Thematic Philately
– Explaining the Philatelic Material

Jonas Hällström FRPSL

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MALMÖ 3rd INTERNATIONAL
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25-27 APRIL 2014
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PHILATELIC SUMMIT

The ***Malmö 3rd International Philatelic Summit*** *was conducted 25-27 April 2014. For the third time it was again a well-attended event with delegates from around the world - 93 participants with 19 different nationalities.*

When I six years ago (2008) started the planning for the first Summit, my long time aim was to found an event where the world's leading philatelic exhibitors regularly could meet sharing philatelic exhibiting expertizes and experiences in a context with shared friendship under social forms. With the three Summits in retrospect, I would say I have succeeded - not alone but with a fantastic response from partners as Postiljonen and Spink, with great speakers and a fantastic audience with leading philatelic exhibitors and collectors in the world.

The first Summit in 2009 proved that the individual philatelic disciplines (classes) have much in common. If one is active as collector and exhibitor in one discipline (class), one way of positive progress and efficient development is to study the other disciplines for new influences. The first Summit dealt with postal history and thematic philately. It proved that there are less differences than there are parallels.

The second Summit in 2012 was dealing with "treatment" and "development" of the story told by the concept expressed in a philatelic exhibit. The Summit proved that without a developed and clear "concept" which is story-telling too, one will never be able to succeed. One of the statements from the second Summit was that

"The perfect treatment can only be reached if you own a large proportion of the best material, but you can easily have the best material without good treatment".

In reality, when studying today's competitive philately, this statement is proven to be true. Few exhibits without a perfect treatment reaches the top level (even though they have the best material).

Our hobby is dealing with philatelic material and the third Summit dealt with the philatelic material. Exhibitors must select suitable philatelic material which will ensure continuity in the treatment and balancing the strict philatelic importance with the importance relevant to the subject. Judges' evaluation of exhibits takes into consideration the philatelic material and relevant information presented. Philatelic material impacts on the importance, requiring an evaluation of the philatelic significance, which rely on the degree of knowledge expressed in the exhibit. The variety of exhibits at international exhibitions are so broad that it cannot be likely that members of the jury have a detailed knowledge of all presented areas. The philatelic material in all exhibits should include the fullest range relevant and of the highest quality available. Knowledge is expressed by the philatelic material. Personal study is the proper analysis of the philatelic material. Research is the presentation of facts related to the philatelic material.

This is the eleventh Paper in the Summit Paper Series and this Paper concludes this philatelically important series of publications. It's my privilege to be the author myself in this Paper, where I focus on the selection of philatelic material to thematic philately.

This Series of publications has became very important because it's a current footprint on where competitive philately/ philatelic exhibiting stands: - It's a very serious game for all of us being involved.

Again I would like to thank my fellow colleagues who willingly have published their philatelic views in this series: James Peter Gough RDP, Henrik Mouritsen, Christopher G. Harman RDP, Lars Engelbrecht, Damian Läge, Brian Trotter RDP, Jari Majander, Geoffrey Lewis and Lars Peter Svendsen. The Philatelic Summit Papers will for a long time in the future carry on the tradition of excellence from the three Malmö International Philatelic Summits conducted.

Jonas Hällström
Editor & Chairman of the
"International Philatelic Summit" in Malmö

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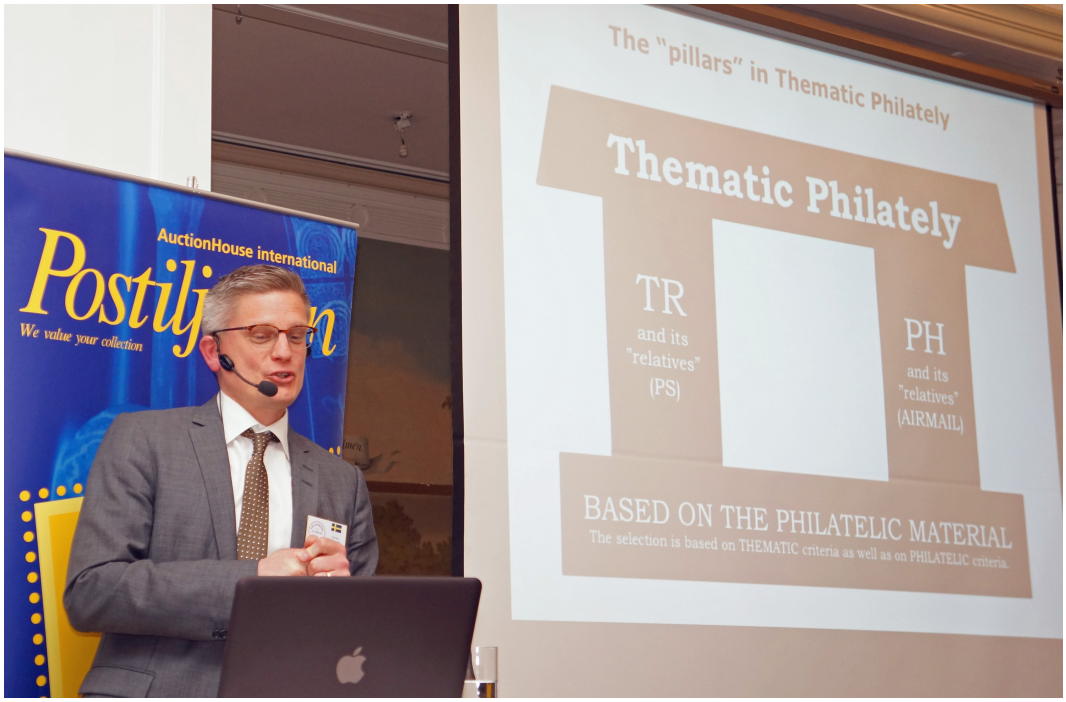

Jonas Hällström has been the organizer of the three Malmö International Philatelic Summits taking place in 2009, 2012 and 2014 and has acted in the role as seminar chairperson. Jonas was chairman of the FIP Thematic Philately Commission from 2012 to 2014. He is an active exhibitor of postal stationery, postal history and thematic philately and was the European Champion in Thematic Philately in Paris (2010) with his exhibit "The History of the Square-rigged Sailing Vessels". His thematic exhibit "Maneuver Warfare - viewed through the theories about the Nature of War" has won Gold and felicitations for "innovation". Jonas is FIP judge and team-leader in thematic philately. At the Summit in 2014 Jonas gave a presentation with the title "Explaining the philatelic material in Thematic Philately". This is the Paper concluding his presentation.

Square-Rigged Sailing Vessels

This introduction to this Paper aims to introduce the reader to the collection "The History of the Square-Rigged Sailing Vessels" on which the presentation given to the Summit was based. The introduction also captures and reflects current approaches to thematic philately and practice, defined as having a "story-telling" concept in philatelic exhibits.

Background

"Sailing Ships" has proved to be a very broad topic and it has allowed me to pursue a worldwide approach to my collecting. Many countries have a sailing vessel in their Coat of Arms, including a fair number of first issues in the 19th century from around the world. Therefore the philatelic importance of much of the material in this collection is higher than many would expect who do not collect thematically.

My own perception of thematic philately in today's context is that it has progressed from its early childhood in the 1920s. By then we saw "Generation 1" of topical collections presented in pre-printed stamp albums, generally covering one single topic like animals, history, etc. and with stamps only.

Topical philately entered international stamp exhibitions in the 1950s and "Generation 2" of topical collections were presented as exhibits. Still they covered one narrow topic in general, but now the exhibitors made their own page layout and wrote descriptions of the topical stamps.

Topical philately took a huge step forward when the philatelic material was mixed – not only using stamps to illustrate the topic, but also a mix of philatelic material. Also the writing-up, i.e. the topical text, began to refer to the specific items' illustrations, which we in today's thematic philately define as the "dialogue". I use to define this step taken from topical philately to thematic philately as "Generation 3".

"Generation 3.5" of thematic exhibits were the first ones to reach Large Golds and Golds in the thematic philately class internationally. The variety of the philatelic material was improved and thematic philately achieved for the first time full status with the general philatelic public. These actually could see philatelically important material treated in the thematic class, with a complementary philatelic "dialogue" stating what actually was displayed and comprehensively explaining the philatelic material.

Thematic philately grew into today's "Generation 4" when outstanding philatelic development of the material was first implemented in thematic philately. This combined the development of the story (concept) with the importance of the philatelic material (rarity) into one and the same operation.

The essence of thematic philately

Thematic philately is fundamentally based on the philatelic material which constitutes an exhibit. I would say that thematic philately has three main pillars based on the philatelic material. These pillars are traditional philately (TR), postal history (PH), and postal stationery (PS). Referring to the different generations defined above, and understanding that the different generations are related to how we as thematic philatelists mix and develop the philatelic material in our thematic concepts, it is clear that there is a relationship between the philatelic material, the concept and of course our knowledge related to both the philatelic material and the concept. The key issue for thematic philately is therefore how to manage and handle the "presentation".

In a thematic collection, "the plan" (traditionally similar to the first page of the collection) should give the reader an overview of the "concept". Also, the plan must be linked to the title of the collection. In my case, the title promises to show "The History of the Square-Rigged Sailing Vessels". When you read the plan on the first page it is obvious that a comprehensive story is told.