

ITU's journals through the ages, 1869-present

Starting life in 1869 as an eight-page pamphlet written in French, the *Journal télégraphique* is now the full-colour *ITU News* magazine produced in six languages and available to all through the Internet.

With more than 140 years of uninterrupted existence¹, ITU's monthly journal has chronicled the scientific and technical progress of all branches of telecommunications since 1869, as well as the many activities of the Union in its efforts to connect all the world's people, wherever they live and whatever their means. The journal has evolved and changed considerably over the years in order to keep pace with the development and diversification of the telecommunications field and to respond to the changing expectations of readers. Its history reflects the growth and evolution of ITU itself.

Over the years, the journal underwent many changes – big and small – to meet the needs of the day. Some changes were announced in advance, while others occurred gradually or without any fanfare. On a few occasions, however, it was decided to change the very name of the journal to mark a particularly significant transition.

1869-1933: Journal télégraphique (French only)

1934-1993 Journal des télécommunications

Starting in 1948, the journal was published in 3 languages (English, French, Spanish)

Telecommunication Journal

Boletín de Telecomunicaciones

1994-2015 ITU News

Nouvelles de l'UIT

Actualidades de la UIT

1869

The 1868 International Telegraph Conference, held in Vienna, decided to establish a permanent ITU secretariat, or Bureau, in Bern, Switzerland. Among the six tasks assigned to the Bureau was the publication of “a telegraph journal in the French language.” The monthly publication would include news sent in by the membership, as well as articles prepared by the Bureau itself.

The first issue of the *Journal télégraphique* was sent, free of charge, to member administrations on 25 November 1869.

The publication – although very modest in size (8 pages for the first issue) – met a real need. In its first year it attracted 800 subscriptions, at an annual charge of four Swiss francs, plus postage.



First issue of the *Journal télégraphique*, 25 November 1869

¹ With the exception of a few months in 1914 due to the First World War.

The inaugural issue of the *Journal* led with a report from Norway on the extension of its network to isolated Arctic villages that depended on fishing. Telegraphy provided them with timely information on the appearance of herring shoals and led to a tripling of the catch. The second issue reported responses to an enquiry by the ITU Bureau about the numbers of women employed in telegraph offices. It revealed that only five administrations allowed women to enter all aspects of the work, while most countries did not have any female employees.

1870-1900

Over the next three decades, the *Journal* published news about the condition of telegraph and telephone networks – including new lines - tariffs and national regulations. Other material included statistics, bibliographies, and articles on technological advances. A series of special articles on the situation of telegraphy and telephone in various countries appeared in the 1890s. The *Journal* also marked the passing of great figures in electrical science, telegraph and telephone development. For example, lengthy obituaries noted the deaths of Samuel Morse in 1872 (American inventor and co-developer of the Morse code), Charles Wheatstone in 1875 (English physicist and prolific inventor who had launched the world's first practical telegraph service in London in 1839), Dr. Werner von Siemens in 1892 (founder of the German electrical and telecommunications company Siemens), and Emile Baudot in 1903 (French telegraph engineer and inventor of the Baudot code). The *Journal* proved to be very popular, and by 1900 had more than doubled the original number of subscribers, announcing a circulation of 1750 subscriptions.



A page of advertising in the January 1915 issue

Advertising

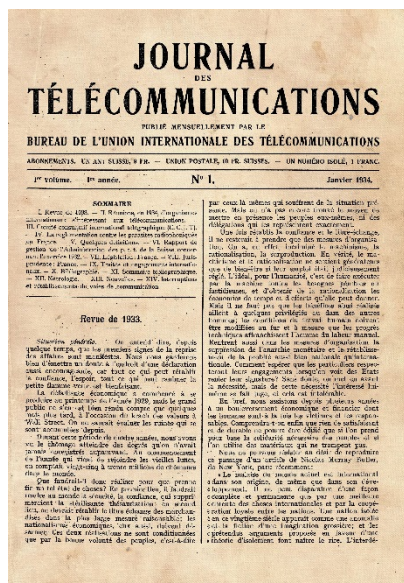
The *Journal* has alternated periods of advertising with periods of no advertising. Names and addresses of manufacturers and suppliers first appeared in 1870 when the Director of the ITU Bureau asked Administrations to send the names of businesses who, on the basis of experience, could be particularly recommended for their excellent products or moderate prices.

Starting in January 1915, 4 pages of advertising were included as a “cover” to each issue of the *Journal*. In the 1930s, the acceptance of commercial advertising was seen as a startling innovation by some other international organizations, but was regarded as a “valuable source of information” by other readers.

1900-1934

With the passage of time, the content changed to include more articles on telephone, radiotelegraphy and broadcasting. Reports of certain proceedings of the League of Nations were published, along with national legal texts, book reviews and news in addition to technical and scientific articles. By 1930, the average length of an issue was 30 pages.

1934



The name changed to *Journal des télécommunications* in January 1934

In 1932 in Madrid, the International Telegraph Conference and the International Radiotelegraph Conference decided to combine the Telegraph and Radiotelegraph Conventions to form the single International Telecommunication Convention. At the same time, a new name was adopted to reflect the full range of ITU's responsibilities: International Telecommunication Union. The new name came into effect on 1 January 1934.

Accompanying the change of name of the Union, the *Journal télégraphique* became the *Journal des télécommunications* on 1 January 1934.

1934-1948

The Bureau strove to provide a good balance of material in the *Journal*: articles on technical, administrative, official, legislative and legal matters alternated with summaries of meetings of bodies working in the telecommunications field such as the International Broadcasting Union (IBU), the International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN), and the International Meteorological Organization (IMO). The *Journal* became the major source of information about the activities of the Union by publishing the outcomes of the Union's telegraph and radiotelegraph conferences and the meetings of the International Consultative Committees (CCIF, CCIT, CCIR).

Technologies of yesteryear

One of the main purposes of the *Journal* – continuing to *ITU News* today – was reporting on technological advances. Some of those innovations, however, have become curiosities with the passage of time.

In 1901, for example, the *Journal* described the “telephonograph,” an early version of a telephone answering machine that recorded messages on wax cylinders. And when you went out, “instead of having to talk to your butler or your office boy,” you could record an outgoing message for callers.

In 1938, readers were told that the “radio newspaper” was becoming common in homes and businesses in the United States. With a special attachment, you could convert an ordinary radio into a printing-press capable of receiving news bulletins and pictures transmitted over the air and printing them on a continuous sheet of paper that unwound from a roll.

1948

The first ITU conference following the Second World War – the *International Telecommunications Conference held in Atlantic City in 1947* – aimed to develop and modernize the organization. One of the administrative changes was the adoption of French, English, Spanish, Russian and Chinese as the official languages of ITU, with French, English and Spanish to be the working languages.

Following these decisions on languages, the *Telecommunication Journal* became a trilingual publication (English, French and Spanish) starting in January 1948. The texts for the three languages were printed in columns alongside each other. Publishing the Journal in its new form meant a considerable increase in work and in cost of production, but the results were declared to be “satisfactory.”

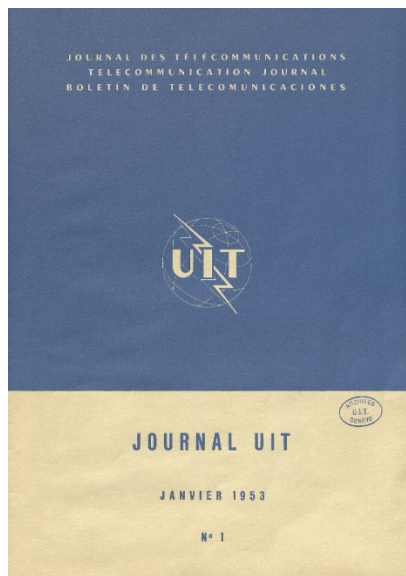


January 1948: the Journal becomes trilingual

1950s

Throughout the 1950s, efforts were made to increase the amount and variety of material contributed to the *Telecommunication Journal*. Administrations were especially encouraged to contribute material. The “Notes and News” column kept readers informed of the main events occurring in the telecommunication world. Much space during this period was devoted to articles about radio and ITU’s radio conferences.

1953



A cover in blue and pale yellow is added to the Journal in January 1953

Starting in January 1953, English, French and Spanish texts were presented consecutively, in separate sections, instead of in parallel columns. A cover with the new ITU logo was added to the issues. These changes were intended to make the Journal more “attractive.”

1961 - 1962

Beginning with the issue of January 1961, the *Telecommunication Journal* was completely remodeled, modernized and improved. A new layout was adopted, and the standard blue and pale yellow covers were replaced by beautiful colored covers with images.

In 1962, the old trilingual format was replaced by three separate English, French and Spanish editions.

The changes resulted in a substantial increase in circulation.

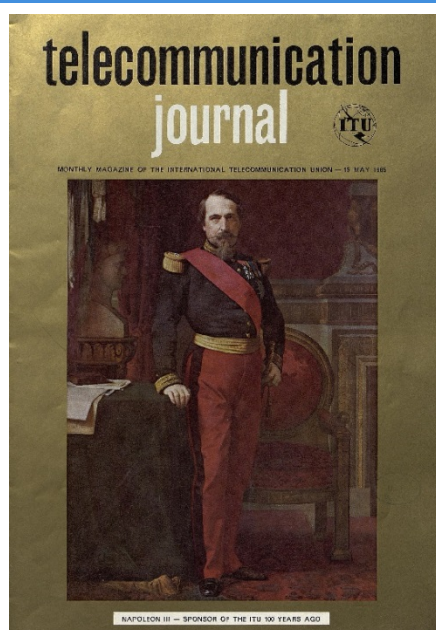


1961-1962: the *Journal* is published in 3 separate language editions and takes on a colored cover with pictures

1960s to 1980s

Over the decades, the *Journal* grew to more than 60 pages, spreading information about ITU and its work. More space was devoted to the activities of ITU itself. A number of articles and news items on the activities of the ITU in space telecommunications were published, and considerable space was given to accounts of the technical cooperation activities of the Union. Coverage of ITU conferences, assemblies and meetings as well as TELECOM exhibitions continued. Supplements such as maps and an annual list of satellites launched were added. A number of special issues were dedicated to an overview of telecommunications in specific countries.

Among the recipients of this revitalized *Journal* were technical cooperation experts in the field, reflecting ITU's expanding activity in telecommunications development. A reader survey carried out in **1981** confirmed that "a substantial proportion of readers liked the *Journal*" and found its contents useful.



Special issue of the *Journal* in May 1965 commemorating ITU's centenary

In **1965**, the *Journal* took part in ITU's Centenary celebrations by publishing a series of commemorative articles and a special May issue.

In November **1969**, the *Journal* celebrated its own centenary by publishing a special issue that included a reprint of the very first issue of its predecessor, the *Journal télégraphique*. This was such a success that the same thing was done in November **1989** to celebrate the *Journal*'s 120th anniversary.

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1990s

The historic title of “Journal” was replaced in **1994** when the publication was renamed *Newsletter of the ITU*, becoming *ITU News* in **1996**. Appearing ten times per year, the *Newsletter* would “concentrate on ITU’s activities, on the issues at stake and on the practical results achieved.”

The next important step was taken in **1999**, when, for the first time, *ITU News* appeared online. It was to become one of the most popular items on the ITU website.



1994: ITU News is born

2000-2015

In the twenty-first century, there have been a number of special issues published in conjunction with various ITU events. Thematic issues have covered a large range of topics, including the evolution of third generation (3G) mobile communications, the advent of the “portable internet,” licensing in an era of convergence, the future of voice, sharing infrastructure to boost connectivity, the networked car, connecting people with disabilities, IMT-Advanced, mobile broadband, protecting children in cyberspace, biometrics and standards, and 3D television.

The reach of the newsletter was extended in **2009**, when each of the six official languages of ITU (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) began to have its own version of the publication, in print and online.



ITU News is published in each of ITU's 6 official languages starting in July 2009

Throughout **2015**, *ITU News* carried announcements and reports about activities and events at ITU and around the world to celebrate the Union's 150th anniversary. Special commemorative editions of the magazine were published in May/June and November/December.



ITU's 150th anniversary was celebrated in special issues of ITU News in May/June and November/December 2015.

2016

In 2016, *ITU News* – rebranded as *ITU News Magazine* – became entirely digital, accessed through a new online portal. Its six issues per year are packed with information from around the world, and special editions are produced around key ITU events and topics throughout the year. The magazine looks set to continue its prime role of informing as wide an audience as possible of developments in the dynamic field of information and communication technologies that are so crucial to the modern world.

*ITU Library and Archives Service
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