The Television History Book

Michele Hilmes

The television is one of the most prominent inventions of the 20th Century. It has become one of the most common ways people view the world. After 1945, television sales in America skyrocketed. The first colour broadcast was made in 1954. Throughout the rest of the world, television came years later, and it wasn’t until the late 1960s that a television was commonplace in houses throughout the West.

At the dawn of television history, two competing experimental approaches led to the breakthroughs that eventually made the technology possible. Early inventors attempted to build either a mechanical television based on Paul Nipkow's rotating disks or an electronic television using a cathode ray tube developed independently in 1907 by English inventor A.A. Campbell-Swinton and Russian scientist Boris Rosing. German scientist Karl Ferdinand Braun entered history books by inventing the cathode ray tube (CRT) in 1897. This "picture tube," which for years was the only device that could create the images viewers saw, was the basis for the advent of electronic television.