Next month the National Postal Museum welcomes the ASDA to Washington, D.C. for its first ever stamp show in the nation’s capital. From November 9 to 11, dealers from all over the country will set up shop in the museum’s magnificent Historic Lobby. The show is being managed completely by the ASDA, but museum staff plans several public programs to coincide with and help draw people to the event.

One of the NPM’s signature annual events, the Maynard Sundman lecture, will take place November 10 from 1-3 p.m. Titled “The Art of the Stamp,” the 2012 Sundman Lecture will focus on the art, process, and philosophy of contemporary stamp design, featuring speakers from the stamp designing and collecting community.

Citizen’s Stamp Advisory Committee member Janet Klug, U.S. Postal Service art director Antonio Alcalá, and stamp artist-illustrators Kam Mak, Howard Koslow, and Sally Andersen-Brice will speak and sign philatelic items, followed by a light reception. The Sundman lectures are sponsored by ASDA member Donald Sundman and his brother David in honor of their father, the late owner of the Mystic Stamp and Littleton Coin companies.

As you walk the length of the ASDA show, the world’s largest and most modern philatelic gallery will be taking shape just on the other side of the Historic Lobby wall. We broke ground on the 12,000 square foot space June 20, and after the November stamp show closes, we will also begin to transform the Historic Lobby into a welcome and orientation center.

By now you probably know that William H. Gross, the founder of PIMCO and a stamp collector, has donated $10 million to the National Postal Museum to create a new 12,000-square-foot gallery that will be named in his honor. Mr. Gross’s generosity has since been augmented by dozens of individual donors, as well as the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society and the NAPEX Stamp Show.

Soon we will “close the books” on the opportunity to be recognized as a founding donor on the wall of the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery and receive an invitation to the gala opening celebration. We must turn the list over to our exhibition design firm at the end of October so they will have adequate time to design, fabricate and install the donor panel. If you are interested in becoming a founding donor at the $10,000 level or above, please contact me soon at kanea@si.edu. The donation doesn’t have to be made before October 31, only a pledge agreement needs to be signed.

Today we are less than one year away from the scheduled grand opening of the gallery, and all I will say for this month is that, when it opens, the Gross Gallery will be the largest and most modern philatelic gallery in the world. This will have long-ranging implications for the future of stamp collecting. NPM is undertaking this project so we can increase our collection’s visibility and advance our educational mission.

But a rising tide lifts all boats, and public awareness of stamp collecting as a hobby will inevitably be increased by a street-level Smithsonian gallery devoted to it in the shadow of one of the nation’s most popular tourist destinations, the U.S. Capitol. We are currently visited by about 500,000 people a year, and roughly half of them tell us that they are not stamp collectors. We project that visitation will increase significantly after the expansion, and we are working to make sure that as many people as possible will leave the gallery as stamp collectors.

Over the course of the next few months, I will devote separate columns to each of the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery’s thematic areas and some of the outstanding objects and experiences they will contain.