The Edison Papers is beginning a new phase in our publications and expectations. Volume Six of the book edition, Electrifying New York and Abroad, is available for purchase through the Johns Hopkins University Press. While continuing to publish The Papers of Thomas A. Edison as books, the Press is also developing an electronic version for online subscribers.

Librarians and researchers should mark their calendars for Spring 2008. That’s when Part Five of Thomas A. Edison Papers: A Selective Microfilm Edition becomes available through UPA Microfilm Collections (a Lexus/Nexus imprint). The microfilm contains 85 notebooks and 34 pocket notebooks used entirely by Edison, 25,000 pages of general correspondence, 2,500 additional pages related to Edison’s role as chairman (later president) of the Naval Consulting Board, and 4,500 media clippings from the Edison National Historic Site (USA).

Moving forward, we are introducing Edison to a fresh generation of college students through Rutgers newly-launched first-year seminar program. Future generations are also learning through recent books and programs that have tapped our publications and personnel for expertise. Included are new titles for young readers in the Sterling Biographies and DK Reader Series. In this spirit, we are also very grateful to Sir Harold Evans for introducing our mission to new audiences, especially in his address, “Innovate or Die: Lessons from the Groundbreakers Who Changed America,” in The Conference Board 2006 Annual Report.

As the community of our website users grows larger each year, it is clear that we need to create more advanced, agile environments for emerging Edisonian interests. We invite you to explore our prize-winning publications and imagine the future possibilities.

Sincerely,

Paul Israel
Director and Editor
In 1889, William K.L. Dickinson started experimenting with the synchronization of sound and images. In 1895, Edison made sound pictures available in storefront parlors. Patrons popped a nickel in the slot of a cabinet, peeped through a viewer to see the moving pictures, and listened to phonographically recorded sound through earphones. The system was called the Kinetophone, a brand name that Edison re-launched commercially in 1913, when the Kinetophone was all the rage on the American vaudeville circuit. However, in the absence of electrically amplified sound or consistently reliable synchronization, the Kinetophone failed to keep audiences satisfied for long. It quickly faded from use.

More than a decade later, the Warner Brother’s Vitaphone system (a sound-on-disc method developed by Bell Labs and Western Electric) was more successful—at least until a sound-on-film system surpassed it. One of the most hyped “talkies” of all time, *The Jazz Singer* (1927) was directed by Alan Crosland, a former employee of Edison’s Motion Picture Division.

Pictured is an illustration of Edison’s projecting machine with a reproducing phonograph, from U.S. Patent No. 1,182,897.

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**Talking Pictures**

The phonograph was integral to Edison’s earliest ideas about “the recording and reproduction of things in motion.” His assistant, William K.L. Dickinson, started experimenting with the synchronization of sound and images in 1889. In 1895 Edison made sound pictures available in storefront parlors. Patrons popped a nickel in the slot of a cabinet, peeped through a viewer to see the moving pictures, and listened to phonographically recorded sound through earphones. The system was called the Kinetophone, a brand name that Edison re-launched commercially in 1913, when the Kinetophone was all the rage on the American vaudeville circuit. In the absence of electrically amplified sound or consistently reliable synchronization, however, the Kinetophone failed to keep audiences satisfied for long. It quickly faded from use.

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Global warming was not the problem it is today when Edison invented his electric light and power system over 125 years ago. But he recognized that the world's supply of oil and gas was finite and that more efficient energy use would become increasingly important.

Beginning in 1883 Edison began working on a system to convert coal directly to electricity. The drawing on the right is his earliest notebook entry on this subject and appears in Volume 6.

Although Edison never succeeded in his quest, he was later quoted as saying

"I'd put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don't have to wait till oil and coal run out before we tackle that. I wish I had more years left."

In a corner of one of the parlors of Mr. Edward H. Johnson, at No. 56 West Twelfth Street, [New York City], stands probably the handsomest Christmas tree in the United States. Mr. Johnson is an electrician in the service of the Edison Electric Light Company, and his knowledge and resources have enabled him to prepare, an incomparable toy for the gratification of the younger members of his family. This Christmas tree is of large size, and stands on a square wooden platform covered with green baize. Suspended on its branches are sixty-three miniature electric lamps of ten-candle power, worked by three currents from the batteries at the Edison office, a motor being also placed beneath the platform, by which the tree is made to revolve automatically and the color of the lamps to change from white to red and from red again to white. The wires connecting the lamps are skillfully strung with glass heads, and thus utilized for purposes of ornament.

Festoons of similar miniature lamps depend from the ceiling, which, with the chandeliers properly belonging to the rooms, make in all seventy-five electric lights in the double parlors. The appearance of the rooms and of the Christmas tree is extremely pretty, and has afforded delight to all who have had the good fortune to see them.  

*Electrical World, 20 Jan 1883*
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We recommend the following Edison items:

**Young Learners Interest:**
- *Thomas Edison and Modern America*, Theresa Collins and Lisa Gitelman, Bedford/St. Martin, 2002

**Entertainment:**

**Biography:**

**Research:**