

Second Century



When Collaboration Works

I recently shared with you our need to work together when making a big decision. It is a topic I introduced more than a year ago, and in ARRL forums and presentations I have given, it has been made clear to me that you want to be involved. You want to be heard about what is important to you. In my April 2023 column, I announced the survey that would be conducted for the entire month of May. I announced it early, with the thought that I might hear from some of you directly, in more detail than the answers the multiple-choice questions provided in the survey. You did not disappoint!

In my role as CEO, I regularly receive correspondence. Much of it is positive, but sometimes ARRL is or is not doing something, and a member needs to connect with me about it. If I receive one email on a subject, I know it is just that: a one-off. If I receive a few emails, I know that where there's smoke, there's fire, and I need to dig deeper into the issue. That didn't happen with my call to collaborate on dues. I received hundreds of emails. Your feedback in support of ARRL was instant and inspirational. I can say that every email was positive, supportive, and insightful.

We are working from now until the July Board meeting to solidify our ultimate strategy. I am here to tell you that two major ideas — ones we had not considered — came directly from you, the members. This is why, when I joined ARRL as CEO more than 2 years ago, I stressed the need for us to change our culture — the culture inside Headquarters and the culture within our community. By putting our ears and eyes, rather than our mouths and keyboards, to work, we give rise to hearing from people who modestly and sincerely want to share a point of view. And we are all the beneficiaries of their collaboration.

The feedback and engagement did not end with our members. Our manufacturers and retailers in the community got involved as well. Two names stand out to me: Scott Robbins, W4PA, the owner of Vibroplex, peppered social media groups with enthusiastic calls for members to support the new dues structure by joining him in writing a check. Robert Ferrero, W6KR, and his team at Ham Radio Outlet also took to social media to remind members to take the survey in May. This engagement, which was neither requested nor expected by me, led to yet another discovery: people don't understand all the benefits of an ARRL membership!

Of course, I read this and thought, "This can't be true! They're prominently listed in QST every month!" It is obvious that the listing is not enough. We need to put a spotlight on member benefits to serve as a reminder of all the

things ARRL does for its members, and it is equally important to educate non-members as well. Some of the comments voiced by non-members were completely without merit, including one that said, "I don't care if I'm wrong, I'm entitled to my opinion, and last time I checked that's my right!" That one made me smile. But it really does put the onus on me to do a better job helping everyone understand the breadth and depth of their ARRL benefits.

The greatest lesson to take away from this exercise is this: creating a culture of collaboration works, and it is worth the investment in time and energy. I encourage you to embrace collaboration in your endeavors. The benefits are obvious and all around us. Just look at the software that you use. Both Tom Wagner, N1MM, with his namesake contesting software, and Dr. Joe Taylor, K1JT, with *WSJT* and the many digital modes he's invented, built a village to create their tools. Great people collaborated to create great software that is forever evolving. To me, that sounds no different than club members collaborating every year to create a Field Day event that is better than the ones from years before.

Collaboration is not easy. It is a capability that is built over time, with the right people and the right leadership. Your collaboration with us on this complex issue of dues, and the leadership of our Board, will deliver what I hope will be something we can all be proud to have contributed input to, regardless of how mundane a topic it might seem to be.

Be radio active. Be a connector helping non-members understand how beneficial ARRL is to you and the hobby. And I'll be looking for you at the big events under way for more collaboration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David A. Minster'. To the right of the signature, the call letters 'NA2AA' are written in a smaller, blocky font.

David A. Minster, NA2AA
Chief Executive Officer