

# **Summit on the Future of Philately Report**

American Philatelic Center  
Bellefonte, PA  
October 28, 2016

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Summary

## Participants

### American Philatelic Society Board of Directors

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*Jeff Shapiro*, Vice President

*Bruce Marsden*, Treasurer

*Rich Drews*, Director

*Eric Jackson*, Dealer Representative

*Trish Kaufmann*, Vice President

*Bob Zeigler*, Vice President

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### American Philatelic Society Volunteer Leadership

*Matt Liebson*, Chair, Membership Cmte

*Melanie Rogers*, Membership & Strategic Initiatives Cmte

*Kees Adema*

*T.P. McDermott*

*Terry Dempsey*, Membership Cmte

*Gary Loew*, Strategic Initiatives Cmte

*Ted Bahry*

*Alan Parsons*

### American Stamp Dealers Association

*Mark Reasoner*, President

*Dana Guyer*, Executive Director

### American First Day Cover Society

*Lloyd DeVries*, President

### American Topical Association

*Dale Smith*, President

*Jack Congrove*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

### Boston 2026

*Mark Butterline*, Executive Director

*Mike Meade*, Dealer Bourse  
(USA/Canada)

### Collectors Club of New York

*David Steidley*, Secretary

### New York 2016

*Wade Saadi*, President

*Tami Jackson*, Bourse Chair

*Matthew Healey*, Editor

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**National Postal Museum**

*Daniel Piazza*, Curator of Philately

*Susan Smith*, Winton M. Blount Research Chair

*Calvin Mitchell*, Asst. Cur. of Philately

*Basil Wilder*, Librarian

**National Stamps Dealers Association**

*Dick Kostka*, President

**Royal Philatelic Society London**

*David Beech*, Past President

**U.S. Philatelic Classics Society**

*John Barwis*, President

**United States Postal Service**

*Chris Karpenko*, Executive Director, Brand Marketing

*Mary-Anne Penner*, Dir., Stamp Svcs

**American Philatelic Society Staff**

*Scott English*, Executive Director

*Rick Banks*, Controller

*Cathy Brachbill*, Director of Education

*Tom Horn*, Director of Special Projects

*Wendy Masorti*, Director of APS Sales Unit

*Megan Orient*, Manager of Shows and Exhibits

*Ken Martin*, Chief Operating Officer

*Jay Bigalke*, Editor

*Mercer Bristow*, Dir. of Expertizing

*Judy Johnson*, Mgr, Member Admin.

*Tara Murray*, Librarian

*“We will continue to be the same unless something changes.”*

1. What can we do to grow the hobby?

A. IMAGE CHANGE

The stamp collecting hobby has an image problem. Stamp collecting has a negative connotation, one of being passive and dull; often associated with “old fuddy duddies”. The hobby needs a “rebranding”. Factors to consider as rebranding efforts are initiated:

- a. Identify barriers to image change.
- b. Describe the hobby in different terms (e.g. incorporate history into description).
- c. Advertise using “cool” role models (e.g. Patrick Dempsey of Grey’s Anatomy, Ron Wood of Rolling Stones).
- d. Rebranding of philately and/or stamp collecting to include relatable terms, such as “postal history.”
- e. Devise mechanisms for getting stamps into the hands of more people.
- a. Promote the low cost of the hobby.
- f. Emphasize the creative aspect of the hobby.
- g. Focus on portraying the hobby as vibrant, creative, dynamic, active, highly personal, intellectual, social, and fun.

B. MEMBER PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES

Questions that are in need of further fact finding and discussion:

- a. How are we serving the hobby?
- b. What does the APS do that can’t be obtained anywhere else?
- c. What are we giving people who are not members?
- d. What are the incentives for non-members to join organized philately?
- e. Is the social element missing from current practices?

Suggestions for improving/expanding APS programming for members:

- a. Create listservs for members to enroll in by collecting interest/category on the “members only” site to encourage peer-to-peer collaboration.
- b. Place greater emphasis on educating both members and non-members on how they can become better informed buyers of philatelic material.
- c. Offer free online courses for beginners.
- d. Increase the amount of intellectual content shared with members and non-members.

### C. MARKETING TARGETS

Marketing begins with identifying the audience to be reached. There are a variety of groups that can be targeted for “personalized” marketing campaigns.

Categories of identified non-collectors to target include:

- a. Former Collectors
- b. Soon-to-to-be Retired/Newly Retired (55-65 age bracket)
- c. Intergenerational Family Groups
- d. Historians
- e. Social Scientists
- f. Genealogists
- g. Special Interest Groups

Additionally, “hidden” collectors need to be identified and pulled into organized philately. There appears to be a disconnect between “hidden” collectors and organized philately. An analysis of this issue may help to identify methods for appealing to these individuals with messages of how organized philately can meet their needs.

### D. MARKETING STRATEGIES – *“One size doesn’t fit all.”*

Effective marketing individualizes messages to reach targeted audiences

A rebranding, as mentioned earlier, is needed to change the image of the hobby.

Promote the hobby as active, dynamic, and current. Increase awareness that postal history is a rapidly growing aspect of the hobby.

Marketing needs to be personalized for each targeted group. Groups need to see collecting as a hobby that is viable, desirable and able to meet their specific needs. The identification and use of role models may promote interest for certain targeted groups but would not necessarily affect interest in all groups. Marketing messages and forms of communication to convey these messages should differ in order to appeal to the differing needs and interests of the target groups.

Important to note: research reveals that an effective introductory activity is crucial for getting individuals involved in something new.

- a. Messages directed at “hidden” collectors should focus on answering the question, “What is the APS going to do for me that I can’t get anywhere else?”
- b. Former Collectors could be reminded; why they first enjoyed the hobby, reasons to return to the hobby, and of the hobby’s stress relieving benefits (among others).

- c. Soon-to-to-be Retired/Newly Retired Non-Collectors (55-65 age bracket)
  - Topical collecting can become a focus for the targeting of special interest groups.
  - Articles with topical hooks (i.e. trains, flowers, dogs, sports on stamps) should be placed in non-philatelic magazines with the goal of putting stamps and the hobby in front of new audiences.
  - Target soon-to-be or newly retired military by placing content in their newsletters.
- d. Develop profiles for both current and future customers.

#### E. SOCIAL MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY

Increasing the use of social media and other forms of electronic communication are vital to the hobby. Social media provides opportunities for getting collectors talking to one another. Virtual stamp shows and club meetings can provide occasions for members, non-members, and “hidden collectors” to collaborate and learn from one another.

Specific suggestions:

- The building of virtual stamp collections by children (and adults) at the National Postal Museum should be followed up by the APS.
- Pursue the idea of providing a safe, “at home”, virtual collection builder for children on the APS website, along with other “family-friendly” activities.
- Apps need to be developed, similar to Mystic Stamps’ “This Day in History” app to promote the hobby.
- Establish an online mentor program where a collector is online at specific times to provide instant access for answering questions.

## 2. How can we work together? What can we do to forge stronger partnerships?

*“Working together we can achieve more.”*

### COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration and partnerships are important to forging stronger relationships among philatelic groups and organizations. Suggestions for collaboration and partnership include:

- a. Share the responsibility for staffing a “Stamps in Your Attic” booth at shows. Use the opportunity to share the benefits of collecting and joining organized philately.
- b. Design, publicize, and present effective introductory activities “personalized” for targeted audiences.
- c. Address image problem of the hobby and of stamp shows (the “-PEXs”).
- d. Co-Sponsor events.
- e. Promote all philatelic events, participate widely, and help to direct traffic to them.
- f. Establish a “Philatelic Roundtable” to bring people together for in-depth conversations, with a problem-solving focus. Develop action plans and track their implementations with continuing analysis of results.
- g. Agree on a “team” marketing approach focused on targeted groups.
- h. Foster volunteerism. Volunteers are an important vehicle for encouraging greater participation of collectors, “hidden” collectors, and non-collectors.
- i. Representatives of the “Philatelic Roundtable” should share progress being made with their specific constituencies.

### **3. The Future of Stamp Shows and Dealers – How are we doing planning shows?**

*“The goal of a stamp show is to meet the needs of a diverse constituency.”*

#### **A. PURPOSE OF SHOWS**

- a. Identify the differing purposes for staging a show. Develop a plan for addressing each; while remembering that show planners must strike a balance to meet the sometimes competing needs of dealers, collectors, and sponsors.
- b. Many shows exist to support local collectors; however, there are some shows that could potentially be combined.
- c. Further conversations on the strengths of shows and the user experience inside the shows are needed.

#### **B. SHOW IMAGE/REBRANDING**

Rebrand stamp shows to something that may attract new collectors. There are image issues with show names ending in “-PEX” that need to be addressed.

#### **C. THE USER EXPERIENCE**

What is the user experience inside of a show?

Shows must meet the needs of “targeted” markets. Do we know how visitors perceive their experiences at a show? Never underestimate the importance of making a good first impression. First time visitors need to feel welcome, comfortable, and knowledgeable.

Social opportunities for both members and non-members need to promote mingling, networking, camaraderie, and making friends. Such sessions need to become an integral part of shows.

#### **D. DEALERS**

- a. Dynamics of stamp shows have changed for dealers, mainly due to the internet. Show attendance is not necessary to earn a living. Dealers are profit motivated; shows depend on dealer fees to pay for show expenses. Show attendance requires dealers to move hundreds of pounds of material, incur costs of travel & lodging, and spend a large block of time setting up and tearing down. There needs to be a reason for dealers to attend; customer traffic and money spent.

- b. It is sometimes difficult to get dealers to attend specific shows. A “day table” with a reduced rate may help entice small dealers to attend shows.
- c. Dealers should be asking their customers to join when they interact with them at shows.

E. USPS

Placement of USPS at shows must be done thoughtfully (front vs. back).

Collectors of USPS issues come to shows to visit the USPS booth specifically. The U.S. Philatelic Magazine is a great source for advertising and promotion of the hobby.

F. PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with other organizations may expand the hobby to new audiences. One suggestion is to invite topical clubs (car, orchid, etc.) and have dealers bring in related topical material targeted at their interests.

G. VIRTUAL STAMP SHOWS

Virtual stamp shows provide unique experiences to a wide audience. Virtual rooms can be set aside for seminars, dealers, auctions, etc. Virtual and face-to-face shows can work together to enhance the user experience.

H. SHOW LEADERSHIP

The success of a show depends upon the efforts by those putting it on. Successful shows happen because of the leadership exhibited by the show committee and individual efforts of volunteers.

I. VOLUNTEERS

Shows thrive when there are many volunteers involved. Recruiting and training volunteers is needed to ensure show success. It is important that volunteers feel valued for their service.

#### **4. Action Plan**

##### **SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

- a. Create a permanent group to address the growth and identity of the hobby.
- b. Presentation of action plans at AmeriStamp Expo 2017 - Reno in March 2017.
- c. Place articles into non-philatelic press using ATA topical listings.
- d. Offer a seminar in Richmond, "So You Want to be a Stamp Dealer".  
(ASDA/NSDA)
- e. Focus on branding of the hobby and shows to appeal to a larger and new audience.