

14 Activities at the Exhibition

Exhibition activities provide organisers with an opportunity to engage dignitaries of the local community, gain news coverage and enhance the overall status of the exhibition before and throughout the course of the exhibition. Activities also provide an opportunity to co-ordinate with societies or clubs, so they can run meetings and seminars during the Exhibition.

Activities should be run as a dedicated stream and not left to happenstance as far as planning before and co-ordination throughout the exhibition. An activities co-ordinator would be key to success as there is a lot of communication and co-operation required before and during the exhibition period. Where this has been left to an already busy executive occupied with other duties issues will arise as conflicting priorities are always a feature at exhibitions with much to do and few people to spread the activities across.

14.1 Opening ceremony / opening day

The opening ceremony / opening day is an opportunity to create a positive start to the overall exhibition. Invitations to a Member of Parliament, or Mayor or other holder of a local public office to officiate at the opening of the event are common options.

Once you have identified the person you would like to open your exhibition write to them as soon as possible to see if they are available and get the event date confirmed into their calendar. A sample letter of invitation is provided in Appendix 14.1. This could be used as a starting point to shape your own message of invitation to the dignitary chosen.

Ensure there is also a plan B and C candidate just in case the first choice is unavailable. Write the letters at the same time but only send them out in order when an apology is received.

Will the dignitary be asked to provide a welcome for the catalogue? If yes, ensure a print ready photo of the dignitary is requested. A suggested welcome message could be provided for them to review as the welcome in the catalogue. This way the dignitary's public relations or marketing team has something meaningful to work with and it could influence the type of message that gets across. The dignitary should be advised when the welcome message is required for inclusion and printing.

It is important to ensure any protocol required for the invitee is understood and they are given advice on any protocol the organising committee will be using for the opening ceremony. Items needing co-ordination and advice will include the following:

- Where will the opening ceremony take place?
- What are the important timings of the event?
- Who will receive the dignitary on behalf of the exhibition and the committee?
- What will happen after the opening address, such as a tour of the exhibits?
- Will there be refreshments provided, any side meetings, etc.?

At least two weeks prior to the event arrangements and programme should be confirmed with the dignitary's office to ensure everything is in order and allow any last-minute changes to be addressed.

For the opening day the following should be considered:

- Crowd control - maintain security, no public entrance to venue until ceremony complete, dealers prefer not to attend (security issues and preparation for public).
- Meet and greet – introduction to whom?
- Opening ceremony – need for an effective sound system.
- Tour of exhibits (as appropriate) [providing the dignitary's office with a copy of the catalogue may allow them to review the exhibits to determine if any have particular interest].
- Presentation (medal or other) and farewell.

14.2 Chairman's evening (if held)

A Chairman's evening is an opportunity to create an event for people visiting and staying around the exhibition to get together for fellowship and entertainment and as a way of thanking them for participating in the exhibition. Generally, these activities are well patronised and give the committee an opportunity to put on a good show and, if a charge is made, gain some revenue.

It is essential a good location is secured, and if there is to be a speaker, use this to drive your marketing and ultimately the numbers you get to the event. Advertising needs to be included in bulletin updates and your website (if you have one).

Select a venue and determine the maximum number of people that can attend. Think about mobility access to the venue as many visitors are of an age that this may make a difference to the numbers attending. Many events of this type are 'stand-up' affair but given the likely attendees a reasonable number of seats should be provided. If a speaker is to be used, it is more likely seating will be required for everyone and this clearly impacts on numbers who can attend.

Decide what food will be provided – normally finger food but some evenings have included a sit-down meal. The choice will be determined by the normal service provided by the venue and cost. Self-catering may be cheaper, but the venue may not allow it and it does require more planning and co-ordination along with someone to manage and make this all happen – someone who may have more critical activities at the exhibition.

Normally a licensed premise is used, and limited complimentary drinks are provided (often controlled by use of tickets / coupons) after which guests may purchase at the venue bar. A minimum spend may be set by the venue and this should be considered when setting ticket prices, etc.

If having a speaker determine the subject / speaker and prepare a programme to go in the Bulletins as soon as possible.

At the exhibition ensure there are flyers advising where the location of the Chairman's evening will be held, how to get there and what time people should be at the location prior to the event. An alternative is to ensure this information is contained on the ticket.

The Chairman's evening might follow a general format of:

- Meet and greet (don't forget Health and Safety briefing).
- Drinks and general discussion.
- Finger food or meal (whichever option is chosen).
- Chairman's Welcome and introduction of the guest speaker
- Guest speaker
- Thank you, close out, discussion and dispersal

14.3 Society meetings, seminars or lectures

Exhibitions are a great time for clubs and societies to get together and hold meetings. National organisations will generally seek to hold a Society meeting or in some cases hold their AGM in conjunction with a national exhibition.

The organising committee should make provision for New Zealand clubs and societies to meet or hold seminars, talks or lectures. While any society might wish to hold a meeting those most likely to want to hold a meeting are national ones such as Postal History Society, Postcard Society, Airmail Society, Thematic Association, NZ Society of GB, Judges' Association. Invitations to all New Zealand societies should be sent to get a view of those likely to want space to run a meeting as early as possible. The organising committee should also discuss what international societies or organisations may want to run seminars / meetings and reach out to these bodies as well. [For example, the NZPF and APF often wish to hold a meeting of such executive committee members as are present, the Rhodesian Study Circle and other specialist societies with New Zealand members often wish to take advantage of the opportunity an exhibition provides.]

Communicating with societies early helps the organising committee determine how many meeting rooms are required; what equipment might be required (e.g. screens, projectors, etc.) and possible

implications arising from venue-preferred supplier and technical requirements; and, provide information to start a schedule of meeting times over the course of the exhibition.

The organising committee should also consider seminars or lectures (e.g. Robert Samuel Memorial Lectures where some support might be obtained from the Philatelic Foundation, Christchurch) suitable for the theme of the exhibition or take advantage of the presence of overseas participants at the exhibition. Good seminars or lectures provide extra value to attendees at the exhibition and increases the value of the event above a general exhibition.

Summary of activities for the planning and implementation of meetings

- Communicate with entities which might wish to hold meetings / seminars to determine requirements.
- Identify key people to communicate with during planning and at the exhibition.
- Based on inputs, determine a schedule of meetings at the exhibition.
- Evaluate room requirements and rework schedule as required.
- Publish meetings / seminars in bulletins and/or website as the programme develops.
- As necessary send out separate communications to the individual societies around their event, timing, requirements, etc.
- Plan equipment and access requirements i.e. which room/s, number of people (remember need for mobility access).
- Ensure final details for activities (meetings / seminars) including the rooms in which they are to be held are published in the catalogue.
- At the beginning of the exhibition ensure co-ordinators from the entities holding meetings are located and instructions provided them for the room, equipment, health and safety, etc.
- Ensure meeting room locations are clearly signposted.
- Provide communications and announcements of activities during the exhibition. This will include public announcements over venue loud-speakers and event programme boards at strategic locations.
- Close out each activity with the co-ordinator from the entity concerned.

14.4 Youth

The exhibition should accommodate any youth attending the exhibition. While exhibition material and activities are great for adults some thought needs to be put into engaging younger people with activities more suitable for them.

The Philatelic Youth Council should be contacted and brought into the planning processes as they can assist with ideas and resourcing. At a minimum, the committee should allocate space for a youth court and provide space and resources for youth activities within the main exhibition.

Some thoughts on activities that could be run at the exhibition are as follows:

- Make a Christmas card or other using old stamps.
- Send a postcard – get sponsorship from NZ Post to cover the postage.
- Write and send a letter to a friend or family member from the show. NZ Post to cover postage and special cancel at the show for the letter.
- ‘Find the facts’ competition based on the exhibits noting this is finalised once exhibits are in place.
- ‘Design a stamp’ Have children draw and design their own stamps and have these displayed in a prominent place and have a prize associated.
- Get the children to vote on the ‘Best Youth exhibit’ as chosen by them.
- Consideration should be given to including local schools in some of these activities including possible class visits to the exhibition.

Whatever activities are chosen there should be an active attempt to get names, addresses and other contact details to enable follow up from the local junior stamp club (if any) or at least by PYC after the event.

14.5 Feedback sessions

Exhibitor feedback (previously called a critique session) is an important part of assisting exhibitors gain an understanding how their exhibit was marked and how they might improve their exhibiting.

The feedback sessions are normally held in the morning of the last day of the exhibition in an allocated meeting room or area with the jury and all interested exhibitors. This is followed by sessions at the frames between an individual jury member and exhibitor.

The Jury Chairman should advise how and when the feedback sessions will be run. Once the time and location have been determined this should be incorporated into scheduling of any rooms and included in the exhibition catalogue and programme timetable. Additional notification or clarification may be required for exhibitors so they can assemble at the right place at the right time. This will include public announcements over venue loud-speakers and event programme boards at strategic locations.

14.6 Programme and communication

It is essential there are systems and people available to provide clear and up to date information on events, timing, locations for exhibitors, staff, the public and Jury. Having a system and identified people to communicate any changes or relevant information will help to keep the exhibition flowing smoothly. Generally such people would be found at the entry table for the exhibition but any volunteer circulating within the venue should, with suitable supporting documentation, be able to assist.

Appendix 14.1 Sample letter of invitation to VIP opening event

[Exhibition letter head]

[Date]

[Title name and address]

Dear [Title and name]

Opening of [Stamp Show] [DATE]

I wish to extend an invitation to you to formally open [the show name] at [time] on [day][date] .

The event

The show is a NZ national stamp exhibition which will contain competitive philatelic and postcard displays. We are planning on having over [x] exhibits containing well over [y,000] pages of material. The show will also be ...

Exhibitions of this type provide opportunities for the public whether exhibitors, collectors or interested observers to view a wide range of material, meet with others of a like mind and purchase material from the dealers who will be present.

I have enclosed a copy of Bulletin 1 for your information.

Opening ceremony

We are still developing final plans for the opening. If you accept our invitation our current plans would be for you to be greeted by the Chairman of the organising committee, briefly introduced to representatives of the countries involved in the Nations Challenge, ... followed by a brief welcoming address (say 5 minutes) from yourself. We would then be pleased to provide a tour of the exhibit tailored to suit the time you have available and any specific interests you may have.

Conclusion

We do hope you are able to accept the invitation to open the show. I would be happy to provide any further information you may require.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Secretary