

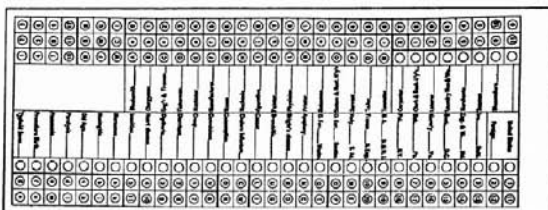
## IBM Card Size

JIM STRICKLAND

What was the size of the original IBM card?

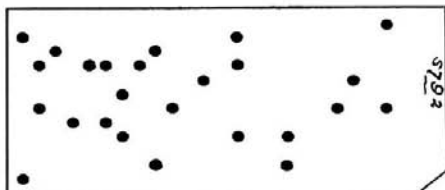
Well, that depends on what you mean by "original" and "IBM."

- The first documented card used by Herman Hollerith was 8 5/8 x 3 1/4 inches. It was used in the 1887 Baltimore Vital Statistics census. It had three rows of 36 punch positions at top and another three at the bottom and was punched using a "conductor punch."



Card for Baltimore vital statistics, 1887

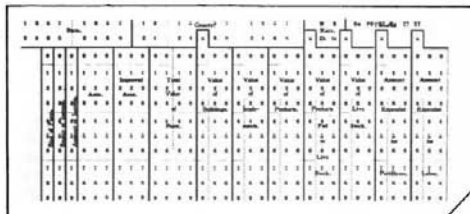
- The card used for the 1890 census was 6 5/8 x 3 1/4 inches and had 288 punching positions in 24 columns and was punched with the pantograph punch.



1890 completed card

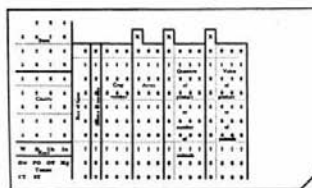
- In 1897 Hollerith used a 7 3/4 x 3 1/4 card with 36 columns to regain the business at the New York Central Railroad. (The NYC had installed Hollerith equipment in 1894 but it had been returned, in part, because the NYC needed to add, not just count.) This card had a columnar layout so that columns could be treated as fields and added with Hollerith's "Integrating Tabulator" and sorted with the automatic feed, Horizontal Sorter. Also, this was the card that (probably) was based on the size of the paper currency of the time. (Note that the currency "of the day" was 7.4218 x 3.125 or approximately 7 7/16 x 3 1/8 inches.)
- The 1900 census used three cards:
  - The Population card was 6 5/8 x 3 1/4, the same as in the 1890 census.
  - The Farm card was 7 3/4 x 3 1/4 card with 36 columns. It was based on the card designed for the New York Central Railroad and was suited to the columnar farm data which required the integrating calculator for addition of, e.g., acreage. By the way,

that is a 1900 farm card template that is on the pantograph punch that is in the Hollerith display.



Farm card, unpunched

- The Crop card was 5 5/8 x 3 1/4 and had 16 cols (plus considerable unused space).



Crop Card 1900

- In 1907 Hollerith settled on a card size of 7 3/8 x 3 1/4 with 45 columns.
- In 1928 IBM retained the size of the previous card but switched from round to rectangular holes and the 80 column format that we know so well.

So, what was the size of the original IBM card? You decide.

### A Huge Understatement

Wolfgang Schaechter found this in a 3-ring binder, taped to the inside cover and probably put there in the early 70's by his late father who was a mechanical engineer, Wolf says, and not computer savvy.

#### Big Savings Seen

But manufacturing executives say that computers have been refined to the point that they can be used to attain significant savings in the factory. That is especially important to plants such as the Harris-Intertype unit here, which ships 30% of its output to foreign markets to compete with machines made abroad, where labor costs are lower. In fact, many executives say the use of computers in general factory operations may be the biggest manufacturing development of the 1970s.

But the article missed the effect of computers on the Harris-Intertype market. The typesetting industry and typesetting machine makers like Harris-Intertype are all gone now. (The parent company, Harris Corp. is still very much with us, but is no longer in the typesetting machine business.)

Wolf suggested, "Maybe you can label this the biggest understatement of the 1970's..."