

The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

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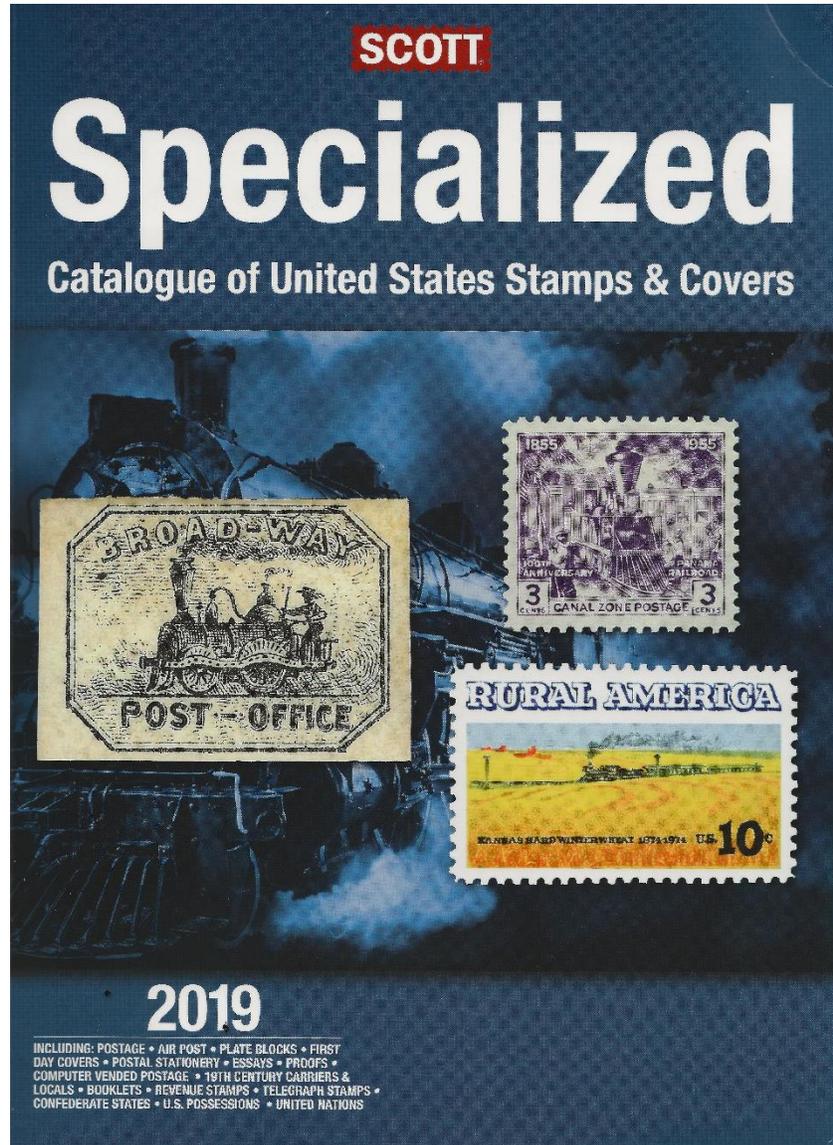
January 1, 2019

Book of the Month

The Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers 97th Edition (2019) published by Amos Media Company, Inc.

This book is available only in paperback, or digitally. It is almost all in full color, and most of the items that are black and white may be because the stamps themselves are only black ink on white paper. Where the image is black and white and the actual color is not black, the description indicates the actual color. For example, on page 842 item 68-E2 (an essay) is pictured in black and white but the description says it is dark green. Many stamp collectors remember well the days when all the images were in black and white, and Scott has made tremendous strides in just a few years to make the catalogue almost all full color.

The paperback version is very sturdily built, and although it weighs-in at well over a hefty 5 pounds, it will last many years even with heavy use. It has 1,288 pages and an additional Preface of 104 pages, in all totaling 1,390 pages. Some pages are purely advertising, such as page 39 which is a full-page advertisement by the stamp dealer Gary Posner, Inc. There are many pages that are partially catalog and partially advertisements. All of the ads are related to philately, and in addition to dealers there are some ads for non-profit philatelic organizations and expertising services.



One minor drawback: The book cannot be stood on edge and will fall over without support. The list price of the book is \$134.99, but it is available at discount prices. A subscriber to Linns qualifies for the "AA" discounted price of \$99.99 plus sales tax in certain states, plus 10% S&H, totaling \$109.99. But, as of the end of December, it can be purchased on eBay with free shipping for only \$83.16.

This is a REFERENCE book. It is not a book that anybody would read starting on page one, and continue reading on to the last page. I do not know if anybody has actually read the entire book. Although issued in October 2018, it calls itself the "2019" catalogue, and only contains entries for postage stamps released up to July 4, 2018.

Notice that the title of the book is NOT a catalogue of postage stamps. Just stamps. You will find that less than half of the book is dedicated to postage stamps. Yes, there are covers (envelopes) also, and a lot of things are not valid for postage, such as Trailer Permit stamps, Hunting Permit stamps, Firearm Transfer stamps and essays and proof stamps. There are big areas of stamp collecting that are not included in the book, such as precanceled stamps, perfined stamps, deltiology, and fancy cancellations.

Certain sections in the book are not only not stamps, but items listed are not valid for any governmental use. Pages 1020 through 1027 are all about Christmas seals. Christmas seals are colorful pieces of paper, often looking like a postage stamps, but not issued by any governmental agency. The ones listed in the book are all issued by The American National Red Cross or the American Lung Association and its predecessors (National Tuberculosis Association.) Many other organizations that issued "seals" are not listed, such as Boys Town, Easter Seals, and seals issued to advertise Philatelic Exhibitions.

The introductions to the Scott Catalogues (there are catalogues for "international" stamps - meaning anything other than United States) contain an incredible amount of information, and the introductions to each of the sections also contain just incredible amounts of information. For example, page 573 has almost half a page detailing a wealth of information about Computer Vended Postage stamps.

Scott catalogs are not easy to use. A new user needs to have a mentor who can explain how to find items. A tutorial would be very handy, but I know of none at this time.

Mostly, the catalogue is chronological, meaning that the numbering system has lower numbers for older stamps, and higher numbers for more recent stamps. But exceptions abound. When the editors group certain items as a series, the numbering becomes very complex. For example Scott 1295 was issued on December 3, 1966, Scott 1296 does not exist, and Scott 1297 was issued on November 4, 1975. Then Scott 1298 was issued on December 28, 1967. This can be very challenging to collectors who have albums that contain pre-printed images of stamps issued during a year, but the catalog listing for that stamp is nowhere in Scott during the year in question.

Also, users need to know that many albums contain stamps that are issued during a year, and appear in their albums side-by-side, but the stamps are hundreds of pages apart from each other in Scott. For example, Scott 643, commemorating the sesquicentennial of Vermont was issued on August 3, 1927, but the stamp featuring the spirit of St. Louis issued on June 18, 1927 is found 330 pages later, on page 401. Reason? The Spirit of St. Louis stamp is an Air Mail stamp, that Scott lists in a separate section. But then is a user wants to find a \$1 stamp issued in 1968 to pay for airlift of parcels to and from the US to servicemen overseas (Clearly marked AIRLIFT on the stamp) it is found on page 122, hundreds of pages way from all the other airmail stamps.

Priority Mail and Express mail stamps are NOT segregated from regular issue stamps, and thus are scattered throughout the regular issues, even though this type of service always is air mail when possible.

Many numbers do not exist at all, such as 1620 and 1621, but there is a number 1618 and a number 1618C, but no numbers 1618A or 1618B. Some stamps are individually numbered when there appear many different stamps on the same pane of stamps, but many stamps do not get separate numbers, but lower case letters after a number. Hence, the 13¢ stamp featuring the flag of the State of Delaware, is Scott 1633, and the stamp that appears right next to it, featuring the flag of the State of Pennsylvania is Scott 1634, but the 33¢ stamp featuring the 1775 Sons of Liberty stamp is Scott 3403a and the stamp right next to it, the 1775 New England Flag is Scott 3403b.

The Scott catalogue has many pages of minor differences in the "Washington Franklin" series, but even experienced stamp collectors find it necessary to take courses designed to teach them how to determine what Scott number a particular stamp is. The earliest stamps issued by the US have tiny differences that result in different Scott numbers, often so tiny that a magnifying glass is essential to tell the differences, and when the stamp is used, having a cancellation, the differences sometimes are impossible to tell even with magnification. Apparently this is a throwback to the earliest days of stamp collecting, when very few different stamps were issued, so collectors collected minute differences in the engraving on different stamps. For many stamps, the only way to tell one Scott number from another is by the perforations, or the watermark - or lack thereof.

Some anomalies are stubbornly kept by Scott, such as listing the first airmail stamp (listed as C3) chronologically AFTER two stamps that actually were issued second and third (Scott C1 and C2.)

In addition to stamps of the US, the Specialized catalogue lists stamps issued by the Confederate States of America, Canal Zone, Cuba (US military rule), Danish West Indies and US Virgin Islands, Guam, (Kingdom of) Hawaii, (US Occupation of) Philippines, Puerto Rico, Ryukyu Islands, and the United Nations.

Pricing in the catalog is subject to a lot of debate. A very high percentage of prices are totally out of whack with reality, as far as what any dealer would be willing to pay, and

even so far as what "retail" price a collector would have to pay. For example, Scott 1035, the Liberty Series 3¢ Statue of Liberty stamp had hundreds of millions issued, and Scott lists a USED copy at 25¢. That is ridiculous. That stamp is only worth its weight as scrap paper. The same stamp in mint, never-hinged condition is also listed as a value of 25¢. These are easily available in bulk at less than the 3¢ face value.

Similarly, values for modern stamps that are still available at local post offices at face value are vastly overpriced. Scott 5295 is priced at \$2.00 in mint never-hinged condition, but that stamp can be bought at any post office today for \$1.00 I recently bought Scott 5297 at the post office for face value (\$5.00) and it is listed at \$10.00. Condition, centering, heavy cancellations, nibbed perforations, hinge remnants, etc. become very important for determining a reasonable value for many stamps issued prior to 1950. Vague guidelines are given, and for some stamps various prices are given for different centering, found on pages 362 to 399. This is an area where Scott has really done a lot, and a current catalogue is necessary to get a reasonable market value.

Incredibly, Scott issues a new catalogue every 12 months! The price of the catalogue at first may seem high, but the information contained in this one book could easily justify a price two or three times higher. The Introduction has a plethora of useful information about gum, paper, printing, listings of Postmasters General, Statehood dates, Domestic letter rates, and much more, and the cost of the catalog is justified by just the Introduction alone. Just having one to peruse will open your eyes to many other interesting areas of collecting. Ever thought about postal cards?

The editors of Scott take the position that if Scott has assigned a number, then that is the CORRECT number, even when logic dictates otherwise. Once you can understand that, it is easier to use this monumental reference item.

Finally, a very useful feature is found in the introductory pages, 92A through 102A where the subject matter of a stamp is listed alphabetically, and the Scott numbers for that subject are then listed.

What do you think? Thoughtful comments are welcomed and will be published, so please feel free to write! (250 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.

Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are greatly appreciated and if \$10 or more you will be sent a written receipt. You also can donate via PayPal on our website - www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org