

From the Azores to New Zealand

The (postal) history of all 14 Belgian Colonies: Prephilately

8.700 copies sold

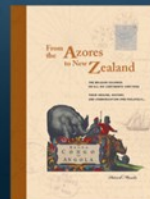
10.000 printed

Patrick Maelis



Summary

- Introduction
- Motivation
- Concept
- Financial plan
- Implementation
 - Commercial
 - Practical
 - Scientific



Introduction

- 4th generation philatelist
- Collection destroyed by fire in 1940
- Father's collections: Stamps of Belgium and Congo
- Myself: Stamps + postal history (also prephilately)
- Much later: other colonies
 - Azores
 - Guatemala
 - Etc.

How many? Nobody knew at that time!!



Motivation: Why?

3 motivations

- Not one publication on prephilately of the Congo (before 1883)
- Only a handful publications on 4 of the 13 other colonies
Target: Wider audience: collectors abroad.
- To study the postal history, one has to study the history.
Target: Wider audience: Non-philatelists.
“Why don’t you write a book?”



Concept

- Wider scope = wider audience:
History → Non philatelists
Postal history of 14 colonies worldwide → Philatelists abroad
- Visually attractive: Fixed cost
(Scans, Copyrights, etc...)
- Trade-off: High price - Limited sales (100% certainty)
Low price - Print could be high but uncertain
Advice from editor: retail price: max. 37,50 euro



Financial plan

Costs

- Development cost: 50.000 euro
- Translation: $4 \times 10.000 = 40.000$ euro
- Copyrights: 20.000 euro
- Printing: 50.000 fixed cost
6 euro/ copy variable

Total: 160.000 euro fixed costs
6 euro variable cost

Revenues

Sponsors (Stuart Rossiter Trust + Pro Post) 10.000 euro

Copies sold by me at 30 euro (retail: 37,50 euro)

First print: 5.000, sold at 30 euro

Revenue: 150.000

Sponsors: 10.000

160.000

Costs: 160.000 fixed + 30.000 euro variable = 190.000

Deficit: 30.000 euro

Second print: 5.000, sold at 30 euro

Revenue: 150.000

Costs: 50.000 + 30.000 = 80.000

Profit: 70.000 euro

Total profit

- 40.000 euro if all copies are sold
- Break-even: 8.666 copies sold

After 3 years, I sold 8700 copies = Break-even

The 1300 remaining copies are the “potential” profit.

Commercial implementation

- Editor:
 - + in all bookshops available
 - + free promotion in magazines
 - + 2 correctors for free (Dutch language + history)
 - + advice on pricing
 - + 1600 copies guaranteed
- Christmas Gifts
 - + Petercam (stock exchange broker): 1700 copies
 - + Bank v. Delen: 500 copies
 - + Others: 300 copies
- Philatelists
 - + Belgium: 500
 - + Abroad: 300
- Total estimate: 4.900, therefore 5.000 were printed

Outcome

Book was launched November 1, 2005
By December 15, 2005, fully sold out.

Reprint of 5.000 by January 30, 2006

Sales above the estimates

- Readers digest: 500
- Philatelists: 1.500 instead of 800 (+700)
- Bookstores: 4.200 instead of 1600 (+2.600)

Today: 1300 left

- + 150 English
- + 150 Spanish
- + 150 Portugese
- + 300 French
- + 550 Dutch

Practical implementation

- + Typing
- + Lay-out: The lady that designs the packaging in our company
- + Printing company
 - + Scans
 - + Printing
- + Editor
 - + Distribution in book stores
 - + Correction (Historical + Linguistic)
 - + Translations
 - + Copyright: “Last resort”
 - + Pricing Advice
 - + Deadlines

+ Control by native speakers

+ Stuart Smith for English

+ Belgian Team for French

+ Luis Frazao: Portuguese

+ Antonio Torres/ Xavier Llach: Spanish

+ Writing: when the book was ready “in my head” I wrote it in 7 months
(every evening + weekends)



Scientific implementation

- Literature: hundreds of books (took 5-10 years): History + postal history
Old fashioned way: “Box with filing cards”
- Philatelist: use the network to ask for info
- Articles: I wrote articles about subjects treated in the book (feedback)





- Archives:

- Belgium:
 - Ministry of Foreign affairs *
 - Museum of the army *
 - Maritime museum Antwerp *
 - Library Ghent *
 - Archive of the Papal Zouaves *
 - Archives of the Ostend Company *
 - Archives of Bruges *
- Holland:
 - National archives
 - Archives for social studies
- New Zealand: National archive
- UK: Maritime Museum Greenwich
- Canary Islands: Museo Canario Las Palmas
- USA: New Netherlands Archives, Albany, NY
- Zambia: Museum of Livingstone *
- Brasil: City of Ilhota *
- Argentina: Museum of Villaguay *

- Visits

The museums/ archives indicated with an asterisk had to be visited.

The others were reachable on-line or by phone/mail.

- Peer reviews

- See translations

- Belgian specialists in postal history

- Claude Delbeke

- Leo Declercq

- James Vander Linden

- + many others



Conclusion

- Expectations were met
- One flaw: Letters should be explained more extensively (*)
- Many prizes:
 - Belgium: Paul De Smeth Medal
 - Europe: FEPA MEDAL for literature; AEP MEDAL for literature
 - USA: Chicagopex, Gold Medal
 - FIP: Grand Vermeil, Valencia (*)

Patrick Masetis

