

A Basic Digital Philatelic Studies Formatting Guide

By Francis Adams

Part III

In part two of this series I discussed planning a digital philatelic study (DPS). As is often said, but rarely practiced, “planning is everything.” In developing a DPS, that quote is a very useful piece of advice. If the suggestions in the preceding article have borne fruit, you now have a reasonable subject and outline and can proceed with formatting.

Rather than experimenting and possibly coming to the same conclusions outlined hereafter, the following criteria are suggested as a starting point for your new digital philatelic study. There is no requirement to follow every detail strictly or even at all, but points in this *DPS Cookbook* may save you some time in getting your study up and running.

The Rules of Engagement

By incorporating a basic set of formatting rules, designed to complement each other from the beginning, your study is less likely to end up as a non-functional bunch of electrons.

We'll begin simply and define our DPS goal as having two guiding lights: (1) our DPS will be viewed *comfortably* on a computer screen as that is what digital is all about and (2) it will be viewable by users of either Windows or Macintosh operating systems.

So, how does our *Formatting Guide* ensure our DPS is comfortable to view and available to almost everyone regardless of computing platform? To realize comfortable viewing, our DPS must be consistent in its presentation. Consistency quickly provides viewers a feeling of familiarity and the document's ease of use factor increases. To develop consistency, we use the same text and graphic styles for headers, paragraphs, etc. throughout the study. To achieve cross platform compatibility, we'll use software common to both computer systems.

Points to Ensure Comfortable Viewing

A. Physical Size

Beginning with a physical format often helps me 'see' what I'm doing. Take a standard sheet of writing paper and turn it horizontal so it is 11 inches wide by 8.5 inches high.

In general, computer screens are capable of displaying horizontal documents better than vertical documents. We'll take advantage of that real estate and develop our *Formatting Guide* with this basic format in mind, as it is also a common format for PowerPoint presentations.

I'm going to get a slight bit *techie* here, so please don't let your eyes glaze over immediately. Computer screens use a measurement known as pixels (px) or dots per inch (dpi). Modern screen dpi measurements are quite large and depending on the screen size, they can be more than 1600 pixels wide by 1200 pixels high.

Let's stay conservative to accommodate the standard 15.4-inch monitor found on many laptop computers and use the minimum standard of 800 pixels wide by 600 pixels high. Screens that dis-

play a general standard of 72 dpi means that 800 pixels is approximately 11 inches wide and 600 pixels equals approximately 8.25 inches high.

Thinking in terms of the writing paper we used previously, we see we're dealing with a screen display roughly the same size as our sheet of paper. All of this simply means we're looking at our standard writing paper sideways — electronically! We're done and it was easy, right?

To keep it simple as well as to get the most space out of our computer screen real estate, we're not going to use graphic or fancy colored margins in our study. Great, now we can visualize the screen area we have to work with, but what other concerns should we have?

B. Page Margins, Header and Footer Placement

The page margin will be a minimum of half an inch on all sides, ensuring headers and footers are within the main content area. This gives us a working area of 10 inches wide and 7.5 inches high.

Headers, footers and their information (i.e., page number) will be located in the same place on every page. Headers should appear at the top of the page and footers at the bottom. (I realize that might sound strange, but you never know how inventive someone might be in this new medium.)

C. Typeface — Color, Style, Size

Black letters on a white sheet of paper are typically what we see in the print world. On a computer screen, black on white is also very common, but it's quite harsh on the eyes if it's read for any period of time. We'd like our viewers to read our study comfortably.

One way to reduce glare and retain reasonable contrast is to change the shades of the black text and/or white screen slightly. Rather than pure black, we'll use a very dark gray for our text. Gray does not tire the eyes as quickly as black might. We may also use red text, but it will be used very sparingly to point out warning or caution information. Hyperlinks should be in blue. Otherwise, no additional colors will be used for text. We'll also leave the screen pure white for this exercise.

The typeface is important for quick comprehension and in print, a serif style is normally used for text in the main body. Serifs are the little flares on letters that make printed documents easier to read — on paper. On screen however, a sans-serif typeface (without the little flares) is better as it eliminates much of the serif style's clutter and results in easier-to-read text. That's not to say you can't use a serif typeface for your main body text, the choice remains yours.

Georgia (serif) Verdana (sans-serif)

Typeface Style Samples

Staying with the clean and simple approach, we'll restrict the number of different typefaces to two: one serif and one sans serif. Our choices for this exercise are Georgia for the 'serif' style and Verdana for the 'sans-serif' style. Why those two you ask? These two typefaces were developed specifically for display on a computer screen. They are also available on both Windows and Macintosh machines and even print reasonably well.

Typeface	Size	Style, Size, and Color
TITLE (REGULAR)	28	This is the Title Style
TITLE (BOLD)	26	This is the Title Style
SUBTITLE	20	This is the Subtitle Style
SECTION HEAD	16	This is the Section Head Style
TABLE TITLE	12	This is the sample table title style
BODY	12	This is the body text style
TABLE COLUMN OR ROW TITLES	10	This is the sample column title style
CAPTION	10	This is the description and caption style
RARITY	10	<i>This is the rarity style</i>
WARNING (IN RED)	10	This is the warning style (red)
FOOTER	8	This is the footer style

A plain (regular) style typeface is recommended for main body text. For a title, subtitle, or section header, bolding is allowed (don't feel obligated) and for a rarity statement, an italic style may be used. Underlining text in electronic documents has come to signify a hyperlink, so we'll not use underlines as text decoration but only to indicate hyperlinks.

Type size is important and normally, printed pages use a 12-point size for body text. *Points* (pt) are a printer's measurement for type size and rather than get into a detailed discussion, let's simply substitute the computer screen type size measurement of pixels. We'll use a 12 size, but in pixels rather than points for the main body text. Other text elements will be either larger or smaller depending on the item we are working with.

For the sake of clarity and simplicity, we will choose 28 px for the title (26 px if bolded), 20 px for the subtitle, 16 px for section heads, 12 px for body text and table titles, 10 px for table column or row titles, item descriptions or captions, and 8 px for footer information.

Table, column and row titles may be bolded and centered. Rarity descriptions will use italics and warnings will appear in red. Individual words in our title, subtitle and section heads will be capitalized.

D. Text Spacing and Justification

Distance between lines is critical in many instances, so we'll designate a standard distance of 1.2 times the normal distance. That will open the text up and allow it to breathe.

Line Spacing	Style
1.2 TIMES NORMAL	We'll designate a standard distance of 1.2 times the normal distance.

Spacing is also a factor in making text easier to read. We'll use one space between sentences. White space between paragraphs

can also provide a sense of clarity and calmness, so a break between paragraphs will be used in our example.

Paragraph Spacing	Style
2 TIMES NORMAL	We'll designate a standard distance of twice the normal distance. We'll designate a standard distance of twice the normal distance.

Our text will be flush to the left margin. We can either allow the right margin to fall where it may (ragged right) or make it so the text is flush on the both sides (justified). Your preference is the determining factor as either method is acceptable.

Our text will be flush to the left margin. We can either allow the right margin to fall where it may (ragged right) or make it so the text is flush on both sides (justified).

Text Alignment	Style
ALIGNED LEFT, RAGGED RIGHT	We can either allow the right margin to fall where it may (ragged right) or make it so the text is flush on both sides (justified).
JUSTIFIED	Our text will be flush to the left margin. We can either allow the right margin to fall where it may (ragged right) or make it so the text is flush on both sides (justified).

Continued on Page 16

Formatting Guide — Continued from Page 7

The only rule I personally have is to never center body text as it becomes unreadable or very confusing at best.

Caption lines of text are distinct and complete pieces of information, so centering will look fine and remain comprehensible.

Caption Alignment	Style
CAPTION	A centered sample caption

E. Tables

Tables will be called ‘tables’ and be sequentially numbered beginning with 1. Each table may have a title, but each should have a caption. (EDITOR’S NOTE: The previous tables follow *TPC* style. The following follow the author’s style.)

Table Title Sample

Item A	Data points here
--------	------------------

As tables generally contain data points or compare numbers, they should contain clearly legible and appropriately titled columns and rows.

	Column 1	Value 1
Row 1	Item 1	Top or bottom
Row 2	Item 2	Right or left sides

umns and rows.

It’s easier to follow the flow of a table if sections are delineated in some fashion. Lines are good. Strings of little ducks are not so helpful, so we’ll stick to lined tables.

F. Images — Backgrounds and Illustrations

Overall illustrated backgrounds are often used in PowerPoint presentations. Using them can be useful under certain circumstances, but in the main, it’s simply a distraction for the reader. Therefore, no overall illustrated backgrounds will be used for this effort.

Images will be designated *figures* and have a sequential number associated with them, starting with Figure 1 for the first image. To keep things simple, we will not use subfigures or subfigure numbers.

Images showing specific details of a philatelic item should be included. As there’s no restriction on image size other than page size, it is theoretically possible to have an image fill the page. In general, it is better to have multiple enlarged images, each showing a different detail in a reasonable size rather than a single image with multiple details so small there is difficulty in recognizing what’s important.

Every image should have a caption, in the typeface and size determined earlier. I personally like captions to be centered under images and no wider than the image. Will we have to reword captions to get that length? You bet! Should the caption be compromised due to word length — only if you want incomprehensible descriptions. Short, sweet and to the point is the objective.



Figure 1
Neanderthal Skull

Images may be in color, grayscale, or black and white. Color images display in red-green-black (RGB) on standard computer screens and personal scanners default to that mode. We’ll stick with RGB as we don’t need this printed professionally.

IMAGE RESOLUTION — Although I typically scan originals at 800 dpi, image resolution in this study will be 150 dpi, which provides some ability to increase the on-screen magnification (zooming in) without breaking the bank for file size.

Incorporating images larger than 150 dpi is possible and does produce better quality when zooming in, however the overall study file size will increase quickly. Large file sizes equal slower loading speeds on the viewer’s computer screen. If the resolution is less than 150 dpi, the image will quickly become blurry as the viewer zooms in for his close-up.

IMAGE FORMATS — Images will be saved in a Tagged Image File Format (*tiff* or *tif*) for everything other than line art, as it produces better reproduction quality.

You may wish to use Joint Photographic Experts Group (*jpeg* or *jpg*) format and that is fine. Remember however, that *jpg* is mainly for displaying color photographs. It also compresses the image and reduces the final quality, although for our purposes it likely makes little difference. (EDITOR’S NOTE: Images in *jpg* format should not be resaved in the same format as quality will deteriorate with repeated compression.)

The Graphics Interchange Format (*gif*) is also frequently used as it is good at displaying line art or single color images while maintaining smaller file sizes. Lastly, Portable Network Graphics (*png*) is a newer format occasionally used due to its ability to include transparency.

Image format selection really boils down to the type of image you are using and the file size or level of quality you desire.

G. Copyright and Source Recognition

Image and text copyright must be observed.

Citing copyright and information sources is not optional. Plagiarism is not condoned and will compromise your study. Adding the source recognition shows you did the research and you know what you’re talking about by citing experts.

For example, if the image you wish to use is owned by a private entity, obtaining permission to use the image is a must. In our case, when showing an entire stamp design, we’ll also opt to modify the image by obliterating a small portion of the design, typically the value.

Also remember that U.S. stamps are negotiable instruments. U.S. stamp designs, if reproduced in color, are subject to size regulations and you must observe the law. Partial images of a stamp design to show selected details are not subject to the same regu-

lations as such sections show only a portion of a design and are normally enlarged quite a bit.

CROSS PLATFORM COMPATIBILITY — We will use software that is common to both Windows and Macintosh.

We'll build our DPS in Microsoft PowerPoint and check the finished file on both platforms. Because there are instances where a function may work on one platform and not the other, we will try to avoid functions that do not work in both environments. Or, if we can use it on one and it does not harm the other, that's fine as well. It simply needs to degrade gracefully when it fails.

Finally, we'll export our finished work into a PowerPoint slide show as well as an Adobe Acrobat document. By having the study produced in two common formats, viewers may choose either version depending on the software installed on their respective computers.

Microsoft PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat both produce files with extensions after the file name. PowerPoint's extension is *ppt* (*pptx* for PowerPoint 2007), *pps* for a PowerPoint Slide Show, and Acrobat's extension is *pdf*.



PowerPoint



Acrobat

Conclusion

Visualizing what you want your study to look like — and documenting the details before assembling it — will allow you to build it with confidence and ease. Making sure your study is clean and presents your materials and information clearly is a key to ensuring viewers enjoy your work and get the most out of it.

Future articles may discuss preparation of graphics, developing a PowerPoint template, and considerations for production and distribution using portable media. Additional subjects are being also being considered.

Additional articles on basic practices and planning digital philatelic studies and references are: "Creating Digital References and Studies" (*PHILATELIC COMMUNICATOR*, Second Quarter 2007), "Planning Digital References and Studies" (*PHILATELIC COMMUNICATOR*, Fourth Quarter 2007), and the Mega-Event Digital Philatelic Study (DPS) rules (WWW.ASDAONLINE.COM/INDEX.PHP?ID=65).

Standard style, formatting and reference publications may be of assistance when building or publishing your digital philatelic study. Two references, the *Chicago Manual of Style* and *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, will prove essential. 

Thanks

My sincere thanks are extended to Alan Campbell and Richard Maisel for their continuing support in reviewing drafts of these articles and suggesting subjects for discussion.

About the Author

Fran Adams, a member of WU30, is a collector and exhibitor learning how to combine the hobby of philately and computer technology to produce digital exhibits and literature references for his interest areas (WWW.BONEANDSTONE.COM).

ATA Creating Topical DVDs To Replace Slide Shows

Over the past several years very few slide shows have been borrowed from the American Topical Association's library. As a result the ATA started a program last year in which ATA members Dennis Dengel, Harvey Edwards, and his wife have now recorded 18 DVD presentations with voice-overs for use by both individuals and stamp clubs. Of these, 14 have been copied from existing ATA slide shows and four are shows created by South African Thematics with ATA traded shows sent to them in return. The South African show titles created to date are *Endangered Species of the World*, *Doctors Who Were First*, *Amsterdam on Stamps*, and *Red Cross on Stamps*. Others will follow.

The ATA created programs now include stamp shows on *Americana*, *Art*, *Flowers I and Flowers 2*, *Butterflies*, *Lions International*, *Olympics*, *Pyramids*, *Ships*, *Orchestration*, *Trains*, *Watercraft*, and *Worldwide Railroads*. Other shows are in process of being created.

With the DVD technology, ATA shows can now either be rented for \$5, postpaid, or bought for individual or club libraries for \$10. Clubs can buy these and loan them to members. The DVDs can also be sent overseas without the high postage costs or fear of loss for only an additional \$2 to cover postage. Additionally, after being viewed, presentations can be donated to stamp clubs,

schools, libraries, hospitals, senior activity centers, or elsewhere to entertain and inform others about topical stamp collecting.

The ATA is also encouraging its members to create their own PowerPoint or CD/DVD presentations to share their knowledge of specialized topical stamps with others.

These shows are available from the ATA, P. O. Box 57, Arlington, TX 76004-0057. For more information contact the ATA at 817-274-1181 or at AMERICANTOPICAL@MSN.COM. 

Palmares — Continued from Page 8

Ray Ceresa, Author, *Russian Postage Stamps 1917–1923 Forgery Guide*, No. 8 (*Russia – Western Army*) and No. 10A (*Russia – Ukraine, Odessa Type Va Tridents*)

Steven Zirinsky, Author, *St. Vincent & The Grenadines Overprints 1993–2004*

Alessandro Arseni, Editor, *The Postal Gazette* (2006–2007)

Bronze

Soler y Llach, Editor, *Private Treaty Sale* (March 2007)

Steven Zirinsky, Author, *St. Vincent Revenues, 1990 to Present and Tonga, Provisional Issues 2002 thru 2004* 