Perspectives

Digital DXCC

Counting countries worked has been a passion among hams since the beginning of Amateur Radio. That passion spawned the ARRL DXCC Awards program, which is currently available in four mode flavors: CW, phone, digital and mixed modes. Digital-mode DXCC was for a long time practiced using RTTY, which itself evolved over the years to the currently popular ham version of two alternating carriers separated by 170 Hz, using 5-bit Baudot code plus one start and one-to-two stop bits, each bit 22 ms long. The DXCC award mode was called “RTTY” but the ARRL counts just about any digital mode for the RTTY award. The award is now known as the “DXCC Digital Award.”

We’ve noted before in this column that the use of digital modes in Amateur Radio has grown dramatically in recent years. Indeed, according to the ARRL, “For newcomers, data emissions are far more popular than telegraphy” (Petition to FCC for Rule Making, February 2018). Today, a simple ‘SDR System’ comprising a recent receiver plus a sound card — or an SDR radio — plus a computer running WSJT-X or fldigi or other software, enables a multitude of digital modes including FT8 and RTTY. FT8 is rapidly gaining popularity in the DX community.

Today some hams are asking for a separate DXCC FT8 award category. As this editorial is being written, the ARRL DX Advisory Committee is surveying the wishes of the ham radio community regarding the FT8 DXCC question. Insofar as QEX is concerned, we are a forum for communications experimenters, so tell us how you are evolving into this exciting digital world!

In This Issue

We feature a range of topics in this issue of QEX.

David M. Collins, AD7JT, designs an innovative CW keyer.

Bob Simmons, WB6EYV, introduces new PIC programs for his VoIP board.

Thomas M. Alldread, VA7TA, builds a portable wide dynamic range RF field strength meter.

Paul Wade, W1GHZ, finds a range of measurement uses for an antenna analyzer.

Virgil Leenerts, WØINK, describes an experimental impedance measuring instrument based on the Howland current source.

Maynard Wright, W6PAP, revisits trimming the wire dipole antenna using remote measurements.

Keep the full-length QEX articles flowing in, or share a Technical Note of several hundred words in length plus a figure or two. Let us know that your submission is intended as a Note. QEX is edited by Kazimierz “Kai” Siwiak, KE4PT, (ksiwiak@arrl.org) and is published bimonthly. QEX is a forum for the free exchange of ideas among communications experimenters. The content is driven by you, the reader and prospective author. The subscription rate (6 issues per year) in the United States is $29. First class delivery in the US is available at an annual rate of $40. For international subscribers, including those in Canada and Mexico, QEX can be delivered by airmail for $35 annually. Subscribe today at www.arrl.org/qex.

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Very best regards,

Kazimierz “Kai” Siwiak, KE4PT