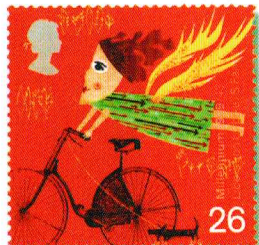


At one time stamp collections consisted of stamps from one country or a group of countries and were generally displayed in date of issue order. However, there is another way of collecting and displaying stamps.



THEMATIC COLLECTIONS

consist of stamps that illustrate a topic or theme, e.g. birds, bicycles, ships, sport, etc.

THEMATIC PHILATELY

goes one step further! In addition to stamps, the collection includes postmarks, postal stationery, stamp booklets and



other items issued by a Post Office, or sent by mail. Every item has to be relevant to the theme and the material is arranged to tell a story. There are Chapters and sub-chapters, which allow the story to be developed logically. There is a need for a good title and a Plan, similar to the Contents page in a book.

GETTING STARTED

It is possible to make a conscious decision to start a thematic philately collection. A look around the thematic philately exhibits at any Stamp Exhibition will give you some ideas. The British Thematic Association has codes for over 800 themes! Many collections are started as side-line collections with the theme suggested to a collector by

an interest or hobby e.g. astronomy or cars; a pastime e.g. gardening or golf; the collector's job e.g. Nursing or the Law or perhaps an ideal e.g. protecting wild animals and the environment.

By selecting a familiar theme, a collector will have a great deal of thematic knowledge. He should be able to prepare a Plan of the collection, without a single philatelic item! Also, the advantage of a side-line collection is that it will only consist of a few pages, at first.....!

Once you have chosen a theme, spend a little time visiting Stamp Fairs (look in your local newspapers for details), Stamp Exhibitions and, if possible, Stamp Shops. Talk to the dealers about your theme and get an idea of how easy, or not, it will be to build a collection on YOUR theme. Browse through their stocks to get an idea of how you might break down your theme into Chapters and sub-chapters. Check Bookstalls for stamp magazines. At present 'Gibbons Stamp Monthly', 'Stamp Magazine' 'Stamp & Coin Mart' and 'Stamp & Postcard Gazette' are published monthly and cost about £3.50 (in 2010). Look for advertisements by thematic dealers. The magazines provide "New Issues" sections, with new stamp issues and summaries by theme.

Check at your local Post Office for forthcoming Special issues by Royal Mail. There may be an issue connected to your theme coming up shortly. For more information about British stamp issues write to the Editor, Royal Mail Stamps & Collectibles, 35-50, Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ and request a copy of the monthly 'British Philatelic Bulletin'. Royal Mail Letters publishes fortnightly, 'British Postmark Bulletin'. This contains details of all new handstamps available from Special Handstamp Centres. A specimen copy of this publication is also available from 35-50, Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ. Details of subscriptions for both publications are available from Royal Mail, Talents House, 21, South Gyle Crescent,, Edinburgh EH12 9PB.

If you are not already a member of a Philatelic Society, check in your Public Library for the name and address of

the Secretary of your nearest local Philatelic Society. At the same time look for books on your theme, to extend your knowledge. Most Societies run an Exchange packet, which is circulated by hand to members. Each packet contains a batch of booklets filled with stamps, at a fraction of the catalogue price. You are also likely to obtain helpful hints on the availability of items for your thematic collection from members and visitors displaying their own collections.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED?

Most of all, you need enthusiasm, and patience, to keep looking for those special items! You will need album pages or plain pages, preferably acid-free, cut to the size you wish to use. Use stamp hinges to attach used stamps to the page. Many collectors now use mounts, sealed on one, or two sides; with a black or clear backing, into which mint stamps can be inserted. To cut the mounts to size you will need a cutting knife, a glass ruler and a cutting mat. The mat is not essential but is useful and can be obtained from an Art shop. You may decide to prepare a checklist from Gibbons' "Stamps of the World" catalogue. Record the catalogue numbers and note the prices. Gibbons have recognised the upsurge in thematic collecting by publishing catalogues for aircraft, birds, butterflies, chess, ships and railways

The American Topical Association has issued booklets, which include check lists on many subjects. For details write to ATA PO Box 8, Carterville IL 62918-0008 or refer www.americantopicalassn.org

WHAT DOES "RELATED PHILATELIC MATERIAL" MEAN?

In addition to stamps, examples of some of the related philatelic material, which should be included in thematic philately collections, are as follows.

Postmarks and Slogans These are markings applied when an envelope goes through the post

and are often suitable for a thematic collection.

Meter Marks Many firms use meters to frank their mail with an advertisement slug alongside the postage value.

Maximum Cards are picture postcards, with a stamp on the picture side and a cancellation linking the subject on the card with the stamp.

Postal Stationery Many official postal stationery items, issued by Post Offices, e.g. aerogrammes, have illustrations which fit into a collection.

Stamp Booklets. These may have illustrations on the cover(s) or on advertising panels within the booklet.

Artists drawings, essays and proofs These are more difficult to find and are usually more expensive items to purchase.

HOW SHOULD THE MATERIAL BE ARRANGED?

These final paragraphs are for the more serious collector. Whilst accumulating material, keep it in stock books and even shoeboxes. Try to sort the material into similar groups, which will become your "chapters". Work out a Story Line at an early stage and do not be in too much of a hurry to start writing onto pages. The write up should be kept to an absolute minimum. Let the stamps and related material tell the story.

Use stamp hinges, or mounts e.g. Hawid or Showgard, to attach stamps to your pages. Use photo corners for mounting covers (envelopes) but avoid self-adhesive corners. Eventually the glue seeps through to the cover.

Thematic collectors frequently use a technique, known as "windowing". The only relevant part of a

cover may be the stamp and its postmark or slogan. Rather than cutting the stamp and slogan off the cover, collectors position these elements and cut the page, so that the bulk of the envelope is tucked behind the page, leaving the stamp and slogan on display on the front. Alternatively covers may be overlapped. It is always preferable to show postal stationery items in full, without attempting to window any part.

The collection or exhibit should have a **Title**, an **Introduction** and a **Plan**.

The Title should be bold and fully relate to the material included.

The Introduction should be brief and give a summary in one or two lines.

The Plan should give the main chapter and sub-chapter headings, and in a competition, the number of pages in each chapter. It should NOT consist of a list of items on each page.

The pages may be written up by hand, stencil or typewriter, but many collectors now use a computer to produce professional looking pages.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Refer to the web-site of The British Thematic Association, www.brit-thematic-assoc.com or write to Captain Peter Denly, Membership Secretary, 9, Oatlands Park, Bishops Stortford, Herts CM23 2BY.

For other enquiries, please contact the ABPS General Secretary: e-mail: secretary@abps.org.uk

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ABPS

What is Thematic Collecting?

Association of British Philatelic Societies