

Reader's Guide

Television in American Society: Biographies presents profiles of twenty-six men and women who influenced the development of television in a significant way. The volume includes a diverse mix of personalities who played a key role in television history, including inventors, broadcast industry leaders, network executives, cable TV pioneers, program producers, TV news journalists, and entertainers.

Television in American Society: Biographies covers such key figures as inventor Philo T. Farnsworth, who came up with a design for the world's first all-electronic television system at the age of fourteen; Radio Corporation of America (RCA) chairman David Sarnoff, a Russian immigrant whose ambition and vision propelled him to the most powerful position in the American broadcasting industry; network executive Boone Arledge, whose ideas revolutionized sports on television; cable TV pioneer Robert L. Johnson, who introduced Black Entertainment Television (BET); children's program producer Joan Ganz Cooney, the creator of *Sesame Street*; TV writer Agnes Nixon, known as the queen of the modern soap opera; influential TV news journalist Walter Cronkite, who reported on some of the most important events of the television era; and television personality Lucille Ball, the star of the beloved 1950s comedy series *I Love Lucy* and the first woman to run a major TV production studio.

Features

Television in American Society: Biographies includes informative sidebars containing brief biographies of influential people in the world of television. Approximately sixty black-and-white photographs enliven the work. *Television in American Society: Biographies* also includes a timeline of important events and a section defining important words to know.

The volume concludes with a bibliography of sources for further reading, and a subject index.

Television in American Society Reference Library

Television in American Society: Biographies is only one component of a three-volume Television in American Society Reference Library. The other two titles in this multivolume set are:

- *Television in American Society: Almanac* presents a comprehensive overview of the development of television technology, the growth of the broadcast and cable industries, the evolution of television programming, and the impact of television on American society and culture. The volume's eleven chapters cover all aspects of television in the United States, from the invention of the technology in the 1920s to programming trends in the 2000s. The main emphasis of the volume concerns the many ways in which television has both reflected and influenced American life throughout its history.
- *Television in American Society: Primary Sources* presents fifteen full or excerpted documents relating to the development and impact of television. These documents range from notable speeches that mark important points in TV history to critical analyses of television's influence on American culture. The documents are arranged chronologically, beginning with longtime RCA chairman David Sarnoff's 1936 remarks to the press at his company's first demonstration of television technology, and ending with former vice president Al Gore's 2005 speech about the effects of television on democracy.
- A cumulative index of all three titles in Television in American Society Reference Library is also available.

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Comments and Suggestions

We welcome your comments on *Television in American Society: Biographies* and suggestions for other topics in history to consider. Please write: Editors, *Television in American Society: Biographies*, U*X*L, 27500 Drake Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535; call toll-free 800-877-4253; fax to 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via <http://www.gale.com>.

Words to Know

A

affiliate: A local television station that is connected or grouped together with a major network. Local affiliate stations are required to carry the network's programs according to a regular schedule.

airwaves: Naturally occurring waves of electromagnetic energy that travel through the air and can be used to carry information, such as television signals. In the United States, the airwaves belong to the American people, and the FCC grants individuals and companies the right to use the public airwaves by issuing broadcast licenses.

American Broadcasting Company (ABC): One of the major U.S. broadcast television networks, formed in 1943.

analog: A naturally occurring form of electromagnetic energy that is composed of waves and can be used to carry information, such as television signals.

anchor: The main host or presenter on a television news program.

animated: A type of television program that features cartoon characters rather than live actors.

B

bandwidth: A measurement of the amount of space on the airwaves needed to carry a television signal, based on the frequency and wavelength characteristics of that signal.

Big Three: The major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) that controlled television broadcasting in the United States from the 1940s until the 1980s.

broadcast: The act of sending communication signals, such as radio or television programs, over a large area to be received by many people. The term is also used to distinguish television networks that deliver their signals over the airwaves from those that deliver their signals by cable or satellite.

broadcast license: A permit granted by the FCC that gives an individual or company the right to operate a radio or television station that sends communications signals over the public airwaves.



cable television: A type of service that delivers television signals to customers through cables, or long wires buried underground or strung along electrical poles, rather than through the airwaves.

cathode ray tube: The part of a television set that makes it possible to see an image on the screen. Invented in 1897, it works by shooting a beam of electrons (tiny, negatively charged particles) toward the inside of the TV screen, which is coated with a substance that glows when struck by the beam of radiation. Also known as a picture tube.

coaxial cable: A type of line or wire used to transmit electronic communication signals, consisting of a copper wire surrounded by insulation, with an aluminum coating.

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS): One of the major U.S. broadcast television networks, formed in 1927 as a radio network.

commercial television broadcasting: A type of service, approved by the FCC in 1941, in which television networks sell commercial time to advertisers. The networks use advertising money to create and distribute programs according to a regular schedule. Before 1941, television broadcasting was experimental, and it was paid for by the television networks and TV set manufacturers.

Communications Act of 1934: The first major U.S. law that covered television. It created the Federal Communications Commission to oversee and regulate all forms of electronic communication, including radio, television, telephone, and telegraph.