

# The PhilateliKid

***The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)***

***Collect Stamps (The Most Educational Hobby)***

[www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org](http://www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org)

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## **Stamp Shows**

Why do we have stamp shows (conventions)? Many stamp collectors enjoy their hobby in the quiet of their home, but also look forward to meeting others who enjoy stamp collecting. Local stamp clubs meet many of these needs, but some things are available only for larger shows. Shows can be classified in one of four ways: Local shows, Regional shows, National shows, and International shows.

Today we are going to look at some of the benefits of National shows which in the United States are put on by the American Philatelic Society, an organization that has been in existence for over 100 years, and which has about 30,000 members. The APS for over 50 years has held two shows a year – the “Summer Show” and the “Winter Show.” The Summer show tends to be held in a city in the Eastern part of the United States. The Winter show is often chosen to be at a place that has a warm climate in the Winter months, such as California or Arizona. This gives stamp collectors, dealers, and vendors to attend stamp shows in different geographical areas of the United States. The most recent Winter Stamp Show was held in Birmingham, Alabama.

The following is an excerpt from a recent Open Letter written by Robert W. Martin to the Board of Directors of the APS regarding the suggestion recently put forth to cancel Winter shows, and just have one national show a year. The APS disclosed that the Winter shows in Birmingham and Reno lost money.

I do not see any need to worry about a \$34,480 loss in Birmingham (about a buck per member of APS) or even the \$65,570 loss in Reno (about two bucks per member of APS.)

I presume that the Summer Stampshows make a profit, which can partially (or maybe fully) offset those losses, however, even if the Summer shows had zero profit, the losses described for Birmingham and Reno are not worthy of giving any thought to canceling the Winter Stampshows.

Let's just look at some of the repercussions of eliminating 50% of our national shows.

First, as I just mentioned, many people who do not live in the Boston-New York-Philadelphia-Washington D.C. area find these other shows to be much more convenient. I certainly can speak for myself about that because I live in Hawaii.

Second, what is the greatest indoor hobby that can be easily pursued during inclement, snowy, cold weather? Duh – stamp collecting!

Third, I realize Reno was a disappointment. (I was there every day.) Did whoever decided on Reno in January have any idea at all about how cold it gets in Reno in January? I think many attendees of the winter show see it as a warm getaway from the colder climates where they reside, and Reno certainly was a poor choice in that respect.

Fourth, uh... isn't the APS a NONPROFIT organization? Yes we are! That means that we do not have to have a profit on everything we do, especially if it is related to member services. In fact. Almost all nonprofit organizations lose money on their member services. Profits derived elsewhere enable the organizations to provide and expand member services.

Fifth, yes, member services would be seriously curtailed by cutting out 50% of the national shows. Those shows are where serious stamp collectors get to meet other serious stamp collectors, attend some educational seminars, talk with stamp dealers they otherwise would not get to meet, attend live auctions, purchase items at the USPS store, (usually) attend a first day ceremony, compare items before making a purchase, and see world class exhibits. Members need MORE of this, not less.

Sixth, I remain unconvinced about the excuse that removing one of the two stamp shows would "allow the society to put more time, energy and effort into improving APS Stampshow." (That is a direct quote from Linns, March 12, 2018, page 13.) Taken at face value, that seems to indicate that more time, effort and energy would result in a better (read "more profitable") Summer Stampshow. I have attended those too, and I generally have felt satisfied with the Summer Stampshows. It is the Winter Stampshows that have appeared to me to be the "ugly stepsister" that did not get the full attention that was necessary.

Seventh, having the Winter shows in a variety of cities across our nation has brought visibility to our hobby. Concentrating on just having bigger and better shows in the East would not accomplish that. And let us not be deceived into thinking that having just one show a year would mean that bigger and better shows would be held in the West (and South.) From what I see the membership of APS to be, that would not be geographically kind to the majority of members of APS. (My impression is that the majority of members live east of the Mississippi River.)

Eighth, the shows are a major income item to stamp dealers who look forward to not only meeting customers they have not seen face-to-face, but other stamp dealers. Before and after every day of every show, dealers often do a lot of business, and I have seen them looking at items that are being auctioned, a big convenience when a dealer is already there. Eliminating half the national shows would be detrimental to many dealers, and the hobby relies upon dealers.

Ninth, if a show is not as successful as desired, maybe more attendance by dealers is needed, and they need to be incentivized by making the costs LOWER for them. Although to most of us APS members stamp collecting is a hobby, let us not forget that to dealers it is a business. Making the cost of a booth more reasonable will undoubtedly bring more dealers, and that is one of the primary purposes people attend stamp shows.

Tenth, although I have not exhibited much at the National level, I believe we need to have plenty of opportunities for stamp exhibitors to show what they have. Children exhibitors are almost non-existent, and there is no banquet at all for them. (Hot dogs and fries would be a favorite, and of course the time frame would have to be such that the event ended well before 9 p.m.) From what I am reading, there may be a whole new group of people who decide to become exhibitors. The Palmares (banquet) for exhibitors we currently have is a high-class (read “expensive and mostly boring”) way to meet very interesting stamp collectors, and cutting national shows by 50% FOR THAT REASON ALONE just does not make sense.

Eleventh, there are dozens of societies related to stamp collecting that have booths at Stampshows where they not only meet and greet their members, but attract and sign up new members. Cutting their opportunities by 50% is a very bad idea.

Twelfth, and often forgotten is the non-philatelic vendors at Stampshows, who also would take a hit if the number of “big” national Stampshows were reduced to one a year.

About 10 years ago I had the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors of Westpex, a “regional” show that routinely makes a big profit, and always has a waiting list of dealers wanting to have a booth. That show is always “in the West” (San Francisco area) and is heavily attended. The one disadvantage (?) they have is that they depend solely on volunteers, and do not have the paid professionals like APS has to plan and run Stampshows. APS should be able to have a Winter Stampshow that equals or exceeds the huge success of Westpex. That is a totally realistic idea.

In conclusion, I believe that **if** the financial losses are really a concern (I doubt it because everything I have seen and heard is that we are stronger financially than ever before) then I believe we need to focus our attention on what we are doing wrong in other areas. Cutting down on Stampshows is 180 degrees the wrong direction to go.

What do you think? Thoughtful comments are welcomed and will be published, so please feel free to write! (150 words or less, please.) Mail it to Robert W. Martin, P.O. Box 1809, Kihei, Hawaii 96753-1809. It should be written as if the reader knows nothing about your topic, so beginners can understand it.

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