



Posting It: The Victorian Revolution in Letter Writing

By Catherine J Golden

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Although "snail mail" may seem old fashioned and outdated in the twenty-first century, Catherine Golden argues that the creation of the Penny Post in Victorian England was just as revolutionary in its time as e-mail and text messages are today.

Until Queen Victoria instituted the Postal Reform Act of 1839, mail was a luxury affordable only by the rich. Allowing anyone, from any social class, to send a letter anywhere in the country for only a penny had multiple and profound cultural impacts.

Golden demonstrates how cheap postage--which was quickly adopted in other countries--led to a postal "network" that can be viewed as a forerunner of computer-mediated communications. Indeed, the revolution in letter writing of the nineteenth century led to blackmail, frauds, unsolicited mass mailings, and junk mail--problems that remain with us today.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Catherine J. Golden is professor of English at Skidmore College.

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