

The rotary telephone

Almon Brown Strowger, and his creation of the Strowger switch and exchange, and rotary dial paved the way for the development of the rotary telephone. His invention eliminated the need for operators, allowing individuals to dial and connect with others independently. The rotary dial was mounted on or in a telephone or switchboard to send electric pulses representing the numbers dialed ("Rotary dial", 2013). The rotary telephone facilitated the dialing process.

By 1919, the modern rotary dial with holes was in use, replacing finger plates. The term "dialing" to refer to the process necessary to connect with someone by telephone became a part of the development of language. Despite the growth and popularity of the telephone during this time, there was still skepticism and concern about the long term effect on society.

Sociologist Peter Berger claimed that

[t]o use the phone habitually also means to learn a specific style of dealing with others - a style marked by impersonality, precision, and a certain superficial civility. The key question is this: Do these internal habits *carry over* into other areas of life, such as nontelephonic relations with other persons? The answer is most definitely yes. The problem is: just how, and to what extent? (Fischer, 1994).

It is interesting to note that Plato had similar reservations about the impact of writing centuries earlier.

And when they have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not: and, if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them; and they cannot protect or defend themselves (Plato, 1925).

New technologies impact civilization and foster change. This is inevitable and will likely involve both positive and negative ramifications.

In the development of the telephone system, the subscriber is the dominant factor. His ever-growing requirements inspire

invention, lead to endless scientific research, and make necessary vast improvements and extensions...The telephone cannot think or talk for you, but it carries your thought where you will. It's yours to use....The telephone is essentially democratic; it carries the voice of the child and the grown-up with equal speed and directness....It is not only the implement of the individual, but it fulfills the needs of all the people. (Fischer, 1994).

This public relations announcement by The American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) in 1916 promotes the potential of the telephone. The distribution of information in all areas for a variety of purposes spoke to people and their need to be heard.