

# **TECHNOLOGIES, TECHNOLOGISTS & NETWORKS**

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**A Symposium on the History of  
Communication Technologies  
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## Origins, Structures and Models of Italian Broadcasting

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Untold history of broadcasting: telephone as a way to transmit entertainment, talk shows, information, news, etc. from a central station to different receivers

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# Telephone: P.T.T. or a Broadcasting Medium?

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Since its birth (ex. Reiss and Bell) and first experiments the telephone was either a point-to-point medium or a broadcasting one (these 2 concepts could not be distinguished by actors in the past):

- Link between telephone and phonograph (registration and emission of phone calls, music, etc.)
  - Habits of eavesdropping
  - Occasional telephone concerts
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# Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

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## Théâtrophone

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- Experiment at the International Electrical Exhibition in Paris (1881): Clement Ader and Tivadar Puskas
  - Link from Paris Opera to several “public hearing points” (in which people could listen together)
  - 5 francs for 5 minutes: pieces of music
  - Unscheduled technique: random listening
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# Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

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## Telefon Hírmondó

- The most famous and regular example of the circular telephone
  - In Budapest from 1893, idea of Tivadar Puskas (co-worker of Edison)
  - An example for other “heralds”:
    - The name: Hírmondó, Araldo, Herald
    - Contents at home: alarm time signals
    - Precise schedule with different “genres” (importance of news)
    - Subscribers of high society
    - Low cost
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# Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

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## Telefon Hírmondó

Unlike other “heralds”:

- Long-lived technology (the Hirmondo Company secured a Hungarian radio license in 1926): it closed only in 1944!
  - Popularity: a) subscribers before WWI peak in 1899 (at 7,269) and after the War in 1930 at 9,170; b) geographical distribution in the city: it could be listened to everywhere; c) almost indispensable
  - Complex structure of the editorial staff (stentors-announcers, business manager, editor in chief, assistant editors, reporters)
  - Why this success? Solymar and Briggs
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# Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

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## Electrophone

- First experiments during 1892 Electrical Exposition
  - Telephone concerts institutionalized in 1894-1895
  - Close association with National Telephone Company and telephone (same network, 2-way system)
  - Between Théâtrophone (entertainment, little space for news) Hírmondó (distribution at home, dressing clothes)
  - It died in 1925, but it retained “nostalgic listeners” in the Bournemouth area
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# Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

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## Telephone Herald

- Unsuccessful attempts in the 1890s and early 1900s
  - Launched in 1911 in Newark (New Jersey), after a legal fight against New York Telephone Company
  - Schedule similar to Hirmondò (a lot of stock exchange information)
  - Popular in a short period of time (in 3 months 2,500 sub), but 3 main problems:
    - financial instability
    - quality of reception
    - it appeared late: concurrence of “radio music box idea”
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# Araldo Telefonico Before World War I

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Luigi Ranieri

- Italian engineer, representative for the Swiss company Escher Wyss & C. of Zurich
  - Interested in telephotography and, later, radiotelegraphy
  - In the 1900s, he asked for licenses in Milan, Naples, Rome (1909)
  - The service of Araldo Telefonico was launched in 1910
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# Araldo Telefonico Before World War I

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First schedule (later Ranieri obtained new collaborations)

Similar to Hirmondò:

- Time signal (very important in Italy also later in radio days)
  - News (agenzia Stefani)
  - Concerts from popular theaters
  - Stock exchange and Parliament
  - Horse races
  - Language Courses
  - Various programs (religious, fashion, children's programs, etc.)
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# Araldo Telefonico Before World War I

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## Subscribers

- 100 in 1910; 1100 in 1912; 1315 in 1914
  - Social classes:
    - High nobility (Queen Elena and Margherita)
    - Roman politicians (a listening station at "Camera dei deputati")
    - Men of culture
    - Lawyers
    - Engineers
    - Doctors
    - Clerics
    - Journalists
    - Roman well-known places (theatres, clubs, hotels, etc.)
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# Araldo Telefonico Before World War I

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## The trial (Ranieri v. Post Office)

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- Ranieri was unable to pay fees for first 3 years
  - In February 1914, Ministry revoked his license
  - 1917: final decision of Rome City Court. Birth of distinction between point-to-point and broadcasting
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# Araldo Telefonico After World War I

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## Fonogiornale in Milan

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- 1917: Roman Araldo closed (World War I and financial problems)
  - 1918: Fonogiornale in Milan
    - Famous journalist Beniamino Gutierrez
    - Schedule based on melodramas and public concerts from the best Milanese theaters (no news)
    - Financial problems (it closed in 1928)
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# Araldo Telefonico After World War I

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## From Araldo Telefonico to Radio Araldo

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- 1922: Araldo Telefonico reintroduced in Rome
  - Technological innovations (isolated lines v. unauthorized use; Improving warning signals: classify genres)
  - From 1922-1923, Luigi and Augusto (his son) Ranieri conducted experiments in radio transmissions
    - The birth of Radioaraldo
    - They managed these two services at the same time (ex. Advertisements)
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# Araldo Telefonico After World War I

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## RadioAraldo and first public radio (URI)

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- 1924: Ranieri involved in negotiations with two other companies:
    - SIRAC (Italian subsidiary of Western Electric; connection with FIAT and new Communication Ministry)
    - Radiofono (connection with G. Marconi)
  - Government issued a license to these 3 companies
  - August 1924, one day before the creation of URI, Radioaraldo ceded its rights (financial and “political” problems)
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# Araldo Telefonico After World War I

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## The Circular Telephone and Radio Broadcasting

Araldo Telefonico didn't perish after advent of radio: reasons of superiority

- Warning signal: audience informed about new shows
  - Better quality of sound
  - Portability of devices / immobile radio devices
  - More reliable technology
  - Rights for rebroadcast from most important theaters
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# Araldo Telefonico After World War I

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## Araldo Telefonico in Bologna

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- At the end of 1921: Italo Pellizzi and Augusto Rigoni
  - Program based on Roman Araldo before the war (time signal in collaboration with the University of Bologna Observatory)
  - The longest running telephone news service in Italy
    - 1935: EIAR (later RAI) decided to revoke an agreement with Araldo (retransmissions of programs via telephone lines)
    - 1943: subscribers and the telegram to Mussolini
    - Why this audience fidelity?
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# Conclusions

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## The untold history of broadcasting?

- Why was the circular telephone ignored by scholars?
    - 1) research on mass media only after the 1920s
    - 2) telecommunications and mass media: two different disciplines
  - Differences between “heralds” and radio broadcasting:
    - 1) one-to-all v. one-to-many
    - 2) infrastructure costs
  - Inheritance:
    - 1) the schedule
    - 2) management model
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