

Review: Stamp Organiser Software '07

I hope that I have looked at the product in an objective manner and through the eyes of a collector who possibly only buys philatelic products through, say, Tallents House, but still sees himself as a true stamp collector.

GENERAL

Sleeve Notes – Helpful.

System requirements – should be usable by most PC computer owners. It appears not to be usable by owners of Apple Macs.

Installation – The disk was inserted into CD drive and its AutoRun facility brought up a clear screen that ensured I chose the correct option. The InstallShield Wizard made installation simple and the Terms of Use are fair. It only took a few minutes to load the 18,416 files. It gives users the option to register the product online, but I over-rode the option with no difficulty owing to a lack of internet access this week. It automatically placed a shortcut icon on the Desktop.

Clicking on shortcut - this takes you to a rather daunting grey screen comprising lots of empty white fields with headings and large blank grey areas. I found this very dull and off-putting and despite years of computer involvement lacked the confidence to actually do anything. I had to resort to choosing HELP, where the User Notes mentioned on the CD sleeve were contained.

In fairness to the product it does tell you to read these notes first, although I think it would have been better if the User Notes had automatically come up upon entry to the product instead of being faced with the grey screen, as it spoilt my first impressions, which count a lot.

USER NOTES

These are contained in a PDF file of 30 pages.

Updates - Reading through and having just bought the product, I now find that it will be necessary for me to purchase updated versions of the software if I want to keep my stock holding data up to date. Collectors have to do this with printed catalogues, so it is probably not unreasonable to have to do the same with an electronic catalogue. It appears that one can add entries manually if you wish to.

IMAGERY BROWSE SECTION

Imagery – Commemoratives. These are in date of issue order and extend through to the Beatles issue. I question inclusion of the Castles high values from the MS and the Smilers pictorial definitives in this category of the image archive.

Imagery – Definitives. I have not fathomed out the logic applied to the order in which the definitive stamps are displayed. It starts with the Penny Black, rightly, but then jumps around, i.e. 1840, 1841, 1854, 1870, 1864, 1870, 1858, 1854, 1848, 1847...etc. Most odd and annoying. If you then jump to the last record it depicts a 2003 Machin, so you assume that nothing is listed after that date, but if you go back a page we find Machin stamps in the order 2000, 2002, 2006, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2003, 1995, 1999...etc. The Pictorial Definitives are excluded from this listing, as are the Castles MS stamps. Some definitives are recorded as being ex-stamp booklets, while others that are exclusively from books (e.g. the embossed Machin from the PSB) is not recorded as being from a booklet source.

Imagery – Regionals. These are stored in face value order, which I guess helps if you have a 15.5p stamp in your hands, but is an unconventional way of recording stamps, especially as this policy has not been adopted for, say, the Machin national definitives (or at least only partly has). It is also possible to look for, say, Northern Ireland without having to first scroll through countries higher-up in the alphabet.

Imagery – MS. Fine.

Imagery – Generic Sheets. These are generally OK, except that the Bradbury range of Customised sheets are included among the generics. The category title makes no mention of Smilers and they are

not generic if the BCS sheets are included.

Imagery - To Pay and Frama labels. Annoyingly imagery for these are excluded, despite the User Notes stating that decimal issues are included. There is a pop-up asking that you express an interest in these being included. With so few to illustrate, I am surprised that they are excluded, especially as when adding stamps to your holdings, the images appear.

Imagery – Booklets. Useful to see, say, the PSB panes in colour. It is annoying that you cannot search by type of booklet, e.g. PSB or, say, Christmas.

Imagery – PHQ Cards. It would have been useful to be able to search for, say, Definitive or label or greetings cards (the D, GS and M series) without them being mixed in with the specials.

Imagery – Presentation Packs. Useful listing, but again, why is it not possible to see, say, all Year Book, or Definitive packs together instead of all being in one long date-order listing?

Imagery - FDCs. This is probably an excellent list, but as the subject leaves me cold, I cannot objectively comment on the content! It appears to be amazingly extensive and is clearly a major strength of the program.

REPORTS

These are fine for seeing what you own and what you do not own and would meet my needs.

ADDING AMENDING ENTRIES

Adding a new entry takes you to an input pop-up from where you select what you want to be included in the entry. It is only possible to select and add entries “one by one”, so is tedious and slow. After adding an entry it comes up with a useless pop-up that insists you are told that an entry has been added and you have to click on it to remove the pop-up before you can continue.

I was surprised that so many fields have to be selected and completed by the collector (if they wish to), such as printer, shade, perfs, gum, paper, formats, watermark, catalogue value. These are chosen from a drop down menu and you can give a Machin stamp a Victorian watermark with graphite lines!!! I would have expected this information to be pre-filled as part of the product.

Usefully it is possible to add to the master list an extra, say, perforation type if a new one comes along after CD has been purchased.

The “purchase/catalogue details” are comprehensive, enabling you to manage what you own/do not own, albeit one entry at a time, so an owner of many stamps would need to spend hours updating.

CONCLUSION

I think that the concept is fine and will suit some more specialised collectors, but the whole thing just takes too long to complete and I lost the will to continue after adding just a few dummy entries.

I believe that the average collector has more basic needs, wanting a simple product that comes with a tick box, stamp imagery, issue date, issue title, stamp description, face value and current selling price (not “catalogue” value which is invariably meaningless). The customer should be able to add price paid, when/where bought, condition (MM, UM, U, VFU) and perhaps a few notes. All the other RM products should also be available in separate listings, such as definitives, Country stamps, FDCs, PPs, Smilers, MS, Booklets, PSBs, Year Books, etc., etc. Reports highlighting gaps (to take to stamp fairs or dealers), plus a record of what is owned with £ value (perhaps for insurers) would also be a necessity.

Since writing this review, a 2008 edition has appeared and a free trial download is available from [Free trial version](#) and download [Stamp Organiser Overview](#) - a two page document giving a brief description of how Stamp Organiser works. Some of my observations may have been actioned.

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