



Smithsonian *National Postal Museum*

Crowdsourcing at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Arago Researcher Program



What is Arago?

Arago PEOPLE, POSTAGE & THE POST

Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Arago™ is your resource to the study of philately and postal operations as seen through the National Postal Museum's collection.

Named after Francois Arago (19th century French scientist and friend of James Smithson), our website upholds his philosophy that knowledge can be shared through the technology of the day.

TELL A FRIEND | NEWSLETTER | SUPPORT ARAGO

Philately
Objects that chronicle the evolution and history of U.S. stamp design and production, and the administration that controlled their issuance and use.

Postal Operations
Objects that chronicle the development of the U.S. postal system and the vital role mail plays in our daily lives.

Exhibits
Special histories told through selected assemblages of museum objects and exceptional private collections. [View all Exhibits](#)

Search
Enter keyword(s) to begin a search. Philately and Postal Operations buttons help refine or limit the results. Otherwise proceed to [Search page](#) for advanced search options.

My Collection
Use collection images to create your own digital collection. Record notes and e-mail items of interest to friends. [Create your Collection](#).

Returning to view your collection? [Log in](#) to view your collection. My Collection requires the [Flash Player](#).

FEATURED EXHIBIT
Celebrating Hispanic Heritage: People, Places and Events on Stamps
[VIEW EXHIBIT](#)

Arago PEOPLE, POSTAGE & THE POST

Philately | Postal Operations | Exhibits | Search

Mystic Stamp Company

American Folklore Issue

Issued on October 18, 1974, at Tarrytown, New York, the 10-cent American Folklore stamp features a scene from Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in which the infamous Headless Horseman pursues protagonist Ichabod Crane. The short story illustrates two qualities for which Washington Irving is best known: his humor and his ability to create vivid, descriptive imagery. Irving first published the short story in 1819-1820. He lived at Birmingham, England, at the time.

Designed by Leonard Everett Fisher, the stamps were lithographed with an offset printing of 148 million. The stamp dimensions measure 1.44 x 0.84 inches and have one plate number: "H41 Early" and H4. Zip appear in the selvage on both the left and right side of each sheet.

References:

Hodges, William L. Washington Irving: An American Study, 180-1832. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965, p. 140.

Warren, Terence. "Rip, Ichabod, and the American Imagination." *American Literature*, Vol. 31, May, 1959, pp. 137-148.

Postal Bulletin (August 29, 1974).

Thomas Lens
October 1, 2006

www.arago.si.edu




Arago Researcher Program

- **Program Description**

- Volunteer researcher program
- Experts around the world
- Online means of managing assignments & communication, 24/7

- **Program Goals**

- Enhance & expand information in collections records
- Capture knowledge of subject specialists
- Establish mutually beneficial relationships/community



The screenshot shows a webpage for the Arago Researcher Program. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the Arago logo and the text "PEOPLE, POSTAGE & THE POST". Below the header is a light gray banner with the text "Welcome to the Volunteer Arago Researcher Program". The main content area is white and contains the following text:

Do you have specialized knowledge in philately or postal operations? Do you want to share your expertise with the general public and other specialists?

Help the National Postal Museum in presenting our collection to the public by joining the volunteer Arago Researcher Program. Learn more about this volunteer Researcher Program [here](#).

Researcher Qualifications

Required

- Expert knowledge in a specific area of philately or postal history.
- Recommendations from authoritative experts or organizations.
- Desire and willingness to share knowledge.

Preferred

- Written or published demonstration of expert knowledge.
- Skills and demonstrated knowledge are current.
- Bibliography of reference sources related to your area of expertise.

Apply [Here!](#)

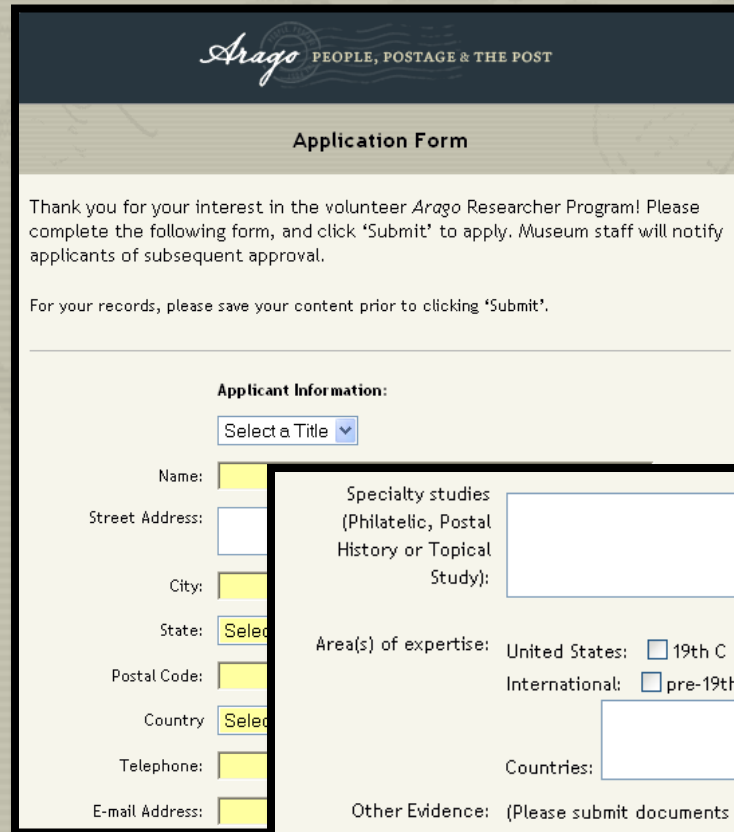
Registration Process

Upon receiving approval from NPM staff:

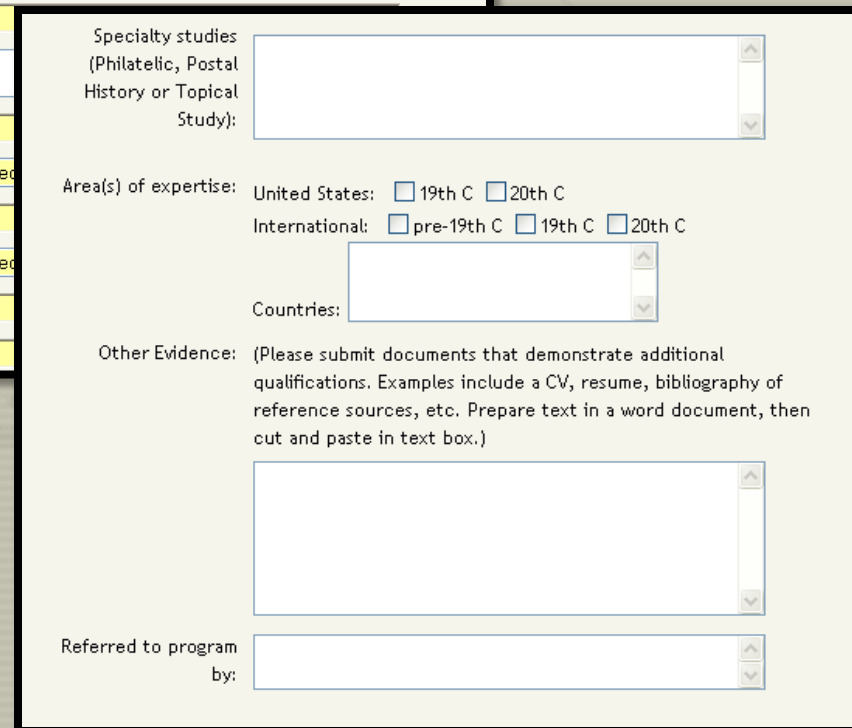
1. Compose an online [Researcher Biography](#).
2. [Read the Intellectual Property Rights Release](#) statement.
3. Complete the required Smithsonian BVP [Volunteer Registration Form](#). (Print and submit form via fax or mail to the **Arago Researcher Coordinator**.)
4. Review the following Program Documents.

Who are the volunteers?

- **Arago** Researchers
 - Philatelists
 - Historians
 - Local, national, international
- Selection Process
 - Application
 - Solicited or by open invitation
 - Vetted by curatorial staff



The screenshot shows the top portion of an online application form. At the top is the Arago logo with the tagline 'PEOPLE, POSTAGE & THE POST'. Below the logo is the title 'Application Form'. A paragraph of text reads: 'Thank you for your interest in the volunteer Arago Researcher Program! Please complete the following form, and click 'Submit' to apply. Museum staff will notify applicants of subsequent approval.' Below this is another line of text: 'For your records, please save your content prior to clicking 'Submit''. The form is divided into sections, with the first section titled 'Applicant Information:'. It contains a dropdown menu for 'Select a Title', followed by input fields for 'Name', 'Street Address', 'City', 'State', 'Postal Code', 'Country', 'Telephone', and 'E-mail Address'. The 'State' and 'Country' fields are dropdown menus.



This screenshot shows the 'Specialty studies' section of the application form. It features a dropdown menu for 'Specialty studies (Philatelic, Postal History or Topical Study)'. Below this is the 'Area(s) of expertise' section, which includes checkboxes for 'United States: 19th C' and '20th C', and 'International: pre-19th C', '19th C', and '20th C'. There is a dropdown menu for 'Countries'. The 'Other Evidence' section contains a text box with the instruction: '(Please submit documents that demonstrate additional qualifications. Examples include a CV, resume, bibliography of reference sources, etc. Prepare text in a word document, then cut and paste in text box.)'. At the bottom, there is a dropdown menu for 'Referred to program by:'.

By Open Invitation

Arago PEOPLE, POSTAGE & THE POST

Philately | Postal Operations | Exhibits | Search

Sponsored by **Association for Postal Commerce** 

Philately / ... / 1990-1999 / 1992-1993 / **Wild Animals Issue**

Wild Animals Issue   ADD TO MY COLLECTION  RETURN

Currently this category does not have an overview narrative description. As part of the on-going additions to *Arago™* the National Postal Museum works with an international, online audience of philatelists, historians, educators and students to supplement the existing collections information. The museum offers an open invitation to specialists to continue making *Arago™* a critical online resource. Please visit again in the future!



USA
29
Flamingo

OVERVIEW      CONTINUE >>

 FILTER RESULTS

 Smithsonian
National Postal Museum

HTML VERSION | ABOUT | GLOSSARY | ACCOUNT | CREDITS | EMAIL THIS PAGE

 MY COLLECTION  LOGIN

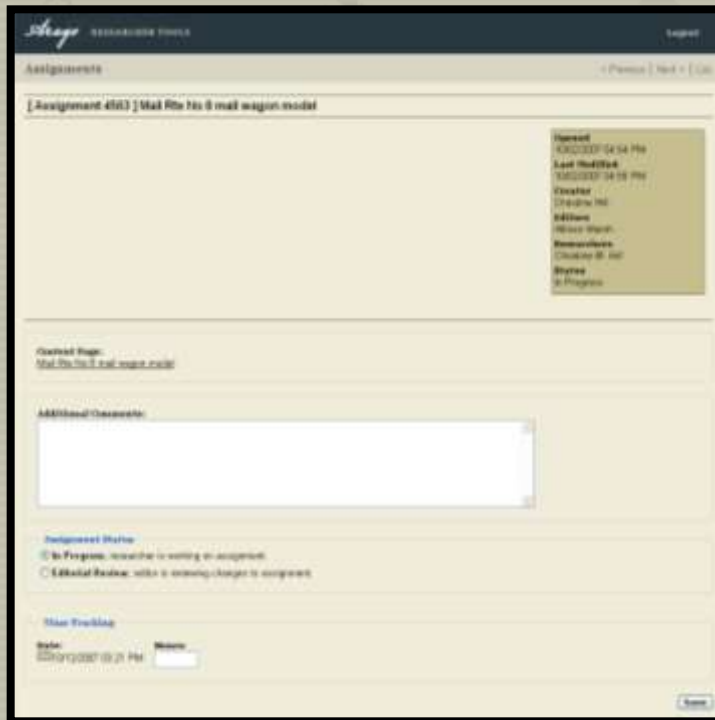
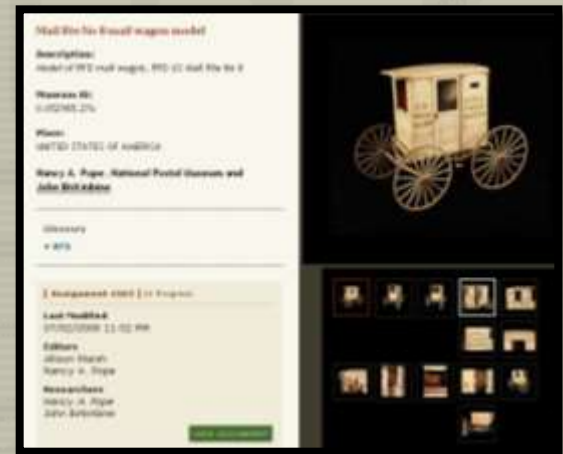
Arago Researcher Tools

View assignment information →

Submit narrative

Communicate ↘

All Digital Transfers



Results

- Worldwide volunteer network established
- Expertise in all areas of collection
- 160 researchers in program
- **Researchers responsible for 75% of stories published on Arago**
- Adding approximately 1,000 new objects each year



Quality Control

- Establishing expectations
 - Style Guide
 - Handbook
 - Researcher Tools Guide
- Editors
 - Content (often curators)
 - Copy
- Arago is NOT open source information sharing and retrieval – it's a closed system

*Arago*TM Researcher Program
Orientation Handbook



*Arago*TM Researcher Tools
Manual for Researchers



*Arago*TM Researcher Program
Style Guide
for Researchers and Editors



What Works

- Research supplements and expands NPM's knowledge base
- Leads to more complete object records
- Collaborative effort- creates a special community
- Increases scholarship



What Doesn't

- Limitations of publishing
 - What if we can't find researchers for objects we want to publish?
- Consistency of content
- Website navigation not intuitive/ User frustration
- Proprietary software



Recommendations

- The researcher program can be scaled down for use at a smaller institution
- Program works best when there's already an established community
- Staff buy-in
- Workload
- Funding