

TCNews

BULLETIN OF THE FIP THEMATIC COMMISSION

N. 15 – AUGUST 2003

FOREWORD

At the last FIP Congress, during the discussion on the Open Class, a couple of speakers pointed out that exhibitors are moving towards this class because they feel upset by the too many rules in the thematic class.

I started immediately asking myself about the reasons of such feelings and I wish to share my considerations with the delegates, hereafter.

My first consideration is that the said perception on the complexity of the thematic philately does not depend on the length of our documents and the rules they actually present.

When I joined the Commission in 1968 the FIP Thematic Regulations were accompanied by a short document of comments. In the preparatory phase of the 1972 Regulations the team led by Frans de Troyer drafted a booklet (32 pages) intended to streamline ideas and interpretations, but it remained a working paper of the Bureau. So for some years collectors had only the text of the Regulations as a reference, until Frans De Troyer published his book (1976) and a group of Italian experts under my coordination issued a set of five booklets, followed by similar initiatives in other countries.

In 1985 FIP introduced new regulations for all classes, expressed in a three-levels documentation: general regulations (GREV), class-specific regulations (SREV), and class-specific guidelines. So we had again an accompanying paper that we shaped aiming at presenting three points:

- How to choose a theme, set a plan and develop it

- How to select appropriate philatelic material for developing the theme, suggesting selection criteria for the items
- How to build an exhibit by arranging the items along the thread of the theme. At a later stage this part (on presentation) was dropped, at it was felt that its concepts had been, at large, well absorbed by exhibitors.

Our Guidelines expand the rules stated in the GREV and detailed in the SREV, and provide more counselling to both exhibitors and jurors; hence they take more pages than others. **As they stem out of the GREV, they contain the same rules common to the whole philatelic world** with the obvious adaptation to the peculiarities of thematic philately. As a matter of fact:

- Criteria for Presentation, Condition and Rarity are exactly the same
- Criteria for Treatment are broken down into Plan and Development

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○ Criteria for Philatelic Knowledge are split into two components, as the concept presented is thematic, but based on philatelic items.

My second consideration is that thematic philately is more demanding in terms of philatelic knowledge, as it encompasses any country, and any time period, and any sort of postal philatelic material.

As an example let's consider postal stationery. The relevant class most exhibits just concentrate on one geographic area and/or one time period; catalogues and studies do exist in several cases and serious exhibitors can just bring forward the research previously done by other students.

Postal stationery is one of the major components of a thematic exhibit, and its correct use, in theory, is based on a very simple rule: use what it is of postal nature and forget what it is private. But the relationship between private entities and the post can be such that items are philatelically appropriate but their content (or a part of it) could have been added by private entities. This border between postal and private depends on country regulations, and it may vary over time; hence the answer requires specific philatelic knowledge, item by item. And stationery is just one area....

Furthermore, in our class when good exhibits are put on sale, their best items are scattered at the auctions and many of them return to other classes, mainly traditional and postal history. And with that, the philatelic research done by the previous (thematic) owner also goes away.

My third consideration is that the general "postal/private" rule is perceived as split in so many rules as the many situations an exhibitor has to face.

Exhibitors are not asked to decide between black and white: they have to assess each grey and establish if it is appropriate or not. Suitable documentation is not on hand or not available at all, and dealers tend to present items in the simplest way. When exhibitors take this information "as is", often delusion will follow, and it will be accompanied by upset.

I published recently a comprehensive study on Ocean letters and Radio telegrams, but for the first time I felt unsure of several conclusions, as

they were achieved only through the items I had accumulated; the documentation available on the subject is scarce and mainly on German material. In the same period a book was published in Great Britain and the author, a postal historian, expressed a similar uncertainty. But if I want to use properly these items I must know them well...

The most frequent question I receive is "can I use this item?" For me this implies to apply my personal philatelic knowledge to assess the item according to the simple "rule postal/private". On the contrary, most requesters do not think in these terms but want the interpretation of the boss of the Commission, the person who is in charge of the rules.

At the same time the new generations have, at large, a lower philatelic background. Previous generations went to thematic philately as they were not satisfied with traditional collecting by country, after having practiced it for a reasonable (or long) time. This experience helped them to build a strong general philatelic culture, and some of them kept their previous interests as well, because of their deep sense of philately. Newer generations have skipped this "traditional" experience and they are going straight to thematic philately because of relations with their hobbies, working and cultural interests. The lower basic philatelic knowledge makes even more difficult to select correctly the material.

My fourth consideration is that this proliferation of rules is also fed through the weakness and the discontinuities of our "supply chain". This chain is bi-directional: from the Chairman and the Bureau through the delegates to the philatelic societies in the Federations, where the jurors (both international and national) and the exhibitors reside; and from the country to the Bureau and the Chairman. Delegates are a vital component of the chain and they must be effective and transparent, i.e. bring messages without changes, misinterpretations and delay. The Chairman and the Bureau did their best to improve the text of the SREV and the Guidelines but, once these papers had been published, international jurors, national jurors and Commission delegates should have been more involved into acquiring the necessary

knowledge, for instance by attending the seminars organized by the Commission. Damian Laege and myself were very pleased with both the audience and the feedback of our Seminars in Copenhagen and Seoul, but it was disappointing to see delegates or international jurors ignoring these events even if they were on site. If they do not get the correct input and do not bring their questions and concerns on the table, how can they be the teachers in the respective countries?

This is also reflected in some comments that show little familiarity with this matter. Quite recently a national juror asked me to clarify a statement of the Guidelines that he quoted as an article of the SREV. This is a quite common misunderstanding on a clear fact: **SREV means rules, Guidelines mean advice based on the SREV rules.** In the same discussion on the Open Class I learnt a new “rule” of thematic philately concerning the number of items on each page. In our environment we have still pseudo-experts and most of them do not make any effort to attend international events on regular basis. But they talk... inventing facts and rules that do not exist. Over the years I have

heard a number of “rules” quoted by exhibitors and originated also by national and international jurors. Once a juror is approved the relevant Federation, its thematic delegate should make sure that national and international jurors of his/her country are constantly up-to-date.

It is up to the delegates, as responsible persons for their Federations, to make clear these ideas, and present the correct interpretation of our basic documents within their countries. At the same time, they should use any opportunity, from the e-mail to the Questions & Answers session of our Conference, to ask for those clarifications and activities which are needed and to send clear warnings in case what we delivery from the top is not sufficient or is not perceived correctly.

Giancarlo Morolli

P.S. One way of keeping national and international jurors up-to-date is to circulate copies of this publication to them. In spite of several recommendations, not many delegates are doing it.

OPEN CLASS – ONE FRAME EXHIBIT CLASS

Every philatelic organisation, from the FIP to the smallest society, has promotion of philately as its main objective. “To promote” means “to help to organize and start” and “to help the progress of”.

That means that we have to start One Frame Exhibit competitions with the best support. I do not want to repeat the considerations I made in the last two issues of FIP Flash, but I was very pleased with the emphasis on my considerations that the editor gave in devoting to my efforts the cover of Flash # 84.

That means that we have to improve our support to the open class. Outstanding thematic experts, like Gunnar Dahlvig and José-Ramon Moreno, are leading this effort with a precise commitment at FEPA level.

We should not be afraid that these initiatives will steal philatelists from our class: if it happens something is wrong and we have to take care of the causes, not of the effects. On the contrary, we should aim at widening the base, by creating NEWER ways for involving NEW people; the “more of the same” approach will be against our targets.

The worst error will be to approach these initiative with the same mind set we apply to our class; they are different and are to be treated with open mind.

Bangkok 2003, October 10th at 15.00 - Exhibition – Jury room

THEMATIC SEMINAR

THE FIP THEMATIC COMMISSION

Hereafter we publish the list of the Delegates to the Commission, that consists of 66 delegates.

Federations, which have not yet a representative in our Commission, are welcome to establish a contact and start planning to appoint a delegate on a permanent basis.

Delegates are strongly invited to report any change of address (e-mail as well) and to send their e-mail contact, if not listed.

Some of the updates have been deducted from other sources; hence, errors or inconsistencies should be reported immediately.

New or updated data are in **bold**.

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FIVE WARNINGS

We want to call the attention of delegates, national and international jurors and exhibitors, on some recurrent issues that need to be addressed in order to have, from one side, exhibits built with appropriate material, and from the other, an evaluation correct and aligned with the Regulations.

Over time it could have been used a tolerant approach to specific types of material (e.g. private postal stationery), but now it has to be halted otherwise our credibility will be impacted.

1. ASSESS POSTAL STATIONERY KEY FACTORS

In the last exhibitions it was felt that most exhibitors are taking a straightforward approach for selecting postal stationery: every item, which has a stamp imprint, is appropriate and any part of it can be exploited for thematic development.

Unfortunately the situation is not so simple. Let's refer to the two basic situations:

a) the stamp imprint is printed as a part of the production process of the postal stationery (*normal Post Office issues*), OR

b) the stamp imprint is applied by the postal printing shop on request of public or private entities on items often supplied by the requesters, which have to comply with specific requirements set by the postal authority (*stationery on private order*).

But these are just references, as the situation can evolve over time even in the same country. This the case of the illustrated postal cards of Greece. Before 1901 the stamp imprint was put by the Post on private order on cards supplied by the requester; in 1901 the Greek Post started issuing sets of illustrated postal cards bearing the stamp imprint.

A third situation is:

c) prints are added to the normal postal stationery (type a) above), namely:

- head data of a company or event
- advertising or commemorative information
- text, or form to be completed manually by the sender (e.g. invitation to regular meetings)
- etc.

Postal stationery Guidelines say "It is important to distinguish unofficial private modifications of normal Post Office issues which are often termed "Répiquages"". On the same track, our SREV states that the information added under c) cannot be used for thematic development.

Furthermore:

d) In some countries some stationery (envelopes) of the Postal Saving Accounting Service, which enjoy franking privilege by the nature of the service, have been illustrated on the back with advertisements, to recover costs. These items as well as other items, which have not been subject to the formal authorisation process for issuing normal postal stationery, are to be used with great moderation.

e) The official Field Military Postcards printed by the Army Headquarters or similar empowered authorities (often this fact is stated on the card) have full postal privilege. But there are also several Field Military Postcards of private origin, like those printed by Regiments or donated to the Army by private organisations; *per se* they do not have any privilege, hence their content (e.g. their illustration) cannot be used for thematic development. Whenever they enjoy a postal privilege, it derives from the status of the sender as shown by the administrative stamp

of his/her department. Without the appropriate military stamp the same card should have been franked.

f) In some auctions/exhibits have been presented as postal stationery the so-called QSLs, exchanged by radio stations and hams for informing about/confirming their connections. Since many years these cards have been sent, in small packets/envelopes, by individual members to the headquarters of their national associations; at this location they have been periodically forwarded (bulk sending) to the corresponding associations and from these further forwarded in small envelopes to the individuals/stations at the other end of the connection. These cards have no stamp imprint and have nothing to do with postal stationery. There are a couple of exceptions, e.g. URSS 1930s, where these card had a free postage privilege by law, according to some words printed in the place normally occupied by the stamp imprint.

2. KNOW THE PECULIARITIES OF ADVERTISING STATIONERY

Apart from initiatives controlled by the Post, most advertising stationery is produced by initiative of private companies which add privately originated prints to normal stationery items bought from the Post. Thanks to the revenue these companies make with ads, in several cases they sell these items at a price lower than the value of the imprinted stamp.

Other advertising items do not have any stamp imprint. Instead, adhesive stamps are applied before their sale. It is the case of some Italian advertising letters, including the famous BLPs, originated to support the Federation of Military blinds and injured, who got financial benefits out of the sales of these items. The Federation bought the stamps from the Post and had the same overprinted (by a private printing company) in order to avoid that customers purchased the "cheaper" BLPs just for detaching stamps for franking normal commercial letters. For the same purpose, in other countries (e.g. France), stamps were perforated.

Most of these items were issued without any authorisation of the Post about their format and content, as it was not foreseen by the law. In some countries or from a certain date, postal authorities set some regulations, e.g. concerning the formal approval of the sale price and/or the sales channels, as in some cases these items were sold also through postal agencies (like BLPs, that were on sale at secondary agencies, not the main postal offices).

As the very many variations of this stationery were never approved by the postal service, it is advisable to

- exclude stationery items which were issued without any postal authorisation, as they are just a type of "Répiquage" (see c) above).
- consider only those items, which have complied with some type of postal authorisation; due to the weakness of this link, do limit their number to depict important thematic facts that are not presented on other items.

Also note that, because of the above reasons, national postal stationery catalogues very often ignore most of these items.

3. PHILATELIC STUDIES MUST HAVE PHILATELIC INTEREST

In the recent years sales and auction catalogues have offered a number of proofs, essays, varieties, artist's sketches and the like. The largest majority of them refer to very modern issues, mainly from countries of minor philatelic importance. This material, often sold at ridiculous prices, enriches an exhibit only if it really documents the process of stamp production or, in case of varieties, derives from sheets which were sold over the counter, and it is pretty sure that serious traditional collectors of those countries have very little interest at preliminary sketches or such "proof" items which are produced in excess of the technical needs. Therefore exhibiting such items (specially as a philatelic study) does not bring any significant added value and that

money could be better used for getting more important items.

By the way, philatelic studies should be devoted to main points of the theme, not to secondary details, as there is the need to emphasize the latter, not the former ones. Otherwise the "plus" for philatelic research will be offset by a "minus" for unbalanced thematic development.

4. ASSESS PRE-PHILATELIC COVERS POSTAL ELEMENTS

Some beautiful pre-philatelic covers have a nice, illustrated mark that states who the sender is; often it could be the reason for a full or partial postal privilege. Only in this case the text and/or the design of the same mark can be exploited for thematic development.

But items have to show some formal evidence of it, like the departure and arrival marks of the postal service that took care of the same. Without these signs it could be a letter carried by a private third party, on a private level. For items of the Italian area another sign is the wording "d'Uff" or "d'Ufficio" (*ex Officio*)

normally written on the left side, which specifies that the sender claimed a postal privilege.

If such an item has a big figure in the middle of it, it means that the privilege was not recognized and the addressee had to pay the postage fees, therefore the information of its mark is not exploitable. Exception: the few case in which there was a partial privilege and the figure refers to the quota to be paid.

5. BEWARE OF OLYMPIC FORGERIES

At Philakorea 2002 seven thematic exhibits, mainly on sport themes, presented forgeries. Most of them referred to the first Greek Olympic issues (stamps, overprints, cancellations).

It is a pity that after so many years of warnings these items are still acquired and so little defence is implemented by collectors. We strongly recommend national jurors to have these items checked already at country level, and to take preventive action on this subject any time they have the slightest doubt, by involving both the exhibitors and the experts.

IN MEMORIAM

It is very sad to remember two friends and past delegates of this Commission who passed away in the last months:

Ing. EIVIND EVENSEN (7.4.1922 – 1.12.2002), from Minde, Norway

Eivind was the pioneer of thematic philately in his country. He founded the National Society of thematic Collectors in 1981 and was its first president. He was active member of the Commission, international thematic juror and very successful exhibitor, with "Urgent Communication from tam-tam to the Satellite" and later with "A Radio Almanac". He promoted thematic philately with his book "Motivsamlere" (The Thematic Collector) published in 1987.

Gen. EUCLYDES PONTES (16.2.1908 - 10.11.2002), from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

General Euclides led Brazilian Philately for a very long period and was President and Honorary President of that Federation (FEBRAF). Together with Heitor Fenicio, Angelo Zioni and other thematic and traditional experts he organized "Brasiliana 79", the first of a successful series of international events in Brazil. A pioneer of religious philately with a famous exhibits on the Virgin Mary, he supported thematic collecting with great dedication and commitment.

Conference of the F.I.P. Thematic Commission, Seoul, 8th August 2002

BUSINESS SESSION

At the beginning of the session the Chairman, Giancarlo Morolli, asks a minute of silence in memory of Francesca Rapkin and remembered her longstanding and very effective contribution to the Commission. He welcomes Knud Mohr and thanks Robert Deroy, President of the French Federation, for the continuing support in sending each issue of TCNews to delegates and philatelic entities all over the world.

1. Roll call of delegates

26 FIP members are represented either by the relevant delegate or by proxy, for a total of 32 attendees.

2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting in Copenhagen

All delegates approve the minutes as published.

3. Report of the Chairman

The Report deals with the following topics:

a) Cooperation with FIP

The Chairman reports about the recent meeting between the Board and the Commission Chairmen where the following items were discussed.

b) Nation's Cup

There is a constant evolution for this new competition. The Chairman has been involved at first as project manager for his Federation in the contest held in Helsinki and later in the revision of the Regulations. The next competition will be hosted in Portugal, and the new rules include philatelic quizzes. The Chairman has been contributing for those concerning thematic philately, with the support of the Bureau.

c) Illegal Issues

The Commission has been supportive of the FIP, and the U.P.U. efforts for fighting the illegal issues. This is an important work, which has to be done quickly because, in some new entries at the exhibitions the number of illegal issues is increasing.

Knud Mohr develops this point informing about actions taken with some dealers at Philakorea and thanks the Commission for the cooperation.

d) List of Themes for W.N.S. (Word Numbering System)

The Chairman has provided at first the FIP and then the UPU with the codes of themes for this new Internet site that is presented officially at the FIP Congress.

e) Open class

The Chairman thanks Jose-Ramon Moreno and Lumir Brendl for their contribution and insist on the importance of these new ways of collecting to keep collectors interested in collecting. But it is important to keep the difference, also by having different evaluation systems and different awards. The Open class can take advantage of the experience of some good thematic collectors.

Gunnar Dahlvig informs that some open class collectors are now getting interested in thematic collecting.

f) Education Program

The seminars for collectors and exhibitors held at Hafnia and Philakorea by the Chairman and the Deputy Vice were very successful. The innovative presentation, based on two parallel stories (one with the theory and one with the example of a real exhibit) could be used also at country level. It is recommended to have similar initiatives in Saint Petersburg, Bangkok, Singapore and Barcelona.

The team leader seminar in Bonn, organized by the Deputy Chairman Damian Laege with the support of the German Federation, was a two days session with the presence of the FIP President. Presentations and discussion were very effective and constructive. The minutes of this seminar will be available for jurors in next months, depending on the cooperation of the attendees and personal workload of Damian Laege.

It is very important to find a way for transferring these concepts to Asian international and national jurors, as this is a fast growing area for thematic philately.

g)Commission's Publications

In Bonn a plan was built for publication aimed at illustrating the guidelines and establishing the correct priorities in terms of material. Many collectors are de facto ignoring that postal means connected with transportation of mail and furthermore they put too much emphasis on variety of material, on search for uncommon and extravagant items, instead of giving priority to stamps, covers and cancellations.

The chairman reports that's some planned activities have not been carried on, namely

- The full listing of thematic groups.
- The Commission Internet site, as a Webmaster has to be identified.
- The diffusion of important articles of general interest (not on specific themes).

Giancarlo Morolli thanks all the members of the Bureau and ask the approval of his report. The report of the president is approved at the unanimity.

4.TCNEWS

The Chairman informs the Commission that the next deadline for material for TC News will be November 15th .

5. Next Conference

The delegates agreed to hold the next Conference of the Commission in Singapore, on the occasion of Singapore 2004.

SECOND SESSION (Questions and answers)

A very constructive exchange of opinions follows between Peter Osusky, other delegates, and the members of the Bureau about some "border line material" (artist proofs, die proofs, etc....)

A short information is given to the delegates suggesting how collectors could be more selective with the material, studying a more restricted area.

The Chairman closes this session thanking for the constructive discussion.

Bernard Jimenez, Secretary

Giancarlo Morolli, Chairman.

Bangkok 2003, October 10th at 15.00 - Exhibition – Jury room THEMATIC SEMINAR

TCNews is published by the
FIP Thematic Commission
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Vice Chairman: Dr. Damian Laege;
Secretary: Bernard Jimenez
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Meeting of the Bureau of the F.I.P. Thematic Commission, Seoul, 8th August 2002

The meeting is attended by all Bureau members, with the exception of Ann Triggles, who is excused.

SREV and Guidelines

The texts are now in order in all the FIP languages and the commission have to work on the "illustrated guidelines".

Thematics and Other classes

Concerning the new classes (One frame, open class,...) the commission has been observing their developments and there is some evidence that, for instance the number of open class exhibits is increasing and involving thematic collectors. The Bureau confirms its support, and it points out that it is necessary to keep separate thematics and open class.

Seminars and meetings

There will be a seminar next October in Budapest for people having exhibited once or twice at national level and never at international level. Others seminars are planned at the coming exhibitions in Bangkok,

Singapore, Barcelona, India. The commission should provide basic documents to be presented in these seminars.

Team leader seminar in Bonn

The Chairman thanks Damian Laege for the good preparation of the Seminar and asks all the speakers to send their input by 15th November for compilation of the documentation.

In the discussion it is pointed that it should be found a way for organising a training seminar for 15 or 20 national jury working with different team leaders.

Internet

Giancarlo Morolli asks John Sinfield to do his best for finding a Webmaster for the thematic commission site.

The Chairman concludes the meeting asking everyone to contribute to TC News in sending articles of general interest.

Bernard Jimenez, Secretary

Giancarlo Morolli, Chairman

Some FIRSTs for Thematics!

- **Gunnar Dahlvig** ("Vikings") won the Gran Prix of the Championship Class at the national Swedish exhibitions "Fjällfil" in September 2002.
- **Giancarlo Morolli** will be presented the "Albino Bazzi" Medal for Philately – 2003, awarded by the Circolo Filatelico Mantovano, on December 6th at the Society annual banquet in Mantua.
- **Bjorn Gunnar Sollaas** won the International Gran Prix at Nordia with "Albrecht Dürer and his Time" in Kristiansand, Norway.
- **Luciano Viti** ("And it was Renaissance...") won the Gran Prix of the Championship Class at the national Italian exhibition "Baninofil 2002".

In all cases it is the first time that a thematic collector receives this award.

Fight against Forgeries Commission

from the Report of the Chairman, Patrick Pearson

We publish a large selection of Patrick Pearson's report (2002), as we feel very important that thematic exhibitors devote the necessary attention to this subject. It gives a clear picture of the approach and the activities performed by the Expert Group, it defines clearly its role and responsibility, and it provides suggestions that exhibitors should take into account for their own benefit.

Half way through my term as Chairman of the Fight against Forgeries Commission I have yet to find out if I have been passed the poisoned chalice - the next two years will tell. However it is clear that one of the apparent mysteries attending exhibitions is the Expert Group - are they the philatelic equivalent of the SAS or do they work under the control of MI5? Do they prowl round an exhibition armed with optically enhanced magnifying glasses capable of detecting the slightest undescribed defect. Over to you Dr Watson.

The reality is much more mundane. They are there to carry out a check of a few exhibits chosen on a random basis. They also examine items queried by members of the jury whose job is to judge not expertise material and, most importantly, they check very carefully the exhibits in the Championship Class and since 2001 the candidates for the Grand Prix.

You may think that everything in the Championship Class should be genuine, having been looked at many times on the exhibits journey to the higher reaches of philately. This is not so and owners really should look at their exhibits and satisfy themselves that everything is what they have been happy to accept in the past. I am sure that the President of FIP will not mind my passing on a comment he made to me: when he was recently selling his Grand Prix collection he realised that one cover was not what it should have been and this must have been looked by him and the judges on many occasions. Recently at the RPS we were sent to certify a small Western Australian piece with the One

Penny, Two Pence and Six Pence used together which had been in my collection (not in the Championship Class I acknowledge) many years before and which I had used to illustrate the Two Pence lithograph. On examination it was clear that the One Penny did not belong to the piece - some one had added it to make the piece look nicer. I had never turned the piece over as my interest was in the Two Pence, a particularly nice copy. The offending One Penny has since been removed and the piece looks much the better for it.

What happens next is that the Expert Group - and it must be made clear that this is a group of there experts who are asked to appraise the items they select or which are sent down to them by the jury teams and that they are not an Expert Committee - will look at these items to see if they have been previously expertised, if the concern, once the item has been removed from the frame, appears justified or all is considered to be in order, and then report back to the Jury who decide the action to be taken.

The equipment provided by the host nation ranges from a basic 'kit' of high powered microscope, UV lamp, and scanner to equipment linked to a PC with the opportunity to print in colour and rotate or compare images. I have some doubts that such sophisticated equipment is necessary as the Expert Group are not expertising the material but only taking a decision whether to ask for a certificate or accept that the item is satisfactory. One piece of equipment which would be useful in future is a digital camera to record the items in digital format rather as well as photocopying them.

Finally a few tips to exhibitors. If they have had their frames opened they should ask themselves why. It may be that they have not clarified an unusual rate, the stamps may have been off the cover and not put back accurately - after all most Swiss, Austrian and Swedish classic issues have been lifted and reaffixed, quite acceptable if correctly so done - the

problem comes where the stamp has been lifted and replaced by one in better condition or which has been repaired, where the tying obliteration has been improved or where one stamp which originally overlapped another has been reattached underneath it.

When preparing an exhibit look at your material, do you have any doubts about a certain piece - if so can you explain to the judges why it is correct, if not leave it out unless it is absolutely vital to the exhibit. Don't accept without consideration auction or other descriptions as 'only recorded' - by whom. I saw in a recent exhibit a cover which had been sold as the only one from a particular provenance which was repeated in the exhibit's description. I have another in my collection (not in quite so nice condition) but to my knowledge there is no listing or census of this particular subject which would act as a basis for such a comment. If you are the expert be prepared to back up your statement with some facts. Finally do not feel that referral to the Expert Group reflects badly on the items in your exhibit - it may however be a reflection on your explanation and this may cause the jury group to downgrade your exhibit on account of knowledge demonstrated even if the item is considered genuine by the Expert Group.

Except in very few cases where the item, be it stamp or cover, is undoubtedly wrong, the practice for those items where there is still doubt is to ask for a certificate from an appropriate expert or expert committee or advise the exhibitor that it must be correctly described in future if, for instance, a stamp is genuine but the obliteration has been enhanced or it has been misidentified. The owner will be advised if items in his collection have been inspected by the Expert Group, the decisions and any action the jury may require.

It is sometimes suggested that exhibitors be given the right to question the Expert Group members if they are present at an exhibition. This is not practicable at an exhibition even if the Exhibition Management held a database of all exhibitors visiting the exhibition. To try to arrange such meetings would delay the

preparation of recommendations by the Expert Group beyond the time limit at which they have to present their findings to the jury Presidium. They only have three days to carry out their random checks, look at the items sent down by the jury and open the frames, with the knowledge of the National Commissioners, and complete their report. With an average of 80 items inspected at recent exhibitions there is no time to spare.

This does not stop either experts or jury members from discussing their concerns with the exhibitors once the jury has completed its work and been discharged, much in the same way as jurors are now expected to hold judging critiques in front of the frames. I held some years ago a most useful discussion with a leading collector concerning a cover where I could not understand the rate. He explained the anomaly, an unusual triple rate where parts were based on different weight stages, he showed me other rate combinations and also a faked cover in a further collection which had been missed by the jury and was not among the exhibits randomly selected. This was noted so the exhibitor could be informed and alerted to the problem. Naturally no action on downgrading was taken as the jury had completed its work and been discharged.

I think that some exhibitors do themselves a bad turn. Frequent claims of the first example of a postal marking, an error, or a particular routing or rate without full analysis of the novelty make both jurors and expert group members nervous - as do repeated claims of 'the only one known'; to whom? It must be remembered that whereas stamp catalogues are readily available, which give a guide to rarity, there is no equivalent worldwide catalogue of postal markings and any such would be so vast as to be unmanageable.

Another problem which sometimes comes to the Expert Group is where something is obviously misidentified. This is more likely to be due to lack of expertise on the part of the exhibitor than any intent to defraud and is normally treated as such. Usually this is where an item has been classified as something rarer than it actually is although I have had occasional where the reverse has occurred. The

decision is then returned to the jury team who would assess if this makes a difference to the marks they have allotted under knowledge.

The exhibitor will, of course, be advised of the mistake and be required to correct it in future.

THE STAMP SCENE IN SUNNY SOUTH AFRICA

Moira Bleazard, Delegate of the Commission

South Africa has a very small philatelic population - maybe our glorious weather and outdoor sporting lifestyle can be blamed for this! However, even though there are too few philatelists, they are certainly active on the local stamp scene. Impressive research is undertaken by individuals on their specific areas of expertise and new publications and magazine articles appear regularly in the philatelic press. The "SA Philatelist" magazine is issued every second month and although it is not specifically a thematic publication, it gives a good idea of the high standard of local philatelic expertise.

The Thematics SA Committee, headed by Mr Robert Harm, (e-mail address: robharm@mweb.co.za), works in association with the Philatelic Federation of South Africa. The committee's mission is to promote all facets of thematic philately and their slogan is: "Any theme will do." The main thematic publication in South Africa is "ThemNews" which has been in operation since April 2000. It aims to promote thematic collecting, which it aptly describes as the "art of philately." Subscribers themselves fill the pages with articles on their various subjects and it makes for interesting reading. The popular themes are depicted - cricket, rugby, music, art, medicine etc as well as the more obscure ones like the Baobab tree, spitfires, computers, minerals and mining. Quite a number of smaller thematic interest groups have sprung up as a result of the increased readership of "ThemNews" - the Biblia Study Group, Railways, Aviation and even a Tree or Dendron unit!

Another philatelic publication "Setempe," is printed quarterly in full colour by the South

African Post Office and distributed worldwide to more than 70 countries. Most articles have a local flavour but the magazine has nevertheless been very well received.

A national philatelic exhibition is held annually - usually in about October. The bigger stamp societies, in the major centres like Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth or Durban, take turns to organize the event. A Thematic section is always represented and the creative "Open Class" has brought new faces onto the exhibition scene - many more exhibitors as well as a renewed interest from the public. For the first time ever, an "Open Class" exhibit was awarded a Large Gold medal at last year's national exhibition - ALGOAPEX. It depicted superb material - photographs, medals, documents, letters, stamps, postcards and covers from the Anglo Boer War period and it certainly told a poignant story in the frames.

The standard of exhibits in the Traditional Philately and Postal History sections is excellent, whilst the thematic standard is steadily improving. We are trying to steer our exhibitors away from topical listings and encourage them to "tell a story" with their material. The inclusion of overseas thematic exhibits in our exhibitions is most useful to the local jurors as an example of what can be achieved. The presence of overseas judges and the sharing of their expertise is equally helpful.

This year our national stamp exhibition is being held from 22nd - 26th October in Johannesburg at the newly opened and very prestigious Melrose Arch Shopping and Conference Centre. For the first time ever, the new "One-Frame" exhibition class will be

featured; a further attempt to make stamp exhibiting more interesting and accessible to the public. More details can be obtained from Mr Jan Bakker, (e-mail: bakkerexpress@freemail.absa.co.za)

An annual Junior national exhibition - JUNASS - is also organized, sometimes in conjunction with the seniors, or otherwise on its own. Mrs Jill Redmond, RDPSA is the

success behind the increased level of interest from the juniors and the high standard of their exhibits.

The stamp scene in South Africa may be small, but what it lacks in numbers it makes up in effort and impact. If any other thematic delegates would like to keep in touch with South Africa, they could contact me at e-mail: bleaz@worldonline.co.za

FORMS FOR THE EVALUATION OF THEMATIC EXHIBITS

In the next pages we present two forms, prepared the Chairman in cooperation with the Vice-Chairman and the Secretary of the Commission

INDIVIDUAL FORM

It is intended for use during the evaluation of an exhibit. In additions to the marks, it has room for taking notes about positive or negative aspects, also in view of planned contacts with the exhibitor (e.g. meeting in front of the frames, walk-through, seminar). Furthermore, some space is provided for listing "dubious items" for reporting them to the Expert team, if active, or for remembering misinterpreted or wrong items.

COLLECTIVE FORM

It is intended for use during the evaluation and the review phases. If continuously updated, it provides a clear overview of other exhibits marks (e.g. which one got 15 for rarity?) so that the points are given in a more balanced way. And it allow quick comparison at any moment.

*This forms are available from the Chairman as MS Word files (please specify *.doc or *.mcw).*

Singapore World Stamp Championship 2004

Suntec Singapore, 28.8 – 1.9.04

68th FIP Congress, 2-3.9.04

Conference of the Commission & Thematic Seminar

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Nr _____ | Exhibitor _____ | Country _____ |
| Exhibit _____ | Frames _____ | |

Evaluation:

Treatment (35)

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Title and Plan (15) | |
| Development (15) | |
| Innovation (5) | |

Knowledge, Personal Study and Research (30)

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Thematic (15) | |
| Philatelic (15) | |

Condition and Rarity (30)

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Condition (10) | |
| Rarity (20) | |

Presentation (5)

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Presentation (5) | |
| Total (100) | |
| Award | |

☐ **Felicitatation for** _____ ☐ **Special Prize for** _____

Remarks & Suggestions _____

Dubious Items

Frame _____ Sheet _____ Item _____

Frame _____ Sheet _____ Item _____

Frame _____ Sheet _____ Item _____

EXHIBITION_____THEMATIC CLASS page ____/____

page ____ / ____

[illegible]