

# Great Inventions of the 19th Century / Postal services and telecommunications

Before the 19th century, postal services were almost completely dependent on transportation. With the development of new modes of transport, communication was raised to a new, higher level. In the 19th century, national postal services were established as state enterprises whose material form was shown in elaborate buildings (post offices) designated for these services. Post offices were integrated with other new means that speeded up communication, from telegraphs to telephones. The introduction of modern postal services helped to standardise the postal infrastructure in the European, Arab and Ottoman territories, although differences in the presentation of those services, including their aesthetic presentation, persisted. The most important consequences of the development of postal services were not only the improvement of communication but also its strategic and commercial use. The development of postal services is an expression of political and administrative reforms and major transformations in the European, Arab and Ottoman territories.



**Working Number:** FR 032  
**Name:** 24 hour optical telegraphy presented to the minister by a marine officer and used by the coast signalling services (1802)  
**Holding Museum:** National Library of France  
**Date:** 1801  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** -  
Napoleon I promoted the use of the telegraph in the territories he conquered. In his military campaigns, he acknowledged the important of technical innovations.

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**Working Number:** AT 007  
**Name:** Map of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia  
**Holding Museum:** Austrian State Archives  
**Date:** 1827  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** After the Congress of Vienna (1815), Austria annexed territories of northern Italy, and the city of Venice, formerly a republic, became part of the Kingdom of Lombardo-Venezia. Austria absorbed the Venetian trade routes on the Adriatic Sea towards the Ottoman Empire introducing infrastructure, as this map of the postal routes shows.

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**Working Number:** TR2 069  
**Name:** The bronze statue representing 22 countries of member of Universal Postal Union  
**Holding Museum:** Istanbul Postal Museum  
**Date:** 1874  
**Materials:** Bronze  
**Curator Justification:** Following the Tanzimat (military, administrative, fiscal and educational Ottoman reforms), an Ottoman postal service was introduced in the empire from 1840. The Ottoman Empire joined the Universal Postal Union in 1874.

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**Working Number:** TR2 066  
**Name:** Postal map  
**Holding Museum:** Istanbul Postal Museum  
**Date:** 1911  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** The development of postal services was associated with the development of roads. The need to provide an efficient distribution service prompted the mapping and connection of the roads with the postal stations throughout the Ottoman Empire.

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**Working Number:** UK 148  
**Name:** The Route of the Overland mail to India; Aden  
**Holding Museum:** Victoria and Albert Museum  
**Date:** c. 1850-1852  
**Materials:** Paper; lithograph  
**Curator Justification:** Before the opening of the Suez Canal, the British postal service to India followed a maritime and overland route. Steamships of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) sailed from Southampton to Alexandria (Egypt), then passengers and mail went via Cairo to Suez by caravan and boat; from Suez they sailed by another steamship to Aden and India.

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**Working Number:** ET1 004  
**Name:** Revenue stamp  
**Holding Museum:** Bibliotheca Alexandrina  
**Date:** 1888  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** The Khedive Ismail is considered one of the great reformers of administration and infrastructure in Egypt. Among the innovations he introduced were stamps in 1866. After that date, stamps were commonly used in the Egyptian postal system, as this stamp issued by the Khedive Tawfiq shows.

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**Working Number:** TN 045  
**Name:** The first postmaster's office in Tunis, 1892  
**Holding Museum:** Musée des Postes, Télégraphes et Télécommunications  
**Date:** 19th century  
**Materials:** Wood, paint, gold leaf  
**Curator Justification:** As an element of continuity with local handicraft and woodworking traditions, the technical innovation (the post office and its furniture) was interpreted according to traditional furniture design, made of wood with floral decoration, mixed with Tunisian, Turkish and European decorative elements.

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**Working Number:** MO 022  
**Name:** Skeleton telephone  
**Holding Museum:** Itisalat al-Maghrib Museum  
**Date:** 19th century  
**Materials:** Metal, gold leaf; wood; cord  
**Curator Justification:** The telephone appeared in the second part of the 19th century, when the possibility of transmitting speech electrically was discovered. In Morocco, Mulay Hasan I introduced telephone lines as part of his promotion of infrastructure.

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**Working Number:** MO 019  
**Name:** Photograph of the installation of the telephone exchange in Tangier  
**Holding Museum:** Itisalat al-Maghrib Museum  
**Date:** 1883  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** -  
The first telephone exchange in Tangier was installed in 1883. Events like this were documented in photographs representing more than just routine technical works: two major inventions, photography and telephone, celebrated reciprocally.

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**Working Number:** FR 034  
**Name:** The young ladies of the telephones: a view of a Parisian telephone exchange  
**Holding Museum:** National Library of France  
**Date:** 1904  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** -  
The telephone was another 19th-century invention celebrated in France with the publication of prints and photographs. They also portrayed the social changes brought about by the new inventions, in particular a new social class of women employees.

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