



Second Century

One Year Down...The Future To Go!

What an amazing first year it has been, serving you as ARRL CEO. The time has flown by incredibly fast! I want to use this month's column to touch on three things of importance: giving thanks, reviewing progress, and looking to the future. Over the course of the many Zoom and in-person appearances I have made, it has been wonderful answering member questions. This column will be a little longer than usual, so I hope you'll hang in there and get through all of it.

Here we are, just after your Thanksgiving celebration, and hopefully it was a joyful and healthy one. This is my favorite time of year: college football, autumn colors, the cooling of the air and the onset of winter, DX contests, and a time for family — for community — and to give thanks. I want to thank you for your membership in ARRL over the past year, and in particular thank our Life, Diamond Club, and Maxim Society Members. Even though we continue to struggle with the fears and mandates associated with COVID, our community feels as strong as ever. As hard and as diligently as we have worked for you over these past 12 months, we appreciate your interest, involvement, and commitment to ARRL. It is your kind words of support and the smartly constructed ideas that make our efforts feel rewarding.

I also want to thank our Board members and Officers. Our “first among peers,” these volunteers spend a tremendous amount of their time working with you and with HQ to improve both ARRL and the hobby at large. We frequently ask the question, “Is this good for ham radio?” Every day, throughout the hobby, I find self-serving and arrogant behavior on the air and on social media that fails this test. This behavior regularly works against efforts to attract newcomers to our ranks, including more youth and women. We must use the lens of a living in a fishbowl to guide how we interact with each other if we have any hope of attracting new people to amateur radio. The Board members and managers at HQ know that everything we do must be intentional, deliberate, collaborative, and positive, to drive amateur radio forward. The support I have received from Board members this past year has been outstanding and has made learning the job, and doing the job, both easier and gratifying.

Before moving on, one thing I want to state clearly and unambiguously is that the notion of a “lack of transparency” is now yesterday's news. I have opened wide the doors to my office for the Board members. I go above and beyond to communicate what is happening at HQ and involve them, not from a micromanagement perspective, but rather one where they want to be involved in the good work that is

going on. This has manifested in now monthly Executive Committee meetings where the CEO update is on the agenda every time. There are certain topics that are not for publication, such as some of our efforts in Washington DC, for obvious reasons, but when you see ARRL leadership at hamfests or conventions, questions about these topics are enthusiastically and clearly communicated.

When I came into HQ last year, my mission was clear. I needed to prepare ARRL for a transformation to the digital realm. We have a good news/bad news situation. The bad news is that we are so late to the game. The good news is that there have been many advances that we can now evaluate and pursue without having to develop them (and potentially fail at) using member dollars. In preparation for this journey through digital transformation, the first thing that jumped out at me was the culture of ARRL, both inside and outside HQ.

Collaboration was clearly lacking. Despite past efforts to combat this, the organization operated in a stovepiped way: You stay in your yard, and I'll stay in mine. This does not lead to the kind of thinking and ideas required to create digital products, and to move from a publisher's timeline to real time! As I explained to HQ staff in two different all-hands Zoom calls, “This is going to feel uncomfortable, and not everyone is going to want to go along for the ride.” The change has been difficult for some who were embedded in thinking, “We've always done it this way, why do we have to change?” Unlike the Spanish conquistador Cortés, who burned his ships to give his crew the motivation and the clarity that change was non-negotiable, we at HQ are going through a change management process that includes understanding the “why” behind this transformation.

Outside of HQ, ARRL is a challenging environment. Leaders are not hired, they're elected. Volunteers are not managed, they are led. Does this mean the elected leaders are popular? Yes. Does this mean they are qualified to inspire and lead? Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

(Continued on page 30.)

Second Century (Continued from page 9.)

The area that required immediate attention was Field Services. Our Section Managers and Affiliated Club Leaders had been left to their own devices for quite some time, leading some to even claim that clubs are dead. We were doing little-to-no development with these thousands of Field Service volunteers. We have changed that. The Board has established a new standing committee focused on both EmComm and Field Services, and we have hired a dedicated Field Services Manager, Mike Walters, W8ZY, who has jumped right in, developing relationships and communications with Section Managers, as well as working to revitalize clubs through new initiatives.

I went into last January's board meeting with great hope for three new initiatives. The first is creating a 5-year strategy for ARRL. I have not been able to devote the time necessary to this, but I am glad it turned out that way. What I have learned over the past year has shaped my perspective on not just where, but how ARRL needs to move forward strategically. Having a clearer vision will give me the ability to lead this strategic planning effort more successfully.

The second is a review of our development efforts. You won't be surprised to know that member dollars do not cover the ever-growing costs associated with the advocacy and operation of our association. Raising funds for specific initiatives, as well as more broadly for a general endowment fund, allows us to pursue the things that members — and, frankly, non-members too — take for granted. ARRL has always, and will always, be focused on the complex web of relationships that need to be cultivated for both advocacy and defense. We will also seek to fund big projects that will lead to improvement of the hobby from a technical and operational perspective. We are now seeking to hire a manager to take on fund raising on a larger scale, and with a background in both making and receiving grants.

The third initiative is called Project X. This is an effort to create an ecosystem for radiosport. It naturally would include electronic logs and confirmations found in Logbook of The World today, as well as awards. Our vision is to go beyond this, creating live uploading of contacts and the creation of new products for users. For example, it would be possible to create contests within contests through real-time logging and scoring, so that small groups of individuals or small teams could compete against each other, potentially using a different set of scoring rules, to move away from the publishing timeline to real-time gaming environments. Just ask a young ham: Do you want to know who won now, or wait a year to find out?

I had hoped to make more progress on this, but what makes LoTW great also hurts progress. The very people who should be involved with moving Project X forward are

too embedded in the past, so I have had to find alternative resources to work with. These conversations have led to the view that open-source applications can sit on top of Project X to create innovative features with data that do not exist today. This is extremely exciting stuff.

Another ecosystem we are building is Learning & Licensing. We are taking our educational resources from YouTube to the ARRL Learning Network, on to the ARRL Learning Center, and harmonizing them with all of our licensing materials to create an environment where people can grow in the hobby. To that end, we worked with YouTube content creator Dave Casler, KE0OG, to come on board as a subject-matter expert and to allow ARRL to edit and host his licensing videos for all three exams.

We've also hired another YouTuber, Steve Goodgame, K5ATA, to run our Education and Learning area. Steve has been a successful teacher, finding ways to integrate ham radio into his curriculum, and licensing scores of youngsters as new hams. He also made sure every new licensee received their first radio. Steve will be taking his formula nationally. We've enjoyed continued success with our Collegiate Amateur Radio Initiative (CARI), where regular meetings with college and university ham radio clubs are conducted on Zoom. Our goal here is not to teach operating skills, but rather to instill in younger hams the passion for the hobby we felt as youngsters and letting them run with it — in their own ways — using today's standards.

As I look to the future, I've never seen a brighter horizon. Amateur radio equipment has never been more capable at the price points that are available today. The hobby has never been more diverse, from the perspectives of modes as well as people! Amateur radio is a global hobby and must be viewed from a global perspective. One only need see the IARU meetings and the initiatives ARRL is participating in to witness the diversity!

ARRL is more than an association. It is a community. We are so much more than the list of member benefits enumerated in *QST* every month. ARRL is structure. It is resilience and resolve. It is cooperation and collaboration. It is promotion and protection. Why isn't *every living licensed ham* in the United States an ARRL member? That's a great question. We need to be leaders, to be connectors, to be positive, and yes, even evangelical about amateur radio and ARRL. I wish you a wonderful holiday season. Be radio active, get involved with your local club, and help us grow ARRL for the future.



David A. Minster, NA2AA
Chief Executive Officer