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# Cross Border Exhibiting

## Simplifying the Customs Experience

— by Michael P. Anderson, Fraser Valley Stamp Club

[Ed. note: This article is in response to a discussion at SEAPEX this year with the author and others regarding the difficulties involved in exhibiting in shows in another country. This case is especially applicable here within the Northwest Federation where we have many exhibitions sponsored by our clubs in both Canada and the US. Hopefully this information will help exhibitors in both countries and encourage them to take their exhibits to these shows.]

With increased awareness for improved “border security” along the extensive border of both nations, many philatelists have become reluctant to exhibit in their neighboring country.

While dealing with customs can be stressful because of the “unknown,” you can take steps to help the customs officer understand what you want to do, and to protect yourself when returning your exhibit home.

When living in Burlington, Ontario, I wanted to take an exhibit to the Rochester National Stamp Show (ROPEX), so I went to both Canadian Customs and US Customs a week before my actual trip to Rochester. I outlined what I wanted to do along with my questions and concerns. The following article describes the procedures developed with input from officers of both countries.

**These procedures were developed for travel from Canada to the USA,** but they also should work for those wanting to go in the opposite direction.

**Customs Issues.** US Customs wants to ensure you are not bringing anything into the country that you will offer for sale. They want to ensure that what you take in will be taken out. If you are taking something in to sell, donate, or leave as a gift you must declare as much. You can initiate this process through an **Informal Entry Application**.

This approach should be supported with a **Commercial Invoice** that clearly describes what you are bringing in, **and the fact that you will be bringing it out on a specific date.** (Refer to the examples shown.)

You should have three copies of the Commercial Invoice.

On return to Canada, you want Customs to recognize you are bringing home the very same exhibit that you took out with nothing having been added to it when it was out of the country.

This is accomplished by photo-copying the exhibit and presenting the copies and original exhibit to Canadian Customs **before you leave the country with them.**

In my case, the customs officer examined both, and placed his identification stamp on the following items:

- All three copies of the Commercial Invoice outlining a detailed description of exhibit
- First page of the exhibit (1/80)
- Last page of the exhibit (80/80)

When this was completed, I crossed the border and presented two copies of the “stamped” Commercial Invoice to US Customs.

This approach was greeted with some confusion as it is not typical. However, the customs officer was more interested in the exhibit itself and my declared value.

He repeatedly asked, “..... for stamps?” His surprise on the value was shared by my wife who was making the journey with me. He wished me luck and allowed us entry with no problems.

Upon return to Canada we experienced no delay or problems. When asked, we declared the full value of our purchases and were granted entry. There were no questions asked about the exhibit, and it was not mentioned at all.

It must be emphasized that each entry application is unique and is evaluated on its own merits. Your deportment and the mood of the custom officer can affect the end result.

However, preparation ahead of time by the exhibitor will assist the customs officers with their evaluation. Documentation removes ambiguity of information and understanding of it. Documentation also removes any doubt about prior ownership of the goods upon return to Canada.

While never attempted, this approach should also work for American philatelists wanting to enter their exhibit in a Canadian show.

On the following page is an example of a completed Commercial Invoice.

## Cross Border Exhibiting *(from page 10)*

### COMMERCIAL INVOICE

<u>DATE of EXPORT</u> <b>MAY 09/18</b>	<u>EXPORT REFERENCES</u> <b>TRANSPORTED BY OWNER</b>
<u>EXPORTER (COMPLETE NAME &amp; ADDRESS)</u> <b>John Doe 123 ~ 88<sup>th</sup> Ave Suite 201 Langley, BC Canada V1M 0A0</b>	<u>CONSIGNEE (COMPLETE NAME &amp; ADDRESS)</u> <b>North West Federation of Stamp Clubs PIPEX Red Lion Hotel 909 N Hayden Island Dr. Portland OR 97217 USA</b>
<u>COUNTRY OF EXPORT</u> <b>CANADA</b>	
<u>COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE</u> <b>USA</b>	
<u>COUNTRY OF ULTIMATE DESTINATION</u> <b>CANADA</b>	

NO of PKGS	TYPE of PACKAGING	FULL DESCRIPTION OF GOODS	WEIGHT	UNIT VALUE	TOTAL VALUE
<b>80</b>	<b>PAGES</b>	<b>EXHIBIT OF HAWAIIAN STAMPS &amp; ENVELOPES TO BE SHOWN DURING "PIPEX" HELD BY THE N.W.F.S.C. BETWEEN MAY 11 – MAY 13, 2018, THEN RETURNED TO CANADA BY OWNER AT THE END OF THE SHOW.  NO ITEMS ARE FOR SALE AND ALL WILL BE RETURNED TO CANADA ON MAY 13/18</b>	<b>10 lbs</b>		<b>\$XXX.XX</b>
<b>TOTAL NO OF PKGS</b>			<b>TOTAL WEIGHT</b>		<b>TOTAL VALUE</b>
<b>80</b>			<b>10 lbs</b>		<b>\$XXX.XX</b>

I DECLARE ALL THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS INVOICE TO BE TRUE AND CORRECT

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF SHIPPER/OWNER

**MAY 09, 2018**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE