

Harry Potter – An Issue too Far?
For Royal Mail's Stamps and Collecting Website

Modern British popular culture has its rightful place in Royal Mail's stamp programme, but should there be a restriction on the number of these issues to just one per year?

British author J K Rowling has been credited with encouraging children to discover the joys of reading books, perhaps for the first time in their lives. Many adults have similarly become captivated by Joanne's seven gripping *Harry Potter* novels. Volumes one to six have been an extraordinary success, with sales of 325 million copies worldwide, appearing in 64 languages and selling in 200 countries.

Royal Mail recently celebrated the launch of the final novel with a series of seven stamps depicting the book jacket artworks, plus a miniature sheet and Smilers sheet both portraying the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry crest, together with the crests of the four school Houses.

2007 has now seen two issues of stamps celebrating contemporary British popular culture; the other set remembered *The Beatles* pop group and was issued back in January. These modern writers and musicians frequently have a far greater global fan base than was ever achieved by former generations and have earned the right to be celebrated on British stamps. There is a desire within Royal Mail to broaden the appeal of the hobby of philately and issues such as these are a sure-fire success, offering massive exposure to a new audience for stamps, while also making a commercial contribution to our business.

What do you think? Do you consider the *Harry Potter* stamps to be an issue too far? Should we produce just one mass-appeal topic annually? Would you have preferred instead to see stamps commemorating more traditional events such as the births of poet and painter William Blake (b.1757), composer Edward Elgar (b.1857) and poet W H Auden (b. 1907)? Do let us know your opinions and we will publish the best responses next month.

[30 words in teaser and 290 in article] [Compiled by Glenn H Morgan FRPSL, 17 July 2007]