

Preparing an APS Slide Program

Slide programs are an excellent way of presenting information about stamps and philately to groups of people. The APS/APRL has a growing library of such programs which it currently makes available for loan to APS Chapters and Affiliates.

Unfortunately, many people with excellent philatelic material, and even those who have something to say about their stamps and covers, hesitate to prepare a slide program because they don't know a great deal about photography or computers, haven't the right equipment, or aren't comfortable with their writing abilities.

The APS Education Department will assist members who would like to prepare programs. As long as someone has stamps or covers and a story to tell, we can together produce a program to be proud of!

The following pages will:

- Review the process by which we work with members who are developing a program
- Provide a list of tips to guide your efforts
- Review some quality standards that ensure programs are appealing to viewers.

When you are ready to submit ideas, outlines, or a program package, or if you have any questions, please contact the APS Education Department, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte, PA 16823; Tel: (814) 933-3803; email: gretchen@stamps.org.

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A SLIDE PROGRAM

Some people have an existing program they would like to include in our library; some are starting from scratch; and still others are partially finished. For those just starting out, or not yet finished, we will list the different steps in order.

For those with existing programs, we will be happy to review your package and discuss any work that might need to be done.

1. **Submit Idea** If you have not yet developed an outline and want to discuss only an idea for a program, drop us a line or simply call.
2. **Prepare and Review Outline** Half the battle in developing a program is having a well-thought-out, smooth-flowing, and interesting story behind your program. We begin by reviewing your outline and suggesting any changes or improvements. Good outlines describe what the program is trying to accomplish, as well as what it will and will not cover. Describing what it will cover ensures we are not leaving out any important part of your story; what it won't cover ensures we won't include unnecessary information that might detract from the story. If the outline flows smoothly, viewers will follow your story and stay interested.

3. **Prepare and Review Script Draft and Illustrations** When the outline is set, we will review your draft, along with photocopies of the material you want to illustrate. Here we sometimes cut unnecessary comments or materials, suggest additions, and help make your story read in a smooth, interesting manner. We will also suggest how to portray your illustrations -- i.e., what material to show on each slide.
4. **Photograph Material** If you have experience in doing close-up photography or have the equipment and are willing to try (following our guidelines and suggested procedures), you may shoot the material. If you do your own shooting, we ask to see samples (several slides) of close-up photography work you have done to ensure the resulting program slides meet our quality guidelines. Or, if you prefer, we can do the shooting here at headquarters.

Or

4. **Scan Images** Set the resolution at 100 dpi/ppi. Scan at 100% of size (full size). Use a dark background so that the perfs and edges can be easily seen. Save the image as a tif file onto a cd and send to the APS Education Department. We will "clean" the images using Adobe Photoshop and create a PowerPoint presentation. Or, if you prefer, we can do the scanning here at headquarters.
5. **Complete Script and Audiocassette Tape** We will put your script into our standard, final format and do any last-minute editing we deem necessary. Then we will prepare a digital and tape recording of the program.
6. **Produce Circulating Copies of Program** We will have professional-quality duplicate slides made, as well as audiocassette tapes, backup scripts, and a digital version of the program. We will provide the program author with a set of duplicate slides, a tape, a script, or a digital copy. If photographs onto slide film were used, we prefer to retain the original slides. This way we can make duplicates from the original master as needed, thus ensuring maximum reproduction quality.

TIPS FOR PREPARING SLIDE PROGRAMS

(...and a word or two about our quality standards for new programs)

All of our new slide programs need to meet established quality standards to ensure programs appeal to our audiences. In addition, we have certain format considerations (maximum number of slides, length of program, etc.) which need to be followed so we can standardize our program packaging (slide trays, cassette tapes, etc.).

1. **Number of slides** (not counting titles, which we prepare) may not exceed 75 in any one program. Ideally, the number of slides will be between 30 and 60.

2. **Running time** (of audio tape) may not exceed 45 minutes. Ideally, it should run 20-30 minutes. As a general rule, specialized programs should be shorter, 25-35 minutes or so. For longer running programs, we may decide to create a Part I and Part II.
3. **Average running time per slide** should be 30 to 60 seconds. We want to avoid cases where we talk for five minutes about a single slide, or only five seconds! Program authors can approximate above times by reading their scripts aloud and timing themselves.
4. **Slide subjects** should be kept within reason. If the subject is **covers**, the ideal is to show one per slide (two at most), unless a comparison is necessary or for general illustration purposes. If the subject is **stamps**, one or two per slide is ideal, unless the subject is a block, a short set, or several stamps shown for comparison. **Avoid exhibit-page assemblies** of 10-20 stamps, which are impossible for individuals in the audience to see well.
5. **Photography should be high-quality.** Subjects should be centered on the slide, well-focused, well-exposed, and shot to accurately reflect colors. Subjects should also fill the full image area of the slide and be shot so the stamp or cover appears level rather than crooked. Backgrounds ideally will be neutral (gray, etc.). Light reflections and glare spots should be eliminated. Scans should be on a black or other dark background.
6. **Program subjects should be manageable and reasonable** -- that is, do not make your subject too broad (i.e., just skimming the surface of the subject) or too narrow (i.e., going into great detail).
7. **Program scripts should be written in narrative form**, like an article or story, and in an interesting fashion. We want to avoid scripts that read like auction catalogs! The best scripts offer a combination of information (e.g., about the stamps, their usage, human-interest sidelights, etc.). Another thing to avoid is excessive use of "I" or irrelevant personal data in scripts -- e.g., "I found this cover in 1973, when my wife (at the time) and I were visiting Uncle Bob in Buffalo. We had lunch at Trafficante's Grill (which serves a tremendous...)..."
8. **Program scripts should be clear, coherent, concise, and complete.** Clear means free of confusing information and wording. Coherent means smooth-flowing and easy reading. Concise is brief, not wordy. Complete means you haven't left out an obvious part of the story -- unless you mentioned early on that you would not be addressing that part of the story.
9. **Factual statements and specific assertions should be supportable** Check your facts, and back up your opinions! If you say that the first stamp from a given country was issued in 1947, be sure it was! If you are not sure, say so (e.g., "Opinion differs as to whether the first stamp was issued in 1947 or 1948 ...").

Factual statements also should be timely. If, for example, if the value of a particular stamp is being discussed, don't use a 1970s figure when more current data is available. If you offer a specific opinion (other than "this is a rather beautiful stamp..."), support it with a pertinent fact or two (e.g., "with only 50 known copies, this stamp is certainly rare...").

10. ***Specialized programs should be brief and interesting.*** Not many people, unless they share your specific specialized collecting interest, want to watch an hour-long, detail-oriented program that does not have much of a story to it. A good example of a specialized program done in an interesting fashion is "A History of U.S. Postage Meter Impressions" (slide program number 114). A sample copy of the program script is available upon request.
11. ***Programs can be made more appealing by introducing topics which may not be universally known.*** Here, we may want to set the stage, and, for example, explain why a particular stamp had so many printing errors. Was there a human-interest angle behind it all? People are generally more interested in a topic when they know something about its background.