

ASSCO INFO-SHEET NO. 5

STAMP PRINTING, PAPER AND POINTERS

To be a philatelist — a really keen stamp collector — you need to know a little about how stamps are printed, how the paper they're printed on often tells a story, and other points for a real stamp detective.

Look at the back of **INFO-SHEET No. 5**, which has a drawing showing how printing plates differ in three main types of printing processes.

Typography (also called "letterpress") is the original way of printing. The design is engraved in such a way that the raised parts of the plate are the design — just like a rubber stamp, in fact.

Lithography means printing from a flat plate, where the principle that "oil and water don't mix" applies. The design is put on the plate just like a schoolboy transfer in reverse in greasy fluid. Then when ink is applied, it runs away from the reverse design and the paper receives the "positive" — or correct — design.

Recess-printing is the third main printing process used in printing stamps. The design is engraved — or etched — in reverse (just the opposite of typography) so that the printing ink is carried in the recessed channels.

Confused? Read this again and look at the drawing!

The paper on which stamps are printed can often tell a story, too. Older stamps were often printed on paper with watermarks — that is, designs squeezed into the paper during manufacture. Try placing stamps on the solid ink patch on this sheet, face down, to see if there's a "watermark". Watermarked paper was hard to get, and this made it difficult for people to properly forge or fake a stamp. Nowadays, paper from printing stamps is treated in different ways for the same purpose. Many recent Australian stamps will glow under an ultra-violet lamp — and some of Papua New Guinea's stamps are printed on paper with tiny coloured hairs running through it!

What else can a "stamp detective" learn from the way a stamp is made. **INFO-SHEET No. 4** told you how to measure the size of the perforations of a stamp. But, did you know that there are two different sizes of holes between two stamps from a stamp-vending (coil) machine outside an Australian Post Office? Try it, and see if you can work out why this is so!

Even the gum on the back of a stamp can be different these days — shiny or dull — or even different shades of colour. And collectors who specialise in Australian stamps are finding that the same issue may be printed on both white and cream paper. Placed side by side in your album, these differences will make your collection more interesting.

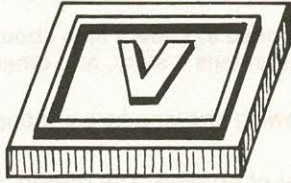
Another tool the stamp detective uses is a colour guide — so that small differences in the colour of ink used may be identified. Is 'red' really red? It could also be Rose, Carmine, Crimson, Scarlet, Rosine, Lake, Vermilion — or a combination of two of these shades. And sometimes for the one stamp, such a difference could make a specimen rare, and therefore worth a lot of money.

**WATERMARK
DETECTOR
PANEL**



STAMP PRINTING PROCESSES

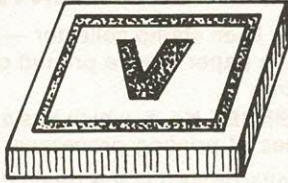
TYPOGRAPHY OR LETTERPRESS



Design is raised



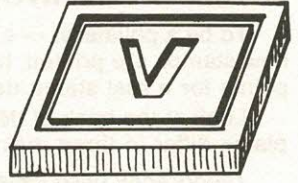
LITHOGRAPHY



Design is level



RECESS PRINTING



Design is recessed



PAPERS

It is very interesting to find out that there are many different kinds of paper used in stamp production, and in some cases you can find the same stamp printed on distinctly different papers. The principal sorts of paper are: **WOVE PAPER** which is smooth on both sides, may or may not be watermarked, and has no other markings in particular in its texture, as in the case of **LAI D PAPER**, which has a series of close parallel lines running through it in the form of a watermark. **SILK PAPER** (Silk Thread Paper) has very small fibres of silk put in the paper during manufacture. **CHALK PAPER** is specially prepared with a coating of chalky substance which has the effect of making the removal of a postmark without disturbing the design very difficult. This is done as a measure of security, and particular care must be taken in removing such stamps from paper to avoid smudging the ink. **SURFACE COLOURED PAPER** is, as the description suggests, paper which has been coloured all over the front before being printed, the back still being the original colour.

Have you an example of each of these papers in **your** collection? By the way, have a look at the back of recent New Guinea stamps — what do you see?

Modern Australian stamps are printed on **HELICON PAPER**. This is a special ingredient either in the paper or coated onto it. It reacts under ultra-violet rays. It is a security measure as well as helping in sorting machines which "face" the letter up the right way ready for the postmarking machine.

WATERMARKS

Illustrated below are watermarks to be found on stamps issued by the Commonwealth of Australia

