



FIP Commission for Postal History

The importance of **Rarity and Condition** in Postal History Exhibits

Updated August 2020

Streamline Seminar Rarity & Condition

Rarity – 20 points

- ❖ Rarity is directly related to the philatelic items shown and to the relative scarcity of this material (however, not directly the value)
- ❖ Thus, rarity is primarily related to how many examples exist
- ❖ It is, however, also considered, from how broad a perspective, the items are rare



Number of Rare Items

- ❖ The jurors will primarily be looking for:
 - How difficult is it to obtain the relevant and interesting material in the exhibit?
 - How difficult is it to duplicate the exhibit?
 - Has the exhibitor avoided philatelically produced material where possible?
 - How important the rare items are seen from a broader perspective?
For instance, a postal marking of a small town showing the only example known, but of a standard type used throughout the country, would be of less significance than a unique example of a special cancellation type used only at that town

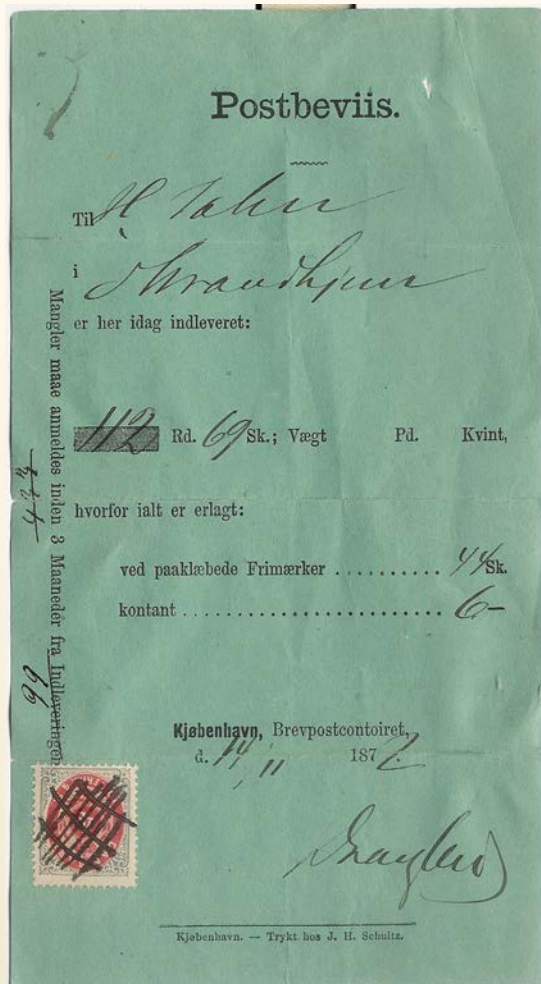


Rarity – 20 points

- ❖ Rarity in Postal History exhibits should primarily be considered from the postal history aspect of the item
- ❖ Thus, a rare rate, route, or postal marking is usually more important when considering rarity in Postal History exhibits than a common postal history item franked with a rare stamp



Postal History Rarity contra Traditional Rarity – Example



A common 4 sk. stamp used on a postal receipt for three money orders sent to Norway. The fee for a postal receipt was two skilling per money order. The green forms cost 2 skilling. Here the form is uprated because the receipt covered such a large amount that it had to be split on 3 money orders. **ONE OF ONLY TWO RECORDED POSTAL RECEIPTS UPRATED WITH ANY SKILLING STAMP**



4 sk. print 4 pos. A90 inverted frame on a standard domestic letter **ONE OF THREE RECORDED USAGES OF THIS INVERTED FRAME ON COVER**

One is a rarity in a postal history exhibit, one isn't!



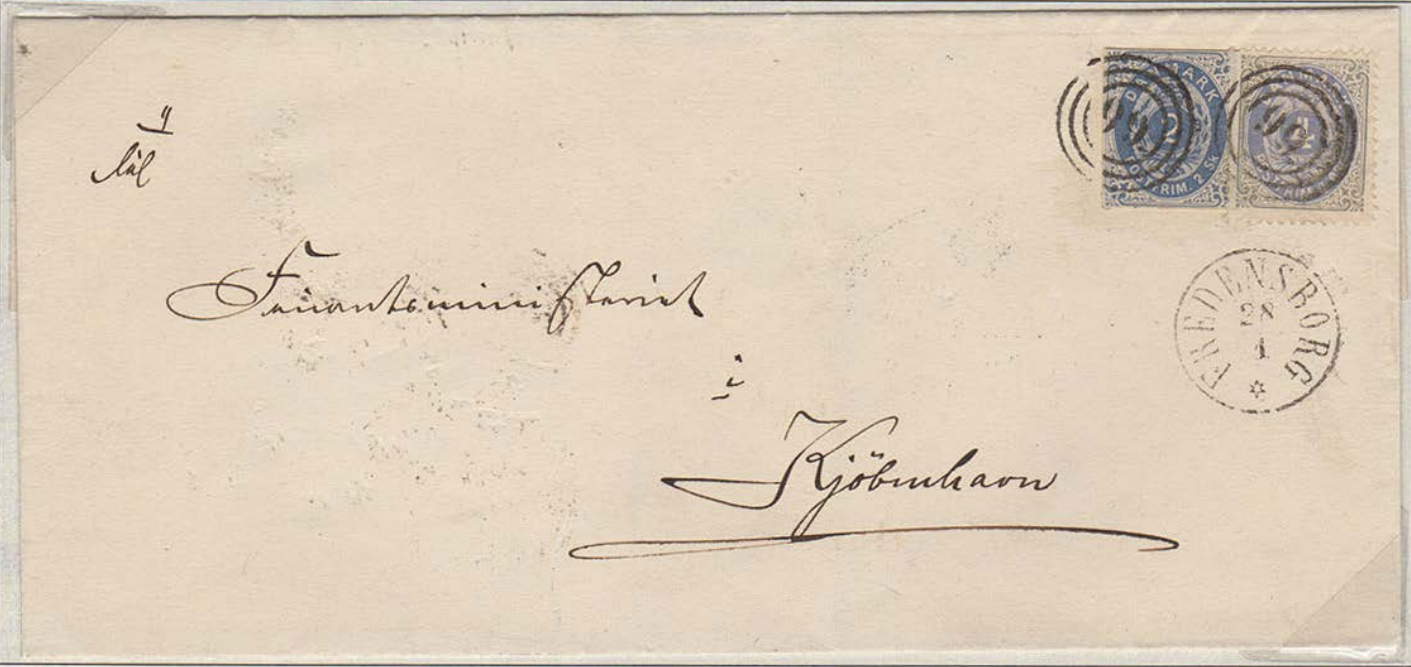
Rarity – 20 points

- ❖ If many of the key postal history rarities within the subject are present, traditionally important items such as rare stamps on postal items, largest known franking, earliest recorded usage, mixed frankings, etc. will also be appreciated in postal history exhibits



Exceptional version of something very common

When a common rate like the domestic letter rate has to be shown, top postal history exhibitors will choose an item being exceptional for some other reason (left: standard domestic 8 øre letter 1875–1902, below: mixed currency franking showing the same rate).



The standard 8 øre domestic letter rate illustrated by this mixed franking 2 skilling + 4 øre = 8 øre sent 28/Jan/1875. ONE OF TWO RECORDED MIXED SKILLING-ØRE FRANKINGS INVOLVING A STAMP AND A STATIONERY CUT-OUT



Rarity – 20 points

- ❖ To sum up, in assessing rarity, keep in mind that it is both an **objective** and a **relative** term.
- ❖ Be careful with local area exhibits: Often exhibitors claim that everything is very rare, but in most such exhibits, the items are only rare from a very narrow perspective (used in that particular village or town), but not from a broader national or international perspective



Relative Rarity – Example



Only three ball invitations exist



Only three cancellations with inverted month and year from Stäfa recorded

One is a world class rarity, the other isn't!



Relative Rarity – Example



Only recorded Danish insured letter sent to a non-European destination before 1907 (unique rate)

Only recorded insured letter to Germany showing the 168 øre rate (unique rate)

BUT >100 Danish insured letters to Germany have been recorded



One is an international rarity, the other is a local rarity!



Levels of philatelic rarities for postal history

- ❖ Category 1: World Class rarities
- ❖ Category 2: International rarities
- ❖ Category 3: National rarities
- ❖ Category 4: Local/Specialized rarities

Each will be discussed in more detail



Category 1- World Class Rarities

- ❖ Items that most philatelists know without having to read a description!
- ❖ Most are famous due to the stamps on those covers, not so much for the postal history aspects they show!
- ❖ There are very few World Class Rarities!
- ❖ You do not need World Class Rarities to get 20 points in rarity, since no such items exist for most postal history collecting areas







Category 2 : International Rarities

- ❖ Items that are rare from an international postal history perspective
- ❖ Examples of very rare types of mail (which they are depend on the period)
- ❖ Earliest or best quality use of a rare and significant handstamp or a rare and important cancellation
- ❖ Covers showing exceptional rates, routes, destinations, and/or significant dates



Category 2: International rarity
Rare international pre-UPU insured parcel
and obligatory mixed usage of postage stamps and revenue stamps



One of two recorded pre-UPU insured parcels sent from Denmark to France. 4 recorded mixed frankings



Category 2: International rarities
Special mail service: Pony Express
Special type of mail: Registered commercial papers to an exotic destination



Category 2: International rarities
First Day International UPU Money Order
01 / Apr / 1879

Abchnitt.
(Coupon.)
Kann vom Empfänger abgetrennt werden.
(Peut être détaché par le destinataire.)

Betrag der Post-Anweisung in Ziffern.
(Montant du mandat en chiffres.)

Bezeichnung des Absenders:
(Désignation de l'envoyeur.)
Kornmühle
Eßlingen
L. Palmer

Den 1. ten April 1879
(Le 18 1879)

Deutschland.
(Allemagne. — Administration des Postes du Royaume de Wurtemberg.)

Internationale Post-Anweisung
(Mandat de Poste international)

auf die Summe von 426 68 Kr. in arabischen Ziffern —
(de la somme de) 426 68 Kr. en chiffres arabes.)

426 sechsundzwanzig und 68 Kr.
(Vertikal in lateinischen Buchstaben. — en toutes lettres et en caractères romains.)

Zahlbar an Johann G. L. von Hove
(payable à M)

Bestimmungsort: Amsterdam
(Lieu de destination.)

Wohnung des Empfängers: ~~Amsterdam~~
(Adresse du destinataire.)

Bestimmungsland: Niederlande
(Payement destination.)

Numero d'émission: 26468
(Date d'émission.)

Datum: 1 April 79
(Bureau expéditeur.)

Aufgabeort: Eßlingen Post
(Anfangsbest.: Würtemberg.)

District d'émission: Esslingen
(accepté par le service)

Gut für 26468 (gleich) 45 Mark 23 Pf.
(Bon pour) (en chiffres arabes.)

Unterschrift des Annehmbeamteten.
(Signature de l'agent qui a dressé le mandat.)
Lang

Poststempel:
ESSENLINGEN
WÜRTEMBERG
STADT-POST
40
1/4
(4)
ESSENLINGEN
WÜRTEMBERG
STADT-POST
20



Category 2: International rarity Rare international postal usage of a US local local - 2 postal systems

Use of 10 cent Baltimore Postmaster Provisional
to pay US postage to port of departure (Boston)

28 March 1847

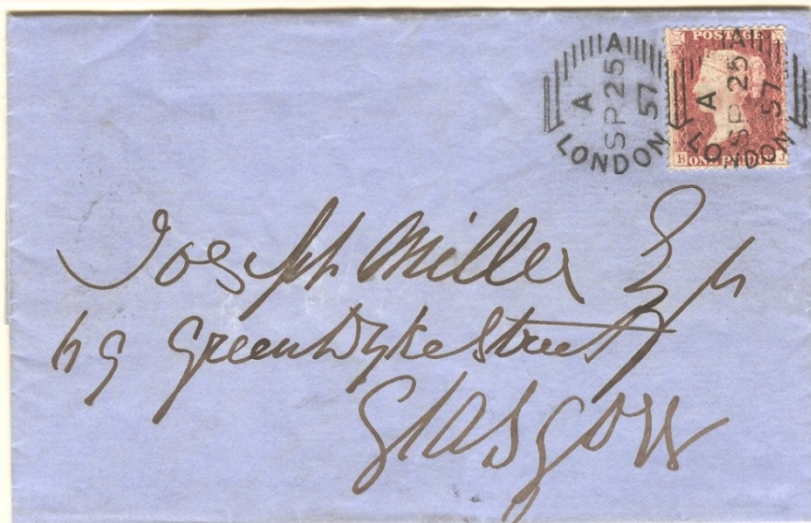


5 known on cover - only one to foreign destination



Category 2: International rarities
The world's first machine cancellations
Great Britain and United States

25 September
1857
only known
example



Postmark from the first full day & evening
operation of Pearson Hill Trial Machine A

22 January 1861
First Day of Trial



“Norton Patent Duplex” Mechanical Device –
New York city trial period 22 January to 28
March 1861



Category 3: National rarities

❖ Items that are rare and important from a broad national perspective with respect to

- Type of mail
- Rate
- Route
- Regulations
- Markings



**Category 3: National Rarity:
Use of significant trial
Registration service: Germany**



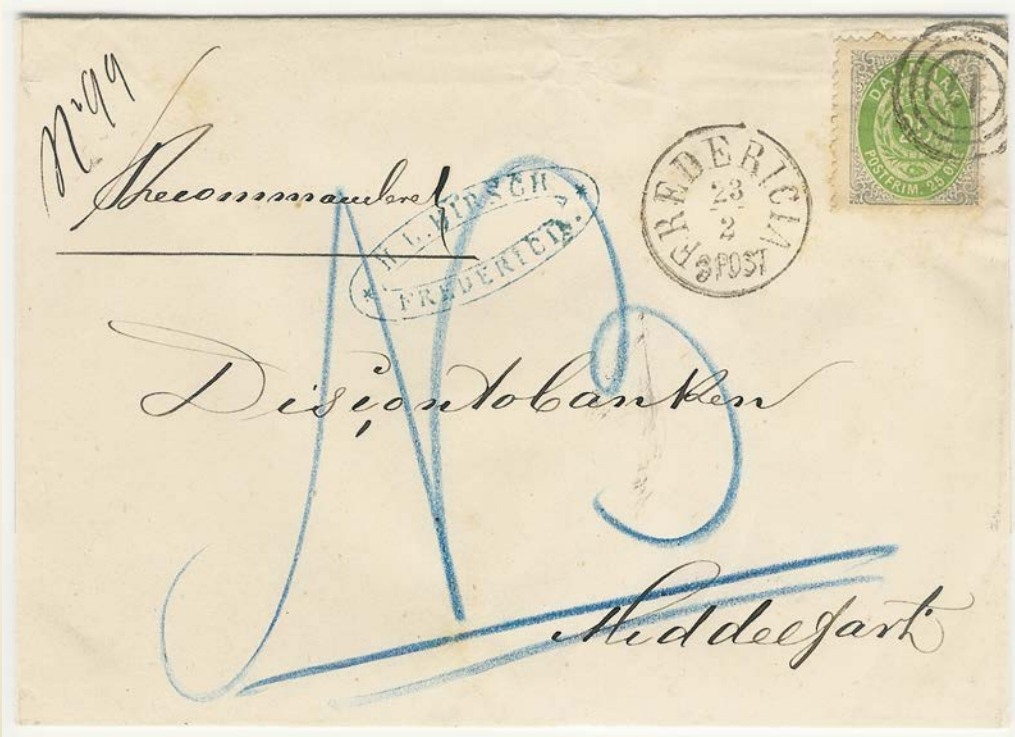
22 November 1909

Reichspost trial of DAPAG Self-Service Machine for Registration of Domestic Mail. One of four covers known from 3 possible dates of usage.



Category 3: National Rarity:

25 øre single on registered letter from the first quarter of 1875.



7 recorded on covers – special rate due to change in currency conversion rules.

THE FIRST OPIUM WAR

**Category 3: National Rarity:
Notable handstamp – China**

In 1839, an Imperial edict ordered the expulsion of foreign traders and seizure of opium in Canton. In order to protect foreign interests in China, British Government sent an Eastern Expedition Force from India to Canton in June 1840.



**MILITARY POST OFFICE CHINA Cachet
One of 5 recorded**

Applied at the base post office on mail sent by military personnel.



Category 4: Local/Specialized rarities

- ❖ Items that are rare and important from a narrow perspective with respect to
 - Type of mail
 - Rate
 - Route
 - Regulations
 - Markings



Category 4: Local/Specialized Rarities

Example from Postal History of Howard County, Maryland USA



c1851 -55
Stampless
envelope
from town of
Woodstock.

Only known example of this date stamp.

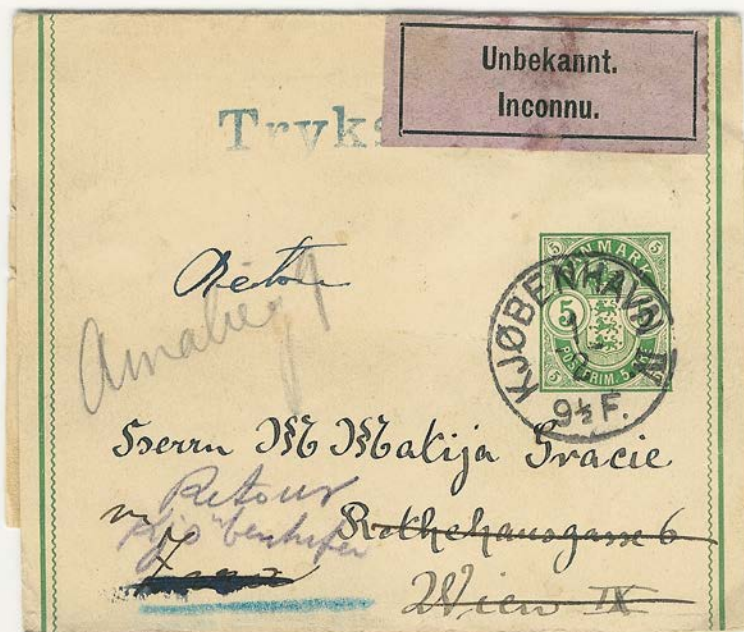
Not significant for any exhibit except for one of a “county/hometown” .

Rare but not of broader significance!



Category 4: Local/Specialized Rarities

Example: printed matter sent from Denmark to Croatia



UPU printed matter rate
5 centimes =
5 øre

One of only 2 recorded printed matter items sent from Denmark to Croatia before 1907

However, the destination does not affect the UPU printed matter rate, which is abundant

Rare but not of broader significance!



Assessing Rarity

It is impossible for a judge to know all the worldwide rare rates, routes and markings



The **exhibitor** is responsible for doing the necessary personal study needed to determine how many of a particular item have been recorded.



Assessing Rarity

❖ But be careful and use common sense:

If enough details are considered, **almost every postal history item becomes unique!**



Assessing Rarity

- ❖ Assess if the exhibit explains **WHY** an item is rare
 - Just the word “unique” or “two recorded” without an explanation is not very useful.
 - Explanations to viewers should include exactly what is rare about the item
 - i.e. only recorded cover taking this route or with this rate or marking



Example of text indicating exactly why an item is rare

4. Foreign Mail via Burma

4. Foreign Mail via Burma
Early combination cover from Yunnan to England. It was not possible to fully prepay letters from China via Burma before the signing of the Mail Treaty between India and China on March 1, 1904.
 So far 14 combination covers China-India are recorded from this period (Dec 10, 1902-March 1, 1904) of which this is the only one sent from TENG YUEH. The oval handstamp of *TENG YUEH* (WITH STARS) was only used in December 1903 (4 recorded, this the only one as a cancellation, the others are transit hs)

Dec 23, 1903 envelope franked with 10 CHINESE 1c being the foreign rate cancelled TENG YUEH and INDIAN 1a cancelled BHAMO (Jan 1, 1904) and sent by SEA POST OFFICE C (Jan 9) to London arriving Jan 23, 1904



Ex Clarke - Hinder: This is considered to be the most important postal history item of Yunnan



2.1 International letters
Overseas UPU rates

Rates: First weight letters to overseas UPU-members 30 øre 01/Apr/1879 to 31/Dec/1898.
Postage due charges according to the true conversion rates 01/Apr/1879 to 12/Jun/1881.

On 01/Apr/1879, Denmark reduced the surcharge on overseas UPU letters to 50% of the standard UPU rate. From 01/Apr/1879, insufficiently prepaid UPU letters were rated at double the missing postage. Between 01/Apr/1879 and 12/Jun/1881, the true conversion rate between the Danish and French currencies (100 centimes = 72 øre) was used when these postage due charges were calculated. From 13/Jun/1881, 1 missing øre was converted to 1.25 centimes.

Stamps: above: 10 and 20 øre coat of arms print 16 and 15, Straits Settlements 2 cents and 2x3/32 cents. below: 5 øre print 1, 25 øre print 2.



Letter sent to Singapore 06/Aug/1894 showing the 30 øre surcharged overseas UPU-rate. Since the letter was opened and then remailed back to Denmark, it was recharged at the normal rate for overseas UPU letters sent from Straits Settlements to Denmark: 8 cents 01/Mar/1894 to 31/Dec/1917.
ONLY RECORDED MIXED FRANKING INVOLVING DANISH AND STRAITS SETTLEMENTS STAMPS



Insufficiently prepaid, second weight overseas UPU letter sent 29/Jun/1880 to the Danish West Indies. **The missing franking 30 øre was converted to 42 centimes** (noted in blue next to the stamps) **according to the conversion table valid before 12/Jun/1881.** In DWI, the missing postage was doubled to 84 centimes and converted to a 17 DWI cents postage due charge.

ONLY RECORDED OVERSEAS LETTER SHOWING THE PRE-13/JUN/1881 RULES FOR POSTAGE DUE CHARGES



14 January 1864 Hong Kong to Lima, Peru via Southampton and Panama ex. *Stubens*

ROUTE: *P&O China*, Hong Kong 15 January to Galle, *P&O Nemesis* Galle 31 January to Suez 15 February
P&O Ceylon Alexandria 19 February to Southampton 2 March
 Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. *Shanon* Southampton 17 March to St. Thomas 1 April
 Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. *Tamar* 1 April to Colon 7 April
Quito, a PSNCo ship from Panama 9 April to Callao arriving on 16 April. Lima 17 April

RATE: 2s 11d for a ½ oz. letter, prepayment compulsory according to Hong Kong postal notice of 7 March 63
 Hong Kong Government took over control of the post office on 1 May 1860, therefore kept 1d for handling
 2s 10d credit to G.P.O. London

MARKINGS: HONG KONG PAID and HONG KONG c.d.s. type 14a & 13a, JA 14 64
 On reverse: London c.d.s. MR 2 64, PANAMA c.d.s. AP 7 64, LIMA 17 ABR 64
 Spanish handstamp 'CONDUCCION DEL CARTERO GRATIS' meaning "Delivery by postman free"

One of the two letters recorded and only one from Hong Kong¹

1. The second letter on the same itinerary to Lima is from Le Havre, France to Lima illustrated on p.221 RMSPC 1842-1879 by Kenton & Parsons

Assessing rarity

- ❖ Under rarity the judge should consider what the exhibit contains.
 - An exhibit with only ordinary material cannot get high rarity points.
 - Not all expensive items are actually rare (e.g. Sachsen Dreier on cover; 2 RBS on cover; Uprated Mulreadies, Basel dove on cover)
 - An exhibit with many rare items should get maximum points **EVEN IF** a few rarities are **missing**.
 - **Many missing items** will, however, also indirectly be considered under **rarity**.
- ❖ If an exhibit has many rare items and is getting 29-30 points for rarity and condition, **adding more rare items should not generate more points in other judging criteria**.



Condition – 10 points

- ❖ When assessing condition the shown items should be in the best possible condition **for what is available** to secure full points.

- ❖ Special cases:
 - Disaster Mail
 - Disinfected Mail
 - Letters written to soldiers, etc;

Judges should consider the circumstances and not expect this type of item to be in perfect condition.



Condition – 10 points

- ❖ Standard condition is given 7 points.
- ❖ Better than average is given 8 points
- ❖ Lower than average is given 6 points

- ❖ What does take to get 9-10 points:
 - Common material is in exceptional condition
 - Rare material is in the best available condition.
 - The quality of all aspects of the items are considered (cleanliness of items; clear cancellations; perforation/cut of stamps; no ugly stains; no ugly folds).

Full points require that exceptional care has been taken to find also the more common material in superb condition.



Top condition (all classes)



Top condition (PH)



Example of special considerations:

Most Pony Express covers are repaired, dirty, ripped, shortened, and/or they have tears in the envelopes or the stamps are cut-into. Finding a pony express cover without any of these issues is extremely difficult!

The shown cover is in superb condition for what it is.



Condition points for exhibits containing only common material

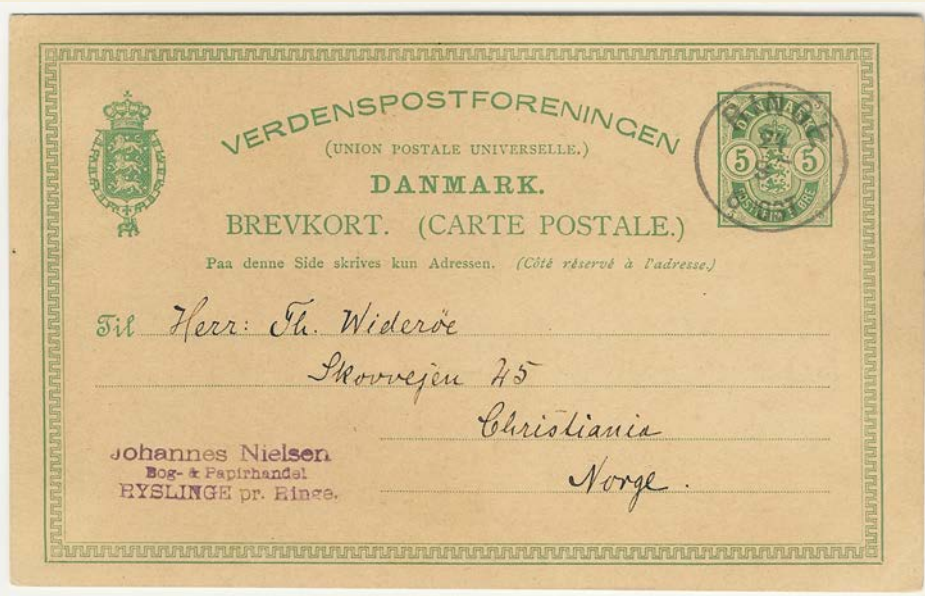
- ❖ The **standard condition** for common material is flawless and very nice. Thus, this alone tends to result in 7 points.
- ❖ If there are no scarce or rare items in an exhibit, based on which, condition can be differentiated, it becomes very hard to get more than 7-8 points for condition.



Average contra great condition of common material



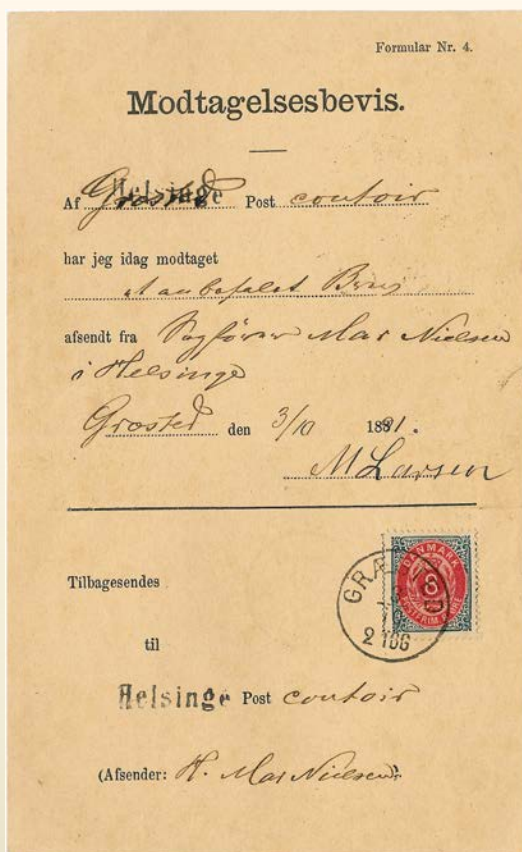
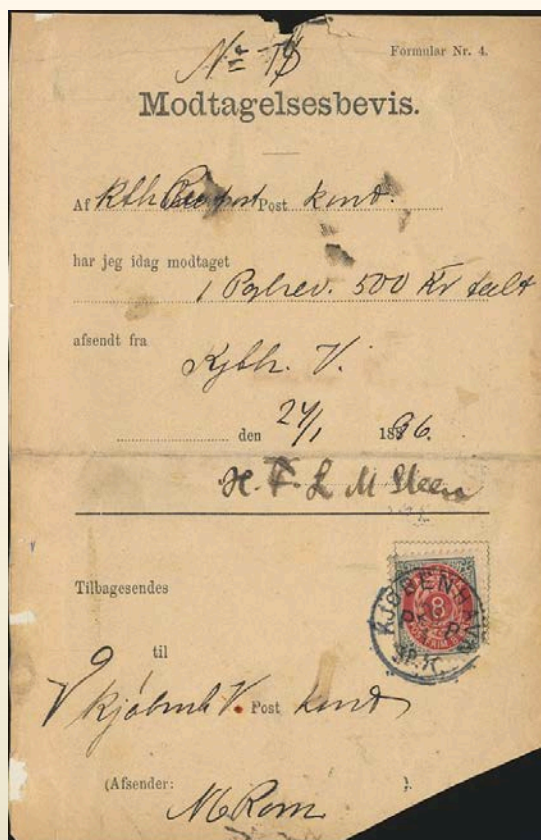
Average condition!



Superb condition!



A rarity in poor contra great condition

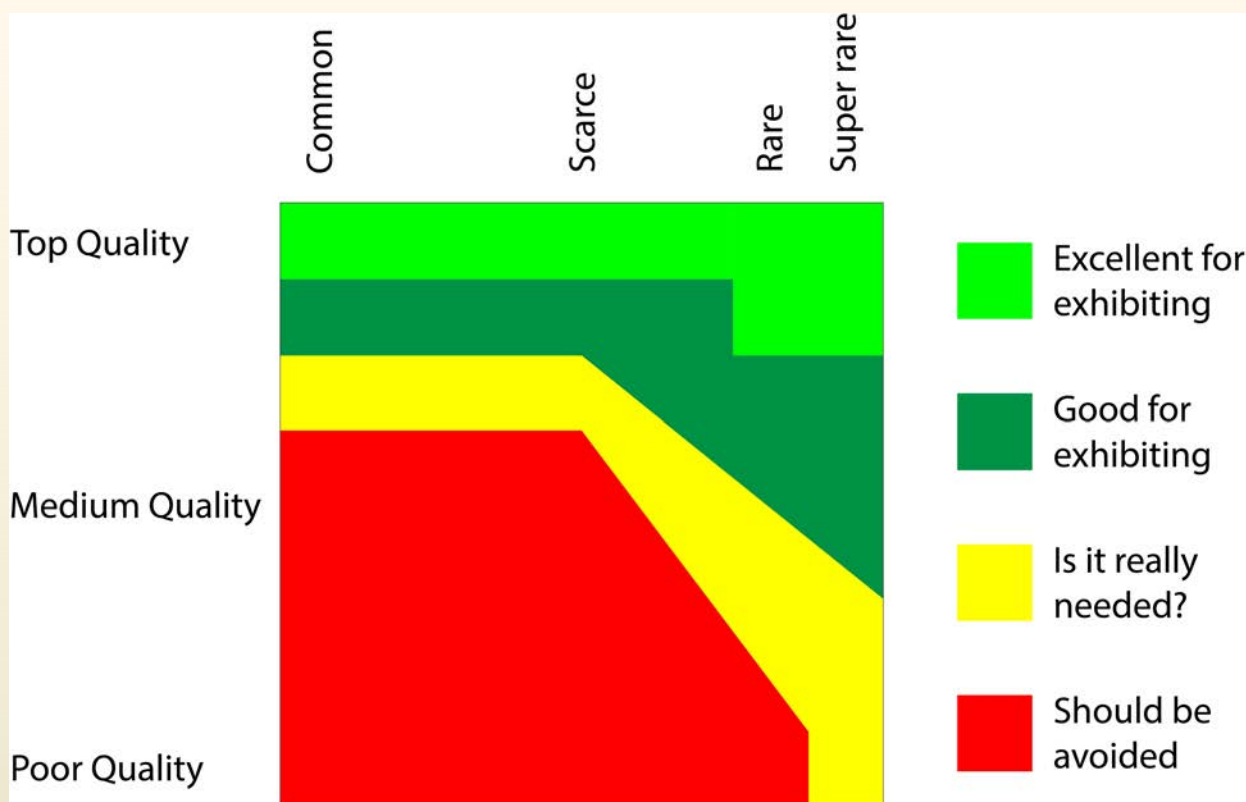


Domestic AR forms:

Only 6 complete forms have been recorded showing
the 8 øre rate 01/Jan/1875-30/Sep/1902



The Rarity-Quality Matrix of modern exhibiting



Source: Mouritsen, H. (2019) "Danish Postal History 1875-1907"

Can be useful when considering whether to purchase an item offered for sale.



Subjects for discussion:

- ❖ The quality demands of collectors have gone up with time. Should this be reflected in stricter judging of condition?
- ❖ Condition rarities:
Are they also considered under rarity or only under condition?

