

The Oceanographic Institute Monaco

Life in our planet's oceans are often a mystery to mankind, hiding many strange and improbable wonders. Undersea explorers have made many important discoveries, but no explorer's efforts were more prolific or inspiring than those of Prince Albert I of Monaco (1848-1922). His founding of the Oceanographic Institute and Museum in Monaco has been one of the most generous acts on behalf of mankind to the benefit of our oceanic environments.



Deluxe Die Proof

Exhibit Plan

Prince Albert I of Monaco
A Legend of Prince Albert's Interest
Prince Albert's Ships
The Palace Collection
Museum Building
Official Institute Mail

The Institute's Paris Office
Official Institute Mail from Paris
First International Oceanic Congress
Institute Research
Exhibitions at the Institute
The Institute Today



Prince Albert I
The Navigator

During the Universal Expo of 1889 in Paris, France, Prince Albert's marine life collection was displayed in the pavilion of Monaco and generated immense visitor interest.



Monaco pavilion at the 1889 Universal Expo in Paris
Chromo card with gold gilded border



Prince Albert I of Monaco and Hironde I
Vintimille Marseille to Remizemont, 14 November 1905
Imp - Imbert & Cie - Grasse - Nice - 804
Déposé Edition Maison Modele - Monte Carlo

A Legend of Prince Albert's Interest in the Oceans

Only a Myth

Legend has it that Prince Albert I was enamoured of the sea, and the life hidden beneath it, as a result of reading the Jules Verne (1828-1905) novel '20,000 Leagues under the Sea' as a very young boy.

Jules Verne, French author
Corner block of four



View from the Nautilus observation port
First Day of Issue maximum card



Scene from "20,000 Leagues under the Sea"

As '20,000 Leagues under the Sea' was published in 1870, when the Prince was 22 years old, the legend can not possibly be true.



Jules Verne bust
Imperforate

Prince Albert's Ships

Prince Albert I sailed aboard highly sophisticated vessels of the period. He also built special laboratories and storage areas on the ships for preservation of his specimens from the sea. His ships were the Hirondelle I, Princess Alice, Princess Alice II and Hirondelle II.



Hirondelle I (1870)



Hirondelle II (1914)



Prince Albert I in Spitzbergen
with ship Princess Alice II



Spitzbergen 1906-1907



Prince Albert I with ships
Hirondelle I and Princess Alice

He sailed the Mediterranean,
visited the Azore Islands and
embarked on an adventure to
arctic lands of Spitzbergen.



Hirondelle II in the harbor of Monaco

Printed by J. Gilletta & Cie, Photo edition, Nice – unusual museum proprietary notice in lower right

The Oceanographic Museum initially resided in a section of Monaco's royal palace before it was housed in the current museum. It remains the world's largest collection of sea life and includes living specimens.



Royal Palace



Coat of Arms



Royal Palace



Postcard from the Torino Royal Academy of Science
Torino, Italy to Monaco, 20 April 1904

Notice of receipt of the 'Bulletin of the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco'



League of Nations
Specimen (red) overprint

The Oceanographic Institute was formally founded in 1906 and in 1921, the League of Nations recognized it as a non-governmental scientific advisory group. The United Nations utilizes the Institute as an advisory resource today.



United Nations
Margin selvedge imprint

The Museum Building

1899 - 1910

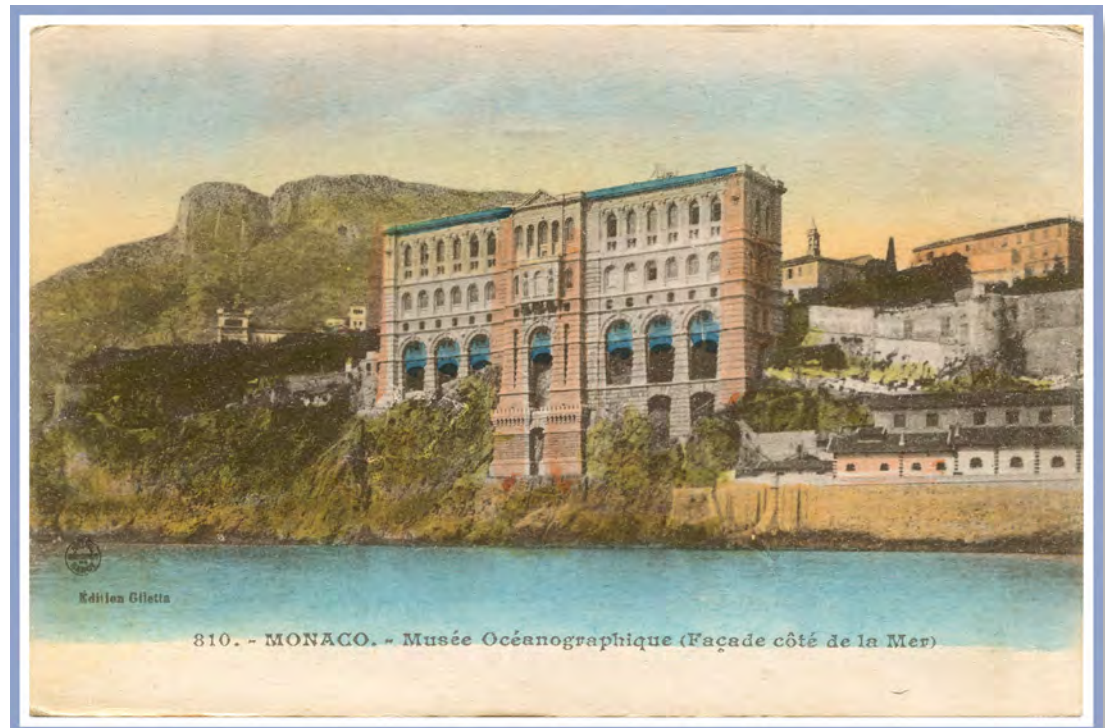


Setting of the first stone
Coin date of printing

Card 810, Facade facing Sea
Gilletta Edition, divided back

Deluxe proof

The first stone was laid in April 1899 and the Museum inaugurated in March 1910. Its Baroque Revival architecture towers 279' over the sheer cliff face. It used 100,000 tons of stone from La Turbie.



Official Institute Mail

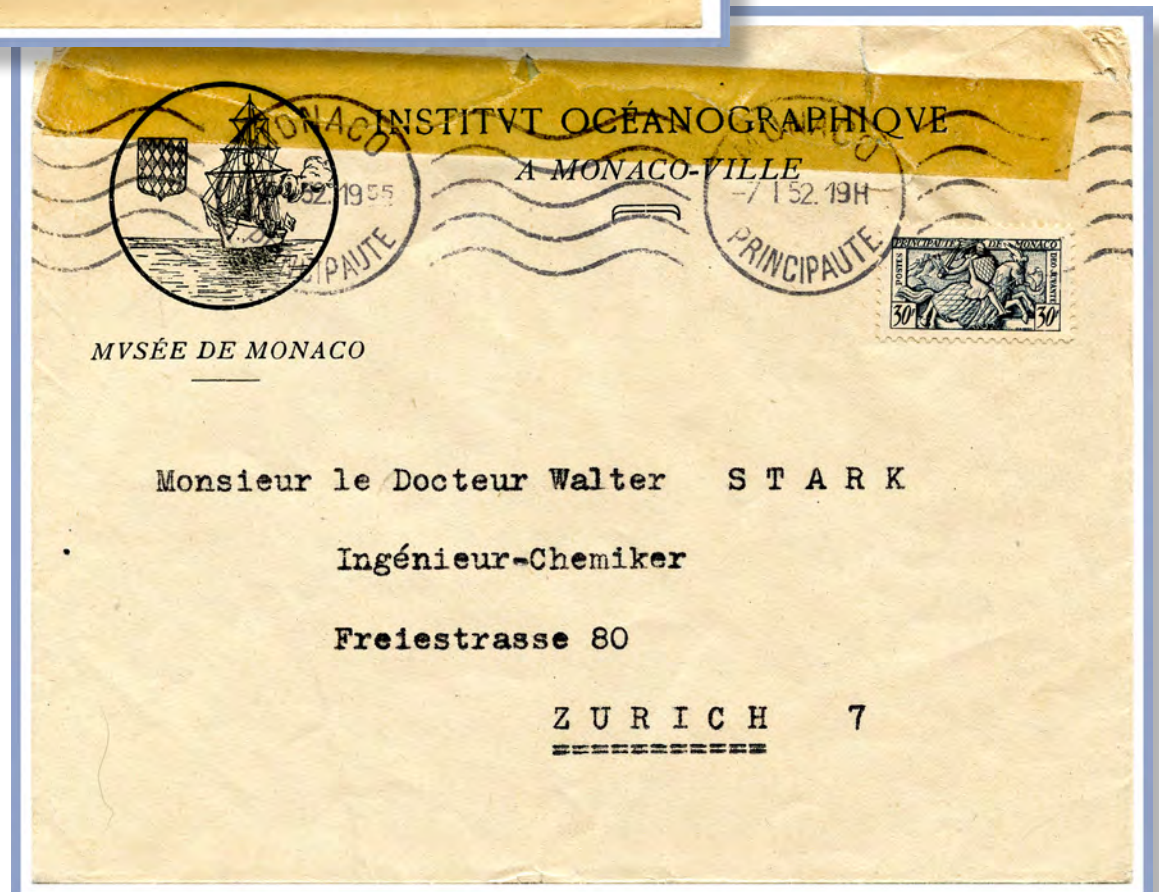
Continental Surface Letter

The Institute used special stationery with a printed corner card picturing the ship *Hirondelle I* with the Coat of Arms of Monaco. No official stamps were issued and the institute used the postage stamps of Monaco.



Monaco to Paris, France
29 May 1925
(European surface letter
rate 25 centimes)

Monaco to Zürich, Switzerland
7 January 1952
(European surface letter
rate 30 Francs
after rate change)





Monaco to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA, 3 May 1921
(International surface letter rate 50 centimes)

Earliest recorded example of service mail from the Institute



Issue of 1922
Light Ultramarine
Variety



Re-Issue of 1923



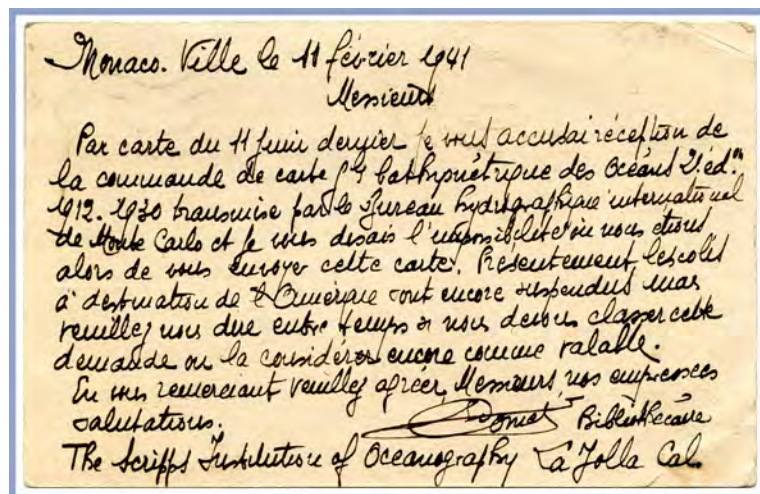
Issue of 1949

"The Oceanographic Institute reflects Prince Albert I's belief that "knowing, loving and protecting the oceans" by acting as a mediator between the scientific community, political and economic decision-makers and the general public promoted the protection and sustainable management of the oceans."

- Institute Web Site



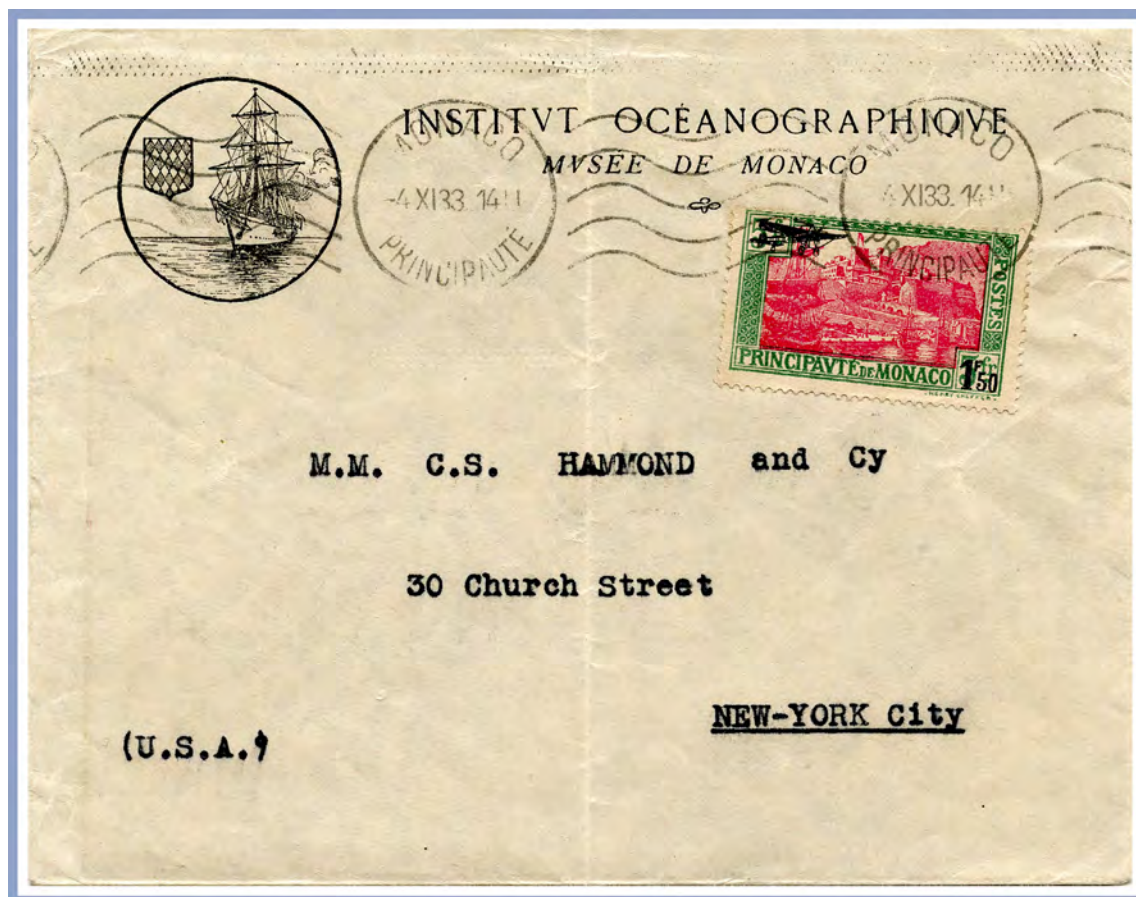
Monaco to Scripps Institute of Oceanography, La Jolla, California, USA
12 November 1941
(International surface post card rate 1.50 Francs)



Reduced rear of postcard
Message discusses the
International Hydrographic Bureau ...



Hirondelle II (1906-1907)



Monaco to New York, New York, USA, 4 November 1933
(International airmail letter rate 1.50 Francs)



Prince Albert I and ship Alice II
Sheet control number



Entrance to the Oceanographic Institute

The foundation is officially recognized as beneficial to the public and is comprised of two establishments: the '*Oceanographic Museum*' in Monaco and the '*Home of the Oceans*' in Paris, France.

*First Day of Issue
Maximum card
for 1949 issue*

Deluxe proof



The Paris office of the Institute houses laboratories specializing in examination of marine animals.

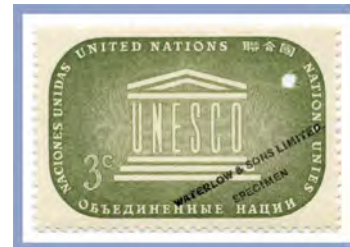


Letter to the head of the School for Hydrographic Services
Paris, France local delivery, 20 January 1943
(Local letter rate 1.50 Francs)



Airmail issue
of 1949

The American Association for the Advancement of Science organized the First International Oceanographic Congress. UNESCO was also a sponsor of the First Congress.



Specimen overprint

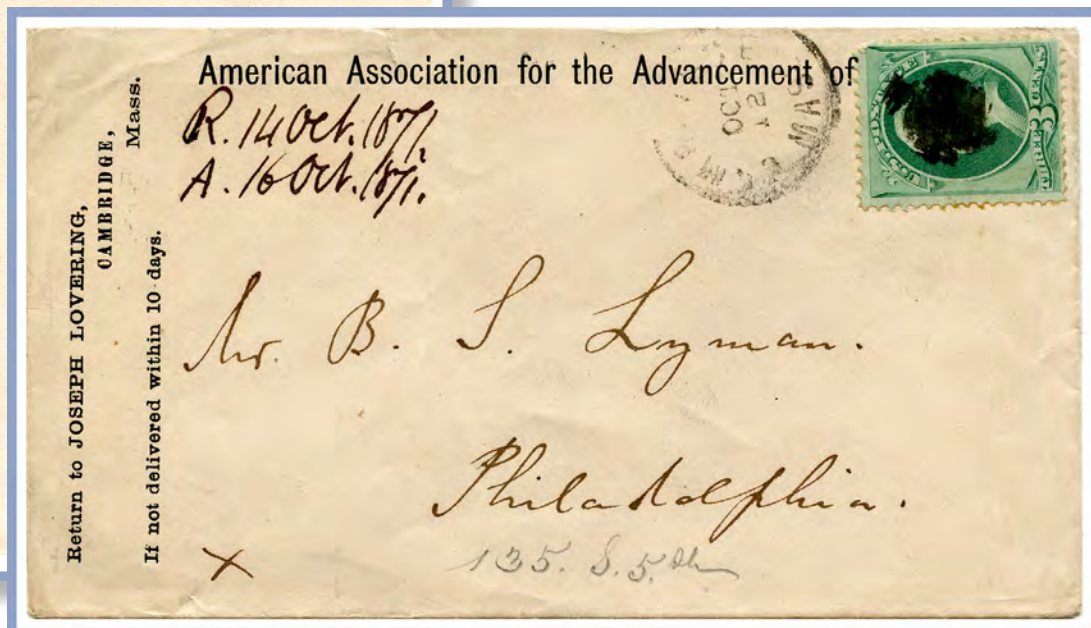
United Nations, New York to
Arlington, Virginia, USA
2 September 1959

(Domestic surface letter rate 4 cents
21 cents overpaid as a publicity franking)

(Content is a page with instructions on procedures and equipment in the assembly hall)

American Association for the
Advancement of Science
Cambridge, Massachusetts
to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
12 October 1871

(Domestic surface letter rate 3 cents)



The museum and laboratories perform research on ocean life and the environment. Prince Albert's research with sea anemones contributed to discovery of anaphylaxis by Charles Richet in 1902.



Discovery of anaphylaxis
Charles Richet & Paul Portier



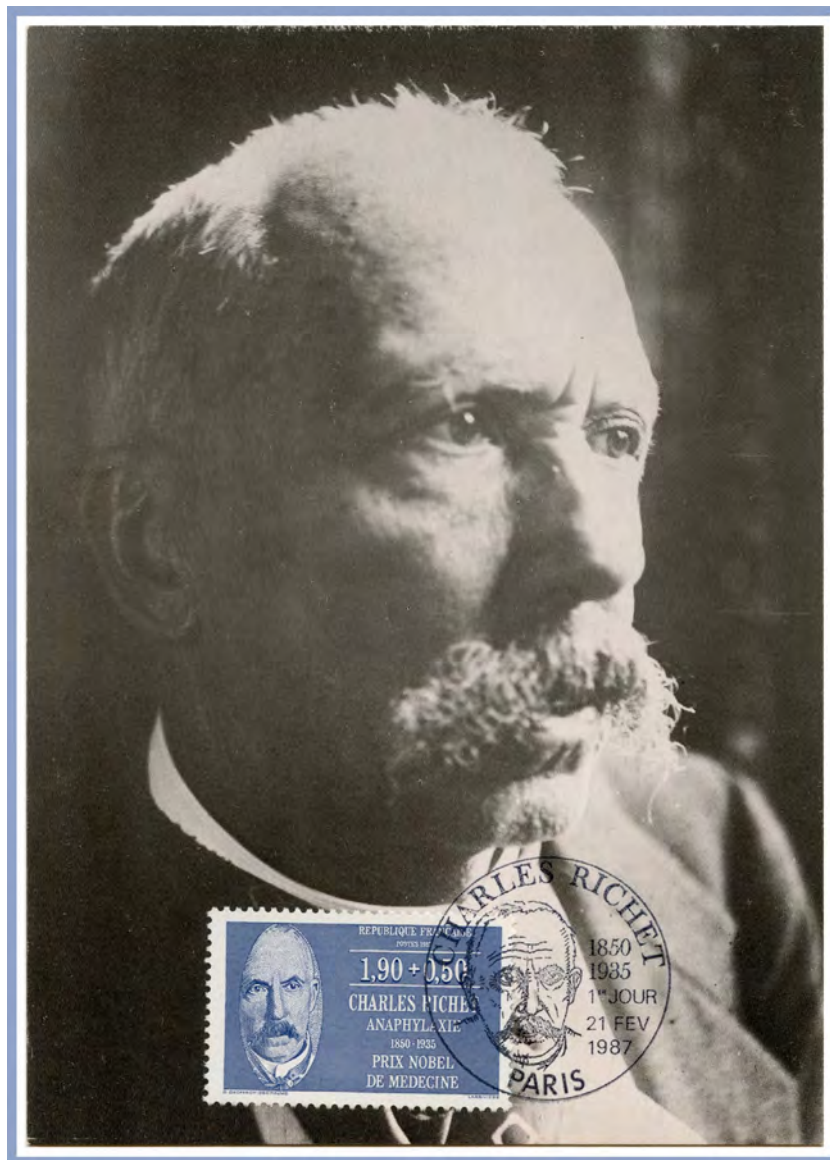
Sea life Discoveries



Sea life Discoveries



Atomic Research



Charles Richet, discoverer of Anaphylaxis
First Day of Issue Maximum Card



Prince Albert I and Princess Alice II
Charting the seabed around the Azores

The museum maintains an open sea aquarium under the building and presents special exhibitions from time to time discussing man's connection with the ocean and displaying both ancient and modern methods of underwater exploration.

Museum Building
with open sea
aquarium below



Alexander the Great's
Underwater Chamber & Bathysphere
of the N.Y. Zoological Society



Fulton's 'Nautilus' 1800
and Modern Submarine



Traditional and Modern Divers



Galeazzi's Turret
1929



Williamson's Photosphere 1914
and Bathyscaph 'Trieste'



Klingert 1797 and Modern Diving Suits



Diving Chamber

Stamp designers and engravers:

Alexander's Chamber and Bathysphere, designed by Bernard Minne, engraved by Pierre Béquet.

Fulton's Nautilus and modern submarine, designed and engraved by Pierre Béquet.

Traditional divers and modern divers, designed and engraved by Claude Durrens.

Galeazzi's turret, designed and engraved by Georges Bétemps

Williamson's photosphere and bathyscaph, designed and engraved by Pierre Béquet.

Klingert suit and modern diving suit, designed and engraved by Claude Durrens.

Diving chamber, designed by Bernard Minne, engraved by Pierre Béquet.

Jacques Cousteau became the leader of the Institute and Museum in 1957 and continued the Institute's legacy of exploration of ocean life. The Institute remains a member of the international research community and advisor to the United Nations.



Research station for living under the sea



Research ship Calypso

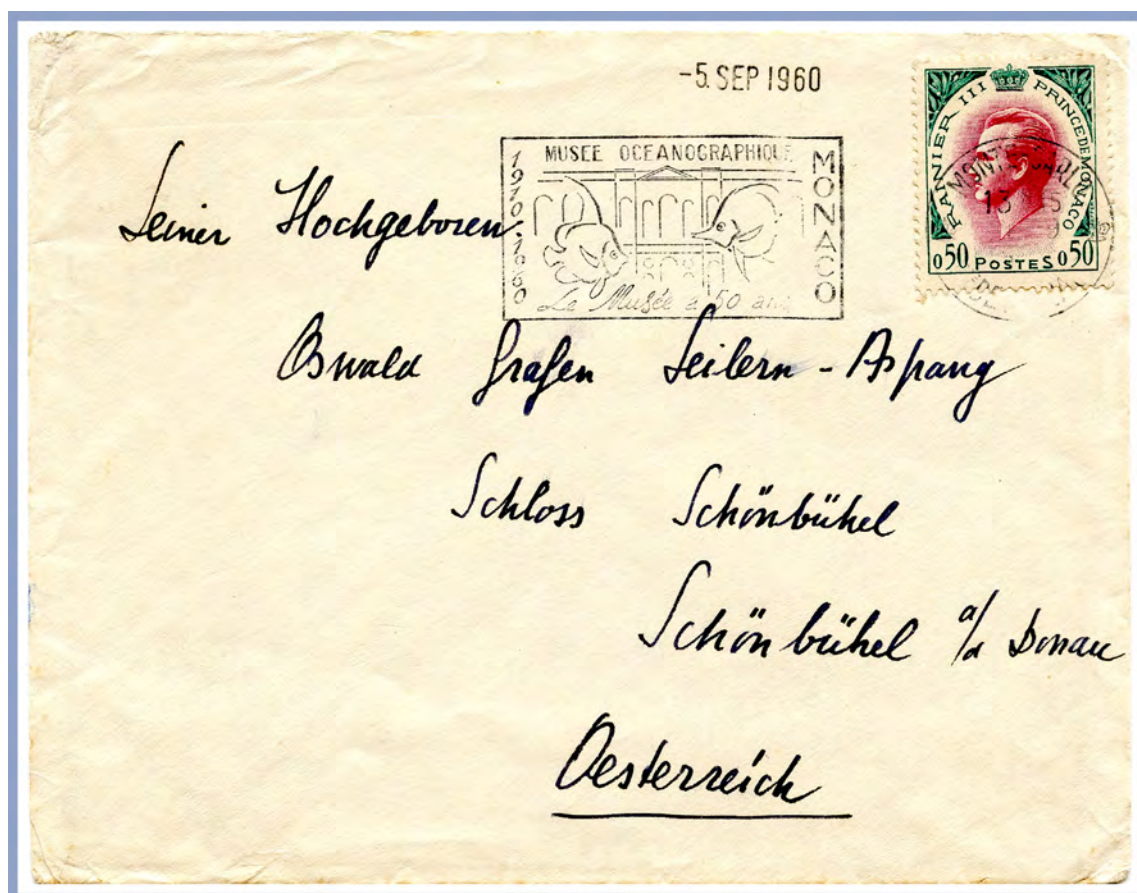


Jacques Cousteau

Monaco to
Schönbühel, Austria
5 September 1960
(European surface
letter rate 50 centimes)



Prince Albert I Statue
outside Museum



The museum celebrated its 50th anniversary with a pictorial machine slogan cancellation device. In 2015, the museum celebrated its 50,000,000th (yes, that's millions) visitor.

50,000,000+ Visitors

