Postal History: Introduction and Purpose

These Guidelines are issued by the FIP Postal History Commission to provide practical advice on how to apply the General Regulations for Evaluation of Exhibits (GREV) and Special Regulations for Evaluation of Postal History Exhibits (SREV) as approved by the 78th FIP Congress at Macao, China.

Where a dispute arises between the level of authority of the GREV, SREV for Postal History exhibits, and these Guidelines, the GREV has the highest order of authority; the SREV for Postal History exhibits the second order of authority and these Guidelines rate below all decisions made by the FIP Congress.

The guidelines have been developed to assist exhibitors in the preparation and judges in the evaluation of Postal History exhibits. They provide guidance and practical advice regarding:

1. The Definition and Nature of Postal History Exhibits and the Three Types of Postal History Exhibits
2. The Principles of Exhibit Composition
3. The Judging Criteria for Judging Postal History Exhibits and their Application
4. Concluding Provisions

1. The Definition and Nature of Postal History Exhibits and the Three Types of Postal History Exhibits

1.1 A Postal History exhibit comprises used covers and letters, used postal stationery, used postage stamps and other postal documents selected, described and arranged according to a balanced plan aimed to develop any aspect of Postal History. Such exhibits generally emphasize rates, routes, regulations, markings, usages, and other postal aspects, services, functions, and activities related to the history of the development of Postal Services.

1.2 Postal History exhibits Type 2A and Type 2Bshow and explain, by analysis of the philatelic objects within such exhibits, the development or operation of one or more postal services; the practical application of postal rates, rules and regulations, and the study and classification of the use of philatelic material and/or postal markings to illustrate the main subject of the exhibit. Historical, Social and Special Study exhibits (Type 2C, see below) show the interaction of the postal system with society, events, commerce or the historical geography of an area and the effects that the postal system has on humanity, and/or humanity on the postal system.

1.3 In Postal History exhibits, it is possible to show the development of mails between two or more areas, nations or continents, to show the development of postal services in one country, one district or one single geographical locality. Alternatively, the development of one special postal service can be shown - either world-wide, in a country or groups of countries or more locally.

1.4 Exhibits may be planned chronologically, geographically (e.g. by local or national districts), by mode of transport/service, by type of mail, by rate, by postal markings, by route, or any other way that the exhibitor chooses. To gain high points in treatment, the structure should be logical and consistent throughout the exhibit. Postal history exhibits should preferably be guided by a clear “thread”, i.e. they should tell a comprehensive and logically structured story centered on a postal history aspect. In some cases where it makes sense, the sub-structure might vary between chapters.

1.5 The most effective Postal History exhibits avoid duplication of similar items, wide chronological gaps (where possible) and the inclusion of items not directly relevant to the subject shown. With rare exceptions, essays and proofs, unused stamps, and unused postal stationery are irrelevant. If they are shown, their inclusion must be justified.

1.6 Postal History exhibits can be prepared for any time period within the history of the post from early postal services through to postal mechanisation of recent times and that important postal developments occurred and should be appreciated in any time period.

1.7 Three Types of Postal History exhibits are recognized.

1.7.1 Type 2A – Postal History Exhibits Relating to Postal Services and Systems

Examples of Postal History Type 2A subjects include (but are not limited to):

A. The development or operation of one or more postal services and systems within a country, district or region or between countries and continents;

B. the practical application of postal acts, rules and regulations and/or specific postal services;

C. Pre-adhesive postal services;

D. Postal rates;

E. Routes for transportation of mails;

F. Military mail, field post, siege mail, POW, civil and military internee camp mail;

G. Maritime mail, railway mail and/or inland waterway mail;

H. All kinds of travelling post offices;

I. Disaster mail;

J. Disinfected mail;

K. Censorship mail;

L. Postage due mail;

M. Automation of the mails;

N. Forwarding agent's markings; and

O. Official mail, free frank mail.

An exhibit of any of these subjects will often include postal markings related to those subjects. A study structured and treated primarily according to those markings is usually considered a Type 2B subject (see below).

1.7.2 Type 2B - Marcophily Exhibits Relating to the Study and Classification of Postal Markings

Marcophily (Postmarks) exhibits principally deal with and show classifications and/or studies of postal markings related to official, local or private mails on covers, adhesive stamps and other postal items.

Such an exhibit may cover any period of Postal History from the pre-stamp period to the present day. It includes all types of cancellations and obliterations, including manuscript markings, applied by official and private postal services. The study may cover the function, the period of use, place of use, colour, state or other changes over the course of time, or other aspects of postal markings. The subjects can include marks of office or of services such as registration, maritime, traveling post offices, disinfection and instructional marks.

Marcophily exhibits may include the study of repaired date stamps and methods of showing distances used by postal administrations. A study of the different types of automatic postal coding marks used would be a Marcophily exhibit (Type 2B); the introduction of postal automation by a Postal Administration is, however, Typical Postal History (Type 2A).

Demonstration of knowledge and personal study of postal markings should include the earliest and latest recorded dates of use, the ink colours used, the identification of place of use, where this is not apparent from the wording or particular types (e.g. identifying the place of use of mute or numeral cancellations), etc.

Markings should be as clear as possible with all essential wording complete. Where Marcophily exhibits are based on obliterating marks, they should be complete and preferably on cover. Generally partial strikes should be avoided; as should unnecessary duplication of the same marking other than early and late dates to demonstrate the period of use.

Any attempt to improve the appearance of a postal marking, subsequent to its being applied by the postal authorities, shall be treated as being faked material.

If used postage stamps are included in a Marcophily exhibit, the evaluation of the exhibit will primarily be based on the classification, study, quality, and rarity of the postal markings and obliterations on the stamps. Duplication of the same marking on the same or different stamps generally does not add to the development of the subject matter covered in a Marcophily exhibit.

1.7.3 Type 2C - Historical, Social and Special Study Exhibits - Relates to Postal History Studies in the Broadest Sense

Historical, Social and Special Study exhibits examine the interaction of the postal system with history, society, events, commerce, or the historical geography of an area; and the effect the postal system has had on humanity, and humanity on the postal system.

Examples of Postal History Type 2C subjects include (but are not limited to):

1. Telegram services
2. Greeting cards (including Valentines)
3. Illustrated, Pictorial, commercial envelopes used in the postal system
4. Studies of the effect of a postal system on commerce, society and industry and the adaptation by commerce and industry of materials for use in the postal system
5. Historical studies
6. Studies relating to an event or historical landmark

Postal History Type 2C subjects usually include material developed by commerce and society for use in the postal system and may include non-philatelic material where relevant to the subject of the exhibit.

Use of such non-philatelic material is encouraged in Type 2C if it is directly relevant to the subject of the exhibit and if it benefits the treatment. The non-philatelic material should, however, not overwhelm the philatelic material. All Postal History exhibits must be capable of being exhibited in standard exhibition frames.

1.7.4 Any Postal History exhibit may contain maps, prints, decrees, illustrations, e.g. on the picture side of a postcard, and similar associated materials. Such items should be used sparingly and should have a direct and significant relation to the chosen subject and to the postal services described in the exhibit.

2. The Principles of Exhibit Composition

2.1 The Exhibit Composition

An exhibit of Postal History should comprise a logical and coherent assembly of material (as defined in 1.1-1.7.4) to illustrate one or more aspects of Postal History.

In a Postal History exhibit, the exhibitor tells a story with the exhibit (ref. SREV 3.6). Normally, it is a story about the development of one or more aspects of the operation of postal services (for details and exceptions, see under 1.7.1-1.7.3 above). A Postal History exhibit has a clearly defined beginning and end. The beginning and end (scope) should be logically connected to the Postal History subject treated. Postal History exhibits in which the scope and/or structure is defined primarily by traditional philately aspects such as one or more stamp or stationery issues are unlikely to attain the highest scores. The exhibits should rather be structured by rate, route, regulations, type of mail, chronologically, geographically (e.g. by local/national districts), by mode of transport/service, or by any other Postal History related way that the exhibitor may feel appropriate to employ. The subject chosen needs to be appropriate in scope for both the initial and also the potential size of the exhibit.

2.2 One Frame Exhibits

A One Frame exhibit of Postal History is intended to be an exhibit within the categories mentioned in 1.7.1-1.7.3 with a very narrow theme that fits into one frame. If a theme can be shown in more than one frame, or if duplication of material is needed to fill one frame, it is not optimal as a theme for a one frame exhibit. All aspects of the chosen subject should be fully treated in the single frame.

A selection of items from a multi-frame exhibit may be suitable only if the selection can completely treat a natural sub-theme of the exhibit within one frame. In such cases, the exhibit would need a narrower title and, in most cases, a modified plan and treatment. An exhibit showing only the best items ("cherry picking") from a multi-frame exhibit is not appropriate as a one frame exhibit, because all aspects of the complete subject would not be treated appropriately in the one frame only.

2.3 The Introductory Sheet (or the Title Page)

All Postal History exhibits must include an introductory sheet. This introductory sheet should include all of the following:

- The title of the exhibit
- A description of the purpose of the exhibit (What is included in the exhibit and what is omitted)
- A description of the scope of the exhibit (The beginning and end and why those limits were chosen)
- A plan of the structure of the exhibit in the form of chapters or sections etc. A listing of the exhibit content "frame by frame" or "page by page" does not convey the intention of the exhibitor to its best advantage.

If space permits, the introductory sheet could also include:

- A list of personal research by the exhibitor within the subject (with references to articles or literature)
- A list of the most important - and preferably reasonably accessible - literature references
- Short, precise and relevant general Postal History information on the subject
- If the exhibitor decides/chooses to use a hierarchy of text and/or paragraph styles to indicate different levels of information presented then this structure should be explained in the introductory page
- Anything else that the exhibitor might feel would help the judges prepare for judging the exhibit.

3. The Judging Criteria for Judging Postal History Exhibits and their Application

In judging a Postal History exhibit, the jury will use the following general criteria (ref. GREV, Article 4.2):

A. Treatment - ref. GREV, Article 4.5: 20 points

B. Philatelic Importance - ref. GREV, Article 4.6: 10 points

C. Philatelic and related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research - ref. GREV, Article 4.7: 35 points

D. Condition - ref. GREV, Article 4.8: 10 points

E. Rarity - ref. GREV, Article 4.8: 20 points

F. Presentation - ref. GREV, Article 4.9: 5 points

Total: 100 points.

Exhibitors should be aware of the need to consider carefully the various aspects which combine together to maximise the award an exhibit can attract. Some indications are given below of the basic elements underlying each individual criterion.

3.1 Treatment (20 points)

Treatment of the exhibit reflects the degree to which the exhibitor is able to create a balanced exhibit characteristic of the chosen subject. A logical progression that is easy to follow and a clear concise write up will help the jurors to appreciate the exhibit. In assessing treatment, jurors will check that the statements made in the introductory sheet and plan are adequately represented in the exhibit.

The judges should consider all of the following in an evaluation of the treatment:

- How well the introduction Sheet (or the Title Page) of the exhibit shows the purpose of the exhibit, defines the scope and explains the plan and structure, and whether it guides the juror to the most

important literature/references for the subject chosen;

- Whether the subject and scope has been chosen to enable a properly balanced exhibit to be shown in the space available;
- Whether there is a natural postal-history-based start and ending point of the exhibit;
- Whether the title of the exhibit corresponds to the purpose, scope and plan;
- Whether the content reflects the title, purpose, scope and plan;
- Whether there is a logical storyline shown created with text and material with a good balance between the different parts of the exhibit;
- Whether the primary focus is on the Postal History (or e.g. history in Type 2C) and only secondly on other things such as traditional philately aspects of the items like e.g. printings, shades, and varieties;
- Whether the material shown completely covers the scope of the exhibit;
- Whether the headlines and other texts on each page support the understanding of the treatment;
- Whether there is unnecessary duplicated material;
- Whether a text related to each item documents the reason for showing it; and
- Whether all the material exhibited is relevant to the scope of the exhibit.

The relevance, balance and importance of non-philatelic material shown in Historical, Social and Special Studies exhibits (Type 2C) shall be evaluated by the judges under treatment.

The selection of material for a Postal History exhibit involves a compromise between the many pages of material the exhibitor may wish to show and the number of pages that will fit in the frames allotted by the exhibition management.

This selection of material is an important factor not only in assessing treatment, but also knowledge. The exhibitor may omit material that is of lesser significance. In general, the common aspects of the subject presented may be represented by a token showing, while the difficult aspects of the subject should be shown in depth. The judges should appreciate that this treatment shows the exhibitor's knowledge of the material.

Exhibitors should ensure that their exhibit is cohesive and avoid combining largely unrelated subjects; such exhibits are likely to lose marks under the treatment and importance criteria.

An exhibit (e.g. of postal rates) which spans the pre-adhesive and postage stamp periods, but omits reference to the first postage stamp issues, will inevitably be downgraded under importance and rarity. This is equally applicable to exhibits of all periods which omit the most difficult sections.

3.2 Philatelic Importance (10 points)

The "importance" of an exhibit is determined by both the significance of the actual exhibit in relation to the subject chosen and the overall significance of that subject.

In assessing the importance of the exhibit, consideration should be given to all of the following:

- How difficult is the selected area to collect?
- What is the significance of the material shown in the exhibit relative to the selected area?
- What is the significance of the selected area and the material shown relative to the national philately of the country? and
- What is the significance of the selected area and the material shown relative to world philately?

Under Type 2C, half of the points available will be given for the exhibited subject's importance to history, mankind, and/or geographic area.

It will usually be easier to adequately treat and provide completeness to unimportant (narrower) subjects than to important ones in the space available. For example:

The Postal History of a capital city may generally be more important than that of a provincial town or a rural area. When evaluating the importance of local area exhibits, it should be considered, how much of the material shown from the chosen geographical area would be desirable for exhibitors of broader defined subjects, such as the Postal History of a whole country.

A postal rate study of postal agreements between two or more states would generally be more important than the domestic internal rates of an individual state over the same period. Likewise, a postal rate study covering all types of mail would generally be more important than a study of a single type of mail or service.

3.3 Philatelic and Related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research (35 points).

Philatelic and Related Knowledge is demonstrated by the items chosen for display and their explanatory comments. Personal Study is demonstrated by the proper analysis of the items chosen for display. Personal Research is presentation of new facts related to the chosen subject.

Philatelic and Related Knowledge is demonstrated by:

- The choice of items reflecting knowledge of the chosen area
- The items being well described
- Using and correctly interpreting the existing literature within the area
- Demonstrating a full and accurate understanding of the subject chosen
- Showing correctly franked, correctly used items, which show the most important philatelic element the exhibitor wants to illustrate

Personal Study is documented by:

- The full analysis and accurate description of the primary postal history aspects that guide the structure of the exhibit or the story being told;
- The description, when significant, of all postal history aspects such as rates, routes, regulations, and markings. A proper rate description includes (a) what is being sent, (b) the price of sending the item, and (c) the exact period (precise start and end dates) the rate was in effect.
- A short mentioning of traditional aspects of the stamps and stationery used at the end of the item descriptions should be appreciated if space permits and all the more important postal history aspects have already been appropriately described

Personal Research and new discoveries by the exhibitor should be given full coverage in accordance with their importance. Major discoveries deserve important coverage and recognition and should be identified by the exhibitor, while minor discoveries should not overpower the main exhibit. For exhibits where obviously a great deal of research (presentation of new facts related to the chosen subject) has been done, a very large proportion of the total points may be given for this research. Where appropriate, references could be given to the exhibitor's own or other previously published information. Where the exhibitor has extended such information, a reference can be placed either in the introductory statement or on the exhibit page to which the research refers. Only the Philatelic and Related Knowledge, Personal Study, and Research documented by the items and their relevant descriptions in the exhibit can be judged.

With regard to historical, social and special studies exhibits (Type 2C), the related historical and general non-philatelic knowledge and research will be considered in assessing all aspects of these criteria.

Some Postal History subjects have been very heavily researched over a long period of time and the results of these studies have been published. To gauge knowledge, the jury should consider how well the exhibitor has made use of these resources. It is unrealistic to require an exhibitor to develop new findings in a heavily studied and researched area. In such circumstances, an exhibit will not be penalised for a lack of personal research.

Text: The importance of understanding a Postal History exhibit can mean that more text is included or that non- postal history or non-philatelic material is included as supporting documentation. However, all text must be concise and clear and the inclusion of related non-postal history or non-philatelic material must

improve the understanding of the Postal History subject and the attractiveness of the exhibit. In all cases, exhibitors should bear in mind that the information given should not overwhelm the philatelic material shown. A well-thought- out plan (see 2.3. above) may avoid otherwise lengthy descriptions later in the exhibit. If an exhibitor can make fact-based rarity statements relying on extensive recordings of known material, this will also be considered positively under Personal Study and/or Research (for more details on rarity statements, see below under 3.5).

3.4 Condition (10 points)

When judging condition in Postal History exhibits, the following aspects should be considered:

- Material in good condition is strongly appreciated in a Postal History exhibit. As condition may vary considerably for Postal History material depending on country, period, and transportation conditions, judges should, however, always bear in mind the quality obtainable.
- Good condition, clean, legible postmarks and other postal markings as well as the general appearance of the objects, should be rewarded, while poor quality will attract a lower assessment.
- The condition of common material should be impeccable and the best available.
- Whenever possible, covers and other objects bearing postage stamps should show the stamps in good condition. In most exhibits, clean covers without stains and missing corners on the stamps etc. are appreciated.
- There are some notable exceptions. For instance, in an exhibit of wreck/air crash covers, while the condition of the covers will by definition be poor, the postal markings applied upon salvage should be as clear as possible.
- Exhibitors are encouraged to show unique or very rare material that does not occur in fine condition, but are cautioned from including other items in a condition that may reduce the perceived overall condition of the exhibit.
- Commercially used items are to be preferred to collector-produced ones.
- If an item has been restored or manipulated, it must be described as such.

3.5 Rarity (20 points)

Rarity is directly related to the philatelic items shown and to the relative scarcity of this material (however, not the value). Thus, rarity is primarily related to how many examples exist and from how broad a perspective the items are rare, but not directly to the price of the item.

The judges should consider all of the following:

- How difficult is it to obtain the relevant and interesting material in the exhibit?
- How difficult is it to duplicate the exhibit?
- How important are the rare items seen from a broader perspective (e.g. a postal marking of a small town showing the only example known, but of a standard type used throughout the country, may be of less significance than a special type used only at that town)?
- Has the exhibitor avoided philatelically produced material where possible?

Rarity in Postal History exhibits should primarily be considered from the postal history aspect of the item. Thus, a rare rate, route, or postal marking is usually more important when considering rarity in Postal History exhibits than a common Postal History item franked with a rare stamp. If many of the key Postal History rarities within the subject are present, traditionally important items such as rare postal stationery and stamps on postal items, largest known franking, earliest recorded usage, mixed frankings, condition rarities, etc. will also be appreciated in Postal History exhibits.

If an exhibit contains very rare material, the exhibitor should draw attention to this fact in the descriptions of the items. If rarity statements (e.g. "One of X recorded") are used, it will be positively regarded if the statement is corroborated by mention of the source and personal research put into generating the relevant rarity assessment. This should preferably be on introductory sheet. The rarity statement should also describe

exactly what makes the item "One of X recorded". At a detailed level almost every Postal History item becomes unique so the relative level of rarity will be considered. A statement saying "One of X recorded" without any specification is therefore not helpful to the judges or viewers. For the same reason, simple expressions like "unique", “significant” or "very rare" without further explanation should be avoided.

3.6 Presentation (5 points)

The method of presentation on each individual sheet, within each row and frame, and throughout the whole exhibit should show the material to the best effect and in a balanced way. The general layout and clarity of presentations also assist judges and viewers with the understanding of the exhibit.

The judges should consider all of the following:

- The work put into the presentation from the point of view of how it facilitates the understanding and attraction of the exhibit to judges and viewers alike;
- The overall appearance of the pages and frames;
- Some variation in the mounting between the pages is appreciated (all the pages should not be almost identical);
- Careful mounting;
- Good use of the page – with not too much white space on the pages;
- The write-up is clear and relevant to the material shown and to the subject chosen for the exhibit. Detailed write-up can be necessary and thus acceptable in Postal History exhibits as long as it does not overwhelm the material. However, the exhibit should not have the appearance of a manuscript for a monograph where the text dominates the material;
- Illustrations should not be too dominating and coloured photographs or reproductions should be at least 25% different in size from the original. Full size reproductions of single cancellations or part of a cover are permitted;
- Illustrations of relevant postal markings can be useful only if the originals are not clear enough to the onlooker. When it is desirable to illustrate significant markings on the reverse side of a cover, such markings can be either drawn or illustrated with a reproduction, such as a photograph or photocopy, as long as the reproduction is clearly seen as a reproduction to onlookers; and
- All material, including non-postal history and non-philatelic material, should be original, except in circumstances where use of original material would be destructive or cannot fit the frame.

It should be irrelevant whether the text is handwritten, typewritten or printed. Brightly coloured inks and coloured album pages should be avoided. The colour of the pages should be consistent throughout the exhibit.

4. Concluding Provisions

4.1 These guidelines do not answer every question an exhibitor or a judge may raise. Each exhibit will have to be evaluated on its own merits.

4.2 In the event of any discrepancies in the text arising from translation, the English text shall prevail.

4.3 These guidelines were approved by the FIP Board and the 78th FIP Congress in Macao on 1st July 2026.