

TELECOM CELEBRATION DAYS

INTRODUCTION

The International Telegraph Convention and foundation of the INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPH UNION

In Paris, on the left bank of the Seine, stands an imposing mid-nineteenth-century building: the Quai d'Orsay. Since 1853, it has been the home of France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and has hosted visits by heads of state and countless dignitaries from around the globe. One of the most sumptuous rooms, the 'Salon de l'Horloge' (Clock Room) is lit by huge chandeliers beneath a gilded ceiling, while above an ornate fireplace, a statue symbolises France itself.

Into this glittering venue, on 17 May 1865, stepped a distinguished gathering to sign an agreement forming the world's first modern international organization: the **INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPH UNION**. They had been invited to France by the nephew of Napoléon Bonaparte, Emperor Napoléon III, inspired by the beliefs of the time in scientific progress and free trade.

The representatives of twenty mostly European countries met under the chairmanship of France's Foreign Minister Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys, who explained that the aim was to rationalise the handling of burgeoning international telegraphic traffic. A general treaty was proposed for this purpose, and because this would need to be signed by national authorities, the United Kingdom was the only European country with an extensive telegraph system that did not participate in the conference: its networks were privately owned, rather than state-run as in most of Europe at that time. But it was felt that, in practice, the UK would follow the terms of the treaty.

This push to modernise France, and to increase its influence in Europe and beyond, led Napoléon III to propose the world's first International Telegraph Conference, which began on 1 March 1865.

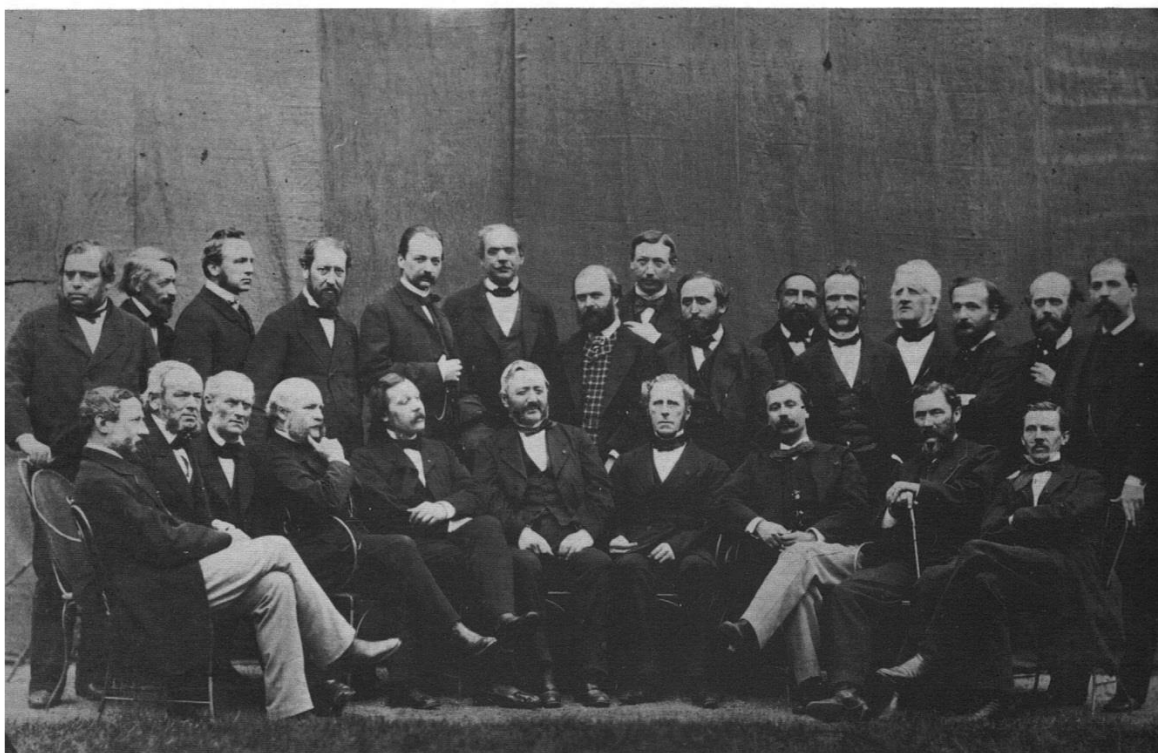
Drouyn de Lhuys noted that the agreements then in force - the 1858 Brussels and Berne Convention - had become insufficient to deal with the advance of telegraphy. International telegrams might be subject to multiple sets of regulations that were not wholly uniform.

The committee of special delegates met sixteen times to thrash out the details of the International Telegraph Convention, and the final draft was presented to the conference at its second session on 13 April. It contained pioneering provisions. These included the introduction of a standard charging system in each country as a whole, rather than by area (with the exception of part of Prussia and the remotest territories of Russia and Turkey). Importantly, a table of tariffs for cross-border messages was annexed to the treaty, and this would considerably reduce the price of telegrams. In addition, a set of Regulations for International Service had been prepared to stand alongside the treaty.

It also established in art.3 the use of the Morse and Hughes telegraphs on international lines; a rare instance of ITU specifying particular equipment.

The third and final session of the conference took place on **17 May 1865**, when the final documents of the first International Telegraph Convention were formally signed. That date is recognized as the birth of the International Telegraph Union – the precursor of today's ITU – and is marked each year as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

CONFÉRENCE TÉLÉGRAPHIQUE INTERNATIONALE PARIS 1865.



BERNIQUE * PHOT.

31, RUE DE FLEURUS, PARIS

Danemark	Bavière	Norvège	Wurtemberg	Belgique	Portugal	Secrétaire	Suisse	Bade	Turquie	Prusse	Italie	Grèce	Secrétaire	Espagne
<i>Faber</i>	<i>de Weber</i>	<i>Nielsen</i>	<i>de Klein</i>	<i>Vincent</i>	<i>Damasio</i>	<i>de Lavernelle</i>	<i>Curchod</i>	<i>Pöppen</i>	<i>Agathon Effendi</i>	<i>de Chauvin</i>	<i>Minetto</i>	<i>Manos</i>	<i>Dupré</i>	<i>de Hecar</i>
Pays-Bas	Bavière	Hanover	France	Belgique	France	Suède	Espagne	Russie	Autriche					
<i>Staring</i>	<i>de Dyck</i>	<i>Gauss</i>	<i>Jagerschmidt</i>	<i>Fassiaux</i>	<i>V^{te} de Vougy</i>	<i>Brandström</i>	<i>Sanz</i>	<i>G^r M^{jr} de Guerhard</i>	<i>de Wattenwyl</i>					

Between 3 September and 10 December 1932, a joint conference of the International Telegraph Union and the International Radiotelegraph Union convened in order to merge the two organizations into a single entity, the **INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION**. The Conference decided that the Telegraph Convention of 1875 and the Radiotelegraph Convention of 1927 were to be combined into a single convention, the International Telecommunication Convention, embracing the three fields of telegraphy, telephony and radio. [



Left: The monument 'Glory of Telecommunications', erected for the International Telegraph Union, ITU's ancestor, which was based in Bern from 1865 to 1946.



Above: TU headquarters in Geneva

THE CELEBRATION DAYS

1. From WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DAY (1969-1973) to WORLD INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY (2006) to WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY (2006-now)

1.1. World Telecommunication Day (17 May)



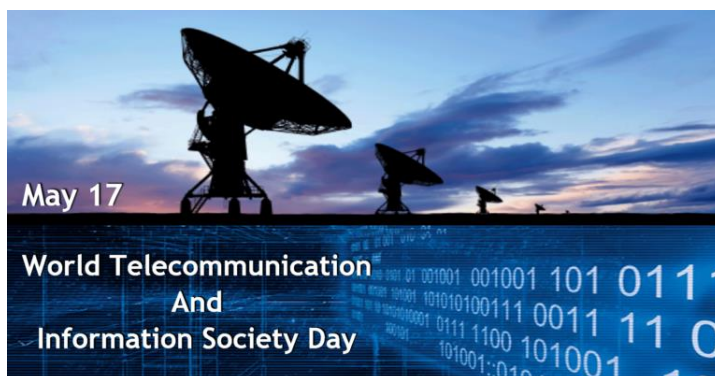
World Telecommunication Day has been celebrated annually on 17 May since 1969. The date marks the anniversary of the founding of ITU on 17 May 1865, when the first International Telegraph Convention was signed in Paris. In 1973, the event was formally instituted at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Malaga-Torremolinos, Spain. Every year a topical theme is chosen and events celebrating that theme take place around the world. *(See the details in my article “The INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPH UNION” in this chapter).*

1.2. World Information Society Day (17 May)



With the growth in importance of information technology alongside telecommunications - especially the Internet - it was recognised that this topic also needed to be brought to public attention. In 2005, the World Summit on the Information Society called upon the United Nations General Assembly to declare 17 May as World Information Society Day. The aim was to focus on the importance of these technologies and the wide range of related social and economic issues that had been raised by the summit. The UN General Assembly resolved in March 2006 that World Information Society Day would indeed take place every year on 17 May. The first one took place on Wednesday, 17 May 2006

1.3. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (17 May)



In November 2006, the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Antalya, Turkey, decided to celebrate both events on 17 May as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

Its purpose is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, like its predecessors, focuses on a particular theme for each event.

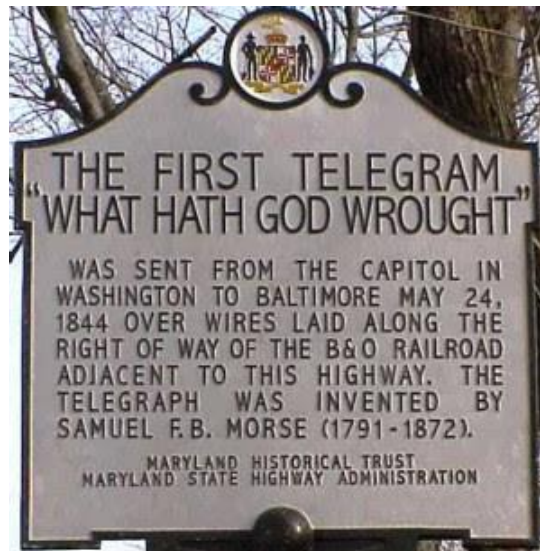
2. OTHER ONES

2.1. World Radio Day (13 February)



UNESCO's Executive Board recommended to its 2011 General Conference the proclamation of World Radio Day, on the basis of a wide consultation process, carried out by UNESCO earlier that year, further to a proposal from Spain. The leader of the project, the Academia Española de la Radio, received support for the proposal from diverse stakeholders, including major international broadcasters and broadcasting unions and associations. The date of 13 February, the day United Nations Radio was established in 1946, was proposed by the Director-General of UNESCO. On 14 January 2013, during its 67th Session, the United Nations General Assembly formally endorsed UNESCO's of 13 February as World Radio Day.

2.2. Morse Code Day (27 April)



April 27th is the birthday of Samuel Morse.

Morse Code Day celebrates the invention of Morse code and his version of the electric telegraph. This special event was established on this date to honour Samuel Morse, who was born on 27 April 1791.

My research did not find the creator, or the origin of Morse Code Day.

2.3. Telegraph Operator Day (24 May)



The image below is the only information that I could find. Is it only celebrated in Brazil?

On 24 May 1844, Samuel Morse sent America's first telegram over a telegraph line between Washington and Baltimore, a distance of around 40 miles.

2.4. (International) Maritime Radio Day (14-15 April)



Maritime Radio Day (MRD) is being held annually to remember to nearly 100 years of wireless service for seafarers. Since its beginning in 1900 it was the most important communication service until the end of 1999 when it disappeared with the coming of the GMDSS..

Maritime Radio Day is held annually in the month of April, the month of the sinking of the TITANIC in 1912, the ship having struck the iceberg on 14th April and finally sinking in the early hours of 15th April. Despite the massive loss of life, radio is acknowledged to have been responsible for the rescue of those who survived. Each year Maritime Radio Day remembers and celebrates the work of the Radio Officer onboard merchant ships Coast station- and ship callsigns could be operated only by former Radio Officers, Operators of Coast Stations and from Radio Technicians worked in the branch of installation and maintenance of coastal and ship radio equipment and antennas. Companies as they are RAMAC, DEBEG, SAIT etc. You can find all information on mrd.sfk-bremen.com .

2.5. International Marconi Day (+/- 25 April)



International Marconi Day celebrates the huge part Guglielmo Marconi played in the invention of radio.

It is a 24-hour Amateur Radio event that is held annually by the Cornish Amateur Radio Club in the United Kingdom to celebrate the birth of Marconi on April 25, 1874. The event is usually held on the Saturday closest to Marconi's birthday.

The purpose of the day is for Amateur Radio enthusiasts around the world to make contact with historic Marconi sites using communication techniques similar to those used by Marconi himself. Registered Stations must operate from a site which has a connection with Marconi

2.6. World Amateur Radio Day



Special Theme for World Amateur Radio Day 2023 Announced

FEB 16, 2023 - News - Mats, SM6EAN



IARU, the **International Amateur Radio Union**, is a federation of over 160 countries worldwide. It is the global advocate for amateur radio through its Sector Membership in the International Telecommunication Union (an agency of the U.N.). In celebration of World Amateur Radio Day, IARU and its member-societies will be conducting a special two-week on-the-air event 11 – 25 April. Special event stations will be operating from around the world, making two-way radio contacts to call attention to the HS4A campaign.

2.7. International Internet Day (29 October)



This unofficial holiday commemorates the very first electronic message sent over a network. On 29 October 1969, a UCLA Computer Science Professor and his staff sent the message “LO” over the telephone network to be received at Stanford University. It is also known as World Internet Day or International Internet Day. The day celebrates the people who helped build the internet. The initiative was made by the ‘Association of Internet Users’ (together with other associations) to share and extend the Information Society to all citizens. International Internet Day was first observed on 25 October 2005 in Tunisia at the Summit of the Information Society. The summit culminated by proposing the observation of the Internet Day to the United Nations. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution for the observance of 29 October as International Internet Day. The day celebrates the people who helped build the internet, and also aims to reflect on all the ways that it has changed our lives forever.

A bit of history

On 12 September 1969 the University of Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Stanford’s Research Institute (now SRI International) succeed in connecting their computers, a physical distance of 560 km. The network to

which the connection is made is called 'ARPANET'. On 28 October 1969, the moment of truth finally takes place. That day a student programmer, Charles Kline, tries to send a message from his computer terminal in Los Angeles to a terminal in Stanford, manned by Bill Duvall. He decides to stick to the simple word 'LOGIN'. Halfway through, the connection crashes and Kline doesn't get any further than "LO". However, approximately one hour later, Kline was able to successfully send the message in full. This shows how primitive the technology was back then, but the letters 'LO' would become a symbol for the birth of the internet. For the first time, two computer terminals were able to exchange communication without being physically connected.

The news goes around the world and further expansion follows very quickly. One milestone after another is written in the books. By the end of 1971 the ARPANET network already has 23 host computers. It is also the year in which the first email is sent and the sign '@' is used. After opening up the internet to commercial users, the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) was introduced in 1974 to enable communication between the various networks. Since the 1980s, Europe has also followed; the success of email ensures this. In 1984 it was decided to assign each host its own domain name.

In 1986 we saw the first virus, developed by an IT student Robert Morris. That was actually a joke that got out of hand. But the virus managed to infect about 10% of all hosts worldwide and damaged many ITC systems. Morris was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine of \$10,000

www

As we have so few renowned scientists here in Belgium, allow me to add a few more words on Robert Cailliau. He was born in Tongeren, Belgium, on 26 January 1947, and in 1958 he moved with his parents to Antwerp. After secondary school he graduated from Ghent University in 1969 as MSc in electrical and mechanical engineering. In 1971 he also obtained an MSc from the University of Michigan in Computer, Information and Control Engineering.

In December 1974 he started working at CERN (Geneva) as a Fellow in the Proton Synchrotron (PS) division, working on the control system of the accelerator. In April 1987 he left the PS division to become group leader of Office Computing Systems in the Data Handling division. In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee proposed a hypertext system for access to the many forms of documentation at and related to CERN and soon was joined by Cailliau. Together they developed what soon became known as the World Wide Web.



Cailliau designed the historical logo of the WWW, organized the first International World Wide Web Conference at CERN in 1994 and helped transfer Web development from CERN to the global Web consortium in 1995. Together with Dr. James Gillies, Cailliau wrote "How the Web Was Born", the first book-length account of the origins of the World Wide Web.



The photo, taken in 2019, shows Tim Berners-Lee on the left and Robert Cailliau on the right.

See an interview with R. Cailliau in 1997: <http://www.computer.org/portal/web/computingnow/ic-cailliau>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- [1] L'UNION INTERNATIONALE DES TELECOMMUNICATIONS - compiled by International Systems and Communications Ltd - 1995 - 612 p.
- [2] LES CAHIERS DE LA FNARH - N° 131-01/2016 - R.M. Lemesle - p. 39-59
- [3] FROM SEMAPHORE TO SATELLITE - published by the ITU - 1965 - 343 p.
- [4] THE WORDWIDE HISTORY OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS - Anton HUURDEMAN - 2003 - 637 p.

Internet

- <https://www.itu.int/en/history/Pages/Pre1865Agreements.aspx>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Telecommunication_Union
 - <https://www.itu.int/en/history/Pages/ITUBorn1865.aspx>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Telecommunication_Union
 - <http://bnrg.cs.berkeley.edu/~randy/Courses/CS39C.S97/regulation/regulation.html>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Information_Society_Day
- and many more...

THANK YOU

Andy EMMERSON, President of the Telecom Heritage Group in the UK, and a good friend, for some hints.
My friend Bill BURNS for having corrected (again) my 'Flemish(Dutch) English. People with interest in the history of the Atlantic Cable & Undersea Communications must check his great website:
<https://atlantic-cable.com>
