

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: More Computer Tricks!

Amateur radio is a fascinating hobby that attracts all kinds of people. But since the typical ham (is there really such an animal?) tends to have an engineering or electronics background, computers are very prominent in the hobby. Overall it's a good thing. Before the personal computer, we essentially had three ham radio modes of operation, possibly four:

- CW (the original digital mode, using Morse Code dots and dashes (also known as dits and dahs) to send messages,
- Phone (invented not long after radio itself),
- RTTY (Radio-Teletype) which required a noisy, dishwasher-sized Teletype machine to be connected to a radio, and possibly
- SSTV (Slow-Scan Television -- sending photos via radio waves).

For most hams, that meant CW and Phone were the only really practical ways to enjoy the hobby.

Enter the humble PC - the Personal Computer. PCs were first sold in the 1970s and took a while to catch on. But by the early 1980s they had moved from being an at-home letter writing, spreadsheet producing, Solitaire and Minesweeper game-playing machine to something used by hobbyists. In the model railroading community, a hardy few tinkered with trying to control electric trains via computer. The idea being it took some of the budget work and less prototypical aspects of the hobby and made them invisible. Amateur radio operators discovered that the PC, with serial and parallel ports, could make ham radio more fun! The PC with a sound card could send and receive RTTY, SSTV, and CW without a lot of bulky hardware and wires. In addition, the PC could replace a Terminal Node Controller (TNC) and be used for sending data packets over the air.

The internet, after 1992, took all this a step farther. It was now easier for ham operators to share ideas and disseminate information.

In other parts of the **How Do I?** series we have taken a look at some of the commonly used computer programs, website and phone apps. Today we will discuss two more: Net Logger and Club Log followed by a brief update on the N3FJP application **Amateur Contact Log**.

Net Logger is relatively new. It is a free program (donation requested) used to improve participation in online nets. Our CARC club nets are relatively small and seldom have more than a half-dozen check-ins. But some nets, such as the OMISS (Old Man's International Side Band Society), may have dozens of participants in the queue. People sometimes become impatient. They may not know for sure whether they were checked in. Net Logger has two functions: 1.) It provides a semi automated way for Net Control Stations to keep track of who is checked-in, who is up next and 2.) When the net is over they can generate statistics such as the number of check-ins, locations, if they want, with a few keystrokes

upload the net log Log Book of The World (LOTW) or eQSL. Net participants can find value in knowing they were checked-in and where they are on the list. Visit www.NetLogger.org for information.

Club Log sounds like it does the same, but it serves a different purpose. It is also free (donation requested). Club Log is designed to help DXers keep track of QSL cards needed for credit for DX entities. It also fosters intramural competition. Some large clubs such as the Potomac Valley Radio Club use it for that purpose. Who can make the most DX contacts this year? on phone? CW? Digital? No matter how you want to slice it, you can mine your club log data. Unfortunately to add a club they need 10 pre-registered Club Log users, and really prefer at least 15.

For individuals, Club Log allows you to see which DX entities you have worked and which ones are in need of QSL card confirmations. You can upload your log book as an ADIF file. If you really want to take advantage of all Club Log has to offer, upload your log! Once uploaded, Club Log has some neat graphs and time lines. I was amazed to find I have logged exactly 600 QSOs in 2019. I was also surprised to find that 2019 was my most active radio year since 2013, and 2019 exceeded 2013 in both new DX entities and number of QSOs logged. Club Log automatically compares your log to every other log in their system and finds matches. So you may have a QSO with someone who has not confirmed the contact by QSL card, LOTW or eQSL. Club Log mines the data, shows you the station call sign and the what effect having that QSL would do for you. In my case, if I pursued my unconfirmed QSOs, I would have an additional 10 DX entities confirmed by QSL cards. If you are a serious DXer or paper chaser, you may want to reach out to those folks or check your log to see why they may not be confirmed via LOTW, etc. I think I could pull the same data from eQSL. LOTW will simply tell you it's not confirmed and pretty much leaves it up to you to figure out who it is and how to get a QSL card. Visit www.ClubLog.org for information.

Amateur Contact Log For logging purposes I use the N3FJP program called **Amateur Contact Log**. It has a menu tab labeled NET. This allows you, when acting as a Net Control, to enter the net data and each check-in as you go. I am going to start using this feature for the CARC Two-Meter Net that meets each Sunday evening at 7 p.m. local time on 146.490 MHz FM Simplex. My current system is to write all the check-ins on a tablet, then manually enter the information into the N3FJP application following the end of the net session.

If one of your 2020 New Year's resolutions is to become more organized, to be more active in ham radio, and/or to maximize your radio play time, check out Net Logger and Club Log. And if you currently are not logging at all and would like to start logging, you will find that the N3FJP software is available at a modest one-time purchase price. Many of our club members use one or more of the N3FJP contest and specialty logs. Visit www.N3FJP.com for information.

Catch ya on the air!