**THE GERMAN ALPHABET**

Officially, the German alphabet is the same as the one we use, with 26 characters. German uses four additional characters: the "ß" or *eszet*, and the three vowels with umlaut, "ä", "ö", and "ü". They are not considered separate letters, however, and do not affect alphabetical order. The "ä" is alphabetized as if it were a plain "a", the "ö" as "o", the "ü" as "u", and the "ß" as "ss". Historically, the umlaut originated as a German cursive "e", written over the vowel in question. In older books, we often see umlaut vowels printed with a small superscript "e" over the vowel:  

\[
\text{Ä} \quad \text{Ä} \\
\text{Ö} \quad \text{Ö} \\
\text{Ü} \quad \text{Ü}
\]

In view of the origin of the umlaut symbol, Germans have long been regarded it as permissible to replace "ä" with "ae", "ö" with "oe", and "ü" with "ue", whenever the proper German characters were not available for use in typesetting or on a typewriter. Similarly, "ß" can be replaced with "ss". If one can use the proper characters, it is better to do so; but use of the alternatives is acceptable.

When the German typeface called "Fraktur" was standard, two forms were used for the letter "s". The form "ß" was used only at the end of words, either when standing alone or when combined with others in compound words. Otherwise, "ß", the so-called "long s," was used. A similar usage was once standard in English. If you have looked at old documents such as the Bill of Rights, you will often note use of "f" instead of "s" — for instance, "Congres" instead of "Congress."

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This is a modified version of the Alphabet Chart given in *In Their Words: Vol. IV, German*, <https://langline.com/books/in-their-words-volume-iv-german/>. It is used here with the authors’ permission.