WinLink 2000: A Worldwide HF BBS

Remember the good old days, when you chose the best bulletin board system (BBS) in your neighborhood to serve as your "home BBS?" All your radio mail would be addressed to you at your home BBS (**you@yourhomebbs**) and when you wanted to read your radio mail, you connected to your home BBS.

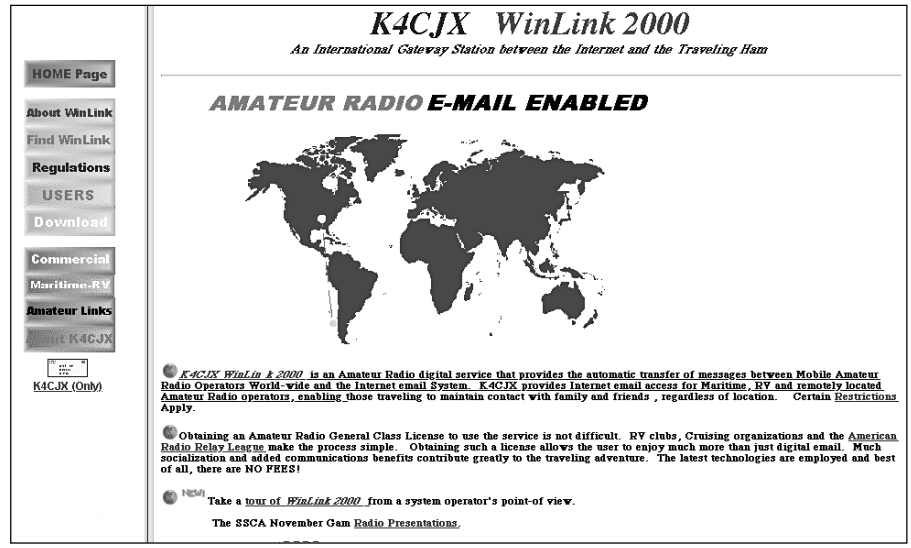
Problem was that when you were out of town, on the road and out of range of your home BBS, you could not get your radio mail. Unless your home BBS provided a landline dial-in service and you were somewhere where you could dial-in, you had to wait until you got home before you could receive your radio mail.

The times have changed and today, there is an HF BBS service that allows you to pick up your mail anywhere in the world. The system is called *WinLink 2000* and it has a backbone network on the Internet, which allows all participating *WinLink* mailbox operation (MBO) stations to share their message databases. Therefore, a user can connect to any participating *WinLink* MBO in the world to send or retrieve mail—doing away with the necessity of having a home BBS.

WinLink 2000 is a *Windows* application that permits messages to be transferred automatically between remote Amateur Radio stations and the Internet. "Remote" is defined here as not having landline access. Therefore, *WinLink 2000* provides Internet e-mail access for maritime, recreational-vehicle and other remotely located Amateur Radio operators, enabling those traveling to maintain contact with family and friends, regardless of their location.

WinLink 2000 is the latest addition to the *WinLink* suite of programs that permit PACTOR and PACTOR II Amateur Radio stations to use the Internet for the transfer of messages that comply with the existing third party traffic rules. In the August 1996 installment of this column, I wrote about how *APLink*, a DOS AMTOR application, had evolved into *WinLink*. Three and one-half years later, I am writing how Jim Corenmen, KE6RK; Hans Kessler, N8PGR; Rick Muething, KN6KB; Victor Poor, W5SMM and Steve Waterman, K4CJX, are taking *WinLink* into the 21st century as *WinLink 2000*.

WinLink 2000 is a BBS that provides for HF-to-HF and HF-to-VHF text message transfer as well as HF/VHF-to-Internet e-mail transfer. It uses PACTOR I and PACTOR II for semi-automatic HF operation. The *WinLink 2000* software scans the HF amateur bands continuously. Scanning takes approximately 1.2 seconds per frequency, with 8 to 21 frequencies to scan depending on propagation and time of day. When the software detects a station trying to connect with it, it parks on that frequency to send and receive traffic with that station.



K4CJX's *WinLink 2000* Web page (http://winlink.org/k4cjx/) is the source for everything you want to know about the software and more.

From the system operator's point of view, *WinLink 2000*'s modularity permits a Sysop to run any one mailbox on different computers. For example, all control modules may run on a computer in the Sysop's shack, while some or all TNC port controllers operate miles away at any remote location with Internet access.

From the user's standpoint, accessing a *WinLink 2000* MBO is the same as accessing a *WinLink* MBO. You need not use special software. Whatever you use for PACTOR or PACTOR II will do the job. There is software available that makes the mailing process easier, however, like *AirMail*. Just connect to the *WinLink* station of your choice and you are off and running! Note that not all *WinLink* stations have implemented the Internet connection.

Here is a very boring, but very useful list of frequencies used by the K4CJX *WinLink 2000* MBO. Center frequencies: 3618.9, 3620.9, 3621.9, 7070.4, 7072.4, 7073.9, 7075.9, 7076.9, 10121.9, 10122.9, 10123.9, 10125.9, 10126.9, 14064.9, 14065.9, 14069.9, 14071.9, 14072.9, 14073.9 and 14076.9 kHz. For LSB, call 2.1 kHz above the center frequency, for USB 1.9 kHz below.

Support for *WinLink 2000* is available at **winlink.org/k4cjx/**, where you can find a downloadable version of *AirMail* that is compatible with *WinLink 2000*, as well as a lot more information regarding the system.

APRS Redux

I often mention APRS in this column and whenever I do, readers ask me "What is APRS?" To answer those questions, I have written a new book *APRS: Tracks, Maps and Mobiles*, which should be available from the ARRL and your favorite ham radio dealer by the time you read this.[1]

Also, available from your favorite ham radio dealer is a new dual-band (144 and 440 MHz) mobile transceiver from Kenwood (the TM-D700A), which, like the TH-D7A handheld introduced a year earlier, has a built-in TNC and APRS software. Unlike the handheld, the mobile APRS radio can digipeat. The radio has been the main topic of conversation on the TAPR hot technology APRS (HTAPRS) e-mail list for a month now, as owners are making new discoveries about the radio every day. (To subscribe to HTAPRS, go to **http://www.tapr.org/**.)

[1]ARRL Order #7741, ARRL publications are available from your local ARRL dealer, or directly from the ARRL. See the ARRL Bookcase elsewhere in this issue, or check out the ARRL Web site at **http://www.arrl.org/catalog**.

Stan Horzepa, WA1LOU ♦ One Glen Ave, Wolcott, CT 06716-1442 ♦ wa1lou@arrl.net, www.tapr.org/~wa1lou