

## **Judging Philatelic Literature**

### **What is Philatelic Literature?**

For many years philatelic literature was restricted to print media. However, in recent years some material has been made available in CD-ROM and other electronic formats that can be judged similar to the printed format.

For the purpose of World Series of Philately shows where a literature venue is offered, the following categories are suggested:

- a) handbooks, monographs, special studies, specialized articles
- b) society journals, periodicals
- c) catalogs—general, specialized, and auction
- d) newsletters, columns, general articles

The show organizing committee will establish in its literature prospectus those categories that it will accept. Show committees may also add categories beyond those mentioned here as a means of broadening the appeal to both exhibitor and attendees. The additional categories may be experimental in nature. Criteria for evaluating such categories need to be spelled out for both potential exhibitors and the judges.

Show programs often require extensive mentoring and may be more appropriately handled by special groups assembled from time to time for that task. Websites are sufficiently removed from the normal “literature” concept as to be excluded from these judging guidelines. At the time of writing, FIP has a website evaluation program that serves this purpose. Similarly, software programs for album page production or inventory records are not included.

Handbooks, monographs, special studies and articles go beyond the casual catalog by exploring a subject in depth. Eligible entries must have been published within the previous three years, i.e., an exhibit entered in a 2003 competition must have been published in 2000 or later, and should be the most recent edition available.

Articles are separated into two areas, and may be stand-alone or serialized. Articles that are major works, not necessarily of monograph length, and present either significant new information about a subject, or a significantly differing interpretation of existing knowledge, are considered specialized articles and are judged with handbooks and monographs. Articles that are more general in nature are judged with newsletters and columns.

An article and the periodical or handbook containing that article may not be both entered into the same competition by the publisher or editor of the publication.

However, the author of an article may enter the article even if the publisher or editor has entered the entire publication.

Periodicals submitted, which can be published independently or by a society, should be the most recent complete volume or year published, or a number of issues equivalent to a volume if the most recent issues are to be evaluated. Periodicals should be submitted in the same format and with the same inclusiveness as received by subscribers. If a society publishes both a formal journal and a newsletter, it is suggested that both publications be submitted as a single entry. An exception is the case where the newsletter and journal may have different editors and one is entered independently of the other. The criteria on the critique sheet are then modified accordingly. See the critique sheet under the Society Journals column. Some specialized “serials” like the American Philatelic Congress *Book* and similar annual mixed anthologies should be classed with handbooks.

Catalogs can be classified in three groups:

- a) General catalogs of the entire world, groups of countries or individual countries that list only major varieties
- b) Specialized catalogs devoted in greater detail to a specific country or to a subject like perfins, precancels, handstamp markings, locals, machine cancels, etc.
- c) Auction catalogs

Catalogs (a and b) may or may not indicate retail prices (a priced catalog), or a rarity or value scale, but will generally fare better if they provide this useful data.

Philatelic columns and general articles may appear in philatelic or lay publications. The entry should consist of ten columns for a monthly or one-fourth of weekly columns that were published in the two years preceding the show. Newsletters may be from dealers, clubs, society chapters, etc. For columns, newsletters, and general articles, the value to the target audience is heavily weighted (see model critique sheet).

### **Judging Criteria**

The criteria for evaluating philatelic literature can be divided into three areas.

- a) Philatelic Aspect (45%)—originality, significance, depth of research, and in the case of society journals, provision of member services and topics of interest
- b) Authorship Aspect (40%)—organization, clarity, treatment
- c) Editorial and Publishing Aspect (15%)—presentation, layout, paper, binding, freedom from typographical errors and similar technical matters

### **Applying the Criteria**

The *Philatelic Aspect* (45%) should be examined in terms of the importance of

the content as well as the audience for which it is intended. Judges should compare the entry with what has already been published or is known in the field. Is the entry bringing together what is previously known, or is it breaking new ground with original research, or possibly drawing new conclusions? Is proper credit given to sources and is there a bibliography that both identifies sources and leads the reader to further detail? If a translation, has there been an effort to incorporate the latest findings?

What is the significance or importance of this piece of literature to its area of philately and to philatelic knowledge as a whole? What does the material bring that is new to the subject area? Is the information presented accurate? What is the purpose of the entry and how well is that met? Is it a nicely illustrated and bound book but weak on content, a comprehensive bringing together of widely scattered information, or an effort to bring new information to the collector?

In the case of auction catalogs, they should be more than simply listings of items for sale. They should provide collectors with an understanding of the importance of the pieces described, and provide future collectors a means of tracing provenance. The descriptions of the philatelic materials listed should be accurate and consistent. This applies to glossaries, lists of abbreviations, rarity scales, retail prices and similar tools that the user needs in order to understand the listings. Specialized catalogs are expected to have bibliographies, indicating the origin of some of the information and leading collectors to more detailed sources.

The *Authorship Aspect* (40%) looks at the organization of the material. The introductory or explanatory material should be clearly presented. The format should be logical and easy to follow. Where multiple authors or translators are used, the resulting text should be uniform and easy to understand.

Is there an introduction that spells out the purpose? Is the information logically presented? Does the table of contents reflect an orderly sequence? Does the author use the language in a way that is easy for the reader to understand? Does the text flow smoothly and is it free of poor sentence structure and problems of grammar?

How successfully does the author/editor treat the material? Are the conclusions logical and convincing? In a journal, is there a variety of authors and viewpoints? Is the purpose of the journal to be a scholarly record, a provider of news and services to society members, or a combination of both? How well is the purpose satisfied?

The *Editorial and Publishing Aspect* (15%) includes both the detailed elements expected of a published work and the presentation. Criteria examined include layout, quality of illustrations, captions, table of contents, indexing if appropriate, printing, binding, paper, pagination, copyright information and treatment of advertisements.

Does the publication have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) or International Standard Serial Number (ISSN)? Is there a copyright statement? Is the pagination logical and accurate? Are there running headers or footers? In the case of journals these should identify the title, date, and page number. Are the volume numbers and issue numbers (or whole numbers) indicated?

For journals, is there a statement of dues or subscription price? Are the officers listed with contact information? Are there a table of contents and an index? Are bibliographies presented in appropriate format? Are advertisements placed and treated appropriately? Is there information for both beginners and advanced collectors?

Are illustrations clear and of the best quality attainable, and are the captions and the illustrations themselves appropriately placed in relation to the text? Has the text been proofread so that it is essentially free of typographical errors? Is the typeface or print easy to read? Are the paper and binding of adequate quality to hold up to repeated use? For electronic media, are there instructions for loading or does it happen automatically when inserted in the drive? Is the electronic format user-friendly or is it cumbersome to navigate?

In summary, for all literature categories and for all three aspects, the judge must keep in mind the purpose and the audience for the literature entry. The judge then measures how well the purpose or intent was carried out. To this end it is suggested that authors and editors submit a brief synopsis (as is done with philatelic exhibits), with the application, stating the purpose and intent of the entry. For example, society journal editors could describe the membership and how they are trying to serve it.

Philatelic Literature is exhibited and entered in competitions for some of the same reasons as philatelic exhibits -- to be rewarded and to benefit from the judges' suggestions for improvement. To insure feedback to the exhibitor, the critique sheet is a mandatory part of these guidelines.

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