



Second Century

Dewey Defeats Truman!

“LoTW is dead and all the data is gone forever!” Who doesn’t love a sensational, but completely false, headline? Did you read the posts from the systems gurus and armchair insiders? We did — in emails from panicked members. Alas, the real headlines read more like, “LoTW is back on, and I uploaded my logs!” And, “The LoTW queue of 60,000 logs is now completely caught up in less than 4 days!”

The real hero of this story is Jon Bloom, a former ARRL IT Manager who wrote most of our Logbook of The World. We’ve been working with Jon for months now, on improvements to LoTW with an eye to the next generation of the system. When we suffered our network attack, Jon jumped into action, taking a full backup of the database off-site. He even has a version of LoTW running on an off-site server with the latest version of Linux, and on a completely different database system. The question of LoTW being safe and sound was never an issue. Despite the headlines. It was more about how we were going to bring it back online with the dependencies it has on other systems in the enterprise, while working to contain and remedy the attack on our network. This took longer than we would have liked, but we were being conservative and deliberate about bringing it back into reliable service.

We take very seriously the responsibility of keeping LoTW up and running. After all, we’re administering amateur radio’s worldwide logbook and confirmation system! It is one of our most popular and important member benefits. For a long time LoTW has had monthly uptimes of 99% or higher. We’ve made investments in the platform, servers, and processors. Keeping the hardware current has been important as LoTW users have radically changed the way they use the system. Long gone are the days of occasional large uploads replacing trips to the post office. Today, most of the traffic on LoTW is a single contact — but the envelope that one contact sits within must be processed just as a thousand contacts would.

If you are an LoTW user, or a fanatic like I am, you might find it interesting that most LoTW users are not ARRL members. The service is popular with international users, including top contesters, DXers, and rare DXpeditions. Of course, the personal accomplishment reflected in your log makes LoTW valuable to every user. There are many opinions on how LoTW should be structured to help fund its full operating costs, but being a member is the easiest way to start. President Rick Roderick, K5UR, and I recently sent out more

than 30,000 emails to non-members in Europe who have used LoTW within the past year, asking them to consider supporting LoTW by joining ARRL. How many users stepped up and became members? 74. So, clearly, asking for support from the people who use it is inadequate. A similar issue exists on the support side: Nearly 60% of the support emails we receive on LoTW come from non-members. Should there be a charge to support non-members? You’re a member! What are your thoughts? So far this year, I have personally spent nearly \$100 so that DXpeditions will send me confirmations via LoTW. This notion of “pay to play” is the one thing I hear the most feedback on from members. If a DXpedition is collecting money to QSL via LoTW, should they be paying to do so? I already know some of your thoughts!

The future of LoTW looks very bright. ARRL awards, including DXCC, remain very popular. The integrity of the submissions is strictly adhered to. The current version of the system runs very well for the load that is placed on it. We plan on moving LoTW into the cloud so that greater horsepower and storage would be available on demand. Calls for changing the look of the user interface and mobile optimization are few and far between. But the next generation of LoTW can look and feel different.

If you’re a new member, or a member who has not yet set up your LoTW account — do it! LoTW is fun because thousands of hams use it. The system is storing nearly 2 billion QSO records! So be the connector who uploads all your contacts to LoTW. Surprise a new ham by uploading the contact you’ve made with them on the same day, so they will begin earning QSL records and can get started with award hunting. Let’s all confirm via LoTW.

David A. Minster, NA2AA
Chief Executive Officer