

An Explanation

In order to clarify any possible misunderstandings, the purpose of the following presentation is intended to initiate and to encourage discussion and analysis of the current state of the World Series of Philately exhibitions in the United States and to consider how this program might evolve to create a viable and stable ongoing program for the future. The presentation was made live and over zoom at the Milcopex 2022 World Series Stamp Show.

The ideas and discussion points are to be seen not as a final conclusion but as a basis for ongoing discussion before any changes might be implemented to establish a long-term sustainable model.



How might the U.S.
World Series (WSP)
Stamp Show Program
be five years from now?

Many WSP shows are under threat

- ▶ Aging of organizers and volunteers
- ▶ Shrinking stamp market with declining number of collectors and attendees
- ▶ Aging of dealers, fewer needing a booth as sales transition online
- ▶ An inflationary environment with a lack of affordable venues
- ▶ A limited population of exhibitors, shows constantly calling for exhibits
- ▶ Frame fees – which don't cover the real costs of hosting the competition
- ▶ Aging frames, difficult and expensive to eventually replace
- ▶ How can we make these shows sustainable five years from now?

A program of events essentially unchanged for decades

- ▶ A program of events established at a time of peak philately in the 1960s and 1970s
- ▶ Events based on two key components – a dealer bourse and a display of competitive exhibits
- ▶ Heavily reliant on the serial exhibitors repeatedly showing the same exhibit show after show
- ▶ Let's consider the perspectives of the stake holders
 - ▶ The organizers
 - ▶ The dealers
 - ▶ The exhibitors
 - ▶ The collectors and the casual visitors

The organizers' perspective

- ▶ What makes a show successful from the organizers' perspective?
 - ▶ It was better than last year
 - ▶ Attendance was up
 - ▶ More dealers attended
 - ▶ The show made money
- ▶ We don't mind the hard work of organizing it
- ▶ A service to collectors in our community, or from elsewhere
- ▶ Smaller shows can't secure the participation of major societies

The organizers' do not always consider all the issues

- ▶ Why do we have a show? We have always had a show – force of habit
- ▶ How their show sits on the annual calendar versus other events?
- ▶ What does their show provide for the general public?
- ▶ Does their show promote philately and stamp collecting?
- ▶ If they have a youth or beginner area, how do they track its success?
- ▶ What does their show contribute to the present, or to the future of our hobby?

The dealers' perspective

- ▶ An opportunity to meet new clients, and sales made in real time
- ▶ A buying opportunity
- ▶ Interaction with other dealers
- ▶ Ever increasing costs of travel, hotels and meals and to take a table
- ▶ Increasing sales made online rather than in person
- ▶ A horrendous potential travel schedule

For dealers – a very heavy travel schedule

- ▶ Organized with little or no coordination
- ▶ When do dealers refresh their inventory?
- ▶ When do dealers service their online clients?
- ▶ When do dealers complete their office work?

<https://stamps.org/events/events-calendar>

September 2022 month week day < > today

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
				BALPEX 2022		
					MSC Monthly Bour	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
			SEAPEX			
			Lawton-Ft. Sill Stamp Show			
				CLIFTON FALL 202		
				ROAPEX Fall Stamp		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			Greater Houston Stamp Show			
			MILCOPEX			
				Sequoia Stamp Club		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
			Greater Kansas City Stamp Show			Fourth Sunday Sta
				Memphex 2022 Stamp & Postcard Show		
				Capital City Philate		
				SUPEX 2022		
				tuscopex 2022		
26	27	28	29	30		
			Gulf Coast Stamp Club Fall Bourse			2022 Hilton Stamp
				Crossroads Postcar		
				Cumberland Valley		
				MSC Monthly Bour		
				Quad City Stamp Cl		

Show Cancellations

The exhibitors' perspective

What is special about a World Series Stamp Show?

- ▶ Perception of standards - accreditation by the APS Committee for Accreditation of National Exhibitions and Judges
- ▶ Very regulated - required numbers of judges, exhibits and frames
- ▶ **Written feedback and oral judges' critique**
- ▶ Requirements to get permission for limited variances
- ▶ Grand Award winners to compete in the Champion of Champions
- ▶ Its all about the exhibitors and the dealers

Exhibiting by specific numbers

- ▶ Total paid APS membership – 27,268 as of August 31, 2022, with about 80% over the age of 60
- ▶ Speculate on the total number of paid APS members who exhibit at WSP shows – probably significantly less, well under 1,000
- ▶ We appear to devote huge resources to something catering to only a few

Disproportionate resources devoted to exhibiting

- ▶ Catering only to a small minority of the collecting community
- ▶ Exhibitors do not cover the real costs borne by the show
- ▶ Storage and assembly of frames and floor space required at shows
- ▶ Judges' expenses, medals, awards and awards dinner
- ▶ Few visitors to shows look at the exhibits
- ▶ Most exhibits are not understandable to the general public

The collectors' and casual visitors' perspectives

Attending a stamp show

- ▶ Venue for collectors to buy stamps
- ▶ Venue for collectors to socialize, to expand their horizons, meet friends, gain and share knowledge
- ▶ Venue for a specialist society to meet in person, to hold lectures and seminars
- ▶ Venue for casual visitors to learn about stamp collecting at a youth or beginners' area

The collectors' and casual visitors' perspectives

Every World Series show is basically the same

- ▶ Same
 - ▶ dealers, exhibits by the same exhibitors, same judges
 - ▶ mandated rules, same limited feedback from the judges
 - ▶ awards banquet
- ▶ Some shows are better attended, some shows poorly attended
- ▶ Some venues are more interesting, others less so
- ▶ BUT when did you last attend a stamp show – especially a WSP show and say – WOW this is different?

A missed opportunity for change

- ▶ Covid – 19 and cancellation of in person events
 - ▶ this was an opportunity for reflection and to chart a way for the future
 - ▶ the opportunity was largely missed as the old program has been reestablished
 - ▶ shows that were dead should have been buried and forgotten
- ▶ Arguably, there are too many shows, too close together in time not suited to the current state of the hobby
- ▶ A missed opportunity to be in the forefront of the growth in virtual exhibiting, now popular around the world

The advantages of virtual exhibiting

- ▶ Minimal overhead costs, minimal expenses incurred by judges
- ▶ No physical movement of exhibits with attendant risks
- ▶ Greater time for judges to study and evaluate exhibits
- ▶ Significantly greater opportunity for people to view and study exhibits
- ▶ Exhibitions can be significantly expanded by drawing exhibits from overseas
- ▶ Zoom and other services provide opportunities for meetings and exhibitor feedback
- ▶ Can be combined with an in-person dimension and dealer bourse – a hybrid

What are the issues with virtual exhibiting and why the resistance to a virtual future?

- ▶ Do exhibitors own all items shown – a spurious argument
- ▶ Assessing condition
- ▶ Some judges claim they spend too much time judging
- ▶ Lack of team judging
- ▶ Lack of face-to-face contact with exhibitors
- ▶ None negate the validity of virtual exhibiting

A suggestion for a hybrid future

- ▶ A tiered structure of exhibitions comparable to the German / Swiss model based on strong local, regional and national shows – to encourage new exhibitors
- ▶ A limited number of in-person World Series shows in viable, accessible and cost-effective venues, with greater dealer participation
- ▶ Perhaps six per annum
 - ▶ Great American Stamp Show, Bellefonte, Chicago, Denver, Florida and San Francisco
- ▶ New criteria for exhibit qualification for WSP shows
- ▶ Bring together exhibits in the frames and virtually, reducing show duration to two days

World Series shows underpinned by

Limited number of second tier in-person or virtual regional shows

- ▶ Perhaps also six - venues and timing to be carefully selected
- ▶ Combining in-person and virtual exhibit sections or shows
- ▶ Limited exhibit regulation – an incubator to encourage new exhibitors
- ▶ No specific frame counts to encourage new exhibitors
- ▶ Opportunity for preliminary training of new judges
- ▶ Opportunities for meetings by study groups and societies with exhibits
- ▶ A planned series of better promoted shorter local shows

Annual Great American Stamp Show

- ▶ Annual in-person APS Convention comprising one of the limited number of WSP shows
- ▶ Not to be held in August – a peak travel time associated with high costs
- ▶ Retaining a revised Champion of Champions (C of C) competition
- ▶ New criteria replacing Grand Award Winner as the qualification to exhibit in the C of C - perhaps a winner of three large gold awards at WSP shows
- ▶ Additionally, an APS hosted open annual virtual competitive exhibition with qualified judges to be held 6 months removed from the in-person event – perhaps the winner could also qualify for the annual Champion of Champions

Hard choices

- ▶ Cut capacity to match a shrunken market - eliminate or modify weaker shows
- ▶ Concentrate resources to create bigger and more impactful events
- ▶ Dealers will benefit from lower expenses and larger number of attendees at events
- ▶ Collectors will benefit from larger numbers of dealers attending
- ▶ Eliminate a lot of the red tape and over regulation which discourages new exhibitors
- ▶ Use the virtual format to encourage greater participation in shows from overseas
- ▶ The current model is not sustainable
- ▶ Change is inevitable, embrace it



Comments and questions

Thank you for attending