



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 19, 2019

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Baltimore Museum of Industry Opens New Exhibition on Telecommunications in Maryland

Tap Talk Text *Explores Maryland Innovations from Telegraph to Television*

BALTIMORE, MD – In 1947, the owner of a Highlandtown radio repair shop, John Moscato, purchased a build-it-yourself television kit and became a local celebrity as the first television owner in Baltimore. Crowds would gather on the sidewalk in front of his shop to watch boxing matches on the seven-inch screen as Moscato adjusted knobs to get the best picture quality and his brother-in-law moved the antenna around on the roof.

An interactive exhibition opens Thursday, March 22 at the Baltimore Museum of Industry (BMI) and explores the history of local telecommunications, including Moscato's television. Entitled ***Tap, Talk, Text: Telecommunication in Maryland*** this long-term exhibition invites visitors to discover a number of methods used to facilitate long-distance communication beginning with carrier pigeons and smoke signals. Focusing primarily on four forms of electrically assisted communication—telegraph, telephone, radio, and television—the gallery contains images, artifacts, and hands-on stations at which visitors can interact with different forms of telecommunications technology and learn how ordinary Marylanders experienced such innovations.

Beginning with the 1844 transmission of Samuel Morse's first telegraphic message—"What Hath God Wrought?"—between the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington and Baltimore's Mt. Clare Station, Maryland found itself well-placed to benefit from this telecommunication revolution. Baltimore-based Bendix, which had telecommunications success with radios, introduced its first television, a 12" screen encased in a mahogany tabletop with doors and optional legs. It retailed for about \$400 (\$4,300 today), at a time when the minimum wage was \$0.40 per hour. With most television sets spanning just seven or ten inches, Bendix Radio's model was among the largest commercial sets.

Over the last three decades, the BMI has amassed a sizeable collection of artifacts and equipment—including a significant Bendix collection—representing the history and the role that local inventors, workers, and entrepreneurs played in the development of such technology. These devices and machines provide a comprehensive record of electrically assisted telecommunication and how it has changed over the past two centuries.

This exhibition was made possible with generous support from Dr. Ira Kolman, Baltimore National Heritage Area, Delaplaine Foundation, The Herbert Bearman Foundation, and Power Up. Located adjacent to the BMI's main Decker Gallery, the Communications Gallery is used by tens of thousands of visitors each year. In addition to the telecommunications exhibition content, the gallery also serves as an auditorium and is the setting for numerous educational and public programs.

This Thursday, March 21, take a deeper dive into Maryland's broadcasting history with our free after-hours event, **The Broadcasting Business: Then & Now**. Broadcasting professionals including WYPR's Tom Hall and WBAL's Deborah Weiner will discuss the public's relationship with information and digital technology in the era of "fake news." The evening kicks off the official opening of *Tap.Talk.Text*, the BMI's newly renovated communications gallery.

When: Thurs, March 21 | 7 PM - 8:30 PM

Cost: Free museum admission | Free onsite parking

Gallery images available upon request.

ABOUT THE BMI:

The Baltimore Museum of Industry celebrates Maryland's industrial legacy and shows how innovation fuels ongoing progress. Our exhibitions, educational programs, and collections engage visitors in the stories of the people who built Baltimore and those who shape the region's future.

VISITOR INFORMATION:

The Baltimore Museum of Industry is located at 1415 Key Highway, Baltimore, MD 21230. The BMI is open Tuesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., and closed Mondays and some holidays. Free on-site parking is available. Admission prices, general museum information and directions can be found at www.thebmi.org. Follow us on Facebook at [BaltimoreMuseumofIndustry](https://www.facebook.com/BaltimoreMuseumofIndustry) and on Twitter at @BMIatWork.