

The Glower-Bell telephone

The liquid transmitter was the first phone to be show cased in North America. This was quickly replaced by other versions, often using electromagnetic induction. It was felt that most liquids, as used in the liquid transmitter, "had too high a resistance and presented complications in getting a sufficiently strong electrical signal" (Carlson & Gorman, 1990). The Glower-Bell phone, used in Europe and surrounding areas, is an example of a model employing this technology. This telephone represents the early stages of the telephone in other countries and its expanding role in society.

Not everyone was immediately convinced that use of the telephone should be encouraged. Fuelled by newspapers, citizens were concerned the telephone would be similar to allowing a spy enter their home. Could telephone wires carry diseases in the way it carried voices? Could it hurt you, make you deaf or mad? (Pollard, 1991). A publicity campaign became necessary to garner the support from the public for a large-scale telephone system. Modeling how the telephone could be used to share knowledge, music and literature proved to be an effective way to gain acceptance.

The Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, permitted Bell to showcase the power of the telephone on a world-wide stage (Pollard, 1991).

Testimonies such as those made by a Scottish scientist provided support for the telephone beyond North America. He stated that:

Five minutes' conversation is about as much as thirty pages of letter paper, and infinitely more intelligible. All the boasted civilization of the nineteenth century has not been able to give us anything even remotely suggesting an equivalent for a chat over a quiet pipe" (Pollard, 1991).

The possibilities for communication with people separated by distance became increasingly enticing. Colleagues, business associates, loved ones, and emergency centres could be contacted quickly and the length of conversations and topic of conversation was limitless.

A short time after the death of Alexander Graham Bell in 1922, his wife Mabel Gardiner Hubbard Bell, commented on her husband and the use of the telephone. "Of course, he never had one in his study. That is where he went

when he wanted to be alone with his thoughts and work, and the telephone, of course, means an open door with the outside world" (Hill, 1926).

Her comments illustrate the expanding role of the telephone in society. It represents how communication and connectivity were expanding beyond the borders of North America.

The culture of literacy was also being impacted by the telephone as an electronic device.

Reading aloud to family and other small groups was still common in the early twentieth century until electronic culture mobilized such groups around radio and television sets rather than around a present group member (Ong,)

Similar to later inventions, such as the radio and television, the telephone was becoming an integral part of society. Knowledge could now be shared quickly with a wider audience.