



TCNews

BULLETIN OF THE FIP THEMATIC COMMISSION

N. 17 – JULY 2004

FOREWORD

TCNews # 15 was very interesting, at least judging on the basis of the many comments and translations I have received. This feedback is the best reward, so that I have decided to go back to the same subject also considering brand new aspects, like personalized stamps.

You are certainly aware of that a growing number of postal administrations (e.g. Austria, Canada, Finland) accept designs to be fitted on a “neutral” stamp (or in selection of) provided that its content is suitable. So I could order Austrian stamps for celebrating my birthday, or franking my Christmas cards with my own stamp depicting my family or my favourite flower. These initiatives are the evolution of those personalized stamps we have become familiar in the recent years (those showing the picture taken at the exhibiton booths of some postal administrations) which nowadays are booming also in the Internet.

The basic question is “is that appropriate philatelic material”? The answer is immediate and it is “Yes”. The evidence: if you frank a letter with these stamps, the same will be duly forwarded to the addressee. These considerations apply to regional issues, authorized private post issues, and many other proliferations made possible by changes in the postal service organization of many countries.

The second question is “when it is recommended to use them?”

The answer depends on the person asking this question, whether he/she is a non competitive collector or an exhibitor.

Non competitive collectors are just putting together stamps because of their personal pleasure. Their freedom must be totally respected and they can fill their albums and stockbooks of any item, personalized or standard. There two caveats:

- they must be aware of their decisions, without blaming, at a later time, philately as an unreliable hobby. Freedom of choice implies, in every situation of life, to stand for own decisions, so enough homework should be done before spending own money. Buying these items in the dark can make collecting life easier, not safer.
- issueing entities and dealers must be aware that the vallet of collectors, at large, has a finite capacity. If they buy A they have little money left for B and C. So they cannot blame, later on, that collectors can be disappointed as they did not get enough advice when they made their choices.

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The second group consists of collectors who are exhibiting or plan to exhibit. By definition, an

exhibit is a selection of material, so let's put these items in the item selection process:

- The first step of the process implies the assessment of the thematic appropriateness of the item, ensuring that it supports the detail of theme the exhibitor intends to illustrate.
- If there is just one item, there is of course no choice.
- If there are several items, there are two considerations:
 - select the item presenting that thematic detail better than the others
 - in case they are of equivalent content, select the item having the best philatelic qualification.

Philatelic qualification encompasses nature of the item and rarity & condition. So some considerations are to be made, depending on the nature of material, as follows

<i>Material</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Rarity</i>	<i>Condition</i>
Stamps, Stationery & Cancellations	Full	No limit	No limit
Personalized stamps	Full	Limited	No merit
Border line items	Limited	No merit	No limit

“No limit” means that rarity can vary from very low to outstanding, and the same for quality (where items of insufficient quality must be excluded). For personalized stamps rarity cannot be measured on the fact that some of them have a printed quantity of some hundreds, as on the same side it could be said that the total implementation of the base design is by far bigger. Quality is expected to be perfect, as for any modern stamp, so it does not bring any particular merit.

Border line items, as they are not fully postal, must be complementary items whenever a thematic detail necessary for keeping development in balance can be depicted only through that specific item. They cannot be inserted because ~~they~~ of their rarity.

Furthermore I wish to point out that:

- Variety of items is just a component of philatelic knowledge, not the predominating aspect of the same. Thirty years ago it was necessary to put emphasis on variety because exhibits consisted mainly of stamps and it was necessary to stress the need for postal stationery, cancellations and the like, but later on exhibitors have started stretching this concept to include border line items beyond the definitions of the regulations and breaking the balance with more appropriate items.
- There are practical situations that, when arranging the exhibit, compel to slightly review the conclusions of the selection process. A page only with stamps could be improved by dropping one or two of them and inserting a cancellation or a meter or a postal stationery item instead, or by dropping the less important thematic detail (without affecting balance of development) if more space is needed and there is no way of expanding that detailed treatment in the following page.

In conclusion: any new type of items is welcome, as long it can contribute to increase attention to our hobby. When we deal of competitive exhibits, these items must be assessed by applying the normal concepts used for selecting items.

The more they are, the lower will be the resulting evaluation of philatelic knowledge, rarity and condition, because other items in their place could have brought better marks. That could be fine in a starting exhibit at local and regional level, but the higher the level of the exhibition, the lower the number of these items in an exhibit aiming at the highest awards.

Giancarlo Morolli

RULES AND PSEUDO RULES

In my last seminar I underlined the fact that thematic rules are basically the same of the other classes, with the necessary adjustments due to the peculiarity of our class. Presentation, in particular, is such that in our official papers we have just repeated the concepts of the GREV, without making any difference from the other classes.

Then we have special situations and here and there pseudo rules are generated. For instance on how to present a stationery item. In our previous guidelines we had also some pages of presentation, that were taken out for making the Guidelines shorter and I republished them as “Notes on Presentation” in TCNews # 15. I continue to hear rules about presentation of postal stationery that are even not in the Guidelines, so I like to recap the viable approaches to this problem:

- give a philatelic description of the key characteristics of the item
- add a photocopy of the side with the imprint showing the latter (partial overlapping)
- add a scanned image of the imprint
- add a second item presented behind the first on the imprint side (partial overlapping).

Of course philatelic text like “postal stationery” or “postal card” or even “postal cart – Italy” are inadequate as too generic. By the way stationery (and not stationary, that is just a spelling mistake, as in English it means

the opposite of “mobile”) encompasses any writing material. Postal stationery is any postal matter bearing an officially authorised pre-printed stamp or device or inscription indicating that a specific face value rate of postage has been pre-paid (SREV Posta Stationery, Art. 2). So the terms to be used are those of Art. 3.3 of the same SREV, like Letter sheet, Aerogram, Envelope, Post Card, Letter card, Wrapper, etc. Personally I describe the rate and the imprint stamp (when it relates to a definitive issue), for instance:

Postal card on private order (MOPHILA Luftpost 1931), 10 Pf Airmail +3 Pf (Germany)

Such a description, contains all the details on the issuing country, occasion, typer of item and denomination of imprinted stamps, normally takes less space than any of the other three alternatives.

This approach, when implemented correctly, demonstrates more philatelic knowledge of the following ones, that are based on clerical activities (photocopying, scanning) of no philatelic content.

All these four approaches require the same level of confidence from the Jurors, as the only way to assess if the text is correct, the photocopy or the scan or the second item is that of the other side of the item, they must open the frame.

So, let’s do what the other classes are doing: take it easy and respect the exhibitor’s approach, without imposing any new rule.

FIP THEMATIC COMMISSION CONFERENCE

Delegates are invited to attend the Conference of the Commission that will take place **in Singapore on Tuesday, August 31st, from 11.00 to 13.00, at the MARINA MANDARIN BALLROOM Taurus Room (Room 1)** with the following Agenda:

Business Session (11.00-12.00)

1. Roll call of Delegates
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Conference in Seoul
(published in TCNews 15, page 10)
3. Report of the President
4. Election of the Chairman
5. Election of the Secretary
6. Election of the Bureau
7. Date and venue of the next Conference

Seminar for Jurors (12.00-13.00)

1. Presentation of the conclusions of the Seminar held in Bonn

This seminar will be open to delegates and to all international jurors attending "Singapore 2004".

FIP THEMATIC BUREAU MEETING

After the Conference, the newly elected Bureau will meet to define the goals for the the next four years.

IN MEMORIAM

We remember our friends who passed away recently:

Jozeph Peeters, past delegate of Belgium

Col. Angel B. Sanguinetti Filippini, past delegate of Uruguay

Lic. Herman Kruse, delegate of Uruguay

Paul H. Jensen, RDP, past president of the FIP Postal History Commission.

R.I.P.

CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION

Candidate for Chairman

Professor Dr. Damian Läge (Germany)

Present vice chairman of the Commission. Well known by his various publications, talks and seminars on Thematic philately. FIP Juror and Team Leader, secretary to the jury at the FEPA exhibitions in Vienna (2000) and Lubin (2001). Active exhibitor (“Australian Birdlife” and “Fascination in Feathers”), he has entered the Championship Class after three Large Gold awards.

Candidate for Secretary

José-Ramon Moreno (Spain)

Thematic collector since 1984, awarded with FIP Gold medals. President of the Spanish Thematic Commission. Present member of the Commission Bureau. FIP Thematic Juror and Team Leader. FEPA General Secretary. FEPA Open Class Director. Vice-Director of FEPA News. Author of a number of articles in different magazines. Since 2001 has started a two/ three pages section on Thematic Philately on the monthly philatelic magazine “Crónica Filatélica”. Has given many Thematic Seminars in Spain and abroad.

Candidates for the Bureau

FEPA

José-Ramon Moreno Fernandez-Figueras (Spain)

Ingolf Kapelrud (Norway)

Present member of the Commission Bureau. FIP Juror and Team Leader. Jury President at Nordic and national exhibitions. Past President of the Norwegian Federation and of the European Federation (FEPA). Honorary President of FEPA. Commissioner General of Norwex 97, the last FIP Exhibition in Norway

FIAF

Eng. Nestor Ferre (Argentina)

Member of the Commission Bureau (1984-2000). Past president of the Argentinean Federation (FAEF). Author of the “Manual of Thematic Philately”. FIP Juror. He has given many conferences and seminars in Argentina and abroad.

Ann Triggie (U.S.A.)

Present member of the Commission Bureau. FIP Juror in Thematic philately and Postal History. Past Vice-President of the American Philatelic Society (APS) Board of Directors. Present Chairman of the Accreditation Committee of the APS.

FIAP

John Sinfield (Australia)

Collector for over 35 years, commencing in thematic philately in 1976. He has received three FIP Large Gold awards, and has entered FIAP Championship class. Present member of the Commission Bureau. Past President of the Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria, and its current Secretary and Chairman of Expert Committee. Member of Australian Philatelic Order. FIAP and National Thematic judge and team leader, providing Thematic judging training in Australia, and Thematic seminars in Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and India.

- *Candidates listed above have been duly endorsed by the relevant Continental Federation*
- *Some nominations were withdrawn by the Federations involved.*
- *Dr. Läge was also proposed by the German Federation as Secretary and Bureau member.*

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Hereafter we publish the list of the Delegates to the Commission, which now consists of 68 delegates.

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AFTER THE 5 WARNINGS

In TC News 15 I warned exhibitors inviting a major attention to some items, which require more attention to philatelic knowledge. More attention does not mean to forbid, but to use items appropriately as far type, quality and number are concerned. We got some requests for clarification and Damian and I are clarifying some points hereafter.

Damian's comment on

Proofs and Essays

By no means there is an intention to ban all proof material from exhibitions! They are fully accepted not only in the thematic class, but also in traditional philately. The important point in this article is the distinction of

- items which "really document the process of stamp production" and
- "items which are produced in excess of the technical needs".

The latter refers to items like colour separations which are produced in thousands to spoil the philatelic market. There was one London printing firm (Format International Security Printers) which has produced "proof" material and printing varieties years after the stamps had been issued. The former owner of this now bankrupt firm is still selling dubious proofs and varieties, together with non-legal stamps. Unfortunately, some background knowledge is needed to distinguish the real proofs from such items which have been produced in excess of the technical/postal needs. In some instances, colour separations are real proofs, in others they are not.

Further there are **different degrees of philatelic importance**. Those items which are really needed for the process to produce a line engraved die are:

- original and accepted drawing for the design,
- stage proofs taken during the engraving process, and
- a final proof for gaining acceptance by the authorities (which have been, in the case of France, the sepia printers' die proofs, or *épreuve de réception* in French language).

This items have the highest degree of importance. Proofs from other printing processes (including the modern computerized stamp printing techniques) are generally of the same importance up to the stage a die is produced (today still on a special proof printing machine). But in the philatelic world, line engraved items generally gain higher attention. So you can divide importance into category 1a (line engravings) and 1b (others).

When the engraving (or, in general terms, the die) is accepted,

- colour proofs and plate proofs

follow. This proofs have a lower degree of general philatelic importance. And again, we should divide into category 2a and 2b because the line engravings have the better image.

- Almost all other material of proof and artwork supporting the production process

is of lesser importance (category 3) but still enhancing the quality of an exhibit. But the collector must be aware that this is on moderate level, and he should neither overload his exhibit with this items nor spend too much money on it.

Surplus presentation material or items just produced to sell them to philatelists (category 4) do not have any importance from this general point of view.

This covers the aspect of importance. Another factor is **rarity**. Both are correlated because the artworks of category 1 are unique by their very nature, and the proofs of this category are generally made in very low numbers. But in the other categories, numbers can vary significantly, and this is for sure a factor to be considered. Advanced exhibitors should at best show only items which are rare and not the ones which are available at quantities (as is often the case with colour and plate proofs and items from category 3). If not being rare, they don't enhance the quality of an exhibit. But, of course, this doesn't mean they are "forbidden".

Giancarlo's comment on Proofs shown in Bangkok exhibits

While judging the exhibits at Bangkok 2003 I realized that especially exhibitors from Asia, who have by far more difficulties in acquiring the material, are using an excess of proofs and essays, as if they were the cornerstones of a thematic exhibit or the only way to achieve high marks for rarity. Beside Damian's explanations, I would like to point out that often these items are not referring to the key thematic points of development. Devoting a larger space on the page to a proof or an essay means automatically to put more emphasis on the relevant thematic point, and that could unbalance balance development. Of course in case of philatelically outstanding items exceptions can be made, but kept as such.

Hence the recommendation is to use proofs and essay when they refer to a key thematic point and they enable to integrate the display with a good philatelic item. Do not multiply them along the exhibit for minor thematic points and for common philatelic items.

Giancarlo's Clarification on BLPs

Since 1877 any private Italian organisation could produce advertising postcards and envelopes franked with stamps and sell them at

a price lower than the denomination of stamps. These stamps were either marked with cross lines or with a specific perforation. In July 1904 it was established that the such a sale of stamps and other postal items at this "cheaper" condition would have required an authorisation of the Ministry of Post.

For this reason a Royal Decree (29.10.20) was issued for the advertising envelopes (Buste Lettere Postali) as they offered a 5c rebate on the denomination of the stamps concerned. Hence, if these items would have been sold at the price of the stamps no authorisation would have been necessary, i.e. the release and the content of the items would have been entirely outside the scope of effort of the Post. BLPs were originated to support the Federation of blind, disabled and injured soldiers, who was supposed to get financial benefits out of the sales of these items.

The Decree required stamps to be overprinted "BLP" and that was done through a private printing company chosen by the publisher of the envelopes in 1921 (one issue) and 1923 (two issues). The stamp overprint had to comply with some standards defined by the Post. Apparently only definitive stamps should have been overprinted, but a misinterpretation of the term used ("common" rather than "definitive") made possible the overprint of some commemorative stamps as well. It was allowed to add other stamps needed to make the exact fare (e.g. foreign destination). No postal supervision was required for the text and the illustrations of the envelopes, that were totally under the (private) control of the said Federation.

Due to the "public" aim of the Federation the Decree authorized sale of these items at secondary postal agencies, but not at the main postal offices. **Of course, authorisation for sale does not mean authorisation for "issue", which is the term used for defining appropriate philatelic material.** Otherwise even today UNICEF Christmas Cards would fall into this category! As the envelopes did not have much success the concession was no

longer exploited even if it had a nine years validity.

As already pointed out, these items are not matching the definition of postal stationery as they do not have any imprint. Stamps have been appreciated by “traditional” philatelists as such (i.e. not on the envelope) whereas stampless envelopes are of no significance. The market value of a BLP depends on the stamps on the same.

For instance an item was offered recently and the catalogue had this description:

“2nd issue 15 c. grey overprinted in blue cancelled on cover to Florence”. “On cover”, implies that the envelope is a BLP, but this acronym is not mentioned at all, as it is taken as natural for stamps with such an overprint. In total four items using that envelope were on sale and, depending on the stamps on each of them, their auction base price was respectively of 150, 250, 1250 and 1550 € At another stamp a mint envelope, with a “small” overprinted stamp affixed, was offered as a part of a lot of three BLPs quoted 50 €

Questions & Answers

1. *Some exhibitors are interested in letter sheets that have pre-printed an illustration (e.g. a saint) on the wording “In Name of God I have loaded...” followed by a list of goods and relevant quantities shipped to a customer. It is what today it is called “bill of lade”.*

Very often these letters have no postal relevance, as they were carried by the person responsible of executing the shipment and handed over to the customer upon arrival and were used, if the case, for paying customs.

In some cases these letters the form was preprinted by the post and/or it was sent through the post so that the customer received it directly. This case is made evident by the full address and some postal markings, normally on the back side of the letter.

Therefore items that have been used outside the postal service are to be excluded as they are just a private document. Different is the case when they have been prepared by a postal service that used to carry both mail and goods.

2. *I have been told that in your seminar in Bangkok you said that revenues can be used in a thematic exhibit. I know that there was a heated debate on this issue for years, and until today I knew that the conclusion was that revenues are not accepted, albeit the rule that if something can be exhibited in another class it can be exhibited in thematics as well. Was there a change in policy or was it just a clarification of a misconception? I would like to hear your authoritative opinion.*

Actually the conclusion of the debate was reflected in the SREV approved in Madrid in October 2000. In Bangkok I did not go in depth on this subject, but Damian and I had a chart in our seminars in Copenhagen and Seoul with these concepts:

- Revenue Stamps with postal validity, or anyway used postally, are treated as postal material
- Revenue Stamps for fiscal purposes are philatelic material to be used mainly to enhance the thematic development, in exceptional cases, when they are the only mean to

present an important thematic point, with appropriate justification.

3. *Many countries use several forms of Prepaid Reply Mail. This refers to envelopes, postcards, etc. that a company is adding to regular mail so the receiver can answer without the need to put stamps. The original sender has of course appropriate permissions from the Post. And the question is if that material is appropriate. I have no doubt that if such envelopes were sent back thru the Post, those are legitimate items, but a problem arises in some countries, Israel is one of them. The issue is how the company pays for that return mail. If they pay in advance for the return mail, then everything is OK. But in Israel, all that return mail is gathered, and when the company comes to collect it, it has to pay according to the number of items received. This stamp value (or meter value) for that payment is then affixed on either a special form or on the top of the packet envelope. Thus one item is stamped for many identical items.*

I would be very careful with these items, not because they are inappropriate, but they present a mixture of private and postally recognized elements. Therefore I am inclined to give less importance the payment system, as it does not impact the postal nature of these items, and I suggest to exploit only postal related information for thematic development.

4. *In Bangkok an exhibitor asked my opinion on a piece of Military*

Franchise that he had with him. The card was originated by a military association and distributed to the soldiers. I was asked to comment on the suitability of such an item.

The item presented was used and had a military postmark authorizing the free postage. Without that postmark it should have paid postage. In this case only the postmark is suitable to illustrate thematic facts related to the said stamp (e.g. "Military medical services" in a medical exhibit), without using the illustration of the postcard, that is of private origin. The postal usage does not extend any privilege otherwise any illustrated postcard sent free of postage by a military will become a postal stationery item.... Furthermore:

- The same item, mint, has to be treated as a private illustrated post card and cannot be included.
- These items must not be confused with military postcard issued with free postage privilege (e.g. Carte postale de franchise militaire, Cartolina Postale in Franchigia). They are the equivalent of postal cards, with the difference that they are issued by the Military Post service instead of the Post. Hence, they can be shown, mint or used, also for their illustration.
- Please note that Austrian and German "Feldpostkarten" are often of private nature (associations, etc.). In any case, they cannot be treated as postal stationery because the postal privilege was only documented by the markings and not by the card itself.

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