

Second Century

Dare to Imagine

Dare to imagine what ARRL and amateur radio will look like in 2025 and beyond. Dare to imagine change.



Are you imagining monthly meetings of local clubs, hamfests with flea markets, hams reading *QST* cover to cover, and on-air ragchewing or contesting — all with fellow hams that look like you? Maybe you're imagining all those familiar activities being done by younger versions of yourself.

The world has changed. People are busy with many activities — establishing careers, building families, giving back to their communities. Free time is scarce. People are used to customization. They expect to engage with the world on their own terms, on their own schedule, and in their own way. Younger hams are not just younger versions of you or me. They have grown up in a different world.

Data tells us that 54% of our current members have an Amateur Extra-class license, but in the pool of non-member amateurs, 75% are Technicians. But more than license class, their interests are different. Their demographics are different. They *are* different, and they want different things.

I get emails from members who complain that *QST* is too technical, and other emails telling me it is not technical enough. Members complain to me that contesting takes over “their” bands. I get other emails suggesting that we expand contests and awards. I'm sure you get the picture.

We can try to mold the future generation of hams to our image, or we can embrace new hams for what they are. ARRL needs to do the latter. We are now organizing our thinking around the concept of verticals — narrow markets or target niches — that will allow ARRL to provide each member what they want.

I've already talked to you about some initiatives — *On the Air* magazine, and Lifelong Learning — that ARRL is taking to engage new hams. We intend to continue developing new products and services for this vertical.

Other verticals I'll be proposing to the Board in January are Radiosport, Experimenters, and Emergency Communications (these are just working titles at this time).

ARRL needs to develop products and services in these verticals.

One product we are recommending to the Board is to create a family of “mini-magazines” that will span the various verticals. To jump start the “mini-mag” revolution, considering the business case, we will offer *NCJ* and *QEX* in digital form to everyone as a new member benefit in early 2020. We hope the digital editions will generate interest in their respective areas. Paper editions would still be available as a paid subscription.

Another way we plan to engage hams is through local clubs. ARRL will be hiring a national club coordinator in 2020, who will be charged with developing new ways for clubs to organize and operate. We will continue to support traditional clubs, clubs that meet monthly for business and social events, organize ARRL Field Day activities, etc. But traditional clubs are not the future of clubs. Young people now join causes, not clubs.

Our focus will be on developing ways, and an infrastructure, that members can use to organize themselves in ways they want, to do things that they consider meaningful. I can see these new clubs organized to support special events such as a marathon; to engage in STEM education; or prepare for disasters. These types of clubs exist now, but they may need to conform to a set of rules designed for traditional clubs. Can we scrap the rules and provide meaningful support? To aid in this, club leadership could be another vertical. ARRL could provide training in soft skills, such as how to run a meeting or give an effective presentation.

These are just my thoughts. To implement them, the ARRL Board needs to agree. If you think we are on the right track, if you think the vision I have outlined for 2020 is on the right track, let your Director know.

I encourage your comments to me at ceo@arrl.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard E. Michel WB2ITX". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.