

Quite often I notice on ebay.de's postcard section, statements like "small format", "...the wanted small postcard format" etc. Meant is the postcard size (up to) 90 x 140 mm which was still popular until about the early 1970's over here. But I wonder whether sellers/buyers really know how long the today standard (DIN A6) postcard size 105 x 148 mm was around already in Germany (and some other countries).

Articles and letters published in Spring 1926 issues of the trade publication "Papier-Welt" describe quite detailed the pro/contra and rumours around the official introduction of the new, larger postcard size in this country. The Universal Postal Union had organized an "International Postcard Congress" in Stockholm, Sweden in 1914. It was decided that from Oct. 1, 1925 on (picture) postcards up to the size of 105 x 145 mm were acceptable for international distribution among UPU member countries.

There were attempts already in pre-1914 years to standardize paper formats (and other materials, machines etc.) which in the end makes work and trade much easier. DIN stands for German Industry Standard, and DIN "A" describes German standard paper sizes. A 0 = 841 x 1189 mm (square meter), A 1 = 594 x 841 mm, A 2 = 420 x 594 mm and so on down to A 8 = 52 x 74 mm. Very good and effective system, although many people abroad first laughed at the crazy Germans and their standards, only to adopt them later. It took many, many years until the standards were established everywhere in Germany, the government did not force the industry to use DIN standard sizes.

In early 1926 the German Postal authorities decided to introduce the DIN "A" paper sizes for all official postal stationery, after old stocks had been used up. The old postcard size 90 x 140 mm had been around for some 50 years by then.



DOWN WITH THE NEW POSTCARD FORMAT!



NO, cried the postcard/publisher trade. Not with us! We want to stick to the old format! Times were not easy. The good old days were gone. And now that. The majority of the German postcard industry refused the new bigger format and found allies in many other European countries and especially in Great Britain. Well, it appears that the British appear to have easily problems with anything coming from the continent. I think the larger ppc format was/still is called "Continental size".

Many, many articles against the new format were published, protest notes were sent to official places, and the poor who used the new size for their cards anyway were covered with critic and boycotted (for some time). The mighty union of postcard related industries met at the Leipzig Spring 1926 Paper Fair and was shocked to find cards by Munich art publisher **Ackermann** in A 6 size on offer. Several German and Austrian firms cancelled already placed orders. Ackermann who had been one of the few supporters of the new postcard format came under heavy attack.

← Ackerman card no. 827. "Sect" signed Osk(ar) Bluhm. Dark green gravure printed with captions in red ink. P/U from France to Hungaria in Oct. 1900.

→ This is the earliest P/U larger format card I have found so far. BUT it was used before the official introduction. Published on occasion of the national gathering of Protestant young men at Mittweida, Saxony Sept. 2 - 5, 1922. P/U from Saxony to Austria on Dec. 22, 1922. With "Postcard" imprint - not Printed Matter. Woodcut-like illustration shows entrance/steps to local church. Signed "FR". Typical poor quality card board of the early 1920's.

Who was the "rebel" Fr. A. Ackermann? Who preferred the bigger postcard format because it was much more suitable for his art reproduction cards.

Friedrich Adolf Ackermann grew up in northern Germany, became book seller and worked in Vienna and Berlin, finally joined an old-established book seller and publishing company in Munich in 1862. A. Ackermann was managing director, then partner and bought the business in 1872. The book selling section was sold and Ackermann concentrated on art publishing from 1874 on. Soon he gained an excellent reputation, had an own gallery and the business grew a great deal. He was among the first to publish artist-signed cards and the amount of printed cards soon exceeded 10 million, distributed worldwide, some 1500 diff. cards are said to have been published already before 1900. Fr. A. Ackermann died in 1903. The firm came in the possession of Swiss publisher Walter Claesen in 1937. The Ackermann firm is still in business today and has specialized on art calendars.

All the protests from the trade's side were fruitless in the end. More and more larger format ppc's were produced, but both formats existed side by side for many years with the small format still dominating. One important aspect hadn't been considered by the trade, however. The (picture) postcard buyers of DIN A 6 cards had **more writing space!** The bad thing with the new format: many collectors used to cut A 6 size cards to fit into their albums. Postcard album manufacturers seem to have continued with albums to hold the small format cards only for a long time.

■ When did the first larger size format postcards appear in your country? Comments welcome.

