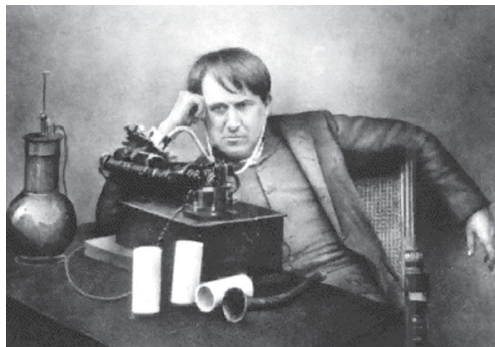


# Tech News

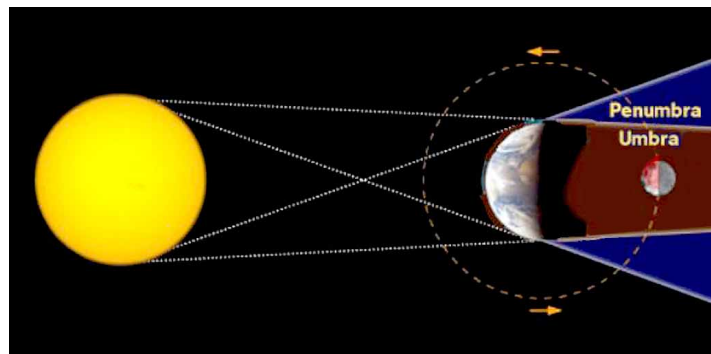
## Thomas Edison's birthday

Thomas Edison is probably America's most famous inventor. He was born February 11, 1847, so this week was the 161st anniversary of his birth. He is famous for inventing many things, including light bulbs, phonographs, and movies, but some argue that his greatest invention was the modern research lab, where many smart people work together on inventions (though Edison took credit for all the output of the lab). Neatorama has a lot of lesser-known facts about Edison at <http://www.neatorama.com/2008/02/11/10-fascinating-facts-about-edison/>

Edison's most famous quote "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration," has been greatly overused by teachers and parents to get kids to work harder. I prefer Nikola Tesla's rebuttal "If Edison had a needle to find in a haystack, he would proceed at once with the diligence of the bee to examine straw after straw until he found the object of his search. I was a sorry witness of such doings, knowing that a little theory and calculation would have saved him ninety percent of his labor."



Tesla is less known these days (he was the inventor of the AC motor), but despite Edison's prestige, financial clout, and deceptive advertising, in the end Tesla's system for distributing electricity as alternating current, rather than Edison's for direct current, because of the substantial technical benefits of Tesla's system.



## Charles Darwin's Birthday

Charles Darwin was born on February 12, 1809, the same day that Abraham Lincoln was born. Lincoln went on to become the most respected of US presidents, and Darwin the founder of modern biology. Darwin's *Evolution of Species*, published in 1859 set forth principles that underlie all of modern biology, long before the mechanisms that enable evolution were discovered. It has only been the last 55 years that DNA replication has been seen as the mechanism for the processes that Darwin described, and new discoveries about how evolution works are being made every year (several have come out of comparative genomics work at UCSC). Next year, there will be a big celebration of Darwin Day around the world for his 200th birthday.

Since today is Valentines Day, I'll close this article with a quote from Olivia Judson's column "The Wild Side" in the New York Times:

*One of his other major works, "The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex," includes a huge compilation of the sexual decorations and displays of animals, from the jaws of stag-beetles to the tail of the Argus pheasant, which far exceeds that of the peacock in absurd magnificence. From his study of all this, Darwin began to elucidate systematic patterns and principles of the evolution of courtship and sexual behavior. In particular, he developed the concept of sexual selection, which is the idea that cumbersome ornaments like big tails can evolve, even if they make the bearer less likely to survive, if the opposite sex (usually the female) finds them attractive.*

## Lunar Eclipse

Wed Feb 20 is a lunar eclipse, and Capitola Book Cafe (475 41st Ave., Capitola) is having a special event starting at 7 p.m. Mid-eclipse will be at 7:26 p.m. Science journalist Dana Mackenzie will talk about her book *How Our Moon Came to Be*, and members of the Santa Cruz Astronomy Club will provide telescopes and facts about the moon throughout the evening. <http://www.capitolabookcafe.com>

<http://sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/lunar.html>

picture: [http://starryskies.com/The\\_sky/events/lunar-2003/lunar.eclipse01.jpg](http://starryskies.com/The_sky/events/lunar-2003/lunar.eclipse01.jpg)