

The last *FIP Aerophilately Commission Newsletter* stated that a seminar was to be held in Korea . . . [on] “*Airmail Stamps as a Sub-Class of Aerophilately*”. Though not everyone was happy with the direction that we were taking at the seminar, *it had already been decided* [emphasis added] at a meeting with the FIP Board before the seminar that the Commission would like to proceed and add airmail stamps as a sub-class.

The *SREVs* and *Guidelines for Judging Aerophilatelic Exhibits* have now been approved by the FIP Board and are on the FIP website. The old *SREVs* and *Guidelines* will remain on the FIP Commission website alongside the new *SREVs* and *Guidelines* so that you can see that what has actually changed.

The seminar in Singapore will be “*How to Write Up an Exhibit of Airmail Stamps for Aerophilately*” on the new sub-class with assurance to be given that if you wish to continue to show the development of airmail with covers only, then nothing has changed.

Ross Wood, Chairman
FIP Aerophilately Commission

(excerpt from FIP Aerophilately Commission Newsletter No. 4)

Op-Ed

On Creating Sub-Classes for Aerophilately Exhibits

Jim Graue

Although only a small minority of collectors actively engage in exhibiting, it is an important aspect of our hobby from which we all benefit. It provides interest, education, insight, inspiration and enjoyment. When changes to long-standing exhibiting principles are advanced, it is a call for our attention.

Introduction

A few weeks ago, a report on the FIP meeting in Singapore 2015 noted that the FIP Aerophilately Commission was proposing the division of Aerophilately Class into two sub-sections:

- (1) Development and Operations of Airmail Services, and
- (2) Airmail Stamps and their use in Airmail Services.

The stated driving force for this proposal was a desire to avoid having exhibits that were entered as Aerophilately reclassified as Traditional because the exhibit focus was airmail stamps rather than aerpostal history.

I expressed general opposition to this idea in the *Airpost Journal*, but took no immediate action to determine its status. Inaction almost invariably is followed by regret, but in this instance it made no difference. As it turns out, the train had already departed. This proposal to create two sub-classes of Aerophilately was magically railroaded through, and in fact had already been approved by the FIP Board. *Fait accompli!*

Comments from Our FIP Representatives

AAMS has no standing with FIP. The APS is the US representative to FIP, including the various commissions. Steve Reinhard is our APS-appointed representative to the FIP Commission for Aerophilately and a past president of that commission. My inquiry to Steve about the "two sub-class" question brought the following reply.

*I was at a Commission Meeting (Australia?) where this came up. I expressed my opinion that under the then-current regulations, the appropriate part (written by me when I was Commission President), allowed airmail stamps in airmail exhibits **provided that the focus was still on the development of airmail services**. The majority of those present (about 30 people, as I recall) felt that this needed to be further clarified so that exhibits would stop being transferred from Aerophilately to Traditional just because there were mint stamps included.*

The Bureau of the Commission (Steve is not a member, ineligible as a former Commission President) shortly thereafter sent their proposal to the FIP Board, where it was approved.

While I see no reason for the change and was not in favor, I also see no real harm. In fact, the number of aero applications for New York 2016 was two to three times what it has been for other recent FIP shows. I suspect that there are two reasons for this, the new regulations and the interest coming from AEROPHILATELY 2014.

So, let's live with this. If it increases any form of airmail exhibiting, it can't be that bad!

A copy of my message to Dr. Peter McCann, an FIP Board member, brought the following reply:

The proposal came to the FIP Board via the Aero Commission.

The idea was that Aero as a Class had many dissatisfied exhibitors who felt their airmail exhibits with essentially very distinct Traditional treatment were quite often being transferred into the Traditional Class by international juries and they were receiving lower medals than they deserved.

The Aero Commission then asked to have an option in their SREVS to allow airmail exhibits to be judged in the Aerophilately Class via a "Traditional" treatment. The FIP Board agreed, so now this is an option for airmail exhibitors whose exhibits are laid out in a Traditional Class style to have them judged in the Aerophilately Class exhibits by Aerophilately judges.

To reiterate, this is an option that can be utilized by airmail exhibitors if they wish. The exhibiting mechanisms, national and international both, are there to give exhibitors what they wish, not to hold up the arms to protect the purity of the way its always been done.

One reason Aerophilately 2014, which you essentially founded and organized, was such a great success was because it was not just Aero Class exhibits but a world- wide exhibition of airmail that included Aero Class exhibits and also Traditional, Postal History, Postal Stationery and Display/Open exhibits, and Astrophilately.

Aerophilately 2014

Aerophilately 2014, especially with its timing only two years ahead of New York 2016, jump started many exhibitors by providing an FIP-recognized forum as a “practice run.” We know for a fact that several exhibitors used Aerophilately 2014 as a springboard to get FIP level qualification for New York. The advantages thus gained should be borne in mind in the future.

Peter is correct in attributing the success of Aerophilately 2014, in addition to its fortunate timing, to its inclusiveness of airmail in all exhibit classes. While I appreciate Peter’s compliment, be assured that Aerophilately 2014 was a *team* success, from start to finish.

“Representation”

An open process providing for notice to those who may be directly affected by a proposed action, and also giving an opportunity to respond, is apparently a foreign concept within FIP. The national representatives of the 65 FIP member nations have no obligations for any such communications with those they “represent.” Those with a stake in the game are “represented” in name only. In fact, fate lies in the hands of a select few (eight) – the Bureau of the Aerophilatelic Commission – who apparently are empowered to represent exhibitors of aerophilately by osmosis.

A decision adverse to my position may be final. So be it. However, a system that affords no notice to or opportunity for those directly affected to address the issues before the final decision is rendered is fatally flawed. Throw the tea into the harbor! We are directly affected but not given adequate, or maybe even any, representation.

Some Background

Whether the “new regulations” work in favor of aerophilately is open to question. I see this change as ill considered, unnecessary, flawed, and harboring adverse unintended consequences.

To set the stage, we must look back at what was and why, the path that brought us to today. Philately was born with the postage stamp in 1840, a time when controlled powered flight was not yet even a twinkle in anyone’s eye. Philately was 70 years old before pioneer mail transport by powered flight made its entry in 1910. The “Golden Years” in aviation technology and advancement were 1918 – 1945, aka the “Development Period” in aerophilately. For most of the 20th century in the world of philately, airmail was “modern,” and most of it was seen as “contrived” and worthy of little to no respect.

Philately is an arena where the cornerstones are . . .

- *“Traditional” philately*: the study of postage stamps (creation, production, and usage)
- *Postal history*: the study of the development of mail routes, rates, means (of transport) and markings.

Aerophilately was defined as the study of the *development and operations of the transport of mail by air*, an aspect of and therefore originally included in the postal history arena. Postal history, in the big picture, deals with the transport of written communications from the beginning of time. Aerophilately, the “modern” means, suffered in the company of Thurn and Taxis, trans-ocean sailing ships, Pony Express, and railroad development.

“Importance” and “Rarity”

Whether it is stamps or postal history, “classic” is widely regarded as more “important” and “rarer” than “modern”. In the process used by the judges in their evaluation and assessment of exhibits, these two criteria carry a total weight of 30 percent, almost one third. Regardless of the overall excellence of an aerophilatelic exhibit, it was handicapped by its “modern” origins and perceptions of “contrived” nature. Discredited in both “importance” and “rarity,” aerophilately was “third tier” in merit for postal history class awards. To avert this fate of “awards compression,” aerophilatelists succeeded in making a case for aerophilately as a class of its own, separate from postal history in spite of its clear and logical place within it.

Countering “Awards Compression”

Interestingly, the merit of this action has been reinforced by subsequent events. APS created “Awards for Excellence” for exhibits in time spans: Pre-1900, 1900-1940, 1940-1980, Post-1980. More recently and more importantly, FIP Postal History is now divided into three time periods: Pre-1875 (Pre-UPU), 1875-1945, Post-1945. The creation of these time-frame sub-classes is clear recognition and mitigation of the underlying problem that prompted the aerophilately break-away: Dominance of “classics” resulted in awards compression for exhibits of later time periods.

The exact same reasoning underlies the current subject. The FIP Traditional Class has *not* sub-divided into time periods. All 175 years of stamps are in one group. Exhibits focused on airmail stamps with “very distinct Traditional treatment” (creation, production and usage) were entered as Aerophilately but promptly re-classed where they clearly belonged, in the Traditional Class. Result: awards compression! Airmail stamps cannot compete for high awards when judged in the same class as “classic” traditional. They are not seen as on the same plane (no pun intended).

The correct solution for this “problem” is time-period sub-classes, the same solution that was adopted for Postal History. Whether or not the FIP Traditional Philately Commission has ever taken this into consideration is not known to me. Rather than pursuing that means of resolution, however, the FIP Aerophilately Commission entertained, and the FIP Board confirmed, the “adoption” of “Airmail Stamps” as an exhibitor’s-option sub-class of Aerophilately, which it very clearly is not. A rose is a rose . . .

Dividing the Aerophilately Class

Dividing Aerophilately Class into two classes to accommodate the awards aspirations of exhibitors of traditional exhibits of airmail stamps cannot pass the giggle test. *Aerophilately is postal history*, pure and simple. It does not include – cannot include – traditional exhibits of airmail stamps. The proposal was railroaded on the fast track, ill-advised and ill-considered.

The new FIP Special Regulations and Guidelines to implement this are rife with problems. Anything in *italics* in the points below is quoted from the new FIP SREV (Regulations) for Aerophilatelic Exhibits:

- The long-standing definition of aerophilately . . .

Aerophilately is the study of the development, operation or other defined scope of airmail services, shown and explained by the presentation of directly relevant items and the treatment and analysis of the aerophilatelic material.

has been scrapped! There is a new definition:

~ **Aerophilately Redefined** ~
*Aerophilately is the study of airmail services, airmail stamps,
and documents related to airmail services.*

- Part of the “old” definition has been used to describe . . .
Subclass a) Development and operation of airmail service.

Development and operations of airmail transport, i.e., means . . . Postal History!

- There is a newly created . . .
Subclass b) Airmail stamps and their use in the airmail service.

Stamps and their use . . . Traditional!

- *Subclass b) Airmail stamps and their use in the Airmail Service*
 1. *Official and semi-official stamps issued especially for use on Airmail, in mint or used state, but also on cover.*
 2. *Any essays, proofs, varieties etc. associated with the Airmail stamps and postal stationery.*

This is the first mention of postal stationery, yet another separate FIP Class. Airmail postal stationery is now “adopted” by the new Aerophilately Guidelines for Subclass b)?

Then there are the new Guidelines. Again, quotes are in *italics*.

Article 2, Subclass b) Airmail stamps and their use in Airmail Service
In this subclass the actual steps taken in the creation of the Airmail stamps that enable the transport of mail by air to be carried out, and demonstrate that this has actually occurred.

Postage stamps are confirmation of payment for postal service(s). Stamps do not “enable” anything.

*Article 3.1 a)B. To ensure that the exhibit is judged as Aerophilately the **covers must be organized to show the development or operation airmail services**, including the routes taken, postal rates and markings.*

Article 3.1 b)E. The use of the Airmail stamps on appropriately used covers and preferably on flown covers demonstrating the rates the stamps were issued for.

Do not assume that all airmail stamps were issued as “rate” issues, i.e., for payment of specific prevailing airmail rate(s). That is not true. The existence of airmail stamps as “make-up” issues is not mentioned at all. Another omission is any mention of airmail stamps valid for any postal usage, i.e., not restricted to airmail.

Exhibitor's Option

The information provided by Peter McCann is most enlightening in its clear intent that the exhibitor of a Traditional exhibit focused on airmail stamps has the option to enter either Traditional Class (logical) or Aerophilately Class, in the latter case having the Traditional exhibit judged as such, but by the Aerophilately Class jury (not logical, but seen as a path to higher awards). The newly published Aerophilately Regulations (SREV) and Guidelines are *silent* on this option, apparently assuming that any exhibitor of a Traditional exhibit of airmail stamps would unquestionably prefer to have it judged by the Aerophilately jury. Maybe or maybe not, but as written it is not compliant with the understanding and intent of the FIP Board to provide an explicit exhibitor's option.

The FIP principle that exhibits will be judged by a team of judges specifically qualified to evaluate the class is not mentioned. Many FIP judges are cross-qualified, but few if any are qualified in Traditional and Aerophilately and Postal Stationery. Good luck with that one.

An exhibit focused on airmail stamps is Traditional, and will be judged as such. Entry in Aerophilately Sub-Class "b" may provide physical separation from other Traditional exhibits, but the principles, regulations and guidelines for the Traditional Class will still apply. One might remove an apple from the barrel and place it with the oranges, but it remains an apple.

Conclusion

All of this rushed effort to satisfy the awards grievances of a few with traditional exhibits of airmail stamps (or airmail postal stationery?) has created more potential problems than it ever sought to solve. Is any of this a real improvement over the FIP Aerophilately Regulations and Guidelines written 25 years ago?

- The recent FIP Board approval of these changes should be rescinded and the proposal returned to the Commission for Aerophilately for reconsideration.
- Provisions should be prescribed for notice to the aerophilatelic community affected and opportunity afforded for comment.
- There are better solution alternatives to the underlying issues or concerns, alternatives that harbor far fewer conflicts, complications and potential unintended consequences. One of the unintended consequences is what is now before us.

We can – we must – do better. What is the rush? A team effort receptive to community involvement and dedicated to problem identification, analysis and resolution in the best interests of both aerophilately and the philatelic community as a whole is required. A realistic time line is needed, but flexibility is preferred over a rush to judgment. Find the right players and task them with reasonable objectives accompanied by guidelines and limits as deemed necessary. Then get out of the way and let them work!

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Airmail . . . the most important postal development of the 20th century.

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The rushed creation of new regulations and guidelines for a Traditional exhibit entered in the Aerophilately Class will surely be seen for what it is: an end run attempt at a more favorable award outcome. Any toleration for such a maneuver will almost surely result in lost credibility damaging to all aerophilately. Be forewarned and do not go there.

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