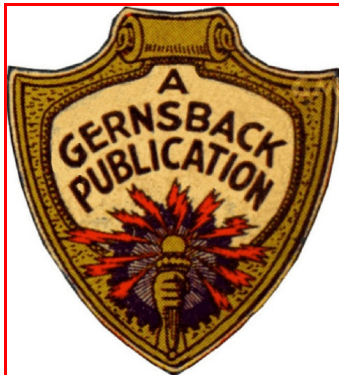


Hugo Gernsback 1884-1967 - If you ask about Hugo Gernsback, you will get multiple answers. Some fascinating and some not so. I can piece together a decent story after reading the Internet and dredging up bits and pieces that seem relevant to our subject.



Gernsback born Hugo Gernshacher 16 Aug 1884, to a moderately wealthy family in Luxembourg City. His father, a vintner. As a child in the 1890s, he became fascinated by electricity when a handyman at his father's winery showed him how to hook up a battery, wire and a bell to make the bell ring. The shower of green sparks that occurred when he touched a wire to the bell's terminal to complete the circuit seems to have impressed him as much as the bell itself. In telling this story to others over the years, Gernsback would always remark on the "wonderful green sparks" that accompanied the bell ringing.

Young Gernsback was after more than sparks and bell ringing. When he reached the limits of experimentation with the simple equipment on hand, he expanded his capabilities with an order of battery powered telephone sets, six volt light bulbs, connecting wire, and buzzers from the catalog of an electrical supply house in Paris.

He was determined to learn as much as possible about the practical aspects of his phenomenon called electricity. After further experiments, he successfully undertook to wire the Gernsbacher family home with battery powered telephone intercoms and six volt lighting system. This impressed everyone who saw it and before long Gernshack was adding door buzzers and intercoms to neighbor's homes and making a bit of money at it. He was even commissioned to install a complicated system of signaling buzzers in a nearby convent and nearly lost the job simply by aging.

Apparently he did well with his electrical tinkering, Gernsback didn't keep his earnings long. Whenever he accumulated a pocketful of cash he headed for Luxembourg's Grand Café and lost it all in poker games. It was fortunate that he did lose, as the losses were probably why gambling did not become a habit.

Following Hugo's basic education, he was enrolled in a boarding school in Brussels. He proved to have something of a talent for language and learned English quickly. This would serve him well in his future career as a writer, editor and publisher. His studies in English led to leading western novels and the works of Mark Twain, which fueled a fascination with America and left him determined to travel to the New World as soon as he completed his education.

Gernshack next studied electrical engineering in German, at a university called Technikum in Bingen. During his three years there he spent quite a bit of time perfecting the design for a portable radio transmitter. He also designed and built several examples of a high amperage dry cell battery that he was convinced would make him a fortune. In 1904 he bought a first class ticket to Hoboken NJ from Germany, taking two models of his battery with him. His family provided him with \$100 – enough to live on for perhaps six weeks, if he was frugal.

The young man hit the ground running and made his way to New York. Shortly after his arrival he applied for a patent on his battery (it was granted No. 842,950 in 1907) and began shopping it around, distributing business cards with the name "Huck Gernsbacher." He borrowed the new first name from his favorite fictional character, Huckleberry Finn. Excerpted from sas.org Continued.

Hugo was a futurist and worked hard to make it happen. He was the Father of Science Fiction and played a major roll in bolstering the amateur radio movement and creating the American science fiction tradition. An annual "Hugo" Award is awarded in his name. He became a publisher, businessman, author and inventor, holding 80 patents.

After emigration in 1904 from Luxembourg he became a naturalized citizen. He would go through the marriage vows three times. He founded Electrical Importing in 1905 to eventually move to radio row 233 Fulton street in Manhattan. (Ad from TV News 1948)

They imported specialized electronic equipment from Europe helping supply many of those who wanted to design their own radios and transmitters, marketing the TELIMCO Wireless brand, the first home radio set and first walkie talkie. He organized the WAA - The Wireless Association of America, the pre-cursor of the A.R.R.L. In 1912 our subject made the statement "estimated 400,000 people in the U.S. were involved in amateur radio."

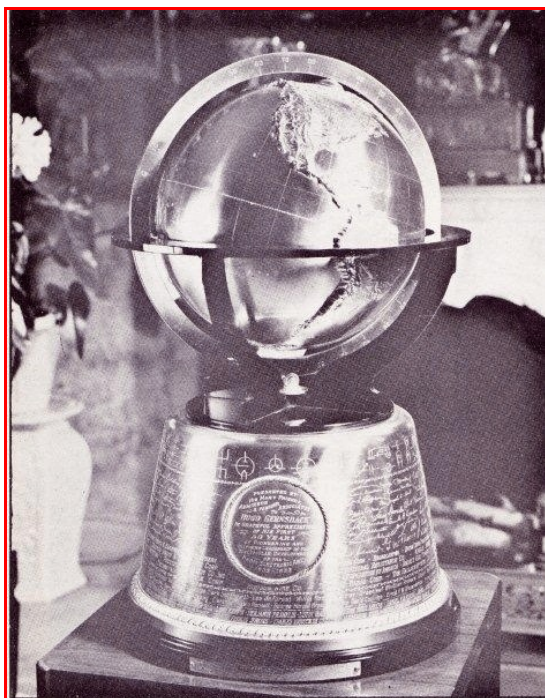
Gernsback published the first radio magazine in the world called "Radio-Craft." - Built and operated WRNY radio in 1925 and there he experimented with Television. In 1926 Hugo published "Amazing Stories." This perhaps the most famous of the early Science Fiction Magazines. He would have the enterprising Robert Hertzberg on his staff. He was a influential promoter of radio and medium thru his popular magazines and books. Being diversified, he kept afloat thru the awful depression times even tho forced into bankruptcy in 1929. Ziff-Davis acquired "Amazing Stories" in 1938 and they had a long run until 1965.

Radio Thirty-Five Years Ago
In Gernsback Publications

HUGO GERNSBACK
Founder

Modern Electrics.....	1908
Electrical Experimenter.....	1913
Radio News.....	1919
Science & Invention.....	1920
Television.....	1927
Radio-Craft.....	1929
Short-Wave Craft.....	1930
Television News.....	1931
Wireless Association of America.....	1908

Some of the larger libraries in the country still have copies of **ELECTRICAL EXPERIMENTER** on file for interested readers.



Gernsback expired in 1967 and his body was given to Cornell Medical College in NYC at age 83. He kept true to science even at the end with the gift of himself.

Pictured at left, the Hugo Gernsback Testimonial Trophy, presented posthumously on 18 May 1953. The event was the anniversary of 50 years of electronic pioneering. The Trophy was signed by many famous personages, including John DiBlasi, David Sarnoff & W2DJJ Bob Hertzberg.