EXHIBIT PAGE PRODUCTION

By Gordon Eubanks

This appendix is a guide to producing philatelic exhibits. There are many approaches and tools available. It is not intended to discuss the way the story is told, which of course is the most important aspect of creating an exhibit. This paper is aimed at the person that wants to exhibit but is not sure how to start the production phase or who is interested in how they might improve the approach they are using. I will focus on my experiences in creating my exhibits.

Paper

Let's start with the paper. Both to preserve the items mounted on it and to provide an attractive background for the material, the selection of paper is critical. There are almost endless choices when it comes to which paper to use for exhibits but there is only one major requirement that the paper should meet: the paper must be acid free. Acid free paper has a pH of 7 or greater. Beyond that there are lots of choices for color, size and thickness expressed as weight that you might choose.

The reason acid is bad is that it leads to paper becoming brittle and falling apart over time. Besides being acid free, paper should have no lignin or insignificant amounts. Lignin is a component from the cell walls of plants that can be introduced during manufacturing of the paper. It causes paper to yellow with age and heat. This seems simple but can easily be confused with the term archival.

What does it mean to be truly archival? First of all the paper must not only be acid free and lignin-free but buffered with a calcium carbonate or sodium ash to provide a buffer or reserve so that over time the pH remains above 7.0. Without a buffer exposure to air containing acid can slowly lower the pH of the paper.

The amount of buffering needed depends on the thickness of the paper and the time that the paper must remain acid free providing a long-term safe mounting surface. The amount of buffering and the amount of allowable lignin determine if a paper is archival. There are both US (ANSI) and international (ISO) standards for archival paper. Most paper available

today and being used today for exhibits is high quality acid and lignin free paper although it may not meet the published all the standards in the standards for archival paper.

The weight of the paper used for exhibits will vary. Exhibitors that I know use 70 to 110 pound paper. The best choice for paper depends on the bulkiness and weight of material that will be mounted. I find 80-pound paper works well for my material reducing the volume and weight when traveling with the exhibit. For larger pages (11 by 17 inches or larger) the 110-pound paper works better for me because it gives more support. Older covers are often thicker and the heavier paper gives more support. It is also important that the paper can be provided in bigger sheets at least 12 x 18 inches. Most copy centers can cut paper for you. When looking at different vendors' paper it is usually described as "writing", "text", or "cover" weights. Thus when you see 80T that means that the paper is 80 lb. paper meant for use as body text (including images) and 110C is 110 lb. intended as cover stock for a document. While this may not seem reasonable 80T paper is not the same thickness as 80C paper.

The choice of color is one where there are strong opinions. If you walk through the exhibits at a show there will be a wide range of colors of paper being used from beige to bright white. I believe that bright white paper is the best choice. Others feel that the off-white is best for their material. Once you find the brand of paper you like there should be many color choices. I recommend trying different colors to see what works best for your material. I do want to be clear that the color is personal taste and I meet people at every show that prefer a softer and slightly colored paper. It really is a choice you have to make. Go to a show and look at a number of exhibits before you decide. When considering a paper color, remember that your material is the focus of the exhibit. Make sure that colored paper does not pull the viewer's attention from that material.

After a lot of experimenting, I recommend paper manufactured by Neenah is an excellent choice for exhibits. I use Neenah Classic Crest cover stock with a smooth or super smooth finish. The paper can be ordered directly from the company www.neenahpaper.com or from a number of paper suppliers. There is also a lot of good background information on the Neenah Paper web site about paper, printing etc. This paper

is acid free and buffered with calcium carbonate and limits lignin to less than 1% but does not meet all the of theANSI or ISO standards. I pick this paper because of the color, finish and weight discussed below. It costs about ten cents a sheet. I do want to emphasize that there are many other choices that have similar specifications. You can also find paper that meets even higher archival standards but it may be more expensive and may not have the color and surface you desire. The color I use is their Solar White. I buy the regular paper in boxes of 250 pages. That seems like a lot but it takes a lot of paper to make an exhibit. The stock number on the paper I use is # 03249 for 8½ x 11 inch pages. This is the super smooth finish. Others use 110-pound paper for all pages while I only use this for double pages. The larger paper is Neenah stock # 04456.

Plate Scratches

Double rate letter to Philadelphia. Entered the mail on the Express Mail train from Boston to New York City.
Stamps positions 44-45R showing plate scratches between stamps.

Short Transfer

Double rate folded letter sheet from Chicago IL to New York City.
Positions 21, 22L. The left stamp of pair has short transfer at top.

because it will scan a double page but have not used it for printing pages. I also have a HP laser printer to print test pages on cheaper copy paper. These printers may support printing double pages and are a great printer for printing scans of pages and for everyday use so I do not put extra wear and tear on the printer used for production pages.

A friend of mine uses a different approach. He saves his computer- produced exhibit pages as an Adobe 'pdf' document and takes them to a local print shop and has them print them on their high quality professional equipment. Companies like Alpha Graphics generally have high-end professional printers that allow high-speed and high quality printing. One advantage of this is you can print on larger paper and trim easily to a somewhat larger size than 8½ by 11 inches, which may take full advantage of the space in the frame. Professional printers get superb results although I am not sure you could pick out which one was printed this way when in the frames. There are professional print shops in most cities. My friend is obviously more disciplined than I am and does not have to reprint pages 5 or 6 times to get them right! I recommend being able to print pages at home even if you use other options.

Printers

After the paper, the printer really matters. First, unless you are absolutely sure that you only will use regular sized pages, the printer must print double sized pages conveniently. It is not convenient to feed paper page by page from the back of the printer. The printers today all print in color; this is critical for modern exhibit pages. The printer I use is a HP Photosmart Pro B9180. This printer is no longer made and I worry about the day I cannot buy another one on eBay so I have a spare. So far they can be found. But this is the type of printer I find works best: a printer designed for photos and handles 12x18 inch paper from a paper tray. You can find other printers that meet these specifications. Another good choice for double pages is a Canon iX6820. It is gravity fed from the top. When selecting a printer be sure it can properly handle and feed the actual paper you are going to use. Test all the weights and finishes you plan to use before you buy a printer. I have learned this the hard way. Finally, printers that work with Wi-Fi are worth the extra money.

Other printers that I know that give good results include the Canon MX870 and the HP OfficeJet Pro L7600 both for regular pages only. The gravity feed limits the amount of bend in the paper. This is particularly important for heavier pages. For scanning I use a Brother multifunction MFC-J6910DW

Software

There are many choices for software that will do layouts easily. There are others that are not recommended. I use Adobe InDesign. This is the industry standard for graphic layout, magazines, books, etc. It is expensive and there is a high learning curve but it is capable of doing any layout job needed. Most local colleges have courses on using InDesign. They are well worth it, often cost little and are better than the rather expensive books on the subject. InDesign also allows for templates that can be used to ensure consistency and make it easy to make wholesale changes. Another excellent choice is Microsoft Word/Publisher. It is much easier to learn. If you use a Macintosh computer you must run Windows on your Mac. There are some subtle issues if you use a Mac so talk to someone with experience before you get started. The key is to use a tool that can give you the look and feel that you want and does not force compromises. I do not find that most word processors have enough capability to layout pages. Part of this is that I put boxes where I mount my covers.
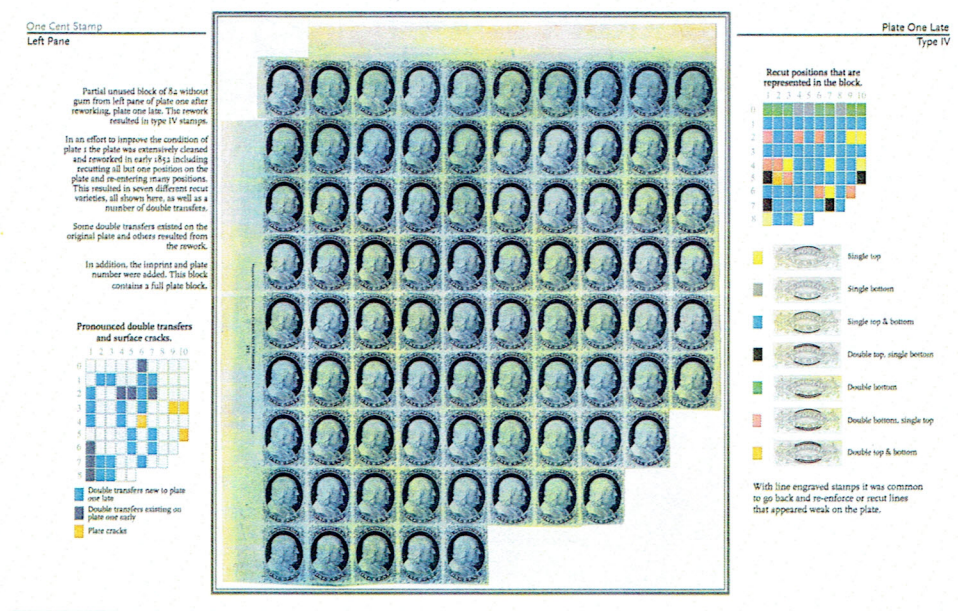
While scanning is not mandatory to make exhibit pages I find that it is important in helping to illustrate my pages. Most scanners today will do a more than adequate job. For scanning software, most people use the software that comes with the scanner. I have been using a third party product VueScan. This can be downloaded free to try and purchased for $89 including free updates. They have solid support via email. You should try before you buy to be sure you are happy with the way it works. I scan every page as soon as I am finished mounting. Other software that I find useful includes Photoshop and Adobe Acrobat both sold by Adobe.

Page Design

Before you decide on a specific page design for your exhibit pages, I strongly recommend that you look at a number of exhibits of different types and decide what you think is the best for your material. Try to attend shows where you can see exhibits in exhibition frames. You can often talk to the exhibitors about why they use the approach they do. Judges will also be roaming around and are almost always very willing to engage in discussions about approaches to exhibiting. In addition, exhibits (primarily of US stamps) are available on the websites of the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors (AAPE) http://www.aape.org/exhibits.asp, the American Philatelic Society (APS) http://stamps.org/ , the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (USPCS) http://www.uspcs.org and Richard Frajola http://www.philamercury.com/index.php There are a variety of other sites that show stamp exhibits as well.

It is extremely important that there is consistency from page to page. The ability of a viewer to follow the exhibit from title page to the last page is critical. While not an exhibiting standard, many use a line at the top of the page with headers left and right above and below the line. To help follow the flow, gray the text when it is repeated from the same position from the previous page. How exactly these four fields are used vary depending on the exhibit's needs. I put the section name in the upper left corner and use the other positions to refine where I am in the exhibit.

Font choice is pretty individual but ends up making a big difference. Here are the choices I made for my exhibit *The United States Imperforate Issues of 1851-1856*.

For headers and the 'notes' at the top of the page I use a san serif font. The term sans serif means without small projecting features at the end of characters including below the line. In my case I use the Scala font. Normally this is regular black for the first use in a header i.e. the first time a specific section title is used. Subsequent uses of the same header are gray.

For all other text, which is smaller and often lengthy, I use a serif font, in this case the same Scala font with the 'serif'. I bold some parts of the text to add emphasis. Text below boxes or to the left or right is 9-point text with 10-point leading. (Leading refers to the space between lines of text.) I use blue text in any statement rarity i.e. 1 of 3 known. Boxes around images are 2 mm cover box gray.

The Scala fonts can be bought on line. This font is custom made for readability. One of my friends uses a Times Roman font, which is simple and also very readable. An advantage of Times Roman is it comes with most computers. Above the line text is 18 point, subchapters, below the line are 16 point. A title below the box that applies to the entire page is 14 point. For descriptions of items and rate information use 12 point text.

Corner Mounts and Page Protectors

Mounting items to the page has the most variations. The "traditional" approach of mounting covers and stamps on backing paper and then mounting the "package" to the page is still used although I believe that most exhibitors now mount covers and stamps directly to the pages. Boxes are created using layout software and items mounted in the box.

The best corner mounts I have found are Herma mounts that come from Germany. They make these in 20 mm, 37 mm, and 80 mm sizes. I use the 20 mm mounts for almost all my covers. The corner mounts can nick a cover so be careful putting them on. These do not seem to be available anywhere in the United States so I buy mine on EBay from European dealers. They arrive quickly and I have had no problems. The 37 mm mounts are much bigger. They are much less risk to the cover but are more visible. For documents or covers with rough or irregular corners another choice is the mounts from Leonard Hartman made by PSP Manufacturing in Milwaukee. They are bigger than the 37 mm Herma mounts. For stamps and a very few covers I use Hawid clear mounts. I buy the strips and cut my own. Hawid mounts are readily available from stamp supply companies and come in a number of sizes. As with all the other recommendations in this article there are other fine products that work.

For the page protectors, I use Atlantic Protective Pouch (phone (732) 240-3871, www.atlanticprotectivepouches.com) archival grade Mylar polyester sleeves. The Mylar comes in different thicknesses. I use 3 mm thickness for regular pages and for double pages 4 mm. I deal directly with the owner, Wally. He is very responsive and will make mounts and sleeves in specific sizes if you order a reasonable amount.

Left block type IV, right vertical pair type II and III.
Positions 54-56, 64-66.
Only recorded block of four of all type IV stamps.

October 1856 folded letter from New York to Glogau Prussia. Left New York on October 11 on the Collins Line packet Baltic arriving in Liverpool 22 October. Middle stamp is 'curl in head' variety. Positions 84-86.

This is a great small business with superb customer service and support. Plan ahead because they supply many areas outside of philately and can be very busy.

Storing Exhibit Pages

For storage I use boxes from Archival Methods (www.archivalmethods.com). They sell black proof boxes, which hold pages safely for storage. Their standard sizes include 11-3/8 x 8 ¾ x 1 3/8 and larger boxes for double pages. I had them make some shallower boxes that held 16 pages. This required a large order and I am not sure they would do this in the future.

Conclusion

There is nothing more valuable than starting to lay out pages. After my first exhibiting experience I redid every page but without getting an exhibit mounted I would never have learned what worked and what did not work. Spend time with both experienced exhibitors and judges. Judges are there to help. Take advantage of them. This article was written in 2015 and updated in 2016. There will continue to be advances in technology so printers, software and available materials will change and improve. It is not the specific products and tools mentioned above that are as important as finding solutions that meet your needs.

I also recommend Steven Zwillinger's book *The Path to Gold, 175 Proven Stamp Exhibiting Tips.* This book is published by the AAPE an organization that I strongly recommend you join.

I want to thank Mark Schwartz for his help in developing and editing this article and his long term feedback on my exhibits and Ron Cipolla for encouraging me to exhibit and his support in developing my own exhibiting style.