

News & Views



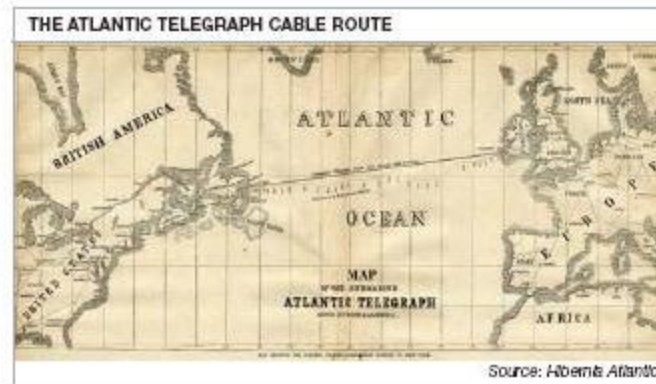
Subsea cables: 150 years young

Hibernia Atlantic is throwing a party to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first transatlantic cable transmission, sent on August 16 1858. The cable was pioneered by Cyrus Field and bridged Europe and north America, running from Valentia Island in Ireland to Newfoundland in Canada.

The Hibernia cable route has a similar footprint to the original cable running from Atlantic Canada to Ireland. Eric Gutshall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Hibernia Atlantic said: "The first cable was handmade, manufactured with gutta-percha, steel and copper... It lasted one month before it failed from a power surge but it took about 400 messages over it. It took one month to lay it from Canada to Ireland, today if you were to do the same linear lay it would take about three weeks, so there is not much time difference."

The first message was less than a 100 words and took 12 hours to transmit. The cable was 4,730km long and cost \$5 million to build. In comparison the Hibernia cable is 12,200km long and cost \$962 million to build.

Gutshall foresees that while capacity will increase over the next few decades it will continue to run over existing submarine infrastructure.



"I am an advocate of protecting these cables, this is an asset which carries billions of dollars of trade daily. The repair time is about 10 days and if multiple cables are destroyed it could cripple a nation for the better part of a week," said Gutshall. "All cables should be recognised by the different military organisations of those areas and governed by a UN body because it encompasses global communications." ■