
Alexander Bain's facsimile machine patent (1843)

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To fax or faxing is by definition "a method of encoding data, transmitting it over a telephone line or radio broadcast, and receiving a hard copy of the text, line drawings, or photographs at a remote location.

The technology for fax machines was invented a long time, however, fax machines did not become popular with consumers until the 1980s.

Alexander Bain

The first fax machine was invented by Scottish mechanic and inventor Alexander Bain. In 1843, Alexander Bain received a British patent for "improvements in producing and regulating electric currents and improvements in timepieces and in electric printing and signal telegraphs", in laymen's terms a fax machine.

Several years earlier, Samuel Morse had invented the first successful telegraph machine and the fax machine closely evolved from the technology of the telegraph.

The earlier telegraph machine sent morse code (dots & dashes) over telegraph wires that was decoded into a text message at a remote location.

How Did Alexander Bain's Machine Work?

Alexander Bain's fax machine transmitter scanned a flat metal surface using a stylus mounted on a pendulum. The stylus picked up images from the metal surface. An amateur clock maker, Alexander Bain combined parts from clock mechanisms together with telegraph machines to invent his fax machine.

Fax Machine History

Many inventors after Alexander Bain, worked hard on inventing and improving fax machine type devices.

In 1850, a London inventor named F. C. Blakewell received a patent what he called a "copying telegraph".

In 1860, a fax machine called the Pantelegraph sent the first fax between Paris and Lyon. The Pantelegraph was invented Giovanni Caselli.

In 1895, Ernest Hummel a watchmaker from St. Paul, Minnesota invented his competing device called the Telediagraph.

In 1902, Dr Arthur Korn invented an improved and practical fax, the photoelectric system.

In 1914, Edouard Belin established the concept of the remote fax for photo and news reporting.

In 1924, the telephotography machine (a type of fax machine) was used to send political convention photos long distance for newspaper publication. It was developed by the American Telephone & Telegraph Company (AT&T) worked to improve telephone fax technology.

By 1926, RCA invented the Radiophoto that faxed by using radio broadcasting technology.

In 1947, Alexander Muirhead invented a very successful fax machine.

On March 4, 1955, the first radio fax transmission was sent across the continent.

