

Astrophilately Guidelines

Introduction

These guidelines are issued by the FIP Astrophilately Commission to assist exhibitors in the preparation and judges in the evaluation of astrophilatelic exhibits.

They are intended to provide guidance regarding:

1. The definition and nature of astrophilately exhibits
2. The principles of exhibit composition
3. The judging criteria for astrophilately exhibits

Definition and Nature of Astrophilately Exhibits

Astrophilately is the study of space flights and space-related events with philatelic material.

It is a philatelic study of the historical, scientific and technical progress achieved in the exploration of space. This includes early stratosphere research, the development of rocketry and the precursors to the various types of spacecraft. The relevant projects, events and space programmes are documented.

Appropriate Philatelic Material

Astrophilatelic material is either:

Postal-Astrophilatelic material. Philatelic items that commemorate an event and have been through the post with stamp(s), postmark(s), on-board postmark(s), labels and markings indicating special treatment. It includes material produced in the preparation for the event such as vignettes, artist drawings, essays, proofs, colour trials, printing errors.

Rocket Flown Astrophilatelic material. Philatelic items with an on-board cachet(s) or special cancellation or dry seal or authenticating signature(s) to provide evidence of being in a rocket or spacecraft.

Philatelic items are stamp(s), covers, stationery, telegrams, military post, stratosphere mail, rocket mail, maritime mail, parcel post, propaganda leaflets, electronic mail, letter(s) and other similar forms of postal services. In these guidelines, the term "cover" subsumes all philatelic items

Postmarks are the most important element of each astrophilatelic cover.

Covers should be postmarked at a post office near the event or by the military unit carrying out the project on the day of the event. If the post office is closed, the postmark of the next day it opens is acceptable. For events taking place in space, the postmark from the post office close to the relevant Mission Control Centre or covers from the post office on board the space station should be shown.

Event Covers

Covers documenting events including; launch, docking, undocking, EVA, landing, launch aborts, test launches and launch failures may be shown.

Cancellations recording launches and landings should only be shown from the post office nearby the launch or landing with the exact date of the event. In the case of spacecraft burning up or crashing, the postmark of the post office in the vicinity of the mission control centre or the crash area is acceptable.

Covers with a postmark from facilities supporting space flights including; tracking stations, primary/secondary recovery ships, aeroplanes, rescue helicopters and other supporting aircraft may be shown if they are postmarked during the mission. In many cases, those facilities use official cachets, and these are preferred.

Covers documenting testing, technical, organisational or political milestones for space flights or space programs may be included. This includes important meetings, rollouts and roll-backs, as well as completion and delivery of key components of rockets and spacecraft. However, this kind of material should not dominate. Where practically no event covers exist (e.g. early Peenemünde, Soviet or Chinese military mail), the cover should have a date as close to the event as possible. If the correct date can only be illustrated this way a location farther than the nearest post office is permitted.

Stamps, Postal Stationery & Special Cancellations

Stamps or postal stationery issued by the postal administration of a country involved in the depicted space event, within 12 months of the event. They should not bear a wording highlighting an anniversary. In exceptional cases, when no other material exists, stamps later than 12 months or anniversary issues are acceptable, however, they should always be from the country involved with the event and be supported by a thorough justification.

Where no event covers with a correct date exists, special cancellations issued, within 12 months of the event, by a post office from a country involved with the event may be used. First day of issue postmarks should not be shown unless the date coincides with the event. This kind of material should not dominate.

Space Mail

Philatelic material flown onboard at least one spacecraft. It must be cancelled on-board showing the appropriate markings (on-board postmark(s), cachet(s) or authenticating signature(s)). Space mail might be signed by crew members or the whole crew staying in space.

Principles of Exhibit Composition

An Astrophilatelic exhibit should have a clear beginning, a central theme, and a logical ending.

The exhibit must include an introductory sheet or title page which should include:

- The title of the exhibit
- A description of the purpose of the exhibit
- A description of the scope of the exhibit (What is included and what is omitted)
- A plan of the structure of the exhibit – chapters or sections (not a “frame by frame” or “page by page” description)
- Short, precise and relevant general information on the subject
- A list of the most important literature, personal research or website references

The body of the exhibit should comprise a logical and coherent assembly of material to illustrate one or more or a subset of the categories set out below.

1. Precursors to rocket flight {rocket mail, stratosphere balloons, rocket development}
2. Unmanned space programme(s) {national, international or non-governmental}
3. Manned space programme(s) {national, international or non-governmental}
4. History of space exploration from precursors to space stations

One-frame Astrophilatic Exhibit

A One-frame exhibit of Astrophilately is intended to be an exhibit with a very narrow subject. If the exhibit can be shown in more than one frame, it is not a suitable subject.

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. An extract from a multi-frame exhibit, showing only the best items ("cherry picking") from a multi-frame exhibit is not appropriate.

The Judging Criteria of Astrophilately Exhibits

Judging of an exhibit will be carried out in accordance with Section V of the GREX.

The jury will use the following general criteria (GREV, Articles 4 &5):

	Astrophilately Judging Criteria	Points	GREV Reference
1	Treatment	20	GREV, Article 4.5
2	Philatelic Importance	10	GREV, Article 4.6
3	Philatelic and related knowledge, personal study and research	35	GREV, Article 4.7
4	Condition	10	GREV, Article 4.8
5	Rarity	20	GREV, Article 4.8
6	Presentation	5	GREV, Article 4.9

Exhibitors should be aware of the need to consider carefully the various aspects which combine to maximise the award an exhibit can attract.

Some indications are given below of the basic elements underlying each individual criterion.

Treatment (20 points)

Treatment of the exhibit reflects the degree to which the exhibitor can 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 introduction and plan are adequately represented in the display.

The treatment of the exhibit is evaluated on whether:

- The Title Page of the exhibit shows the purpose of the exhibit, defines the scope, explains the plan and structure and guides the juror to the most important literature/references for the subject chosen.
- The subject has been chosen to enable a properly balanced exhibit to be shown in the space available.
- The content reflects the title, purpose, scope and plan.
- There is a logical narrative, created with text and material, with a good balance between the different parts of the exhibit.
- The headings support the understanding of the treatment.
- There is a good balance between the different parts of the exhibit
- There are a natural start and ending point of the exhibit.
- The completeness of material shown in relation to the scope of the exhibit, with precursors where applicable
- There is no duplicated material.
- The primary focus is on event covers. Stamps, postal stationery and special cancellations do not dominate

- The text at each item covers key aspects of the technical data, the dates, the place and the purpose or mission of the space objects, including the special activities of the astronauts and cosmonauts, the payloads, and scientific experiments involved.

The 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 material of a programme may be represented by a token showing, whilst the better material of the same project should be shown in depth. The judges will appreciate that this treatment shows the exhibitor's knowledge of the material.

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 within astrophilately.

In assessing the importance of the exhibit consideration is given to:

- How difficult the selected area is to collect?
- The significance of the selected area relative to world astrophilately
- The significance of the selected area relative to the specific space programme or subject
- The significance of the material shown relative to the selected area
- How much of the key material of the chosen subject is present

Philatelic and related knowledge, personal study and research (35 points)

Philatelic and related knowledge is demonstrated by the items chosen and their explanations. Personal study is demonstrated by the proper analysis of the items. Personal research is demonstrated by the presentation of new facts related to the chosen subject.

Only the knowledge, study and research documented by the items in the exhibit can be judged, however, the information given should not overwhelm the philatelic material shown

Philatelic and related knowledge of the exhibit is demonstrated by:

- A full and accurate understanding of the subject.
- Good choice of items reflecting a sound knowledge of the chosen area.
- Accurate description of material with fakes, alterations, backdating or repairs clearly noted.
- Rarity statements ("One of X recorded") mention their source. Expressions such as "Unique" or "Very rare" are not used.

Personal study and research of the exhibit are demonstrated by:

- Accuracy and appropriateness of the write-up of key flight details, technical data and the purpose of the mission.
- Knowledge of precursors, technical evolution and chronology of events is demonstrated
- Research and new discoveries are given full coverage in accordance with their importance.
- Appropriate use of existing literature within the area

It is unrealistic to require an exhibitor to develop new findings in a heavily studied and researched area. Such exhibits will not be penalised for a lack of personal research but will be given additional consideration if the exhibitor has managed to come up with new findings.

Condition (10 points)

The condition of the exhibit is demonstrated by:

- The material is in overall good condition, if so available
- Fine and clear cancellations wherever available
- If an item has been repaired or manipulated it must be described as such
- The condition of common and modern material should be in perfect condition. Exceptions are items that originate from an accident, crash landing or another irregular event.
- Exhibitors are encouraged to show unique or very rare material, that is not in fine condition but are cautioned from including common items in a similar condition

Rarity (20 points)

Rarity is the relative scarcity (not the value) of the philatelic items shown. The rarity of the exhibit is evaluated on:

- The difficulty of obtaining the relevant and interesting material shown
- That most of the appropriate rare items are shown
- That common material does not dominate the exhibit
- The exhibit would be difficult to duplicate

Presentation (5 points)

The method of presentation should show the material to the best effect and in a balanced way both in the sheet, in the frame and throughout the whole exhibit.

The presentation of the exhibit is evaluated on:

- Good balance in the frames and the individual pages, with variations in the layout between the pages.
- Good use of the page with not too much white space on the pages.
- Careful mounting
- The write-up is clear, concise and relevant to the material chosen and to the subject of the exhibit.
- Overlapping of items is accepted but obscuring important features should be avoided.
- Illustrations are not too dominating, and photocopies must be a minimum of 25% different in size from the original.

No advantage or disadvantage shall apply as to whether the text is handwritten, typewritten or printed. Brightly coloured inks and coloured album pages should be avoided.

Concluding Provisions

These Guidelines are not intended to provide an answer to every possible exhibitor's question; nevertheless, we hope that this advice will help the judge and the exhibitor to better understand the regulations.

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

The Guidelines for Judging Astrophilatelic Exhibits (were approved by the FIP Board during the 144th FIP Board meeting in Lugano on 22 May 2022)