



Encouraging Exhibiting (*but not for exhibitors only!*) Rob Henak

[Rob Henak, ATA Exhibits and Judges Chair, continues his series on Exhibiting 101.]

Exhibiting 101: Why Exhibit?

In my previous article, we learned that a philatelic exhibit is more than just an assortment of album pages thrown into exhibit frames. Rather, an exhibit is an organized showing of philatelic and related material and explanatory writing, usually telling a coherent story.

Like most worthwhile pursuits, preparing an exhibit of which you can be proud takes effort. Having your work judged, moreover, can be an intimidating experience. Why, then, would a collector choose to put in the time and effort to exhibit? I have found a number of reasons, whether it is the challenge of putting together a quality exhibit, the thrill of competing against other collectors and yourself, the desire to share what you enjoy and what you have learned in your time as a collector, or a desire to finally organize your collection.

Most exhibits are shown competitively, meaning that they are judged for an appropriate award level by either accredited philatelic judges or knowledgeable collectors. I will discuss the types of competitive exhibits and how they are judged in a later article.

However, many exhibitors choose to enter their exhibits as non-competitive. Some collectors want to share their collections, but are uncomfortable having their efforts officially judged by others. That is fully acceptable. Exhibiting, like collecting, is supposed to be fun, not stressful. Other exhibits are shown just for fun or educational purposes, with the knowledge that they do not meet the standards required for a competitive award.

Although many exhibitors thrive on the competitive aspect of exhibiting, working to increase their medal level or to best their friend's exhibit of Lower Slobovia, others find enjoyment merely in the opportunity to exercise their creativity and share their collections. We collect stamps for a reason; we enjoy them.

We enjoy learning from them, and we enjoy learning about them. It is only natural that we would want to share our enjoyment with others. Rather than subject our long-suffering loved ones to yet another tour through that cherished shoebox full of Upper Slobovia covers, why not share them with others who have shown enough interest to attend a stamp show?

Exhibiting also helps to share an exhibitor's knowledge, gained over years – if not decades – of research and focus on his or her area of philatelic interest. If you have put together a nice collection of Anytown, Wis., postal history, or a thematic collec-

tion of timepieces, exhibiting that collection can give a head start to others who may have similar interests. At the same time, your exhibit may encourage others to pursue similar philatelic interests.

Both novice and experienced collectors sometimes look for new and interesting areas to collect. It is one thing for them to search through disorganized dealer stockbooks waiting for inspiration to strike. It is much more helpful wandering through the frames of fully formed collections to see what options are available to expand one's philatelic horizons.

Of course, philatelic exhibiting is not a purely philanthropic exercise. Developing a reputation in philatelic circles as the exhibitor of Upper Slobovia often means that – when new material comes on the market – dealers and other collectors know to contact you. My exhibit and website on state marijuana tax stamps have resulted in a number of contacts from those with similar interests, as well as offers of material for which I had been searching for years.

And, finally, exhibiting allows (forces?) the exhibitor to structure and organize his or her collection. We all have disorganized stockbooks of stamps or shoeboxes of stamps and/or covers sitting in closets or on shelves, awaiting our attention. How many times have we told ourselves that we will someday get around to dealing with the clutter, never to do so? Exhibiting forces you to do that organization. It requires you to figure out what you have, where you have it and what you still need to tell a complete story.

So, there are many reasons to exhibit. Some may not apply to you, or may not make the work of creating an exhibit worthwhile to you, but you should at least consider it. Many other collectors have enhanced their enjoyment of the hobby, while helping enhance the enjoyment of still others, by adding exhibiting to their collecting pursuits.


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In future articles, I will discuss the various types of exhibits and exhibitions, and the nitty-gritty of putting together an exhibit. ☐

You'll love to know how it all began . . .


**THE FIRST SHIPS SHOWN ON STAMPS
AND 'SHIPS ON STAMPS ON STAMPS'**

Sir Rowland Hill invented postage stamps in 1840. For years, they depicted only heads of rulers, seals of states, crowns, and numerals. *But seven years later . . .*



In 1847, in Trinidad, the world's first pictorial issue featured the *Lady McLeod*, a small sail-and-steam sidewheeler carrying mail and passengers between Port-of-Spain and San Fernando.
[Scott 2005 values: \$50,000 unused, \$12,500 used.]


The world's rarest and most expensive stamp, the fabled British Guiana 1¢ Magenta of 1856, shows a sailing ship. The current owner — *NOT A UNIT MEMBER!* — paid \$935,000 buying it in 1980.




Reportedly, he slept with the stamp under his pillow. In 1997, he was convicted of murder and sentenced to thirty years in prison. [Today's estimated value is \$3 million to \$4 million.]


In 1857, the Pacific Steam Navigation Co. gave two stamps to the Peruvian government showing their mail steamers *Chile* and *Peru*. [Scott 2005 values: \$1,250-1,600 each unused or used.] They are also seen on eight 1858 stamps of Buenos Aires. [Scott 2005 values: Each up to \$4,500 unused, \$1,750 used.]

All stamps on this page were issued 1957-1979.





Their total cost today is still well below \$10.



The United States issued her first ship stamp in 1869 with the S.S. *Adriatic*, represented on the title page to the left. [Scott 2005 values: \$1,100-2,600 unused, \$160 used.]

None of the rarities depicted here are within the reach of most of us. So, we enjoy their images with 'Ships on Stamps on Stamps' — and stay out of prison!

Page 2 of a one-frame exhibit assembled by the late Wolf Spille for the Ships on Stamps Study Unit. The exhibit takes a fun approach to collecting rare stamps with ships on stamps by collecting them as ships on stamps – on stamps.