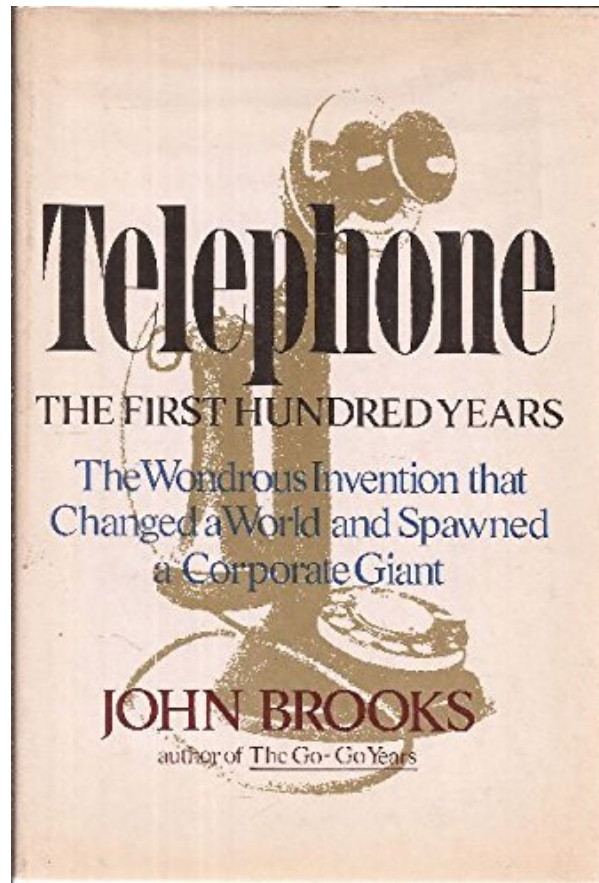


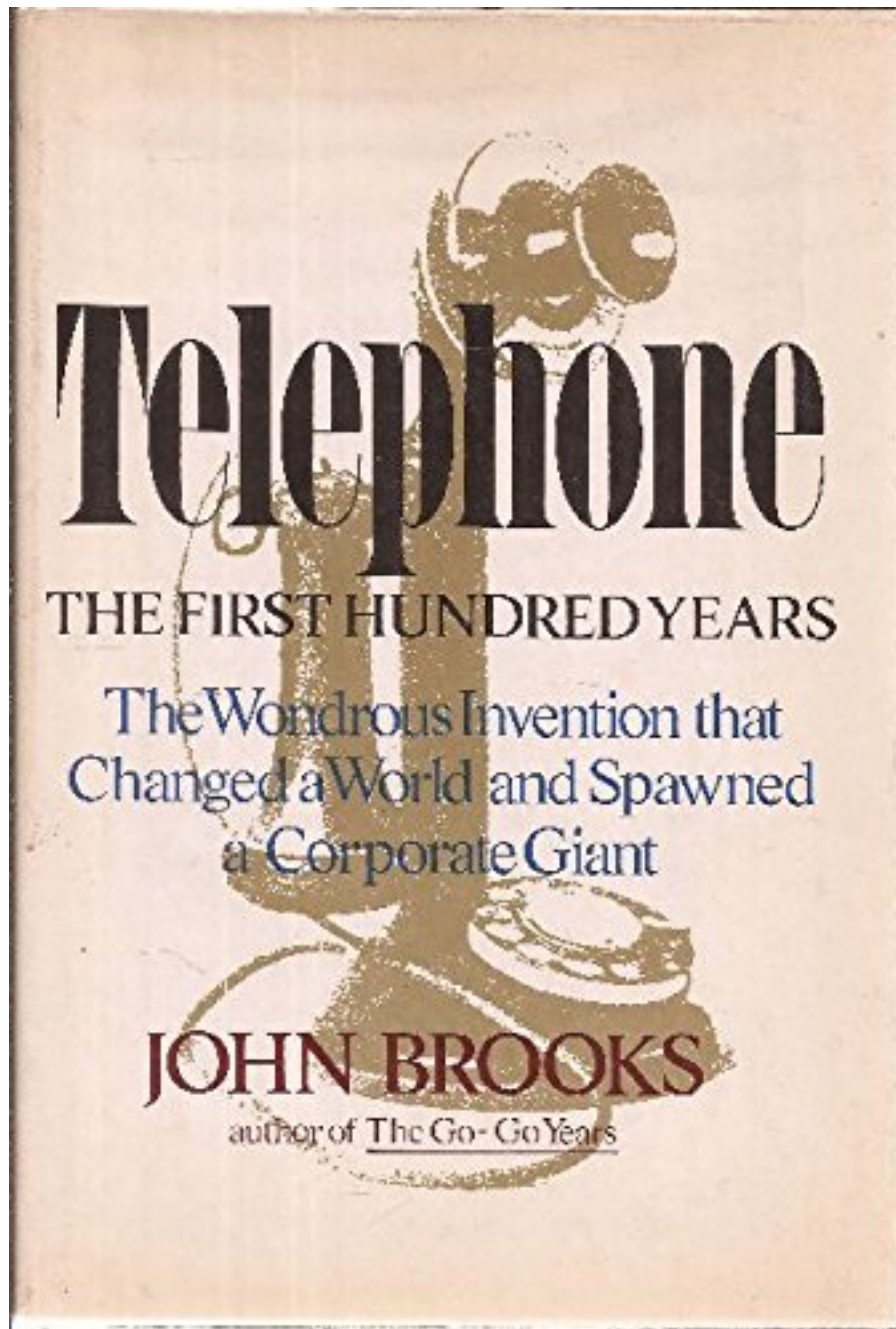
TELEPHONE: THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

BY JOHN BROOKS



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Telephone: The First Hundred Years

- Sales Rank: #1237846 in Books
- Brand: Harpercollins
- Published on: 1976-05
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover
- 369 pages

Features

- Great product!

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Good History "Ma Bell" up to 1975

By Albigensian

This book is actually a good source of information, so long as one understands its limitations.

It's not really a history of the telephone, it's a history of the old "Ma Bell" AT&T- except that, being written in 1975, it's lacking the final chapter. Unlike most "history of" business books, it's not primarily a boardroom drama and, although it has an overall-positive view of Ma Bell, it's willing to look at at least some of its faults. In reading this book, the old AT&T appears as a corporate colossus; who could have guessed that practically all of it would simply vanish over the next few decades?

Looking at Ma Bell from the present, its flaws seem far more apparent than they did in 1975. One flaw surely is that for all the vaunted prowess of Bell Labs, it stifled innovation within the telephone industry. If AT&T had had its way, users would have been forever forbidden to attach anything not provided by AT&T to their phone lines- modems, answering machines, everything would have to be rented from the phone company. In such an environment, would AT&T have even introduced cordless phones? For the fact is, the inside of a 1975 desk phone wasn't, except for the addition of a dial or pushbuttons, all that different from a phone from 1900 (same carbon microphone, etc.).

So Ma Bell's gone now, as obsolete as a vacuum-tube radio. And even within its limitations the book is not perfect- for example, it does not cover "phone phreaking" at all (although it surely should). But as a history book- specifically, about the life and times of Ma Bell as it existed throughout most of the 20th century- it's a pretty good source.

But if you want the final chapter- how opening the long-distance market destroyed post-divestiture AT&T's profitability, and how cellphones proved to be a totally disruptive technology, rendering MA Bell's old landline network increasingly obsolete- well, you'll just have to write it yourself.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

The Way it Was was just fine.

By Theodore Masterton

I read this book with personal interest; my father worked for Western Electric from the late 40's to sometime in the late 60's. Consequently I had the added enjoyment of events I remembered happening as a child or younger man. But even before the book got to the 60's, I was enthralled with the stories of a regulated monopoly both as an enemy to be watched and a friend committed to an essential mission. Having a copyright date of 1975 was perfect. Sometimes there is a special truth that comes with reading a history written by a competent author long ago. The contrast better AT&T's periodic "good citizen" periods, and the cooperate rules today are astounding. So much of our economic and financial beliefs have been forged in the last 40 years of left-right battling, won substantially by the free-market crowd. It is charming to read how business could make millions, serve the public, demand that profits be reasonable, take on difficult social problems, and treat failures as problems to be solved no matter what the cost. AT&T even cooperated with the elected government regulators in a honorable and fiercely competitive way. And made it work for the citizens and the company.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

I should have noted copyright date

By Peter F. Foss

Book was very good and well researched. However I should have noticed the copyright was 1978.....some 35 years ago. A lot has happened to that industry in the intervening years. Pages 341-342 in the chapter "Toward a New Century" prophesied pocket cordless telephones enabling us to speak with almost anyone in the world, light-emitting diodes, and microwave transmission of data. But the 1984 break up of the Bell monopoly by the U.S. Justice Dept., was not foreseen. It is, nonetheless, a good read.

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