

OpenPhilately

Philately without Borders

Susan J. Martin, Editor
Middle Tennessee State University

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Editorial Board

Ernest West
Unaffiliated, Independent Philatelist

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From the Editor

Susan J. Martin, *Middle Tennessee State University*

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *OpenPhilately*! *OpenPhilately* is a completely Open Access journal, free of any fees for both authors and readers. It is hosted by the James E. Walker Library at Middle Tennessee State University and is archived and made accessible as part of the Walker Library's Journals@MTSU service.

What is Open Access?

For over 25 years academic libraries have advocated for a different model of academic publishing, Open Access (OA). Open Access is a publishing model where research outputs (articles, data, etc) are distributed online, free of any type of access charges. Led by the good work of organizations such as Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) and Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), there are now many OA journals published by for-profit and non-profit publishers, including libraries.

Why Open Access?

As a new philatelist, I was surprised at the number of paywalls around accessing philatelic literature. As a librarian, I was not. As I delved into philately, I did discover philatelic literature that was free, but was often limited to older back issues and not to more current material. However, the most important philatelic scholarship was completely behind the paywalls of societies which carry their own barrier, membership. Memberships not only have an annual cost but, in some cases, one also needs one or two philatelic references or nominations.

As an academic librarian, I am fortunate to have access to a wealth of information for my research and scholarship. As a philatelist, my access to information was limited unless I could afford to join numerous societies. I decided that I wanted to minimize the boundaries philatelists face in obtaining philatelic information. *OpenPhilately* endeavors to be a journal without boundaries with a broad content base, without commercial advertisements, and most importantly, without any type of paywall to access or use.

Publishing on the Walker Library's Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform provides long-term stability for the journal and ensures access. Additionally, it provides content indexing via Google Scholar with the possibility of other indexing and abstracting avenues.

About the Issue

This first issue contains a variety of scholarship and ideas. There's a brief piece about 17th century maritime mail; an introduction to the sporting competition of the Island Games and its commemorative stamps; a pedagogical technique on using postage stamps in the higher ed classroom; and finally, a piece that narrates the struggle and barriers encountered in the field stalwart, the stamp club.

This modest first issue will hopefully be the first of many. To grow, improve, and gain additional functionality, such as more robust indexing, the journal needs additional folks willing to serve on its editorial board to review submissions, assist with copyediting, and layout. We always need content – consider writing a brief piece or submitting a brief exhibit. However, the most critical need the journal faces is a robust editorial board. If you are interested in serving on the editorial board or in another capacity, reach out to me.

About the Authors

Dr. Michele M. Bresso

Dr. Michele M. Bresso has been collecting stamps since she was nine, thanks to a gift of stamps from her 4th grade teacher. A retired educator, Dr. Bresso often used stamps in her Public Speaking and Leadership Communication classes as topic catalysts for students' speaking and research assignments. She also made it a practice to provide stamps to any students interested in starting a collection of their own.

She serves on the board of the American Topical Association and is co-coordinator of ATA's My One-Page Exhibit Program since 2020. She has presented philatelic programs on many topics both in person and virtually. As Vice President of the Knoxville (Tennessee) Philatelic Society, she organizes and schedules monthly stamp programs for members. She is affiliated with several other philatelic organizations and enjoys engaging with philatelists from around the world. She has published articles in several philatelic journals including *The American Philatelist* and *Topical Time*.

Lawrence Fisher

Lawrence Fisher is a systems analyst and senior computer programmer, skills he learned while serving in the Israel Defense Forces. He's been collecting stamps since he was five but became serious about philately about 40 years ago. Exhibiting since 1990, he recently earned a Large Gold medal with multiple awards for treatment for his exhibit "The Jewish Homeland – Our Struggle for Survival" at the 2023 IRBA World Stamp Exhibition in Essen, Germany. Lawrence has a YouTube channel entitled *The Stories Behind the Stamps* (<https://www.youtube.com/c/Storiesbehindthestamps>) which focuses on the story and not the stamps themselves. His channel appeals to both the collector and the non-collector alike. He is also an author, and his book, *Kill Me Now*, is sold on Amazon. Lawrence lives with his wife and daughter in Israel.

Todd Gantzer

Todd lives in the Boston area with his wife and two dogs. He is dedicated to helping philately evolve into a more accessible hobby that everyone can enjoy. Todd collects Straits Settlements, modern Singapore, and topical squirrels. He is the current president of the Greater Boston Philatelic Society.

Richard Sun

Richard Sun, known as Richard Philatelist, is a philatelic digital creator who discusses stamps and postal history on various social media platforms, including YouTube.
(<https://www.youtube.com/c/richardphilatelist>)

Go Forth

Lawrence Fisher

As a thematic exhibitor with an Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) Large Gold medal, I can say that there is a huge difference between what you collect and what you exhibit. Thematic exhibiting has evolved so much in the last twenty years such that what may have gotten you a gold medal in yester year, may only give you a certificate of participation today.

Today thematic exhibiting is all about the story, it is not enough to exhibit a subject called “Trains,” but you need a story line, such as “How Trains helped build America” or something like that. Now, it is no longer simply about trains, and you need material that, in your opinion, has nothing to do with trains, and you don’t have the material either way. Fair point, no one can tell you what to collect, but an exhibit is a different story.

Now in my own exhibit, *The Jewish Homeland, our struggle for survival*, I want to use the Bible phrase: “The LORD said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father’s house to a land that I will guide you to.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

To display that, I need the best item possible. In the international arena, stamps are pretty, but not always the best item to use. In earlier years, it was simple: there is an Israeli special cancel from 2009, with the Bible phrase, “Go Forth”. For many years, I was happy because that was the best item I could find. But is it?

A good friend said that I should look into French Maritime mail with the letters Q.D.C. Why? What? Huh? Well, Q.D.C. or Que Dieu Conduise, translates to "May G-d Guide" or as we say today “Go with the Lord.” This is in essence exactly what I am looking for -- G-d guiding someone to a specific place.

From approximately the end of the 17th century until the beginning of the 19th century, French maritime mail used marks such as QDC. These three letters, added

together with the name of the ship and the captain, showed that the fee for the mail was paid for, although it was quite often carried for free. They were then distributed locally, free of charge at the destination port. It seemed to be acceptable practice that the marks + the name of the ship + the name of the captain meant that postage had been paid, either free or not, so no further fee was charged. Similar markings do exist on maritime mail from other countries such as "Which God Protect" (WGP) (English), "Che Dio Guardia" (Italian), or "Que Deus Guia" (Portuguese), but in all fairness, I have never seen these or looked very hard.

I recently came across this item (figure 1), it is a letter sent in 1689 from Acre in what was then Turkish Syria (now Israel) to a Francois Venturini in Livorno, Italy. It was endorsed 'per Capt. Carbonneau' via Marseille with Q.D.C. notation. It is missing the name of the ship, but these were early days. The X or + shows that postage was paid for, by the sender.



Figure 1 1689 Letter from Acre

Francesco (also seen as "Monsieur Francois") Venturini was a merchant, banker and ship owner in Livorno and had agents in the Eastern Mediterranean, such as the Holy Land. He died in 1690, a year after this letter was sent.

The town of Acre during this period was a part of the Ottoman Empire. It was mostly ruined and neglected, having only a port which served as a busy trading post. There were only 200 houses in the entire town including a few European merchants. The ships leaving Acre consisted mainly of cotton but also ashes from local plants burnt to be used in the manufacture of glass and soap.

In an auction catalog of well know firm, a collection of these surfaced, known as the “Livorno” archives, but few are known from Acre. For me it was a nice addition to my exhibit and provided the perfect philatelic example of the Biblical phrase in my exhibition story. Unlike Traditional or Postal History exhibiting, you have a wide range of fields to choose from to illustrate your points in Thematics. So, research, keep your eyes open to new possibilities, and enjoy!

Topical Stamps in the Classroom

Michele M. Bresso, *Professor Emeritus, Bakersfield College*

Imagine a set of diverse artifacts that serve as effective teaching tools in any discipline and at any level of education. This holy grail of classroom interactives is not fantasy. It is philately.

In teaching communication in the college setting, I drew upon my philatelic hobby to engage college students in the subjects of Public Speaking and Leadership Communication. These courses required students to research people, theories, and societal trends and then to deliver presentations about their chosen topics. Unfortunately, students sometimes struggle to choose a topic, not because they don't have myriad personal interests, but because they don't know how to choose.

Students balk when an assignment topic is open-ended because choosing a topic from millions of options is overwhelming. Additionally, even when assignment instructions include parameters for topic selection – e.g. a 20th century politician, an artist whose work represents cultural impact, an historic event that demonstrated leadership, etc. – the choices are vast. One important student learning outcome (SLO) of such an assignment is that students will build and strengthen core academic skills around analysis, comparison, and criteria-based selection.

To help students achieve this SLO in a fun way, I have incorporated philately as a component of assignments. Introducing students to stamps containing images that suggest assignment topics is a way to narrow the assignment's topic field. As a result, students see the topic selection aspect of the assignment as both approachable and achievable.

In this article I will offer a way to use philately in the classroom that increases student engagement. I will provide an example assignment from one of my courses, and I will suggest how this methodology smoothly transitions into assignments for any discipline. Finally, I will share ways philately can be a tool to break the ice for students

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at the beginning of a new class or school year, and how they can even facilitate the creation of small groups or project teams.

Figure 1 Paraguay Scott #1002a-e and 1003a-c, 1966 commemoratives include portraits of women by (left to right from top left) DeLargilliere, Rubens, Titian, Hans Holbein and Sanchez Coello plus paintings by Veronese, Vouet, and Andres Montegna.



I've been collecting stamps for some five decades – ever since my fourth-grade teacher gifted me with a set of stamps from Paraguay (Fig. 1). The set of fine art portraits and paintings depicted on those stamps were significantly different than any U.S. stamp I'd seen. I was accustomed to envelopes bearing stamps with single-color images displaying unfamiliar subjects (Fig 2).

Figure 2 US Scott #1268, 5-cent maroon and tan 1965 commemorative featuring Italian poet Dante Alighieri.



In contrast, these issues from Paraguay were alluring. At age 9, I had not yet made my first trek to a fine art gallery, so these stamps presented art in a way that was new and fascinating. I wondered what other images I might find on stamps from countries different than my own. That implied question awaiting an answer drew me into a lifetime of philately.

I started out collecting any stamp I could get my hands on. Eventually, however, I realized that obtaining every stamp from every country on the planet was a very big endeavor and beyond my meager, youthful finances. I narrowed my collecting interests to stamps of the United States and of Russia. Dozens of years later, I learned about a different way to collect and organize stamps—by topic instead of by country.

Topical collecting is a flexible way to build a stamp collection by gathering stamps that pertain to an area of personal interest rather than by the nation that issued the stamp (American Topical Association, 2023). Education, for example, is a worthy topical collection in which stamps that show colleges, universities, schools, educators, and more might be included (Fig 3).



Figure 3 Ireland Scott #872-873, celebrating the 400th anniversary of Trinity College, Dublin.

While I maintain my U.S. collection today, I also seek stamps in a variety of subject areas of interest to me. These include typewriters, baseball Hall of Famer Willie Mays of the San Francisco Giants, Maine Coon cats, and any topic that interests me in the moment. As a result, I have many different and interesting stamps that I've shared with my students.

I soon discovered that introducing stamps to inspire topic choices formed a structure for choosing a topic and simultaneously helped students learn ways to analyze and compare choice options from a subset I created with stamps. Additionally, since few of my freshman and sophomore students had experienced postage stamps as anything more than the cost of sending snail mail, the introduction of these worldwide artifacts intrigued the students and spawned their curiosity.

I provided my students a PDF containing digitized images of several dozen worldwide postage stamps. I included stamps depicting images I thought they would find especially interesting and that met the parameters of the speech assignment for that week. For example, one assignment for a brief speech required students to talk about a person, place or event and share a personal experience related to the topic. Students who reviewed the stamp images saw such topics as soccer (Fig. 4), the Golden Gate Bridge (Fig. 5), and Philippine independence (Fig. 6).



Figure 4 Chile Scott #750b, from a 1987 set of 4 commemorating World Youth Soccer Championships.

In the case of those three specific stamps, the students who selected them not only told us a bit about the topic in their three-minute presentation, but they also supported their facts with a personal narrative that related to the topic. The student who selected a topical stamp about soccer, for example, shared how his extended family gathers at his parents' home to watch World Club soccer. He illustrated the importance of the sport by talking about his experience playing on soccer teams and about learning the rudiments of the game from his uncle.

Springboarding from the Golden Gate Bridge stamp, another student provided a brief history of the bridge including statistics about its height, length and cost to build. She surprised her audience when she noted that she has a fear of bridges, so she has never crossed the Golden Gate Bridge on foot or by car even though she has visited San Francisco multiple times.



Figure 5 U.S. Scott #3185l, from the 1930s Celebrate the Century mini-sheet that includes the Golden Gate Bridge, which opened to the public on May 28, 1937.

The student who selected the Philippine Independence Day stamp discussed the importance of that event to her because she is of Philippine decent. She shared a picture of her and her family during their travels to the Philippines one year earlier. She took the opportunity to contrast daily life she experienced in that country compared to her life in the United States.



Figure 6 Philippines Scott # 501, a 1946 issue celebrating independence of the Philippines.

In each of these three instances, the philatelic images became catalysts for engaging presentations about students' personal experiences and familial touchstones. All of the students in the class were able to select topics with ease by choosing from the pool of philately I had provided. Even though one or two of the students later requested to change topics, they came forward with that request having already chosen a different stamp from the list. Using philately to facilitate assignment topic choice not only structured the selection process, thus making each student's task easier, it smoothed the process for me, too. Students had a clear understanding of their topic options, so they declared their topic choice sooner than previous students to whom stamps were not presented. This process improvement meant that I did not have to do as much follow-up with students to get them started on the project by prodding them to make a topic choice.

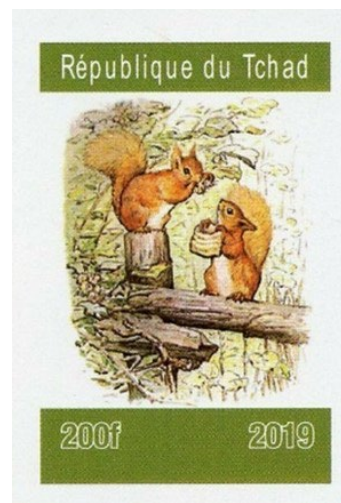
The successful assignment mechanics afforded by philately, as discussed above, transition seamlessly into other disciplines and for earlier education levels. Stamps from around the world represent people in history, far-flung locales, scientific and technological innovations, arts and culture, critical world events, social movements and more. This makes stamps an ideal starting point for research projects, experiments, and philosophical exploration in many, if not all, subjects. A single stamp may be employed to accommodate several teaching scenarios.

Stamps depicting mammals, for example, can generate classroom activities related to animal identification (biology), research about terrain or locale of wildlife habitats (geography), or demonstrations of food favored by the mammal on the stamp (agriculture). Let's take the topic of squirrels on stamps, which is the focus of one of my philatelic topical collections. A stamp depicting a squirrel (Fig. 7) might kickstart a student project to differentiate species of squirrels. In a different course or assignment students might compose an essay delineating the kinds of places squirrels call home. Such a stamp might inspire a show-and-tell demonstration about foodstuffs that squirrels prefer.

Figure 7 Cuba Scott # 3678 – This red squirrel (sciurus vulgaris) is one of six animal stamps in a 1995 set featuring denizens of the Havana Zoological Gardens.



Figure 8 Chad 2019 issue—One in a set of four stamps depicting characters of author Beatrix Potter.



Squirrels appearing in children's literature (Fig. 8) might be a subject suitable for exploring the role of animals in stories for children. Meanwhile, a miniature sheet of stamps displaying flora and fauna of a particular region (Fig. 9) could enliven a counting game for very young children. Teams of grade school students might be tasked with counting and identifying birds, insects, flowers, and mammals (including the squirrel in the upper left corner).

Figure 9 Czech Republic Scott # 3059a-d is a miniature sheet depicting flora and fauna of Sumava UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.



I have even used tools like stamps as icebreaker and team activities. To encourage students to get to know one another and build community in the classroom, consider having each student select a stamp randomly from a mass of stamps in a bag. Give students a few minutes to contemplate the stamp they drew from the bag, including the stamp's subject, imagery, design elements, color, country of origin, and what it inspires in each student's mind. Ask students to think of one aspect of the stamp that speaks to them. This could be a memory that it generates, a bucket list item they have yet to achieve, or a way the stamp represents them. Then have students mingle around the room, sharing their stamp with at least 10 other students. Each time they encounter a student, they should share the stamp and tell something about themselves that the stamp brought to mind. At the end, each student can be asked to tell one new thing they learned about one of their peers.

Creating teams for projects is another way to put stamps to use. Determine how many teams you want to create and the size of each team. For example, you may decide that you want students to form teams of five. Once again, place stamps in a bag as you did for the icebreaker activity. This time, however, put in only one stamp per student in the class. When you choose stamps to go into the bag, pre-select stamps in groups of five. Be sure to select five stamps that obviously go together. That might be five of the exact same stamp, or five blue stamps, or five stamps that depict fish. You'll want to make sure that you pre-select groups of five stamps that can be identified by your students as belonging together—whether that's color, subject, size of the stamp or other characteristic. Once students choose their stamp from the bag, their job is to walk about the room and locate the four other students whose stamps fit into the same group. By the end of this activity, the number of groups of five that you planned for your assignment will be formed. Expect plenty of laughter in the process!

If you're not a philatelist yourself, you're probably wondering how to get stamps to carry out the activities presented in this article. Online sales sites like eBay, Etsy, and Hipstamp will sell used stamps in bundles or lots, and the cost can be quite low. If you are looking for stamps on particular topics, the American Topical Association, a nonprofit organization that provides programming and service to philatelists who collect stamps by topic, provides sets of stamps on specific topics for a small fee on their website (www.americantopical.org). You can also include students (or even colleagues!)

in the stamp gathering process by having them bring in discarded envelopes with canceled stamps affixed.

My use of stamps to teach course concepts grew out of my own passion for learning about the world through philately. Each stamp I come across represents a new opportunity to learn. Even better, those stamps provide each of us a renewed occasion to share knowledge with others. In the end, that's what education is all about.

References

American Topical Association. *What is Topical Stamp Collecting?* (Accessed May 31, 2023. <https://americantopical.org/About-Topical-Collecting>).

Stamps of the Island Games

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Richard Sun, *Richard Philatelist*

Stamp collectors who have an interest in sports may likely focus on collecting stamps related to major events such as the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, and Pan American Games. However, there are also numerous other multi-sport games that are worth paying attention to, including the Island Games.



Figure 1: The logo of IIGA¹

The Island Games are sports events for islands around the world, organized by the International Island Games Association (IIGA). The first games were held on the Isle of Man in July 1985 and were known as the Inter-Island Games. Seven hundred athletes from 15 islands participated in the games. Initially, the games were intended only as a one-off sporting celebration, but due to their success, they later became biennial. The second edition was held in Guernsey in 1987, followed by events in the Faroe Islands and Åland Islands. The most recent Island Games were held in Gibraltar in 2019.

¹ IIGA official Website. <https://www.iiga.org/>

The members of the IIGA include Greenland, the largest island in the world, as well as many small islands, they are located in Europe, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea. Currently, there are 24 members in the IIGA: Åland Islands, Alderney, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Faroe Islands, Frøya, Gibraltar, Gotland, Greenland, Guernsey, Gozo, Hitra, Isle of Man, Isle of Wight, Jersey, Menorca, Orkney Islands, Saaremaa, Saint Helena, Sark, Shetland Islands, Western Isles, and Ynys Môn. Gibraltar is not actually an island, but a peninsula that borders Spain to the north. It is the only member of the IIGA that is not an actual island. For convenience, the members will be collectively referred to as 'islands' in the rest of this text. Former members of the IIGA include the countries Iceland and Malta, the province of Prince Edward Island, and Rhodes.

Sovereign States	Islands
Denmark	Faroe Islands, Greenland
Estonia	Saaremaa
Finland	Åland Islands
Malta	Gozo
Norway	Frøya, Hitra
Spain	Menorca
Sweden	Gotland
United Kingdom	Alderney, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Isle of Wight, Jersey, Orkney, Sark, Shetland Islands, St Helena, Western Isles, Ynys Môn

Table 1: The Islands and the Sovereign States

None of these 24 islands are sovereign states. Although Malta and Iceland were members of the IIGA, they left for various reasons. However, in 2022, Gozo, a small island in the Republic of Malta, became the latest member to join the IIGA. Among the 24 current IIGA members, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands have competed independently in the Olympic Games, while Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, Jersey, and St. Helena have all sent teams to the Commonwealth Games. The IIGA Constitution of 2017 states that new applications are limited to island territories with populations under 125,000, with at

least two sports governing bodies represented in the IIGA program where the island can compete "adequately." Membership is limited to 25 islands.²

Postal Administrations	Islands
Åland Post	Åland Islands
Bermuda Post Office	Bermuda
Cayman Islands Post Services	Cayman Islands
Falkland Islands Philatelic Bureau	Falkland Islands
Posta	Faroe Islands
Royal Gibraltar Post Office	Gibraltar
Post Greenland	Greenland
Guernsey Post	Guernsey, Alderney, Sark
Malta Post	Gozo
Isle of Man Post	Isle of Man
Jersey	Jersey Post
St Helena's Post Office	St Helena
Eesti Post	Saaremaa
Posten	Froya, Hitra
Correos y Telégrafos	Menorca
Posten Sweden Post	Gotland
Royal Mail	Isle of Wight, Orkney, Shetland Islands, Western Isles, Ynys Môn

Table 2: The Islands and the Postal Administrations³
Italics: unlikely to issue Island Games stamps

Sovereignty over these islands belongs to eight countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Table 1). There are 17 postal administrations (Table 2) on these 24 islands, some of which have their own postal administration, while others do not. For example, the British Crown Dependency Isle of Man and the British Overseas Territory Bermuda have their own postal administrations, but the islands of England, Wales, and Scotland do not. Therefore, collectors can expect to find Island Games stamps from these 17 postal administrations. However, it is unlikely that countries like Spain, Sweden, and the UK will issue Island Games stamps as the games are not major events for these countries. Therefore, it is more likely that the stamps for the Island Games will come from the following 12 territories: Åland Islands, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Faroe Islands, Gibraltar, Greenland, Guernsey, Malta, Isle of Man, Jersey, and St Helena, however so

² IIGA. "Constitution of International Island Games Association"

³ UPU member countries

far only five of them have been confirmed to have issued Island Games stamps. All these 5 territories only issue stamps when they host the games.



Figure 2: 1989 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: June 5, 1989

The Faroe Islands issued the first set of Island Games stamps for the 3rd edition of the games in 1989.⁴ Four stamps (Figure 2) feature four sports: rowing, football, swimming, and handball. The first-day cover includes the Faroese word 'Oyggjaleikir,' which means 'Island Games' in English. However, rowing and handball are not official competition events in the 1989 Island Games. During the games, the Faroese organized a traditional Viking boat rowing competition to promote their culture. As for the handball stamp, it may simply feature a popular sport on the islands.

In 1991, the Åland Islands hosted the Island Games for the first time and issued four stamps (Figure 3) featuring volleyball, shooting, football, and athletics. These four sports were official competitions in the games. The miniature sheet included the Swedish phrase 'Ö-spelen,' which means 'The Island Games' in English. Despite being an autonomous region of Finland, the official language of Åland is Swedish.

⁴ Faroe Islands Stamps. "Island Games"



Figure 3: 1991 Island Games stamps. Issue date: April 5, 1991

In 1995, Gibraltar hosted its first Island Games as the only member located on a peninsula, and they issued three stamps (Figure 4) featuring sailing, athletics, and swimming.⁵



Figure 4: 1995 Island Games stamps. Issue date: May 8, 1995

In 1997, Jersey hosted the Island Games for the first time and issued six stamps (Figure 5) featuring six sports out of the 13 official competitions. They are Cycling, Archery, Windsurfing, Gymnastics, Volleyball and Athletics.

⁵ Gibraltar Stamps. "Gibraltar Island Games"



Figure 5: 1997 Island Games stamps. Issue date: June 28, 1997

In 2003, Guernsey hosted the Island Games for the second time but first issued stamps for the games at the beginning of the year. Six stamps (Figure 6) featuring six sports out of 15 competitions. They are Athletics, Mountain biking, Gymnastics, Windsurfing, Golf and Triathlon.



Figure 6: 2003 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: January 30, 2003

In 2009, the Åland Islands hosted the Island Games for the second time and issued a single stamp (Figure 7) featuring a real person, Hanna Wiss. Hanna is the best sprinter on the Åland Islands and is also a long jump and triple jump athlete. In that year's Island Games, she won three gold medals in the 100m, long jump, and triple jump events.



Figure 7: 2009 Island Games stamp. Issue date: June 27, 2009

In 2015, Jersey hosted the 16th edition of the Island Games and issued 14 stamps (Figure 8) for all 14 official competitions. They are archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, cycling, football, cycling, football, golf, sailing, shooting, swimming, table tennis, tennis, triathlon and volleyball.



Figure 8: 2015 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: June 27, 2015

In 2019, Gibraltar did something similar and issued 14 stamps (Figure 9) featuring athletics, badminton, basketball, beach volleyball, bowling, cycling, judo, sailing, shooting, squash, swimming, table tennis, tennis, and triathlon.⁶



Figure 9: 2015 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: April 25, 2019

Featuring all official sports on stamps may become a trend in the future. For instance, Guernsey, which will host the 19th edition of the Island Games in July 2023⁷,

⁶ Gibraltar Stamps. "Gibraltar Island Games XVIII"

⁷ Guernsey 2023 Island Games Official Website.

has issued a set of seven stamps (Figure 10) and a miniature sheet (Figure 11) on May 24, 2023⁸. It's worth noting that there are still 14 official competitions in this edition of the Island Games. Each stamp features two sports, and the additional miniature sheet features the mascot⁹.



Figure 10: 2023 Island Games Stamp. Issue date: May 24, 2023



Figure 11: 2023 Island miniature sheet. Issue date: May 24, 2023

⁸ Guernsey Stamps. "Stamp Programme 2023"

⁹ Guernsey Stamps. "Guernsey 2023 Island Games"

The Island Games can be compared to a mini-Olympics. While the Olympics showcase the world's best athletes, who are often viewed as superheroes in their countries, the Island Games are on a much smaller scale, with a lower level of competition. However, this does not diminish the significance of the event. Due to the small populations of these islands, athletes and islanders may be acquainted with each other. For instance, Sark has a population of less than 500, which is the smallest among the members. An islander of Sark may know every person on the island, and Sark has won three gold medals in the Island Games. This is quite remarkable, and the islanders should be proud of their athletes. Issuing stamps featuring sports on small islands is an excellent way to promote the event and highlight their own local heroes, such as Hanna Wiss. For stamp collectors interested in sports and small postal administrations, the Island Games offer a fantastic theme to collect, with a manageable number of stamps available.

Year	Games	Host Island	Participating Islands	Athletes	Sports	Stamps
1985	I	Isle of Man	15	700	7	
1987	II	Guernsey	18	1,049	9	
1989	III	Faroe Islands	15	800	11	✓
1991	IV	Åland	17	1,500	13	✓
1993	V	Isle of Wight	19	1,448	14	
1995	VI	Gibraltar	18	1,214	13	✓
1997	VII	Jersey	20	~2,000	13	✓
1999	VIII	Gotland	22	1,858	14	
2001	IX	Isle of Man	22	2,020	15	
2003	X	Guernsey	23	2,129	15	✓
2005	XI	Shetland	24	1,658	14	
2007	XII	Rhodes	25	2,343	14	
2009	XIII	Åland	24	2,286	14	✓
2011	XIV	Isle of Wight	24	2,311	14	
2013	XV	Bermuda	22	1,296	14	
2015	XVI	Jersey	24	2,430	14	✓
2017	XVII	Gotland	23	2,333	14	
2019	XVIII	Gibraltar	22	1,700	14	✓
2021	Postponed due to COVID-19 Pandemic					
2023	XIX	Guernsey	24	~3,000	14	✓
2025	XX	Orkney			13	
2027	XXI	Ynys Môn				
2029	XXII	Isle of Man				

Table 3: The summary of the games and stamps

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Perils of a Modern Collector

Todd Gantzer, *President, Greater Boston Philatelic Society*

I started collecting at a remarkably interesting time. I ran across a great YouTube channel; *Exploring Stamps*¹ and Graham's genuine excitement for a topic that he himself was just learning ignited a memory.

The memory was of a time in the 70's when I approached my dad and told him that I wanted to collect stamps. Give the man credit, he had no knowledge and zero interest but tried to get me started with some modern first day covers. I was bored instantly. You see, where I grew up, no one collected stamps unless you count cigarette stamps. There was no one to talk to, to learn from, or someone to tell me that just because I found the first day covers boring that did not mean that there were not some other aspects of this vast thing called philately that would rock my world.

Away went those stamps, in came hockey cards.... I wonder what happened to those anyway?

So, there I was, an adult with a disposable income, and a rekindled desire to collect little slips of paper. Ok, I can handle that says I, I have learned over the years the value of learning from those that know more than I do, so the first thing I do, ok the second. The first thing I did was hit eBay and buy some stamps with squirrels on them.



Figure 1. Eurasian Red Squirrel. Tannu Tuva. 1935

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/c/ExploringStamps>

The second thing I do is hit the web looking for resources, the American Philatelic Society (APS)² has some great stuff, cool, back to YouTube for more *Exploring Stamps* followed by *Ted Talks Stamps* ³ and others.

Ok, I am feeling it now. I own a stock book, some tongs, more squirrel stamps and the first of my new Singapore collection. I have read about the Royal Philatelic⁴ and how the members share info and resources. Seems the logical next step, right? I will find a local group of collectors that will encourage me, share resources, and get together to show off our latest acquisitions. It will be exactly what I need to take my collection up a notch and really, how hard could it be to find a local club if I can find YouTube content right?

Wrong.

I had not been searching the web for an hour and I was already worried. Searching my local plus stamps, nothing. My local plus philately, nothing. Ok, don't panic, let's look at Meetup, nope. Twitter? Bupkis. Instagram? Ditto. Ok, what is up with this? I know people are collecting. There are some folks that are shouting into the ether on YouTube, and people are selling stamps; so others must be buying but where are they?

Ok, I did not get where I am by giving up. Back to first principals. The APS website and start digging. Ok, there are the registered clubs and here is my local...thin options but there are a couple. Wait, snail mail address for contact? I mean, I know this is about stamps, but come on, an email or phone number would have been nice to reach out to for info. A website with some info and pics along with contact options would have been great, but at this point, I will take what I can get.

I spend more frustrating time tracking down all area clubs with some form of electronic contact, or phone, and start reaching out. At this point, I am still excited. I did the leg work, and now I get the pay off. The payoff was weeks of silence. My enthusiasm was beginning to wane. I got a few desultory replies stating that meetings were either

² <https://stamps.org/>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/@tedtalksstamps>

⁴ <https://www.rpsl.org.uk/language/en-US/Home>

not happening at all because of poor attendance or loss of meeting place. But what I mostly got was a vast silence.

This started putting me off the whole organized philately thing, but I still had visions of the Royal, so I pressed on. Besides, I had something to offer. I am a tech guy; I work in tech and have for more than 20 years. I know a bit about websites and have a good working knowledge of social media. I can help update whatever club finally invites me to a meeting and help them grow!

Wrong again.

I did finally connect with a group that had not met in a while due to the membership declining in a way that could politely be described as attrition. They had not introduced new members in years. Well, I say I can help with that or at least help get the word out. I will find us a place to meet and set up a website and social media, so we are easier to find. Sound good?

What happened next really shocked me. I was told that a website was too complicated and expensive to maintain. I was offering to do all the work and not asking to be paid. We would need to spring to buy the domain name but that was about it. Ok, ok, what about social media to bring in some fresh blood and make you easier to find? The answer was that “*Serious Collectors*” don’t use social media and that *the kids* that are on social media won’t be interested. I came to find out that when people said, “*serious collectors*”, they meant collectors of a certain age. I never could get them to understand that we need to meet collectors where they are on their journey, not where we think they should be. I explained how hard it was for me to find them and that we could make it easier for the next poor fool. I was promptly told that the contact info was available from the APS. And that was that.

Here is the thing, the APS is a great resource if; A-you know it exists. A lot of new collectors may not even know that it is out there and, B-the clubs that are listed have updated contact information. I cannot tell you how many dead links and dead emails I chased. It's still a problem now. I recently tried to reach out to a club about something and had to try four different emails before I hit one that did not bounce. Then there is response time. I live in a world where emails are responded to in a day or so, not in

weeks or never replied to at all. I still have emails out seeking information that have never received a response. We need to do better if we are going to attract new people. When you don't put effort into updating contact information, or you wait a week to reply to an email, you are telling people that you do not value them as potential members or colleagues. This will not help move the hobby forward.

Like I said, I don't give up easily. So I got permission to set up social media for the group and started posting content. I found us a place to meet, and we had two meetings with the six members, and then COVID hit. Cue the long hiatus. During this time, I was posting to the social media accounts on a regular basis, and we have followers! Well ok, I have followers. No one else in the group had ever submitted a single thing to post; so I really feel it's mine at this point. There was not much in the way of interest in meeting in-person with the few members that remain, and it looked like the club would fold. This was a shame since this club was one of the country's oldest.

In the next club bulletin announcing a reorganization meeting, I asked the current person who was sending it to include a write up which I provided on how we could modernize the club, use social media, zoom, and all the modern tools available to reenergize and rebuild the club.

I was told that to have a functioning club we needed people willing to take on the roles and responsibilities of officers. So, I gave it a shot. I leveraged our Facebook group to get the word out. At that meeting, folks stepped up to be secretary and treasurer, and the people who attended asked that I be president. No member of the old club attended this meeting or ever reached out with thoughts or opinions.

This is where things took an unexpected turn. I excitedly sent out an email to the only member of the old club I had ever met and gave him the good news: we had officers, we had a place to meet, and we had a small but interested group of people that wanted to press on. It took several days to receive a reply and that reply was, No.

The current non-active members decided that a club that leaned on social media and the internet was uninteresting and had decided to fold the organization. I was further told that I had no standing in the club to make changes or have access to the club's mailing list. I was not allowed to directly contact any member and explain what I

wanted to do. I was shocked. I came to find out that in the three years I had been working to bring the club back to life, my contact had never submitted my name for an actual vote. So, I was not a member. What was more shocking was that the current membership, that was inactive, would decide to allow a club founded in the 1800's to die, rather than evolve.

I will not lie, this hurt. I was feeling betrayed and had another “why bother with clubs” moment. But a remarkable thing happened, that core group that was at the last meeting with me still wanted to move forward.

We were asked not to use the old name; we changed it slightly and started our own thing.⁵ As of this writing, our membership is still small, but we have received our APS charter. We have a website, and we have monthly in-person meetings that all include Zoom for folks that want or need to attend remotely. At our last few meetings, we had a visitor join on Zoom from India.



Figure 2 Greater Boston Philatelic Society logo.

Our website is modern and lists one email address for any query. That address is checked multiple times a day. The site also has a chat function in case someone wants to reach out that way. I often check the links on my site to make sure I do not send someone to a dead end. After the initial building of the site, the maintenance takes me less than an hour a week.

⁵ <https://thegbps.com/>

It's been a long, slow road but worth the work. Recently, we sent out mailers to all the APS members in the general area inviting them to join and are hoping that it will help us get our information out there. We have also reached out to the good folk at Boston2026⁶ to see how we could help them with the event.

Clubs are still an important part of philately; we encourage each other and build each other up. Clubs are a place where new folks learn from more seasoned collectors and serve as a vital touchpoint between the collecting community and the world at large. When you first start on the journey of collecting anything, most folks will look for a guide. Now there is a vast amount of information on-line to help you on your way. But that only enhances the experience, it does not replace the impact and fellowship of having a place where you can ask face to face questions and draw upon the work of others. We need to find a way to help traditional clubs be a visible and welcoming place for people at all stops on their journey. We need to meet people where they are, not where we want them to be. In today's digital age that means we, as clubs, need to be reachable on the internet and through social media.

There is a work that goes into to this, but if we lean on our younger collectors, we can learn from them how to stay current, even as they learn more about philately from the more seasoned collectors. We just need to be open to change and be willing to listen.

⁶ <https://boston2026.org/>