

Enhancing the Joy of Creating and Judging Philatelic Exhibits. Understanding *Treatment* and its Assessment as a Judging Criterion.

**APS Committee on Accreditation of National Exhibitions and Judges
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Why this article?

The 7th Edition of the *APS Manual of Philatelic Judging and Exhibiting* (1) is not a set of rules. Rather, the *Manual* includes guidelines to help exhibitors understand the increased level of flexibility now available to create exhibits. That flexibility is a significant change from earlier editions of the *Manual*. We hope this article will help you as an exhibitor and/or judge to use the new guidelines to their fullest extent. In particular you should understand:

- the choices one has for creating exhibits;
- that the exhibitor controls the exhibit's subject (Philatelic driven or Theme driven);
- that the exhibitor chooses the treatment for presenting the material (aerophilately, postal history, combination or experimental, etc.);
- the exhibitor's responsibility to effectively communicate how the exhibit has been treated (Purpose, Scope and Organization); and,
- the importance of the synopsis.

The 7th Edition of the *APS Manual of Philatelic Judging and Exhibiting* (MJE7).

MJE7 streamlined exhibiting by eliminating the previous class and division structure, truncating philatelic exhibits into three classes: One-Frame; General (all multiple frame exhibits [2-10 frames]); and Youth. The judging criteria as summarized on the Exhibit Evaluation Form (EEF) apply in the same way for all three exhibit classes although there is a special form for Youth Class exhibit evaluation (1).

So what happened to the exhibit types of the 6th Edition of the *Manual* (2), *i.e.*, Aerophilately, Postal History, Revenues, etc.? These are still present, as optional treatment types available to exhibitors to achieve an exhibit's

stated purpose and scope. Later in this article we will discuss various types of treatment in greater detail, with references to online examples.

Defining Treatment

Treatment is how the exhibitor presents the story, theme or categorizations of an exhibit. It is the flow of the narrative, or the development of a theme, or in topical exhibits, a logical categorization of the subject. Treatment is the *Golden Thread* of the exhibit to get us, as viewers, from the logical beginning to the logical end of the exhibit. You should remember that treatment does not have to be a straight line nor chronological.

Understanding Philatelic Subject and Non-Philatelic (Theme) Subject Exhibits

In addition to truncating the classes and divisions, *MJE7* also implies a broad separation of how an exhibit is focused and thereby, its treatment. *Exhibit treatment is either a philatelic subject or a non-philatelic subject.* What is the difference between these two categories?

Philatelic subject exhibits focus on some aspect of philately, be it a stamp, issue, or use. These exhibits present a story about the philatelic subject with a logical beginning, middle and end. The story is specifically about the philatelic subject. The exhibitor defines, in the statement of Purpose and Scope, and details in the plan of organization, how the story of the philatelic subject will be developed (its treatment).

Non-philatelic (Theme) subject exhibits do not focus on philately as their subject. Instead, they use philatelic material to develop the theme. In some cases there is a story line associated with the theme, and in all cases the philatelic material (and/or a mix with non-philatelic material) is used to carry the theme forward.

A slight exception is a topical exhibit where there is no story. In this case an exhibitor provides a logical organization or categorization of the topical subject (the theme) of the exhibit (3). Again the philatelic material is not the subject of the exhibit. It is used as a vehicle to present the topical categorization. *MJE7* (1) refers to all theme-driven exhibits as having “non-philatelic subjects.”

What about Post Card exhibits? Picture post cards (PPC) are not philatelic material unless they are Maximaphily (Maxi) cards or they have

postage affixed to the picture side of the card (*timbres côte vu* card). But a PPC exhibit can be treated as the development/evolution of the card types, their printing methods, etc. This then is a study of the cards themselves, much the same as the study of a philatelic subject (stamp or issue). Exhibitors can also use PPCs to develop a theme so that the exhibit is not about the cards themselves. Instead the illustrations on the cards carry the theme and achieve the exhibitor's stated purpose. Accordingly, PPC exhibits can be assessed in the same way as other exhibits.

The above discussion relates specifically to PPC exhibits. CANEJ has concluded that PPCs can be used in any exhibit to support a story line or theme. However, exhibitors should realize that a good philatelic item is always a better choice unless the PPC makes a specific point. In topical exhibits the focus is on a particular topic as it appears on philatelic material. In this case because PPCs are not true philatelic material, exhibitors should use them sparingly in topical exhibits.

The Title Page sets the stage for Treatment of the entire exhibit.

Treatment begins with the Title Page (TP). The important elements of the TP include:

- a clear title that describes the content of the exhibit; clarity and accuracy are more important to the exhibit than cleverness;
- a statement of purpose (what, why) and scope (when, where);
- how the exhibit will develop (type of treatment);
- a plan or description of the organizational structure of the exhibit (a plan can be second page for thematic exhibits);
- a brief introduction to the exhibit subject, including a statement on the importance of the exhibit and its context;
- a key or guide to how special or rare items are identified, how personal research is indicated and how expertization is noted; and,
- (optionally) an item that gets the story started or provides an overview (such as a philatelic item or graphic).

The TP is arguably one of the most important aspects of the exhibit. *It is the exhibitor's invitation to view the exhibit* and can leave a lasting impression of the remainder of the exhibit. The TP together with the synopsis are the primary resources available to judges preparing to judge exhibits.

The TP is the key resource for the exhibitor to effectively communicate to the viewer and judge the intended purpose, scope and organizational structure of the exhibit, *i.e., This is what I intend to do. This is how I am going to do it.*

A special note about One-Frame exhibits since they have only 16 pages or size equivalents thereof: the TP of a One-Frame exhibit ideally is succinct enough to take up only half (or less) of the first page allowing the exhibit story to begin on the TP.

How the Treatment criterion is affected by the exhibit's stated purpose & scope.

As mentioned above, Treatment is the “*Golden Thread*” that ties the organization and the development of the exhibit together, thus achieving the stated purpose and scope. The statement of **purpose** (why the exhibit was created and what the exhibitor intends to present) ideally supports the title and is sufficiently detailed to provide the judge or viewer with a clear understanding of the exhibitor's intent.

Following is an example of the Purpose and Scope for a traditionally treated exhibit titled: *The 1924 Eagle in Wreath Issue. The First Gold Currency Stamps of Poland*, clearly a philatelic subject exhibit.

“An eight frame exhibit showing rare essays and proofs, followed by each of the 11 denominations, including production, errors, and uses in Polish territories and foreign mail. The issue is covered through design withdrawal in 1933.”

The **scope** statement provides an understanding of the limits the exhibitor has placed on the exhibit, be it time, geography or any of many other limits. In the above example the last sentence provides the exhibit scope.

A second example of scope is for the exhibit titled, *Józef Piłsudski. Father of Poland's Independence – The Second Republic*. While the title implies the purpose, the statement of purpose and scope below clearly states the intended content of the exhibit and provides the limits. Note that the statement also provides some guidance as to how the exhibit will be sequenced.

“This is an eight frame exhibit using a display treatment. It details the life of Józef Piłsudski, a Polish patriot and leader. The exhibit spans from his

birth in 1867 to his death in 1935, detailing the major influences in his life, and his legacy, which extends to the present day. The exhibit has six subject chapters which are not necessarily in chronological order. However, within each chapter, the flow of details is chronologic.”

The Organizational Structure of the Exhibit

The statement of organizational structure allows the exhibitor to define how the exhibit will be developed. It can be a simple statement as above, or an outline or a more detailed plan. Thematic exhibits often have a detailed plan as a separate page. This is actually a requirement of FIP and is expected by ATA for eligibility of their awards. However, it is not required by *MJE7* guidelines.

Exhibit Flow or Development

The exhibitor develops the exhibit as described in the plan, flowing from beginning to end. The type of treatment can be any of the former classes such as aerophilately, postal history, etc., or it might be a combination of several treatment types. It can also be something completely new, a creation of the exhibitor. But the viewer needs to understand the exhibitor's intent. The stated purpose, scope and organizational structure allow viewers to assess how well the exhibitor developed the story, theme or categorization based on those stated goals.

Exhibit Balance and Comprehensiveness

Comprehensiveness seems straightforward. However, one can lose sight of the *Golden Thread* partway through the exhibit and not tell the full intended story. One can be missing key elements of the story (or expensive philatelic items).

It is important to remember that balance is not numerical. As an exhibitor, we must tell our viewers why there are fewer or more details and items related to parts of the exhibit. For example in a postal history story, a company of marines lands somewhere and writes a few letters. The army follows and writes thousands of letters. Then nearly everyone leaves, with a small occupation force staying behind and again writing only a few letters. We then expect to see a lot of items in the middle of the exhibit and fewer on the front and back ends.

For balance and comprehensiveness ask the following questions:

- Does the level of organizational detail satisfy the stated purpose and scope?
- How detailed is the story or theme covered?
 - Are some sections dominant or secondary to others?
 - Do sections contribute appropriately in relation to their part of the overall story or theme?
- Does the exhibit material satisfy the stated purpose, scope and organizational structure?
 - Is everything expected represented?
 - Are things missing because they are rare?
 - Is there redundant or irrelevant material (padding)?

Balance as assessed in Treatment is not a numerical comparison (number of pages or items shown).

How the Exhibit Ends

Just as an exhibit needs to start somewhere, so it needs a logical ending for the topic of the exhibit. Themed story lines often have natural end points be they event or chronology related. Topical exhibits also need a logical ending even though they do not tell a story. Exhibits usually end with a summary statement or a preview of the next phase of the story.

A Bit about “Fit”

MJE7 describes the One-Frame Class as presenting a subject completely in one frame (*i.e.*, 16 pages or size equivalents thereof). For one frame exhibits part of the assessment of Treatment regards *fit*. This is an assessment of the suitability of the exhibit subject (focus) such that it can be adequately covered in one frame. The table on page 20 of the *MJE7* (1) provides additional guidance on *fit*.

How Treatment Influences the *Importance* Criterion

Philatelic subject exhibits are assessed on philatelic importance, while *Non-philatelic (Theme) subject exhibits* are assessed on the challenge of creation and the exhibit itself.

One-Frame Class exhibits often have a narrow scope which can influence *Importance*.

The Key Elements of Treatment Based on Assessment Criteria

In summary, the key elements of *Treatment* are:

- Is there a clear title?
- Are there clear statements of purpose and scope?
- Is there a clear statement of organizational structure?
- Does the exhibitor follow the plan or organizational structure?
 - Does the exhibit easily flow from beginning to end?
 - Do the chapter/section and page headers effectively guide viewers?
 - Does the exhibit have a logical ending?
 - If a One-Frame Class exhibit, does it “fit”?
- Are the exhibit chapter/sections balanced and comprehensive?
 - Is the balance logical for the subject being presented?
 - Are all key elements of the story/organization presented?

Examples of Different *Treatment* for Philatelic and Non-philatelic Subject Exhibits

In the examples below one can view the specific exhibits on various society websites as designated in the references (4-9). Also refer to appropriate sections of *MJE7* and its appendices (1).

An Experimental or Hybrid Exhibit. *MJE7* provides the flexibility for experimentation wherein a mixture of different treatments can be presented in the same exhibit. These generally are not philatelic subject exhibits, rather they tell some story (theme driven) using various types of philatelic material to achieve the stated purpose and scope.

An example of such an experimental exhibit is *Postal and Revenue Evidence of Ceylon's Economic Evolution from Coffee to Tea 1836-1910* (5). This exhibit mixes postal history and fiscal revenue treatments.

Another example is *The United States 1943-1944 Overrun Countries Series* (5) which is an example of mixing traditional, postal history, illustrated mail and revenue treatments to accomplish the stated purpose and scope.

A final example of a hybrid exhibit is *The Natal Rebellion of 1906* (4) which blends PPCs and postal history to accomplish the stated purpose and scope.

An exhibit detailing the development of the British Commonwealth of Nations postal system over a long period of time, a likely postal history treatment.

For a good example of a postal history treatment of a philatelic subject exhibit covering a long period of time see: *Philadelphia-Great Britain Mails* (5).

An exhibit detailing the life of an animal or person, a likely thematic or display treatment (if also using non-philatelic material).

For a good example of a thematic treatment of a non-philatelic subject exhibit see: *Beavers: Nature's Engineer's* (6).

For a good example of a display treatment see: *Alexander Hamilton: Soldier, Financier, Statesman, Founder* (6).

An exhibit using advertising, patriotic and event cover material. This theoretically could be a philatelic subject exhibit if the focus is on the production and use of the illustrated mail itself, *i.e.*, development/evolution of designs, printing methods, designers/artists, etc., *e.g.*, *The Evolution of Hartford Insurance Company Advertising Covers* or *The Cachets of W.G. Crosby*.

More likely the use of illustrated mail will be used to tell a story, where the exhibit is a theme driven subject and the illustrated mail is a vehicle used to develop the story and to achieve the stated purpose and scope.

For a good example of a theme subject exhibit using illustrated mail material as a treatment see: *Apple Pie* (4).

An exhibit detailing the development of airmail routes and attendant rates using an aerophilately treatment. This would be a philatelic subject exhibit since the focus relates to a facet of philately (development of airmail routes and rates).

For a good example of an aerophilately treatment of a philatelic subject exhibit see: *Clippers over the Pacific: Development and Operations of Pan American Airways Trans-Pacific Airmail Routes 1935-1941* (6)

First Day Cover (FDC) exhibit. First day cover exhibits are almost exclusively about the stamp and its initial (first day) use, therein being a philatelic subject exhibit. It is unlikely that that a FDC exhibit would carry a theme. However cachets, as illustrations, could be used to tell a story creating a theme driven exhibit.

A good example of a philatelic subject FDC exhibit is: *The 1964 New York World's Fair Envelope and its First Day Covers* (4)

A Picture Post Card Exhibit. As discussed earlier a PPC exhibit may focus on the cards themselves, their printing methods, design development over time, etc. More likely PPC exhibits are used to develop a theme.

For an example of a theme (non-philatelic) subject PPC exhibit see *The Royal Palm Tour* (4).

One-Frame Class Exhibits. One-Frame exhibits can be developed using any type of treatment. They are simply limited to one frame (fit) to achieve the stated purpose and scope. They may be purely philatelic and have a philatelic subject or may use philatelic or other elements (PPCs and non-philatelic material) to tell a story, in which case they are theme driven.

Conclusion

While the examples above may prove useful, we suggest that exhibitors and judges examine a large number of exhibits using internet sites that have galleries of different treatment types (see also references 7-9). Reading the title page while thinking about the purpose, scope and plan of organization, then reviewing the overall exhibit, will help with understanding the sub-elements used in creating and assessing *Treatment*.

MJE7 provides the exhibitor with great flexibility in creating an exhibit. With that flexibility an exhibitor accepts responsibility to effectively communicate the intended purpose, scope and organizational structure of the exhibit. Viewers of exhibits, especially judges, rely on the TP to guide them as to what will be shown and why and how the exhibit was created. As an exhibitor you can essentially let your imagination go and do anything you want in creating an exhibit. But its assessment requires your diligence in communication of your intent and methods.

Enhance the joy of creating an exhibit by making sure viewers easily understand your TP, purpose, scope, plan and treatment.

For additional examples refer to the CANEJ PowerPoint slide set on Treatment posted on the APS website under *Judging Information - Other Supporting Material*.

A Postscript on Synopses – providing information for judges

We encourage exhibitors to provide guidance for judges so that the judges can give an assessment of the exhibit with the best and most complete information available. By convention we call this document the synopsis.

The synopsis is a separate document, usually no more than two pages. Exhibitors submit this along with the TP when the exhibitor applies to a show. Ideally, the synopsis answers the following:

- Why this is an important subject to study;
- Why the exhibitor chose this type of Treatment;
- Special challenges putting the exhibit together;
- How the exhibitor gathered material and information;
- How the exhibitor will indicate rarity and special items; and
- Key references easily available for the jury to study.

It is not necessary to repeat anything that appears on the TP, since the show committee also furnishes the TP to the judges. The best synopses provide the type of information listed above on how the exhibit was created – useful background information for judges that does not belong in the exhibit. An exhibitor can also brag a bit about accomplishments and challenges in creating the exhibit.

The most effective synopsis follows the structure of the Exhibit Evaluation Form: Treatment, Importance, Knowledge, Condition, Rarity, and Presentation. Several layout designs are shown in the CANEJ PowerPoint presentation on Title Pages and Synopses available on the APS web site.

Two critical things should be present in the synopsis to assist the judges preparing to evaluate the exhibit:

- 1) A date. Exhibitors often revise their synopsis, occasionally several times before the show. To avoid confusion, always date the document.
- 2) A brief list of the major references used to build the exhibit. The best references are accurate citations which are readily available from the APRL or public library/Internet. Avoid citing private correspondence,

generic philatelic journal lists without a reference to germane articles, or articles in foreign languages. There is no value in citing standard philatelic catalogs. Do not provide a long list of references. It is not a bibliography.

References for this article

1. *The APS Manual of Philatelic Judging and Exhibiting*, 7th Edition, 2016, pp. 9, 17, 19, 29. (You can access and download it from the APS website, www.stamps.org using the Keyword search *Judging Information*).
2. *APS Manual of Philatelic Judging*, 6th Edition, 2011, pp. 13-14.
3. Andrews, E.J.: "How to Build a Topical Exhibit." *Topical Time. Journal of Thematic Philately*. November-December 2016, Vol. 67 [400], pp. 52-63.
4. www.AAPE.org ("Exhibiting" tab then "Exhibits Online" tab)
5. www.collectorclubchicago.org ("Exhibits" tab)
6. APS website. www.stamps.org using Keyword search *Online Exhibits*
7. www.americantopicalassn.org ("Exhibiting" tab)
8. www.upss.org ("Society information" tab then "Exhibits and Downloads" tab)
9. www.exponet/info (select "English language" and then "selection of exhibits by subject" tab. You can also search by Exponet exhibit category).