



Creating the Philatelic Exhibit Synopsis—A Master Class

Andrew McFarlane

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“Remember: The most important pages in your exhibit aren’t in the frames”

When I first encountered a philatelic exhibit by Andrew McFarlane, I thought to myself that this man has got to write a book on his techniques for preparing competitive exhibits. It would be a definitive work—a perfect guide for the exhibitor to help both inexperienced and vastly experienced exhibitors navigate the modern day methods used to create gold medals. And yes, there are modern-day methods for doing so—never think for a minute that techniques used as recently as 20 years ago are enough these days to produce the results you strive for.

Over my decades in this biz I had never seen an exhibitor who—every single time he showed one of his exhibits—he turned out such eye-appealing, intellectually superior and rules-adhering exhibits as young Mr. McFarlane. Rarely, even at less-crowded shows, could one encounter a McFarlane exhibit that wasn’t usually surrounded by visitors.

He hasn’t written that book yet—but I hope he will because he’s already written one of the most flawless books ever conceived for a philatelist. This *Creating the Philatelic Exhibit Synopsis* is the greatest road map ever produced that both tells the exhibitor how to develop the essential elements in a competitive exhibit, and also (conveniently enough) what a judge should expect in a synopsis page when he sees one. In other words, the full “how to do it” when crafting the synopsis page.

McFarlane, by experience, knows what motivates a judge to vote “gold” when he sees an exhibit that qualifies for one right before his eyes. He’s a judge, himself. In his book, he has opened the door to that knowledge. If you’ve ever wanted to know what specific criteria are

judges using behind their closed doors, here is the book that tells you. In his own words in a promotional brochure he explains some of what his book includes:

- Case studies of eight different exhibits.
- “What is a Synopsis and Why is it so important?”
- Discussion of a two-page versus a four-page synopsis.
- A “How to” section in producing the synopsis [I’ve long-awaited for something like this.]
- How the synopsis and title pages complement each other. [Yes, *every* exhibit needs *both* of these!]

For those of you reading this review and are totally inexperienced as an exhibitor—but may want to get involved in this popular segment of philately, a Synopsis Page can actually be from one to four pages in which you create, separately from the exhibit itself, and given to the judges in advance of a stamp show to help them prepare to judge the exhibit. This often misunderstood and underrated document can dramatically shape how an exhibit is received by the judges and can have a big effect on an exhibitor’s medal level. It can include both words and images. There are some “do nots”, too. Don’t brag about previous medals won, for instance.

Aside from this book’s erudite and comprehensive treatment of what is most the important element of an exhibit (never to appear in the frames, by the way), the author, a talented graphic designer, himself, has made his work especially easy to swallow. Throughout, the reader is treated to some of the finest graphics I’ve ever seen. You’ll find it on Amazon. com!