**PHILATELY**

**DEFINITION**

Philately is the hobby of collecting and studying of postage stamps and other postal materials.

**INTRODUCTION**

Postage stamp is the most widely known postal symbol and the primary element of philately. It is considered a messenger conveying letters to all parts of the world.

By its feature or the image it bears, the stamp becomes an ambassador for the country it represents. It supplies information about the country’s culture, its history its products, famous personalities and events of national or international significance.

Over the years, the hobby of collecting stamps fascinates the young and the old from all walks of life. Today, the hobby has the largest following thus earning it the title "***King of Hobbies***" or “***Hobby of Kings***".

Although, ancient definition of philately focused on it as a hobby, but in recent time philately is a real business propelled by its various value added service. These services have expanded the scope and number of stakeholders in Nigeria ranging from designers (Artists) printers, album and philatelic tools manufacturers, stamp dealers, journalists (publishers) etc.

NIPOST has moved steadily in the business of philately aligning itself with regional  or continental Pan African Postal umbrella body the Universal Postal Union(UPU) a United Nations Specialized Agency. Every standard measure in form of resolutions and legislations resulting from conference/seminars and research by the UPU for postal market growth especially philately are adhered to by NIPOST.

**ORIGIN OF PHILATELY**

People started to collect postage stamps soon after the postage stamps were introduced. Postage stamp was invented by an Englishman Sir Roland Hills in 1840. It is generally believed that the idea of collecting stamps came from a Belgium School Master around 1854. He asked his pupils to adorn their atlases with stamps.

**PHILATELY IN NIGERIA**

In Nigeria, the history of postage stamp dates back to 1859 when Hand Struck Stamp with inscription "Paid in Lagos" was issued. However the first set of adhesive postage stamps was released in Lagos on 10th. June, 1874.

An Indian was commissioned to repackage Philately. He was in Nigeria for six months. Philately was run on a very small scale in Nigeria before 1969. The service was repackaged that year as an arm of International Operations Department;

1. To ensure that a large percentage of Nigerians are made aware of the hobby and business of stamp collection especially those hl the literate class and the youth.

2. To ensure that high quality stamps that rank among the best in the world are produced.

3. To cooperate with international philatelic agencies to promote philately.

4. To generate adequate revenue to the coffers of NIPOST.

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| **HOW TO BE A STAMP COLLECTOR**  You simply make up your mind to explore the fun in the hobby of stamp collecting and fix into one of the three categories or customers that patronize the Philatelic Bureau.  (i) Deposit Account Customer  (ii) Sundry Customer  (iii) Freelance Customer (Counter Service)  i. **Deposit Account Customer:** In this category, a prospective collector will obtain (free of charge) and complete the deposit account form indicating the number of sets of each issue that should be supplied to him/her when new stamps are released. A certain amount of deposit, which is deductable as supplies are being made, is required to be paid The current initial minimum amount as deposit is one thousand naira (N1,000.00) or Four Hundred Dollars ($400) Four hundred Pound Sterling (£400).  The payment should be made with Nigerian Postal Order for people resident in Nigeria and international postal money order or British Postal Order for those outside Nigeria. On receipt of this amount with the completed form, an account is opened for the prospective collector and all subsequent stamp issues are supplied according to the standing order. The collector reimburses the accounts required when the balance in his/her account is inadequate to pay for a set of stamp.  ii. **Sundry Customers:** These are customers who write to the bureau for the current stock-list. They then place order for their choice from the stock list with the appropriate fee in postal order, Bank draft or Certified cheque and the items are supplied to them by post. Of course the cost of postage and handling charge would be part of the amount charged for the transaction. Nigerian made a final in-road to the main stream of the world philately by its admission in 1996 as the 78th member nation of the Federation International de Philately (FIP).  iii. **Freelance Customers/Counter Service:** This is off the shelf services; some collectors and other customer for conventional use patronize the counters. This service is available on philatelic counters at Post Offices in the Territories. |