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"Early Electromagnetic Telephone Receivers"

by Basilio Catania

Introduction

The birth of the telephone is often associated with the birth of the electromagnetic receiver, since the same instrument was used also as a transmitter in early telephone lines. Many inventors—in addition to Alexander Graham Bell—claimed to have invented this instrument, whose simplicity of construction is truly elegant, but whose proper functioning requires meeting a number of critical constraints. The following is a list of the most essential constraints:

1. the magnetic core's material, shape and size (height/diameter ratio);
2. the polarization (by either electric current or permanent magnetization) of the magnetic core in order to achieve the maximum amplification of the superimposed oscillatory component;
3. the coil's shape (height/diameter ratio), its position along the core and the (copper) wire's cross section and number of turns;
4. the diaphragm's material, shape (preferably circular), thickness and mode of clamping (preferably all along its circumference);
5. the air gap between diaphragm and the magnetic pole(s) and means of adjustments of the same for optimum performance;
6. the acoustic interface with the human ear (or mouth) both for maximizing the acoustic gain and minimizing any environmental noise capture.

In addition to the above, even if not strictly pertaining to the electromagnetic instrument proper, the call signaling as well as the anti-sidetone (AST)[1] layouts are important to achieve its best performance in actual operation.

Although much has been written on this subject, I have often found ambiguities, more or less of the same kind as those regarding the make-and-break transmitters as compared with the true variable resistance devices (e.g. carbon microphones), that I have pointed out earlier in *Antenna* [1]. More precisely, I will refer to some early telephone receivers that operated, fully or partly, by magnetostriction (see the article on magnetostriction on page 15), but claimed to be either pure electromagnetic receivers or improvements over the magnetostriction receiver, and also to some electromagnetic receivers that were used in conjunction to unsuitable transmitters and therefore could not exploit their potential nor enjoy subsequent improvements.

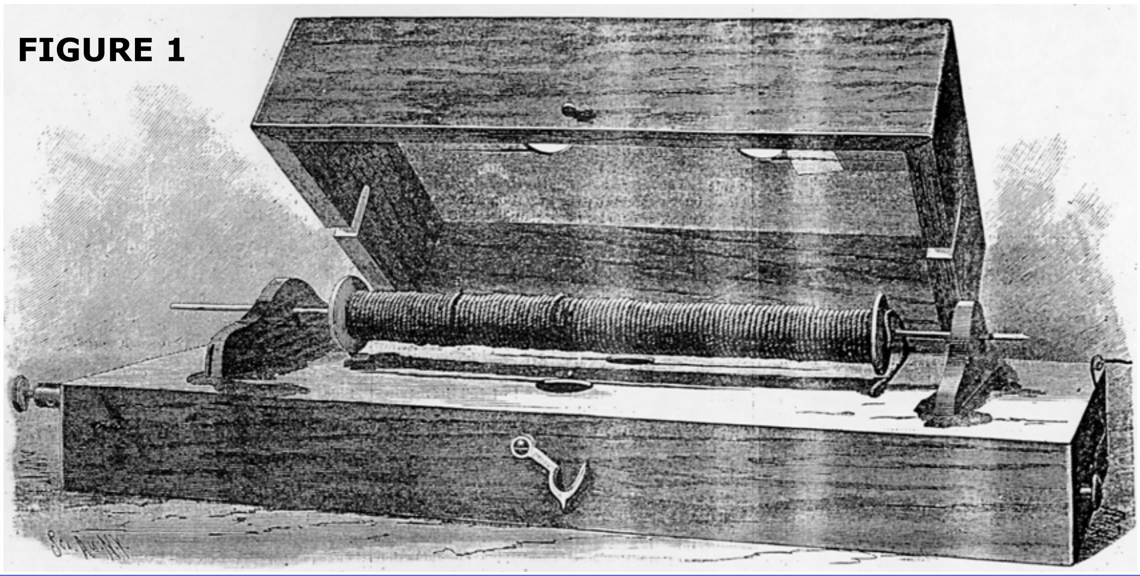
Let us review a few, among the most important ones, devised in the early times of telephony.

Van der Weyde's Reis Receivers

As already shown in [1], the magnetostriction receiver used by Philipp Reis (Figure 1, taken from [2]) exploited the elongation of the magnetic core of a solenoid each time the core was magnetized by an electric current. Reis used as the core of the solenoid a long =>

The Original Reis Receiver of 1861

FIGURE 1



1. An anti-sidetone (AST) layout is a circuit that prevents the speaker's telephone receiver from picking up the echo of the speaker's own voice as well as any background noise entering the speaker's telephone transmitter.

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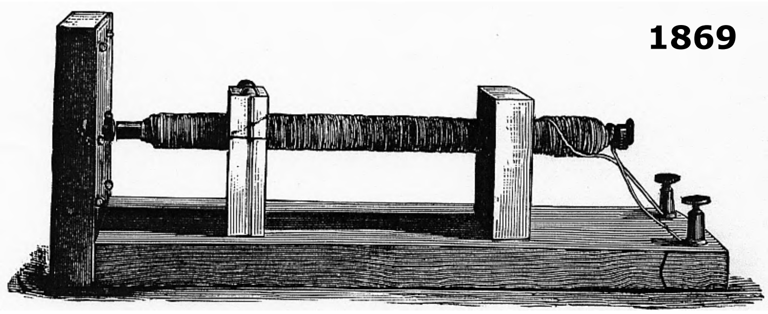


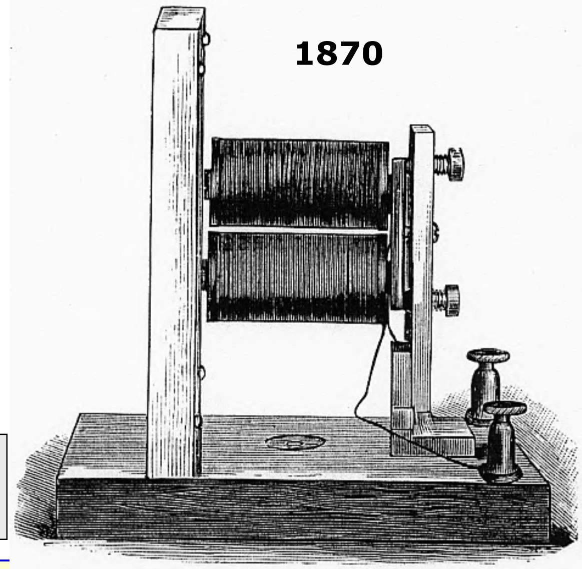


FIGURE 2

Van der Weyde's "Improved" Reis Receivers from 1869 and 1870

knitting needle clamped at both ends to two wooden bridges, and these in turn he glued to a wooden sounding box. This construction was necessary because of the feeble sound emitted by the needle alone.

Several inventors—among them Philip H. Van der Weyde—improved on the 1861 Reis receiver. In 1869 and 1870 Van der Weyde made a couple of interesting receivers (Figure 2) whose description appeared some years later in the *Telegraphic Journal and Electrical Review* [3] (and even later in *Scientific American* [4]). This is what the *Telegraphic Journal* columnist had to say (italics added):

". . . He [Van der Weyde] soldered an iron button to the centre of a brass plate (see fig. 11 [shown here in Figure 2]), placed *in front of* an iron bar, surrounded with a coil, and this was the instrument used as a receiver at the lecture of January 8th, 1869.[1] In August, 1870, he read a paper before the American Association for the Advancement of Science which that year assembled at Troy, N.Y., the paper being entitled "Further improvements in the method of transmitting musical melodies by telegraph wire." In the discussion which followed the reading of the paper, one or two of the members present stated that they had obtained good results by placing a tinned *iron plate in front of* the poles of a horse-shoe electro-magnet, and mentioned this as a well-known device; and on arriving at home in September, 1870, he constructed the apparatus shown in fig. 12 [Figure 2], in which a tinned iron plate was used."

Now, both receivers hardly resemble—not even in principle—the plain magnetostriction receiver made by Philipp Reis (Figure 1). It appears, in fact, from the two illustrations in Figure 2, that we now have an iron armature (either *an iron button* or *an iron plate*) and an air gap (however small) between the armature and the pole or poles of the electromagnet.[2] These are characteristics of an electromagnetic receiver. If, however, the air gap were very small, for instance with the armature *touching* the head of the magnetic core (which also could occur occasionally when the elongation of the core reaches its maximum value), then magnetostriction could have played a role—or the output sound could have been the result of the superposition of both the magnetostriction and the electromagnetic effects.

We must remark, however, that Van der Weyde's experiments were aimed at transmitting *musical melodies* [5, 6], and that he did not possess at the time a transmitter suitable for speech, excepting the Reis make-and-break transmitter (which was hardly suitable for that purpose). The word "telephone" found in Van der Weyde's articles [7, 8] referred to the Reis "telefon" with no allusion to the transmission of speech. Many years later, of course, he discovered that one could utilize it to transmit speech, but only in conjunction with a different telephone transmitter. =>

1. Van der Weyde gave similar lectures in the United States ([5] and [6]). These lectures are quoted in [7] and [8].
2. The account given in [4] is less accurate than that in [3], and the illustrations in the latter do not allow one to guess the size of the air gap—or whether there was one at all. However, the author states that the armature *faced* the poles of the electromagnet, implying that they were *not* in contact and therefore that actually *there was* an air gap.

"Early Electromagnetic Telephone Receivers" by Basilio Catania (continued)

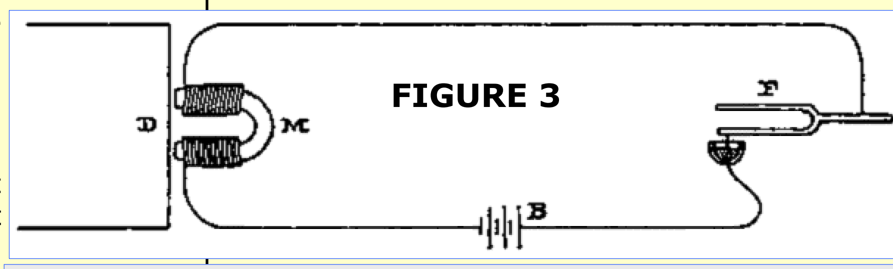
Pickering and Cross

During the aforesaid August 1970 lecture by Van der Weyde, Prof. Edward C. Pickering of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) rose and "got up and described his tin-box receiver, which would make such transmissions even more audible" ([9], p. 117). We have an extended description of this receiver, made by Prof. Charles R. Cross, also associated with MIT, who had been using Pickering's tin-can receiver since 1869 ([10] p. 222). Prof. Cross testified as follows ([10], [11] p. 221-226) (italics added):

"Q. 17. When did you first take part in any experiments relating to the telephone? I use the word 'telephone' in its generic sense.

A. I do not remember exactly, but think that it must have been about 1869 or 1870, certainly not subsequent to the latter date. I connected a tuning-fork transmitter with a *receiver similar to that used by Reis*, with some slight modifications of my own, and produced thus, at the farther end of the line, a note having the same pitch as that of the tuning-fork transmitter [Figure 3]."

"A. [22] . . . The new element in the apparatus was a receiver which was of a form that had been used in some experiments by Professor Pickering several years before in connection with an imperfect kind of circuit-breaking transmitter. The receiver exhibited at the date referred to consisted of a *large plate of tinned iron* which constituted the bottom or one side of a packing case in which some instruments had been imported. The case was rectangular in form, 38 inches long, 21 inches broad, and 19 inches deep. As shown in the lecture, the box was placed upon its side, so that the bottom of the box was in a vertical position. The box was secured to the table on which it rested so that it should be firm. Opposite the centre of the great diaphragm, formed by the bottom of this box, *was placed an electro-magnet*, whose legs were about six inches long, and whose cores were something over one inch in diameter. This magnet was fixed upon a support so that *its poles were quite close to the plate, but not in contact with it*, even when a current of electricity was caused to flow through the coils of the magnet. . . the particular tuning-fork used made 128 vibrations per second, so that when it was vibrating the circuit was broken 128 times in each second. . . . Whenever the circuit at the tuning-fork was closed, a current of electricity flowed through the circuit, including the coils of the electro-magnet, *and in consequence of the attraction of this electro-magnet*, the diaphragm was pulled towards the poles of the magnet. On the other hand, whenever, on account of the vibration of the fork, the stile attached to it was lifted out of contact with the mercury in the cup below it, the circuit was broken, the electro-magnet became demagnetized, and the pull on the diaphragm being released and thus under the influence of its own elasticity, the diaphragm moved away from the poles of the magnet. Since the tuning-fork *made and broke* the circuit 128 times per second the diaphragm was pulled and released the same number of times per second and hence executed 128 vibrations per second. Under these circumstances sound-waves corresponding to this frequency of vibration were produced in the air so that a note of a pitch corresponding to this rate of vibration was heard to issue from the receiver. . . ."



Cross's Electromagnetic Receiver (1872) Derived from Pickering's (1869) Tin-Box Receiver

"Q. 23. Of what material was the diaphragm of the receiving apparatus described in your last answer composed?

A. It was the *ordinary tinned iron of commerce*."

"Q. 31. Will you please offer a diagram fully illustrating the construction of the apparatus which you used in your experiments of 1872?

A. I will, and hereby produce it.

[*Witness produces the diagram hereto annexed.*]

Q. 32. Please also indicate the parts of the apparatus by suitable letters.

A. In the diagram which I have produced, **F** is the tuning-fork transmitter, **B** is the battery, **M** is the electro-magnet, and **D** is the diaphragm formed by the bottom of the box which is represented in figure as resting upon its side."

There are several remarks I wish to make about these statements. First, the term *tin-box* (or *tin-can*)

"Early Electromagnetic Telephone Receivers"
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receiver is misleading, since it actually was a *tin-coated iron box*. Therefore, it acted as an armature (or diaphragm) respecting the electromagnet, whose poles were *quite close to the plate, but not in contact with it*. Once more, it had nothing to do with the Reis receiver—not even as a modification or as an improvement of the same—but was a plain electromagnetic receiver.

Once more, this receiver was used in connection with a make-and-break device (a tuning fork equipped with a stile dipping into a mercury cup acting as a breaker) and therefore the relevant experiments were all conducted with a *pulsating* current, instead of an *undulatory* current. This configuration prevented this receiver from being considered as a regular electromagnetic telephone receiver, although the difference was only in its use, not in its structure. This fact came out in 1879, when the American Bell Telephone Company asked Prof. Cross to demonstrate in court that his *tin-box* receiver anticipated Elisha Gray's *tin-can* receiver, specifically the claim that it was capable of reproducing speech. The following is what Prof. Cross declared before the Court ([10], [11] p. 233-234):

> "My own apparatus was capable of doing everything which any apparatus described by Mr. Gray was capable of doing; and from this I have inferred that my experiments showed Mr. Gray's apparatus to have been anticipated, and hence of no particular importance in relation to speaking-telephone receivers, even admitting all claims put forward as to the date of its construction, and all arguments based on its mode of operation. . . . . my apparatus was earlier than Mr. Gray's . . ."

Elisha Gray[1] became interested in the transmission of musical tones in the Spring of 1874, soon after he resigned as superintendent of the Western Electric Manufacturing Company (of which he was the founder) and set out to become an independent inventor. He first developed an electric single-tone oscillator, which he called a *rheotome*, using a steel reed instead of a tuning fork as in Helmholtz's interrupter.[2] He then combined eight rheotomes into a "one-octave transmitter" in the hope of realizing an octoplex telegraph that would best the quadruplex telegraph patented by Thomas Edison and demonstrated at the New York Headquarters of the Western Union Telegraph Company on June 8, 1874 [17]. Gray's one-octave transmitter featured eight reed oscillators, each tuned to a note of the diatonic scale (the white keys of a piano), and made to vibrate by depressing a key on a piano-like keyboard. Figure 4 below shows his further improved instrument which covered two complete octaves (and so had 24 single-tone oscillators) and which he would use in his harmonic telegraph of 1876.

Gray demonstrated his "one-octave musical telegraph transmitter" on May 10, 1874, at the Western Union's headquarters in New York, on a 2,400-miles route without repeaters [17]. On June 13, 1874, he showed the same apparatus to a scientific audience at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, Joseph Henry presiding. He held other demonstrations in Boston and throughout Europe using various wideband receivers that merely acted as loudspeakers for the =>

Elisha Gray's Two-Octave Transmitter Used in his Harmonic Telegraph of 1876 (an improvement on his 1874 one-octave transmitter)

courtesy Oberlin College

FIGURE 4

1. Extensive information on Elisha Gray's life and work can be found in [13] and [14]. A remarkable archive on his work is kept at the Special Collections and Preservation Library, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.
2. Finding it necessary to maintain the vibrations of a tuning fork for a considerable time, Helmholtz constructed an electric single tone oscillator by placing an electromagnet between the prongs of the fork, using a circuit similar to that of the electric bell invented by the German physicist C. E. Neeff in 1831 [15]. The terms *interrupter*, *electrotome*, *rheotome*, and *trembler* [15, 16] indicated such single tone oscillators, including subsequent versions that replaced the tuning fork with a vibrating steel reed—such as those of Gray, Edison, and Bell.

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musical tones sent over the line. The *New York Times* [17] noted that, although Gray's demonstration consisted of playing and transmitting popular themes on his musical telegraph, "quite enough has been demonstrated to show that, from its basis, a new system of telegraphy, both for serial and sub-linking lines, of a simple, rapid and economical character can be introduced." In modern terms, Gray paved the way for the exploitation of a new principle in telegraph multiplexing, that of "frequency-division multiplexing" (FDM), and, in particular, of "harmonic telegraphy," the word "harmonic" being derived from the use of musical notes.[1]

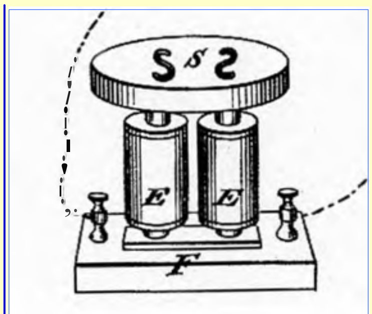
As we will see shortly, Gray finally would develop a selective receiver (which he called an "analyzing receiver") to separate (in modern terms, to demultiplex) the received tones and forward them individually to the corresponding Morse operators. However, we should first advance some considerations about his two wideband receivers—his "tin-can" and his "washbasin" receiver—employed in his aforesaid demonstrations.

Gray's tin-can receiver,[2] said to have been made in May of 1874, was described well in his two patents [18] and [19]. Both patented instruments are quite similar to each other, and both relate to his system for transmitting musical tones. The drawing shown at the top of Figure 5 is from Gray's U.S. patent #166,095 [19].

In the specification of this patent, Gray stated (italics added):

"My invention relates to what I term an 'electro-harmonic telegraph,' and is based upon the fact well known to electricians that *an electromagnet elongates* under the action of the electric current, and contracts again when the current ceases. Consequently a succession of impulses or interruptions will *cause the magnet to vibrate*, and if these vibrations be of sufficient frequency a musical tone will be produced, the pitch of which will depend upon the rapidity of the vibrations. . . . *As the receiving electro-magnet* is connected with this circuit it *will be caused to vibrate*, thus *producing a tone of corresponding pitch, the sound of which may be intensified by the use of a hollow cylinder, S, of metal, placed on*[3] *the poles of the magnet*."

Note that the same receiver is termed in the remainder of the patent specification an "electro-magnet



Gray's Tin-Can Receiver 1874

FIGURE 5

Gray's Washbasin Receiver 1874

receiver," although it clearly was conceived to operate by magnetostriction. This ambiguity is reflected in [14], in which the author, after noting that this instrument was equipped with a "*diaphragm*, originally an ordinary shoe-blacking box, supported near the poles of the electromagnet" (italics added), concludes that this receiver "anticipated the design of the modern telephone receiver." One finds similar statements in [13].

One must observe, however, that replacing the word "*on*" (i.e., *above and in contact*) with "*near*" and the phase "*hollow cylinder*" with "*diaphragm*" substantially alters the meaning of the description in Gray's U.S. patent. More precisely, as Gray's original receiver was intended to operate with zero air gap, the hollow cylinder **S** could not operate as a *diaphragm* in regular telephone receivers, but only as a more efficient acoustic radiator of the vibrations transmitted to it *mechanically* by the magnetic core of the electromagnet.

1. From these words, it appears that Robert Bruce's statement ([9] p. 118) that the New York Times "piece said nothing of multiple telegraphy" is incorrect.
2. As remarked in [13], Gray "happened to see two boys playing with a homemade toy known as a 'lovers' telegraph' . . . what would be known today as a tin-can telephone." Hence the name given to his receiver.
3. The preposition "on" describes something in a position above *and in contact* with the surface of something else.

"Early Electromagnetic Telephone Receivers" by Basilio Catania (continued)

Gray developed his second receiver (bottom of Figure 5)[1] in July of 1874 and used it in his demonstrations in Europe in August and September of 1874. Among others, he showed the device to Prof. John Tyndall of the Royal Institution in London and to Latimer Clark, a prominent officer in the British telegraph administration [13, 14]. This receiver differed from the earlier tin-can receiver in that he substituted a washbasin in place of the shoe-polish can on top of the electromagnet, and he rotated the instrument so that it resembled parabolic acoustic radiator (in fact, it has been considered to be the forerunner of the modern loudspeaker). Of course, as a result he obtained a more powerful sound, because the surface of the air column set in movement by the elongation of the electromagnet was much wider than that of the shoe-polish can. Apart its efficiency, however, we do not see any novelty as far as its principle of operation is concerned.

In December 1874, Gray constructed his third receiver, which was a selective receiver. He called it an *analyzing receiver*, since its purpose was to discriminate among the eight tones sent over the line, so as to allow each Morse operator at the line's receiving end to receive the individual message carried by a particular "tone."[2] On March 17, 1875, he demonstrated his whole octoplex before the American Electrical Society [20], just after having filed a patent application on the same apparatus in England [21]. Gray later filed a patent application in the United States for the same apparatus on January 8, 1876 [22], from which comes Figure 6.

The following is the description of Gray's third receiver provided in his U.S. patent #175,971 [22]:

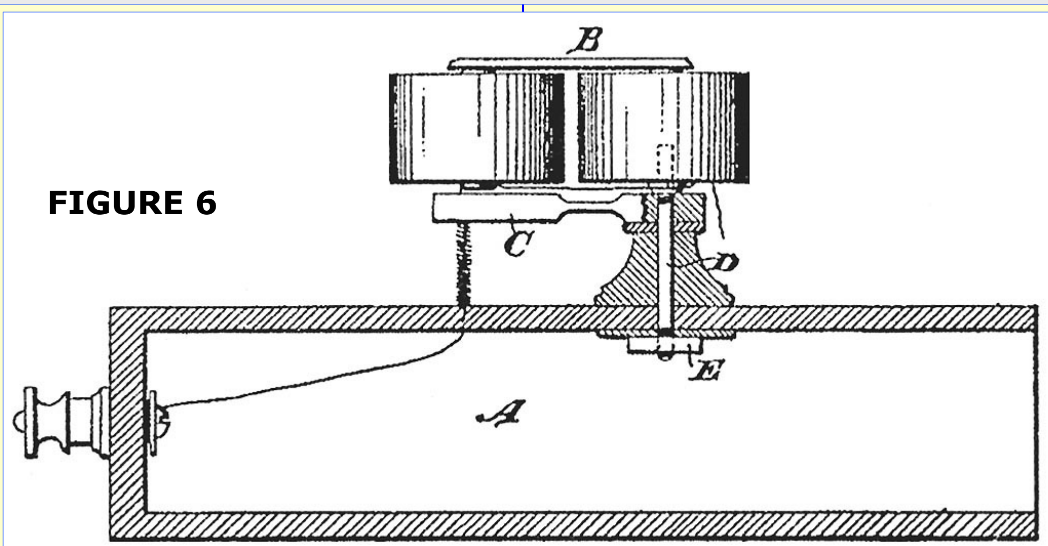
"A resonant-box, **A**, such as used for intensifying the sound of tuning-forks, is shown as closed at one end. A screw-bolt, **D**, or other suitable support secured upon this box, sustains an electro-magnet, **B**, of well-known construction. A vibrating tongue or reed, **C**, of steel, is also fastened upon the support **D**, and is united with one pole of the magnet **B**. The free end of the reed passes close to, but does not touch, the other pole of the magnet.

For convenience of removal or replacement, all the parts of the apparatus may be united by means of a common bolt and nut, **E**.

The box is tuned to produce a maximum resonance of the desired tone, and the reed is accurately tuned correspondingly. Consequently, as the reed vibrates, the sound of its fundamental tone is intensified by the resonance of the box in accordance with well-known laws of acoustics. =>

Gray's Harmonic Receiver (or Wooden Sounding Box Receiver) Used in his Octoplex Demonstrated at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition on June 25, 1876

FIGURE 6



1. The original model is in the possession of the National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC [14].
2. Most Morse operators in the United States received by ear and wrote down the message directly in a telegram form. There were, however, a number of Morse machines that either wrote on a paper ribbon which later was glued in strips to the telegram form or were true typewriters that did the job without operators at all.

"Early Electromagnetic Telephone Receivers" by Basilio Catania (continued)

If, now, the electro-magnet be connected in a telegraphic circuit in the same way as one of my analyzers described in the application aforesaid, and the note be transmitted by means of one of my transmitters described in said application for Letters Patent, the note will sound in the box, provided the tone transmitted corresponds with that of the box; otherwise the note will not be heard. Should a second analyzer be similarly placed in the circuit and tuned to a different pitch, and a second note of corresponding pitch be transmitted, it will sound in the box of corresponding pitch without affecting the other. The same rule holds with a larger number."

From the above, it appears that Gray's third (or *wooden sounding box*) receiver responded to only one tone determined by both the resonant frequency of the sounding box and the vibration frequency of the reed, which were made to match perfectly to each other as well as to the pitch of the corresponding transmitter.[1] On Sunday, June 25, 1876, Gray successfully demonstrated his octoplex on a telegraph line built between Philadelphia (starting from Western Union's stand at the Centennial Exposition) and New York along the poles of the Pennsylvania Railroads. On September 21, 1876, Gray demonstrated the same system at Western Union headquarters in New York City, which *Scientific American* reported on at length [23].[2]

His octoplex telegraph was a success. David Hounshell [13] noted that in the reports of the Centennial Exposition's awards committee [25] Gray's octoplex was cited as "promising important useful practical results," whereas Bell's electrical transmission of speech was characterized as a great "marvel," but without reference to "practical results."

As a matter of fact, Gray himself stated in a letter to his lawyer, Alex H. Hayes a few weeks later (October 29, 1875) [26]:

"Bell seems to be spending all his energies in the talking telegraph. While this is very interesting scientifically it has no commercial value at present, for they [Western Union] can do more business over a line by methods already in use than by that system. I don't want at present to spend my time and money for that which will bring no return."

Consequently, Gray was very busy until about the end of January 1876 in perfecting his octoplex and filing a number of improvement patents on the same [27, 28, 29, 30]. We, therefore, cannot find a satisfactory explanation of why and how Gray made up his mind and filed his well known caveat on the transmission of speech [31], only two weeks after having filed his four octoplex patents, without having done the least experiment on speech transmission—notwithstanding his aforementioned negative attitude towards the return of such an invention. As Hounshell [13] noted, the explanation that Gray had changed his mind after having seen two boys playing with the so-called lovers' telegraph is hardly credible.

At any rate, let us analyze the technical background of his caveat specification, in particular the receiver described there.[3] The caveat stated (italics added) [31]:

". . . my present invention is based upon a modification of the principle of said invention which is set forth and described in Letters Patent of the United States granted to me July 27, 1875, respectively numbered 166,095, and 166,096,[4] and also in an application for Letters Patent of the United States filed by me February 23, 1875."

". . . an electro-magnet of ordinary construction *acting upon a diaphragm to which is attached a piece of soft iron* and which diaphragm is stretched across a receiving vocalizing chamber **C** . . . . The diaphragm at the receiving end of the line *is thus thrown into vibration* corresponding with those at the transmitting end and audible sounds or words are produced."

It seems quite evident from the above description that it was jotted down, without clearly discriminating the principle of magnetostriction from that of =>

1. A sounder like Gray's receiver shown in Figure 6 often was called a "telephone," although intended for receiving not speech, but a single tone.
2. A full account of Gray's work in harmonic telegraphy carried out between 1867 to 1876 is provided in his 1878 book [24].
3. We have no remarks whatsoever regarding his liquid transmitter, it being derived from his earlier commercial water rheostats manufactured by the Western Electric Manufacturing Company 1872-1874, while Gray was superintendent at the company ([32], p. 153). Note that a similar device was utilized by Edison and others from 1873 [33].
4. Both patents were derivative of his English patent [18]. The latter was split into two parts that were filed and granted separately in the United States as patents #166,095 and #166,096.

"Early Electromagnetic Telephone Receivers" by Basilio Catania (continued)

magnetodynamics, i.e. the attraction and repulsion of an armature or diaphragm under the action of an electromagnet. In fact, on one hand Gray refers to his "tin-can" or magnetostriction receiver discussed above, while on the other hand his electromagnet now faces a vocalizing chamber **C**, apparently with a non-zero air gap (Figure 7), instead of touching the shoe-polish can of his tin-can receiver (top of Figure 5) as describes in his U.S. patent #166,095 and quoted in his caveat.

Among the writers supporting the thesis that Gray's caveat implied the use of a true electromagnetic receiver is William Aitken, who wrote ([34] p. 63), referring to Gray's lecture of March 17, 1875,[1] before the American Electrical Society, that Gray's (wooden sounding box) receiver (italics added) "is a common electro-magnet having a bar of iron rigidly fixed at one pole, which extends across the other pole, *but does not touch it by about one sixty-fourth of an inch*." However, Gray's wooden sounding box receiver was a selective receiver intended to respond to one tone only and whose air gap (at the second pole of the electromagnet) allowed the tuned reed to vibrate at that same single tone.

In addition, Aitken neglected to report what Gray stated just two lines before the same quotation, namely (see [20], p. 9, italics added):

"It is a well known fact that *an iron rod elongates when magnetized, and contracts again when demagnetized*. The elongation and contraction are so sudden, that an audible sound is produced at each change. In order to convert this sound into a musical tone it is only necessary to repeat it uniformly and at a definite rate of speed, which shall not be less than sixteen nor more than four thousand per second."

These ambiguities in Gray's caveat—as far as its receiver is concerned—still remain and strengthen if we consider the events that followed Gray's octoplex demonstration at Philadelphia. Gray, in fact, on June 25, 1876—the same day of his octoplex demonstration—also watched Bell's demonstration of speech transmission, and he thought he had heard the words "Aye, there's the rub" ([9], p. 197). Soon after, he instructed his instrument maker, William Goodridge, to construct a liquid transmitter, as described in his caveat [31], and in July 1876, Gray tried it out using one of his octoplex "wooden sounding box" receivers. Obviously, the test failed and could not have done otherwise, since the receiver he utilized was absolutely unsuitable for receiving (wideband) vocal sounds, because it was tuned to a single tone.

Gray's "vocal sound receiver" as depicted in his caveat of 1876

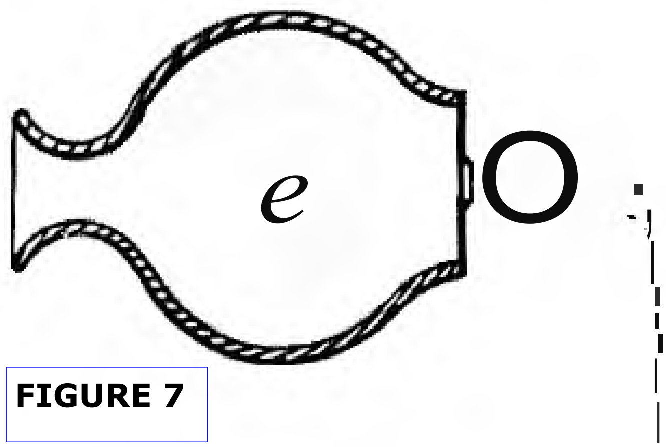


FIGURE 7

Gray himself later admitted that the failure was a result of using an inappropriate receiver type ([13] p. 155, [35] p. 457).[2] The fact, however, that he made this test with such a receiver and not with either his tin-can or washbasin receivers, does not rule in favor of his correct understanding of the basics of speech transmission.[3]

After said failure, moreover, Gray abandoned his telephone scheme. The following March 5, 1877, he wrote to Bell: "I do not, however, claim even the credit of inventing it, as I do not believe a mere description of an idea that has never been reduced to practice—in the strict sense of that phrase—should be dignified with the name invention." ([9] p. 269). In the end, after about

1. Aitken erroneously quotes this lecture as delivered on March 13, 1875.
2. Hounshell [13] quotes the "Deposition of William Goodridge," in *Elisha Gray's Case, Speaking Telephone Interferences*, p. 18. Prescott [35] quotes Gray's own statement (probably made in the same case).
3. Hounshell remarks ([13] p. 135) that Philadelphia was hit in those days by an unusual heat wave and that "he [Gray] passed out in the streets of Philadelphia either from heat prostration or a mild heart attack. He spent over a month in bed for recovering from this attack."

"Early Electromagnetic Telephone Receivers" by Basilio Catania (conclusion)

five months from filing his caveat at the Patent Office, Gray could not get his invention to work satisfactorily or work at all.

Conclusions

I have attempted to reconstruct, from the original documents and statements of each inventor, the structure and principle of operation of some early electromagnetic receivers. I have shown that a few of them, which were represented as improvements of the Reis magnetostriction receiver, were actually true electromagnetic receivers, although their inventors may not have realized this difference. I have shown that other receivers actually embodied the principle of the electromagnetic receiver, but were used to reproduce single tones (not speech) or were conceived and described as being magnetostriction receivers and discovered only later that they could serve to reproduce speech.

I have done the same exercise for other inventors, including Alexander Graham Bell and Antonio Meucci, and I hope to report on their receivers in a forthcoming paper.

Acknowledgements

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Symposium on Postal History (Deadline July 1, 2006)

A call for papers went out for the Winton M. Blount Symposium on Postal History to be held at the National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, DC, on 3-4 November 2006. The sponsors are the National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution, and the American Philatelic Research Library of the American Philatelic Society (*www.stamps.org*).

Scholars of postal organizations and systems rarely meet and discuss their ideas and research with scholars of philately. This conference hopes to bridge that gap. In addition, the Blount Symposium aims to integrate philately and the history of postal operations within the broader context of U.S. history. The conference hopes to promote research, increase public awareness, and bring national visibility to resident scholars, libraries, and resources.

The symposium will begin with a plenary panel discussion on the topic "What is postal history?" Invited speakers include Michael Laurence, editor, *Classics Chronicle*; Richard R. John, professor, University of Illinois at Chicago (and a member of the **Mercurians**); John Willis, historian, Canadian Postal Museum; and Maynard H. Benjamin, president and CEO, Envelope Manufacturers Association.

Potential presentation themes include transportation and the mail, the technology of moving the mail, and the impact of the information age on communication.

Organizers of the Blount Symposium will post all papers on the website of the National Postal Museum, and publication of selected proceedings papers is under consideration.

Conference co-chairs are Cheryl R. Ganz, Allison Marsh, and David L. Straight.

"History of Wireless"
A Book Review by A. David Wunsch*

Tapan K. Sarkar, Robert Mailloux, Arthur A. Oliner, Magdalena Salazar-Palma, Dipak L. Sengupta. ***History of Wireless***. New York: John Wiley-IEEE Press, January 2006. 680 pages. $60.00 hardbound. ISBN: 0-471-71814-9.

The word "wireless" has become strangely ambiguous: does it refer to wireless telegraphy of the late 19th and early 20th century, is it the British term for "radio" widely used until the end of World War II, or is it the young person's definition—the world of cell phones and wire-free internet access? The cover of *History of Wireless* is graced by perhaps 20 postage stamp sized pictures that include some familiar dead white males: Faraday, Maxwell, Hertz, Tesla, Marconi, and Fessenden. Fortunately, the cover misleads; the "history of wireless" is interpreted in this work to include a number of subjects—some in the near present—that are not part of the traditional wireless/radio canon.

The book has a curious construction. The names of 5 authors appear on the cover, and the book has 17 chapters. All 5 wrote some of the chapters, but the authors of the majority of chapters are people not listed as book authors. One soon suspects the lack of an editor. Certain chapters suggest that they originally were PowerPoint lectures that went directly to the printer. The clue is the sleep-inducing bullet list characteristic of the PowerPoint medium. Chapter 2 consists entirely of a list of hundreds of factoids preceded by the tell-tale fat dot. There seems to be little to connect one nugget to another, and many are so cryptic and erroneous that one's faith in the succeeding chapters is apt to be shaken. For example, we have "George Westinghouse developed an electronic balancing machine for rotors to detect vibrations as small as 25 millionths of an inch" (p. 142). The date given for this achievement (whose connection to wireless escapes me) was 1944; yet Westinghouse died in 1914.

After reading *History of Wireless*, I decided that—before lending it to my students—I would wrap the nearly 700 pages with a band on which I would write a Surgeon General's warning: "Caution: although this book contains useful and novel history, it contains so much wrong and contradictory information that you'd better talk to me before reading it." Let me begin with three illustrative quotes:

a) ". . .Maxwell was the originator of dimensional analysis." (p. 220)

b) "As we know today, starting with Hertz and Marconi, all used the Tesla spark gap generator for their experiments." (p.308)

c) "Fessenden made . . . the first ever scientific investigation of electromagnetic phenomena, wave propagation, and antenna design." (p.414)

These statements have something in common—they are wrong. I don't know who invented dimensional analysis, but I know that it was not James Clerk Maxwell. Joseph Fourier used it in his *Analytic Theory of Heat*, published in 1822 nine years before Maxwell was born. The evidence against statement (b) is overwhelming. The equipment used in both cases is simply a Ruhmkorff induction coil with some elementary circuitry capable of resonance. Hertz's initial fundamental experiments were published in 1887 at least 4 years before Tesla's lectures on spark gaps. If the statement is taken at face value, we would have to conclude that Tesla derived his invention from Hertz—surely not what the authors intend. Statement (c) is astounding, especially to anyone who reads the remainder of the book. It ignores the entire history of electrical investigations in the 19th century.

The above paragraphs have another feature in common that pervades much of the book—the curse of hagiography. In several cases the authors of the chapters have chosen to lionize one or two of their heroes, embellishing their accomplishments beyond what is necessary. Maxwell, Tesla and Fessenden are justifiably famous without falsehoods. The hagiography, too, has about it a whiff of chauvinism. The Canadian John Belrose is responsible for statement (c) regarding Fessenden, a fellow Canadian. The chapter on the Serb Nikola Tesla is written by a fellow Serb who consistently overstates his hero's achievements and confesses wonderment (p. 286) that historians neglect his subject's "important . . . role in the early development of radio."

Among the 17 chapters of this book the most controversial is that of John Belrose which deals principally with Reginald Fessenden. Not only does he attempt to advance the already secure reputation of this inventor, but he seeks to achieve this through a series of invidious comparisons involving Fessenden and Marconi. Belrose is unable to let pass a chance to denigrate Marconi. Some examples: "Marconi (as was his usual)" patented someone else's device in his own name (p. 365). Marconi had no qualms about borrowing once more from earlier work" [not his own] (p. 367). We are told that "Marconi was not a systems designer, he was a systems developer . . . and an expert in concealing what he did so that others could not copy him" (p. 351) .=>

"History of Wireless"
by A. David Wunsch (continued)

Belrose's campaign reaches a crescendo in his discussion of the events of 12 and 13 December 1901. Marconi and two assistants were in St. John's Newfoundland where—if we are to believe Marconi—he and one of his men repeatedly were able to hear at midday the letter S (three dots in Morse code) broadcast by prearrangement from a powerful spark transmitter in Cornwall, England. This event is regarded as the first transatlantic reception of wireless telegraphy. Although some skepticism followed its announcement, Marconi's reputation was such that most of the scientific and engineering community accepted its validity, and the following month the American Institute of Electrical Engineers held a reception in his honor in New York City. Many greats of the electrical world sent congratulatory letters. Tesla referred to Marconi as a "splendid worker and a deep thinker," ([1], p. 113), a view not shared by Dr. Belrose.

Controversy has dogged Marconi's celebrated experiment for a century, and there has been no shortage of pundits claiming that Marconi could or could not have have heard the transmitted signal. Belrose is so certain that Marconi did *not* receive those signals that he supplies an alternate explanation for the three dots heard on those two days: natural atmospheric noise. Most of the disagreement stems from the frequency used.

A Marconi engineer gave the frequency as 819.6 kHz ([2], p. 268). Others have cited different frequencies. An AM radio easily gets stations at 819.6 kHz, but at midday—when Marconi was listening—you will not be able to hear a station much further than perhaps 100 miles. However, using a short wave radio (which receives frequencies higher than those in the AM band) at midday in the winter, you can hear signals from thousands of miles away, provided you started hunting at frequencies above about 5,000 kHz. If you tried a receiver capable of detecting low frequencies, you also might hear signals below the AM band. Thus, 819.6 kHz lies in a spectrum of frequencies that is unsuitable for long distance communication during the day.

Those engineers who accept Marconi's word rationalize his results by saying that 819.6 kHz was not the frequency employed. A spark transmitter puts out a "dirty" signal—one rich in harmonics (overtones)—and at least some of them might have corresponded to signals in the shortwave band. The radio propagation expert J. A. Ratcliffe [3] concluded that the transmitter generated two frequencies, the higher of which would have been well into the shortwave band, and therefore a candidate for reception. Ratcliffe alternatively suggested that the uncertainties in the parameters of the circuits used at Cornwall were such that a signal as low as 200 kHz also could have been emitted and then received by Marconi.

Belrose dismisses these possibilities, faulting Ratcliffe's model of Marconi's transmitting antenna. He creates his own model of the Cornwall transmitter using linear circuit theory plus the Numerical Electromagnetics Code (NEC).[1] However, a circuit containing a spark gap—there are two here—is inherently nonlinear, making his analysis suspect. Belrose also does not acknowledge a paper by Mackeand and Cross [4] who created a hybrid model of the Marconi transmitter. The transmitting antenna is a computer model, but the theoretical power of the signal entering this antenna is extrapolated from that obtained with a small laboratory spark device. The authors concluded that "Marconi is likely to have received high frequency wide band signals, spurious components of the spark transmitter output, propagated across the Atlantic by sky waves." The last word on this subject should belong to English radio historian Desmond Thackeray [5] who asserted that, given the vagueness of our knowledge about the system that Marconi used, all conclusions about whether he received the S come down to "a matter of faith."

Duncan Baker has written one of the most useful chapters. It describes the usage of wireless telegraphy during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), perhaps one of the earliest of the new medium by the military industrial complex. The British purchased their equipment from Marconi, while the Boers got theirs from the German firm of Siemens, which equipment the British confiscated before the Boers could place it in combat.

Another valuable contribution, written by G. Sato and M. Sato, is on the development of radio antennas in Japan beginning essentially with the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). The Japanese initially had planned to purchase their wireless equipment from Marconi, but—finding the cost excessive—developed their own. When television entered U.S. homes in the 1950's, rooftops became festooned with a receiving antenna called a Yagi. Antenna cognoscenti might have called this a Yagi-Uda array. Sato and Sato give the history of this enormously popular invention and clarify who both Yagi and Uda were and why the former, at least initially, got the glory.

The Yagi antenna is what engineers call an array. It consists of several elements—in this case the thick wires or tubes attached to the supporting struc-

"History of Wireless" by A. David Wunsch (continued)

ture. Robert Mailloux, an antenna expert with the United States Air Force, has written an unusual history of arrays of a particular type, the phased array. If one uses a phased array for transmitting, one can adjust the direction of the radiated beam by electrical means, and if one uses it to receive, one also can alter the direction of reception. This capability has obvious application to radar, and indeed the military historically has been the chief supporter of research in this area. Mailloux concludes his contribution with a modest disclaimer that I wish the authors of some of the more provincial chapters had heeded—a recognition that because he is an American, he may have neglected research and inventions originating outside his home country.

Most historians of electronics in the United States and Western Europe are ignorant of 20th-century communications history in the Soviet Union. Starting in the 1930s and continuing into the late 20th century, Soviet engineers could not publish their work in international journals. The resulting dearth of information is remedied in part in a chapter by A. Kostenko, A. Nosich, and Paul Goldsmith. The latter is a radio astronomer at Cornell, while the others are at the Usikov Institute in the Ukraine. Their chapter deals with a very specific branch of electromagnetics in the USSR—the transmission of power and information at extremely short wavelengths only millimeters long. In contrast, the length of radio waves in the middle of the FM radio band is about 3,000 millimeters. The use of millimeter wavelengths nearly makes possible the practical transmission of electric power (as opposed to information) without the use of wires or cables. (This was long the dream of Nikola Tesla, whose use of enormously large wavelengths doomed his experiments.)

Microwave engineers are well acquainted with the great achievements of the MIT Radiation Laboratory during WW II; its history is richly documented. Arthur Oliner tells us of an illustrious university-affiliated laboratory in Brooklyn, New York, that deserves recognition: The Microwave Research Institute at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. As Oliner puts it, "To those who worked in microwaves in the two or three decades after the end of WW II, the name Microwave Research Institute commanded great respect . . . but the name is hardly known today." (p. 554) Oliner, who taught at Brooklyn Polytechnic, embeds this history in a chapter on waveguides—the pipes and metal strips used to carry microwaves. I would have liked to have known more about what led to the decline of the Institute, an institution that by 1968 had trained more microwave engineers than even MIT.

The remaining chapters of the book deal with the classical history of electromagnetics, wireless telegraphy, and early radio. With a few exceptions, this material has appeared elsewhere, and is based on easily obtained secondary sources. A student of this subject would be better served by reading such well regarded books as those by Aitken [2, 6], Hunt [7], and Nahin[8], as well as Hertz's original papers, which are available in an inexpensive edition [9].

Two exceptions to this pattern of recycled old news should be noted. One is the chapter by Tapan Sarkar and Dipak Sengupta on the Indian, Jagadis Chandra Bose, who, astonishingly, in the late 19th century, already was doing microwave research. The authors' thesis—that Bose discovered the ability of lead sulfide crystals to detect radio waves in 1904—is undercut two chapters later by Manfred Thumm's informative essay on German contributions to electromagnetic waves. Thumm asserts that as early as 1874, Karl Ferdinand Braun (who later shared the Nobel Prize with Marconi) used metal sulfide crystals to rectify (make flow in a single direction) electrical signals, and that this "led to the development of crystal radio detectors." The hand of an editor is needed here to give the lost reader some guidance.

In a provocative chapter, Sarkar and Sengupta take aim at a well regarded book: *Hertz and the Maxwellians* [10]. The Maxwellians were three Victorian British scientists: Oliver Heaviside, Oliver Lodge, and George Francis FitzGerald. Their work sought to interpret the difficult theory of electromagnetism set forth by James Clerk Maxwell in his 1873 treatise. Correspondence between Hertz and the Maxwellians began in 1888, and Hertz eventually met all but Heaviside. Sarkar and Sengupta accuse O'Hara and Pricha of promoting the erroneous thesis that Hertz's most famous experimental work was inspired by his interactions with these physicists. The experiments in question occurred from 1886 to 1888, and an important theoretical paper of 1884 preceded them. A careful reading of *Hertz and the Maxwellians* shows that the authors paid scrupulous attention to the dates of all correspondence and meetings between Hertz and the Maxwellians. They demonstrated a fruitful interaction, but never asserted that the exchange led to Hertz's famous experiments. Despite his remarkable work, Hertz, like Maxwell himself, had an imperfect comprehension of Maxwell's theory[2] and was indebted to the three for a deepening of his knowledge.[3]

In a book of this length, one expects to find errors, but the quantity here is excessive. Some are recognized easily, such as the sinking of the Titanic in 1911 (page 406). Others are more insidious and are the cause of my caveat to students. For example, the Pref-

"History of Wireless" by A. David Wunsch (conclusion)

ace asserts that: "[with the start of broadcasting] around 1920 . . . the word 'radio' was introduced." Prior uses of "radio" abound. The U.S. Congress is not famous for being technically *au courant,* but it passed a famous Radio Act in 1912. The Institute of Radio Engineers (now the IEEE) was founded in 1912; the General Radio Company dates from 1915; and Lee de Forest had an earlier start with his Radio Telephone Company of 1909. I suggest that before the next printing, the contributors read the entire book and root out the mistakes of their coauthors.

Footnotes

1. NEC (as it is usually known) was developed at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory circa 1981. It is in the public domain, and is often used for designing and analyzing radio antennas.
2. Heaviside often is quoted as saying that "Maxwell was ½ a Maxwellian" because of his incomplete grasp of the implications of his own treatise. See [7], page 205.
3. Hunt[7], p.182, also asserts that after 5 years exposure to the Maxwellians, Hertz in 1893 "explicitly credited Heaviside with priority in having recast Maxwell's equations and explained their proper meaning and use."

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Magnetostriction by Basilio Catania

Magnetostriction is a property of magnetic materials—typically, ferromagnetic materials—in which the material changes its shape when influenced by a magnetic field. As the material is magnetized, it grows longer and inversely changes its thickness; when no longer magnetized, it quickly regains its original shape, typically in less than 1 microsecond.

J. Philipp Reis explained this mechanism in his October 26, 1861, lecture before the Physical Society in Frankfurt-am-Main [1]: "At each closing of the circuit, the atoms of the iron wire inside the distant spiral are moved away from each other . . . on breaking the circuit, these atoms seek to regain their position of equilibrium."

In the case of an electromagnet, magnetostriction occurs each time an electric current travels through the coil. As soon as the battery connection is broken, the magnet's length and thickness return to normal.

The magnetostrictive effect was first identified in 1842 by James Prescott Joule, who observed that a bar of nickel changed in length when he magnetized it [2]. Earlier, however, Charles Grafton Page of Salem, Massachusetts, discovered in 1837 that an electromagnet makes a sharp sound (often referred to as a "tick" or "click") when suddenly magnetized or demagnetized. Page also noted that "when the contact is made, the sound is very feeble; when broken it may be heard at two or three feet distance" [3].

Alexander Graham Bell also noted, "when the circuit upon which it [the electromagnet] is placed is rapidly made and broken, a succession of explosive noises [clicks] proceeds from the magnet" [4]. The ear perceives a continuous sound similar to a musical note whose pitch depends on the number of clicks per second. Hence the name "galvanic music" that Page attributed to this phenomenon. Page's public demonstrations of "galvanic music" were deemed by some as kicking off research on the speaking telephone.

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Awards for Scholarship on the History of the U.S. Postal System

Beginning in 2007, the U. S. Postal Service will sponsor two annual prizes for scholarship on the history of the U.S. postal system. Scholarship by junior scholars (undergraduates and graduate students) is eligible for a $1,000 award; works by senior scholars (faculty members, independent scholars, and public historians) are eligible for a $2,000 award. These prizes are designed to encourage scholarship on the history of the U.S. postal system and to raise awareness about the significance of the postal system in U.S. life.

The awards honor Rita Lloyd Moroney, who began conducting historical research for the Postmaster General in 1962, then served as Historian of the U.S. Postal Service from 1973 to 1991.

The U.S. postal system coordinated the first nationwide communications network in the United States. Throughout much of U.S. history, it was also the largest federal government agency. Founded in 1775, the postal system expanded rapidly following the enactment of the Post Office Act of 1792; by 1828, it maintained offices throughout the length and breadth of the United States. In the early republic, the postal system facilitated the regular and reliable conveyance over long distances and at high speed of information on public affairs, market trends, and personal matters. Since the 1870s, it also has been a major medium for the conveyance of goods. Given the enormous geographical scale on which the postal system has operated and its importance as a federal government agency, it played a major role in U.S. business, politics, journalism, labor, popular culture, and social reform. The influence of the postal system in each of these realms—as well as in many others—deserves the attention of historians.

Eligibility

Topics: The prizes are intended for scholarship on any topic on the history of the U.S. postal system from the colonial era to the present—including the history of the imperial postal system that preceded the establishment of the U.S. postal system in 1775. Although submissions must be historical in character, they can draw on the methods of disciplines other than history—e.g., geography, cultural studies, literature, communications, or economics. Comparative or international historical studies are eligible, if the U.S. postal system is central to the discussion.

Junior Prize: This prize is for scholarship written or published by undergraduates or graduate students. Submissions can take the form of a journal article, a book chapter, a conference paper, an M.A. thesis, or a Ph. D. dissertation. Submissions are eligible if they originally were written when the author was a student, even if they were subsequently revised for publication. All submissions must include a signed statement from the author attesting to his or her status at the time when the initial work was completed.

Senior Prize: This prize is for scholarship published by faculty members, independent scholars, public historians and other non-degree candidates. Submissions can take the form of a journal article, a book chapter, or a book.

Restrictions: Submissions must have been published, accepted (in the case of theses and dissertations), or presented (in the case of conference papers), in a three-year period prior to the application deadline. Submissions that do not receive a prize may be resubmitted the following year if they fall within these restrictions. No one may receive more than one prize in either category during any five-year period.

Selection Criteria

In evaluating submissions, the prize committee will rely on the following criteria:

What is its significance for our understanding of the history of the U.S. postal system and its role in the U.S. past?
How original is its argument?
How imaginative is its use of primary sources (e.g., archival materials, trade and professional journals, or visual imagery)?
How effectively does it engage existing scholarship?
How well is it written?

The committee reserves the right not to award any prize during an award year if no submissions are deemed suitable.

Deadline and Submission Procedure

Submissions for the 2007 prize must be postmarked by 1 December 2006. No late entries will be accepted. Decisions will be announced by 15 February 2007.

Authors must submit three copies of each submission along with a cover letter in which the author attests that the submission meets the eligibility requirements. Send all materials to:

Professor Richard Kielbowicz
Department of Communication
Box 353740
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195

Direct all questions to Professor Kielbowicz at the above address or to *kielbowi@u.washington.edu* (with the words "postal award" in the subject line).

Mercurians Award
Responses from Questionnaire

The results are in! The following discussion summarizes the results of the questionnaire distributed to Mercurians and returned by 15 June 2006. The number to the left of each option below indicate how many members voted for that option. Based on these results, a proposal will be drawn up for the creation of an award program and submitted to the SHOT Executive Council for their approval.

A. How many awards?
_7_ A single award for best article in a scholarly journal
_9_ Three awards: best article "junior" scholar, best article "senior" scholar, and best book.

One of the suggestions offered was an award for the best dissertation (4 votes). Perhaps we can consider dissertations in the "best book" category or in a separate fourth category.

A1. How do we define "junior scholar"?
_15_ Graduate students
_16_ Postgraduates (1-3 years after receiving Ph.D.)

This is a close one, so close that maybe we should consider both graduate and postgraduate students for the "junior scholar" award.

"Individuals without an advanced history degree, but whose work merits the recognition of the Mercurians' award" received 8 votes. A comment from one member merits consideration: "Surely all of these categories could be considered. The prize is awarded on the merits of the work not the person submitting."

This is an excellent point. Such individuals will be considered for awards in all categories.

A2. Must the recipient be a Mercurian as a condition for receiving the award?
_3_ Yes
_16_No

A3. Must the recipient be a member of SHOT?
_1_ Yes
_19_ No

A4. Should articles receiving an award be limited to those published in refereed scholarly journals?

The voting was split evenly 9 for and 9 against (without counting my own vote).

I have two concerns about not limiting awards to articles published only in refereed scholarly journals. One is opening the competition to articles that have not been refereed. The other is the absence of "scholarly apparatus" (footnotes, bibliography, references, etc.). I feel that as long as the article has been vetted by referees and contains evidence of appropriate scholarship (the "scholarly apparatus"), then we should consider the article for an award.

A5. Should books be limited to those published by scholarly presses?
__2_Yes
__16__No

B. This area of the questionnaire dealt with how often the Mercurians should make the awards. Most respondents (8) supported granting the award every three years. Smaller numbers backed annual awards (5) or biannual awards (5). One way to interpret these responses is to say that more (10) voted against triennial awards than for (8) them. One of the factors determining the frequency with which the Mercurians can grant awards is the availability of funding, which brings us to the next set of questions.

C. ***What should the awards consist of?***

The responses were mixed and wide-ranging. The questionnaire offered five alternatives, and many Mercurians volunteered variations and alternatives ("other"). A consensus emerged, nonetheless, in favor granting a prize of $1,000 for the best article in a scholarly journal by a "junior" scholar and a certificate for the best article by a "senior" scholar.

_7_ $1,000 for the best article in a scholarly journal by a "junior" scholar
_2_ A yet-to-be-determined sum for the best article in a scholarly journal by a "senior" scholar
_4_ A cash award for the best book (Option A)
_8_ A prize of $1,000 for the best article in a scholarly journal by a "junior" scholar and award certificates for the best article by a "senior" scholar and the best book
_6_ A prize of $1,000 for the best article in a scholarly journal by a "junior" scholar; an award certificate for the best article by a "senior" scholar; and a sum of money (to be determined) for the best book (Option B)
_1_ No monetary award
_2_ A prize of $500 for the best dissertation; a prize of $500 for the best article in a scholarly journal by a "junior" scholar; a plaque for the best article by a "senior" scholar; and a sum of money (to be determined) and/or plaque for the best book (Option C)
_1_ A lower amount, say $300 to $500, for each of the 3 awards.

Mercurians Award
Responses from Questionnaire (continued)

One question remains: whether to reward the best book with cash or just a certificate. If one adds numbers from different options (labeled above as Option A and Option B), support for a cash award for the best book appears to have received more votes than its opponent (Option C). The amount of cash to be awarded, nonetheless, was not resolved by the questionnaire responses. As for dissertations, they would be eligible for an award ("junior scholar" category?), but not in a separate "best dissertation" category.

In all cases in which the Mercurians make a cash award, an appropriate certificate will accompany it (by overwhelming vote). Several members pointed out that the recognition and publicity garnered by junior scholars who win this award will outweigh any monetary prize that the Mercurians might be capable of bestowing. Therefore, they argued that our group give certificates, but no cash.

The weight of voting as reflected in the above responses appears to favor the following program of awards:

Best article by a junior scholar (certificate and $1,000)
Best article by a senior scholar (certificate)
Best book (certificate and cash).

E. How do we finance the award(s)?

Many respondents (13) agreed to charge all members an annual membership fee in order to raise money for the awards. The question of financing the awards is inexorably linked to that of funding the newsletter, *Antenna*. One of the 3 votes against using an annual fee to finance the awards—a long-time member—wrote that he did not mind paying a membership fee, but to finance the newsletter, not to underwrite the awards.

The question of how much to charge as an annual membership fee is not clear from the responses. The same number of members (7) voted to charge $10/year as voted to charge more than $10/year with $15/year receiving more support than any other specific amount. One possible resolution is to create different membership categories with dues set at $10 and $15 per year.

The scales tipped in favor of charging students $5/year (11) versus paying zero (6).

As for funding *Antenna*, many members (9) wanted to raise the annual dues to a level sufficient to cover the costs of both the award and the newsletter in printed form, while 6 supported the current practice of paying a subscription to the newsletter. Under that arrangement, subscriptions to *Antenna* would be financially separate from membership dues.

However, another option—to distribute *Antenna* electronically—received the largest number of votes (11), with most (8) in favor of paying for the remaining newsletter costs (other than printing and postage) out of the annual dues. All of the Mercurians' expenses (outside of those incurred during the annual meetings) arise from printing and mailing the paper edition of *Antenna*. An electronic *Antenna* would mean the Mercurians would not have to raise funds to cover printing and mailing costs.

In addition, by mailing *Antenna* in electronic form, every dues-paying Mercurian with an e-mail address (or Internet access) could receive a copy at no extra cost. This alternative nearly eliminates the potential fiscal nightmare of separating subscription and dues money, if we charged everyone a separate subscription fee for *Antenna*. Of course, going to an electronic format raises several new questions.

How do we handle the institutions (libraries and museums, for example) that currently subscribe to *Antenna*? A paper edition could be printed and distributed to those institutions, as well as to any member of the Mercurians who might prefer (insist on?) a paper newsletter. Subscription rates would reflect printing and mailing costs.

The questionnaire also asked about options for financing the awards in case the Mercurians were unable to raise sufficient funds. A few offered that we should terminate the award in that case, while others suggested giving an award only when our funding was adequate, or reducing the award to the amount available from membership fees, or drawing on our reserves.

The largest numbers of members, however, favored making up the difference from the Shiers Memorial Fund if possible (9) or decreasing the award amount to $750 per year (or some other figure below $1,000) (7). Delivering *Antenna* in an electronic format, however, frees up Shiers Memorial Fund money that has been underwriting newsletter expenses, suggesting the prospect of calling on those funds to make up any future differences in case the Mercurians are unable to fund the award program.

Members approved additional means for raising award money. They endorsed allowing members to contribute funds over and above their annual membership fee to fund the awards (12) as well as creating one or more special membership categories for those contributing additional award funding (5). =>

Mercurians Award
Responses from Questionnaire (conclusion)

Beyond these funding alternatives is the possibility of receiving support from another organization, such as the IEEE Communications Society or the IEEE History Center.

G. Picking the winners

Members approved creating a three-member award committee (15). The advantage of the three-year term is to provide continuity and institutional memory. However, because the three-year term also is the inter-val of the awards, the possibility exists that this continu-ity might be lost. Instead of changing all of the commit-tee members every three years, the terms of the com-mittee members could be staggered.

The questionnaire also raised the question of how we should select the committee members. A very large number (16) supported the volunteer option, in which those wishing to serve on the committee would make their interest known. The recruiting of committee members would take place through a number of venues, not the least of which would be *Antenna* and the Mercurians Google Group. A somewhat smaller number (12) favored nominating and approving the committee members by a vote during the annual meeting. The voting need not take place during the meeting, but could occur more discretely (and more democratically) by votes cast by (electronic) mail.

In addition, almost all respondents (16) rejected the idea that committee members had to be academics. A similarly large number (17) voted for the award committee to draw up and submit the required annual report to the SHOT Executive Council.

H. Award Ceremony

Not surprisingly, members overwhelmingly (19) expressed a desire to incorporate an announcement of the Mercurians award winners in the SHOT annual awards banquet program (to the extent permitted), and a slightly smaller number (18) endorsed presenting the award during the Mercurians' annual meeting. We can do—and will try to do—both.

I. Duplication of Awards

The SHOT guidelines require that we not duplicate other awards, especially those presented by the society itself. Therefore, we need to create a mechanism to avoid duplicating the IEEE Life Members' Prize in Electrical History, which rewards "the best paper in electrical history published during the previous year" at the SHOT annual banquet.

Mercurians voted in large numbers (19) to require the members of the Mercurians Award Committee to contact the IEEE Prize Committee in order to ensure that no duplication of awards takes place. A few members (4) voted for interlocking committee memberships, that is, a member of the IEEE Prize Committee would sit on the Mercurians Award Committee, and a member of the Mercurians Award Committee would sit on the IEEE Prize Committee.

We may have to revisit this question, if the IEEE Communications Society or the IEEE History Center assists in funding the Mercurians awards. In any case, our proposal to the SHOT Executive Council needs to embrace this possibility, so that we do not have to submit a proposal again in the future in order to make changes.

The Next Steps

The Mercurians' award program will consist of:
Best article by a junior scholar (certificate and $1,000)
Best article by a senior scholar (certificate)
Best book (certificate and cash)
Dissertations are eligible for consideration in either the "junior scholar" or the "best book" category.

In addition to the Shiers Memorial Fund (and other potential donors), a new annual membership fee will help to underwrite award program costs. Additional contributions will be encouraged and accepted.
Membership categories and annual fees:
Student: $5
Regular: $10
Friend: $15

Annual subscription rates for the paper edition of *Antenna* will be $5 for delivery in the United States and $10 to everywhere else.

In order to resolve the issue of whether the awards will be granted triennially or more often, we will begin by establishing an award committee whose members will select candidates for the prize program from all relevant articles and books published in the past three years. Their selections will establish the prestige of the awards, perhaps more so than any sum of money. In addition, the winners will be announced at the meeting of SHOT in 2007. The meeting in Washington, DC, marks the society's fiftieth anniversary.

The award committee subsequently will review the candidate articles and books at the end of the next year to determine whether their number is sufficient to warrant making the award program an annual event. If not, the Mercurians will offer the awards every three years. The decision will be in the hands of the award committee, which will report annually to SHOT.

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Please send all questions and correspondence via e-mail to: MERCURIANS@EARTHLINK.NET.

Editor:
Andrew Butrica
P. O. Box 30223
Bethesda, MD 20824-0223
MERCURIANS@EARTHLINK.NET

Assistant Editor:
David Whalen
2106 South Bay Lane
Reston, VA 20191
DJWHALEN@YAHOO.COM

Assistant Editor:
Prof. Christopher Sterling
Media & Public Affairs
George Washington University
805 21st St. NW
Washington, DC 20052
chriss@gwu.edu

Assistant Editor:
Derek Schultz
Media Design Associates
3204 Pauline Drive
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
mediadesign@att.net

CONTRIBUTOR INFORMATION

Basilio Catania *is the retired Director General of the Centro Studie Laboratori Telecomunicazioni (CSELT), Turin, Italy. He can be contacted via e-mail at mark3@esanet.it.*

A. David Wunsch *teaches the history of radio in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He also is Lecturer in Electrical Engineering at Tufts University and can be contacted via e-mail at David_Wunsch@uml.edu*.