

Moji Telecommunications Museum

The museum building was first the telephone switchboard station of the Moji Post Office operated by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. It was designed by architect Yamada Mamoru (1894–1966), a cofounder of the Japan Secessionist movement, who is known for his work on the Nippon Budōkan and Kyoto Tower. Built in 1924, the museum building is typical of the Taishō Modern style of the 1910s and 1920s, with angled trefoil arches and imposing columns. The museum itself was established in 1994 to showcase the history of telecommunications in Japan. In 2009, it was designated a Heritage of Industrial Modernization site by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry.

At the time of its construction, the Moji Telecommunications Museum (then a post office) was regarded as the pinnacle of contemporary architectural design. The reinforced concrete building's curved stairwells showed an Italian influence, and it had state-of-the-art fireproofing and dust-reduction systems.

A century after its completion, the building is now a testament to the history of telecommunications in Japan and the ingenuity, perseverance, and technical know-how that has driven revolutions in global communication. Its hands-on exhibits and collections of legacy hardware are an engaging experience for anyone who has ever wondered how we got from the dots and dashes of Morse code to the long-range wireless telephones of today.

Exhibit Details

The first floor showcases the development of the telephone, with exhibits of telegraph and telephone equipment used between the Meiji era (1868–1912) and the present day. The displays are organized in a timeline, beginning with a restored version of Alexander Graham Bell's (1847–1922) original 1876 invention to the 1890 Gower-Bell, the 1896 wall-mounted Delville, and on through phones of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. More recent models include Howdyphones from the 1980s, the PICSEND-R TV phone (1994), FOMA sets (2001), the first smartphones (2005), and mobile phones of today.

At one interactive display, visitors can practice transmitting Morse code, the revolutionary communications system invented in 1837. Other displays allow visitors to experience the job of a telephone operator and see the inner workings of an automatic switchboard. At one simple but memorable exhibit, visitors can try lifting early “mobile” phones, which

weigh around 3 kilograms each.

On the second floor are several switchboard systems (viewable by appointment only), including a type-A automatic switchboard first used in 1926 at the Kyōbashi Branch Office in Tokyo. The museum's type-H automatic switchboard, first installed at the Yokohama Telephone Station in 1926, is a rare example of switching equipment that is still operational today.