

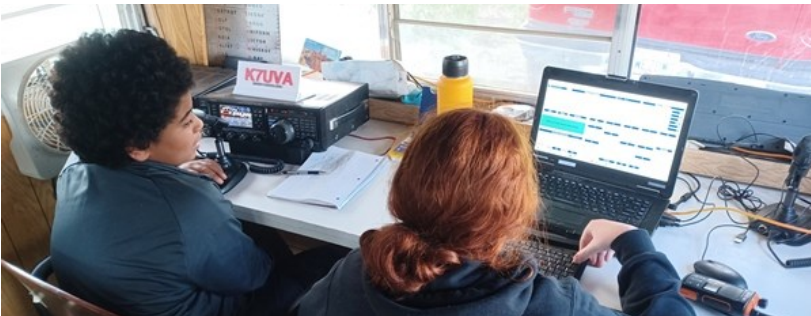
Microvolt

Monthly newsletter of the Utah Amateur Radio Club

October 2025



Amateur Evolution



Take a look around you. Digital modes, volunteer examiners, emergency communication, mesh, and a fresh generation of rising hams give amateur radio a new appearance. Gone are the days of Heathkit and Radio Shack, which provided a constant supply of glowbugs and creativity to the budding amateur nerd. Face it – this doesn't look much like your grandpa's hobby any more. Yes, amateur radio is evolving, but are these changes positive or negative? The real question is whether you personally will fight 'em or join 'em. So, what's it gonna be?

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Cover – Amateur evolution

Anybody who's been involved with amateur radio for more than a couple of decades can attest that things have definitely changed over the years. On one hand, there seems to be fewer [tinkerers](#) per capita among us than in previous generations, and many long for the days when most young amateurs wore soldering irons attached to their proverbial sleeves. On the other hand, many of the changes have brought in a huge influx of new operators, and have opened the doors to many new approaches to ham radio.

Change is bad

The fact is, many older hams have decided that the hobby has “gone to the dogs,” and have pretty much left the craft except to keep a late-night 75-meter health ailment ragchew going. These seasoned hobbyists are accustomed to the craft of amateur radio appearing as one exclusive to the die-hard experimenter that possesses a shack full of tools, many handcrafted, even hand-designed. Many of them bristle when encountering a less-experienced amateur who makes a mistake or demonstrates a bad habit while operating, and are often quick to step in and correct the offender.

They often blame changes in exam policy, indicating that today's operator need but memorize the answers to secure a license, which was once earned by deep technological knowledge, asserting that today's ease will allow just about anybody to get one, leading to poor on-air practices. Some express longing for the day when pink slips were liberally issued by OOs (official observers) for rules violations, saying that enforcement is no longer a priority.

On the other hand, some of the same veterans warn that very few of the rising amateur generation have much interest in repeater function and maintenance, and that many mountaintop stations will eventually fall to disrepair as a result. They worry that changes in technological focus will divert attraction away from important responsibilities and toward more interesting yet less enduring craft facets.

Change is good

In the [March 2025 Microvolt issue](#) we explored how amateur radio is quite the diverse craft, and that part of its diversity today is due to its evolution. Due in part to the very problems that people claim are making ham radio go to heck in a hand-basket, we now



have more licensed hams than at any time in amateur history. With the resurgent interest in emergency communication, a new type of person is attracted to the craft, bringing with it a record number of female participants who now find greater relevance in amateur radio. Good or bad, today's on-air priority has turned from strict rules adherence and proper operation to understanding, tolerance, and kindness.

A few want to reinstate the Morse code requirement as a badge of achievement, a gate to filter out those who are not technically adept enough to be deemed worthy of the craft. Yet, the removal of the code requirement has allowed numerous good, honest, and valuable folks to participate. As an aside, record numbers of hobbyists have become proficient at Morse code since the requirement was dropped because today's participants *want* to operate CW, rather than being coerced into it, only to forget it later.

As discussed in [this month's editorial](#), built-in TNCs and other computer-related interfaces (USB, CAT, HDMI, other video, et al) are becoming regularly included in amateur radio equipment. Also, SDRs (software-defined radios) have emerged, on the internet ([WebSDR](#)), our desktops, and in our transceivers.

In the end

Online platforms such as Reddit and Discord foster communities for collaboration and discussion. Yet many licensed operators, new and otherwise, are rediscovering amateur radio as yet another social medium.

We would love to hear your thoughts about the evolution of amateur radio.

Microvolt editorial staff