

let's talk EXHIBITING

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EXHIBITING THEMATICS (Part 2): Demonstrating Philatelic Knowledge

As mentioned in Part 1 of this article, selection of material becomes paramount in telling the story of your topic. Here is where you are expected to demonstrate both philatelic and thematic knowledge so as to influence your rating in the area of Personal Study and Research. And your material must be

of the widest variety possible to satisfy judges that you really know the philately of your topic, as well as your thematic knowledge. Here is where the inclusion of “elements” becomes so crucial in the demonstration of Philatelic Knowledge.

“Elements” are quite simply examples of a full variety of legitimate postal issues. After all, countries issue



more than just postage stamps - the stamps may exist as essays or as proofs; they may be issued in booklets, coils, or miniature panes; there may be thematic information in the margins of printed sheets or on booklet covers or on their interleaves; there may be varieties in colour, or perforation, or printing methods; etc. Countries may also issue different types of postal stationery, use postal meters, have a variety of regular and commemorative cancels, have fancy cancels as created by postmasters, have telegrams used for postal communication, have international reply coupons, or have other special postal forms that pass through the mail. Even legitimate local posts of the country can be exhibited. Any of such elements that directly relate to your topic can legitimately be included within your exhibit and are, in fact, expected to be shown in any thematic exhibit.

The greater the variety of elements you incorporate in your exhibit, the more your Philatelic Knowledge is appreciated. The trick is know what may be available in all the elements for your chosen topic; the challenge is then to go out and find them, for such items are not readily at hand in just any dealer's stock. Thematicists then are faced with the necessity to engage in a protracted hunt for scarcer or more obscure philatelic material that can be used in the thematic development of their topics. This also necessitates deeper research into the various postal issues of many different countries in order to locate such potential thematic material that will align





and its treatment, but a small section on any page can occasionally be used to advantage to elaborate on such varieties. Note, however, you don't show the same stamp in its various elements (e.g., stamp, imperforate stamp, souvenir sheet, imperforate souvenir sheet, miniature sheet, etc.) on any single page, as such is not a philatelic study. Instead, it is unnecessary and considered overkill. Instead, if you have such a variety of elements for a single issue, distribute them throughout the exhibit, if and only when appropriate to illustrate your topic within its development.

Included with this column are two illustrations. The first illustration is from Sam Chiu's gold medal level exhibit of "Frogs and Toads". In a page headed "Life Cycle", and with a sub-heading "Eggs and Tadpoles", he is showing various items which relate to eggs or tadpoles. In this one page he has managed to incorporate seven philatelic elements – a souvenir sheet, a commemorative cancel, three regular issue postage stamps from different countries, an imperforate postage stamp, and a postal stationery item. Note that this page is typical for a thematic exhibit – although the page may seem to appear somewhat "busy", this is the way that is often utilized to make maximum use of the space available on each page. Thus there is also some skill in ensuring that each such page nevertheless appears well-designed, and nothing appears otherwise crowded.

The second illustration is from my "Fisheries of the North Atlantic" exhibit. In a page headed "The Fishing Industry" and with a subheading "The Harbor" it incorporates, as the first item, a philatelic study simply showing the three dies of the French stamp (Scott 251-252) depicting the harbour at La Rochelle. Then, incorporating other elements (two other stamps, a stamp with cancel, and postal card) the page is completed. The page also has made use of both older and newer philatelic items in an attempt to influence impressions of Rarity/Condition/Difficulty of Acquisition.. ☒

to one's chosen topic, and an ongoing cultivation of various sources who may be able to provide some of such material. It also means not only acquiring a thorough grounding in modern material but, more importantly, in more classic material as well. For in many cases, it is the classic material that one can acquire that will load more deeply on the Rarity/Condition/Difficulty of Acquisition factor. In fact, one of the most frequent suggestions we receive at Judges' Feedback Sessions is the recommendation to find a greater variety of older material to support our topics in order to increase our scores in Rarity/Condition/Difficulty of Acquisition.

Another way to demonstrate Philatelic Knowledge is through occasional incorporation of a "philatelic study" within the thematic exhibit. A philatelic study is a more in-depth philatelic analysis of a specific item. It can be as simple as showing the same stamp with two different perforations, or with several of the same stamp showing variations in shade, in gum, on printing process, etc. The point here is to show to the viewer that you are aware of the varieties available for a single stamp or philatelic item, and that you have included them (and correctly identified them) within the exhibit. Such philatelic studies cannot otherwise overwhelm your topic