



The Fireman's Seat

By Robert Bell, Division 15 Assistant Superintendent

Seasons Greetings and Happy New Year!



The advent of the Internet has had a very positive impact for our model-railroading hobby. In the “old” days, if we followed a prototype that was not near our home, we had to wait for someone to write a book on it before we could halfway model it. We had to wait for those rare pictures to be found in some attic, for someone else to share our interest and include them in that book, and wait for that book to get published. Or, we could write letters to the NMRA Library or to any number of railroad museums, or pay someone to do the research for us, and still not find out what we wanted to know. Needless to say, it was not easy. But, the Internet has changed things. There are thousands and thousands of web sites full of information and photographs on just about any subject out there waiting to be discovered with just a click of the mouse.

Aside from the typical web sites, there are e-mail lists for various railroads (prototype and/or model) and related subjects that one can join. These lists offer the opportunity to share knowledge and ideas with people from around the world. By joining such a list, you can “lurk”, just reading other member’s posts, or jump right in and share any info you might have. The largest source of these lists is probably www.yahogroups.com, but there are others out there. There are also “forums” and on-line discussion groups such as www.railfan.net, www.railroad-line.com and my favorite www.ngdeadgoatsaloon.com. These discussions take place in “real time” and can eat up our valuable modeling time, but can be a great source of information, photos and friends.

Many libraries and museums have great on-line resources such as the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov), the Denver Public Library (www.denverlibrary.org), and of course the Smithsonian Institution (www.si.edu). Many universities also maintain searchable historical on-line resources. When you visit one of these, search for either the rail subject or look for a link to a historical photographic collection. I find several of these sites really addictive; you never know what you might find with the next click.

Two more interesting sites that I’ve found are www.rr-fallenflags.org covering defunct railroads and www.northeast.railfan.net, a great photograph source for locomotives of all kinds, industrial to mainline, steam to modern diesel.

In the February “Fireman’s Seat” we’ll talk about more on-line resources that pertain to our modeling.

Until then, remember: It’s your club - get involved! **(Become a convention volunteer!)** Let’s play trains!

