April 19 2019 saw the release of the much anticipated “EUROPA” stamps of Moldova. The common topic this year was “National Birds” and Moldova selected two perfect species: the white stork and the golden eagle.

The significance of the annual EUROPA stamp issues, organised jointly by postal administrations throughout Europe and under the auspices of the PostEurop organization, has increased very significantly for Moldova in recent years. In 2017 Moldova won third place in the annual public vote “Best EUROPA Stamp”, with the issue “Castel Mimi”. Then in 2018, Moldova won first place in the “Best EUROPA Stamps: Collector’s Choice 2018” awards, organised by experts, Jürgen Heapers and Eric Contesse, for the issue “Bridges”.

These remarkable achievements were the result of the splendid work done by the philatelic team “Timbrofil” in Poșta Moldovei, together with IMPS support by way of an extensive awareness campaign.

For 2019, the team in Timbrofil did not disappoint, providing us with two magnificent specimens, printed in the extra-large format (68mm x 34mm) first seen on in “SMURD” issue of 2017 and reserved for the most prestigious issues.

For № 1095, the chosen bird was the white stork, which is traditionally (rather than officially) the national bird. This large, migratory bird is found throughout Eastern Europe, as far north as Finland but also in the south of Spain and Portugal.

For № 1096, the chosen bird was the golden eagle. Whilst this bird is not designated as an official symbol of the Republic of Moldova, its image is represented in the state coat of arms and on the state flag.

This widely disbursed raptor is found throughout Europe, Asia and parts of North Africa. It has been a symbol of national power since Roman times and today, it is the official bird of at least five different countries. For the EUROPA 2019 theme, the golden eagle appears on the stamps of several different countries.

Continued...
As in previous years, the postage stamps were printed on minisheets and on booklet panes. Due to the large format stamps, the minisheets contain only 8 stamps (2x4). Each minisheet was printed in a quantity of 6,456 pieces.

In Moldova, stamp booklets are usually only issued for the annual EUROPA release and 2019 was no exception. The booklet panes are not attached to the interior of the booklet and it is possible to buy the panes separately. The booklet was printed in a quantity of 6,500 pieces.

The beautiful booklet cover shows a flock of white storks, holding bunches of grapes in their beaks, flying over the Dniester river towards the fortress of Soroca. This depicts a scene from a local folk legend where the birds relieved the embattled defenders of the fortress, who had depleted their supplies of food and water.

Two first day covers were issued and at two different locations. This unusual arrangement was a repeat of the previous year’s issue.

The cachet for first day cover № 1096 FDC1 features a pair of nesting white storks. The first day cancellation is from the town of Soroca, the location of the fortress illustrated on the booklet cover. Quantity printed: 500 pieces.

The cachet for first day cover № 1097 FDC1 features a golden eagle in flight. The first day cancellation is from the town of Orhei, a territory where golden eagles range. Quantity printed: 500 pieces.

Two official maximum cards were also issued. Each maximum card is cancelled with the same first day postmarks as the first day covers. Quantity printed: 500 pieces (each).
Treasures of Moldovan Philately: Part X
The tenth part of a series of articles about the rare and valuable stamps of Moldova

This month we look at the curious and extremely rare varieties that exist for the 1993 issue “EUROPA: Modern Art”.

This series of stamps was originally issued on December 29 1993, the same day as the previous series “Princes of Moldavia”. Apparently, there were a multitude of production delays and it was only with great difficulty that the stamps were ready for release, with just two days to spare before the year expired. Indeed, these stamps were the very last ones issued by any EUROPA country in 1993 and they were the very first EUROPA stamps issued by the newly independent republic.

According to the official philatelic catalogue, they were printed in in Spain by “Graficas Jorcar” in Barcelona. However, this may be incorrect since the earlier stamps issue, “Endangered Snake Species - World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)”, issued in July, was actually printed in Spain by “Servicios Graficos Jamsa SA” in Barcelona. It is unlikely that two different printing houses, both in the same city, were used.

The series consisted of two stamps. The name of the graphic designer is not known but was probably someone from within the postal administration.

№ 94 (0.03 Lei) shows the painting “History of one life” (1967) by Mihai Grecu. № 95 (1.50 Lei) shows the painting “Concerns of Spring” (1975) by Igor Vieru. Both artists are extremely prominent in Moldova.

Each stamp was printed in a substantial quantity of 315,000 pieces. They were issued, separately, in sheets of 15 values (3x5) and together in a collective minisheet consisting of two se-tenant blocks of 4 with decorated selvage.

At this point, it is worth noting that there exist two minor varieties of the minisheet. № 94-95 Kb1 has perforations in the bottom-left and bottom-right corners and was printed in a quantity of 45,000 pieces. № 94-95 Kb2 is missing these perforations and was printed in a quantity of 15,000. Although these are substantial quantities and neither minisheet can be considered a rarity, both sheets can be remarkably difficult to obtain on the collector’s market.

TOP: Minisheet № 94-95 Kb1. BOTTOM: Minisheet № 94-95 Kb2

Regarding first day covers, according to the official philatelic catalogue of the Moldovan Post, two types were issued. № 94-95 FDC1 with a pair of stamps (4,699 pieces) and № 94-95 Kb1 FDC with a minisheet (970 pieces).

This is all the official data. However, the reality of this series is considerably more complex.

Background:

In these years, the Republic of Moldova was a newly independent country and was engaged in a lengthy process of learning how to construct it’s own civil infrastructure, including postal services and postage stamp production. Sometimes, the services of foreign specialists were needed and in the case of the postage stamp production and distribution, the Ministry engaged the well-known German philatelist, Michael Mittelstrass, whose name has been mentioned several times in past articles.

Of course, we have no access to the details of the contract with Mr. Mittelstrass, but it is evident that he had a very free hand, not only to negotiate deals on behalf of the postal administration of Moldova with foreign agencies but also to execute and distribute philatelic material.

There is nothing unusual or extraordinary about such an arrangement. Indeed half of the world’s postal administrations have similar, outsourced agreements. In this article, we simply aim to describe some previously undocumented and extremely rare material that does not appear in the official catalogues but is of significance from a philatelic perspective, and also to provide provenance for such material.

In 2014, the prestigious German auction house, Heinrich Koehler, listed an extraordinary selection of previously unseen material from the 1993 EUROPA issue. This included imperforate stamps and sheet fragments, some on official FDC envelopes, complete with the official first day cancellation. Since the existence of such material defied reasonable explanation, we contacted the management of Heinrich Koehler and asked about the source and provenance. They were happy to confirm that the seller was indeed Mr. Michael Mittelstrass and gave us other valuable background information.

Continued...
In the first place, we received an answer to a long-term question regarding the first day cancellation. For two years, we had queried the existence of two distinct types of cancellation.

Apparently, Mr. Mittelstrass was responsible for the actual execution of the FDCs for customers in Germany. He was already in possession of the postage stamps and minisheets, as well as the official FDC envelopes. The Post of Moldova made a first day cancellation frank and supplied Mr. Mittelstrass with it. However, the frank he was given had a flaw. The word “CHIŞINÂU” was misspelled “CИIŞINÂU”. Therefore, all FDCs executed by Mr. Mittelstrass can be easily identified.

For their own use, the Post of Moldova made a second first day frank, without the spelling error. This “Germany” variety is not mentioned in the official philatelic catalogue.

This explains how it was possible for Mr. Mittelstrass to execute some of the extraordinary materials shown in the Heinrich Koehler auctions. Some examples are displayed below:

Much of the material being offered by Heinrich Koehler was totally unique, existing only in a single copy. For the IMPS catalogue, we have a policy to only list material that is “collectable”, i.e. where collectors have some reasonable possibility of acquiring the it, even if the costs are astronomical. The samples we show on this page are not included in the catalogue because collectors have zero chance to ever acquire them. Such material will disappear from the market and into a wealthy investor’s portfolio, possibly not to be seen again for years or decades. The images are displayed here, only for curiosity sake.

That being said, not all of the material is unique and some of it can indeed be acquired from time to time, from various auction houses and internet platforms.

The remainder of this article provides a comprehensive list of the “collectable” varieties of the 1993 EUROPA issue, which are included in the IMPS catalogue.
Individual Stamps:

LEFT: № 94B. RIGHT: № 95B. (Imperforate)

Collective Minisheets:

№ 94B-95B Kb (Imperforate)

№ 94B-95B Kb Zd Uncut Pair (Imperforate)

№ 94-95 Kb1 Zd Uncut Pair (Perforated)

Minisheets of 15v:

FDCs:

№ 94 Kb FDC (Perforated)

№ 95 Kb FDC (Perforated)

№ 95-95 FDC2 (Stamps in Reverse Order, Perforated)
So, you spend a huge amount of time working on your collection and maybe you also spent a lot of money. But is your collection properly presented and organised, or is it scattered throughout files, folders, envelopes and boxes?

This month, we have written a special article about making your stamp album and getting your collection presented in a really beautiful way, and without any huge expenses.

First of all, we need to clarify exactly what a stamp album is. Many people think a stamp album is one of these…

Sorry! This is not a stamp album. What you see here is known as a “stock book”. These are used, primarily by stamp dealers, to store their stock (inventory) of merchandise for sale. Stamp collectors also use them to store their duplicates, items for trade or material not yet added to their stamp albums.

Whilst stock books are a very simple and safe way to store your philatelic material, they are quite unsuitable for the presentation of your precious collection. For this purpose, a proper stamp album is required. There are many kinds of stamp album but typically, they look something like this…

As you can see, the stamps are mounted (attached) to pages and are arranged in a pleasing, symmetrical way, in chronological order, with dates, titles, notes and sometimes even catalogue numbers. Not only stamps are mounted in albums. Souvenir sheets, minisheets, se-tenants, FDCs, maximum cards, in fact, just about any kind of philatelic material can and should be included.

We can hear you say “Of course I know what a stamp album is! But they are outrageously expensive and only for rich people with high-value collections!” Our response is that this is not necessarily so.

For starters, your collection of Moldovan stamps is valuable! Maybe it’s not crammed with Penny Black’s and Inverted Jenny’s, but it’s priceless to you and therefore deserves to have the very best home. So, where to begin?

**Step 1: The Binder**

The lovely binder illustrated on the right cost an absolute fortune! Right? Actually, no, only about €8. What you are looking at is a white vinyl presentation binder, which is available from any office supplies retailer, anywhere in the world. These binders have a 25mm wide spine and are designed to house standard A4 sheets of paper.

The binder has 4 “D” shaped rings to securely hold the sheets. There are transparent plastic overlays on the front cover and on the spine. These overlays are open at the top, allowing you to slip in paper inserts, describing the content.

IMPS has designed two nice inserts for this purpose, which are available, free to members. Login (or register) to the IMPS members area and then scroll to the top of the page and click the “My Membership Page” link. From there, look for the “Download Stamp Album Pages” link and click. On the resulting page, scroll down to see the two links “Album Cover Image” and “Album Spine Image”. These files are in Adobe PDF format. The PDF reader is pre-installed on 99% of the world’s PCs. Print the inserts and slip them carefully into the plastic overlays. Note that you will need to cut the spine image to size.

Presto! You now have a really nice presentation binder just like the one illustrated above, fit for a king only costing only about €8.

**Step 2: The Album Pages**

IMPS has also designed beautiful album pages for all stamps issued by Moldova, from 1991 until 2018. In January each year, we will upload the supplement for the previous year’s issues.

From the same link mentioned above, “Download Stamp Album Page”, click the link for the year you want to download. Once again, all files are in Adobe PDF format.

*Continued...*
Pages can be printed in black and white or in colour, but high-quality print output is advised. For the very best results, we recommend using a colour laser printer. If you don’t have one at home or in work, use the services of a local print bureau.

All of the images on the album pages are actual sizes, with an added 2mm black border for presentation.

The selection of paper is very important. Firstly, the PDF files are designed to use standard A4 sheets only. If you try to use US Letter or any other size, the stamp image placeholders will become distorted.

Do NOT print on ordinary 70 or 80 gram photocopy paper. This paper is too thin and is too easily warped and creased. Use 90 gram paper or heavier. Ideally, try to get acid-free archive paper, 100 gram or better, but that can be quite expensive.

**Step 3: Mounting the Stamps and Other Material**

“Mounting” is the term used to describe attaching the material to the album pages.

For mounting, you have three options. If you collect used stamps or CTO stamps and you are not concerned about disturbing the gum on the back side of the stamps or sheets, then you can use simple stamp “hinges”.

A stamp hinge is simply a small rectangle of semi-transparent paper, lightly gummed on one side and folded. Both sides are moistened. The shorter fold is attached to the back of the stamp and then the combination is attached to the album page, taking care to place in the correct position and to avoid crookedness.

This is a very low cost solution to stamp mounting and a packet of 1000 Prinz brand hinges will cost just a few euro and last for a very long time.

However, if you collect mint (unused) material, hinges should never be used. Disturbing the perfect gum on the back of a mint stamp will reduce it’s value by as much as 80%. Please note the philatelic abbreviations “MNH”, meaning “mint—never hinged” and “MH” meaning “mint—hinged”.

For collectors of mint material, a non-damaging method must be used. These come in the form of small plastic “pockets” known simply as “mounts”.

Mounts are manufactured either in black or transparent colours and come in strips that need to be cut to size. The back sides or the mounts are gummed for attachment to the album page. Some brands of mount need to be moistened while others are “peel and stick” (self-adhesive). We especially like the quality of the self-adhesive Davo “Easy” brand from the Netherlands.

We have been using the low cost Prinz brand of mount cutter for many years, with perfect results.

Stamp mounts are not cheap. Expect to pay about €9 (plus shipping) for a pack of 25 Davo Size 34 strips, enough for about 125 standard sizes stamps. However, as a method of protecting and presenting your material, there really is no substitute.

**Continued...**
Some material is either too thick and heavy for mounts (for example, FDCs, postcards, booklets etc.) or the material is just too large and a suitably sized mount cannot be found (for example, large sheets). In these cases, you have a third option for mounting, namely photo corners.

Photo corners are small rectangular self-adhesive plastic “pockets”, originally designed for mounting photographs in photo albums, but are also ideal for mounting philatelic materials such as FDCs, postcards and other bulky or large items in stamp albums.

Photo corners are available from any office supplies retailer. They are very inexpensive and are manufactured in coiled rolls.

Material that is too wide to fit the “portrait” orientation of the pre-designed IMPS album pages, can be mounted sideways. But, if your material is simply too large, in terms of width and height to fit the A4 pages, folding is not advised. It is better to exclude such material from your album, rather then causing damage to it, simply for the sake of presentation.

The pre-designed IMPS album pages include placeholders for all standard issues of stamps and souvenir sheets but they do not include placeholders for sheets, FDCs, maximum cards or stamp varieties. To incorporate these types of material into your album, we have provided a “blank” page, which can also be downloaded from the website.

This page includes the same decorated borders as the usual pages but the main body is blank, allowing you to mount any kind of material you choose.

Step 4: Protecting Your Stamp Album & Pages

Each printed album page should be protected by inserting them into A4 size transparent plastic sleeves as illustrated above. These are available very cheaply from any office supplies retailer.

The plastic sleeves are pre-punched, with every possible combination of 2, 3 or 4 ring binder. If you attempt to punch holes in the printed album pages themselves, you will not only damage the pages but you will find that the pages are very difficult to turn. The plastic sleeves will not only give added protection to your material against moisture, but will also protect the pages from getting dirty from constant handling of the paper.

In each plastic sleeve, two pages should be inserted, back to back. This allows the album to display two pages, side by side, when opened (as illustrated above).

The album should be stored in a cool, dry place and away from direct sunlight. We also suggest that the album be kept in an upright position and inside a cloth bag, to prevent dust from accumulating on the top.

The finished album will look really splendid and your precious collection will be well protected for many years.

We remind readers that whilst the IMPS pre-designed album pages are free to members for their personal use only, they are copyright protected and IMPS retains Intellectual Property rights. You may not sell, trade or otherwise redistribute the files or paper prints produced from the files. The PDF files are digitally encrypted and it is not possible to edit or reverse engineer them. It is also not possible to copy the text or to extract the images from the files.
The “Red Book of the Republic of Moldova” (Cartea Roșie a Republicii Moldova) is published by the Academy of Sciences of Moldova and should not be confused with the “Red List” of the IUCN or the “Red Book of the Russian Federation”.

The book includes species of endangered organisms. The first edition was published in 1978 and consisted of 26 plant species and 29 endangered and critically endangered animal species.

Over the years, the Post of Moldova has issued many stamp series dedicated to the theme. On April 11 2019, a new series was issued, featuring two species of insects and two species of mammals.

The postage stamps, FDC and maximum cards were designed by father-daughter team, Oleg & Aliona Cojocari, who have been responsible for many stamp designs in recent years.

№ 1092 (1.20L) features the Alpine Longhorn Beetle (Rosalia alpina/Rosalia longicorn). Printed 400,000 copies in minisheets of 10v.

№ 1093 (1.75L) features the Stag Beetle (Lucanus cervus). Printed 400,000 copies in minisheets of 10v.

№ 1094 (2.00L) features the European Hamster (Cricetus cricetus). Printed 100,000 copies in minisheets of 10v.

№ 1095 (9.50L) features the Speckled Ground Squirrel (Spermophilus suslicus). Printed 100,000 copies in minisheets of 10v.

The official FDC also features the Speckled Ground Squirrel and was printed in a very small quantity of only 300 pieces.

Additionally, the Post of Moldova realized a set of four official maximum cards, each printed in 300 copies.
22.04.2019: Earth Day

Earth Day is an annual event celebrated on April 22. Worldwide, various events are held to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day now includes events in more than 193 countries, which are now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network.

On Earth Day 2016, the landmark Paris Agreement was signed by the United States, China, and some 120 other countries. This signing satisfied a key requirement for the entry into force of the historic draft climate protection treaty adopted by consensus of the 195 nations present at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

23-27.04.2019: Easter

Easter is a festival and holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, described in the New Testament as having occurred on the third day after his burial following his crucifixion by the Romans at Calvary c. 30 AD. It is the culmination of the Passion of Jesus, preceded by Lent, a 40-day period of fasting, prayer, and penance.

10 Years Ago...

April 2, 2009 saw the release of the beautiful “Easter” stamps with the traditional painted eggs in the old Moldovan and Romanian tradition.


20 Years Ago...

The first issue of postage stamps in 1999 was the series “Anniversaries (II), released on April 9 for the UPU and the Council of Europe.

Full technical details at https://www.moldovastamps.org/catalogue_stamps_issue.asp?issueID=89
Following on from our article in last month’s newsletter “Stamp Exhibiting in the Digital Age”, it is interesting and gratifying to see that more and more stamp exhibition organisers are permitting digital media and websites into competitive exhibitions.

As an Internet-based philatelic society, IMPS has a special interest in the field of Philately on the Web and we are constantly searching for those progressive organisers who dare to think outside the 1970s FIP mindset. So, we are very pleased to announce that the IMPS website will be participating at two new exhibitions.

**“BRAPEX 2019”** - Brazilian National Exhibition, São Paulo, August 2019

**“OSTROPA 2020”** - International Exhibition, Berlin, June 2020
http://www.ostropa2020.de/PH0WelcomeE.php

By participating these international exhibitions, we hope that we will increase awareness and appreciation of Moldova and her philately, especially in new regions, such as Latin America.

**Philatelic Plan 2020: Any Suggestions?**

We remind readers that IMPS has received an official invitation from Poșta Moldovei to submit suggestions for the 2020 Philatelic Plan of Emis-sions and we pass this invitation along to all of our members*. If you have ideas, please email them to info@moldovastamps.org. The deadline for submissions is May 24, 2019.

*NOTE: This invitation applies to registered members of IMPS only. Submissions received from non-members will be disregarded. You can join IMPS for free.

Information: https://www.moldovastamps.org/member.asp.

**Next Month...**

**New Stamp Issue:**
Flora: Water Lilies

**New Stamp Issue:**
International Year of the Periodic Table of Elements and of Indigenous Languages

**New Envelope Issue:**
Efim Tarlapan - 75th Birth Anniversary

**Article:**
Treasures of Moldovan Philately Part XI: Winter Olympic Games, Lillehammer 1994

**And lots more...**

**Newsletters Archive...**

The archive of previous IMPS newsletters is now on the site. www.moldovastamps.org/info-newsletters.asp