

TCNews

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FOREWORD

On the occasion of Pacific 97 I run a thematic seminar, which was well received by the many exhibitors and collectors who attended it. In order to communicate at best with the exhibitors I was supported by the other members of the Jury, who kindly gave me their comments on the judgment criteria. Some charts were prepared and several copies were made on attendees' demand. The same material was used on the occasion of the Thematic Seminar at Israel 98. Again I was asked for copies. At this point I decided to publish the content of the Seminar by adding some notes to the text of the charts. I hoped to present it last year, but then the overwhelming task of managing a part of Italia 98 did not leave me the time.

I am convinced that these considerations are still useful for several exhibitors and I present them in this special issue of TCNews on the occasion of Philexfrance 99.

In several seminars, including those in China in 1997, I found very useful the presentations that myself and Gunnar Dahlvig put together for the education of jurors. That that was circulated to several delegates who requested it, in both electronic and paper form and created a lot of interest at national level. The following notes can be used to supplement some of the considerations developed in that presentation as well.

I wish to point out that this paper is a summary of the concepts presented in

Seminars and talks with exhibitors. It is not another version of the Guidelines. I feel advisable to analyze the same points, once again, as the skilled implementation of the same could be very beneficial for the majority of the exhibitors at F.I.P. world exhibitions.

In the same Seminars some considerations were also presented on how to approach the decisions of the Jury. They are presented separately.

Finally, I present a thematic bibliography covering publications released in the last four years, built on the basis of the material I receive, as well as of some thematic literature reviews that appear regularly on the specialised press. I urge delegates to inform about publications in the respective countries, as philatelic literature is so important for the growth and the dissemination of knowledge among exhibitors and collectors.

GIANCARLO MOROLLI

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PACIFIC 97 and ISRAEL 98 THEMATIC SEMINARS

PLAN

1. **Make sure that the plan is fully consistent with the title and the development.**

The sequence of the philatelic items mounted on the pages should give the full details of the story announced in the title, which represents the synthesis of the work performed. Therefore the title and the contents of the pages have to match at best. "Sexy" titles used to make the exhibit more attractive can be misleading as long as they deviate from the concept developed in the pages.

In the first period of thematic philately exhibitors were showing all-embracing themes with generic titles (e.g. Railways, Arts). Over time exhibitors have started presenting just a logical section of a general theme, according to geographic, and/or time, and/or theme specific criteria.

The plan represents the detailed structure of the development of the title in the exhibit. Hence, different titles originate different plans.

Example of impact of different titles:

"Italian Masters of Color" and "Italian Painting and its influence on the World of Arts" represent different ways to deal with the same general theme of Italian Painting. The first is a straightforward description of the history of Italian Painting; the second puts the emphasis on the influence. If properly implemented, the second approach offers the possibility of a by far more creative and original treatment.

These titles imply different plans, which in turn result in very different developments.

Jurors take the title as the "meter" to measure what they see on the pages and expect a plan and a development consistent with that title. Unfortunately, sometimes they find that the plan is not presented (i.e. no appropriate plan page) or they find something unexpected in the plan. Or they just see a display of chapters that cover the theme without depicting consistently the concept expressed by the title.

2. **Remember that completeness depends on scope of the exhibit as defined by the title.**

The title defines the area of development within the generality of the subject. It can limit it geographically (e.g. Australasian Bird Life), or time wise (e.g. The Summer Olympics 1894-1936) but not according to material related criteria (e.g. Beethoven on European stamps). A given title allows bypassing some sub-divisions that are no longer needed to cover "that" specific section of the general theme (e.g. symbols, congresses, exhibitions).

If the title does not present any geographic limit, a "global" plan and a "global" development are expected. Hence, there is no room for chapters dealing only with the country of the exhibitor, or giving the same a depth or importance by far greater than the theme requires.

3. **Try to tell a story rather than to classify or list the aspects of the chosen theme.**

Some exhibits still follow the approach to show "all on this subject". This is often structured through a rationale classification that demonstrates a sound knowledge of the theme. This type of exhibits includes chapters that are fully pertinent with the subject, but very often

the overall exhibit lacks personal development, creativity and originality.

Some exhibits need a deeper and/or broader analysis, for instance on the cultural and/or historical framework of the chosen subject, its roots and consequences, as well as important relations of the same with other subjects.

The different chapters should have a good balance, according to their relative thematic weight within the scope of the theme as defined by the title rather than to the quantity of material available.

4. Avoid generic sub-divisions that do not belong to your plan.

Some exhibits have chapters or sub-divisions like "Toponymy", or "Symbols". "Toponymy" and "Symbols"; they may demonstrate a rationale thematic classification of the philatelic items, which anyway is not exploited at best for the thematic development. The fact that a town, or a site, or a flower has received a certain name depends on a thematic concepts, of historical, social, scientific, or other nature. The relevant items can be presented according to that concept, in the sub-division it belongs to, without creating such specific (and generic) sub-divisions. This more accurate "reading" of the material results into a better thematic exploitation of the same.

5. Do not use philatelic sub-divisions.

Some exhibitors still use philatelic sub-divisions to segregate cancellations, franking meters, stationery, etc.. These items are to be placed where their thematic content fits at best, in the same way as explained under 4.

DEVELOPMENT

1. Ensure consistency of level (scope, depth), and continuity of development throughout the whole exhibit.

Balance and continuity of development of several exhibits can be improved, so that each thematic detail is presented without any deviation from the thematic thread. A crisp, clear and effective development can be obtained by making sure that

- each thematic detail is necessary to develop the theme.

Balance of development requires to describe each thematic detail according to its relevance of the same in the frame of the theme, not on the basis of the number of philatelic items available.

Hence, selection of philatelic items has to be based only on what the same "tell" to support the concept as defined by the title.

Example of relevance of a thematic detail:

"Marconi was born in Bologna".

In an exhibit like "History of Telecommunications", or "History of Radio", or "Nobel Prize Winners" this detail is irrelevant, as the specific fact has no major impact on the history developed.

This detail is appropriate in a narrower, more specialised exhibit on "Marconi" or "History of Bologna".

- each philatelic item is the most appropriate to represent correctly that thematic detail along the thread of the theme.

Example of thematic appropriateness:

The most suitable item to depict Napoleon in Milan is the Cuban stamp (1969) showing Andrea Appiani's painting with the same title, on display at the Napoleon Museum at Habana.

A generic letter of the Napoleon's Army in Milan is more appropriate to demonstrate the presence of the French troops in Milan.

2. Keep the development thread visible through each page, up to the item level, also in case of philatelic studies.

A crisp, clear and effective development can be obtained by making sure that each philatelic

item is positioned on the page according to the sequence of the "story". Sometimes the resulting layout does not allow the best appearance of the page but that has to be seen as the "lesser of two evils": a better appearance could seriously jeopardize the understanding of the development. For instance, if the development is time based, the items should follow the chronology they represent.

3. Understand the real thematic significance of valid philatelic items.

Sometimes an item is displayed without the necessary thematic research, taking into account only external, and often deceiving, appearances that cause errors or inconsistencies. Before presenting a thematic detail it is necessary to have direct evidence (i.e. no "feeling" or "rumor") of the same detail. Research means to go to the roots of the thematic facts presented by philatelic items as well as to the essence of the postal significance of material.

Exhibitors should assess why the information of an item is important and, if they make a decision, they must be consistent throughout the exhibit. If they present a certain type of detail only in some cases, they impact the consistency and balance of development.

Some real life examples:

- *Opera is a small town in the Milan district with no connection whatsoever to the musical world. Before using a cancellation of this town the exhibitor should have double-checked the thematic fact in some books of music. No one of them presents a relationship between that town and music.*
- *Postmarks showing some bridge-related town names were presented to document a censorship at the bridge that never existed. Here a postal history handbook would have helped to avoid the error.*

The jury evaluates any abnormal, forced action aimed at displaying items of philatelic interest without a specific thematic significance. In case this is just a nice excuse for showing a "good"

item (often a pre-philatelic cover). Exhibitors should know that jurors do not take into account the philatelic merits of thematically useless or inappropriate (= no relationship with the theme) items. This choice turns out to be a waste of page space (and money too).

4. Understand that personal thematic research is the cornerstone of creativity and originality.

Acquiring data to justify items is the first compulsory step of personal research. This is necessary, but not sufficient to achieve the best results, because it is not only a matter of reacting in order to be able to describe unknown items. A proactive approach is mandatory to achieve better results. By studying thematic and philatelic sources one will be able to get new ideas to push forward the plan and the development, as well as to spot new items that bring a thematic contribution not evident at a first glance.

It is superficial to list congresses, associations, exhibitions them in separate sub-divisions. A logical solution is to present them within the history of the subject, highlighting their significance (motivations, decisions, results, influence, etc).

Another example:

In a "History of Music" exhibit, it is not correct to put modern Bach Festivals under the history of music in the XVIII century. Of course some items issued on such occasions can be used to depict details that support the development of Bach's chapter (e.g. the title of a musical work).

Modern Musical Festivals devoted to specific composers illustrate the musical culture of our time and have no relationship with the period that composer was active. The analysis of the musical interest of a period for specific composers of the past can enrich the development of the history of music.

5. Do not be distracted or limited by the superficial thematic significance of the items.

The basic step is to understand the real thematic significance of valid philatelic items.

Example on thematic significance of an item:

A small Italian company who manufactured silk fabric and was so imaginative to use B.L.P.s for its advertisements does not belong necessarily to the history of textile industry; i.e. it brought no direct contribution to that history. Nevertheless, as a player in that business, it can be a useful reference to illustrate the economic characteristics of such industry, for instance in terms of size or products or geography.

As a matter of fact, the wealth of advertising stationery or franking meters allows presenting a number of small, unknown enterprises and some well-known larger ones. In most cases there is a way to justify both of them, but it requires some analysis to achieve the most logical and pertinent development.

6. Avoid use of generic cancellations of a place to document events that happened at the same place.

Once again, some exhibits show the abuse of generic cancellations for this purpose. In most cases a pre-philatelic item has been used.

I like to consider a prephilatelic cover from my hometown, Rimini.

*Could I use it in a "History of Cinema", as it is the birthplace of movie director Federico Fellini, who was buried there? Or to remember Francesca da Rimini, a subject that inspired composers (Mercadante, Rachmaninov, Zandonai, Tchaikowski, etc.), painters (Ingres, Rossetti, etc.) and writers (Pellico, D'Annunzio, Dante Alighieri, etc.)? Or to make reference to its school of painters in the XIII and XIV century...Or to document that Leonardo da Vinci was in town on 5 August 1502? There is only one answer: **NO!** An item has always to present an explicit thematic relationship, not a very generic one.*

7. Realize that more frames do not necessarily mean higher results

Some exhibits, once they have achieved the status for being allocated the maximum of frames, are unable to keep the previous level. As a matter of fact the addition of a significant number of pages (around 40%) may dilute the pace of development and introduce a lot of more common, sometime cancelled-to-favor, items. Of course this exposure is more common for narrower themes. In specific, well justified cases

exhibitors could ask for a smaller number of frames taking advantage of the provision of GREX Art. 6.4

PHILATELIC KNOWLEDGE

1. Be aware and respect philatelic principles and postal definitions.

Postal regulations of a country have changed over time and are different from country to country. These principles must be clearly observed when assessing the philatelic appropriateness of the pieces that are considered suitable to support the development. What is valid in a country at a given period could be no longer valid in a different timeframe or in another country.

The most common error is to assume postal attributes for items that have not, or have very limited postal connotations. Stationery items with private made overprints produced after the release of the items by the post are presented as normal postal stationery. The range of situation is ample and complex, and has to be analyzed on the basis of the postal regulations valid for that specific item. There is a substantial difference between a "repiquage" implemented by the post or by a private printing shop, between postally produce-to-order, postally authorized, postally tolerated or totally private overprints. This consideration applies not only to postal cards, but also to other items, like advertising envelopes, (e.g. Italian B.L.P.s).

Likewise, items are displayed because of free-franking rights, which either do not exist or are of nature different from that described by the exhibitor. We saw pre-philatelic items with clear markings of the fare paid upon receipt, or military post cards presented as military postal stationery items. In the latter case the franking privilege was because of the status of the sender (as justified by the relevant military department's cancellation), not because of the nature of the card.

QSL cards used by radio-hams to confirm communications are often presented as postal stationery. At large they are just private cards, very often mailed in big envelopes through the societies network; in some cases the sender may have a franking privilege and only in few cases the card per se has as such privilege (e.g. URSS).

In some philatelic areas, philately has developed considering as acceptable and desirable items that are not fully compliant with the current definition. Jurors must respect this situation as long as it is justified by treatment and these items are in a small quantity, they are not thematically redundant and do not replace existing philatelic items on the same detail.

2. Do not abuse of borderline items

The definition of "appropriate material" establishes the criteria for identifying the items acceptable. There is a lot of confusion based on the concept of "post". GREV says very clearly "the purpose of transmitting mail or other postal communications", whereas many exhibitors have in mind "any service carried out by the post". The reference to "other payment of official dues including Revenues", was added to the same definition to update the GREV after the introduction of the Revenue competitive class, with no automatic extension to the other classes, which have a well established postal philatelic nature. The FIP Congress in Istanbul underlined this fact by adopting the motion presented by the Swedish Federation to clarify the matter.

The understanding of the criterion of "philatelic knowledge" is often limited to one of its components, namely the "widest possible range of philatelic material". This fact is demonstrated by an excess of attention for borderline items, or for items related to secondary functions of the post *vis a vis* to basic philatelic items that represent the cornerstones of philately (stamps, cancellations, postal stationery, postally traveled items).

In my opinion excessive preference is given to less common (i.e. "different") but also to by far

less postally significant items, presenting a "private" content that might have been authorized or tolerated by the post. A number of stationery forms and other items, concerning activities of the post with no connection with the postal service (e.g. marketing, administration) are not appropriate.

Variety of philatelic items is highly appreciated, but it should take into account the right philatelic priorities. In any case to be "different" does not imply automatically a higher marking for philatelic knowledge.

3. Aim at replacing thematically important items that are of lower philatelic level (e.g. "00" meters, cancelled to order covers). Justify off-line situations.

Thematic development may force exhibitors to show items that are not fully meeting the selection criteria presented in the SREV and the Guidelines. They need to present them, otherwise their absence will weaken development.

For instance, the exhibitor is able to show, at present, only a "00" meter, or a cancelled to order, or an overfranked cover. Most of such items presented in the exhibits are just "grade B" items and are to be replaced as soon as possible. However in some cases such items are already, in spite of the said characteristics, remarkable pieces, due to special circumstances. For example: a cancelled-to-favor cancellation from a temporary post office, on the occasion of a special event, open only for two hours, or an overfranked cover with a special cancellation known only on that type of cover. In these cases a short comment would help, even if specialists should detect these items at the first glance.

8. Ensure that there is a good integration between thematic and philatelic research. The display of rarities has to be the result of the above.

Philatelic studies imply a selection restricted to philatelically significant pieces, linked together by the research of the exhibitor; that is by far different from a plain display of good items

found in different auctions having philatelic commonalities but no philatelic elaboration.

CONDITION AND RARITY

1. Beware of forgeries, fakes, repaired items and the like.

The key prerequisite is the attention to the genuineness of items. Forgeries can be used only as a "documentation" within a philatelic research and are to be clearly marked as such. The nature of repaired or reprinted items must be also clearly presented. Jurors ignore the doubtful nature of these items in the normal evaluation, but they call upon them the attention of the expert team. The latter inspects other exhibits on its own initiative. The exhibits having forged material are proposed for a penalisation that depends on the gravity of the case, up to disqualification. In recent exhibitions we had very painful situations due to the presence of such items in thematic exhibits, up to downgrading of gold medals or disqualification of exhibits. Thematic exhibitors give too often the impression that they look at the content of the piece from a thematic standpoint, and ignore condition and genuineness. As a consequence, also for protection of own investments,

HAVE ANY DOUBTFUL ITEM EXPERTIZED!

2. Develop a sound approach to acquire material.

The best suggestions, in my opinion, are:

- Apply your best philatelic knowledge when selecting material. Do not buy just what has been left over by collectors of other classes because it is cheaper (and B Grade as well!).
- Avoid (thematically) unnecessary, expensive items, and **CONCENTRATE YOUR BUDGET** on the significant ones. How many French proofs and essays are thematically and philatelically justified?

Remember also that the first requirement is the direct relationship between the item and the theme.

- Avoid repetition of expensive items, which do not add anything if they are not contributing to a sound philatelic study.

PRESENTATION

1. Remember that an excellent presentation is the necessary complement to a great exhibit.

Presentation is the only mean to convey the essence of the exhibitor's work to the jurors and to the public:

WYSIWYJ - WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU JUDGE!

Concepts and developments are absorbed by the jurors and by the public as much as they are clearly communicated. Lack of such effective communication results not only in lower marks for presentation, but very often makes it difficult to understand fully what the exhibitor intends to demonstrate with its development.

Today personal computing and all the related paraphernalia, from scanners and laser printers to desktop publishing software, enable achieving perfect presentations, as shown by a growing number of exhibits at FIP shows. Therefore it is easier, even if probably not less time consuming, to implement a good presentation.

2. Improve readability through the pages.

The main recommendations:

- Select one format (titles and subdivisions captions, fonts, position and justification of text, etc.) and be full consistent with it through the entire exhibit.
- Define a Plan structure clear and detailed, and present it in the Plan Page at sufficient level of detail (subdivisions).

- Carry over to the pages the same captions of the Plan Page, including numbers (3 levels at most).
- Place thematic information close to the items being presented.

- Use thematic text to “draw” the development along the thread.
- Use philatelic text to explain philatelic peculiarities of the items that require some explanation.

After the Palmares

• Fair analysis of results

Visitors and exhibitors who intend to make a fair and sound assessment of the results must follow the spirit and the definitions of the GREV and the SREV, and take the Guidelines as more detailed directions and examples, not as an additional set of rules.

To understand and to criticize the decisions of a jury, one must apply the same evaluation criteria and the same methodology applied by the jurors. If the exhibits are measured with a different meter of judgment, discrepancies will be found anyway. But they reside in the approach, rather than (or as well as) in the reality.

The medal awarded is the result of a thorough and comprehensive examination by the jurors. This evaluation is performed by making an average assessment of all concepts, details and items displayed, without being biased either by the best or by the worst situations found in the exhibit. Few exceptional pages cannot influence significantly the marks for thematic development, whereas all the others are from normal to mediocre.

An 80 pages exhibit displays at least 200 philatelic items; hence the addition of two rarities cannot change the overall result in a significant way!

During the walk through sessions with the exhibitors in front of the frames at Pacific 97 I was pinpointing the

several areas for improvement of an exhibit that was awarded a vermeil medal. An attendee asked why the exhibit got such a high award, considering the number of my remarks... Analysis of results focused on specific errors or on the absence of significant items is misleading. Also one should avoid to be carried away by the presentation, that is evaluated on its own but must not be double counted when the plan or the development are taken into consideration.

Furthermore, the average is made in a positive way. I.e. no points are deducted from the maximum available. The words “penalize” or “downgrade” apply only to the case of fakes, forgeries *et similia*, and this matter is defined by the GREX, not by the Thematic SREV. The Jury Presidium is the only body that applies downgrading, starting from the award proposed by the thematic team on the assumption that those items were genuine; the level of downgrading depends on the findings reported by the expert team.

On the above basis the same award (i.e. same

EXHIBITOR	PLAN	DEV.	PH. KNW.	C. & R.	PRES.	TOT.	MED.
Mr. White	18	27	15	17	3	80	V
Ms. Black	16	24	17	19	4	80	V
Dr. Grey	14	21	18	23	4	80	V

total points) can derive from different situations, as depicted by the table that presents 1) a well

treated exhibit supported by mediocre philatelic contents, 2) a balanced situation, and 3) a good philatelic display based on an a less valid treatment.

1. Mr. White: Strong thematic part (90%), weaker philatelic part (70%), average presentation
2. Dr. Grey: Good thematic part (80%), good philatelic part (80%), good presentation.
3. Ms. Black: Weak thematic part (70%), strong philatelic part (90%), and good presentation.

• Advice from Jurors

Talking to some "frequent exhibitors" I was told "I have done everything suggested by juror XYZ". Communications between exhibitors and jurors can be helpful, and opinions of jurors can represent a valuable asset for improving the exhibit. Anyway these opinions reflect the personal opinion of an expert, in full good faith and good will, but the exhibitor is the **best connoisseur** of the theme and the only owner of its development.

Experts may present different and complementary opinions, and the exhibitor has to understand, assess, verify, adapt and apply them to his/her work in the framework of the SREV and the Guidelines. A mechanical, passive adoption of other people's ideas is very risky, as it is likely to introduce discontinuities and deviations in the development.

This consideration applies at first to myself, and some references to my words in those Seminars ("you said", "you wrote") from some exhibitors seemed to me too strong, as if I was the only voice of truth.... Of course I was very pleased when an exhibitor went to thank me as he reached national gold after I reviewed his exhibit on display in a walk through session at a previous show!

• Regulations are enough!

Exhibitors are strongly recommended to take the GREV, SREV, as the only reference, avoiding making additional rules on the fly. The Guidelines are an explanation of the said documents and we are reviewing them so those exhibitors shall not perceive in them any new rule.

In these documents there are no quantitative rules or limitations, as exhibitors often report to me. For example I was told that "only two fiscal stamps are admitted in an exhibit" and somebody else asked me "how many stamps are allowed to be shown in an exhibit?"

Another example of overstating the content of our official documents concerns presentation of postal stationery. Somebody told me that "it is mandatory to present a photocopy of the other side of a stationery to show the imprint of the stamp". In my opinion a photocopy (or a second item shown on the other side) does require the same level of confidence of the Jury as a caption like "*Postal card – Italy 1927 – Domestic rate*". If the nature of the item is not self evident, the jurors have to trust the exhibitor, whichever the mean (photocopy, second item, caption) used to describe it. In case of doubt, to make sure that the piece is really a postal stationery item, jurors would either check it with a specialist of the area concerned, or look for a specialised catalogue, or open the frame, as it was done in some dubious situations.

In conclusion:

World exhibitions represent the highest level of philatelic competition. Therefore participation to these top class events should be given the due attention, entering them only when the exhibit is ripe and the most common defects eliminated, or at least strongly reduced, by showing at national and regional level.

After their first world experience, exhibitors are suggested to present some improvements at each

exhibition to keep the pace of the best exhibits in the thematic class. In some cases a short pause for re-elaboration is the best advice!

GIANCARLO MOROLLI

Thematic Bibliography

The following list, that continues the work published in previous issues of this bulletin, has been built using the information received directly as well as the literature review of some philatelic magazines. Therefore the accuracy and completeness of the same information depends on the accuracy of the source. This list should give the basic input for triggering further request for details directly from the publisher. The latest known address of the same is also supplied, whenever available.

Price has to be intended as a reference. Some publications have different prices depending on currency and shipping distances. In some cases shipping is included, at least on a short (or continental) distance, in others is not included but a reference cost is known (indicated with "+"). Some publications have a price for the general public and a reduced one for members of the association that has published it.

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