Veterinary medicine through the eyes of a deltologist

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Colleagues, I have to tell you that when the organizing committee first asked me two years ago to be the banquet speaker and to speak on deltiology, I really had my doubts as to their sanity. Deltiology as a banquet topic? No way? Well, they persisted and finally I desisted. I must confess that last week when I started putting this presentation together, did you catch that from two years to last week - you don't think I procrastinate do you? Any way, as I worked on the presentation, I really became enthusiastic about it because several of you in the room tonight have contributed to my collection over the years. Now I have the opportunity to share with you what you have helped me to assemble. I hope you will find it as fascinating and exciting as I do. I do have two of my most severe critics sitting in the audience tonight, so I really do have to be on my toes. If you become bored with the presentation, then you can try to figure out who the two critics are.

I would first like to give a very brief overview of the collecting of postcards and their history. This slide is for Pelle Råf, our resident etymologist and philologist. The term used for collecting postcards is "deltiology" and one who collects postcards is called a "deltologist". The word was coined in 1945 and comes from the Greek word "deltos" meaning "writing tablet".

Postcard collecting like all other hobbies waxes and wanes. Today, it currently is as fashionable to collect postcards as it was during the Golden Age of Postcards (1898-1918). Some recent surveys suggest it may be the third largest hobby in the world. One reason for its popularity is its topicality. One can chose almost any subject under the sun and be able to find a postcard on the topic.

Archivists have known for many years the importance of photographs for providing visual image of events of past years. However, it has been in recent years only, that archivists, librarians, historic preservationists and sociologists have realized the important role that postcards can play in documenting the past. I think you will be surprised, in a few minutes, at how well postcards can help document the history of veterinary medicine.

The idea of a card being sent through the mail without an envelope and at a reduced rate was presented at a postal conference in Germany 1865. However, it was a paper published by Dr. Emanuel Herrmann, an Austrian professor of economics that convinced the Austrian government to issue the world's first postcard on October 1st, 1869. Three million postcards were sold in three months. Denmark introduced the government postal in 1871. In 1875, the International Postal Treaty was changed to allow government postal cards internationally.
Some important dates in the United States regarding postcards are:

- 1873 - US introduced the government postal
- 1893 - First view card published in the US.
- 1898 - US Congress granted permission for privately printed cards to be mailed at the same rate as government postals. This allowed private enterprise to really promote postcards.
- 1903 - Eastman Kodak Company introduced the folding pocket Kodak No. 3A camera which was designed to take postcard size negatives. This meant any one in the world could make their own postcards.

A tremendous volume of postcards were being produced and sent through the mails shortly after the turn of the century:

- 1904 - Germany sent over 1 billion postcards; France - 600 million; Japan - 453 million, Austria - 250 million; Belgium - 55 million; Switzerland 43 million
- 1909 - Americans purchased over 1 billion postcards - twice what today's postcard industry sells.

This reinforces my point of why I say one can find almost any topic illustrated on a postcard.

It is important to emphasize the distinction between the terms "postal" and "postcard".

- **Postal** - A card issued by the postal service of the government with the stamp printed on the card. Philatelists usually collect these.
- **Postcard** - A card issued by private enterprise and postage must be affixed. Deltiologists usually collect these.

In recent years there has been a real resurgence in the use of the postcard by companies to advertise and by associations to promote upcoming conferences. I certainly have seen this in the veterinary profession, as you will see shortly.

The reasons for using postcards:

1. Postcards combine the immediacy of billboards with one-on-one contact of direct mail
2. Postcards stand out
3. Postcards are incredibly versatile
4. Postcards provide a lot of space to provide a powerful message for a very small amount of money
5. Postcards stick around
In attempting to organize my collection of some 1,700 veterinary postcards, I have found that most of the cards fall into the following categories: colleges, libraries, museums, associations, military, clinics, veterinarians in action, teratology, pet cemeteries, reminder cards (postcards mailed by veterinarians), advertising, comic, boy scouts, anthropomorphic and children playing veterinarian.

During the new few minutes, we will be looking at a very, very limited selection of cards from each of these groups.

The rest of the presentation was a slide show of postcards illustrating the various categories given above.