



Second Century

Learning — The Journey of A Lifetime

As an educator, one of my favorite sayings is, “Learning is a journey, not a destination.” For most of us, learning is a lifelong endeavor in many areas of our lives. Sometimes we are not even aware of it, as learning often occurs informally. We begin learning as young children by observing the world around us. Then we go to school to learn in a more formal manner. Some of us go back to school years later to get advanced training. We continue to learn on the job, we adjust to new trends and new technology, and we explore new interests as our lives change.

Through the years, the learning journey in amateur radio hasn't changed much, but the way people learn has changed dramatically. Today, you can find the answer to virtually any question wherever you are, whenever you want, using your smartphone. On a personal note, my career path — online learning — wasn't even a possibility back when I was in college, with personal computers and smartphones still years away.

Currently, the number of amateur radio licensees remains relatively steady. However, data shows that the number of active ARRL members is not keeping pace, as many of these new licensees don't become active in ham radio despite the resources around them. Passing the exam and obtaining a license has become the point where many hams' journeys come to a halt. ARRL wanted to know why this was happening, and what could be done to change it.

We conducted research that provided some very helpful clues. People who have their amateur radio license but stopped engaging with ham radio — or who were never active — were asked what, if anything, might have helped them stay (or become) active. The most common response was, “Help with how to get started on the air.” These respondents also indicated that they would prefer this training to be delivered using online videos or multimedia.

This information, along with the increasing popularity of self-guided learning using the internet, where people can find answers to virtually any question at any time, has been the catalyst in the development of ARRL's Lifelong Learning program.

As part of ARRL's Second Century, and to align with the way many associations now provide education to their communities, ARRL's Lifelong Learning program is looking to add a modern touch to the way new hams learn. By taking into account the increasing popularity of online videos and tutorials, ARRL is developing an online learning center to serve as a hub that new licensees and those seeking to expand their level of knowledge will use to further their own learning journey.

This learning center will focus on three main content tracks, all of which were identified in the research as the most common areas of interest for amateur radio enthusiasts: Electronics & Technology, Personal Communications, and Emergency Communications. Ideally, this learning center will serve as a bridge to the larger ham radio community and the resources already in place.

2020 has been a challenging year for learning, with the pandemic forcing educators and students from pre-school to college to teach, learn, and work remotely. But even though this situation comes with many challenges, it highlights the increasing popularity of online learning, providing ARRL with the perfect opportunity to offer this type of service to the entire ham radio community, while adding even more value to ARRL membership.

We hope you join in as the learning journey at ARRL continues in 2020 and beyond!

*Kris Bickell, K1BIC
Lifelong Learning Manager*