Modeling – Computers & the Internet

Fellow Modelers
I am going to discuss with you some points on Modeling, the Internet and Computers. I would like to talk you about how to use your computer and the Internet to help with your modeling, or just about any subject you care to mention. It can be difficult to find what you want; we will talk about how to make it a little easier. Why this subject, well I have been giving it some thought on what subject has not come up at a convention. Research into your favorite interest has never come up as far as I know. So here goes, you may be able to add some info as well.

Myself
I should imagine I am just like you, been in the hobby since I was a child. My Dad God love him brought me my first Triang train set. Good old Santa.! Sounds familiar.!! Had HO for quite a few year then N gauge moved back to HO for a while then moved to O gauge but found it too Big. So I moved down one and mixed both gauges with On30.

Computers.
I am not a trained computer person; I have learned computer techniques by trial and error. I have been interested in computers and there workings since my early twenties. My first computer was a System 80 a TRS80 clone that really went well. I joined a TRS80 group, they taught me a lot of techniques, and it was a lot of fun learning. Have written my own programs in Basic and have dabbled in Machine code. But found this very hard to work out with all push and shove of the code.

With the arrival of a modem my System 80 was turned into a message board. I found then that another system was needed as I had cranked that poor old CPU up as far as it would go. So I moved into an IBM style system or what is know now as a PC. A special note about computers, they are really stupid machines really DUM. It's the software and the operating system that makes a computer so called smart. But don't be put off; most software now is relative safe to use and bug free. Most software does have bugs; the author cannot cater for all possible conditions.

You
I take it for granted you know how to run programs, how to start your system etc. I don't want to linger on this for too long. If you need help come and talk to me later.

Internet Basics
Every Internet user has been given a hidden large number by their provider e.g. (201:04:127:55) So when you put in an address like www nmra.com.au the WWW part changes that info into a number. Cookies are not little cakes, they are small files most site send you to track you. So next time you log on to a site it will log you on automatically and say welcome back. There are good cookies and bad tracking cookies, most good virus scanners will remove the bad cookies.

Viruses what are they.
A virus is a hidden program that's usually designed to harm your PC in some form. Example: When run, a program may delete important files without you realize it.

Trojan Horse
Is also a hidden program or virus to look harmless so you won't act on it and delete it. Both examples plus a lot of other viruses can do a lot of damage by deleting information or stealing information and sending it to someone else.

Virus scanning Program
A virus program is very necessary if you are going to access the Internet. There is a free program out there but I doubt it if it is any good. It would be OK in the short term, but not for the long term. Look at it from the other side, would you spend many thousands of dollars developing a virus program. Then give it away with no strings attached, I think not do you. So the best bet is bite the bullet and buy yourself a well-known virus-scanning program and keep it up to date. Which one to get, we shat chat about this at the convention.

The World Wide Web or the Internet.
Now enough background chatter, let get down to tin tacks. The Internet is a huge repository of data, trillions of Megabytes just waiting for you to read it. Where do we start, well the best place to start is a simple example. I assume some provider connects you to the net.

First method:
You then look for a large search engine like Google, now Microsoft has just Launched Bing. http://www.google.com.au/ Why Google, because it is BIG and the advertising is not extreme like most others. In the search window we type what we are interested in, example "How to make trees".

With this search we found 73 pages plus with 10 entries to a page and I did not go to the end. So, there would be well over 1000 plus entries, some useful and some not very useful. Next you decide which one best meets your requirements; you can do this with just about any subject you wish to name.

Second Method:
Join a list that will help you with your particular subject you have in mind. I suggest Yahoo Lists, there are others but this one seems to be the largest. Go to: http://groups.yahoo.com/ This is a free service, so it has advertising. But after a while you don't see the flashing signs. Some people are worried that you get viruses from yahoo, but you don't as most forums do not allow attachments.

With millions of groups at your fingertips, it's easy to find the group that's best for you -- no matter your interest. Click into the search window and look for the subject you would like. As you can see there are two search engines here one for the web and one for Yahoo List. Have a look what have you got to loose.

Youtube.com
This is a great place to see other people's models, just search for say "Narrow Gauge", Also a good place to find ideas by looking at different modeling movies.

Internet Precautions
Don't go to sites your virus program warns you about, mine does.!! Use the search engines to find out what a site is like before going there.

Mail Program
I strongly suggest you take out a free email account with a place like Gmail so can minimizes the chances of a virus attack. If you do get a virus, it only a matter of time the best place to get it is on someone's machine. Programs cannot run on Gmail server as it is designed to hold data not to run it. You will be alerted to a strange email by the way it is set out; example the sender will be a name you don't know. So in that case you can look at the email and see what they have to say and it will tell you if there is an attached file.

Get Yahoo groups to send mail to your Gmail account and not your Bigpond or your provider account. Your own mail program like Windows Mail should not be in auto send and receive; this

will stop any virus from sending out clones of its self. Before you send an email check they are your emails, if not you more than likely have a virus. Your virus scanner should stop most viruses, so keep it up to date. In your address book the first entry should be "AAA Name" with no email address. This is done in case a virus gets past and tries to send out clones on its self to all your friends. But instead your system should stop with a no address error.

Software
Keep you software up to date; don't be worried about using it. The net is out there for you to use, so use it; enjoy it and extend your modeling by having up to date info on just about any subject.

Helpful Hints
For copying and pasting just about anything you like in most windows modes use these keys to do just that. Highlight the data first you wish to Copy, Delete or change; using the mouse carefully. Do not press any other keys while performing Copy and Paste, as it confuses the program. First Press the CTRL key, while holding down the CTRL key press the C key together. Now you have copied said highlighted text, to see it else move the mouse cursor to the new area then; press the CTRL key then the V key, what you have copied will now be pasted to the new area. Do this with the same-copied text as much as you like, wherever you like. You MUST hold down the CTRL key otherwise Windows will think it's the C key you have pressed. If this seems a bit basic for you, don't be concerned, as not many people know about the useful function. This copy and Paste will carry across most Windows programs, transferring data from one program to another.

Assorted Interesting Sites

http://www.modelersguild.com/
Sells O and HO Structure Kids.

http://www.internethobbies.com/
Worth having a look to see what's new with the hobby.

http://www.bachmanntrains.com/home-usa/index.php
Bachmann USA Site always worth a look.

http://www.australianmodelrailways.com/
Australian Model Railways always worth a look.

http://www.hobbiesplus.com.au/beginnersguide.htm
Beginner's Guide to Model Railways, always worth a look even for the experienced modeler.

http://www.loystoys.com/
Loytoys great place to get info on DCC items.

http://tonysdcc.com/
Tony's Train Exchange, excellent place for all DCC info.

http://www.walthers.com/
Walthers home page great place to see all items available in most gauges.

http://www.nmra.org.au/
Australian NMRA web site great place for finding out what's going on.

www.modellers-warehouse.com.au

Welcome to Modeler's Warehouse. For the serious modeler, interesting scenery site.

http://www.bantamodelworks.com/
Banta Modelworks manufactures quality craftsman kits in just about all gauges.

http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/
Great FREE modelers Magazine, just download with lots of articles.

The Two Footers Newsletter is now online at:
http://www.thetwofooters.com

Learn the Net tutorial
http://www.learnthenet.com/english/index.html

Learn The Net getting Started
http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/00start.html

How the Internet Works
http://computer.howstuffworks.com/internet-infrastructure1.htm

Most of the above sites will send you a newsletter; you just have to ask for it. You get to hear about new items first, which is very handy at times. That's about it, I hope I have not confused you; try out my search methods and enjoy your hobby even more.

Steve Chapman