

Owen Sound Stamp Club
Chapter 191
Royal Philatelic Society of Canada

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 18th 2016 @ 7 PM

From the President...



Spring has arrived and I see that some of our snowbirds have returned from the sunny South, and there may even be someone departing for a postponed southern vacation. Either way, if you are able, the Owen Sound Stamp club has its regular meeting on Wednesday, May 18th at the St Mary's High School again. After two meetings with guest speakers, this meeting is a return to stamps!

The planned activity for this meeting is an opportunity for member to share tips on how to soak/remove stamps from envelopes or paper. This topic was prompted by the challenges of removing some of the modern stamps from paper which just won't come off using the regular water method. Randy Rogers is going to demonstrate something he uses, while Larry Crane will be showing how to use Bestine. I will be bringing along the usual things for soaking stamps off by water and for anyone interested some of the practices I follow. This is an open topic for any other club member to join and share something else

If this topic doesn't interest you, the Owen Sound Club Circuit books will be present as well as the "Treasure Box." It is also an opportunity to remind members that all those excess stamps we have can be put onto pages and find new homes while generating some cash for the person who makes the pages. It may take some time to get a lot of cash, but the more pages that are entered in the binders, the more chance you have on selling those excess stamps. By the way, it is also a reminder that you should only submit sound stamps, unless it is a more expensive stamp that can be used as a space filler. If you decide to put space filler in the pages, it should be clearly identified as a "Space Filler."

I am also a member at a neighbouring club and submitted pages to that clubs circuit books. At the recent show on April 30th, I was greeted with "here Phil, empty circuit book pages and an envelope of cash." Somehow, I found new material that would fit nicely into my collection! Now the challenge is to restock pages for the circuit books here in Owen Sound and in Hanover as well. The two biggest chances to sell stamps to other collectors is at the GRVPA Club Circuit Book fair in Cambridge in October, as well as at our own stamp show on September 24th.

I am happy to share with you a new author in this newsletter. Thank you Randy for submitting the article and I hope it stimulates others to make an attempt to keeping the newsletter as a tool to further our knowledge about stamp collecting. Another Stamp Tip is included to further your perspective on the hobby.

Now it is a time to invite everyone out to our meeting on Wednesday evening, May 18th starting at 7 pm. The meeting is in the usual place, Hillyer Hall at the St. Mary's High School.

Phil Visser
President
OSSC

Stamp Identification by Computer

By Randy Rogers

At our February meeting Neil Baxter mentioned an app that could identify a stamp from a photograph. The notion that it might be possible to identify stamps from an image intrigued me. I have seen apps that can read barcodes and identify products as well as apps that can translate text using a cell phone camera image so I went searching on the internet. I don't have any of the products mentioned in this article so what follows is a summary of what I found on product web sites and customer reviews.

Until recently, stamps had to be carefully categorized and organized manually. Stamp collecting is still done the same way but technology and computer software are making the process easier, quicker, and more accurate.

Stamp collecting software provides a database that is used to track and identify stamps in a collection. When deciding to select software to manage your collection it is important to consider how well the application organizes data and understands philatelic terminology. It is no small task to enter the information for every stamp in your collection. Consequently it is important the software provides the user with automated comprehensive data backup. If you currently use a computer to maintain your collection inventory, the ability to import data from other applications would be a key factor for consideration.

As technology changes, products come and go, so it is important to also consider how you would access your collection data if the software was no longer available. A bit of research and keeping the above mentioned factors in mind will help you select the right software for your needs.

There are several different product offerings on the market each with their own unique features. Prices for these products range anywhere from free to over \$300 USD. In my research for a "stamp identification from a picture" feature I looked at these products:

Stamp Tracker (<http://www.cniche.com/stamp/index.htm>),

StampManage (<http://www.libertystreet.com/Stamp-Collecting-Software.htm>),

EzStamp (<http://ezstamp.com/>), and

Stamp Organizer Deluxe (<http://www.primasoft.com/deluxeprg/stodx.htm>).

Only two of the products reviewed, StampManage and EzStamp, provide a feature for identifying a stamp from an image. The remainder of this article will focus on the stamp identification features of those two products.

StampManage

StampManage, by Liberty Street Software, is a stamp collecting inventory application that is officially licensed to use the Scott Numbering System. StampManage offers free updates that include updated images, data & values from all countries. You can identify stamps from an image using the LignUp stamp search application (sold separately) which has been integrated into the StampManage menu. StampManage can currently be purchased for \$79.95 USD.

LignUp Stamp Search 4, by LignUp Software, uses a single photo of a stamp to automatically detect and search for your stamp on the internet. Identification takes 1-2 minutes and search results show stamps of this variety for sale on the internet, popular auction prices for stamp valuation, and non-commercial philatelic sites with information about this stamp. LignUp Stamp Search 4 works on both Mac and Windows platforms and can currently be purchased at the low price of \$19.95 USD; there is even a free version available for US stamps. Poor support has been reported in some reviews.

View Demo at <https://youtube.com/3JXFv32GIZs>

LignUp also sells Stamps Multi Collector Mac and Windows compatible stamp inventory software for \$29.95 USD.

EzStamp

EzStamp, by SoftPro, is a stamp collecting inventory application that includes Scott Catalogue numbers, current market values and full colour images. They have several additional stamp collecting applications including AlbumGen, EzGrader, EzPerf, EzImage, and SRS (Stamp Recognition Software). SRS (requires EzStamp) can quickly analyze and identify a stamp from a scanned image of the stamp. Stamps are identified in 1 second in most cases and you can process batches of stamps. Most stamps can be identified in a fraction of the time it would take to identify and catalogue them compared to the old way of looking them up in a book or internet. The search results are so quick that searching and filtering can be repeated without wasting a lot of time. All varieties of a particular stamp are returned in the results. This is a handy

feature as it is quite easy to miss varieties when manually searching a printed catalogue. SRS makes identifying and adding stamps to your inventory simple and fast.

View Demo at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stPjBdebkfM>

SoftPro offers many different pricing options so you can fine tune your purchase to what you collect. A world-wide collector might pay \$359.98 for the World Edition and the SRS feature. A collector of Canada and Provinces might pay \$94.98 for Canada & Canadian Provinces and the SRS feature.

Their updates seem to be expensive at approximately 70% of purchase price. Support is fantastic according to reviews; however, you will need to read the manuals of each software piece if you intend to get the best out of the programs.

Creating Stamp Images

As the name might suggest, image recognition software requires an image to work with. It is difficult to get a flat image of a stamp using a camera. The best way to obtain an image is to use a scanner at 300 dpi. Stamps should be scanned with a black background to clearly show perforations. It is not practical to scan one stamp at a time; create a multi-stamp image by placing many stamps on the scanner bed and cover them with a piece of black paper. Once you have the scanned page of images, you will probably want to burst the multi-stamp image into individual images. Searching on the internet, I found two products that do a good job of creating the individual images from a page of images:

Image Scan Splitter <http://www.eaztools.com> and

Stamp Image Bursting Software <http://www.drakeserver.com>

Image Scan Splitter is a tool for Windows that will save you a bunch of time when selling online. It will automatically analyze the scans you have made, detect the different items in each scan, and save each item individually (and automatically rotate/center it to enhance its visual appearance). This program has many handy options merging, rotating, and adding descriptions to your images. The standard version is free and can handle scans of up to 1 MB. There is also a Pro version available.

Stamp Image Bursting Software is a Java Web Start based application that requires Java 1.6 or higher and at least 2.00 GB of RAM. The author does not have any digital certificates so the process of downloading and installing this application is not too bad, but you do need to ignore the digital signature warning each time the application is run. It is free and has many of the same capabilities as the previously mentioned product.

Conclusion

There are really only two applications that I found that provide "stamp identification from a picture", SRS and LignUp. LignUp is inexpensive, can be purchased without any other software required, and runs on both the Windows and Mac platforms. SRS is more expensive, requires the purchase of the EzStamp inventory software and only runs on the Windows platform. SRS is quick, returning results from its database whereas LignUp is noticeably slower and returns data from the Internet.

For bursting your scanned images, Image Scan Splitter is the most comfortable to use. The downside is it only runs on Microsoft Windows®. Stamp Image Bursting Software will run on either Microsoft or Apple computers, but I felt uncomfortable ignoring the security warning each time I ran the program.

If you are considering the purchase of a stamp collection inventory application, EzStamp would be a good choice for someone who is willing to dive into the deep end. It is full featured with good support but it uses a proprietary database, is pricey with expensive updates. On the other hand, StampManage is also full featured but with poor support, utilizes a Microsoft Access database, is less expensive with free updates.

Summary Tip #9: "Understanding Quality" - Part II

Train your 'Philatelic Eye'

Dear Philip,

In part I of 'Understanding Quality' we discussed the benefits of stamps being 'flat(!)' and just how helpful this is in making quality comparisons. I hope that you have been making comparisons between the 'best' and most expensive dealers internet illustrations and those of other vendors at say, eBay.

Have you been horrified at what you have seen? Certainly we are - regularly. We don't profess to be perfect - and with 13,000 lot quarterly auctions we are always going to make our share of errors too - but never deliberately and always guaranteed by prompt full refund or credit if required.

But, over the years, one of the most important and overlooked aspects of 'understanding quality' that I have noticed - is ... amazingly ..., that many collectors do not carefully examine their purchases - but more than that - they don't appear to know 'how' - and that is perhaps because nobody has ever explained '*how to train your philatelic eye*'.

How have I reached this rather fundamental conclusion? I have lost count of the times that I have handed over a x10 magnifying glass to collectors, inviting them to look at the stamp we are examining together. Most collectors do not realise that the focussing distance of the most practical magnifying glass is actually having their eye and the 'glass' approximately one to two inches from the stamp. That is how close you need to get in to examine the detail of a stamp.

Understanding this opens so many doors to what you are actually looking at and what you may start looking for.

Now that you are perhaps thinking of examining stamps 'closer up' than before - start by consciously selecting a point that you will consistently start from - say the top left north west (NW) corner ... then actually work your way 'clockwise' around the stamp. What you are now doing is 'disciplining' your eye to work to a pattern - you'll be conscious of this to begin with - but soon it will become an unconscious efficient process which will prove invaluable when looking for varieties.

1. Start by examining the perforations all of the way round the stamp, are any too short, 'pulled' or missing? Don't forget to look for 'closed tears' - or even scissor cuts. Closed tears are easily missed - but easily detected if you look for fine lines emanating from the perforations and running into the design. (Tip - flex the stamp gently, but not with your fingers! - a good time is when filing the stamp into a mount or stockcard).

Depending upon scarcity of the stamp, one pulled out/missing perforation - upon a commonly available stamp is not acceptable when you can so easily have a perfect example. The scarcer and older the more 'forgiving' you can become.

2. Now examine the margins/centring of the design to the perforations or the width of margins of an imperforate stamp. How off-centre a stamp are you prepared to have in your collection? This can have a big impact upon price in classic issues, and in modern issues - do you need it - when you may relatively easily obtain better.

3. Next, look for thins or pinholes - not just upon the reverse - but also for facial abrasions. Thinning has one of the heaviest impacts upon price. Hold the stamp against good quality background light - preferably a 'daylight' type bulb. Invest in a good quality desklight - seldom seen when we visit collectors to value their collections.

4. Now, check the colours of the stamp - are they 'true' - how do they compare with other stamps in your collection. Beware of faded stamps; consider the period of stamp you are working with - for example Queen Victoria GB often have crayon marks (from registered envelopes) - stamp 'improvers' often 'reduce' such marks in an attempt to reduce their overall impact upon the stamps appearance.

5. Is the stamp 'toned' - if mint - is the gum creamier than it should be. In this area - everything is 'relative' - toning on a modern stamp within the last 50 years is pretty unacceptable as it is unnecessary to accept it. Earlier stamps - a degree of overall toning becomes more acceptable and in some cases virtually the only quality available. But, beware of tone/rust spots - these can be severe. As with everything the degree of severity affects the price. Remember that some stamps the gum was always brownish, creamy or off-white. In the British Empire KGVI 'key types' high values, for example, a brownish streaked gum often indicates an early printing which actually went to the colonies.

6. Toning in used stamps - this can often be minimised - even eradicated with careful repeated application of a once difficult to obtain product called 'fox-it'. Try 'Googling' for 'fox-it + stamps' or <http://www.michaelkay.co.uk/index.htm> - go to 'useful stamp accessories' page - (we have no affiliation with this supplier). Be careful - 'fox-it' type products are a bleaching anti-fungal - apply from the reverse in numerous applications - dried in between each application - watch for fugitive facial colour 'leaching'.

7. Creasing - look for creases - minor bends/ gum bends are common in classic issues and in some cases hard to purchase the stamp without such. In used stamps - particularly the 'top' end a pressed out crease can as much as halve the value of the stamp, sometimes more. Look for a crease as you would look for a phosphor band - let the light from your desk lamp glance across the surface of the stamp. Remember that all creases are not vertical - diagonal, even horizontal are common.

Victorian/classic stamps are likely to have the highest chance of bearing a crease. A crease can convert an 'exhibition' appearance stamp to an 'also-ran' worth 50% or less. Be aware that heavy creases are often 'pressed out' - so the crease could be a 'finer' line. 'Improvers' use 'hydraulic presses' these days to eradicate creases.

8. Look at the postmark - is it a beauty? The Americans have a philatelic phrase which has 'travelled' - SON - otherwise 'socked on the nose' - probably the finest quality of a used stamp is a full crisp clear cancel beautifully positioned and with perfect balance/harmony between adhesive and postmark. However there are many who term a contemporary part CDS (circular date stamp) cancel as the finest quality sought - particularly clear of profile is highly desirable in typically heavily cancelled Queen Victoria line engraved issues such as the 2d blue. No matter how 'sound' the stamp, the heavier the cancellation - the lower the resale price.

Finally consider that a combination of defects - whilst acceptable in the unique British Guiana (which would probably realise £10 million in auction if offered today) - are less and less acceptable in lesser high-flying stamps. When you are considering the value of a stamp - it helps not to think of 'how many £'s or \$'s to deduct for this or that' - a sure-fire way to confuse oneself - think in terms of ... is this a super-fine stamp - in which case you may think to yourself it's an X % of catalogue value example, incrementing down to it's a 'space-filler' with multiple faults worth say 5% to 10% of catalogue value to you - or no value at all to you - if it lowers the tone of your collection too much.

By adopting a systematic approach to examining stamps you will soon 'train your philatelic eye' so that all of what I have written automatically, effortlessly and enjoyably becomes second nature to you. If you start to think how faults relate to value this will stand you in good stead when understanding quality.

In my next 'Stamp Trade Tip' we'll talk about mint stamps and what to look for in regumming.

Happy collecting from us all,

PS. If you find this 'tip' interesting please forward it to a philatelic friend.

Andrew McGavin

Coming Events...

- **MAY21 Burloak Stamp Fair**
Burlington Senior Centre, 2285 New St., Burlington, ON, L7R 1J4
Hours: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nineteen years of regular monthly shows on the third Saturday of every month. Six to nine dealers, active buyers, and always something new. For more information contact Steve Simon, telephone 905-575-2950, email bas6@bell.net.
- **May 28, 2016 to June 4, 2016 World Stamp Show NY 2016**
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, 655 W 34th St., New York, NY, 10001
Designated as a "World Stamp Exhibition" by the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP), WSS-NY 2016 will provide all show-goers with a unique experience combining our passion of stamp collecting with the fun and excitement of everything New York City has to offer. Organizers anticipate over 250,000 people will pass through the show doors over the eight days. Featuring about 200 dealers selling and buying philatelic material of all kinds, dozens of postal administrations, 3,800 frames of competitive exhibits, a Court of Honor displaying priceless stamp rarities, auctions, seminars, youth and beginner activities, and first day ceremonies sponsored by the U.S. Postal Service and other nations. Admission: Free throughout all 8 days of the show. Show runs on most days from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Phone: 844-977-2016 Ext. 3 (toll free in the U.S.) Email: info@ny2016.org
- **JUN 4 North Toronto Stamp Club Summer Bourse**
Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge Street, Toronto, ON, M4T 1Z9
Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Easy subway access at St. Clair subway station. Free admission. 22 dealers, over 100 sales circuit books including recent issues, over 100 ten cents books, members table, door prizes, snack bar, wheelchair access, parking at the Church and on nearby streets, families and children welcome. Phone: 647-990-4073 Email: NTSC.ProgramChair@gmail.com Web: <http://www.NorthTorontoStampClub.ca>
- **JUN 11 Best Western Stamp Show**
Niagara Room, Best Western Hotel, QEW at Lake Street, St. Catharines, ON, L2N 4G9
Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free parking, free admission and free appraisals. Sponsored by Roy's Stamps, specializing in the stamps and covers of Canada and the British Commonwealth. For further information, contact Roy Houtby Phone: 905-934-8377
- **JUN 18 Burloak Stamp Fair**
Burlington Senior Centre, 2285 New St., Burlington, ON, L7R 1J4
Hours: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nineteen years of regular monthly shows on the third Saturday of every month. Six to nine dealers, active buyers, and always something new. For more information contact Steve Simon, telephone 905-575-2950, email bas6@bell.net.

- AUG 13 KINEX 2016
Davidson Center, 601 Durham St., Kincardine, ON, N2Z 1L6
Annual stamp Show & Bourse. 8+ dealers, youth table, sales circuit, displays, lunch booth, door prizes. Free admission. For more information call John. Phone: 519-395-5817 Email: jcortan@hurontel.on.ca
- AUG 19 ROYAL*2016*ROYALE August 19, 2016 to August 21, 2016
Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex, 101 Father David Bauer Drive, Waterloo, ON, N2J 4A8
88th Convention of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. National postage stamp, postal history, & postcard marketplace. Competitive exhibits, Canadian & international dealers. Canada Post, RPSC Sales Circuits, seminars, Junior collectors program. Phone: 519-746-4270 Email: royal2016royale@gmail.com Web: <http://www.rpsc.org>

From the Editor...

Space is limited in this edition of the newsletter, but just a few things to share. I received an email about another stamp selling website, www.hipstamp.com. If anyone has used/bought from bidstart or stamp wants before, it is the same creator of this new website. Bid start was purchased by Stanley Gibbons, but since the email was addressed to me, he must have kept his buyers list!

Sadly, you may note that the "Publicity Director" is not included below. Due to personal situations at home, John has resigned from the position. Hopefully we will see John again when the "Home Front" improves. We do miss your boisterous nature at the meetings John! However, if someone is willing to step forward to help bring the club into the public eye, there is a job available. Lastly, thanks to Larry Crane and Bob Ford for representing the Owen Sound Stamp Club the Community Fair in the Owen Sound Library at the end of April. Some people were interested and we may see new faces at this meeting or in the future.

During the school year, the Owen Sound Stamp Club meets at 7:00 pm on the third Wednesday of each month in the cafeteria of St Mary's High School, 555 15th Street East. Meeting agendas will vary between having visiting club circuit books, speakers and an auction. Guests and new members are always welcome. Annual membership fees: \$15.00. Visit the Owen Sound Stamp Club website at <http://www.owensoundstampclub.org/>



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