

Newspapers and the Austrian Post

Last altered Monday, 18 May 2026

Parts

These are the envisaged parts of the web site, not necessarily in this order.

1. General introduction
2. POST
3. TAX
4. Powerpoint reimagined
5. A representation of each frame of the static display
6. Handout
7. Appendixes



General Introduction

This Meisterwerk was written and rewritten over the last 26 years, with many periods of inactivity for non-philatelic reasons. The two core displays eventually reached 93 points and Gold Medals at Birmingham2025. They have now retired from competitive exhibiting - so have I.

Thanks

I gladly acknowledge the help and assistance received from Frau Elisabeth Jung and thanks Prof. Dr. Günther Dembski for permission to show material from the Münzkabinett of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; and his helpful staff for seeking the material and showing it to me. I thank the Austrian Staatsarchiv; the Library of the Vienna Technical Museum; and the archives of Österreichische Post AG.

Special thanks to Martin Brumby HLM and Roger Morrell for going several extra Meilen with technical and editorial assistance. Especially, the author gratefully thanks Dipl.-Ing. Carsten Mintert, Solingen, Germany, for permission to use his ideas on layout and presentation, as well as for numerous valuable suggestions for improving the text content and translation and for supplying many additional illustrations from his personal collection. Nevertheless, any errors and mistakes are All My Own Work™.

Many people have assisted by providing answers to my questions, including Alan Becker, Alan Berrisford HLM, Joyce Boyer HLM, Helene Bravery, Hans van Dooremalen FRPSL, Dorli & Hannes Haslauer, Bill Hedley FRPSL, Hubert Jungwirth, Dr C Kainz †, Inger Kuzych, Dr Hans Moser, Henry Pollak, Eva Sinnmayer HLM, Otto Teufel, Petr Vykoukal, Yvonne Wheatley FRPSL, John Whiteside †, Richard Zimmerl †, and many other members and friends of the Austrian Philatelic Society. Without their help, much of this would have been impossible, and much of the rest nonsense.

Finally, I thank the Oksanen-Taylor Partnership for advice on layout and intelligibility; Statement Planning [¹] for sponsoring the handout, and Lime_Visuals for photography.

Image Adjustment

Or, is it real or was it Photoshopped? While the philatelic items are nearly all mine, supporting documents will be electronic copies of scans of printed pages in archives and vary from superb black-on-white to shades-of-grey on buff-coloured foxed paper from the late 1800s. I routinely alter colour balance, sharpness, brilliance/contrast etc; trim off ragged edges; resize to fit my page; and remove flyspecks. The aim is to present

¹ www.statementplanning.co.uk

the best possible picture of the reason why I am showing the image - has it an interesting cancel, is there an obscure handwritten annotation, is the adhesive stamp (or its usage) unusual.



Original - itself folded.

I occasionally manipulate an image - and would say so. Typically I might copy a marking from the bottom of a newspaper, insert it at the top, and show only the top, deleting the news below. Or enhance the contrast of a marking by cloning to a new layer, contrast-adjusting, and multiplying the layers.



Image as used in text.

Artificial Intelligence

To the best of my knowledge no Intelligence other than human has been involved in this work.

Indeed, occasionally non-humans have actively hindered progress. The laptop is a full-size Mac and Smargl is a cat.



Exhibit history of the two displays

This work is basically the final contents of two displays, Austrian Newspaper Post and Austrian Newspaper Tax, plus a selection from the hundreds (probably thousands) of Laws, Decrees, Instructions, Bulletins and so on stating what had to be done, who had to do it, and the punishments if they did not.

POST: The first appearance for which I have a record was at Innsbruck in 2003, where it received 52 points and many useful suggestions for improvements. By Stampex 2010 it had risen to 72 points, climbing steadily to London2015 (83) and Yorkfair2017 (87). The change in allocation of the 100 possible marks produced 85-86 from 2019 to 2022 at home and abroad. Another post-Covid allocation-change (and some new material) reached the Gold Medal region at Yorkfair2023 with *Large Gold & Best in Show*, Hafnia2024, and Royal-Challenge-2024. A final push for Birmingham2025 reached 93 points with added *Felicitations for Research*. Reflections on this history and discussions with a similarly-positioned colleague led me to conclude that the exhibit would never reach International Large Gold - it may be a big fish but it is in a small pond. I have decided to retire it.

TAX: Only relatively recent data points survive: London2015 (91 points - gold. Best in Class); Bucharest 2024 (88); Hafnia (88); and Birmingham2025 (93). I have decided to also retire this exhibit.

Stage Management

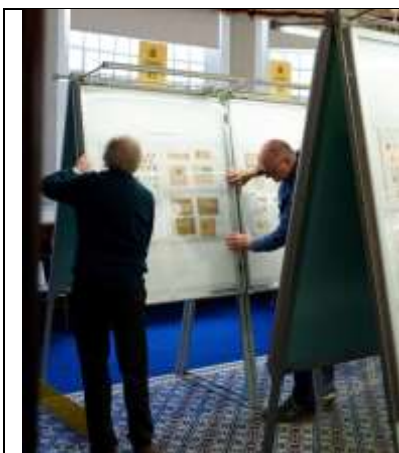
A considerable time was spent in laying out the display frames and deciding what should go where. Luckily I have a 'king-size' bed, which is bigger than a display frame, so it served; working records of the layouts were made on my phone's camera. The RPSL Guidance for Displayers [2] includes a layout of the frames in the hall: 4 rows of 6 and 6 rows of 5. Only one of my sections (signets on newspapers) overflowed, as it had 11 frames in 2 facing rows, and nothing went round a corner. I had been advised that if possible I should avoid the top row, for two reasons: people of average-or-below height cannot readily see what's up there (and the reflections on the frame's protecting plastic front sheet do not help); and if the same material is spread out then more people can view it at once.

First hurdle: getting it there. I knew from experience that I could not physically carry it all - and I also had two boxes of Austrian Post New Issue Descriptions to transport. Both the railway companies that connect me to London have introduced limits on passenger luggage. I would need various permits to drive my car to the Royal, and then where would I park it? DHL to the rescue!

² https://www.rpsl.org.uk/Portals/0/RPSL/Guidance%20Notes%20for%20Displayers_2025_1.pdf



Nearly ready for collection! The brown box contained 110 copies of my handout brochure and an assortment of just-in-case items. I travelled by train, carrying the Red Mercury sheet with me in an A3 “artist’s Portfolio” which is like a laptop bag except that it’s rectangular. Everything arrived as hoped. I had recruited a team of assistants to assist with mounting the display, two travelling from France and one from south west London. It took us about an hour.



Creating a Frame-Picture

For several reasons, I needed a record of exactly what had been put where. I know a professional photographer. You would think it was easy to create a good picture of a display frame-with-contents. It is not!

Owing to the layout of the hall, with 54 double-sided A-frames in 5 rows, it was not possible to get far enough away from a row to take undistorted pictures. Nor could we take everything to a properly-equipped studio: we only had an hour on the morning of the event between “everything in its place” and “doors opening now”. Also, each sheet is in a polyester protector which reflects its surroundings.



Anticipating all this, a cunning plan had been evolved.

Take a photo of an empty frame in the row nearest the bay window (the best lit), and one of each frame showing its actual contents as mounted. A copy of the empty frame would then be populated in Photoshop with the existing flatbed-scans of the individual exhibits (nearly all of which are A3-landscape).

Unfortunately, this didn't work, mainly as the scans were too tall. After much head-scratching and endless coffees, I realised why. The A-frames are, well, A-shaped.

They lean backwards. So, standing in front of the frame and photographing horizontally, the width is correct but the height is foreshortened. In the two pictures below, the one on the left is as-photographed and the one on the right is as-corrected; both are the same width. The frames are designed and built to take two A3 sheets sideways, so the real-world row width is a bit over 840mm and the height is 300mm. Using Photoshop, it's simple to stretch the height so that the height-width ratio is correct.



And now the task is achievable!



Handout



Displayers are expected to produce a printed handout. As I have edited 108 issues of 'Austria', and had written a "thesis" on both Post and Tax, this was not a daunting prospect. The handout has 48 sides of A5, ie is printed double-sided on 12 sheets of A4, which is the maximum number our printer's machine can fold.

The back cover is a layout plan of the display hall with the contents of each frame.

The handout was sponsored by Statement Planning, www.statementplanning.co.uk.

54	55	52	1535-1867 Lombardy & Venetia Tax	53
45	46	47	48	48
1920, 1922 Newspaper post		Postal quirks		Tax quirks

1916, 1919 Newspaper post	1908 Newspaper post	1900 New currency
44	43	42
41	40	39
1890 newspaper tax adhesives		1899 Newspaper postage stamps
1885 two-ring signet		

1867 Printing sheet	1861 to 1880 Newspaper postage stamps			1877 Ntax adhesives
34	33	32	31	30
29	28	27	26	25
1858 Newspaper tax signets on newspapers				1858 and 1859 Ntax adhesives

Extended timeline	1853 tax adhesive G-A Postal Union newspaper subscriptions		1851 and 1858 Newspaper postage stamps		
24	23	22	21	20	19
18	14	15	14	17	16
1803 to 1850 Newspaper tax signets on newspapers (cont.)					

1803 to 1850 Newspaper tax signets on newspapers					The Bogen
12	11	10	9	8	7
1	2	3	4	5	6
Introduction to the display	1745-1802 Laws, newspapers		1823-1850 Specimen signets		

Presentation



As well as a 54-frame display, I had chosen to do a Powerpoint presentation. I tried to obey the guidelines, eg if text is smaller than 20 point the people at the back of the room cannot see it; do not read the slide's text to the audience - or to the slide; it is not necessary to turn round and check that each slide has appeared on the big screen; don't ad-lib, have a script...



When I'd finished, and after a few questions from the audience, the RPSL's President Simon Richards awarded me the customary Certificate and Medal, and offered words of appreciation.

The "Newspapers" mini-site that you are reading contains the presentation reimaged, both as a PPTX file and as an MP4 movie file. These run continuously, for 27 minutes; the PPTX requires you to download it to a computer with powerpoint (or equivalent eg Libre Office) but the MP4 should run on almost any machine.



Taking down, shipping back

Taking down was straightforward: since the actual position of each item was recorded on the frame-photographs, they could be put into any of the big white boxes. The Red Mercury went into its portfolio case. The boxes were as arranged collected by the carrier the following (Friday) morning, but "just in case" I returned to the Royal from my hotel in an adjacent street and waited. Boxes were duly sealed and dispatched, following which a short trip on the Northern Line, lunch at Kipferl, and a Grand Central train took me home; the boxes arrived on the following Monday.

And next?

I have decided to sell the entire newspaper collection. I have scans of everything, so could turn the two theses into printed books.