Steve Zwillinger's
Exhibiting TIPS

Figure 1.

Tip 33 – Content matters more than format

Exhibitors commonly spend hours preparing their exhibit pages. When we use a computer to prepare pages, we can adjust the font, type size, line spacing and every other element that contributes to making the page look exactly as we wish. It can take quite a while.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the pages serve to support our exhibit material. As tempting as it may be to admire our perfect pages, we have to remember that our pages are subordinate to our philatelic material and it is the information that the pages convey in support of the material displayed, rather than the appearance of the pages, that is a major factor in an exhibit's success.

Let's look at Figures 1 and 2. It would be hard to imagine two more different exhibit pages. Figure 1 shows a hand-written exhibit page showing two covers from Barbados with minimal descriptive information; Figure 2 is an FDC exhibit page with detailed descriptive text that was prepared on a computer. There doesn't appear to be much in common between these two exhibits.

The major thing the pages have in common? They are both from gold-medal exhibits. They both tell a compelling story and provide the necessary contextual and descriptive information to make it engaging and informative. Despite the superficial differences in appearances, both Mike Nethersole's "Barbados – Pre-Stamp to End of Sterling Currency" and Ralph Nafziger's "Oregon Territory "exhibits are strong exhibits that are very well done. Although many judges suggest that exhibitors who rely upon handwritten pages consider redoing them with a computer, these same judges do not let presentation preferences interfere with judging philatelic material.

What do you think? Is there a significant difference between hand written pages and computer generate pages from a judging perspective? Figures 3 and 4 show two more of Mike Nethsole's handwritten gold-medal winning exhibit pages.

The challenge we have is how to supplement our philatelic material with useful information, presented succinctly, that allows a viewer or a judge to understand the 'how' and 'why' of the material without overwhelming the philatelic material. There is a tension between telling too much and too little. Successful exhibitors are able to find a balance. Both exhibitors strike a balance between the philatelic material presented and the information used to describe it. Each is appropriate for the story they are telling. Whether the information is handwritten or prepared on a computer is not nearly as important.
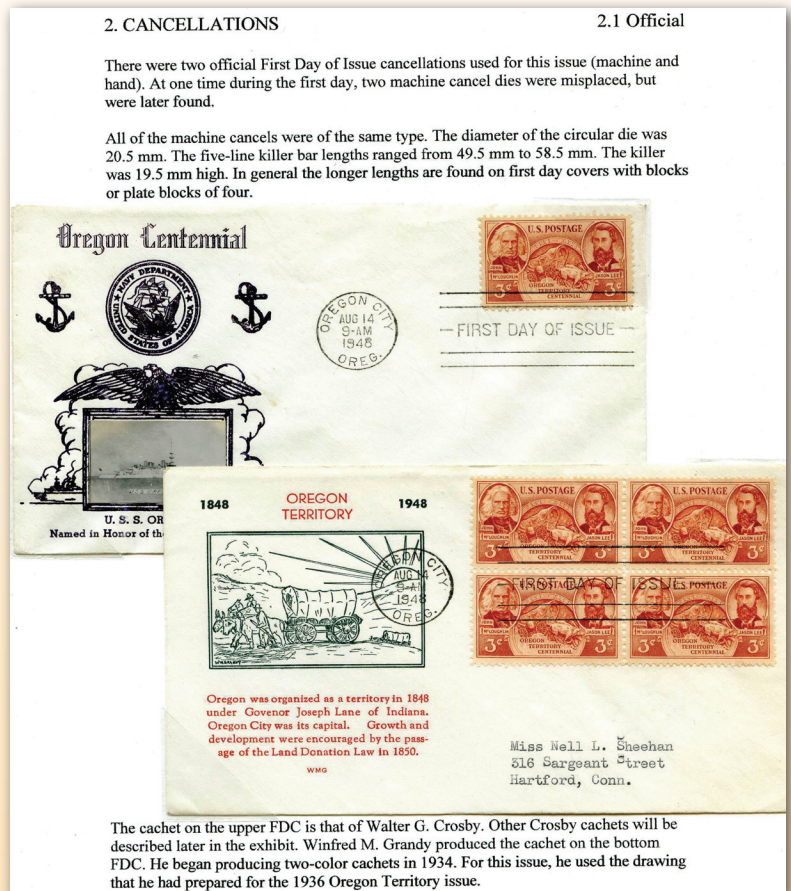

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

Tip 34 – Provide clear instructions for mounting exhibits in frames

I am in the midst of getting ready to mail one of my exhibits to a show and am reminded of the mounting things, as opposed to philatelic things, that we have to do in order to make our exhibiting proceed as smoothly as possible.

The back of each exhibit page needs to have instructions indicating where the page is to be placed in the frame. The only way to ensure that your pages are mounted in the order you want is to provide specific instructions. Some exhibitors print the location within the frame on the back of their pages. I don't care for that as I frequently change the sequence and/or add and subtract pages. I prepare a small piece of paper with page placement information that I insert behind the exhibit page in the page protector. At first I prepared a picture as shown in Figure 5.1 to show where each page in each frame would go. Double pages were shown by merging the boxes as shown in Figure 5.2. Now I omit the picture and use lines of text that I prepare and cut out as shown in Figure 6. The show volunteers who place exhibits in frames do not understand our exhibits as well as we do and they do not have the time to study the exhibits to determine the sequence of pages. We have to make it as easy and as clear for the volunteers to know how to mount our pages in a frame as we possibly can.

Next month: more great exhibit pages and how to provide clear instructions for large pages to be mounted in frames.

Figure 4.

Figure 5.1

Frame 1	Position Within Row			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Row 1				
Row 2				
Row 3				
Row 4			x	

Sequential Number: 15

Figure 5.2

Frame 1	Position Within Row			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Row 1				
Row 2				
Row 3				
Row 4		x		

Sequential Number: 14-15

Figure 6

Frame 1	Page	12
Frame 1	Page	13
Frame 1	Page	14
Frame 1	Page	15
Frame 1	Page	16