

Judging Astrophilatelic Exhibits

Notes on the International Efforts for Improvements

Ray Cartier - SU 1055

To fellow Space Unit members:

Hi gentlemen,

I thought you'd like to see Juergen's comments on Astrophilatelic judging in Europe. It matches what Lollini in Germany told me when I was writing my book. There is no Astrophilatelic Division in the US or Europe and we don't fit in the confines of the Division we are in (Postal), nor do we fit in closely with any of the other Divisions. Probably "Illustrated Mail" is closest except that they put too much emphasis on cachets. Although we like cachets like Goldey's, SCC, Sarzin, Becks, Captain's and Crew Covers, Officials etc. that is only because they are an improvement over others and since many are not attainable for many important missions, we have no qualms about putting Rubber Stamped Cachets on the covers or, as with Recovery Helicopters and C-130s - handwritten cachets to explain the reason for the cancel. We actually need our own Division, just as Thematics, Display, Cinderella, Revenues and Illustrated Mail currently have. And - the rules should be approved by a committee of Space Unit leaders/exhibitors before being published in the next Manual of Philatelic Judging. One step further would be to get knowledgeable European exhibitors to join in reviewing the rules so that we can adjust to where rules are the same on both continents. Then the FIP can use the knowledge of the most knowledgeable collectors on both sides of the Atlantic to adjust the FIP rules. If they don't make changes based on the complaints of exhibitors from across the US and Europe, then the FIP becomes irrelevant and we can all ignore international exhibitions and comply on our continents with reasonable rules that collector/exhibitors find to be in line with our joint

knowledge. It's not the best option, but it is one that might keep exhibiting of Astrophilatelic Material going. I plan on getting a Gold on my revamped exhibit, thanks to the great help I am getting in presentation from the FIP Astrophilatelic representative, and the Space Unit rep in Australia - Charles Bromser. Info at NAPEX from judge Phil Stager is also being incorporated into these changes that I'm making. Prior critiques have helped only with telling me to not use borders, to use off-white paper to add time lines on page to page, and other minor things that had little to do with what was needed to really improve the exhibit.

It's a lot of extra work to revamp this once again, but it can possibly help us to make new rules that all US and European collector/exhibitors believe to be right, based upon our knowledge of this philatelic niche area. I've learned that FIP doesn't want any stamps shown (but, as an example, how do we show what a simple rubber stamp cachet reading "LLRV" looks like without a stamp nearby that shows a Lunar Landing Research Vehicle? We see showing fakes as part of displaying philatelic knowledge but the email review I got was, "show Fakes if you must". Showing the differences in postmarks - Hand Cancel vs. Machine Cancel / Wavy Line Cancel vs. Straight Line / 24 mm vs. 22 mm die hubs (as on the Apollo 11 PRS cancels) etc., is philatelic knowledge. So is showing, for instance, cancels from Port Canaveral, Patrick AFB and Cape Canaveral for Glenn's flight and explaining that there was no Cape Canaveral Post Office at the time. Things like these allows us to include pertinent write-ups to show what we know from a philatelic standpoint. I was given the suggestion to show only one cancel. But then what do we do when different cachets with

the same cancel show up on Captain's covers, crew covers, flown-to-the-Moon covers and insurance covers? We would want to show an example of each - again for the philatelic knowledge. Also, we can't know which non-existent covers will be pulled out of a judge's hat as not being shown. It's very upsetting to those who have superior exhibits to get downgraded for not showing covers that don't exist. We need to get judges at shows in which we have SU meetings, to follow the Manual of Philatelic Judging rule on the USE OF CONSULTANTS, which none of them that I've heard of follow in this niche of Astrophilately. We can't expect the judges to understand the quirks of our hobby and at shows like NAPEX where there may be twenty to twenty-five Space Unit members, the use of one or more of our members as consultants could eliminate this situation. Here is what the Manual of Philatelic Judging rules say:

"Occasionally a jury may be faced with one or more exhibits of difficult, unusual or highly specialized subject matter. In these instances, the Jury Chairman is encouraged to use an available and impartial consultant, well-versed in the subject, who can provide background information and answer questions the jury may have."

I recall that several years ago at a show, in Pennsylvania I believe, when Dr. Ramkisson was asked to be a consultant for four exhibits. As I remember it, that resulted in three Golds and a Vermeil at that particular show.

If we decide to exhibit at future shows where we have an Space Unit meeting, then each of us need to ask for the Chief Judge, through our synopses to utilize one of our non-exhibiting members when judging. The Space Unit should make sure that we have McMahan's book, where "00" under the price listing means that he has never seen a cover for that event, along with other agreed-upon books, to assist the judges to make reasonable assessments of the material shown (as well as what is not shown).

Without exhibiting, we won't attract new collectors. Without new collectors, our collections will not have buyers when we or our children are ready to sell.

— Ray Cartier

Space Unit European Director Jürgen Esders weighs in on the subject from the European perspective:

We have the same problem here in Germany - no qualified judges, no Astrophilately classification, and exhibitors who feel misjudged and stop exhibiting, one by one. The last surviving exhibitor told me things were fine whenever he exhibited in Switzerland or Austria, but never in Germany.

The problem is the same you describe: jurors are ill-qualified and insufficiently trained to judge astrophilately. We have just invited Igor Rodin to give a seminar we have organized to familiarize collectors with the judging criteria.

When I say Switzerland and Austria, the thing that is key to change is - have your own jury members. Both countries still have collectors who have a track record of exhibition success up to the international level and then become qualified as jurors. Then you can check which juror judges which exhibition, and have exhibitors apply for these shows where they know there is someone onboard who knows what he's talking about. It is a difficult and long term effort to, a) have a range of qualified and successful exhibitors, and then b) make sure they act as jurors. This requires a large and deeply-rooted range of qualified and experienced collectors and volunteers. I don't see that either Germans or Americans have that. In the present situation we're more dealing with the "founding generation" that is at the age of dying and/or giving up the collection. Future Space Clubs will be very lean. It takes a dynamic person who runs the show for thirty years and builds up a solid place.

Look at Italy: it's basically a single person: Umberto Cavallaro, who does everything: organizes stamp shows, Astrophilately exhibits, and creates picto-

rial postmarks. It's similar in the other countries: usually one leader who has the stamina to do that for ten years. It must not end like it did with Ben Ramkisson - it depends on the personality of this leader.

— Jürgen

Tim Bartshe with APS Committee on Accreditation of National Exhibitions and Judges responds:

Dear Fellow APS Committee on Accreditation of National Exhibitions and Judges (CANEJ) members,

This is a conversation between Ray Cartier, an exhibitor of Astrophilately in the United States and his group of fellow interested exhibitors. I have discussed things with Ray and he feels as I do that the Astro section in Postal Division is kinda silly and not very effective. He is right that in general most astrophilatic exhibits do not fare well for a number of reasons, not the least in that the exhibitors do not fully understand what it is that they should be doing to move their subjects into a more mainstream treatment and exhibiting techniques. Most of what they are doing is related to an event or a series of events (like the Apollo Mission). We already have a subsection in Illustrated Mail to deal with that and with a little bit of expansion, it can be used to deal with astrophilately instead of this rather antique and arcane system established by Ben Ramkisson in the past.

What do you think?

— Tim

David McNamee with the American Philatelic Society adds his thoughts:

I think the time has come to place Astrophilately explicitly in Illustrated Mail for the reasons cited. Hal Vogel similarly complains that the postal division parameters don't fit Polar studies for the greatest part. Hal was arguing for a separate group of event-driven exhibits, but Illustrated Mail already handles that category quite well.

Ray Cartier concludes with this:

Hi all,

Despite my rocky start in reviewing most of exhibiting problems with F.I.P. due to my overall lack of knowledge of how they and the APS Manual of Philatelic Judging work, it is possible that the effort has paid off for astrophilatic exhibitors. FIP has agreed that the Post Office does not have to be the nearest to the featured event, but a nearby facility is now acceptable (allowing KSC Officials to be okay for launches from Cape Canaveral, for instance).

It appears that the judges who write the APS Manual of Philatelic Judging will consider moving Astrophilately from the Postal Division to the Illustrated Mail Division which will give exhibitors significantly more latitude in showing Space covers in a much better environment.

A special thanks for Judge and CANEJ leader, Tim Bartshe for taking this on for us.

— Ray Cartier



Side Note: Members at the recently held Astrophil 2013 Joint German-Russian Exhibition in Berlin, Germany, were frequently heard criticizing the difficult career path to becoming a juror on the international level. One delegate reported he had been a national juror for Astro since 1998, but was still waiting for his promotion to FIP level. Another delegate recalled that during an association meeting when they were discussing who should aim at becoming a juror on the international level, he was warned that at 40 years of age, he was probably already too old for the challenge, perhaps never reaching the aim during his lifetime. "Let's meet at the crematorium then", one delegate quipped wryly.

— Jürgen