

THE EXHIBIT WORKHORSES

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In the articles written so far, we have talked about postal stationery, cancellations, revenues, essays, proofs, etc. These items are the appetizers, the salads, the vegetables, the rolls, and the deserts of the exhibit. Now, it is time to talk about the meat and potatoes, the main course, the workhorses of what makes an exhibit tick and succeed.

What are the workhorses, you ask? They are the stamps, of course. The stamps that we bought via a checklist, the stamps that started us collecting the themes that we will be showing, the stamps that keep us looking for more material. For some of us, it was about 90% of the material we owned until we decided to put together an exhibit.

Even now, when the majority of our money is being spent on other types of material, it is our stamps that we look to in order to tell our story line in a cohesive, intelligent, and logical manner.

Not only are our stamps the workhorses of our exhibits, they are also the backbones that keep our exhibits standing tall and presentable for the public to view and enjoy and for the jury to appreciate.

So, this time we will concentrate on our issued stamps. Okay, which stamps?

There are two main groups of stamps: the definitives and the commemoratives. They can be found in all types of stamps ranging from basics, airmails and semipostals to officials, postage dues and revenues for starters. Last time we saw them as proofs, essays, trial colors and specimens. The answer: All of them, of course.

By their very nature, the majority of the stamps in most thematic exhibits will be commemoratives with all their design messages on many themes. Popular themes will obviously have many choices of stamp designs to choose from. Having many choices may seem an asset to those who have few choices. Instead, there is the stronger obligation to choose the better material at all times. And, we will be judged on how well we chose one stamp design over another for a particular page.

We have mentioned more than once "Show what you talk about and talk about what you show". One of the easiest way to show what you talk about is with commemoratives. Therefore, there will probably be very few pages in the exhibit that will not have on it at least one commemorative stamp.

However, that commemorative stamp does not have to be a mint single. Commemoratives are issued in panes, coils, booklets, souvenir sheets, and miniature sheets, primarily. They can also be shown in pairs, triples, blocks, etc.

Therefore, the exhibits where the commemoratives are primarily mint singles will probably do some fading in the eyes of the judges when other exhibits will have shown the wide range of exhibitable varieties.

Coils and booklet pairs are normally shown in multiples to distinguish them from pane printing. The number of stamps on souvenir and miniature sheets plus the number of designs on the theme of the exhibit can determine how large a multiple might be shown. Show pane multiples for emphasis of a thematic point, for aesthetics, and because stamps are not issued as singles.

Commemoratives are issued or overprinted in the many types mentioned above which can give all of us many opportunities for additional varieties for those willing to look for them. Again, I will try to put as wide a variety on a page when the opportunity is there.

What I will do just as soon as I get back from Chicago in May and have to start thinking in 12-page frames is to check off just my commemoratives on the PHILATELIC ELEMENTS CHECK LIST and see how much variety I will have with the new frame size. I would recommend that you might want to do the same. And, equally important, it should help you determine, if you have your stock book beside you, where you can substitute to give you some better variety.

You should study each page for itself and then in concert as to how it relates with the other pages around it. I make it a practice to change a number of items each time I show my exhibits. It helps to keep an exhibit from looking tired and shopworn and also helps me keep in touch with every page in my exhibit. At the international level, an exhibitor cannot get complacent about the material on any page no matter how good thematically or philatelically the material is now or when it was mounted.

I also make it a practice to include recently issued material. We all try to obtain the earliest material for the exhibit. But, please, do not overlook the material issued last month. It might have a thematic thrust that is germane to your story line. It also reinforces in the minds of the jury that you are working on upgrading your exhibit and not letting it get static. That is important because most exhibitors work very hard on bettering their exhibits and those exhibitors who do not, are in danger of even dropping a medal level, not just holding their own.

When you finish working on the commemoratives, then you should turn your attention to your definitives. In most thematic exhibits, definitives are frequently clustered in 'philatelic studies', but they should also be scattered throughout the exhibit. As with the commemoratives, many of the available types and varieties should be represented in the exhibit and on the PHILATELIC ELEMENTS CHECK LIST.

Definitives give many thematic exhibitors chances to show varieties that are not available with the commemoratives for their thematics. Look at each type of stamp as a challenge to see how well each can do with the others.

Many exhibitors do not pay much attention to the other types of stamps beyond the airmails and semi-postals, such as officials, postage dues, postal tax, locals, revenues and the like because they are frequently not on checklists. On the other hand, there are some interesting items in these types of material and the inclusion of them throughout the exhibit can help to vary the exhibit page look as well.

As with any other element, stamps should not take over an exhibit either. There should be a reasonable balance with the other elements. It helps make for a better exhibit in the eyes of viewers as well as judges. That is what counts!

Commemoratives and definitives are also issued to be used on mail. Those covers will be discussed next month.