



The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers

By Tom Standage

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The Victorian Internet tells the colorful story of the telegraph's creation and remarkable impact, and of the visionaries, oddballs, and eccentrics who pioneered it, from the eighteenth-century French scientist Jean-Antoine Nollet to Samuel F. B. Morse and Thomas Edison. The electric telegraph nullified distance and shrank the world quicker and further than ever before or since, and its story mirrors and predicts that of the Internet in numerous ways.

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Editorial Review

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Imagine an almost instantaneous communication system that would allow people and governments all over the world to send and receive messages about politics, war, illness, and family events. The government has tried and failed to control it, and its revolutionary nature is trumpeted loudly by its backers. The Internet? Nope, the humble telegraph fit this bill way back in the 1800s. The parallels between the now-ubiquitous Internet and the telegraph are amazing, offering insight into the ways new technologies can change the very fabric of society within a single generation. In *The Victorian Internet*, Tom Standage examines the history of the telegraph, beginning with a horrifically funny story of a mile-long line of monks holding a wire and getting simultaneous shocks in the interest of investigating electricity, and ending with the advent of the telephone. All the early "online" pioneers are here: Samuel Morse, Thomas Edison, and a seemingly endless parade of code-makers, entrepreneurs, and spies who helped ensure the success of this communications revolution. Fans of *Longitude* will enjoy another story of the human side of dramatic technological developments, complete with personal rivalry, vicious competition, and agonizing failures. --*Therese Littleton*

From Publishers Weekly

A lively, short history of the development and rapid growth a century and a half ago of the first electronic network, the telegraph, Standage's book debut is also a cautionary tale in how new technologies inspire unrealistic hopes for universal understanding and peace, and then are themselves blamed when those hopes are disappointed. The telegraph developed almost simultaneously in America and Britain in the 1840s. Standage, a British journalist, effectively traces the different sources and false starts of an invention that had many claims on its patents. In 1842, Samuel F.B. Morse demonstrated a working telegraph between two committee rooms of the Capitol, and Congress reluctantly voted \$30,000 for an experimental line to Baltimore?89 to 83, with 70 abstaining "to avoid the responsibility of spending the public money for a machine they could not understand." By 1850 there were 12,000 miles of telegraph line in the U.S., and twice that two years later. Standage does a good job sorting through a complicated and often contentious history, showing the dramatic changes the telegraph brought to how business was conducted, news was reported and humanity viewed its world. The parallels he draws to today's Internet are catchy, but they sometimes overshadow his portrayal of the unique culture and sense of excitement the telegraph engendered?what one contemporary poet called "the thrill electric." News of the first transatlantic cable in 1858 led to predictions of world peace and an end to old prejudices and hostilities. Soon enough, however, Standage reports, criminal guile, government misinformation and that old human sport of romance found their way onto the wires. 18 illustrations. BOMC, QPB and History Book Club alternates. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

In his first book, British science journalist Standage gives an engaging and readable account of the invention, growth, and decline of the telegraph. In the preface and epilog, Standage claims that by understanding the social changes brought about by the telegraph we can better understand the contemporary sociology of the Internet; however, he only seriously addresses their similarities in the final chapter. Instead, most of the book is a historical account, peppered with biographical, sociological, and technological anecdotes. Annteresa Lubrano's *The Telegraph: How Technology Innovation Caused Social Change* (Garland, 1997) investigates the same subject but takes a much more academic tone. This lay reader's history of telegraphy is recommended for public and academic libraries.?Wade Lee, Univ. of Toledo Libs., OH

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As people who live in often the modest era should be change about what going on or information even knowledge to make them keep up with the era which can be always change and move forward. Some of you maybe may update themselves by studying books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to an individual is you don't know which one you should start with. This The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, because book serves what you want and want in this era.

Katherine Humphrey:

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