

The friction of distance? Information circulation and the mails in early nineteenth-century England.

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Derek Gregory

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Postal charges in Britain were a step function of distance until 1840. Although these put a brake on information circulation through the General Post, the state made use of its Privileged Post (which was not distance-rated) to oil the wheels of official communications. But these privileges were regularly abused and on occasion extended, and there were in addition numerous illegal systems of conveyance. For many people in many places, therefore, the friction of distance was, in effect, the *fiction* of distance.



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