

TSS2000 Final Report on Literature Area



Introduction

It is a requirement of the International Federation of Philately (FIP) that every exhibition under its patronage has an area set aside where visitors can access the literature entries.

The National Philatelic Society (NPS) was approached by The British Philatelic Trust (BPT) last December to manage the literature reading area at The Stamp Show 2000 (TSS2000). It readily accepted the role and this Final Report contains a record of the facilities provided and the success of this feature of the show.

Staffing

The area was under the overall control of Glenn Morgan, who had almost forty voluntary helpers working on the stand during the seven days of the show. He drew on the past experiences of those who had been involved with literature areas at the 1970, 1980 and 1990 London exhibitions, ensuring that best practices were adopted at TSS2000.

- Public days used seven staff for each shift.
(1 for book sales; 3 for book loans; 1 for Internet area; 2 for security)
- Public days were broken into four shifts of 2.25 hours.
(0945-1200; 1145-1400; 1345-1600; 1545-1800, plus 1745-2000 on Thursday late night opening)

Facilities

The area comprised of 75 square metres, with:

- Five tables with twenty seats where visitors examined the competitive literature entries.
- Three PCs. The web site UKPHILATELY.ORG.UK was established during April and TSS2000 was the launch-pad for this exciting new development initiated by BPT. For technical telecom reasons, the site was made available on CD-ROMs, rather than being on-line. The feature attracted a lot of interest, but could probably have been promoted more both before and during the show. Limited staffing resources precluded this from happening.
- A large counter area where staff managed the loan of the literature entries. The basic procedure involved completing a simple form recording name and address details and the catalogue entry number. The book was then given to the visitor to read, under the supervision of security staff. It had been intended to charge a refundable deposit on the valuable books, but this proved to be unnecessary.
- A literature sales counter where books published by BPT and NPS were sold from. Over £250-worth of books were sold.
- Eight Display panels featured photographs of activities within the British Philatelic Centre. This helped to make a bare wall area more attractive and the aims of the centre became more obvious to visitors and potential new NPS members.
- ASCAT catalogue area. For the closing day, the NPS offered to staff this stand for the Association of Catalogue and Album Manufacturers. The feature was re-sited within the literature reading area,

giving the show a central focal point for literature. The NPS gained an additional sixty books for its library by undertaking this exercise, at no extra cost to anyone. It also gave ASCAT a show presence on a day when they were travelling back to Germany to prepare for WIPA in Vienna.

- NPS membership drive. Staff took the opportunity to advise visitors of the benefits of joining the society. Eight new members joined at the show, which must be seen as a bonus as the purpose of attending was not to overtly sell the NPS.
- Stamp Lover magazine. Approximately 1,500 back issues of the NPS magazine were given away to visitors to the stand. These copies are now in the hands of interested collectors, rather than cluttering the basement of Charterhouse Street. Additional new memberships may result.
- Special Prizes Cabinets. Two large glazed display cabinets held the special prizes awarded to exhibitors. They attracted a lot of interest from visitors and were able to be under constant supervision thanks to their position on the stand.
- Show information. Dozens of questions were answered about such issues as where the toilets were and where the Dr Who stand was to be found, etc.
- Message board. Visitors were able to leave messages on a Post-It Note board. Several messages resulted in collectors meeting friends at pre-arranged times.
- IPLA Gifts. Around a dozen library members of the International Philatelic Libraries Association (IPLA) visiting the show received a gift of several books for their respective libraries. This NPSL initiative has not been adopted at previous world exhibitions and it is hoped that it will set a trend.
- IPLA Package Collection Centre. Arrangements were made for IPLA members to leave unsealed packages and letters for friends and colleagues at the stand. This facility, which had been publicised in advance, was disappointingly not utilised by anyone.
- A meeting point. The stand acted as a central point for any collector, but especially NPS members, to meet-up.

Book Lending Statistics

The 1990 exhibition at Alexandra Palace reported that in a ten day period 400 books had been lent to visitors for examination. Ten years on, with doom and gloom merchants claiming that the hobby is in decline, TSS2000 beat those figures in just seven days. The literature reading area staff lent 473 books to 202 visitors.

The daily breakdown was:

DAY OF SHOW	BOOKS LENT	No. OF READERS
MONDAY	12	3
TUESDAY	62	33
WEDNESDAY	70	35
THURSDAY	59	28
FRIDAY	115	40
SATURDAY	88	32
SUNDAY	67	31
TOTAL VISITORS	473	202

(The Monday resulted in very few people reading the books, which is quite normal for a first day, when visitors are most keen on buying from the dealers. Also, the £10 entry fee on day one will have deterred many visitors from attending the show.)

The two most popular books given-out were the Large Gold work on Egypt and a huge Airmails tome.

It is believed that no books were lost during the period of the show, although a couple of items were never received from the judging panel, so were unavailable for examination by visitors.

Thanks

On a personal level, I wish to express my thanks to Royal Mail, the British Philatelic Trust, my team of helpers and Opex for the support that they all provided to me both before and during the show. In particular, I wish to single-out Rachel Lonsdale of Royal Mail for 'bearing with me' over a lengthy period. Also, my thanks to Susan Ellis, Ian Harvey, David Huggins, Francis Kiddle, Dickie Pratt and Richard West for their varied and many contributions to the success of the literature reading area.

The generous gift of the prestige booklets, miniature sheetlet and Millennium books was unexpected and drew many appreciative comments by my team of helpers and, indeed, myself. They instructed me to thank Royal Mail, which it gives me great pleasure to do here.

Conclusion

Arranging and running the literature reading area involved a lot of work for what was only a very small part of the overall show. However, the effort was well worthwhile. Certainly, the many visitors to the stand were appreciative, which is the most important thing.

It is not the purpose of this Final Report to comment on TSS2000 as a whole. However, it must be noted that it was a tremendous success. As the organiser, Royal Mail is to be congratulated and thanked by those who love philately for rescuing the event at such short notice. The show was of a world class standard and all that took part in its creation should be proud of this achievement.

It was years ago when I last heard the hobby of stamp collecting being spoken of with such interest and enthusiasm by so many members of the non-collecting public. There is now a solid base on which to build for the future and this opportunity must not be lost.

(Glenn H Morgan, Honorary Librarian, National Philatelic Society, London. 30 May 2000)