

2022 ANNUAL MEETING
ARRL BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Windsor, CT
January 21-22, 2022

Report of the Chief Executive Officer

ARRL BOARD CONFIDENTIAL

INTRODUCTION

2021 was a year of transition for ARRL, and 2022 will continue in that direction. The primary focus was on changing the culture at ARRL, improving the quality of everything that we do, and to begin making moves towards digital transformation. ARRL has, for as long as staff remembers, been a stove-piped organization. The departments were territorial, and collaboration was largely in word only. Despite getting the entire building involved in the 2014 Centennial celebration, old habits died hard and went back to where they were in the past.

The cultural shift has been paying dividends. Despite the negative bias that certain people have taken to the gross turnover at HQ, when you look at the net turnover which includes the replacement of problematic staff with energetic, experienced, and positive team members, ARRL is in a far better place than it was just one year ago. Finding hams for certain positions has been a struggle both through qualified business background requirements and market conditions including salary. As we now look at some of these positions as 'unicorns', we are moving on to find qualified non-hams for the positions and will train them after the fact.

The quality of our products has also been variable. Certain publications have been written, edited, and updated over the years with high consistency and quality. Others have not. More recent books have suffered from non-hams reading and editing the offerings without context and we have introduced products we are not proud of. They have sold well, but the sales have come from people buying the book cover and description from our online store, not through the quality of the book itself. This is where we let members down and are working to correct that issue aggressively.

Through our assortment planning team, a new book editor who is proving to be outstanding, and through CEO cover to cover reviews of every single book prior to print or reprint, we have been ensuring new titles go to the market as something we can be proud of, and older titles that are in reprints have been edited to ensure that legacy problems with the content are corrected prior to press.

Despite COVID, members have not diminished their engagement with ARRL. We have had to respond by dramatically increasing our presence through Zoom appearances, online YouTube interviews and presentations, and in-person Division level events. For 2022, this begins with the delayed ARRL National Convention at HamCation in Orlando next month. COVID remains a concern with many members, and

the registrations to our all-day Thursday event prior to HamCation has been a little light on registered attendees, but the event will be well attended and we are looking forward to this major engagement event with members.

We took the opportunity to upgrade the Education & Learning area by hiring a teacher to put in charge and to expand the footprint into the areas of youth and blind/vision impaired. An added benefit is that the manager is also a YouTube 'celebrity' who is active in the YouTube amateur radio community. We have developed opportunities for these popular and highly viewed content creators to build modules for our Learning Center, engage with ARRL staff for broader community engagement, and even to promote the 2022 Handbook this past fall through an integrated set of live streams to make the Handbook more approachable for inexperienced hams, and to have an uplift in sales.

The operations area at ARRL received a much needed improvement in staff and focus, principally in managerial leadership as well as the engagement and servicing of field based volunteers. Beginning mid-year, monthly engagement via national Zoom, and now Teams, calls have been held with Section Managers. A census project was undertaken creating learning for the SMs and clubs involved, as well as HQ where we are seeing trends in who responses are coming from, and what they are saying.

Emergency Communications was another area that required a reset during 2021. The incumbent EMD left ARRL in July to attend to personal issues. The first half of the year was spent fielding messages and calls from people trying to engage with ARRL on EmComm but not being responded to. The Board's establishment of a standing committee focused on EmComm and Field Services sent a strong message to members, however the field waited to see what would happen with the EMD spot. Through a collaboration of the CEO and ECFSC, resumes were collected, screened, interviews conducted, and a finalist selected for the position. The hiring of the EMD sent yet another positive message to members, especially given the EMD's employment background in EmComm and his AUXCOMM certification. From a field perspective, this is the most looked at and scrutinized area of ARRL. And the most contentious.

The internal area of greatest concern continues to be IT. The Director of IT position remains unfilled after accepting resumes for some 9 months. We recently decided to remove the requirement of being an active ham to focus on the importance of cloud and software development requirements. The knowledge of existing staff is adequate and has been supplemented with two contractors to support Personify. However, with at least two major multi-year development issues on the horizon in addition to the continued development surrounding Personify and data warehousing, the Director is a critical-to-fill position.

The 2022 and 2023 plans continue to tell the story discussed one year ago: ARRL has a revenue problem. ARRL cannot, year in and year out, endure increasing labor, operating, and cost of goods increases with a zero increase in dues. The atmosphere with membership is still not conducive to taking an increase in 2022, and deficit spending is easily offset with realizable investment portfolio gains. However, that is not a long-term solution. We will be looking to new ideas to enhance revenue opportunities and remain hopeful that Directors will make increasing ARRL membership ranks within their Divisions a primary goal for 2022.

The balance of this report will provide details regarding ongoing initiatives, new initiatives, and recruiting.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Personify – As of this meeting, all user acceptance testing is complete except for one end-to-end test to finalize the data interface from Personify to AIS to Great Plains. There are some resource concerns with Personify and with our own contractors so we are working to finalize a schedule for going live. One concern worth mentioning is that once we have gone live with Personify, we are going to need to create a ‘break the glass’ plan in the case that Personify were to be acquired or go out of business creating a potentially long-term outage of the cloud service.

Culture – The effort to change the culture at HQ continues. We have had huge success with creating the culture of “YES”. Staff have seen it with their Directors and with the CEO and CFO. Everyone knows we must make an effort to say yes, even if at the end it becomes a no. It doesn’t always make people happy, and we’re working on the recognition side of that.

There is a strong layer of direct reports to the CEO now, so we will begin to focus on the managers and supervisors. Although the requirement to collaborate is well known and fully adopted at this point, the need for individual accountability is still in its infancy. The basics of time and project management are also weak and need reinforcement. The other area that seems to be very well known to Board members is the heightened level of sensitivity of staff. To that end, we will be testing a program called Crucial Conversations with our Marketing and Sales team. This is an effort to give everyone the same set of tools to have important conversations while building a level of trust and a safe space to do it in.

Emergency Communications – Following the July 2021 Board meeting, ARRL staff members participated in one ECFSC meeting. Since the departure of the previous EMD, Mike Walters has been overseeing the area on a day-to-day basis. During the Fall, the CEO and Committee Chair of the ECFSC collaborated on a process to hire the next EMD. The collaboration was successful with a shortlist of candidates selected for interview and the ultimate selection and hiring of Josh Johnston. Mike and Josh have been collaborating on the EmComm track and a forum panel for the National Convention upcoming next month.

Learning Center – In September we hired Steve Goodgame to join ARRL to take on the role of Education & Learning Manager. As a part of his onboarding, he worked with Mintz & Hoke to ensure that he would be able to manage the Learning Center without their involvement going forward. This handoff took place successfully and Steve now fully controls the content management system of the Learning Center. As announced in the July Board meeting, it was our intention to pursue marketing of the Learning Center without Mintz & Hoke’s involvement. This led to more than a \$100K cost avoidance in consulting fees. We communicated our intentions to them and have moved forward without their further involvement. In the meantime, we have been rapidly expanding the number of offerings within the Learning Center for members and continue to use our YouTube channel as a way to give non-members a view into our Learning Center offerings and other ARRL initiatives.

Development / ARRL Foundation – An objective presented in January as an attachment to the 2021 CEO Report to the Board was a project to conduct a formal, third-party audit of our Development area, including the Foundation, to determine current issues and recommended actions to be taken. The preliminary findings were attached to the 2021 July CEO Report to the Board, and the final report is

attached to this report ([ARRL Assessment Report – CEO Document 7.1](#)). We have continued to struggle with coordination issues between HQ and the Foundation. There is a desire by some to tie personalities to the issues that exist. Removing personalities from the picture, the audit found that there are ongoing communications and coordination issues between ARRL and ARRL Foundation, there is no formal accountability of the Foundation to ARRL, and recommendations were made to correct these.

The focus for 2022 is going to be the hiring of the Director of Major Gifts & Grants. For some 5+ years now, ARRL has not been actively engaging with major donors nor cultivating new ones. We know the existing major donors have issues with ARRL, and we are quietly working through them. Having someone focused on cultivating relationships on a daily basis as well as looking at the landscape of grant opportunities beyond ARDC can lead to a potential influx of monies to support ARRL initiatives.

At the July 2021 A&F meeting, the decision was made that the Foundation interface to ARDC would be restricted to discussions of funding scholarships, and everything else was to go through the CEO office to ensure coordination amongst ARRL Board initiatives and potential ARDC funding opportunities. This has not happened and until there is messaging to and accountability of the Foundation from the ARRL Board, it will remain an issue where ARDC will potentially view us as a multi-voice, uncoordinated partner.

NEW INITIATIVES

Estate Planning – As a follow-up to a recommendation from Director Norton at the July 2021 Board meeting, we have undertaken the writing of an Estate Planning Workbook for members and non-members alike. It is focused on the process of planning how a ham's station will be dispositioned after becoming a Silent Key. The draft is attached ([Estate Planning Guide – CEO Document 7.3](#)). The next steps are to have outside reviewers comment on the document, layout the document and associated forms, and then publish the workbook. This includes creating a dedicated web page to the workbook and ability to download any part of it.

E&E – There are two major initiatives we plan to undertake with the Ethics & Elections committee in 2022. The first is the implementation of electronic balloting. This will be the second known attempt to try this. The last time saw a dramatic drop in submitted ballots from members. The other is the creation, adoption, and publishing of a single source of ARRL Election Rules, Regulations, & Policies. We discovered through the 2021 election cycle that there are numerous unwritten expectations surrounding elections that need to be memorialized in print and posted on our website.

2023 Handbook – 2023 represents the 100th edition of The ARRL Handbook. Extra steps are being taken to ensure that this offering will excite members with an enhanced quality book as well as online access to content. We also plan on more YouTube engagement with content creators to create buzz around this new edition.

2023 “Year of the Volunteer” planning – An area that has seen a dramatic drop in activity is the engagement of members towards volunteerism. This year, out of 10 possible board races, 8 had no challengers and the other 2 had a race with the incumbent running against the prior incumbent. The Section Manager area is no better. Out of 71 SMs, it is nearly impossible to get 50 to attend a monthly web-based meeting. We also had 2 New England SMs essentially quit-in-place. They needed to be replaced by HQ. This goes further yet to include clubs where finding volunteers to take on leadership

roles has become increasingly difficult if not impossible. This project proposes to create a series of content opportunities, events, and training to create a heightened level of interest with members, especially younger members, to get involved in ARRL broadly and volunteer to serve more readily within our Field Services and Governing structures.

Video Streaming / Content Production – There continues to be a dramatic increase in content we are developing on video. There is no shortage of ideas and we are working with groups across the membership to turn the ideas into content. We anticipate that club training and EmComm training will be two areas leading the pack this year. As a link into our Year of the Volunteer, we will be looking to build content related to leadership in both of these areas, going beyond functional leadership to inspirational leadership, how to build and grow a following, and create the next set of leaders.

5 Year Strategy –The proposal for a new 5 year strategy was delivered as an attachment to the 2021 CEO Report to the Board. During 2021, it became clear that there was insufficient time and resources to conduct this initiative in a quality way, and the view to how it would be run was also evolving. In order for this project to receive the proper guidance and facilitation, we may be well served to hire a consultant in the strategy space, or find a volunteer, who will be given full responsibility for leading the sessions and managing the process. The initial view on this effort called for a mix of ARRL board members, staff, and outside members like large donors. This process may not be appropriate and too sensitive/contentious to include outside members as active participants and their involvement may come from interviews only.

New arrl.org – We expect that one of the highest priorities that will come from the 5 year strategic planning process will be the call for an immediate establishment of a plan to replace arrl.org. We regularly hear from members that the website is hard to navigate, there's too much content getting in the way of what they're looking for, that it is horrible on mobile, and the https security issue with various aspects of the site continue to concern them. Our vision is to create a website that can be individually dashboarded so that a member can construct icons like with Apple iOS and Android, two common interfaces hams use everyday with their smartphones.

Project X – There has been no effort to rename this project since everyone knows what it is and refers to it as such. The committee to manage the direction of Project X needs to be reformed as it seems to have become integrated into LoTW Committee meetings and conversations. The prerequisite to doing technical work on this project is dependent on hiring the new Director of IT. In the meantime, efforts will be made to begin a functional user requirements document that covers off the existing elements of LoTW, needed functionality for Radiosport, as well as new functionality and revenue possibilities based on the potential changing ways that users are interacting with LoTW.

LoTW – After hardware upgrades to the database side of LoTW, that yielded very little performance enhancement but eliminated the database failures we had seen, we still need to look at the boxes that the application itself runs on. This is an ongoing effort to stabilize LoTW while Project X is progressing. There remains a small but dedicated group of supporters who are quite vocal about their desire to spend considerable resources on trying to upgrade LoTW, but the membership at large seems quiet on the issue. We receive very little, if any, member feedback on LoTW. Our strategy remains to, in as much as possible, not break that which is not broken and focus on the future.

Development / Foundation – The main goal for 2022 is going to be the hiring of the Director of Major Gifts & Grants and to begin building relationships. The Director will be working to evaluate our current programs, retool or expand them, and prepare for new opportunities with donors. We will also be looking at tools to assist the new Director in the ‘moves management’ of donor engagement through the use of a cloud based tool. Another consideration is the establishment of a more detailed annual report for donors that focuses on both ARRL and ARRL Foundation to showcase ongoing initiatives that rely on donations.

Vendor Outreach/Advertising – We have continued working closely with vendors, especially HRO for the new QST operating supplements, DX Engineering, and Icom – where Ray Novak has visited HQ recently and will be involved in equipment upgrades at W1AW and W1HQ. We continue to seek opportunities for advertising relationships outside but adjacent to amateur radio. We have been largely unsuccessful getting 3rd parties interested in the small circulation of our publications, surprisingly including Harbor Freight, but we continue exploring new advertisers for 2022. We have also expanded our reach to more international advertisers given the number of growing amateur radio companies abroad, especially in Europe.

KEY POSITION RECRUITING

The following positions are currently being recruited:

- Director of Major Gifts & Grants ([Job Description – CEO Document 7.2](#))
- Director of Information Technology
- Manager of Public Relations
- Social Media Strategist