

Commands File Generator

CommandsFileGenerator is a command line tool that facilitates the creation of an AlbumEasy command lines file for a particular country.

Overview

The tool creates an AlbumEasy command lines file from information available either at stampworld.com or touchstamps.com or from a csv file exported from ```.com. If stampworld.com or touchstamps.com is the source of the information, the tool also retrieves the image files associated with the stamps.

The commands file created organizes the stamps in chronological order and groups them by series. Depending on the source of the information, options are available to limit the formats (e.g. stamp, souvenir sheet, tete-beche) and emissions (e.g. definitives, air mail) included in the album. There are also options that let you decide how currencies should be displayed and let you choose to create an album without images.

The process of initially extracting the information from the web sites is time consuming so the retrieved information is saved to an extract file which may be used for subsequent commands file generation. For example, after the initial album containing stamps is created, you may want to create an album that contains booklets and booklet panes. Creating the album commands file from a saved extract file takes just a few seconds. Regardless of any limiting options you may have selected when interacting with the web site or csv file, all available data is stored in the extract file.

The Commands File Generator does not claim to create a “correct” album in all cases. But it will relieve you of a lot of the work needed to create an album commands file from scratch. Lack of correctness may result from several factors. These will become clear from the discussions which follow.

Command files generated for United Nations offices in New York serve as the basis for the examples.

System Requirements

Operating System

The Commands File Generator will run on Windows, Linux, and MacOS systems.

Java

A Java runtime environment is required. If you do not have this environment consult the documentation for your platform to determine how to install.

https://www.java.com/en/download/help/download_options.html has links to web sites that explain how to install Java on the various platforms.

Depending on the version of Java you have installed, you may encounter a run-time error indicating that some libraries are missing. Check with the appropriate way to resolve this for your platform.

For example, if you have installed the latest version of openjdk Java (21) on Ubuntu, you might have to do

```
sudo apt install openjdk-21-jdk --fix-missing
```

Curl

Curl comes pre-installed on MacOS and Windows 10 and 11. Most Linux distributions come with curl pre-installed. However, if it's not, you can install it using your distribution's package manager with the syntax, `sudo [apt/yum] install curl`.

Other Open Source Libraries

The open source libraries jsoup-1.8.3.jar opencsv-5.8.jar commons-lang3-3.1.jar are required and are present in the zip file with the Commands File Generator.

License

CommandsFileGenerator is free software. You can redistribute it and/or modify it under the terms of the GNU General Public License as published by the Free Software Foundation, either version 3 of the License, or (at your option) any later version.

The software makes use of the jsoup library distributed under the open source MIT license (see <https://opensource.org/license/mit>). It also makes use of the opencsv and commons-lang3 libraries distributed under the Apache 2.0 license (see <https://www.apache.org/licenses/LICENSE-2.0>).

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Using the Tool

The generator is a Java command line tool. In order to function, it requires that certain jar files be present and in your classpath. As released, the program assumes that you have placed all of the files extracted from the Commands File Generator download in the same directory.

To run the program, from a command line enter

```
java -jar CommandsFileGenerator.jar <required parameters> <optional parameters>
```

This assumes that your current working directory is the location of the Commands File Generator.

If it is not, you would enter the full path (absolute or relative) of the CommandsFileGenerator.jar file.

Required Parameters

For deriving the commands file from either of the two websites, the <required parameters> takes the form:

<source> <album name> <web site country identifier> <root directory for the generated files>

Using United Nations office in New York as an example and assuming you want the files to be placed in an Albums directory under your directory and that you want the album to be titled United Nations New York the <required parameters> for the two websites would look like

Stampworld: stampworld "United Nations New York" UN-New-York Albums

Touchstamps: touchstamps "United Nations New York" 532/uno-new-york Albums

The <web site country identifier> can be obtained by visiting the website, selecting the desired country, and then using the portion of the URL that uniquely identifies the country. For example

<https://touchstamps.com/Catalogues/532/uno-new-york/2023>

After the program is run, the resulting directory structure and files would be:

Stampworld:

Albums

UN-New-York

UN-New-York_extract.txt

the saved extract file

United_Nations_New_York.txt

the commands file

Images

the images directory

Touchstamps:

Albums

532-uno-new-york

532-uno-new-york_extract.txt

the saved extract file

United_Nations_New_York.txt

the commands file

Images

the images directory

If you are deriving the commands file from a Colnect export file <required parameters> take the form

colnectexport <album name> <export file path>

Again, using United Nations offices in New York as an example and assuming you want to use a csv file that had been exported from the Colnect web site with the name UN_New_Yorkj_export.csv and that this file had been placed in the csv directory of your work environment, the <required parameters> would be:

colnectexport "United Nations New York" csv/UN_New_York_export.csv

The resulting extract and commands files would be placed in the same directory as the csv file and would be called United_Nations_New_York_extract.txt and United_Nations_New_York.txt respectively.

If you are deriving the commands file from a previously saved extract file <required parameters> take the form

extractfile <album name> <extract file path>

Again, using United Nations offices in New York as an example and assuming you want to use a extract file previously saved from a run against the Touchstamps web site and assuming you want a slightly different album title, the <required parameters> would be

extractfile "United Nations New York Again"

Albums/532-uno-new-york/532-uno-new-york_extract.txt

The previously extracted file knows its original source so there is no need to pass that information. The resulting commands file will be placed in the same directory as the extract file and in this case, it would be called United_Nations_New_York_Again.txt.

Optional Parameters

There are a number of optional parameters, some of which may be specified more than once and some of which are only applicable to a subset of the data sources. All optional parameter entries are case insensitive.

Catalog

Catalog is only applicable to data originally derived from Colnect (I,e from a previously saved extract file or a Colnect exported csv file). By default, all stamps extracted for the country are included in the generated commands file. This parameter allows you to limit the contents to

those items that appear in the specified catalog. You may only have zero or one catalog specification. The form of the parameter is

catalog:<catalog id>

where catalog id is

Mi	Michel
Sg	Stanley Gibbons
Sn	Scott
Yt	Yvert & Teller

It is important to note that if you use this option when doing an initial run against the Colnect export file, the saved extract file will still have all the data. So, on a subsequent run against the extract file you may choose to specify a different catalog.

Emission

Emission is only applicable to Colnect and Touchstamps. By default, all emissions are included in the generated commands file. This parameter allows you to limit the emissions that are included in the generated commands file. You may specify as many emissions as you desire. The form of an emission entry is:

emission:<emission name>

where the allowed emission names are

"Agency Issue" "Air Post" "Air Post Official" "Air Post Semi-Postal"
"ATM Labels" "Cinderella" "Commemorative" "Cryptostamp" "Definitive"
"Erinnophilia" "Forgery" "Franchise Stamps" "Hunting Permit" "Illegal"
"Insured Letter" "Military" "Newspaper" "Official" "Official Reprint" "Other"
"Parcel Post" "Personal Delivery" "Personalized - Official" "Personalized - Private"
"Postage Due" "Postal Fiscal" "Postal Tax" "Precancelled" "Private" "Proof"
"Regional" "Registration" "Revenue" "Savings Stamps" "Semi-Postal" "Special Delivery"
"Specimen" "Telegraph & Telephone" "Used Abroad" "War Tax"

You may specify as many emission:<emission name> statements as you wish. Quotes are required for emission names with spaces and optional otherwise. For example, if you wanted to create an album with the various air post stamps you would specify:

emission:"Air Post" emission:"Air Post Official" emission : "Air Post Semi-Postal"

Format

Format is only applicable to Colnect and Touchstamps. By default, all formats are included in the generated commands file. This parameter allows you to limit the stamp formats that are included in the generated commands file. As with emissions, you may specify as many format statements as you desire. The form of the parameter is:

format:<format name>

where the allowed format names are

Booklet "Booklet Pane" "Full Pane" "Gutter Pairs" "Mini Sheet" Se-tenant
"Souvenir Sheet" Stamp "Stamp with Attached Label" "Stamp with Collectible Margin"
Tete-beche Unknown

Quotes are required for multi-word formats.

For example, if you wanted your album to include simple stamps, Se-tenant groupings, and Tete-bech pairs, you would specify:

format:Stamp format:Se-tenant format:Tete-beche

Currency

The currency option may be used with any data source. The purpose of the option is to have the face value of stamps presented in the most appealing way. As an example, Colnect uses the terminology "United States cent" and "United States dollar" as the currency names for United Nations New York. It would certainly be more desirable to use the cents and dollar signs in the album. The parameter lets you do that. The format of the parameter is:

currency:<source currency string>:<desired currency string>:<position>

where

<source currency string> is what the web site uses (e.g. United States dollar)

<desired currency string> is what you want to see in the album (e.g. \$)

<position> is pre or post and indicates if you want the desired character to appear before or after the numeric value

You may include as many currency statements as you desire. For example

currency:"United States dollar":\$:pre currency:"United States cent":¢:post

The desired currency string is not limited to one character. For example

currency:"Israeli new shekel":NIS:post

The currency option could also be used to "better position" a currency symbol. For example, Stampworld uses the dollar sign (\$) for United Nations New York, but it places it after the numeric part of the face value. To place it before the numeric value, specify

currency:\$:\$:pre

NoImages

The nolimages option may be used with any data source. You would use this option if you chose not to include any stamp images in your album.

FixSizes

While the fixSizes parameter may be used with any data source it is only useful for Colnect data since only Colnect provides any meaningful stamp dimension information. There are times where stamp dimensions are provided for some of the stamps in a series, but not in all. If

this option is specified, then any stamps in a series for which no dimensions are provided will be assigned the dimensions of the first stamp in the series that does have specified dimensions. The thought behind this option is that all stamps in a series are generally the same size. However, this may not always be the case (as with the opening definitive series of United Nations New York). In such instances it is possible, for example, that a vertical stamp without dimensions is assigned the dimensions of a horizontal stamp because the first stamp in the series with dimensions was horizontal. Whether or not fixSizes is specified, if no accurate size can be assigned to a stamp the width/height value placed in the commands file is 30.0 30.0.

startYear | endYear

The startYear and endYear options may be used with the Touchstamps and Stampworld data sources. They are used to limit the years for which stamps will be extracted from the web sites.

The formats of the parameters are:

startYear:<year>

endYear:<year>

You may include either or both of the two values. Year must be expressed as a four digit number. If neither is specified then stamps from all years are extracted from the data source. To extract a single year, specify that year as both the startYear and the endYear.

The Output

General

While the tool only produces the commands file, it is best to explain the output in terms of the pdf file that AlbumEasy creates from the generated commands file. Except for the fact that images for Colnect must be acquired manually, all output described is the result of using commands files generated by the tool with no subsequent editing.

Exhibit 2 on the following page shows the first page of the pdf file created by AlbumEasy for each of three possible initial data sources (Stampworld web, Touchstamps web, and Colnect export file) produced with no optional parameters.

There are several things to note:

- Only the Colnect album has stamp sizes that are accurate (not always the case). This information is not available from Stampworld and Touchstamps.
- The different sites do not necessarily agree on things like release dates. Stampworld has the whole series on the same date whereas Colnect and Touchstamps have the series issued on two different dates. For Colnect and Touchstamps, you may want to modify the commands file and have the whole series together in face value order.
- For Stampworld, perforation information is part of the series heading but for the others, perforation information is shown with each stamp. This is because Stampworld reports that the perforation is the same for all stamps in the series but Colnect and Touchstamps indicate that there are different perforation values for some of the stamps in the series.
- Face values are shown with the currency shown being what appears on the web site. For Stampworld this is C and \$ following the value and for Colnect and Touchstamps this is “United States cent” and “United States dollar” following the value.
- At most four stamps are drawn in a row, but there may be less if that is all that will fit. As can be seen in Exhibit 1 below for the case where we know the stamp sizes this will result in only three stamps on the row. Where we don’t know the correct sizes and the default 30.0 30.0 is used it will mean four stamps can be accommodated.

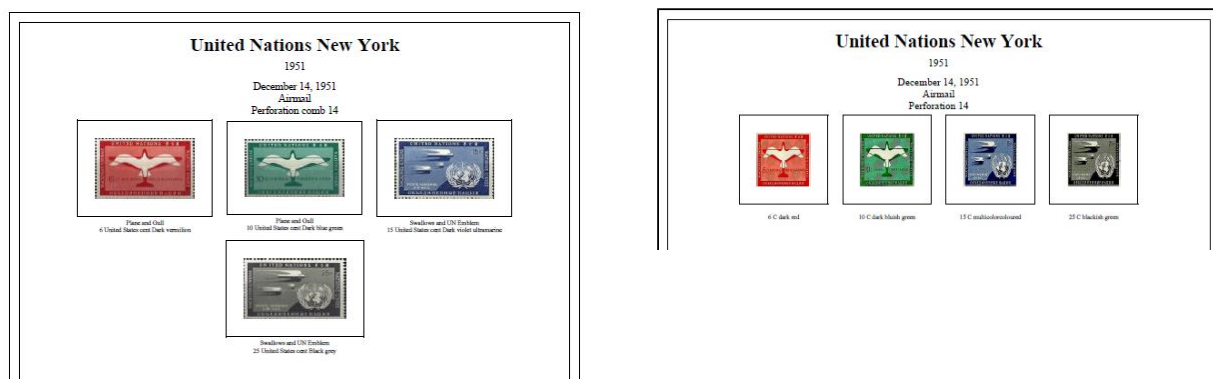
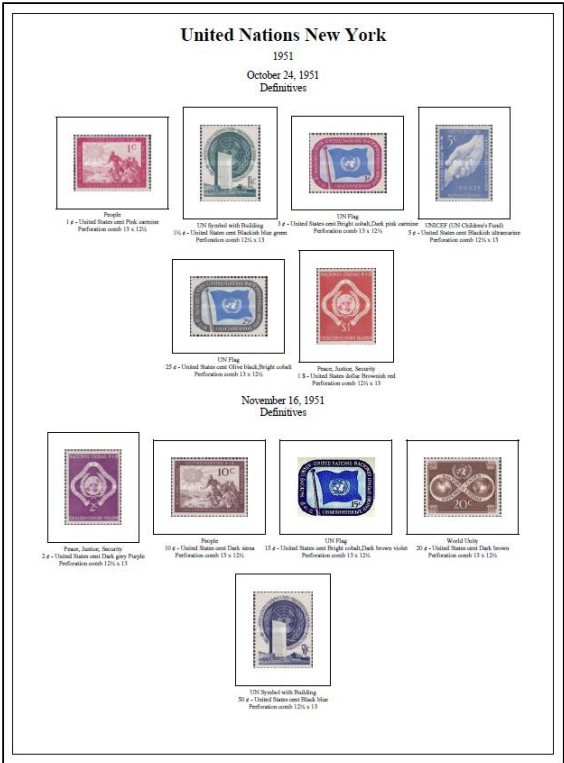


Exhibit 1



Colnect Export File



- There may be cases where the existence of the stamp is known but no image is available or the image file that was found was not a valid jpg file. In such cases the stamp box will be drawn with the text “Image Not Available” in the text box as shown in Exhibit 3 below

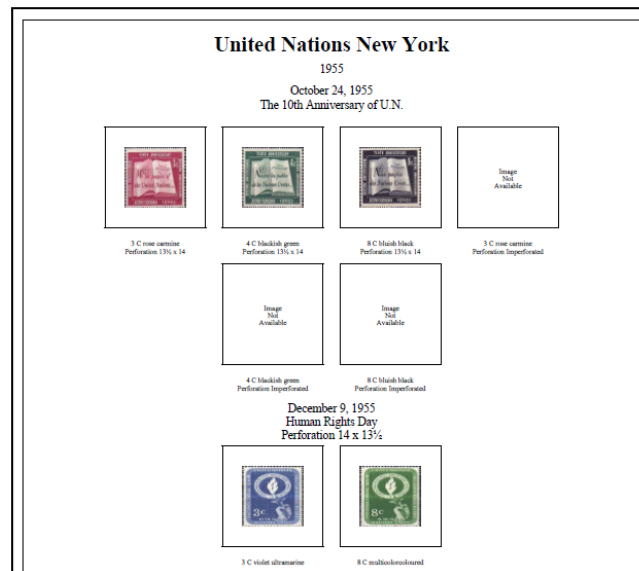


Exhibit 3

- By default, all items are included. So, for example, Exhibit 4 illustrates that the 1960 issues include a souvenir sheet

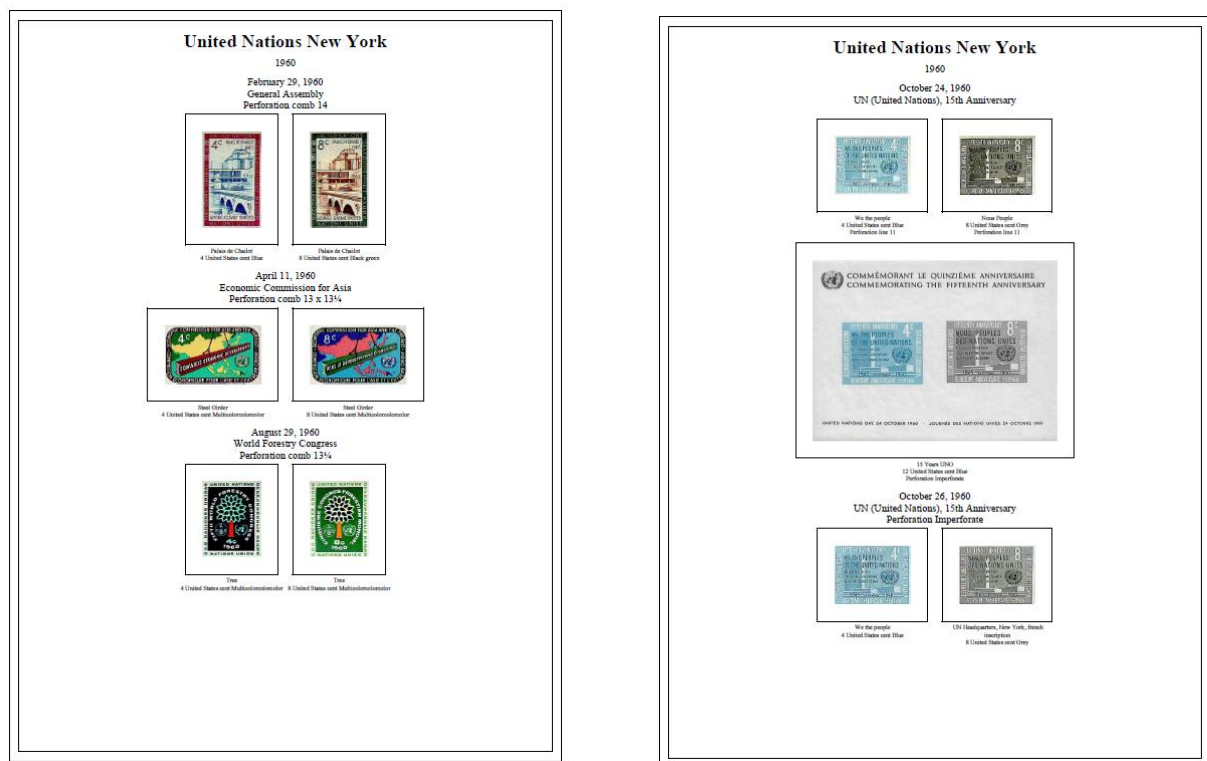


Exhibit 4

Optional Parameters

The following discussions indicate how the optional parameters can affect the resulting commands file.

Format

In the example of Exhibit 4, we saw that souvenir sheets as well as stamps would be included in the album. If you only wished to include stamps, you could specify the optional parameter:

format:stamp

on the command line. If you were to do this the 1960 pages would now appear as shown in Exhibit 5 below.



Exhibit 5

Emission

Perhaps you only want to include commemorative stamps in your album. Using the emission parameter, you could specify:

emission:commemorative

Exhibit 6 shows how the first page of 1961 would appear without this specification on the left and with this specification on the right.

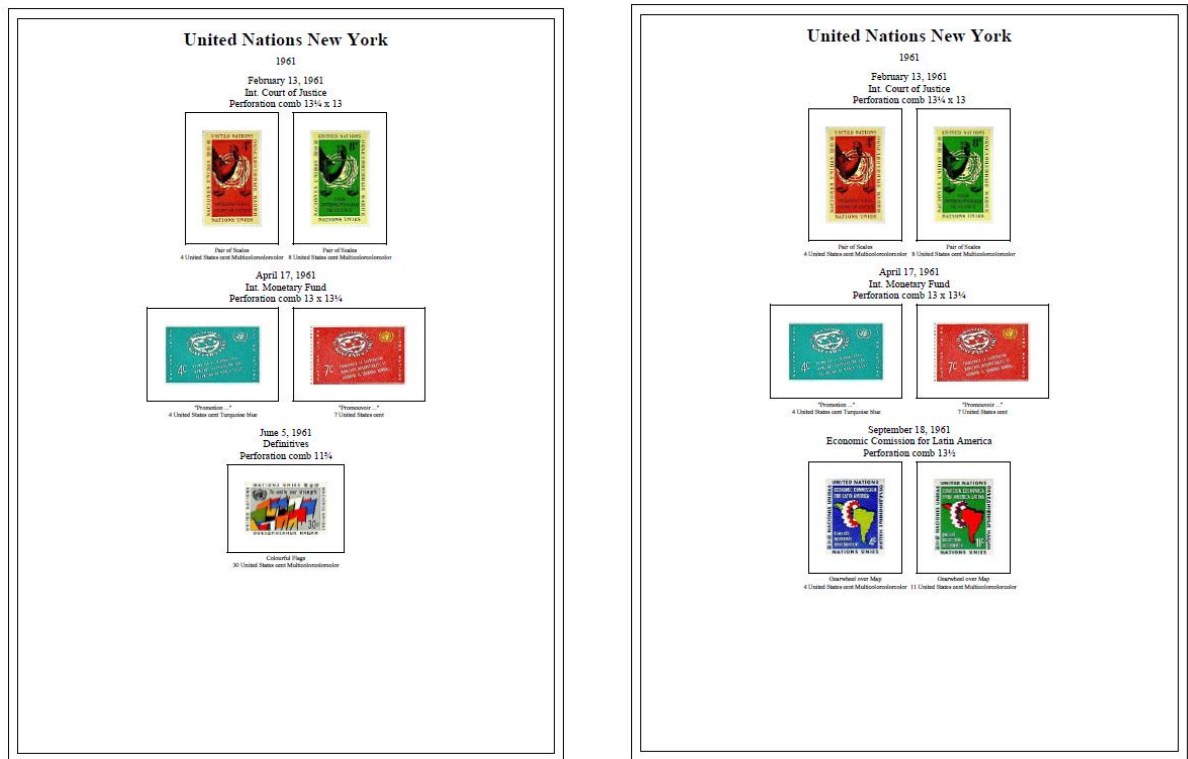


Exhibit 6

Currency

As noted earlier, this option allows you to specify how face values should appear under the stamp. If we were to specify

currency: "United States cent ":¢:post currency: "United States dollar " :\$:pre

the first page of the United Nations album would change from the view on the left of Exhibit 7 to the view on the right of Exhibit 7.

You may also want to use the option to relocate the currency. For example, Stampworld specifies the dollar sign as the currency for the United Nations, but it places it after the value. To have the dollar sign appear before the value, you could specify:

currency:\$:\$:pre

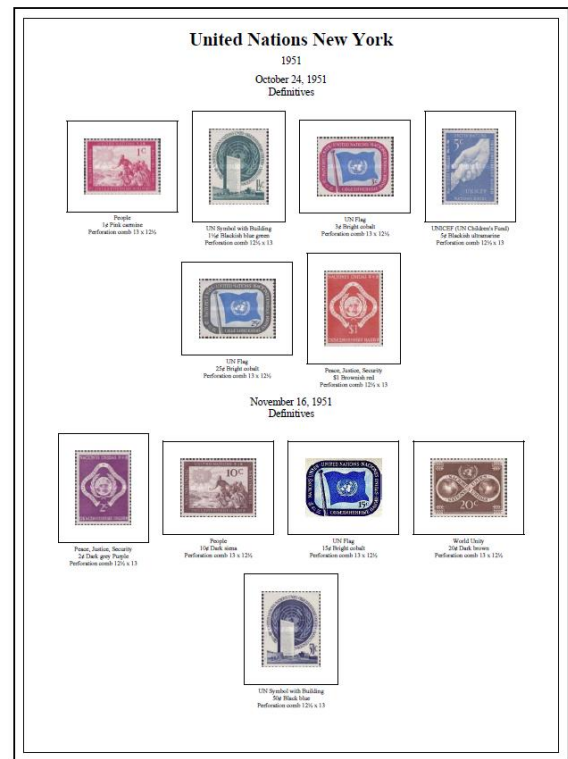


Exhibit 7

Noimages

Exhibit 8 shows what the first page of a Collect United Nations New York album would look like if the noimages option were specified.

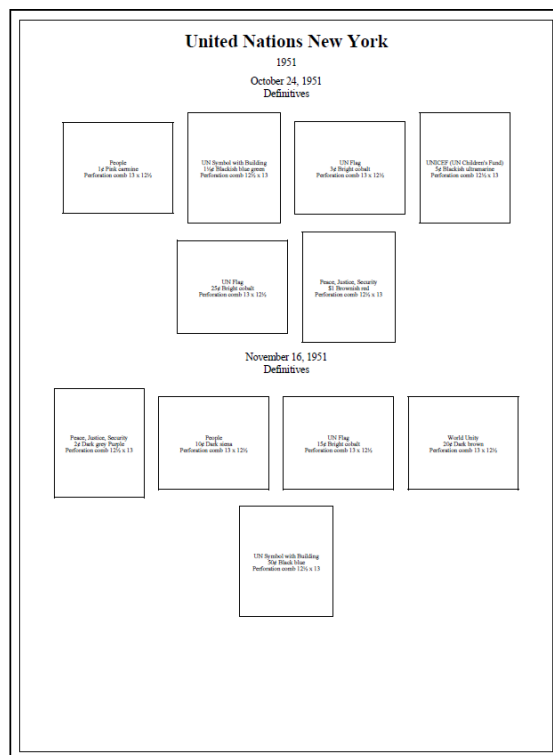


Exhibit 8

Fixsizes

The function of fixsizes was discussed earlier. Exhibit 9 illustrates the impact the use of this optional parameter could have on a page. The image on the left illustrates how the page would appear without the use of the parameter and the image on the right is how it would appear if fixsizes were specified.

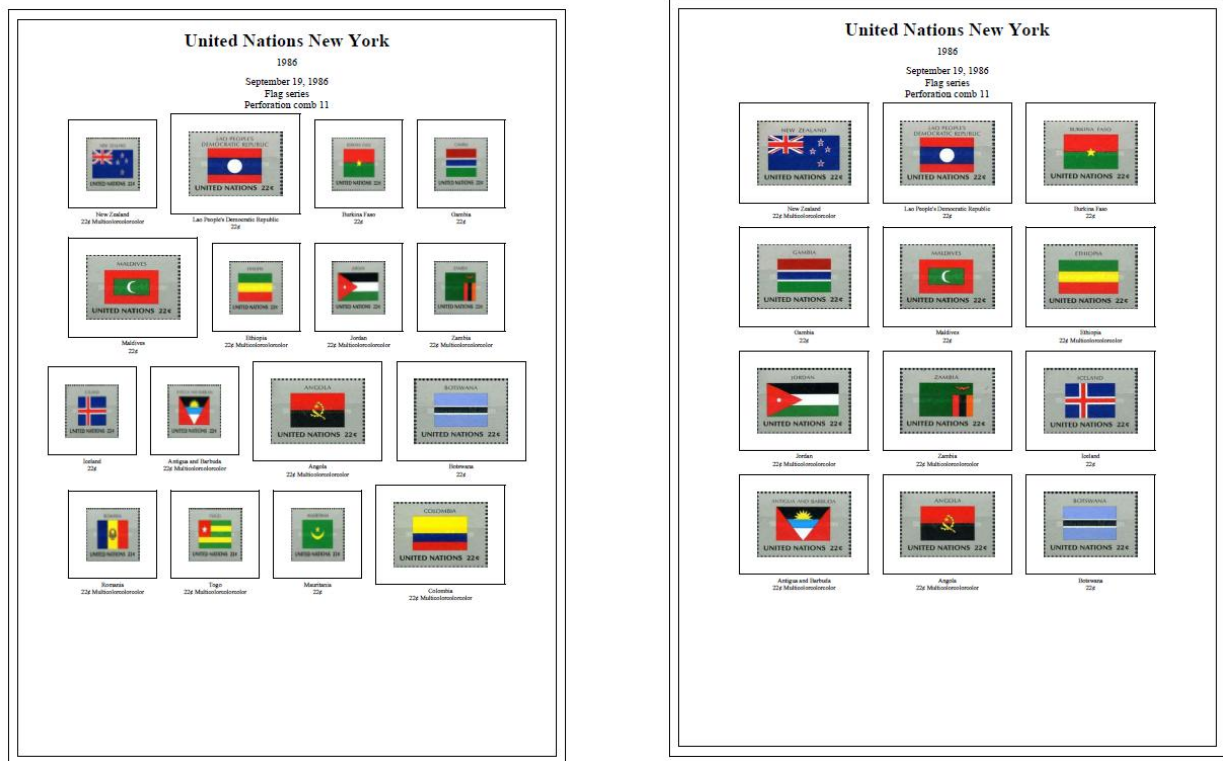


Exhibit 9

startYear | endYear

The startYear and endYear options may be used with the Touchstamps and Stampworld data sources. The formats of the parameters are:

startYear: yyyy

endYear:yyyy

You may include either or both of the two values. Year must be expressed as a four digit number. If neither is specified then stamps from all years are extracted from the data source. To extract a single year, specify that year as both the startYear and the end year.

noSSLCheck

This optional parameter should only be used if absolutely necessary, as it reduces the level of security when interacting. There is a known bug relating to the interaction of Avast Web Shield (including in Avast One) that interferes with the cURL utility which the generator uses to retrieve images. If you choose not to disable Web Shield, you can use this option to circumvent the problem.