



The DXer's Notebook

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Most of us DXers like to keep track of the stations we hear. How we do that and what we keep track of varies by individual. This time we'll hear from some DXers about their record-keeping methods.

RECORD KEEPING

Bruce Winkelman <bdwink@cox.net>: Spent the past few evenings cleaning up my Tulsa logs, both computer-based and paper logs. I feel I finally have an accurate log as far as total stations, states and provinces heard. Found a couple of "new" stations in the logging notes as well.

I keep a chronological log, a separate "by frequency" log and a "by state" log on paper for domestic (US and Canada), a separate paper log for Mexicans and other international stations heard as well as a MS Works database that includes all of the above. I was able to "clean-up" both the computer log as well as the paper logs by comparing the two with logging notes and making the necessary changes/deletions/additions as appropriate.

The effort got me to wondering what kind of record-keeping techniques and methods other BCB DXers use. I'd like to hear from those on the list that would care to share their methods of record keeping. I know there's not one "correct" way (whatever method works for you is "correct"!) but I think it would be interesting to compare how we keep track of the stations we hear.

Harry Helms <ak6c@earthlink.net>: I'm very old school. My logs are bound notebooks and kept in longhand, with all my DX for a given day listed in the time order I heard it. They're more diaries than logs, with notes about reception conditions, equipment used, interference, and reception details for those rare occasions when I send a report. Since I don't keep track of station, state, or country totals any longer I don't care about being able to retrieve such data quickly, but I enjoy being able to write something like "ZOWIE!!!" with several underlines next to DX I really enjoyed catching; it makes the record more personal and brings back a lot of memories of what I heard. Frankly, I enjoy looking through my old logs more than QSLs. While I have all of my California logs since moving here in 1987, most of my east coast logs (including my South Carolina logs from the 1960s and 1970s) got lost in transit when I moved. I really wish I still had them just so I could remember what a frequency check sounded like!

On the other hand, I use Log Windows for all my ham radio contacts for DXCC, etc.

Russ Edmunds <wb2bjh@nrndxas.org>: I use Lotus123 spreadsheets. This permits me to sort or retrieve rather easily. It also permits me to maintain the log sorted differently on different sheets within one file, as well as to maintain totals on still another. My current version has the day-to-day log on one sheet, the cumulative log of stations not heard before on another, and a frequency-sorted list of the same on the next. I then have an additional sheet for totals.

This can also be done in Excel or any other spreadsheet programs. I started mine in Lotus over 14 years ago for the current location and later converted the prior locations. I keep it in Lotus primarily because the same file in Excel consumes 3 to 4 times as much space for little added benefit. If, for some reason, I want to use more than 3 sort keys at a time, I can always load the Lotus file into Excel and do that.

David Hochfelder <hochfeld@rci.rutgers.edu>: My record-keeping system isn't very sophisticated or detailed. I keep a current bandscan, listing my loggings by frequency, in an Excel file. I print it out, about 15 pages, and add to it in longhand. When that gets too messy and cluttered, I print out an updated version. I have columns noting whether the station is confirmed (that is, call or city ID; the NRC Log really helps here) or tentative/probable, date and time of first logging, day and night powers, and comments about the programming and reception. In the past year or so I've gotten into the habit of printing out my submissions to DX News, which give a fuller description of new loggings. Taken together, those serve as my chronological log. I keep all this in a three-ring binder. I tried to keep a running log, using an ARRL ham logbook, but I found that I was writing stuff down on scraps of paper anyway, so why bother.

For shortwave listening, I don't keep a log. I have a 24-hour listing of English-language broadcasts and have files of the seasonal schedules of the major broadcasters, taken mainly from postings to Glenn Hauser's website, so if there's something I want to listen to I tune to it. If I want to send a reception report, I take notes on signal quality and program content, then type up the reception report within a couple days. On the rare occasions when I listen on the tropical bands, the blue pages of Passport to World Band Radio come in handy.

For my ham activity, I keep an accurate log of all my contacts, including station worked, time/date, frequency, signal reports, other op's name and location, and any other pertinent information. It's no longer a legal requirement to do so, but it's handy to refer back to it when someone's callsign sounds familiar.

Kevin Redding <amfmdx@fastq.com>: I am not surprised that our methods are very close to the same. My logs are in engineers notebooks and are written. All kinds of stuff are in these books and its not formal. There is the usual freq, time, signal strength, radio used and all that stuff but there are comments on weather, and even the programming.

However, for ease of searching for things, I also enter the straightforward stuff into an Excel file. I lived in SC for 4 years and I love that place. I am LMAO because I have no idea where my logs are from there and only have a few tapes of stations I recorded there. I wish I could find the others.

Rick Kenneally <woodlandview@yahoo.com>: I certainly put more work into my record keeping than is necessary, but then that is part of the hobby for me. My profession is in banking and financial systems, but it's been many years since I actually did any programming at work. So to feed my need to code I tinker a bit at home, and building/upgrading my BCB logging system is one way to get a fix. Until recently, I logged all catches (including sufficient description for submission to the club bulletins) on a home-grown database on an HP200LX Palmtop. This I periodically transfer to my home computer where I have an MS Access database that generates:

- DDXD/IDXD/EDXR submissions formatted for each bulletin;
- A frequency listing of what's been heard. This I print out and paste to the wall of my shack, and I carry a printed copy in the car to have handy while reviewing tapes during my commute;
- My printed chronological log (which I will embellish with commentary and an occasional radio station logo graphic pulled off the web). I place any veries and other memorabilia in the ring binder next to the log pages of the particular receptions. So my log becomes a kind of scrapbook of DXing memories; and
- An index showing where in my cassette tape collection a particular station ID can be found.
- Recently (as I mentioned in another email) I've been migrating off the HP Palmtop and onto a Toshiba Pocket PC. Alas, the new Windows-based Pocket PC software is bloated, a bit buggy, and just plain harder to manipulate than the HP software was. So this process is taking some time. It is amazing how often we advance technology without actually improving the tools.

Periodically I also take a copy of the full US and Canadian station list from Lee Freshwater's site and load that onto my PDA to have handy during commutes.

Note, I will relog (and re-tape) call changes and unusual receptions of stations I've already heard, but these don't count as new in my totals.

Overkill for recording DX? Absolutely. But it helps keep me just a bit current with some technical tools. I'd love to put the logs and recordings up on a website some day, but the work involved would put an end to actual DX for a very long time.

Bruce Conti <BACONTI@aol.com>: I haven't kept a formal log in ages. I save back issues of DX News and QSLs as an informal log, and more recently assembled logs which are posted on my web site. (I still need to post a transatlantic log.) After some 25+ years of MW DXing, like many in this hobby I've developed a "photographic" memory and know what stations I've received before and when I've got a new catch. I guess DX News and the QSL collection serve as my only official documentation.

Mike Brooker <aum108@idirect.com>: For many years I kept my log records on scrap paper or in a spiral-bound notebook. In 1998 I transferred all my paper records to MS Works (a simplified version of Excel for home use). I've entered loggings by ascending order of frequency, but I can sort them by

alphabetically by city, state/province, or whether or not they've qsl'ed. I have two Works spreadsheets, one for BCB and one for SW.

Rick Dau <rdau1965@yahoo.com>: I use the same method for reference, although I no longer have my Oakland and Iowa City QSLs, but my recollection is still good enough where I am able to look at a station in my logbook and say "yes, I did verify that", or "no, I didn't." As for my present-day record-keeping, I still write everything down first on notebook paper, and then, about every six months or so, will type out what I've written down into two proper logs, one by frequency order, and the other by chronological order. The down side of this is that it uses a lot of typing paper twice a year, so I need to figure out how to use get my logbooks onto a computer, then I could simply drop in updates when needed, and print it out whenever I feel like it.

The few back issues of DXN that I have go back to October 1997. Over the summer, while BCB DXing is at a minimum, I've been working on updating both my Oakland and Iowa City logbooks, but I need copies of DXN much older than what I have right now in order to be able to accomplish this (my original collection of DXNs got burned up in a house fire in South Dakota last year, and I gave away the ones I got from Chris Cuomo to replace those three years ago because I felt they were taking up too much space in my apartment at that time). So I'm going to take this opportunity to put out the call again -- if anyone out there has old issues of DX News dating from October 1987 to Sept. 1997 (in other words, Volumes 55-64) and wants to get rid of them, PLEASE contact me, and we can work something out. I'm desperate!!!

Les Rayburn <les@highnoonfilm.com>: Having only been in the hobby for about a year, I've used an Excel based log exclusively. The log contains entries for each "channel", call letters, location, time and date of logging, power, propagation notes, and even calculates the distance to the transmitter. The other neat feature is that I use the "hyperlink" option to link the entry to a recording of the station ID...making it easier to review those "rare" catches. I can certainly recommend this approach, but I'm sure paper logs work just as well.

Pete Taylor <ptdx@att.net>: You asked for it so here goes. For my DX file, I use PFS software on an Apple//. I will eventually convert it to FileMaker Pro on my Mac. However, it will all have to be retyped since I know of no software which will bridge that gap.

Fields:

- DATE & TIME HEARD
- CALLS
- FREQ
- POWER
- HEARD #
- REPORT # (as in T-493 for a Tacoma report)
- CONTINENT
- COUNTRY
- STATE
- CITY
- DATE VERIE REC'D
- TYPE OF VERIE
- VERIE SIGNER
- LISTENING SITE COORDINATES
- STATION XR COORDINATES
- DISTANCE (derived elsewhere and typed in)

MISC

Printouts can be based on any of the above. Basically I use these:

1. STATE-BY-STATE, PROV-BY-PROV for US & CANADA
2. COUNTRY BY COUNTRY under CONTINENT for everything else
3. MASTER FILE OF ALL INFO BY REPORT # (I have sent reports based on reception from many locations)
4. YEAR BY YEAR TOTALS

On another file on the Mac I keep a running file on a yearly basis primarily to see which stations haven't responded with veries. In reality, I now send very few reports; I tape IDs instead.

I keep a separate file on the Apple/// for beacons. It is similar to the above except that I don't send reports. This one also includes mile-per-watt statistics (derived by the software) and the actual dit-dahs of each beacon's letters. This is because I am so lousy at reading code. When I revisit a place, this comes in handy.

On another file on the Apple/// but using Word Juggler I keep an ongoing file of everything I have ever heard - AM, FM, TV, LW, SW. I don't keep it updated too often, however.

The software and machines are about 20 years old. The Apple/// includes a Profile hard drive with all of 5MB. At one time I had three each of the Apple/// and Profiles in working order; I am now down to 2 each, with every file backed up. I do not know if I will live long enough to transfer all the data to the Mac - or if it would even be worth the effort, since if and when I get around to it, some other format will be in vogue. (I've got to get the 7000 LPs and 20,000 titles computerized first).

I hope you have enjoyed this little tidbit of nostalgia. Whatever works!

Benjamin Dangerfield <ben-dangerfield@worldnet.att.net>: The only permanent records I keep are my foreign veries by stations, countries and continents, and this is primarily for Paul's IDXA. I also have a record of my U.S. and Canadian veries, not that many, which also ties into my IDXA totals. My veries are in an album and a country file folder. I don't try to keep any kind of log on stations heard, but I make day-to day notes in a 6 by 9 flipover pad, and I have all of these pads back to around 1958. A single pad lasts me from 2 to 4 years depending on reception conditions but I write small and neatly as Bruce has noticed. For each day I show sunset and sunrise times, weather for the day, and noise levels. In this I am mainly interested in TA and LA activity. I indicate TAs by circling the frequency and showing lines under the circles as to signal strength. The frequencies of LAs and domestics are shown in a square box. To back up my loggings I list some program details and station names. And any logging worth reporting to IDXD is circled in red for fast reference. I also show the exact time that each frequency was heard, for reports to IDXD or verie requests. But for the last several years my only verie requests have been to new countries.

WORKED ALL STATES?

And from how we keep our records we'll go on to seeing what some have accomplished:

Frank Doosey KB2LBM <Frank.Doosey@MWHSE.com>: Just curious...in the ham world there is/was an award for working all 50 states...I know the NRC doesn't dole out the awards like the ARRL does, but has anyone on list actually logged all 50 states, preferably from one location?? If so, stand up and take a bow. I'd wager if anyone has, it'd be someone in the midwest as they are separated from the NYC, Chicago and west coast blowtorches.

Paul LaFreniere <mailto:plafren@boreal.org>: I'd love to take a bow, but unfortunately I only qualify on the DXing from one location stipulation. I'm stuck at 45. Still need FL, ME, DE, NH and AK. But this is the only location I have ever DXed from, and I am still trying.

Frank Doosey KB2LBM: Take a bow anyway...45 is mighty impressive. I'm surprised you haven't heard FL yet...there ought to be a few which make it up to you. Delaware is tough (so is Maine), I've only heard one station from each and I live in NJ. Apart from Alaska, you got a legit shot at nailing the other 4. I assume AK is possible under the right conditions with the right equipment and several transmitters on a given freq turned off. =)

Russ Edmunds <wb2bjh@nrcdxas.org>: People have, although I'd suspect most of them did it some time back. I'm sure there are a couple on this list. And, NRC did have an award program, although I seem to recall that there wasn't much interest. I'm sure Paul will add to the discussion if that's still active.

Adam Rivers <redsoxdxer417@hotmail.com>: How many states do some of you others have? I have 31.

David Gleason <david@davidgleason.com>: 50 from Cleveland in the 60's.

Frank Doosey KB2LBM: I suppose it would have been nice of me to mention that...I've heard 37 states plus DC. In Canada, I haven't logged: BC, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. (and Nunavut - almost forgot!)

Bob Klinger <Rklinger97@aol.com>: From New Cumberland, PA. I am holding at 33.

Bruce Conti <BACONTI@aol.com>: 37 states, 7 provinces.

Randy Stewart <jrs555t@smsu.edu>: Logged: 42 states, 6 provinces for me, all from Springfield MO since 1969. States still needed: Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island and Vermont.

Provinces still needed: Newfoundland, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island, Yukon.

Wally Wawro <WWawro@wfaa.com>: 28 states, 4 provinces.

Chris Rigas <crigas@birinc.com>: States Heard: 45 (need: AK, HI, ID, ME, NM)

States QSLed: 44 (need above + AZ)

Provinces heard: 8

Provinces QSLed: 6

Frank Doosey KB2LBM: It must be an advantage for us easterners...we have smaller states, so within a given radius (say, 600 miles), we can have many more states than Wally or other folks out west, where you'd only have a handful of states in the same distance...

Wally Wawro <WWawro@wfaa.com>: The only two central time zone states I haven't heard are the Dakotas.....15 out of 17. For what it's worth it's an excellent question and one that should be updated annually.

Randy Stewart <jrs555t@smsu.edu>: Need to add New Brunswick to my list of needed provinces... thanks to Eric Floden for pointing out to me I left out one, and that's it. (There are 13 provinces/territories and I only accounted for 12... 6 logged and 6 LISTED as needed...)

Gary Wilt <gary041@earthlink.net>: 34 states, 6 provinces.

Niel Wolfish <niel@ican.net>: From Toronto since 1977: 10 provinces heard and verified; none of the three territories. 44 states heard and verified (including DC) While going to school in Winnipeg between 1984 and 1987 I did manage to QSL all the states I hadn't heard from Ontario (including Hawaii), with the exception of Alaska (which I never heard) and New Mexico (which I never QSLed). I think I heard every province from Winnipeg too, save for Nova Scotia.

Russ Edmunds: 47 states & 9 provinces (& 14 estados) from NJ/PA. Missing AK, ID, OR, BC, NU And all 3 of those missing states were heard between 1964-68 whilst DX'ing in Syracuse, NY.

Eric Loy <eloy@wdws.com>: Needed states: AK, HI, NH, VT, ME, NV, ID, OR. AZ fell this year. Needed provinces/territories: NB, NF, NWT, YT, NS and Nunavut. BC fell this year.

Paul Swearingen <PlsBCBDXER@aol.com>: No, the awards program died pretty much for lack of interest after I passed it along to the next individual who wasn't interested, either, way back in '82. It was sort of a piggyback adjunct to IDXA, which I eventually reinherited, but I have no idea whatever happened to the certificates and such. They might be in someone's attic.

Paul Swearingen <PlsBCBDXER@aol.com>: My loggings from e-Kan are a carbon copy of Randy's, above. I still think Oregon should be easier!

Bruce Winkelman <bdwink@cox.net>: 36 states/4 provinces/16 Mexican states from Tulsa WA, OR, NV, MT, AK, HI needed to the west

CT, DE, ME, MD, NH, RI, SC, VT, DC needed to the east

Got the center of the country covered.

BTW, I have worked all 50 states 75 meters SSB with 100 watts and a ground mounted vertical. Alaska and Hawaii were NOT easy!!

Mike Brooker <aum108@idirect.com>: From Toronto since 1973, and Sudbury, ON (Laurentian University), 1982-84: 10 provinces, 40 states. Still need NWT, YT, Nunavut, AK, HI, NM, ID, WA, WY, MT, OR, NV, AZ. Hoping not to have to add "West Quebec".

Barry McLarnon <bdm@bdmcomm.ca>: From Ottawa, since January 1998: 45 states, but two (ID, NM) are based on tentative loggings. Needed are solid loggings of those two, plus AK, HI, OR, WA and NV. 10 provinces, but no territories.

Steve Francis <Amdxmail@aol.com>: States: 1970-1974: 45
April 1976: OR
April 1995: NV
April 1997: ME no AK or HI
Provinces: 1970-1976: 7
April 1998: NB no NF or BC

Bob McCoy <n0sce@alltel.net>: For whatever its worth, I've received 47 States + DC from Lincoln, NE since 1972 (need AK, VT, & ME). Only 7 provinces in Canada. I must say I haven't tried a lot lately. Skip Dabelstein did WAS and all continents from Lincoln, basically in the '70s., if I remember OK.

Patrick Martin <mwdxer@webtv.net>: I have 46 states from Oregon (45 QSL'd, waiting for WTIC-CT QSL). I still need VT, NH, WV, & DE, Plus DC. I still need PEI, NS, & NT from Canada. I have 49 states from Alaska, and a NJ transmitter site (NY city stations) From Canada PEI & NFD.

Willis Monk <wb5khd@ocoeenet.com>: Just got to get my 2 cents in on this topic. Have ALL 50 states logged on BCB from one QTH!!! Time was from 1957 to 1960 and from 1969 to 1973 in Dallas, Texas From 1960 to 1968 I was in the navy. Most exciting logging was from KORL-650 in Honolulu, Hi. in 1969. The engineer at that time sent a VERY nice QSL and letter. This was on Monday morning at 0300 Dallas time. WSM in Nashville was off the air. Thanks WSM for being off the air!!

In Canadian provinces I never heard Labrador or North West Territories, from Texas. I logged a station from Vancouver, BC in 1969, and the announcer said if you want to request a song call a given number, and I did. He was so shocked over hearing his station on the land lines for Texas that he put me on the air, live!

From my present QTH in southeastern Tennessee I only have 38 states logged and 4 provinces. HAM RADIO - But when it comes to the real Worked All States certificate given out by the ARRL I have worked all 50 states and Canadian provinces many times over, on all 5 ham bands, and that also, was from Texas.

TVDX - From Texas, logged 45 states logged and 10 countries. From Tennessee, have 46 states logged and 5 countries.

Kevin Redding <amfmdx@fastq.com>: 39 US states, 4 Can. Provinces, 8 countries, 15 Mexican States.

John Sampson <jsampson@qwest.net>: Picked a couple of representative DX locations--
Omaha, Nebr. (1954 - 1960, 1979 - 1981): 44 States, 6 Provinces
Hutchinson, Minn (1960 - 1962): 43 States, 6 Provinces
Freehold, NJ (1962 - 1966): 40 States, 7 Provinces
Cupertino, Calif (1966 - 1968): 17 States, 2 Provinces
Winston-Salem, NC (1968 - 1972): 32 States, 2 Provinces
Sun City West, Ariz (1996 - Now): 19 States, 2 Provinces
From all locations, I've heard all 50 states and am only missing the Nunavut and Yukon Territories in Canada.

Michael Battagliano <radio_head2214@yahoo.com>: Let's see... 35 states and 4 provinces--most from Northern NJ and from Wilmington/Newark, DE back in the early 80's when I was first active in the Club. I still need most of the western states--ND, SD, WA, OR, MT, ID, UT, WA, OR, AZ, WY, NM, CA--and of course AK and HI (yeah, in my wildest dreams!).