

THEMATIC EXHIBITING

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1. Introduction

This item on the BTA website is based on a Thematic Exhibiting Seminar held at the Royal Philatelic Society London in June 2011 with the aim of encouraging more competitors in the Thematic Class of Stampex and in the BTA Cup, and of improving standards in thematic competitions at Federation and National level. It covers all the main aspects of thematic exhibiting for 16/64 pages in a simple and straightforward manner.

NB: Before embarking on a thematic exhibit in any competition it is important that potential exhibitors should read the rules – including what can be exhibited.

2. Presentation

Only 5 points are available for this aspect, but it is so important as it reflects throughout the whole exhibit and enhances other aspects.

2.1 Size and number of pages

The rules should state the maximum size of pages, usually 29.5cm high by 23cm wide (just larger than A4). It is for the exhibitor to decide the size of page to be used subject to the maximum allowed, but do not forget that with protectors the exhibit becomes larger and may not fit the frames. You can choose A4 size, or even one and one third sized pages (=3 pages per row), or A3 (= 2 pages per row). The number of pages per frame will be stated in the rules, e.g. 16 (= 4 rows of 4 single pages), or sometimes 12 (= 3 rows of 4 single pages). It is possible to mix the size of pages in an exhibit, i.e. A4 and A3 pages, but the balance of any frame needs to be right.

2.2 Pages themselves

These should be plain, with no lines. White or creamy white is mostly preferred, but soft pale colours will do. Black and strong colours are to be avoided, as are fancy pages with arty surrounds and headings

It is always best to use the maximum size page permitted as this allows for the largest items to be shown.

Transparent protectors should be used for each page. Ensure they are made of the correct material and will not damage the pages and material over time. Remember if the protectors are too large they may not fit the frames and could be damaged or your pages may not be exhibited.

Pages should be numbered from 1-32 etc. This is best done with a small sticky label on the reverse of the protector.

2.3 Writing

This is a matter for the exhibitor, who can use a computer, typewriter, or hand write the exhibit. Most exhibitors nowadays use a computer to write their pages because it gives an even print throughout and mistakes can easily be corrected. An electric typewriter can do the same, but without a screen to view the

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page, positioning the text on the page is very hit and miss. Few exhibitors hand write their pages because it is so difficult to maintain the same standard throughout, and if a mistake is made the whole page concerned must be rewritten. However, handwritten pages do lend themselves to the Traditional Class and 19th Century stamps.

Black ink should be used throughout. It is best to avoid any other colour and not use red, even for emphasis. Whatever method of writing is used it should be clear and concise.

2.4 Style and Font

Use the same style and font throughout apart from headings, and thematic and philatelic texts (see paragraph 5.1). The same margins at the top, bottom, and sides should be used throughout – even though this may be difficult to achieve. The main title does not need to be repeated on other pages.

2.5 Background mounts

Black or pale green/blue card is best for everything. Hawid mounts or their equivalent or hinges can be used for stamps. An alternative is to put black lines round everything and mount all items directly onto the page either with hinges or corner mounts.

2.6 Tramlines

Tramlines round the outside of each page are a matter for personal taste, but if used they must be used on every page – and items should not go outside the tramlines! Tramlines can limit the size of items on a page, whereas larger items can be displayed better on pages with no outer tramlines.

2.7 Balance

Pages should be balanced. If one cover only is involved then place it at the bottom or in the middle of the page rather than at the top ([figures 1 & 2](#)). Vertical items should face inwards by mounting them on the left hand side of the first two pages in a row ([figure 3](#)) and on the right hand side of the last two pages in a row ([figure 4](#)). Any image on a stamp, e.g. a portrait or vehicle, should face inwards if at all possible. Writing can be above and below the items.

2.8 Mint and Used Stamps

Use one or the other – do not mix them up on the same page.

2.9 Photocopies

Used for example for the other side of postal stationery, or imprinted stamps They should be 50-75% full size and in colour. Ensure they face inwards ([figure 3](#)).

2.10 Overlapping

This should only be used when more than one version of the same item is being shown ([figure 5](#)). Postal stationery, i.e. the address section, should not be overlapped by another philatelic item. Windowing items ([figure 6](#)) is a useful technique especially as it removes purely philatelic items on first day covers or the exhibitor's address.

2.11 Arrows

These are now frowned upon as a distraction.

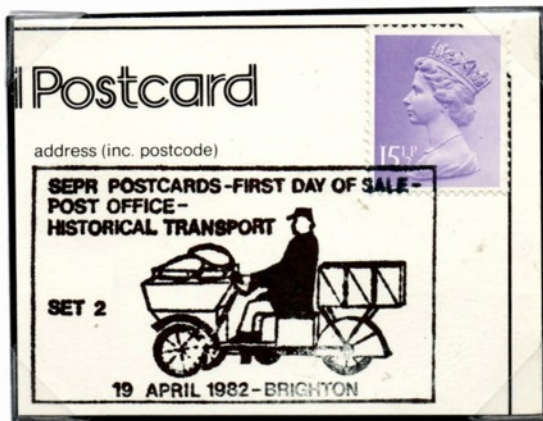
2.12 The "Wow" factor

This is all about where to show your best items to gain the judge's attention. This is most essential in the first 2 or 3 pages.

[Next paragraph: section 3](#)

Figure 1. Shows:
2.7 Balance; 5.3 Range of material exhibited

The two wheeled Einspur has bred some strange, yet useful, three and four wheelers, whereas its direct offspring, mopeds and scooters, have a distinctive feminine appeal.



The motorised tricycle was tried at first with a third single wheel at the rear or front.



By WW I though motorised tricycles had disappeared, but would return in the 1970s.

Figure 1

Figure 2. Shows:
2.7 Balance

Daimler was not the only engineer to carry out experiments at the end of the 19th Century with a two wheeled self-propelled vehicle. Nonetheless, it was the use of his petrol driven engine in the automobile, invented in 1996 by compatriot, Carl Benz, that would eventually make him famous.



Having shown his two wheeled invention could work, Daimler left it to others to perfect, so that today his name is only borne by one motor-cycle factory, Daimler-Puch, whereas his name is everlastingly associated with Benz, whom he never met, and the automobile.



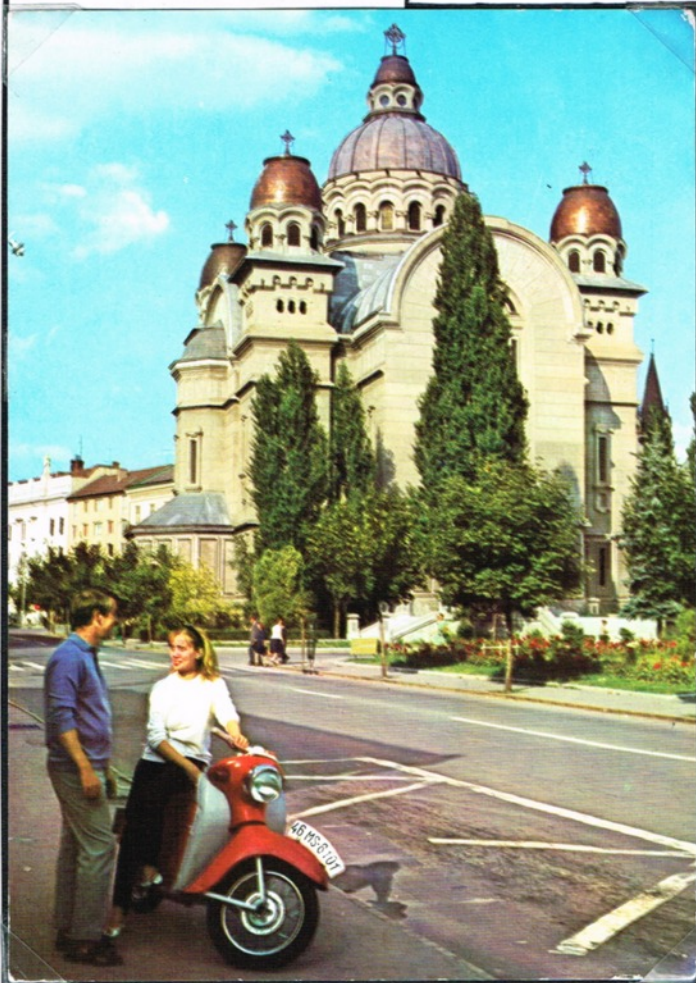
After the invention of the first automobile by Benz, Daimler moved on to making four wheeled vehicles. Benz's engines were not as good as those made by Daimler though. As a result it was Daimler's engines on which the new motor industry would be based.

Figure 2

Figure 3. Shows:
2.7 Balance ; 2.9 Photocopies; 5.3 Range of material exhibited



Scooter usage and production gradually spread outside Italy.



Scooters are suitable for meeting feminine aspirations and handy for getting round town.




Some versions have appeared like compact scooters and modern styling is sophisticated.


Figure 3

Figure 4. Shows:
2.7 Balance


More enjoyment of leisure time by motor-cycle.



Why not impress the fair sex by giving them or the family a ride?



Call at the town hall first to find the best place to go.



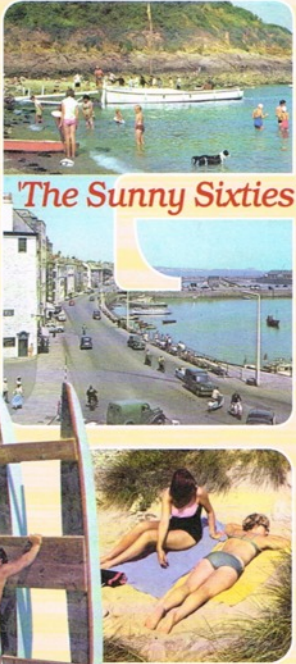
** Perforation shift in lower 3 rows.




Six decades of tourism poster art

Guernsey
The Charming Channel Isle

Guernsey enjoyed more sunshine in 1966 than any other British resort. This statistic provided the ideal opportunity to highlight the Island's natural charms. Not only could it offer golden sands, azure seas and breathtaking scenery, but also perfect weather!



'The Sunny Sixties'



08759

45 poster art ER

45 poster art ER

45 poster art ER

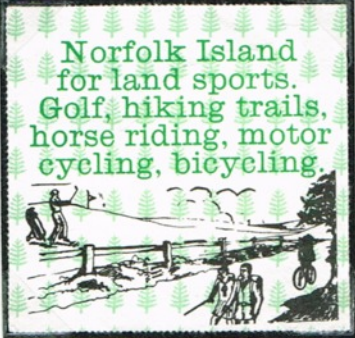
45 poster art ER

45 poster art ER

45 poster art ER

5 026720 133052

Norfolk Island
for land sports.
Golf, hiking trails,
horse riding, motor
cycling, bicycling.



Camping, riding along the promenade or some leisure pursuit could be appealing.

Figure 4

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3. Title and Plan

15 points are awarded for this aspect.

3.1 The Plan is the Key

The following is an extract from a report by the Thematic Juror Team Leader at the International Exhibition, Joburg 2010:

“ . . . a large proportion of marks are allocated to the exhibit plan and development. To achieve a higher level of award, it is crucial for the exhibitor to invest time and energy in putting up a good plan. This is the key step in communicating the story that the exhibitor wishes to illustrate with his or her collection to the audience, which includes the jurors. Here the exhibitor should devote efforts in designing a plan that illustrates the theme in a clear and concise way. In this way the audience can understand the story line immediately and be connected with the flow of ideas as shown in the various chapters in the plan.”

Reproduced from: Flash: publication of the F. I. P. no.113, 2010

3.2 Title and Plan Page

This should be limited to one page only for 16/32 page exhibits. Two pages would be acceptable for 48/64 page exhibits.

3.3 Title and Introduction

It is customary to show a nice item (this can be non-philatelic) to go on the title page with an introductory paragraph ([figure 7](#)). The Title/Introduction/Plan must be followed for the whole exhibit. Do not stray beyond the parameters. Remember to show everything relevant to your title/plan. Do not leave anything out, otherwise you must limit yourself in the title/plan.

3.4 Size of Subject

Do not attempt too big a subject, especially for 16 pages. For example ships, trains or birds are far too big a theme for a 16 page exhibit. You would need to limit these examples to a specific aspect, such as one type of ship or ships in a certain period, one type of train, one genus of birds etc, to provide a satisfactory exhibit on 16 pages.

3.5 Format of Plan

Set out the Plan like a book with chapter headings and sub-headings ([figure 7](#)). There should not be one page per section in the Plan, i.e. 16 sections in a 16 page exhibit. Some sections will comprise two or more pages. Choose the main chapters – up to six to seven with sub-chapters. Don't fit your album pages to the Plan. You should avoid geographical/periodical chapters if possible. Chapters such as 'Philatelic', 'Miscellaneous', etc are not thematic, which is what the exhibit should be all about.

Chronological order is not absolutely necessary even if it appears logical. Just as books and films use flashback techniques, you can adopt this technique in a thematic exhibit. You can start with the present day and pose the question "How did we get here?". Or you can start with the time when someone became famous and then in the remainder of the exhibit retrace the steps of how they became famous. In a well balanced Plan there should be approximately an equal number of pages per chapter.

Lay the whole exhibit out roughly beforehand to see if you have enough/too little material.

3.6 Personal Touch

A personal approach which especially displays originality and innovation will score points.

[Next paragraph section 4](#)

Figure 5. Shows:
2.10 Overlapping

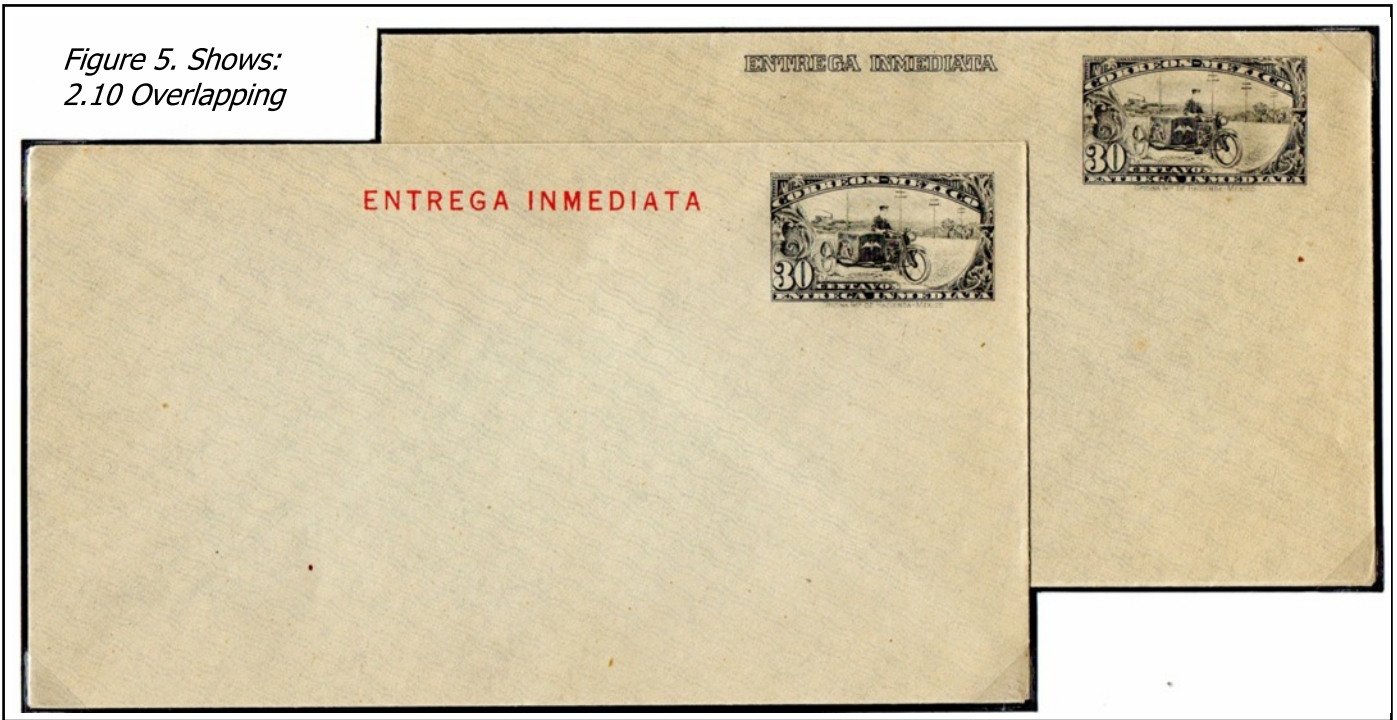


Figure 6. Shows:
2.10 Overlapping (back and front)

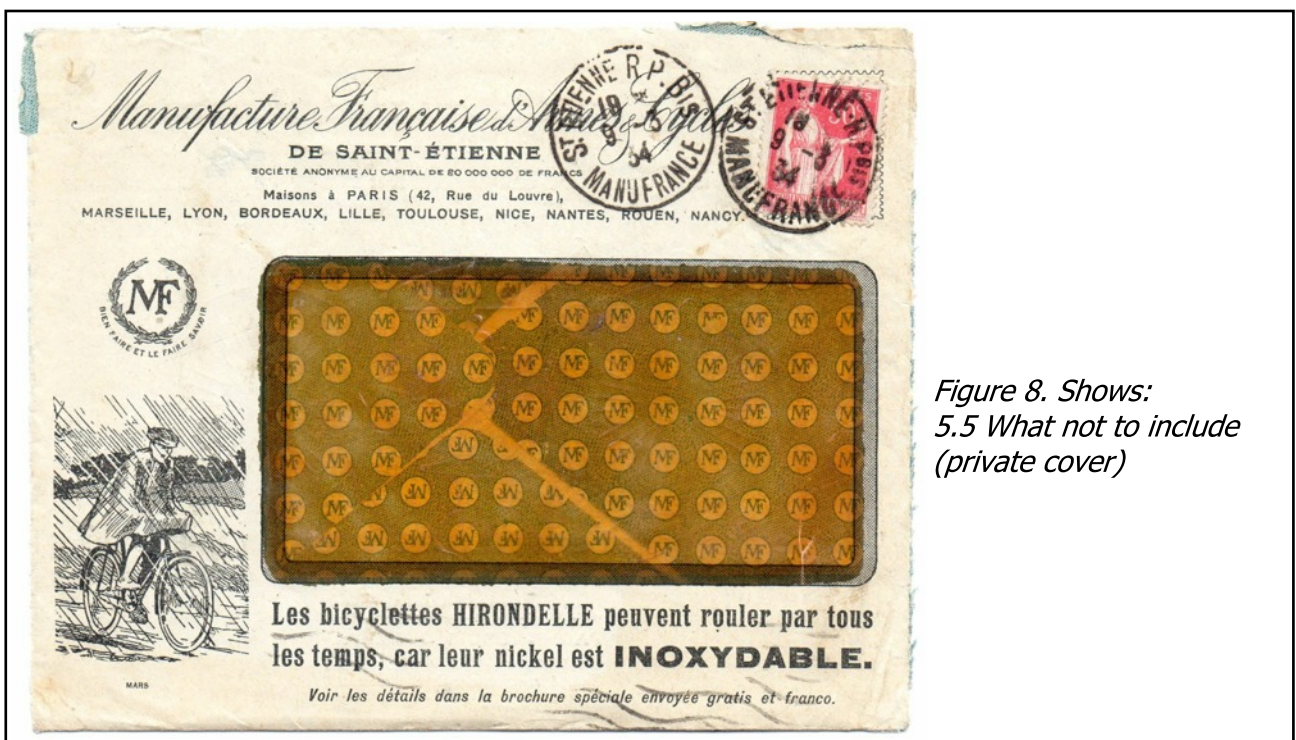


Figure 8. Shows:
5.5 What not to include
(private cover)

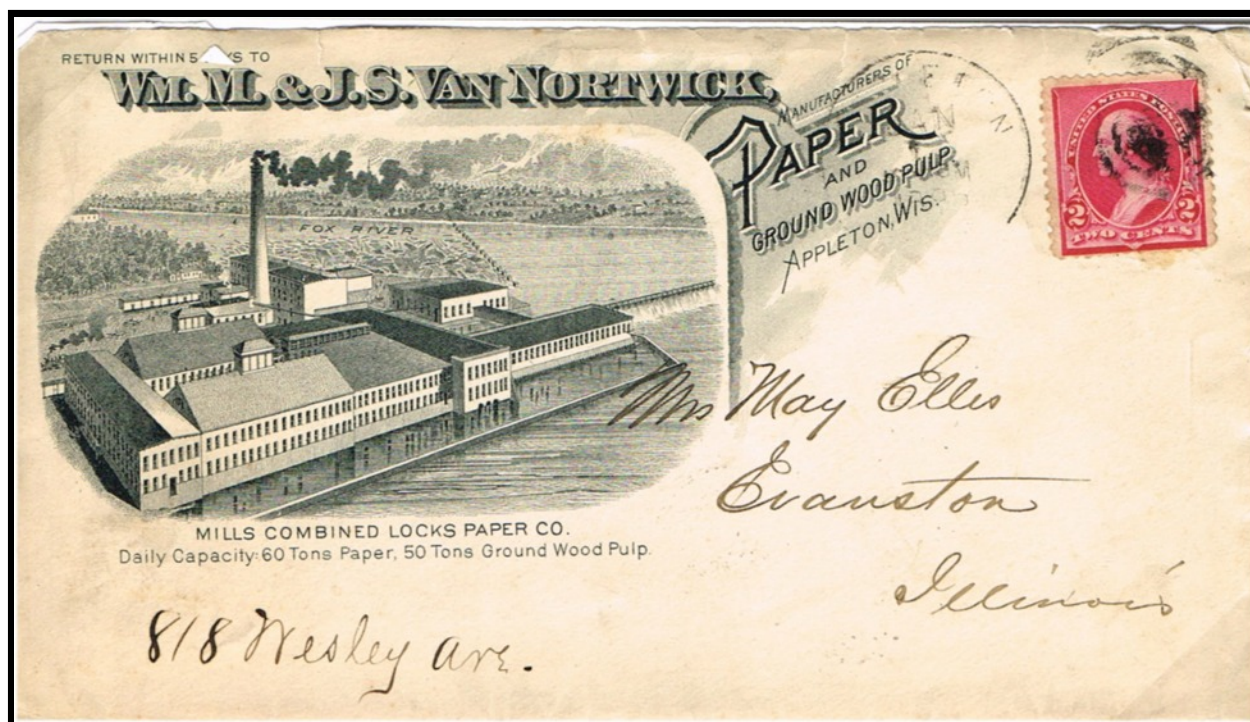
Figure 7. Shows:

3.3 Title and Introduction; 3.5 Format of Plan; 5.2 Philatelic Knowledge

WORTH THE PAPER IT'S WRITTEN ON: Making and using paper

Plan	No. of pages	Introduction
1 A great invention	1	Paper is a material made from wood pulp, rags or other fibrous substances. Today it is most commonly made from the cellulose fibre of softwood trees. Taking its name from papyrus, true paper was invented by the Chinese in about AD105 and imported into Europe via the Middle East. By the mid 13th century papermaking had reached Spain and Italy, and the first English paper mill opened in 1494. Originally made by hand, paper making machines were invented in the 19th century which produced rolls rather than sheets of paper. Paper now has a wide number of uses, common ones being the written or printed word, and (as cardboard) packaging. This display starts with the range of materials used before paper was known, its invention, and then looks at developed. It covers some of the myriad uses to which paper can be put, how it has been affected by policies such as taxes, attempts to cope with shortages, and efforts being made today to get the most from the resource. Finally it considers the future, and the possible redundancy of paper.
Knowledge moves westwards	1	
The raw materials	1	
The basic process	1	
The mould	1	
Watermarks	1	
Early paper mills	2	
2 Industrialisation: mechanised paper mills		
Wood: the raw material	1	
Chemical improvements	1	
The modern mill	2	
The paper roll	1	
The paper industry	1	
Types of paper	4	
3 An invaluable resource: uses of paper	4	
4 Officialdom gets involved		
Taxes on paper	1	
Newspaper taxes	1	
Paper through the post	1	
5 A commodity in demand		
Paper shortages	2	
Recycling	2	
6 The future: attempts to replace paper	2	

Thematic information in plain text, *philatelic information in italics*



Mills Combined Locks Paper Company
Appleton Wisconsin to Evanston Illinois, 1 January 1895

Figure 7

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4. Developing the Plan

There are 20 points for this aspect including 5 points for originality/innovation.

4.1 Review at Every Stage

Tell a story throughout with a continuous thread – always go back to the title/plan and review what has been presented so far. Is everything covered by the title/plan? Does it need to be? Has an item been included which should not be there? There is no need to describe items in detail, only their relevance to the theme.

4.2 Best Use of Items

Make the best use of the philatelic material available to tell the story. There may be more than one place for an item; ensure it goes in the best place. Also ensure that what is on the page fits the chapter concerned. Look for items which illustrate your knowledge of the theme especially in greater depth or in a new way. Avoid tenuous items – do not bring in something that is superb philatelically, but unconnected to the theme.

4.3 The Story: Causes and Consequences

You need to include the causes and consequences when telling the story. For example, if you have a chapter on the express delivery of mail by motorised transport in an exhibit on the delivery of the post in the 20th Century, you would need to explain with appropriate material that delivery of mail on foot or by horse was too slow in certain circumstances.

4.4 Text and Material

This must blend together. Does the text refer to something which is not illustrated?

4.5 Maintaining the Thread

There should be a link between the chapters: in the last line of the last page of each chapter provide a linking text to the next chapter.

4.6 Placing the Text

The text at the top of the page should be a general explanation; underneath should be a fuller explanation, but not too much.

4.7 Final Chapter

You should strive for a strong ending – keep it positive, not negative.

5. Thematic and Philatelic Knowledge

There are 15 points for each of these aspects.

5.1 Thematic Knowledge

Know your theme back to front – all the detours and sidelines – demonstrate this in your exhibit.

5.2 Philatelic Knowledge

Pick your best items, but not those that are purely philatelic such as illustrated first day covers. Have you included the key items for your theme? Judges will expect to see certain items for a particular theme.

Use different fonts for thematic and philatelic texts, showing these on the first page with the latter in a smaller font ([figure 7](#)).

5.3 Range of Material Exhibited

This should include as many different philatelic categories as possible and be from as many countries as possible. Vary the material on each page – aim for 3 different philatelic items per page ([figures 1 & 3](#)). For example, do not show a complete page of stamps or of metermarks.

[Next paragraph section 5.4](#)

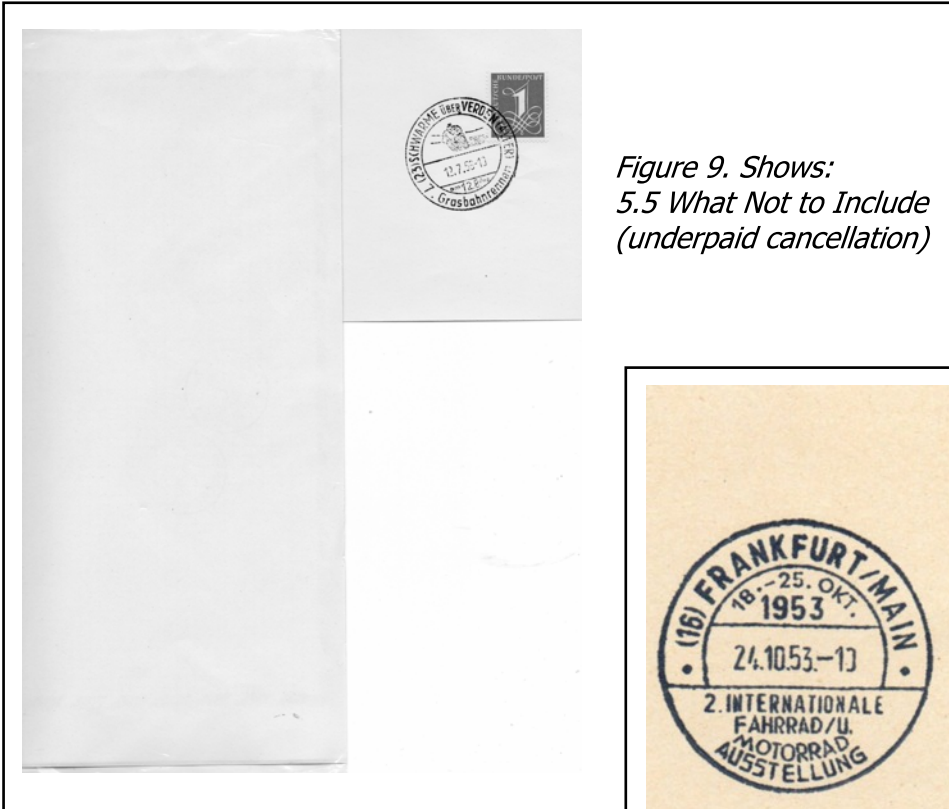


Figure 9. Shows:
5.5 What Not to Include
(underpaid cancellation)



Figure 10. Shows:
5.5 What Not to Include (double cancellation)



Figure 11. Shows:
5.5 What Not to Include (unaddressed cover)



Figure 12. Shows:
5.5 What Not to Include
(appendix / illegal issues)



Figure 13. Shows:
5.5 What Not to Include (cancelled to order)



Figure 14. Shows:
5.5 What Not to Include
(personalised stamp)

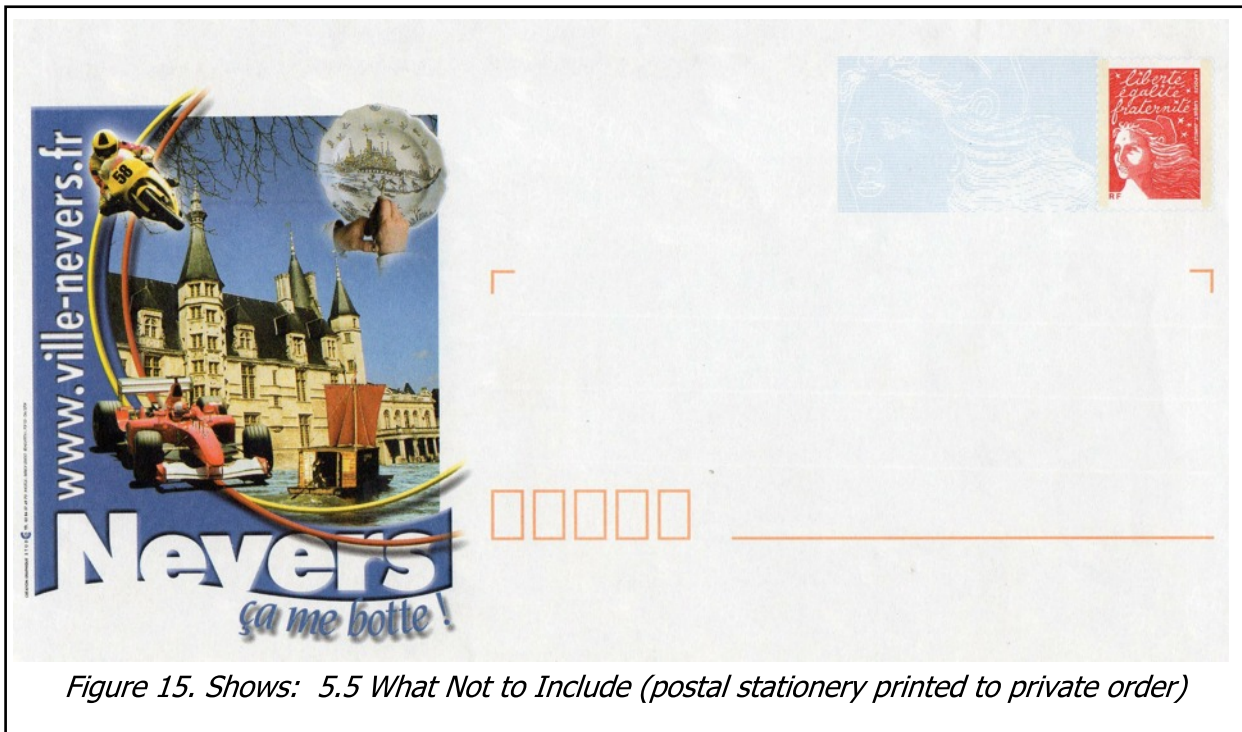


Figure 15. Shows: 5.5 What Not to Include (postal stationery printed to private order)

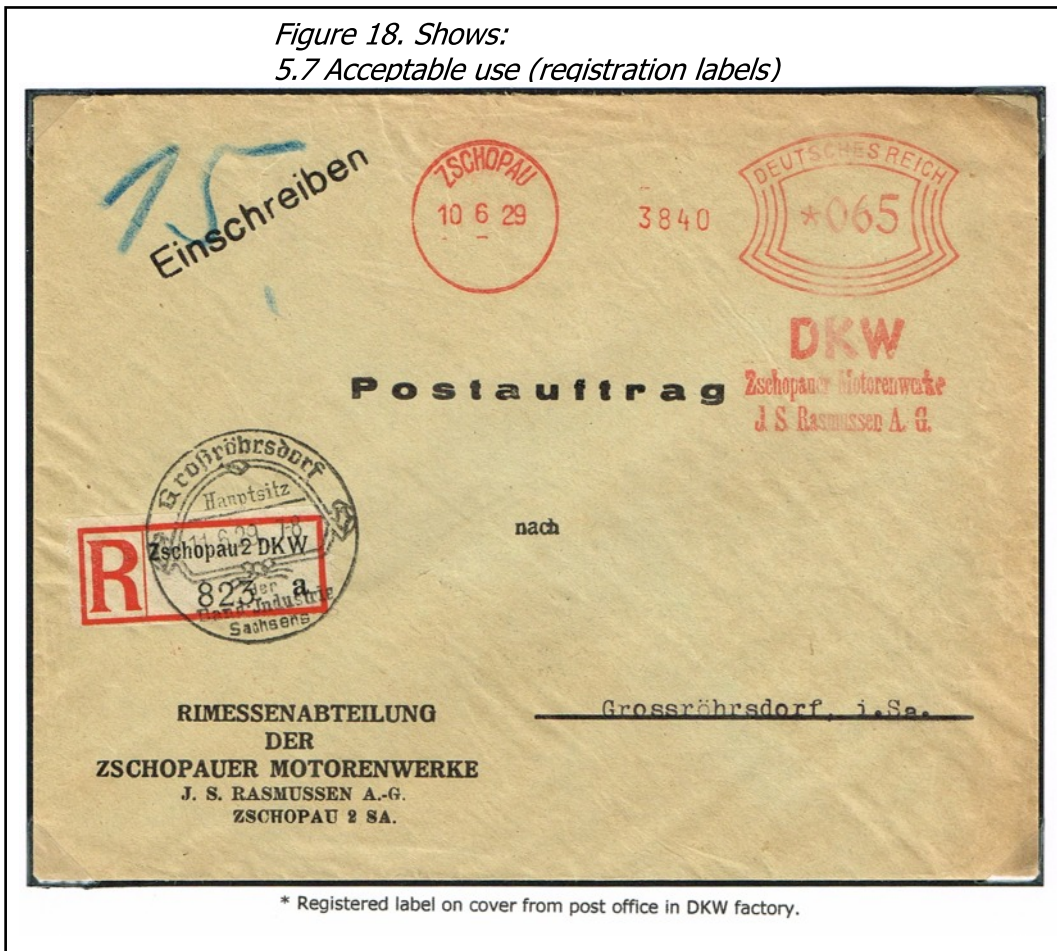


Figure 16. Shows:
5.7 Acceptable use (private post)



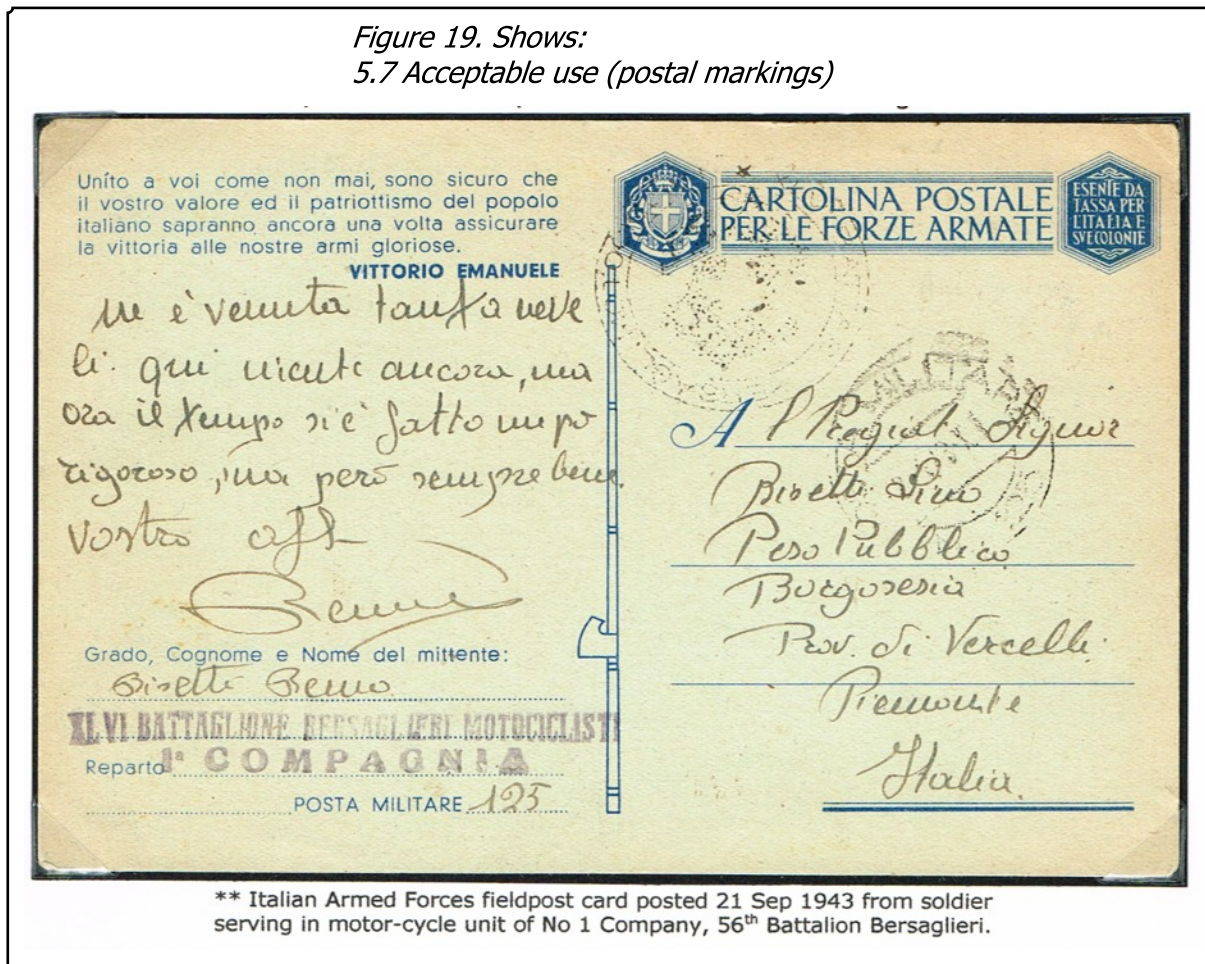
Figure 17. Shows:
5.7 Acceptable use
(metermark)

Figure 18. Shows:
5.7 Acceptable use (registration labels)



* Registered label on cover from post office in DKW factory.

Figure 19. Shows:
5.7 Acceptable use (postal markings)



** Italian Armed Forces fieldpost card posted 21 Sep 1943 from soldier serving in motor-cycle unit of No 1 Company, 56th Battalion Bersaglieri.

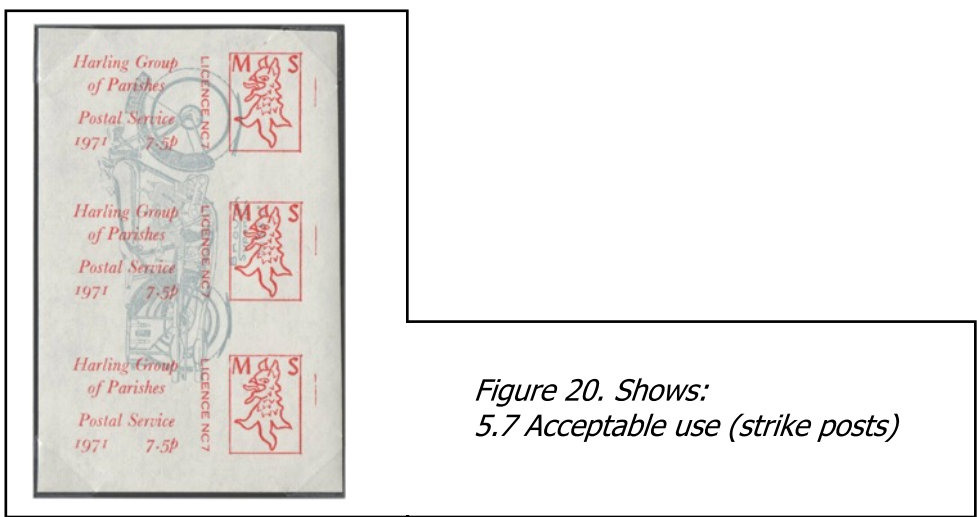


Figure 20. Shows:
5.7 Acceptable use (strike posts)



Fig 21 Acceptable use (printing error)



Figure 22. Shows:
5.7 Acceptable use (design error)

Inscribed 'first ever world speedway championships' in error. It is a minor event at Crystal Palace.

**THEMATIC PHILATELY
NATIONAL MARKING SCHEDULE**

Treatment	Title and Plan	15	
	Development	15	
	Innovation	5	
			35
Knowledge, Study and Research	Thematic	15	
	Philatelic	15	
			30
Condition and Rarity	Condition	10	
	Rarity	20	
			30
Presentation		5	
			5
Total			100

5.4 Period of Time

The period of time covered by the items should be from as wide a period as possible, which may be difficult for some modern themes. Recent items should be included, but wherever possible it is recommended to show pre World War II material. Do not show all recent material – there will be appropriate earlier material for your theme, it just needs looking for.

5.5 What Not to Include

The exhibit should not include postcards, private covers ([figure 8](#)), underpaid cancellations ([figure 9](#)), double cancellations ([figure 10](#)), a cancellation on an unaddressed cover ([figure 11](#)), appendix/illegal issues ([figure 12](#)), Cancelled To Order ([figure 13](#)) and personalised stamps ([figure 14](#)), FDCs unless the handstamp was only available on the first day of issue, and postal stationery printed to private order ([figure 15](#)). None of these items were produced by a Post Office for use through the normal postal service.

5.6 Restricted Use

Limit the inclusion of miniature sheets and maximum cards as these had restricted postal use if any at all.

5.7 Acceptable use

Local stamps are acceptable if used on piece. Their use should be explained in the philatelic text ([figure 16](#)).

Metermarks – these are better if pre World War II and from third world countries which have had little use of metered mail ([figure 17](#)).

Acceptable and borderline items – these can include registration labels ([figure 18](#)), postal markings ([figure 19](#)), strike posts ([figure 20](#)) etc, all of which are acceptable in a thematic exhibit.

Printing and design errors should be placed throughout the exhibit ([figure 21](#)), and use personal knowledge (thematic) to describe design errors ([figure 22](#)). Remember that design errors are expected in some themes, e.g. maps, people etc.

5.8 One Country Themes

Care needs to be exercised here to show material from more than the country involved.

6. Condition and Rarity

10 points available for each of these aspects.

6.1 Condition

It is expected that modern material will be pristine, clean and entirely undamaged.

6.2 Rarity

Do not indicate the value of an item in the exhibit, but state, for example, "one of three known". Erase any purchase prices from covers.

7. Conclusions

Be prepared to accept constructive criticism from the judges – don't give up on adverse comments – rise above them.

The following books (all available from the BTA Library) are recommended for a more detailed explanation of thematic exhibiting:

L'Association Francaise de Philatelie Thematique (The French Thematic Association) *La Philatelie Thematique (Thematic Philately)*

Van den Bold, W. E. J. *Handbook of Thematic Philately* (1994)

Vegter, Wobbe *Thematic Exhibiting* (2010)