

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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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 woodwork 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.



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.



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.



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.
