

The Philatelic Communicator

Quarterly Journal of

Writers Unit 30, American Philatelic Society

Volume 40, Number 1, Whole Number 151

First Quarter 2006

Scanners and How They Can Help You

by Robert P. Odenweller

Scanners have a wide range of uses, but are a particularly essential piece of equipment for the author and editor. Mine sees action daily to make illustrations for articles for the CCP (one just arrived in the mail asking me to make the proper scan), illustrations to send to others, conversion of text submitted instead of electronic copy, which I convert by OCR (Optical Character Recognition), and expertizing. A few other uses creep in, but I couldn't imagine life without one.

Let's assume you already have access to a scanner but have not been able to see what it can do for you. Each scanner, when delivered, will have some sort of entry level program that can be put to limited use. These programs are often just a come-on to get you to buy the full bells-and-whistles version, which is almost guaranteed to have far too many things you'll never need.

Selecting a proper program is another subject. For the moment, let's see what you can do with what you have. Although each scanner will have different controls that you use both as buttons on the face and electronic selections on the screen, they will generally have the same basic selections available. Primary of these is the number of dots per inch (dpi) you can use.

Current scanners routinely deliver 1,200 dpi if you need it. Earlier ones were limited to something on the order of 300. So what do you need?

Consider this basic rule of thumb: Deliver the final image at 300 dpi for virtually any top level printing job and you'll have a fine level of sharpness.

I say "final level" for a reason: A cover scanned at 300 dpi and intended for printing at life size should do just fine. A stamp or marking scanned at 300 dpi and blown up to show some smaller detail will suffer, depending on how much you blow it up. If the final size is double the original, you will wind up having half of the 300 dpi, or 150. A three times enlargement yields only 100 dpi, and so forth.

To get the proper level of sharpness, then, you must multiply the 300 dpi end-product output by the amount of the enlargement. Thus, a double size stamp must be scanned at 600 dpi (2 x 300), and a triple size at 1,200.

Unless you have a huge storage capacity in your computer, you'll want to scan at a size that will reflect any future need, and not just at the highest level. For example, a full 300 dpi color scan of a standard 8½ x 11 page will yield a 24 MB file. That goes to 96 MB for 600 dpi and a whopping 385 MB for 1,200. Drop that to a greyscale image and you still have 8, 32 and 128 MB, respectively. Individual covers will be a portion of those figures, but a #10 cover will still be about 45% of each of the above file sizes.

How these are saved will make quite a difference. Retaining the full amount of information of the scan will require saving as a TIF file (Tagged Image File Format), but that will result in the largest size. A small cover I just scanned (measuring about 5.4 x 3.1 inches), gave me a 3.7 MB file. This is much more than you would want to send to anyone electronically unless you both have a very high speed connection. Even then, it's a bit much. For this, and certainly for more than one image to be sent, a CD in the mail is the best solution. All this is, of course, dependent on the type of production involved in the final journal. For the CCP, we can handle up to 375 dpi in color on surfaced paper. For the journals that are printed in black and white or that don't use such high tech equipment, such as Kinko's, you can get away with less than 300 dpi. And remember, too, that any reduction of size gains in the other direction. If a cover is to be shown at only half size, then you can get away with 150 dpi since it will again return to 300 for the final image. Just understanding the trade-off is enough. Each requirement will be different. Once you have

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Writers Unit 30, APS, publishes *The Philatelic Communicator* four times a year. A subscription to *TPC* is included with dues paid by members of the Unit.

Manuscripts are solicited on subjects of interest to writers, editors and publishers of all forms of philatelic literature. All submissions for publication, without exception, are subject to being edited. Opinions expressed in *The Philatelic Communicator* are those of their authors, and not necessarily of Writers Unit 30, APS, its officers, editor, publisher or agents. Letters received by the editor may be published unless labeled "Not for Publication." When possible, furnish copy, including letters, electronically (WordPerfect 8, RTF or Word!). Include a printed copy as a control. All editorial matters must be handled with the editor.

DEADLINES--For receipt of copy by the editor:

First Quarter Jan. 15
Second Quarter April 15
Third Quarter July 15
Fourth Quarter Oct. 15

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Writers Unit 30 has as its primary objective the encouragement and improvement of philatelic writing in all of its various forms. Calendar year membership dues, payable in advance in U.S. funds through a U.S. bank or Post Office are:

USPS Zip code address	\$15.00
Canada & Mexico	\$17.50
All other addresses	\$20.00

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The Philatelic Communicator is printed and distributed by Wilcox Printing & Publishing, Inc., Madrid, Iowa.



The Quill

Gene Fricks

STANDING WITH YOUR BUDDY

When Joe Foley told me of his medical problems and asked for help with the *Communicator*, I thought of how a similar request almost 30 years ago led to an almost 20-year stint at the *Collectors Club Philatelist*. However, when your buddy is hurting, you stand with him. So here I am and I trust that I can depend upon each of you to help continue the fine effort Joe has spearheaded on our behalf. I am not in a position, timewise, to do all for this publication that he has accomplished. However, to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, 'we get the type of publication we deserve.'

So, if you deserve a first-class product, let's collaborate to make it happen.

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

By Peter Martin



Editorial Opening

In his fourth quarter 'The Quill' column, Editor Joe Foley announced that he had been diagnosed with lung cancer and that he would begin treatment right away. Gene Fricks, a longtime council member and former editor of the *Collectors Club Philatelist*, agreed to step in on an interim basis

I am pleased to report that Joe appears to be winning his battle with the dreaded disease. But the situation has caused him to reassess his priorities. The end result is that he is limiting his outside activities so that he can

spend more time with his family. Regrettably, he has submitted his resignation as editor of *The Philatelic Communicator*, a duty that he has done with energy and enthusiasm for a prolonged period of time.

Joe revitalized the journal and has produced excellent themed issues. He sought out experts to provide their insights into the writing and editing craft with the goal of improving the skills of our members. He worked tirelessly to provide a quality journal and on behalf of the officers, council and membership I offer our sincere thanks for a job well done.

Joe's departure opens an opportunity for someone else to showcase his or her skills. Gene Fricks has produced this issue and has agreed to hold down the fort until a new editor is selected but he hopes that time will be very soon because his schedule and commitments will not allow him to continue long-term.

Anyone interested in accepting the challenge, or who would like additional details about the job, should contact me immediately. In fact, I'd like to appoint an editor and one or more associate editors so that we ease the burden on any one person and provide a possible training ground for writer's wishing to add editorial experience to their list of accomplishments.

The Philatelic Communicator is the main communication and educational tool of the organization. The Writers Unit needs your talent. Will you answer the call?

Washington 2006

Washington 2006, the once-a-decade U.S. international philatelic exhibition is scheduled for May 27-June 3 in Washington, D.C. A number of you have asked if we are going to have a WU#30 breakfast during the show. We normally have our winter meeting coinciding with the APS winter show which, this year, is at Washington 2006.

Unfortunately, event coordinator Ken Martin informed me that the convention center cost for a breakfast would be prohibitive and that there were no suitable restaurants within easy access of the venue. Therefore, our only formal meeting of the year will be on Sunday at the August STAMPSHOW in Chicago.

Hall of Fame Criteria.

In my fourth quarter column, I highlighted the effort to establish HOF guidelines and a complete nomination program. You were invited to comment and, I must say, the response was underwhelming. Surely you have opinions about the guidelines listed in that column. Admission into the WU#30 Hall of Fame is the most prestigious award that we offer. Your comments are solicited. Take a moment to write or e-mail today.

Final Call for Writers Unit #30 Hall of Fame 2006 Nominations

This is the final call for nominations for the Writers Unit #30 Hall of Fame class of 2006. Anyone may

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