

WASC notes for displayers

These notes have been put together to cover questions often asked by those new to giving a philatelic display. We hope that they make the process clearer, but do ask experienced displayers for any advice you need, and, if you can attend a WASC members' meeting, you will see at first-hand what is involved. There are also videos of past displays available on the WASC website – see

<https://www.wasc.org.uk/WASCmeet.html>

What is a display?

It is a presentation showing philatelic material accompanied by a talk. Displays are the traditional mainstay of philatelic meetings.

A display is built around a common thread related to philately. Displays might focus on a stamp issue, but might equally concentrate on an aspect of postal history, or a theme which can be illustrated with philatelic material.

The format of a display generally combines a talk to introduce the material followed by 'viewing', in which attendees look at the presented material, ask questions, give opinions etc.

Why display?

For many collectors, philately is a solitary pastime but can be made more stimulating by sharing and advancing your interest with like-minded people. Displaying tells a story and is often the natural development of a collecting interest. Displaying is an important part of the sharing, learning and fellowship which are what belonging to a society is all about. Preparing a display provides a focus for improving one's own knowledge and understanding too.

'Is my material special enough to display?'

Some displays feature really exceptional material accumulated over many years at considerable expense, but just as interesting to one's fellow philatelists are displays built around less high-end, but well-chosen and explained material. Some of the display opportunities described below provide a good way of gaining display experience gradually.

Display opportunities at WASC meetings

WASC does not engage in competitive philately (see later mention) but all WASC meetings centre on displays, and the different meetings each have their own 'flavour'.

The annual meetings at the RPSL, London

These run from mid-morning into the late afternoon. They comprise several 'major' displays, and as many 'members displays' as are offered. **Major displays** comprise up to 120 sheets and take up to an hour each. **Members' displays** are shorter: anything from around 12 sheets upwards, and tend to be on a more specialised theme. It is not necessary for a newcomer to speak to a short display if he or she is not comfortable with public speaking. It provides an opportunity to get supportive feedback from members about how to develop your display.

The Salisbury meeting

In a more homely venue, the day-long Salisbury meeting feels less formal than the ones at the RPSL. The other difference is that each year's meeting is based on two themes, (though other topics are welcome). Displays at Salisbury tend to be more akin to members displays than the major ones.

The WASC week-end Conference

Held over two days every two years, Conference is as much a social event as an opportunity for displaying. However, the two days also give the opportunity for a wide range of displays, most but not all of them 'major'.

WASC online meetings via Zoom

Held online four times a year, the Zoom meetings are probably the most diverse in terms of displays. Each meeting includes five or six 'presentations' of up to 20 minutes.

Presentations are based on PowerPoint slides or equivalent, via screen-share. Some are very similar in approach to an in-person display, but others incorporate a wider range of material (for example on philatelic techniques), or are used to ask questions about material.

Much of the advice on in-person displays applies equally to presentations online, and there is specific advice on the WASC site (or from Peter Wingent) on how to use Zoom and on PowerPoint.

The in-person display - from start to finish

1. **Start planning well in advance** to work out how your storyline will unfold, and how that integrates with the material you have available. The story may be simple but for more complicated stories, a broad-brush focus on the sequence of ideas will help.

As a general guideline, think in terms of 1-2 minutes display time per sheet.

2. **Translate your pathway through the display story into a sequence of sheets.** Sheets are pages, though they don't have to be A4 size. This will give you a set of notes, summarising what each sheet will show and outlining what you will say about the material. That may change as you proceed... Your sequence may well be based on chronology but any logical framework is fine.

One sheet (or slide if online) per idea / stage / example is a useful principle to bear in mind. Story and examples should support each other. As well as stamps and covers, relevant material might include maps, photographs, postcards, copies of announcements etc.

Once you have settled on the main sequence you can plan how you will introduce and finish your story, and the sheets needed to do that.

It is worth also thinking about whether you will have a standard format for every page which saves time later on and makes your display look polished. Don't make the font too small to read easily. But don't be put off by concerns about presentation – some excellent displays are hand-written.

Unless it's a short display, number your sheets – it's easy to get them muddled. Leave numbering to the end in case you want to insert extra sheets.

3. Once you have a reasonable idea of length and topic, **contact the event organiser** (advertised in the WASC newsletters) to offer the display – they are likely to be most grateful – and it helps their planning. This is less important if you're offering a short 'members display'.
4. You should now be in a position to **start making individual sheets**. Things to bear in mind include:
 - Keep the number of text-only sheets to a minimum – it is the visual material which is most important.
 - Your sheets should include enough text to provide effective explanation when viewed later by others who have not had the benefit of hearing your commentary.
 - There's plenty of online advice available on paper / card to use, and how best to 'mount' material so it doesn't get dislodged. Most people put finished sheets into transparent wallets for ease of transportation and to protect material. Use superior quality wallets which are stiffer and fully transparent. Archive quality wallets and acid-free paper are a worthwhile expense.
 - It's best to show the actual material, though you will need to use copies if some material is not your own (which needs acknowledgment of course). Copies may be necessary for very valuable material you do not want to risk, or if your collection is abroad and you want to avoid possible import/export

problems). Scans may be easier to use as basis of your page layout: if so, do bring the original material as well if you can, in case a colleague would like to examine it.

5. If you are used to speaking to an audience, **preparing what you will say** is pretty similar. If not, there's plenty of advice online. Some points to bear in mind:
- Find out roughly how much time you have been allocated. Aim to use no more than 50% to 75% of it for talking, including some time for questions. The remaining time will be used for 'viewing', when members to look at your display sheets and when they may have more questions.
 - Your talk should explain your theme in summary then outline its content without simply reading from your sheets (which the audience will be able to do later). To keep facing the audience it is best to use bullet-point notes so that you do not have to turn around to read your display. You do not need to speak about every sheet.
6. **Afterwards**
- you'll need to decide whether to leave your display intact for the future or whether to take it apart. If intact, that's another reason to use quality, acid-free materials. It's worth noting that it is easy to lose track of material remaining in your stored display should you need to find it in future.
 - While there's no requirement to do so, the editors of *Cameo* will be most grateful for a one-page account of your display, with suitable image, to provide a permanent record. The WASC web-manager will ask if you can supply scans of your display to put online. There's no obligation to do this, but it does help members who couldn't see it 'live'.
 - If you've enjoyed displaying, you could think about offering your display to other stamp clubs. Check the ABPS magazine for details.
 - Finally, if you really get a taste for it, there's a whole world of competitive displaying out there, with opportunities, awards and of course a detailed rule book. Some of our members can offer advice if you wish to start to present your collections in that way. In competitions you do not have an opportunity to present your theme in person, verbally, so the text of your display sheets must speak for itself.

We hope these notes prove useful, and we welcome suggestions for improvement.

Do please ask experienced members for advice on any aspect of displaying – you'll find them happy to help.