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A World-Class Philatelic Library

It has been a 14-year odyssey. The world's largest philatelic library finally has a world-class new home, which was enthusiastically celebrated October 28-29, 2016, with a formal two-day grand opening.

The American Philatelic Research Library (APRL) moved into its state-of-the-art space following a \$4 million construction project, much of the funding provided by generous donors. This cost includes the structural, floor and roof work that was completed a few years ago.

The 19,000-square-foot library increases its floor space by about 60 percent at the American Philatelic Center (APC), which it shares with the American Philatelic Society (APS) in a historic former match factory in central Pennsylvania.

The vast central atrium of the American Philatelic Research Library showing parts of both floors of the 19,000 square foot facility. On Dedication Day, some spectators stood on the balcony at right to view the ceremonies. The podium (far right) was on the stairwell landing.

At center: the main floor of the APRL showing spacious seating for library visitors.



The library is open to the public, although only members have borrowing privileges. The APRL was incorporated in 1968 and the APS was founded in 1886. Both are nonprofit organizations.

The bulk of the move, from the old library in an adjacent building, was accomplished over two weeks by a professional library mover, with help from volunteer and staff labor.

The library houses the world's largest and most accessible collection of philatelic literature. Some of its rarest and most prized titles date to the very early days of collecting in the 1860s.

Quite simply, the new library is gorgeous! The public area is spacious and bright, with a 2½-story high atrium roof and a clerestory providing natural light. There are four large Mission-style tables equipped with their own lighting and electrical outlets and matching chairs in the center of an open area. Open stacks are located beneath faux copper ceilings on two sides of the room hold the library's books, government documents, exhibits, and show programs.

At the back of the main floor, there's a cozy reading lounge, a conference table for group studies, and a children's area—all with large windows. The loft-style second floor is reached by a wide center staircase or a side elevator. The open stacks house the library's journals and airmail collections. The second floor includes two more reading lounges and a carrel room with storage lockers for visiting researchers. Windows overlook Talleyrand Park.

Visitors can now enjoy the library's bright modern new space while utilizing its extensive collection of more than 85,000 volumes and special collections devoted to the study of postal history and mail services. The library impressively occupies approximately three miles of shelf space.

The library collections include books, journals, catalogs, auction catalogs and price lists, stamp show programs, copies of exhibits, government documents and more. Special collections include unique re-

sources such as the Daniel Hines Air Mail Collection. U.S. stamp files, American First Day Cover Society archives, APS archives and much more.

A 1729 postal map showing New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, is the oldest item in the library's collection. A society member found the map on eBay. Fellow collectors got together to purchase it for the library. Over 99% of the library is donated by members.

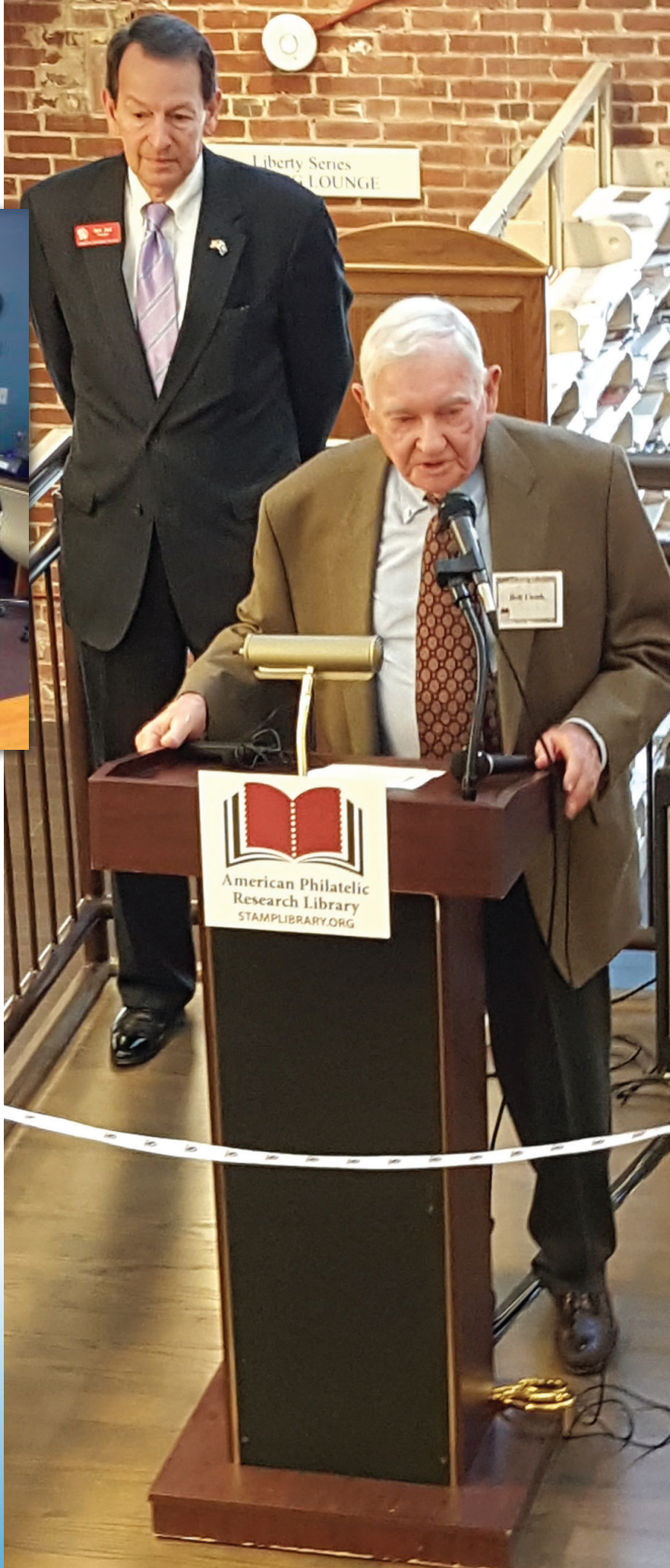
The APRL can now store its valuable and fragile items in two adjacent closed stacks areas employing space-saving compact shelving and map and rare book rooms. Previously, storage areas were in separate areas of the complex. There is Wi-Fi connection throughout and ample outlets to plug in phones, tablets, and laptops.

Digital collections continue to grow. Collectors and researchers may visit stamplibrary.org to access the Philatelic Union Catalog, search the holdings of all major North American philatelic libraries, a database of journal articles, digitized books and journals, online exhibits and philatelic research websites.

Thanks to its reputation and Internet presence, the APRL has patrons, researchers and writers throughout the world. It is also used by stamp artists and designers, cable television programmers and postal agencies, including the United States Postal Service.

Services include expert research assistance, photocopying and scanning, book loans by mail (APS members only—if you're not a member, I'll be happy to sponsor you), and a used book shop. Modest fees help to offset the costs of providing copying, scanning and book loans. Members receive discounts. All members of the American Philatelic Society are full members of the APRL and eligible for personalized reference services. The library also is open to the public during regular weekday business hours and participates in the interlibrary loan program.

Visitors can take advantage of three service desks—two on the main floor and one on the second floor, as well as a public computer, book



scanner, and photocopier on each floor. Library staff and volunteers have work space on the main floor, and visitors can take advantage of restrooms within the library space. The main floor includes a shop for used and new books, gifts and souvenirs, and stamps and covers selected from material donated to the APS and APRL.

The Match Factory

The philatelic center complex of 18 adjoining buildings is in the Bellefonte Borough's southwest corner. Known locally as the Match Factory, the Pennsylvania Match Company was founded in 1899. By 1911, the company was one of the eight largest producers of wooden matches in the U.S. At its peak during World War II, the factory employed almost 400 and merged with the Universal Match Corporation. Per the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association, the business closed in 1947 due to competition from book matches and cigarette lighters.

The complex's main use for many years thereafter was as a hardware store and warehouse. The APRL purchased the vacant and dilapidated property in 2002 and moved there from State College in 2004. It is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

The APS and APRL have now completed more than \$16 million in renovations to the approximately 100,000 square-foot facility, which includes rental space of 45,000 square feet to 11 tenants. The new library uses 19,000 square feet of space for shelving the world's largest collection of philatelic literature.

Bob Lamb, former APS executive director and spearhead of the project to convert the match factory to APRL/APS HQ, speaks to the Dedication Day crowd.
Photo: Ken Martin



A Fitting Celebration

I made the lovely fall-color drive to Bellefonte from Delaware on Thursday afternoon before the Friday meetings and dinner. I woke up early on Friday morning and flipped on the television to get the local news. Within 30 seconds, I was delighted to see APRL Librarian Tara Murray and Ken Martin, APS chief operating officer, proudly showing local news reporters the wonderful new facilities. It seemed a delightful omen of good things to come.

The Grand Opening Dinner was a sell-out event attended by 166 people at \$100 each (\$25 of which went to the APRL as a donation). The staff twice increased the size to allow for all those who wanted to attend the on-site celebration. The catered dinner was held in the brick-walled Maynard Sundman Hall at the American Philatelic Center. Appropriately, the centerpieces were comprised of stacks of small philatelic books.

Scott English pointed out that this celebration coincides with the 130th anniversary of the APS and the 48th anniversary of the APRL, created on October 28, 1968, the exact date of the dinner and clearly not a coincidence. A library had been discussed almost immediately after the founding of the APS in 1886, but it did not materialize until 1968.

The keynote speaker, David Beech, was introduced by Jay Bigalke, editor of *The American Philatelist*. Beech was the curator of the Philatelic Collections at the British Library from 1983 to 2013, and head of that department from 1991 until his retirement in 2013. His responsibilities included the Crawford Library of philatelic literature. He initiated its conservation program, the publication of its modern printed catalog and its recent digitization project. He is a fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London and was its president from 2003 to 2005. He spoke about the need to digitize for the sake of preserving and making material available to the widest number of people.

APS and APRL presidents Mick Zais and Roger Brody jointly cut two festively decorated cakes bearing respective society logos and both men offered brief remarks to the gathered group.

APRL President Roger Brody noted, "The culmination of this project has been supported by APRL and APS officers and board members over more than a decade and has been made possible by significant donations from hundreds of Society members. We are hopeful that the excitement generated by the completion of the project will motivate more donors to help towards reducing the amount of permanent financing required at the completion of the project."

It was announced at the dinner that the APS has received \$50,000 as an initial contribution from World Stamp Show-NY2016—\$25,000 for technology and \$25,000 for the future of philately, as a matching donation to support the Summit on the Future of Philately's mission going forward. The hope is that APS members, as well as others, will contribute to solidify the future of the hobby.

Stamp Collecting Forum member Dennis Gilson was recognized and received the Luff Award for Outstanding Service to the APS. The Luff Award is the highest award given by APS to living individuals.

On display at the dinner were the two 1918 24-cent Jenny air mail stamps with center inverted. George Eveleth, representing Spink USA, received an oversized \$10,000 reward check from the APRL for the tip that led to the recovery of the position 76 invert.

Spink USA generously donated the \$10,000 back to the society. It was a pleasure to see the two iconic stamps together, leaving but one position from the McCoy block of four yet to be recovered. One of



The APRL Dedication Weekend hosted the first Summit on the Future of Philately. Shown is a partial view of the philatelic leaders (nearly 60 of them attended) involved. From left: Mark Schwartz, Trish Kaufmann, Ken Nilsestuen, Daniel Piazza, David Steidley, Kees Adema, Wade Saadi, Jay Bigalke (standing), Roger Brody (partially), Mark Reasoner, and Mick Zais.

the two now in library custody will likely be sold to benefit the library, probably position 76.

Donald Sundman, President of Mystic Stamp Company, donated \$50,000 for the recovery of the position 76, which was presented to Keelin O'Neill from Northern Ireland at World Stamp Show NY2016. O'Neill found the stamp in a collection inherited from his grandfather.

Mystic Stamp Company made the same offer of \$50,000 for the return of the remaining fourth position of the block, but it came with an expiration date of December 31, 2016. APS Executive Director Scott English announced at the dinner that if the last position is not recovered and the reward claimed by the end of the year, Mystic will generously donate that tagged \$50,000 to the APRL. Sundman has long been a tireless worker and financial backer of the hobby; he has been the top membership recruiter for APS year after year, as well as a former Luff Award winner.

The McCoy block of four was stolen out of its exhibition frame in 1955 during the American Philatelic Society convention in Norfolk, Virginia. Ethel McCoy had purchased the block, from positions 65-66 / 75-76, in 1936; it was her most prized possession. After the theft, the block was broken into four singles, and each copy was altered to disguise its appearance. In 1979, in declining health, Mrs. McCoy assigned all her rights to the block to the APRL, in the event they could be recovered.

This was a déjà vu moment for me, personally. I was vice-president of the Washington, D.C., philatelic auction firm of John W. Kaufmann, Inc. when, in 1981, the APRL chose us to sell position 75, the first of the recovered inverts. My late husband, John, and I were elated at the opportunity. We auctioned the stamp at APS StampShow 1981 in

Atlanta and donated our commission to the APRL. As with recent copies, both national and philatelic press were very visible. Of the six Jenny inverts, which I handled during Kaufmann auction days, this was by far the most exciting and generated the most bidding interest of any we brought to the auction block. The incredible story sold it.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

The waiting crowd of collectors knew the magic time had arrived when the sounds of bagpipes filled the atrium, beautifully played by Betsy Gamble, APRL technical service coordinator. Dignitaries descended the steps from the second floor of the library to the first and positioned themselves on the landing of the library atrium to address gathered spectators.

Philatelic dignitaries were joined by U.S. Representative G.T. Thompson, Centre County Commissioners Mark Higgins and Michael Pipe, Borough Council Vice President Randy Brachbill, Director of Stamp Services for the U.S. Postal Service, Mary-Anne Penner, and former APS Executive Director Bob Lamb. This assembly was a testament to the importance of the APS and APRL to the community, both in Centre County as well as the stamp community.

The grand opening "ribbon" was comprised of a roll of APRL non-profit postage-paid labels assigned "Permit 100"—no coincidence to the APC address of 100 Match Factory Place.

Roger Brody specifically recognized former APS Executive Director Bob Lamb and Stamp Collecting Forum member Ken Lawrence for their vision in 2002 that led to the library's completion.

A pictorial cancellation and souvenirs were available in Sundman Hall. The postmark shows the open book with perforated pages that serves as the library's logo. The serviced covers were franked with \$2

“At the back of the main floor, there’s a cozy reading lounge, a conference table for group studies, and a children’s area—all with large windows.”





In all of its glory—this great facility awaits the pleasure of philatelists and students of philately from throughout the world. It is the most expansive example (and a shining one, at that!) of how far the stamp collecting hobby has progressed since the adhesive postage stamp was invented.

Jenny inverts, postmarked with the APRL logo and signed by Librarian Tara Murray, APRL President Roger Brody, and APS Executive Director Scott English.

Collectors could buy current U.S. postage stamps at the 19th-century Headsville Post Office, on loan from the Smithsonian. The working post office and general store operated in Headsville, West Virginia, from the early 1860s until 1914. It was delivered from the Smithsonian to Bellefonte in pieces on refrigerated trucks to preserve the wood and has been in use there since 2007. Over the years, I remember visiting the Headsville Post Office more than once when it was housed at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

There was also a book signing and sales in Sundman Hall; five authors were on hand to sign their books. I personally bought two copies of Steve Zwilling's new book offering tips on exhibiting, *A Path to Gold*, an augmented selection of his columns from *The American Stamp Dealer and Collector*. I have not exhibited since 1984, but felt this was a must-have for my library.

Library staff members gave tours of the overall facility after the ribbon cutting, which were enjoyed by young and old.

Although I don't have an exact count, undoubtedly a few hundred visitors and dignitaries attended different events over the weekend. I

was delighted to see so many familiar faces from the past, such as Gini Horn, former APRL librarian, who delightfully materialized at my elbow during the weekend.



Connie I. Swartz Reception Area

Another dedication was the Connie I. Swartz Reception Area, named after long-time former APS employee Connie Swartz, with a wonderful reunion of staff past and present, along with members and friends to honor Connie's years of service to the APS and APRL. Doris Wilson, public relations manager and graphic designer, made a framed replica of the resolution unanimously approved by the Boards when Connie retired in December.

Connie Swartz served the American Philatelic Society as member records secretary and was often the first contact for members when they called or wrote one of the two organizations. She started working at APS two weeks after graduation in 1967, and says, "I never dreamed I would stay on to see four different executive directors and four different buildings during my career. Remembering back to the beginning, I first went to work in a small office in downtown State College, one large room that held everything that was offered to members, and maybe 10 or 12 employees. Services such as the library, the sales division, and *The American Philatelist* that were once scattered all over the country are now centralized at one location."

We heartily thank Gary Wayne Loew and Ken Martin for some of the photos appearing in these pages.



Below: George Eveleth, head of the philatelic department of Spink USA, receives oversized check from Scott English (Executive Director APS) and Roger Brody, president of APRL, a reward for the tip toward the recovery of the stolen Inverted Jenny. Spink returned the funds as a gift to the APRL.



Charles Wooster makes use of the available technology at the library.

Roger Brody, president of the APRL, having a chat with Ken Martin, APS Chief Operating Officer on the balcony of the library.

One of the first Librarians of the APRL, Lois Evans-deViolini (previous page, center), was also a respected visitor to the dedication.

Summit on the Future of Philately

The American Philatelic Center hosted a Summit on the Future of Philately on Friday, October 28, 2016, from 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., allowing for participation by early arrivals for the grand opening festivities. The public was welcome to participate or just listen. The event was streamed live on Facebook and interested parties could dial in by phone, passing along questions or comments. Hundreds have listened in since then.

There were 56 leaders in the industry participating from all over the United States, attending in person or by phone, representing, what APS President Mick Zais identified as the “Five Families of Philately”—the APS/APRL, the dealer organizations, specialized collector organizations, the United States Postal Service and the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

Representatives attended from the American Philatelic Society, American Stamp Dealers Association, National Stamp Dealers Association, Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Collectors Club of New York, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, American Topical Association, American First-Day Cover Society, U.S. Postal Service, Boston 2026 World Stamp Show, and other collector and stamp dealer groups, as well as both print and online stamp media.

The public session of the Summit was preceded by a closed session, not because there were sensitive topics, but because participants munching on box lunches would not present well on video! Nevertheless, there was a lot of substance discussed during the earlier session,

which was mostly not repeated in the public session. Fortunately, detailed notes were taken and, of course, it was all recorded so can be reviewed for reference.

APS Executive Director Scott English guided the conversation, preceded by a welcome by APS President Mick Zais, and ASDA President Mark Reasoner. Over the signature of both presidents, the two societies joined forces to issue a formal invitation to hobby leaders from diverse backgrounds to participate in a broad-based effort to attract new collectors to the hobby and to organized philately.

Participants enthusiastically discussed growing the hobby, the future of stamp shows, dealer and philatelic partnerships, and ways the leading organizations in the stamp hobby can work together to make it succeed and grow. Leaders are working cooperatively to establish goals and, more importantly, to design and implement programs to achieve them. It was a very positive and balanced conversation.

A list of action items was determined, including the creation of an industry advisory council on collecting, which will meet on a schedule to be determined.

The three key takeaway items that dictate the group’s next steps:

1. The branding of the hobby to be more inclusive and descriptive of the hobby, especially for non-collectors.
2. Increasing our technological capabilities to reach a larger audience of collectors.
3. Strengthening our ability to improve the marketplace, including preparing the next generation of dealers today.

This Summit was not simply an “event,” rather a call to action. As Scott English pointed out in his opening remarks, we can’t fix all issues



A partial view of the crowd watching the dedication ceremonies on the main floor of the APRL. Stamp collectors!—all ages, all walks of life. The way it's always been!



Charles Wooster makes use of the available tech—The soldout celebration dinner in Sundman Hall in the APRL. A great way to cap off the weekend!



Collectors Club of New York Secretary David Steidley making a purchase in the APRL's sales room during the weekend events.

before us in one day or even in one year. This must be a concerted and sustained effort by those across the hobby to achieve measurable results.

On the APS website at stamps.org, there is a video link to the public session of the Summit and a report providing a summary of the meeting, as well links through the APS Facebook page and APS blog at blog.stamps.org

Final Thoughts

The Grand Opening in Bellefonte was a wonderful celebration and one of which I was proud to be a part. But just as significant was the Summit on the Future of Philately.

In Portland, Oregon, I read for the first time the Letter to the Editor from Nick Salter in the July-August edition of *Kelleher's Collectors Connection*. David Coogle and I had a long and enthusiastic exchange about the content.

I also discussed this at length with Mick Zais and Scott English. We couldn't agree more with the Salter's contention that, "...dragging along little Johnny to a room full of grandfathers (great-grandfathers?) busily searching for plate flaws may inspire the odd child but isn't going to influence the volumes that philately needs." You'll get no argument from me on that score, nor most (any?) others.

Salter also wrote that, "[The] Big Idea has to be something that resonates with tomorrow's youth. With respect to the philatelic community, I doubt that idea will be self-generated." With that statement, I do take issue.

As noted earlier, World Stamp Show-NY2016 has already made a substantial donation toward technology and the future of philately, to support the Summit on the Future of Philately's mission going forward. Simply throwing money at the problem will not solve our woes either. But it is an essential part to driving the message.

I have been an avid financial supporter of the Young Philatelic Leaders Fellowship of the APS virtually from inception. I was fortunate to be introduced to the hobby in my teens and joined APS in 1969. But our focus to grow the hobby should not be focused solely on youth.

If you look at the old black and white photos of philatelic dinners from a century ago, they were gatherings of mainly aging white men and their wives sporting stylish (?) hats. So, the lack of youth in organized philately is not a new issue. If you read the journals of a century ago, collectors made the same laments, "Where are our youth? Is this the death of our hobby?"

Our target audience needs not only to focus on youth but, as important or even more important, we need to inspire recent retirees who have time, inclination and money on their hands. We need to cross lines into other hobbies and make our presence known in all ways from online to print media. We can't wait for our youth to grow up!

All types of demographics collect—all age groups, all ethnicities, all incomes, with all sorts of collecting interests from topical to historic. We need to cast a far wider net.

In short, our target audience needs to be multifaceted. We will continue to be the same unless something changes. The hobby needs rebranding to make it "cool" to the masses, and overcome the general perception that stamps are a passive dull hobby for old fuddy-duddies.

The APS has been on the forefront of social media since the beginning with an active Strategic Initiatives and Technology Committee that evaluates technology-based opportunities. If you go to stamps.org/Social-Media/ you will find links to APS on Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, the APRL blog which updates library news as well as APS Stamp Talk Radio with Nancy Clark. And other social media venues with which I am less familiar.

There are countless online blogs and websites devoted to stamp collecting, such as virtualstampclub.com, run by Lloyd de Vries, who reports breaking philatelic news and maintains a popular message board with news, information, opinions and advice. There are also stamp exhibit competitions online, such as the PhilaMercury Digital Rendezvous. Or the weekly Wednesday podcast by Professional Stamp Experts (PSE) called stampshowheretoday.com for collectors from beginner to advanced; it can be listened to at any time.

I am a postal history dealer and roughly 95% of my sales are online sales. I assure you, my clients are not all young, although there are some. I maintain a list of specialized exhibits (not a competition), articles and primers on my website, as well as countless links to resources of all kinds in my specialty. I've had inquiries from grade school, high school and college students working on projects, as well as genealogists researching their families and—of course—many collectors.

Despite some obvious problems, we have come a long way in the hobby in the past half century, as has the country and some parts of the civilized world. When I first began collecting, I was one of few women in the hobby. Consequently, I collected a lot of titles of “first woman” to hold whatever position. Most appropriately to this story, I was the first woman to serve on the board of the American Philatelic Research Library from 1983-89.

Our changing world allowed American women to vote in 1920—no, I'm not near old enough to remember women's suffrage—but I do remember bra burning in the 1960s! And the “old boys' club,” warmly welcomed me—for the most part. There are always some resistant to change.

I have fond memories of being chauffeured to State College by a fellow APRL board member, the late Horace Harrison, with jazz music blaring loudly for the entire trip and Horace cheerfully beating out the rhythm on the steering wheel. I was privileged to serve with an incomparable group, many of whom have now passed on: Jim DeVoss, Joe Frye, George Martin, Emerson Clark, Dan Walker, David Lidman, Bill Welch, Bob Paliafito, Herb Trenchard, Hubert Skinner, Bud Hennig and John Foxworth. And there I was among the mix—the lone woman. We've come a long way since then and watched Janet Klug take

the helm of the APS as the first woman to serve as president and many other women become heavily involved in organized philately at the top level.

Less so, we are coming to see a more diversified ethnic presence in organized philately—something on which we still need to work.

I believe that the hobby is as strong as ever, but the focus is shifting to online sources. Yet organized philately is struggling with membership numbers. Some stamp shows are not well attended, nor local stamp clubs.

There are countless older collectors who are not joiners. For whatever reason, they choose to seclude themselves and interact only on their computers and with their albums. This is not solely a problem of youth being distracted by outside influences. We need to reach these “hidden collectors” of all ages.

I assure you, I am computer oriented; my keyboard and I are joined at the fingertips much of every day. But there is nothing I enjoy more than the fellowship and personal face to face interaction with like-minded people. All my adult life has been spent in this wonderful hobby, actively serving organized philately. The camaraderie is one of the aspects I most treasure.

I will never forget my first Confederate Stamp Alliance meeting (my specialty is Confederate postal history) and being amazed that every person there “spoke my language.” Wow! I forged ahead and never looked back.

Attending the APRL Grand Opening celebration was one of the most inspiring and encouraging experiences of my philatelic career. I was bursting with pride at this monumental achievement as if I had personally raised the trusses. If we can together bring about the creation of this remarkable library space for the good of the hobby, I suspect we can do anything working together as a team.

No, we won't solve all the issues concerning the future of the hobby in a day. It will be a challenge. It will take vision, time, effort, money and the cooperation of all in the hobby. No one group or person has all the answers but, working together, we can make a difference.

Acknowledgments: Photos courtesy of the American Philatelic Society, Ken Martin, and Gary Loew, as well as the author.

