

TCNews

BULLETIN OF THE FIP THEMATIC COMMISSION

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FOREWORD

The last issue of TCNews was very well received according to the feedback sent to me. As it was not possible to include the Guidelines, it is now the time to present them. This text is the result of a long and intense elaboration and was reviewed in order to accommodate the consequences of the decision of the Congress about fiscal stamps.

Before dealing with this subject, I would like to make the following points:

➤ The Congress decided, as reflected in Art. 6.2 of the SREV, that the same should be implemented immediately. Hence the assumption, still around, that it would have been implemented at the first FIP exhibition receiving patronage at the Madrid Congress, is not appropriate.

➤ For Belgica it was decided, also with my positive answer, to use the old Regulations, due to the short time frame since Madrid. In Tokyo the new SREV was used and the same should happen in any future exhibition.

➤ As a Commission President I am not involved in the definition of juries or other matters concerning individual exhibitions and sometime I have to ask for the bulletins even if I should have been in the distribution list according to a specific point of the GREX. Of course I am pleased to cooperate with FIP Coordinators and Organising Committees any time my support is requested. Anyway I cannot give statements on the operations at individual exhibitions.

The Seminar in Hafnia will address the major aspects of the new SREV, but I can anticipate some

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considerations that, in my opinion, should reduce the confusion created by some miscommunication.

It is unfortunate that there are so many steps between the Congress and the collectors and that sometimes action cannot be so quick and spread around on time, as I would like.

1. After the FIP Congress in Essen (1980) few classes had well-established thematic regulations, implemented at international level. The first international thematic one was defined already in 1960, followed by the first FIP Regulations in 1966 and by those developed under the lead of Frans de Troyer in 1972. Therefore our regulations were taken as a reference for defining the new GREV and we were allowed to keep our definitions, of course adapting them to the approach of the new FIP regulations. We kept basically our points scheme, but we had to write a thematic SREV according to the structure of the GREV. Over time we have converged towards the FIP general definitions and the text adopted in Madrid represents the final step of this commitment.
2. The new SREV does not change the nature of evaluating (or building) thematic exhibits. It is just an elaboration of the previous one, and the points have been logically rearranged in order to match, basically, those of the other

FIP competitive classes as established in the GREV.

3. A more common set of definitions and points breakdown is important for different reasons.

In a number of Federations each juror is asked to judge all classes and this happens very often at small and intermediate shows, where it is impossible to cover all kinds of specialisation with dedicated jurors, but also at national level. Furthermore, new type of competitions are growing around us (e.g. Nation's Cup, One-Frame Exhibits, and similar initiatives); they are judged according to a common scheme that will be adapted to the peculiarities of each class.

Hence, I am confident that the commonalities established in the new SREV will be beneficial for both exhibitors and jurors.

4. The new SREV does not change any aspect of thematic exhibiting, as shown by the continuity between the previous and the new Guidelines, that share most of the text of the previous ones. Most changes have been introduced to make things clearer and to cover some aspects that, according to the experience, needed some clarification.
5. The total marks "theoretically" given respectively to the philatelic and the thematic elements remain the same.

I wrote "theoretically" because I want to highlight that there is a clear interdependence between thematic and philatelic elements and they cannot be treated as totally separate. The choice of philatelic items depends on thematic considerations, and certain "heavy" items make thematic development more consistent. This interdependence reflects the nature of our hobby as of philatelists collecting according to a theme. But, "thematic philately is, first of all, philately" as my good friend Marc Dhotel used to say.

6. Points for thematic elements have been rearranged as a consequence of the definition of the new criteria of "Innovation" and "Thematic Knowledge"; now "Plan" and "Development" have 15 points each. The definition of a separate criterion for assessing the thematic knowledge enables a direct evaluation of the real mastering of the subject by the exhibitor, which is fundamental for a good treatment. Actually a number of thematic exhibitors complained about an insufficient attention to the knowledge they had achieved with a personal effort and had

shown in the exhibit.

7. The criterion concerning the plan is now called "Title and Plan". This definition highlights the fact that the title represents the synthesis of the work as structured in the plan. The Guidelines have always made clear that the title and the plan represent a meaningful entity, but the title of some exhibits still promises developments that are not implemented in the plan, or the latter goes beyond the concept of the title.
8. "Originality" has been often misinterpreted, by giving the same the meaning of "difference from normal" rather than of "result of a creative study and research". The definition of "Innovation" should make the concept clear and bring more attention to personal elaboration of the theme.
9. "Philatelic Knowledge" as defined in the GREV has to be understood as the sum of two components. In traditional philately or postal history the exhibitor analyses concepts related to "philatelic" facts (e.g. issues, production process, combinations, errors and varieties, or to rates, routes, destinations) whereas a thematic exhibitor analyses the thematic content of the items. Therefore this component is called in our definition "thematic knowledge". A second component, common to all classes, concerns the "general" philatelic knowledge of the items selected according to the distinctive criteria of each class.

The criteria of thematic and philatelic knowledge have been given 15 points each.
10. The philatelic elements have been split into "Condition" and "Rarity", and given, in total, 30 points using the 5 points previous allocated to philatelic knowledge. In this way we are at the same level of the other classes and also the breakdown of 20 points for "Rarity" and "10" for "Condition" is common to other classes, e.g. Postal History and Aerophilately.
11. The separate evaluation for "Condition" should motivate exhibitors to a more careful selection of rare items as far as quality is concerned. Several jurors have pointed out the lack of attention for this requirement. An exhibit built with a lot of modern material could have some advantage, but in parallel it

could have clear limits as far as rarity is concerned.

Up to now, without a clear split, there was the risk that the assessment of rarity could take away the attention from condition.

12. Jurors are now requested to give the maximum of points with less reluctance, assuming that it means "excellent" rather than "perfect". In theory, if a juror follows a strict approach, the maximum attainable would be in some classes 95 (5 criteria) or even 93 (7 criteria)...

Of course any new implementation requires some adaptation, following a learning curve that will take some time. The full continuity between the previous and the current SREV should not bring any major concern.

And now some words about revenue stamps. I would like to remind that this is not the key issue of thematic philately: the real challenges for the exhibitor are the ability to define a suitable plan and to create a flowing development, as well as to do an appropriate thematic and a good philatelic research of the material.

Revenue stamps have been always accepted as a borderline material and at least a couple of very good exhibits have reached Gold or Large Gold as long as jurors considered their presence appropriate and balanced.

The Congress - i.e. the delegates of our Federations - decided to drop the sentence forbidding fiscals, and left us the approach to be taken in practice.

The Bureau had a wide exchange of opinions, and at the end I had to make a decision respecting all opinions.

Postal revenue stamps, or fiscal stamps used for postage, are no problem being "postal philatelic material". The area to be regulated was that of fiscal stamps without postal usage. The conclusion I put in the Guidelines is as follows:

Revenue stamps for fiscal purposes are admitted in exceptional cases, when they are the only mean to describe an important thematic point. ...

The use of revenue stamps for fiscal purposes should be limited to a few, significant items, mainly to enhance the thematic development in very important points of the theme that cannot be covered otherwise. These items are to be properly justified.

Therefore we are talking of possible exceptions. Nobody is requested to have these items in his/her exhibit, but if an exhibitor believes that he has identified a couple of pieces that very important for his/her development... why not? The exhibitor takes the risk as long he has to do it "in exceptional cases" and when "very important points of the theme cannot be covered otherwise".

But please, stop the rumours that fiscals are admitted without any condition and do not make these items as the most important pieces of the thematic arena. We have enough examples of items misinterpreted (from "private" post cards and proofs, to prephilatelic cancellations without franking privilege) that we have to avoid this detrimental risk.

Giancarlo Morolli

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A LETTER FROM THE U.P.U.

I have received the following letter that I wish to bring to your attention, due to the importance of its content:

Dear Dr Morolli,

My name is Maria Libera and I am the official responsible for philately in the UPU. I have been advised by Mr. Kapelrud, current President of FEPA, to bring to your attention as well, information that the Universal Postal Union is now publishing concerning the proliferation of illegal stamps. I am not sure if you have been receiving this information from us already or from other sources. The illegal stamps are mostly on themes that are apparently very popular with certain thematic collectors.

As a first step, I am enclosing the summary of illegals that have been denounced over the period 1996-2001. There are unfortunately many more countries which suffer from illegal stamps but they have not yet been able to finalize their cases and denounce the stamps officially through the UPU. Their major problem is also that they do not have sufficient or any access to information about illegal stamps which circulate in the name of their country.

Certain producers of illegal stamps pretend that these are "Cinderellas" or "local issues" and not stamps, but our member countries think otherwise. It is also stated in our regulations that legal proceedings are recommended against those who imitate or produce likenesses of stamps and sell them as such. And one cannot produce "so-called" stamps in the names of real places including the mention of some kind of currency, sell them as mint stamps, imperf. or perf, and then pretend that these are only "Cinderellas" or "local issues"! You will also be interested to know in this regard that we have begun an important debate about the intellectual property protection of the country's name on stamps or other material produced that is supposed to represent the country concerned.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please advise to whom I should also be sending our information about the illegal issues.

With best regards,

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Few days later I got a circular letter with the following text:

Please find attached the most recent circular denouncing the illegal issue of postage stamps which comes from the postal administration of Rwanda. For your information, this is the eleventh circular to date this year, denouncing the illegal issue of postage stamps.

For information, UPU circulars are available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. The electronic version of all these language versions is being made available in the future. In the meantime, we have easiest access to the electronic versions of English and French which are attached.

I am sure that all of you will realize the importance of this action of the U.P.U. and support it.

If you wish, I can forward you the Word files

Summary - Illegals-2001- 1996.doc and Rwanda-En-363.01.doc,

and I urge those of you interested to be in the regular mailing list of Ms. Libera to contact her directly as in the above letter.

GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE EXHIBITS OF THEMATIC PHILATELY

INTRODUCTION

Article 1: Competitive Exhibitions

These Guidelines have the objective of guiding collectors to assemble an exhibit and jurors to evaluate it according to the principles of the General Regulations for the Evaluation of Competitive Exhibits at FIP Exhibitions (GREV) and the Special Regulations for the Evaluation of Thematic Exhibits (SREV).

Article 2: Competitive Exhibits

The pages exhibited ought to:

- present the chosen theme as a whole, or
- show in depth specific sections of the collection without losing the coherence and the continuity of the chosen theme. In this case it may be necessary to adapt the plan page (see 3.2.1 below) to suit the exhibit.

Article 3: Principles of Exhibit Composition

3.1 Appropriate Philatelic Material

Appropriate postal-philatelic material is that which, for the purpose of transmitting mail or other postal communications, has been issued, intended for issue, or produced in the preparation for issue, used, or treated as valid for postage by governmental, local or private postal agencies, or by other duly commissioned or empowered authorities.

Appropriate postal-philatelic material has the following characteristics:

Type of material:

- postal franking items (stamps, stamp booklets, postal stationery, franking meters, computer vended postage e.g. FRAMA labels, etc.) and their modifications (e.g. overprints, surcharges, and punch-perforations, as shown by "perforations"). However modified items are not to be included if the modification distracts from the original theme (e.g. by making it no longer visible); they may be used for the theme(s) related to the modification.
- postal cancellations (ordinary, slogan, commemorative and other special postmarks)
- stamps, cancellations, marks and/or cards indicating a postage privilege (e.g. authorities, military)
- other items used in the postal operations, such as registration labels, postal route labels and markings, supplementary labels or markings (e.g. censorship, disinfection, crash mail), mail delivery dockets, reply coupons, forwarding agents markings, postal automation markings and labels, etc.; where applicable, these items should be on the relevant document.
- items "intended for issues, or produced in the preparation for an issue", e.g. sketches, proofs
- varieties and errors
- revenue stamps. They are admitted as long as they are postally used or have postage validity. Revenue stamps for fiscal purposes are admitted in exceptional cases, when they are the only mean to describe an important thematic point.

Time frame:

- postal material from the pre-stamp era, through the classic period, to the present day.

Postal Services:

- in addition to the normal transmission of mail, specific types, e.g. (postage free) service- and military- post (including Airgraphs and V-mail); maritime, railway, and air mail of any type; prisoner-of-war and concentration camp mail; packet, parcel post and freight post
- postal payment service
- private post, authorised or tolerated by the official authorities, or active in total absence of an official post.

Under "other postal communications" are included other forms of postal services, like pneumatic post, telegrams, electronic mail (i.e. message sent electronically to a Post Office where it is printed out and delivered to an addressee), etc.

Inappropriate Material

The following items are inappropriate:

- fantasy issues from non-existent postal territories, issues of exiled governments or organisations without postal services
- private additional cancellations applied by a sender or a supplier before mailing the documents
- picture postcards, unless they are postal stationery produced by a Postal Authority
- private additional prints on postal stationery (also known as "repiquages")
- administrative marks (not postal), when they do not give any postal privilege
- private decorations on envelopes and cards
- private vignettes (advertising labels), whatever the purpose of their use.

Border-line material

The variety of postal services and regulations in different countries and their evolution over time make it impossible to define a list encompassing all possible situations. Some items only follow to a certain extent the above definitions of appropriate or inappropriate material; therefore they should be used mainly when no other material is available to describe a specific thematic detail. When included in the exhibit, they should always be supported by a thorough philatelic justification.

Items belonging to the specific philatelic culture of a theme, a country or a region can be tolerated as much as they are justified and their number is proportional to the degree of elaboration of the exhibit.

Thematic Information

The thematic information is derived

- directly from the purpose of issue (or of use) or the design of an item, or
- indirectly as a result of a deeper analysis that enables the use of items that, at a first glance, do not show any connection with the theme.

Thus the thematic information can be drawn from:

- the purpose of issue:
 - those which follow changes in political situations
 - those which document a particular period.
- and, in addition to the primary and the secondary design of the item, from:
 - the text, art style of illustration and similar peculiarities
 - the material on which the item is printed e.g. granite (silk thread) or banknote paper, war maps
 - the watermark design and the perforation (e.g. "perfins")
 - the text or illustration of margins, gutters, tabs, cover and interleaving of booklets, etc.

- functions of the postal service, which have a thematic significance (e.g. railway, telegraph, newspaper stamps, official service postal stationery, pigeon post).

The thematic information described above must be:

- initiated by the postal service, or
- introduced or added by the postal service (e.g. advertising appendices, marginal descriptions, postal stationery illustrations), or
- approved by the postal service (e.g. postal stationery to private order).

Printing or surcharges added privately after the sale of the items do not fulfil this requirement.

Generic cancellations can be used because of the specific meaning of a place name, or of the reason a place exists. Alternatively, they must contain adequate thematic information (e.g. advertising text, illustration), in addition to the data concerning the place and/or the date. A postmark, even if of the pre-philatelic period, does not document the birthplace of a person. Also the postmark date and place, when related to a special event which happened on the same date and place, is relevant only if other thematic elements concern the theme or it has a specific thematic significance from a postal history standpoint; in the latter case it should only be used when it refers to an important detail of the theme.

Sender and addressee data represents insignificant information, unless the document shows a special postal privilege (e.g. reduced or free postage) as a result of the position, condition or status (e.g. military, government or other official mail) of one of the parties. The indication of reduced (or free) postage or the service postmarks, or equivalent markings of the postal route, provide sufficient evidence. In some instances sender and/or addressee data may be helpful as complementary thematic information, in combination with the postal elements of the document.

The information made available by vignettes (i.e. pictorial labels), marks, cachets and decorative overprints of private origin (i.e. not postally authorised) should not be used for the thematic development. In exceptional cases, where no other material exists, these items can be considered as a part of the document as long as they are relevant to describe a specific postal route or they present a significant thematic connection.

3.2. Thematic Treatment

In thematic philately the concept defined by the GREV is represented by the plan.

The plan and the development represent the two aspects of an interlaced process, based on personal study and research by the collector on both the theme and the material. A deeper knowledge of the theme enables one to increase the number of facts and details and to look for additional items to illustrate them. A better knowledge of the material allows one to identify new pieces, which often must be justified through further study of the theme, which could result in a more elaborate plan.

3.2.1 Title and Plan

The title and the plan represent a meaningful entity and reflect the specific characteristics of the chosen theme. Hence, different titles originate different plans.

If an exhibitor decides to show a self-contained section of his/her collection, the plan and the title of the exhibit must be consistent with that section.

The title represents the synthesis of the work. Therefore the title and the contents of the pages have to match and the sequence of the philatelic items mounted on the pages should give the full details of the story stated in the title. Boosting titles to make the exhibit more attractive can be misleading if they deviate from the concept developed in the pages.

The plan provides a clear and intelligible insight into all major aspects of the theme. It may:

- be freely chosen in order to make the synthesis of a theme or an idea, or
- derive naturally from the theme.

The structure may follow a time-related classification (historical, evolutionary), or subject-related criteria (scientific, systematic, organisational, economic, etc.), or other criteria. For instance, themes related to Organisations and Institutions (e.g. Red Cross, League of Nations, Council of Europe),

repetitive events (e.g. Stamp Days, Olympic Games), etc. can be subdivided according to their structure, type of organisation, and individual events following thematically time- or place-related classifications.

Themes developed within an organisational or chronological framework should clearly show the historical background, the aims, tasks, results and effects of the activities of such organisations or events. The plan consists only of thematic divisions and subdivisions, with no generic chapters (e.g. "Miscellaneous", "Appendix"). Subdivisions by date of issue, issuing country, type of material (e.g. "Meters", "Postal stationery"), or purpose of issue (e.g. "Anniversaries") are to be avoided. Such items are best used according to their thematic information. The same applies to special philatelic studies (ref.: 3.2.3).

The plan is supposed to present a logical order allowing the study of the entire exhibit without disturbing breaks between the different chapters. Ideally the beginning of the following chapter has a logical link with that preceding. This helps to create an interesting story instead of an unconnected "list of contents".

An effective plan covers the largest scope compatible with the title. In this respect, unless specifically stated in the title, the plan should not be limited by time or by geography, as far as the chosen theme allows it.

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 by the quantity of material available.

The construction of an innovative plan is considered a prerequisite for an innovative development.

The Plan Page

The plan page comprises all major subdivisions of the plan; finer and more detailed subdivisions are presented, in principle, only on the individual pages. The plan cannot be replaced by a literary description or by a generic introductory statement.

An adequate plan page will ensure that the public and the jurors do not have to "reconstruct" the plan by browsing through the pages of the exhibit. The obvious difficulties caused by having to do so might be reflected in the understanding and the evaluation of the exhibit.

A numerical classification (e.g. decimal, legal systems) may be used if it helps to make the exhibit easier to understand. It should be limited to major divisions of the plan. Experience has shown that a two/three digits/letters system is sufficient.

In addition to the plan page, an introductory title page may highlight the theme.

The official FIP languages in which the title, the plan and any other introductory statement have to be presented are English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish.

3.2.2. Development

The analysis of both the theme and the appropriate material, based on a thorough thematic and philatelic knowledge, is a prerequisite for the best possible thematic development. This enables the skilful selection of each item and its correct positioning and sequence, as well as a connecting description. This is necessary to ensure a proper understanding of the relationship between the item and the theme.

This is shown by:

- the selection of the most suitable items for each thematic detail described.
- the balanced utilisation of the items according to the significance of the thematic detail they support. The number of philatelic items available for the same detail should not be the basis for their inclusion.
- the accurate thematic arrangement of the items shown on the same page according to the sequence of the "story". The correct sequence takes priority over the best appearance of the page.

Therefore, the simple classification of the philatelic pieces related to a subject is necessary but not sufficient to achieve an advanced degree of elaboration.

The Thematic Text

The thematic text:

- illustrates the logical sequence of the development, by connecting the items shown. A good connection is effective and concise, without unnecessary information. This requires that the text be fluid enough to demonstrate the thread of the development.
- explains the thematic qualification of an item, if required (Ref. 3.3 below)
- gives appropriate information of the thematic details of stamps and documents.

Any thematic explanation has to be closely related to the material shown, and any given statement must be covered by thematically appropriate philatelic items, otherwise it weakens the thematic development.

Even if FIP languages are not compulsory for thematic and philatelic text, exhibitors who intend to show frequently at international exhibitions are strongly advised to present their exhibit in one of those languages, to help in the understanding of their work (Ref. GREV 3.3).

3.2.3 Innovation

The exhibit is supposed to show the personal work of the exhibitor, highlighting the results of his/her ability to innovate. This requires personal effort by study, research and imagination and cannot result from the simple mechanical duplication of existing works. Exhibitors can take advantage of all sources available on the subject (e.g. thematic and philatelic literature as well as other collections) to push their research forward.

3.3 Qualification of Philatelic Material

A short thematic description is necessary whenever the connection between the item and the theme is not self-explanatory. Items without a demonstrated relationship with the theme should be excluded.

When selecting qualified material for the exhibit, preference and greater importance has to be given to:

- types of items that are the cornerstone of philately (i.e. stamps, postal stationery, cancellations and postmarks) as opposed to items with a lower postal connotation, even if their issue or use has been duly authorised by the post
- issues which have information whose contents bear a direct relation to the issuing country from a political, historical, cultural, economic and/or similar standpoint. Avoid speculative issues, which exploit the "fashion trends" in thematic philately (these dubious items ought to be in principle totally excluded), with special reference to issues not following the code of ethics of the UPU
- normal issues, as opposed to additional parallel imperforate issues (stamps and souvenir sheets)
- genuinely cancelled items, as opposed to items cancelled to order,
- genuinely carried commercial mail with relevant cancellations, as opposed to mere souvenir documents and any similar items which were created to please collectors, e.g. decorated FDCs (even when issued by the postal service), and maximum cards
- genuinely carried items with correct postage and relevant thematic cancellations, as opposed to favour cancellations, often with underfranked postage, or, even worse, cancellations on stampless covers ("blank cancellations") unless due to a free postage privilege
- documents with individual, differing addressees, as opposed to covers and cards received by the same addressee as a result of a subscription
- correct postage frankings, as opposed to overfrankings due to philatelic reasons (e.g. complete sets)
- meter frankings with correct postage, as opposed to favour cancellations (e.g. "000"), unless the latter is a "specimen" or it has a justified postal reason.

Exceptions to the above criteria may only be shown if properly justified.

The relative rarity or unusual characteristics of proofs, varieties and similar items, can increase the philatelic quality of the exhibit. Common varieties (e.g. minor colour nuances) play an insignificant role and they are likely to adversely affect the thematic development. If a variety does not clearly demonstrate the connection with the theme, the normal item should be also shown as a reference.

Common stamps and documents are appropriate if they best represent important thematic details.

The use of maximum cards should be limited to a few, significant items, mainly to enhance the understanding of the thematic information on the stamp. In addition to the necessary concordance of subject, time and date, defined in the principles of Maximaphily, these items should have a theme-related cancellation.

The use of revenue stamps for fiscal purposes should be limited to a few, significant items, mainly to enhance the thematic development in very important points of the theme that cannot be covered otherwise. These items are to be properly justified.

Philatelic studies

Postal items and documents present a number of philatelic variants. If this material is of thematic and philatelic importance, then a concise and balanced philatelic study is commendable, so that this material can be properly shown.

A philatelic study follows in a systematic manner the criteria for traditional philately (e.g. development of the item, varieties), postal history (e.g. usage, routes, handling of the mail, postmarks) or any other postal philatelic discipline. A philatelic study may exploit existing sources for further personal research. In order to safeguard the balance of the exhibit, the aim of these studies is not completeness, but the presence of the most significant philatelic peculiarities. The extent of the studies is proportional to the degree of specialisation of the exhibit.

Philatelic studies, whenever included, blend with the thematic development without affecting the fluidity of elaboration of the exhibit. The thematic text has to continue in parallel with the study, so that there is no disturbing interruption.

Philatelic text

A philatelic text can be used when a specific philatelic characteristic of the item is not easily recognizable, for documenting the use of revenue stamps, or for presenting a philatelic study. Boosting definitions, in the style of those of the auction-catalogues, are inappropriate.

3.4 Presentation

The statement of the GREV suits perfectly thematic exhibits; hence there is no specific article in the SREV.

Article 4: Criteria for Evaluation

4.1. Thematic Treatment

4.1.1. Title and Plan

The title defines the overall concept, which then is structured through the plan. Inconsistencies between the title and the plan indicate either an inadequate breakdown of the title or an inappropriate synthesis of its structure in the selected title.

The plan page, that provides an insight into the theme, has to be shown at the beginning of the exhibit. Failure to do so will result in the automatic loss of three points."

The requirements for a correct, logical and balanced structuring into divisions and sub-divisions are defined as follows:

- Correct: The plan should be accurate, scientifically reliable and sound
- Logical: The sequence of the main chapters and their subdivisions must follow a rational order, without superfluous or misplaced chapters
- Balanced: The same importance should be given to the different sections in accordance with the thematic significance and the available material coverage of all major aspects necessary to develop the theme.

4.1.2. Development

The correct assembly and position of the items, including the individual ones on each page, is demonstrated by a well understood, correct, and fluent thread of development. Misplaced items make development confused and hard to understand.

The balance is demonstrated by giving the appropriate depth and size to the various thematic details, according to their significance within the theme. This also applies to philatelic studies.

4.2. Knowledge, Personal Study and Research

The GREV considers "philatelic and related knowledge", that can be seen as the result of two components:

- A "concept" related knowledge. In almost all classes is of postal and philatelic nature: issues, usages, printing processes, rates, routes, services, and so on. In thematic philately this "concept" is of a thematic nature: cars, bridges, history, nature, sport, etc.; hence "thematic knowledge" is that which is based on personal study and research and sound knowledge of the subject studied.
- "Philatelic knowledge", that relates to the material used to support the concept. This component is common to all classes.

4.2.1 Thematic Knowledge, and its related Personal Study and Research

Thematic knowledge refers to the overall knowledge of the theme as expressed in the choice of the items, their correlation and the degree of appropriateness of the accompanying text; the correct thematic use of material is reflected by the degree of appropriateness to cover specific thematic details.

Thematic knowledge is also demonstrated by the use of material that has a thematic qualification, which is not immediately obvious and needs to be discovered by the exhibitor.

Thematic knowledge assumes the absence of thematic errors and avoids pretexts for introducing material not directly related with the theme or unnecessary borderline items.

The level of thematic study and research is evaluated by taking into account the availability of previous studies of the theme, in order to assess how much the treatment took advantage of available thematic and philatelic literature, catalogues and documented research. This will then be compared with the personal research and study shown in the exhibit.

4.2.2 Philatelic Knowledge, and its related Personal Study and Research

The full compliance with the rules of postal philately concerns, for instance, the presence of items that are unsuitable for collecting purposes because of their state (e.g. cut stamps or cut postal stationery, improper maximum cards)

The presence and balanced utilisation of all the different philatelic types of material should be obtained by presenting items of all periods and from the largest number of countries, within the possibilities of the chosen theme.

The suitability of the postal documents considers their philatelic appropriateness, including the number and the justification of borderline items, if any, as well as the selection of items of real philatelic significance rather than of extravagant pieces

Personal philatelic study and research are demonstrated by the presence of:

- material which
 - has not yet been researched for that theme, or where there has been very little research
 - refers to an uncommon area of collecting
- philatelic studies presenting a true, well documented, philatelic in depth analysis and which are not just an excuse for showing an accumulation of more pieces without any serious philatelic foundation.

4.3 Condition and Rarity

The condition is based on the usual overall criteria for evaluation in philately. For modern material good condition is an essential requirement. Booklets should be presented complete with stamps.

Cancellations must be clear, and allow the stamp design, where thematically relevant, to be clearly visible.

The rarity is based on objective criteria such as recognised absolute scarcity and difficulty of acquisition.

It is essential that varieties, proofs, essays, are rarer than the issue itself, in order to increase the philatelic level. The same applies to blocks, strips, etc.

It is obvious that items which, despite being very rare, have no or insufficient relationship to the theme, should not be included in the evaluation of this criterion.

4.4 Presentation

The efforts of the exhibitor are demonstrated by the arrangement of the items and the text on appropriate exhibition pages. Presentation will be evaluated on the basis of:

- clarity of the display
- clarity of the text
- the overall aesthetic balance of the exhibit.

Article 5: Judging of Exhibits

The thematic jurors must complete an evaluation form in order to be guided towards a thorough and consistent judgement.

The presence of faked, forged or repaired items, which are not clearly marked as such, will cause the downgrading of the exhibit by the Jury, according to the report of the special Expert Team appointed at each exhibition.

Reprints must be presented as such. Weak or faded postmarks must not be redrawn on piece; instead a copy of the postmark should be redrawn and presented next to the item.

Collectors are therefore recommended to have any doubtful item expertised before selecting it for the exhibit and the original of the certificates should be included behind the sheet, in the same transparent protective cover. In case a photocopy is used, the same has to be certified by the Federation. Alternatively, the commissioner may bring the original certificate for use if needed. Irrelevant of how the certificate is made available, at the end of the philatelic text concerning the item certified should be put the abbreviation "e" in bold thus **(e)**.

What's wrong with thematic exhibits (3) ?

In peril of being accused of nagging, I follow up my articles in TC News 7 and 10 with the results in 2000 and 2001. I also add an analysis of the break down points at BELGICA 2001.

As the results in the classes Traditional, Postal History, Postal Stationery and Aero are very similar during the years compared, I have rationalised the statistics and I only show the results for Postal History and Thematic. My comparison started in No 7 with the result at ITALIA 98. I now present statistics consolidated with the later exhibitions.

	1998	1999			2000		2001		
	ITA	IBRA	PARIS	CHINA	LONDON	ESPANA	BELGICA	JAPAN	MEAN
POSTAL HISTORY									
Entries	175	161	165	120	164	135	157	92	1169
LG %	11,4	7,4	15,2	4,8	9,8	5,9	14,0	7,6	9,9
G %	28,5	22,4	19,4	13,4	30,5	28,9	30,0	23,9	25,0
LV %	32,6	34,8	24,2	36,8	29,9	25,2	30,0	35,9	30,8
Total %	72,5	64,6	58,8	54,2	70,2	60,0	74,0	67,4	65,7
THEMATIC									
Entries	169	80	89	87	51	109	101	52	738
LG %	1,8	5,0	3,4	3,4	3,9	3,7	4,0	3,8	3,3
G %	11,2	16,3	15,7	3,4	21,6	12,8	15,0	17,3	13,3
LV %	22,5	28,7	24,7	19,6	29,4	17,4	15,0	38,5	22,9
Total %	35,5	50,0	43,8	26,4	54,9	33,9	34,0	59,6	39,5

As can be seen, nothing has happened since 1998 - with London and Japan as small exceptions. As the thematic class was small at these two exhibitions, their results have little effect on the mean figures.

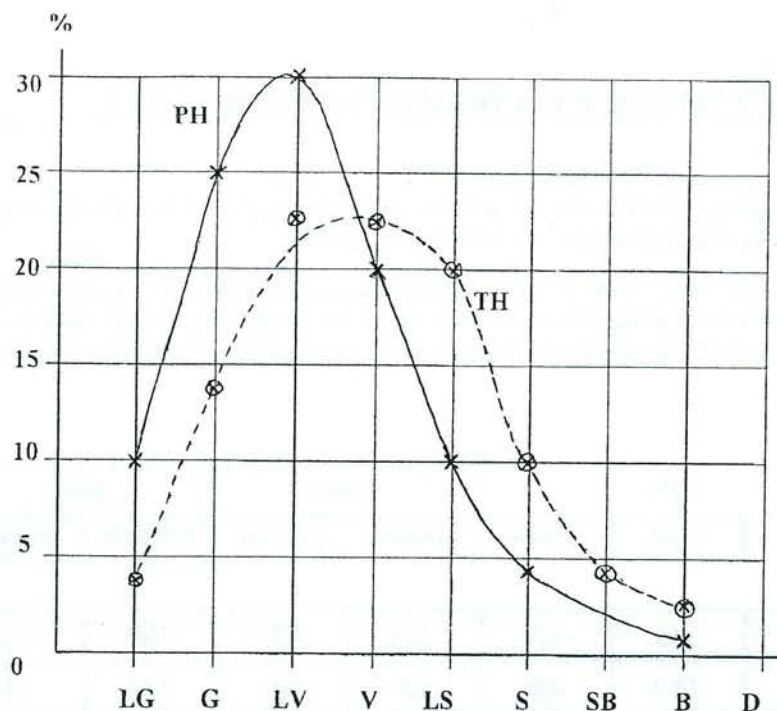
I was not in London or Tokyo so I cannot express any opinion of the exhibit standard there, but in Madrid and Brussels I saw the exhibits and was impressed by their very high standard. But the jury obviously had another opinion.

I have made graphs of the mean results of the table, also including the results below LV.

Both graphs can with reasonable accuracy be considered as a Gauss normal distribution, the thematic only displaced one medal to the right.

However, 75 points (Large Silver) is an important dividing line - the qualification for participation at FIP - FEPA exhibition. In the best of worlds with the best of jurors, no exhibit should get a lower medal than Large Silver at these exhibitions.

However, we know that + or - 5 points is an acceptable difference from one jury to an other. So, it is reasonable to expect some Silver medals, but how are awards as low as Silver Bronze and Bronze explained ???



The Postal History graph has exactly the expected few Silver medals and almost no lower (less than 5 %).

In thematics we have 10 % Silver and another 10 % even lower. According to FIP rules, 20 % of all accepted exhibits at an exhibition must be "first timers". Does it mean that all newcomers in the Thematic class are getting less points than the qualification? Of course not, there are old-timers in this group as well but it is alarming anyhow.

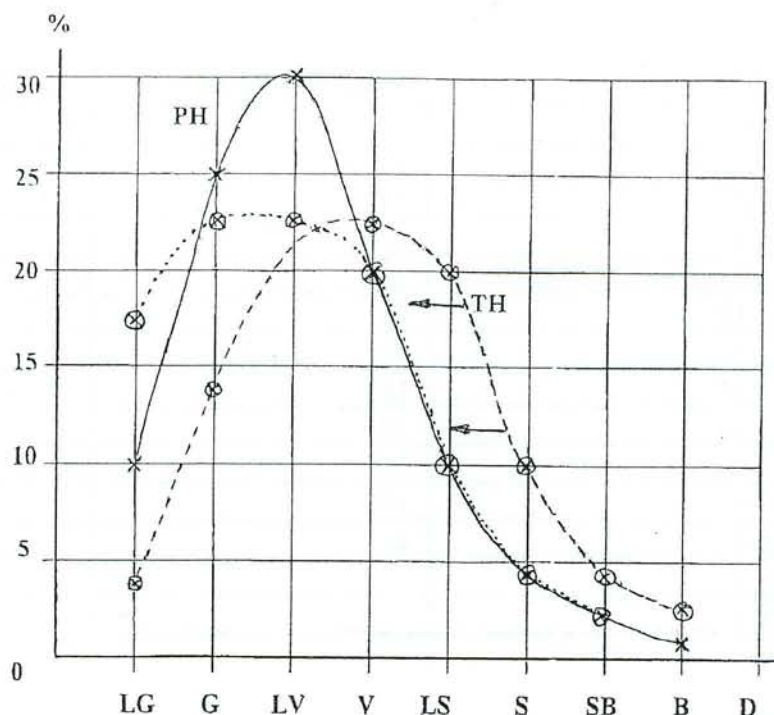
Are our national jurors that bad? Of course not, our FIP jurors are working at home as well.

Or are these low-pointed exhibits coming from thematically underdeveloped countries? No again! At BELGICA 2001 we had 20 exhibits with Silver or lower and their home countries were:

Argentina	2	Korea	1
Austria	1	Malaysia	1
Belarus	1	Peru	1
Canada	1	Poland	1
Costa Rica	1	Slovakia	1
France	1	Switzerland	2
Germany	1	Uruguay	2
Europe	11	Asia	2
		America	7

I leave this problem for a while and make a suggestion. What will happen if we raise all thematic exhibits one medal level (with exception of the large golds of course)?

The graph will look like this:



You can see that from Vermeil and down, the graph follows the Postal History graph exactly. But we will get too many Large Gold and too few Large Vermeil.

Why are thematic exhibits evaluated one medal lower than in all the other classes?

- * Are the exhibits that bad? No
- * Anything wrong with the criteria? Maybe
- * Are the jurors too demanding? Yes

In TC News No 7 I have already proposed an answer of the first question and it will take too long time to repeat it here.

I am partly responsible for the regulations and I don't think that they are the villains of the piece but others may have a different opinion.

Question No 3, are the jurors too demanding? Here I need more statistics and I use BELGICA as example.

The different criteria had the following distribution of the points in %ages (85 points are Large Vermeil, and if we get 85 % of the maximum on each criterion, we will be awarded such a medal):

Plan (85 % = 17)		Philatelic Knowledge (85 % = 17)	
20	1	20	0
19	7	19	7
18	16	18	21
17	19 42 (IBRA 47)	17	22 50 (IBRA 70)
16	24	16	24
15	17	15	15
14	11	14	6
13	3	13	5
12	3	12	1

Development (85 % = 25,5)**Condition & Rarity (85 % = 21,25)**

30	0	25	0
29	2	24	5
28	8	23	11
27	8	22	16
26	7 25 (IBRA 40)	21	12 44 (IBRA 69)
25	17	20	19
24	7	19	16
23	15	18	14
22	10	17	4
21	9	16	3
20	6	15	1
19	8	4	
18	4		
16	3		

Presentation (85 % = 4,25)

5	18 18 (IBRA 12)
4	73
3	9

For Plan	42 % have got 85 % or more
For Development	25 %
For Philatelic Knowledge	50 %
For Condition and Rarity	44 %
For Presentation	18 %

I start from the bottom with Presentation. Only 18 % obtaining 5 points for Presentation is far too low in my opinion.

But it is even worse that Plan and Development are the next lowest evaluated criteria **and those two represent the thematic knowledge!**

The figures in brackets are from IBRA. They are higher but still follow the same pattern. The thematic knowledge is lower than the philatelic knowledge! Is it really true that the thematic exhibitors have better philatelic knowledge than thematic knowledge? In that case they should collect something else - postal history for instance!

A final statistical comparison: I will only point to Presentation: Postal History obviously has a much better presentation than Thematics. Do you really believe that?

More than 85 % of max

CRITERION	Thematic Class			Postal History Class	
	Points	BELGICA	IBRA	Points	BELGICA
Plan	(max 20)	42 %	47 %	Not applic.	Not applic.
Development	(max 30)	25 %	40 %	(max 30)	55 %
Philatelic Knowledge	(max 20)	50 %	70 %	(max 35)	85 %
Condition & Rarity	(max 25)	44 %	69 %	(max 30)	60 %
Presentation	(max 5)	18 %	12 %	(max 5)	28 %

I finish here with my opinion that if thematics are to enjoy parity of marking with other classes, we, the jurors will have to upgrade the points in all criteria and especially for Plan and Development but also for Presentation.

Gunnar Dahlvig

I thank Gunnar for the stimulating article. In the program for the Commission, that I circulated to the members of the Bureau in preparation of our meetings at Hafnia, I already inserted this subject for a first discussion.

I believe that the contribution of Gunnar is very important. Unfortunately in the past his articles, very well received and translated in a number of countries, have brought no open follow on; in spite of my requests I got only one answer, very short and focusing just on one aspect of the problem.

At the consultant classes I learned that numbers provide facts, but also that facts are to be streamlined, analysed and transformed in conclusions. Recommendations are possible only when there is the agreement on conclusions. Gunnar has already given some examples of this approach, by proposing the problem of the 22 exhibits who did not stand up to the qualification marks, or by going deeper in the distribution of the evaluation of each criterion.

Hence, I believe that it is necessary to define a list of points for a deeper analysis, because the scope of Gunnar's research has involved a set of exhibitions that were judged by a large number of jurors; with a good rotation; most of the jurors are (or have been) active exhibitors. I have the feeling that in some countries there is no significant difference between the marks received at national and international level; and this is another point for analysis. Also the selection sometimes could play a role: in Milano we had planned the same number of entries for PH and TH but the number of applications was exceeding the availability by 85% in PH and 57% in TH... and we ended up rejecting a PH exhibit who then got a GP at one of the following shows. That year there were 5 exhibitions (Tel Aviv, Lisbon, Praga, Johannesburg, and Milano) so the number of exhibits involved was greater (and that could have impacted the level of each exhibition), but this consideration is valid for PH is well...

As a result of this analysis we should be able to understand the causes of the issue and to propose the most appropriate solutions. Is our "mind set" that prevents higher marks, especially at the higher levels, as Figure 2 could suggest? (discrepancies at the higher end are due to the assumption that all G become LG). Is that caused by the reluctance to give the maximum (or 1 point below) for the most important criteria? Why is presentation judged more strictly than in PH? Is something in the SREV & Guidelines that supports this behaviour? Or we should not assume a priori a 1:1 alignment with the result of other classes? Have other classes any specific situation (de facto or in their SREV) resulting in more "generous" awards, at least up to a certain level of medal?

Or do our results depend on the fact that Thematic philately is the most difficult discipline and, last but not least, that there are very few examples of exhibitors who capitalize on previous "great" exhibits when the same

are put on sale? In other classes several exhibitors increase their awards significantly just by merging the (several) items acquired in one of these actions...

I do not want to put the cart in front of the horse. I am looking forward to doing a serious analysis, so that Gunnar's initiative will have an appropriate follow-on based on knowledge and avoiding any emotions. We have to establish what, to which extent, and why, is wrong with thematic exhibits and to take the necessary actions.

I strongly believe that we cannot take care of this situation just by giving bonuses; any increase should result out of our regulations and of the way we implement it. Any other approach will jeopardize the effort to gain credibility started by Frans de Troyer in 1972. He was realising that our awards were lower, but he was seeing also the gaps that at that time was in place. Nowadays one thematic exhibit has been proposed as a candidate for a GPI and that also has a clear meaning. (g.m.)

Circular letter from the U.P.U.

Madagascar – Illegal issues of postage stamps

Before closing this issue we received another circular letter from Ms. Libera, as follows.

Dear Sir/Madam

The postal administration of **MADAGASCAR** asks me to inform you that it has information about the circulation on the international market of an illegal issue of postage stamps purporting to be issued by the PAOSITRA MALAGASY.

The characteristics of this issue are as follows:

- A perforated miniature sheet and an imperforate miniature sheet, bearing at the bottom of the sheet the inscription "Millenium – Concorde 2000 – 30e anniversaire" and consisting of nine postage stamps, each with a value of 2000 Fmg, 400 ARIARY. Each postage stamp shows different views of the "Concorde" aircraft and the inscriptions "REPOBLIKAN'I MADAGASIKARA" and "Paositra 1999". These two inscriptions are not positioned in the same way on all the postage stamps. In addition, the postage stamp on top at the right also has the word "MILLENIUM" in capital letters.

As these postage stamps have not received the approval of the postal administration of Madagascar, they have been issued in violation of the provisions of the Universal Postal Convention and its Letter Post Regulations. Consequently, they are regarded as null and void and may not be accepted as a means of postal prepayment.

The postal administration of Madagascar would be grateful for any information which would lead to identifying the person responsible for these illegal issues.

Yours faithfully,

K J S McKEOWN,
Director of Communication and Postal Markets