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An Overview of the American Philatelic Society

Collect and Connect with the United State’s Largest Organization for Stamp Collectors

Founded in 1886, the American Philatelic Society is a nonprofit association for stamp collectors which seeks to promote the hobby and serve its members. The 28,000+ member organization is run by a full-time staff of 33 from Bellefonte, Pennsylvania and guided by a volunteer Board of Directors elected by the members.

Annual dues of $45 per year (for U.S. residents) generate about 35% of the Society’s annual $4.5 million budget. Nearly 60% of the budget comes from service related fees, and the remaining balance from donations.

The largest share of the dues is used to produce The American Philatelist, the full-color one hundred page monthly magazine sent to all members. It includes a mix of articles written by members, information on U.S. new issues; hobby-related websites; Society news, and a calendar of stamp shows and exhibitions.

Member dues also support the American Philatelic Research Library, the largest public philatelic library in the United States, with more than two miles of books, catalogues, auction listings, journals, dealer price lists, indexes, research papers of famous collectors, and other materials. The materials in the library are supplemented by the Society’s Reference Collection of genuine and fake postage stamps.

The Society’s circuit and Internet sales divisions are used by the membership to buy and sell stamps. An inventory of $8 million, primarily of stamps selling for less than $10 is available through the mail. More than 300,000 additional items are available for viewing and purchase through the Society’s www.stampstore.org website.

The insurance program which allows for purchase of $8,500 coverage for only $25 per year is also popular. Unlike most riders to home owner’s policies, the standard Society insurance includes no deductible and requires no appraisal or inventory (except for individual items valued at $25,000 or more).

More than 6,000 items are submitted for authentication to the Society’s Expertizing service each year. For as little as $20 an item, a member can receive a guaranteed opinion on the genuineness of their stamp or cover. This Society service has been a forerunner in the use of technological equipment employing the use of a Crimescope and other scientific analysis to assist personal expert evaluation.

The Society sponsors two major shows that travel around the United States. The summer event is as large as many international shows with a bourse of 150 dealers, 15,000 pages of exhibits, a public auction, and one or more first day ceremonies, participation of about 50 national philatelic organizations, a youth area, and over 150 meetings and seminars over a four day period.

The Society offers educational programming in its 45,000 square feet of space at the American Philatelic Center as well as shows around the country and over the Internet. Its flagship educational offering is a weeklong event at which about 70 students choose among several major courses which are supplemented by electives and social events. The Education Department also works with teachers to develop lesson plans to incorporate stamps in school classrooms.
More than 450 local clubs and over 200 national specialty organizations are chapters and affiliates of the APS. Contact information for these groups is provided on the Society’s website at www.stamps.org and the APS provides other services for the organizations including over 100 audiovisual programs that may be used for local meetings.

A monthly e-newsletter supplements the printed magazine and provides the latest news, tips, and links to useful websites and other resources such as free downloadable mini-albums.

Some individuals have a misperception that the APS primarily serves advanced collectors, but many of the services available are aimed specifically at helping newer less experienced collectors. The Mentor Program, matches members with a more experienced collector with similar collecting interests. Educational offerings are available at the Society’s headquarters, through the mail, over the Internet, and at the Society’s shows. And the Society’s website at www.stamps.org tries to assist all collectors including nonmembers.

More information on the American Philatelic Society is available from www.stamps.org, e-mail to apsinfo@stamps.org, by calling 814-933-3803 or by writing to APS, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte, PA 16823.

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