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Inventions that Changed the World

Typewriters

The earliest recorded attempt to produce a mechanical writing device was in 1714, but the first useable typewriter was produced by Remington in 1873. It had most of the features of later machines, except that it typed only in capital letters. With the addition of lower case ("small") letters in 1878, the basic design was in place.

Portable typewriters appeared in 1912, and electric machines became available in 1925. By this time millions of typewriters were in use, and in countries using the Roman alphabet, very few official letters and documents were still being handwritten.

Although typewriters are still manufactured in small quantities, they have largely been replaced by computer word-processing applications. Some people remain nostalgic for the old-fashioned typewriter, though. It requires no electricity, no separate printer and no expensive ink cartridges (a single ribbon will type hundreds of pages, and is quick and cheap to replace). Most significantly, perhaps, with no easy correction, sentences have to be fully thought-out before they are committed to paper - an intellectual discipline perhaps in danger of being forgotten in the age of cut, copy, paste and delete.



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For reference see A & C Black *Dictionary of Computing* (978 07475 6622 9).

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