

This Day in History... May 17, 1865

The International Telecommunication Union

On May 17, 1865, the International Telegraph Union (ITU), which later became the International Telecommunication Union, was founded. The first international standards organization, it established basic principles for international telegraphy. It later became an agency of the United Nations.

As the telegraph industry grew in the mid-1800s, the need for standardization and international cooperation became apparent. Between 1849 and 1865, several agreements were made between Western European nations to create a set of international communication standards.

Then in 1865, many of these nations agreed that they should all meet and set international standards for telegraphy equipment and instructions, as well as tariffs and accounting rules.

From March 1 to May 17, 1865, delegations from 20 European states visited Paris as part of the first International Telegraph Conference. These meetings led to the signing of the International Telegraph Convention on May 17. This marked the establishment of the International Telegraph Union, which was the first international standards organization. The union's role was to establish basic principles for international telegraphy, including the use of Morse code as the standard telegraph alphabet, the secrecy of messages, and the right of anyone to use telegraphy.

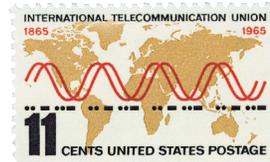
Decades later, the International Radiotelegraph Union was established in 1906 at the first International Radiotelegraph Convention in Berlin. A group of 29 nations met in that instance to establish radio regulations. The International Telegraph Union helped to administer that conference.

United Nations New York stamps honoring the ITU

In 1932, the International Telegraph Union and the International Radiotelegraph Union merged to become the International Telecommunication Union. This new combined organization would oversee telegraphy, telephony, and radio.

Then in 1947, the ITU was recognized as a specialized global agency for telecommunications by the United Nations. Two years later, the ITU officially became an agency of the United Nations.

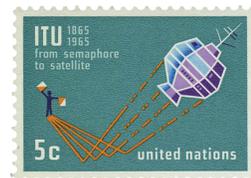
Now the world's oldest international organization, the ITU oversees global use of radio spectrum, encourages cooperation in satellite orbits, strives to improve telecommunications in developing countries, and coordinates worldwide technical standards. The ITU also works with broadband internet, wireless technology, aeronautical and maritime navigation, radio astronomy, satellite meteorology, mobile phones, TV broadcasting, and next-generation networks.



This stamp was issued for the 100th anniversary of the ITU.



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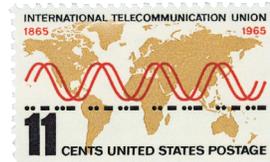


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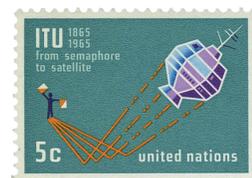


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