

This is a Due Diligence and Findings
Package for the NMRA.

Tendered respectfully,
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Questionnaire & Interviews

Questionnaire + Kick-off

- David
- Riley
- John
- Bob
- Lucy
- Gordy

General Information

What are the core values of the NMRA?

John: We don't (to my knowledge) have a published list of core values, but I have created (with some help and input) a list of 'first principles' which include 1) always be kind, 2) seek first to understand, 3) share with others, 4) build up the team, 5) be a doer, 6) ride for the herd, and 7) people beyond trains. This is rough, in progress, but gives some ideas.

What is the mission of the NMRA?

David: The National Model Railroad Association advances the worldwide scale model railroading community through education and standards as well as advocacy and fellowship.

John: 1) Our mission statement—recounted here by others—is functionally accurate, but it does not move my soul. Advocacy and standards are important, but few care about them day to day. Fellowship is the magic part, but this is a hard thing to sell transactionally. Education is our best best for tangible value, and potential differentiation—but the world of information is a messy place today of overwhelm, quality variability, and lack of curation. 2) Our mission is too, I think constraining today—specifically in the focus on 'scale.' I think it's a plus that we don't represent 'toy trains' (a different hobby focus), but I do think we should embrace other facets of the hobby more deeply—like game play, electronics, weathering, and railfanning—that themselves may not tie

General Information (cont.)

directly to 'scale modeling' (but often do). 3) Our mission should, in my view, reach for something more, and stir more emotion. I think we should ultimately be about "making model railroading more awesome," about "delivering joy to kids of all ages," and about "helping each other to become—through the magic of trains—better human beings."

Bob: The official mission statement is "The National Model Railroad Association, Inc. advances the world-wide scale model railroading community through education and standards as well as advocacy and fellowship." This is a wordy way of saying that the mission is "To promote scale model railroading." A keyword is "scale." Model railroaders work hard to create precise replicas of the real thing in miniature. They may dismiss Lionel or American Flyer and similarly crude models as "toy trains" or "tinplate." I don't know if there are stated core values, but I could suggest "Craftsmanship, Fellowship, and Knowledge."

Gordy: Mission: advances the global scale model railroading community through education, advocacy, standards, and social interaction.

What is the primary purpose of the NMRA, and how has it evolved over time?

David: Primary purpose was so trains would interoperate across people's layouts. It has expanded into a role of education/mentorship along with fellowship through the local Divisions and Regions.

John: I think of purpose and mission as essentially the same thing, but comments of others here are insightful. Standards remain important (though some people assume that there is less innovation and change today, not true). Education is changing—but it's often conflated with information—not the same thing. We can still play a leading role in curated information and hands on education. Fellowship is changing a lot, and we're struggling with the lack of desire for others to join in to our 'bowling league.'

Bob: The purpose of promoting scale model railroading has evolved with technology. In the early days little was commercially available, and modelers had to build their layouts

"from scratch." Education was available only from magazines and fellow modelers. The NMRA played a crucial role in stimulating the production of scale trains that were interoperable between manufacturers. Widespread availability of high quality "ready to run" scale trains and free "how to" videos and documentation over the internet has cut into what made the NMRA essential in the past, leading to declining membership and relevance.

Who is your target audience? Is there a secondary or tertiary audience?

David: Target Audience is people that are participating in the model railroad hobby in all scales. Secondary audience is model train manufacturers whose products we certify as conforming to the NMRA Standards. Tertiary audiences might be the Hobby Press, who get content from our members and are also charged with advancing the hobby of model railroading

John: Bifurcated (and always has been): 1) a more serious modeler who has some resources (money, space, time), and 2) a wide-eyed kid with fascination and dreams (but who won't participate with us really for many years). Note too: more and more women, STEM kids, minorities, etc.

Bob: The primary audience is the "serious" scale model railroader. Secondary audiences include manufacturers, publishers, dealers, and clubs.

Please describe your typical NMRA member.

David: The typical member is male, over the age of 60 living in North America. I am not sure if we can say that they are active in the hobby and have home layouts, although I surmise a majority do. We have younger members (30-50) but they are not in the majority. Would love to change that, speaking as an old guy

Bob: Old-white-male-retired, although there are more women and diverse individuals than there used to be. Mixed professional / white collar / blue collar, with not a few current and former railroad employees represented. Most own homes with sufficient space for a model railroad, and have enough disposable income to spend several thousand dollars or more per year.

General Information
(cont.)

What are the key services and benefits offered to NMRA members?

David: Key benefits are standards that allow manufactured products to work together. We also host an annual convention that is key for the education mission. Local Regions and Divisions further the education mission while providing more frequent (monthly?) in-person interactions

John: The overwhelming benefit to existing members is I think "belonging." We feel like we are a part of something, and something worth belonging to. All the other stuff—meetings, meets, conventions, clinics, resources, discounts, is I think secondary. Education is though, I think, the path of most value ahead.

Bob: NMRA conventions and meets are probably the top benefit. In addition to the annual national convention, many NMRA regions hold annual conventions, and some Divisions hold meets, clinics, model railroad tours, and other activities several times per year. Through these events NMRA members are able to meet like-minded modelers and form friendships and clubs. The NMRA has a monthly magazine, although it competes with prominent commercial publications. The Achievement program allows members to prove their abilities in different areas of the hobby and eventually become a "Master Model Railroader" or MMR.

What are the NMRA's biggest achievements or milestones?

John: Standards early on and ongoing, conformance, promotion of the hobby, and creation of the Achievement Program.

Bob: I would say the initial standards for wheels, track, and couplers that allowed mass manufacture and interoperability. More recently, the "DCC" standard for command control, again permitting equipment from different manufacturers to work together.

Gordy: A few years old now and update coming soon for the last 15 years (Link to The NMRA at 75 Years—A Look Back, A Look Ahead)

Do any geographic areas attract increased membership or a higher level of engagement? If so, do you know why?

John: Yes—big cities with strong visibility and legacy of trains is where early concentrations were and still are. Places of population density, especially those with industrial base. North America.

Are there specific historical events or innovations in model railroading that have shaped the NMRA?

David: First Convention, Horn Hook Coupler, standards gauge, DCC?

Bob: Again, the standards for wheels, track, and couplers, most of which were finalized in the 50s-60s, and DCC in the 90s.

“I cannot think of anything that would be relevant to modelers under 40, and I think that overemphasis on the past hinders the NMRA’s potential reach to new types of modelers.”

Prompt: What symbols, imagery, or traditions from the NMRA's history are important to preserve?

Extracts from kick-off questionnaire

Historical Context

What are the NMRA's most iconic moments or contributions to the model railroading community?

In addition to the standards, I would say that NMRA events were the vehicle for model railroaders to get to know one another beyond their immediate communities and local clubs up until the advent of the internet in the 90s.

Does the NMRA have historical partnerships or collaborations that should be reflected in the rebrand?

David: Al Kalmbach, Publisher of Model Railroader, Irv Athern, Manufacturer were effectively founders. RMC seems to be more NMRA friendly (although MR is also very receptive to what we are doing)

What symbols, imagery, or traditions from the NMRA's history are important to preserve?

Bob: I cannot think of anything that would be relevant to modelers under 40, and think that overemphasis on the past hinders the NMRA's potential reach to new types of modelers.

How has the perception of model railroading as a hobby changed since the NMRA's founding, and how has the organization adapted?

David: Model Railroading has moved from a kit building hobby to more of a layout building hobby with enhanced electronics, specifically sound

Bob: Participating in the hobby in the early days required a lot of mechanical aptitude—the ability to build realistic models out of wood and metal. It was also, of course, almost exclusively a male pursuit. Since then it has evolved to have broader appeal:

- More artistic, with greater emphasis on landscaping (scenery)
- More interest in real railroads, current and historic
- More ability to integrate advanced electronics, including computers and software
- Somewhat greater representation of women and diverse Americans

Are there any historical figures within the NMRA who are particularly celebrated or influential?

David: Allen McClelland, Tony Koester, Bill Darnaby, Bernd Lenz(?)

Bob: Although many model railroading "celebrities" were active in the NMRA I think the greater influence and fame came from their books and magazine features, e.g. John Allen, John Armstrong, Tony Koester, Allen McClelland, Malcolm Furlow, George Sellios

What role has the NMRA played in advancing the hobby of model railroading globally?

David: Standards, especially wheel sets, couplers, and DCC and Sound, now LCC. There is also a sponsorship of train shows and other forums that expose the public to the hobby and give the manufacturers a platform to announce products

How has the NMRA been impacted by full scale railroad operations?

Bob: Railroads were glamorous and legendary in the 30s-40s-50s, and for most people were the primary means of cross-country travel. Now railroads are generally huge faceless corporations concerned with efficient movement of freight. People remain fascinated by big powerful machines, including today's locomotives and rolling stock. However, many model railroaders choose to inject a historical/nostalgic dimension to their hobby, and the NMRA has had to try to encompass the modeling of multiple eras.

Personal Interests

If the NMRA was a train, which one would it be and why?

David: Local steam powered turn, slow, steady and focused on serving local members

Bob: A long mixed freight pulled by an F unit—still functional and classic but underpowered and out of date.

Are members' affinity for model railroading equivalent to their affinity for real-life railroading, or is there a notable difference?

David: Not sure, I think there are examples where this is true but also ones where models trump the prototype

Bob: Not sure of what this question is trying to get at. Most modelers are fans of real railroads but often in a historical context. There is a strong correlation between the railroads that existed at the time the modeler was a teenager and what the modeler likes to model—e.g. the oldest modelers like steam trains and railroads like the Pennsylvania and Santa Fe; middle aged modelers like second generation diesels and railroads like Conrail and UP; young modelers like modern diesels and NS, CSX, and BNSF.

What other common interests/hobbies/lifestyles appeal to NMRA members, that are not related to railroading?

David: Social interactions, model building and recreating worlds in miniature, research and history along with general building and planning

Bob: Music, woodworking, photography, role play games like D&D

Is there common ground around how most members first took up model railroading as a hobby?

David: In general, most were exposed to trains as a youth with a Christmas gift of a trainset or a train around the tree

Bob: Virtually every "older" model railroader has a story about getting a Lionel train set for Christmas as a child from a father or grandfather. This is probably not true of the younger modelers the NMRA needs to attract.

Do members like to describe it as a hobby? Is there a better/preferred word to describe the pastime?

David: In general, people describe this as a hobby

Bob: "Hobby" is the word generally used and accepted. It is important to realize how dead serious many modelers are about model railroading; it's a passion and compulsion for many.

Goals for the Rebrand

How do you want the NMRA to be perceived after the rebrand?

David: The leading organization in the world that is driving model railroading forward and making it better for all participants in the hobby

Bob: Friendly, welcoming, generous, resourceful, useful, fun, easy, enthusiastic, energetic

Are there specific challenges or opportunities driving the need for rebranding?

David: Stagnant membership and an aging membership along with an increasingly more vocal social media influence in the hobby that is questioning the relevance of the organization

Bob: Dropping membership, graphic confusion

What new audiences, if any, do you hope to attract with the rebrand?

David: Younger members (20–50—although how we get involved with programs like Youth in Model Railroading, Teens in Model Railroading is an interesting question for the future). Also Women and members of minority groups, but maybe also tapping into the recreational hobbyist and those not deemed as elite.

Bob: Younger, more diverse, more global; Gen Z, Millennial, Gen X, and increasingly, Gen Alpha.

Is there a desire to attract a different audience, or just bolster the existing one?

David: Both, but I think the focus is on expanding the relevance across all demographic groups in (25)

Bob: I think the NMRA should continue to focus on scale model railroaders, and the evidence is that there are at least 500,000 in the U.S. who are not NMRA members. The NMRA should not be closed to railfans or collectors, but the emphasis and value should remain on the scale modeler.

What aspects of the old/outgoing brand were working/not working?

David: For me, the primary concern is the new brand was never really adopted throughout the Regions and Divisions making it difficult for us to present ourselves as a single organization to the general public

Bob: You mean the “boob” logo? Say no more...

What materials or platforms will the branding be used on (e.g., website, merchandise, signage, publications)?

David: Website, Merchandise (shirts, aprons, hats), Models, pull-up banners, social media, NMRA Magazing and advertisements in other national magazines

Practical Considerations

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Brief (more than 3, less than 10) list of key/direct local competitors

David: Local Competitors—Train Clubs, Loose affiliations (round-robin groups)

Bob:

- Individualism/"lone wolf"/ non-joiners
- Informal operating or construction groups
- Train shows (Amherst, Timonium, Greenberg)
- NMRA divisions and regions

Brief (more than 3, less than 10) list of key/direct national competitors

David: National Competitors—YouTubers, Magazines looking to create communities, other community based social channels

Bob:

- YouTube channels/influencers
- Magazines and associated forums: Model Railroader, RMC, Model Railroad Hobbyist
- RPM "movement" (Railroad Prototype Modelers events)
- Social media groups (Facebook, groups.io)
- Railroad historical societies
- Manufacturers' forums (Bachmann, Digitrax, etc.)
- Books

Inclusivity
Community
Fellowship
Vision
Friendship
Education

Prompt: Describe the
NMRA in one word.

Extracts from one-on-
one interviews with
board members

“The biggest problem we have is declining membership. It has just been steadily declining for 30 years. Consequently the membership is aging...”

Extracts from one-on-one interviews with board members

Board Member Interview

Speaker 1

Summary

The meeting featured a detailed discussion about the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) and its current challenges and opportunities. Speaker 1, a long-time member and board director, shared his personal journey into modeling, starting from his early interest in trains in Pennsylvania to his current involvement in NMRA since 1980. He discussed the organization's evolution, membership challenges, and educational opportunities. The conversation highlighted key issues such as declining membership (noted as a 30-year trend), aging demographics (average age around 72),

and the balance between attracting younger members while retaining existing ones. Speaker 1 emphasized the importance of educational programs, regional conventions, and the value of local chapters. The discussion also covered branding consistency, website development, and the need for better marketing of membership benefits, particularly the discount programs. Speaker 1 noted that while younger modelers are spending significant amounts on the hobby, they are not joining the organization, indicating a gap in engagement strategies.

Key takeaways

Personal Journey into Modeling and NMRA Membership

Speaker 1 described his early interest in modeling starting at age 40, with initial experiences in Pennsylvania. He detailed his journey through various locations, including Louisville, Philadelphia, and West Virginia, where he joined NMRA in 1980 and has maintained continuous membership.

Current Membership Challenges and Demographics

Speaker 1 discussed the major challenge of declining membership over the past 30 years, with an aging demographic average age of 72. He noted that many board members share similar ages, highlighting the need for new volunteers and leadership.

Educational Opportunities and Regional Conventions

Speaker 1 emphasized the value of educational programs, with monthly meetings featuring presentations and regional conventions offering opportunities to see other layouts and learn new techniques.

Branding and Marketing Challenges

Discussion focused on the need for consistent branding across chapters, effective marketing of membership benefits, and better integration of promotional materials with partner organizations.

Younger Membership Engagement Strategies

Speaker 1 discussed the challenge of attracting younger members who are spending money on the hobby but not joining the organization. He noted that some younger leaders are successfully taking on roles within the organization.

Board Member Interview

Speaker 2

Summary

The meeting featured an in-depth discussion with a long-time member of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA), who shared his extensive history and experience within the organization. Speaker 2 detailed his journey from early childhood interest in model trains to becoming the CFO of NMRA. He described his progression through various leadership roles, including chairing multiple programs and eventually taking on financial management responsibilities. Speaker 2 provided insights into the organization's structure, membership demographics, and challenges, particularly regarding youth protection policies and

organizational cohesion. He also discussed the international membership distribution, noting approximately 13,000 members in the US, 1,000 in Canada, and smaller numbers in other countries. The conversation touched on important topics such as organizational governance, membership demographics, and the evolution of model railroading culture. Speaker 2 emphasized the importance of service-oriented leadership and the organization's inclusive nature, while also addressing challenges related to maintaining cohesive governance across different organizational levels.

Key takeaways

Early Involvement and Career Progression in Model Railroading

Speaker 2 described his early introduction to model railroading at age 8 or 9, developing interest through Boy Scouts and magazine projects. He detailed his career progression from R&D in a large company to various leadership roles within NMRA, including chairing Heritage Cars, Living Legends Cars, and the Achievement Program, before becoming CFO in July 2010.

Club Experiences and Facility Challenges

Speaker 2 shared experiences with various model railroad clubs, including an HO club that became inactive due to space issues, and an O-scale club that secured a favorable long-term lease in a Masonic home basement. He detailed the challenges of maintaining club facilities and the eventual consolidation of tenants in their building.

Organizational Structure and Governance Challenges

Speaker 2 discussed the NMRA's organizational structure, highlighting the lack of top-to-bottom cohesiveness and regulatory connection between different levels. He compared NMRA's structure to that of the Boy Scouts, noting the challenges of maintaining consistent policies across divisions and regions.

Comps outside of the industry

Speaker 2 mentioned the achievement program of the NMRA gets compared to Boy Scouts merit badges.

Membership Demographics and International Presence

Speaker 2 provided detailed membership statistics, noting approximately 13,000 members in the US, 1,000 in Canada, 1,000 in Australia/New Zealand, and smaller numbers in Europe and other regions. He discussed challenges in engaging with international members and the unique situation in China, where model railroading is popular but access to western markets is limited.

Board Member Interview

Speaker 3

Summary

The meeting focused on discussing the challenges and opportunities within the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). Speaker 3 shared insights about organizational issues, including volunteer management, project execution, and membership engagement. Key points included the need for better project management, the challenge of balancing traditional practices with modern approaches, and the importance

of improving organizational structure. Speaker 3 highlighted specific challenges such as slow decision-making processes, volunteer burnout, and the need for better communication between national and regional levels. The discussion also covered the importance of maintaining inclusivity while modernizing the organization, particularly in relation to technology adoption and member engagement strategies.

Key takeaways

Personal Background and Initial NMRA Experience

Speaker 3 shared their journey from Los Altos, California, to Louisville, Kentucky, discussing their early exposure to NMRA as a child and initial hesitations about joining due to negative perceptions. They described a pivotal moment during the 75th anniversary convention that changed their perspective about the organization.

Current Organizational Challenges

Speaker 3 discussed major challenges facing NMRA, including resistance to change among some members, particularly regarding technology adoption and organizational processes. They highlighted issues with maintaining momentum on projects and dealing with historical grievances from long-time members.

Volunteer Management and Structure

The conversation focused on volunteer management challenges, particularly regarding project execution timelines and accountability. Speaker 3 emphasized the need for better-defined roles and responsibilities, particularly in social media and project management areas.

Regional and National Communication Issues

Speaker 3 described challenges with communication between national headquarters and regional divisions, particularly regarding information flow and accountability. They discussed the effectiveness of the Regional Advisory Council and identified areas for improvement.

Future Directions and Solutions

The meeting concluded with a discussion about potential solutions, including hiring an executive director, improving project management processes, and finding ways to balance modernization with inclusivity for less tech-savvy members.

Board Member Interview

Speaker 4

Summary

This meeting featured a discussion about model railroading and the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). Speaker 4 shared their personal journey into modeling, starting from age four with an early fascination for trains, through various life stages including marriage and raising children, and eventual return to the hobby. They discussed their involvement with NMRA, joining in 2014 and taking on leadership roles including secretary and president. Speaker 4 described their model railroad project based

in British Columbia, featuring a fictitious railway line. Key topics included the challenges of attracting younger members to the hobby, the diversity of modeling approaches (artistic vs. accuracy), and the various aspects of model railroading as a multifaceted hobby. Speaker 4 emphasized the importance of providing entry points for younger enthusiasts, such as T-track modular layouts, and discussed different artistic approaches to modeling, including unique color schemes and design philosophies.

Key takeaways

Personal Journey into Model Railroading

Speaker 4 described their early fascination with trains at age four, visiting a rail yard. They attended the NMRA convention in Winnipeg in 1983, which reignited their interest. After marriage in 1985 and raising children, they returned to the hobby later in life.

Involvement with NMRA

Speaker 4 joined NMRA in 2014 after attending several national conventions. They progressed through leadership roles, becoming secretary of NMRA Canada and later president, while also leading their local club.

Model Railroad Project Description

Speaker 4 detailed their InScale model railroad project based in British Columbia, featuring a fictitious railway line. They created a 22-foot long backdrop photograph from a panoramic shot taken at the actual location of their theoretical main yard.

Challenges and Opportunities for NMRA

Discussion focused on attracting younger members to the hobby. Speaker 4 noted that model railroading requires space, time, and money, which often limits participation to older demographics. They suggested T-track modular layouts as a potential entry point for younger enthusiasts.

Artistic Approaches to Modeling

The conversation explored different modeling philosophies, including artistic vs. accuracy-focused approaches. Speaker 4 shared their experience designing a logo and color scheme for their fictitious railroad, highlighting the creative aspects of the hobby.

Board Member Interview

Speaker 5

Summary

In this meeting, Speaker 5 shared their personal journey into model railroading and their experience with the NMRA (National Model Railroad Association) in Australia. Speaker 5, who transitioned from a career in percussion and music performance to model railroading in their early 40s, discussed their modeling focus on Victorian railways in Australia, specifically Melbourne in 1983. They detailed their initial interest in carnival rides and how it evolved into a broader passion for model railroading. The conversation then shifted to the NMRA, where Speaker 5 expressed both positive aspects and challenges within the organization. They

highlighted the importance of NMRA standards for interoperability and discussed current political issues, particularly regarding the digital magazine and membership structure. Speaker 5 emphasized that while some members join primarily for insurance benefits, the organization offers much more in terms of education and community. They noted that approximately 800 members exist in Australia, with about 300 being primarily insurance-focused members. Despite current challenges, Speaker 5 maintained a positive outlook on the organization's overall value and the friendships formed through it.

Key takeaways

Personal Journey into Model Railroading

Speaker 5 described their transition from a music career to model railroading in their mid-40s. They shared their background in percussion and various music genres, and how their interest in carnival rides led to their first model railroad project.

Modeling Focus and Development

Speaker 5 detailed their focus on Victorian railways in Australia, specifically modeling Melbourne in 1983. They explained the different railway libraries in use at that time and their initial carnival-themed layout based on the Rye Carnival.

Joining the NMRA

Speaker 5 explained how they discovered the NMRA through a local model railway club and their subsequent involvement. They emphasized the organization's role in maintaining standards and interoperability in the hobby.

Challenges within the NMRA

Speaker 5 discussed current political issues within the Australian region of NMRA, particularly regarding the digital magazine and membership structure. They expressed concerns about the '100% club' concept and insurance-focused memberships.

Value of NMRA Membership

Speaker 5 concluded with a positive note about the value of NMRA membership, emphasizing the importance of active participation and the friendships formed through the organization.

Board Member Interview

Speaker 6

Summary

The meeting featured an in-depth discussion with a model railroading enthusiast about his extensive experience in the hobby and his leadership role in the NMRA (National Model Railroad Association). Speaker 6 shared his journey from early childhood interest in trains to becoming a prominent figure in the NMRA. He detailed his 27-year membership in the organization, his role as lead director, and his involvement in various projects. The discussion covered topics such as the challenges facing

the organization, including aging membership demographics and project implementation speed. Speaker 6 also discussed his personal model railroad representing Rosenberg, Texas, and his approach to prototypical modeling. Key numerical details included his 72 years of age, 7.5 years on the NMRA board, and 36x14 feet size of his model railroad layout. The conversation highlighted both the organizational challenges and personal passion that characterize the model railroading community.

Key takeaways

Early Life and Introduction to Model Railroading

Speaker 6 described his early fascination with trains, starting at age three. He recounted how his mother would take him for walks alongside train tracks and how his father gifted him his first train set when his sister was born. He detailed his progression from Hornby clockwork trains to electric trains in 1959.

Joining the NMRA and American Model Railroading

Speaker 6 explained how he discovered the NMRA in 1996 after initially focusing on British railways. He described his first railfanning trip to Colorado and his gradual transition to American model railroading, particularly through his interest in prototypical modeling.

Leadership Role in NMRA

Speaker 6 detailed his progression through various leadership roles in the NMRA, including division representative, local president, and eventually lead director. He discussed his 7.5 years on the board and his collaboration with Gordy, the current president.

Challenges Facing NMRA

Speaker 6 addressed key challenges facing the organization, including aging membership demographics, project implementation speed, and the need for more active engagement from members. He specifically mentioned Project 100, aimed at the organization's centenary in 2035.

Personal Model Railroad and Prototypical Modeling

Speaker 6 discussed his personal model railroad representing Rosenberg, Texas, describing its 36x14 feet size and his approach to prototypical modeling. He explained how he uses Street View and other resources to accurately recreate the location.

- › Simplify structure of the organization.
- › Get younger people involved.
- › Do away with the politics.
- › Less talking, more action.
- › Modernize the organization and bring it into the 21st century.

Prompt: If you could change one thing about the organization today what would you change?

Extracts from one-on-one interviews with board members

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 7, CEO of a Manufacturer

Summary

The meeting focused on the future of the model railroad industry and strategies to attract younger audiences. Speaker 7 discussed their investment in Virtual Railfan, which has been significant over the past six months, and their goal of reaching 25,000 paid subscribers this year and 100,000 by the end of next year. They emphasized the changing demographics of the hobby, noting that younger people are increasingly interested in high-tech, realistic models rather than traditional kits. Speaker

7 shared their company's approach to marketing, including social media strategies and the importance of engaging younger audiences through technology. They also discussed the challenges faced by traditional model railroad clubs in attracting younger members and the need for mentorship and community building. The conversation highlighted the importance of adapting to new technologies and marketing methods to grow the industry and attract new enthusiasts.

Key takeaways

Investment in Virtual Railfan and Subscriber Growth Goals

Speaker 7 discussed their significant investment in Virtual Railfan over the past six months, mentioning the development of exclusive products for the platform. They outlined their goal of reaching 25,000 paid subscribers this year and 100,000 by the end of next year, with plans to unveil new features at the Rocky Mountain show in April.

Changing Demographics and Market Trends

Speaker 7 addressed misconceptions about the hobby being only for older individuals, highlighting the presence of younger enthusiasts in their company. They discussed how younger customers are willing to invest in high-quality, technologically advanced models rather than traditional kits.

Marketing Strategies and Social Media Engagement

Speaker 7 detailed their comprehensive marketing approach, including a full-time social media team and presence on

platforms like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. They emphasized the importance of realistic photography and video content in attracting younger audiences.

Challenges in Attracting Younger Members to Clubs

Speaker 7 shared insights from their 'road trip' experience, noting that younger audiences often do not participate in traditional clubs. They identified key barriers including unwelcoming attitudes, rigid prototype adherence, and lack of flexibility in allowing members to run their own trains.

Future Plans and Convention Preparation

Speaker 7 discussed preparations for the upcoming convention in Chattanooga, including a complete renovation of their facility and plans for a special steam excursion event as a celebration of the end of their road trip initiative.

“I’ll tell you about a young kid who was 13 years old who lost his father... Mother found a local model railroad club. The guys from the model railroad club would pick him up every third Thursday of the month and teach that kid how to model. That kid is standing right here right now. If it wasn’t for those men investing in me I wouldn’t be standing here right now, and that is the kind of mentorship that we have to get back into what we do.”

—Shane Wilson,
President, Scale Trians

Extracts from one-on-one interviews with industry leaders.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 8, Podcaster

Summary

The meeting focused on discussing the rebranding and revitalization of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). Speaker 8, a long-time NMRA member and podcaster, provided extensive feedback on the organization's current challenges and opportunities. Key points included the need for modernizing membership options, improving social media presence, and reducing bureaucracy. The discussion revealed that the NMRA currently has 16,000 members in the USA and 300,000 worldwide, with membership

fees at \$70 per year. Speaker 8 emphasized the importance of creating a free membership tier to attract younger members. The conversation highlighted the need for more accessible communication, better digital presence, and a more streamlined organizational structure.

Key takeaways

Current Perceptions of NMRA

Speaker 8 shared his long-term connection with NMRA, describing it as vital to the hobby but also acknowledging its outdated structure and bureaucratic challenges.

Membership Value and Modernization Needs

Discussion focused on improving membership value, with Speaker 8 suggesting a news app feature and better digital engagement strategies.

Bureaucracy and Organizational Structure

Speaker 8 criticized the NMRA's bureaucratic structure, comparing it to the Toronto Maple Leafs' 57 years of futility, and emphasized the need for organizational streamlining.

Digital Presence and Social Media Strategy

Discussion about improving NMRA's social media presence, with Speaker 8 emphasizing the importance of consistent and relevant content delivery.

Future Growth Strategies

FÖDA discussed potential strategies for increasing membership and engagement, including implementing a free membership tier and improving digital communication.

“...we have created the AML (A Modelers Life) Nation. No effort of my own, people just started finding out about it and finding each other. We gather and we give each other support. You don’t get any of that from the NMRA.”

—Lionel Strang

Extracts from one-on-one interviews with industry leaders.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 9, Editor of a Publication

Summary

The meeting featured a discussion among members of the model railroading community, focusing on design, branding, and organizational challenges within the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). Speaker 9, a graphic designer with extensive experience in publishing and model railroading, shared insights about magazine design and branding challenges. The conversation covered topics such as logo design evolution, the balance between modern and traditional design aesthetics, and the importance of maintaining organizational identity. Speaker 9 emphasized

the need for timeless design that appeals to diverse modeling eras (steam, diesel, etc.) and discussed the NMRA's international presence. The group also explored membership engagement strategies, particularly how to connect with members who have limited time for local activities. The discussion highlighted the importance of maintaining the NMRA's identity while considering modern branding approaches, with particular attention to the challenges faced by similar organizations like the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS).

Key takeaways

Introduction and Background of Participants

Speaker 9 introduced themselves as a graphic designer with experience in magazine layout and production, working on publications like Railroad Model Craftsman and others since 2010. They mentioned their role in publishing and their connection to the model railroading community.

Discussion on Design Language and Branding Challenges

Speaker 9 shared their experience with magazine design, particularly how they learned from competitors like Model Railroader. They discussed the importance of creating a consistent graphic language that provides a cohesive experience for readers, while acknowledging the diversity of design backgrounds in the industry.

Logo Design and Branding Considerations

The group discussed the evolution of the NMRA logo, with Speaker 9 emphasizing the importance of designing logos that work in black and white and across various applications. They shared insights about branding challenges and the need for logos to be engaging and representative of the organization.

International Presence and Organizational Identity

Speaker 9 discussed the NMRA's international membership, particularly its appeal to European modelers interested in North American railroading. The group explored the implications of maintaining the 'National' aspect of NMRA's name while considering its global reach.

Membership Engagement and Organizational Evolution

The conversation shifted to membership engagement strategies, with Speaker 9 discussing their limited local involvement due to time constraints. They emphasized the importance of balancing online and in-person engagement, and the need for organizations to evolve while respecting their history.

Comparison with Other Organizations

Speaker 9 compared the NMRA's branding challenges with those faced by the NRHS, highlighting the importance of maintaining engaging and relevant branding while avoiding alienation of existing members.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 10, NMRA Divisional President

Summary

The meeting featured a detailed discussion about the speaker's extensive experience with model railroading and his leadership role in the NMRA. Speaker 10 shared his journey from Cuba to becoming a prominent figure in the model railroading community. He discussed his 25-30 year involvement with the hobby, his leadership roles in the Hub Division, and his current position as president. The speaker highlighted challenges facing the organization, particularly regarding financial support from the national level and regional divisions. He emphasized the importance of maintaining

strong local divisions while navigating the complexities of national organizational structure. The conversation also touched on the speaker's architectural career, his work with the Museum of Science in Boston, and his efforts to promote the hobby through various initiatives. Speaker 10 expressed concerns about financial support for divisions, membership retention, and the need for better communication between national and local levels.

Key takeaways

Introduction to Model Railroading Journey

Speaker 10 described his early exposure to model railroading in Cuba, where his father built a model railroad using cigar boxes for tunnels. He detailed his journey from Cuba to the US in 1961 and his eventual re-engagement with the hobby through his son's interest.

Leadership Experience in NMRA

Speaker 10 outlined his progression through leadership roles in the Hub Division, starting as a board member, then vice president, and eventually serving as president for five years. He discussed his current role and ongoing commitment to the organization.

Financial Challenges and Organizational Structure

Speaker 10 expressed concerns about the financial structure of NMRA, particularly the low financial return per member (\$2/member) and the need for better support for local divisions. He compared the organizational structure to Freemasonry, highlighting similar challenges in funding distribution.

Museum of Science Collaboration

Speaker 10 discussed the successful partnership with the Museum of Science in Boston, where they have been displaying model train exhibits for six years. He mentioned the financial benefits of this collaboration and the challenge of securing weekday volunteers.

Future Directions and Challenges

Speaker 10 outlined his vision for improving financial sustainability for local divisions, including exploring investment opportunities and better financial management practices. He emphasized the importance of maintaining strong local organizations while navigating national-level challenges.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 11, Author / Modeler

Summary

Background & Entry into Model Railroading

Speaker 11 started with a Lionel set as a child, eventually moving into HO scale.

He joined the NMRA about 5–6 years ago after attending a Piedmont Division clinic.

Initially hesitant to join, citing cost and feeling like he wasn't "at that level" yet.

NMRA Involvement & Perceptions

Enjoyed the clinic experience and found the NMRA welcoming.

Main benefits: social connections, knowledge sharing, and the Achievement Program (Speaker 11 has 5 of 7 certificates).

Appreciates the online meeting option due to long drive times (2.5–3 hours one way).

Challenges with NMRA

Main complaint: high cost of conventions (\$150–200) and lack of compensation for presenters, unlike other events (e.g., RPM meets like Cocoa Beach, where presenters are refunded or even paid).

Believes NMRA could do more to recognize and support contributors.

Local Club Involvement

Member of a non-NMRA model railroad club in rural Georgia (Tri-State Model Railroaders).

Club operates out of a historic depot and runs public train rides three times a year as fundraising.

Only ~5–10 of the 40 club members are NMRA members; reasons include cost, redundancy, and sufficient value provided by the local club.

Comparative Value

Local club offers a layout, operations, and social ties—more hands-on engagement than NMRA.

NMRA seen as more of a standards body and national organization with fewer immediate/local returns.

Final Thoughts

Speaker 11 would recommend NMRA membership, especially for newcomers closer to urban areas with more access to meetings.

He values the Achievement Program but feels NMRA could learn from local clubs and other modeling organizations when it comes to engagement, compensation, and accessibility.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 12, Modeler

Summary

Speaker 12's Background and Involvement

Speaker 12 got into model trains as a child through his dad's layout and rediscovered the hobby more seriously about four years ago.

He joined the NMRA shortly after getting back into the hobby, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when online programming was strong.

He is in 10th grade and lives on an island in the Pacific Northwest, which limits in-person access to clubs and events.

Despite the isolation, the NMRA (especially the 4th Division, Pacific Northwest Region) has helped him connect with the broader community via Zoom.

Experience with NMRA

Appreciates the organization's online programming and sees it as a necessary evolution for accessibility.

Joined additional subgroups like the operations and layout design SIGs.

Finds the NMRA community welcoming and inclusive, even as a younger participant in an older-skewing hobby.

Notes that the hobby could benefit from being more accessible and appealing to younger people.

Layout and Interests

Currently building a 6.5' x 2' HO scale shelf layout in the den, based on a real location served by the Great Northern Railway in the 1950s.

Passionate about historical accuracy and research, even identifying specific locomotives in use during that time.

Also enjoys music, golf, and history—interests that support his approach to the hobby.

Attitudes Toward Growth and Recognition

Interested in pursuing the NMRA's Master Model Railroader (MMR) certification in the future, but currently prioritizing learning and building experience.

Doesn't currently know any peers his age who are equally engaged in the hobby but remains optimistic about its potential for growth.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 13, Association President

Summary

Speaker 13 reflects on his deep involvement with model railroading, especially through the NMRA (National Model Railroad Association). He describes how the hobby combines technical challenges and social connection, emphasizing the value of shared enjoyment over competition.

His journey began in youth, paused during military service, then resumed more actively after returning to civilian life. He reconnected with the NMRA after a brief stint with a different modeling group that wasn't welcoming to new ideas. Over time, his passion expanded into building and designing layouts, collecting various scales, and using 3D printing extensively for custom parts and portable layouts.

Speaker 13 juggles responsibilities as NMRA president with personal projects, noting the challenge of maintaining momentum when life intervenes. He also touches on his wife's background in engineering-related hobbies, and the general dynamic of being a multi-layout household. Toward the end, the conversation turns toward community, mentioning how some people leave and return to the NMRA due to local conflicts, but many ultimately rejoin. The tone is informal, passionate, and full of anecdotes about the joys and complications of being a dedicated model railroader.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 14, Designer at Large Manufacturer

Summary

Introductions & Backgrounds:

One speaker recently got into model trains after attending the Amherst train show.

Both share a background in design and comics, including personal stories about VCU, comic book shops, and interactions with notable comic creators like Jim Lee and Walt Simonson.

Branding Strategy in the Hobby Industry:

The industry is very niche and fan-driven, more like engaging with a “fandom” than traditional customers.

ScaleTrains has intentionally modernized its branding to stand out—clean, professional, black-and-net design—thanks to leadership willing to hire outside the traditional hobbyist pool.

Their goal is to elevate the brand to the level of recognition like Lionel.

Fan Culture & Customer Base:

There's a deep, segmented community around model railroading (weathering, building tracks, historical accuracy).

“Foamers” (a self-embraced term for train fanatics) are a dedicated but sometimes intense segment.

Many team members at ScaleTrains are fans themselves and know how to balance fun with respect for the culture.

Challenges in the Hobby:

Navigating community expectations: historical accuracy, strong opinions, and emotional investment are significant.

Keeping branding clean and modern in an industry that often looks cluttered.

The NMRA is perceived by younger hobbyists as outdated or disconnected, offering less perceived value than in the past.

Opportunities for the NMRA:

Update its branding and tone to be more inviting, contemporary, and inclusive.

Shift from being just a regulatory body to more of a supportive community presence.

Emphasize education, support, and care for the community/hobby.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 15, Author, Former
Editor of a Publication

Summary

Speaker 15's Background: Speaker 15 joined the NMRA in the 1960s while at Purdue University and became heavily involved over the years, serving as a worldwide director. He discusses the changes he saw within the organization, including the shift from a Board of Trustees to a Board of Directors, and some of the tensions and strategic decisions made, such as the rebranding of the magazine.

Rebranding and Logo Changes: Speaker 15 explains his involvement in rebranding efforts, particularly the decision to update the magazine's name and design. He reflects on the challenges, like dealing with a logo that didn't resonate with all members. He was keen on a non-specific logo that wouldn't become outdated, like the Nike swoosh, and talks about the long process of getting the current logo approved.

Getting into Modeling: Speaker 15's interest in modeling started in childhood, influenced by his father and early exposure to trains. He later joined a railroad club at Purdue, which helped shape his lifelong passion for the hobby. His experience includes working on model layouts and transitioning from Lionel trains to more intricate HO-scale modeling.

Current Projects: Speaker 15 now works on a model of his hometown from the 1950s and is also involved in a new project involving O-scale models. He enjoys the research aspect and has connected with experts to deepen his knowledge. His current layout is fully operational, and he's dedicated to continually improving and expanding his work.

Location and Lifestyle: Speaker 15 lives in northwestern New Jersey, in a rural area near the Appalachian Trail. He shares that, despite being close to New York City, he enjoys a peaceful life surrounded by nature, with wildlife like bears and deer walking through his yard.

Travel and NMRA Connections: Speaker 15 and his wife, before her passing, traveled the world, often with people they met through the NMRA. These trips led to new friendships and adventures, including visits to places like Norway, South America, and Europe. He stresses the importance of joining railroad historical societies and staying connected with fellow enthusiasts, which has been key to his ongoing projects.

Follow-Up: Dale expresses gratitude for Speaker 15's time and asks if it's okay to follow up with him by email, which Speaker 15 agrees to.

The conversation touches on Speaker 15's deep passion for modeling, the NMRA, and how friendships and shared interests in the hobby have shaped his life.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 16, Executive Director of
a Model Railroad Museum

Summary

Speaker 16 at a large HO scale model railroad museum and is actively involved in model railroading both professionally and personally.

Speaker 16 has been an employee at the museum since 2011, having started as a volunteer. She works at a museum that features the largest single-track mainline scale layout in the world, about 5,500 square feet. The museum operates with a mix of automation and manual dispatched train operations, making it unique.

Speaker 16 also models in N scale at home, which differs from the HO scale of the museum.

She has played a key role in developing tourism around the museum and connecting with the model railroading industry.

Connection to Model Railroading and NMRA:
Speaker 16 got into the job through volunteer work connected to a homeless shelter and then transitioning into museum work.

Speaker 16 was not initially a member of the NMRA (National Model Railroad Association) and shares some challenges related to the organization's structure and culture. She joined NMRA in 2018 as an individual member to engage more deeply in the hobby and pursue the Master Model Railroader (MMR) certification.

Speaker 16 restarted a local NMRA division in Northern Colorado after local divisions had dissolved, focusing on education and skill development rather than just social club activities. She serves as the superintendent of this division, aiming to grow membership and support skill-building for MMR certification. Speaker 16 is working toward her own MMR and has completed three of the seven required certificates.

Observations About the Hobby and NMRA:

The museum attracts many operators who don't have home layouts, including younger members and volunteers, which is somewhat unusual for the hobby.

There is some tension in the community around NMRA membership policies, particularly a past requirement that clubs have 100% NMRA membership for insurance, which led to splits.

Speaker 16 criticizes NMRA's leadership structure as outdated and difficult to navigate but appreciates their work on standards and the value of fellowship at conventions.

She emphasizes the need for NMRA to modernize, perhaps by offering monthly subscriptions rather than lump sum fees to attract younger members.

The local NMRA divisions in Colorado have small memberships, with some aging out, but Speaker 16's division is more active and focused on education.

Overall, Speaker 16 presents a committed and pragmatic perspective on model railroading as both a hobby and professional endeavor. She is deeply involved in community-building and education within the hobby and is working actively to rejuvenate local NMRA participation while managing a major model railroad museum.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 17, Director, NMRA

Summary

Speaker 17 grew up in Texas and discovered model railroading around age 11 or 12, thanks to a transformative experience meeting an adult hobbyist. This adult introduced him and his friend to the seriousness and community of the hobby, and told them about the NMRA, describing it as the organization for serious modelers. From that point, he internalized the idea that NMRA membership was part of a dedicated model railroader's identity.

Like many in the hobby, Speaker 17's interest waned in his teenage years. He didn't actually join the NMRA until shortly before turning 50, after a long period spent focusing on two marriages, raising five children, and running his own business. As a busy professional, he found his business took the place that a hobby might fill for others.

In his late 40s, feeling the need to reconnect with the hobby and others involved in it, Speaker 17 started attending train shows again and finally joined the NMRA. The experience wasn't instantly welcoming; he noted the common issue of cliques and a lack of hospitality at first meetings. However, he persisted and soon found opportunities to volunteer, which helped him integrate and take on more responsibilities.

Speaker 17 served two terms on his local division board and also joined the regional board, where he initially ran for vice president. Unexpectedly, he was thrust into the role of president when the sitting president resigned. He found that he thrived in executive roles, where he could drive planning and make decisions, rather than simply being one voice among many. He especially enjoyed creating strategic plans and setting the agenda for his region. However, NMRA rules required him to give up that regional executive position when he joined the national board, which he did with some reluctance.

Looking back, Speaker 17 felt the NMRA's leadership suffered from a lack of vision across departmental and regional heads. He observed that few leaders brought forward new ideas or pushed for bold changes. When he tried to engage others in strategic planning, he often encountered passivity or resistance. In Speaker 17's view, the NMRA's long-term membership decline was closely tied to its unwillingness to fundamentally reexamine or transform its practices. Even the brief pause in declining membership around 2023 was, in his opinion, more the result of individual leadership efforts (such as those of Gordy) than systemic change.

Speaker 17 believed incremental changes-like tinkering with the Achievement Program-were not enough. He argued for a larger cultural and organizational shift, beginning with telling a more relevant and engaging story about the NMRA. The narrative that had appealed to Speaker 17 as a child-that being an NMRA member is simply the "right thing to do"-was no longer enough to attract younger generations, who are more transactional and need clearer, more compelling reasons to join.

Outside of the NMRA, Speaker 17 participated in other groups, such as N-scale associations and modular standards organizations. He also attended RPM (Railroad Prototype Modelers) events, which arose in part as a critique of NMRA practices. While the NMRA often supports these events through sponsorship and insurance, Speaker 17 noted that RPM has a distinct, sometimes oppositional philosophy.

In conclusion, Speaker 17's story highlighted the passion and sense of identity model railroading brought him, the satisfaction he found in executive leadership, the challenges he saw in NMRA's culture, and the urgent need for broader change if the organization hopes to remain relevant and reverse its decline.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 18, Director, NMRA

Summary

Dale, working on branding efforts for the NMRA (National Model Railroad Association), interviews Speaker 18, an NMRA member and director based in Australia. They discuss his background with model trains, starting from childhood, and how he got involved with the NMRA through his father's club. Speaker 18 points out that many younger hobbyists are "lone wolves" and don't naturally seek out clubs unless introduced through family.

Speaker 18 values NMRA membership for the socialization, mentorship, and educational opportunities, but feels the educational offerings are too geographically limited and not well-distributed online. He suggests improving accessibility through digital platforms like Zoom or online classrooms.

Speaker 18 highlights that while Australians are upset about recent changes (like the digital magazine), he believes the issue is miscommunication and poor marketing rather than the changes themselves. He thinks member benefits should be tailored and sold based on individual interests, demographics, and practical value (such as discounts or mentorship connections).

He stresses that NMRA leadership lacks a professional, dedicated role (like a paid project manager) to drive change and manage projects with accountability. Volunteers alone can't sustain the necessary momentum, leading to stalled initiatives.

Speaker 18 also mentions the need for better member background data to improve volunteer recruitment, leadership succession planning, and tapping into members' professional expertise. He feels NMRA should market itself better internationally and ensure members understand the full range of benefits available through national membership. Finally, Speaker 18 passionately emphasizes that education should be the NMRA's highest priority moving forward.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 19, Former NMRA Board Member

Summary

Speaker 19, described his model railroad layout, which he built in a 20-by-30-foot room featuring double decks connected by a helix that allowed trains to transition between levels. The layout's track plan was loop-to-loop, with the two loops stacked vertically to maximize space. Speaker 19 valued having windows in the room to enjoy natural sunlight and the ambiance it created, contrasting it with basements that typically lack daylight. When building the house, he had the foresight to install electrical outlets in the floor to avoid running extension cords across aisles, making the layout's wiring more convenient and less obtrusive.

Professionally, Speaker 19 worked in a brand consultancy named "Photo," where he and two partners focused on brand identity, strategy, positioning, and naming rather than traditional advertising campaigns. His background as a creative director in advertising influenced his perspectives on modeling and organizational leadership.

Speaker 19's entry into model railroading was unconventional; although his father had a Lionel layout when he was a child, Speaker 19 had little interest at the time. His father later traded in vintage equipment for HO scale items but lost interest before completing a layout. Speaker 19's involvement began in college, around 1978 or 1979, when he inherited old trains from his parents. A book by Leslie T. White about N scale modeling opened his eyes to the possibilities of building miniature worlds and inspired him to join the NMRA soon after. He also contributed cartoons to the NMRA Bulletin during that period.

After taking a long break from the hobby to play in a rock band for about 20 years, Speaker 19 returned to model railroading in 1999 while building a house with a basement. Before the wide availability of internet resources, he relied heavily on print magazines like *Model Railroader* and *Railroad Model Craftsman* to learn skills and gain inspiration. His early layouts were imperfect, but over time and with more knowledge, he built what he considered his best

layout in the attic of his Minneapolis home.

Speaker 19 joined the NMRA within a month of starting model railroading, feeling it was his "tribe" and valuing the sense of community it provided. When he returned to the hobby decades later, the hobbyist community seemed more fragmented, with more specialized subgroups than in the 1970s.

He served on the NMRA leadership team for 16 years, including roles as communications director and vice president. Speaker 19 noted that while the NMRA had longstanding achievements such as Digital Command Control (DCC) standards, more recent standards initiatives-like Layout Command Control (LCC) and dead rail battery-powered trains-had not gained traction. The primary obstacle was the volunteer nature of the NMRA: many people volunteered by raising their hands but lacked the time or follow-through to complete major projects. Speaker 19 lamented that this "person power" shortage limited the NMRA's ability to stay relevant and innovate.

As part of his volunteer work, Speaker 19 recorded and edited over 150 clinic videos from national conventions to provide member benefits, but only a small percentage of NMRA members ever accessed these resources. He emphasized that, despite the NMRA's excellent goals and legacy, limited active volunteer participation constrained what the organization could accomplish.

Speaker 19's reflections highlighted how model railroading as a hobby and the NMRA community had evolved over decades-from a unified group to a fractured landscape of specialized interests-and underscored the challenges of leadership, engagement, and innovation in a volunteer-driven organization. His experience offered valuable insights into both the pleasures and the organizational difficulties of the hobby.

Industry Leader Interview

Speaker 20, Modeler

Summary

Speaker 20 and the interviewer have an informal, friendly chat that transitions into a discussion about Speaker 20's background in model railroading. Speaker 20 shares that he grew up in England near live steam railways, influenced by his father, a model engineer. He enjoyed trainspotting as a child and owned early model train sets. After moving to Canada in 1972, Speaker 20 became deeply involved with model railroading, joining the NMRA (National Model Railroad Association) and being mentored by skilled modelers. Though close, he hasn't yet earned his Master Model Railroader (MMR) certification.

Speaker 20 returned to the UK about 20 years ago and stayed active in the NMRA's British Region, eventually taking leadership roles (magazine editor, membership director, and secretary). He notes a major challenge in the UK: British modelers view the NMRA as too "American," despite NMRA standards benefiting even British modeling products. There's heavy local interest in British railways,

preserved steam, and local clubs, making recruitment into the NMRA difficult. He emphasizes that the NMRA offers valuable fellowship, learning opportunities, and standardization. Programs like "Brew & Natter" (a virtual meet-up started during COVID) have connected modelers globally. Speaker 20 also discusses Fremo modular layouts as a popular, space-saving way to participate in model railroading in the UK, where space is limited.

Suggested Proposal from
Derrick Magnotta

Based on Discussion with Lionel Strang & Crew
Episodes 249 & 251 of A Modeler's Life

Why Do We Need an NMRA?

Setting Standards for the Hobby

The NMRA's most significant contribution is its establishment of technical standards and recommended practices that ensure compatibility across manufacturers and modelers. These standards allow products from different companies to work together seamlessly, enabling hobbyists to build their layouts without worrying about compatibility issues. This foundational work has been crucial in maintaining the growth and accessibility of the hobby.

Preserving the Heritage of Model Railroading

As an organization with a long history, the NMRA plays a vital role in preserving the art, history, and technical knowledge of model railroading. It serves as a steward for passing down the craft to new generations, ensuring that the depth and richness of the hobby remain intact. The NMRA's library, archives, and historical resources are invaluable for hobbyists and researchers alike.

Building and Connecting the Community

The NMRA can provide a structured way for hobbyists to connect with others who share their passion. Through conventions, regional groups, and local events, it fosters camaraderie, collaboration, and mentorship among modelers. While informal online communities have grown in popularity and continue to accelerate, the NMRA can offer an organized framework that complements these platforms by providing in-person meet-ups for deeper engagement.

Supporting Education and Skill Development

The NMRA offers workshops, clinics, and resources to help hobbyists at all skill levels improve their craft. The NMRA provides a wealth of knowledge to help modelers grow in their abilities. Its structured programs, such as the Achievement Program, encourage lifelong learning and mastery of skills.

Advocating for the Hobby

As a representative organization, the NMRA advocates for the model railroading community at large. It works to promote the hobby to the public, ensuring its visibility and relevance in an age where other hobbies compete for attention. Through outreach and partnerships, the NMRA works to inspire new generations to join the hobby and reinforce the model railroading experience for new entrants to the hobby.

Creating a Sense of Belonging

The NMRA fosters a sense of identity and pride among model railroaders. Being part of an organization that values the same passion provides hobbyists with validation and a sense of belonging. This is especially important in a hobby that can sometimes feel isolating due to its individual nature.

What's Wrong with the NMRA?

Outdated Structure and Bureaucracy

The NMRA's reliance on geographic regions and in-person meetings feels increasingly irrelevant in today's digitally connected world. Hobbyists now connect globally based on specific interests, rendering the regional format less useful. The hierarchical, bureaucratic nature of the NMRA's leadership structure and its old-fashioned meeting formats discourage ad hoc engagement, especially among younger generations who value flexibility and inclusivity. Without significant modernization, the NMRA risks alienating a large portion of the hobbyist community.

The Innovator's Dilemma and the Erosion of the NMRA's Influence

The NMRA faces an innovator's dilemma, a situation where its long-standing success and legacy have hindered its ability to adapt to transformative changes in the model railroading community. Much like Kodak, which famously clung to its dominance in film photography and failed to embrace the rise of digital cameras despite inventing the technology, the NMRA has remained tied to traditional structures and practices even as the hobby has shifted toward digital platforms and decentralized engagement.

Suggested Proposal from
Derrick Magnotta

Based on Discussion with Lionel Strang & Crew
Episodes 249 & 251 of A Modeler's Life

What's Wrong with
the NMRA?
(Cont.)

By prioritizing established members and legacy systems over innovation, the NMRA has struggled to attract newer generations of hobbyists who expect flexibility, inclusivity, and digital-first experiences. This resistance to change has allowed alternative platforms—such as social media communities, YouTube channels, and independent hobbyist groups—to fill the void, eroding the NMRA's relevance and authority in the model railroading world. Today, the NMRA's biggest competitors are:

- Inertia
- Social Media
- Web 2.0/Forums
- Blogs
- Independent Hobby Media

To avoid the fate of organizations like Kodak, the NMRA must embrace bold changes that address the evolving needs and expectations of modern hobbyists.

Digital Disconnect

The digital age has transformed the way hobbyists interact, making platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok the primary spaces for hobbyists to connect. These environments allow enthusiasts to engage with others who share their specific interests, regardless of geographic location. To remain relevant, the NMRA should double down on Discord and similar digital-native platforms to create dynamic, flexible environments for community building. These tools not only enable real-time interaction but also foster a sense of belonging for hobbyists who may never attend a traditional meeting.

Additionally, the NMRA should dismantle its geographic region-based structure and replace it with interest-based communities that connect modelers globally. By creating a system that acts like a "platonic dating site for model railroaders," the NMRA can help members find peers based on shared passions, such as prototypical modeling, modern railroads, or scenery design. This approach would align with how hobbyists interact in the digital age and make the NMRA more accessible and relevant to a wider audience.

Social Media Disconnect

The NMRA's current social media efforts show a disappointing disconnect between the reductive, superficial content it produces and the intricate, deliberate practices that define the model railroading hobby. The hobby thrives on the careful balance of research, creativity, and contemplation, yet NMRA's online presence often reduces this rich tapestry to oversimplified snippets that fail to resonate with serious enthusiasts or draw in curious newcomers.

This gap highlights a lack of meaningful collaboration between those who actively live and breathe the hobby and those responsible for crafting its digital narrative. To remain relevant, the NMRA must establish a stronger link between the doers and the storytellers—those who are thinking critically about the hobby and those managing its outreach—so that their content truly reflects the depth and authenticity of the model railroading community. In an increasingly crowded digital space, the NMRA has an opportunity to stand out—but only if it elevates the quality of its content. The organization's current offerings too often come across as amateurish, half-baked efforts that fail to capture the attention or respect of a discerning audience. This is not just about improving aesthetics or production values; it's about demonstrating professionalism and thought leadership in a way that sets the NMRA apart from the sea of casual creators. High-quality, well-researched, and visually polished content can establish the NMRA as a guiding force in the hobby, rather than a struggling participant or also-ran. NMRA-produced content rarely exceeds the popularity or engagement of even low-tier content creators. By investing in quality over quantity, the NMRA can assert itself as the definitive source of inspiration and expertise for model railroaders everywhere.

Demographic Cliff

The NMRA faces a demographic crisis as its membership primarily consists of baby boomers who will age out of active participation. Younger generations, such as Millennials and Gen Z, are not joining at rates necessary to replace older members. This generational divide is further compounded by differing values—while

Suggested Proposal from
Derrick Magnotta

Based on Discussion with Lionel Strang & Crew
Episodes 249 & 251 of A Modeler's Life

What's Wrong with
the NMRA?
(Cont.)

older members may prioritize tradition and institutionalism, younger hobbyists expect inclusivity, collaboration, and mission-driven engagement. Without addressing this imbalance, the NMRA risks long-term decline. The Inverted Funnel of Model Railroading The hobby of model railroading operates as an inverted funnel, with a broad array of participants engaging at various levels of interest and commitment. At the top of the funnel are casual enthusiasts—those who watch videos, attend train shows, or occasionally buy model railroading products. As engagement deepens, some hobbyists build layouts, participate in clubs, or seek community through digital platforms. At the very bottom of the funnel, only about 5% of hobbyists are members of the NMRA.

To grow, the NMRA must recognize and target the entire funnel, not just the narrow segment at the bottom. This means engaging casual and intermediate hobbyists through accessible, value-driven offerings that meet them where they are. By expanding its appeal and demonstrating relevance at every level of the hobby, the NMRA can bring more participants into the fold.

Unwelcoming Culture

Younger hobbyists frequently report negative experiences at NMRA events, citing judgmental attitudes or dismissiveness from older members. These interactions foster an exclusionary culture, where newcomers feel unwelcome or invalidated. The NMRA should develop a 90-day onboarding plan for new members to promote engagement and to ensure integration into their division/region.

Where do we go from here?

B2C Growth Tactics

To broaden its reach, the NMRA should adopt business-to-consumer (B2C) growth tactics aimed at engaging the wider spectrum of hobbyists. This could include launching targeted digital campaigns, offering entry-level resources for beginners, and developing high-quality, low-cost or free content that sparks interest in membership. Additionally, the NMRA should explore badging products and retailers to promote the NMRA's brand and values. By partnering with manufacturers, hobby shops, and online retailers, the NMRA could encourage them to display a recognizable badge or logo on their products, signaling to consumers that these offerings are aligned with the quality and standards of the NMRA. This would increase visibility and foster brand association among casual hobbyists and prospective members.

Moreover, the NMRA should consider implementing a conversion funnel that moves casual hobbyists toward active membership. While an information funnel gathers broad awareness through education and outreach (like blog posts, social media content, or videos), a conversion funnel is designed specifically to turn interest into action, such as membership sign-ups or event participation. The difference is that a conversion funnel focuses on driving measurable outcomes through clear calls to action, incentivized offers, and content that leads potential members closer to joining the organization. By creating distinct strategies for both types of funnels, the NMRA can build a comprehensive system that attracts new participants and successfully converts them into long-term members.

Suggested Proposal from
Derrick Magnotta

Based on Discussion with Lionel Strang & Crew
Episodes 249 & 251 of A Modeler's Life

Where do we go from here?
(Cont.)

Modernizing the Membership Model

To remain relevant, the NMRA must transition to a big tent, top-of-the-funnel organization that attracts all hobbyists, not just the most traditional or serious ones. Replacing geographic regions with interest-based communities would allow members to connect globally with others who share their passions. Introducing free or low-cost membership tiers, offering limited but meaningful benefits, could attract a broader audience and provide a pathway to deeper engagement.

Next Generation Leadership

To position itself as a forward-thinking organization, the NMRA must modernize its leadership approach. A fast-track leadership program for younger modelers could empower emerging voices to take on leadership roles and shape the organization's future direction. This initiative would help bridge the generational gap while fostering fresh ideas and perspectives. Additionally, forming strategic partnerships with popular content creators and influencers in the model railroading community could elevate the NMRA's brand and expand its reach. These alliances could produce high-quality, engaging content that showcases the NMRA's value while attracting new members from diverse backgrounds. By combining innovative leadership programs with targeted partnerships, the NMRA can rebuild its relevance and appeal.

Streamlining Leadership and Governance

To operate more effectively and embrace a modern structure, the NMRA must streamline its leadership by appointing a professional executive director to oversee operations. The reliance on elected volunteers often results in inconsistent priorities and limits the organization's ability to execute long-term strategies. Empowering professionals with expertise in nonprofit management, digital engagement, and membership growth would enable the NMRA to become more agile and responsive to members' needs. A clear delineation of responsibilities between leadership and staff would also reduce inefficiencies, allowing the organization to focus on its mission rather than internal politics.

Reimagining the Public Image

The NMRA must rebrand itself to demonstrate that it is turning over a new leaf and embracing the future of the hobby. A refreshed image, accompanied by a clear and compelling mission, could signal change to both members and non-members. Campaigns highlighting a vision such as "Making Railroad Hobbies Better" or "I'm a Proud Model Railroader" could create a sense of identity and pride for hobbyists. By executing a proactive, outbound messaging strategy rooted in this mission, the NMRA could position itself as a forward-thinking organization. Digital advertisements, social media campaigns, and testimonials from diverse modelers would amplify this message, helping to rebuild trust and enthusiasm in the community.

Creating an Inclusive Culture

The NMRA must actively foster a welcoming and inclusive culture, training members to create positive experiences for newcomers. Celebrating all approaches to the hobby, from casual railfanning to detailed prototypical modeling, would help break down barriers. A clear, updated mission focused on inclusivity and innovation would signal to hobbyists that the NMRA is evolving to meet their needs.

Rethinking Events and Community Building

The NMRA must reimagine its events and meetings to focus on enjoyable, educational, and community-driven activities. Simplifying conventions, integrating hybrid formats, and collaborating with independent events like RPM meets / local meetup groups could draw in a more diverse audience. By reducing bureaucracy and emphasizing member connections, the NMRA could create a more engaging and dynamic community.

Specimens

Primary Wordmark



Primary Wordmark in Black



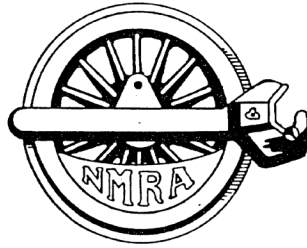
Primary Wordmark with
Supporting Text



90th Anniversary Mark



Legacy Mark



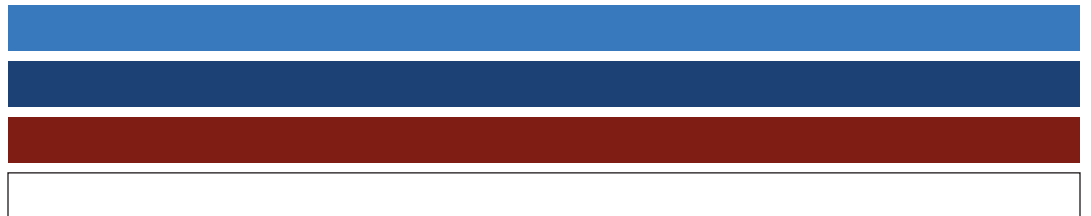
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ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789 (!@#\$%&.,?;:)

Avalon Demi

Avalon is a display sans and sans serif font family. This typeface has fourteen styles and was published by FontSite Inc.

Primary Colors



LOGO

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS
OF MODEL RAILROADING
EXCELLENCE

BRAND STORY

The National Model Railroad Association's 90th anniversary celebrates nearly a century of bringing together model railroad hobbyist of all ages, establishing industry standards, and fostering fellowship within the hobby.

Our 2024 celebration theme “#NMRagoStrong” represents not just our longevity, but the enduring strength of our community and our continuing commitment to excellence in model railroading.



COLORS

SUBTLE HUES,
HARMONIOUS ELEGANCE

COLOR USAGE RULES

Our Story

For 90 years, the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) has been the cornerstone of the model railroading community. Founded on the principles of supporting both the hobby and industry of model railroading, we've grown into a global fellowship of enthusiasts united by our passion for 'the world's best hobby.' As we celebrate our rich history, we look forward to the next 90 years of innovation, education, and community. #NMRAStrong

Brand Promise

To foster the art and craft of model railroading through education, standards, and fellowship, ensuring the hobby continues to thrive for generations to come.

02



Regional Logos



Regional Logos



Regional Logo Taxonomy

Features New
NMRA Logo: 3



SMD
Rock River Valley Division
Illinois Valley Division
Rio Grande Division

Features Heritage
NMRA Logo: 8



Australasian Region
Mid-Central Region
Midwest Region
North Central Region
Mid-Eastern Region
Canada
Lone Star Region
Niagara Frontier Region

Mentions NMRA
Without Logo: 6



Pacific Coast Region
Thousand Lakes Region
Pacific Northwest Region
Southeastern Region
Pacific Southwest Region
Sunshine Region

No Mention of NMRA: 1



Northeastern Region

Serif: 6



Australasian Region
Canada
Mid-Continent Region
Mid-Eastern Region
Midwest Region
Sunshine Region

Sans Serif: 10



British Region
Lone Star Region
Mid-Central Region
Niagara Frontier Region
North Central Region
Pacific Coast Region
PNR
Rocky Mountain Region
Southeastern Region
Thousand Lakes Region

Display: 2



North Eastern Region
Pacific Southwest Region

Script: 0

Title Case: 2

UPPERCASE: 16



Pacific Southwest Region
Sunshine Region

Australasian Region
British Region
Canada
Lone Star Region
Mid-Central Region
Mid-Continent Region
Mid-Eastern Region
Midwest Region
Niagara Frontier Region
North Central Region
North Eastern Region
Pacific Coast Region
PNR
Rocky Mountain Region
Southeastern Region
Thousand Lakes Region

Dominant Brand Colors

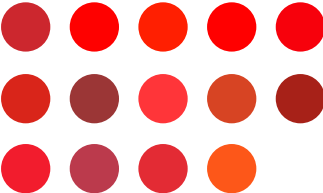
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Black/Gray: 5



Red/Orange: 14



Green: 3



Yellow/Gold: 5



Divisional Logos



Divisional Logos
(cont.)



Divisional Logos
(cont.)



Divisional Logos
(cont.)



Divisional Logos
(cont.)



Divisional Logos
(cont.)



Divisional Logos
(cont.)



Divisional Logos
(cont.)



Divisional Logo Taxonomy

Features New
NMRA Logo: 4



Illinois Valley
Rio Grande
Rock River Valley
South Mountain

Features Heritage
NMRA Logo: 9



Capital
Indian Nations
PNR Div 6
Potomac
SCWD
Susquehanna
Tidewater
Western Reserve
WIS

Mentions NMRA
Without Logo: 59



3 Rivers
Allegheny Western
Allegheny Plateau
Arizona
Black Swamp
Bluff City
Buckeye
Cajon
Carolina Mountain
Carolina Piedmont
Carolina Southern
Cen-Tex
Central New York
Cherokee
Chesapeake
Cincinnati
Clinton River
Coal
Coast
Concord Flyer
Dakota Southeastern
Daylight
Du Page
Eastern Canada
Fox Valley
Garden State
Gulf
HUB
Hudson Valley
Illinois Terminal
Lakeshore
Little Rhody
Los Angeles

Magnolia
MCR Div 1
MCR Div 10
MCR Div 3
NCR Div 9
Northern Colorado
Northern Utah
Nutmeg
Philadelphia
Pikes Peak
Plateau
PNR Div 1
PNR Div 2
PNR Div 3
PNR Div 4
PNR Div 5
Redwood Empire
Roadrunners
San Diego
Sierra
Silver San Juan
Smoky Mountain
South Suburban
Thamesiders
Twin Cities
Western New York

No Mention of NMRA: 11



Black Diamonds
Buckeye
CID
Cowcatcher
Estes Valley
Green Mountain
Palmetto
Piedmont
Red Dragon
South Shore
WLD

Serif: 21



Alleghany Western
 Allegheny Plateau
 Black Diamonds
 Carolina Piedmont
 Cen-Tex
 Concord Flyer
 Du Page
 Garden State
 Gulf
 Hudson Valley
 Illinois Terminal
 Little Rhody
 NCR Div 9
 PNR Div 3
 Potomac
 Red Dragon
 Rio Grande
 Roadrunners
 South Shore
 Susquehanna
 Turkey Creek

Sans Serif: 51



3 Rivers
 Arizona
 Black Swamp
 Bluff City
 Buckeye
 Buckeye
 Cajon
 Capital
 Carolina Mountain
 Central New York
 Cherokee
 Chesapeake
 Clinton River
 Coal
 Coast
 Cowcatcher
 Dakota Southeastern
 Estes Valley
 Green Mountain
 HUB
 Illinois Valley
 Indian Nations
 Los Angeles
 Magnolia
 MCR Div 1
 MCR Div 10

Display: 2



MCR Div 3
 Motor City
 Northern Colorado
 Northern Utah
 Nutmeg
 Palmetto
 Philadelphia
 Piedmont
 Pikes Peak
 PNR Div 2
 PNR Div 4
 PNR Div 6
 Redwood Empire
 Rock River Valley
 SCWD
 Sierra
 Silver San Juan
 Smoky Mountain
 South Mountain
 South Suburban
 Thamesiders
 Twin Cities
 Western New York
 Western Reserve
 WLD

Carolina Southern
 CID
 Cincinatti
 Daylight
 Eastern Canada
 Fox Valley
 Lakeshore
 Plateau
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 PNR Div 5
 PNR Div 7
 San Diego
 Tidewater
 WIS

Title Case: 14

UPPERCASE: 68

lowercase: 3



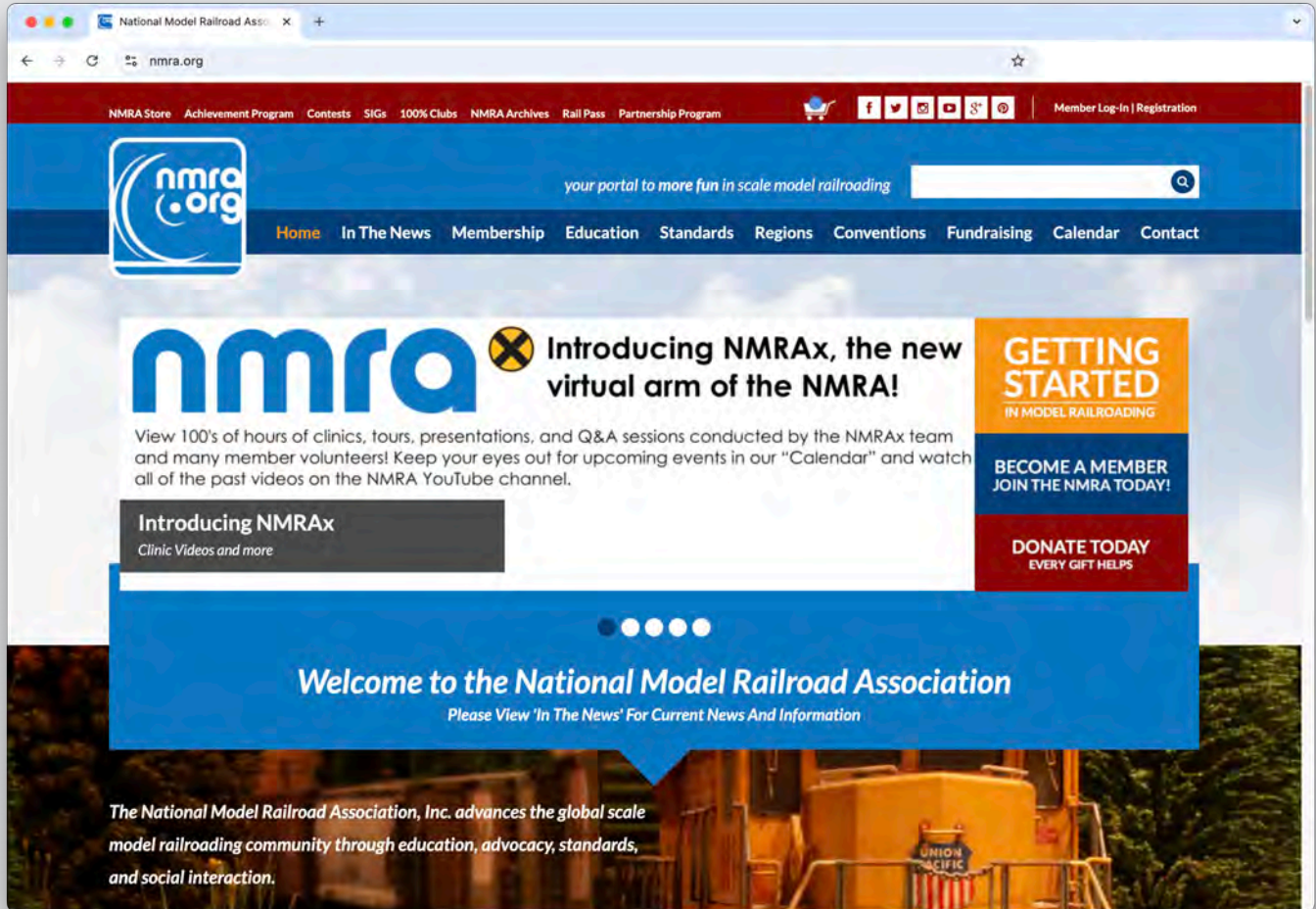
3 Rivers
Allegheny Plateau
Black Diamonds
Carolina Southern
Chesapeake
Cincinatti
Illinois Valley
Magnolia
Palmetto
PNR Div 4
PNR Div 7
Potomac
Susquehanna
Thamesiders

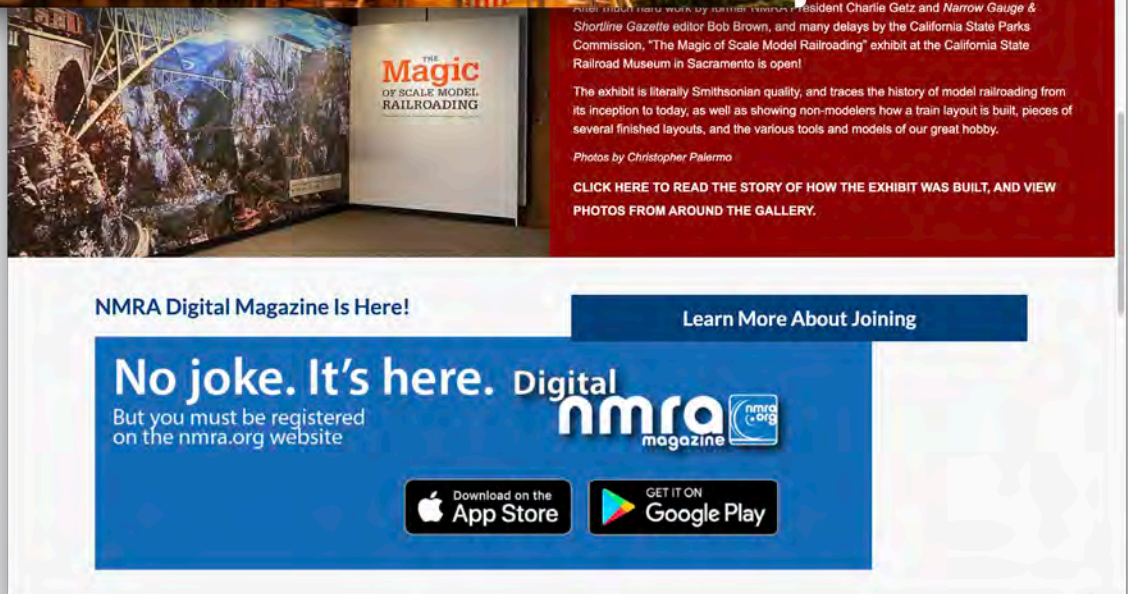
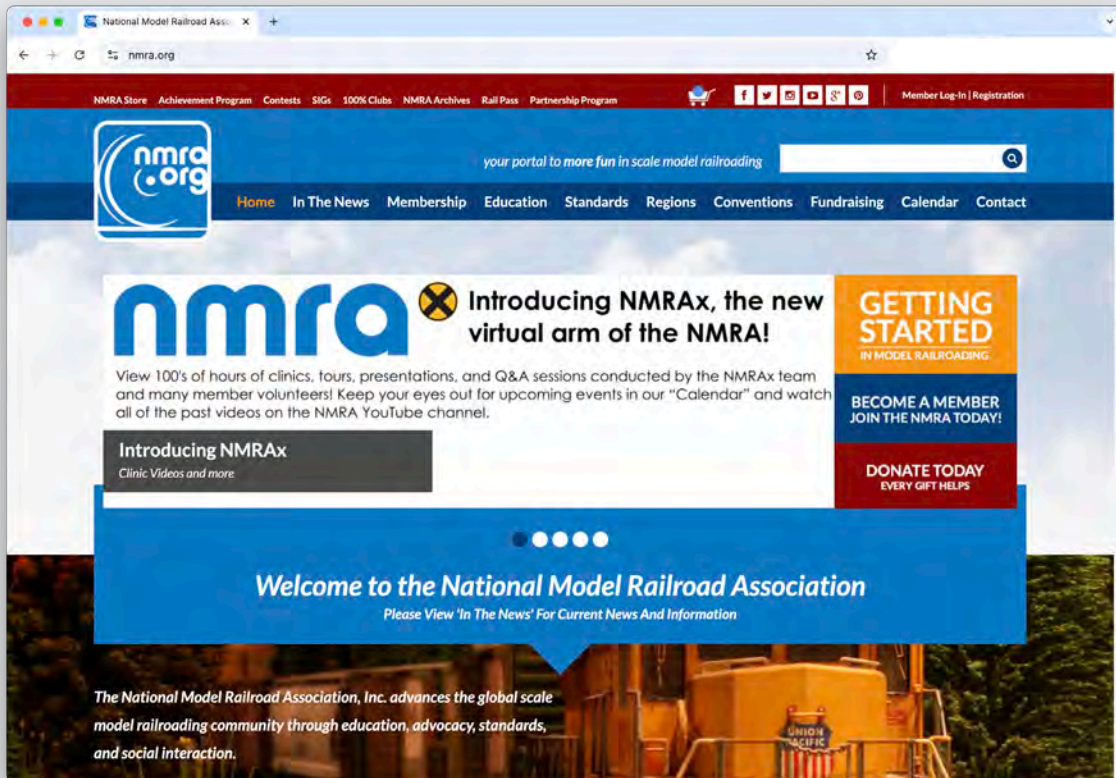
Alleghany Western
Arizona
Black Swamp
Bluff City
Buckeye
Buckeye
Cajon
Capital
Carolina Mountain
Carolina Piedmont
Cen-Tex
Central New York
Cherokee
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Clinton River
Coal
Coast
Concord Flyer
Cowcatcher
Dakota Southeastern
Daylight
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Eastern Canada
Estes Valley
Fox Valley
Garden State
Green Mountain
Gulf
HUB
Hudson Valley
Illinois Terminal
Indian Nations
Lakeshore
Little Rhody

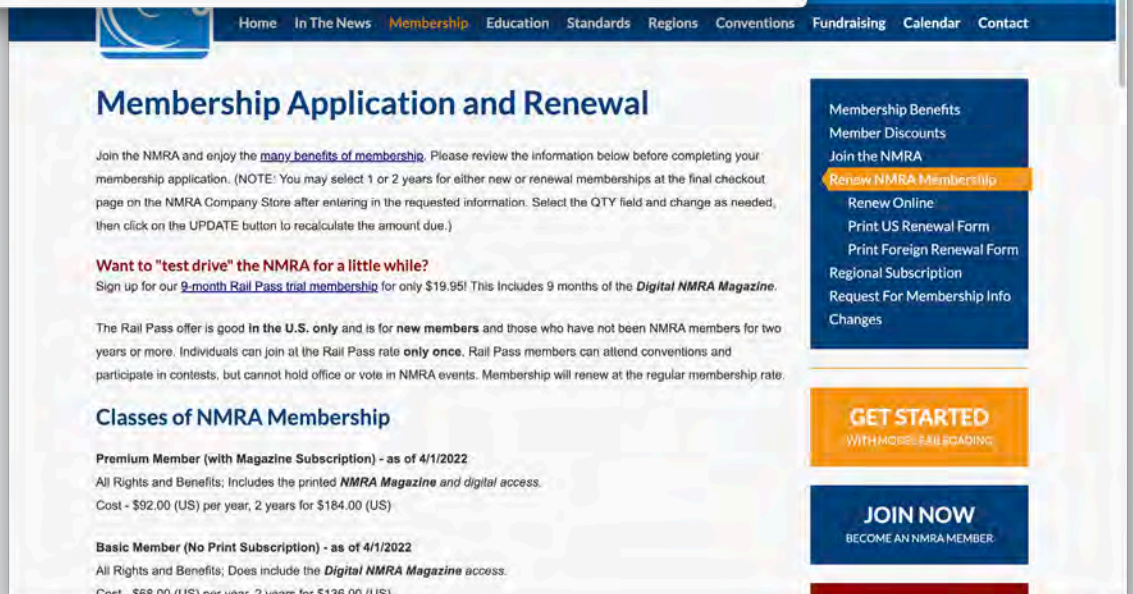
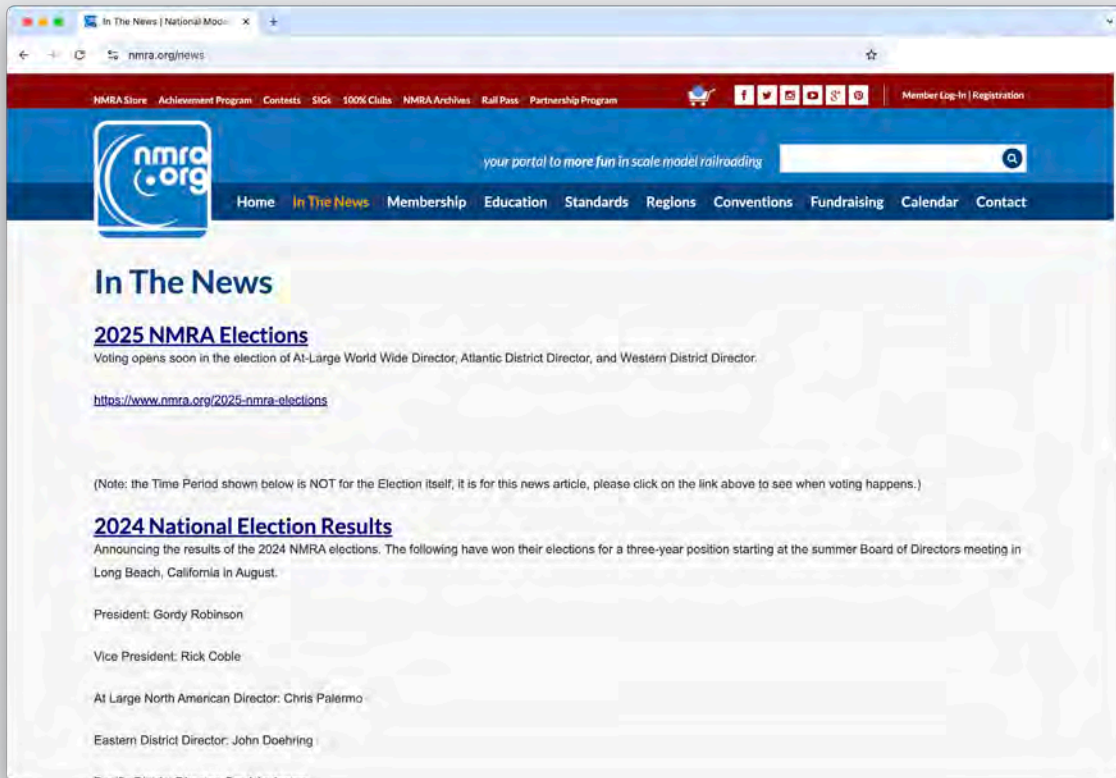
Los Angeles
MCR Div 1
MCR Div 10
MCR Div 3
NCR Div 9
Northern Colorado
Northern Utah
Nutmeg
Philadelphia
Piedmont
Pikes Peak
Plateau
PNR Div 1
PNR Div 2
PNR Div 3
PNR Div 5
PNR Div 6
Red Dragon
Redwood Empire
Roadrunners
San Diego
SCWD
Sierra
Silver San Juan
Smoky Mountain
South Shore
South Suburban
Tidewater
Twin Cities
Turkey Creek
Western New York
Western Reserve
WIS
WLD

Rio Grande
Rock River Valley
South Mountain

Web Presence







Regions | National Model Rail x +

nmra.org/regions

NMRA Store Achievement Program Contests SIG 100% Clubs NMRA Archives Rail Pass Partnership Program Member Log-In | Registration

nmra.org

your portal to more fun in scale model railroading

Home In The News Membership Education Standards **Regions** Conventions Fundraising Calendar Contact

Regions

Districts, Regions and Divisions

The NMRA's Districts (see image below) are divided into 17 Regions which cover the United States, Australasia, Canada, and the British Isles now including Europe. There are other NMRA organizations in the rest of the world. Each of the 15 Regions which cover the United States and Canada are made up of, with one exception, two or more adjoining states/provinces or parts of states. The NMRA Regions elect officers and publish newsletters. Each Region holds one or more conventions each year, usually two-day affairs on weekends, making it easy for members to attend.



Regions And Divisions
Region Conventions

GET STARTED
WITH MODEL RAILROADING

JOIN NOW
BECOME AN NMRA MEMBER

DONATE TODAY
EVERY GIFT HELPS

Home In The News Membership Education Standards Regions **Conventions** Fundraising Calendar Contact

Conventions

Why Attend a National Convention?

The National Model Railroad Association each year sponsors a national convention in order to provide a place for the membership to meet to continue their association with the hobby in a common forum. [More on attending the National Convention...](#)

Click here to view a list of the [conventions from 1935 - Present](#)

This Year's Convention



2025 NMRA National Convention, Novi, MI
2025
[2025 NMRA National Convention](#)

Future Conventions

Note: Future Conventions dates are subject to change. Please refer to the specific convention's website for information.

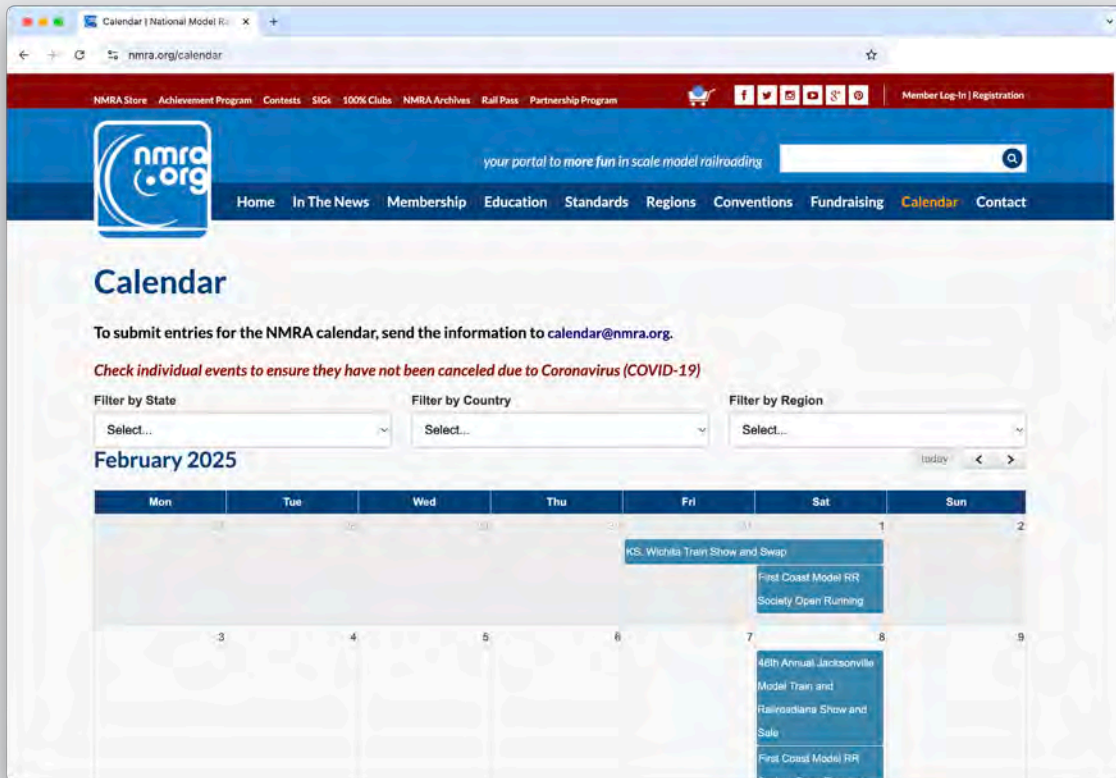
This Year's Convention



2025 NMRA National Convention, Novi, MI
2025
2025 NMRA National Convention

National Conventions
National Train Show
Region Conventions

GET STARTED
WITH MODEL RAILROADING



Calendar (National Model Rail) x

nmra.org/calendar

NMRA Store Achievement Program Contests SIGS 100% Clubs NMRA Archives Rail Pass Partnership Program Member Log-In | Registration

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Calendar

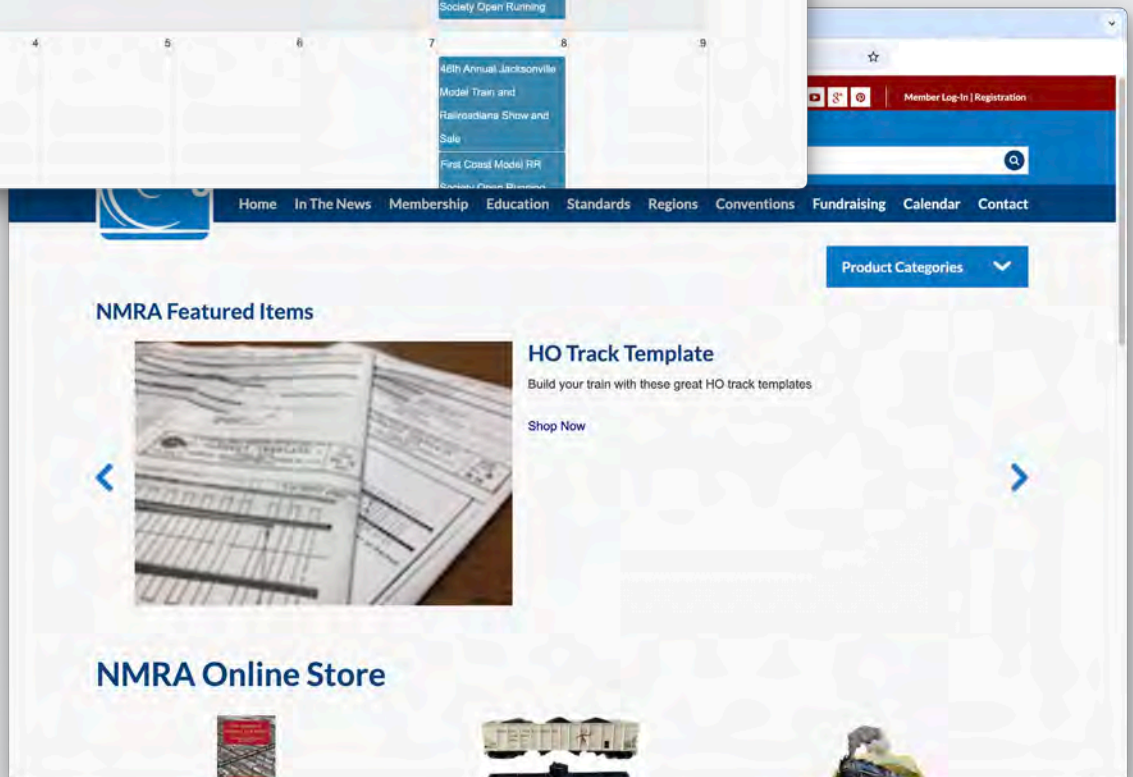
To submit entries for the NMRA calendar, send the information to calendar@nmra.org.

Check individual events to ensure they have not been canceled due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Filter by State: Select... Filter by Country: Select... Filter by Region: Select...

February 2025

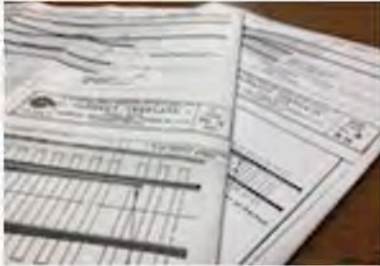
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1 KCS Wichita Train Show and Swap	2 First Coast Model RR Society Open Running	
3	4	5	6	7 48th Annual Jacksonville Model Train and Railroadiana Show and Sale	8 First Coast Model RR Society Open Running	9



Home In The News Membership Education Standards Regions Conventions Fundraising **Calendar** Contact

Product Categories

NMRA Featured Items



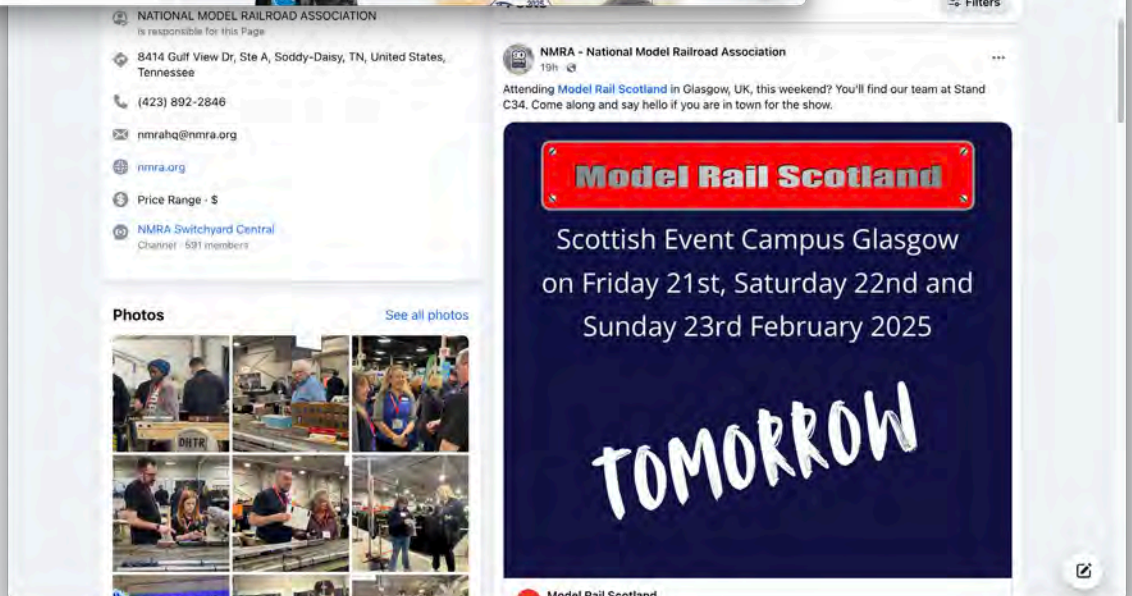
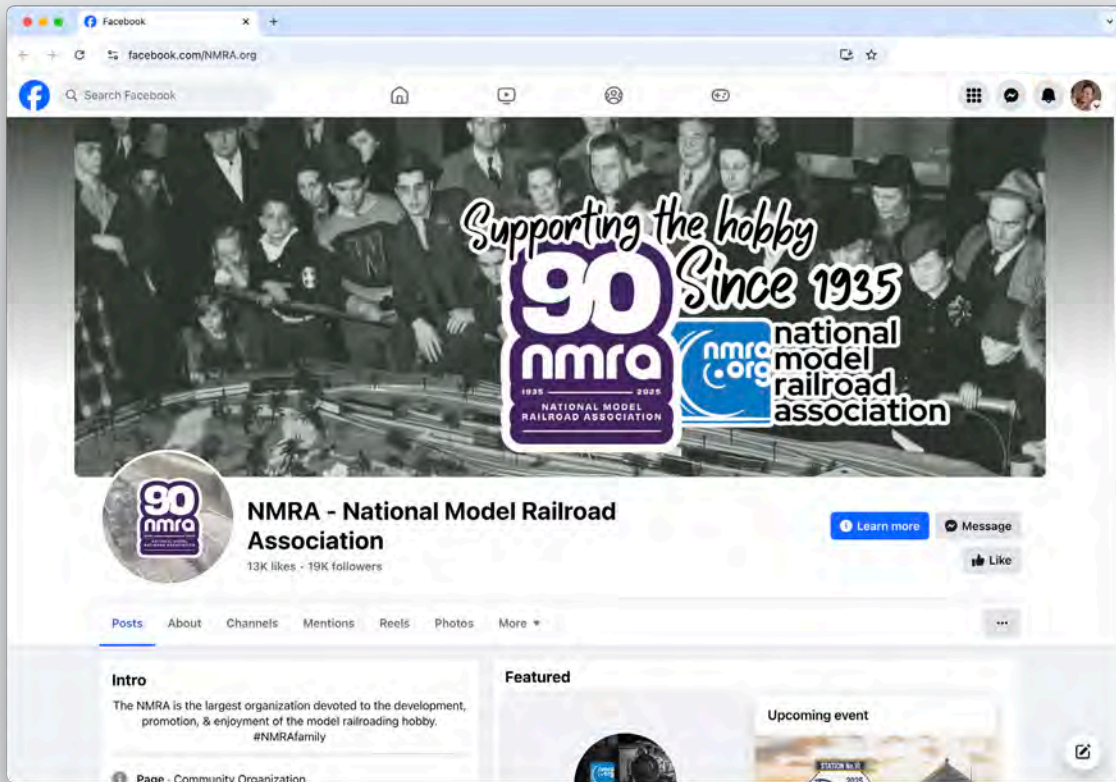
HO Track Template

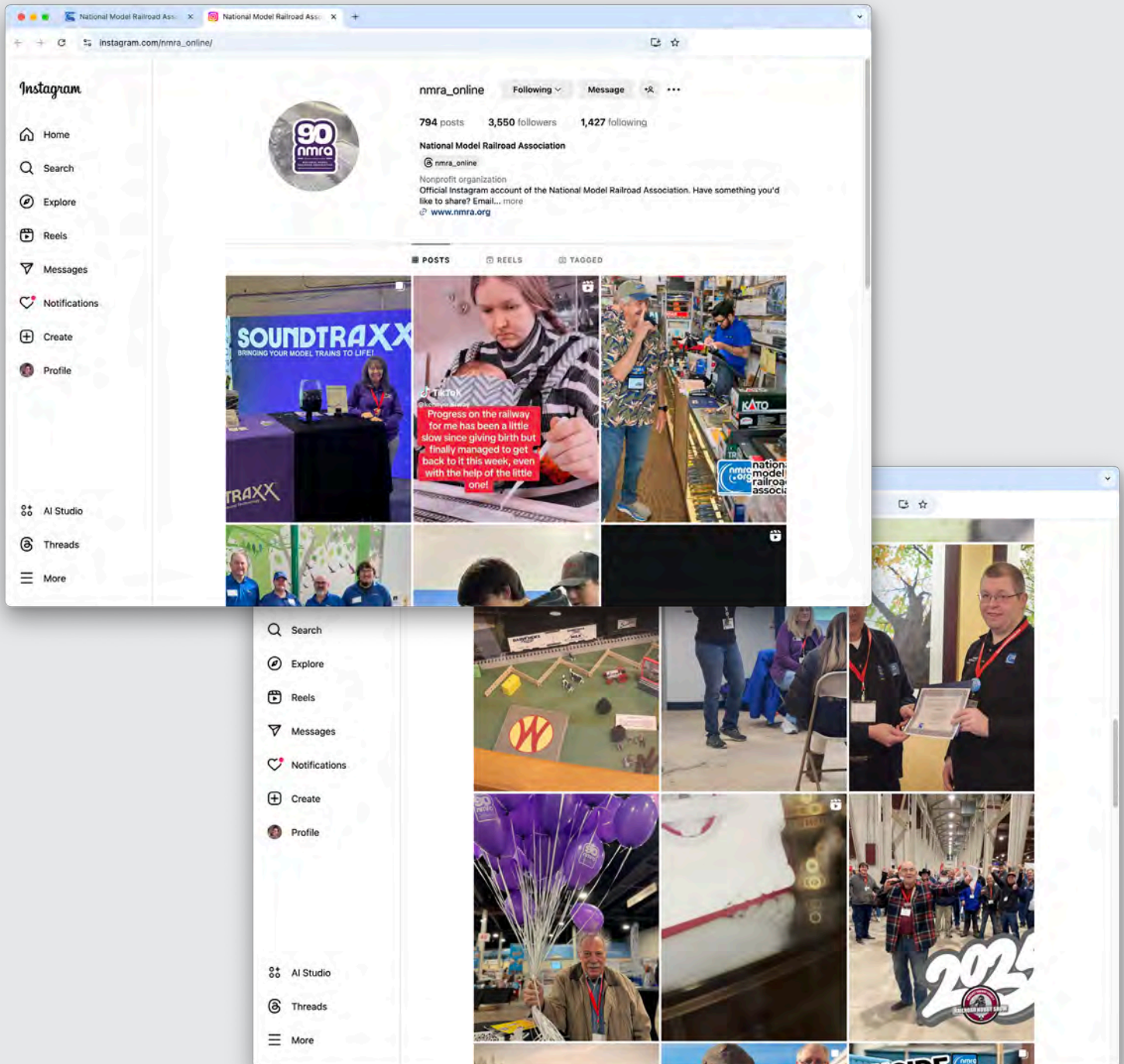
Build your train with these great HO track templates

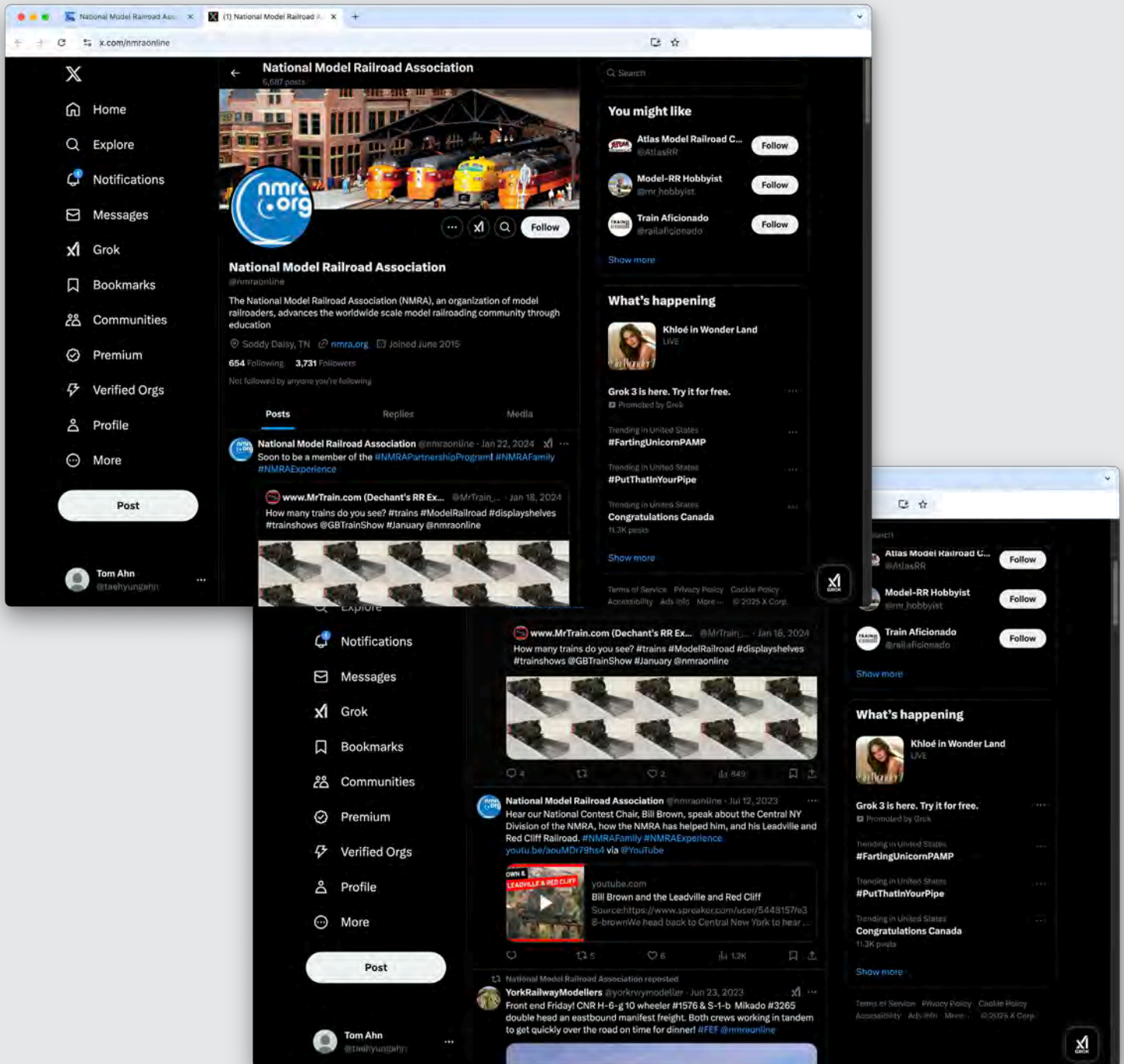
[Shop Now](#)

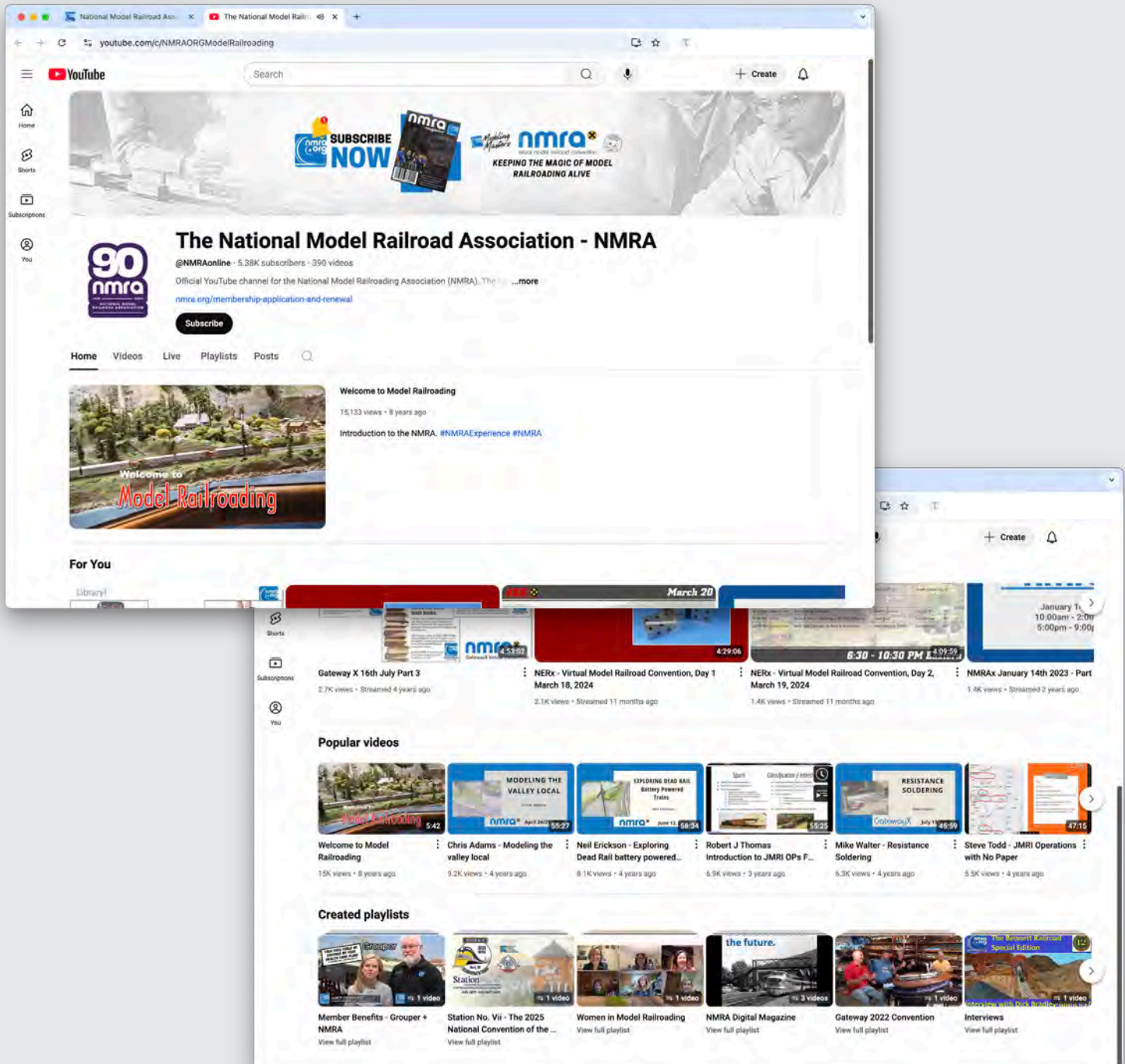
NMRA Online Store

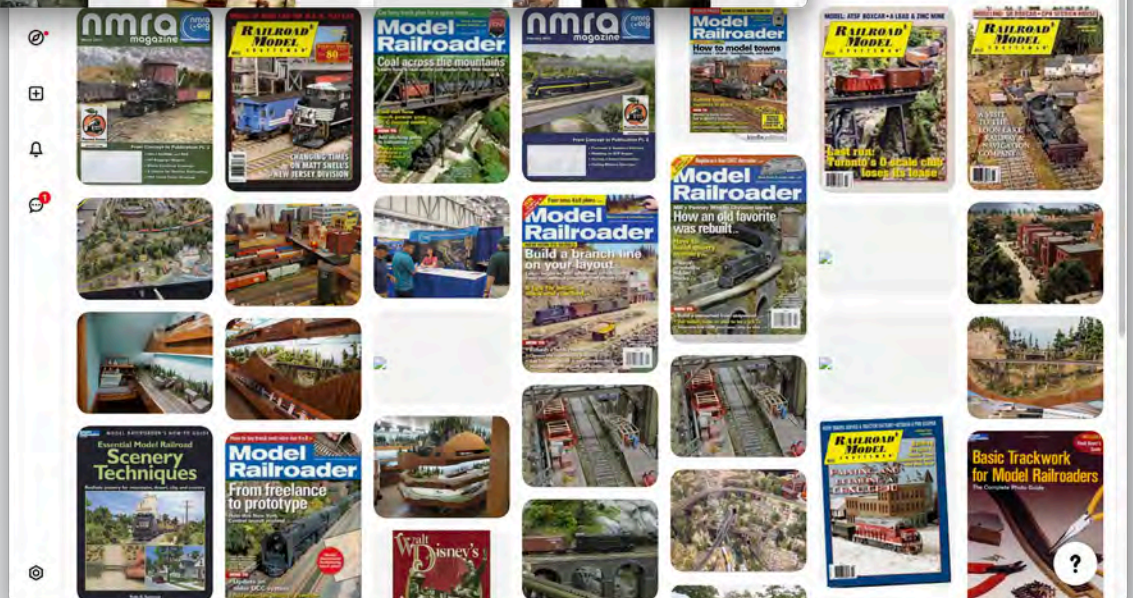
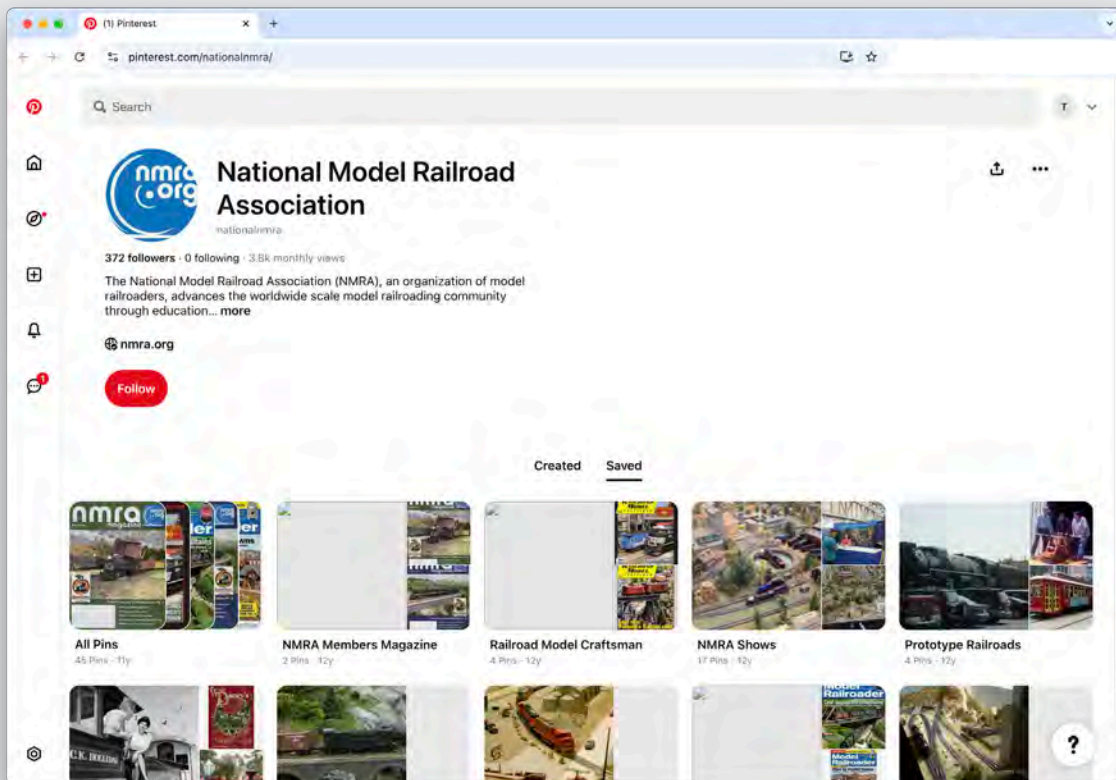












Brand Context

NMRA
About

The National Model Railroad Association, Inc. advances the global scale model railroading community through education, advocacy, standards, and social interaction.

The National Model Railroad Association, a 501(c)(3) not for profit educational organization, was founded at the first National Convention over Labor Day Weekend, 1935. The initial goal was to develop standards for scale model railroad equipment to facilitate interchangeability and operation of equipment between modelers, clubs and others.

Today, the NMRA is a world wide organization, with over 16,000 active members, associates, families and clubs dedicated to the hobby of scale model railroading in all it's facets, supporting a hobby of many diverse interests that all relate to the greater world of trains and railroads.

NMRA
Mission & Vision

Mission Statement

The National Model Railroad Association, Inc.
advances the world-wide scale model railroading
community through education and standards as
well as advocacy and fellowship.

NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework

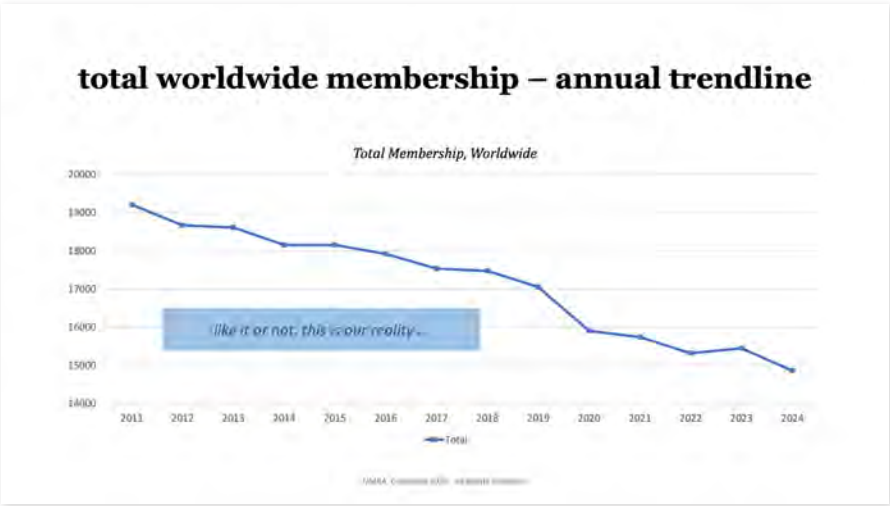
Vision (2030-2035) Strategic Framework



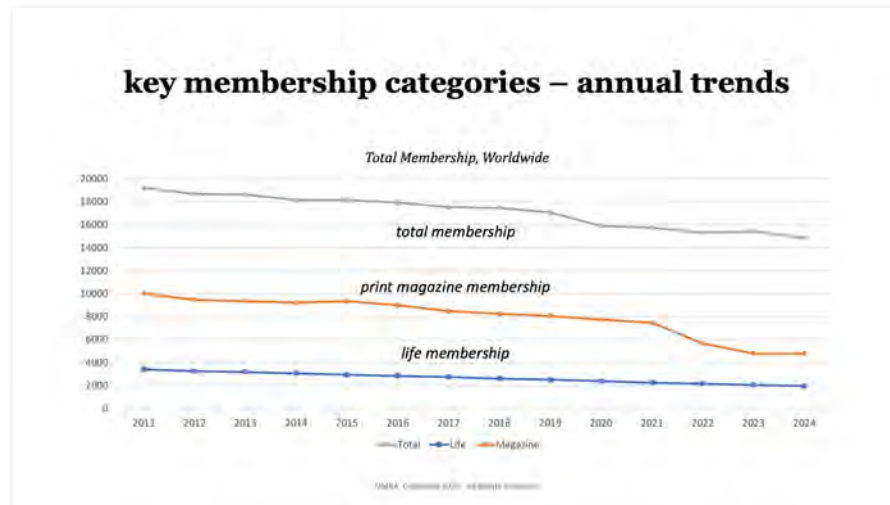
national model railroad association
Draft - August 2024
Update: January-February 2025

Current Reality

A quick look at where we are today – and why ...



NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)



Bottom line: what we do and what we don't, how well we do it, who we do it for, who we are and who we aren't, how we're seen, what others believe about us, changes in the hobby, changes in generations, perceptions of value, perceptions of the marketplace ...

all of this (taken together) - has resulted in the long, steady, and unbroken decline in the membership we see ...

So,

If we don't change – and create something new, different, bigger, bolder, more valuable, and more quickly – how can we realistically expect a future any different from this established trendline?

if we could start all over – what parts would you keep just as they are today?

NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)

Mission

A mission is a purpose, reason for being, answer to the question of 'why?'

we do have a defined mission in the nmra today.

mission

*The National Model
Railroad Association,
Inc. advances the world-
wide scale model
railroading community
through education and
standards as well as
advocacy and fellowship.*

NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)

our current mission is ‘functionally’ accurate –
it focuses on the main points of our why:
education, standards, advocacy, and fellowship.

but is it compelling?

shouldn’t we look still deeper, to find a more
important, compelling, inspirational, even
profound *noble purpose* -behind our why?

our real why.

NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)

For instance ...

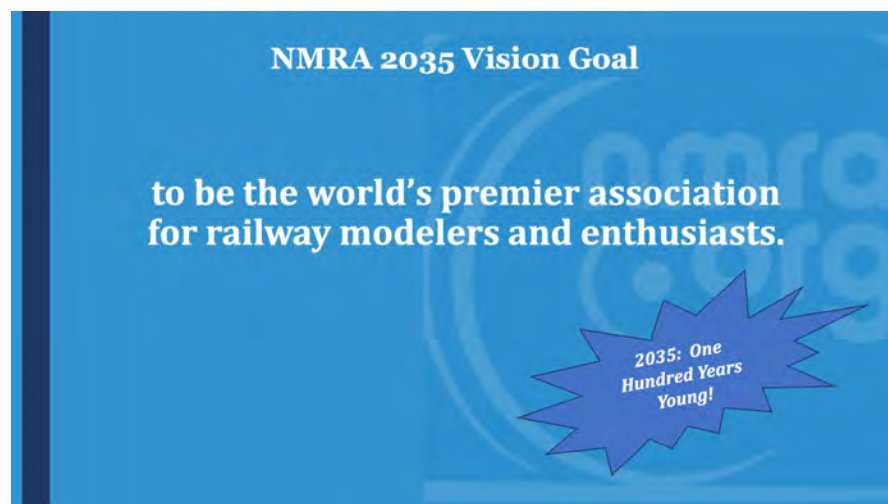
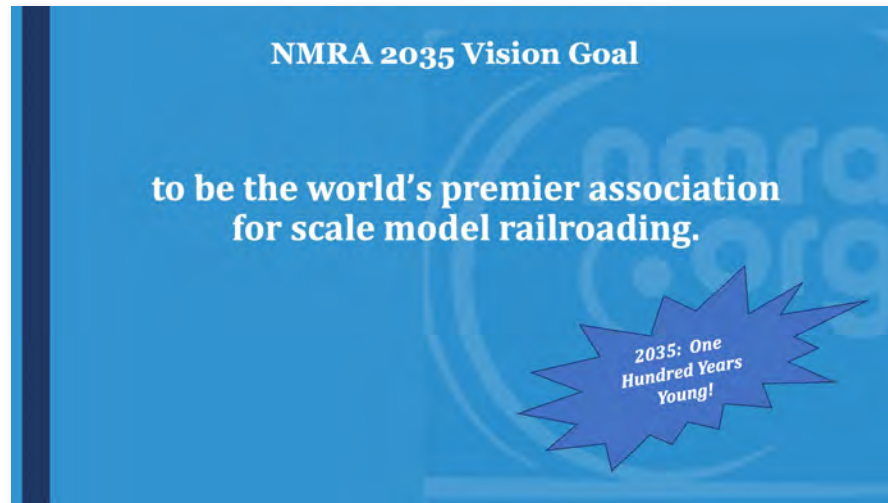
a shared love for trains, and shared love for one another – to build a better world.

Vision

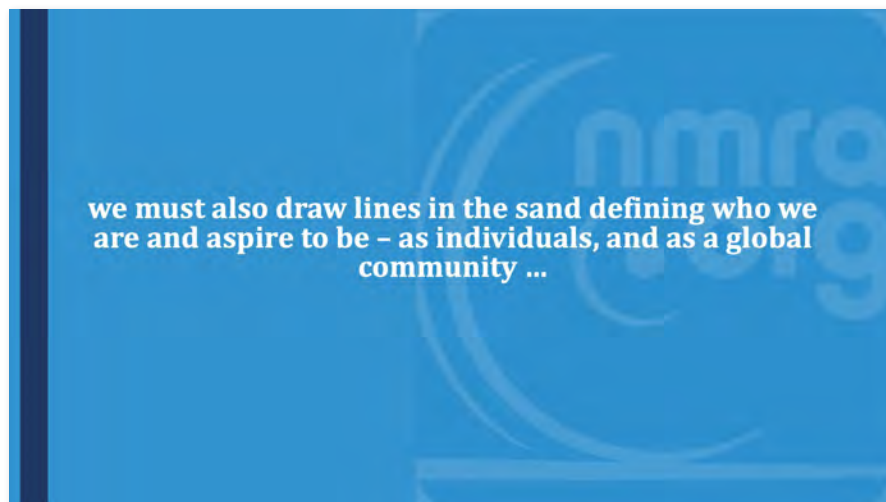
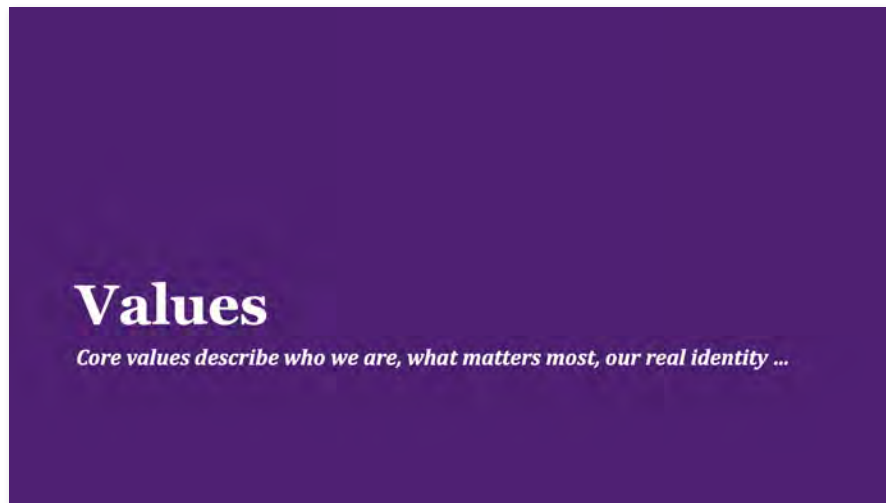
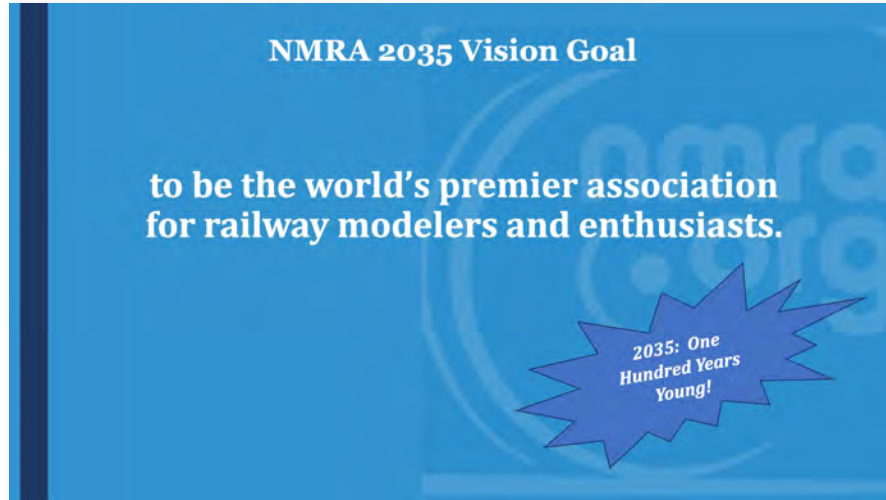
A vision is the big objective, big goal, answer to the question of 'where?' where we are headed, what we want to be ...

our big, scary, 'don't-know-how-to-do-this-yet' dream is this:

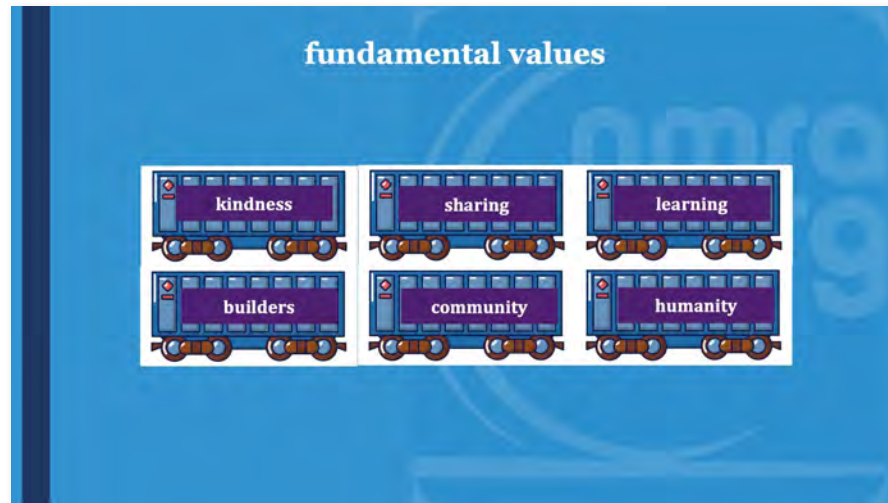
NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)



NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)



NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)

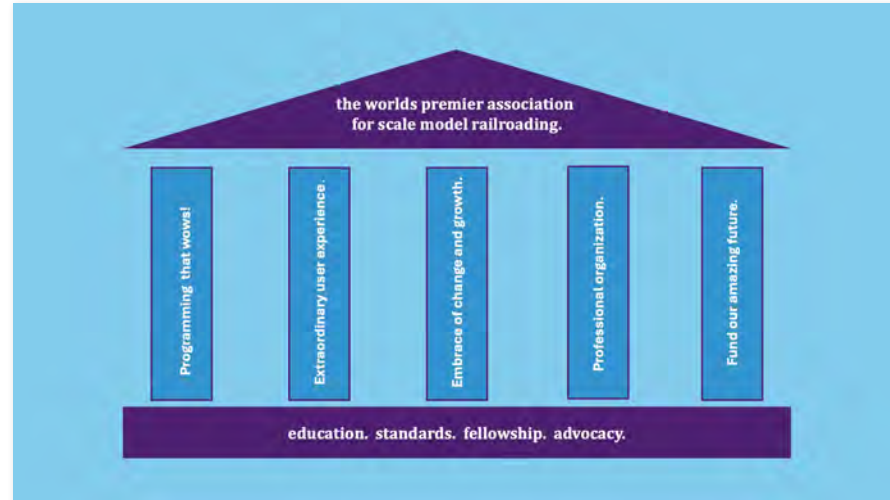


Strategy

Strategy is an answer to the questions of 'how?' – and at the enterprise level describes the focus and thrust of the organization in pursuit of its vision.

**we'll build our vision with five, key strategic
concepts (pillars) ...**

NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)



Strategic Initiatives

Initiatives are the projects, decisions, and actions we take to achieve our strategy - and ultimately to capture our vision.

NMRA 2030 (2035) *Twelve Ideas for Strategies and Actions*

1. Create a comprehensive, integrated education system for learning and experiencing the hobby – (AP, MWTM, NMRAx, NMRA University)
2. Redesign and update the annual NMRA convention experience (ModelRailCon!), elevate the focus of annual regional conventions; create new event experiences;
3. Bring together a sponsored train show and NTS strategy with an annual NTS, CTS, and regionally 'sponsored' events (Springfield, Rocky Mountain, Canada?);
4. Add new publications beyond the members magazine – focus these on the educational mission, and NMRA angle;
5. Accelerate our influence and leadership with hobby standards/interoperability – lead faster with technology;
6. Re-engineer the relationship with regions and division, create a stronger and more consistent identity and experience across the association – provide training and mentoring for new and experienced leaders;

NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)

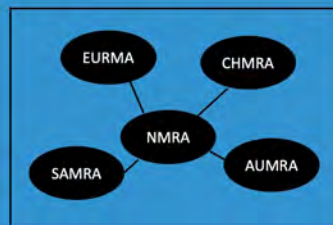
NMRA 2030 (2035) *Twelve Ideas for Strategies and Actions*

7. *Create an all-new approach and programs for attracting families and young adults in hobby education and experience – revamp the Rail Pass into a killer offer;*
8. *Create a worldclass on-boarding experience – with multiple touchpoints and 'concierge' level service;*
9. *Build an endowment to offset 30-50% of the annual operating budget;*
10. *Study our organization structure and team options – hire and build a paid, professional management team (CEO-ED, Marketing, IT, etc.);*
11. *Explore and develop plans to truly become a more global organization by 2035 – with new focus on model railroading of international (non-North American) prototypes;*
12. *Develop a stronger, more explicit partner relationship with manufacturers and other hobby influencers – learn to reach non-members at a much more meaningful level;*
13. *(Bonus!) Create a marketing machine so all model railroaders really, really know us.*

Organization Structure

We organize ourselves to support success with our strategy (form follow's function).

how do we organize internationally?



GARMA

The Global Alliance of Railway Modeling Associations

[Analogy: Star Alliance of airlines, global alliance of national speakers' associations]

NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)



Next Steps

A few recommended next steps we plan to take together.

NMRA 2030 (2035) Next Steps

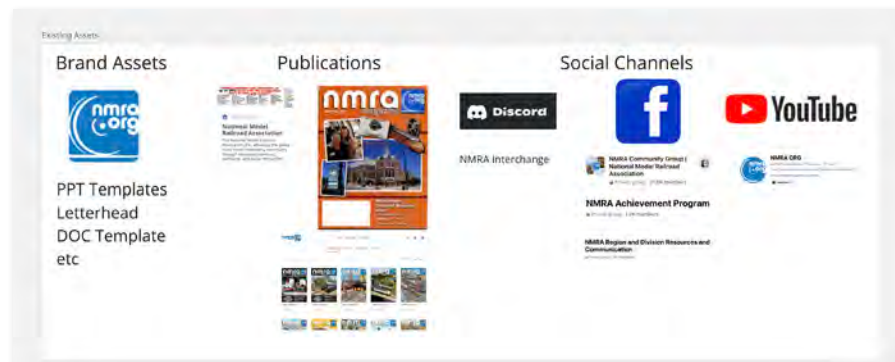
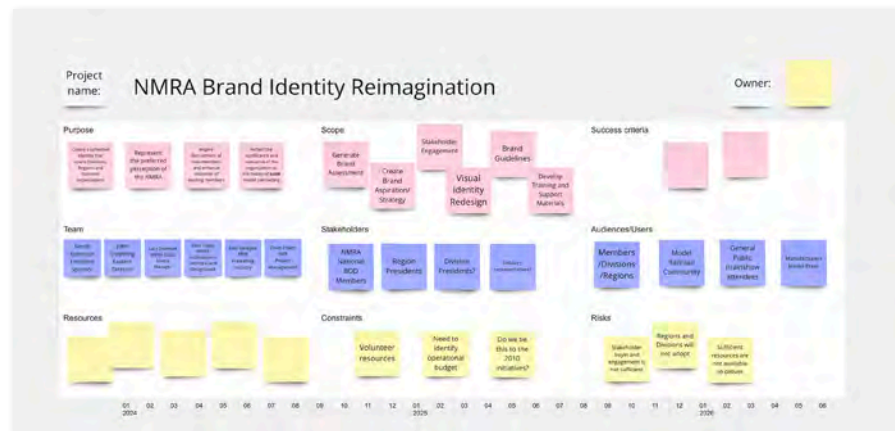
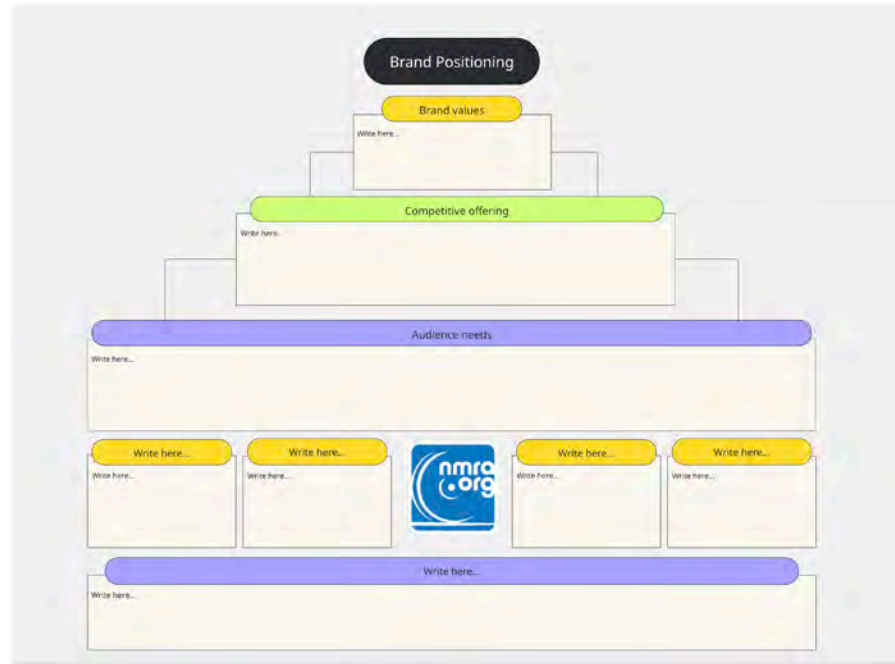
the world's premier association for scale model railroading.

- ☐ Create a Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) to plan and oversee the work ahead – with a maximum of five principals;
- ☐ Create separate planning committees for 1) programming, 2) operations, and 3) fundraising and endowment – each with a responsible chair;
- ☐ Share presentation and vision ideas with department heads and others for input, collaboration, commitment;
- ☐ Engage with a variety of key sources, influencers, focus groups, and scale connectors contacts to research, understand, and include the perspectives of hobbyists outside of the Association;
- ☐ Engage (at scale) with a large group of division superintendents – survey and focus groups for unput, ideas, and engagement;
- ☐ What else?

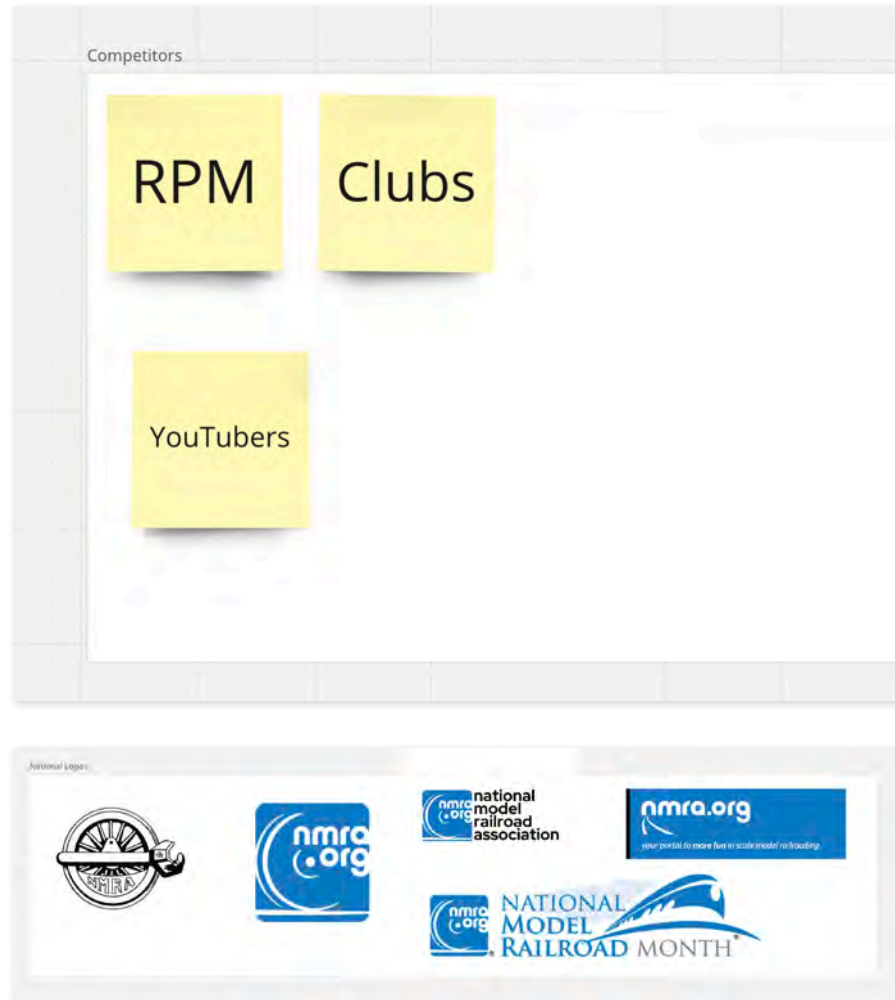
NMRA
Vision (2030–2035)
Strategic Framework
(Cont.)



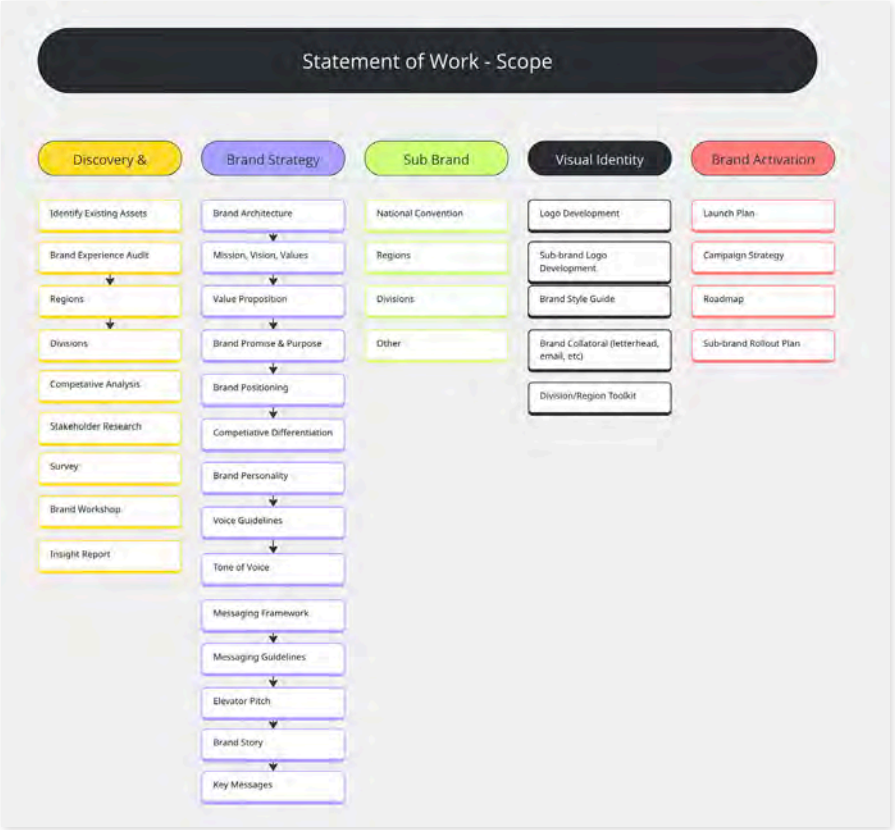
NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots



NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots
(Cont.)



NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots
(Cont.)



NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots
(Cont.)



NMRA 2030 Visioning Session Preparation Questions

1. Should the NMRA in any way reconsider its purpose (mission)?

Today the Association focus is limited to scale model railroading. Should we broaden this at all (railfanning, toy trains, computer games ...)? What about the focus on four specific paths: education, standards, advocacy, and fellowship? Are there other avenues to 'advance the worldwide scale model railroading community?'

Directors are comfortable with the current mission and focus of the Association. We note however, that the hobby continues to change and evolve, and that in some areas (for instance with various aspects of technology) the pace of the change is accelerating. Additionally, hobby interests that are related, adjacent, or ancillary to scale model railroad are also quite popular – like railfanning, computer simulation, and model or railroadiana collection.

2. How important do you believe it is for us to define, adopt, and develop a more explicit 'culture' in the Association?

This might include a definition of values, principles, member conduct and expectations, etc. Is this important? How much effort should we put into this?

3. Looking out to 2030, what membership size should we target and pursue (important context for other decisions)?

- a) *Reverse the slide, hold on to what we have, but with very modest growth? (18,000) (very little annual growth)*
- b) *Build momentum from the turnaround, make progress, change the story? (20,000) (5% annual growth)*
- c) *Create a strong foundation, accelerate success, double the membership? (30,000) (10% annual growth)*
- d) *We're thinking too small – why not really rock this thing, and move toward 10X? (50,000) (15-20% annual growth)*

NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots
(Cont.)

NER STYLE GUIDE

February 20, 2019

Purpose

Visual identity plays a big role in building awareness for any brand. The minute you see a "swoosh" logo, you know it means "Nike." Because you've seen it in all of their communications, you've come to understand what Nike is and what they stand for. In our case, the brand we're selling is the Northeastern Region (NER). So all of our graphics -- logos, typography, photos and all other visual elements -- need to be consistent to help build our brand awareness. That includes everything from documents to web pages to shirts. Brand consistency helps build awareness, so that the moment a person sees our brand graphics, they'll instantly remember who we are and what we're about.

Developing brand awareness begins with a style guide. A style guide provides editors, web developers, printers, graphic designers and others a unified approach to how the brand is presented to the consumer. This style guide defines the region's name, colors, font, and usage for the NER. Consistent usage of this style guide will lead to brand awareness by the consumer.

Northeastern Region

1. The name of the region is "Northeastern", not "Northeast".
2. Northeastern is one word. It should **never** be broken into two words, "North" and "Eastern".
3. If Northeastern appears in mixed case, the only letter that should be in upper case is the first "N".
4. The "E" should **only** be in upper case when the rest of the letters in "NORTHEASTERN" are in upper case.
5. When "Northeastern" is used, it must always be succeeded with "Region", as in "Northeastern Region".
6. To establish the Northeastern Region's connection to the NMRA, the first usage of Northeastern Region should be preceded with "National Model Railroad Association." Afterwards, it is optional to precede "Northeastern Region" with "National Model Railroad Association" or "NMRA", as in "NMRA Northeastern Region". The exception is with graphics, such as mastheads for brochures, banners, and web pages. In these cases, use "NMRA Northeastern Region".
7. The acronym for the Northeastern Region is "NER", in uppercase only. The acronym should not be used in combination with "Northeastern Region".

Logo

The logo uses the rail and the outer edge of the wheel and flange from the NMRA National's logo. However, these components were flipped from left to right for use in the new NER logo. The font used is City, in bold and italics. With the wheel components in this position and the font in italics, it projects the image of the NER as forward moving. The axle and hub from NMRA National's logo were not used. Instead, all that is needed is the rail to reinforce that it is a railroad wheel.

There are conditions on how the logo can be used:

- No other graphic element should touch the logo.
- No graphic element or other logo can over-print the logo.
- The logo can overlay a photo, provided the logo can be seen clearly.

Page | 1

Positioning the NMRA for Our Next 75 Years

You're reading an historic issue of the National Model Railroad Association's periodical. The August 2010 edition inaugurates a new name, *NMRA MAGAZINE*, which will support our reinvigorated efforts to promote our NMRA brand throughout the hobby of scale model railroading. The new name makes it crystal clear what and who this publication represents, and that its focus is our organization's and our members' activities and accomplishments.

A 21st century organization

Since the 17-member Board of Trustees was replaced by a nine-member Board of Directors in 2005, the leadership team has had numerous and often intense discussions concerning how to make the NMRA more useful and relevant to the needs of today's model railroading community. That ongoing conversation has made it clear that younger modelers are universally accustomed to sending and receiving information almost instantly via the Internet, World Wide Web, and even texting and Twitter. It's also clear that the most promising demographic group for recruitment into the hobby of scale model railroading and as NMRA members are Baby Boomers, and they, too, are rapidly becoming accustomed to instant online communications.

The NMRA must respond to these trends by showing Boomers and younger modelers alike that there's a place for the NMRA in today's hobby, and a place for today's hobbyist in the NMRA. Now we need to carry that message out to members and non-members alike with both words and accomplishments.

As one means to that end, the BOD recently created the Diamond Club to fund enhancements to our website, nmra.org, so that it is capable of supporting our immediate needs as we move forward into our next 75 years. For example, donations to this fund will provide funding to scan our vast photographic collection now stored at our Headquarters in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Having our photo archives available online to members and researchers means that it will no longer be necessary to travel to Chattanooga to review the entire collection; members around the world can instantly gain access to copies of those images.

We also recognized the need to be able to deliver news about NMRA activities and accomplishments in a much more timely manner, and to have existing, updated, and new Data Sheets available online to members. Moreover, through nmra.org we can share extra images from articles and "NMRA in action" reports that space did not allow us to include in the *NMRA MAGAZINE*.

Going forward, we also plan to share short video clips of members' layouts and modeling projects and virtual tours over layouts still in the planning stages. We are also introducing an "Ask the Masters" section of our website so that members can ask for and receive help from Master Model Railroaders without waiting through the multi-month cycle of a printed publication.

In short, your leadership team is responding enthusiastically to the need for ever-increasing amounts of content to be delivered in a timely, and less expensive, manner via nmra.org. Fortunately, this is occurring as more and more of our senior members are recognizing the benefits of online access, either via personal computers at home or in local libraries or senior centers.

That said, the era of the printed publication and photographic image is not over by a long shot. The NMRA plans to continue to publish a high-quality print magazine for its members. But as that is continuing, we are also working to ensure that the "look and feel" of both our print and our Web deliverables are as identical as we can manage. Both media should have a strong family resemblance.

An overview of branding

In a small organization such as ours, we need for everything we do to convey the same message and image to members, to the hobby of scale model railroading, and to the industry that supports it. Even huge organizations have recognized this need. Consider, for example, the American Association of Retired Persons, which formerly published a monthly magazine called *Modern Maturity*. They recognized that their true brand was AARP, and that to reinforce that brand they should rename their periodical *AARP The Magazine*. The "formal" name of the organization no longer appears anywhere within the pages of their publication, which

is billed as the world's largest circulation magazine. They're AARP. Period.

Despite our formal name, we're proud to be not just a national but a truly international organization. To that end, increased focus on our "short" name — NMRA — is beneficial. Everything we produce from magazines to apparel to conventions should reflect that brand. As you noticed when you picked up this issue of what formerly was called *SCALE RAILS* — a popular name but one that did not reinforce our brand — we have followed the lead of the AARP and other organizations by renaming our periodical *NMRA MAGAZINE*.

The new name also points to the magazine's primary mission, which is to keep NMRA members up to date on our activities and accomplishments. We think of this as coming under the umbrella of "The NMRA in Action!" *NMRA MAGAZINE* is not a general-interest model railroad magazine; that's the province of the commercial magazines that have supported us over the decades. Among them are *Model Railroader*, *Railroad Model Craftsman*, *Narrow Gauge & Shortline Gazette*, and *Model Railroad News*. But the magazine will continue to publish outstanding articles about members' layouts and modeling projects as long as they reflect on the value of NMRA membership and member activities.

Going forward, there will be numerous other opportunities for us to use our brand, NMRA (and nmra.org), as the main identifier of our organization. For example, we will ask that National Convention hosts recognize the need to reinforce our brand, NMRA, in the names they select when bidding for a future convention. "NMRA 2099 Metropolis" conveys more information than "Metro 99" for example.

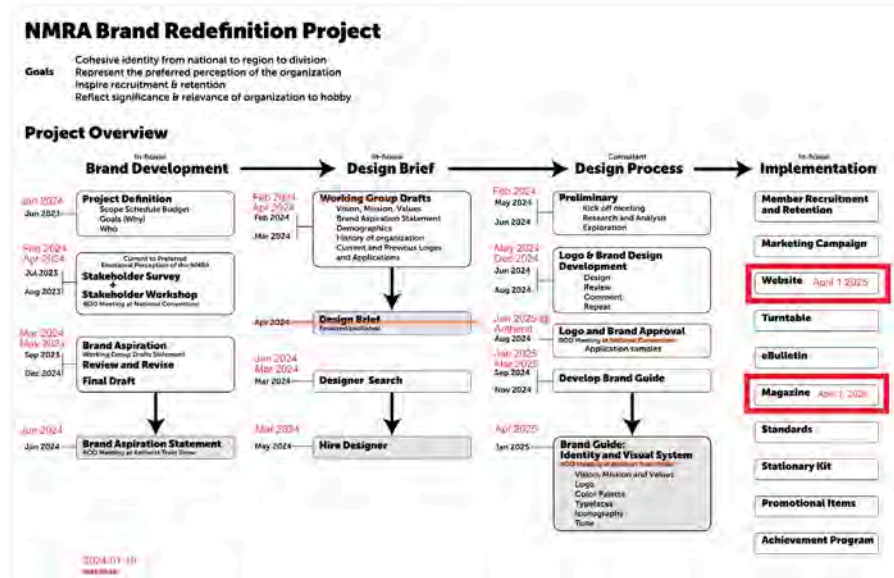
A logo reflecting our mission

Not long after the NMRA was founded in 1935, the NMRA's venerable logo — a coupler superimposed on a steam locomotive driver — was introduced. It has served us well, but it is no longer relevant to an increasing number of model railroaders and potential members who grew up in and model the diesel era. The Board recognized that no era-specific graphic design would improve this situation.

Moreover, the original logo does not evoke thoughts about our primary mission:

NMRA Magazine

NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots
(Cont.)



Placements

WebSites

NMRA.org
Regions
Divisions
SIGs
Conventions

Social

Facebook Page
Facebook Groups
Instagram
TikTok
YouTube

Signs

Vertical Banners
Display Wall
Horizontal Banners

Templates

PPT
Business Cards
Letterhead
Social Posts (see above)
Membership Form
Trifold Brochure

Stickers

Stickers
Buttons
Badges

Other

Apparel
• Shirts
• Hats
Decals for Freight Cars
Pizza Box
Modeling with the Masters (MWTM)

NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots
(Cont.)

DRAFT BRAND LANGUAGE
National Model Railroad Association
June 17, 2024

MISSION

(existing) **The National Model Railroad Association, Inc. advances the global scale model railroading community through education, advocacy, standards, and social interaction.**

BRAND PURPOSE

An organization's reason for being and the things it stands for aside from the usual business goals and objectives.

The National Model Railroad Association helps model railroaders fully enjoy their hobby by providing them with knowledge, skills, reliable products, and camaraderie.

BRAND PROMISE

A brand promise is a statement that businesses write to describe the value they deliver to customers.

The National Model Railroad Association makes it easy to connect with others who share your passion for scale model trains, giving you the opportunity to learn, share, and grow in the hobby.

VALUE PROPOSITION

A value proposition is a short statement that communicates why buyers should choose your products or services.

Joining the National Model Railroad Association helps you get the maximum enjoyment out of every hobby dollar by giving you access to the knowledge and experiences of the world's largest group of scale train modelers.

BRAND MESSAGING

Brand messaging refers to the different words and phrases that communicate the value proposition of your brand to your target audience.

- **Fun people making the hobby even more fun.**
- **Learn from the best, share with the rest.**
- **The NMRA has what you're missing in the hobby.**
- **Your quickest route to learning how to do model railroading your way.**
- **The NMRA: the reason your model trains work together.**
- **The NMRA: model railroading on a global scale.**

BRAND POSITIONING:

The National Model Railroad Association is an international nonprofit organization serving those who enjoy building replicas of real trains and railroads in miniature form. By connecting modelers locally, regionally, and globally the NMRA encourages knowledge sharing, skill building, standards for interoperable products, and the formation of lifelong friendships.

NMRA
Miro Board Screenshots
(Cont.)

CREATIVE BRIEF

Campaign Name	NMRA Brand Refresh and Visual Identity
Campaign Timeline	6/1/2024-1/25/2025

Project Overview:

Many model railroaders are unaware of the National Model Railroad Association, Inc. (NMRA) and the seminal role in “education, advocacy, standards, and social interaction” it has played over its 90 years of existence.

Brand confusion and lack of a consistent virtual identity may be a barrier. The NMRA has 17 regions, dozens of divisions, and conventions each year, all of which publicize their own logos and branding schemes. The current NMRA national logo, adopted in 2010, has not “taken hold.”

A refreshed brand and visual identity could help to unify and simplify NMRA marketing, attract and retain more members, and assist the NMRA in regaining its leadership role.

Project Deliverables & Scope:*Deliverables:*

- National brand strategy document, articulating key language (brand positioning, brand promise, key messages, brand architecture)
- Refreshed (not all-new) NMRA national logo
- Visual identity, including
 - a. Logo templates for regions, divisions, special interest groups, and conventions
 - b. Proper and improper use of logo and branding elements
 - c. Associated fonts, colors, and imagery
- Templates for business cards, letterhead, presentation (MS PPT), social post, web page, signage, and newsletters
- National brand standards guidebook
- Launch campaign strategy

Considerations:

- The NMRA is an all-volunteer organization and time and resources of decisionmakers is limited
- Strong voices exist within volunteer leadership

Target Audience:

Primary audience: Scale model railroaders who are not NMRA members but should be. These are individuals who are typically U.S. males 35-60 who have an affinity for trains and who

Industry Context

History of Model Railroading

From Napoleon to Now: The Evolution of Model Trains
midwestmodelrr.com, 2023

Model trains are some of the most interesting products on the market. Both the toy versions for children and the more complex versions for adults and collectors are popular today. However, the invention and evolution of model trains are as interesting as the trains themselves. To help you get a better appreciation for these amazing products, here's an in-depth look at the history of model trains.

1830s: Matthias Baldwin

While it's difficult to say what counts as the first model train, you can trace back to Matthias Baldwin as the person who made the first passenger train model. Soon, multiple toymakers started their own versions of the model train, and the product started its growth as one of the most beloved toys and collectible items.

1859: Napoleon

Perhaps the most famous model railway is from 1859, which many people believe to be the first. Napoleon, the famous emperor and leader, ordered a model train for his child. This model was of the Chemin de fer du Prince Impérial. This railway ran on clockwork on a figure-eight pattern.

Early Manufacturing Process

These first model trains came about in a time before industrial production like we know today. This meant that people made these trains using a mold, pouring tin or brass to form the basic shape. Then, they would attach wooden parts and carve the mold to match the shape of a train. These early model trains don't match the accuracy of current train models, but they were great products for their time.

1891: Mass Production of Train Sets

With time, the popularity of model trains increased more and more as people wanted to collect these amazing new sets. However, it wasn't until 1891 that mass production was a possibility and there was a market for it. Märklin, a German manufacturer, was the first to corner this mass-production market, and the manufacturer still produces model trains to this day. In fact, it's one of the bigger brands in the world, remaining a big name in the model train industry.

1896: Electric Train Sets

Only a few years later, the first model trains running on electricity came to be. Carlisle & Finch came out with the electronic train set and was the first company to make them in the US. This was a game changer in the model train industry, as people had to scramble to catch up with these new trains that could power themselves with electricity. Even to this day, most moving models you find at the model train shop use electricity as their main power source.

1920s: Model Train Boom

When it comes to model trains, you need to look at the history of traditional trains as well. In the US, the time leading up to the 1920s was a golden age for trains. The nation needed a lot of passenger trains traveling from city to city, which made these trains very popular across the country. This increase in train-travel popularity meant that the model train industry also experienced a boom, as people gained more exposure to and admiration for trains.

1930s: O Scales

Until the 1960s, O gauge was the most popular scale for railroad models, starting in the 1930s from the German manufacturer Märklin. This large size was the most popular because it worked well for children, and the design was durable enough for playing. Recently, this model scale has become popular once again because the bigger size means more possible detail for modelers.

WWII Stops Manufacturing

Manufacturing always changes in times of national distress, and WWII was such a time. Most manufacturing facilities were no longer able to make the same recreational products, as the war consumed manufacturers' attention and production. Therefore, WWII saw an almost complete stop of model train production, as mass production like it was before the war was effectively impossible.

History of Model Railroading (cont.)

1950s: Trains Are the Top Toy

After the war, it took a bit for things to return to normal, but that didn't stop model trains from once again becoming a popular toy. Once consumer manufacturing returned in full force to the nation, people could easily get these trains like they could before the war. In fact, the war had a positive impact on production capability, and model train sets only got more popular. In the 1950s, train model sets were the most popular toy amongst boys.

1962: N Scale

Another German model train design, the N scale, came about in 1962 but only arrived in the US in 1967. These train sets use a 1:60 ratio with the trains they represent, which is much smaller than many of the other popular scale sizes at the time. This model size was and remains perfect for people with limited space or people who want a small railroad system.

1968: G Scale

Before the G scale, most people saw trains as an indoor toy or set to keep just on display. However, the G scale set uses materials that allow for outdoor use, such as brass and durable tracks that can withstand outdoor weather. This scale originated from yet another German company: the LGB.

1970s: Z Scale

When it comes to getting a train set, one of the biggest problems is the size of the pieces. It's hard to store things with limited space, which is why small models are always in high demand. With the evolution of technology, smaller and smaller scales are possible while still maintaining plenty of detail on the models. The Z scale is a model that's at the 1:220 ratio, which was the smallest scale on the market back in the early 1970s.

1980s: Digital Controls

The 1980s were the next huge jump in technology and the most recent evolution of model trains. The big advancement was digital controls, which means people could use remotes to control their trains' motions rather than relying on manual controls. This was a huge evolution for model trains since their invention back in the 19th century.

Understanding this history will help contextualize the evolution and popularity of model trains from Napoleon to now. Since their inception, trains have been extremely interesting to people, and model trains reflect that interest in an accessible way. That's why they're so popular and why so many people love to build and create with them.

History of Model Railroading

History of Model Trains
o-gauge.com, written by
Linda L. Coulter and first
published in Friends 'n
Neighbors in 1993

Model trains have been the Christmas delight of youngsters for many generations. From the most primitive replicas of the “iron horse” in the 1800s to the most sophisticated railroad sets of the today, trains have remained atop the Christmas lists of both the young and old.

Many boys and girls who were introduced to trains as young children have never lost their fascination with them, and still enjoy settling in to recapture childhood fantasies on a cold winter’s day at home. For some, trains conjure up images of mystery and adventure while other folks simply enjoy the engineering challenges of the railroad era.

Steam engine trains and locomotives were not invented until the 1800s, but the basic idea of trains dates back much further in time. The ancient Romans developed a paved railway system for beast-drawn wagons. Then later, in the coal mining regions of England, horse-drawn wagons were built on the same basic idea to carry coal from the mines to river loading sites. Both of these are the predecessors of the modern trains of today.

During the 1800s, our countryside was laced with railroad tracks, bridging vast territories and making it possible for America to grow and prosper as a large united nation. Towns sprang up along these railways, and people all across America had the easy opportunity to relocate and build new lives anywhere they chose. The railroad provided easy means of transportation for both goods and services and quickly became “the heartbeat of America.” Toymakers saw the potential market for model trains, as people everywhere were wanting a little piece of the action. Soon miniature replicas of these giant trains appeared on storekeepers shelves everywhere, especially during the Christmas Season.

The idea of collecting miniature railroads, however, did not start in America. German crafters in the 1830s made the very first miniature trains. These could be pushed along a track. They were made by pouring molten brass or tin into a mold, much like the popular tin soldiers were made. Hand-carved wooden fittings were fastened to the metal bases, creating a complete toy train. They were usually very fragile and contained no moving parts.

The French, who were the master tinsmiths, were responsible for making elaborately decorated toy trains with ornate designs, tall chimneys and spidery spoked wheels. They were gay and fanciful, but

did not run on rails. Instead, they were pushed along the floor. Paint does not stick well to tin, and consequently, these early French beauties are rarely preserved with their original decorations.

England was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, and toymakers there took model train making seriously. Sir Henry Wood is credited with building one of the first steam powered toys. The “Dribblers” and “Piddlers” were nicknamed because of the tell-tail trail of water left behind from the steam cylinders.

It’s interesting to note that European craftsmen who made musical instruments were the first to make toy trains. They soon began fitting their toy trains with clockwork mechanisms to eliminate the mess of the first steam powered versions. Highly complex brass models were made for the children of wealthy families by Newton & Co. of London. They were, however, neither realistic nor made to scale, and were primarily made to trigger the imagination of the collectors. These individually hand-crafted toy trains made in Europe were too expensive to be sold here in our nation. Toy manufactures in the U.S. had to mass produce train replicas economically to be competitive in our marketplace.

Mathias Baldwin, founder of the Baltimore Locomotive Works, made an early passenger train model in the 1830s. By the end of that decade, several other toymakers had produced their own versions. George Brown & Co., of Connecticut is credited with making the first known self-propelled American model train in 1856. It utilized clockworks.

American trains differed from European ones because they had to be durable enough to ship over vast areas of rugged wilderness and yet authentic enough to true collectibles. French trains were much too delicate to ship safely, and the German lead and wood trains along with the English “dribblers” were simply not sophisticated enough for the American market.

The American model was fashioned from heavy tin-plate. The locomotive (not the cars nor track) was made during the early 1800s. From 1860 to 1890, during “the golden age of American tin train making”, many famous train makers gained the American limelight. They were: Ives; Hull & Stafford; Althof Bergman & Co; Francis, Field & Francis; and James Fallows.

History of Model Railroading (cont.)

From 1890s to the early 1900s, American toy companies produced train replicas at such reasonable prices that most middleclass families were able to buy model trains for their children. As the demand grew, American people began to expect more realism and authenticity from toy manufacturers.

It wasn't long until the American public cried out for more than just a simple locomotive. They wanted to buy complete train systems with tracks, passenger cars, stations and wagons.

Meanwhile, a German toy maker, Theodore Marklin, one of the most successful in Europe, introduced the first sectional track and figure-eight layout. Marklin is also credited with producing Europe's first electrical train set.

During the Paris Exhibition of 1900, another German toymaker, Stefan Bing, and a British firm, W. J. Bassett-Lowke formed a partnership and vowed to produce more authentic train replicas in Europe. Bing sparked public interest for model train collectors by distributing an assembly guide book called "The Little Railway Engineer".

As the gay nineties gave way to the turn-of-the-century, several legendary toy trainmakers emerged in America. Ives, Lionel and American Flyer made some of the most well-loved trains in American history. The Ives company, established in 1868, was famous for its catchy slogan, "Ives toys make happy boys" and was best known for high quality trains and excellent replacement service.

Lionel, established in the early 1900s by Joshua Lionel Cohen, produced the most legendary trains of all. The company began by making small electric motors to power electric trains, but shortly after World War I, became the biggest name in model train making. One reason for such success was that Lionel trains were more realistic than all the others, with powerful motors and rugged construction. They became the American standard of excellence for judging toy train manufacturers. In addition, Lionel painted their trains in bright, exciting colors, which stimulated buyers and collectors of all ages.

American Flyer burst into the model train market with larger and cheaper trains during the 1920s. Their elaborately decorated passenger trains were a huge success. The aggressive Lionel, however, outshined again by offering the American public more impressive models. American Flyer succumbed to Lionel in 1967.

After World War II, model trains became more detailed and functional. These are highly prized by collectors who actually want to run their trains. Men and boys gather today to set up layouts so elaborate and realistic that viewers are enchanted by these trains in action. They gather together with their families and friends to rekindle the love of "the railroad days" and sweet childhood memories. Whether we collect trains or not, the words Lionel and American Flyer tug at our hearts as we remember days gone by. For many, "the love of it all" first began -- under the Christmas tree at home.

History of Model Railroading

Model Train History: From
Tinplates to Detailed
Collectibles
Model Railroader, 2024

Model trains have long captivated the imagination of hobbyists, collectors, and enthusiasts of all ages. From their origins as simple tinplate toys to today's intricate, highly-detailed machinery, model trains trace a fascinating evolution that mirrors advancements in technology and changes in cultural trends. Let's explore how this beloved hobby developed over the decades.

Tinplate Trains and Toy Railways (1890s-1910s)

Model trains first appeared in the late 19th century as simple tinplate toys, often crafted by hand. Companies like Märklin in Germany and Lionel in the United States were pioneers in this space.

Märklin, initially a producer of dollhouse accessories, shifted to manufacturing tinplate trains in the 1890s. Early models were made from stamped metal and powered by wind-up or clockwork mechanisms – all finely crafted and considered showcases of both engineering and artistry.

By the early 1900s, Lionel began producing electric trains, introducing a new level of realism and interactivity. Their first product, the Electric Express in 1901, was designed as a store display to draw customers' attention, but its popularity quickly grew.

Tinplate trains were often brightly colored, oversized, and durable – designs that captured the imaginations of both children and adults for many decades.

The Golden Age (1920s–1950s)

The interwar period and post-World War II era marked the golden age of model trains. During the 1920s and 1930s, model trains became more detailed and realistic, catering to both children and adult collectors.

Lionel dominated the American market with its O gauge trains, while European manufacturers like Hornby and Märklin refined their designs to create more realistic models.

During this time, accessories such as buildings, stations, and landscapes became commercially successful, featuring in now iconic media and advertising of the era. Hobbyists began to build entire miniature worlds, and the community started to form clubs and even competitions to showcase their artistry.

This era also saw the rise of smaller scales, such as HO scale (1:87), which originated in Germany in the 1920s. HO scale quickly gained popularity due to its balance between size and detail, enabling hobbyists to create more expansive layouts in less space.

The 1950s brought a boom in the popularity of model trains, fueled by post-war economic prosperity and the advent of mass media. Lionel's advertising campaigns on television turned their trains into a must-have holiday gift for children, something many of us still associate with this age of Americana today.

The Shift to Scale Modeling (1960s–1980s)

By the 1960s, model trains began shifting from toys to collectibles and scale models for serious hobbyists. Enthusiasts focused on replicating real-world railroads in exquisite detail. This era saw the rise of N scale (1:160), which became popular for hobbyists with limited space, as well as innovations like realistic weathering techniques and advanced track layouts.

Electric technology improved dramatically during this period. Manufacturers introduced more reliable motors and power systems, while features like lights, sound effects, and smoke generators made trains increasingly lifelike.

The 1980s also brought digital control systems into the hobby. Digital Command Control (DCC), introduced in the late 1980s, allowed hobbyists to control multiple trains independently on the same track. This innovation revolutionized the way model railroads operated, providing unprecedented realism and flexibility.

Precision and Detail (1990s–Today)

The modern era of model trains is defined by unparalleled precision and realism. Today, manufacturers like Broadway Limited Imports, Atlas Model RR Co., Walther's Protos, Rapido, Bowser, and Athearn produce models with incredibly fine details, from hand-painted lettering to intricate undercarriages. Digital sound decoders can mimic the exact sounds of specific locomotive engines, while LED lighting creates realistic effects.

In addition to realism, customization has become a hallmark of the hobby.

History of Model Railroading (cont.)

Enthusiasts use 3-D printing, laser cutting, and other advanced technologies to create bespoke pieces for their layouts.

Model railroading has also embraced technology in other ways, with smartphone apps and computer programs enabling advanced control and layout design.

Meanwhile, collectors continue to seek out vintage models from Lionel, Märklin, and other classic brands. Rare pieces from the early 20th century can fetch thousands of dollars at auctions, making model train collecting both a passion and an investment for many enthusiasts.

The Enduring Appeal of Model Trains

What makes model trains so enduring? For some, it's the nostalgia of Christmas gifts, and for others, it's the challenge of designing and constructing intricate layouts that bring a miniature world to life. For many, it's the appreciation of craftsmanship, whether in a vintage tinplate model or a modern-scale replica.

History of Model Railroading

The Fascination of Model Trains: A Journey through History
Harris Benjamin,
for Medium.com, 2023

Model trains have captivated both young and old for generations. The miniature locomotives, meticulously crafted tracks, and detailed landscapes create a world of wonder that transports enthusiasts to a different time and place. But the fascination with model trains goes beyond their aesthetic appeal. It is a hobby that offers a unique blend of creativity, problem-solving, and historical exploration. In this article, we will take a journey through the history of model trains and explore the enduring appeal they hold for hobbyists.

The Origins of Model Trains

The origins of model trains can be traced back to the early 19th century when the first toy trains were produced. These early models were made of metal and propelled by clockwork mechanisms. Their primary purpose was entertainment for children, and they were often seen as mere playthings rather than objects of serious interest.

However, as the Industrial Revolution swept across Europe and the United States, the fascination with trains grew. Railways became a symbol of progress and modernity, connecting distant places and revolutionizing transportation. Model trains began to reflect this cultural significance and became more sophisticated in their design and engineering.

The Golden Age of Model Trains

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked the golden age of model trains. During this time, manufacturers such as Lionel and Märklin produced exquisite models that replicated the real-life locomotives and rolling stock in intricate detail. These models were often made of tinplate and boasted impressive features such as working lights, smoke units, and even sound effects.

Model train enthusiasts would spend countless hours meticulously building and maintaining their layouts. The tracks would wind through miniature towns, countryside, and industrial areas, complete with tiny houses, trees, and people. The attention to detail was astonishing, and many hobbyists found solace and relaxation in the meticulous craftsmanship required.

Model Trains as Historical Artifacts

Model trains serve as more than just toys or hobbies; they are also historical artifacts that provide a unique window into the past. The detailed replicas of locomotives and rolling stock allow enthusiasts to explore the development of railways over time. From the steam-powered locomotives of the 19th century to the sleek diesel and electric trains of the modern era, model trains offer a tangible connection to the history of transportation.

Furthermore, the landscapes and settings created around model train layouts often reflect specific time periods, such as the Wild West era or the hustle and bustle of a busy city during the Roaring Twenties. Hobbyists can delve into the historical research required to create accurate and authentic scenes, immersing themselves in different periods of history.

Problem-Solving and Concentration

Model train enthusiasts often compare their hobby to solving jigsaw puzzles. Like puzzles, building and maintaining a model train layout require problem-solving skills and attention to detail. The intricate tracks need to be laid out correctly, ensuring smooth operation and realistic movement of the trains. Wiring and electrical connections must be carefully planned to avoid shorts and ensure proper functioning of lights, sound effects, and other features.

The concentration required to build and operate model trains is a significant part of the hobby's appeal. Hobbyists can lose themselves in the process, focusing on the intricate details and the meditative rhythm of laying tracks and arranging scenery. Assembling and painting miniature buildings, landscaping with realistic foliage, and adding small details like signs and streetlights all demand a high level of concentration and precision.

The Model Train Community

Model trains have a unique ability to bring people together. Enthusiasts can join model train clubs or attend exhibitions and shows where they can showcase their layouts, exchange ideas, and learn from fellow hobbyists. The camaraderie among model train enthusiasts is remarkable, and the hobby provides an avenue for socializing and connecting with people who share a similar passion.

History of Model Railroading (cont.)

The internet has opened up new avenues for model train enthusiasts to connect and share their experiences. Online forums, blogs, and social media groups provide a platform for hobbyists to discuss their projects, seek advice, and showcase their work to a wider audience. The online model train community is a vibrant and supportive space where enthusiasts can find inspiration, learn new techniques, and connect with like-minded individuals from around the world.

Model Trains in the Digital Age

While the traditional model train setup continues to be the preferred choice for many hobbyists, technological advancements have introduced new possibilities. Digital control systems, such as Digital Command Control (DCC), allow for more precise control over multiple trains on the same layout. Sound modules can recreate the realistic sounds of steam engines, whistles, and braking mechanisms, enhancing the overall experience.

Additionally, the integration of digital technology has led to the rise of virtual model train simulations. These computer-based programs allow hobbyists to design, build, and operate virtual layouts, complete with realistic train physics, sounds, and scenery. While virtual simulations cannot replicate the tactile experience of the physical models, they provide a cost-effective and space-saving alternative for those who may not have the resources for a full-scale layout.

Model Trains and Other Hobbies

Model trains are often seen as a standalone hobby, but they can also be integrated with other related pastimes. For example, jigsaw puzzle enthusiasts can incorporate miniature puzzles into their train layouts, creating engaging scenes within the overall design. Jigsaw puzzles can provide additional challenges and a way to add unique features to the layout. For more information on jigsaw puzzles, problem-solving, and concentration, check out this link.

Similarly, model train enthusiasts who are fascinated by aerial photography and remote-controlled (RC) devices can explore the world of RC drones. RC drones offer a thrilling hobby that combines the joy of flying with the ability to capture stunning aerial imagery. They can be used to capture unique perspectives of model train layouts or to explore the surrounding landscapes. To learn more about RC drones as a hobby and their potential for aerial photography, visit this link.

Conclusion

Model trains have stood the test of time as a beloved hobby that combines creativity, problem-solving, and historical exploration. From their humble beginnings as children's toys, model trains have evolved into intricate replicas of historical locomotives and rolling stock. The attention to detail and craftsmanship required to build and maintain a model train layout captivate enthusiasts of all ages.

Model trains not only offer a creative outlet but also serve as a source of historical knowledge. The ability to recreate specific time periods and historical settings adds an additional layer of fascination to the hobby. The concentration and problem-solving skills required to build and operate model trains provide a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

The model train community is a vibrant and supportive space where enthusiasts can connect, learn, and share their passion. The advent of digital technology has introduced new possibilities for model train enthusiasts, allowing for more precise control and even virtual simulations.

So, whether you are a longtime model train enthusiast or someone looking to explore a new hobby, model trains offer a fascinating journey through history, creativity, and the joy of craftsmanship. It is a hobby that continues to captivate and inspire generations, connecting people across time and space.

Model Railroading Market

'Death of the model railway' as ageing enthusiasts run out of steam
The Telegraph, 2024

Next generation required to take over the staffing and running of events 'does not seem to be materialising'

Once many a child's favourite pastime, model railways are now the domain of ageing rockers, train buffs and retirees, but the unique hobby could be about to hit the buffers as its fans grow older.

Two of the linchpins of the model railway community – a long-running exhibition, and one of the oldest modelling shops in the country – are to close, with both blaming the ageing profile of enthusiasts and a decline in the numbers of new fans taking part.

Warley Model Railway Club (WMRC) has announced that the national exhibition it has run for the past 30 years is to close, with the one held at Birmingham's NEC in November 2023 the last to take place.

Club officials said the organisers and volunteers who had run the show were simply getting too old for the job.

At the same time, Hatton's Model Railways shop in Liverpool, which has been open since 1946, is to shut its doors permanently.

The shop, set up by Norman Hatton after he was demobbed from the Army at the end of the Second World War, went on to become one of the country's preeminent modelling outlets, expanding into mail order and website retail supplies for model railway enthusiasts.

Announcing the end of the much-loved Warley National Model Railway Exhibition, Nigel Smith, 62, the exhibition manager said: "This will be disappointing to many people including visitors and exhibitors alike. However, we are an ageing membership and we have to be realistic about what we can deliver in the future.

"Many of our existing team have been involved for over 30 years and would like to retire gracefully".

Steve Flint, 69, former editor of Railway Modeller and a member of WMRC charitable trust, said: "The hobby is alive and well at grass roots level, but the commercial boom period of recent decades has probably run its course, having been slowed by the effects of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the ever-increasing age of enthusiasts."

He added: "Moreover the tick of the demographic time bomb is getting more prominent, as the next generation of younger enthusiasts required to take

over the staffing and running of such prestigious events does not seem to be materialising."

Steve Scott, 70, a trustee of the WMRC charity, told The Telegraph it was getting harder to find new, younger members to revive the organisation.

He said: "The way youngsters play virtual reality games, sitting down with something like model railways is not something they want to do. The idea of going along on a cold winter night to a distant hall to take part in a railway modelling session just doesn't appeal to them."

The current owners of Hatton's have also decided to shut-up shop – despite having an annual turnover in excess of £16 million in recent years – due to a drop in customer numbers and increasing running costs.

Mr Hatton's late son Keith and his daughter Christine, now 61, took over the business when their father retired in 1998, expanding the business into online sales. But even that was not enough.

In a statement Hatton's said: "The company is not insolvent. The company is being wound down in an orderly fashion, leaving no outstanding debts.

"Changing market conditions have had a large impact on the business, we have seen this in declining customer numbers, changing customer demographics and supply chain disruption."

It added: "Increased cost of compliance has become a large factor. Brexit, GST [Goods and Services Tax] and other operational costs of running an international business have all increased dramatically over the past few years."

Recent TV interest in model railways appears not to have been enough to save either Hatton's or WMRC's exhibition. Pop producer and music impresario Pete Waterman is to present a four-part Channel 4 show on model railways called Little Railways & Big Names later this year, alongside Jools Holland, James May and Francis Rossi. This follows Channel 5's Great Model Railway Challenge series in 2018.

Waterman, who used to shop at Hatton's as a boy in Liverpool, said the rail modelling community had to change tack to appeal to younger people and children.

"Youngsters are into modern layouts and modern engines, like the high speed Pendolinos - not the steam engines that are routinely put on at shows," he

Model Railroading Market
(cont.)

said. “They also like operating things digitally, which is a new way forward to model railways. It’s difficult for railway modelling to have a future if it doesn’t evolve. But in my experience it is possible to get children excited about it.”

Middle-aged railway model enthusiasts have bemoaned the closure of two of their best loved institutions.

Ryan Pringle, from Nuneaton, Warwickshire, wrote on social media: “In one week we hear that the Warley show will not be happening and that Hattons is closing down. What will happen next with the hobby? It’s such a shame.”

Jon Schofield, from Dorchester, in Dorset, said he was “absolutely gutted” at the closure of the WMRC’s national exhibition.

“Started coming to the event 28-ish years ago and each trip was a brilliant memorable experience,” he said. “This is a massive loss to the UK hobby and a real shame more couldn’t be done to secure its future.”

Model Railroading Market

'A Perfect World' Around
Every Miniature Bend
New York Times, 2021

The pandemic has helped Märklin, a 162-year-old company that makes model trains, discover a new audience.

BERLIN — Last spring, the managers at Märklin, the 162-year-old maker of model trains in Germany, were surprised by something unexpected in the sales reports.

“We started to notice a serious uptick in orders,” said Florian Sieber, a director at Märklin. The jump continued into summer — a further surprise, he said, because that’s “when people don’t usually buy indoor train sets.”

But buy they did. In November, Märklin’s monthly orders were up 70 percent over the previous year. The company’s video introducing its new trains and accessories, posted in January, has been viewed over 165,000 times.

Along with baking and jigsaw puzzles earlier in the pandemic, model trains are among the passions being rediscovered while people are cooped up indoors. Several companies that make trains are reporting jumps in sales. For many people, the chance to create a separate, better world in the living room — with stunning mountains, tiny chugging locomotives and communities of inch-high people where no one needs a mask — is hard to resist.

“Outside, there is total chaos, but inside, around my little train set, it is quiet, it is picturesque,” said Magnus Hellstrom, 48, a high school teacher in Sweden, who has indulged in his hobby while working from home during lockdowns.

“It’s a little piece of a perfect world,” he said.

Mr. Hellstrom is one of many Märklin enthusiasts. The company, which filed for bankruptcy protection over a decade ago, is now for the first time in years hiring new apprentices to learn the precise work of making super-detailed tiny trains.

“We’re booming so much it’s hard to keep up,” said Maria Huta, 64, who has assembled trains for 38 years at the company’s main facility in Göppingen, a town 25 miles southeast of Stuttgart, where the company was founded.

The factory building is more than a century old, and touring the facility is a trip back in time: a factory floor with skilled manual laborers toiling over workbenches. Ms. Huta and her colleagues often use a microscope to attach tiny details like bells or handrails. The company employs about 1,170 full-

time employees in its two locations in Göppingen and Gyor, Hungary.

“We used to contract some of our parts abroad, but we found mostly it was not worth it, the filigree of some of our parts was so fine that we often had to return things,” said Gerhard Tastl, the plant’s production manager, during a factory tour conducted over video.

The Märklin trains come in three scales, with H0-gauge models the most popular. A high-end Gauge 1 locomotive, made up of several thousand individual parts, can cost up to \$4,200 new (and much more if the train becomes a collector’s item), although lower-cost locomotives, composed of about 300 parts, sell for about one-tenth of the price. Märklin also makes LGB trains, which are larger and designed to be set up outdoors.

Most H0-gauge trains are built from scratch out of basic elements — zinc alloy, steel, plastic pellets and paint — in the Göppingen plant, allowing Märklin to mark these models “Made in Germany.” Parts for other models are made in Göppingen and then assembled in the Hungarian plant.

“For our customers, it’s less about saying it comes just from this one factory in Germany and more about the Märklin signature,” said Mr. Tastl, noting that some of the electronics in the modern trains might come from Asia.

Although the trains that leave the factory floor might resemble the models produced here decades ago, they hide features that were unavailable back then. They now include tiny speakers that reproduce scores of digital chugging noises and whistles (recorded, if possible, from the original), and interior and exterior lights that can be controlled separately. Another feature simulates how actual trains leave the station (very slowly, then gradually gathering speed) and later slowly decelerate to a stop.

A new feature is the remote-controlled raising and lowering of electric pantographs, the apparatus atop a train that connects with overhead wires. Real steam coming out of the steam locomotives has been a feature for years.

“What’s really changed during the last 20 years is the focus on truly replicating the original,” said Mr. Sieber, the director. Founded in 1859 by Theodor Friedrich Wilhelm Märklin, the company first sold doll accessories. After the founder’s death seven

History of Model Railroading (cont.)

years later, the company grew under his young widow, Caroline Märklin, who was one of the company's first traveling saleswomen, covering territories in the south of Germany and Switzerland.

The company started producing windup model trains in 1891, and continued to be owned by different branches of the family until 2006, when it was sold to Kingsbridge Capital, an investment firm. But the company was losing money and had to lay off many hundreds of employees, and in 2009 it filed for bankruptcy protection. Then, in 2013, the Simba Dickie group, a privately owned German toymaker, bought the company, trying to salvage what it saw as an important brand.

Mr. Sieber, whose father founded Simba Dickie in 1982 and who is now co-chief executive of the group, said it took a few years to sort out Märklin's finances. But he said the workers were a critical resource.

"When we first had a very serious look at them, we were so surprised at what we found — the technical know-how of the staff was just unique in the industry," said Mr. Sieber, 35, who fondly remembers playing on a Märklin set as a child with his grandfather.

By 2015, things were looking up. Orders were coming in again and the new management had sought and won new customers with social media outreach campaigns. (The Märklin Insider club, which counts more than 50,000 members worldwide, helps the company keep track of its customers.)

"I have to admit, things are looking better now than they did years ago," said Ms. Huta. She is part of a board representing the workers in negotiations with the factory owners, and remembers vividly when many of her colleagues were let go when the company's future seemed unclear.

The boom in sales from the pandemic has led to shortages of some parts, like rails. Certain special models have sold out, like a model of the 078 series, a steam locomotive used by the West German national rail in the 1960s and 1970s. In a first since Simba Dickie took over the company, the company is training new apprentices to join the roughly 700-strong work force in Hungary.

The company is betting that many of the people drawn to Märklin trains during the pandemic stick with model trains afterward. "Because it really is not the kind of hobby that you do for two weeks and then abandon," Mr. Sieber said.

Model Railroading Market

'Model Train Market Size, Share, Growth, and Industry Analysis, By Type (HO, O, N, Z), By Application (Below 30, 30-60, Above 60), and Regional Forecast to 2033' Business Research Insights, March 2025

MODEL TRAIN MARKET OVERVIEW

The global Model Train Market size was USD 1.18 billion in 2024 and is projected to touch USD 2.22 billion by 2033, exhibiting a CAGR of 7.23% during the forecast period.

The market for model trains consists of a specialized community who build this hobby through their passion for both collecting and operating miniature trains. The market contains various model train products including locomotives plus tracks and scenery items and digital control devices delivering vintage appeal with technology advancements. Market demand keeps growing because more people are becoming interested in model railroading as a learning-focused imaginative pastime. The manufacturer works on precise craftsmanship alongside historical accuracy and innovative designs, which draw hobbyists as well as collectors and diverse groups of enthusiasts. The model train market shows constant growth because manufacturers build advanced digital features and customizable options into the industry.

COVID-19 IMPACT

"Model Train Industry Had a Positive Effect Due to Pandemic Growth during COVID-19 Pandemic"

The global COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented and staggering, with the market experiencing Higher-than-anticipated demand across all regions compared to pre-pandemic levels. The sudden market growth reflected by the rise in CAGR is attributable to the market's growth and demand returning to pre-pandemic levels.

The viral outbreak of COVID-19 brought unlikely benefits to the model train industry because people isolated at home chose indoor pastimes during lockdowns. An increase in people looking for creative and relaxing pastimes led to substantial market demand for model trains as well as their tracks and their corresponding accessories. E-commerce served as a vital factor for enhancing sales numbers since online platforms became the main purchase points for hobbyists. The extended period of staying at home allowed new people to discover model railroading, which boosted the expanding customer base composed of various demographic groups. The market's solid foundation developed through pandemic-driven growth now creates prospects for long-term development together with new innovative solutions.

LATEST TREND

"Market growth is driven by digital innovations and historical replica demand"

Customers now seek model trains with DCC systems while digital technologies continue to dominate the latest model train market trends.

Modern train control systems provide hobbyists with the ability to operate multiple independent trains simultaneously, which creates realistic and precise operating conditions. The market shows increasing interest in exact historical replica models together with personalized customization, which attracts expert model railroaders. Manufacturers now focus on sustainability through their research of green materials and low-energy designs. Two major factors are shaping railroad hobbyist excitement: digital innovations featuring application-based control systems and synchronized sound production that draw technology-oriented enthusiasts into the activity.

MODEL TRAIN MARKET SEGMENTATION

Based on Type, the global market can be categorized into HO, O, N, Z

HO Scale: The HO scale (1:87) represents the most popular train scale in model train markets because it strikes the ideal balance between small dimensions and detailed modeling. This model rail gauges caters well to hobbyists across all levels because it presents extensive selection of locomotives and rolling stock together with extensive design possibilities. The HO scale trains enable budget-friendly operations and simple control; thus, they smoothly fit inside home setups without filling available space excessively. The market loves this scale because of its wide-ranging popularity that stimulates continuous product development and accessory distribution.

O Scale: The O scale (1:48) remains highly popular because of its massive dimensions combined with outstanding detailed features, which primarily serve collector setups. The bigger overall size of this model provides superior handling capabilities and enables precise display of detailed realistic features. Its durability plus attractive appearance along with higher cost and greater size requirements make this scale a top selection. The use of O scale trains in display models together with educational settings is possible because their robust construction enables clear visibility.

Model Railroading Market

'Model Train Market Size, Share, Growth, and Industry Analysis, By Type (HO, O, N, Z), By Application (Below 30, 30-60, Above 60), and Regional Forecast to 2033' Business Research Insights, March 2025 (cont.)

N Scale: Hobbyists who need to save space will find the N scale (1:160) suitable because it remains small in size. With its small size, the model maintains a high level of detail, which makes possible large layouts within compact areas. Its economical nature combined with spatial efficiency has boosted the popularity of this scale among city-dwelling enthusiasts. Those who want detailed train layouts should choose N scale because they offer high realism and functionality at all times.

Z Scale: The miniature model railway scale of Z (1:220) serves as the smallest commercially available format with remarkable precision and small details. Small dimensions enable these layouts to be made portable and space-efficient which benefits limited display areas.

The small dimensions of Z-scale trains deliver exceptional details but require precision when handling because they tend to be delicate.

Advanced model railroads find the Z scale attractive because it provides engineering excellence along with modern compact design standards.

Based on Application, the global market can be categorized into Below 30, 30-60, Above 60

Below 30: An expanding group of younger model train enthusiasts and beginners belongs to the below-30 demographic. Digitally designed controls that function through apps together with sound effects and interactive settings produce advantages particularly attractive to users who have technology-savvy minds. This demographic finds attraction toward the train set building process alongside landscape creation. Beginners find it simple to start their hobby because starter sets and cost-effective models allow them to dive right into their passion.

30–60: Serious hobbyists and collectors who value premium quality model trains with detailed features purchase these items together with extensive layout designs during their 30–60 age brackets. During this phase, the quality of historical authenticity meets expert craftsmanship alongside superior control systems through Digital Command Control (DCC). People in this segment typically possess enough money and home space to build sophisticated, extensive railroad systems. Model railroading combines both relaxation with rewarding experiences for this population through their blending of artistic concepts with technological know-how.

Above 60: Older model train enthusiasts who are above age 60 make up this demographic since they bring their vast experience alongside their strong dedication to hobby trains. This segment shows preference for traditional railroad models together with past collections as well as offering detailed representations of historical train systems. Individuals who possess increased free time focus on enhancing their model layouts and safeguarding model train historical artifacts. The members of this group take part in community exhibitions together with their expert training sessions to show their knowledge to the public.

MARKET DYNAMICS

Market dynamics include driving and restraining factors, opportunities and challenges stating the market conditions.

Driving Factors

“Market growth is fueled by rising interest in creative, stress-relieving hobbies”

The model train market has experienced substantial expansion because people are increasingly interested in relaxing and creative indoor diversions. The COVID-19 pandemic created improved home-spending needs which motivated people to take up model railroading as an at-home hobby. The hobby serves as an ideal combination of thematic creativity with technical development alongside historical understanding, which works for people of all ages. The model train market expands due to increased interest in stress-relieving activities from people seeking this entertainment.

“Market growth accelerates with digital features enhancing realism and interactivity”

Digital Command Control (DCC) along with app-based train systems have brought a revolutionary change to model train operation. These modern technologies deliver improved capabilities to users who can command several trains simultaneously on one track system and handle sounds with precise synchronization and control train light settings better. The market broadens its customer base to include technology-loving generations by integrating modern digital components. The market demand for model trains grows because manufacturers continue to develop digital features that enhance the capabilities of model trains to become more realistic and resulting model train market growth.

Model Railroading Market

'Model Train Market Size, Share, Growth, and Industry Analysis, By Type (HO, O, N, Z), By Application (Below 30, 30-60, Above 60), and Regional Forecast to 2033' Business Research Insights, March 2025 (cont.)

Restraining Factor

"Market growth is restricted by high costs and initial investment barriers"

The model train industry is limited by expensive costs for premium quality models together with complicated accessories. High-end locomotives, together with tracks and digital control systems, represent costs that deter numerous prospective model train hobbyists from embracing the hobby because of its expense. The high initial financial requirements restrict market expansion since new consumers especially those who are young and beginning in the hobby tend to avoid large-scale investments up front.

"Market growth thrives through e-commerce and global digital hobbyist communities"

The model train market finds new possibilities through increasing e-commerce channels and digital hobbyist groups. Online stores allow enthusiasts from around the world to shop more easily from an extensive collection of models with accessories and digital systems. Virtual forums combined with tutorials and social media groups help hobbyists build connections through idea sharing and obtain mutual inspiration. The capability to connect globally with hobbyists across the world both expands markets and generates new audience interest because it demonstrates the artistry behind model railroads. Nonetheless, maintaining and developing layouts becomes progressively expensive, which could deter committed hobbyists from staying involved in the long run.

Challenge

"Market growth slows due to aging customer base and shifting preferences"

The model train market encounters a major obstacle because most of its customer base consists of senior enthusiasts. Younger people demonstrate decreased participation in traditional hobbies because they spend their time with digital media and speed-based activities. The changing consumer preferences create obstacles to attracting and keeping new hobbyists, thus slowing market expansion. Long-term success for this market demands innovative measures and new methods to reach younger audiences through modern technological interactions.

MODEL TRAIN MARKET REGIONAL INSIGHTS

North America

"Market growth in North America thrives on strong community and innovation"

The model train market receives its power base from North America because the region holds a vibrant community of enthusiasts alongside robust industry manufacturers, which aligns with its deep railroading legacy. Market expansion in this region develops because customers pursue superior detailed models together with state-of-the-art digital control systems. The active group of model train enthusiasts and collectors supports ongoing research and product improvement in the industry. The United States Model Train Market collaborates with widespread popularity and high purchasing power and growing digital model train system interest to maintain this dominance in the industry. With numerous clubs, exhibitions, and online platforms, the U.S. fosters a vibrant and expanding model train community.

Europe

"Market growth in Europe thrives on craftsmanship, innovation, and historical passion"

Europe holds remarkable model train market share because of its established tradition in handmade goods together with its emphasis on accurate historical representation. Germany, along with the UK, maintains a cash dealer status by creating sophisticated high-end models and developing groundbreaking digital systems. Advanced technological leadership in Europe drives manufacturers to provide digital command control (DCC) alongside realistic illumination and sound systems. The passion of rail history enthusiasts combined with their passion for collecting fuels sustained market expansion in this region.

Asia

"Market growth in Asia expands with production, urbanization, and rising demand"

The market growth of model trains in Asia happens through expanding production facilities and rising consumer desire. The affordable, high-quality models manufactured by Japan and China can be found worldwide for consumers. The model train culture in Japan stands out due to its exact production methods and creative development approaches. The growth of urbanization along with increased disposable income in the region creates rising demand for both

Model Railroading Market

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traditional and digital model train systems.

KEY INDUSTRY PLAYERS

"Market growth thrives through industry leaders' innovation, quality, and global expansion"

The market for model trains develops day by day because leading industry actors continue to drive progress through new advances and enhanced quality standards and worldwide business growth. The leading market position belongs to Märklin and Bachmann alongside Hornby because they deliver exceptional detailed workmanship while implementing advanced digital features including Digital Command Control (DCC).

The companies continue investing substantial funds into research projects, which enables them to introduce mobile apps and create realistic audio effects and customization tools that improve user interaction. Their e-commerce infrastructure, together with partnering, means these brands extend their global distribution of products across international markets. Through their dual commitment to traditional methods and forward-thinking approaches, key players draw numerous customers to sustain market growth and development.

LIST OF MODEL TRAIN COMPANIES

Walthers (U.S)

Atlas (U.S)

PIKO (Germany)

Bachmann Industries (China)

Lionel (U.S)

KEY INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

March 2024: Alstom secured an additional contract worth US\$ 875 million to supply 103 new MF19 trains for the Paris metro in Île-de-France.

This order, initially placed in 2019, significantly boosts the French rolling stock manufacturer's portfolio and will enhance the regional transportation infrastructure. The MF19 trains are designed to replace older rolling stock, offering improved energy efficiency and passenger comfort. Alstom's commitment to innovation is evident in the incorporation of advanced technologies, such as real-time monitoring systems and enhanced safety features. Production of these trains is set to take place at Alstom's manufacturing facilities across

France, supporting local employment and expertise. The delivery of the new trains is scheduled to commence in 2025, with full deployment expected by 2027.

REPORT COVERAGE

The study encompasses a comprehensive SWOT analysis and provides insights into future developments within the market. It examines various factors that contribute to the growth of the market, exploring a wide range of market categories and potential Applications that may impact its trajectory in the coming years. The analysis takes into account both current trends and historical turning points, providing a holistic understanding of the market's components and identifying potential areas for growth.

This research report examines the segmentation of the market by using both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a thorough analysis that also evaluates the influence of strategic and financial perspectives on the market. Additionally, the report's regional assessments consider the dominant supply and demand forces that impact market growth. The competitive landscape is detailed meticulously, including shares of significant market competitors. The report incorporates unconventional research techniques, methodologies and key strategies tailored for the anticipated frame of time. Overall, it offers valuable and comprehensive insights into the market dynamics professionally and understandably.

Market Size Value In: US\$ 1.18 Billion in 2024

Market Size Value By: US\$ 2.22 Billion by 2033

Growth Rate: CAGR of 7.23% from 2024 to 2033

Forecast Period: 2025–2033

Hobby & Toy Stores in the US,
Market Research Report
(2015-2030)
IBISworld.com

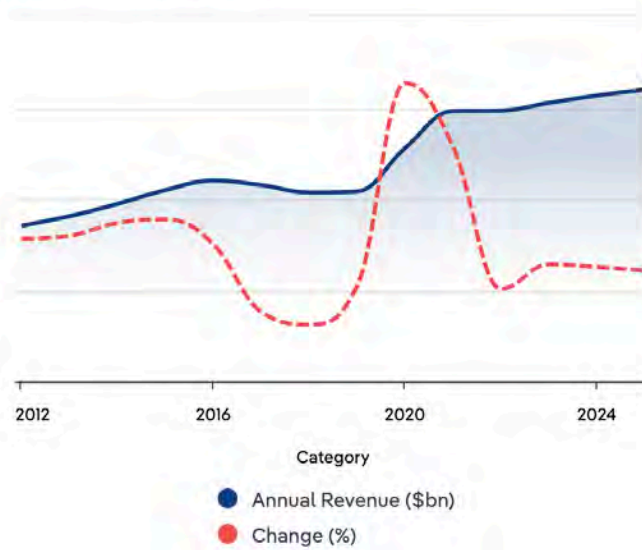
Hobby & Toy Stores in the US industry analysis
Hobby and toy stores endured a strong shift in the retail landscape through the end of 2025. The popularity of e-commerce has significantly altered how consumers shop, with many preferring the convenience, variety and easy access offered by online platforms. This shift has pushed traditional retailers to diversify their sales channels and strengthen their digital presence. The popularity of licensed toys and merchandise, inspired by popular film, television and gaming franchises, has greatly impacted the industry, leading to robust sales and collaborations between toy companies and entertainment studios. Simultaneously, large discount retailers and mass merchandisers, aided by their national scale and direct connections with manufacturers, have become an increasing threat to hobby and toy stores. Still, hobby and toy stores that successfully established an online presence and carry popular toys and hobby supplies have remained competitive and profitable. Revenue for hobby and toy stores is expected to swell at a CAGR of 4.6% to \$64.0 billion through the end of 2025, including growth of 2.2% in 2025 alone.

Trends and Insights

- Increased leisure time will support sales to older consumers through the end of 2030. As more baby boomers retire, they will spend more on hobby supplies and toys.
- Traditional toys are the largest product segment of the industry. This includes dolls, toy cars and other toys, but their revenue share has decreased as video games have become more popular.
- Like most retail industries, the distribution of hobby and toy stores falls broadly in line with the dispersal of the national population. Sales for hobby and toy stores are greatest in regions with more residents.
- Competition among toy and craft goods retailers intensified as internal and external competitors fought to win over consumers. Increased competition from online retailers and discount department stores has pressured profit as lower-priced comparable products increasingly lure customers away from traditional brick-and-mortar stores.

Hobby & Toy Stores in the US,
Market Research Report
(2015-2030)
(cont.)

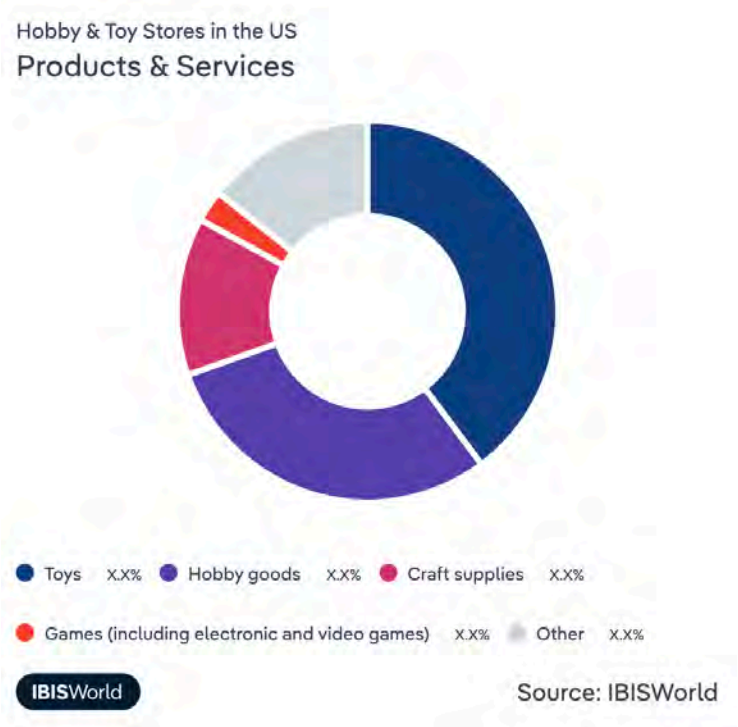
Hobby & Toy Stores in the US
Revenue (2015-2030)



IBISWorld

Source: IBISWorld

- Industry Statistics and Trends
- Market size and recent performance (2015-2030)
- Industry revenue has grown at a CAGR of 4.6 % over the past five years, to reach an estimated \$64.0bn in 2025.
- Trends and Insights
- E-commerce represents an opportunity and a threat for hobby and toy stores
- The growth of e-commerce through the end of 2025 has shifted the retail landscape. Online shopping has become a convenient and preferred alternative for customers, offering a wider variety and easier product access. This trend has meant that traditional toy and hobby retailers must diversify their sales channels and boost their online presence.



Products & Services Segmentation
Industry revenue is measured across several distinct product and services lines, including Toys, Hobby goods and Games (including electronic and video games). Toys is the largest segment of the Hobby & Toy Stores in the US.

Trends and Insights
Toys' share of industry sales has fallen due to the age compression phenomenon

This category of products contains various items, including wheeled toys, stuffed animals, dolls, toy weapons, magic supplies, children's vehicles and bicycles. Toy and game stores have had to modify their product offerings to adjust to changing preferences in younger demographics. Children who have grown up surrounded by technological change in the internet era prefer products traditionally marketed to older children and adults (like tablets and video games).

Comparative Set

Manufacturer logos



Manufacturer logos (cont.)



Publisher logos



Classic Trains



DIESEL ERA



Model Railroader



Trains

Other groups logos



The **2**mm Scale Association



BOULDER CREEK
RAILROAD



LIONEL COLLECTORS AMERICA
EST. 1978



TRAINBOARD



Serif: 23

Sans Serif: 43

Display: 6

Script: 6

Classic Trains

Trains



Roco

Bachmann
Bowser
Fox Valley
Hornby
Kadee
Micro-Trains
NWSL
Overland
Precision Scale Co
Rix Products Inc.
Rivet Counter
Showcase
Tichy Train Group
Classic Trains
Ho Collector
Hornby Magazine
O Scale Trains
Railroad Model Craftsman
TrainMasters TV
1/87 Vehicle Club
HMRS
Lionel Collectors Club
TTOS

Atlas
Blackstone
Broadway Limited
Class One
Digitrax
Division Point
Inter Mountain
Iowa Scaled Eng.
Kato
Lionel
Marklin
Micro Scale
Mini Prints
NCE
Noch
Piko
Rapido
Ron's Books
Scale Trains
SierraWest
Spring Creek
TCS
Trainz
Trix
Walthers
BRM
Classic Trains
Diesel Era
Garden Railways
Railfan & Railroad
Model Railroad News
MRH
Model Railroader
Trains
2mm
7mm
Modelers Life
Boulder Creek Railroad
CWMRC
DIY & Digital
MOROP
N Gauge Society
Queen City HiRailers

Broadway Limited
ESU
LGB
Rivet Counter
Narrow Gauge and Short
Line Gazette

Athearn
Ocala
Roco
Tru-Color Paint
3mm
Golden Gate American Flyer

Title Case: 22

UPPERCASE: 47

lowercase: 4

**Model
Railroader**

**CLASSIC TOY
TRAINS**

märklin

Athearn
Bowser
Kadee
Ocala
Rix Products
Roco
Ron's Books
SierraWest
Tichy Train Group
Tru-Color Paint
Classic Trains
Garden Railways
Model Railroad News
Model Railroader
O Scale Trains
Trains
2mm
Modelers Life
CWMRC
Golden Gate American Flyer
Queen City HiRailers
Train Collectors Association

Accurail
Atlas
Bachmann
Blackstone
Broadway Limited
Class One
Division Point
ESU
Fox Valley
Hornby
Iowa Scaled Eng.
Kato
LBG
Lionel
Micro-Trains
NCE
Noch
NWSL
Overland
Piko
Precision Scale Co.
Rapido
Scale Trains
Rivet Counter
Showcase
Soundtraxx
TCS
Trainz
Trix
Walthers
BRM
Classic Toy Trains
HO Collector
Hornby Magazine
Railfan & Railroad
MRH
Narrow Gauge Gazette
1/87 Vehicle Club
7mm
Boulder Creek Railroad
The British Railway Modellers
DIY & Digital

HMRS
Lionel Collectors Club
MOROP
N Gauge Society
TTOS

Marklin
Micro Scales
Mini Prints
3mm

DIESEL ERA

SMALL CAPS: 7

Digitrax
InterMountain
Spring Creek Model Trains
Diesel Era
Railroad Model Craftsman
TrainMasters TV
TrainBoard

Type with Graphic Element: 58



Accurail
 Atlas
 Bachmann
 Blackstone
 Bowser
 Broadway Limited
 Class One
 Digitrax
 Division Point
 ESU
 Fox Valley
 Hornby
 Inter Mountain
 Iowa Scaled Eng.
 Kato
 LGB
 Lionel
 Micro-Trains
 Micro Scales
 Mini Prints
 NCE
 Noch
 NWSL
 Ocala
 Overland
 Rapido
 Rix Products
 Ron's Books
 Scale Trains
 Rivet Counter
 Showcase
 Spring Creek Model Trains
 TCS
 Tichy Train Group
 Trainz
 Tru-Color Paint
 Walthers
 MRH
 Railroad Model Craftsman
 TrainMasters TV
 1/87 Vehicle Club
 2^{mm}

3^{mm}
 7^{mm}
 Modelers Life
 BRMNA
 CWMRC
 DIY & Digital
 Golden Gate American Flyer
 HMRS
 Lionel Collectors Club
 MOROP
 MRC
 N Gauge Society
 Queen City HiRailers
 TCA
 TrainBoard
 TTOS

Type With Subtext: 26



Accurail
 Bachmann
 Class One
 Digitrax
 Division Point
 Kato
 Lionel
 NCE
 Noch
 NWSL
 Ocala
 Rix Products
 SierraWest
 Spring Creek Model Trains
 Tru-Color Paint
 HO Collector
 MRH
 TrainMastersTV
 Modelers Life
 CWMRC
 Golden Gate American Flyer
 HMRS
 Lionel Collectors Club
 Queen City HiRailers
 TCA
 TTOS

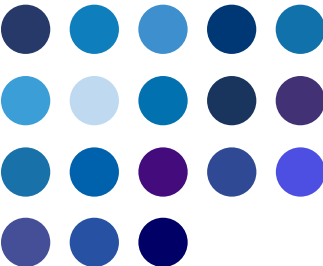
Type Only: 23



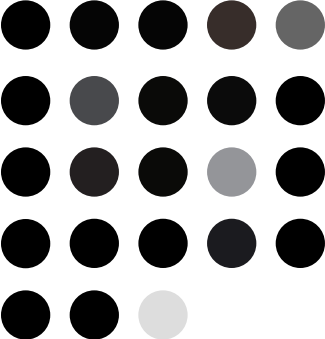
Athearn
 Bowser
 Marklin
 Piko
 Precision Scale Co
 Roco
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 Soundtraxx
 Trix
 BRM
 Classic Trains
 Classic Toy Trains
 Diesel Era
 Garden Railways
 Hornby Magazine
 Railfan & Railroad
 Model Railroad News
 Model Railroader
 Narrow Gauge and Short
 Line Gazette
 O Scale Trains
 Trains
 Boulder Creen Railroad

Dominant Brand Colors

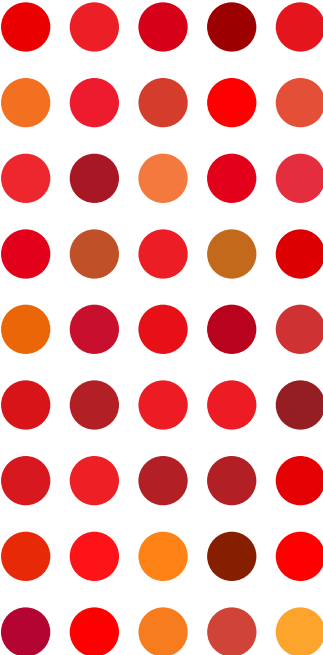
Blue/Purple: 18



Black/Gray: 23



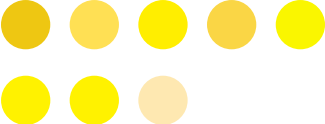
Red/Orange: 45



Green: 6



Yellow/Gold: 8



Fieldwork

2025 Railroad Hobby Show



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)

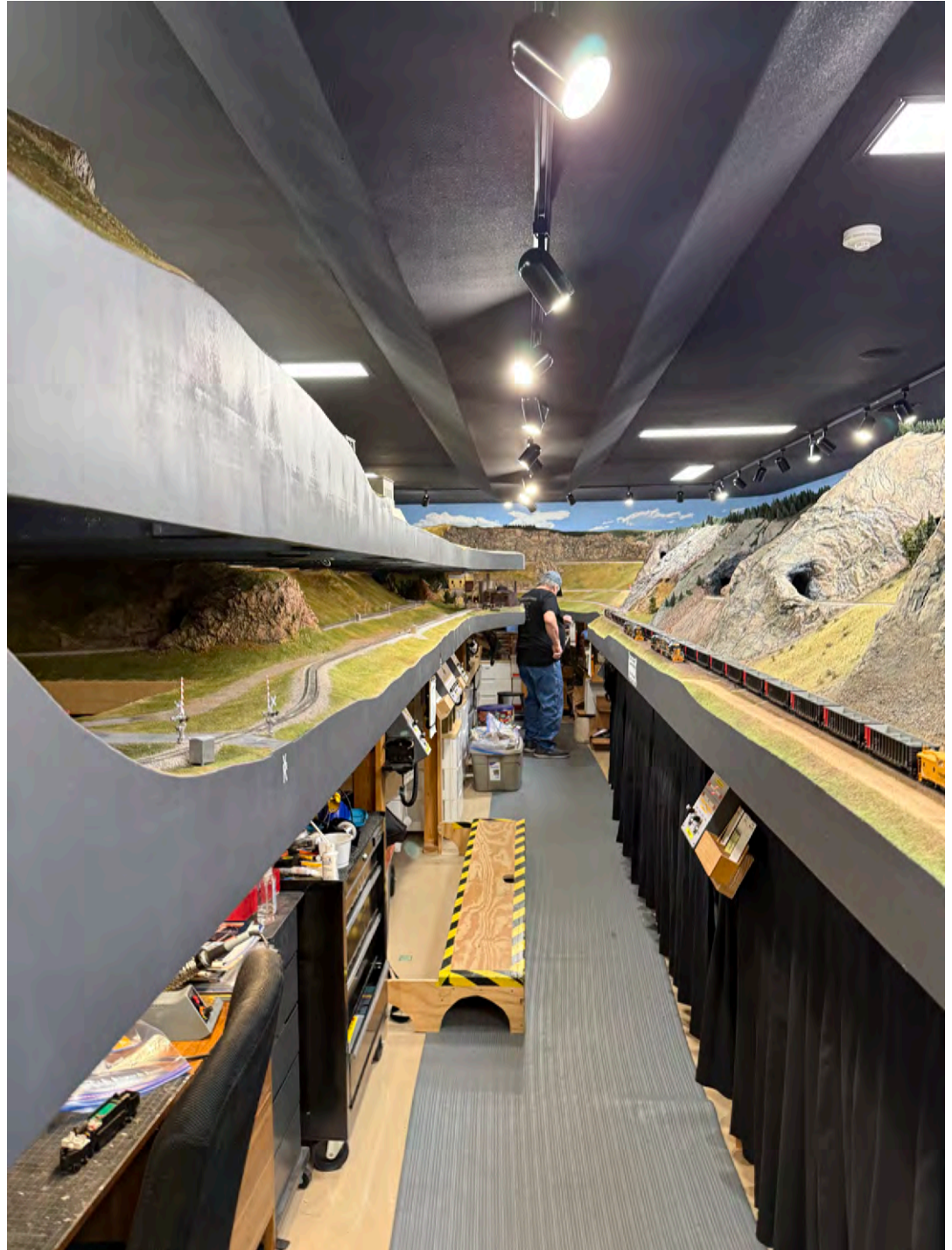


2025 Railroad Hobby Show
(cont.)



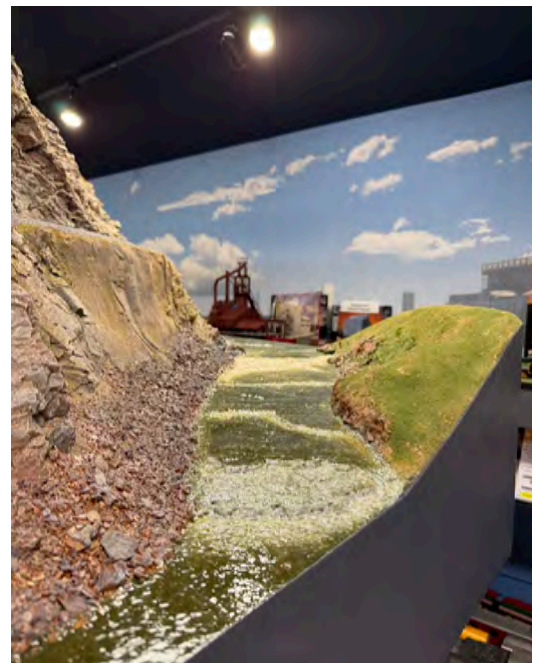
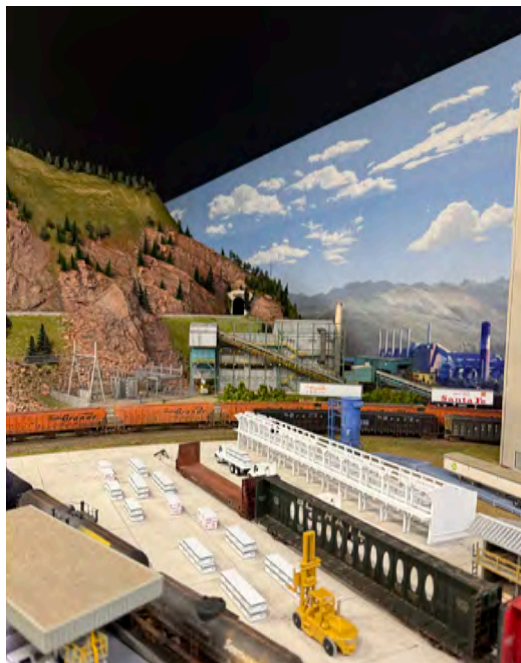
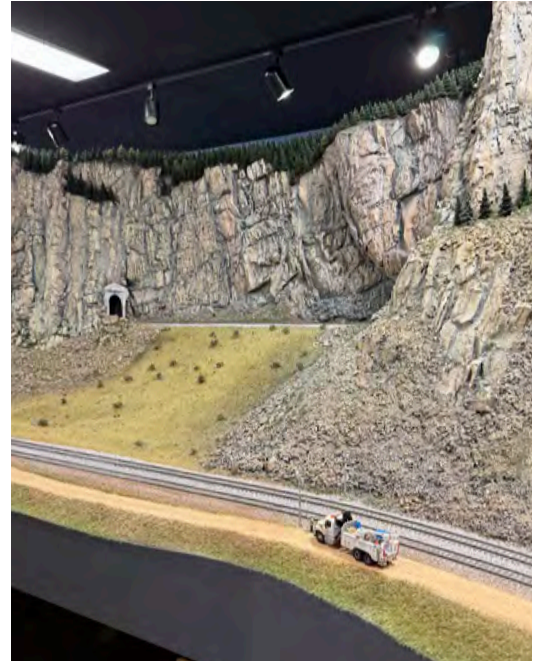
Operating Session

David Nicastro's
Home Layout



Operating Session

David Nicastro's
Home Layout
(cont.)



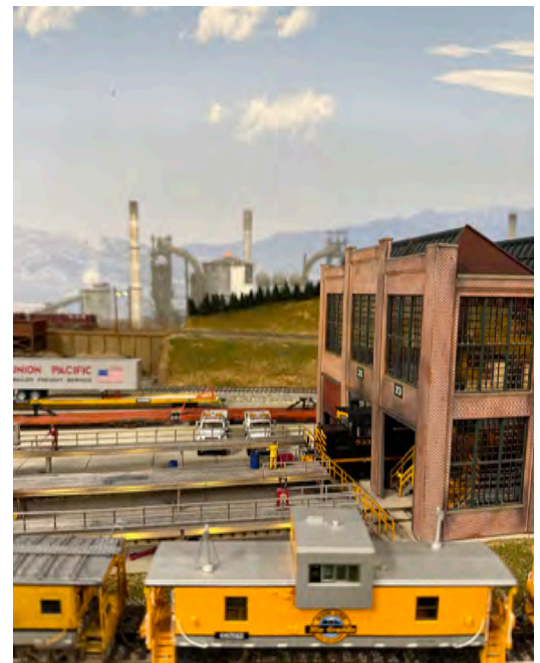
Operating Session

David Nicastro's
Home Layout
(cont.)



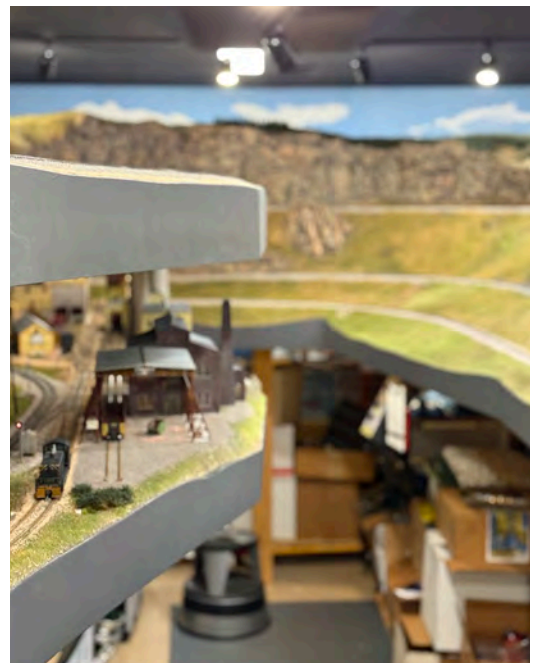
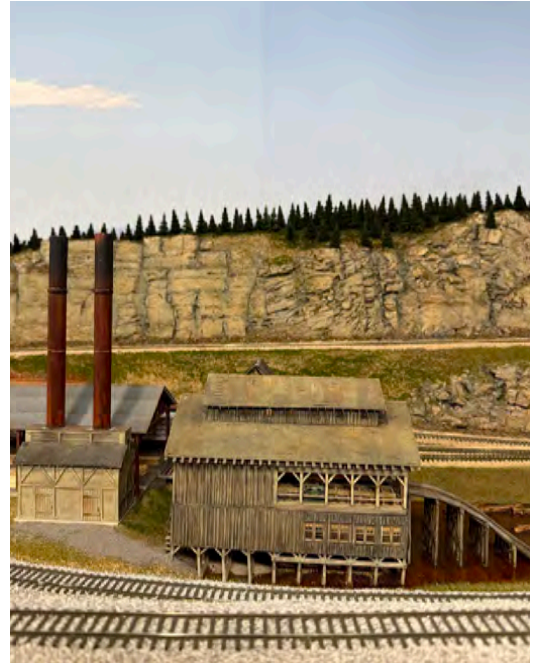
Operating Session

David Nicastro's
Home Layout
(cont.)



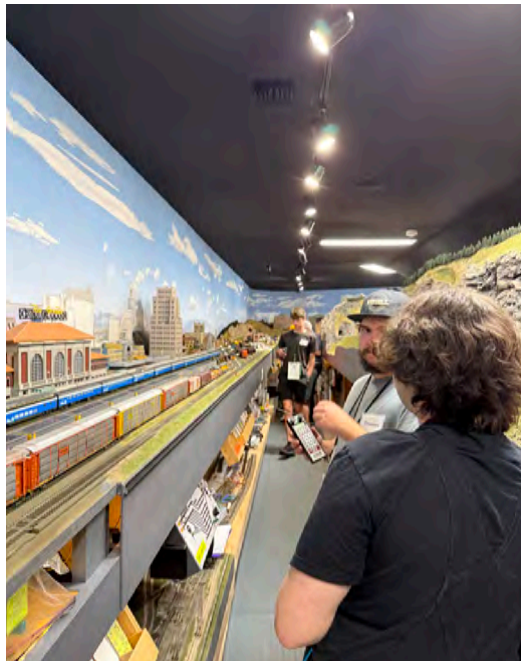
Operating Session

David Nicastro Home Layout
(cont.)



Operating Session

David Nicastro's
Home Layout
(cont.)



Ephemera

Amtrak

Tours

PRESENTS

SOUTHWEST

GRAY LINE

TOURS

19

78

ESCORTED

MOTORCOACH

RIM OF THE GRAND CANYON

Beautiful

8 DAYS 7 NIGHTS ESCORTED

Another day of breathtaking vistas, this time at Bryce and Zion National Parks; then on to that wonder of the world, Grand Canyon! Overnight at TWA Services Lodge at Grand Canyon.

6th Day Friday
Enjoy a morning of exploring and picture taking at Grand Canyon. Afternoon, on to the Hopi Indian Reservation, completely surrounded by the Navajo Nation, for a Farewell Dinner on the Second Mesa and lecture on Hopi culture. Overnight at Hopi Cultural Center.

7th Day Saturday
The Indians still come to Hubbell's Trading Post--our major stop today as we return to Albuquerque via scenic western New Mexico. You'll arrive Albuquerque late afternoon and check into Sheraton Old Town Inn, adjacent to historic Old Town where Albuquerque was founded in 1706...a perfect place to spend your last evening.

8th Day Sunday
You may wish to visit Old Town and the San Felipe de Neri Church, which has not missed a single service since 1706. Make arrangements at the hotel desk for courtesy car transportation to the airport, bus or Amtrak stations, and you're on your way home with fond memories of the Southwest and America the Beautiful.

UTAH

COLORADO

ARIZONA

NEW MEXICO

Bryce National Park

Zion National Park

Grand Canyon

Hopi Reservation

Canyon de Chelly

Albuquerque

INCLUDED IN TOUR

- *All transportation on air conditioned motor-coaches
- *Seven nights lodging in fine Southwestern hotels
- *Baggage handling where available, excluding garment bags and small hand luggage
- *Welcome Dinner on arrival in Albuquerque and Escort's Dinner at Hopi Cultural Center, Second Mesa
- *Jeep trip into Canyon de Chelly; admissions to all National Parks and Hubbell's Trading Post; Lake Powell boat cruise and an evening of sing-along and melodrama at Barn Theater, Kanab (seasonal)...Fully escorted by a Professional Gray Line Tour Escort

4 Departures 1978

Arrive Albuquerque

June 18

Aug. 20

July 16

Sept. 17

Departures Guaranteed

Agents Sell & Report

Tour fares per person:

AMI-493

Single	Twin	Triple
\$494	\$394	\$364

Children under 12 sharing room with parents: \$294

Additional night hotel taxes, Klamath Inn Downtown, Albuquerque: \$22.25 Single, \$17.00 per person sharing twin. Sheraton Old Town Inn, Albuquerque: \$32.15 Single, \$18.50 per person sharing twin.

You may take "America the Beautiful" following any "Seven Cities of Cibola" for a wonderful 2-week vacation and receive \$25 discount!

NATIONAL PARKS AND MONUMENTS VISITED

Grand Canyon National Park, North Rim

Bryce National Park

Zion National Park

Canyon de Chelly National Monument

Rainbow Bridge National Monument

PACIFIC RAILWAY

JOURNAL

A HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Donald Duke.....Editor

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 6

JUNE 1958

LOCOMOTIVES

of the

MILWAUKEE ROAD

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL & PACIFIC

RAILROAD

By

Paul T. Warner

This issue covering the steam and electric motive power development of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad is the fifth in a series of reprints devoted to Western Railroads as they originally appeared in the BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVE MAGAZINE which for many years has become a rare collectors item.

The Pacific Railway Journal is deeply grateful to the Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton Corporation for permission to reproduce these old magazines. Appreciation also goes to Richard Jackson whose October 1930 and January 1931 copies of BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVES produced this issue.

FRONT COVER The Milwaukee Road's limited, the Olympian.

148

NOVEMBER, 1955 - APRIL, 1956

Burlington Route

TIME SCHEDULES OF PRINCIPAL TRAINS

Get complete schedules at all stations consult System Time Table



Way of the Lephus

[illegible]

Ephemera
(cont.)

SUPPLEMENT - CATALOG - MODEL RAILROAD SUPPLIES - OCTOBER, 1936

USE TABLES FOR

ALUMINUM(2) EXCEPT TUBING(1) FLAT WIRE (1) SPRING STEEL (1)
BANDS (1) HOOPS (1) STEEL PLATES (3)
BRASS TUBING (3/800(LARGER)(1) IRON WIRE (4) STEEL SHEETS (3)
BRASS TUBING (SMALLER 3/800)(2) MONEL METAL SHEETS (3) STEEL TUBING (SEMI-SEAMWELD)(1)
BRASS SHEETS (2) MUSIC WIRE (5) STEEL WIRE (4) [EXCEPTIONS -
BRASS STRIPS (2) NICKEL SHEETS (3) MUSIC WIRE (5) ARMATURE
BRASS WIRE (2) NICKEL SILVER SHEETS (2) BINDING WIRE (2) FLAT WIRE (1)
COPPER SHEETS (2) NICKEL SILVER WIRE (2) STRIP STEEL (1)
COPPER WIRE (2) NICKELLOID (6) ZINC (6)
CHROMALOID (6) PHOSPHOR BRONZE STRIP (2)

GA. NO.	1 BIRMINGHAM OR STUBS	2 AMER. OR BROWN SHARP	3 U.S. STANDARD	4 WASHBURN & MOEN	5 MUSIC WIRE STANDARD	6 ZINC GAUGE	FRACTION OF INCH WITH DECI. EQUIV.
3-0	.425	.4096	.3750	.3625	.007		1/64 - .016
2-0	.380	.3648	.3437	.3310	.008		1/32 - .031
1-0	.340	.3248	.3125	.3065	.009		3/64 - .047
1	.300	.2893	.2812	.2850	.010		1/16 - .062
2	.284	.2576	.2656	.2625	.011		3/64 - .078
3	.259	.2294	.2500	.2457	.012	.006	3/32 - .094
4	.238	.2043	.2343	.2253	.013	.008	7/64 - .103
5	.220	.1818	.2187	.2070	.014	.010	1/8 - .125
6	.203	.1620	.2031	.1920	.016	.012	3/64 - .140
7	.180	.1443	.1875	.1770	.018	.014	5/32 - .156
8	.165	.1285	.1718	.1620	.020	.016	11/64 - .172
9	.148	.1144	.1542	.1483	.022	.018	3/16 - .187
10	.134	.1018	.1406	.1350	.024	.020	7/32 - .203
11	.120	.0907	.1250	.1205	.026	.024	1/2 - .219
12	.109	.0808	.1093	.1065	.028	.028	15/64 - .234
13	.095	.0715	.0937	.0915	.031	.032	1/4 - .250
14	.083	.0640	.0781	.0800	.033	.036	17/64 - .265
15	.072	.0570	.0703	.0720	.035	.040	3/32 - .281
16	.065	.0508	.0625	.0625	.037	.045	19/64 - .296
17	.058	.0452	.0562	.0540	.039	.050	5/16 - .312
18	.049	.0403	.0500	.0475	.041	.055	21/64 - .328
19	.042	.0359	.0437	.0410	.043	.060	11/32 - .344
20	.035	.0318	.0375	.0348	.045	.070	23/64 - .359
21	.032	.0284	.0343	.0317	.047	.080	3/8 - .375
22	.028	.0253	.0312	.0286	.049	.090	13/32 - .406
23	.025	.0225	.0281	.0258	.051	.100	7/16 - .437
24	.022	.0201	.0250	.0230	.055	.125	15/32 - .469
25	.020	.0179	.0218	.0204	.059		1/2 - .500
26	.018	.0159	.0187	.0181	.063		11/32 - .531
27	.016	.0142	.0171	.0173	.067		3/16 - .562
28	.014	.0126	.0156	.0162	.071		19/32 - .594
29	.013	.0112	.0140	.0150	.075		5/8 - .625
30	.012	.0100	.0125	.0140	.080		21/32 - .656

STANDARD WIRE GAUGES

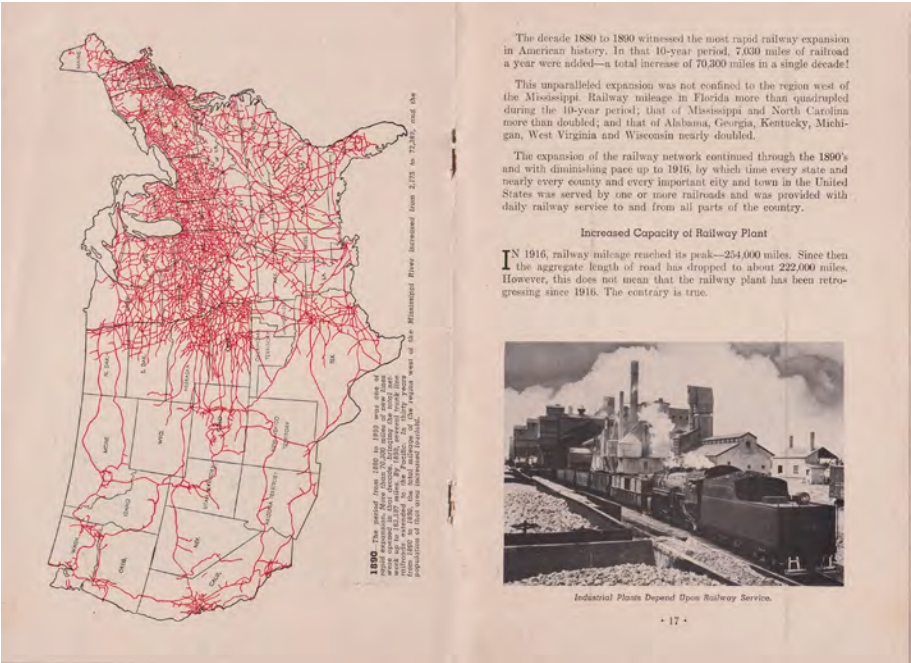
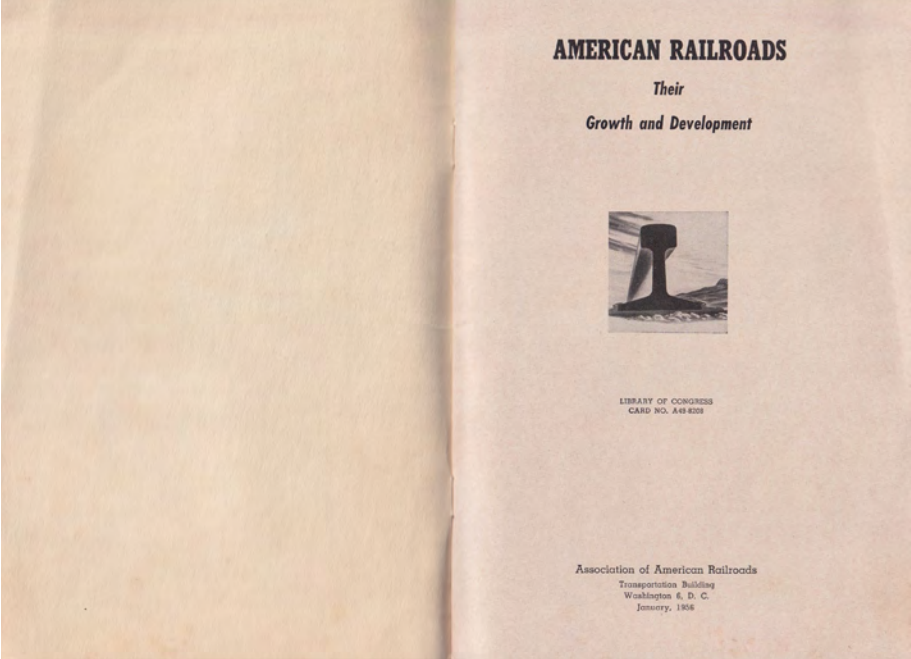
W. K. WALTHERS, 1560 WEST PIERCE STREET, MILWAUKEE, WIS.



ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE No. 10250—BUILT IN 1919 by the General Electric Company and the American Locomotive Company. This is a bi-polar gearless motor and is the type used to haul passenger trains of The Milwaukee Road across the Cascade Mountains. This locomotive was renumbered E1 in 1939.

Weight on Drivers.....457,800 lbs.
Total Weight.....521,200 lbs.
Number of Motors.....12
Tractive Effort.....114,450 lbs., at 25% tractive coefficient
Driving Wheel Diameter.....44 inches
Length Overall.....76 ft. 0 in.

Ephemera
(cont.)

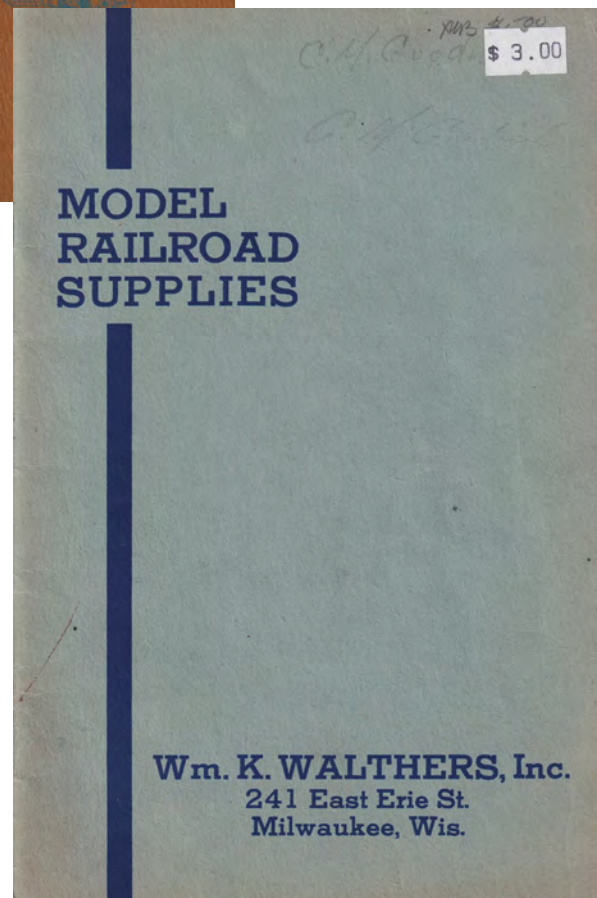
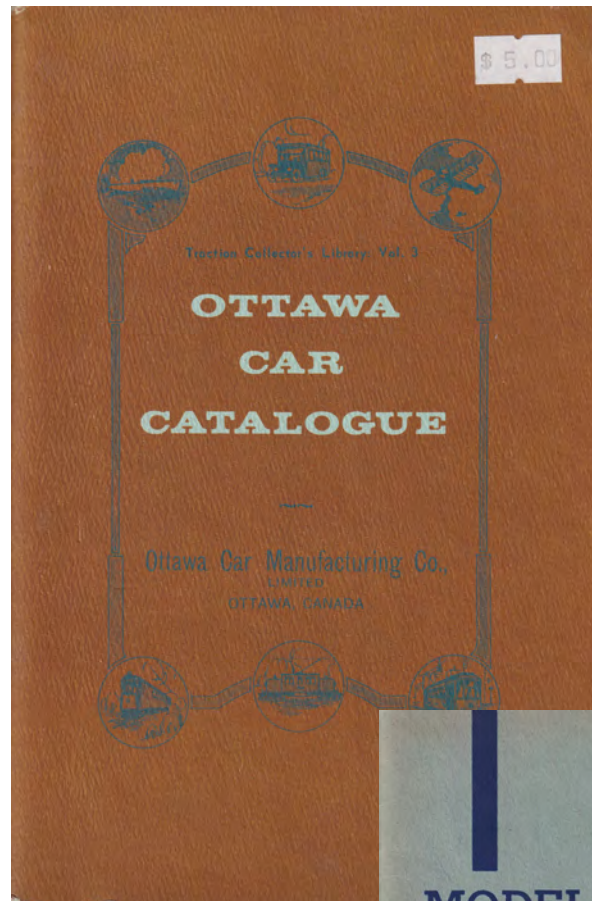


Ephemera
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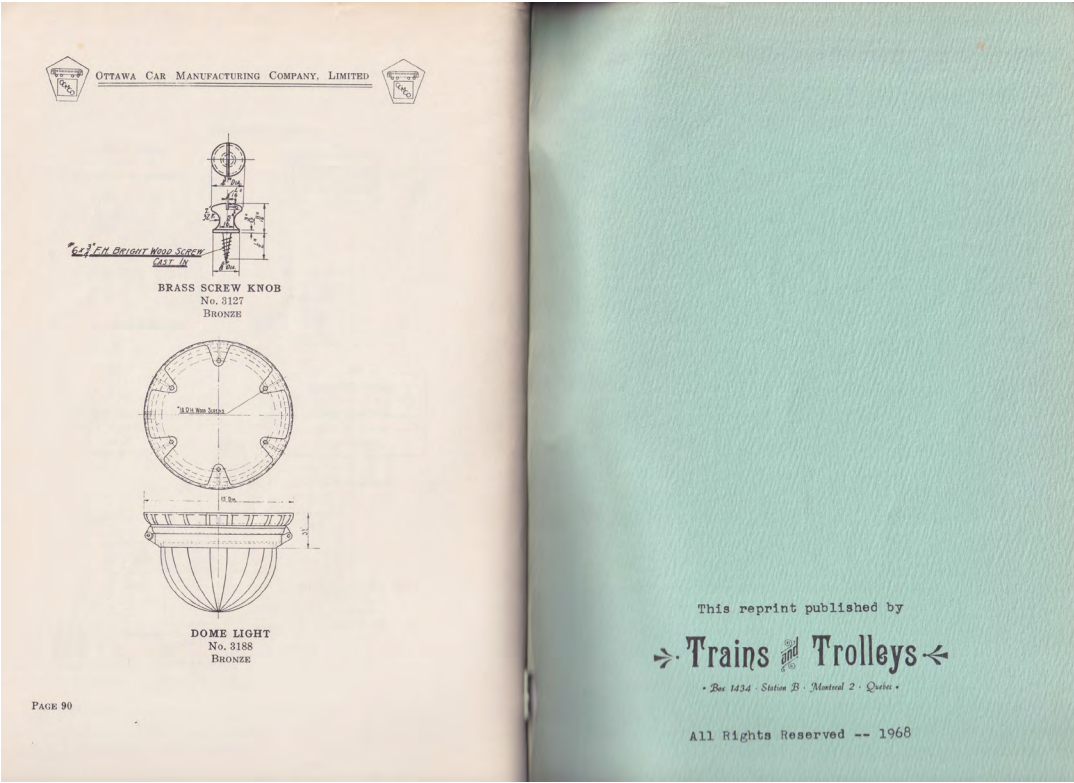
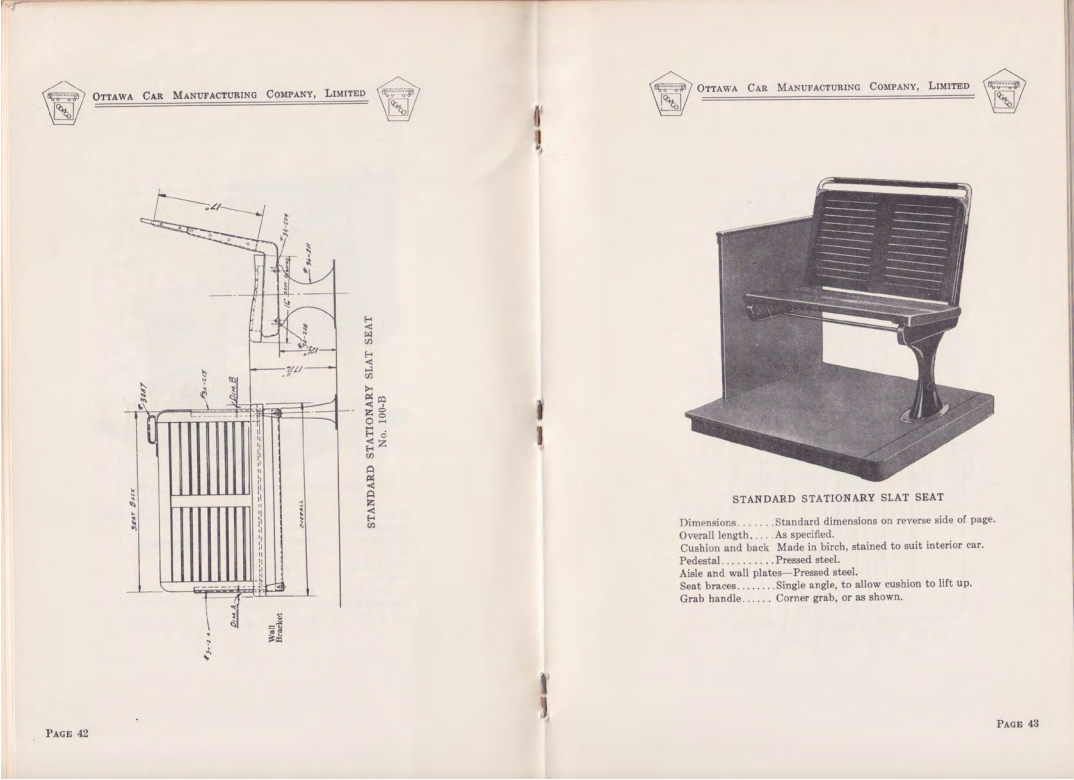


Ephemera
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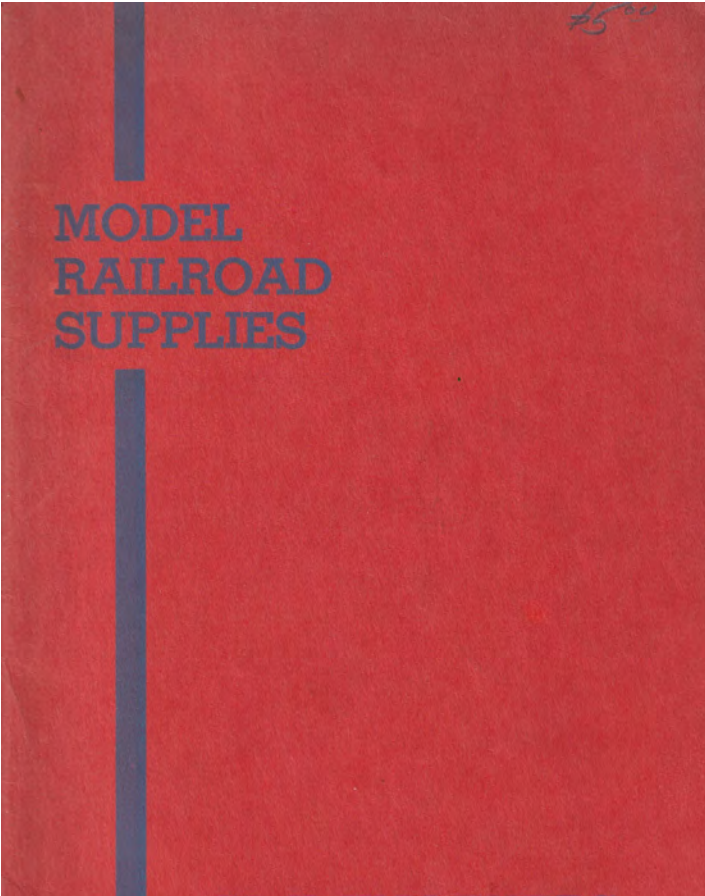
Ephemera
(cont.)



Ephemera
(cont.)



Ephemera
(cont.)



(((((

• • • • •

Inspiration

Typographic Americana



Typographic Americana
(Continued)

430

ANNIN & CO., NEW YORK

FELT NOVELTIES

EMBLEMS

No. 10

No. 11

No. 12

No. C1

No. C2

No. C3

No. C4

No. C5

No. C6

No. C7

ATHLETIC SHIRT AND SWEATER EMBLEMS AND MONOGRAMS

MADE IN FELT AND CHENILLE

Prices upon Application

FLAG AND BANNER FELTS

Cotton Felt	Width	Per Yd.
Cotton and Wool Felt	.72 inches	\$1.40
Wool Felt—all colors	.72 inches	3.50
Wool Felt—White	.72 inches	4.80

FELT LETTERS

Style 1

Style 2

Style 3

Style 4

Style 5

Size	STYLE 1 Per Doz.	STYLE 2 Per Doz.	STYLE 3 Per Doz.	STYLE 4 Per Doz.	STYLE 5 Per Doz.
2 inches	\$.20				
2½ inches	.25				
3 inches	.30	\$0.36	\$0.50		
3½ inches	.36	.45			
4½ inches	.48	.60	.75	\$1.20	\$2.00
5 inches	.54	.72	.90	1.50	2.20
6 inches	.72	.90	1.20	1.80	2.50
8 inches	.96	1.50	1.80	2.10	3.00



American

HAT CO.

908 LIVE OAK

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77003

STYLE

COLOR

DIM.

5½	6	6½	6¾	6¾	6¾	6¾	6¾	7	7½	7¾	7¾	7¾	7¾	7¾
----	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	----

Q

3

12

SEC.

ROW

SEAT

RESERVED SEAT - LOWER STAND

Est. Pr. 5.00

F. Tax 1.00

Lic. Fee .15

St. Tax .10

\$6.25

NATIONAL LEAGUE

19

WORLD'S

46

AMERICAN LEAGUE

CHAMPIONSHIP

SPORTSMAN'S PARK

GAMES

SAINT LOUIS

GAME

6

RAIN CHECK

RETAIN THIS CHECK

IF LEGAL GAME IS NOT PLAYED THIS CHECK IS GOOD WHENEVER THIS GAME IS PLAYED.

St. Louis National Baseball Club

W. B. Gaudin

NOT GOOD IF DETACHED

WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES 1946

GAME

6

READ IMPORTANT NOTICES ON REVERSE SIDE

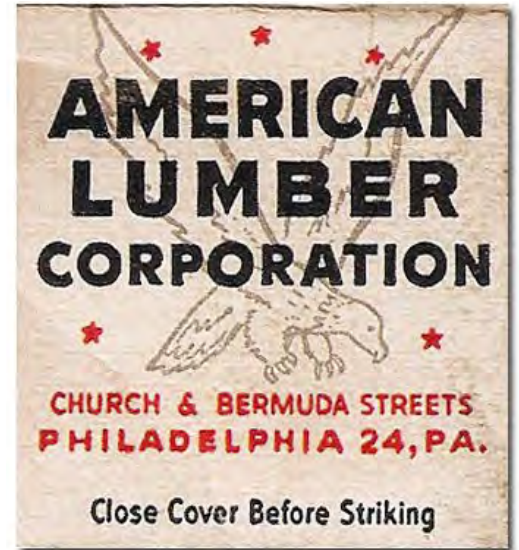
DO NOT DETACH THIS Coupon from Rain Check

St. Louis Nat'l Baseball Club

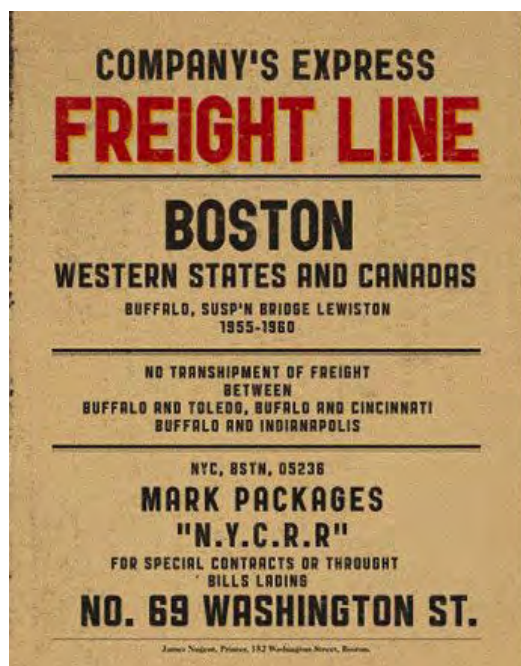
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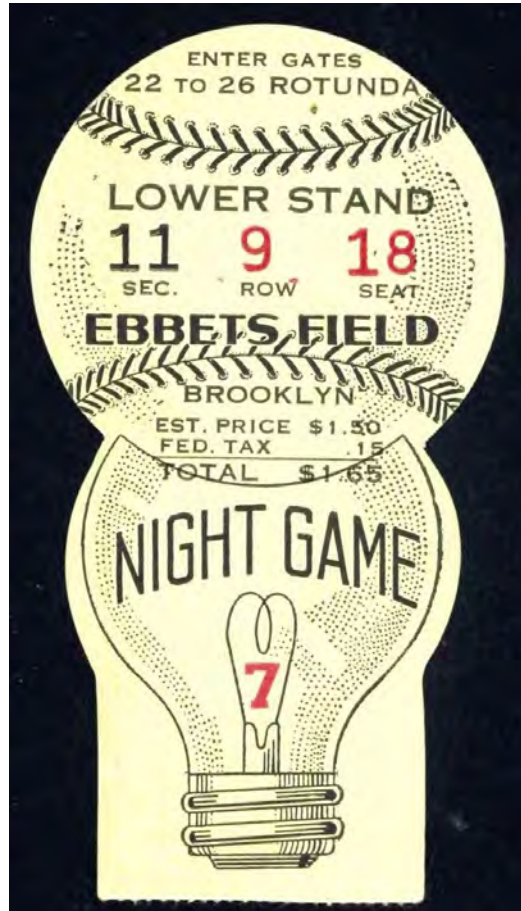
WELDON, WILLIAMS & LOCK, FT. SMITH, ARK.

Typographic Americana
(Continued)

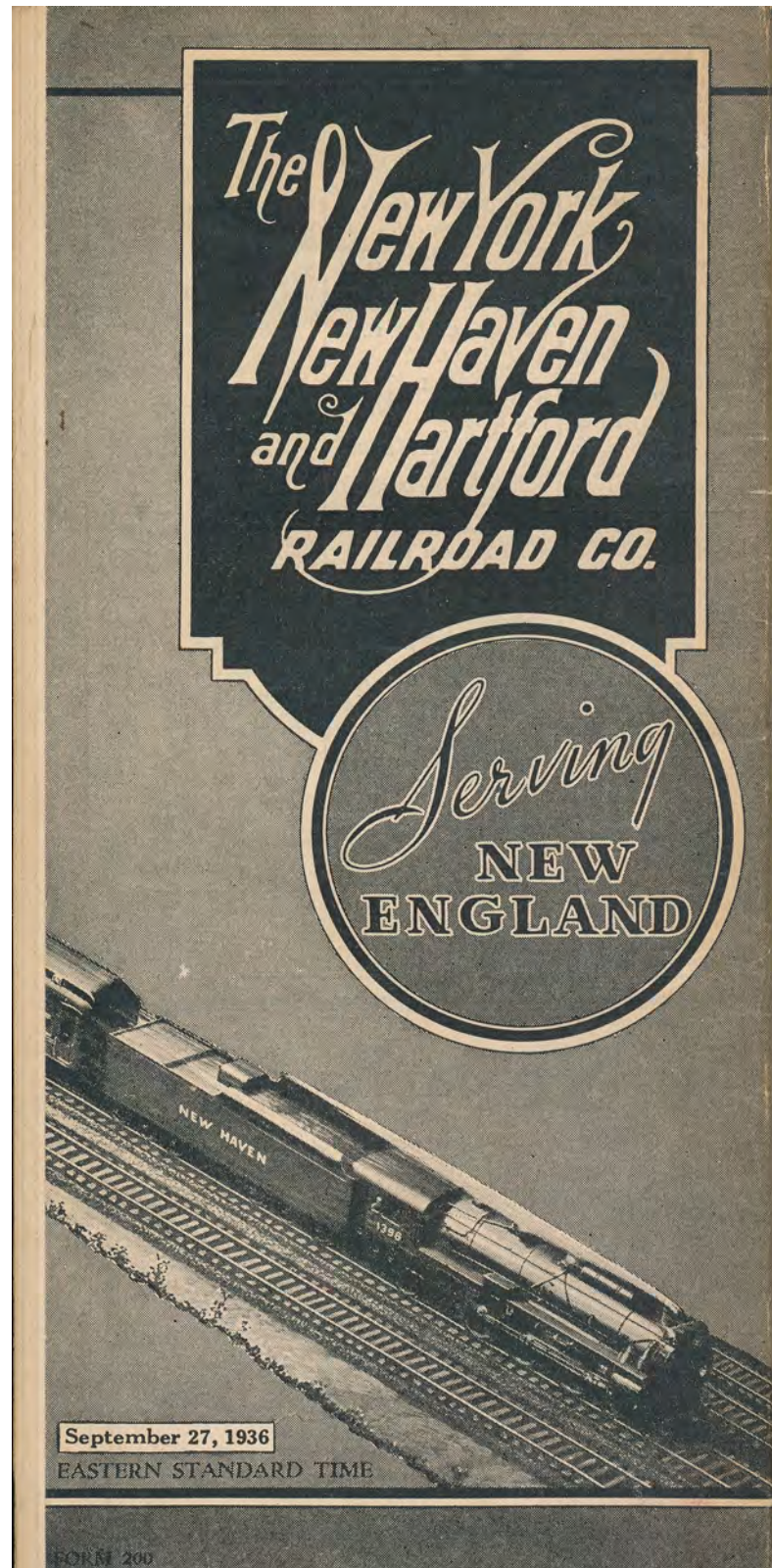


Typographic Americana
(Continued)



Typographic Americana
(Continued)

Typographic Americana
(Continued)



Boy Scouts of America



Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)



Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)



Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)



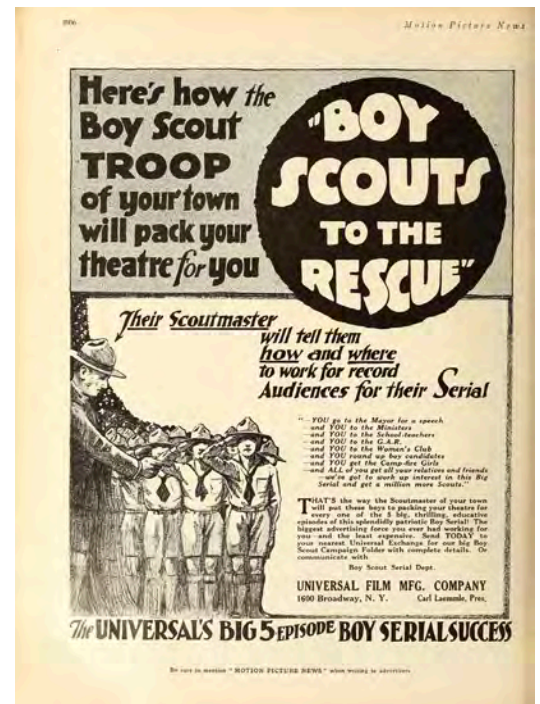
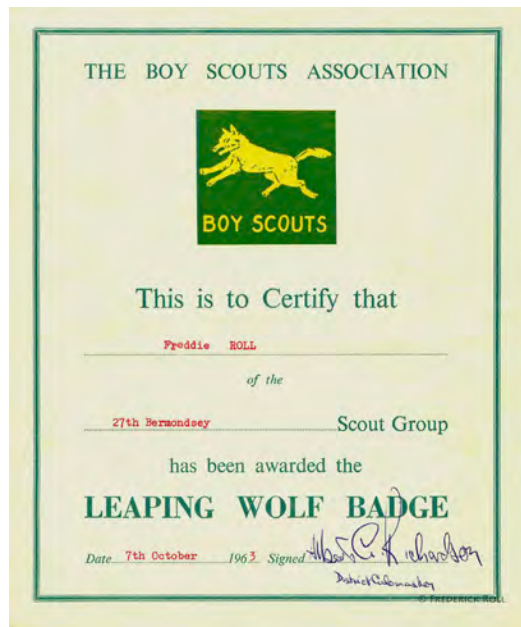
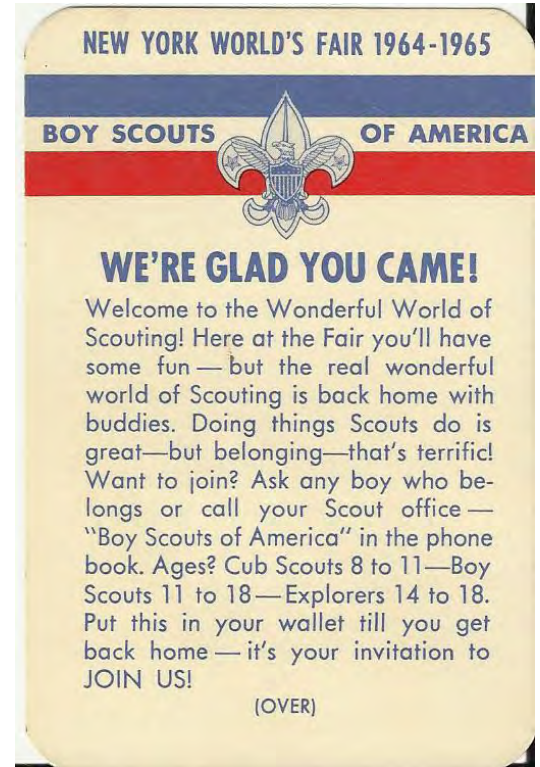
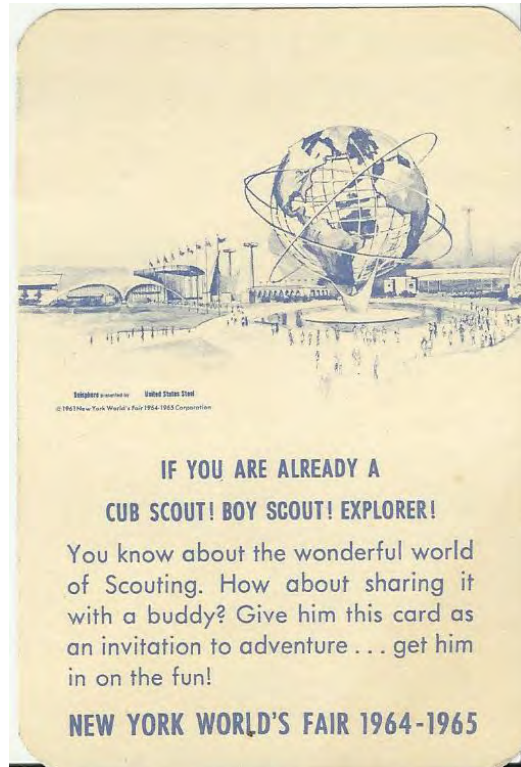
Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)



Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)



Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)



Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)



Boy Scouts of America
(Continued)

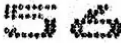


Industrial Normcore

BR 3502/

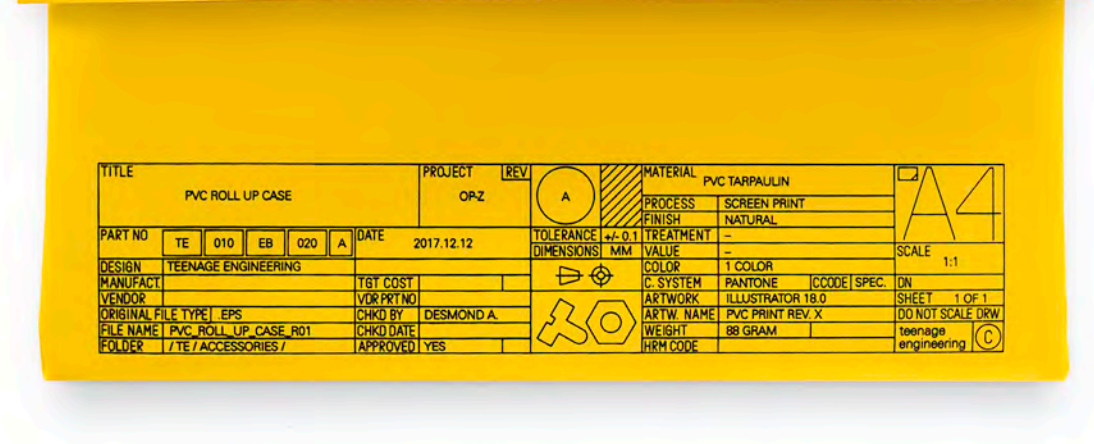


Reserved

Class	Coach	Seat
		
BACK to direction of travel		

Between





TITLE				PROJECT		REV	MATERIAL	
PVC ROLL UP CASE				OPZ			PVC TARPULIN	
PART NO	TE	010	EB	020	A	DATE	2017.12.12	TOLERANCE
DESIGN						TEENAGE ENGINEERING		PROCESS
MANUFACT								FINISH
VENDOR								TREATMENT
ORIGINAL FILE TYPE						EPS		VALUE
FILE NAME						PVC_ROLL_UP_CASE_R01		COLOR
FOLDER						/TE/ACCESSORIES/		C. SYSTEM
TGT COST								PANTONE
VDR PRT NO								ILLUSTRATOR 18.0
CHKD BY						DESMOND A.		ARTW. NAME
CHKD DATE								PVC PRINT REV. X
APPROVED						YES		WEIGHT
								88 GRAM
								HRM CODE



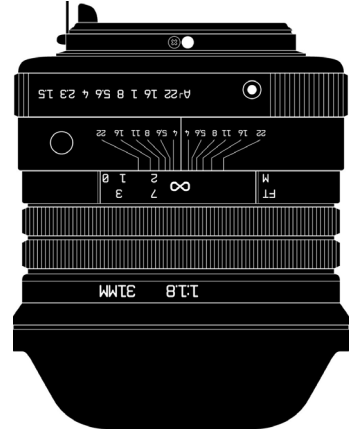
SCALE 1:1

SHEET 1 OF 1

DO NOT SCALE DRW

teenage engineering

Industrial Normcore
(Continued)



RISO KAGAKU CORPORATION

インクのセット方法 ホルダーの▶マークに合わせて差しこみ、右に回してロックする

Insert the Ink Cartridge with this arrow aligned with the ▶ on the holder, and turn it clockwise to lock it.

Introduire cette cartouche en alignant cette flèche avec la ▶ sur son support et la tourner vers la droite pour la verrouiller.

注意

- 眼に入った場合は、速やかに多量の水でよく洗い流してください
- 皮膚についた場合は、せっけんなどでよく洗ってください
- 印刷中は十分な換気を行ってください
- 異常を感じた場合には医師の診断を受けてください
- 印刷以外の用途には使用しないでください
- 小さなお子さまの手の届かないところに保管してください

- 口のある面には、衝撃を与えないでください
- 適正な使用温度：15℃～30℃

Caution

- If ink gets into your eyes, flush it out immediately with plenty of water.
- If ink comes into contact with your skin, wash it off thoroughly using soap.
- Allow plenty of ventilation during printing.
- If you feel unusual during use, seek medical advice.
- Check that this ink is for intended purposes.
- Check that this ink is for intended purposes.

RISOINK

NET. 1000ml

RISO INK G1

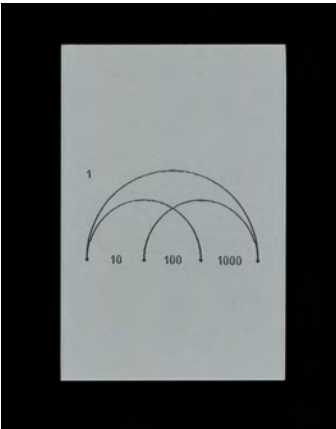
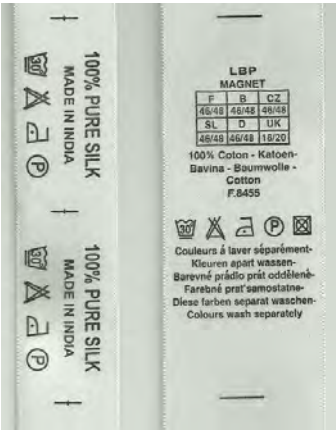
© 2009 RISO KAGAKU CORPORATION. All rights reserved. RISO INK G1 is a registered trademark of RISO KAGAKU CORPORATION.



Industrial Normcore
(Continued)



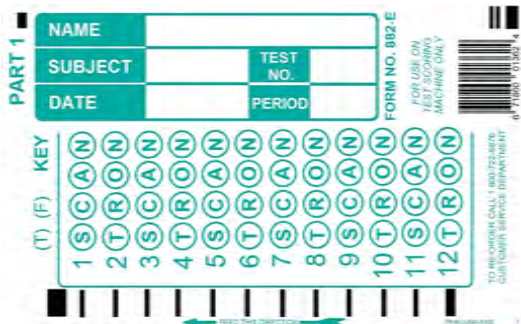
Industrial Normcore
(Continued)



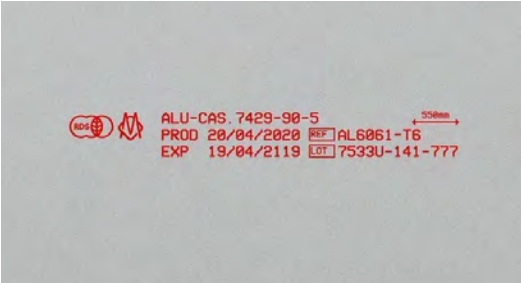
Industrial Normcore
(Continued)



Industrial Normcore
(Continued)



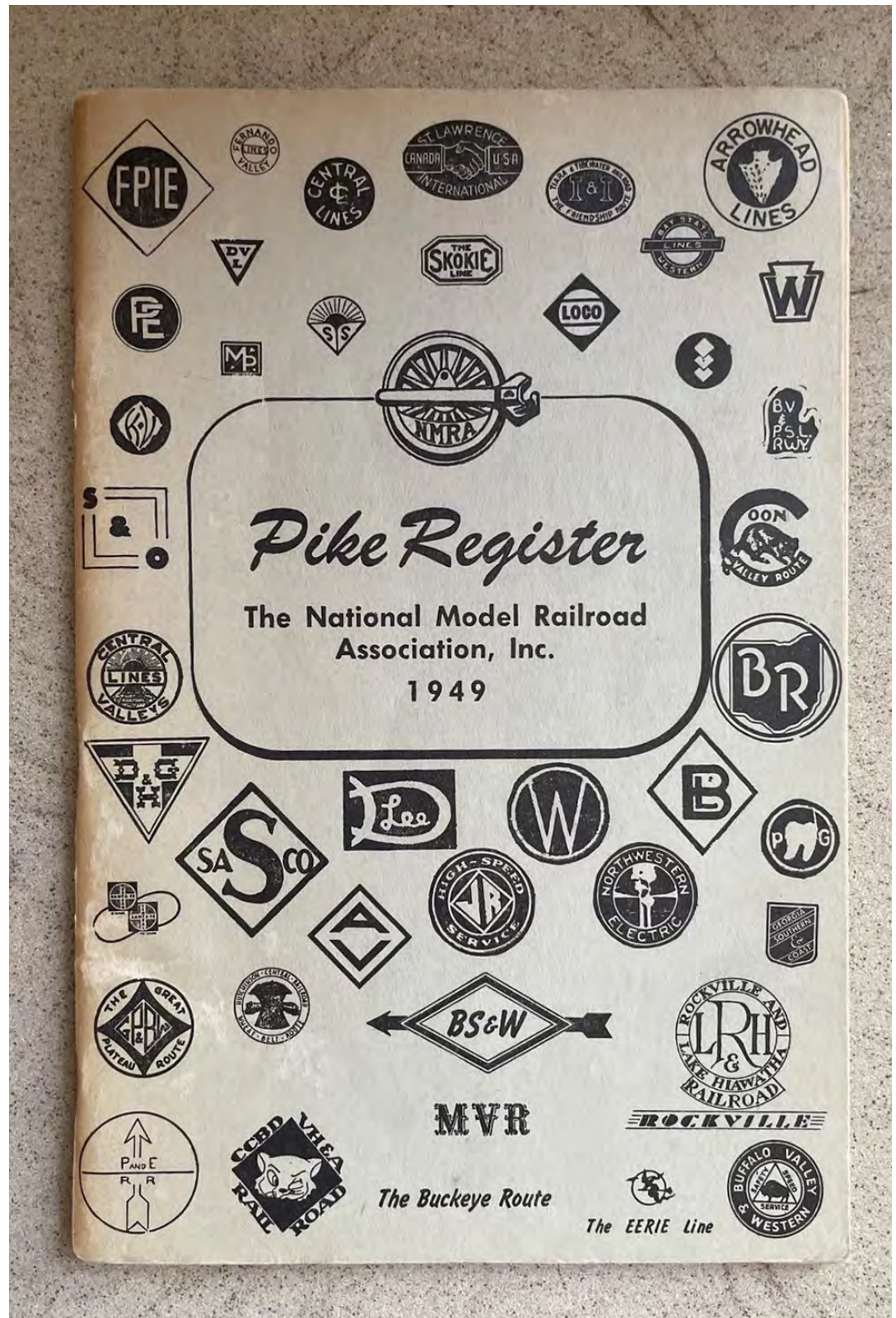
Industrial Normcore
(Continued)



Vintage NMRA



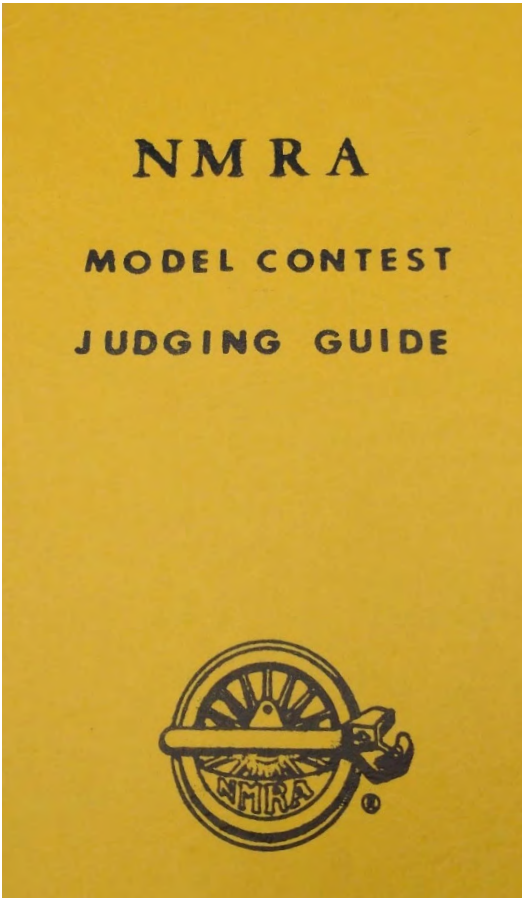
Vintage NMRA
(Continued)



Vintage NMRA
(Continued)

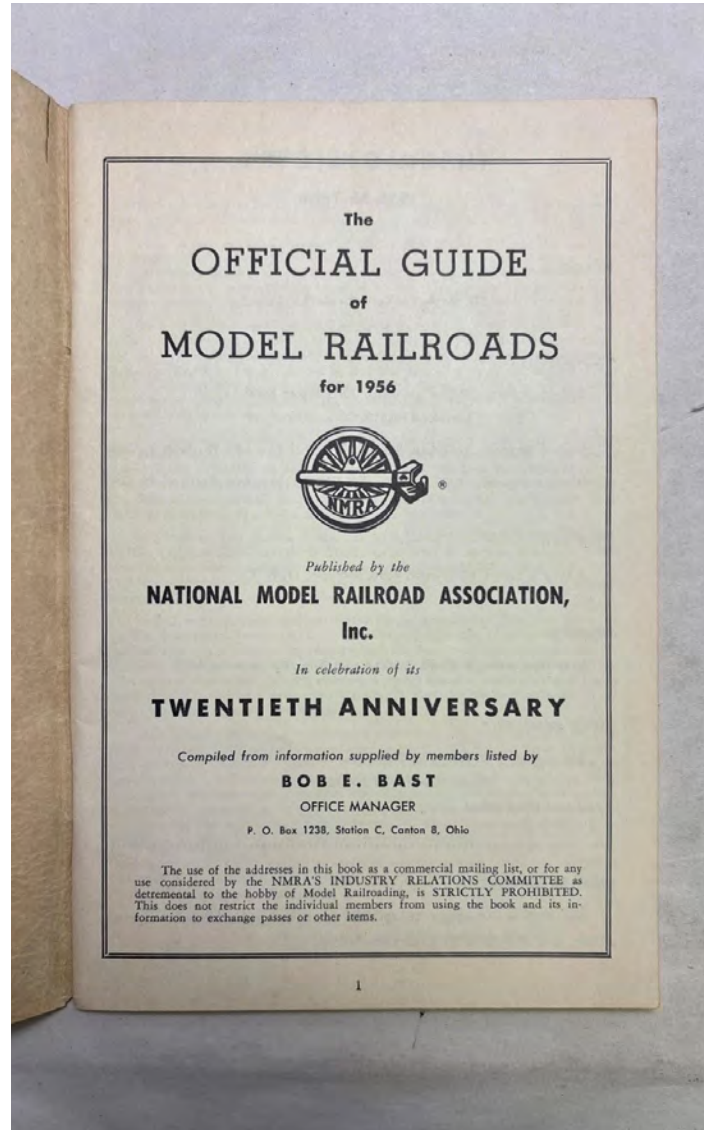


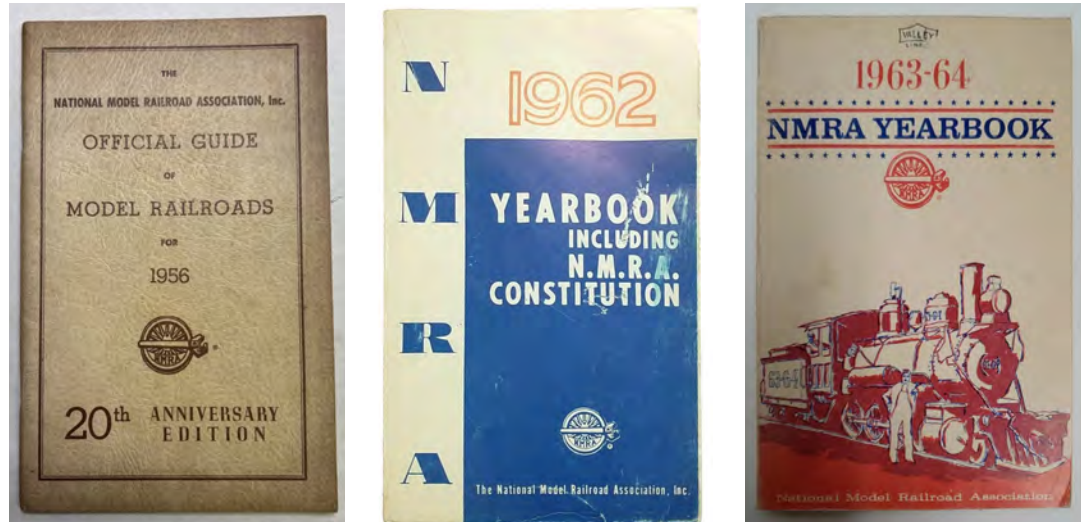
Vintage NMRA
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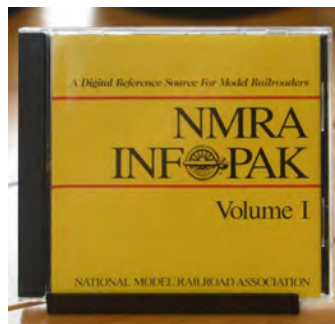
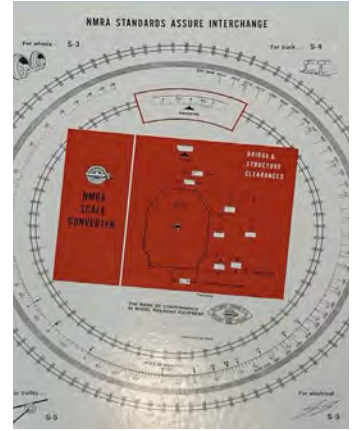
Vintage NMRA
(Continued)



Vintage NMRA
(Continued)

Vintage NMRA
(Continued)

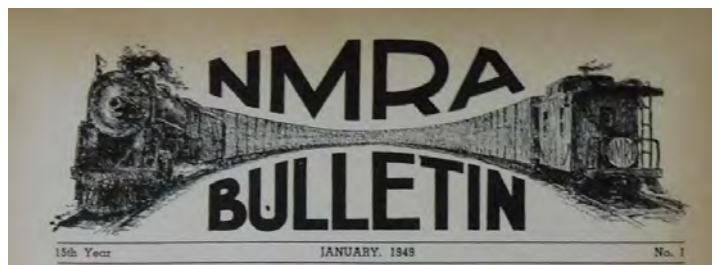
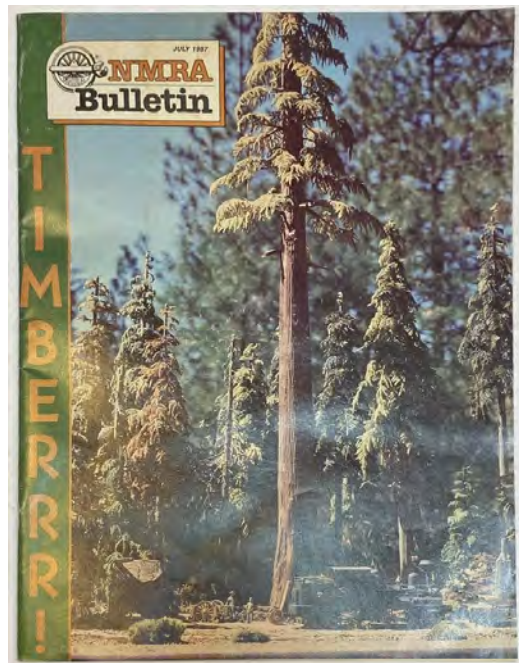
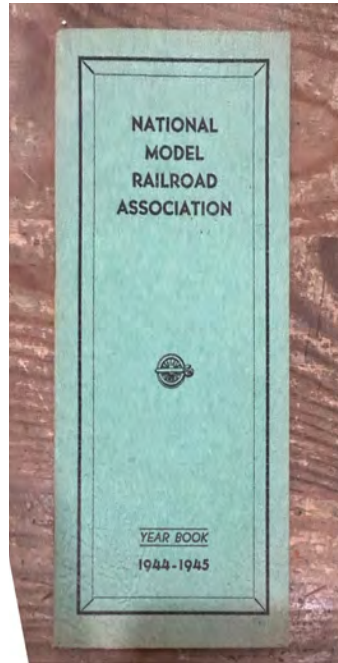
Vintage NMRA
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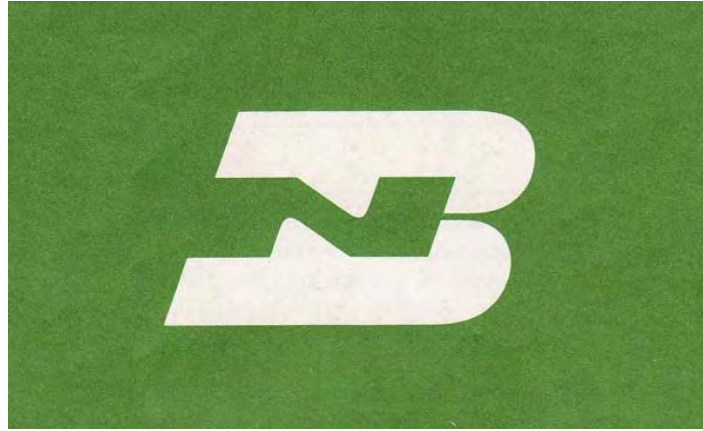
Vintage NMRA
(Continued)



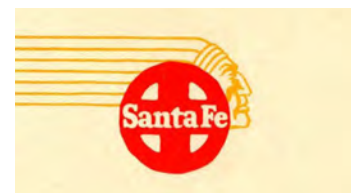
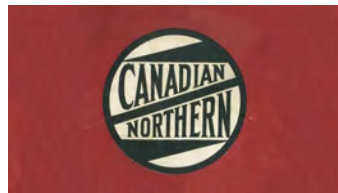
Vintage NMRA
(Continued)



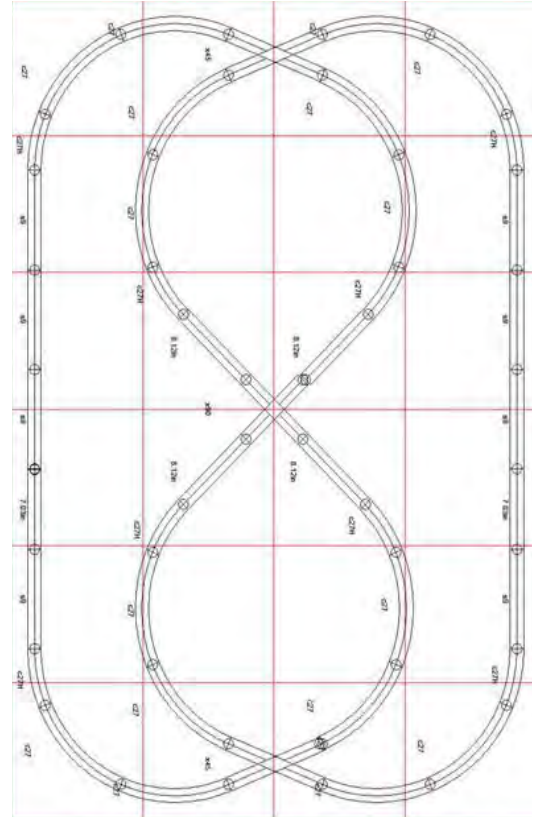
Vintage Railway Brands



Vintage Railway Brands
(Continued)



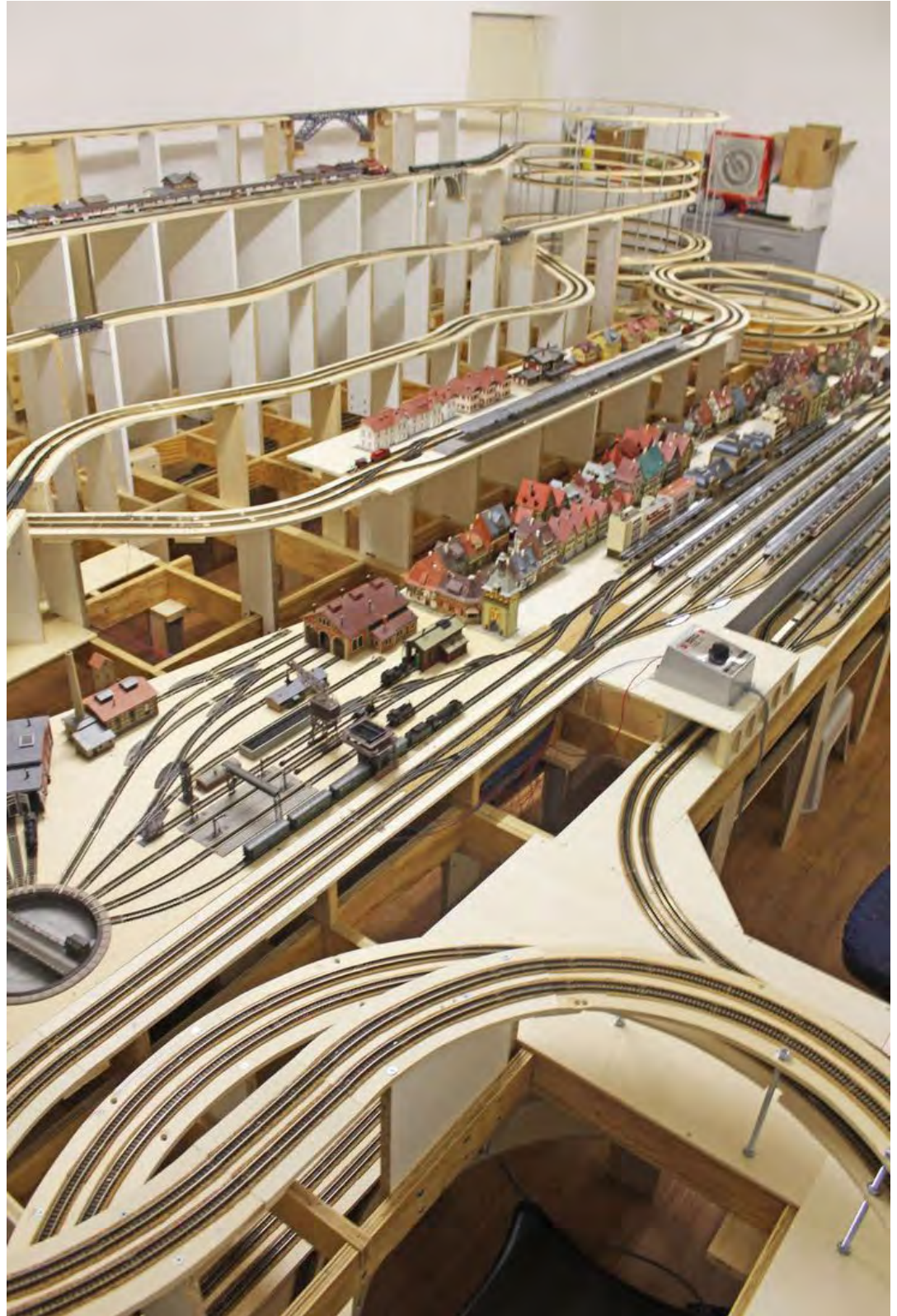
Track Patterns



**fiddle level with through station
and multiple sidings**
ramp made of Märklin bridges to
upper level
layout size: 350 x 130 cm (11' 5" x 4' 4")



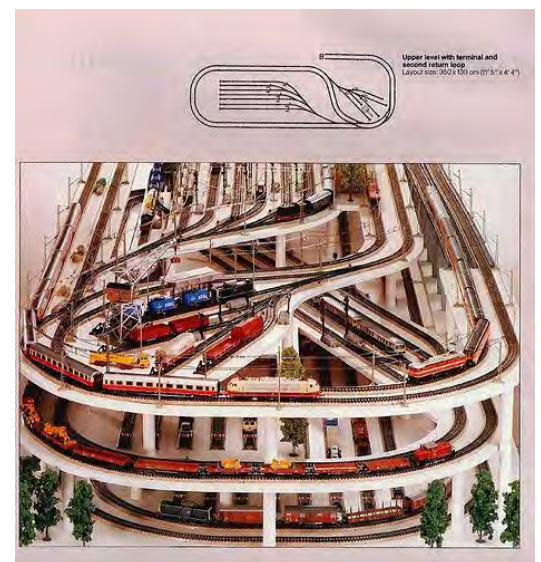
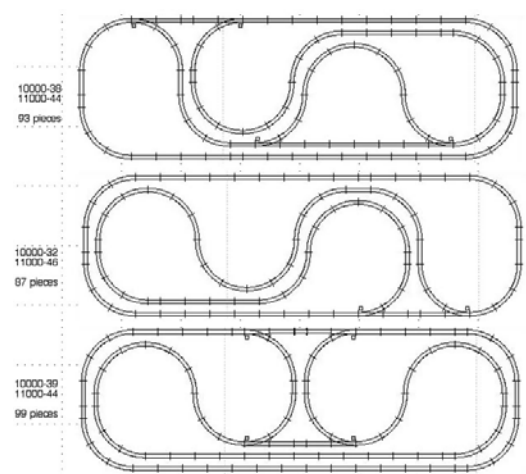
Track Patterns
(Continued)



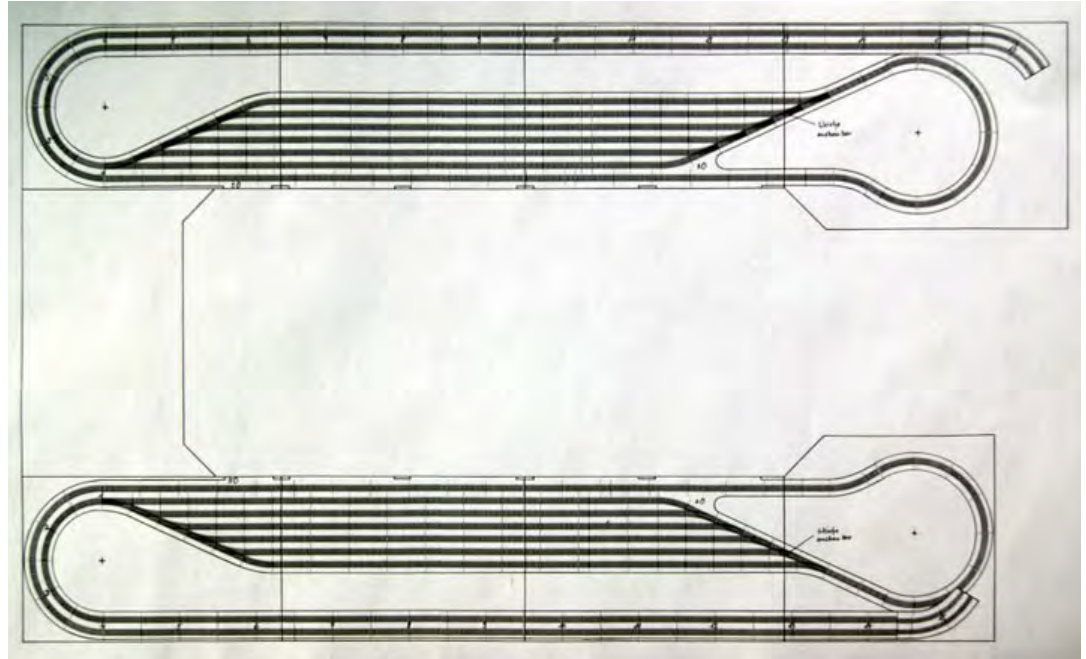
Track Patterns
(Continued)



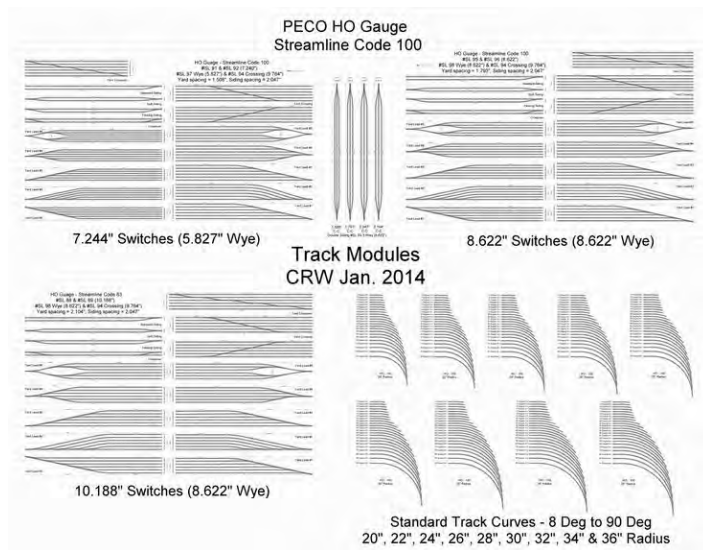
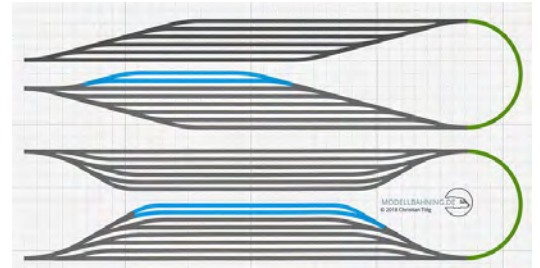
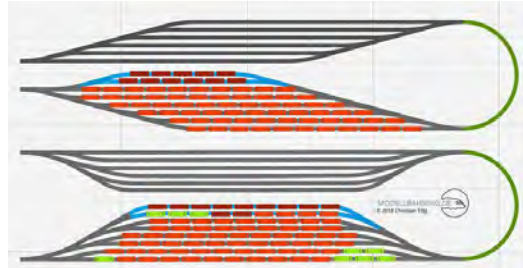
Track Patterns
(Continued)



Track Patterns
(Continued)



Track Patterns (Continued)



Messaging

'Do-Not-Use' List

→ These terms and phrases are to be avoided, as they are in heavy use by other hobbyist organizations, or unconvincing brand promissory statements, or do not qualify as effective brand positions or statements.

Words

Unique
Friendly
Enthusiasts
Like-minded
Learning opportunities
World-class
Hands-on
Interactive
Rich history
Invaluable
Supportive
Inclusive (unless backed by meaningful proof)

Phrases

Fun for all ages
Join us today!
Preserve the tradition
For future generations
Get involved!
The way it used to be
Back in the day
The golden age
Something for everyone
Join our community of like-minded individuals
We welcome all skill levels
Great for the whole family
Promoting the hobby
Meet fellow enthusiasts
Grow your skills
Take your hobby to the next level
Get involved in your local chapter
A must for any serious hobbyist
Be part of something special

Example of bad copy

_____ is an association dedicated to providing education and resources to hobbyists to advance their mastery of the craft. We support serious hobbyists in their efforts to perpetuate tradition and keep the artisan aspects and high quality standards of the craft alive.

Messaging Analysis

NMRA's Average Lexical Density

56.97%

Lexical Density

(Number of different words / total number of words) x 100

The lexical density of a text tries to measure the proportion of the content (lexical) words over the total words. Texts with a lower density are more easily understood.

As a guide, lexically dense text has a lexical density of around 60-70% and those which are not dense have a lower lexical density measure of around 40-50%.

Sunday's Finest Site's Reading Level

(grade) 16.54

Also known as the fog index, a readability test designed to show how easy or difficult a text is to read. It uses the following formula:

(Average Number of words in sentences + Percentage of words of three or more syllables) x 0.4

The gunning fog index gives the number of years of education that your reader hypothetically needs to understand the paragraph or text. The gunning fog index formula implies that short sentences written in plain english achieve a better score than long sentences written in complicated language.

Select Comparative Sites**Girl Scouts**

Average lexical density—41.98%

Reading level (grade)—14.15

BSA

Average lexical density—50.50%

Reading level (grade)—18.43

SEMA

Average lexical density—75.70%

Reading level (grade)—20.9

American Philatelic Society

Average lexical density—52.73%

Reading level (grade)—25.32

The Model Railroad Club

Average lexical density—56.671%

Reading level (grade)—17.7

Marklin

Average lexical density—58.14%

Reading level (grade)—11.43

Scale Trains

Average lexical density—54.04%

Reading level (grade)—12.69

Athearn

Average lexical density—77.40%

Reading level (grade)—11.38

Lionel

Average lexical density—60.64%

Reading level (grade)—16.03

Rapido

Average lexical density—69.35%

Reading level (grade)—14.91

American Kennel Club

Average lexical density—57.17%

Reading level (grade)—13.14

American Numismatic Association

Average lexical density—57.84%

Reading level (grade)—26.39

The National Association for Amateur Radio

Average lexical density—55.61%

Reading level (grade)—26.25

Select Messaging

Unique Language
Messaging beyond 140 words*

*statistically, 140 words is the maximum number of words which will hold a new reader's attention in marketing copy.

NMRA

The National Model Railroad Association, Inc. advances the global scale model railroading community through education, advocacy, standards, and social interaction.

The National Model Railroad Association, a 501(c)(3) not for profit educational organization, was founded at the first National Convention over Labor Day Weekend, 1935. The initial goal was to develop standards for scale model railroad equipment to facilitate interchangeability and operation of equipment between modelers, clubs and others.

Today, the NMRA is a world wide organization, with over 16,000 active members, associates, families and clubs dedicated to the hobby of scale model railroading in all its facets, supporting a hobby of many diverse interests that all relate to the greater world of trains and railroads.

Dave Thornton, then a Director and currently Vice President of Administration, wrote a history of the NMRA for the 75th Anniversary celebration at the 2010 National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. To read his article, click on the link below:

Girl Scouts

When you're a Girl Scout, you call the shots.

Every Girl Scout has their own curiosity, dreams, and talents—so when they come together to decide which of the thousands of Girl Scout activities to try, the sky's the limit. Whether visiting an animal shelter, camping, hosting a dance-off, or filming a movie—they're learning to take risks, trust their gut, and team up with others for good.

The secret sauce holding it all together? Joy.

Forever friendship is a powerful thing. It's what gives Girl Scouts the confidence to be themselves, unapologetically. It's what makes them feel safe enough to try new things and cheer each other on in tough times. It's the support that can get them up on tough mornings, help them raise their hand in class, and even climb to the top of a mountain.

BSA

Scouting invites every youth to a safe, fun place to learn, explore, and grow.

Welcome to Scouting

Scouting America is chartered by Congress to serve our nation's youth by instilling the values of the Scout Oath and Law. Scouting America aims to prepare young people for lives of impact and purpose. We welcome, at every level of our movement, youth and families who wish to live such a life of impact and purpose, guided by the Scout Oath and Law.

Scouting America is committed to creating a welcoming, safe environment where Scouts can freely express themselves, share their experiences, and become the best version of themselves by learning from and respecting each other.

Scouting America is non-partisan. The National organization, Local Scout communities (councils), and units will ensure that their decisions, public statements, relationships with third parties, activities, and events are consistent with our non-partisan nature and maintain the welcoming and supportive nature of Scouting.

About Scouting America

Scouting America provides the nation's foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training, which helps young people be "Prepared. For Life.®" The Scouting organization is composed of more than 1 million youth members between the ages of 5 and 21 and more than 628,000 volunteers in local councils throughout the United States and its territories.

Since its inception in 1910, more than 130 million young men and women have participated in Scouting America's youth programs. More than 35 million adult volunteers have helped carry out Scouting America's mission.

BSA programs are divided by age and activity: Cub Scouting is for boys and girls in kindergarten through 5th grade, Scouts BSA is open to young men and young women in grades 6 through 12, and co-ed Venturing and Sea Scouting are available for young men and young women age 14 through 20. Scouting America also offers career-oriented co-ed Exploring programs to youth age 10 through 20.

Traditional Scouting programs are operated by local chartering organizations, such as religious institutions, clubs, civic associations, and educational organizations, which implement the Scouting program for youth within their communities. These units are led entirely by volunteers appointed by the chartering organization, who are supported by local

Select Messaging (cont.)

councils using both volunteers and paid professional staff.

In order to further outdoor activities, which are core to Scouting's mission, Scouting America has four High-Adventure Bases: Northern Tier (Minnesota, Manitoba, and Ontario), Philmont Scout Ranch (New Mexico), Sea Base (Florida), and Summit Bechtel Reserve (West Virginia).

The Foundation of Scouting

Scout Oath: On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

Scout Law: A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

Scout Mission: The mission of Scouting America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

SEMA

The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) serves as a leading voice for the worldwide car culture, representing over 7,000 member companies that create, buy, sell, and use specialty-automotive parts that make vehicles more unique, attractive, convenient, safer, fun, and even like new again. Business member benefits include product development resources, market research, networking, education, legislative advocacy, and more. The Association organizes the annual SEMA Show in Las Vegas, Nev., and actively supports the career and business opportunities that the aftermarket generates. The industry contributes nearly \$337 billion in economic impact to the U.S. economy, supports 1.3 million jobs nationally, and generates \$52.3 billion in parts sales annually.

America Philatelic Society

With members in more than 110 countries, the APS is the largest, non-profit organization for stamp collectors in the world. Founded in 1886, the APS serves collectors, educators, postal historians, and the general public by providing a wide variety of programs and services.

The Society is entirely supported by membership dues, gifts, and the sale of publications, specialty items, and services.

Membership in the American Philatelic Society offers a wide variety of benefits and services, including the monthly journal, *The American Philatelist*. We invite you to apply for membership today.

Our Mission

To promote stamp collecting for people of all ages

To offer services to its membership and to philately in general, including knowledge and education, which enhance the pleasure and friendliness of stamp collecting

To initiate and coordinate new programs for the benefit of stamp collecting and of all collectors

To represent the United States of America in the world body of philately

To assist its members in acquiring and disposing of philatelic materials

The Model Railroad Club

The Model Railway Club is recognized by the Guinness Book of Records as the oldest model railway society in the world, having been formed in 1910, hence being known as 'The MRC'.

The club has been synonymous with the hobby for over 110+ years, with many famous members including Peter Denny (builder of the iconic Buckingham Great Central layout) and C J Freezer (Former editor of the *Railway Modeller* magazine). The club's exhibition at Westminster Hall was for much of the 20th Century 'the' exhibition.

Today, The MRC is the largest club in the UK by a number of members and has its own purpose-built premises, Keen House, situated in central London, 10 minutes walk from King's Cross.

As well as being the home of The MRC, Keen House is also home to many railway and modelling societies who hold their regular meetings.

Our clubroom has a licenced bar and our library with over 5000 books and periodicals is one of the most extensive of its kind in Europe.

We help to organise the two largest model railway exhibitions in the UK – the London Festival of Railway Modelling at Alexandra Palace, and the

Select Messaging (cont.)

National Festival of Railway Modelling at the NEC in November.

The National Association for Amateur Radio

MISSION

ARRL's mission is to promote and protect the art, science, and enjoyment of amateur radio, and to develop the next generation of radio amateurs.

What Is Amateur Radio (or Ham Radio)

VISION

ARRL, through our digital transformation, will be globally recognized by radio amateurs and the public for promoting amateur radio through our superior delivery of content, training, and licensing; protecting amateur radio through our work with regulators and industry; and investing in the future of amateur radio by inspiring and educating America's youth in radio communications and technology.

ABOUT

Founded in 1914 by Hiram Percy Maxim as The American Radio Relay League, ARRL is a noncommercial organization that numbers within our ranks the vast majority of active radio amateurs in the United States. ARRL is also the Secretariat of the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU). We have a proud history of achievement as the standard-bearer in amateur affairs.

A bona fide interest in amateur radio is the only essential qualification of ARRL membership; an amateur radio license is not a prerequisite, although full voting membership is granted only to licensed radio amateurs in the US.

Join ARRL Today

ARRL FIVE PILLARS

ARRL's underpinnings as amateur radio's witness, partner and forum are defined by five pillars: Public Service, Advocacy, Education, Technology, and Membership.

American Numismatic Association

Who We Are

The American Numismatic Association (ANA) is a congressionally chartered nonprofit dedicated to the study, collection, and appreciation of coins, paper

currency, and other forms of numismatic items.

Founded in 1891, the ANA has since grown to become an invaluable resource for collectors, researchers, and enthusiasts alike. With our mission to promote the hobby of numismatics, the ANA offers educational programs, conventions, publications, and online resources aimed at fostering knowledge and camaraderie within the numismatic community.

The association also operates the Money Museum, located in Colorado Springs, Colorado, which houses an extensive collection of rare and historically significant coins, paper currency, and related artifacts, providing visitors with an immersive experience into the fascinating world of money.

Our History

Dr. George F. Heath of Monroe, Michigan, when not involved in his practice of medicine, gained a knowledge of world history by studying his collection of coins. The obscurity of his little town hampered his efforts to gain additional knowledge of the hobby and to obtain certain specimens for his cabinet, and made meeting fellow numismatists almost impossible.

In 1888 his ingenuity was tested when he, alone, printed, published and distributed a four-page leaflet, *The Numismatist*, in which he listed his coin needs, advertised duplicates for sale, and discussed numismatic topics. The little publication found many friends among the few hundred collectors who, like the doctor, were too isolated to take advantage of numismatic societies in large cities such as Boston, Montreal, New York City, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Our Mission

The American Numismatic Association is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to educating and encouraging people to study and collect coins and related items. The Association serves collectors, the general public, and academic communities with an interest in numismatics.

The ANA helps all people discover and explore the world of money through its vast array of programs including its education and outreach, museum, library, publications, conventions and seminars.

Case Studies





→ www.girlscouts.org

Girl Scouts prepare for fun, friendship,
and new adventures while making
the world a better place.

Girl Scouts look at our world and take action
to change it for the better. They make friends,
challenge themselves with new experiences,
write their own stories, and develop the skills
and confidence to say, "I know I can do this!"

So how do we do it? It's all part of
the Girl Scout Leadership Experience,
and it's what makes Girl Scouting
a unique experience for girls.

Girl Scouts Fact Sheet

Brief History

The Girl Scouts of the USA was founded on March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia, by Juliette Gordon Low. Inspired by the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides movement in England, Low envisioned an organization that would help girls develop leadership, outdoor skills, and confidence. The first troop consisted of 18 girls, and the movement quickly expanded nationwide. Today, GSUSA continues to empower millions of girls through service, adventure, and education.

Membership

- Total Members: Approximately 2 million, including 1.7 million girl members and 750,000 adult volunteers.
- Local Structure: GSUSA operates through 111 local councils, which oversee service units and individual troops.

Age Levels: Girl Scouts is divided into six program levels based on school grades:

- Daisy: Kindergarten – 1st grade
- Brownie: 2nd – 3rd grade
- Junior: 4th – 5th grade
- Cadette: 6th – 8th grade
- Senior: 9th – 10th grade
- Ambassador: 11th – 12th grade

Membership Dues:

- 2024-2025: \$25 per year
- 2025-2026: \$45 per year (youth members)
- 2026-2027: \$65 per year (youth members)
- Adult Membership: Increasing from \$25 to \$30 in 2026
- Financial Assistance: Available for families in need

Key Programs & Activities:

- Outdoor Adventures: Camping, hiking, survival skills
- STEM Education: Robotics, coding, science projects
- Entrepreneurship: Famous Girl Scout Cookie Program
- Community Service: Volunteer projects, leadership training
- Badges & Awards: Girls earn badges based on skills learned, culminating in prestigious awards like the Gold Award

Impact & Legacy:

- Over 50 million alumnae in the U.S.
- Famous former Girl Scouts include Sandra Day O'Connor, Sally Ride, Taylor Swift, and Michelle Obama
- Generates over \$800 million annually in cookie sales, funding local troops and programs

Sample of Girl Scouts
Concil Logos

There are 112 councils in total



“The Girl Scouts of America is composed of 112 independent councils, so COLLINS’s creation needed to arm each one with the tools for cohesive communications while still providing flexibility to support their different communities. ”

—Charlotte Beach, PRINT Mag

Girl Scouts Earns a Badge in
Exceptional Branding Thanks
to a New Identity by COLLINS

PRINT

The Girl Scouts of the USA has always had well-known visual signifiers, like pig-tailed little girls selling TagAlongs outside supermarkets, circular patches sewn onto brown sashes, and summer sun-faded friendship bracelets tied to small wrists. Since their 1912 inception in Savannah, Georgia, these images have ingratiated Girl Scouts into our culture, and underlined their mission to pioneer female leadership and encourage girls to act on their dreams.

Over 100 years later, Girl Scouts still plays a key role in the lives of over a million American Girls, and now they have a new brand identity that reflects this importance. COLLINS recently took elements of these iconic Girl Scouts images to develop a colorful brand system, Trefoil logo, and refreshed site design for the organization.

COLLINS was particularly inspired by the visual history of Girl Scouts patches and badges, and translated them into geometric forms to use as building blocks throughout the brand system. The reimagined Trefoil logo sits at the center of this visual language, paying homage to its previous iterations while distilling them down to a new shape and color.

The Girl Scouts of America is composed of 112 independent councils, so COLLINS's creation needed to arm each one with the tools for cohesive communications while still providing flexibility to support their different communities. The patch-inspired shapes met these needs head-on to serve as a common language to all communications, while retaining an adaptability for any application, from presentation templates to campaigns.

COLLINS and Girl Scouts also teamed up with Positype to design a custom typeface worthy of the new brand system, opting for a playful, yet classy serif that deftly compliments the color palette and iconography. The project also extended into considerations for new Girl Scouts merchandise, which took the form of reviving styles from the archives with modern updates.

If this comprehensive undertaking wasn't enough, COLLINS also worked with a diverse group of women designers to create a series of posters called The Trefoil Poster Series, with each poster expressing the artist's unique experience of Girl Scouts. Ranging from emerging voices to celebrated masters—including PRINT's very own Debbie Millman—the posters reflect a spectrum of styles and interpretations of the Trefoil emblem.





Girl Scouts Against the World
The Nation.

Now that STEM and girls' empowerment are mainstream—and Boy Scouts is coed—is there a place for Girl Scouts?

Mobile, Ala.—MacKenzie Brackett, 14, held up a toothbrush ready for transformation. “We’re going to finish up our robotics badge by making a toothbrush robot,” she announced to four fellow members of Mobile, Ala.’s Girl Scout Troop 8274 in June. Under her khaki uniform vest MacKenzie wore a T-shirt featuring the periodic table, with the slogan periodically i’m sarcastic.

MacKenzie’s mother began snipping the heads off toothbrushes while co-leader Evelyn Toler, 14, stood ready to demonstrate to three members on Zoom.

“I am He-Man, I have the power,” Alyssa Edwards muttered, looking at her battery. “Or She-Ra.” Switching sci-fi references, she looked at her battery’s V-splayed wires and held up her hand in the Spock sign. “Live long and prosper,” she said.

Girl Scouts of the USA has lived long, and it has prospered. The organization dates back to the early years of the 20th century and boasts alumnae as groundbreaking as Sandra Day O’Connor, Mae Jemison, Queen Latifah, Hillary Clinton, Martha Stewart, and Condoleezza Rice. But now, it is threatened by multiple factors, including the Boy Scouts’ going coed, the Covid-19 pandemic, and, ironically, the success of feminist movements that made the core Girl Scout mission of girls’ empowerment mainstream. Membership has been declining, and the organization’s efforts to increase diversity have not borne significant fruit: Girl Scouts remain disproportionately white.

Troop 8274 faced a more immediate challenge, imposed not from without but within. In second grade, MacKenzie and Evelyn broke away from a (to their minds) insufficiently ambitious Brownie troop because they wanted to earn every badge in the book. And it looked like they were on track to do so. But, as the core of the troop finished eighth grade, they still needed to earn 16 Cadette badges, and had only eight weeks to do it.

Their mothers felt nervous. The girls felt confident. “The positive wire is longer than the negative wire,” MacKenzie instructed her troop-mates as they stuck batteries onto their toothbrush heads, ready to motor.

As befits the grand dame of girls’ empowerment, what became the Girl Scouts has been standing up for itself from the start. The seeds for the

organization were planted more than 100 years ago when a group of British girls showed up at a Boy Scouts event in the UK and staked their own claim to Scouting, according to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. Rather than include them, the founder of Scouting in the UK, Robert Baden-Powell, created a separate organization. Juliette Gordon Low of Savannah, Ga., introduced the group to the US soon after.

Science was in the new organization’s DNA. The very first badges, in 1913, included Naturalist, Electrician, and Health. The curriculum prepared girls for service to the country, not primarily to a husband and children. That may owe something to Low’s unhappy marriage: She was in the process of divorcing her husband when he died, according to biographer Stacy Cordery. The 1920 handbook presented homemaking as just one option for adulthood, along with working as a nurse or a naturalist or in defense. Before Girl Scouts sold cookies, they sold Liberty bonds.

To solve its current problems, the organization is drawing on its original strengths: leadership and STEM. These days, it’s not a great idea to join a badge-focused troop like 8274 if you’re not into science: Close to half the Girl Scout badges focus on the subject. Next come outdoor adventures, entrepreneurship, civics, and wellness, along with some art-focused badges. The national office says it updates badge options based on what girls want—Evelyn Toler is on a feedback panel—and evidently girls want science. From 2019 to 2020, close to 90,000 girls earned the new Think Like a Programmer, Coding for Good, and Cybersecurity badges, Striegel said.

The Girl Scouts treats STEM its way: with an emphasis on changing the world. Along with following the organization’s long-standing commitment to public service, that stance aligns with research that shows that girls are more likely to stay involved in science when they see it as relevant to their own lives and as a way to improve their communities. (Or to become Hermione Granger, perhaps: One of the Gulfcoast Florida council’s most popular activities is “Mischief Managed,” in which girls program magic wands and brew potions.)

To compare, the Boy Scouts Programming badge, which Scouts may start earning as early as age 11, is impressively technical, requiring the writing of code in several languages. Girl Scouting offers three-badge Coding for Good sequences for all

Girl Scouts Against the World (cont.)

six of its age brackets, even kindergarten-level Daisies. At the middle-school level, Girl Scout Cadettes learn the grammar of coding—algorithms, arguments, functions, and arrays—but they learn the basics of just one language, JavaScript, focusing instead on women computer science champions and conceptual design. “Every stage of the coding process offers girls opportunities to use their skills for good,” the Girl Scouts website says.

Even for the Space Scientist badge, a topic that is otherworldly by definition, Girl Scouts have to connect to their community, perhaps by presenting at a stargazing club, performing a “space show” for family and friends, or teaching younger Scouts. The national organization makes a point of noting that almost every woman who has flown in space is a Girl Scouts alumna.

Though less technical than the Boy Scout badges, the science in the girls’ badges is not dumbed down. Curriculum partners include NASA, Dell, Raytheon, VEX Robotics, and FIRST Robotics. The University of West Florida Center for Cybersecurity team put on a virtual Girl Scouts camp in June with a curriculum based on both the Girl Scout badges and the National Security Agency’s GenCyber standards, said Eman El-Sheikh, associate vice president for the Center for Cybersecurity.

El-Sheikh thinks it makes a difference when girls learn about science in Girl Scouts instead of through another kind of club or at school. “Absolutely!” she said. “No other organization matches the scope and variety of evidence-based, out-of-school educational and leadership opportunities, including those in STEM, specifically designed for girls.”

The overarching goal is to increase women’s leadership in the sciences, just as Girl Scouts has helped launch women into political leadership. There’s a brand-new Digital Leadership badge. The cybersecurity field will soon have millions of unfilled jobs, and “women are grossly underrepresented,” especially among its leaders, the Girl Scouts Research Institute reports.

Even now, the Girl Scouts are unique, said Jean Sinzdak, associate director for Rutgers’ Center for American Women and Politics. Year in and year out, no other organization has been as proactive as the Girl Scouts in reaching out to the center, or as focused on girls’ political leadership. A lot of women politicians are former

Girl Scouts, and “they always want to talk about their Girl Scout service,” she said. On National Girl Scout Day in 2018, Senator Tammy Duckworth posted a photo of her badges on Instagram.

Peer support makes an enormous difference in promoting girls’ ambition, Sinzdak said. In Girl Scouts, just at the age that girls’ confidence begins to fall off a cliff, “they continue to get that focus on leadership,” she said. “It’s a place where they can unapologetically be girls and be leaders.”

Troop 8274 puts that into practice. With its members in middle and high school, the mothers who formerly planned activities have taken a back seat. The girls plan, prioritize, teach and execute; their mothers guide and remind, shop and drive.

Tori Marks, 16, enjoys it much more than her old troop, which did “very childish” things, like making “this turkey plate for Thanksgiving,” she said with scorn. “It wasn’t very creative.” Tori loves the science and math in Troop 8274, and spoke proudly of her community service awards. Girl Scouting “gives me a chance to work with other girls ... to make the world a better place,” she said, echoing the Girl Scout Law.

And without boys around, “You can do whatever you want and you don’t have to worry about being judged,” Tori said.

Troop 8274 has done a lot. MacKenzie and Evelyn showed off photo album after photo album, badge after badge. The mega-badge commemorating Girl Scouts founder Juliette Gordon Low’s life, which they worked on one Sunday per month for a year. The book drive. The trip to Disney on Ice that they paid for by cookie sales. (“That’s when I went through my cat’s ears phase—remember?”) The signs they carved for a Scout camp using a wood router. The forensics badge, featuring disgustingly realistic spatter made from Crystal Light powder. The time Evelyn capsized her DIY recycled-material boat, and got the award for “best swimmer.”

All memorialized in embroidery thread on a vest.

Even so, igniting that excitement and loyalty among more girls has been a challenge in a changing nation. A decade ago, Girl Scouts raised its age range and created the Ambassadors category, so girls may Scout from kindergarten until college. But even so, membership numbers keep going down: from 2.3 million in 2010 to 1.7 million girls in 2019, according to annual reports. That’s not the

Girl Scouts Against the World (cont.)

case for after-school activities in general, National AfterSchool Alliance President Gina Warner said; she theorized that some other extracurriculars offer “much-needed care for working parents,” whereas Scouting relies on parent volunteers.

Then there’s Big Brother elbowing in. The Boy Scouts made its core programs coed in 2018. More than 140,000 girls have joined since then, participating in all-girl dens, BSA spokeswoman Stephanie Lish said. This year, the organization inaugurated its first female Eagle Scouts. (It published a special edition of its 110-year-old youth magazine, newly renamed from Boys’ Life to Scout Life, honoring them.) Girl Scouts of the USA spokeswoman Julia Striegel declined to comment on whether the Girl Scouts viewed the Boy Scouts’ move as a threat—but the all-girls’ organization has sued for trademark infringement.

Nor has the Girl Scouts had significant success diversifying its membership. The organization had an ignoble early history of supporting white supremacy, a history it shares with other youth groups. The 1920 edition of Scouting for Girls included Robert Baden-Powell’s racist statements valorizing white dominance, and Southern councils were all-white until Josephine Groves Holloway pushed for the recognition of Black membership in the 1940s, according to Smithsonian Magazine. Fittingly, a local Girl Scout troop recently helped erect a historical marker for Holloway in Nashville.

The national organization now hails Holloway as a heroine and has made efforts to recruit a more diverse membership. There are already some areas that are more diverse than the organization as a whole, such as Spanish-speaking troops and council-organized empowerment summits featuring women of color. Even so, the Girl Scouts remained 71 percent white as of 2017, counting both adult volunteers and girls.

After George Floyd’s murder, the then-Girl Scouts president Kathy Hopinkah Hannan wrote, “Councils must, at a minimum, reflect the diversity of their respective communities.” Striegel, the spokeswoman, said GSUSA is committed “to becoming an antiracist organization.”

Finally, there’s the enrollment impact of the pandemic. Striegel would not say how many Scouts hit pause last school year. The Associated Press reported that Girl Scouts youth membership fell by 30 percent, and that Boy Scouts of America lost close to half its 2.2 million members said.

Councils leaned on Zoom and YouTube, and created “Scouting at Home” options that spanned everything from local troops making videos in their kitchens to curriculum by companies such as Cabot Dairy to a Latina leadership panel to virtual summer camp. Zoom allowed Troop 8274 to hold on to members who moved out of state.

Even so, Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida lost about 1,500 of its almost 5,000 girls, leaving insufficient numbers to staff the usual supermarket cookie sale tables, Kelly McGraw, Gulfcoast member experiences director, said. That meant the group “only had 2,000 girls selling cookies this year,” she said. “I had stores calling me, ‘Where are the girls?!’” Nationally, 15 million boxes of Girl Scout cookies went unsold this year, according to the Associated Press, even though bakeries decreased production.

Can Girl Scouts rebound from this latest blow?

The national office is, naturally, optimistic. Almost all summer camps sold out this year, Striegel said, and 370,000 girls renewed their membership in April, the best month in some time. She did not clarify whether that number included girls returning after a pandemic pause.

Making Lemon-Ups out of lemons, the Gulfcoast council created a Reconnection patch to encourage Scouts to lure back their friends with activities such as creating an elevator pitch and a commercial for Scouting. Along with regaining troop-mates, the girls would learn entrepreneurship skills.

In Mobile, the reconstructions were faulty—the electrical ones, that is. Evelyn, MacKenzie, Alyssa, and her sister, Adrienne, looked perplexedly at Tori’s toothbrush-head robot, their lone success, which proudly lit up and vibrated. The other robots would do one or the other, but not both.

“Mine’s not working. It’s a disappointment,” Evelyn said.

“Mine starts when I touch it. I am the battery,” Alyssa said, taking the positive view.

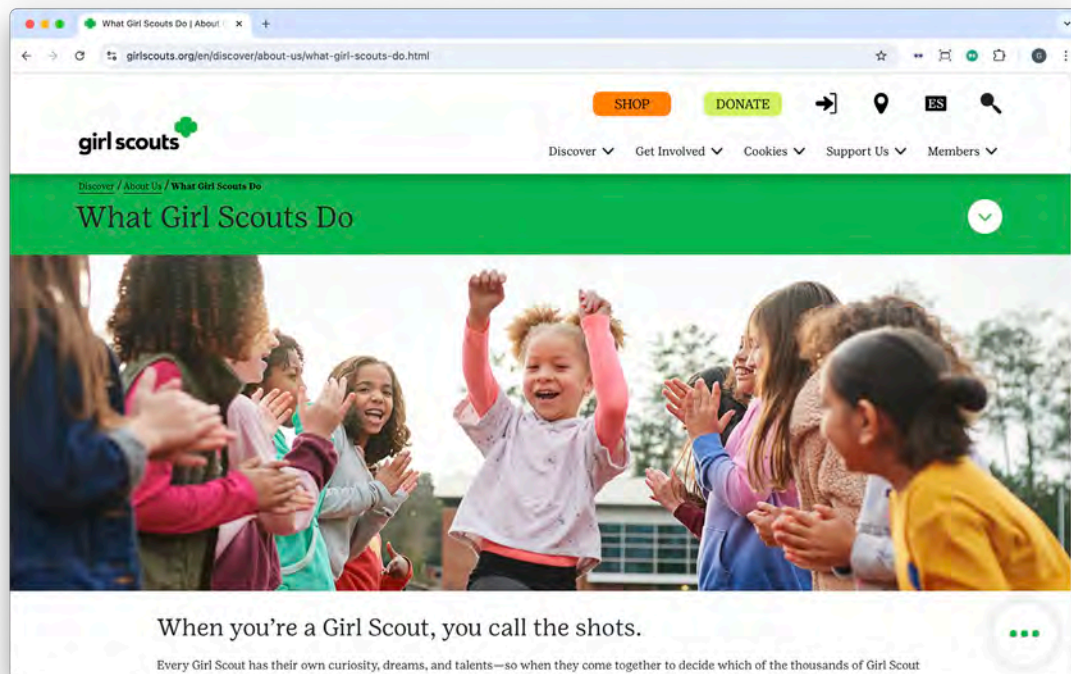
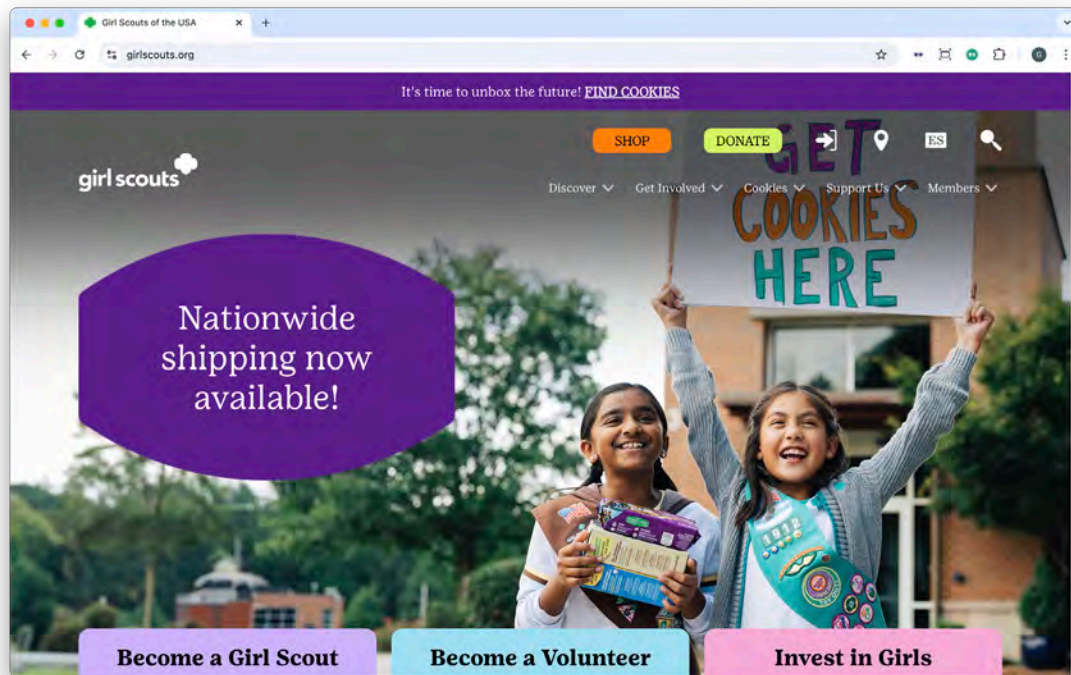
No one seemed that let down, though. They had a rock-climbing trip to plan and a lawnmower robot to design, like a Roomba but for grass. Seven badges to go.

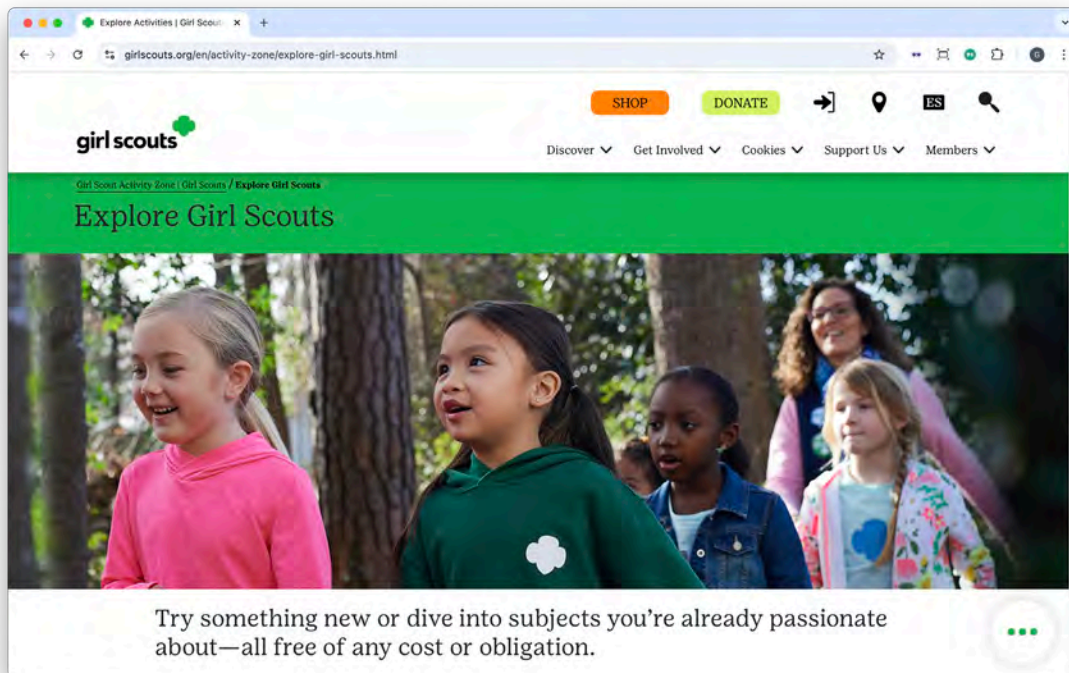
“The Girl Scouts treats STEM its way: with an emphasis on changing the world. Along with following the organization’s long-standing commitment to public service, that stance aligns with research that shows that girls are more likely to stay involved in science when they see it as relevant to their own lives and as a way to improve their communities.”

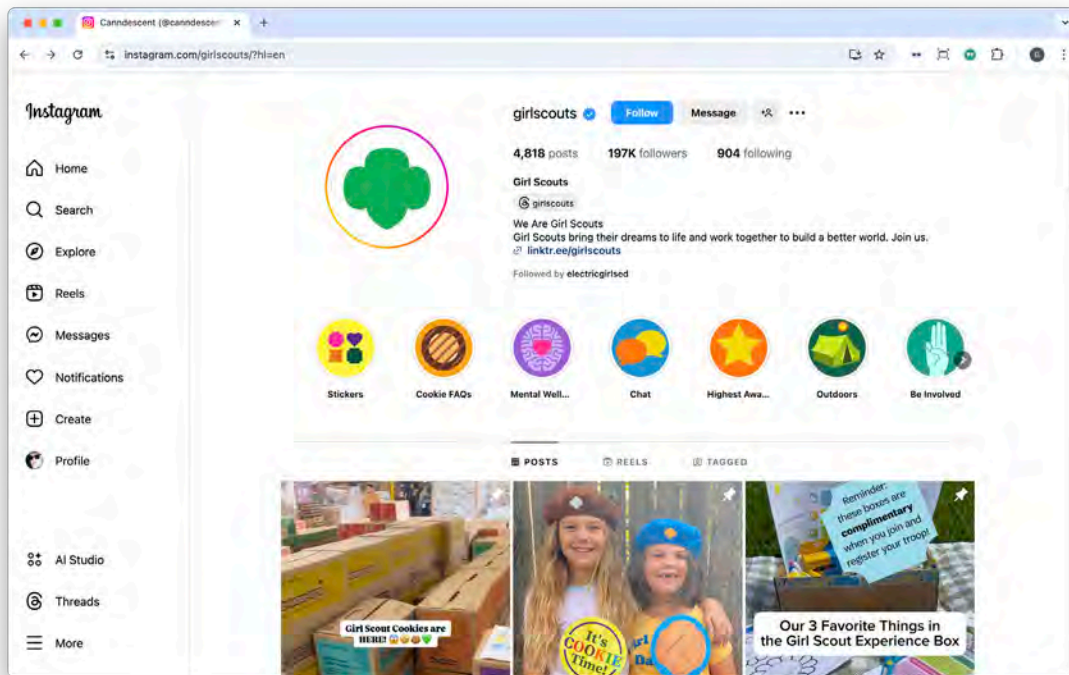
—Danielle Dreilinger, *The Nation*.

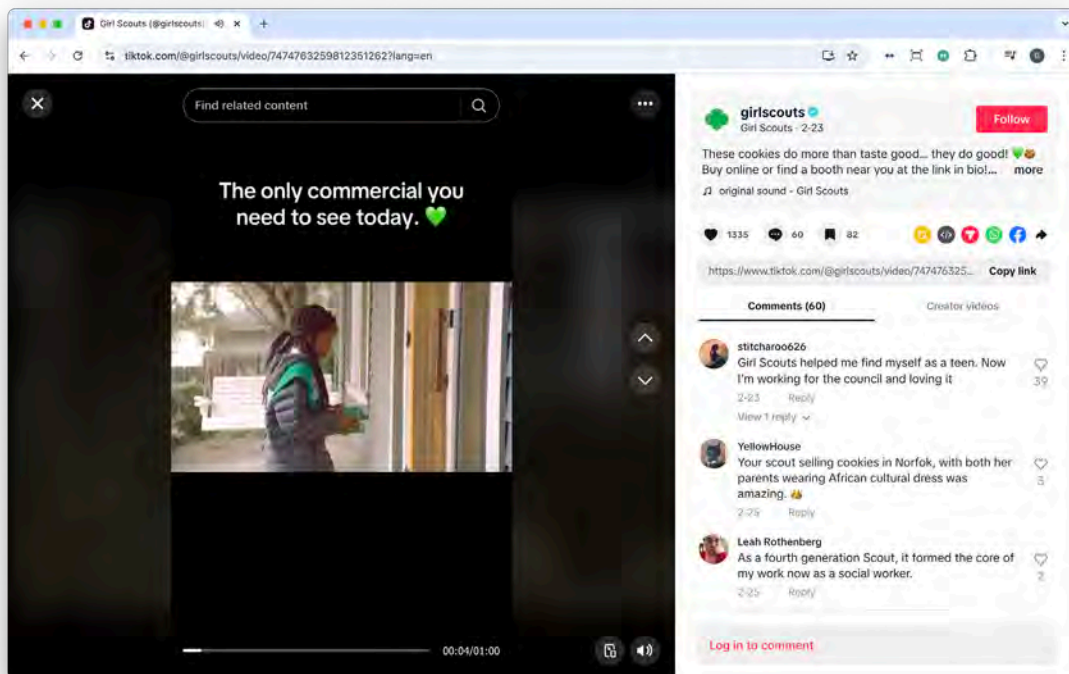
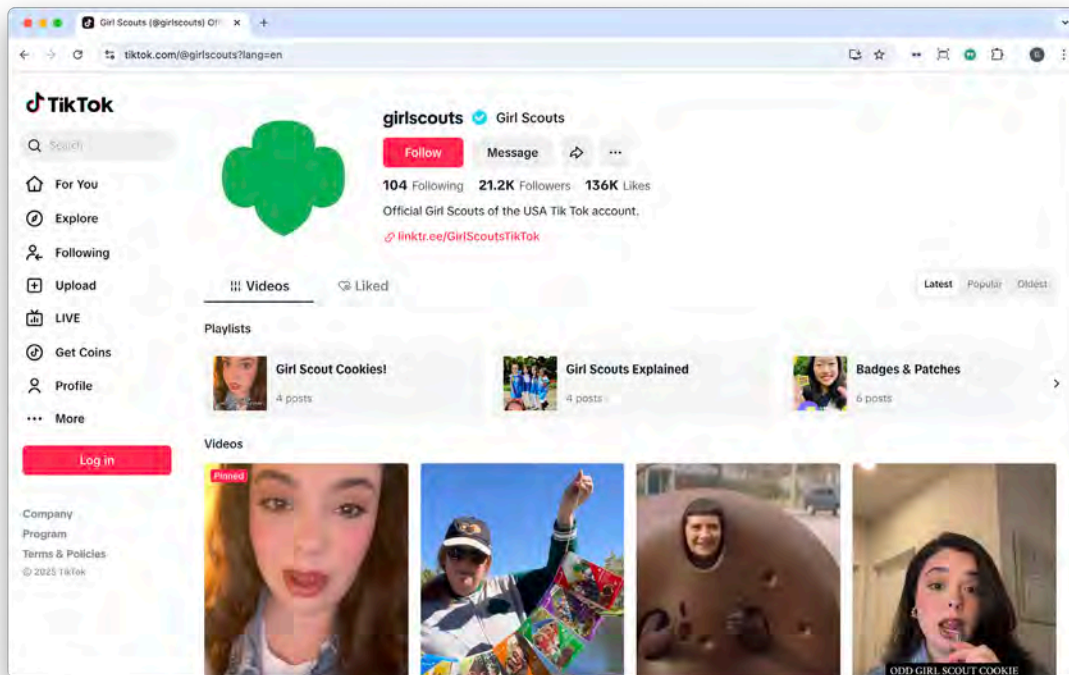
















→ www.sema.org

The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) serves as a leading voice for the worldwide car culture, representing over 7,000 member companies that create, buy, sell, and use specialty-automotive parts that make vehicles more unique, attractive, convenient, safer, fun, and even like new again. Business member benefits include product development resources, market research, networking, education, legislative advocacy, and more. The Association organizes the annual SEMA Show in Las Vegas, Nev., and actively supports the career and business opportunities that the aftermarket generates. The industry contributes nearly \$337 billion in economic impact to the U.S. economy, supports 1.3 million jobs nationally, and generates \$52.3 billion in parts sales annually.

Membership Fact Sheet

History

- Founded in 1963, the Specialty Equipment Market Association is a trade association dedicated to helping companies within the automotive specialty-equipment industry.
- SEMA is the authoritative source for research, data, trends and market growth information for the automotive specialty-equipment industry.
- Automotive specialty-equipment products are defined as those that allow drivers to personalize and enhance their vehicle's appearance, performance, comfort, convenience, safety and fun.
- The history of the automotive aftermarket industry dates back to the 1950s, when hot rod and racing hobbies were just beginning. The industry has since grown into what is now estimated to be a \$31.85 billion industry.
- SEMA is governed by a board of directors who volunteer their time to lead and guide the association. A professional staff is responsible for the day-to-day execution of the programs and services.

Membership Profile

- SEMA has 7,144 member companies, all manufacturing, selling, distributing and marketing automotive specialty-equipment parts and accessories.
- The typical SEMA member company is a small to midsize business, with an owner entering the industry as an enthusiast whose passion led to a career.
- SEMA membership complements their existing staff by providing free education, training, research, legislative advocacy, international outreach, as well as group discounts on insurance, shipping and more.

Industry Profile

- Vehicle personalization is growing around the world. In 2007, more than 275 products from the SEMA Show were honored with a Global Media Award and professionals from more than 100 countries attended the SEMA Show.
- The automotive aftermarket industry is one chalked full of innovators. SEMA members are constantly designing and developing hot, new products. In fact, more than 1,500 new

products consistently debut at the SEMA Show in Las Vegas each year.

- The aftermarket industry is composed of several smaller niche markets: light trucks, racing, off-road, restoration, street performance, restyling, street rod and custom, compact performance, and others that are typically electronics or high-tech in nature.

SEMA Member Resources & Support

- SEMA's Technology Transfer Program, Measuring Sessions and Project Vehicle Programs enable members to get firsthand information about new vehicles from automakers, so SEMA-member companies can bring top-quality products and accessories to market faster and more successfully.
- SEMA's International Outreach helps members identify export opportunities and work through the maze of legal and cultural issues involved in doing business in foreign countries. SEMA maintains international offices in key strategic markets.
- SEMA's Government Affairs staff in Washington, D.C. keeps close tabs on legislative and regulatory issues at the state and federal levels, and alerts members to pending bills or regulations affecting any part of the automotive specialty-equipment industry. The SEMA Action Network (SAN), a national grassroots group comprised of car clubs and individual hobbyists, has been extremely effective in defeating harmful (and supporting favorable) legislation and regulations.
- SEMA's Technical Support staff offers members free assistance on such matters as California Air Resources Board (CARB) parts certification, new vehicle technology and electronic data interchange (EDI).
- SEMA's Market Research and Information department provides market studies and information on trends in the industry, and offers members access to a vast supply of industry-related data and publications. The department also publishes an annual SEMA Market Study and other topic-specific research and information reports.
- SEMA's Editorial Department produces publications to inform and educate its members and the industry-at-large. These

Membership Fact Sheet
(cont.)

include SEMA News, a monthly industry magazine and SEMA eNews, a weekly electronic newsletter filled with timely news and information. The annual SEMA Membership Directory is also an invaluable reference.

- SEMA's Consumer Website, www.enjoythedrive.com, educates automotive specialty equipment consumers, on behalf of its members, on how they can accessorize their vehicles to match individual lifestyle needs.
- SEMA's Education Department provides continuing education and management training to members and manages the SEMA Memorial Scholarship Fund, which helps students pursuing careers in the specialty-equipment market. The Intern Program at the SEMA Show provides aspiring automotive specialty-equipment professionals a practical, feet-on-the-ground experience at the industry's largest trade show.
- SEMA's Council and Committee structure lets members work on joint programs to enhance their niche-market business and overcome challenges and obstacles to the growth of those businesses.
- SEMA's Trade and Business-to-Business Events, in addition to the annual SEMA Show, include PAACE Automechanika in Mexico.

“The industry’s alive and well. We’re going to continue to be able to modify no matter what. We’re going to continue to individualize no matter what. Whether it’s EV or whether it’s internal combustion engine or whether it’s hydrogen or whether it’s other alternative fuels, we’re going to continue to push the envelope because that’s what people want.”

—Mike Spagnola, CEO, SEMA

Going to the SEMA Show for the First Time Was a Life-Affirming Experience

The Drive

There was a moment in all of the chaos when it hit me: I was right where I belonged.

The Las Vegas Convention Center is a 3-million-square-foot campus comprised of four buildings in total, with a vast lot shared between them. It's used throughout the year for various conferences and expos. None fill up that space quite like the annual Speciality Equipment Market Association show.

Every fall, thousands of vendors and builders take up every last square inch of the convention center. Hundreds of thousands of people attend to see what's new and exciting and who's put together the best display of craftsmanship and ingenuity. And while it used to have a reputation as kind of a silly carnival, that's shifting in recent years along as the new car industry is roiled by change and the aftermarket is focusing more on preserving car culture. In many ways, if you want a peek at the future of enthusiasm, SEMA is the place to get it.

As a lifelong car enthusiast, attending the SEMA show has always been on my agenda, come hell or high water. This year, I finally had my chance to get out to Vegas and see it for myself. But I didn't just go on some routine press trip. From immersing myself in the sea of incredible builds and enthusiasts to going for a ride with a drift legend, I got the full experience. But even if you don't go full-force like I did, beyond a shadow of a doubt, getting out to SEMA is an item that should be on every car nut's to-do list—because thanks to the new policy of opening it up to the general public on the Friday of show week, it's not just a B2B conference anymore.

The Immortal SEMA

SEMA is much more than an annual trade show. The Specialty Equipment Market Association primarily focuses on helping industry professionals do their jobs to the best of their ability. I sat down with Mike Spagnola earlier this year. We talked about SEMA as a whole and what it does for the industry year-round. We finally met at the show. He shared that, despite the many uncertainties the industry is facing in recent times, it is alive and doing well. The show's upward trend is a great indication of that. With 160,000 people in attendance at the show this year, and more than 2,400 vendors, SEMA is stronger than ever. It has officially surpassed pre-COVID numbers.

Like any enthusiast with more of an interest in things built in garages than factories, I've always seen SEMA as a bit of a fabled oasis. Aftermarket brands are there showcasing the latest and greatest products, surrounded by all sorts of amazing builds. All of the biggest influencers and celebrities in the space are also in attendance. The exclusivity of

it historically being a business-to-business affair makes it all the more desirable to be there.

And full disclosure: I wasn't there just to bring back this report. As The Drive's commerce editor, part of my job is meeting with companies to ask/convince/beg them to hand over review units of all sorts of products—from impact wrenches to independent front suspension systems to crate engines—so Mike Febbo and I can evaluate whether they're worth your money. My goal for 2025 is to push The Garage to the next level with some really kickass projects, and there's no better place than SEMA to make the right connections and get the ball rolling.

Every day we rushed from booth to booth, shaking hands, kissing babies, pitching The Drive's brand. I spent hours on my feet, but never got tired. The atmosphere was just electrifying—and so was the response we got from some big names companies to partner up next year. More on that soon!

Taking It All In

I can't overstate how much wheeling and dealing we did at the show. I packed every available moment with meetings with reps and CEOs to talk shop about everything we could. But even as I rushed from both to both, reviewing what was discussed in emails between each step, I made sure to engage with that part of myself that's still an enthusiast under it all.

There is no shortage of amazing builds to look at. As a Mopar nut, I am very taken up by the sudden rise in appreciation for classic Dodge and Plymouth muscle cars. Everywhere I looked, there was a second-generation Charger built for me to drool over. It was even a little more humbling than normal. Even the Joe Dirt replica on display at the ACES Fuel Injection booth served as a benchmark from which I could take notes. I definitely love the "homegrown hotrod" aspect of my Charger. But, man, do I need to step it up a notch.

Thankfully, I also had the chance to sit down and talk to Jim Ring, one of the legendary Ringbrothers. His stories of their humble beginnings that led to what is now one of the most well-respected names in custom builds had me feeling like there's hope for me yet. While I'll never be able to hold a candle to what these guys put out, I'm hoping a bit of his magic rubbed off on me while we rubbed elbows.

The Ringbrothers also happened to have an absolutely gorgeous Mopar on display, which was their 1970 Plymouth Barracuda dubbed Infected. However, the Grand National, known as INVADR, just a few booths away, was the talk of the show. Detuned to produce just north of 1,200 horsepower, the V6-powered tyrant is capable of belting out an astounding 1,800



Going to the SEMA Show for
the First Time Was a Life-
Affirming Experience
(cont.)

horsepower on full boost. It was also a spectacular display of Ringbrother's insane skill and painstaking attention to detail. Every last millimeter of the car had received the grace of their legendary touch. I could have spent hours just taking it all in.

As much time as I could have spent around the types of cars I'd normally flock to, I made sure to change things up a bit as well. Putting a car together, no matter the operational scale, is an artistic endeavor. As such, you should blend bits of inspiration from all over to keep it from feeling stale. That's why I made sure to check out some non-domestic builds and look at the culture from a position I normally wouldn't—like inside a professional drift car, with Tanner Foust at the wheel.

Now, I'm not running from the event with plans to convert my Charger into a drift car. Getting to watch someone as talented as him work his magic first-hand was definitely inspirational, though. Drifting is an intense sport that takes a lot of concentration and practice. Feeling that power as the car slung around while the crowd cheered us on reminded me that even I needed to loosen up and have a little more fun with my car. That experience also added some dimension to my first time at SEMA, which I'd otherwise have missed. Not only was I surrounded by radical cars, but I got to feel full force.

In the Right Place

Perhaps the most incredible thing about the SEMA show is just how much is happening all at once on the scale that it is. Everywhere you look there are celebrities signing autographs, people showcasing amazing builds, suppliers talking about some game changing technology, and it's all happening at every corner of the absolutely enormous facility.

There was a moment in all of the chaos when it hit me: I was right where I belonged. Not because I knew what I was doing was beneficial to my job, but because I truly connected with it and felt a deep purpose behind it. It's not often you feel that in life, and when you do, you know great things are about to happen.

That moment hit me as I looked around and saw familiar faces in the crowd. I was surrounded by icons and heroes that I've been looking up to since this whole thing started. Folks I've immortalized for the impact they've had on me and the industry at large. And to see them in a moment of profound self-enlightenment was a moment in time I'll remember forever.

“There was a moment in all of the chaos when it hit me: I was right where I belonged. Not because I knew what I was doing was beneficial to my job, but because I truly connected with it and felt a deep purpose behind it. It’s not often you feel that in life, and when you do, you know great things are about to happen.”

—Hank O’Hop, The Drive



“The bottom line at SEMA, as it shall always be, is a combination of quality and service. The ingredients for a successful trade association are performing to the satisfaction of its member companies and accommodating industry growth and diversification. SEMA attempts to set the pace for others to follow. That’s why our membership roles continue to increase in number.”

—Christopher J. Kersting, Previous President and CEO, SEMA

Annual SEMA Show Just One Face Of Organization's Industry Dedication

TORQUE

LAS VEGAS — They show up from everywhere around the world to this constantly brilliant oasis in an otherwise desolate part of Nevada.

Some arrive to show off their latest wares, some to gather knowledge. And some to discover exactly what product will turn potential customers into life-long friends.

The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) show.

A five-day jolt of automotive adrenaline each November that touches almost every facet of the industry.

Awards are presented, cars and trucks honored as leaders in certain categories, educational seminars spread the word on multiple trends, tire smoke hangs over multiple parking lots following riding demonstrations, and more than 2,000 exhibitors hang out a shingle to attract a projected audience of more than 130,000 people.

All of this pushes the SEMA event on stage as one of Las Vegas' top yearly attractions.

But for all those who attend, as well as for exhibiting manufacturers and vendors, there is still the notion SEMA is just a show even though its roots stretch way deeper into the industry.

SEMA was first started back in 1963 by people who loved cars and trucks, and wanted to turn that passion into a career. The original goal, according to the organization, was to develop uniform standards for certain products used in motorsports competition; promote the industry as a supplier to consumers involved in constructive activities of recreational and hobbyist value; develop programs to encourage improved business practices among member companies; and hold regular meetings to achieve unity as a business organization. In those days, members were founders of companies that exclusively produced speed equipment.

Over the years, the fold grew into a nearly 6,500-member-based powerhouse contributing to the vitality and strength of the automotive aftermarket's \$30-billion-a-year industry.

Its members come from all walks of automotive life now, including businesses in the distribution chain, manufacturers, warehouse distributors, jobbers, independent retailers, volume retailers, specialty stores (speed shops), sales agents, subcontractors and publishing companies.

Memberships even include racing teams, car clubs and special service organizations. Products supplied by the industry are found not only in the United States but also throughout the world.

These days, SEMA performs many educational and data services for its members and the industry as a whole. More importantly, heading into 2025, SEMA is working hard to protect consumers' rights to drive accessorized, customized, and vintage vehicles and keeps close tabs on legislators nationwide.

For example, SEMA pressure helped Pennsylvania legislators recently pass a law legalizing doors-off driving in Jeep vehicles like Wrangler and CJ. Additionally, the organization filed a lawsuit against the state of California's attempt to ban internal combustion engines. SEMA is also very involved in efforts across the country regarding recreational access to public lands. All so its members and anyone who loves cars and trucks can protest pending legislation that might harm those hobbies, or endorse legislation that is good for the industry.

SEMA has also helped numerous consumers interact with car dealers, who sometimes try to get away with charging for repairs on a modified vehicle by wrongly claiming that specialty accessories have voided the warranty.

"The SEMA show is five days; the other 360 days of the year we use the resources from our members to create a collective voice," said former SEMA President Chris Kersting during a Quadratec interview in 2018. "We do a lot of different things, but one thing we do is take care of legislative and regulatory issues that kind of encroach on the hobby. With the off-road scene there is constant pressure.

"One thing that would be good (for Jeep enthusiasts) would be to go to the SEMA website and look for the SEMA Action Network. It is a grassroots way for you to be informed on what is going on out there, when we have problems, when we have threats, and to protect the opportunity to get out there on the trails."

Another way SEMA strives to help its member companies, which in turn helps consumers, is that it performs quite a bit of market research to assemble viable data and trends through its Research and Information Center. All members have access to this information, which can be used to formulate sales and trend projections for the coming years.

Annual SEMA Show Just
One Face Of Organization's
Industry Dedication
(cont.)

The show, however, certainly remains the shining jewel of the SEMA year. And for those in the Jeep aftermarket, it can be the perfect time to discover new products, make new contacts and even show off your skill as a Jeep vehicle builder. Also, those new products revealed and displayed during the show tend to set the Jeep aftermarket product tone for the coming year and beyond.

"The bottom line at SEMA, as it shall always be, is a combination of quality and service," Kersting said on the company's website. "The ingredients for a successful trade association are performing to the satisfaction of its member companies and accommodating industry growth and diversification. SEMA attempts to set the pace for others to follow. That's why our membership roles continue to increase in number."



“SEMA’s advocacy efforts were also front and center, underscoring the importance of collaboration across the industry. With initiatives like the SEMA Action Network (SAN) and the SEMA Political Action Committee (PAC), SEMA continues to advocate for policies that protect and promote the automotive aftermarket, ensuring the continued growth and success of the sector.”

—Jason Stahl, Body Shop Business





SEMA Show Wraps Up to Huge Success

Body Shop Business

With over 160,000 attendees, the 2024 SEMA Show solidified itself as the global epicenter of automotive innovation.

The 2024 SEMA Show has officially concluded, solidifying its status as the global epicenter of automotive innovation. The event brought together over 2,400 exhibitors, including 580 first-time exhibitors, and attracted more than 160,000 attendees from 140 countries celebrating the industry at events throughout SEMA Week. Held at the Las Vegas Convention Center Nov. 5-8, this year's show encompassed 1.2 million net square feet of indoor space and acres of outdoor exhibit space and activations showcasing groundbreaking products, cutting-edge technologies and forward-thinking custom builds. The scope, energy and passion reaffirmed the SEMA Show as the premier automotive aftermarket event shaping the future of the industry.

"SEMA 2024 was a true celebration of where the automotive aftermarket industry is headed," said Mike Spagnola, president and CEO of SEMA. "This year, we saw a remarkable convergence of innovation, collaboration and passion, with exhibitors, builders and enthusiasts all coming together to push the boundaries of what's possible. Innovation was the heart of SEMA Show 2024, driving the merger of creativity and technology across the show floor."

Whether it was the unveiling of next-gen products like the Revv ADAS Plus, Milltek Forge Motorsport E-DV electronic diverter valve solution or innovative designs like the Kia EV9 ADVNTR Concept, the event demonstrated that SEMA is not just a trade show — it's a catalyst for industry evolution.

Innovation & Technology Highlights

The 2024 SEMA Show was packed with visionary products and builds that underscore the continuous advancement of the aftermarket industry:

Toyota GR86 Rally Legacy Concept: A nod to 90s rally heritage, this build merges modern-day performance with vintage rally design, embodying Toyota's commitment to motorsports innovation.

Ram REV & Dodge Charger Banshee Concept: Electrification meets performance in these two bold concept vehicles, showcasing the growing trend of electric performance vehicles in the aftermarket space.

SEMA Battle of the Builders: The category

champions for the 2024 Battle of the Builders — including overall champion Noah Alexander's '68 Dodge Charger (Hot Rod/Hot Rod Truck), Bruce Yarnell's '65 Aston Martin DB5 (Sport Compact/Import Performance), Connor McElvain's '69 Datsun 2000 Roadster (Young Guns) and Rob Lindsay's '49 Willys Pickup (Off-Road) — demonstrated the artistry, craftsmanship and forward-thinking approaches of the industry's best custom builders.

Custom Autosound's USA-850 DigaDial: The virtual screen radio allows user a choice of four distinct, one-of-a-kind displays, from a classic analog look to all-digital RDS display, as well as improved audio refinements.

FutureTech Studio: A highlight of the 2024 show, the FutureTech Studio presented next-generation technologies that are transforming the automotive world. From advanced EV innovations to autonomous driving systems, this space provided a glimpse into the future of the industry.

SEMA Show Celebrities: Stars Behind the Wheel

A staple for celebrity appearances and star-powered moments, the 2024 SEMA Show attracted major attention from both the entertainment and motorsports worlds. Among the most anticipated reveals was country music sensation Kane Brown's custom F250 King Ranch. Displayed at the American Force Wheels booth, the stunning build had crowds buzzing as fans lined up for a glimpse of the star's personalized ride.

Chip Foose, legendary designer, brought his unmistakable touch to a number of custom builds, and Akira Nakai (known for his work with RAUH-Welt Begriff or RWB) created a one-of-a-kind Porsche 997 — a milestone as his first-ever build at the SEMA Show, continuing his legacy of perfection and influence in the world of custom cars.

Connecting with Fans

SEMA Fest expanded the show's reach by offering the public a chance to engage with cutting-edge automotive designs, live music and motorsports. Featuring performances from bands like Cage the Elephant and Sublime, SEMA Fest brought together music, motorsports and automotive culture for an unforgettable experience.

The SEMA Cruise was another crowd-pleaser, with more than 1,200 vehicles parading down Convention Center Drive, giving attendees a

SEMA Show Wraps Up to Huge Success (cont.)

final chance to see some of the most innovative and jaw-dropping builds up close.

SEMA also opened its doors, literally and digitally, through the Friday Enthusiast Experience, an opportunity for the public to experience the show on its final day, and SEMA Live, the show's first ever livestream, which attracted hundreds of thousands of viewers from around the world, giving the SEMA Show a true global audience.

More Than Just a Trade Show

The 2024 SEMA Show was more than just a celebration of the latest products — it was an exploration of the future. The event served its role as the industry's innovation epicenter, where attendees engaged in 80-plus seminars, hands-on workshops and networking events designed to keep them ahead in an ever-evolving industry.

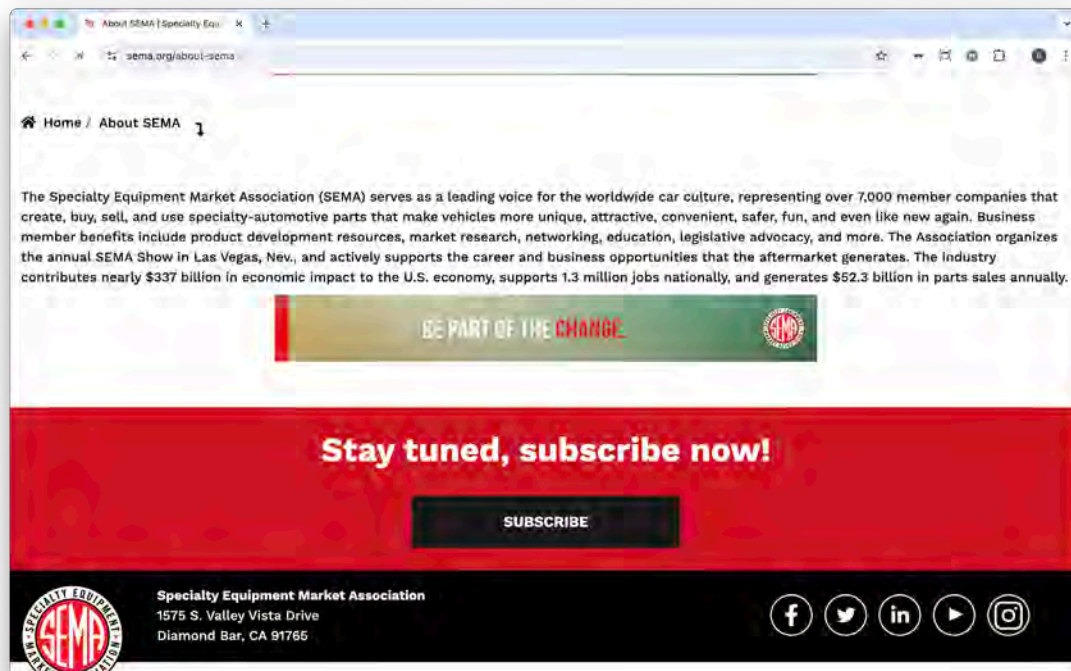
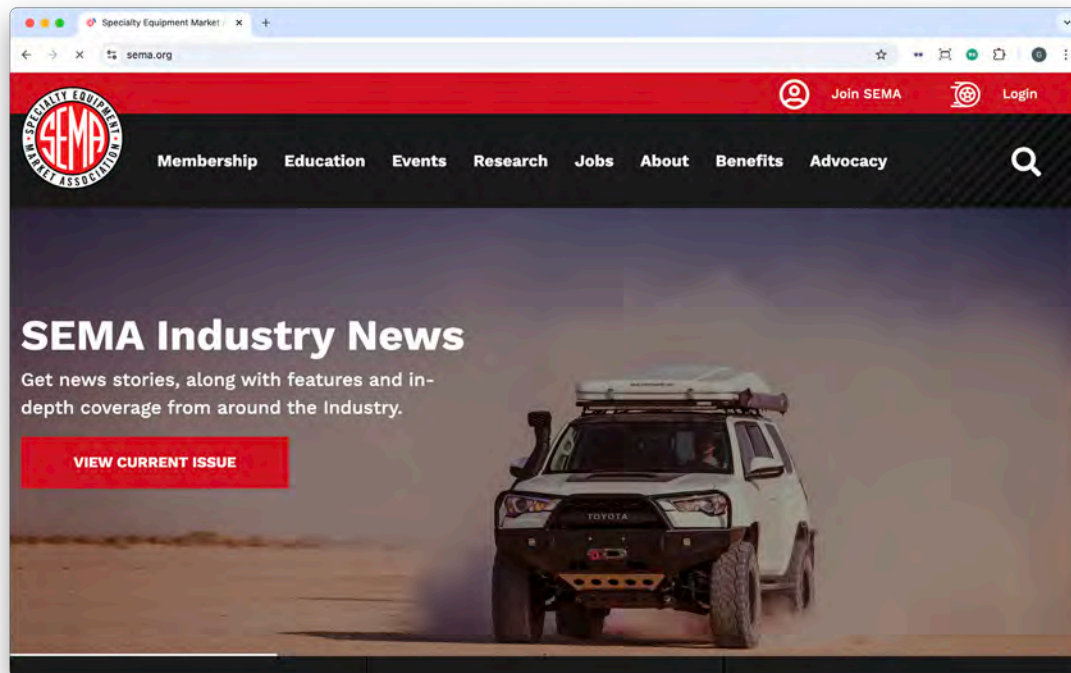
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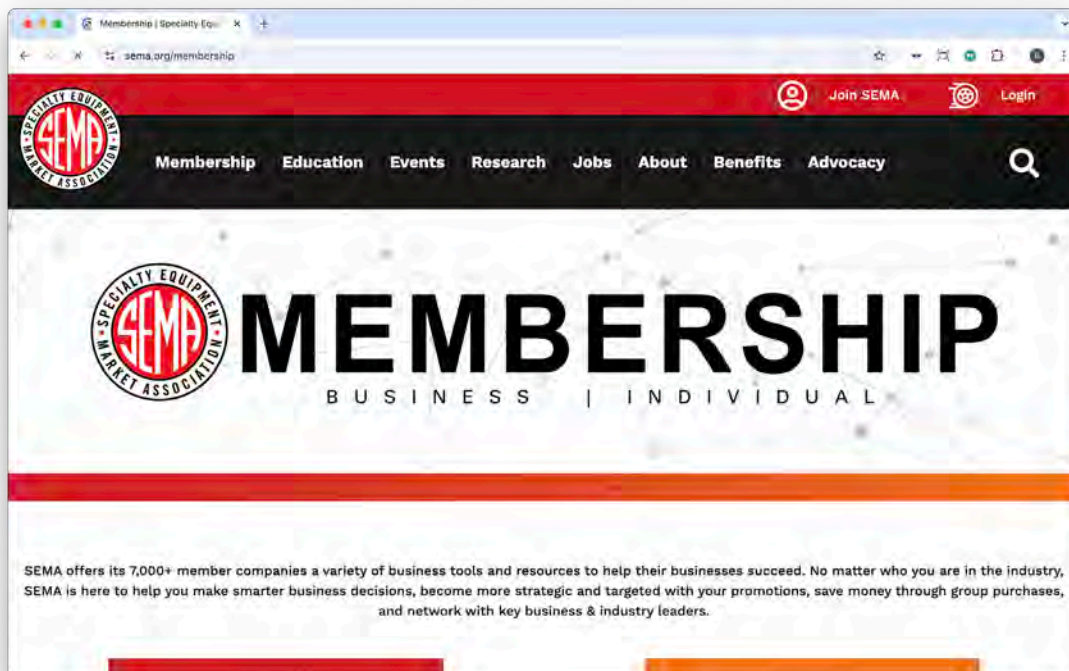
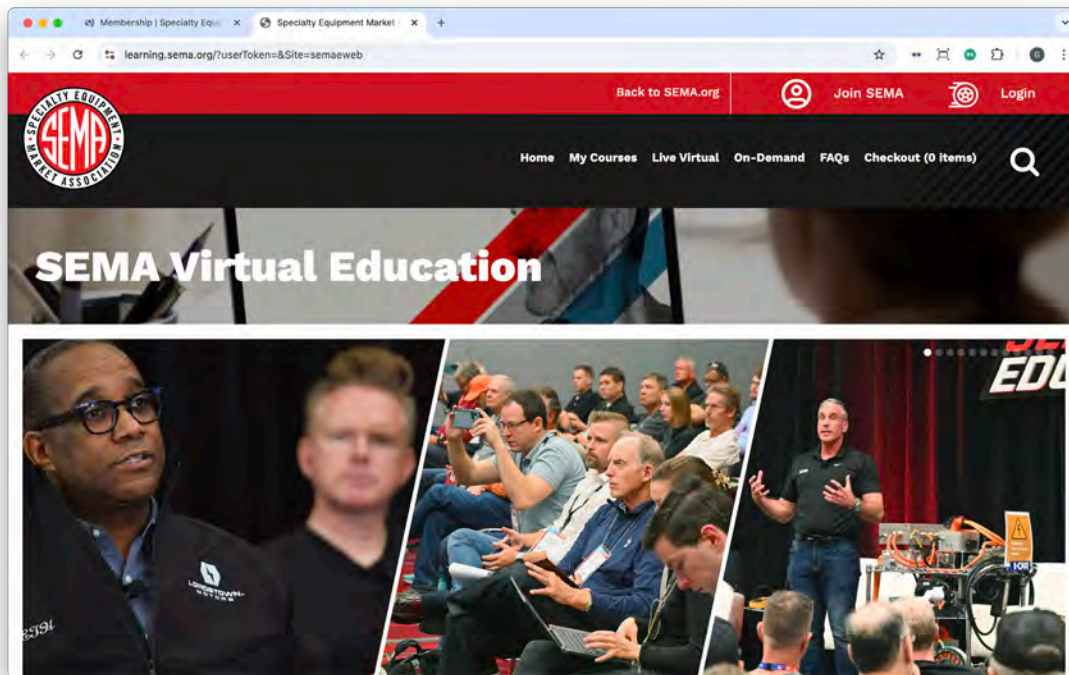
The Road Ahead: A Global Industry Powered by Innovation

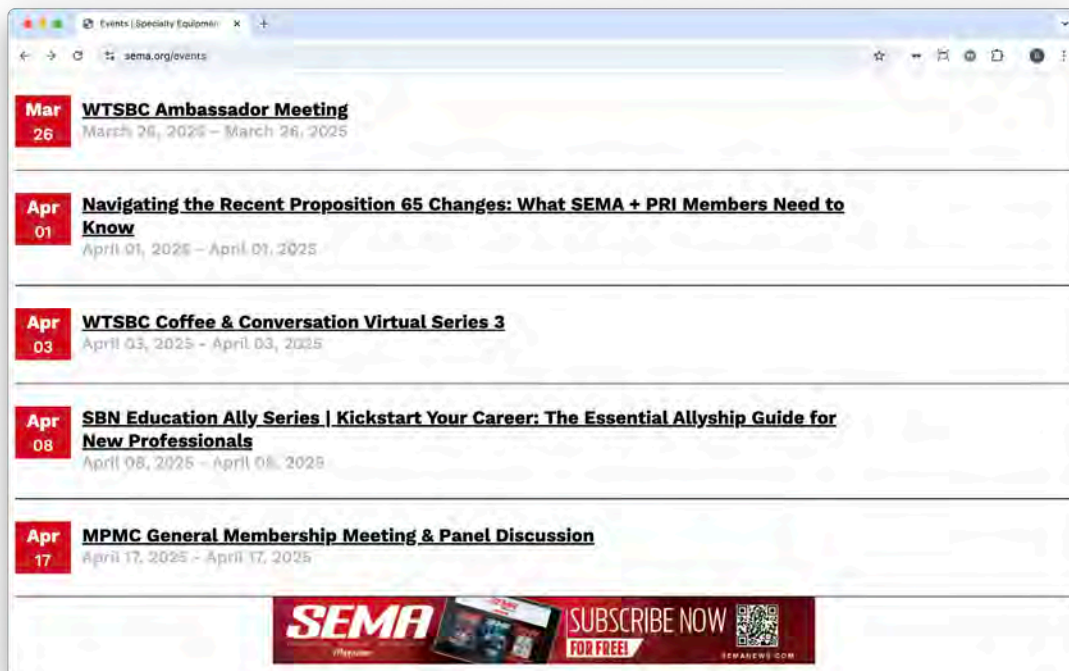
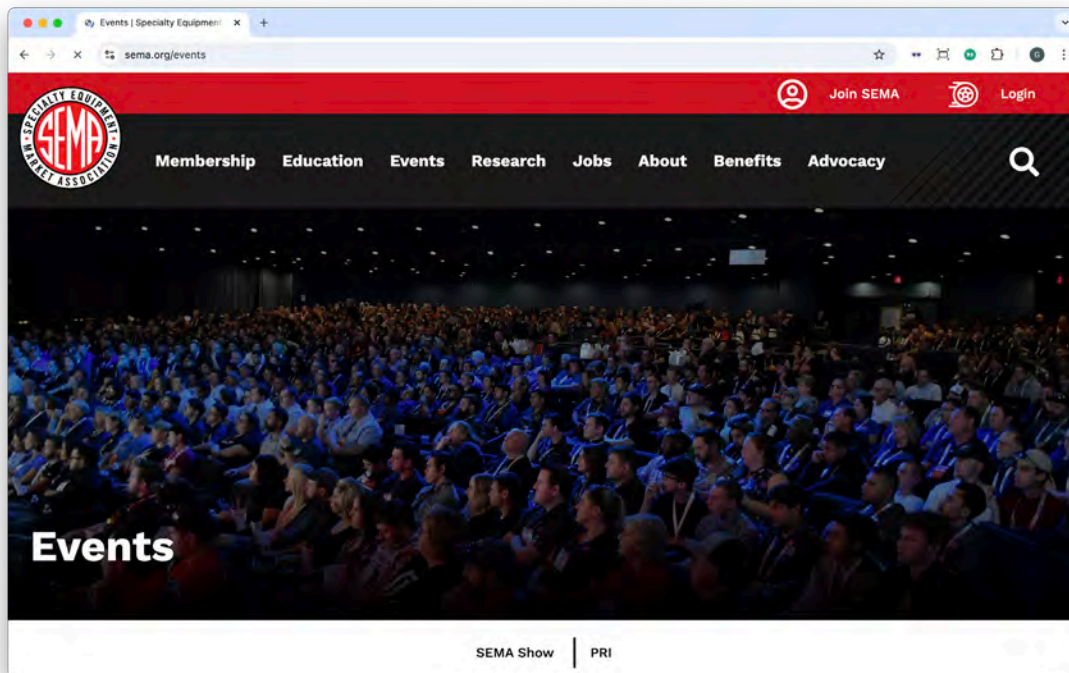
The SEMA Show 2024 closed with an electrifying sense of optimism. As the global leader in automotive innovation, SEMA once again demonstrated how the aftermarket industry is evolving.

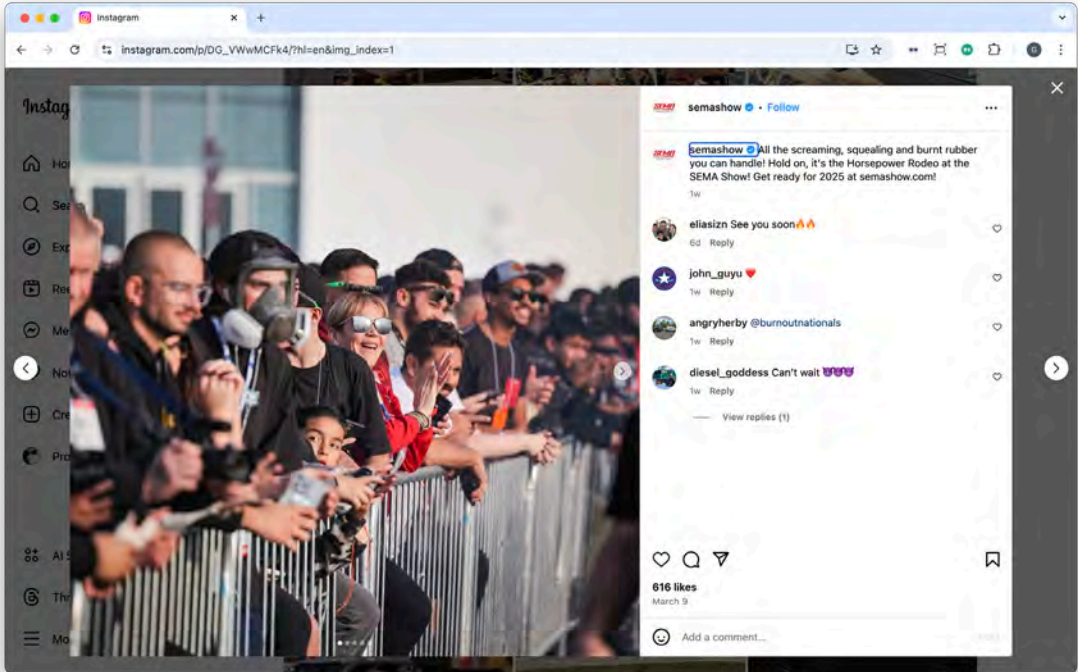
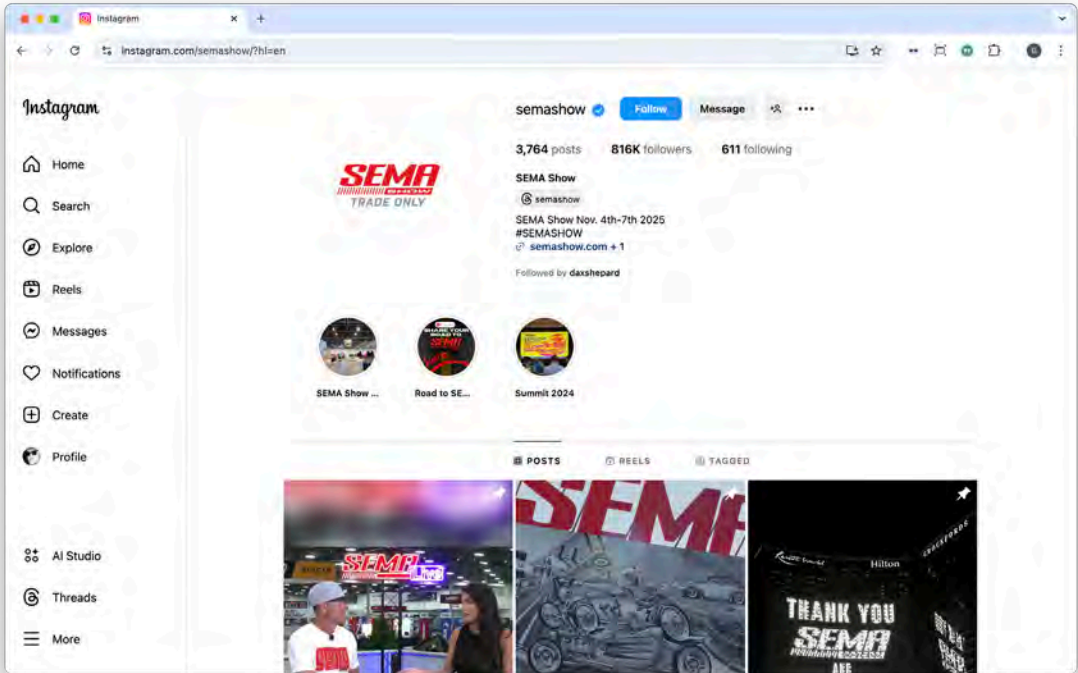
By championing collaboration, sustainability and next-gen technologies, the show remains the essential destination for professionals, entrepreneurs and enthusiasts eager to shape the future of automotive culture.

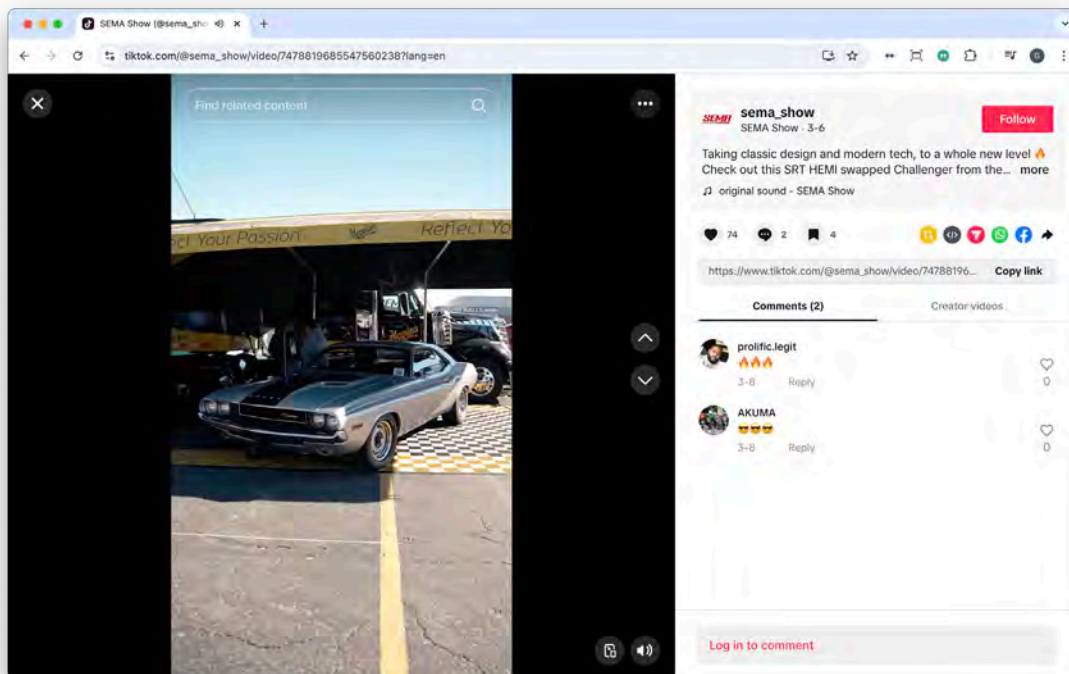
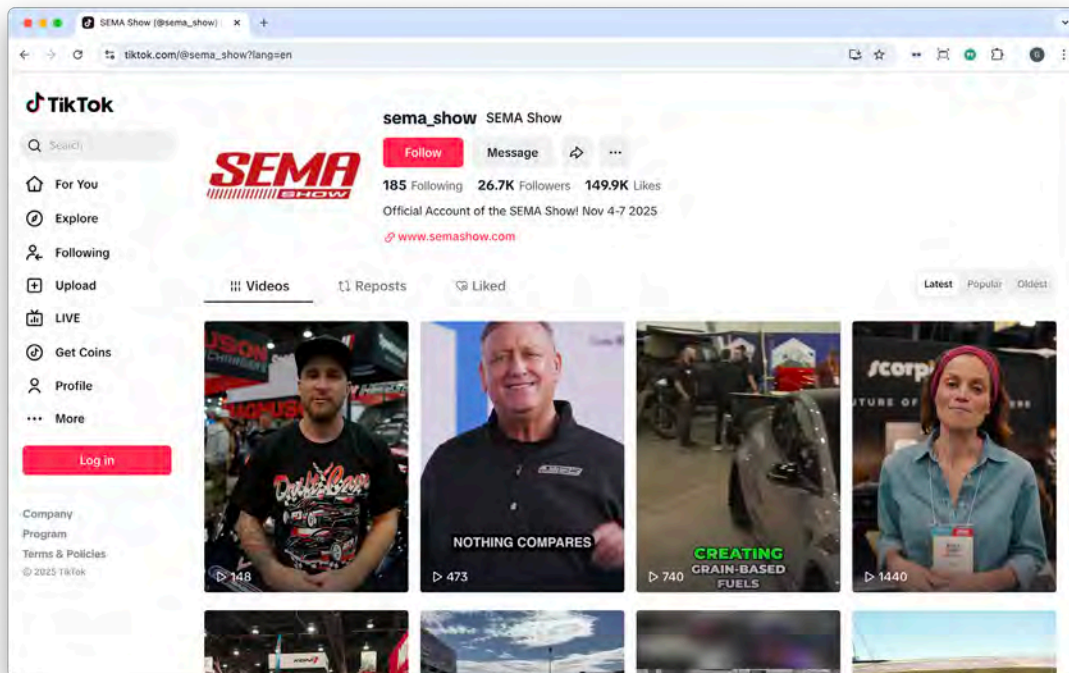
"We're excited by the groundbreaking innovations showcased at SEMA 2024," said Tom Gattuso, vice president of events for SEMA. "The future of the automotive aftermarket has never been brighter, and SEMA is where it all begins."















Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) that blends storytelling, strategy, and dice-based mechanics. Players create characters like warriors or wizards and embark on adventures led by a Dungeon Master (DM), who serves as the narrator and referee. The game emphasizes creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork as players navigate a fantasy world filled with quests and battles.

Created by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, D&D was first published in 1974 by TSR, Inc. It evolved from miniature wargaming and popularized character-driven role-playing. In 1997, TSR was acquired by Wizards of the Coast, now a Hasbro subsidiary, which modernized and expanded the game. The 5th Edition, released in 2014, revitalized D&D, making it a mainstream phenomenon through live-play shows and streaming. Today, it remains one of the most influential tabletop games worldwide.

“... nothing proliferated the good word of D&D as effectively as the internet. Video game streaming platforms such as YouTube and Twitch showed gaming voyeurs just how fun the world of tabletop games could be.”

—Amelia Diamond, The New York Times

Who's Playing Dungeons & Dragons These Days? The Usual Fans, and Then Some.

The New York Times

The role-playing game has never been more popular, and players seem to be getting more out of it than ever before.

Everyone's been playing Dungeons & Dragons without you: your co-workers, Anderson Cooper, Tiffany Haddish. More than 50 million people worldwide have "interacted" with D&D since it was created in the mid-1970s, according to its publisher, and while that number also includes movies, video games, books, television and livestreams, it doesn't factor in the number of people reached over TikTok.

The infamous tabletop role-playing game became a household name when "satanic panic" — a general fear of satanic ritual abuse that caught fire nationwide in the 1980s — began to take root in the suburbs. Anything with even a remote whiff of the occult, from astrology to heavy metal, was suspect. Since casting spells during a game could label you a devil worshiper, a nerd or something in between, Dungeons & Dragons was banished to the underground.

As a universe of dedicated players expanded steadily in the shadows, the game popped up intermittently in the pop cultural consciousness: D&D was either alluded to or mentioned by name in TV shows including "That '70s Show," "The Big Bang Theory," "Community" and in the series finales of both "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and "Freaks and Geeks." Rivers Cuomo sings about the solace he found among his Dungeon Master's Guide and 12-sided die in the Weezer song "In the Garage." In "The Simpsons," Homer tells his family that he played Dungeons & Dragons for three hours with a new group of friends — until he was slain by an elf.

But regardless of its pop culture appearances, the general public's impression of the game had more or less remained the same: Dungeons & Dragons was for outcasts.

In the last decade, the tides of cool began to shift. Now, playing Dungeons & Dragons has become something of a social flex — the antithesis of the popularity contest that was the 1990s and early 2000s, an antidote to our more basic tendencies and cheugy proclivities.

"It's hip to be a nerd now," Stephen Colbert said in a 2018 interview with the actor Joe Manganiello, where they spent eight whole minutes of his talk show discussing their shared love of the game.

Marisha Ray, 33, a Los Angeles voice actor and cast member of "Critical Role," one of the best known D&D livestreams, recalled a moment several years ago when she realized "the nerd kids" had become the entertainment industry. Enter a decade of Marvel

films, including four directed by the Russo brothers, who grew up playing D&D. The Duffer brothers, the creators of the hit Netflix show "Stranger Things," were influenced by tabletop role-playing games like D&D and Magic: The Gathering, the fantasy card game with its own rabid fan base. George R.R. Martin, author of the fantasy novel series upon which HBO's "Game of Thrones" was based, is a noted J.R.R. Tolkien fan, and Tolkien novels are often cited as a gateway into D&D. (Perhaps unsurprisingly, Dave Arneson and E. Gary Gygax, the creators of Dungeons & Dragons, were enormous Tolkien fans.)

But nothing proliferated the good word of D&D as effectively as the internet. Video game streaming platforms such as YouTube and Twitch showed gaming voyeurs just how fun the world of tabletop games could be. Online forums like Reddit, Discord and Twitter created digital homes for role-playing game subcultures to cross-pollinate and thrive, and from there, pieces of insider gaming lingo worked their way into the meme vernacular.

Add all of that to a nearly two-year stretch of our lives during which pandemic-induced isolation converged with a desperation for escapism, and there you have it: a potent spell to summon Dungeons & Dragons from the depths of our collective mother's basement into its rightful place upstairs at the kitchen table.

Ellen Remley, 31, who works in creative marketing, was lured into the game by way of TikTok. "I think I liked one TikTok about D&D and then suddenly my entire For You page was posts about Dungeons & Dragons," she said. From there, she found Dimension 20, watched "a lot of D&D content" and decided she wanted to play.

Game Time

This winter, I joined my very first D&D game at the Brooklyn Strategist, which describes itself as a "community board game store." My character was a Level 2 paladin orc named Atlas (after my dog) who carried a great sword, had 19 charisma points and was able to conjure divine smite. My fellow players and I partook in "Curse of Strahd," a fifth-edition fantasy-horror adventure that, in our case, began with a quest and ended on a cliffhanger, and since then I have not stopped wondering what might happen next.

That's how it keeps you coming back.

A four-hour game is not uncommon. A typical D&D session takes at least three hours, and that's just one chapter of a campaign that can last for months, if not a year. But that time commitment might not seem so intense when measured against the hours we spend on our phone,



Who's Playing Dungeons & Dragons These Days? The Usual Fans, and Then Some. (cont.)

scrolling through Instagram or bingeing TV.

"Play is a part of the experience of living on this planet," said Siobhan Thompson, 37, a cast member of *Dimension 20*, a popular comedic D&D show on Dropout and YouTube. "The other stuff is so that we get to play, as far as I'm concerned."

A quick playbook for those who haven't delved into this world before: Players announce their characters, along with their characters' classes, levels and races — dwarf, elf, halfling, gnome, dragonborn. With the help of an evolving rule book, seven polyhedral dice, quick addition skills and flexible imaginations, players determine their characters' backgrounds, strengths, moral alignments and traits. As you play, these identity elements factor into every decision your character makes (with rolls of specific dice, which determine the intensity and impact of the action you wish to take). The dungeon master is more an omniscient narrator than an in-game player; it's the so-called D.M. who leads the players through the twisting, turning valleys of what's to come.

The new guard will tell you that playing D&D is like doing improv around a table with your friends. A collective willing suspension of disbelief keeps the narrative moving; dice randomize the outcomes. And while it is, at its roots, a war game, the appeal is less about winning or personal scores. The consensus among players interviewed for this article is that the real-life magic is born out of the communal storytelling.

It's about the journey, not the destination.

'New Blood and Air and Perspectives and Voices'

It's the newer generation of players who make D&D — and tabletop role-playing games generally — what it is today.

Connie Chang, a 24-year-old game master who runs "a semi-Tumblr-famous D&D meme blog," is the G.M. of *Transplanar*, "a non-colonial, anti-Orientalist" livestreamed game consisting entirely of players who are transgender and people of color.

"I really feel like marginalized people are the vanguard of making D&D blow up again," Mx. Chang said. "People say 'Stranger Things,' but I'm like, 'Nah, it's the queer community.'"

"Within the community, it's the Black folks, right?" Mx. Chang continued. "It's the Asian folks. It's the Indigenous folks. It's the people of color who are really bringing cool, innovative, fresh, much needed new blood and air and perspectives and voices and ways of G.M.ing and ways of playing to the space that would shake up an otherwise stale play community, straight up."

For all its fantastical otherworldliness, *Dungeons & Dragons* — created by Mr. Gygas when he was 36, and Mr. Arneson, at 27 — is deeply rooted in Eurocentric ideals of the Middle and Dark Ages. In interviews, players pointed to the work of J.R.R. Tolkien for inspiring entire races and subclasses within the D&D game that were built on racist tropes and reinforced harmful stereotypes. Players of different races, gender identities and sexual orientations cited instances of feeling unwelcome by legacy D&D players, by the game itself and by its history of straight white maleness and overt colonialism.

"D&D was originally published in 1974, so it's very nearly 50 years old now," said Ray Winninger, 55, the executive producer of *Dungeons & Dragons*. "And D&D is obviously not unique in this: We all try to tune our heads back to what pop culture was like 50 years ago. Obviously, things have progressed in a lot of ways since then, and in a lot of positive ways. And so, D&D wrestles with some of the same problems that any beloved franchise that's that old has."

Dungeons & Dragons recently outlined several diversity, equity and inclusion goals. A June 2020 blog post by Wizards of the Coast, the game's parent company, acknowledged that "some of the peoples in the game — orcs and drow being two of the prime examples — have been characterized as monstrous and evil, using descriptions that are painfully reminiscent of how real-world ethnic groups have been and continue to be denigrated."

A list of course corrections followed: The company changed "racially insensitive" text in recent reprintings of "*Tomb of Annihilation*" and "*Curse of Strahd*," two D&D books that players use to run campaigns. The game said it was working with sensitivity readers, promised to "continue to reach out to experts in various fields to help us identify our blind spots" and vowed to seek "new, diverse talent" to join its staff and pool of freelance writers and artists.

For Ms. Thompson, the *Dimension 20* cast member, *Dungeons & Dragons* "is absolutely real to me in a way that sometimes my real life is not," she said. She described how, during a "*Game of Thrones*"-themed campaign that resulted in many character casualties, she found herself crying as if someone had actually died.

That kind of intense emotion is so widespread among tabletop role-playing games that there's a name for it: "bleed," referring to the way emotions can bleed over from make-believe into reality. The release is cathartic, but perhaps more therapeutic is the act



Who's Playing Dungeons & Dragons These Days? The Usual Fans, and Then Some. (cont.)

of play itself. In interviews, many players described using Dungeons & Dragons to safely explore facets of their identity, to parse through the enduring existential question of all humankind: Who am I?

Luyanda Unati Lewis-Nyawo, 34, an actor and dungeon master in Britain, has a tattoo of a character from one of their campaigns, who was made up of “all the bits of myself that I really wanted to aspire to be even more of.”

“I was in therapy at the time, and so much of my life has changed just because I was able to explore these big themes and tell these stories and understand myself through play,” they said.

Elise Portale, a 33-year-old social media manager, came out as pansexual — someone who is attracted to people regardless of sex or gender — by way of Dungeons & Dragons.

“I’ve played gay characters, I’ve played straight characters,” she said. “I’ve recently played a character who, just in the course of our game, became very sapphic. It feels like as I got comfortable with this character who I was playing in a lesbian role, I started realizing that maybe I feel this way too. And I think a lot of people gravitate toward that.”

Central to Dungeons & Dragons’ appeal is its ability to foster community. Jimmy Doan, 42, a former “Wall Street guy” and Navy veteran who is now the community manager at the Brooklyn Strategist, said that for children in the store’s after-school program who are bullied or isolated in school, the game had become a safe haven, even a second home.

Adult players described the feeling of finally finding their niches in games like Dungeons & Dragons. They spoke of reconnecting with childhood friends over virtual D&D campaigns, of overcoming childhood speech impediments and strengthening social skills, all in the comfort of a welcoming space. They spoke of meeting significant others, making lifelong friendships, of finally finding their people.

“D&D has showcased that we are an evolved species,” Mx. Lewis-Nyawo said. “We want shelter. We want warmth. We want companionship. We want to be fed, hydrated. There are basic human needs, and I think storytelling is one of them.”

“And while it is, at its roots, a war game, the appeal is less about winning or personal scores. The consensus among players interviewed for this article is that the real-life magic is born out of the communal storytelling.

It’s about the journey,
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“There were polyhedral dice, which were interesting, but it wasn’t a board game. It was a storytelling game. It was both happening in our imaginations and playing out in real life with our friends around a table. We were all in this fantasy together, a group delusion in which everybody bought into the reality.”

—Anderson Cooper, Journalist and Anchor

For Dungeons & Dragons, the magic is in the memories

The Washington Post

In most games, crying isn't a good sign. But my character, a young elf, had survived an enemy attack only after making a desperate bargain with an ancient and cruel being. In exchange for her life, she could never return home. With a magically assisted message, she was saying goodbye to her family — played equally emotionally by my friend 800 miles away — and my eyes were welling with tears of joy over it. Our friends, scattered in different cities, cheered on our call over a scene well done.

We'd been playing Dungeons & Dragons together for five years, starting because we wanted to keep in touch after graduating high school. None of us had played much before, but it didn't matter. We learned together, navigating the rules and making each other laugh (and sometimes cry) with the story we created.

Dungeons & Dragons turns 50 this year. Over the decades since the game was created and designed by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, it has been transformed in the public consciousness from an image of social misfits playing in basements to a commercial behemoth. But the emotional bonds forged along the way are what players remember. We asked five of them to share a moment that stuck with them.

1970s: A miracle from my brother

Anderson Cooper is a journalist and anchors "Anderson Cooper 360" on CNN.

Fletcher, my elven thief, was dear to my heart. He wore a red cape and, in my mind, bore a close resemblance to D'Artagnan from "The Three Musketeers." Fletcher and his fellow adventurers would slay monsters and collect treasure. Ever the magnanimous hero, he hosted a party for the townspeople using his windfall of gold.

I was around 11, and my older brother and I had started playing a new game. We had previously played with toy soldiers, staging elaborate troop movements through our house by following the rules from H.G. Wells's "Little Wars," so we had a history of having a joint fantasy in our head. This new game, Dungeons & Dragons, was a natural extension of that.

There were polyhedral dice, which were interesting, but it wasn't a board game. It was a storytelling game. It was both happening in our imaginations and playing out in real life with our friends around a table. We were all in this fantasy together, a group delusion in which everybody bought into the

reality. And it was extremely important to me.

My brother, Carter, two years older than I was, came to it first after our father died in 1978. It allowed us to lose ourselves together and gave us a brief respite from the sadness that had descended on us. When we were playing D&D, we weren't stuck in the silences of not talking about him. We could talk about D&D.

I see us now hunched in a circle, waiting for this incredible adventure to begin. My brother set it up, hiding his papers behind a screen to keep the elaborate plans he'd made for us secret, and there was a palpable excitement as we wondered what magical world he had created.

This game gave me license to extend my childhood just a bit longer and permission to feel joy and excitement again. I was a sad boy, stunned and terrified by my dad's sudden death, but playing D&D, I could dive into the table and emerge on the other side as a swashbuckling elven thief, slaying orcs and other monsters. But death found me even in D&D. The game may not have winners and losers like other games, but it does have loss. I don't recall exactly what happened, but in some underground lair, my character, Fletcher, was killed. I was stunned and inconsolable. I refused to accept the death of this imaginary alter-ego for whom I deeply cared. Thankfully, the game allows for miracles the real world does not. My brother, using the mechanics afforded to him in his omniscient role, prolonged Fletcher's story by magically reviving him.

We stopped playing a few months later. My brother, Carter, was developing other interests and D&D no longer seemed so cool. He died by suicide when he was 23. In going through his things recently, I found his "Dungeon Masters Guide" and "Monster Manual," along with a binder full of hand-written notes he'd made for our games and detailed maps of mazes he'd created for our characters to explore. I'm not sure what to do with them, but I can't throw them away because they are such a part of who he was when we were kids.

The care and imagination my brother put into our adventures inspired in me a love of exploring and storytelling. I left high school early and rode in a truck across sub-Saharan Africa for several months, from Johannesburg to Bangui in the Central African Republic. It was the beginning of a lifetime of travel and adventure and learning to tell stories of my own.

For Dungeons & Dragons, the magic is in the memories (cont.)

1980s: A mythology of the mind

Lev Grossman is the author of “The Bright Sword” and the “Magicians” trilogy.

We started hearing rumors about it when I was in fourth grade. Nobody knew exactly what Dungeons & Dragons was except that it wasn’t quite a normal game; it was something weird and arcane and important, like sex or calculus. An older boy who’d played it showed me, furtively, a map hand-drawn in ballpoint pen on graph paper. I struggled to grasp the concept. Was it a board game? Like Sorry? But the pieces could go, like, in any direction? And there’s more than one board? “In D&D,” the boy said sagely, “there are many maps.”

Then one day my friend Ben called and said his brother had a copy of the game. Did I want to play? I did. I hung up the phone — it was a rotary phone, the kind that’s firmly attached to a wall — and solemnly announced to my family: “This is the greatest day of my life.”

It wasn’t, but it was a very good day. We probably played the Village of Hommlet, which came standard with the Basic Set. Ben’s older brother was the dungeon master. I played a magic user, so I didn’t wear armor, and my only weapon was a dart. I cast my one first-level spell — magic missile, obviously — and then I died. I loved it.

I was raised with no particular religion, and the suburb of Boston where I grew up was an arid, unspiritual place. D&D supplied me with something I was desperately missing: a mythology. I was overflowing with surging pre-pubescent feelings that were beyond my ability to manage or understand, but D&D activated in me vast, hitherto dormant realms. I was learning how to navigate the dungeons of my own subconscious, with their many maps, where the dragons lived, and how to survive there.

As much as I loved it, when it came to the actual playing of D&D, I was awful — both at playing it and to play it with. On some level I still didn’t get the concept of D&D because all I wanted to do was win it. If I’m being charitable, I might say that I cared too much. I would do anything to keep my character from dying: lie about my dice rolls, conveniently forget rules, invent other rules and argue legalistically with the DM about them. My more imaginative friends would role-play as their characters, act out the scenes and do the voices. I just tried to get all the treasure I could.

As I got older, my tastes evolved. Reading the rulebooks gradually replaced the pleasure of actually playing D&D. I drew vast unplayable maps and combed through the books for bizarre minutiae — the “Players Handbook” contained a reference to a weapon called the Bohemian ear spoon, and I spent hours speculating about the nature of this cruelest of pole-arms. I sought out the more obscure and bizarre modules, like the infamously unbeatable “Queen of the Demonweb Pits.” Much of my adult sexuality is probably rooted in my contemplation of the alluring drawing of Tlazolteotl, Aztec goddess of vice, in the “Deities and Demigods” handbook.

It didn’t last forever. Eventually, my attention wandered — like Jackie Paper, I got interested in other toys. D&D offered many pleasures but not the pleasure of feeling cooler and cleverer than other people, and I, a callow teenager, went off in search of games that were easier to win.

But the dragons would have the last laugh. Years later, when I grew up and became a writer, I initially chose the path of conventional literary fiction — I wanted to write books that were respectable, full of my caustic, clear-eyed observations about good old-fashioned social reality. But I didn’t have much success at it, and it was a long time before I realized I wasn’t a literary writer at all. It wasn’t until I changed horses and wrote a novel about people who cast spells and explored a magic land that I found my voice and had my first success.

I didn’t belong in the surface world, with the cool and clever people. My place was down in the dungeons, where the dragons lived. That’s where the treasure was all along.

1990s: A good dungeon master is a good collaborator

Joseph Gordon-Levitt is an actor, writer, director and the founder of HitRecord.

It was something like 1994. I was 13. My friend Nick was coming over later, and I was getting ready. We had agreed that I would be dungeon master that day. I was behaving a bit like a screenwriter outlining a movie and a bit like a kindergartner playing pretend. I paced around my room, absorbed in thought, a pad of graph paper and pencils ready at hand somewhere on the carpeted floor. And then, I had an idea.

I imagined a flood, not a real flood, a magic one, an unrealistically massive amount of water. The currents far too powerful to swim, the threat mortal; our

For Dungeons & Dragons, the magic is in the memories (cont.)

main character would need to escape — somehow. But how? He would have to use his shield! He'd ride the deluge like a medieval boogie-boarder all the way to safety. I'm not saying it was a brilliant idea, but I was totally sold at the time. Our adventure's climax firmly in mind, I felt ready to play.

Not long after Nick's mom dropped him off, we sat down on the carpet and got to it. How does the game begin? Do you turn something on? Do you deal cards? Do you start at Go? No, none of the above. As the DM, I just started talking to Nick in the second person, describing his character's experience. "Okay so, you're at a tavern," I might've begun. That's where a lot of adventures started, us young adolescent dudes fantasizing about what it might be like to go to a bar.

At the tavern, Nick's character met a mysterious thief who knew of a hidden dungeon containing unknown treasures and needing a partner with whom to make the dangerous but potentially lucrative journey. On their way, they probably met a few orcs or wraiths they had to fight, Nick and me rolling dice, doing arithmetic, erasing and re-penciling numbers on graph paper to determine the outcome of the combat. Once in the dungeon, I used a new sheet of paper to map the labyrinthine passageways and specify the locations of other monsters that needed fighting. The whole while, of course, I was thinking about my predetermined climax.

Nick's character did have a shield because I had surreptitiously persuaded him to spend some of his gold on one before the adventure began. Everything was going according to plan. Then, once the time was right, I brought in the flood. "You hear something," I told him. "A rumbling. It's getting closer. And louder."

"What is it?" he asked.

"You can't tell, but it's getting really loud now. Do you want to run?" I prompted him.

"No, I want to see what it is," he said.

BADOOSH! The magic water exploded into the dungeon's chamber, the door flying off its hinges. The Chaotic Evil Mage from whom our heroes had stolen was exacting his revenge. Nick's character ran. Now he just needed to flip over his shield and ride the rushing water.

But he didn't.

Uh-oh. I tried to coax him into it.

"The water's gonna pull you under; you gotta do something."

"I swim hard!" he said, not knowing what else to do.

But that wasn't what I was looking for. The idea I'd started with was not coming to pass. The climax of our story would have to become something else. And that, dear reader, is what makes Dungeons & Dragons unique. A good DM can imagine literally anything and make that part of the adventure, but once the game begins, they also have to be flexible, ready to come up with new ideas in response to the equally limitless imaginations of their players.

This is the crux of collaboration.

I wish I could remember exactly how my adventure with Nick ended that day. I do know it didn't end as I expected. And as I've grown from a 13-year-old D&D player into an adult in the working world, that spirit of collaboration has only revealed itself to be more and more valuable. These days, I put much less weight on my own ideas and much more on what becomes of them once other people join in the game.

2000s: A community of my own

Matthew Mercer is a voice actor and co-founder of Critical Role, where he serves as chief creative officer and game master for the company's flagship show, "Critical Role."

One by one, they stopped coming to play. Folks who had never tried it canceled at the last minute, feeling awkward about joining something they didn't understand. Experienced players who were looking forward to making characters and building a story together struggled to explain to their partners why they needed to spend hours away with their "work friends" to play make-believe. The D&D campaign I had poured myself into fizzled to nothing. I wasn't angry at my friends, but I was worried about the death of this passion that had meant so much to me.

I was a kid whose heart sat in high fantasy, so D&D was very much an experience I felt drawn to. I spent countless afternoons after high school in the '90s at the Collectors Asylum in Westlake Village, Calif., the local comic shop that also sold tabletop role-playing books and "Magic" cards. The Satanic Panic of the '70s and '80s still lingered like an albatross, while TV shows and films endlessly made us the butt of nerd jokes, playing up stereotypes of ultimate geekdom. The zeitgeist perpetuated the idea that "to play D&D was to be an outcast."

For Dungeons & Dragons, the magic is in the memories (cont.)

The stores were my first taste of this colorful and creative world of gamers. The back corners were consumed with groups gathered around card tables, inventing their own stories together. These were the places I used to go on my lunch break, my little escapes when I had a moment, even if I didn't buy anything. These were our social spaces. It felt like I walked into a community of my own.

In the 2000s, however, video games like "World of Warcraft" became cultural juggernauts, and "pen and paper" games started to fade. Many of the game stores I frequented shut their doors. It had all these signs of an extinction. I felt like this joyful pastime of mine was dying on the vine.

So after each group fell apart, I just tried to find fresh folks who might want to engage in that new journey. It largely ended up being friends who trusted me, were newer to the game and were curious to try it out. Preaching of the joys of rolling dice and playing make believe, I hoped that things could turn around.

We started video streaming our private game in 2015 and it became the web series "Critical Role," which has inspired fans around the world to start their own games. I am so thankful I didn't give up.

2010s: A character's journey — and my own

Ally Beardsley is a comedian and actor in the Dropout series "Dimension 20."

I was an aspiring comedian in Los Angeles and had just landed a salaried job at the comedy website CollegeHumor. My co-worker and friend Brennan Lee Mulligan was looking for six comedians to create a show that would be like an at-home game of D&D. Why not? "Dimension 20" became a weird punctuation to my day.

I remember there being too many rules to remember. I kept turning to my friend, Brian Murphy, to ask which dice I should be rolling. I wasn't paid overtime, but I loved the group and was having a lot of fun.

For the second season, I had my sea legs. I created a character for the campaign who was transgender. I had started going by the gender neutral they/them pronouns at work and among friends, but sourcing hormones or getting surgery seemed equal parts expensive and invasive. A fun thing about fantasy is stripping away the crunchy, real-world limitations and asking yourself: "What would I do if I could do anything?"

That season's arc for my character, Pete, was extremely euphoric for me. I had described him as a trans cowboy you might see at Burning Man, and the artist drew him dressed as a freaky Hunter S. Thompson in an open shirt to show his top surgery scars. He has wild magic — uncontrollable and dangerous in the game mechanics — which we used to explore the painful chaos of leaving a family that doesn't accept you.

Since then, I've started testosterone HRT and had top surgery. It's funny to listen back to myself playing a character who had transitioned in ways I hadn't. It's full of inaccuracies that make me smile. Pete takes a testosterone pill every day; I now know it's a weekly injection or a topical gel. I see my face, one wrapped up in playing something so new but instantly right. It was like an oracle. A near-future me who has health insurance! Who's talked to their mom about being trans and even spent a week post-top surgery on that mom's couch in Temecula, Calif!

As I started transitioning my appearance, seeing that in front of the camera felt raw. I was starting hormones, and my voice was cracking. Realizing it was all being recorded felt naked at times, but it has been really nice to talk to fans and friends about how important it is to see someone that looks like you taking a big risk on themself.

With Pete, it was really important to me to tell a story other than the dramatic lead-up to a medical transition. So we started with him having just gotten out of surgery, but that's all you see of that process. Part of his backstory is that he doesn't have a relationship with his transphobic parents, and before shooting the first episode, I felt sick to my stomach. I've been on a journey with my parents, and our starting place didn't have much common ground. When my character meets with his father, it felt as though I was actually running into my own on the street.

Brennan could sense that discomfort, and as my character's dad was about to call Pete by his deadname, Brennan shut the interaction down, surrounding his dad with bubbles that carried him into the sky. Magic is the power and freedom to manipulate your reality, and you can banish the awful voices in your life — let them swirl away into the air.



“The current D&D edition hits a sweet spot. It’s complex enough to sustain long-standing players, but approachable enough to draw in new people.”

—Lisa M. Given, *The Conversation*

50 years on, Dungeons & Dragons is still a gaming staple. What's behind its monumental success?

The Conversation

Half a century on from its creation, Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) continues to attract millions of players across demographics.

The tabletop role-playing game truly has cemented its position in an increasingly competitive market, valued at more than US\$15 billion (A\$23 billion) in 2022.

How is a fantasy game from 1974 still capturing the imagination of so many people?

How to play

Tabletop role-playing games are driven by players' own imaginations. They are a collaborative form of storytelling where players collectively control the narrative and "play" their characters through their words and actions.

In D&D, each player creates a character (such as a human, elf or dwarf, to name a few examples) with unique qualities. Do you like spells? You can be a wizard. Interested in sabotage? Become a rogue. Enjoy combat? You may be a barbarian at heart.

Guided by a dungeon master, your party narrates a quest-filled campaign filled with sticky situations and perilous encounters.

Players roll dice, including a 20-sided die, to dictate what actions they can take. The numbers they roll decided their successes and failures, whether they're casting spells, picking locks, or attacking monsters.

There are abundant rules, minutiae and lore. But, at its heart, D&D is simply a collective effort to tell a great story.

A global success

More than 50 million people worldwide are estimated to have played D&D. This is immense reach for a game that emerged in the 1970s as a fantasy spin-off from strategic war gaming, where predominantly male players used miniatures to simulate military operations.

D&D's increased popularity, over the past decade in particular, has been driven by the success of the game's current version (the fifth edition, released in 2014), the growth in online gaming culture, as well as increased social acceptance of what have historically been considered "nerdy" or "geeky" interests.

Franchises such as Game of Thrones and Lord of the Rings have also helped bring fantasy narratives into the mainstream.

The current D&D edition hits a sweet spot. It's complex enough to sustain long-standing players, but approachable enough to draw in new people. Following its 2014 release, celebrities such as Vin Diesel and Joe Manganiello

made online appearances playing D&D.

In 2016, Netflix's *Stranger Things* introduced the game to a massive new audience, as a portrayal of 1980s suburban nostalgia for carefree creative adventures.

Cultural representations of the game are plentiful, including in the 2023 film *Dungeons & Dragons: Honour Among Thieves*, 2023 videogame of the year *Baldur's Gate 3*, podcasts such as *Critical Role*, and live-streamed D&D campaigns available on YouTube and Twitch.

But as D&D became mainstream, scrutiny followed. The subculture has its share of controversies, including an element of toxic fandom that expresses hostility towards the game's evolution and diversifying fan base.

As with any growing community, some fans have been concerned with gate-keeping. Some players experience bullying and exclusion, while others find themselves in awkward conversations around the table. This has been a recurring concern for women trying D&D for the first time.

On balance, however, the vast majority of people play to have fun, express their creativity and engage with others. The flexible nature of the game means fans have found endless ways to turn their campaigns into something highly personal and treasured.

D&D continues to evolve through the rich contributions of its fan base, for whom it has become an important outlet for creativity and self-expression.

We all need connection

In challenging times, tabletop games provide inexpensive entertainment, escapism and a way to stay connected to friends and family.

One recent Australian study, of community members playing the game over an eight-week period, found playing D&D decreased players' depression, stress and anxiety, and increased self-esteem. The authors suggest the game could be used as a wellbeing intervention tool or to prevent mental health issues from arising.

Role-playing games in particular offer psychological support to people of all ages, helping to combat anxiety and build confidence.

This is particularly valuable at a time when social isolation is plaguing communities. Australia's social cohesion index dropped to its lowest level in 2023. People were concerned about rising household expenses and the state of the economy, with almost half of respondents feeling socially isolated some or all of the time.

50 years on, Dungeons & Dragons is still a gaming staple. What's behind its monumental success? (cont.)

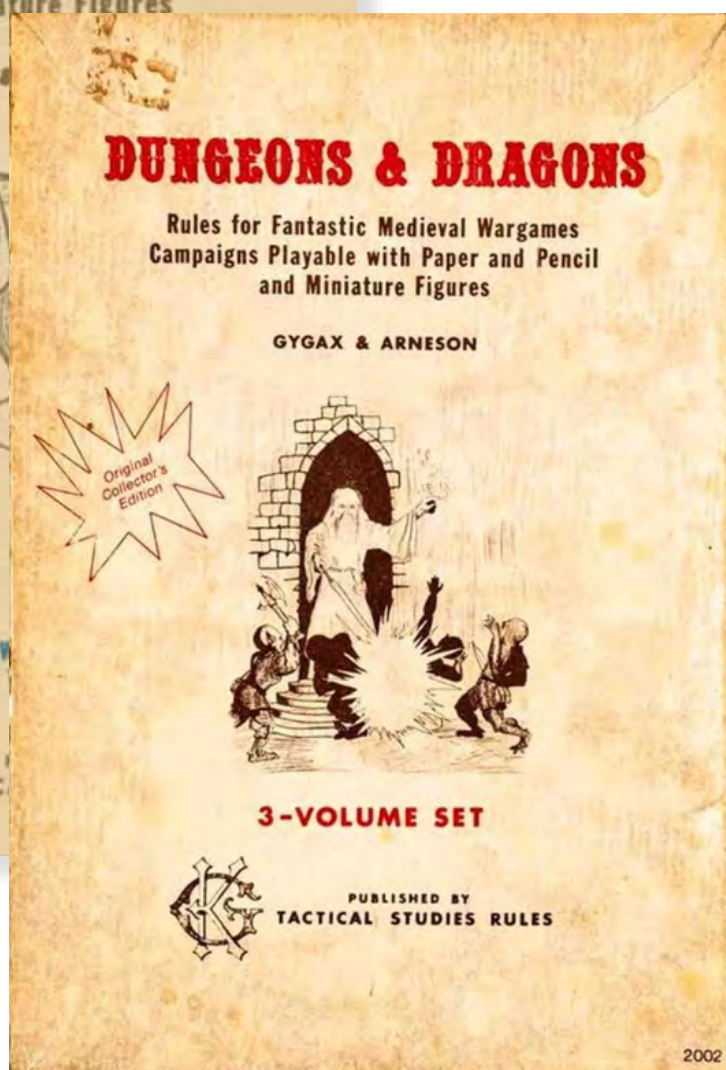
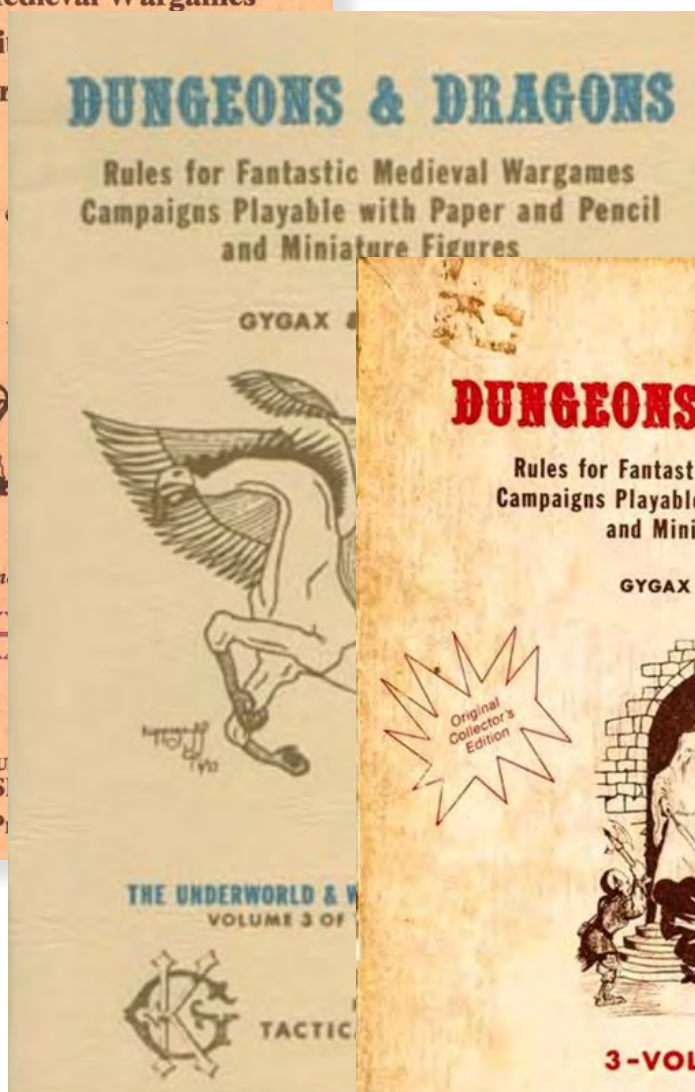
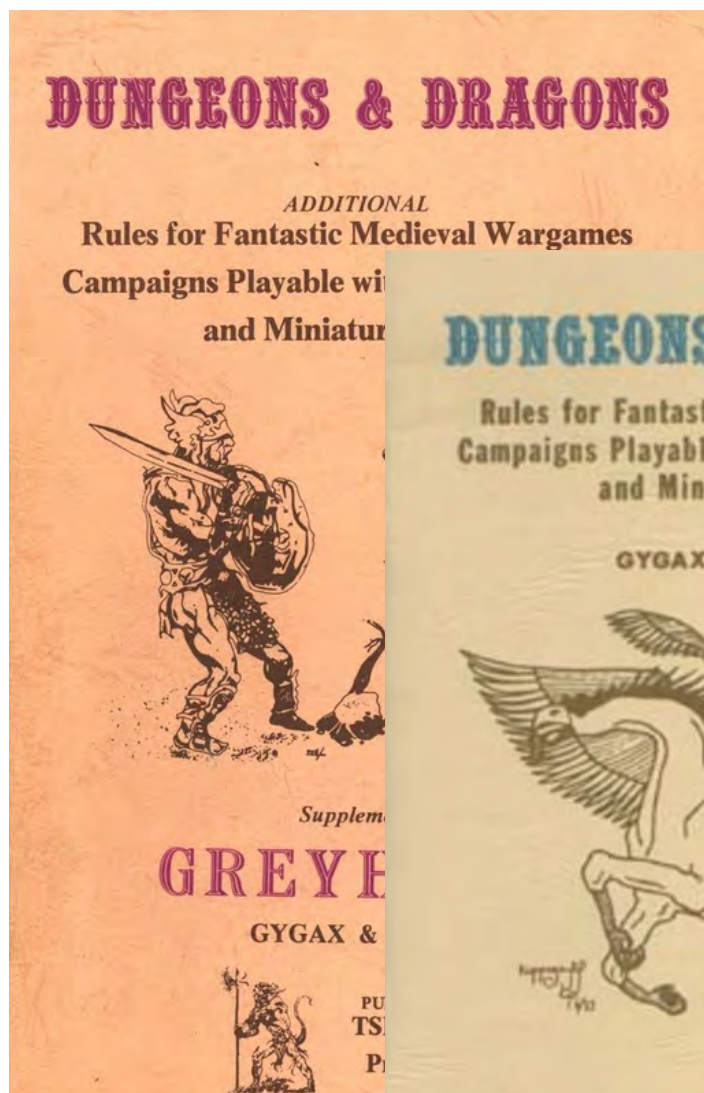
During the COVID pandemic, many households in lockdown introduced game nights to entertain themselves. Now, even with restrictions lifted, Australia continues to experience a thriving role-playing and board game movement.

The campaign continues

Around the world, shared public spaces, cafés and pubs offer tabletop gaming spaces to foster community engagement. Public libraries have included spaces for gaming since the 1850s, starting with billiard tables and puzzles, and now including video games.

New social media communities, such as the Latrobe Valley Boardgamers Facebook Group, are frequently popping up for people with shared gaming interests.

In April, the British Library will host a live-streamed event to celebrate D&D's 50-year legacy — one of many events to be held this year. A new rules update is expected later in the year and is sure to entice fans new and old.



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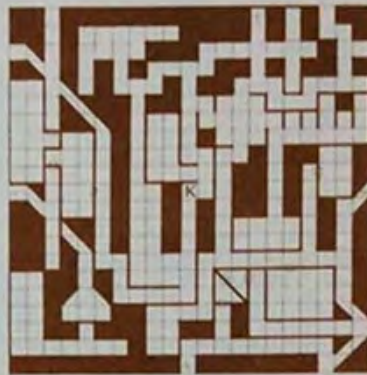
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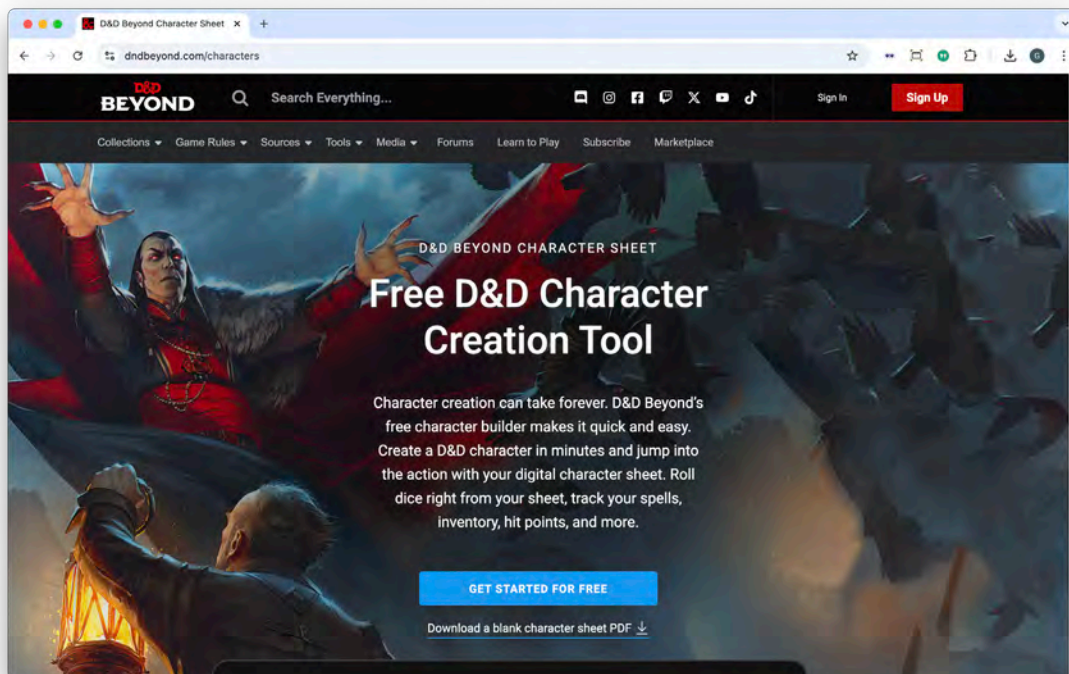
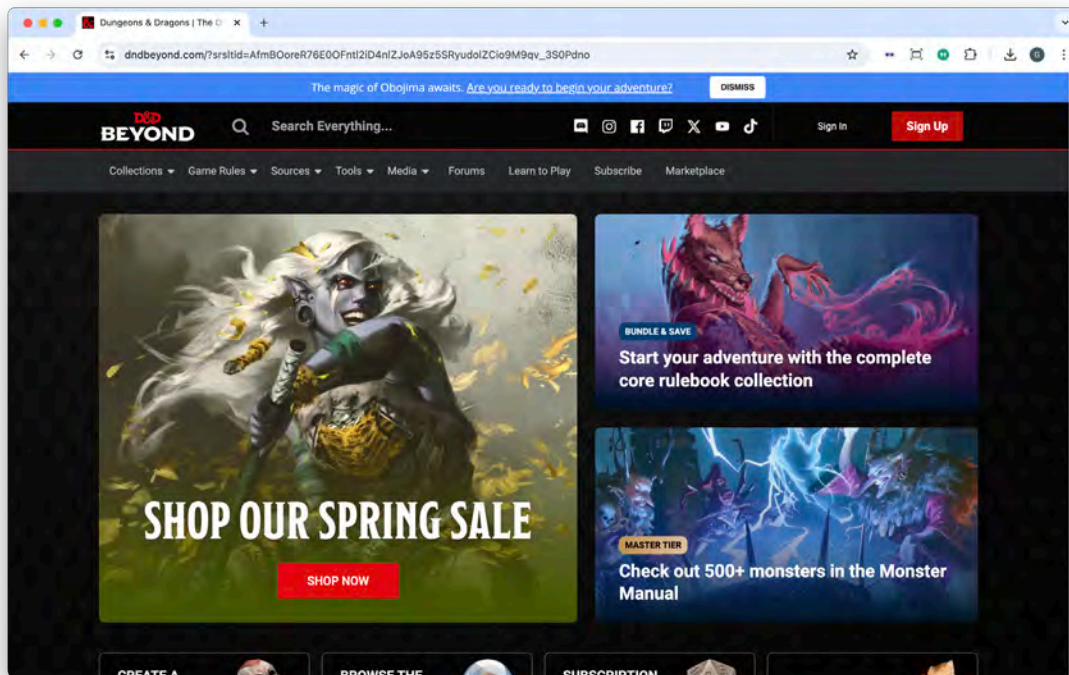
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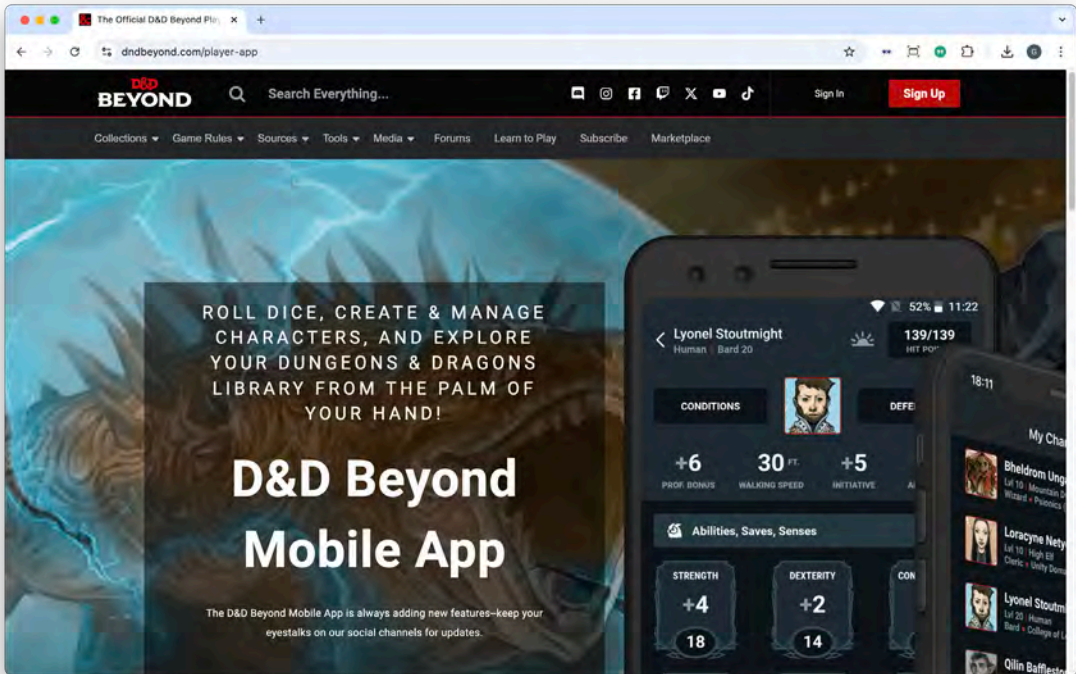
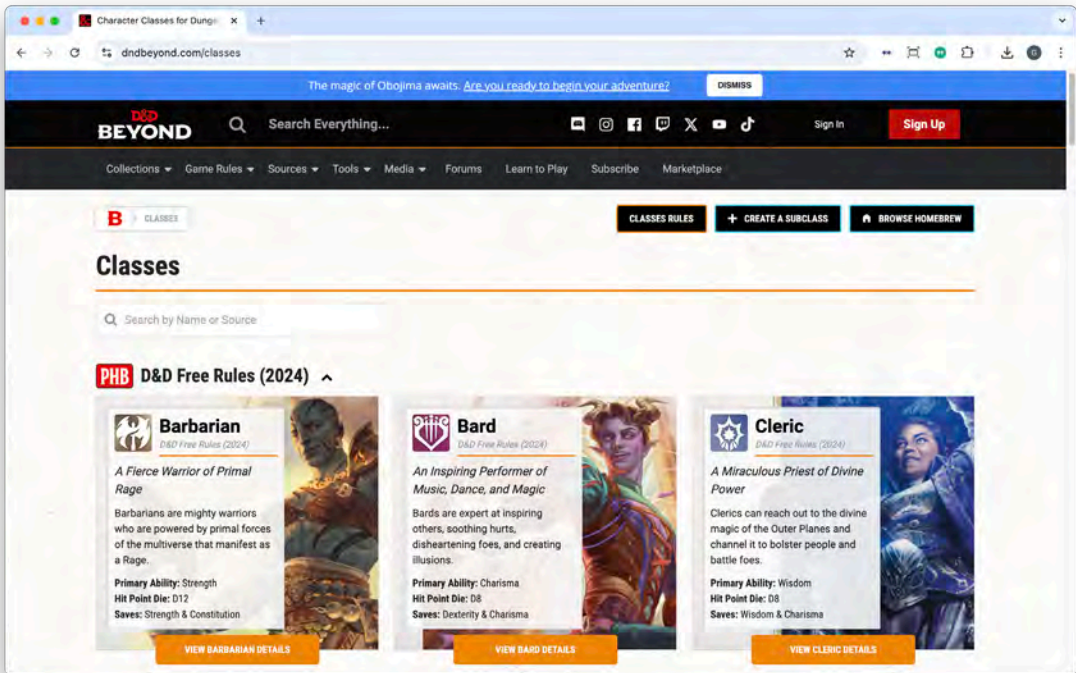
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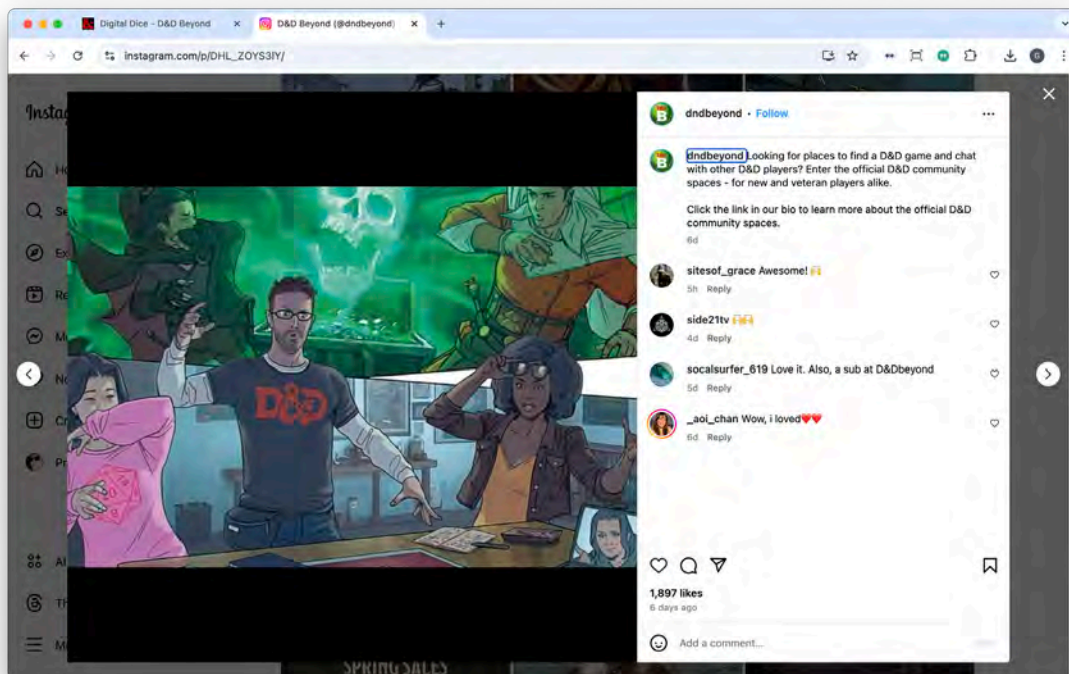
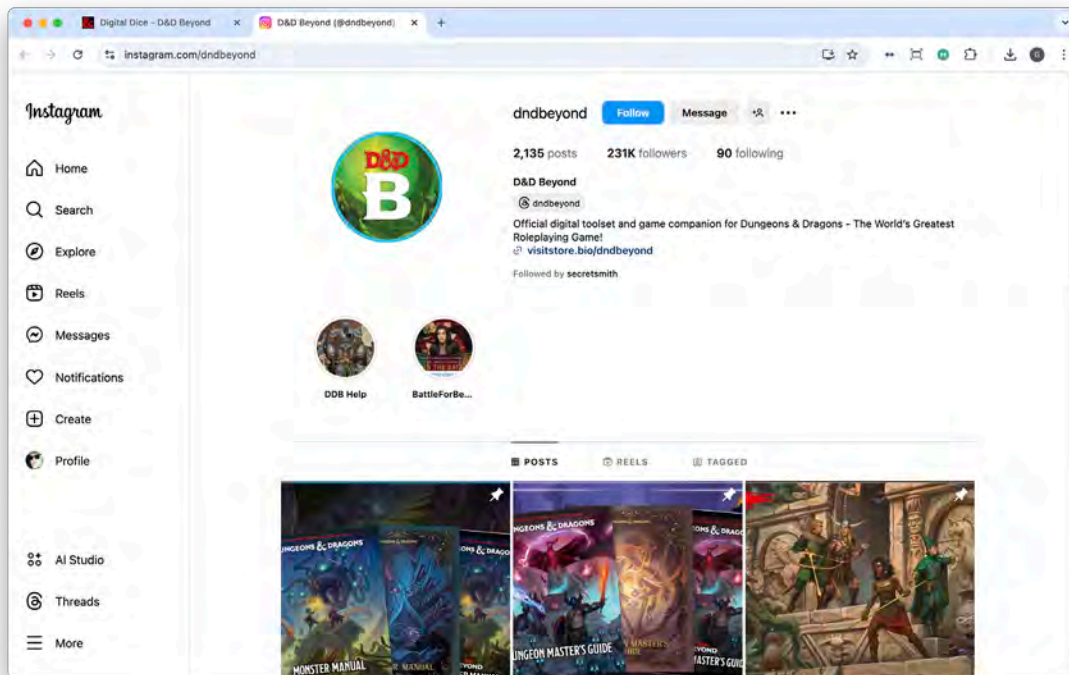
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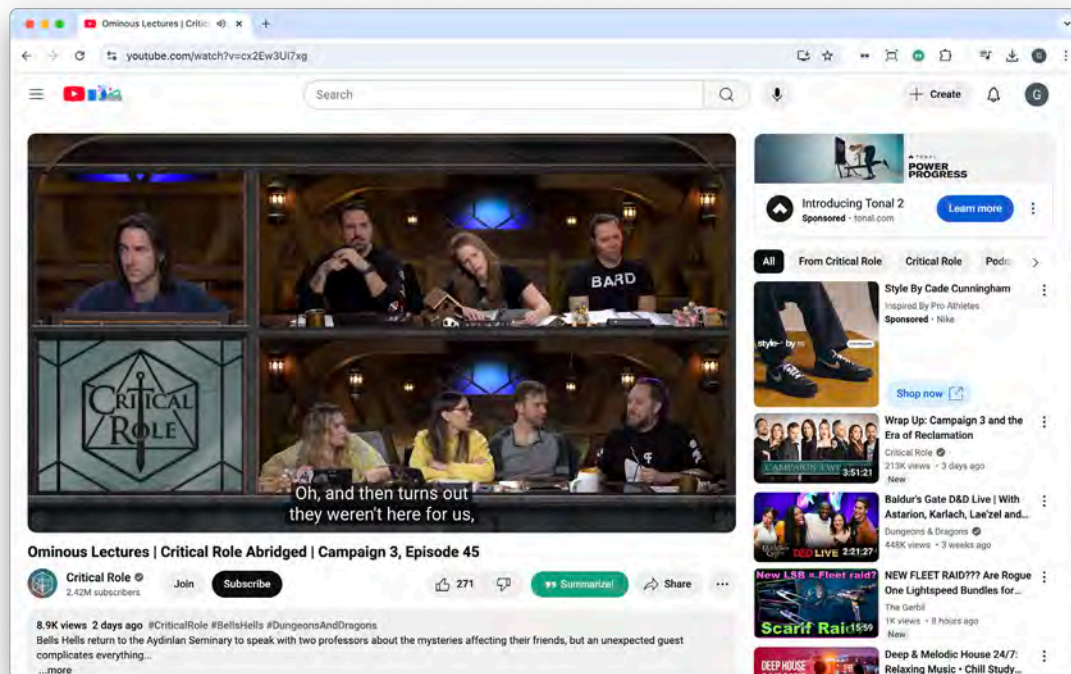
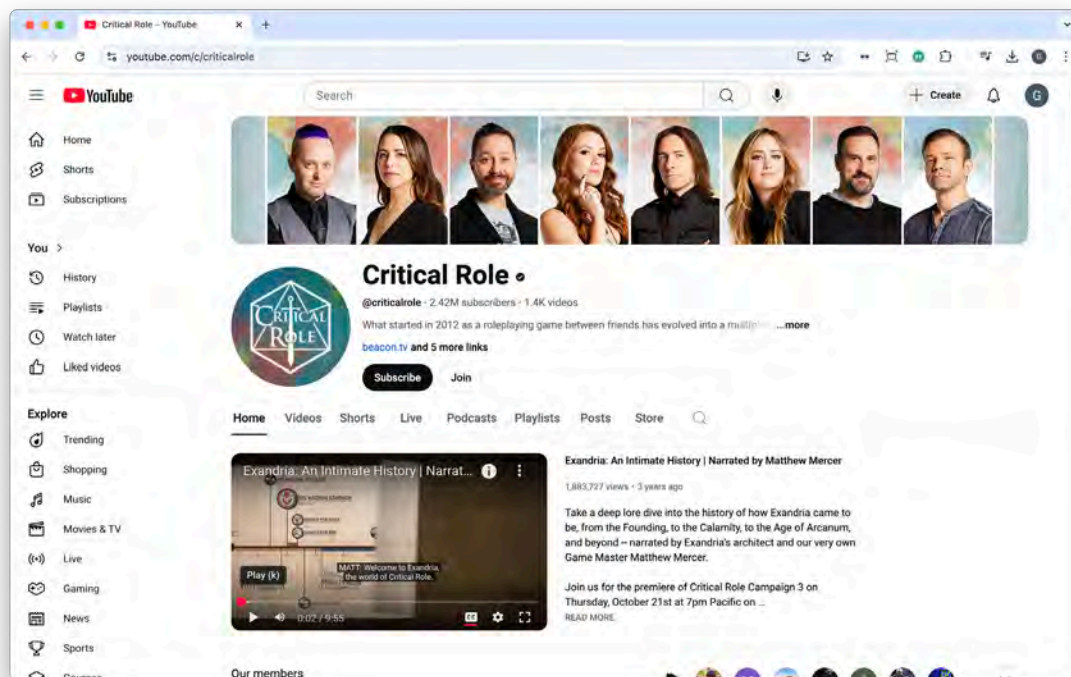
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The American Philatelic Society (APS) is the largest nonprofit stamp collecting foundation of philately in the world. Both the membership and interests of the society are worldwide.

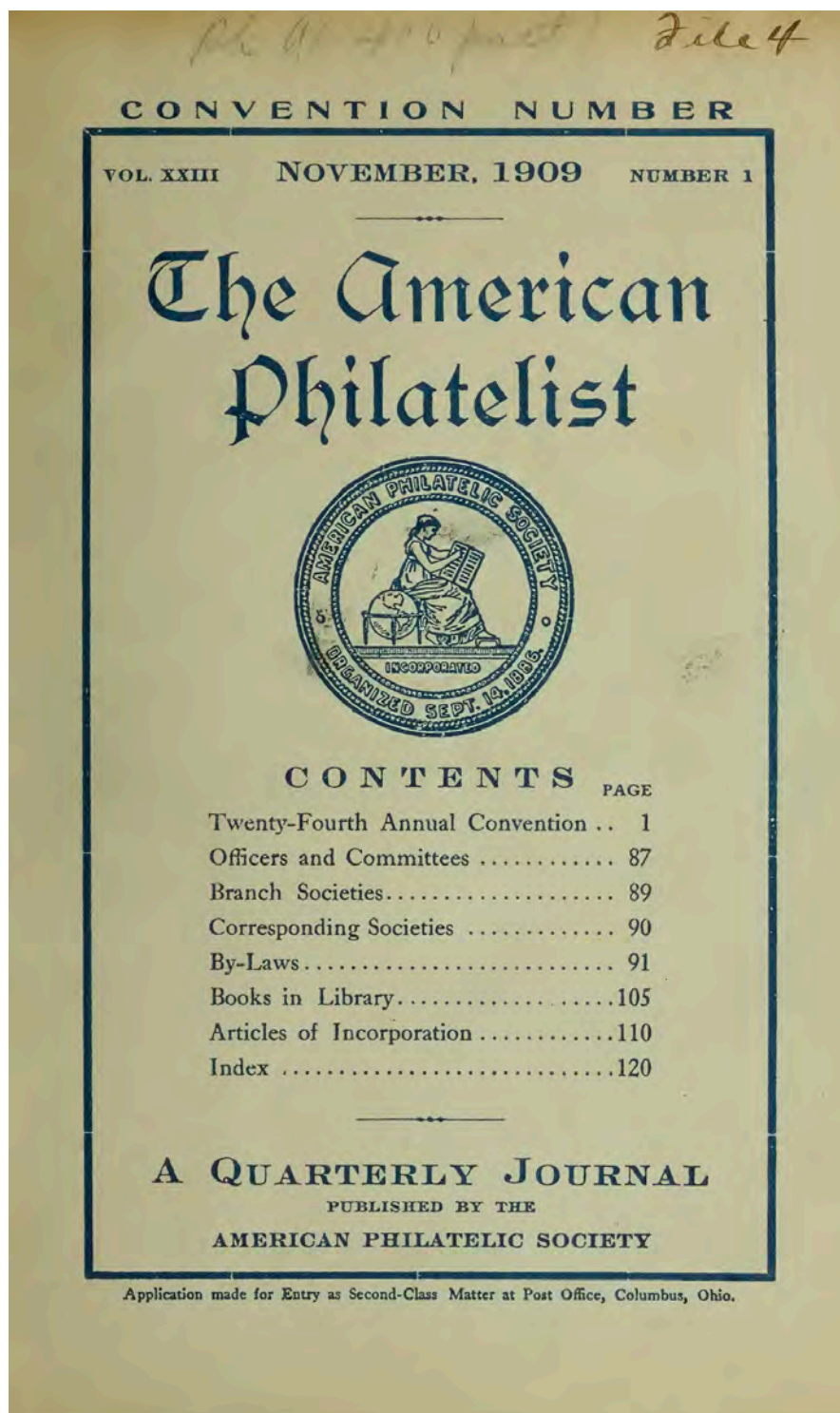
With members in more than 110 countries, the APS is the largest, non-profit organization for stamp collectors in the world. Founded in 1886, the APS serves collectors, educators, postal historians, and the general public by providing a wide variety of programs and services.

The Society is entirely supported by membership dues, gifts, and the sale of publications, specialty items, and services.



“Stamps are both miniature art works and pieces of government propaganda. They can be used to promote sovereignty, celebrate achievement, define national, racial, religious, or linguistic identity, portray messages or exhort certain behaviour.”

—Dennis Altman, *Paper Ambassadors: The Politics of Stamps*



Why We Still Use Postage Stamps.

The Atlantic

In a decidedly digital age, the modest postage stamp seems to be slowly vanishing from daily life—no longer ubiquitous in wallets or pocketbooks, useful but maybe not essential.

They're so overlooked that the comedian Nate Bargatze has an entire bit about how stamps make him "nervous." "I don't know how many you're supposed to put on [a letter]," he says. "And they change the price of stamps, and that's not in the news, you know? You don't find that out on Twitter. You have to find out from old people. They're the only people that know." (As someone in the news, I am duty bound to report that stamps' price increased from \$0.66 to \$0.68 on January 21.)

But stamps aren't yet entirely anachronistic. Yes, the volume of first-class mail has been on the decline, but the U.S. Postal Service still sells about 12.5 billion stamps annually. Some of this is a matter of taste. "There are certain things where physical mail is still seen as the socially correct way to do things," says Daniel Piazza, the chief curator of philately at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, pointing to mailing wedding invitations, birthday notes, and holiday cards.

But stamps serve a purpose that is not merely functional. If you look back far enough, they also tell a story about national identity, and the technological and cultural trajectory of America. Stamps "are both miniature art works and pieces of government propaganda," Dennis Altman wrote in his 1991 book, *Paper Ambassadors: The Politics of Stamps*. "They can be used to promote sovereignty, celebrate achievement, define national, racial, religious, or linguistic identity, portray messages or exhort certain behaviour."

Richard Morel, the curator of the British Library's Philatelic Collection, put it to me more succinctly: "Stamps democratize our history and culture." In short, the history of U.S. stamps tells a story of America.

The postage stamp as we know it today is a relatively young technology. Prior to the mid-1800s, "most letters were sent collect, so postage was paid by the recipient of the letter rather than by the sender," Piazza told me. This turned out to be a very bad business model for the Postal Service. First, it required people to go to their post office to see whether they had mail. In fact, postmasters paid to run ads in local papers listing who had letters to collect so those people would retrieve them. (One true constant across time seems to be that people consider going to the post office a chore.) Then, if there was a letter for someone and they did pick it up, the receiver had to pay

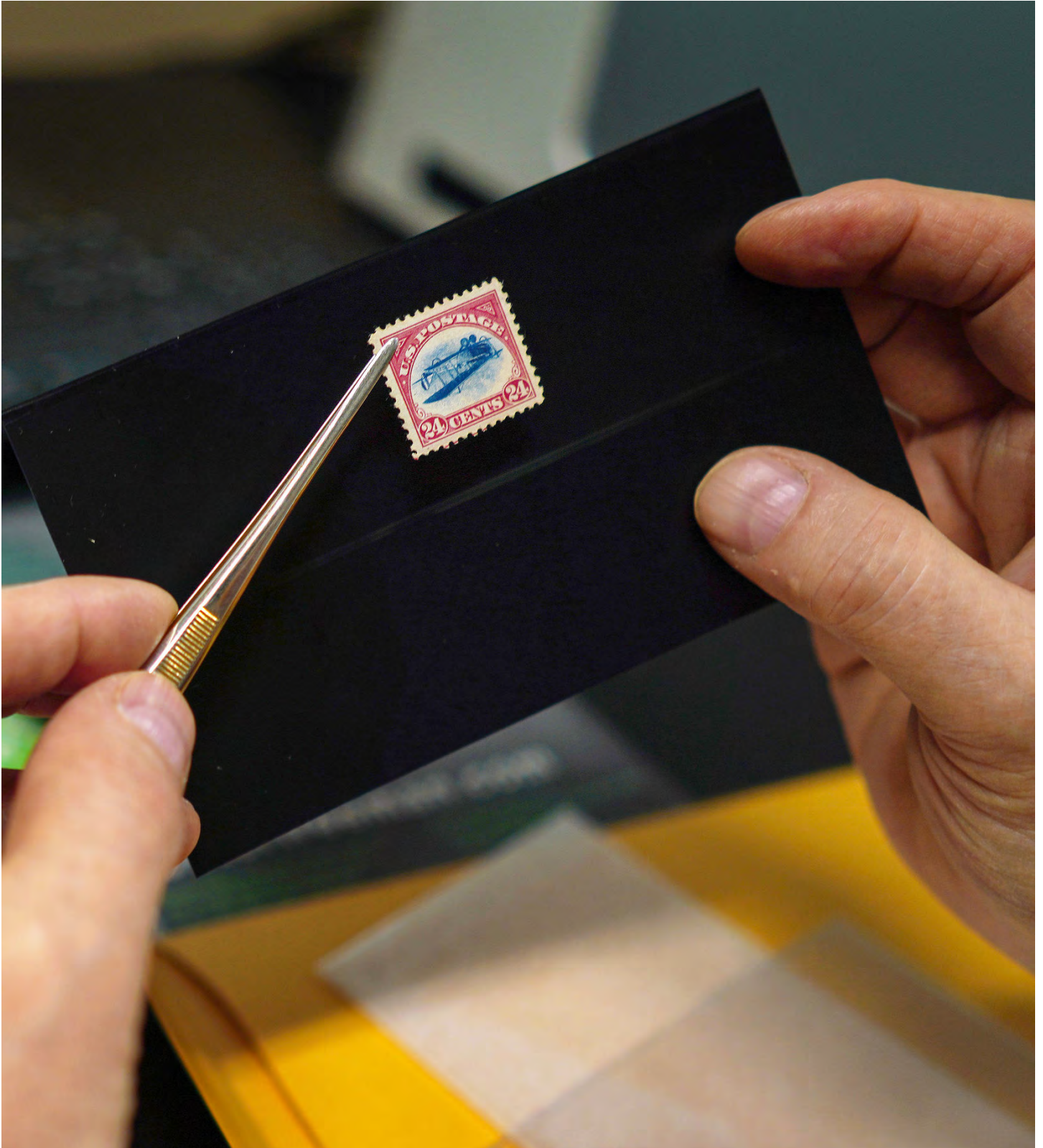
the postage, which they sometimes refused to do, given its expense. "So it's a very cumbersome, sort of expensive system" for both the Postal Service and the receivers of mail, Piazza said.

Until a breakthrough in 1840. The U.K. issued the Penny Black, the world's first prepaid, adhesive stamp. With this stamp, people could send a half-ounce letter for a flat, prepaid rate of one penny. The Penny Black featured the face of Queen Victoria, and, in a sign of the times, some people believed that "licking the back of the queen's head was undignified, if not potentially treasonous," Altman wrote in his book. On a recent visit to the British Library, I was able to see the last remaining press of the type that printed the Penny Black. Displayed on the library's upper-ground floor, the machine—which was smaller than I had imagined, given its function—looked as delicate as an antiquity of the Industrial Revolution can, with its large spindle, rope pulleys, and iron weights.

This British innovation in stamp production set the path for other countries to follow. In the 1840s and '50s, several other nations developed their own postage stamps. The U.S. issued its first ones on July 1, 1847: a five-cent stamp featuring Benjamin Franklin, the country's first postmaster general, and a 10-cent stamp featuring George Washington. (Washington, distinguished in so many ways, also has the distinction of having more appearances on U.S. stamps than anyone else.)

The start of stamps in the U.S. was an unheralded affair. A postmaster in Maine mailed a letter—without a stamp, postage due—to the postmaster general to inquire whether the stamps his office had received were "genuine," according to *Smithsonian Magazine*. But by 1856, all mail required federal, prepaid postage stamps, and we largely entered the state of postage stamps as we know them today. Or, as Morel put it, their invention "triggered our information revolution."

Stamp design, however, took a little longer to develop. For decades, American stamps followed the aesthetics of coin-face design, that is, profile drawings of heads of state. In our case, primarily dead presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson. The U.S. didn't begin issuing commemorative stamps until 1893, timed to the World's Fair in Chicago, with a series of 16 stamps celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage to the New World. Included in the series was a depiction of Queen Isabella of Spain, making her the first woman featured on a U.S. stamp. (The first American woman on a stamp was Martha Washington, in 1902.)



Why We Still Use Postage Stamps. (cont.)

In the 130 years since that first commemorative stamp, hundreds and hundreds more designs have been issued. U.S. postage stamps have celebrated momentous events, such as the 1932 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid New York, home of the first U.S. Winter Olympics Games, and the moon landing, in 1969. There have been many stamp firsts: the first Hispanic American (Admiral David Farragut, 1903), the first Native American (Pocahontas, 1907), the first African American (Booker T. Washington, 1940). Some stamps impart social messages: Prevent Drug Abuse (1971) or Alcoholism: You Can Beat It (1981). They've even been used to fund causes. The Breast Cancer Research semipostal has sold more than 1 billion stamps since it was first issued, in 1998, and has raised millions of dollars for the cause.

"If you compare some of the American stamp designs ... to other countries', they're incredibly progressive much earlier on," Morel said. There's the Black Heritage Series, which began in 1978 with an image of Harriet Tubman and still runs today with annual new releases. Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan were commemorated on a stamp in 1980. Even designs that might now be seen as dated or insensitive were bold in their own time. In 1969, the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp that featured an image of a young child gradually emerging out of a wheelchair. The language on the stamp reads, Hope for the crippled. "The language is now problematic," Morel said, "but it's the intent that underlies the stamp design, which is actually a positive one."

These design decisions are not made lightly. In 1957, the Postal Service created the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, which consists of a group of people from across disciplines who consider stamp recommendations from the public. Anyone can suggest any subject to the council, which will weigh the recommendation so long as it meets its healthy list of criteria—for example, the design should honor a subject or a figure that made a significant contribution to American life, and the commemorated can't be a living person.

It's a deliberative process that can take several years—and for good reason. Nearly any stamp design is certain to irritate someone. In the early 1990s, when the Postal Service announced that it would be releasing a stamp featuring Elvis, some Americans were scandalized. They couldn't fathom the idea of honoring someone who had addiction issues and was once considered too sexy for broadcast television. "I was appalled to see that a picture of Elvis Presley is being considered for a postage stamp," one person wrote in a letter to the editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1992. "The

picture on a postage stamp should be someone or something of historical significance or an individual who has made an extraordinary contribution to the well-being of the human race ... If Presley appears on a stamp, the postmaster general should be fired immediately." The Postal Service won the day; the Elvis stamp is widely considered the most popular commemorative stamp in U.S. history. The decision to put Bugs Bunny on a stamp was also met with mild indignation. "That one probably didn't go over as well with the serious stamp collectors," says Jay Bigalke, the editor in chief of Linn's Stamp News. People used it as an excuse to "write to the Postal Service and say, 'If you can issue a stamp for Bugs Bunny, you can issue a stamp for fill-in-the-blank.'"

A reason these design choices are so freighted is that they have broad, international reach. "Trivial as they may seem, [stamps] are objects that are extremely dispersed both domestically and abroad, and which allow governments to propagate widely the official culture of a given state," Altman wrote. Said another way, stamps let officials tell the story they want to tell. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a stamp collector himself, "nosed his way into stamp design, even sketching them out on a napkin and passing it along to the postmaster general at the time," Bigalke told me. After Roosevelt signed the National Industrial Recovery Act, he asked for a stamp promoting the law to be issued. "He just recognized the importance of the postage stamp and conveying a message," Bigalke said.

Other countries use their stamps to tell stories too, and sometimes those stories are deeply influenced by the United States. A number of African countries have released stamps featuring Martin Luther King Jr., for example, a testament to King's international importance and popularity. The Apollo 11 mission has been featured on more than 50 stamps in other countries. A stamp issued by Iran in 1984 featured Malcolm X. American pop culture has also infiltrated international postage stamps. In the Caribbean, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has featured both Elvis and Michael Jackson on its stamps. (Jackson has not been featured on an American stamp.)

Stamps are also used for more expressly political or propagandist purposes. In 1969, North Korea issued a stamp called "International Conference of Journalists Against US Imperialism," showing several pens attacking President Richard Nixon. "The very fact that [North Korea] uses stamps as a medium to attack America is, again, proof [of] the value of stamps," Morel said. "Because if there was no value, why bother?"



Why We Still Use Postage Stamps. (cont.)

More recently, Ukraine used its stamp program as a sort of hearts-and-minds campaign. “When the invasion and the war broke out, they issued a postage stamp showing a soldier flipping off the battleship” off of Snake Island, Bigalke said. Ukraine has “been using stamps as a rallying cry in the country in a much more powerful way than any other country really has with their postage stamps,” he told me. “A lot of people have bought the stamps to help support Ukraine.”

Stamps have also been used as a sort of bilateral foreign-relations tool. A stamp commemorating joint Soviet-American efforts in space exploration was released in 1975, during the Cold War. And the U.S. and Australia jointly released stamps celebrating the latter’s bicentenary, in 1988.

Perhaps the most famous American stamp design is one the U.S. Postal Service never wanted to release. In 1918, the department issued its first airmail stamp, which featured a Curtiss Jenny biplane. Because of its two-color design, the stamp had to go through the press twice. And at some point in the printing, one of the plates was turned upside down. This run resulted in nine misprinted 100-stamp sheets. Eight of them were found and destroyed on the printing floor, but one misprinted sheet of the stamp—now known as the Inverted Jenny—found its way to the public. (In 1939, this magazine referred to such misprints as “philatelic romances.”) The Inverted Jenny has since become one of the most highly prized stamps for collectors and is a small pop-culture phenomenon. It was briefly referenced in the film *Brewster’s Millions* and in a joke at Homer’s expense in *The Simpsons*. Last year, a single Inverted Jenny stamp sold for a little more than \$2 million.

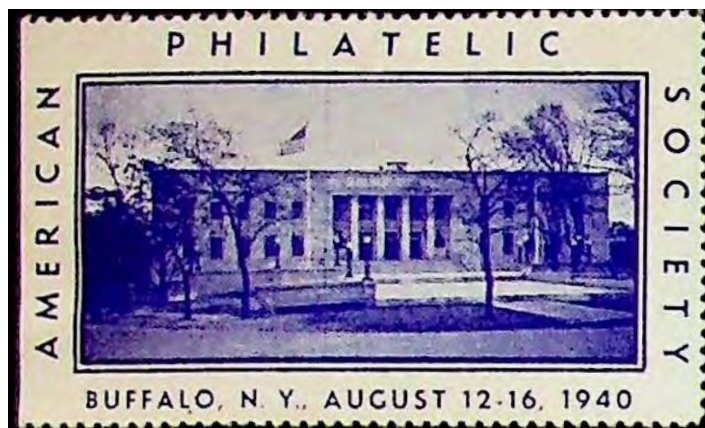
Stamps provide “an amazing body of material to study the history of communication, art, design, but also humanity,” Morel said. And this study started essentially on the very first day of the modern postage stamp’s existence. The oldest surviving stamp collection dates back to 1855, by a collector from Belgium who started amassing the stamps to learn geography.

In 1943, in the midst of World War II, *The Atlantic* published a sort of defense of the hobby in its February issue. “So stamp collecting. It’s a vice, but most pleasant,” wrote Henry Bellamann, a poet and an author, in the article “Stamps for Me.” He later continued, “The stress of the day in which we are living is unbelievably great. We have need of releases through simple pleasures.”

Seeing stamps through the prism of history made a recent visit to my local, fluorescently lit post office edge just barely into exciting territory. I had gone to return a package and thought I might buy some stamps. A gentleman ahead of me in line asked about the particular design I wanted, and I overheard the teller say that it had sold out. So when I returned home, I decided to buy some stamps online. Scrolling through the gallery, I selected some Our Lady of Guápulo holiday stamps (issued 2020) and some Piñatas! stamps (issued 2023) to attach to invites for a party. I could just send an email invite, but knowing that nearly everyone’s mood lifts when they receive actual letters, it only feels right to choose the mailbox over the inbox.

“Trivial as they may seem, [stamps] are objects that are extremely dispersed both domestically and abroad, and which allow governments to propagate widely the official culture of a given state.”

—Dennis Altman, *Paper Ambassadors: The Politics of Stamps*



A Stamp Just Sold For More Than \$2 Million. Meet The 'Inverted Jenny.' Its New Owner Calls It 'The Holy Grail Of Postage.'

The Washington Post

With only pocket change to spend in the 1950s, collector Charles Hack focused on acquiring stamps that few wanted: overprints churned out in Eastern Europe during World War I. As a boy building a stamp collection, first in Brooklyn and later in Long Island, he could only gaze longingly at advertisements announcing the auction of an “Inverted Jenny” — one of the rarest and most coveted stamps in the world.

Even then, he knew it was “the holy grail of postage.”

“At the time, they sold for more money than God, in my mind — \$7,500 each,” Hack told The Washington Post.

On Wednesday, Hack, 76, spent just over \$2 million to buy the stamp that was so far out of his reach when he was a child. The Inverted Jenny was a misprint of a stamp created in 1918 to commemorate the start of regular airmail service. In a scramble to make the stamps in time for the inaugural flight, the printers made a batch with the Curtiss “Jenny” biplane flying upside down. Although postal officials quickly discovered and stopped circulation of nearly all misprints, a sheet of 100 was sold to the public. Over the years, those 100 Inverted Jennys have become the most famous and sought-after treasures in the stamp-collecting world.

The Inverted Jenny is so famous that it has occasionally broken out of the esoteric confines of the insular world of philately and bubbled up into popular culture. In a 1993 episode of “The Simpsons,” Homer rummages through a box at the Springfield Swap Meet, where he astutely observes that “the airplane’s upside down” before tossing a sheet of 40 Inverted Jenny stamps into a “junk” pile of priceless Americana and other artifacts — a copy of the Declaration of Independence, a copy of Action Comics No. 1 and a Stradivarius violin.

Like a Picasso or a Honus Wagner baseball card, the Inverted Jenny transcends stamp collecting, resonating on a cultural level, said Scott Trepel, president of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, which auctioned the stamp to Hack.

When he was around 11, Hack gave up stamp collecting in favor of pursuing girls. But in the early 2000s, amid a successful career in real estate development and investing, he picked it up again when a Jenny stamp went up for auction. This time, he had the money. He bought it for about \$300,000, which “started my rebirth in the field of philately at a whole different level.”

In 2007, a better-quality Jenny hit the auction block. This time, Hack shelled out nearly \$1 million for “Position 57,” so named because of its original orientation in the sheet of 100 purchased by William Robey on May 14, 1918, at a post office on New York Avenue in the District.

Then, in 2018, the holiest of holy grails emerged. “Position 49,” which had been unaccounted for since 1918, popped back up on the radar of the stamp-collecting world. Siegel Auction Galleries had digitally re-created Robey’s sheet of 100 Jennys with photographs of each stamp, and until then, the only blank spot was Position 49, which hadn’t been seen since it was purchased in 1918 and locked away in a safe-deposit box.

“We can fill in the last piece of the jigsaw puzzle,” Trepel said of the reemergence of “Position 49.”

Turns out, it was a beautiful piece. The collector who bought it in 1918 had put it in the safe-deposit box in a Midwest bank vault, and their descendants had left it untouched for decades, Trepel said. It was one of the few Jennys that wasn’t in the possession of American megacollector Col. Edward H.R. Green who, according to Trepel, had a habit of storing stamps in “not the best places.” Confined to the safe-deposit box, the stamp wasn’t exposed to light, nor was it ever affixed to a hinge, which collectors use to put stamps in albums.

All of that led to a superior specimen.

“The colors in the paper are just beautiful and fresh,” Trepel said, adding: “There’s nothing better.”

When a member of the family died and some of the younger descendants came into possession of the stamp, they decided to sell it, Trepel said. They eventually found their way to Trepel, and in 2018, Siegel put the stamp up for auction.

Hack was there and ready to buy. Unfortunately for him, his bid came in second. His effort was about \$50,000 behind the winning bid, which would translate to a sale price of nearly \$1.6 million. Hack said he could have continued his bidding war but demurred, given that he already had a solid Inverted Jenny.

“I already had the other one that was nearly as good, and I just didn’t want to spend that much money,” he said.

A Stamp Just Sold For More Than \$2 Million. Meet The 'Inverted Jenny.' Its New Owner Calls It 'The Holy Grail Of Postage. (cont.)

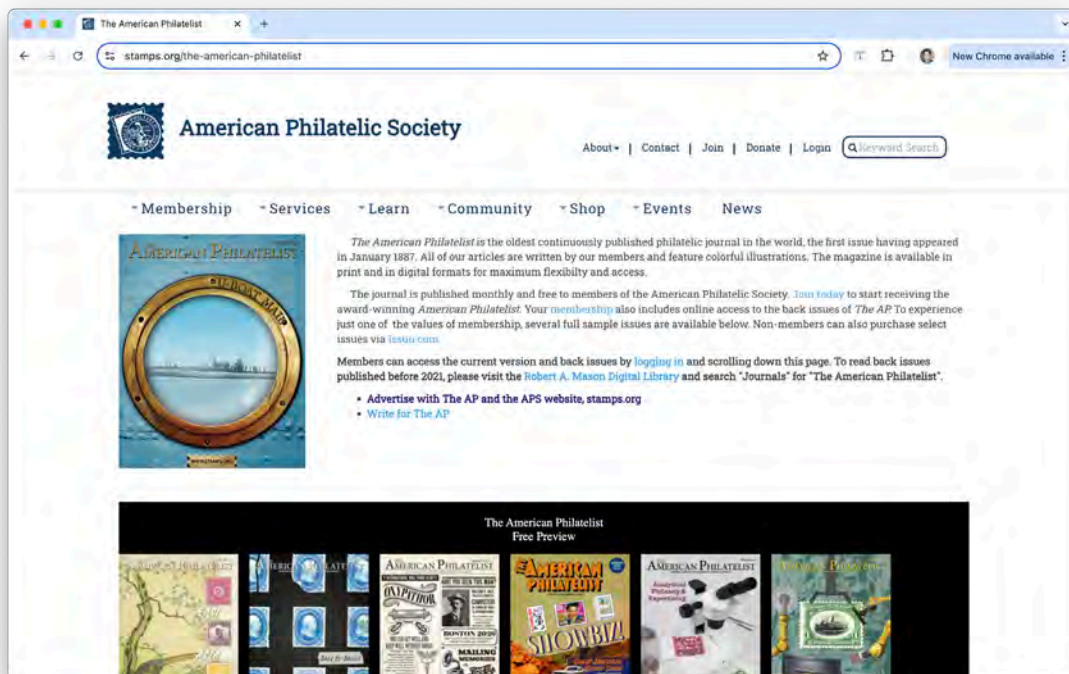
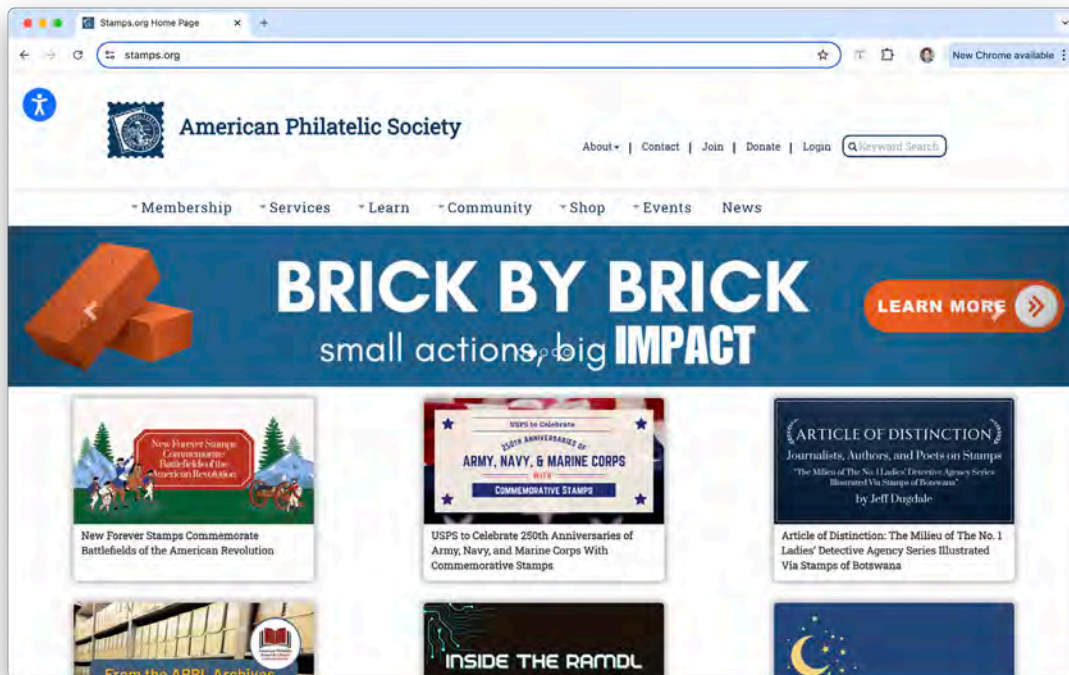
Five years later, his thinking had changed. Even though he still had "Position 57," one of the best preserved Inverted Jennys, "Position 49" was unequivocally better, especially since a new evaluation had seen its rating increase from a 90 to a 95 — higher than any of its 99 counterparts. And Hack now wanted the best.

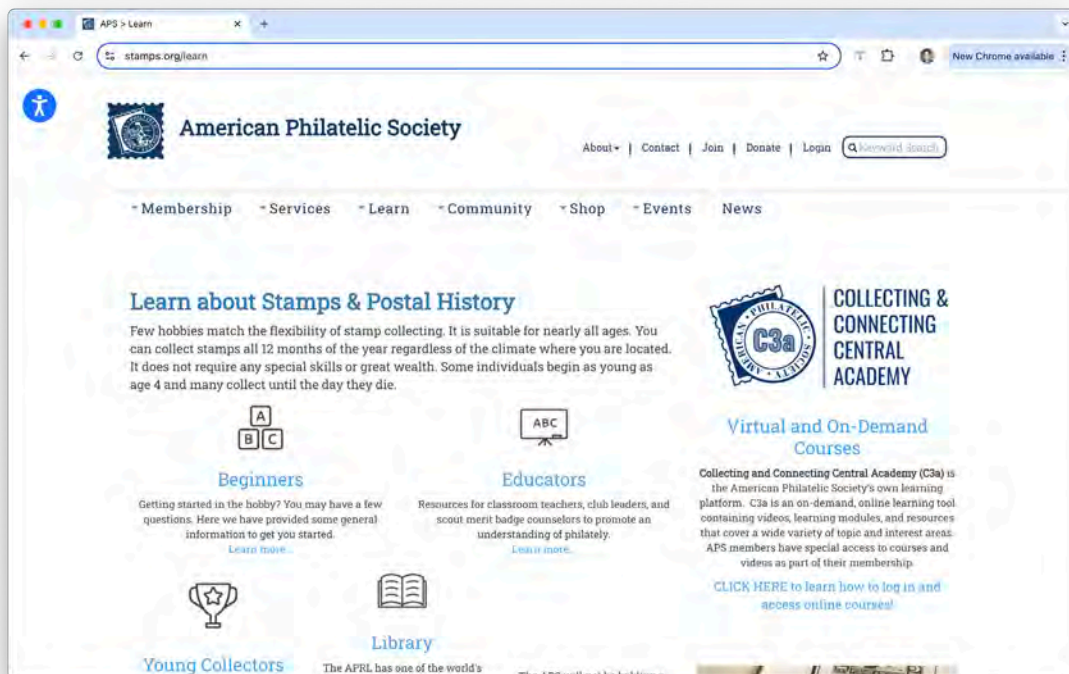
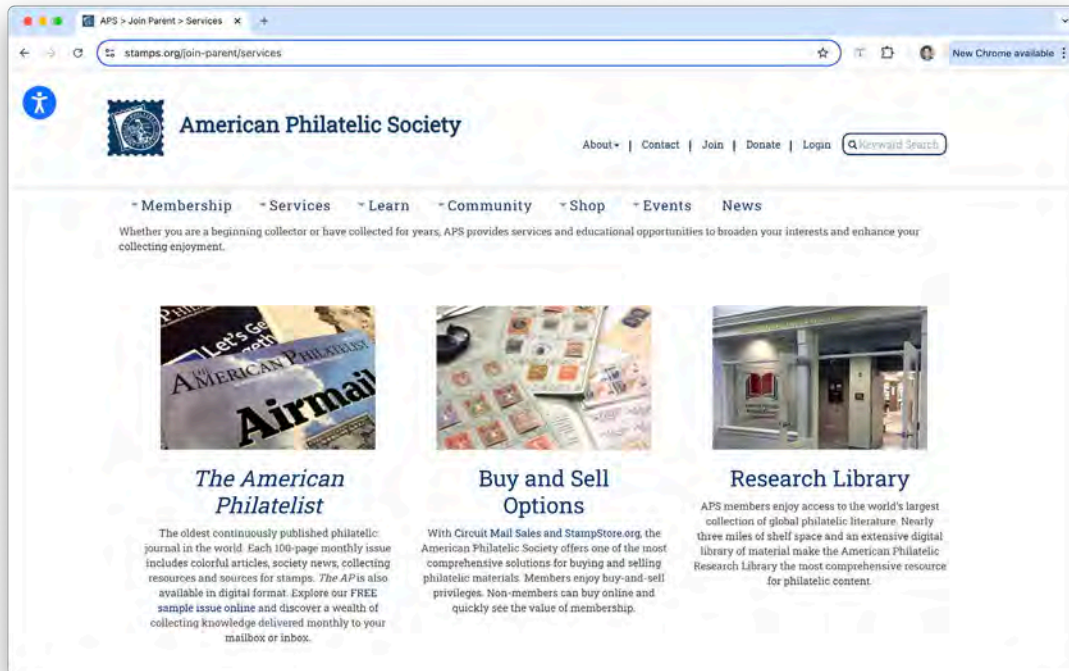
"This is the premium copy," he said. "It doesn't get any better than this."

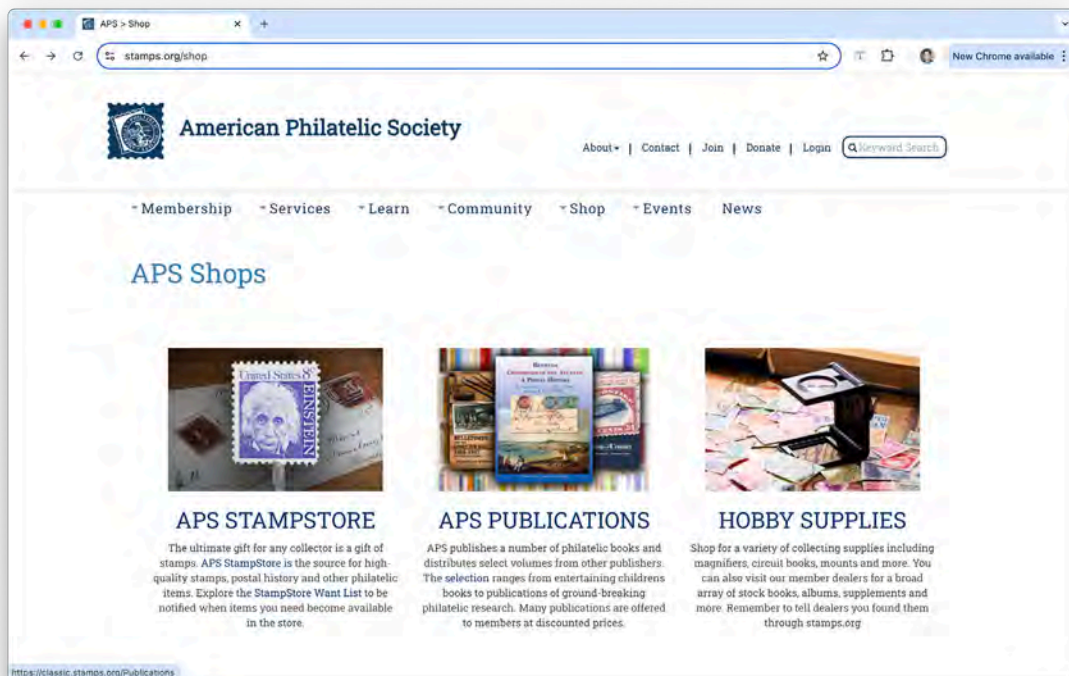
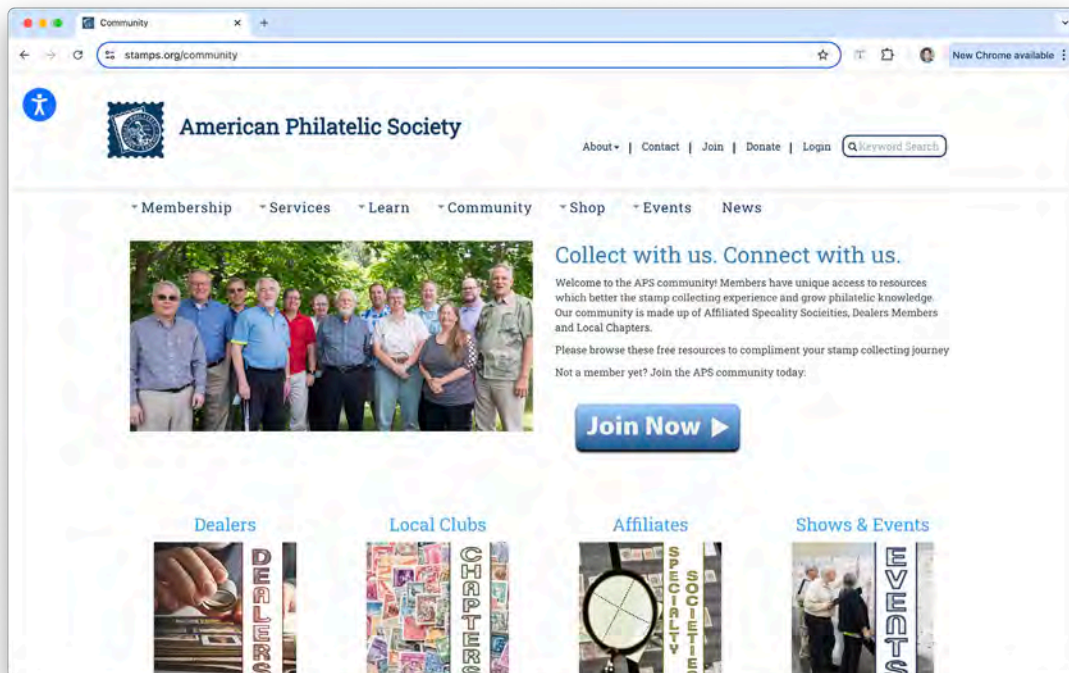
Hack said he's not exactly sure what he will do with "Position 49" once he gets it from Siegel in the coming weeks, but he knows he will continue the century-long tradition of protecting it from light and otherwise preserving it from the elements and from time. He said he will probably keep it in his safe at his home in New York, occasionally showing it off to visitors who are interested in looking back in time through a stamp-size window.

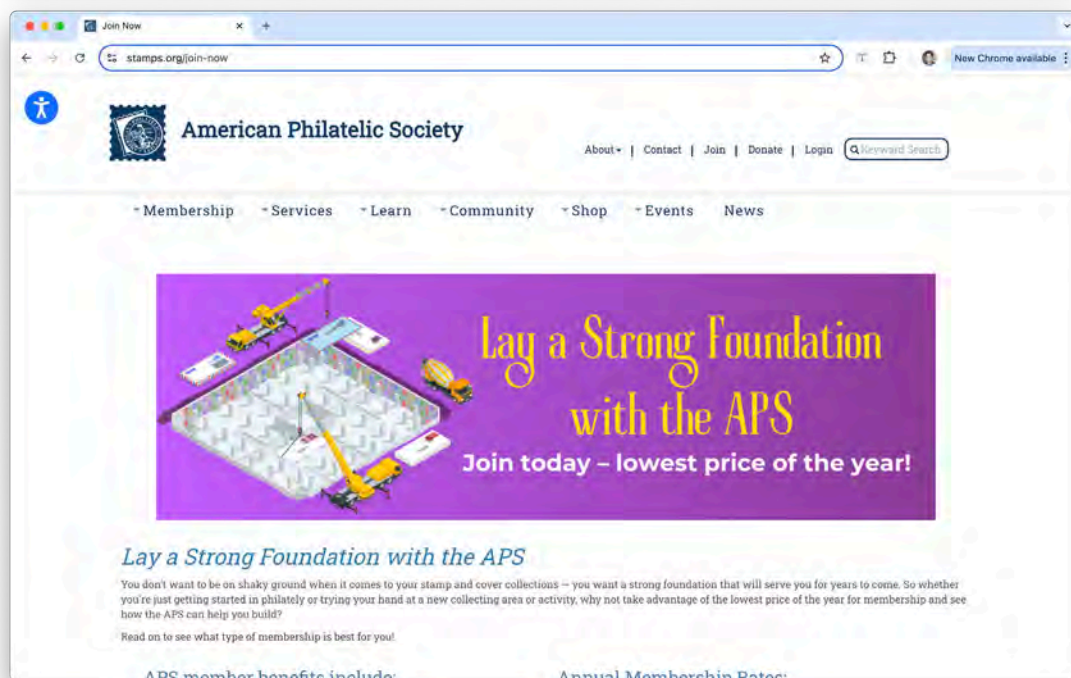
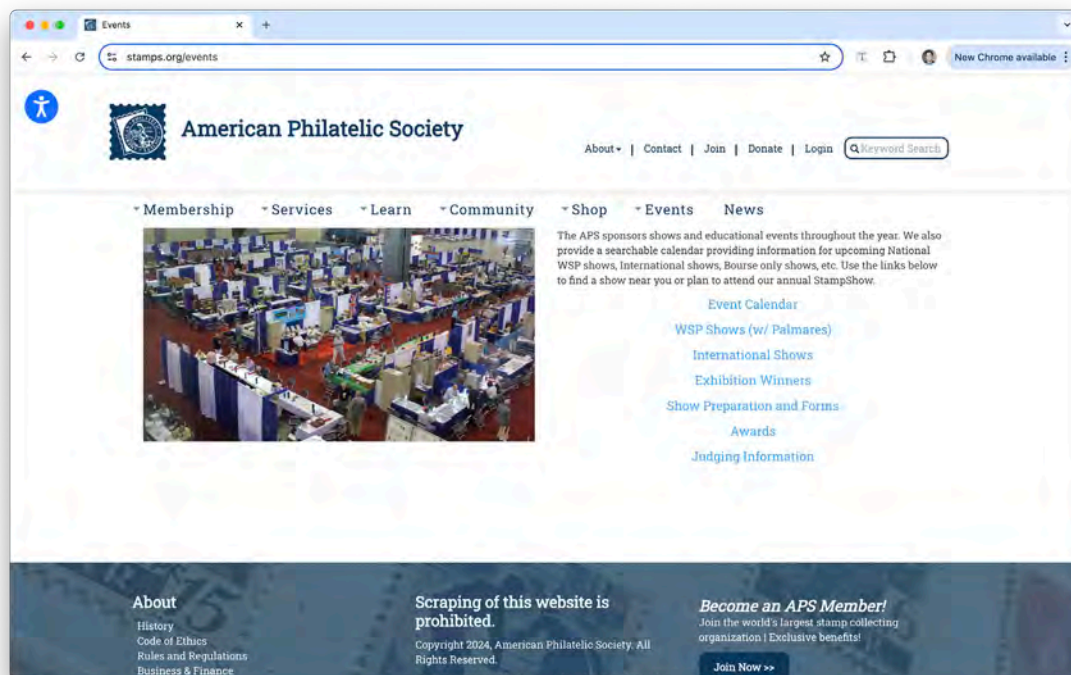
"It's the very best item of the most well-known American icon in philately," Hack said, "and it's a bit of American history."

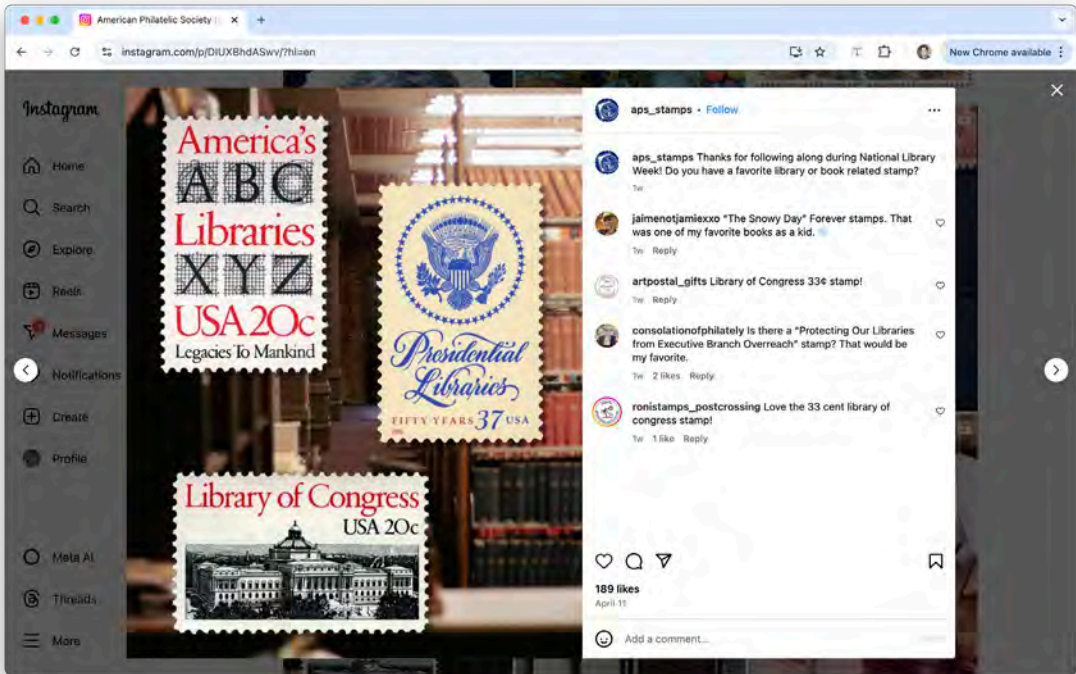
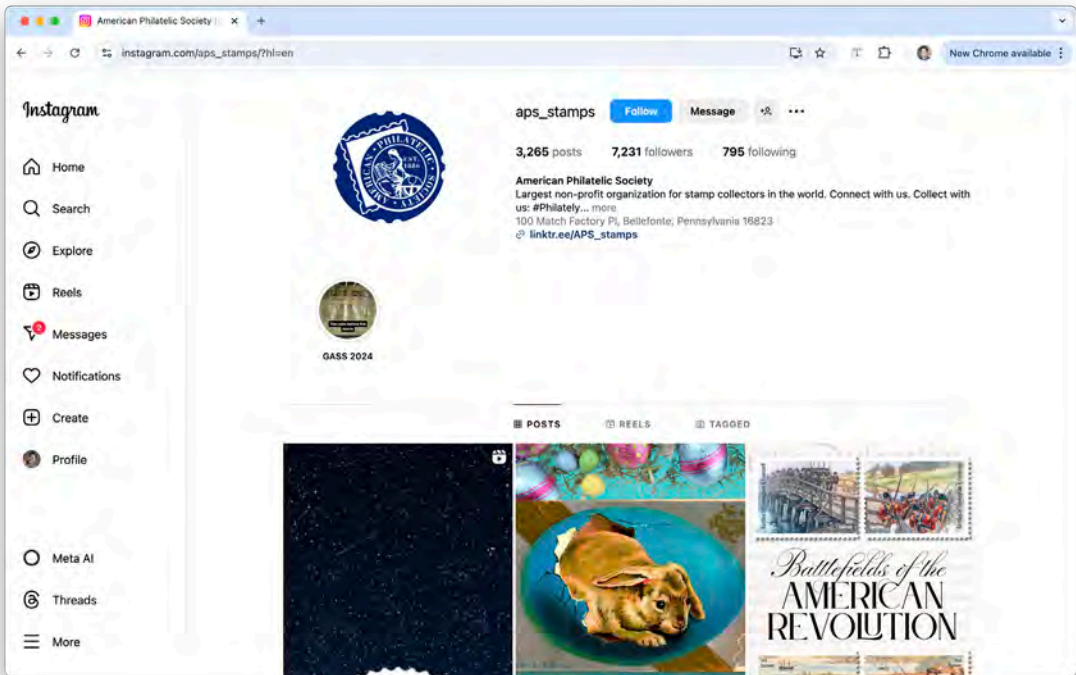


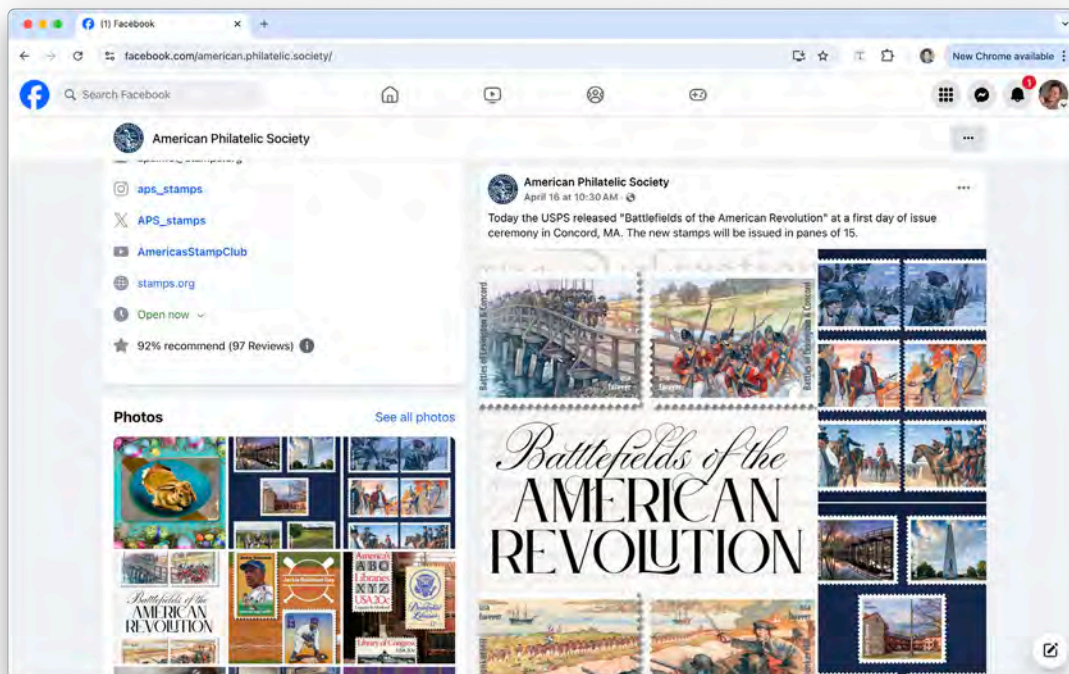
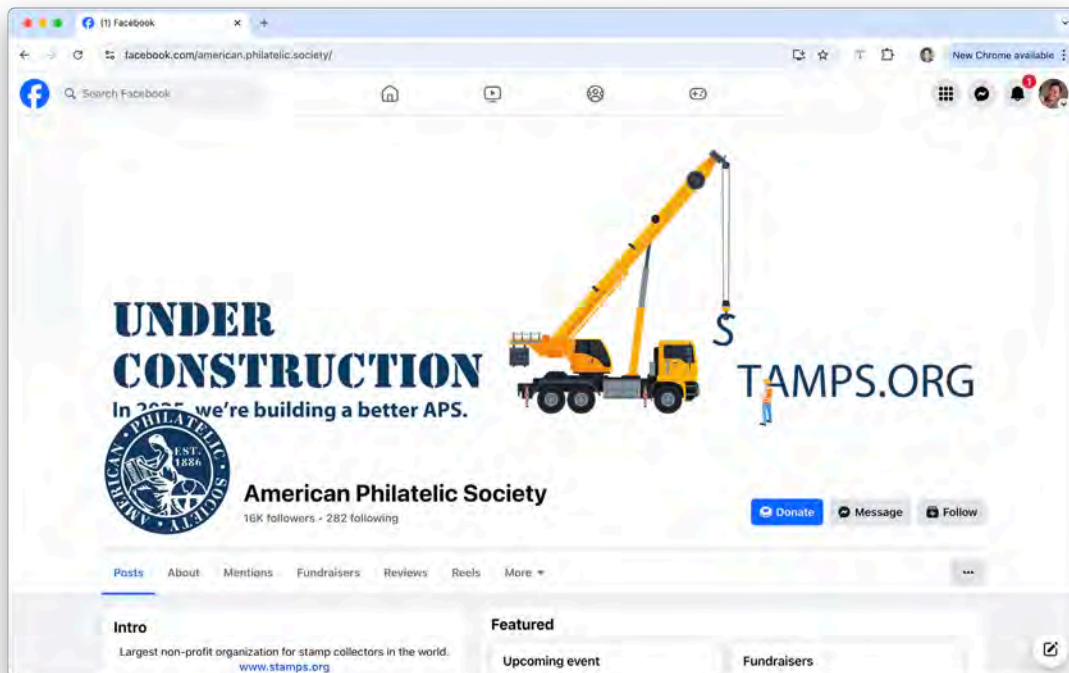


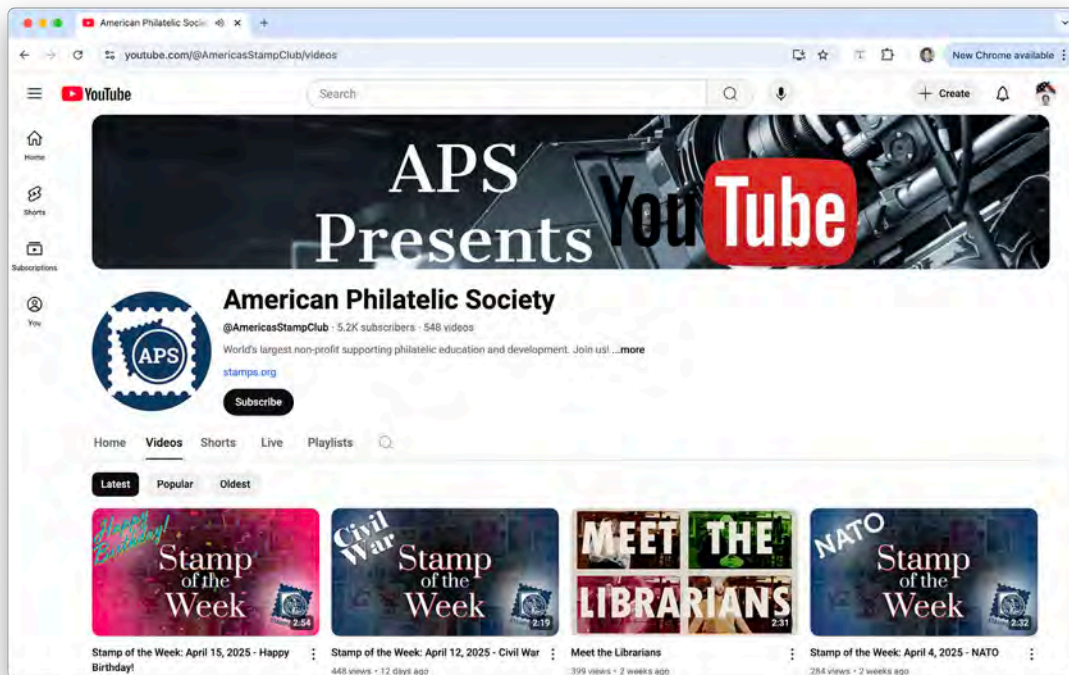


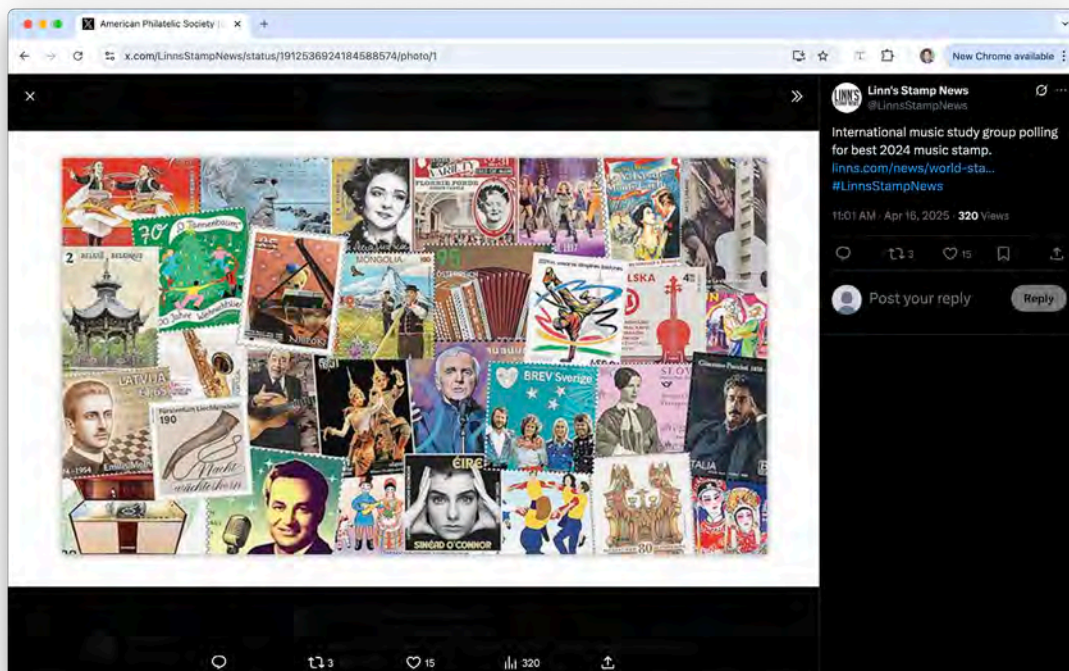
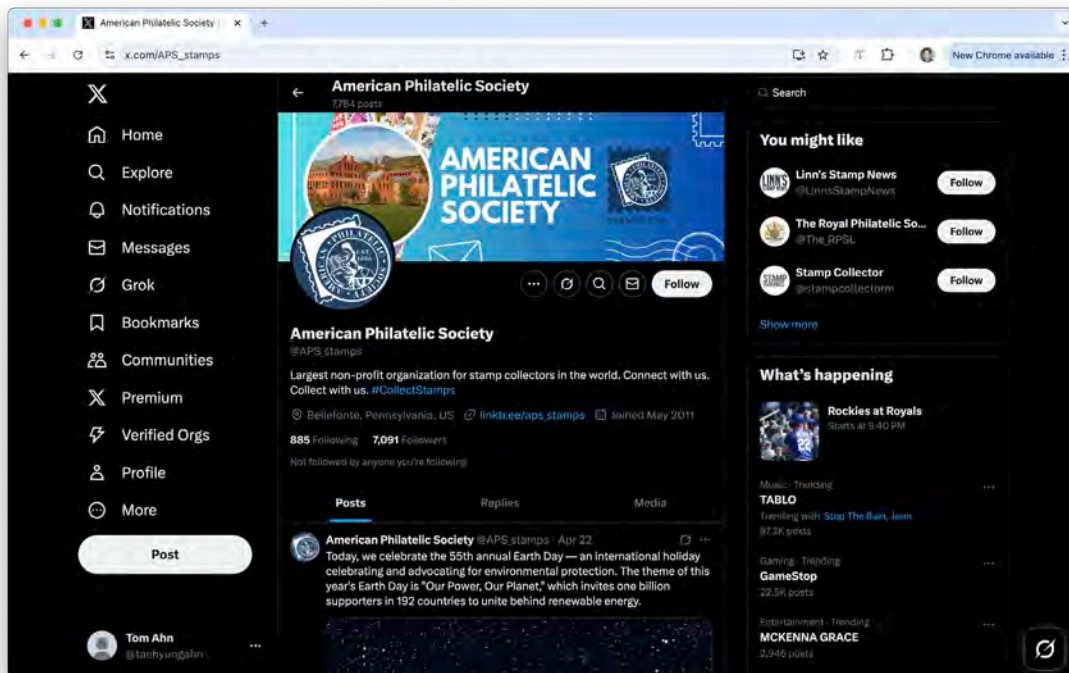












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Thank you for your attention.