

AUSTRALIAN NEWSPHILATELY “DOWN UNDER” (II)

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In my article in the previous issue, I mentioned 'Social Philately' and 'Frugal Philately' as two innovations introduced as experimental classes into competitive exhibitions in Australia in recent years. The Australian Philatelic Federation has long sought to be responsive to the needs of collectors who wish to exhibit, but feel too constrained by the limitations placed upon them by the rules of the established FIP competitive classes.

What are the parameters of these non-FIP classes, which are regularly included in Australian philatelic exhibitions?

Social Philately attracted considerable worldwide attention when it was included as an experimental class at the FIP World Exhibition *Australia 99*. However, it has been a regular class included in Australian and New Zealand National Exhibitions since 1988. Social Philately's definition and rules have been modified during the past decade. Currently the definition is as follows: "Social Philately represents a study of the development of social systems and products derived from the operation of postal systems."

It is the exhibiting of materials and artifacts that illustrate either:

- The social reaction to the presence of a universal and rapidly developing postal system, or
- The development and diversification of a social activity or enterprise.

Visitors to *Australia 99* were able to peruse exhibits such as '*Valentines*', *Stamp Boxes*, and *The Development of Decorative Writing Paper in the 19th Century*, which fitted in the first category. Some of those, which reflected the second category, included *Herzl's Zionism*, *Trade Exhibitions 1851-1901*, and *Mourning Memorabilia*.

Exhibits can include material, which can be included in other philatelic classes, as well as non-philatelic items, which are directly related to the operations and products of a postal system. Non-philatelic material must have a close connection with the operation or objective of a postal system or the paraphernalia of stamps and philately, but should not occupy more than 50% of the exhibit. In practice Social Philately exhibits tend to emanate from either a Postal History or Thematic collections.

One might expect to find some of the following included in a balanced Social Philately exhibit: Telegrams, Greeting Cards including Valentines, Illustrated

and Pictorial envelopes, Post Office and Official office stationery and documents. Exhibits could include Post Office equipment such as mail bags, uniforms, postal tools, or objects associated with postage stamps and their use [letter balances, stamp boxes, post office equipment]. The non-philatelic material included should relate to the postal system. Non-philatelic material not related to the postal system can be included provided it is directly linked to the social aspects of the exhibit but should not comprise more than 10% of the exhibit.

The concept of Social Philately was designed not to replace 'Open' or 'Free' as practiced elsewhere. It can be viewed as a step in the evolution and hopefully, the eventual recognition of a uniform set of rules which enable enjoyment and display of non-conforming philately at international exhibitions in the future.

Frugal Philately Although I must confess I do not particularly like the use of the word 'frugal', the alternatives such as 'inexpensive, economical, cheap, low-priced, thrifty, nominal or bargain basement' have even less appeal.

One of the reasons collectors are reluctant to compete in the conventional classes is the perceived high cost involved. To dispel the widely held view that one must have deep-pockets to compete, the APF first trailed an experimental class in a Canberra exhibition in 1996, where a wholesale value limit of \$Aust150 [approx. 18,000 escudos] per frame was placed on an exhibit.

The exhibit was judged in two steps. First, by philatelic judges according to conventional judging norms for the class [Traditional, Postal History, Thematic, etc]. A points score was determined.

Second, the exhibit's financial value was then assessed independently by a group of dealers. If the financial value per frame exceeded \$150, penalty points were then deducted from the points given by the philatelic judges.

Modern postal historians immediately recognized this class as a medium to exhibit such things as aspects of modern postal mechanization.