Committee on Communication with ARRL Members

The Committee was formed to address members' desire for more and more-timely communications from the League, as well as the Board's wish to more frequently and effectively provide information on its plans and activities.

Accordingly, the Committee has concerned itself primarily with two communications vehicles:

1. Near realtime Question and Answer interchange between stakeholders and the Board and Staff.
2. Communication mainly to members of results of Board and Staff actions, primarily at this time reporting of the results of Board meetings.

Real-time communication with members and non-members

Phone and e-mail inquiries and follow-up to Board and Staff consume lots of peoples' time, and additionally sometimes require significant research. When inquiries occur via these methods, the resulting responses mainly go to the single individual making the request. Despite this, the answers are often of interest to a wider group of stakeholders, and deserve wider distribution.

Bernstein and Widin have been deeply involved with a Groups.io forum called ARRL-LOTW which has handled all manner of questions and discussions concerning Logbook of the World, and which effectively solves many of the problems of inquiries via e-mail and telephone. The communication afforded by this forum has turned around the relationship of ARRL to the users of LoTW.   This transition occurred over the course of the first year after ARRL assumed ownership of the group in 2014.

Upon discussion, the committee agreed that expanding this approach to more-general inquiries seemed likely to satisfy the need for Q&A interaction, the Logbook group being the demonstration project. As of 3 January 2020, the following groups are set up:

Group name	Moderator	Moderator position	Members 3 Jan 20
ARRL-Awards	Bart Jahnke, W9JJ	ARRL RadioSport Manager	242
ARRL-Contesting	Dennis Egan, W1UE	ARRL Contest Advisory Committee Chair	415
ARRL-IARU	David Sumner, K1ZZ	IARU Secretary	188
ARRL-LOTW	Michael Keane, K1MK	ARRL IT Manager	4918
ARRL-Moderators	Dave Bernstein, AA6YQ Greg Widin, K0GW	Members—Communications Committee	9

The Moderator-only group is set up to help establish the interactive, open environment we believe will be most valuable to questioners and answerers.

At its final meeting, the committee agreed that three additional groups should be set up in the near future. This will transition to a staff responsibility, while the initial groups above were worked on by the Committee and staff together.   The new groups and tentative moderators are:

- Antenna Policy ("ARRL Antenna Law and Policy")—Fred Hopengarten
- Regulatory—Dan Henderson
- New hams—Steve Ford, Joel Hallas, Ward Silver

A press release will be needed for the launch of these groups, and the list of groups should be added to the list of member benefits. Dave Isgur has been assigned this responsibility.

Ultimately, there should probably be a group supporting communication from the field to and from the ARRL CEO and/or President. This would be both more timely and more efficient than current methods like phone calls, e-mails, etc. This group should be launched after more familiarity with the online groups communication mechanism has been obtained, since it will likely include a considerable amount of traffic.

Reporting Board Meetings to Membership

ARRL's Board meetings have long been reported in the format mandated by Robert's Rules of Order. That venerable source recommends that minutes simply report the motions and votes which occurred during a meeting. From a parliamentary viewpoint, this is a good format, but it does not permit readers to understand anything about what was discussed, reasons why a particular motion passes or does not, what was said by particular participants, and what kind of considerations were included in the thinking that led to the vote reported. Contemporary members expect to see more comprehensive reporting, and it is this expectation that has led some to call for live streaming of Board meetings.

The committee believes that the correct balance is somewhere between Robert's minimalist minutes format and the extreme coverage of live streaming. As an example, the current format of A&F meeting minutes combines both the actual wording of motions and a high-level summary which includes expression of opinions and other suggestions made by committee members. The routine production of A&F Committee records demonstrates that this is not a difficult task.

The committee agreed to draft a motion to update the format of Board minutes, to be presented at the Board's January 2020 meeting. Rather than change the format immediately, the committee recommends that the minutes be produced in the proposed new format, for the

Board's approval. A brief example of the difference between the proposed and current formats appears at the end of this report.

Other topics

The committee also discussed topics concerning communications with new hams and how they can be improved from their current formats.   Marketing Communications Manager Kathleen Calahan presented a comprehensive program of assessments and changed communications intended to be more enticing and relevant to newly licensed hams. This will also fit into the Personify system now being deployed at ARRL, with expected launch in August. Details of the expectations for the system are included in the 2020 Operating Plan.

The two initiatives by this committee will provide valuable improvements in communications with members and non-members alike. It is important that non-members have access to these vehicles, since the groups are one means by which people can discover the benefits that League membership provides.

In general, the committee concurs that we need to ensure that headquarters' bias defaults to communication with the community. When constituents don't know what is going on, they tend to invent explanations, and those inventions are less positive than reality in most cases. Communications should be sufficient that no invention is necessary. The groups should be easier to use than to fabricate an explanation.

Future of this initiative

The motion which established the Committee on Communications with ARRL Members scheduled this report and termination for the January 2020 meeting of the Board of Directors (Minute 20 of the Executive Committee 20 May 2019). Without further nurturing, however, movement toward better communications will likely falter, or even be displaced by other, apparently more urgent actions. But better communication with the entire amateur community is a crucial component of re-building ARRL's membership.

Further explicit action will be required to encourage a bias *toward* communication at ARRL HQ. The three new groups will likely falter without someone on the Board that owns their success. And we will never get to an open communication channel to the CEO and President without someone to be the champion for its establishment. The committee urges the Board to charter a new version of the committee to continue the work of improving communication between ARRL and all amateurs.

Members:
David Bernstein, David Isgur, Fred Hopengarten, Howard Michel, Greg Widin (chair)

Proposed format for Board Minutes

For the proposed format, consider the following real example from the Minutes of the A&F Committee, 7/18/2019. The current format of Board minutes would typically include only the **bold type** version of the motion, without any of the explanatory information preceding it. The non-bold material exemplifies the additional detail to be included in the new format. Where individuals made specific comments, they can be identified under the new format as well.

Example format:

> **12. LoTW Study Committee Report**
>
> Mr. Widin, referring to his previously distributed report, expressed his concern that Logbook is suffering from the lack of programming support that was originally allocated to support Logbook. He noted that ARRL does have competitors and can lose the lead that we have in the industry. He opined that based on the way things are currently, there will be no progress made on Logbook.
>
> A discussion took place about the ability to use volunteers to aid in the programming. Mr. Widin reported that this possibility was investigated and a migration to a different platform would need to take place before volunteers could be utilized effectively. The discussion continued about the necessity of IT resources needed for not just Logbook, but the ability to effectively move forward.
>
> **Upon the MOTION of Mr. Carlson, seconded by Mr. Blocksome, the Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to authorize Dr. Michel to hire up to two full time equivalents to address demands of IT resources including LoTW with a cost estimate of $375,000.**