

guardian.co.uk

Letters

The Guardian, Saturday 10 August 2002

Addicted to hoarding

I enjoyed Tom Phillips's review of Phillip Blom's book on collecting (To have and to hold, August 3). As both a psychologist and collector (of too many things to mention) I have always been interested in why we have what seems like an innate ability to collect. I would almost go as far to say that we are "natural born hoarders". Furthermore, there has been surprisingly little psychological research in this area and Freud's theories on the topic are unfortunately almost empirically untestable. I would also add that for some people, collecting is at the pathological end of the behavioural continuum. There are some who are (for want of a better word) "addicted" to collecting and there are some with obsessive-compulsive disorders who simply cannot throw anything away. On the basis of the review, I look forward to reading the whole book.

Professor Mark Griffiths

Psychology Division, Nottingham Trent University