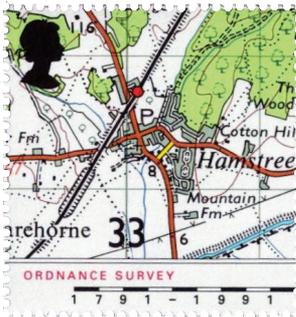


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Inky Business

Glenn H Morgan

Without the use of inks our stamps would be blank, without color they would always be printed in black. Inks can add greatly to the visual appeal and the physical security of a postage stamp. They are important to philatelists as they record the work of the printer and make one aware how some inks react adversely to liquids. They are important to the issuing authority because inks allow diverse values to be differentiated by color and because substances in the ink can secure the stamp against forgery.

When conversing about inks, most people simply think of color, but this is generally of less importance to a printer than the sort of ink that is employed.



Fig. 1, A Penny Black cancelled in red and a Penny Red cancelled in black.

From the first postage stamp, ink has been an important consideration for the postage stamp. The red Maltese Cross postal markings applied to the British Penny Black stamp (Fig. 1) had proved to be hard to see and easy to remove, resulting in re-use and loss of revenue. The color choice was consequently reversed resulting in the Penny Red stamp with a black cancellation.

Printing inks comprise different substances depending on the process that is to be employed. They can include oils, chemicals, pigments and other compounds to ensure the correct viscosity for the printing press, process, paper

thickness or coatings being used. Intaglio inks are very thick and therefore raised above the stamp surface, whereas most other inks are thin, transparent and flush with the paper surface.



Fig. 2, Dutch trials showing the impact of different color gradients on a design.

Color shades are an important aspect of stamp collecting and the Dutch 'Verlooptint' (gradient) trials shown nearby (Fig. 2) and probably printed by Joh. Enschedé of Haarlem, show the impact that shades can have on the appearance of a stamp.

Stamps started out as single color, as with the Penny Black, then could be bi-colored and slowly incorporated four or more inks when perfect registration of the design became feasible (Fig. 3).

cont. on pg 36.

THIS ISSUE

Inky Business	33 & 36-37
GPA News	34
Progressive Proofs: Liberia 1949 Independence Issue ...	35
They Are Not What They Look Like	37
Printerly Birthday Greeting	38
New Issues of Graphic Interest	39-47
Biographical Dictionary: Friedrich Gottlob Koenig ..	48

cont. from pg 33.



Fig. 3, Sc 175-176. The first ever four color stamps were from El Salvador.

Today's advanced printing presses can produce stamps with 12 or more colors, enabling truly multi-colored stamps to grace our albums. On the British Ordnance Survey stamp depicted (Fig. 4), the printer utilized a dozen inks to ensure total accuracy with the original map being shown. Most printers would have simply settled for CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black) inks, but the effect would not have been as realistic.

These days, printing inks can be split between those helping to secure the product and those that are purely there for a decorative purpose. Security-type inks can

Fig. 4, Sc 1394. The House of Questa used 12 ink colours, plus phosphor tagging, on a single British stamp.



Fig. 5, Sc 847. The Marshall Islands issued a sheetlet commemorating US Presidents that used 18 ink colors, but each stamp was monochrome.



This tribute to the American Presidency is inspired by the classic U.S. 1938-1939 issues, which were used for postage in the Marshall Islands for many years.

The denomination of each stamp corresponds to the sequence of each man's Presidency.

The dates give the years of each President's term in office, the longest being Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Engraving: Gene Jarvis and Michael Hubert

be machine readable, such as graphite, phosphor or fluors (i.e. ‘tagging’). Stamps can also incorporate a specially formulated ink such as ultraviolet-sensitive, which glows under special lighting, or can be optically variable (OVI), changing its color when tilted (the British Castles high values, for example).

Decorative types can include aromatic inks (a ‘scratch-and-sniff’ synthetic smell of, say, coffee, chocolate, roses, etc), might incorporate scratch-off latex areas (Figs. 6&7) (like lottery scratch cards), or may be sensitive to temperature change (usually when touched for a length of time by the heat of a finger). Other tactile materials can now be suspended in a varnish ink, such as the actual rock particles used on a Rock of Gibraltar stamp issue.

It seems that there are now no limitations as to what types of ink can be used on a postage stamp!

GPA member Glenn Morgan won a gold award at Stampex Autumn 2016 in the Philatelic Literature category for his series of articles titled “Gravure Stamp Cylinders” published in Gibbons Stamp Monthly.



Fig. 6. An oval area of gray wavy latex ink meant to be scratched off in order to reveal printed design. Produced by Cartor Security Printing.



Fig. 7. After scratching off gray latex ink, the oval-shaped printed design is revealed. Produced by Cartor Security Printing.

They Are Not What They Look Like

Larry Rosenblum



These three semi-postal stamps (Sc B24-26) were issued to raise money for a sinking fund to pay off World War I debt. They appear to be overprints but are really bicolored stamps.

The three stamps shown above look like common French definitives with an overprint that includes a surcharge. That’s not what they are.

In the mid-1920s, France’s economy was in bad shape. World War I left France with high debt and severe inflation. In 1926, Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré established a sinking fund (“caisse d’amortissement,” a kind of savings account) to collect funds to pay off France’s debt. He decided to issue special stamps for five years to raise money for the fund, and he hoped that stamp collectors would buy a lot of them.

There were three definitive stamps for the basic post-card, internal letter and foreign letter rates. Two existing

designs were used, one picturing Louis Pasteur and the other picturing the feminine symbol of France known as the Sower. The reason for the surcharge and the amount were printed over the design in a different color.

The two colors were printed together on a two-cylinder press. To discourage counterfeiting, the base designs were printed in colors not otherwise used for that denomination. For example, the 40-centime Sower in Figure 1 is blue, a color never used for the normal 40c Sower.

Strictly speaking, these stamps are not overprints, which are existing stamps that are put back to press to add additional information. The sinking fund definitives are simply bicolored stamps.

The three definitives were issued in new colors in each of the five years. Collectors bought a modest quantity of the earlier issues, but by the end of the period—which coincided with the beginning of the Great Depression—the stamps were largely ignored. The final set of three, issued in 1931, is scarce today. A mint, hinged set of three has a Scott Catalogue value of \$240.

Ironically, this scarcity led to forgeries, and collectors buying the later sinking fund definitives should have them expertized.