Preparing material for a ZOOM presentation

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ZOOM is the video conferencing product used by Southampton DPS (and the RPSL) for its online meetings and presentations. It is free to install on almost any platform you may choose, but perhaps best used on a tablet (eg iPad) or a desktop or laptop (eg Windows, Macbook etc). It offers high level encryption of all communications so it is believed to be safe to use.

Below are the steps required to prepare your material to display via ZOOM. If you write letters, documents or even album pages using a word processor such as Microsoft Word or Apple Pages then setting out the pages of a display should be easy. The idea is to create digital images of your stamps, covers or album pages and then insert those images into new pages; add some text as necessary and then save as a document (a file) for online display.

STEP 1 – you need to acquire an electronic image of what you want to show on ZOOM. The simplest way to do that is to take a photo with your smart phone. If you have a desktop scanner, then that will produce a better result, but most modern phone cameras will do a decent job. The main thing to watch out for is to make sure your image is bright & in focus – this may take a little practice with your phone camera.

STEP 2 – Image manipulation. Sadly for philatelists, it is often not quite as simple as scanning (or photographing) an album page and then sharing the resultant image via ZOOM. Most ZOOM participants are using computer or laptop screens in landscape format while an album page is in portrait format. To see a postage stamp well one has to zoom in on the image and this can be fiddly while also talking to the audience.

One way around this is to crop the portrait image into its upper and lower halves using free software such as FOTOR (but many other photo/image managing applications for this may already be installed on your machine). This will give you two images (usually referred to as "jay-pegs" because their file type is ".jpg"). Each will now be in landscape format. When displayed on the ZOOM screen they will appear at their correct size without the need to fiddle with the zoom controls of the application you use to share the image with ZOOM (yes, an unfortunate pairing of a function name and a product name, bear with us on this). Ideally your album page is arranged so that careful use of the crop function will give suitable results. For postal historians the same problem arises, but usually there are only two covers on an album page!

STEP 3 – improving what you want to show. Better results for the audience may be achieved with more work on the part of the presenter. By further cropping to have just images of the stamps or covers you wish to show, you can use your favourite software to create a new landscape page with the images suitably inserted and arranged on the page with minimum text – as you are going to talk and the audience will listen and view – but not read as well. It is a much better experience that way!

STEP 4 - So what software will you use? Ideally something you are already familiar with, which may well be what you use to create your original album pages – just adjust 'Page

Layout-> Orientation' to be 'Landscape'. For example, a simple word processing package like Word may be all you need (see the video link at the end of this article).

Others may immediately suggest you use PowerPoint (or Apple Keynote) because that is what many business people use to create presentations for work – so it comes naturally to them. The (free) Open Office suite has a presentation creation facility as well as one for writing letters / album pages. If you are using an Android machine (such as Chromebook) then Google Docs may be used.

When you are satisfied with the presentation you have created, save it away as a file that you can find again when you are ready to give the presentation.

STEP 5 - Displaying the result during a ZOOM session. When sharing your final landscape presentation you open the application used to prepare it, open the file then SHARE the application in ZOOM, and page through the presentation as you speak. However, that shows the audience the application's menu bars and reduces the viewing area. Many applications, such as PowerPoint have a full screen viewing option. If, after SHAREing you select that viewing option then the ZOOM audience sees the whole page as large as their viewing screen, and you may still just page through.

An alternative is to SAVE or EXPORT your finished presentation document as a PDF (.pdf) file which may be subsequently viewed by means of Adobe Acrobat Reader which is available on almost all machines and is independent of the Apple, Microsoft or Android underpinnings of your favourite machine. You SHARE the Adobe Reader application, open your .pdf document and expand to full screen via 'View->Full Screen Mode'. Use the left mouse key to page forward and the right mouse key to page backward. Press the ESCape key to exit at the end.

STEP 6 – as always, preparation & practice are everything. The key to preparing a good presentation is to do a little extra work to create a new document from your album pages / collection. Find by experiment the application which gives you the best results and is easiest for you to work with. Practice full screen viewing on your own to see the results for yourself. Be prepared to try a new application.

Resources
Five minute tutorial on how to use Word to prepare slides for a zoom presentation:

> https://youtu.be/ON-a4QuQPF8

Some Software options:

> Google Slides or LibreOffice:
>
> https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/7-free-powerpoint-alternatives-presentation-needs/
>
> Open Office: https://www.openoffice.org/
>
> FOTOR free download: https://www.fotor.com/windows/index.html