

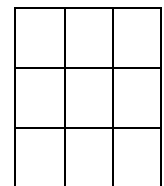
Planning an Exhibit

It is more practical to plan an exhibit from stamps you already have, than it is to start an exhibit with new material. There are exceptions, but exhibiting material you have studied over an extended period of time produces the kind of exhibit that gets attention.

When you become expert with a philatelic subject, it is wise to use that material as a foundation and grow your exhibit, adding and upgrading to it as more material becomes available. You may decide it is time to invest in stamps or covers that are not easy to find. If you are lucky, more than one resource might offer enough variety to justify expensive purchases. Material for exhibits does not need to be expensive. In ideal situations, you might use the same material from a primary exhibit, let's say, on postal history, to support another exhibit (add a few different items) on unique postal markings or both within the same field of study but with two entirely different titles, presentations, and stories.

Choose a suitable subject which permits you to tell a reasonably complete story in the number of pages you have been allocated. If your topic is too large, minimize the scope and shrink the material into a pleasing arrangement that validates the exhibit. For example, exhibiting the Machin definitive issues of Great Britain is too large, but focusing on the ½p value, showing every print and characteristic, accented with covers showing usage for applicable postal rates would be doable.

An exhibit, like a good book, has a beginning, middle, and an end. To begin, take a piece of paper and draw connecting boxes to represent the total number of pages your exhibit can have: nine pages for MPS club exhibits, which means you should draw three horizontal boxes across the paper followed by three vertical boxes down the paper. Connect the boxes by drawing other boxes until you have one large box consisting of nine smaller boxes, but make sure they are large enough to fill the sheet of paper. Use the squares to outline your story. As ideas develop, you might find it necessary to use a full sheet of paper to outline each exhibit page.



Allow your stamps and covers to tell as much of the story as possible. Cover captions are best described when you start with the sender's postmark information followed by the receiver's postmark information. Include data that is not obvious to the viewer. It is not necessary to explain everything that can be read on the cover's surface. Trace the path of the cover's journey. Example:

May 15, 1939, Cairo to USA (international surface letter rate 25c, first 20 g, underpaid 20c),
backstamp: returned Sept. 16, 1939, Danbury, Conn., received Oct. 10, 1939, Alexandria

Identify stamps by listing the year of print, identify the printer, paper types, gum varieties, watermarks, phosphors, and perhaps color variations or tell what cannot be seen or is not obvious. Put stamps with the best condition in your exhibit. WSP exhibits avoid covers considered "philatelic" or those made by stamp dealers to intentionally be attractive. "Philatelic" covers are acceptable in MPS club exhibits.

When exhibiting leaves the field of education and enters the realm of competition, rules appear, political parties form, and the enjoyment of sharing knowledge becomes tarnished. Some exhibit programs fail because judges assume they know more about an exhibit than the exhibit's owner. Some WSP judges make decisions based on "exhibitors must please judges." Not all judges agree on the rules. To make it worse, the judge's decision is "final" and without debate. Our judges are club members, some with exhibiting experience and some without it. That ingredient should soften political ambitions and offer enjoyment to exhibitors and those who view their exhibits. Research the Subject • Document the Facts • Share the Knowledge • Have Fun!

July 2011, Bob Burney