Thomas Alva Edison
1847-1931
Biography

He was an American inventor and businessman who developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the phonograph and the long-lasting, practical electric light bulb. Dubbed "The Wizard of Menlo Park" by a newspaper reporter, he was one of the first inventors to apply the principles of mass production and large teamwork to the process of invention, and therefore is often credited with the creation of the first industrial research laboratory.

He is considered one of the most prolific inventors in history, holding 1,093 U.S. patents in his name, as well as many patents in the United Kingdom, France and Germany. He is credited with numerous inventions that contributed to mass communication and, in particular, telecommunications. His advanced work in these fields was an outgrowth of his early career as a telegraph operator. He originated the concept and implementation of electric-power generation and distribution to homes, businesses, and factories - a crucial development in the modern industrialized world. His first power plant was on Manhattan Island, New York.