

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: Logging Software

Hams have kept logs since the beginning. From at least the 1930's into the 1980's, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) required logs. That legal duty has ended in the US but tradition goes on.

Why log? This may seem like an odd question, but many hams, possibly most at this point, do not keep a log book. A log is history. Old timers may have log books going back into the 1950's beyond. Every QSO faithfully recorded. QSL cards sent carefully marked. Cards received carefully checked off. It can be fun to page through old logs and see call signs from now extinct countries.

I am young enough that while I carry a logbook in my go kit, my primary "log book" is in electronic form. I use the N3FJP software as my base log and import and export as needed.

Logs tell stories. I make notes in the comments such as antenna they used, weather etc. Carl KB3KJP regularly checks into the CARC 2M net in the summer time from his QTH in Westminster, MD. He is running a vertical beam and about 50 watts and is about 50 miles away. Sometimes we have 59 signal report, sometimes a 55, and sometimes we need a relay to get from Dillsburg, PA to me. We have done this long enough to know that when it is wet, but not raining, at either QTH, it works. A dry day and I am less likely to hear him. If I run across someone with an interest in trains, traction engines, trucks, farm tractors etc, I will make a note. If we talk again, it gives me something to talk about.

Logs keep fun facts. With a few clicks of a mouse I can see how many continents, countries, states, grid squares, counties, call sign prefixes (is there an award for working 100 prefixes?) 10-10 numbers, Islands on the Air, Summits on the Air, Mines on the Air, Walmarts on the air (yes that's a thing apparently) I have worked.

There are many options. Log Book of the World "LoTW" is a world wide format maintained by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL). QSO's are uploaded and matched. You can use LoTW as an easy way to prove contacts for awards. Before LoTW the primary, and in many cases the only, way to collect "paper chaser" awards such as Worked All States (WAS) or DX Century Club (confirmed QSO with 100 DX entities) (DXCC) was to take your collection of QSO cards to a card checker. In this area we are lucky to have Glenn K3SWZ to perform this function! E-QSL is an alternative method of keeping an electronic log and recording QSL's. QRZ has a log book in each member profile where you can record QSO's. Please see "PC's" in this series and "There is an App for that".

Today I want to write about 2 that I use: N3FJP and N1MM Logger

N3FJP logging software. <http://www.n3fjp.com/> Scott N3FJP offers over 100 different PC programs. The heart of their offerings is AC Contact Log, known to most as simply the "N3FJP logging

software". It is easy to set up and use. With it you can easily store contacts, create mail labels for QSO cards, keep track of QSO's for various awards like WAS-Worked all States and DXCC-worked 100 DX entities, etc. It also provides fields for County names for County Hunters, 10-10 numbers for 10-10 club members, etc. It also provides for very easy access to upload to LoTW-Logbook of The World and to send and track E-QSL's. It is not free but it simply works! The base log is \$24.99 but for \$49.99 you get access to everything Scott, N3FJP offers. It works out to pennies per program! I started with I think version 3.1 several years ago and upgraded to version 3.3. It worked well and is crash proof (I keep my log book backed up on 3 hard drives as well as the computer it lives on). I recently upgraded to version 6.4. Version 6.4 maintains the look and functions of 3.3. With 6.4 I started using CAT control to link the radio to the log. The data entry screen automatically fills the band and frequency. Not necessary, but very cool!

How do I use it? for ordinary QSO's-net check ins, the occasional special event, casual QSO's etc, I directly enter in to N3FJP. Then periodically upload all contacts to LoTW and can send EQSL's directly from N3FJP. I am pretty sure I can download EQSL confirmations to it, but my somewhat dated routine is to print EQSL cards received, then manually enter an E in the QSL field to show I have an EQSL. That way I have the look and feel of a paper card, but also don't try to give Glenn K3SWZ a non complying card for WAS or DXCC checking. For contests, like Winter Field Day and the Minnesota QSO party, I import the contest log as an ADIF file. Most contests want logs submitted in Cabrillo Format, which the N3FJP software does well. It also compiles statistics.

N1MM Logger (Now N1MM Logger +) is designed for contesting. Prior to my N3FJP upgrade, I would start the log in N1MM and then import as ADIF to N3FJP. I expect to keep using N1MM Logger +, just not as much.

FLDIGI also has a built in log book. I log PSK31 contacts there and export via ADIF format to N3FJP.

WSJT-X I am still figuring out. It logs contacts but doesn't seem to have the functionality that *FLDIGI* does. It can interface with N1MM Logger+ for contesting but since I haven't played in a contest with FT8, I have not taken the time to figure it out. I expect given the popularity of WSJT-X that someone will hang an interface to N3FJP on the WSJT-X software so QSO's can be logged directly. Version 1.8 and 1.9 of WSJT-X used color coding to mark calls previously worked. Version 2.0 has added more colors but seems to have dropped the coding for previously worked calls. I miss that and expect enough others do also that version 2.1 will bring more changes there. So in the meantime I log everything in WSJT-X then import the ADIF file into N3FJP. Works very slick!

How do I handle portable ops? I operate from my dad's a fair amount. So I have a separate N3FJP log book set up for that, and a separate location set up in LoTW for his place. I upload them, then the next time I upload from home, LoTW will prompt me that I have QSO's in LoTW not in my log and download them into my regular log book. This weekend I tried to play in the Minnesota QSO Party. Band conditions were terrible on 20m between the east coast and there, and I made 1 QSO. That is not enough to start a QSO party log for so I just recorded it in the regular log. If band conditions had been better, I'd have run a MN QSO party log. I need to look at the calendar and start to prepare for this season. The NC, VA, and WV QSO parties are coming and maybe this year I can add a new one. The PA QSO party should be October 12 and 13, 2019. It is still one of the largest and most popular.

Catch ya on the air!