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What will be the best way to a German bibliographic work on philately?

[Wie gelangt man am sichersten zu einem deutschen bibliographischen werke der philatelie]

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**WHAT WILL BE THE BEST WAY TO A GERMAN BIBLIOGRAPHIC
WORK ON PHILATELY?**

Thanks to the stimulus given by **Herr Diena** in *Postwerthzeichen*, the history of philatelic literature has begun to interest the leading philatelists more and more in recent years. Obviously, the compilation of a German bibliography to raise fundamentally the overall level of philately, is so important as to make the production of such an essential work desirable as soon as possible.

It is completely obvious that the chief obstacle to the accomplishment of this plan is the financial difficulty caused by the great extent of the work to be covered. This must depend on the actual sale of it, so that is would be hard to find a publisher willing to take the risk. It is equally obvious that the only prospect of calling this bibliography into life depends on the societies raising the money. It is the aim of this article to search for the most suitable ways of supplying this help, without overloading the societies with work, since they themselves already have the task of promoting philatelic interests. This task cannot be neglected or perhaps even given up.

The first step needed is to divide up the work that will lead to a history of the German philatelic literature, to form the main supporter and propagator of the overall picture of philately, which cannot be rated too highly. To do this it is necessary to recruit the finest talent from the main German philatelic societies in Vienna, Dresden, Munich and Frankfurt-am-Main.(*). They will need to work closely together to deal with the material accumulated in their own libraries and archives, and at the same time to exchange materials for study amongst themselves. It would also be necessary to make available material from the other German societies which could be missing from the four main ones.

As part of the preliminaries, the prospective publisher of the work, who should if possible be the owner of his own philatelic magazine, should publish an appeal in his paper and also in the society magazines, which ought to give the necessary space free. This should ask all of the subscribers to the magazine and the members of societies and sections to subscribe to the parts of the projected work, perhaps at half of the later publication price or even less*.(**)

* Obviously these rebates can only be claimed by those societies and sections which can guarantee their members will take up a given number of copies of the work. Even so, no member can be compelled to subscribe to the work, though every member should look upon it as a privilege to help in the production of such an important work.

The publisher's journal will gain a considerable number of subscribers by this manipulation, whilst the societies and sections will guarantee the sale of the bibliography to the greater number of their members, and the agreement with the publisher will result in the sale of a significant number of copies of the work, according to the subscriptions taken out.

To make certain, the societies and sections should draw up an agreement with each member concerned, stressing the need for punctual payment to be made in advance for one or more parts. The actual payment should be noted on the back of the agreement. At the same time the societies and sections should be ready to pay the full published price for copies of the entire work for their libraries.

Philatelists who are members of several societies will obviously choose one of them as their source for the work, and let the other societies and sections to which they belong know of their decision.

An arrangement like this should make it easier to find a publisher for the work, since he will have a guarantee of a wider sale for the work in collecting circles. He can then later charge the full price for foreign sales which will ensure the publisher an adequate if not generous recompense for his undertaking.

This would entail a number of problems for the societies which however weigh lightly against the great gain to philately: so, may these guidelines for the practical fulfilment of the desired aim be put into effect as soon as possible.

Archangel, [Russia], 13/25** March 1888
Ed. Blossfeld

** **Translator's Note:** At the time this letter was written, Russia was still not using the Gregorian Calendar.

Translator's Note: The following editorial footnotes appears in the reprint in the Illustrierte Briefmarken Zeitung:-

() The Philatelic Club in Berlin, which counts the most important philatelists among its members, should probably be included in this. The Editor*

*(**) Naturally these privileges can be enjoyed only by those organizations and chapters that are prepared to guarantee the purchase of a certain number of copies of this work for their members. Likewise, no member can be required to subscribe to this work but all members will doubtless feel honour-bound to participate in the success of such an important work by subscribing to it.*

Postscript

Even while we were gathering material for Lindenberg's great Handbook of Philately, we felt the need for such a work, so we are prepared to support the publication of this work and to undertake its production at our own expense subject to the conditions cited above.

Ernst Heitmann [Publisher of the Illustrierte Briefmarken-Zeitung]
Leipzig

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