A universal code

The telegraph pioneered instant, long-distance communication through the transmission of electrical signals. No longer was it necessary to wait days for a message to travel kilometres by letter, on horseback or by carrier pigeons. In a matter of minutes, information could cross tens of kilometres: the world suddenly shrunk, and time ran faster.

The application of Morse code — a combined system of dots and dashes — fostered the massive expansion of the telegraph. It became the first global technology, the first to prove the value of universality. For communication to cross borders, it was essential to agree on the code and the channel used; something that happened with the telegraph and that would later be repeated with the arrival of the telephone and the Internet.