

QSL Cards and QSL Card Mailing Systems

QSL cards of many types can be obtained from many suppliers. Explore some of the QSL card vendor websites found at www.eham.net/reviews for examples and prices. I personally use cheapqsls.com and have been pleased with their service and products.

A QSL card received from another station serves as documented proof that a particular QSO contact entered in your Log, was actually made. This documentation is important if the Ham seeks to get an award like DXCC. Sending and receiving QSL cards in the USA and other countries with reliable mail agencies, has a reasonable chance of success. Other mail agencies that are not as reliable, can significantly reduce the chance of success.

Hams exchanging QSL cards in the USA usually provide a SASE (self addressed stamped envelope) as a courtesy to facilitate the QSL card from the other station.

This same courtesy takes on a different form when mailing internationally to a DX station. A self addressed envelope may be included but instead of having a stamp on it, the HAM also includes in the mailing either an IRC (International Reply Coupon) or one or more “Green Stamps” also known as dollar bills. The cost of postage for mailing a letter internationally back to the USA from many foreign countries can cost \$1.50 to \$2.00 or more, which makes including IRC’s or “Green Stamps” more than a courtesy. This is especially true for a rare DX station that may get 2000 or more QSL card requests a month.

Ham organizations in many countries, like our own ARRL, have created “Bureaus, or Buros”, to help defray the costs of exchanging QSL cards. These Buros act as QSL card clearing houses that sort and collate QSL cards destined for a particular foreign Buro, and then forward them via a bulk mailing. QSL cards sent via the Buro system, sometimes take many months or even years to reach their final destination. Nevertheless, many Hams appreciate this valuable service.

The individual Ham, who wishes to speed up the exchange by mailing a QSL card directly via international mail, should be aware of some potential pitfalls. One of them is that the Postal employees in some third world postal agencies may consider liberating the “Green Stamps” from Ham QSL card mail as a job benefit, before rerouting the letter to the trash can. These employees specifically target mail with Call signs on the envelope, or envelopes that look like they have a folded return envelope inside. They may even know some in-country Ham addresses. This is unfortunate, and Hams have had to develop countermeasures against this form of theft happening. The article appended after the second page of this letter, documents one Ham’s experience and methods to increase success with QSL cards.

A Ham may also wish to explore using one of the QSL card mailing systems that include stamps from foreign countries for the return envelope, which is custom sized to snugly fit inside the outer envelope to avoid folding. Contact information for two vendors that have similar such systems follow. The first vendor is William J. Plum. He does not have a website, but will send you a product list and price list. All you have to do is request one by email, telephone, or fax, and supply a return email address for his prompt reply. His contact information and a brief description of his system and its benefits follow.

William J. Plum
Airmail Postage & DX Supplies
12 Glenn Road
Flemington, NJ 08822-3322
Tel. (908) 788-1020 10am-4pm ET M-F

Fax (908) 782-2612
plumdx@msn.com

Successful QSLing made EASY...

As Easy As A, B, C, and D!!!

Using Our European Airmail Envelopes and Foreign Return Airmail Postage!!!

1. Make the QSO.
2. Get the QSL route.
3. Address MAILER Envelope to QSL route (operator or manager).

Address RETURN Envelope to YOURSELF.

Order Foreign Postage for your Return Envelope.

What country do I order?

Sending a QSL to a Finnish ham? Order Finland

Worked A52JS with QSL route via VK9NS? Order Norfolk Island

4. Put foreign postage on return envelope. Insert return envelope and your Qsl card into Mailer Envelope. Put international postage on Mailer Envelope. Seal and Mail!

RESULTS? Years faster than QSLing via the Bureau. Safer, easier, cheaper and more dependable than IRCs and green stamps.

A similar system is offered by James E. Mackey, K3FN. He does have a website and it is located at <http://users.net1plus.com/ryoung/index.htm>. Please explore his website for more information and to compare prices.

Hams are encouraged to explore and compare prices for the products and systems available. Also, you may find the feedback at www.eham.net/reviews helpful as well. Use the search box entering the vendor's name to find a review for a vendor's product.

73 and good DX, Roger K6OU 3/17/09