



Charles Kao (1933-2018)

ICFO remembers the *“Father of Fiber Optic Communications”*

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In the 1960's when Charles Kao began his experiments at Standard Telecommunications Laboratories in Harlow, Essex (UK) on low-loss fibers needed for practical long-distance communications, few could have imagined the profound impact his findings would have on society. Some 40+ years later however, Kao was co-awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics *“for groundbreaking achievements concerning the transmission of light in fibers for optical communication.”*

His work opened the way to the huge transmission capacity of modern telecommunications, which, combined with the signal processing of integrated electronics, powers our information society.

“The word ‘visionary’ is overused, but I think in the case of Charles Kao, it's entirely appropriate because he really did see a world that was connected, by light, using the medium of optical fiber,” said [John Dudley](#), former president of the European Physical

Society, in an interview with the New York Times. And I think society today owes him a great deal for that work.

Charles Kao died this week at the age of 84, but will forever be remembered as the Godfather of Broadband, Father of Fibre Optics and the Father of Fiber Optic Communications. We are indeed indebted to him for his contributions to science and society.