

The Philatelic Communicator

Quarterly Journal of
Writers Unit 30, American Philatelic Society

Volume 35, Number 2, Whole Number 132

Second Quarter 2001

The Mission Statement

by Larry Goldberg

I am a firm believer in the need for planning in any and every human endeavor. Plans are needed to run a business, to aid the functioning of the family and to successfully publish a periodical. After all, if you don't have a plan, what are you going to change when things go wrong?

A plan does not exist in a vacuum. In order to develop a plan, one must have a set of ground rules that defines the parameters within which the plan must function. For example, if you are publishing and/or editing a philatelic journal, it would probably be inappropriate to include instructions for fine tuning a family car. To keep yourself on track, you need to develop a mission statement, a document that clearly defines the purpose and scope of your publication.

You might well say that you have edited your particular publication for years and who better than you know its purpose and scope. The truth is that the longer you have edited your publication, the more critical the need for a mission statement.

A mission statement should serve as an answer to the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of your publication?
2. Who is the reader you are trying to reach?
3. What is the publication's geographic reach?
4. What sort of writing style should be used?
5. How often will it be published?
6. What backbone (things that appear in every issue) will be included and how much space will it require?
7. Who has the final word on content?
8. Who has the final word on writing and layout?

Let's examine each of these points.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR PUBLICATION?

You need a crystal clear understanding of why you are producing your publication and what your goals are in doing so. Put this information in writing and stick to it.

Speaking from my own experience, it is easy to get off track. State your purpose in a clear, concise manner and live with it. Again, if you do not do this, you have nothing to change when you get off track.

Bear in mind—none of this is carved in stone. It should be dynamic. It should be reviewed periodically and changed when necessary to reflect the goals and needs of your audience.

WHO IS THE READER YOU ARE TRYING TO REACH?

Know your readers and their interests. Like everything else in this life, people buy what they want. In most cases, the newsletter and perhaps a bill for annual dues are the only communication between the group and its members. If you do not give them what they want, there is a strong possibility you will lose their membership.

Viewed in this way, you might say that the newsletter is responsible for more than just communications. It also plays a significant role in marketing the group. To do an adequate job of this, you have to know your audience. An annual survey is a good way to keep track of your readers' interests.

WHAT IS THE PUBLICATION'S GEOGRAPHIC REACH?

This is an important factor to keep in mind, especially from an editorial standpoint. Frequently, we might use figures of speech that are not readily comprehensible to people who do not live where we do. It is important to know what is acceptable anecdotally and even metaphorically in order to foster better communications with your readers.

Geographic dispersion can have a bearing on production as well. If a significant portion of your readership is in foreign countries, you might want to print on a lighter weight paper or go to a self-mailer format to keep postage costs down.

WHAT SORT OF WRITING STYLE SHOULD BE USED?

The more I write, the more truth I see in the importance of keeping my writing in a simple style without patronizing the reader. Typically, most people in the U.S. and Canada have comprehension problems when writing gets past the sixth grade level. Avoid big words. Avoid long sentences and paragraphs. Use illustrations freely because a picture is truly worth 1,000 words or perhaps more. Tables are also a big aid to comprehension.

Frankly, I think the typical philatelist is brighter than the norm and you can probably get away with writing at a level higher than sixth grade, but don't get too carried away; keep it simple and to the point.

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The Philatelic Communicator

ISSN 0147-3646

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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, on diskettes (WordPerfect 8, RTF or ASCII). Include printed copy with diskettes. 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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(2003)

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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:

U.S. Zip code address, bulk rate

\$15.00

Canada & Mexico, 1st class mail

\$17.50

All other, by AO Airmail

\$20.00

Please report address changes to the Secretary-Treasurer as soon as known in order to avoid loss of issues.

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



The Quill

Joe Foley

In this issue Karen Weigt's two part article on illustrations is concluded. Examples of various approaches to producing illustrations are also given and I hope they serve the purpose. In reviewing many study group and local club journals and newsletters, quality illustrations appears to be elusive. Hopefully we will have more articles like Karen's in the future.

A SAD NOTE

As will be noted on page 13, our sister society, the Philatelic Writers Society based in the United Kingdom has closed down. I got to know some of the members in person and some through correspondence. Like many of the volunteer organizations on this side of the pond, when the ranks of those willing and able to carry on the work of the group thins, a downward spiral can easily begin.

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There were a good 17 pages available for this issue. Unfortunately, I have to work in multiples of four. The page left out carried details of the FIP Web site evaluation for this year. However, since anyone interested in this, undoubtedly has access to the 'net, a shortcut is to refer to the FIP Web site for details: <http://www.f-i-p.ch/> Closing date for applications is August 1, 2001. The application form may be obtained on line from Francis Kiddle at franciskiddle@talk21.com Applications may be submitted electronically or by mail to the address noted on the form.

CHICAGO AGAIN

Some time ago, I mentioned that the collectors in the Chicago area always seem to "do it right!" They continue to "do it right." A recent note from Les Winick, president of the Collectors Club of Chicago, noted a number of new features added to their Web site www.AskPhil.org Included are: a want list service available to all collectors at no charge and a listing of every illegal stamp and souvenir sheet that has been reported to the UPU and a topical breakdown of these false "stamps." Les reports that the site is averaging more than 8,000 "hits" a month and approximately 150 questions and answers each month. This is a club that is truly investing in the future of our hobby.

FAIR USE

I have asked a couple of our members to comment on the concept of "fair use" in a future issue. It's an area that all writers and editors should probably be more familiar with than most of us really are. Comments from any member on this or any other subject would be welcome.

If there is any aspect of writing, editing or publishing that you would like to see covered in *The Philatelic Communicator*, let me know and I'll do my best to have it covered.

►► Mission Statement (continued from page 1)

WHAT BACKBONE WILL BE INCLUDED AND HOW MUCH SPACE WILL IT REQUIRE?

The backbone includes things like your masthead, banner, editorial, letters, reports from officers and any other features that regularly appear in every issue. They form the core of every issue. It's a good idea to have a few of these as it cuts down on the number of articles you need to solicit for each issue.

WHO HAS FINAL WORD ON CONTENT?

&

WHO HAS FINAL WORD ON WRITING AND LAYOUT?

The truth of the matter is that the editor has responsibility for the content, writing and layout. Depending on the way your study group is organized others may be involved in the decision process. I urge you to try to get agreement that clearly defines who does what. Optimally, get your chairperson to buy in on what runs in the newsletter, but reserve final authority on the writing, editing and layout for yourself.

I currently edit and publish several periodicals. The following is a copy of the mission statement that I developed for *George VI*, a quarterly publication for the King George VI specialist collector. It is a for-profit publication and not affiliated with any study group or organization.

MISSION STATEMENT

George VI is a quarterly philatelic journal that is published for the specialist collector of the stamps and postal history of the reign of King George VI. While the primary readership is geographically located in North America and the United Kingdom, we serve subscribers throughout the world.

There are few fixed articles that appear in every issue, other than one page devoted to an editorial, one page that is reserved for letters from the readers, one page for readers' classified ads, and the front cover.

We will strike a balance between articles on stamp issues, postal history, postal stationery and revenues so that we are able to provide good coverage of the full range of King George VI philately.

The style of these articles should be written for the average person in an easy-to-read but knowledgeable tone without being patronizing.

We will accept advertising, but will maintain an editorial/advertising ratio of at least three to one.

The editor/publisher of *George VI* has final approval on the content and design of the publication.

I urge you to go through this process for your publication. It is a valuable tool for your use as well as an information piece to use for your contributors, advertisers and subscribers.

Larry Goldberg is editor/publisher of *George VI* and editor of *Precancels/Canada*, the newsletter of the BNAPS Precancel Study Group. He is also the author and publisher of *Falkland Islands Dependencies: 1946 Thick Map Issue* and the soon-to-be published monograph: *1946 Commonwealth Victory Issue: Parliament Buildings Design*. □

Cast Your Ballot for WU#30 Officers

As promised in the last issue of *PC*, the ballot for officers and Council members appears in the centerfold of this issue. The deadline for receipt of ballots in August 15, 2001.

Wayne L. Youngblood, chairman of the WU#30 Nominations Committee, has placed in nomination: Dane S. Claussen as 2001-2003 president; Barth Healey as 2001-2003 vice president east; David L. Herendeen as 2001-2003 vice president west; George Griffenhagen as 2001-2003 secretary-treasurer; and 2001-2005 Council members Ernest E. Fricks; Augustine Serafini; and Jay Smith.

All nominees except one are incumbents and their biographical sketches have previously appeared in *The Philatelic Communicator*. The exception is Jay Smith of Snow Camp, North Carolina, so here is a short biographical sketch of this nominee.

Jay Smith, a native of Ithica, New York, commenced stamp collecting at the age of seven. While still attending high school, he established a firm selling postage stamps specializing in Scandinavia which today has six employees. In 1995, Jay Smith started another firm, *The Press for Philately*, to pursue the entirely digital production of on-demand printed and electronic philatelic publications. He also serves as editor and publisher of *Danish West Indies Mails* (second edition).

The terms of office for Council members Lloyd de Vries and Kenneth Trettin do not expire until 2003. As immediate WU#30 past president, Alan Warren, will continue to serve as a member of the Executive Committee.

The newly-elected officers and Council members will take office at the WU#30 Breakfast on Sunday, August 26, 2001, in the Hyatt O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont, Illinois, during APS STAMPSHOW 2001. □

NEW EDITORS

A number of journals have announced new editors. Among them are:

Scott Stamp Monthly: Michael Baadke moves from *Linn's* to the vacancy created when Peter Martin joined the staff of the American Philatelic Society

The Circuit (journal of the International Society of Worldwide Stamp Collectors): Jennifer Arnold will take up the blue pencil beginning with the July issue.

Postal Stationery (journal of the United Postal Stationery Society): Wayne Menuz was named editor. The January 2001 issue was produced under his care.

German Postal Specialist (journal of the Germany Philatelic Society): Fred Baumann's first issue was the March number. Fred continues as an associate editor at *Stamp Collector*.

Congratulations and best wishes to all. May your in-boxes be overflowing with spectacular manuscripts. □

You can't want to be a writer, you have to *be* one.

—Paul Theroux