

Second Century

Advancing Amateur Radio, Together



“Communication and helping our fellow hams are more important than ever, in this time of great change.”

As the new Chief Executive Officer of ARRL, I understand that my name and face are new to many of our members. In actuality, I've been with the organization in a less-visible capacity for quite a while. Having had the pleasure of serving as ARRL's Chief Financial Officer for the last 28 years, I am familiar with the issues that matter to ARRL members and the Amateur Radio community at large. Drawing from that experience, I'll continue my efforts toward fulfilling ARRL's mission: *To advance the art, science, and enjoyment of Amateur Radio* — a mission that remains the same despite the many changes that ARRL has gone through over the course of more than a century. As ARRL CFO, I felt very strongly about my obligation to be a responsible steward of ARRL's membership and resources, and I'm committed to continuing to uphold that obligation now as CEO.

In my opinion, fulfilling ARRL's mission means doing so for all Amateur Radio operators, regardless of their license class, level of technical ability, or particular interests within the wide range of activities that Amateur Radio has to offer. I also believe that an increase in the number of “younger” practitioners of Amateur Radio will benefit the avocation and ARRL. These are not simple or easy propositions, but we're determined to meet the challenge.

I step into this position at a time when Amateur Radio and ARRL are undergoing a great deal of change. Whether this change is “good” or “bad” is often a matter of perception, but one thing most of us can agree on is that change is often necessary, even if it's difficult. At a time like this, disagreement can be healthy, and bring new perspectives to light. At the same time, we need to take care that our disagreements remain respectful and constructive, with the aim of educating each other, rather than crossing over into disruption.

For a while now, a rift has existed between amateurs from different generations. Their differing experiences of Amateur Radio lead to differing opinions about how our avocation should be enjoyed. There's more to enjoy than ever before — Amateur Radio in 2018 looks and sounds differently than it did in 1968, or even 1988 — and licensing numbers indicate that people are still interested in exploring Amateur Radio.

Last year, for example, there were over 32,000 individuals who received Amateur Radio licenses for the first time.

As the sub-interests within ham radio become increasingly diverse and segment our community even more, how does that community continue to thrive? How do we develop a clear path forward for Amateur Radio — a path that hams of all stripes will want to walk together? In an effort to answer these questions and others, a team at ARRL Headquarters has been conducting research for more than a year, to better define the needs of amateurs in the various generational and interest groups, and plan for how ARRL can respond to those needs in the most effective manner possible.

One thing that's clear in all of our research, both formal and informal, is that hams of all ages, license classes, levels of experience, and areas of interest want help. They want help figuring out which activities to get involved in, what kind of gear they need for those activities, and where to find like-minded fellow hams. Getting help begins with asking for it, and requires someone to be there to listen, and answer questions. A ham who comes to you for help may be interested in contesting — or not. They may want to explore new technologies like microcontrollers, or new modes like FT8 — or not. They may be budding DXers — or not. If a ham in need of assistance asks you to step into unfamiliar territory, maybe it's an opportunity for you to learn something new as well. It doesn't mean you have to become an expert in programming an Arduino, but you may find a way to apply your years of workbench skills in a manner you hadn't previously considered.

The point is that we all need to keep our vibrant and varied community moving forward amid great change. Let's keep encouraging others to join our wonderful hobby, let's keep talking to each other, and let's keep teaching each other — after all, that's the tried-and-true ham way. It's how we've gotten this far. I am eager to hear what you have to say as we move farther into Amateur Radio's Second Century.

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