

ANTENNA

Newsletter of the SHOT SIG on the History and
Impact of Communications Technologies



Directory Nears Completion

The SHOT Communications Directory promises to be a valuable networking resource for scholars in the field, containing abstracts of members' areas of interest as well as addresses and phone numbers. If you haven't sent in the information form for the directory please do so soon.

Blessed

It seems that there is no limit to Mel Kranzberg's enthusiasm and interest in SHOT's development, even though we are already in his debt for his work in starting up and sustaining SHOT all these years. As the group officially gets underway, Professor Kranzberg has given us his blessing in a wonderfully warm and helpful letter. In addition to his broad encouragement, the letter contained specific suggestions, including a nomination for the group's name, which will

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Editorial

Welcome to the newsletter of the SHOT special interest group on the history and impact of communication technologies. Perhaps the most important news we have to report is the story behind the newsletter itself. This issue was produced and funded by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications. The Annenberg School has agreed to support the publication of our newsletter for the next two years. The newsletter staff now consists of graduate students at Annenberg whose area of expertise is the history of communications and communications technologies. We are enthusiastic about the potential of historical studies in communications, and believe that a regular organ of news and information for SHOT communications technology SIG members will help to advance scholarship in this area. The newsletter will come out three times a year: April 15, October 1 and

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**When Old Technologies Were New:
Thinking About Communication in the
Late Nineteenth Century.**

by Carolyn Marvin. Oxford University Press, 1988, 269 pp.

Professor Marvin has written a scholarly yet engaging account of the phenomenal growth of electrical communication technologies in the late 19th century. She approaches the introduction of new technologies as "a special historical occasion when patterns anchored in older media that have provided the stable currency of social exchange are reexamined, challenged and defended." Marvin's particular focus is on the public discourse about potential and appropriate uses of new 19th century media such as the telegraph and the telephone. This cultural conversation, Marvin argues, reveals less about any inherent qualities of the media under discussion than it does about the patterns of social relationships and competing interests that are implicit in all discussions of communication technologies. Her analysis of the reception of these new media is supported by evidence from professional and general-interest publications of the period, ranging from the annual reports of electrical associations to humorous anecdotes about media use found in the popular press. This book should be of interest to media historians, social historians of the late 19th century, and anyone who is intrigued by current debates over the future of new technologies such as the computer.

--Reviewed by Pam Inglesby.

**The Fall of the Bell System:
A Study in Prices and Politics.**

by Peter Temin, with Louis Galambos.
Cambridge University Press, 1987.

This is the first complete account of the forces and events leading to the largest industrial reorganization in history. Temin's carefully documented narrative is based on interviews with the principal actors and on internal AT&T sources as well as public sources. This is an "official" history, prepared with the full support of AT&T's voluminous corporate archives and

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its archive staff. Temin argues that the decisions which initiated competition with the Bell System were never intended to lead to its dismemberment, but nevertheless set in motion actions and reactions the cumulative effects of which could not be controlled. As the subtitle suggests, he gives technological change a minor role in bringing about the breakup, emphasizing instead economic and political factors. This potentially controversial assumption, however, is never explicitly defended. Edited transcripts of Temin's interviews are stored in the AT&T archives. --Reviewed by Milton Mueller.

The Journal of Communication Inquiry will devote its Summer 1988 issue to "historical approaches to communication study." The editor of the issue, Georgia NeSmith, is specifically interested in "research that challenges traditional interpretive frameworks for understanding media or communication history, and in research that locates the practice of communication inquiry in historical context." Although the deadline for submitting papers has passed, NeSmith stresses that the pages of the Journal will be open to historical work in the future. The Journal is published at the University of Iowa. Copies of the special issue can be obtained by mailing \$5 to The Journal of Commu-

nication Inquiry, 205 Communication Center, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242. The issue should be available in August.

The Fall, 1987 issue of **Critical Review** contains a review essay on James Beniger's The Control Revolution written by John Durham Peters of the University of Iowa Communications School. The special issue on "The Technical Order" also contains a review essay on Langdon Winner's The Whale and the Reactor and Autonomous Technology written by Milton Mueller of the Annenberg School of the University of Pennsylvania. Copies of this issue can be obtained for \$4 from Critical Review, 532 Broadway, 7th floor, Room 101, New York NY 10012.

Exhibits

"Making Waves: Radio Communication in Pennsylvania, 1900-1935" will open July 1 at the William Penn Memorial Museum in Harrisburg, PA. The exhibit traces the history of radio communication technology from its earliest stages through the invention of the vacuum tube and FM. The Pennsylvania State Museum's exhibit is based on its acquisition, via donation, of the extensive collection of early radio artifacts of Harry Houck, a pioneer radio technician and collaborator of Edwin Armstrong. Armstrong invented the regenerative circuit that made modern radio possible and frequency modulation (FM).

A new museum devoted to the art, history and technology of motion pictures, television and video is being formed. The American Museum of the Moving Image will be located in Astoria, Queens, just outside of Manhattan. It will open in September, 1988. The October issue of the newsletter will report on its first exhibition.

"The Automobile in American Life," a \$6 million, 60,000 square foot permanent exhibit, opened November 7 at Henry Ford Museum

in Dearborn, Michigan. Aside from an unprecedented display of the most historically important cars, the exhibit explores the numerous ways in which the automobile transformed the culture and landscape of the country. The development of fast food chains, billboards and road signs, drive-in theatres, motels, diners and jukeboxes are represented by original artifacts from the 1930s, '40s, '50s and '60s. The exhibit was designed by Albert H. Woods Associates, producers of the energy exhibit at Walt Disney World's EPCOT Center and the American Exhibition at the 1982 World's Fair.

Philadelphia's Franklin Institute has opened a new permanent exhibit called "Communication Technology." It features a number of interactive displays, including devices that allow visitors to play with digital image processing technology and a large papermaking demonstration. Historians will be interested in the operational manual telephone switchboard and some very fine early telephone artifacts.

The 16th Annual Telecommunications Policy Research Conference offers a prize of \$1,000 for the best graduate student paper in telecommunications research in the fields of economics, law, engineering or public policy. The competition is open to all graduate students. Papers may be based on research undertaken for seminars, the dissertation or course work. Papers should be typed and double spaced. Three copies of the paper are required. Deadline for submissions is June 1, 1988, winners announced by August 15, 1988. Address submissions and inquiries to: Professor Gerald Faulhaber, Chair, Organizing Committee, 16th Annual TPRC, Department of Public Policy and Management, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6371. The award recipient will present the paper at the 16th Annual Telecommunications Policy Research Conference, October 30-November 1, 1988, Airlie House, Airlie Virginia.

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January 15.

We want the newsletter to be something more than just a bulletin board, although that will be one of its functions. We would also like it to be a stimulating forum for exchanges about the research agendas of those engaged in the study of the history of communications technologies. Communications technology raises a particularly fascinating set of questions about the relationship between humans and their artifacts. Because the answers to these questions are only beginning to be pursued systematically, we think that the newsletter should probe and analyze, not just report, the events, books, journals, conferences and exhibits that are shaping the definition of the field. This kind of active exploration will, of course, be conducted in a spirit of constructive and open inquiry. We hope it will make it fun to read as well.

Lori Breslow and Pam Lurito, who have devoted so much energy to getting the group off the ground, deserve a special thanks for their willingness to let the growth of the organization involve more people. Such openness is a sure sign of the organization's vitality. We hope that their trust in us will be more than justified by the results. We also want to extend our thanks to Dean George Gerbner, Professor Carolyn Marvin and Elvira Fitzgerald of the Annenberg School, whose encouragement and support for the project was vital.

"Blessed," from page one...

be disclosed with the other ideas in the October newsletter. In closing he wrote: "I am certain that your new special interest group will advance the history of communication technology, will keep SHOT lively and up-to-date, and will demonstrate that the history of technology is both a serious and fun enterprise. Keep up your wonderful work!"

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