The tradition to issue stamps honouring Nicolaus Copernicus dates back to the 1920s. The first Polish stamp showing the image of Copernicus was issued in 1923. During the World War II occupation of Poland, Germans introduced a number of stamps with Copernicus. The aim of the Nazi propaganda was to convince Poles that Copernicus was German.

In 1954 the post of the People's Republic of China issued a stamp with the image of Copernicus on the occasion of the 410th anniversary of his death, and in 1955 the post of the USSR did the same to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement on friendship and cooperation between Poland and the USSR. The post of the French Republic issued in 1957 a series of seven stamps featuring famous representatives of science and arts, including Copernicus. It was perceived as an occasion to advertise Poland, Polish national heritage, as well as scientific and cultural accomplishments of our country. Postal stamps played an important role in that process.

Many Copernican decorative motifs were printed on notellets and envelopes, and used on date stamps. The first German – postmark with Copernican motif commemorating the astronomer's 400th death anniversary appeared during World War II, in 1943. A depiction of an astrolabe was surrounded by an inscription “400 Todestag des Deutschen Astronomen” and another one was placed below: “Nikolaus Kopernikus Krakau 24 Mai 1943”. As a response to that, Polish soldiers in the POW camp in Wöldenberg prepared their own postmark representing the Earth surrounded with a depiction of Copernicus, Equatorial Guinea, 1973.

Many Copernican decorative motifs were printed on notellets and envelopes, and used on date stamps. The portrait modelled on a drawing by Sabin Kaufmann from 1854, UNESCO provided patronage for these celebrations, ensuring their international prestige. This was a great opportunity for the whole world to get acquainted with the life and work of Nicolaus Copernicus.

Stamps with the image of Copernicus from a biography of Nicolaus Copernicus by Pierre Gassendi from 1654, the USA, 1973.

In the years 1970–1973 the Copernican theme in the philately blossomed. At that time, philatelists from all around the world prepared for postal stamp exhibitions honouring the 500th anniversary of Copernicus’ birth. UNESCO provided patronage for these celebrations, ensuring their international prestige. This was a great opportunity for the whole world to get acquainted with the life and work of Nicolaus Copernicus. Also, it was perceived as an occasion to advertise Poland, Polish national heritage, as well as scientific and cultural accomplishments of our country. Postal stamps played an important role in that process.

Many Copernican decorative motifs were printed on notellets and envelopes, and used on date stamps. The first – German – postmark with Copernican motif commemorating the astronomer's 400th death anniversary appeared during World War II, in 1943. A depiction of an astrolabe was surrounded by an inscription “400 Todestag des Deutschen Astronomen” and another one was placed below: “Nikolaus Kopernikus Krakau 24 Mai 1943”. As a response to that, Polish soldiers in the POW camp in Wöldenberg prepared their own postmark representing the Earth surrounded with an inscription in Polish “400-lecie Kopernika” (“400th anniversary of Copernicus”).