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## **Internet Resources for the Philatelist**

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### **Introduction**

Gone (mostly) are the days when philatelists waited around mail boxes (Figure 1) or made a commute to the neighbourhood stamp shop, to add to their collection. Indeed, the internet has revolutionised all aspects of human well being, including the pursuit of stamps and other collectibles. At present, more philatelists prefer to purchase stamps online than via any other route, and a variety of outlets are available, ranging from governmental bodies, such as postal agencies that produce and distribute stamps to independent vendors, databases, auction houses, online catalogues and others.

### **Governmental and Intergovernmental Sources**

National Postal Agencies are often the first port of call for most online philatelists, bookmarking the postal agencies of countries they collect. For Malaysia, it is Pos Malaysia Berhad (<http://www.pos.com.my/post-offices/stamp-philately>), one of the earliest online sources of information for new stamps, typically through the publication of their yearly stamp issue programme (albeit, typically, with many changes). Some postal agencies offer prepaid accounts, permitting paid-up members to acquire stamps and other philatelic products via post, as they are released. The scheme from Pos Malaysia is called SODA (Standing Order Deposit Account; <http://www.pos.com.my/post-offices/stamp-philately/?soda>). Select Pos Malaysia outlets in the country also offer a service called ‘SetemKu’ (<https://www.posonline.com.my/setemku/index.asp>), permitting individuals and organisations to produce personalised stamps to commemorate special events, such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and also, conferences and other special events (Figure 2).

The proliferation of stamps mean it is difficult to keep track of the products of philatelic agencies of the world. Printed stamp catalogues are produced annually, and stamp magazines, monthly, but even these cannot cope with the sheer volume of stamps being produced all the time. Not least of the problem is the issuance of fake stamps by certain agencies and individuals.

The World Association for the Development of Philately (WADP) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) jointly maintain an online database of stamps, using the dedicated WADP Numbering System. It was launched on 1 January 2002, using the WADP Numbering System (WNS: <http://www.wnsstamps.post/en>). Currently, 170 countries and territories are members of WADP and the website lists 82,724 registered stamps, a tiny proportion of the world’s stamps, but covering all new issues from the start of the system. For each stamp are separate data fields that include date of issue, primary theme, subject, width, height, denomination, number in set, layout/format, perforations, stamp issuing authority and printer, besides a high resolution image of the stamp.