

LoTW Update—July 2019

Logbook Committee

Logbook of the World Status

1,059,374,343	QSO records have been entered into the system.
203,098,481	QSL records have resulted.
119,541	Users are registered in the system
174,133	Certificates are active
21,421,711	User files have been processed

Logbook availability exceeds our 99% uptime target. You can always find the realtime status report at: <https://status.lotw.arrl.org/> In the last 30 days (as of 7/1) we had 99.959% uptime, with most of the 17 minutes of downtime due to maintenance work on our Internet connections performed and mandated by AT&T.

In view of the great performance of Logbook in the last few years, and a largely enthusiastic community of users, it is hard for me to write this, but we are currently becalmed. No, this isn't because of low sunspots.

Logbook resource stagnation

As one member of the ARRL-LOTW group summarized it recently:

SO, you can see the dilemma that ARRL is in. We have a priceless service that everyone wants to complain about, but no one wants to fund.

--From ARRL-LOTW. June 23. Message 31098

Because of demands on IT programming resources for other projects, planned LoTW projects have almost ground to a halt.

- We currently have only exception-level access to IT resources. For example, the blueprint for Logbook 2.0 that was expected to be **completed** by the end of 2018 is now delayed to the point where the best estimate is that work on the blueprint will only **start** in 2020.
- We have retired the technical debt of Logbook, but find an additional level of technical debt in the web and database infrastructure. The rewrite of the DXCC database is a major part of this. This project drags on in 2019.
- Further, in 2013, the Board approved hiring 2 additional full-time employees dedicated to Logbook. At this point, these resources have been mostly diverted to other projects, leaving us unable to make progress.

Let me be clear that this is not an IT problem; they are doing the best they can in a difficult situation. This is an overall resource sufficiency and allocation challenge within the organization which, from the perspective of LoTW, becomes a resource availability challenge.

Fiscal and Personnel Support for Logbook

For the last few years, the Logbook team has wrestled with trying to meet the criterion that LoTW should be self-sustaining. Accomplishing this is impossible with the current level of IT resourcing.

Aside from Publications and other merchandise, I am not aware of any other service of ARRL which is required to pay its own way. In fact, Logbook contributes to operations by supporting a major part of ARRL's awards program. Most (if not all) other ARRL programs run without any substantial income.

Logbook is one of ARRL's most popular and visible programs. We should stop treating it like a poor stepchild, and provide it with appropriate resources. Today, we have a significant competitive advantage. Investment is needed to keep that advantage.

Logbook's competition

Logbook of the World is the foremost source for confirming amateur radio contacts worldwide. However, the low level of resource devoted to it is squandering this leadership position.

Make no mistake- though Logbook is not a commercial product, it has competition, and the competition has been emboldened by Logbook's apparent inability to respond to our articulated vision of being Awards Central. As an example, we have a plan to add support for 3 awards new to Logbook, in a project whose duration is measured in weeks. From mid-2018 through the rest of this year, we have (unless something changes) no ability to implement these awards. These awards would all provide additional income to ARRL through LoTW, and 2 of the 3 are ARRL awards as well, which contribute additionally.

Significant progress on better communication to and with Logbook's users

One of the few things we have been able to do is to find opportunities to close the loop for Logbook users. Better feedback to users about the success of their actions increases confidence and satisfaction, reduces duplicate and confusing transactions, and results in reduced e-mail and phone calls for Logbook support.

The committee continues to remove or restructure processes which users find confusing. This has been a substantial collaboration between Radiosport and IT.

The current version of TQSL is 2.4.7. Recent updates have focused on simplifying the certificate request process and ensuring that users understand that process.

More friendly Logbook

We have improved and simplified setup and use of Logbook. Users who were discouraged on earlier trials now report better success when they try again.

Today, most major logging programs, both free and paid, support an easy upload to Logbook using information already available in the logging program.

Acceptance of Logbook among FT8 users has been phenomenal. Logbook is now sufficiently robust to be able to handle individual QSOs, uploaded one-by-one in real time. QSL rates for FT8 via Logbook are correspondingly high.

Submitted by,
Greg Widin, KØGW, Chair 2019
for the Logbook Committee

Members: AA7A, K3DGB, K7GM, KØGW, W3IZ, W9JJ, K1MK, K1MU/4, K6WX, Doug Haney