



AUSTRALIAN PHILATELIC FEDERATION LTD

HOW CAN I IDENTIFY AND VALUE MY STAMPS

“Information is the key – making use of stamp catalogues”

- Do you want to find out more about the stamps in your collection?
- Do you want to start a new collection?
- Do you want help to better organise your collection?
- Do you want to find out what stamps are missing from your collection?

To find the answer to all of these questions, you need access to a stamp catalogue.

Stamp catalogues are an essential and valuable reference for beginning and specialist collectors alike.

Whole world stamp catalogues come in many formats. The best known catalogues are produced by *Stanley Gibbons*® in the U.K., and *Scott*® in the U.S.A. These are used by collectors all over the globe and are updated with new editions regularly, mostly annually.

Other firms producing well known catalogues are *Yvert et Tellier*® in France and *Michel*® in Germany. Naturally these are in French and German. A number of these, including the *Scott*® catalogues, are also available in CD format.

There are also many single country or regional catalogues. In Australia there are small and medium catalogues, which are often stocked in newsagents and stamp shops. These are in colour and list the basic issues, usually with prices for mint and used condition. More comprehensive catalogues include *Stamps of Australia* and *Comprehensive Colour Catalogue of Australian Stamps*. The multi-volume *The Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue* is one of the most outstanding catalogues available for a single country and provides much detailed information on all aspects of Australian stamps.

There are numerous one country catalogues available for the serious collector. *Stanley Gibbons*® publish at least 40 different one country catalogues. In addition to the Gibbons catalogues many countries have a local publisher which prints a catalogue of that country. These include popular countries such as China, Japan, New Zealand, Korea, Canada, Israel, and most European nations.

Many collectors are interested in thematic collecting, and there are a surprising number of thematic catalogues available including the very popular topics such as birds and ships. While these tend not to be updated each year most include comprehensive listings and useful notes that will help you put together a collection on your area of interest. *Stanley Gibbons*® publish catalogues on Birds, Chess, Railways, Ships, and Motor Vehicles for instance. The *American Topical Association*® has an extensive list of 70 titles covering some surprising topics.

Other philatelic and collecting interests are catered for by a wide range of specialist catalogues. These include airmail catalogues such as the Australian Air Mail Catalogue which covers the airmail flights of Australia. Some people concentrate on certain eras, such as the stamps of Queen Victoria, King George V or George VI periods. Another popular starting point for a collection are the stamps of the Australian decimal period, in part because the stamps are easily obtained and not overly expensive. There are handbooks for each of these and many more.

There is growing interest in revenue stamps and, yes, there are catalogues of these as well although you generally need to seek out such catalogues from specialist dealers or stamp dealers who carry a wide range of literature. Other collecting interests catered for include space mail, telegraph stamps, Zeppelin flights, Framas, prisoner-of-war mail, different cancellations, first day covers, postal history, postage dues, postal censorship, railway parcel stamps, and so on and so on... There are catalogues for all of these!

Where can I get these catalogues?

At little or no cost you can access or borrow basic catalogues from your:


- Local Library
- Local Stamp Club
- On-line

Commercially available from:

- Stamp shops run by Australasian Philatelic Traders Association (APTA) members are located in all capital cities
- Stamp dealers at Stamp Fairs
- Local Stamp Shops
- On-Line through Catalogue companies
- Specialist philatelic literature dealers such as Vera Trinder in the UK (www.vtrinder.co.uk)

How do I use a catalogue to identify stamps?

The following excerpt is from the Australian section of a simplified world stamp catalogue.



4.

		1914.			
51.	4.	½d. green ..	..	2·50	1·25
94.		½d. orange ..	..	1·75	65
30.		1d. red ..	..	8·00	25
57.		1d. violet ..	..	6·00	1·00
95.		1d. green ..	..	1·75	25
58.		1½d. sepia ..	..	6·50	55
55.		1½d. brown ..	..	6·00	1·00
61.		1½d. green ..	..	4·00	20
97.		1½d. red ..	..	2·00	35
62.		2d. orange ..	..	12·00	35
127.		2d. red ..	..	2·00	15
78.		2d. brown ..	..	18·00	3·50
79.		3d. blue ..	..	18·00	1·00
32.		4d. orange ..	..	35·00	4·00
64.		4d. violet ..	..	25·00	14·00
65.		4d. blue ..	..	60·00	12·00
129.		4d. olive ..	..	18·00	60
81.		4½d. violet ..	..	24·00	3·50
130.		5d. brown ..	..	18·00	50
131.		1s. 4d. blue ..	..	£120	10·00

The illustration (4) shows the stamp design of the stamps listed below it. The numbers in the left hand column are the numbers of the stamps listed in the same firm's specialised catalogue. For each stamp listed there is a value given, its colour, and the prices of the stamp in Mint Lightly Hinged (MLH) condition and in Fine Used (FU) condition. Note that these prices are in Sterling and not Australian currency.

You need to match the illustration in the catalogue with the stamp that you have, then check its given value and colour. In specialist catalogues you will need to identify your stamp's watermark, its perforations, and overprints (if any). That way you can accurately identify it. It is not always easy to identify a rare variety of a stamp and this is why it is advisable to seek assistance – your local stamp club is a good starting point.

Stamp Dealer Price Lists

This excerpt below is from a local stamp dealer's price list and has three price columns:

the left side shows the mint unhinged (MUH) price, the middle shows the mint lightly hinged (MLH) price, and the right column shows the price of Fine Used (FU). These are the costs to you if you wished to purchase those stamps from that firm. It is important to note that these prices are for stamps in good condition. Stamps in lesser condition should cost you less.

How can I use a catalogue to value my stamps?

What value would you put on your stamps? If a catalogue says a stamp is worth a \$100 will I get a \$100 for it? The simple answer is no. Most catalogues and all dealer price lists are simply offers to sell you a stamp at that price. Most stamps only sell for a percentage of the catalogue price. Remember a dealer who buys off you must make a profit when they sell a stamp otherwise they won't stay in business.

		KANGAROOS		MUH MLH FU		
		SG	ASC	\$	\$	\$
						
1915-20 3rd Watermark						
107	37	6d Chestnut		50	30	20
108	38	9d Violet		275	90	20
109	39	1/- Green		150	60	15
110	40	2/- Maroon		525	175	25
111	41	5/- Grey & Yellow	POR	375	135	
112	42	10/- Grey & Pink	POR	750	650	
114	43	£2 Black Rose	POR	POR	POR	725

Thus the value of your stamps is always less than what the catalogue says, except in rare cases. If you wanted to sell them, for rare or scarce stamps you could expect a high percentage of the catalogue price. For common material you could expect to receive a small fraction of catalogue value, provided that you can find a buyer! The best value is in having complete sets or collections, and remember, having one \$100 stamp is better than having a 100 \$1 stamps. The latter may be very hard to sell.

To maintain value stamps must be collected and kept in optimum condition. Always use the best quality stockbooks and albums for your collection. For advice on maintaining the condition of your collection ask your local stamp club or dealer.

For Further Information

www.apf.org.au

or

Contact your State Council

ACT: ACT Philatelic Council,
GPO Box 9800 CANBERRA ACT 2601
NSW: Philatelic Development Council -NSW
GPO Box 9800 SYDNEY NSW 2001
QLD: Queensland Philatelic Council
18 Coolcrest Street WYNNUM QLD 4178
SA/NT: South Australian Philatelic Council
GPO Box 9800 ADELAIDE SA 5001
TAS: Tasmanian Stamp Council
GPO Box 9800 HOBART TAS 7001
VIC: Victorian Philatelic Council
GPO Box 9800 MELBOURNE VIC 3001
WA: Western Australian Philatelic Council
GPO Box 9800 PERTH WA 6001

(Further contact details, including e-mail addresses, are available on the APF website.)

Other brochures in this series are available from the Australian Philatelic Federation or your State Council:

- 1 *Why Collect Stamps*
- 2 *Why Join a Stamp Club?*
- 3 *I have just inherited a stamp collection - where do I go from here?*
- 4 *I have just rediscovered my old stamp collection – where do I go from here?*
- 5 *Where do I get stamps for my collection?*
- 6 *Beyond Australia!*

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