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## NEWSLETTER JUNE 2013

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### EDITORS COLUMN

Hello everyone, well all of you who read this on receiving it :-). I say that with a big smile and thank you to those who replied to my little survey. It was a cheeky survey really, me trying to gauge a reaction to the Newsletter, and trying to see if I could get ideas about what to write, and why I am writing what I do.

My favourite comment was from a member who wrote in response to the question, "I wish the IPDA Newsletter would cover different topics, such as .....". It was "A whole world of topics out there to choose from" well yes that is true, but I am trying to write to please and make this Newsletter relevant and interesting so "throw me a frikkin bone" hahahahahaha :-). And one member wrote Machins are boring. Now I assume I know who that is (you all realise the responses are anonymous - I have no idea who replied, but Machins are only boring to the uninitiated and a Machin article might well interest some, me included).

The survey received 18 responses — out of 70 members or thereabouts and 17 of those replied they enjoyed reading the Newsletter. So to all 17 of you :-). hope you think the same after this one. The feedback on what to write about was actually useful. Seems there is an interest in what is going on in the Stamp market place, what can be done to improve or make it easier to market philatelic material on the internet and more on fraud related topics.

One member wrote they don't feel qualified to write material — I find that hard to believe as I am sure you are all more qualified than me and anyway all views are important I think. One member is spending a lot of time setting up an online market place so is very busy. I can relate to that having started my online Bidstart Store in December. More on that later and I will write about my experiences and give some commentary that I think relates to some of the pointers given to me in the survey answers.

### Stamp of the Month



The \$2.60 stamp features the Australian Coat of arms as it appears on the first banknote issued May 1913

The most pleasing response was that 14 members said they would send me material for the Newsletter. You all know my email and I am waiting with excitement :-). I got different views re the length of the Newsletter. But I think 4 to 6 pages seems to be an acceptable length, as long as material is relevant and concise. Content matters, that was a theme, more than the length. So with all your input lets see how we go.

Thanks everyone for taking the time to respond. I do appreciate it very much

Finally, I hope you enjoy a few pictures of some of us at the Melbourne Stamp Expo. I did attend and I was very fortunate to meet some of you. What a pleasure to meet those of you who I have only had email dialogue with in the past. You were all so busy on your stands and I appreciated you taking time to chat. Forgive me Ian but I have to mention this. Ian Boulton from [Ace Stamps](#) from Perth is obviously hot as he had people lining up wanting to show him their stamp albums (picture on page 5) and get his advice re selling them. He is such a gentlemen. Great to see the crowds around his stand.

Finally, well done to Glen Stephens for an amazing job hosting, with great help from many others as well, the [Stampboards](#) stand. I met a few IPDA members there as well as many other philatelists. See article and pictures on pages 4 and 5

**And just to remind you again, the IPDA AGM will be held on 5th August (USA / northern hemisphere time (morning of 6th for us down under!!) Please make a note of this in your diary as we would like a good attendance please.**

Michael [michaelatipda@gmail.com](mailto:michaelatipda@gmail.com)



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### INVENTORY, MARKETING AND REPUTATION

I am writing this because perhaps some of what I myself am doing will in a small part answer a few of the responses in the survey that I mentioned in my opening remarks.

These thoughts on the three topics of inventory, marketing and reputation are not entirely my own. I say that because while I was at the Melbourne Stamp Expo I was fortunate to be able to spend time with one member who was kind enough to share many of his experiences with me.

Lets start with building inventory. I have written about this in recent issues and we had an article recently about inventory cataloguing and filing. My inventory has climbed to the astonishing (ha ha ha) figure of 5000 items now. It keeps climbing but then people keep buying and the number drops. :-) The challenge I think is to get to an inventory level that is sustainable both in terms of the number of items listed, the quality of those items, the demand for those items and the ease with which buyers can find the items. Now think about it. Why list 100 items that are very low value or just wont be bought by anyone. This is something I keep reminding myself. Don't list what won't sell, but, and I think this is an important but, if the inventory level is too small the buyer might not bother looking because they will consciously, or maybe unconsciously, assume you don't have depth of stock to meet their needs. This line of thought needs to be balanced against the marketing presence you have. It might be obvious to say that if you have 2 million items in stock that there is a good chance that you have what the buyer is looking for. And brand and marketing can endorse that of course. But brand and marketing can also be important to differentiate that even with a smaller stock that you are able to meet a buyers needs, albeit more specialised needs. So the balance is important. Get the right stock level of the right material that is in demand. Too easy I know to just say it in a few words but I hope you see my point. For me it means concentrating on a top 8 countries and while I have a long way to go to get what I think is my optimum and sustainable stock level I know where I am going. And, finding the material is important, but I will leave that "database search topic to a latter date.

Next theme is marketing. I do not have sales to support expensive marketing. But if I don't invest in marketing how will buyers know I am there. A conundrum we all face really, even when we are quite well known

Apart from the boring use (and some would argue misuse) of Yahoo groups, my blogs and my website there are two avenues I considered. One, advertising in stamp magazines. Pretty expensive for me at this stage. I am conscious that one ad in one months issue is only going to be seen by a potential audience once, maybe a few more times but unless I advertise each month (expensive to me) I am not really getting the exposure I need. The avenue I have taken is Adwords from Google. I am not promoting it other than to say I am using it, albeit in a very small way at this stage. I have a budget spend of \$2 a day. Absolutely nothing you say. True ,but I am learning and trying to understand what I get for it. So far, at the time of writing, after 18 days of having Adwords marketing banner, and with a \$2 a day cost to me I have had just over 100,000 impressions of my ad shown. From that I have had 240 click through to my web site. Orders as result. I honestly do not know that but I think it is one or two. What I have learnt is the text on my website has to be right. And I have already changed it once as I realized I could improve it. Lets see what the next month brings. So, my thoughts here relate also to marketing made easier on the internet. I am pretty impressed with Adwords I have to say, and after a very shaky start, (I complained about something and the Google people got back to me and agreed with what I had said, I might add) I am very happy with the service I am getting so far. I am getting exposure that is for sure. I just have to have compelling words in my ad and then on my webpage and then service quality. Which brings me to my final thought.

Given there are literally thousands and thousands of sellers these days, I means sellers of anything that even looks like a stamp, on maybe 100 auction / selling sites for stamps across the internet, how do we differentiate ourselves to the buyers. How do we establish a reputation? Established reputation and credibility has to be earned, and many of you have this in spades and are standing members of major philatelic bodies. But you still have to maintain that reputation and credibility. So whether we are establishing or maintaining it, it comes down to one factor. Quality. By quality I mean not only the quality of the stamps we are selling, but also the quality of service in whatever form that is for each and every prospective or actual customer. I believe I am establishing that because my sales at the moment are very much repeat business. Yes a new customer each week, but more repeat business than new customers. And yes I keep promoting I am a Member of the IPDA.



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### PAYPAL AND THE OFAC

*Another piece I received this month from Roger West, our Director in the UK and owner of Avion Thematics. Thanks Roger for sharing this with us.*

In the last Newsletter I mentioned that I'd received a disturbing email from Paypal as a result of selling a Sudanese stamp. The continuance is even more disturbing.

Because I accepted Paypal for this transaction they warned me that I was in breach of the United States regulations administered by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Paypal accept the OFAC rulings therefore all users of Paypal must do so as well. I didn't realize at the time but my Paypal account had been suspended which in essence means I can't use the account to receive or payout. A fine situation for breaking the rules of an organisation I'd never heard of who operate in another country the other side of the world from me.

The email I received mentioned that Sudanese & Cuban items were in breach of the rules so I removed these countries from my web site, Delcampe and BidStart. I still had to wait nearly a week before I could use my Paypal account again, but when I received notification that my account had been restored, they also mentioned that Syria, Iran and North Korea were also countries that violated their rulings. Obviously, I immediately removed these countries from my listings as well.

When I looked at the Delcampe site, I found 130,000 items from these five countries. I sent them copies of the Paypal emails and suggested they might contact their sellers and explain that if they accept Paypal (which most of them do) they too might have their accounts suspended. This is the reply I received from Delcampe – "We have posted a message on the forums and installed different technical rules regarding these items. However, since we are but intermediaries and are not responsible for PayPal (a third party), we cannot however intervene more than what we already did."

Not exactly addressing the problem and certainly not providing a courteous service to their sellers. I wouldn't be too surprised if this becomes an on-going saga. So if you have any of these five countries for sale, be warned and do NOT accept Paypal as a payment option. The countries again are Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

I have to say I still find the whole affair difficult to come to terms with. If I was selling firearms or promoting ways to make a time-bomb, I could understand Paypal's actions but I'm selling STAMPS. Stamps as in the hobby of Kings – King George V and King George VI formed probably the finest collection of stamps ever (which I'm pretty certain includes Sudan if not the other countries). King Farouk, King Fuad, American President Franklin D Roosevelt, the Amir of Bahawalpur and Prince Ranier of Monaco (to name but a few) were all collectors. Just imagine what would happen if one of these great names tried to purchase an item from this no-no list and wanted to pay using Paypal ... I'll leave it to the reader to form his own conclusion.

Roger West, [Avion Thematics](#), Director IPDA for GB & Europe

### APS NEWS

The APS has established the Articles of Distinction for Chapters and Affiliates to honor their authors by hosting an annual "best article" competition and submitting the winning article for all to enjoy. In addition to awarding authors, this allows APS to provide exposure to our groups, encourage philatelic writing, and share these wonderful articles with our membership. APS Clubs and Affiliates interested in participating [click here for more details](#).

As a service to collectors you will now find a listing of suspended/reprimanded and expelled APS members who were published in *The American Philatelist* since 2000. An online form to verify APS membership status can be found at <http://stamps.org/verify-a-member> see also <http://stamps.org/Disciplinary-Action> Editors Footnote: This looks rather dated to me but showing you all the same FYI





## WORLD STAMP EXPO 2013 REPORT

Glen Stephens was one of the people I met at the **World Stamp Expo 2013** in Melbourne this past month. Glen writes for Australian Stamp News as you will know by now. Much of the following is taken, with full acknowledgment and thanks to Glen, from the June issue.

Glen talks about the Show and some of the stamps that were auctioned. While I have included a few of my own photographs there are many more to be seen at [tinyurl.com/StampExpo13](http://tinyurl.com/StampExpo13) along with various chat and comments which you may enjoy if you missed the Show.

As Glen says, there were lots of things to do and see, not only at the [Stampboards](#) stand but also just having fun meeting up with so many collectors and dealers

A very professional and incredibly well run show, and a real credit to all those involved in the years of volunteer work. Without them such shows simply cannot occur.



Glen (4th from left), and [Stampboards](#) members, including the little short guy, me!!!!

Glen knows some of the Committee, and he guesses we are talking THOUSANDS of Volunteer hours for each, not hundreds. For folks with busy jobs in many cases so many thanks are owed to them.

2013 is of course the Centenary of the Kangaroo and Map stamps, and interest in them - and prices - have never been higher.

On May 9 Phoenix Auctions in Melbourne tested the water, by offering the "Kangaroos" collection of the late Stuart Hardy of Adelaide.

The sale established an Australian record price for a single stamp auction - **\$2,587,000 - and every lot sold**. Indeed this figure far more than DOUBLED the previous best sale here - by any auction, at any time.

So many price records were set that I lost track, but will record a few below.

The £1 Kangaroo sideways watermark was described as having a gum thin, and as we can all see, has "fluffy" perms, but it sold for \$A233,000, on an estimate of \$40,000. That is around TREBLE the price in the current ACSC "Kangaroos" catalogue - itself only issued weeks back, and reviewed in my last column







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### WORLD STAMP EXPO 2013 REPORT ....CONT'D

The market for Kangaroos is WHITE HOT, and as I have typed for years, will get stronger still, as this Centenary Year of the issue has created many new collectors - globally.

A pretty ordinary looking 2½d Kangaroo with "missing fraction" sold for \$A53,590 on a sensible estimate of \$8,000.

With those perfs and centering, I'd certainly have been happy with \$8,000 or so, if I owned it! SG 36ba cat £14,000, there are a dozen recorded in used.

As for my observations and time at the show I certainly enjoyed every minute I was there on the opening day. I picked up a few souvenirs including the \$10 stamp on FDC and the special edition overprinted Miniature sheet shown below. This stamp was issued to commemorate the release of the first Commonwealth postage stamp in January 1913.

I was also fortunate to meet a few IPDA members as you can see in the other pictures below



Above: Me with Sebastian [Delcampe](#) and his assistant Miranda — great to meet you both. Below, with IPDA Member Steve Fletcher from [Stamp Mall](#)



Above: Ian Boulton from [Ace Stamps](#) studying some material people bought to him.





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### DELCAMPE REVISITED BY ROGER WEST

*Just one more to close this topic I think, Roger West added these further thoughts.*

I was delighted to see Miranda's response to my article in the January Newsletter – at least it shows they do read the Newsletter and it gives me an opportunity to elaborate upon a few points.

My article in the January Newsletter was not a criticism of Delcampe but merely to point out some of the problems we've had to would-be sellers.

Firstly, I am a thematic dealer and as such I sell items with a thematic appeal. This includes stamps of course, but also non-philatelic items such as matchbox labels, picture postcards and telephone cards as well as the so called Illegal issues. These I have been selling since their first appearance over 10 years ago and I have to say most of my customers are happy to see them on my lists.

My inventory is currently just short of 100,000 items but when I was invited to list my stock on Delcampe, I decided to exclude items valued at 3 pounds or less which reduced the list down to 66,500 items. Our first upload resulted in numerous items being thrown out by the Delcampe moderators because they were Illegal. This prompted me to send an exclusion list of unsuitable countries to my webmaster who was doing the uploads for me – this was a cut and paste from the moderator's email. We now know that several of these countries were mis-spelt which obviously would not have been recognized – for example the Delcampe list included BERIN but my listings had BENIN – so my items got listed, the moderator removed them and the next thing my account is suspended. In Miranda's response she states that "this list hasn't been created nor sent by Delcampe itself. Therefore, Delcampe is not responsible for any of its spelling mistakes". Well I'm sorry but this is something they must take responsibility for particularly when they endorse it by suspending my account.

On another point, I stated the API system is complicated so I passed it on to my webmaster. As I understand it, one of the features of the API is that it works in conjunction with your own web site such that if an item sells on one site it removes it from the other. To get this to work however, each item needs to be cross referenced by my reference number against the Delcampe number – try doing that for 66,500 items and then say its easy to integrate.

Continuing with my listing problems (but nothing directly concerned with Delcampe) we now find out that Paypal refuse to allow payments for sales relating to items from Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria and North Korea. These items have now been removed from my own website and coupled with the Delcampe exclusions reduces my listings down to about 35,500 items – just over half.

So for the powers that be on Delcampe – they invited me to list my stock and I'm more than happy to go along with whatever rules are in place at the time but it would have been nice to have had a little more sympathy and understanding for the logistical problems encountered as a result

One final comment, I stated that the upload was very slow and Miranda replied by saying it is not slow. Early one Tuesday morning our computers started uploading my stock onto Delcampe. By Saturday only about half were showing but we were informed the reminder were all safely waiting in a queue. On Tuesday after the 7 days listing period two thirds had appeared which we were able to extend but the remaining third were 'closed without a buyer' having not even got so far as being listed. So I'll leave it to the reader to decide if they're slow or not!

### CLOSING REMARKS

One important News Items for you all to consider please.

**Both General Secretary and the Treasurer positions are up for re-election at the AGM. If any members would like to offer their services and contribute to the IPDA please let the current General Secretary know of your intention and nomination by writing to him at [ipdasecretary@ipdaonline.org](mailto:ipdasecretary@ipdaonline.org)**

Your articles or ideas for articles are always welcome. Best wishes, Michael [michaelatipda@gmail.com](mailto:michaelatipda@gmail.com)