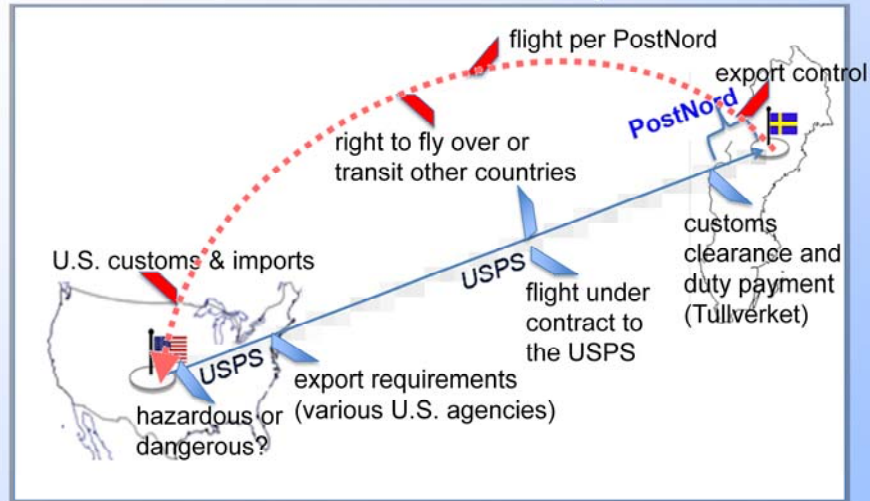


International Mailing (and how to make it easier)

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International Mail's Journey

The Basic Journey



The process of getting mail to a foreign destination is more complicated than it is domestically. There are agencies of the U.S. government and other governments involved in the process and a foreign postal operator responsible for the “last mile”.

The International Mailing Environment

The Major Players (other than mailers)

- The Universal Postal Union (UPU) is a specialized agency of the United Nations for cooperation in the postal sector.
 - 192 Member countries agree on international regulations and treaties that make the rules under which international mail transport is governed.
- The Designated Operators – the “national” postal services
 - USPS, Canada Post, Royal Mail, La Poste, Deutsche Post, et al. are bound by UPU agreements. They may be ETOEs (Extra-Territorial Offices of Exchange), too.
- Other Logistics Companies – express companies, re-mailers, mail consolidators, local delivery companies
- U.S. and foreign government customs agencies, import and export control agencies

The International Mailing Environment

The Main Rules

- The UPU Acts, multinational agreements and bilateral agreements all govern international mail.
- Postal agreements, such as
 - The USPS and Canada have a bilateral agreement.
 - The EU members have multinational agreements.
- Other treaties, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), apply to mail.
- Import and Export controls (specific to each country)
- Customs regulations (specific to each country)

These form the basis of the USPS regulations for international mail. The mailer doesn't need to know the details of all these but should be aware of the basics. Where to find more information if any of these apply or may apply to your mail will be covered in this presentation.

The International Mailing Process

Different ways to get mail to destinations

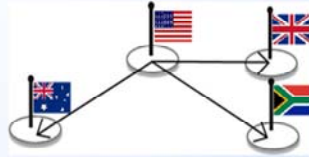
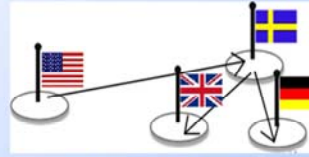


ABB Mail

or



ABC Mail

- ABB alternatives:
 - Post the mail in the U.S. and let USPS ship it there
 - Ship the mail to other countries and post it there
- ABC alternatives:
 - Ship the mail to another country and post it there for delivery in a number of countries
 - AKA remailing (subject to UPU rules that make it less attractive)

Unlike domestic mail, multiple options exist to get mail to other countries. Which alternative is best for a particular mailing by a particular organization depends on their goals – delivery time, cost, importance of U.S. postage, importance of

The International Mailing Process

Classes of Mail

- Less than 2 kilograms = letter; over 2 kilograms = parcels (The USPS uses 4 pounds as the limit.)
- EMS, international Express Mail Service, is offered by postal operators in most UPU member countries.
- International mail classes are named differently by various Posts.
- USPS: Global Express Guaranteed® (GXG), Express Mail International®, Priority Mail International, and 1st Class Mail International.
 - Plus 2 commercial bulk mail services: International Surface Air Lift® (ISAL) & International Priority Airmail® (IPA).
 - Plus 1st Class Package International Service for packages that weigh 4 pounds or less and have a value of \$400 or less.

The UPU defines 3 types of international mail: (1) letter-mail that is defined by weight, not be whether it is what would normally be called a letter; (2) parcels, again defined by weight; and (3) express mail, which is not available to all countries or all locations within the countries that offer it.

These types of mail become the different offerings of the postal operators, who use their own terms to describe them. The USPS services are listed above. It is important to note that they differ from the domestic services with similar names.

The International Mailing Process

Postal services covered by the UPU:

service	status
registration for outbound priority & airmail letter-post	mandatory
registration for non-priority and surface letter-post to destinations with priority or airmail	mandatory
registration for non-priority & surface letter-post to destinations w/o priority or airmail	optional
registration service for all inbound letter-post items	mandatory
insurance for letter-post and parcels	optional
recorded delivery for letter-post	optional
cash-on-delivery (COD) service for letter-post and parcels	optional
express delivery service for letter-post and parcels	optional
delivery to addressee in person of registered, recorded delivery or insured letter-post	optional
services free of charges and fees for letter-post and parcels	optional
fragile and cumbersome parcels services	optional
consignment service for collective items from one consignor sent abroad	optional
International business reply service (IBRS) is basically optional but all member countries are obliged to operate IBRS "return" service.	mixed
International reply coupons are exchangeable in all members but sale is optional.	mixed
Advice of delivery for incoming registered & recorded delivery or insured letter-post and parcels must be given. Outward advice of delivery is optional.	mixed

Not all the domestic postal services offered by the USPS are available in all countries around the world. This list is a quick reference to what may not be offered. Note that only 3 are mandatory and therefore offered by all countries. In addition, countries must provide the last 3 services on the list if that service was purchased when the item was mailed in another country.

Addressing

- International addressing basics
 - More than 25 “basic” address formats
 - Lines may be long and there may be more lines.

	Average # of lines	Maximum lines	Average characters/line	Maximum characters/line
World	5.9	10	14.8	54
Germany	5.4	8	15.9	30
Mexico	6.1	9	18.6	30
U.K.	6.8	10	11.3	40
U.S.	4.1	6	18.9	30

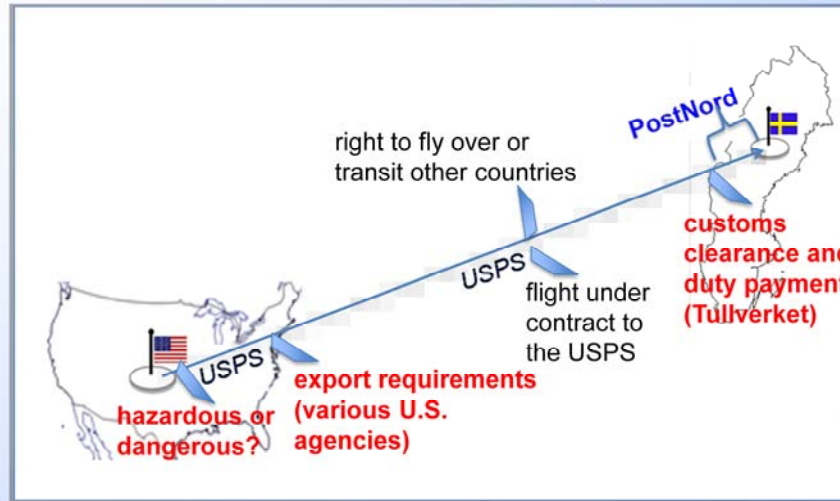
- Data quality and databases
- Address hygiene and updates

While not part of the rules and regulations for international mail, it's obvious that addresses – correct, deliverable addresses – are important to getting mail delivered. Address look very different in other countries. The equivalent of a state or a postal code may not be used. If it is, it will most likely look different from ours in the U.S. and is likely to be placed differently in the address. The issue that provides a great deal of difficulty is that addresses around the world are longer – more and lengthier lines. The U.S. format doesn't work for most countries, although it does for Canada.

Maintaining good quality for addresses means that the database used to store them has sufficient space to allow for all the different options. It also requires address updates. There are a number of companies that can provide high quality hygiene for international addresses. (Contact me if you would like more information.)

International Mail's Journey

The Basic Journey



Going back to a simplified version of international mail's basic journey, the items in red are the points that mailers need to be aware of and may need to take action to get their mail to its destination. Let's look at them individually.

The International Mailing Process	
Universal Prohibitions and Restrictions	
level	category
prohibited	radioactive, explosive, flammable or dangerous goods, including replica & inert ordnance
prohibited	narcotics and psychotropic substances
prohibited	Category A infectious biological substances
prohibited	live animals
prohibited	counterfeit and pirated items
prohibited	obscene or immoral articles
prohibited	certain documents
prohibited	anything prohibited in the country of destination
restricted	Category B infectious biological substances
restricted	dual-use goods (strategic goods usable for civilian or military use)
restricted	products from endangered species of fauna and flora per the Washington Convention.
restricted	food products
restricted	plants, plant material and seeds
restricted	tobacco and tobacco products
restricted	valuable articles: coins, banknotes, currency, travellers' checks, securities payable to the bearer, platinum, gold, silver, jewels or precious stones, jewelry of high value

These are the basic prohibitions and restrictions on international mail. Some of these are very similar to the domestic restrictions on dangerous or hazardous goods. But they go beyond the domestic restrictions. Most of these apply to goods, but notice that some can apply to print items. In particular, obscene or immoral items and anything prohibited in the country of destination are very broad. The destination country, usually at customs, determines what is allowed and what is not.

The International Mailing Process

Export & Import: different for each country

- The list of restrictions from the US are online at <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/default.aspx>.
- Import or export licenses may be required. (See <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/Programs.aspx>.)
- Other countries also have their own restrictions. See the USPS individual country listings, <http://pe.usps.gov/text/imm/immctry.htm>

Here's where you can find the details on what is not allowed. Ideally, this information is checked before it reaches the point of mailing.

The U.S. has restrictions on doing business with certain countries and individuals and on exporting certain types of goods and information. The Department of the Treasury has the information online.

The first link, according to the web site: "As part of its enforcement efforts, OFAC publishes a list of individuals and companies owned or controlled by, or acting for or on behalf of, targeted countries. It also lists individuals, groups, and entities, such as terrorists and narcotics traffickers designated under programs that are not country-specific. Collectively, such individuals and companies are called "Specially Designated Nationals" or "SDNs." Their assets are blocked and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from dealing with them."

The second link is the sanction programs related to particular countries or regions or goals such as countering narcotics trafficking, terrorism or cyber crime.

The International Mailing Process

Customs: a separate function from the Post

- The value is the retail or commercial value.
- For the HS (Harmonized System) tariff number from the US International Trade Administration, see <http://hts.usitc.gov/>.

- More documentation (bill of lading, commercial invoice, etc.) may be required, particularly for high-value or large items.

Documents (no customs declaration needed):	Items that are not defined as documents:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business records • personal correspondence • circulars, pamphlets, advertisements • written instruments not for resale • money orders, checks, and similar items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • printed music • books and periodicals • antique or collector documents • blueprints and engineering drawings • printed educational and test materials

Customs is separate from the postal services. They have very broad powers to open packages, to re-assess the value, and to require the payment of duties. The duty must be paid before the item is released to the recipient and the recipient is usually required to pay any duty. What is subject to duty fees and at what rate varies by country. For example, in Canada customs is charged on goods worth CAN\$20.00 (about US\$18.15 or €14.05) or more and the import duty averages 8.56% but varies from 0% to 35%. For the United Kingdom, no customs duty is charged on items under £135 (about US\$217.20 or €168.15) in value or if the duty is less than £9 (about US\$14.50 or €11.20) and duty ranges from 0% to 17%.

Documents do not require a customs declaration, but the definition is not the one used every day. In this case, document is more like correspondence. For example, a single marketing brochure sent in a business envelope does not require a customs declaration but a box of them does require one.

The USPS, as of July 2015, is using new customs forms. (The form we've all used for years is shown above.) The information required is readily available: whether it is a gift, documents, commercial sample, etc.; the sender's name and address; the name and address of the recipient; a description of the goods; the weight and value (retail price) of the goods; the country of origin (where it was made). The HS number will soon be required for all items. It can be looked up at the link provided through the search function or by category on the "view" tab. For higher value or heavy or large items, other documents may be required. These need to be placed in a plastic pocket on the outside of the package. The new forms integrate the label into the form.

There are various software packages that integrate the customs forms and provide the electronic submission of the information. Manual forms are available from USPS. These require over-the-counter submission where the clerk will enter the information on the form into terminals they use. There are also services that can assist with this. They will be discussed shortly.

Using Postal Designated Operator

i.e. the USPS

- The mail meets the requirements of the USPS (or the operator in another country if mailing elsewhere).
- Discounts are available through USPS, as with domestic mail, but the rules for preparation and sorting are different, of course. The International Mail Manual (IMM) is at <http://pe.usps.com/text/imm/welcome.htm>.
- The rules vary by class of mail – and country of destination.

The basic requirements are simple. The address must be in Latin characters, the country name must be in English, the items must be legally mailable, any documents attached properly. All the details are in the IMM, the international counterpart to the DMM.

Each of the 6 classes of mail have some rule differences, as the different domestic classes have different requirements. Where it becomes a bit more difficult is that some rules vary by country of destination – and there are around 200 destinations.

Using Postal Designated Operator i.e. the USPS

- For example the IMM states,

M-bags are defined as direct sacks of printed matter (see [261.22](#)) sent to a single foreign addressee at a single address. There are three types of M-bags: Airmail M-bags, International Priority Airmail (IPA) M-bags, and International Surface Air Lift (ISAL) M-bags. All M-bags are subject to the following conditions of mailing:

- a. Maximum weight of a sack: 66 pounds (including the tare weight of the sack). Lower maximum weights apply to certain countries. See the Individual Country .
 - b. Availability: All destinations that are referenced in the Individual Country Listings for Airmail M-bags, in [Exhibit 292.45](#)
 - c. for IPA M-bags, and in [Exhibit 293.45](#) for ISAL M-bags.
 - d. Identification: PS Tag 158, *M-bag Addressee Tag*, must be completed and attached to the neck of the sack. ...
- There are alternatives to doing it all yourself.

The IMM is specific and clear. However, unless you must handle this in-house, there are companies that specialize in international mail processing that can save you time and money.

Using a Postal Logistics Company

- Mail Consolidators combine or consolidate mail from multiple companies. Companies providing USPS international letter and parcel services are mail consolidators, authorized by the USPS.
- Extraterritorial Offices of Exchange (ETOE) are operated by a postal operator outside its national territory to attract business.
- Remailers ship mail as freight to another country, clear it through customs, and mail it there. This can save on postage and time but can be subject to mail being held in the destination country.

They all specialize in international mail and know all the details of processing and sorting, as you do for domestic mail.

Using a Postal Logistics Company

Pricing, Cost & Delivery Time Comparisons

- Compare rates between Postal Logistics Firms! Estimates can vary from 71% to 52% of the postal operator's public rate for apparently equivalent services.
- The number of pieces for each weight for each country is needed for an estimate.
 - # pieces x weight = postal cost in local currency & measurements
- The same method is rarely used by different companies in their price quotations. Common methods include
 - per piece + per unit of weight
 - flat rate per piece
 - flat rate per piece + a handling charge per weight unit
 - total cost of the mailing with no break out

Using a Postal Logistics Company

Questions to ask

- Is there a minimum charge per country? Are there surcharges not shown on the estimate?
- How might the final charges vary from the estimate? Are there charges for returned items?

The best option depends on

- What are your goals and needs?
- What is the budget?
- What are you mailing?
- What are the destinations?

There is no one “best” option. The transit time and cost vary. So, your specific requirements matter in defining the best option for each mailing.

Pricing, Cost & Delivery Time Comparisons

- Delivery times vary with the mail service or class chosen, the destination, and the type of logistics provider, but there are few publicly available statistics.
 1. Mailing through their home-country designated postal operators consistently provided the fastest delivery to the destination address.
 2. Consolidators, bundling items for mailing through the home-country designated postal operator, ranked second with one to three days slower delivery, on average, and a consistent savings in postal costs.
 3. Remailers, shipping items to another country for mailing, provided the longest time with an average of 9 more days to delivery but were the least expensive option.
- Mail monitoring is useful in providing independent information on delivery.

These are general indicators. Again, the consolidators and remailers can assist with customs forms and other documentation.

If you have concerns about delivery, “seeding” a mailing with addresses from a mail monitoring service can provide independent verification of delivery times.

Mailing in a country is different from Mailing to a country

In a country, their requirements need to be met.

- Critical Elements: Addressing, the size of individual items and their weights.
 - Weight: grams or kilograms not pounds/ounces
 - Size: millimeters or centimeters not inches
- To avoid charges or rejection of items, check with the Post.

To a country, that's not required

- Offshore printing and mailing
- Hybrid mail
- Regional fulfillment (agents or directly through local offices)
- Free trade zones (free or foreign-trade zones or bonded areas)

The U.S. is the only country in the world that uses inches and ounces. Our envelopes are unusual sizes.

The placement of items on the envelope or package also varies among countries. In some, advertising copy on an item is prohibited or requires prior approval.

Undeliverable as Addressed (UAA) Mail

- UAA is a serious – and costly – problem.
 - USPS estimates 3-4% of the mail is undeliverable, costs about \$1.6 billion per year.
 - In the U.K., 5.8 million items a year are misaddressed.
 - 5-10% of all parcels are incorrectly addressed, requiring return or redelivery attempts, according to one Austrian delivery company.
- Return to sender services vary depending on the country where the mail is entered.
- Undeliverable as addressed international letter-mail and parcels for certain classes of mail are returned to the country where the postage was paid.

RENOVI A L'EXPEDITEUR RETURN TO SENDER	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non réclamé Unclaimed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Adresse inexistante No such address
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adresse incomplète Address incomplete
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parti sans laisser d'adresse Moved, address unknown
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bureau inexistant No such Post Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refusé par le destinataire Refused by addressee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inconnu Unknown

Responses: Getting Something Back

- For orders, payments, correspondence, or anything letters/postcard size, outsourcing is often easily available.
- For international order processing and fulfillment services, consider the effect of different time zones, languages, and payment methods.
- Return of undeliverable mail may incur an additional charge or require special arrangements.
- For merchandise returns/parcels:
 - Payment of export fees & import or re-import fees may be required. Compliance with license requirements.
 - For damaged goods, less costly to replace item (no return).
 - For unwanted goods, a refund with no return is less costly.
- Agents who accept returns of items & recycle exist in some countries for some categories of goods.

Letters are not a problem. Returned packages can be very problematic, although there is some signs of improvement. The package must clear any export controls in the foreign country and then U.S. customs and import controls. It can be expensive.

Examples of International Reply Mail



If you use BREs and want to use them in international mail, they are available. Arrange and account with the USPS and get the envelope specs from them.

Thank you for your time.



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