

## DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE POSTCROSSING PROJECT IS?

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Данная статья является реферативным изложением основной работы. Полный текст научной работы, приложения, иллюстрации и иные дополнительные материалы доступны на сайте III Международного конкурса научно – исследовательских и творческих работ учащихся «Старт в науке» по ссылке: <https://www.school-science.ru/0317/3/28314>.

How often do we write letters to each other? Not e-mails! Real letters, which we write with a pen on a piece of paper.

Many centuries before the Common Era people sent runners to deliver a message. About the 10<sup>th</sup> century, people in Russia sent pigeons or couriers to send important letters. But these ways of communication weren't dependable. The traditional story relates that Pheidippides, an Athenian courier, was sent to Sparta to request help when the Persians landed at Marathon, Greece. He ran about 240 km in two days. He then ran the 40 km from the battlefield near Marathon to Athens to announce the Greek victory over Persia in the Battle of Marathon with the word «We have won», then collapse and die.

In the USSR people communicated with each other by postcards. They were cheap and very colorful. Some of them were with the scene from a movie or a view on the scenery in the town where you live. Letters were not in great demand; most of them were romantic or formal.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century writing letters is not as popular as writing them in time when people didn't have telecommunication, telegraphs or the Internet. Writing e-mails have good features. You can upload pictures, videos or music. Also, when you send a message, it is already received within a few seconds. As much information as you want and just a few seconds for sending process. But can we connect the World Wide Web with real mail?

Paulo Magalhaes was only a student when he started The Postcrossing project as a side project. He loved to receive mail and postcards from his family, friends or from anyone in the globe. He knew more people shared the same interest, but there was no good way yet of connecting them across the planet.

After playing with the idea of creating an online platform to support this offline hobby, Paulo started to create the website in his free time. Paulo's friend Ana Campos designed the

first logo (Appendix 1). After much indecision about the name, on July 14th, 2005 the Postcrossing Project website was open to everyone for free.

Postcrossing was still hosted in an old home computer tucked away in a storage room in Paulo's home. But soon it became apparent that what started as a pet project was quickly turning into a great success. Since then, Postcrossing has been in the media spotlight around the world, from the widely known BBC (News,

H2G2) to random newspapers, magazines, and blogs in languages and alphabets that Paulo can't even grasp.

Postcrossing has brought together many people making the world a smaller place. We continue to discover different cultures, traditions and unusual facts about each other.

Paulo wanted to connect people across the world through postcards, independent of their location, age, gender, race or beliefs. And he created our independent world called Postcrossing!

The goal of this project is to allow people to receive postcards from all over the world, for free. The main idea is that: if you send a postcard, you will receive one back from a random Postcrosser from somewhere in the world.

After you've registered you can send your first postcard. The first step is to request to send a postcard. The website will display (and send you an email) with the address of another member and a Postcard ID (e.g.: US-786). Necessary to write an ID number. It consists of two letters, which mean the country you are living in and a number. If you don't write a Postcard ID, the recipient won't register your mail. The member receives the postcard and registers it using the Postcard ID that is on the postcard. At this point, you are eligible to receive a postcard from another user. You are now in line for the next person that requests to send a postcard. Where the postcard comes from is a surprise!

Postcards expire after traveling 60 days although they can still be (and often are) registered after that time frame. That means you can send another postcard if the last one is lost. Initially, you can send 5 postcards. As you exchange more postcards with other members of the website, the number of postcards that you can send (that is, have simultaneously traveled)

will increase. If you have sent between 0 and 4 postcards, you can send 5 postcards. If you have sent between 150 and 199 postcards, you can send 12 postcards. And so on, in increments of 1 postcard for every 50 you send.

Don't know what to write on the postcard?

1. Express what daily life is like where you're sending the card from by describing what you did today, your routine, etc.

2. Give local traveling tips from your area! What are the must-sees around you?

3. Recount a childhood memory or something you've learned from your grandparents.

4. Share a local idiom or saying, in its original language, with a translation of course!

5. Did you ever travel to the place where your card is going? Recall your best memory of that place.

6. What's the weather like as you are writing your postcard? Draw the weather forecast in detail!

7. What are the local festivals or traditions from your area?

8. If you're a student, what are you studying? What was the last thing you learned in school?

Now The Postcrossing is popular all over the world. There are already about 35 million received postcards and about 611,000 members from 210 different countries (Appendix 3, 4). About 81,000 males, 407,000 females, 9,000 group accounts and 113,000 prefer not to say.

The country where most of all members are participating is our homeland – Russia. But from 2005 the biggest number of sent postcards was sent from Germany. The country which takes the 5<sup>th</sup> place according to members.

Willi (or Wilhelm) is a member in Germany. He speaks German and English. He has been a member for over 9 years. During this time he has sent and received about 19 000. But this big number is not the only record he has. He is also first on most postcards sent on and on the longest distance sent on from Germany. Postcrossing is offered for free but running this project involves many costs such as time, support, hosting, bandwidth, and storage. So, Wilhelm is a Postcrossing Supporter.

The language of the website is English. Employing possibilities of The Postcrossing project is allowable with any level of knowledge. On the stage of receiving postcards, the developing of a variety of language and speech competencies is arising. The vocabulary and grammar are activating, skills of reading and writing communications are improving. Willing or not you have to write in English. You will need some dictionaries to translate speech, but after a few weeks learning new words, you

are going to speak fluently. Though people from small towns and countries could give a touch to the real language because they've never met and never spoken to a foreigner.

Writing an address and a message on the postcard is not the only part, where you need your knowledge. When we receive the postcard we are training many of aspects such as reading, learning new phrases or words and accounting grammar rules – tenses and sentence construction.

The Unified State Exam is an exam in the Russian Federation. It is, in fact, a series of exams every student must pass after graduation from school to enter a university or a professional college. Writing a letter to your friend is a part of USE in English. You must know how to greet your friend, what you should write and how to end your mail. After some written postcards, you will know how to do all these things (Appendix 2).

Being a member of The Postcrossing project is not only useful for your language skills. Geography is a very important lesson, too. You can discover the world just with one book. But reading the book and memorizing unknown names of countries is sometimes not so interesting. So Postcrossing is a good way to practice your knowledge of countries.

The text of your postcards is not less interesting than the picture on it. Not only the photo tells us about the place. A person who lives in that place can relate so much information to us which we won't find in any geography book. People are writing about their towns with love and pride, talking about unusual buildings and sightseeing, hourly ascribing cordial words in the mother-tongue.

A topical collection of postcards may become an entry of investigation. For example, history of seafaring, postal service, cookery or folk costumes. But unexpected postcards irrelevant to the topic are very interesting, too. With the aid of these postcards, we are traveling through places where otherwise we'd be unlikely to go to, enquiring the culture of the town or country and learning about the life of different nations.

The Postcrossing project is developing a sense of beauty and observation. With due time you notice that the neatest handwriting belongs to the Japanese (also they love to draw cats and flowers), some hand-made postcards are accompanied with long stories about the town or family and in envelopes from China are surprises in terms of teabags.

Besides training targets participation in the project is rising to other aims of the learning process. At first, the formation of ethical and moral presentation in students: participating in the project excites the wish to afford great

pleasure to the recipient and intercourse by Postcrossing is promoting the formation of tolerant attitude to representatives of other cultures, rapprochement of people of different nationalities, the broadening of outlook and negotiation of language or spatial boundaries.

How do people pollute the environment? They drop the litter in the streets, cut down the forests. Every year world industry pollutes the atmosphere with about 2 billion tons of dust and other things. As a result, some rare species of animals, birds, fish and some plants disappear forever. Many cities suffer from smog.

Since ancient times nature has served Man, being the source of his life. For thousands of years, people have lived in harmony with the environment. But with the development of civilization man's interference with nature began to increase. Large cities with thousands of smoky industrial enterprises appear all over the world today. They pollute the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we live in. Environmental protection is a universal concern. That is why serious measures to create a system of ecological security should be taken. Some progress has already been made in this direction. The creators of Postcrossing project care about our nature, too.

How can you help to make Postcrossing a greener hobby? (Appendix 5) Here are a few tips from the forum:

1. Choose postcards made with recycled paper or postcards made with fibre that comes from sustainable forests.
2. Reuse/Recycle envelopes (it can be fun!)
3. Use envelopes/writing pads made of 100% unbleached recycled paper.
4. Walk, or ride your bike to take your mail to the Post Office.
5. Write your postcards during daylight, or outside in the fresh air, and save energy.
6. When the soaking off your stamps do them all at the same time and reuse the water as much as possible.
7. Use refillable pens/highlighters etc.
8. Print on both sides of the paper or reuse old study courses etc. to print things for personal use.
9. When wrapping things, reuse gift paper. Be creative! You can use old maps, newspapers, pages from magazines etc.
10. Get your electricity from a company that provides it from sustainable energy sources such as wind farms, solar energy, hydro energy, etc.
11. Support an environmental organization such as Climate care, WWF, Greenpeace etc.

Postcrossing doesn't have the financial resources to offset every single postcard sent...

this is where YOU can help. By making little choices like the ones suggested above, you too are contributing to making Postcrossing a greener hobby.

### Conclusion

I am sure that you hadn't heard about the Postcrossing project before. In my project, I've tried to tell you as much information as I found to be interesting and unusual.

As you can see, Postcrossing is not only a funny hobby which you can try in your free time. It is already a big chain in our world, which connects all men by using post and the Internet.

I have proved that The Postcrossing project is useful as a motivation to study English. Developing writing and reading experience and preparation for the Unified State Exam in Russian Federation. Also, I have examined this project as a new method to explore the world in Geography. Personal enrichment and benefits in communion between different nations are also described.

I've taken a poll and saw that only one person from my class knows what The Postcrossing project is (Appendix 6). So, I've made a booklet in which I wrote the most important information or how to become a member of this project (Appendix 7, 8).

The work on this project was really interesting for me, so I will continue practicing my English and Geography skills, helping nature and of course learning something new about other people.

While doing my project I've received a letter from Buckingham Palace. Elizabeth II received my postcard in December. In March I've received the follow-up letter from Her Majesty. It proves that postcards connect people irrespective of age, nationality or person's social standing.

Happy postcrossing!

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