# “HELLOW!” – for UNIVERSITY SPEAKS

If you want to start a conversation with a girl/boy in any of the social networks nowadays, starting your conversation with a clumsy “Hi!” will certainly not break the ice. But interestingly and hopefully, that is not the case with our telephone communications. The classic “Hello!” is still the popular trend, and is in practice and accepted worldwide. Even if English is not popularly used in some country, still the “Hello!” is used.

It was Alexander Graham Bell who invented the Telephone in 1876, but it was “The Wizard of Menlo Park” – Thomas Alva Edison who first coined the term “Hello”. And thus he resolved one of the first crises of techno-etiquette: What do you say to start a telephone conversation?

And to find out the story behind the term, Allen Koenigsberg, a classics professor at Brooklyn College, put upon himself the tortuous search, and found an unpublished letter by Edison. As then the Telephone was envisioned with a permanently open line to parties at both ends, it created a problem. How would someone know that someone is trying to speak to him? Edison addressed the issue one T.B.A. David, president of the Central District and Printing Telegraph Company in Pittsburgh as: “Friend David, I don't think we shall need a call bell as Hello! can be heard 10 to 20 feet away. What do you think? EDISON”. And thus the ‘punchy’ “Hello” offered itself as an efficient alternative to “Are you there?” or “Are you ready to talk?”. Mr. Koenigsberg says, “The phone overnight cut right through the 19th-century etiquette that you don't speak to anyone unless you've been introduced,". The “Hello!” and the fusty “What is wanted?” was even on the user-manual of the first ever public Telephone Exchange, opened in New Haven on Jan. 28, 1878, but by 1880, “Hello” was the trend. Even the early Telephone operators were called the “hello girls”, a term that appears in Mark Twain's "Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" (1889).  In "A Telephonic Conversation," a comic sketch written in 1880, Twain reproduced half of an imaginary telephone conversation, with "hello" making its first appearance in a work of literature.

When Edison discovered the principle of recorded sound on July 18, 1877, he yelled "Halloo!" into the mouthpiece of the strip phonograph. The word was then the traditional call to incite hounds to the chase, and is of a close fashion of such words as hilla, hillo, halloa and hallo, all used to hail from a distance. The British "hullo," which dates from the mid-19th century, is deceptive. It was used not as a greeting but as an expression of surprise, as in "Hullo, what have we here?". It seems likely that Edison, satisfied with the resonant halloo, continued to use it in his experiments, at some point compressing the pronunciation and modifying the spelling, never his strong suit, in any case.