

The Synopsis - telling the judges about your exhibit

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Introduction

Nowadays, more and more shows, as part of your exhibit application, are asking you to submit a title page and/or a synopsis (ancillary notes for the judges), sometimes both. Why is this? It's because both of these documents are considered vital, as they better define your exhibit for the judges who will evaluate it.

Note: The advice given in this article represents the opinions of the authors. As you consider it, be assured that the concepts stated here have a sound basis because they represent the thinking of a significant number of judges for whom we have the highest respect. Keep in mind, however, that these concepts are evolving over time as new and valuable insights come to light.

The Title Page - telling everyone about your exhibit, the article found elsewhere on this web site, has introduced you to the format of the title page, the page that defines your exhibit. Now, you ask, what is the synopsis?

What is the synopsis for?

Your synopsis will tell the judges about your exhibit. It will help them to research your topic beforehand and to evaluate it at the frames. It is also your chance to brag about the significant items you are showing and why you have included them. The better your synopsis, the more likely the judges will understand your exhibit and give it the medal it deserves.

Layout

Start your synopsis with your exhibit heading, then follow it with the stamp show name and draft date. If you decide to submit an improved one later on before the show's deadline, don't forget to change the date.

Purpose and scope

Here you restate the Purpose of your exhibit, exactly as you have written it on the title page. State the limits of your exhibit (this is the Scope), and explain why those limits are appropriate and not an arbitrary choice (e.g., excluding a difficult time period or cutting it short to fit it in the frames).

UEEF criteria as headings

Download the *UEEF (Uniform Exhibit Evaluation Form)* from the APS website. You should use the headings on this form as criteria to discuss your exhibit, relating your exhibit to each in turn. The UEEF criteria are (like many of the concepts in this article, these criteria are in flux):

- **Treatment** (organization, clarity, balance, subject completeness)
- **Importance** (subject, philatelic and exhibit importance)
- **Philatelic/Subject Knowledge** (selection and application, brevity, correctness)
- **Personal Study and Research** (evidence of significant personal study or original research)
- **Rarity** (challenge, difficulty of acquisition, no artificial limitations on items)
Indicate how they are identified in the exhibit. Here you may list a limited number of what you consider your significant items.
- **Condition** (physical condition and appearance in light of quality obtainable)

Don't worry about Presentation, as you will be covering it under Treatment, Purpose and Scope.

Changes

Include a short paragraph on what has changed since the exhibit's last outing, e.g., completely remounted, treatment changed, new items added.

References

These are the sources of information on your exhibit topic that will help the judges understand it. They have to read up on all of the exhibits at the show, so they may not spend more than an hour looking at your references. Aim to provide a **limited number** of **easily accessible** and **preferably brief** references, in **English, if at all possible**. Here are some more tips to maximize the amount of information they can glean:

- List no more than four references. One or two may be sufficient.
- Don't list references that are unavailable to the judges.
- List the best reference first and explain why it is so important.
- Make them specific (don't refer to "selected newsletters of a certain specialist society").
- Supply page numbers to be even more specific, if it means saving the judges time looking through a source for the relevant material.
- For highly relevant but short and/or hard to obtain material, consider emailing it as a PDF to the Exhibits Chair, or sending photocopies with your entry form.
- Personally written articles make great references if they are relevant and cover all the questions and concerns the judges might have. You can email these as PDFs or send photocopies.
- Make sure any website links listed have been tested, and are accessible to all.
- Try to avoid listing publications written in another language, unless that is all that's available.

What not to include

There is no need to make a list of prior shows in which the exhibit has been entered and the medal levels gained. Your exhibit will be judged on its own merits.

Readability

To make the synopsis more readable and visually appealing, you can format it into two columns, use a different font or color for headings, highlight important text in some way, and even add scans, pictures or maps. Don't get too carried away though! Make sure your font size is at least 10pt and preferably greater.

Length

Your synopsis should not take up more than two pages. If you feel you have covered all the topics on one page, then that would be fine too.

Learn from others

We would like to thank Tony Dewey for giving us permission to link to his excellent synopsis for his *Connecticut Tercentenary First Day Cover* exhibit. See

http://www.malariastamps.com/exhibits/exhibits_images/DeweyConn/Synopsis.pdf

It incorporates many of the suggestions made above, and is available on the AAPE exhibits webpage (scroll down to the 15th exhibit). Do yourself a favor and check it out!

OK, let's do it!

Don't be intimidated by having to prepare a synopsis. Just use the headings above and tell the judges what they need to know to best judge your exhibit. Remember, you know your topic better than they do!