

## From the Editor

Back in October 1975, *Saturday Night Live* first hit the television airwaves. Fortuitously, *SNL* came out in a format — timely sketches and satirical newscasts — that was perfectly suited for future media like YouTube videos and other online content formats. Fifty years later, *SNL* has over 38 million unique YouTube views, compared to just over 7 million on traditional “linear” broadcast/cable TV.

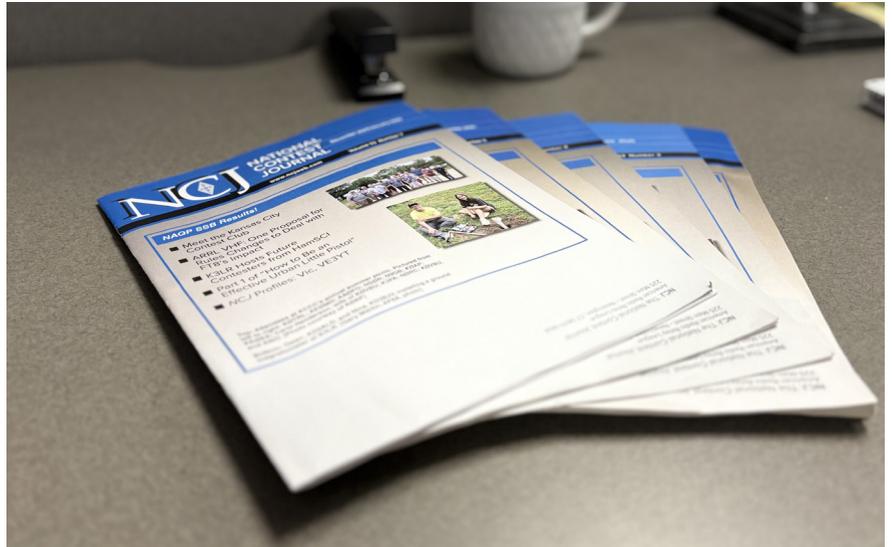
More than two years before *SNL* came out, another three-letter acronym debuted in print media — *NCJ*.

*The National Contest Journal* was founded by Tod Olson, KØTO, who, in his first editor’s column, said: “We believe that a genuine desire exists for more information about Radio Contests. Most of us have an interest in learning about other stations, operators, etc., that we find in competition with us.”

That ancient form of print media (letter-sized paper folded, stamped, and dropped off at the Post Office) was a labor of love that took a lot of time from a lot of volunteers. In 1987, then-editor Randy Thompson, K5ZD, and ARRL CEO Dave Sumner, K1ZZ, worked out an arrangement where the ARRL would take over publishing and delivery functions, and *NCJ* took on its familiar magazine format. Years later, in 2020, the ARRL expanded member benefits to include digital access to the bimonthly *NCJ* and *QEX* magazines.

Since then, to quote the ARRL letter sent to subscribers, “...print subscriptions have naturally declined. *NCJ* readers have almost entirely moved to the digital edition.

“As a result, ARRL will phase out subscriptions to the print edition of *NCJ*. The December 2026 / January



2027 issue will be the final printed issue mailed to subscribers. Subscribers with remaining issues beyond January 2027 will be issued pro-rated refunds.”

This doesn’t really come as a surprise — physically transporting ink on pieces of dead trees has been following the same trajectory as telephone booths for years now. Albert Einstein once said: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” The practicalities of publishing require a shift towards a new, more digitally aligned way of approaching our content.

It’s important to consider the benefits of this digital-only change. For example, getting away from print constraints can shorten the reporting time for Sprint and NAQP results and allow for longer feature pieces. Volunteer online efforts, like Bruce’s, WA7BNM, 3830scores and Contest Calendar, and the rapidly growing Online Contest Scoreboards, have already blazed the path.

On a side note, print copies of *NCJ* content won’t disappear completely — the ARRL has decided to offer an annual print compendium of *NCJ* issues. Look for a future ARRL email for more details. Personally, I first started reading folded/stapled *NCJ* back in the 1980s from the piles of copies Frank, W3LPL, kept handy for breaks when operating his multi-multi station. I’ll kind of miss have the pile of *NCJ* issues handy to skim through when rates are slow at my home station, but I guess I’ll learn how to do that on an iPad! I’m also playing with getting a Stream Deck interfaced to my K4 and N1MM — maybe an *NCJ* button with a turn page knob?

If you have questions about your subscription or digital access over this transition, you can contact the ARRL via email at [membership@arrl.org](mailto:membership@arrl.org) or by phone at (860) 594-0200. If you have ideas for articles or other content to better utilize the digital format, let me know.