

EXHIBITING AEROPHILATELY

Exhibitors in Canada have created some interesting and important air mail exhibits. A subsection of air mail, aerophilately, is all about exhibiting items that have been carried by airmail services. Your choices within this broad description are almost limitless, as there are so many ways to tell the story about airmail: whether a particular country or region, a particular era, the uses of airmail stamps, or airmail rates, to name just a few.

As the current *Manual of Philatelic Judging and Exhibiting* indicates, "aerophilately is aeropostal history." Various postal history aspects – whether of rates, routes, markings, or means of airmail services – can all be considered. 'Aerophilately' is, however, not synonymous with 'air mail.' Any type of exhibit – whether of postal stationery (e.g., aerograms), air mail stamps, topical, thematic or display – can all be constructed as airmail exhibits. An aerophilately exhibit is just one type of air mail exhibit – that which directly and unequivocally addresses the postal history aspect of air mail.

Aerophilately exhibits have been around for many years now, and are specialized studies, important in their own right. Airmail exhibitors have led the innovations in exhibiting practices, as they were often the first exhibitors to include a wider variety of paper ephemera with their exhibits. For some time, this was frowned upon by more traditional exhibitors

(and judges), expecting to see only philatelic material on the pages, but such practices are now much more commonplace and acceptable within all general class exhibit categories.

The sorts of ephemera often encountered in aerophilatelic exhibits include items which directly relate to airmail services and include non-postal items that document air services such as schedules, photographs and perhaps even relevant newspaper clippings. As long as it advances the story, and does not overwhelm the philatelic material, such sorts of ephemera are fair game.

Like all general class exhibits, treatment, personal study and research, rarity and condition, and presentation all play a part in the exhibit's favourable evaluation. A wide variety of covers showing origins, destinations, rates and usages should be included to demonstrate depth, diversity, and aerophilatelic knowledge. Commercially flown covers are more desirable than philatelically inspired flight covers, though, if only philatelic use is known, they should be included and identified for their importance.

Of paramount importance, like all exhibits, the aerophilatelic exhibit still must have a consistent storyline and all items selected must be relevant to the exhibitor's intended storyline and plan.

Let's take a look at a gold medal aerophilately exhibit by Sam Chiu of Toronto, Hong Kong Wartime

Airmail 1939-1941. His comprehensive eight-frame exhibit covers the airmail services available in Hong Kong during the tumultuous period of World War II, before Hong Kong was occupied by Japanese invading forces in December, 1941, and after which normal airmail services were suspended.

Chiu's exhibit shows airmail covers that went in, out, or transited Hong Kong, carried by the various airlines that had been providing services during this period. It describes the various rates and routes such covers subsumed.

Illustrated first is his title page, where his 'Introduction' explains what he intends to show. His plan then tells us the various chapters he will use in organization of his storyline. His sidebar on the right gives us the key to understanding the abbreviations he will necessarily use throughout the exhibit. Perhaps to set the mood for what we will then be seeing, he illustrates his page with a small painting depicting a Pan American Airways clipper ship flying above Hong Kong harbour, with a Chinese junk in juxtaposition to the aircraft, which was state of the art for its day. This painting is the sort of ephemera you can use to augment your storyline, particularly on a title page.

The next page, from his chapter on 'Special Topics,' shows a cover carried by Tata Airlines, a regional carrier out of Columbo, Ceylon, from Karachi to Bombay on the last leg of its journey from Hong Kong. Chiu augments the page with another non-philatelic item from that airline: a flight ticket envelope that mentions the destinations to which the airline flew. Again, it is an acceptable use of paper ephemera, augmenting his storyline, and verifying the cover's routing.

The final page shown here, also from his 'Special Topics' chapter, illustrates a rare flight from Bangkok, through Hanoi and into Hong Kong. It was an Air France flight in transit to San Francisco for its intended destination in Kentucky. The more normal routing by BOAC, a westbound flight to England, had been cancelled due to hostilities in the Mediterranean. It also received a Hong Kong censor mark. What makes this page particularly attractive is Chiu's inclusion of an Air France luggage tag of the period. Not immediately germane to this cover, it nevertheless serves to illustrate contemporary Air France ephemera, and such items can be occasionally included if they support the storyline.

Note too, that Chiu succinctly demonstrates his philatelic knowledge by listing, above each cover, his determination of the postal rate paid, the postal (and censor) markings on each cover, and the particular routing each cover took. Such analyses of his covers, over the 128 pages of the eight-frame exhibit, indicate the depths of personal study and research an aerophilatelic exhibit may entail. ⋈

Previous columns in this series now also appear on the RPSC website, at http://www.rpsc.org/exhibiting.htm. Readers are encouraged to use any of them to facilitate further discussion at club meetings, and for promoting novice exhibiting at local and regional levels.





