



Second Century

Building Strength, Maintaining Balance

“ARRL is the national association for Amateur Radio, but beyond that tag line, I see ARRL as a membership association, a business, and a public charity. As CEO, I intend to strengthen all three aspects of the organization. And all three must remain in balance for ARRL to function effectively.”



I expect those three views of ARRL might start a conversation, and I invite you to share your views with me, fellow members, and potential members. Here are thoughts on each of those three views that may help to start informed discussions that will help us move forward together.

ARRL is a membership association. We are composed of approximately 157,000 people who chose to join, banding together for a common purpose. We are members, volunteers, and staff working together to advance Amateur Radio. Together, as an association, we are more than the sum of individuals. But some people who join ARRL view their membership as a subscription to *QST*. Others join looking for information, not association.

Young people today seem to prefer to join causes, rather than organizations. If we can develop the ability for people interested in Amateur Radio to self-organize around causes and design the infrastructure around that, maybe they'll see value in ARRL and become a new type of member — not necessarily one who comes to club meetings, but perhaps one who finds that ARRL can facilitate what they want to do with like-minded hams.

We need to strengthen the bond members have with the association — on their terms, and not ours.

ARRL is a business. We are a nonprofit business. A nonprofit business does not return a dividend to shareholders, nor can it return excess revenue to its members. A nonprofit business must use excess revenue to further the tax-exempt purpose for which it exists. Our Articles of Association spell this out.

But just as any business must, ARRL must operate with the financial discipline one would expect from the \$15 million corporation that we are. Without financial discipline, ARRL will not have the resources it needs to function. As CEO, I, along with the management team in Newington, will make data-driven business decisions.

We need to keep the business strong. As the business environment changes, we may face declines in revenue from publications, advertising, and membership. To be proactive, we need to cut costs and find new sources of income now.

ARRL is a public charity. Our tax-exempt status is under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. That defines us as a public charity. With that status, we can accept donations, and the donor can receive a deduction on their income tax. But in the broader sense, ARRL has received its tax-exempt status because we exist for the public good. Let me say that again. We exist for the *public* good. We do not, and cannot, exist only for the direct benefit of the members of ARRL. If we look at our Articles of Association:

The purposes for which our corporation is formed are the following: the promotion of interest in Amateur Radio communication and experimentation; the establishment of Amateur Radio networks to provide electronic communications in the event of disasters or other emergencies; the furtherance of the public welfare; the advancement of the radio art; the fostering and promotion of noncommercial intercommunication by electronic means throughout the world; the fostering of education in the field of electronic communication; the promotion and conduct of research and development to further the development of electronic communication; the dissemination of technical, educational, and scientific information relating to electronic communication; and the printing and publishing of documents, books, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets necessary or incidental to any of the above purposes.

We need to go back to our roots, and keep the purpose for which we were formed always at the front of what we do.

All three aspects of ARRL — the membership association, the business, and the public charity — must operate in balance. Without members, without funds, or by forgetting our core purpose, we will lose that balance, and lose our way into our Second Century. I encourage your comments at wb2itx@arrl.org.