

DX University @ W9DXCC

2013

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Manager, Membership and Volunteer Programs ARRL

Work Everything



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Heh Heh

What means this
“work” everything?

Non-Hams do not
understand the term
“work” as we use it.
Of course, we might
not understand it
either....



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DX is Relatively Relative

We always argue about what is rare, and rare to whom. DX and rarity is relative depending on geography, band, and station.



Work Everything

The single best recommendation I can give today is “to work everything.” You may become interested in IOTA someday, and you may regret hearing that Alaskan Island in 2013 and not bothering to work it. And on that someday you need one island group to “have them all—that Alaskan Island.”



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Work Everything – Why Not?

- Ops used to say that they only logged on paper, and didn't want to waste paper or effort on QSOs they didn't really need.
- When I was younger I generally only worked DXpeditions/new entities on CW and phone without regard to band.
- Computer logging makes it so easy to log and track information.



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The Awards

- There are “must have” awards. These are the awards that require QSL inspection or other solid forms of authentication and verification.
- Integrity – it’s why LoTW is important.
- Think about the 68 years of the present DXCC program and what went into it. And it is still going strong.



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Types of Awards

-There are basically three types of awards:

- (1) Geography-based;
- (2) Call sign-based; and
- (3) Manufactured.

All types have some great awards with operating challenges.



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The Awards

-Depending on one's station and antennas, some awards can be more fun – WPX is a great example. Simple antennas and low power are sufficient to work new prefixes. Prefixes are plentiful and interesting. WPX and IOTA contests bring out many new prefixes. WPX is one of the call sign-based awards.



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The “Explosion” of Wacky Call Signs Since WARC 2003

Some recent calls from my log:

- GB65BTF LM9K75Y LY1ØØØBY EO8141ZPN
- EN5ØØI 5P15COP ON25BELGICA LYØ9XMAS
- HF12HAITI DP85ØZZ GB5ØRNARS CR515ØNM
- TB9ØMM RP65RMG IR9ITALY OL5ØKRASOV
- 3Z1ØØZHP R1ØØØYR 3G200AA 8J65ØYRC
- TCØ3W YR150UAIC W9MU HF2ØØCHOPIN
- ST26ASC XR33AA TCØ33TAI HA15COOP
- 9K5ØUU PA11CC LZ137ØPRT OL1911VP
- TM3ØØCDXC OM2Ø11IHF LZ18Ø2PLO SX22ØM
- LZ855SRKM GB11ØØFBS OM75IHWC SQØMORSE
- 4KV8MG 8N3START/3 LZ1Ø16WIW E711AMRS



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Anything goes today!

The Call Sign Awards

-Other than WPX, there aren't many. The German Society, DARC, sponsors awards for working calls that make palindromes (KW9WK, T33T) or "mirrors" (KW9KW, 8P8P).



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The Geographical Awards

- Numerous. Easiest to identify and create. Ham Radio is the best example of “the where of geography” there is. DXCC, VUCC, WAS, WAZ, IOTA are all perfect examples.
- Many other geographical awards are out there: All Japan Districts (AJD), County Hunters (CHC), Worked all Entities on the Equator...



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Manufactured Awards

- Created to bolster activity and give operators another challenge. 10-X, Geratol Net, 3905 Century Club, SMIRK (Six Meter International), anything that gives membership numbers.
- E.g., when one works all states on Geratol, one gets a # -- then everyone gets to work you again for credit for the #. And WAS with #s, etc. Then you get a club call, and get it a #...



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The Awards Themselves

-Most awards are available as certificates. Many also offer plaques or other options. There is nothing quite like a plaque to commemorate many hundreds of hours of effort. The 5-Band DXCC has long been a lifetime target for many. In 2000 the DXCC Challenge was introduced to bring another set of goals to DXers.



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The Awards on the Wall



K
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R

The Awards on the Wall



K
A
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X
T
T

The Awards

-See the K1BV Awards Directory to find paper to chase.

<http://www.dxawards.com/>



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Back to DX. What is DX?

- When it comes down to it, the base meaning is still “Distance Communications.”

The Fringe Bands (160 and 6)

- The “fringe bands” of 160 and 6 Meters make for the most interesting and challenging DX. These bands are usually not easy for difficult/distant QSOs and that’s why we all eventually end-up on these bands. Distance is difficult. My excitement over working JHØINP from Connecticut on 6 Meters should have been recorded on video 😊
- Even if you are not concentrating on working DX on the Fringe Bands, remember, work everything. Some openings may be once-in-a-decade or more rare. If a rare opening occurs to a place where someone just happens to be, for a short time, with a real signal, and you miss it, well, you missed it – It happens. My QSO with E3ØNA on 6 may be once-in-a-lifetime.



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Back to DX

80 and 10

- As you move to the middle bands (20 Meters is the classic Ham band where the HF spectrum is most useful for us), 80 and 10 each have significant DXing challenges. Distance QSOs are still highly valued, but more easily achieved than on the Fringe Bands. Antennas are smaller and small enough that installations can be managed by most people. Openings are more frequent and stronger. 10 generally relies on sunspots, while 80 benefits from darkness and quiet.
- Missing good DX on 80 and 10, while painful, can likely be repaired in future years.



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Back to DX

The Middle Bands

- 40, 30, 20, 17, and 15 Meters are easy bands on which to work DX – whether DX be distance, or needed-stations for any awards. The challenge is to be there and check-off the boxes. Distant stations are still fun to work, but sometimes closer-in stations are DX and tougher to work – like working the nearby states on 10-15.
- 12 Meters is a weird band. It exhibits characteristics of 10 and 15, of course, but frequently the MUF will get to 24 MHz when it has no chance of hitting 10. Activity is very low on 12 compared to the other bands. You don't want to miss working expeditions on 12.



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Back to DX

VHF

- The VHF bands are true DX bands. Distance is always valued. And distance is very difficult to work. Antenna aiming is critically important to ensuring all the gain of modern antennas is focused in the correct direction. Amazing things can happen on VHF and when they do, the satisfaction of working “terrestrial DX” is immense.
- Moon Bounce (EME) communications is another challenge made easier today thanks to digital modes, databases, and scheduling.
- Each of us chooses what to include in our public presentation of DXing achievement.



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QSL QSL

- There is a lot more to DXCC than simply making a contact, eh?
- Part of the game is proving to ARRL that a 2-way contact occurred. That proof exercise involves exchange and confirmation of QSO information, and then presenting that proof to ARRL. Fortunately there are many ways to accomplish this today.
- It is good to look at why we confirm contacts. It is OK to say “because I enjoy it!” One of the most recognized reasons to send and receive QSLs is to add to a collection. QSLs are the baseball cards for Hams. Personally, I don’t need 12 cards from the same station, but I would be very pleased, for example, to collect one from every station I work.



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QSL Methods

- Traditional QSLing with cards.
- Electronic QSLing with images.
- Digital confirmations with LoTW.
- Shared contest log data (IOTA).
- OQRS and Paypal – use the web or email to present your claimed QSOs and pay money so that a card is sent via mail or bureau to you.

Traditional methods have not changed much. What has changed is we seemingly have lesser time available to process QSLs. As the requestor of a QSL it is your job to make it as easy as possible for the target station, or manager, to confirm your QSO and send a card back.



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Traditional QSLing

- Paper, or cardboard QSLs are cheaper and nicer than ever. They are so nice now that I actually find myself reminiscing about those Little Print Shop QSLs, or W9SKR's simple, but interesting cards.
- The old operating and DXing books recommend that you try hard to impress your target op by sending a really nice card, and including extra “trimmings” like cash, stamps, and other swaggy stuff. Today, all of that isn't so important. What IS important is to make your QSO information easy to find, read, and verify.
- Do splurge on a nice card – they are not very expensive. If you spend a lot on your station, why not take the last step and make a nice card? Nice cards often are good marketing tools and help incent stations to keep working you in contests, for example. Change your card design every few years too.



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W9SKR Cards

STREAMWOOD, ILLINOIS 60103

520 Walnut Dr.

WD9DCL

Radio DAZKE
 QSO 14-DEC 1980
 at 1432 GMT.
 Ur 28 mc. SSB sigs
 R 5 S 9 T -

COOK COUNTY



Rcvr: TS-820S
 Xmtr: KW wts.
 Ant: TH6
 73, Pse QSL, ~~Tnx~~
 DAVID C. PATTON

Dave

W9SKR

ILLINOIS

COOK COUNTY

K9BGG

5BWAS 5BDXCC ARRL CP-35 FCC 1394

Radio	Date	GMT.	RST	MHz.	2 way
KJ9W	31 OCT 81	0527	599	14	cu

Please QSL, *Imm*

73

Jerry Brunning
 15 Tilipi Court
 Schaumburg, Illinois 60193

Tnx DAVE -

ILLINOIS

WB9CAS

EN52

Radio	Date	GMT.	RST	MHz.	2 way
W0FG	3/26/89	2149	5-9	28.433	SSB

Please QSL, Thanks

73

Louis Kapischke
 213 Hillandale
 Round Lake, Illinois 60073

STATE #50 Pse QSL

W9SKR

Streamwood, Illinois

520 WALNUT DR.

60103

WD9DCL

5BWAS DXCC WPX

Radio DAZQN confirming QSO of 14-DEC 1980
 at 1641 G.M.T. on 28 MHz. Ur SSB sigs
 RST 59 73 *Dave* Pse QSL Tnx
 Cook County DAVID C. PATTON

Little Print Shop

WD9GYF

Jim Burns
5459 W. Windsor
Chicago, Illinois 60630



Clarendon Hills, Illinois 60514
6139 Knollwood Road

WD9DCM

Bruce K. Felder, D.D.S.

Wonder Lake, Illinois 60097
8610 Ramble Road
McHenry County

K9XI

A. B. "Art" Reis

289 W. Berkley Place Hoffman Estates, Illinois 60194



WD9CWV

Gary A. Cannalte, Jr.

Traditional QSLing

- Many DXpeditioners and QSL managers just throw your cards away. Sometimes I use a 4x6 index card with my call and QTH on it, and QSO labels. Send your nice cards to regular hams who will appreciate them most.

Basic Tips for Traditional QSLing

- Your card should display your call in large letters and on both sides, if you use the back. QSO information should be in blocks and easy to find. Use Day/Month/Year for the date. Time is always in GMT.
- Use the PSE QSL TNX box.
- Use nested SAE/SASE in your outer envelope. Use self-stick envelopes.
- Include enough money for return postage. Follow the instructions of the manager. Postal rates have crossed a line (\$1) where it becomes more expensive than ever to QSL direct. Use \$2 bills if you can find them.



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Traditional QSLing Basics

More Basic Tips for Traditional QSLing

- Make sure to look-up most calls for QSL Manager information. There are many sources of QSL information – my favorite is www.QSLinfo.de. The GO (this name comes from the founder, W6GO) list is good. *The Daily DX* has a nice compilation. QRZ.com is super. Garden variety DX stations usually don't have a QSL Manager. You don't want to put a card into the Bureau for someone who has a QSL Manager unless you note the Manager on the card – otherwise your card is unlikely to ever be delivered or answered. DXpeditions often are happy to use the buro.
- Feel good about using the QSL Bureau. It is still a good deal and great membership benefit. With LoTW and eQSL, and other options, it isn't necessary to spend a lot of money on direct QSLing if the other op will use the Bureau. ARRL will send out more than 1 million bureau cards.



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Traditional QSLing continued

Even More Basic Tips for Traditional QSLing

- ALWAYS personalize your card. Don't just slap a label on there. Anyone can do that and cheaters frequently do. You should at least place ink from a rubber stamp across a label edge. And sign the card with your first name. If you do a lot of cards, the name-signing is not necessary.
- If you make a mistake on the card, do another one. Don't cross out and send the card. If you must cross-out, then make sure to "initial" next to the cross-out.
- Make sure you have all your geography printed on the card: State, County, Grid Square, mailing address, IOTA # and island name if you are on an island...



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Traditional QSLing (there is a lot to tell)

How to Answer an SWL QSL

- This question is asked frequently. Short Wave Listeners (SWLs) sometimes send cards to stations they hear. They want QSLs more than anyone as they have nothing else to do ☺ They need proof that they heard a station just like we want proof of a 2-way contact.
- You simply need to write the SWL's name and/or "call sign" on your regular card in the regular box. Confirm the time, date, and mode.
- Cross out the "2-way" that is usually pre-printed on your QSL, as it is not a QSO much less 2-way. I usually just use a Sharpie and write "1" over the "2" and leave it at that. The SWL usually will tell you who he heard you working, but you aren't confirming those QSOs so you don't need to write those calls on the card. Line through any extra space, including the signal report box. Personalize the card, and done.



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Some SWL Cards Received -- Painful When You Need the Entity!

waz 16
itu 29

Russian Short Wave Listener

R1A-12

GENNADY BORISOV
St. Petersburg

EX:
ua 0-107-368
ui 8-053-777

BEST DX ES 73!

TO RADIO	DATE	UTC	MHZ	RST	MODO	wkd witi
NTIN	09.10 1999	1625	24	559 (9.30)	CW SSB	5v28FL

PSE QSL VIA SRR QSL BUREAU, RUSSIA

GSQA(CW)
R-150-C(CW)
R-100-0
VPX
CWJF
WSPHCM

REPUBLIC OF INDIA

VU - 0020

IOTA
HA-VK-CA
AJD
MMA
SSA-75 (CW)
BAFARA
KDN-CL2

TO RADIO NNLN UR CW SIGS HRD HERE ON 10.1.06

WKG WID	TIME(UTC)	FREQ(MHZ)	RST	RXR	ANT
V09LA	2320	1.8	339	NATIONAL RF B 65	Long wire

QTH: TELLICHERRY (KERALA STATE) NAME: VISWANATHAN
T.K. VISWANATHAN, "MADHAVI KRISHNA", CHETTAMCOON,
TELLICHERRY, KERALA STATE, INDIA - 670 101

PSE UR QSL VIA BURO / DIRECT DR OM
73 ES & GOOD DXING

EWWA HF 200-CW YO-DX-C YO-AM CPR BERU JUBILEE CCCP 50
SWL JCG-CW DPX-CW F11A DDFM-CW WFLC

YUGOSLAV SHORT WAVE RECEIVING STATION

YU1RS-201

To Radio WD9DCL *Kyi*

CONFIRMING UR SIGS. HEARD HERE
YOU WERE QED/WKD TAZ HIA
ON 17.7. 1979. AT 03⁰⁶ GMT
ON 14 MHz. UR SIGS WERE SSB/CW R-S 559
RX FT-217 ANT 9P LONG WIRE, DIPOL
REMARKS SONY CF 950 QTH Baghdad
IRAQ
This is a genuine Report of your Signals
I would appreciate a verification

PSE QSL VIA BUREAU 73'S Kalle

TAIWAN R.O.C. 461

SWL STATION MEMBER OF JARL

JA1-20762/BV

I HRD UR QSO WITH JA1YXP ALSO JP1RIW/

TO RADIO	DATE	UTC	MHz	MODE	RST
W0FG	MAR. -3. 1990	0121	21	SSB	51

RX: ICF-200ID MX-7 ANT: DP GP PSE QSL VIA
RMKS Hope to see you on the air JARL OR DIRECT

QRA KEN'ICHI HOSHINO *Ken*
QTH P.O. BOX 7-94 HSIENTIEN TAIWAN R.O.C.

Electronic QSLing

The Future Contains More Electrons

- If you like the idea of printing an image and filing that paper, eQSL is perfect and easy to use. You also can just leave the data alone and hopefully it will always be there. eQSL offers its own awards (ARRL does not accept eQSLs).
- Sending image files via email to confirm contacts is taking place, but these are not accepted for most awards. SWL ops are trying this.
- While it's not technically electronic QSLing, IOTA will verify contacts made during the IOTA contest from submitted log data. I don't know of any other award sponsors that do this directly.



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The LoTW

- Logbook of the World debuted in 2003. I am biased, but so far this is the best way to work towards awards and will continue to get better.
- LoTW operates as a double-blind matching system. Each person submits his logs which are then compared to other logs in the system looking for data matches in a large database (nearing 600 million QSOs and 60,000 users).
- If QSOs match time, date, band, mode, and call, there is a confirmation which is valid for any awards supported by LoTW.
- System uses Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) -- a set of hardware, software, people, policies, and procedures needed to create, manage, distribute, use, store, and revoke digital certificates. The use of PKI and digital certificates allows ARRL to reliably identify users of LoTW, and if need be, remove data from LoTW.



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OQRSing

Online QSL Request System and Club Log

- Newer tools have emerged recognizing the cost of waste in time and materials and effort. DXpeditions and others do not want QSL cards. But they want to send them. DXpeditioners also need to recoup some of their costs. Providing a way for DXers to contribute money over the Internet saves the effort of creating a QSL, packaging, shipping, opening, log verification, and then replying, packaging, and shipping, and the risk of loss both ways. The DXpeditioner is able to keep more of the contribution (and DXers tend to contribute more via OQRS than in a mailing) while providing better and faster service to the DXer.
- Club Log is doing new things with data and providing interesting analysis as well as tools for DXpeditioners and DXers.



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The Tools

- IRC and Return postage http://www.qsl.net/w9ol/IRC_Chart.htm
- WF5E QSL service <http://www.qsl.net/wf5e/>
- K1BV Awards Directory <http://www.dxawards.com/>
- NG3K.com <http://www.ng3k.com/>
- QSLinfo Germany <http://www.qslinfo.de/>
- QRZ.com for calls, addresses, QSL information, maps
- Club Log <https://secure.clublog.org/about.php> for OQRS



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The Process

See the hand-out for a simple step-by-step on decisions and processes to follow after you work a new one.



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Ethics and Courtesy

-Generally, DXing and DXers are competitive. Even though the DXer works everything, are there times when the DXer should stand-by? Yes.

Don't get in the pile-up if:

- BS7H is the target, and you already have this exact call confirmed on 20 phone. A large percentage of the last BS7H QSOs were exact dupes.
- Your friend needs this one for a new one, and you don't (and you know he is there calling right now) ☺
- IOTA – if you are sure of one QSO, and you don't need the island for a new DXCC band, don't call on another band. IOTA doesn't consider bands.
- You can't really hear the target.
- You've already worked the station during a different opening on 6 Meters and you know he is struggling to hear some weak stations.



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The Organizing

- Take the time to file your QSLs alphabetically. Don't try to file them by band or mode – this won't work because of cards with multiple QSOs on them.
- Applying for awards is made much easier with your logging program telling you what cards to find, and having them stored alphabetically.



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The Bragging and Display

- Definitely install your awards on the wall. New DXers and Hams will see them, and see that you are proud of them, and will want the same.
- Display some QSLs on the wall.
- Make an album for all the extra certificates.
- Make an album(s) that contain one card from each entity (or your favorite cards) – easy to grab in case of fire!! Good for showing cards off.



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USA 2x1 QSL Album

Boonville - Warrick County - Indiana

NS9G

EX WA9UQP

TERRY GORDON

NS0Z

Box 105 Marion County
Hannibal, MO. 63401

STATION	DAY	MO	YR	UTC	FREQ	RPT	MODE
AI2V/9	24	3	87	0300	3.7	59	SSB

PSE QSL 73. *Deny* 88. TNX QSL

MASSACHUSETTS
Worcester County

Dave Siegrist
34 Millwood Drive
Shrewsbury, MA 01545

Thanks for the QSL DAVE
D3 DAVE

NT1U


CONFIRMING QSO WITH	DATE	UTC	MHZ	RST	2X MODE
W00G	06 13 89	2000	81215	59	SSB

PSE QSL TNX QSL

Memo

Memo

Memo



NT2V

Alvin C. Bach, II
213 Cinnaminson Street
Riverton, NJ 08077 USA
BURLINGTON COUNTY

Sorry for the delay in sending you this QSL.
73, Al

Never Talk 2 Vampires,
But please talk to NT2V!!
Confirming QSO with: Pse QSL Trk

STATION	MO	DAY	YR	UTC	FREQ	REPORT	MODE
KW9KW III	III	30	97	0453	75M	59	TWO WAY SSB

KQDF, PHM

GREETINGS FROM THE OLEY VALLEY
BERKS COUNTY, PA, U.S.A.

NT3N

(EX N3FCD)

"Keep in touch -
with the Pennsylvania Dutch"



QTH ●



Bob Miller, Jr.
RD 7218
Reading, PA 19608
CQ Zone 5
ITU Zone 8

VIRGINIA
CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

NT4U

CONFIRMING QSO WITH	DATE	UTC	MHZ	RST	MODE
W00G	28 1 90	0540	1.8	599	CW

CHUCK STIGBERG
206 Rivers Bend Circle
Chester, VA 23831 U.S.A.

PSE QSL TNX QSL A WEMPT QSL

The Bragging and Display Ideas

- K9HMB made a cool, large, framed display of his 40 QSLs for WAZ. Hard not to look at. I stared at it for hours while operating contests ☺ I'll never forget it.
- I have two albums with my USA 2x1 collection. Neat to see cards from NN1, NN2, NN3, NN4, NN5, etc., one after the other. I also have plastic boxes with my WPX collection.
- Some picture albums are great for storing collections of QSLs. WAZ is a good fit for one of these albums. Look for non-PVC plastic, sleeved holders. You want to see both sides of the card. Some albums have space to write the Zone on the side.
- Use the plastic storage boxes available at all the big box stores. 6.5 quart shoeboxes with flat bottoms are the best.



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The Tools

- http://www.qsl.net/w9ol/IRC_Chart.htm
- WF5E QSL service <http://www.qsl.net/wf5e/>
- K1BV Awards Directory <http://www.dxawards.com/>
- NG3K.com <http://www.ng3k.com/>
- QSLinfo Germany <http://www.qslinfo.de/>
- QRZ.com
- Bill Plum DX Supplies (no web page, email plumdx@msn.com – nesting envelopes)



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The Future

- Technology marches on, but has little effect on awards themselves. Geography and distance still rule.
- Remote control will continue to challenge ethics and award rules.
- QSLing will slowly move toward digital. I can't see the time yet when paper cards stop being exchanged.



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