

**Workshop 1, Homework Review – Constructive Feedback:**

- What did you think about the Reference CD?  
**Note:** *Hardcopy handouts to be distributed to those without a computer.*
- Did everyone bring the materials they plan to exhibit? Who would like to show their material and explain the rough-sketch outline about their story?
- Who has a DRAFT of their Title Page to share with the class? By the time the last workshop is in session, you should have revised your Title Page at least one time.

**Workshop #2 – Write-up, Page Design, and Tricks of Our Trade**

In this segment of training we discuss write-up (a.k.a. page layout and composition). We also look at the materials used to mount exhibits, and demonstrate design techniques useful when mounting philatelic material, including text in tight spaces, or where special attention to detail is necessary.

**Note 1:** *The term “organized exhibiting” is understood to represent exhibiting standards at the APS/AAPE/WSP level of philatelic competition.*

**Note 2:** *Anything I can and will say about exhibiting will probably be argued by others. With Club Exhibiting, I lay the foundation, and YOU decide what to build on it.*

**Write-up... What does that mean?**

For organized exhibiting, write-up is the precise text pertaining only to the philatelic importance of the “things” you are talking about. For Club Exhibiting, you can add amplifying text that explains the details about these “things”. Write-up includes the aesthetic appearance of your exhibit: text fonts, size, presentation, illustrations, graphics, and on, and on. It’s the vehicle that carries your story’s delivery. It can capture your audience, or send them away.

Years ago, exhibitors were expected to be artists. Hand-lettering was the rage. So were ornate borders, and original pen-and-ink illustrations. Today, the term “lean-and-mean” is the status quo. Write-up is not just words you plaster across paper, it’s the foundation for your story. To avoid some pitfalls, here are some of the more common points judges make when evaluating exhibits:

- Your write-ups are just too long, even though much of what you are saying is necessary. Get rid of the fluff! Eliminate unnecessary words.
- It is very difficult for the viewer to read your write-ups; the type is too small.

- Many of your write-ups are unnecessary. You spend too much time pointing out the obvious. Here is a good rule to learn... don't include the catalog data about your stamps in an exhibit (that is not research; it is common knowledge, or should be).
- Some of what you say does not match the stamps on your pages. If you decide to use fancy words, make sure to select the correct ones to identify your material.
- Your write-ups stretch clear across the pages, making them difficult to read.
- Your write-ups are too brief. Here, nothing is gained by anyone.
- Many of your write-ups are redundant. You've said the same thing more than once.
- Your write-ups are hard to decipher because of the type you are using (or the odd grammar). Don't speak in code only understood by you.
- More facts, fewer opinions.
- Too many spelling and/or grammatical errors. Always have at least two other people read your work to search for errors). An exhibitor who errs sees the same mistake any number of times without detection.
- Let your material reign supreme. STAMPS RULE; text amplifies.
- Your headlines are way too big.
- sloppiness

If you really want to test the impact of your work, ask yourself these important questions... commit them to a mental check-list:

- Is it necessary?
- Is it brief and to the point?
- Is it fact or fiction?
- Are you being objective or opinionated?
- Is the position of my text properly related to the material?
- Does the page look like an Italian road map?
- Have I inverted the pyramid? Always do this... heavy on top, light on bottom.
- How many times did I check my spelling and grammar?
- Did I develop the story before applying it to my pages or afterwards?
- Have I maintained the story-line or did I drift far, far away?

### Designing Pages for a Philatelic Exhibit

Create them by hand, use a computer, or mount you material in plastic stock pages. With Club Exhibiting, you get to choose what works best for your situation. Some of us are artistic and others have a foundation in computers. Those abilities are nice to have but should not

limit others who desire to exhibit, but lack those tools. Remember, the story line is the primary mission. Everything else should be secondary.

If you would like your exhibit pages created on a computer, speak to any of our club mentors who have offered to build them for you. Before contacting one of our computer gurus, consider the following idea. Transitioning from analog to digital exhibit pages will become much easier for you and the person building your electronic pages if you sketch the basic layout on blank sheets of paper.

Regardless how hard I try to construct pages without making changes, I find it an impossible task. My mind may see a graphic image that I think will tell a story, but when my eyes make contact with the paper, I know more work is necessary. I never met an exhibitor who said they made one set of exhibit pages, never made changes, never made mistakes, mounted their material correctly on the first attempt, and were good to go. The message here is simple. Don't wait to the last minute to get started. Your exhibit should be built in a series of progressive steps, allowing time to eliminate mistakes, and to change your mind without becoming frustrated.

I like to use five basic tools when sketching my basic layout:

- a pencil (with a large eraser)
- a notebook
- a very accurate 12-inch ruler with inch and metric scales
- several sheets of paper
- 2-pocket and 3-pocket Vario stock pages

The pencil draws lines to form boxes and words; the eraser changes them. A notebook is where you scribble notes to yourself, create new ideas, and keep a running record of what you need to do before your project is complete. Paper is where we transfer our ideas from a mental concept to a physical presence for positioning covers, stamps, and words. The Vario stock pages store the material we plan to exhibit. Use each pocket of the stock pages to represent a page in your exhibit, and put all the material for that page in the pocket. I like to use index cards to create short notes reminding me what might be missing from specific pages; the index cards accompany the material.

Let's mention the first page of every exhibit – the Title Page. This is also the last page you should attempt to complete. Forget the first title you thought of. By the time you finish this project, a new and possibly better title will unfold. Most exhibits have a title, so this should appear at the top of the Title Page. For Club Exhibiting, use this page to introduce your story, and tell the observer what they should learn if they study your exhibit. Say only enough to entice curiosity. You have nine pages to exhibit and most folks don't like to read long bulky paragraphs printed in small type. Use the K.I.S.S. (Keep it Simple, Stupid)

approach. Say what is necessary and nothing more. If done well, those interested in your work will seek you out for more information.

Your Title Page could have a map, philatelic material or anything that gives your exhibit a boost. Many articles have been written on this subject. Organized exhibiting is more stringent on what you can and cannot do with the Title Page. You might want to ask club members, who are also WSP exhibitors what they believe should be included on a Title Page. But remember, Club Exhibiting allows you flexibility to be creative without taxing rules. When I read a little, see a little, and both the words and the visuals attract my curiosity, I want to know more.

Remove everything from your desk. Place the material you intend to exhibit into organized piles. Think of the piles as individual pages in your exhibit. Keep moving the material around until you are reasonably comfortable with the arrangement. This is your first connection with your story line, which becomes the visual others will see after the material is mounted. If you don't like it, chances are your audience won't either. Adjust the arrangement to match the story. If that is not possible, you just discovered a problem with your story and need to address it – now! Leave the arrangement on the table for several hours (or days). This will help you critique the work. Well, if you leave the material roughly arranged on your desk, and return later, you might see where improvements need to be made before continuing to the next step.

Pick up each pile of stamps and place them into individual stock page pockets. I try to keep them in the same order they will appear in the exhibit. So, the first pocket holds material for the Title Page, the second pocket is assigned to the next page, and so on. You might number the pockets to make it easier when it is time to grab the material for mounting. For single stamps, I place them neatly into 5-3/8 x 3-1/4 inch manila stock cards, and slide the cards into glassine envelopes. Manila stock cards allow you to make notes about the stamps to help you remember why they are necessary to the exhibit. Covers can slip into clear plastic sleeves. Expanded notes can be written on index cards and tucked away with covers. Whatever it takes to protect your material while stored in the stock pages, do that.

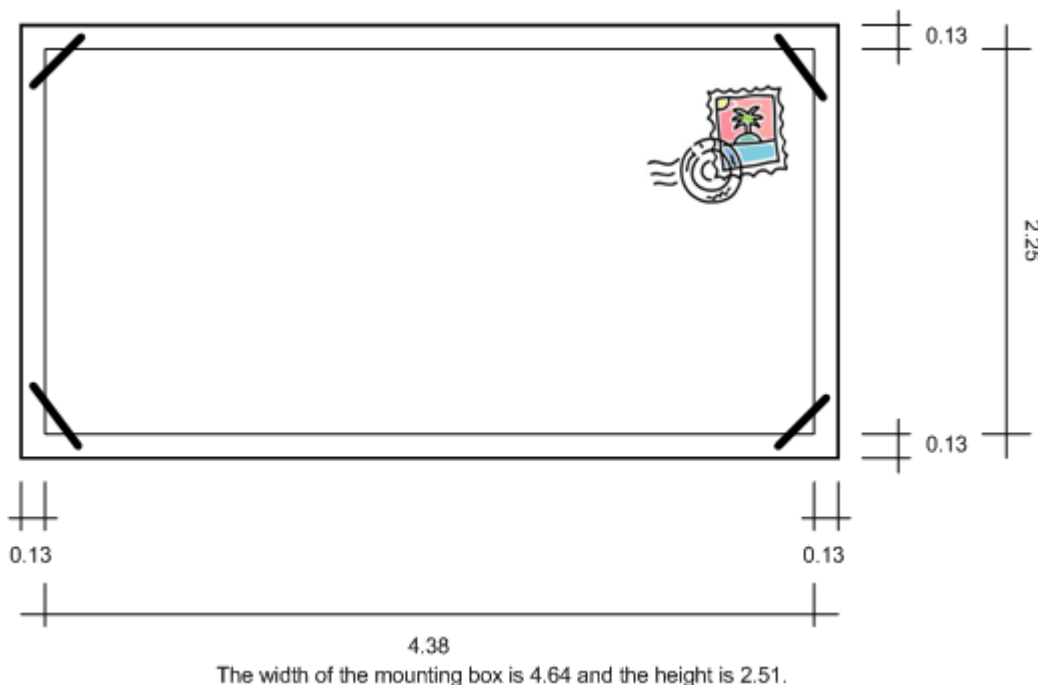
You have come a long way and accomplished more than you may realize. You are also nicely organized and ready to continue. I begin with the second page. Place a piece of paper in front of you, remove the material from the proper stock page pocket, and grab your pencil. Again, arrange the material to best tell your story. Draw boxes on the paper to correspond with the stamps and covers arranged on your desk. The hand-drawn boxes do not need to be perfect, just approximate to the size of each stamp and cover you intend to mount.

Now, here is where you want to pay particular attention to detail. To obtain finished boxes that comfortably fit around the material you intend to display, carefully measure, and record

the width and height of each item. You then pencil-in those measurements at the top and side of the hand-drawn boxes, but before you do, remember to include these:

- Convert your measurements into decimals. For example, 2-1/4 inches should be written as: 2.25 (computers won't accept fractions)  
Note: When using a calculator, do this to convert a fraction... for 1/4-inch, the result of .25 would be 1 divided by 4 equals (0.25).
- There must be "some" white space between the inside edge of your boxed lines and the outer edges of the material being mounted. Add 1/8-inch (0.13) to the width and height of your initial measurements. If you don't like 1/8-inch, select a different amount. Be consistent throughout your exhibit. Applying different amounts can be distracting to your audience.

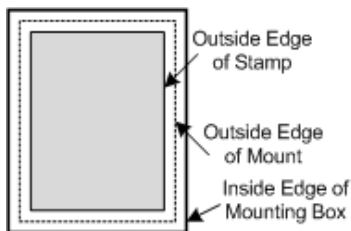
Always check the measurements twice to prevent repeating this task. Here is where your notebook becomes important. Make a note saying that your "standard" amount of white space between ruled borders and stamps or covers is 1/8-inch (0.13). If you don't think this step is important, wait until you forget the amount you determined for a cover on the second page and are forced to repeat the task, because you are now mounting a cover on the ninth page and can't remember your original measurements.



I learned that all covers need to be measured, even if they appear to be the same size. Usually they are not because they do not always have corners at ninety degree angles. Similarly, individual stamps that look to be the same size might not be. Pick the largest stamp from a series and find a mount that it fits into without stress. Provide equal space

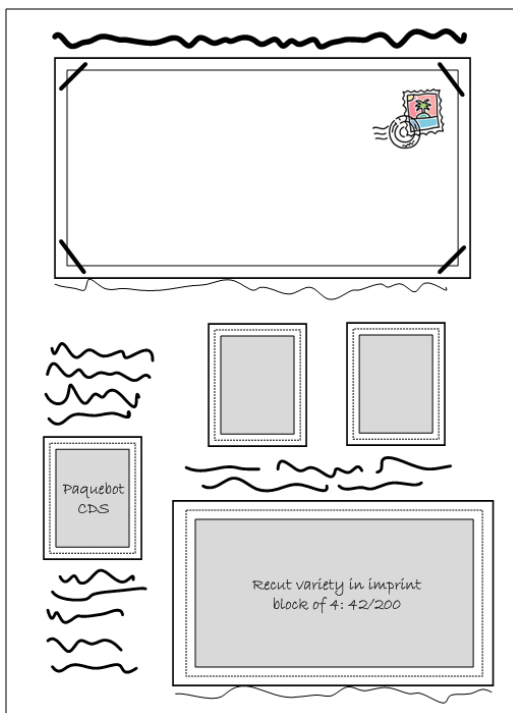
around the stamp while it is inside the mount, then cut the mount. An X-acto knife and straight-edge or guillotine style mount cutter does the job nicely. Cut enough mounts for each stamp of that same size in your exhibit.

Here is where you determine the finished box size for stamps (inside mounts). Go back to the “white space” measurement we discussed earlier and apply it to your box size, but the measurement should be from the space between the inside edge of your boxed lines to the outer edges of the mount.



Some guidelines from APS/AAPE exhibiting seem applicable to Club Exhibiting. For example, a cover rests better on a page if it is mounted at the top of the page with stamps and text under it. Unused stamps should precede used stamps. Pages should be balanced when possible. But you, the exhibitor, must decide what is best for your story.

Here is where you switch gears, pick up a pencil, and imagine where text might be placed. You do not need to write the actual text, just imagine where it will go. Scribble some lines on the page to represent text placement. Remember the page title is larger than the body text, which is larger than caption text. Always add a caption under covers in a smaller point size than the body text.



There is much more to discuss about the aesthetics associated with page design, but that is for another workshop.

As you can see from the example, our page is taking shape and we can sense its purpose. Repeat the previous steps until all pages are in this stage of development. Remember to return material to the correct page protector pockets when you have finished working with them. And, remember to return every item to the pocket.

Those of us using computer graphic software, scanners, and page composition software get a real sense of satisfaction at this level of development because we bypass the box drawing and scribbling. Everything I mentioned previously can be created electronically. Using a computer’s mouse as a pencil, scanning stamps and images,

then placing them on a page is fun. Text is added separately.



Moving text and images is fast and simple, so changing your mind is not an issue. Because you are using scanned images of covers and stamps, you quickly see the “would be” finished design on your computer screen. I like to print mine and arrange them (using rubber cement (mucilage)) on a piece of craft board the same size as our exhibit frames (30 x 36). Make three rows with three pages across. Now you get a visual for the entire exhibit before you glue anything down on finished exhibit pages. Study the exhibit. Move things around to refine balance – now you’re cooking!

Earlier, I mentioned you should build sample pages with sketches of your exhibit and measure the box sizes for covers before asking the computer dudes or dudettes to help you. Now you see how easy it would be for them to build boxes to the exact sizes you want, and add text.

Those using computers discover they can delete the scanned images from their working set of pages, keep the boxes and text, then do a “Save As” to quickly create a new file containing a set of master pages. They use the master pages to mount the material.

Everything mentioned in this article can be accomplished with or without a computer. Some of the most beautiful exhibits I have seen were created by hand. If you use a computer, remember to manage your philatelic material, not replace it with scanned images. The actual philatelic material is paramount in all forms of exhibiting. Electronic exhibiting is for a future discussion.

### **Page Specifications [serif and sans serif fonts]**

A font with a sans serif style is typical of the body text used in this handout. Sans serif fonts (Arial, Calibri, Maiandra GD) are typically used for headers. The font is block-shaped. Serif (Baskerville Old Face, New Times Roman) is French meaning “little tiny feet” that drop off the ends of most characters in those fonts.

Much argument has been made for which font style is more appropriate for reading. I use both and make my decision based on how the fonts I choose read with the words I am delivering, but I prefer serif fonts for body text and sans serif fonts for headers. What you like will work best for you, but stick with one or the other for body text. Never mix fonts over different exhibit pages. I also avoid italic and bold or underlined text unless it is absolutely necessary.

**Page Specifications [point sizes]** – Headers look better one point size larger than body text if the headers are sans serif fonts. If the headers are serif fonts, go two points larger than the body text. Body text is always easy to read in 12-point. Those who argue usually need a new prescription for glasses. Body text larger than 12-point type is an excuse to fill

white-space when words are hard to find. Using body text smaller than 12-point type is annoying to those reading your story. The lighting at philatelic events is often in a gymnasium where it is dull, yellow, and sometimes produces a glare across the Plexiglas on exhibit frames.

**Captions** – Text for captions should be two point sizes smaller than body text, so 10-point is great. Depending on the serif font used (should be the same as the body text font) the point size may read more clearly if it is increased or decreased by one point.

**Caption Organization** – Organize the data within captions in the same order, in all of your captions, throughout the exhibit. I like to use a format where the caption tells its own story:

- a) Start the caption by stating the month the letter was sent; use conventional abbreviations for months of the year
- b) Give the date of the initial postmark; the day the letter was sent
- c) Include the year in complete numbers; do not abbreviate
- d) Within parentheses, tell us the established rate and then, say if the letter was overpaid, underpaid, redirected, etc.
- e) If known, give the delivery date but only state the day and month; the year is already known unless delivery crossed into the next year

**Note:** Refer to Tip Sheet D for examples.

Learn approved standards, their proper abbreviations and adopt consistent usage. One of the most common mistakes made is when weights and measurements are applied incorrectly. For example, millimeter is expressed as “mm” not “mm.”.

### Materials for Mounting a Killer Exhibit?

Club exhibiting allows maximum flexibility and choices when selecting materials for mounting exhibits. The rules for organized exhibiting are more restrictive, so learn the differences before you attempt to enter your exhibit at a WSP show. You might decide the rules for organized exhibiting provide the best delivery for your hand work.

**Paper Size** – In the United States, we use 8½ x 11-inch (standard) stock mounted in “portrait” position. It is also acceptable to use 11 x 17-inch stock mounted in “landscape” position when the material you need to show will not fit on standard stock. If you intend to exhibit internationally, the rules concerning paper size change, but for club exhibiting and organized exhibiting in the U.S. the stock sizes mentioned here is the standard.



There are exceptions. In one case an exhibitor decided to mount a full sheet of stamps (200 impressions) in a standard APS exhibit frame. The sheet was large enough, when mounted on a custom size sheet of paper to fill the area usually accommodated by four 8½ x 11-inch pages; two on one row and two on the row directly below the first. His first step was to contact the show chairman and ask him to measure the inside area of an exhibit frame that would hold his sheet of stamps. He had custom stock cut and printed for his sheet of stamps. There was also the extra effort to have a special sheet protector made to fit around the stamps and a sturdy container for shipping the completed exhibit to shows.

**Paper Weight** – Papers used in exhibiting are 65 to 100 lb cover stock. Most home office printers accept 65 lb stock. If you want to use heavier stock, save your finished work to a Flash Drive (Thumb Drive) and take it, along with your paper to an office supply store that offers copying services. If the office supply company cannot do the job, you will need to visit a printing company. Heavy cover stock stands straight (will not curl) inside an exhibit frame, which keeps them from falling out of the clear plastic page holder strips inside the frame.

**Hint:** Create an “Exhibit Mounting Emergency Kit” and include a small package of stamp hinges. Stick a stamp hinge on the back of the exhibit page, near the top center, and then stick the other side of the hinge to the inside of the exhibit frame to keep pages from falling out of the frames.

If you decide to use a different material for your exhibit, consider one of these:

- a) An album page with heavy card stock behind it, sandwiched inside a sheet protector
- b) Card stock mounted to the back of a sheet of standard 20 lb printer paper

**Paper Color** – White or off-white is preferred for all classifications of exhibiting. Pastel colors for organized exhibiting have been noticed on a few exhibits, but are never appreciated by judges and always mentioned as a bad practice during the judge’s critique. White is a reflective color less stressful on the human eye, providing more attention to your stamps. After all, you are building a philatelic exhibit, not a scrap book. Most of the stamp shows I have attended have poor lighting in the area of the show where the exhibits are displayed... white paper reflects light; mauve absorbs it.

Most paper sold by the major paper manufacturers is acid-free. That is important when preserving your material, in an album or an exhibit. Remember this: the collections and exhibits we own are miniature archives entrusted to our safe keeping. They are not permanently ours, and should pass from generation to generation for all to enjoy.

**Mounting Corners** – Products described as “mounting corners” come in various sizes and can be purchased from philatelic suppliers, or Michaels and Hobby Lobby. Look in the scrap book supply section of those stores. Most have a clear plastic cellophane or Mylar front that slip over the corners of your covers and postcards. The back has a self-sticking adhesive or glue you moisten and press against the paper. They are great for mounting postal history items in your exhibit.

I use two, sometimes three sizes. The smallest ¼-inch size leaves an almost invisible footprint and is used for sturdy cover corners. When I have a cover with weak or torn corners I apply the larger ½-inch or 1-inch mounting corners (use the same size mounting corners on each side of the cover; don’t mix sizes). A note of caution here: don’t use a mounting corner that could rub against the perforations of a stamp. It is always wise to select a size that will cover the corner of the envelope and the perforations of the stamps mounted near the envelope’s corner. Don’t risk damage from a mounting corner that touches the stamp’s perforations.

**Stamp Mounts** – Judges at organized exhibiting shows encourage clear protective mounts. However, black is acceptable. For club exhibiting, either works well. Think of this in another way: clear mounts are less distracting to the material in your exhibit than black mounts, which can “frame” your stamps and draw attention away from the very thing you are trying to focus on. I reserve the right to make exception to the previous statement when it is necessary to draw attention to a particular stamp, but there are three other methods that work better:

- a) Colored matting
- b) Clear mounts on colored matting
- c) Thick ruled lines (black or a bright color) versus thin ruled lines (always in black)

**Note:** Refer to Tip Sheet D.

Remember the old “Crystal Mounts” your grandpa or grandma used for mounting their stamps? Avoid that product like the plague! Crystal mounts destroy stamps. The product contains polypropylene, a chemical that discolors the ink the stamps were printed with and dissolves the gum. Any questions?

Oh, by the way, don’t cut stamp mounts with scissors! Take time to be neat and accurate when cutting stamp mounts. Use a guillotine or rolling-cutter to produce a professional looking finished edge when cutting stamp mounts. If you have several stamps of the same size, make all of the mounts for them the same size.

**Stamp Hinges** – Many professional exhibitors still use stamp hinges to mount used stamps in their exhibits. If you think all the stamps in your exhibit are used, go with stamp hinges. If some of the stamps are used, but other are unused (NH gum), use stamp mounts on all of the stamps in the exhibit.

**Sheet Protectors** – Make absolutely sure the brand of sheet protectors you purchase are archival quality. Avery products are sound. Other brands that look like Avery products might not be safe; some contain polyvinyl chloride. Before making a selection, contact the manufacturer. Although Avery sheet protectors are usable, they are thin and have holes along one side for mounting into a 3-ring binder. I think that detracts from the exhibit's material, but you can cut along the side of the sheet protector to remove the holes.

A better alternative is custom .004-inch thick special polyester protective sleeves custom made to the size you want for mounting exhibit pages. There are many companies on the market that offer this service. One of the popular companies that have been around for many years is Atlantic Supply. I'm not ashamed to say I do not recommend them. The person I worked with made a mess of my order after three consecutive attempts to fix his original mistake, tried to convince me the mistake in finished size is what every stamp exhibitor uses (there was an additional ½-inch clear plastic space on each side of the exhibit page, and no additional clear plastic space at the top of the page). They never answer their phone and it can take days for them to return your call.

Want better service for a cheaper price? I use Conservation Resources. They are very friendly and helpful over the phone. They take the size you ask for, make a sample, and send it to you for inspection within two days of your initial request. If you need adjustments to the sample, they gladly make another sample and send it to you. When you are happy, they place the order. No excuses... no boo boos... no delays.

Conservation Resources International LLC  
5532 Port Royal Road  
Springfield, Virginia 22151 USA  
Office hours: 9:00 to 5:00 EST  
Phone: (800) 634-6932 or (703) 321-7730  
Fax: (703) 321-0629  
E-mail: [sales@conservationresources.com](mailto:sales@conservationresources.com)

**Note:** Here are the two sizes I order to fit my exhibit pages.

- 8½ x 11 stock – 8-5/8 x 11-1/8, open at one short side (top)
- 11 x 17 stock – 17-1/4 x 11-1/4, open at one short side (right side)

I also purchase one of their archival storage boxes to protect my exhibit while carrying it to and from shows.

Other considerations when working with the materials in your exhibit:

- Slow down. Take time to avoid costly mistakes.
- Keep your hands clean and dry. Wash and dry them frequently; when you think your hands are clean... check them again.
- Keep food and liquids far, far away from your exhibit.
- Erasers are valuable. An “Art Gum” works miracles on dirty unwanted marks.

**Special Tools: Stanley Gibbons Position Finder** – A tool often needed, but generally overlooked, is the Position Finder. It is used to establish a location on a stamp where there is a printing flaw. The tool is clear plastic with letters of the alphabet along the outer vertical side, and numbers across the top horizontal portion of the gauge. A stamp is placed behind the gauge, aligned with the top left corner, with the stamp’s outermost edges along the vertical and horizontal edges of the gauge. Each square on the grid has an assigned letter and number, such as G6, used to identify a plate flaw for the stamp identified in Tip Sheet D.

#### **Class Study Aids, References and Resources:**

- a) Tip Sheet C – Mounting Techniques that get Attention
- b) Tip Sheet D – Specifications and Special Tools

#### **Homework Assignment:**

- Pick three covers from the plastic boxes.
  - o Write captions for each of the covers.
  - o You will use these covers and captions for another assignment in the third segment of the workshops – bring your work to class.
- Students without computers pick a mentor; begin designing DRAFT pages with assistance from your mentors.
- Revise your DRAFT Title Page and bring it to the next workshop.