

Title: Utilizing Your Stamp Club's Newsletter and Website for Productive Communication and Growth
24 June 2019, 3:30-4:30
American Philatelic Society Summer Seminar Elective

Presenters: Paul Petersen (pcpetersen@comcast.net) and Dr. Charles J. DiComo (charlesdicomo@gmail.com)
Philatelic Society of Lancaster County (www.lcps-stamps.org)

Abstract: The presenters are the newsletter Editor (Paul) and Club President, Webmaster and Designer (Charles) of the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County (PA). The purpose of this presentation is not to describe how to compose an effective newsletter or build and develop a successful website. Instead presenters will detail how these modes are an asset to both internal and external communication to promote growth of the club and the hobby itself.

The stamp club newsletter and website are critical to keeping all the members informed of upcoming local events and other regional philatelic activities. In this digital age, the activities and images of working clubs can go just about anywhere as marketing tools for the local, regional, and national stamp club organizations. In essence, these convey "We're a great organization; come visit us."

Presenter's aim: Participants will conclude that this presentation has some of the most beneficial information that they have heard in a long time related to the growth of their club.

Some Basics:

A club's **Newsletter (NL)** provides updated club, member, and event information on a monthly or quarterly basis sent either digitally or via the USPS. For members not online, the hardcopy newsletter is their lifeline to the club. The newsletter is valuable to non-members with contact info, program descriptions, and a calendar of events. It further serves as the archive of club history when taken collectively. It can recognize achievement, publish members' articles, display the latest images (i.e. the stamp show, club picnic, end of year holiday dinner, and more), describe upcoming educational programs, offer member biographies and/or new member introductions, compile members' collecting interests, and coordinate bus trips among others. It encourages participation and provides a sense of belonging where members feel more like insiders than outsiders. To make this happen, the newsletter contains many member's names and photos.

When kept up to date (and this is critical), the stamp club **Website (WS)** has all the information of the newsletter and much more. For example there are directions and maps to the meeting site and the locations of other club activities, archives for newsletters and members' exhibits and PowerPoint educational presentations, listing and descriptions of awards achieved by members, extensive photo galleries, and members articles and outside presentations (as available). Someone visiting the site has access to the membership application and can easily connect with the club's officers and board members. All inquiries should be responded to as soon as possible.

Ideally, the goal of the website is to be a "one stop shop" with anything a member or visitor ever needs. The website contains a link to the club's active Facebook Page where the action is. The website contains additional links to a host of philatelic societies. One of the most important pages covers the club's annual stamp show with demographic information, dealer roster, satisfaction surveys, past photo galleries, food service availability, security, USPS presence, show covers, silent auctions, door prizes, exhibits, and anything else that would welcome and encourage visitors to the show and eventually to a club meeting.

✓ **Help Available:** For those clubs who would like to start a newsletter and/or website, the presenters, at a later date, would be glad to advise them on how to get started. This introduction would be at no cost as a service to the hobby.

✓ **Today's Take-Home Idea:** Write your newsletter and build your website, not just for your members but also for those potential collectors and members.

✓ **Pillars of Newsletter and Website:** (Not mutually exclusive)

You're important to us (ATA's "You Belong") Every collector and member matters

What is going on at the club?

Who's who?; Who's new?; Who collects what?

What's going on Elsewhere?

✓**External Communication:** (*Desired result: “I want to visit that club.”*) Your NL can reach out to others, collectors and non-collectors alike. This is to show that you have a lively club with lots goin’ on for collectors of all levels. It promotes your show, which in turn promotes membership in the club. Community calendar, activity directors, (Retirement centers, your church meeting space) Get on digital their calendar; get hard copies on bulletin board.

Personal contacts help

Get NL on WS

Send it all over. “Stamp-Two”

Newsletter Exchanges with other clubs: Receive a copy and push “Send” to your distribution list. Get some great ideas for your club. Share your ideas with others.

Promote other clubs’ activities.

✓**Disclaimer:** What works for PSLC may not apply to other clubs who may have different emphases. There is a lot of advice to posit regarding club development, but today’s presentation will emphasize the NL and WS in the communication process. There are many ways to keep people informed.

✓**Starting Out:** Initial stamp club newsletters do not have to be beautiful, but merely effective. You can beautify them with time and experience. Start with a “Word” or “Pages” document. In time break it into columns. Start with the basics then add pictures, and let it grow over time. When starting out, decide your priorities. Discuss it with club members-what do they want to see? And the one with the best ideas is appointed as editor!

✓**Updating the “Other” Sites:** Stamp Club contact and demographic info is listed in a variety of places. Keep them up to date i.e., *Linn’s*, APS, etc.

A side note on the club’s **Email Distribution List**. This is the conveyance for the newsletters to the membership, but it is also a means for rapid communication such as change in the meeting (*i.e.* bad weather cancellation), membership info (*i.e.* sudden hospitalization of a member), and other queries. Don’t overuse these. ☑ Be sure to monitor the lists, as these can degrade, dropping members. And this is not always apparent, especially with a large number of members on the email distribution list.

Using your Newsletter for Communication

☐ **Your Club’s Affiliations:** (APS, ATA, GPS, AFDCS, CCNY, etc) Shows depth, ties to other societies.

☐ **Location, Dates, and Times:** Where the month’s meeting will be held and when. Directions needed? Avoids confusion. Gets visitors to your club. Give contact info for the geographically challenged. Highlight any changes such as an early starting time for the picnic or December Dinner.

☐ **Contact information:** A way for club members and outsiders to reach club leaders with questions/comments. The key is that these key people respond in a timely fashion. Security: Be sure your people want to be listed. Not all do.

☐ **Relevant President’s Message:** This demonstrates the club’s leadership, vision, and engagement. It is eclectic and can vary from month to month and administration to administration. It can contain comments on upcoming events, recognize club members’ achievements, narrate a story, convey thank-you messages to the Stamp Show team, the auction team, etc. Include brief Philatelic articles such as a discussion of a cover. This is open ended. This message is another opportunity to give kudos to the club’s members.

☐ **Program & Speaker Bio and Other Program Info:** Programs may be the heart of your club. Details of the program enhance attendance, and if the speaker is from the outside, a bio is necessary. Discuss other club meeting activity info (ie the club auction, one-page exhibits, show and tell...) Will there be dinner before or after the meeting? What impressions are you providing of your club to your members and to those outside the club. Would you want to belong to this club? Don’t let “stasis” set in!

☐ **Varied Club Activities:** These add zest to your club. This includes meeting activities and extracurricular events. These show member engagement. Club picnic, Open House, Socials, December Dinner, bus trips, local ball games, auctions, packet preparation nights, community outreach, kids' programs, and all else you do. Appoint a club community organizer.

☐ **Minutes & Treasury:** Shows the club's health and financial condition. A reader should be able to tell about the inner workings of a club from this documentation.

☐ **Membership Info & Data:** Identify new members and visitors, their collecting interests. What was the meeting attendance? Is there other club membership data? Attendance Awards.

☐ **Club Members Stuff:** This is to highlight your people. It is more member-oriented coverage than activity oriented. Include collecting Interests (Publish this on occasion, as it facilitates interaction) and other personal interest items. Can cause extra-philatelic engagement between members. Obituaries. Remember, many like their name and/or picture in the papers, except perhaps those in the coin club!

☐ **Items for sale or trade:** Facilitate commerce within your club. Have an annual Club's Dealers Issue with a short blurb and services of each of your club member-dealers.

☐ **Calendar of Events:** Plan your club's meeting programs ahead of time and include this in the newsletter so that folks know what is coming up. If there is a local coin club, post card club, add their meeting data and topic to your Calendar. Advertise any trips to other club or regional shows, Carpool to APS... Use the NL to coordinate your car pools. Use boxes to highlight events. Next to the people, these events are one of the most important assets of the club. Include extra-philatelic events.

☐ **Awards:** Sparkplug Award, Carter Volunteer Awards, APS Article of Distinction, local club awards, lifetime achievement awards. Include these when awarded. When included in the club newsletter, this is like a second award of the "award."

☐ **Your Club's Stamp Show Info:** Would you go to the show as described? Include pre-and post-show news, finances, and photos identifying your usual suspects.

☐ **Exhibit winners:** Self-explanatory. This lets club members know of the exhibiting successes of others. Show pictures. Use illustrations.

☐ **Club Member Bios:** Occasionally include a bio of a club member and new members in your newsletters. Use pictures, favorite stamps, covers associated with the biographee.

☐ **Members' Articles:** Encourage contributions from heavy philatelic stuff to a book review or favorite cover or stamp. Offer to help new writers to get started. Use illustrations as needed. This builds a sense of belonging for the writers.

☐ **Club Auction Coverage:** Some clubs describe the auction lots by number in their newsletter. Most don't. Give some highlights. Risk Management: For each auction state the rules. Your newsletter is a legal document.

Two Other Sources for External Communication

✓*The Stamp Insider**:

Members of the NY Federation of Stamp Clubs can contribute a full-page article (with illustrations) X6/year regarding the activities of their societies to this bimonthly online publication. This includes stamp club contact information so interested outsiders can reach the club.

*This federation journal ceased publication after the January issue in 2018, though there is talk of bringing it back. See www.stampinsider.org.

✓**American Topical Association:** For stamp clubs which are affiliates of ATA, most issues of *Topical Time* will contain a synopsis of the last month or two of each club's activities as gleaned from their Newsletters. This also contains vital club contact information.