

The Philatelic Communicator

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2000 Circulation of Stamp Hobby Publications — A Report and Analysis

by Ken Lawrence

Table 1 — Annual Paid Circulation

	1997	1998	1999	2000
Linn's Stamp News	65,970	65,020	62,202	58,816
The American Philatelist	54,044	53,878	52,608	51,788
Scott Stamp Monthly	25,060	26,357	27,116	30,491
Stamp Collector	17,664	13,463	13,670	15,736
Mekeel's and Stamps	8,159	7,125	6,939	6,604
Topical Time	5,344	5,121	4,989	4,819
U.S. Stamp News	4,010	4,606	4,384	4,762
First Days	2,704	2,791	2,807	2,800

The list of United States stamp hobby publications with average paid circulations in excess of 2,000 copies per issue has now shrunk to eight in my annual Table 1 listing, with the demise this past year of *The Stamp Wholesaler* as a separate publication. You read that prediction here first. Last year I wrote, "*The Stamp Wholesaler*, which has plummeted . . . is now at its lowest ebb. Perhaps it will be next to join the list of defunct stamp periodicals."

Both Linn's editor-publisher Michael Laurence and *Scott Stamp Monthly* editor-in-chief Peter Martin opined in editorials that the 15 percent gain in *Stamp Collector's* circulation is partly due to the addition of whatever separate subscribership *The Stamp Wholesaler* had enjoyed when the two periodicals were combined, but Martin added, "I expect that the percentage was small. The move to biweekly, improvements in content and design and aggressive marketing seem to have paid off for *Stamp Collector*." I agree; this second consecutive year of *Stamp Collector's* modest growth is not a statistical fluke.

Despite the generally dismal overall Table 1 picture of dwindling readerships, two of the eight periodicals — *Scott Stamp Monthly* and *U.S. Stamp News* — registered not only substantial growth, but reported their all-time peak circulations in the year 2000, as Table 2 shows. Martin proudly boasted that his monthly "had another record breaking year and topped 30,000 in circulation for the first time, only the fifth stamp periodical to have reached that milestone."

Oddly in contrast to that, *U.S. Stamp News* publisher John Dunn seemed not even to have noticed the 10 percent leap in his

magazine's alleged circulation. He wrote, in the May-June-July-August 2000 issue (May and June cover dates; July and August in the masthead and footers), which arrived at the end of November, "One thing is certain: while we stayed about even with last year, the subscription figures you see in the Publisher's Statement are woefully inadequate."

Table 2 — Peak Circulation (Year)

Linn's Stamp News	91,383	(1977)
The American Philatelist	55,665	(1991)
Western Stamp Collector	35,292	(1960)
Stamps Magazine	34,316	(1960)
Scott Stamp Monthly	30,491	(2000)
Weekly Philatelic Gossip	19,878	(1952)
Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News	17,906	(1961)
National Stamp News	16,618	(1962)
Topical Time	10,607	(1973)
Chambers Stamp Journal	9,921	(1949)
The Stamp Wholesaler	9,593	(1973)
Stamp Show News	8,548	(1979)
SPA Journal	8,453	(1978)
Mekeel's and Stamps	8,159	(1997)
Southern Philatelist	6,035	(1950)
New Stamp Dealer	5,407	(1961)
U.S. Stamp News	4,762	(2000)
First Days	4,053	(1989)

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THE QUILL

Joe Foley

RESPONSIBLE (?) JOURNALISM

The October 2000 issue of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* carried an "invited" article by Ken Lake over the title "Are the Judges always Right?" The leader to the article, apparently expressing the feelings of the editor and/or publisher, noted "Questions regarding some of the awards at The Stamp Show 2000 have arrived in the *GSM* office from a number of sources—so we asked Ken Lake to investigate."

I was not at the show in London and obviously can't comment on the relative merits of one exhibit vs. another. However, Lake's malicious treatment of the exhibit of the winner of the Grand Prix National Award is devoid of both taste and accuracy. The comment "Yet every professional philatelist and experienced collector to whom I've spoken rated it as worth at best a Vermeil because, to quote one of them; 'most of the handful of rarities in it were either fronts, or undated, or in poor condition, and virtually all important pieces were missing,'" is particularly vicious.

By referring to unnamed sources Lake attempts to simulate substance and avoid accountability. (An exercise in mythology?) The exhibit has a track record that has shown improvement over time, and while this is its first large international gold, it is by no means its first international gold. I recently judged a version of this exhibit at the national level (the owner had to tighten it to reduce from 10 to 8 frames for London). The statement "most of the handful of rarities in it were either fronts, or undated, or in poor condition, and virtually all important pieces were missing" is simply *not true*.

The firm of Stanley Gibbons and its publications have a long history in our hobby, and indeed, a very special place. That *GSM* should give voice to such a scurrilous piece is not only disappointing, it is offensive.

CRASH!

I lost my hard drive (and everything on it), CD drive (twice) and power unit in my computer.

Back up—we'll—some of us learn our lessons the hard way! At present I'm limping along with a borrowed lap top and, thanks to the Baltimore Philatelic Society, using their computer to get this issue out.

Some of our authors have sent me material by e-mail only, no hard copy. If you don't see your item in this issue, it went down with the hard drive. Please send it in again. □

NEWS RELEASE IMMEDIATE

OKPEX 2001 DROPS PHILATELIC LITERATURE COMPETITION

The Philatelic Literature competition will not be held at OKPEX 2001, the WSP show on May 4-6, 2001 in Oklahoma City. OKPEX is sponsored by the Oklahoma City Stamp Club. The Chairman for 2001, Joe H. Crosby, announced that the OKPEX Committee was forced to make this difficult decision because of the lack of support from those writing, editing and publishing philatelic literature, and particularly the lack of interest shown in the special class of competition offered for Stamp Auction Catalogs as literature. OKPEX has been the **ONLY** National Stamp Show that offers awards to Auction Catalogs as a distinct category of philatelic literature. Crosby explained that the show has been required to significantly underwrite the literature portion of the show for the last two years. OKPEX has been pleased and proud to provide this service to the philatelic community for the last five years, but we have decided that, *at least for now*, we can no longer continue to do so.

We are pleased to learn that Chicagopex will include some auction catalogs in their philatelic literature competition this year. We encourage other WSP shows that already offer Philatelic Literature competitions to add Auction Catalogs as a category, and to consider making several sub-categories so that auction firms of all sizes and publishing of all types of sales catalogs can obtain meaningful suggestions from the jury to improve their publications, as well as achieve sufficient entries to provide meaningful competition within each sub-class.

For additional information, contact the Oklahoma City Stamp Club, P.O. Box 26542, Oklahoma City, OK, 73 126 or email to joecrosby@home.com

Editor's note: Accompanying the OKPEX press release was a letter from Joe Crosby which bears reading by all of us who have an interest in philatelic literature. JEF

I enclose a news release from OKPEX 2001 which will be of some interest to *The Philatelic Communicator* readers, especially after Michael D. Dixon's excellent White Paper on Philatelic Literature Competitions. Please be assured his comments did not "cause" us to make our present decision. It has been one that has been coming for nearly two years.

You may want to include some additional material about our decision for your publication that probably would not be of interest to the general philatelic press.

We have worked hard to grow our Philatelic Literature competitions for five years, particularly in the Auction Catalog category, which we pioneered. But when you only get three firms to bother to enter their catalogs in 2000, it becomes apparent that there is insufficient interest to justify the expense of judges, awards, time of coordinating the advance mail outs to the jury, providing floor space for public display of the entries, and all the rest. The amount of effort required, versus the response received simply makes it difficult to get any one on our committee to be willing to do the job and do it right. I personally tried for the last two years, and really have gotten the message that the United States just does *not want or need another* Philatelic Literature competition.

It has always been our hope that we could be a positive influence on the publication of better quality auction catalogs

that we all want to keep in our libraries and refer to quite often. We have seen increasing quality over the last five years, not necessarily as literature, but in more color, more illustrations, better lot descriptions, etc. But we know it has been the MARKET that has driven this, not our OKPEX awards.

Still, for all the reasons stated by Mr. Dixon in his fine White Paper, we would encourage the Committee on Accreditation of National Exhibitions and Judges (CANEJ) in its review of philatelic literature competitions to take a long and thoughtful look at Auction Catalogs and develop formalized Judging Criteria and Methodology for them AS A SEPARATE CLASS. All former OKPEX literature judges are APS qualified literature judges and would be the best source of input on the subject.

Finally, we have not totally abandoned the field of philatelic literature at OKPEX, only put in on the shelf for a while, to return to it at some appropriate future date maybe 2007 when Oklahoma celebrates its Centennial of Statehood.

Joe H. Crosby
Chairman, OKPEX 2001

Email: joecrosby@home.com