

What is “good” philatelic exhibiting?

When you participate in the Midwest Philatelic Society's Club Exhibiting program, YOU and the club members present at the December meeting will have a chance to answer this question, because those who participate in viewing the exhibits are the judges. Each club member will receive a ballot for selecting their top three impressionable exhibits. There will be no fees paid to judges sponsored by professional organizations. Those judges and the exhibiting criteria they promote belong to World Series of Philately events offered at stamp shows across the country. Their program contains a discipline of rigid rules some exhibitors are not comfortable with, while others are simply not able to travel to shows. Some exhibitors do not want the expense of shipping and insuring their exhibits, or do not trust the handling of their valuable material by others. And, some do not want to purchase exceptional material simply to meet the expectation of WSP judges.

A good exhibit is what YOU believe it should be and not what a self proclaimed expert wants to make you think it should be. The focus on the MPS Club Exhibiting program gets back to educating collectors. You might get them excited about material they may not be familiar with, encourage them to develop an interest in new material for their enjoyment, or because they know you specialize and exhibit in a specific field, offer you material they no longer have an interest in collecting.

One of the basic rules of philatelic exhibiting is for each exhibitor to decide why it is important to them: educating club members, the fun of participating in club events, displaying rare material, or competing for awards? YOU decide. This is your program with unrestricted opportunities to learn about exhibiting and enjoy yourself while doing it. It is an advanced “show and tell”. Prepare for advanced exhibiting interests. If you try club level exhibiting and like it, you might also read about national and international exhibiting to discover greater benefits for your collecting experience.

I believe the primary consideration for any exhibit is: yagottawanna! That word is not a typographical error. It is a word I created (not currently listed in any English dictionary) for all to share, regardless of the collecting task each of you chooses to embrace. An exhibit should catch the eye of every person who glances at it and to draw them into its web and provide satisfaction to viewers by telling an interesting story. It should be neat, organized, and pretty: everybody likes pretty things. Tell your story!

A great story is supported by the research data you acquire beyond what is printed in catalogues. As with all memorable stories, yours should unfold with a beginning, have a middle, and ending supported with philatelic knowledge. Here's where YOU get to “break the mold”. Don't organize stamps and covers as they are traditionally presented in stamp catalogues (unless it benefits your exhibit). You get to tell your story though words and images. Include non philatelic material (related to the subject) to amplify interesting points throughout your story.

One of the simplest statements I ever read concerning the purpose of philatelic exhibiting was written by Franceska Rapkin when she said, “... we collect stamps for our own pleasure, and if, in gaining pleasure ourselves we also give pleasure to others; that is an added bonus.”

June 2011, Bob Burney