

Open Philately is the new international name for Open Class, which was quite close to the Social Class in the UK, but with more freedom of choice on non-philatelic material. While Open Class developed in Scandinavia in the 1990s, the Display Class in the USA, Social Philately with more defined guidelines was the norm in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Open Class was recognised as 'an experimental class' by the FIP (Fédération Internationale Philatélique) in the 2002 Congress in Singapore. At the Congress in Jakarta in 2012 Open Philately was accepted as a discipline in its own right, and '**Guidelines on judging Open Philately**' were approved. The new Guidelines were used for the first time at the international exhibition Australia 2013.

So what is Open Philately? It is the only philatelic discipline where the exhibitor must use original non-philatelic material. All collectors have such material among their philatelic items, and they have always been shown at club meetings and displays, but at national and international competitive exhibitions there are rules to govern its use. This provides exhibitors with the unique opportunity of illustrating their philatelic items with a variety of non-philatelic material. To quote the Guidelines, "*Open Philately seeks to broaden the range of exhibiting and to allow philatelists to include objects from other collecting fields in support of, and in order to develop, an understanding of the philatelic material shown. It provides an opportunity to present the range of research undertaken by showing the philatelic material in its cultural, social, industrial, commercial, or other context and to show wider and deeper knowledge of the topic. By allowing an extended range of material Open Philately has the further objective of bringing new collectors to the skill and enjoyment of exhibiting and demonstrating its attractiveness as a hobby.*"

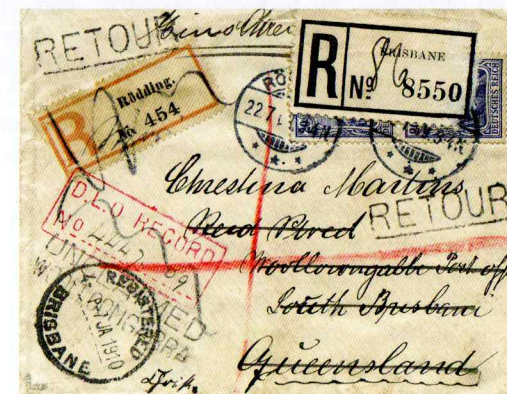
The exhibit should show the dual aspects of philatelic and non-philatelic material, and this provides the opportunity really to use one's imagination and creativity.



Postcard with photograph of Danish PoW in front of the staircase at École Albert in Aurillac, France.

There are only two rules, that the philatelic material must be at least 50% of the exhibit, but it is not a requirement that the non-philatelic material comprises exactly 50%. It is important, however, that the range of the non-philatelic material is as wide as possible. All the different kinds of philatelic material included in all the other classes are permitted, and non-philatelic material may include all types of relevant items: postcards, photographs, coins, medals, pins, ribbons, badges, leaflets, flyers, and other ephemera, but the items must be original if at all possible. Naturally, all items should have an appropriate text, not too long, but not too short. If necessary, some background information as the variety of topics chosen in Open Philately might be helpful for the audience and, indeed, the judges if exhibiting competitively.

What does 50% of an exhibit mean? It does not mean counting the number of philatelic against non-philatelic items. It does not mean measuring up how much the items cover on the sheet. One sheet may have all or mostly philatelic items, while another has all or mostly non-philatelic items. It is the overall view, looking at a frame and at the whole exhibit, and neither should overwhelm the other, there should simply be a balance.



Registered cover sent 22 July 1909 from Rödding to Brisbane in Queensland, Australia, franked with UPU foreign letter rate 20 Pf. plus 20 Pf. registration fee, and cancelled with bridge type RÖDDING.

An arrival hand stamp is depicted on the reverse in Woolloongabba 26 August, where it was unclaimed, arriving at the dead letter office in Brisbane 9 December, from where it was returned registered 7 January 1910.

Open Philately is a wonderful chance for all collectors to show their philatelic material in a personal and creative way. Starting out as an exhibitor can be daunting, but a one-frame Open Philately may be a good way, developing these into a larger exhibit according to the rules of individual exhibitions. Most topics are much too large for a one-frame exhibit, in its nature of being 'open'. This was also the case in Social Philately and is in Thematic Philately. Many experienced exhibitors also find it challenging to try a new discipline with a more 'open' attitude to what is permitted and a chance to show their non-philatelic material, which might otherwise be hidden in boxes.

Open Philately is no different from other disciplines in that it also must have a title or introductory page, which should show the aim of the exhibit, relevant general information

on the topic, a plan explaining the development of the exhibit, an indication of personal research, and a bibliography. It is also very important that there is a story line, a red thread going through the exhibit, with a beginning, middle, and an end.

Imagination is the only restriction on choosing a topic as can be seen from the titles of Open Philately exhibits in recent exhibitions:

The new guidelines were developed with two major aims, to set Open Philately in an acceptable form for national and international exhibitions across the world and to help both judges and exhibitors to exploit and appreciate the use of non-philatelic material. Therefore the points awarded for *Presentation* were reduced to five points as in all other disciplines, and the points for *Treatment & Importance* were divided into the philatelic and non-philatelic aspects; this was also the case for *Knowledge & Research*. The distribution of points is now the same as for all the other disciplines except for Thematic Philately. The distribution is as follows:

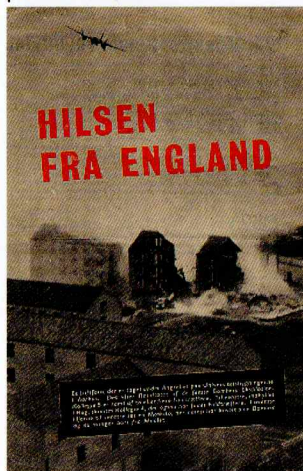
Treatment and Importance:		30
Title and Plan --	10	
Philatelic Treatment --	5	
Non-philatelic Treatment --	5	
Philatelic Importance --	5	
Non-philatelic Importance --	5	
Knowledge and Research:		35
Philatelic Knowledge and Research --	20	
Non-philatelic Knowledge & Research	15	
Material:		30
Condition --	10	
Rarity --	20	
Presentation:		5
TOTAL		100

There are accredited judges in Open Philately at national level in a number of countries, but at international level judging will be by approved specialists in their fields, i.e. if an Open Philately exhibit is mainly based on Postal History, a judge with this specialisation will be appointed, if the exhibit is mainly developed from a Thematic Philately base, a judge from Thematic Philately will be chosen.

Research should be interpreted in a wider sense, and should demonstrate the exhibitor's knowledge of the topic, which must be shown through the choice of material and the relevant text. Any personal research on the topic, articles and/or books, should be included in the bibliography.

It can be extremely difficult for judges to assess the *Rarity* of both the philatelic and the non-philatelic items - there is no register for much of this material, so as an exhibitor it is helpful to indicate which items are rare, special, or exceptional. Some exhibitors use a different colour mapping, a thicker or different colour frame, or a symbol; it does not matter as long as the system is explained on the introductory page.

Although *Presentation* is just five points, an attractive layout will appeal to the audience, fellow exhibitors, and judges alike. Every single page, every frame, and the whole exhibit must look good, be attractive, and well balanced. As many non-philatelic items do not fit easily on the usual A4 size pages, exhibitors might want to try out larger page formats, e.g. A3 or 'three pages across'. Many exhibitors of Thematic Philately also use such sizes to great advantage, and they often enhance the overall presentation.



HILSEN FRA ENGLAND (Greetings from England) - The leaflet describes the RAF precision bombardment of the Gestapo Head Quarters at the Århus University by 24 Mosquito bombers on 31 August 1944.

Finally: 'One of the most important aims of Open Philately is to encourage collecting.'

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What is Open Class Philately?

Association of British Philatelic Societies