

# The Young and the Digital

**B**ack in January, *CQ* Propagation Editor Tomas Hood, NW7US, started a Facebook page for *CQ*, as well as separate pages for our other magazines (*Popular Communications*, *CQ VHF*, and *WorldRadio Online*). This forced me to join Facebook, something I had been resisting for a long time, and that led to some fascinating discoveries.

First of all, without any promotion at all, the *CQ* page quickly gathered about 500 “fans.” With minimal promotion in the following weeks—a note on our website—that number jumped to about 1500! Looking at the list of fans, and of those hams who started sending me “friend” requests, I quickly saw a pattern emerging. About half the “fans” are outside the United States and Canada, and a disproportionate number (compared with our typical readers and our general perception of today’s hams) are young and/or female.

Coupled with FCC statistics showing that over 30,000 new hams were licensed last year in the United States (and over 100,000 in the past four years), it is becoming obvious that there is a growing number of newer hams out there, many of them young, who are not being reached in traditional ways. Like other young people today, they’re not big on joining clubs or doing much of anything analog. We are not reaching the majority of them in the traditional way ... but the response we are getting to our Facebook page is a very loud message that they are out there, they know who we are, and they want to engage ... but on their terms, on their turf. Today’s young people “hang out” on social networking sites. That’s where they keep in touch with their friends, meet new people and exchange information about hobbies. It’s up to us to go where they are, and our Facebook page is the first step. Getting our writers and readers on there and involved is the next step, and it’s already beginning. Propagation Editor NW7US, who took the initiative to set up the page, is actively greeting those who post messages and is himself posting regular near-real-time propagation updates, something that simply is not possible in a monthly magazine.

Last night, I posted photos from the chilly Orlando Hamcation® hamfest (see below). Just before the March issue came out, Kit-building Editor Joe Eisenberg, K0NEB, posted a note alerting fans to what his column was about and encouraging them to watch for it. *CQ* WPX Contest Director Randy Thompson, K5ZD, has started a WPX Contest page on Facebook. Elsewhere on the internet, Public Service Editor Richard Fisher, K16SN, has a blog site serving as a supplement to his printed column. Several of our columnists have their own websites. As time goes on, I’m sure that more of our editors and authors will make their way to our Facebook page or other sites, and engage readers and potential readers in conversations that build on their columns in the magazine.

This is a natural progression for us. If you look back at *CQ*’s original “mission statement” in the January, 1945 issue (before anybody had ever heard of a “mission statement”), one of our goals was for the magazine to be an ongoing conversation with the readers, *about* ham radio, but not *on* ham radio; rather, in the printed pages of each issue of *CQ*. Today, such conversations extend beyond the printed page and onto the internet. We encourage you to join us on Facebook if you’re a member, to meet your fellow hams (who may be a lot younger than you are!), discuss things, make skeds, etc.

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## American Resurgence

I’m writing this a couple of days after returning from the coldest Orlando Hamcation® I can remember in more than a decade of regular attendance. Early-morning temperatures were in the upper 30s and I needed to wear gloves while wandering the flea market. I even needed to keep my jacket on inside for the first hour or so on Saturday morning. Chilly weather aside, it was an excellent show as always, and it was great to “meet and greet” so many of our readers. At one point during the show, one of our “neighbors” in the exhibit hall pointed out that all of the companies in our row were selling products made in America. This included transceiver manufacturers Ten-Tec and Elecraft, as well as Buddipole and GAP antennas, Times Microwave, and us. Beyond our aisle were Vibroplex, DZ-Kit, MFJ/Ameritron/Hy-Gain/Cushcraft, W2IHY audio products, Heil Sound, HexBeam, and others that I’m sure I’m missing. But the point is that while the transceiver market continues to be dominated by our friends from Japan, the ham radio industry in the United States is alive and well and growing, just as ham radio itself in the United States is alive and well and growing.

## Column Realignments

This issue contains the final “World of Ideas” and QRP columns written by Dave Ingram, K4TWJ, before he became a Silent Key in January. Dave’s passing has resulted in some realignments of our columns, a process that had actually begun before he became ill and that is not yet complete.

Last month, we introduced a new column, “Ham Notebook,” by our longtime Beginner’s Editor, Wayne Yoshida, KH6WZ. This column allows Wayne to continue exploring his many interests without being tied to keeping things on a newcomer’s level. While we didn’t plan it this way, “Ham Notebook” will become somewhat of a spiritual successor to K4TWJ’s signature “World of Ideas” column, in that it will be wide-ranging and go where Wayne’s interests take it, much as “World of Ideas” was guided by Dave’s wide-ranging interests. As part of this initial transition, we asked Rich Arland, K7SZ, to continue “Beginner’s Corner” on an every-other-month basis, alternating with “Ham Notebook.” Dave’s passing changed that plan somewhat.

In this issue, we introduce “Learning Curve” by K7SZ, which will appear monthly and will merge elements of both “Beginner’s Corner” and K4TWJ’s “How it Works” column. While the column will retain its beginner’s focus, it will also offer information that far too many of us old-timers have either forgotten or forgot to learn in the first place. Rich starts out this month with a look at basic considerations for setting up a ham shack, a topic of value to beginners and veteran hams alike.

Editorship of our QRP column (Dave’s final installment is on page 85) will be assumed as of the June issue by well-known low-power operator Cam Hartford, N6GA. We welcome Cam to our staff. Still to be worked out are the specifics of how we will continue to provide regular coverage of topics that Dave regularly covered in “World of Ideas,” including code keys, crystal sets, and projects involving tube rigs. For now, we will be looking for feature articles on those subjects.

Finally, we’ve got some great articles this month, including an interview with Grammy winner and CW aficionado Larnelle “Stu” Harris, WD4LZC, Professor Heisseluft’s annual visit to our pages and a thought-provoking article on “Dictators and Amateur Radio” by a ham who grew up behind the Iron Curtain and is now free to write about it.

73, Rich, W2VU