While going through Vol. 30 No. 3 (3rd Quarter 1981) of Philatelic Literature Review I came across the noted bibliophile William Hagan’s regular column Philatelic Literature Price Trends; this particular issue’s column deals with, amongst other things, A.J. Sefi’s masterpiece An Introduction to Advanced Philately. ¹ Hagan describes the first edition as well as the “Ordinary” second edition; but since he did not have access to the ‘De Luxe’ version of the second edition he does not cover it. He ends his piece saying, “If someone will lend or sell me this edition I’ll describe it.”

Being fortunate in possessing a copy of the ‘De Luxe’ edition, I will, in this article, describe it. However before doing so, I would like to give a brief background of this book especially to readers who do not have access to Sefi’s book.

The title of the book can be a bit misleading especially if one expects the book to erudite on stamp collecting and its processes, famous stamps etc. Rather the author adopts the method of “…explaining and illustrating the characteristics of stamps produced by different processes”. He takes one single design and shows how it is reproduced by different processes (line engraving, lithography, and surface printing in the first edition and additionally photogravure in the second) and how these processes affects its appearance and what abnormalities could occur during the manufacture of the printing surface, or during the actual printing of the stamp.

The first edition of Sefi’s book was published in 1926; it was printed on handmade paper and was a limited edition of two hundred and fifty copies.² Hagan mentions that he has not seen the dust jacket for this edition and nor have I; it is possible that it was not issued with one. The second edition, published 1932, was printed in both an ordinary edition of three hundred and fifty copies as well as a deluxe edition of fifty copies, the former printed on machine and the latter on handmade paper. Both editions are accompanied by a dust jacket.

¹ The full title of the book is An Introduction to Advanced Philately: With Special Reference to Typical Methods of Stamp Production.

² Brian J. Birch mentions in his Bibliography of General Literature in the Philatelic Library of Brian J. Birch that of the 250 copies, 240 were numbered.
Description of the Deluxe Edition

If I have to stick to Hagan’s original style, I would describe the deluxe edition as follows:


A more modern bibliography (using the Chicago Manual of Style 16th edition,

3 Hagan measures the ordinary edition at 9 ¾ in.
4 The cloth is in a slightly lighter shade of brown than the leather. The covers are plain.
5 “Editor of the Philatelic Journal of Great Britain”
6 The dust jackets of the two editions are quite similar to each other excepting that the spine of the dust jacket of the ordinary edition has “18/-” (shillings) printed.
7 The exact wording is “This is the Second Edition, limited to four hundred copies, of which three hundred and fifty (numbered 1 to 350) constitute the ordinary edition and fifty (printed on “Millbourn” Hand-Made paper and numbered 351 to 400) the “de luxe” edition”. My copy is numbered 364.

annotated bibliography) would be as follows:


Valuation

Before estimating the valuation of the different editions, I would like to mention that my estimates are based on recent auction estimates as well as prices quoted by various philatelic literature dealers from time to time.

The first edition (without the dust jacket) is typically available for between US$150 and US$250. For example, in the 352nd Heinrich Köhler sale held on 3 Nov 2012, lot #9304 (numbered 203/250) bought €150 (approx. US$190) + buyers premium.

The second ordinary edition would likely cost US$150 to US$250. However, in the 364th Heinrich Köhler auction held on 21 Mar 2017, lot #10021 (numbered 101/350) (which also contained the first edition of Stanley Phillips’ Stamp Collecting) bought a surprisingly high €620 (approximately US$680) plus buyer’s premium. I say surprisingly since, as I write this, I know at least two dealers offering this book for US$180 and US$250 respectively.

Finally, the second deluxe edition is relatively rare and I am unable to readily find it in recent literature auctions. Given the limited printing a copy can come up for sale only once in a few years and on such occasions it would be the desirous buyer who would set its true worth. Nevertheless I would take it to be worth at least between US$350 to US$500, if not more.