

Vatican Philatelic Ephemera—Part I: Philatelic Show Folders

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We are all familiar with the many philatelic items that are associated with the collecting of material from Vatican City. Simply peruse the offerings on eBay on any given day, and you will be able to find first day covers with various cachets, first flight covers, Acta with stamps tied by first day cancels, commemorative event covers, and a host of other items prepared by collectors as part of their interest in Vatican philately.

In a series of articles, I will attempt to provide members with a list of the known items beyond stamps and postal stationery produced by the Vatican philatelic agency (UFN)—items I describe as “official philatelic ephemera”. Many of these items carry the UFN copyright. A number of them—with some interesting omissions—are listed in the most recent CEI (*Catalogo Enciclopedico Italiano* 2007/2008), the most comprehensive catalogue of Vatican City material.

These items can be divided into six general categories: 1) Items related to the Vatican’s participation in specific philatelic exhibitions; 2) Items of a general nature for use at philatelic shows; 3) Commemorative folders; 4) Annual collection books; 5) Philatelic-Numismatic covers; 6) Miscellaneous items.

1) Officially Produced Items for Specific Shows

These pieces of philatelic ephemera come in three varieties: folders, cards, and miniature sheets. None have postal value, but they usually have stamps affixed and tied by a commemorative show cancel. It seems that the first of these items was a folder produced for the 1977 San Marino show, which took place August 28–September 4. The

folder is on heavy stock with a horizontal orientation. When opened it measures 338 mm wide × 114 mm high. A large reproduction of the €2 special delivery stamp from the Gardens and Medallions issue (Scott #E1) is on the inside front cover (Fig. 1).

A folder of similar size but different design was produced the next year for Europa ’78 which took place in Naples from April 29–May 7. This folder had oversize reproductions of the 1965 St. Benedict commemoratives (Scott #414–15), appropriate since St. Benedict is the patron of Europe. A line art map of Vatican City appeared on the outside back cover (Figs. 3 & 9).

Three slightly larger folders were produced in 1979. They are 338 mm wide × 118 mm high and the same exterior

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Fig. 1. Believed to be the Vatican’s first commemorative show folder, this example was produced in 1977 for a philatelic exhibition in San Marino. At top right is the front cover; below is the interior of the folder with its oversized reproduction of Scott #E1.



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design was used for all three folders. Inside is an outline map of Vatican City (celebrating its 50th anniversary as an independent state) and the name and date of the particular show for which the folder was issued, respectively: Riccione '79, August 25-28; Eurphila '79, Rome, September 28-30; and Palermo '79, October 25-28 (Figs. 4-8).

A much more elaborate folder was prepared as part of a philatelic exhibition celebrating 50 years of Vatican stamps that took place from November 12-25, 1979 [See *Vatican Notes* XXVIII:3 (Nov-Dec, 1979), p. 6]. The folder measures 300 mm wide (when opened) × 209 mm high. The cover has the standard tiara and crossed keys emblem embossed in gold – a style that was also used in other examples. Inside, on the right, printed in grey is the legend “Vaticano / 50 anni di francobolli / esposizione filatelica / 12-25 novembre 1979.” On the left are three clear strips containing the stamps celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of Vatican City State (Scott #657-663). My copy also has an inscription from James Cardinal Freeman, Archbishop of Sydney from 1971-1983.

Traditional presentation folders (260 mm wide when open × 189 mm high) were used as show souvenirs in 1980 and 1981. The front cover of these is the usual tiara and crossed keys shield inside a yellow frame along with the words “STATO DELLA CITTÀ DEL VATICANO / FRANCOBOLLI.” Each folder was imprinted inside with the name of the show (Eurphila '80 and 35th National Philatelic Congress) and with guides on the upper right to place a stamp which would receive the show cancel.

1981 was also the year that the first of the souvenir sheets without postal value was issued commemorating the Vatican's participation in a philatelic exhibition. More on these interesting pieces of official philatelic ephemera in the next issue.



Fig. 3 (top): Front and back covers of the attractive presentation folder issued to mark Vatican participation in the Europa '78 show, held at Naples in April and May. The interior pages of the folder are shown at top of facing page. Figs. 4 and 5: Cover (4) and inside cover (5) of the common design type used for three philatelic presentation folders in 1979 (shown slightly cropped). Remaining figs. show details of the stamps and cancels affixed inside each folder. Fig. 6: Riccione, August. Fig 7: Eurphila (Rome), September. Fig. 8: Palermo, October.



Fig. 9 (top): interior of the folder illustrated in Fig. 3, with its oversized reproductions of Scott #414-15. Fig. 10 (middle left): Inside pages of the presentation folder prepared for a 1979 philatelic exhibition marking 50 years of the Vatican City State. The author's copy is autographed by an Australian cardinal. Fig. 11 (middle right): This cover art was used for both the 1980 and 1981 presentation folders shown below. Fig. 12 (bottom left): Interior of the 1980 presentation folder for Eurphila, a philatelic exhibition held at Rome in September. Fig. 13 (bottom right): Interior of the 1981 presentation folder for the 35th National Philatelic Convention, held at Rome in February and March.