

Modern Electrics in the CHRS Library

By Bart Lee, K6VK, Archivist

Hugo Gernsback started *Modern Electrics* in 1908, in connection with his Electro-Importing Company in New York. The wiki says:

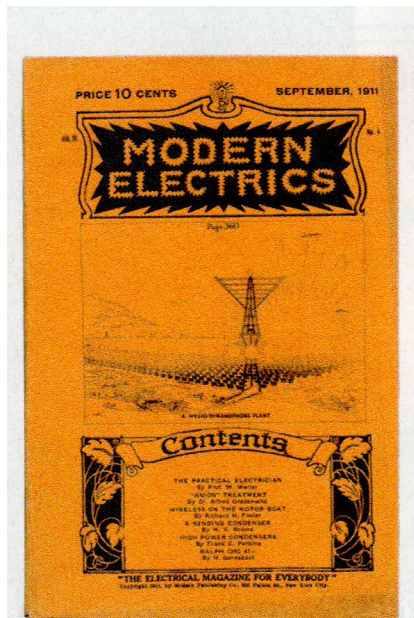
“April 1908 he founded *Modern Electrics*, the world's first magazine about both electronics and radio, called "wireless" at the time. While the cover of the magazine itself states it was a catalog, most historians note that it contained articles, features, and plotlines, qualifying it as a magazine.”

See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugo_Gernsback

See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Electrics:

“The circulation for this magazine increased rapidly, starting at 2,000 and increasing to 52,000 in 1911. In 1908, the magazine announced the "wireless registry", a listing of radio owners, their call letters, and the type of equipment they owned and how it was operated.”

Modern Electrics has recently been recognized as one of the most important American magazines. See Michael Dolan, “Cover Story” [American Magazines], *American History*, August 2021, page 44 at 48.



1911 Modern Electrics

The first radio magazine was started by Hugo Gernsback, an immigrant from Luxembourg, in April 1908. In 1911 Gernsback ran his story, "Ralph 124c 41+." As literature, "Ralph" leaves much to be desired, but among its many accurate predictions are television, the videophone, solar energy, and the first accurate description of radar. The September 1911 cover is the first depiction of a solar field.

From "Cover Story"

The library of the California Historical Radio Society enjoys an extensive run of *Modern Electrics*:



We are still looking for issues from 1908. The bound volumes are an Archivist's donation.

Modern Electrics frequently featured photographs of amateur radio stations. These were days before the Government in 1912 restricted amateur operation to wavelengths of "200 Meters and Down" (= 1,500 KHz and up, then a wasteland). The photos show many large inductances and substantial – and dangerous – spark gaps.

This pioneering popular technical magazine kept the country up to date on the state of the art in wireless telegraphy and associated arts. In these early days, it sometimes took a while for the science to catch up to the technology. It is the ancestor of *Radio News*, *Popular Electronics* and today's radio websites and publications, including much of YouTube.

Hugo Gernsback could (and often did) envision the future. It took a while for a lot of the future to catch up with Hugo Gernsback.



Gernsback demonstrating his television goggles in 1963 for Life magazine



From the wiki.

(de K6VK) ##