Announcement from the JMRI community: October 3, 2024

The Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI®) community announces two major milestones: the 25th anniversary of the first use of JMRI and the 10,000th update to the Java Model Railroad Interface software used by almost 50,000 model railroad hobbyists for managing and operating today's digitally controlled model railroads. With over 300 developers worldwide having contributed, the "community sourced" JMRI project began in 1999 to provide a way for model railroaders to manage the complexity of train engines fitted with digital decoders. Today, model railroaders worldwide use the greatly expanded JMRI system for everything having to do with the development and enjoyment of modern model trains and layouts.

Bob Jacobsen, a member of the original team and still a senior developer, said "JMRI has helped bring the sophistication of modern electronics and computers to thousands of model railroads - all based on open source software." Not only model railroad hobbyists, but millions of people of all ages have seen JMRI in operation at holiday train displays, hobby shows, and train exhibits at multiple museums around the world.

"JMRI was one of the key steppingstones in the wide adoption of Digital Command Control across the model railroading community by making the process of implementation easier, visual, and common across all manufacturers," noted Peter Ely, a founding member of the NMRA DCC Working Group. "JMRI itself grew in complementary directions to allow the typical model railroader to do things at the system-wide railway level only dreamed about by the original working group."

Jacobsen said that JMRI development continues to keep pace with changes in technology and that another 10,000 updates are likely over the next decade. It is through the continued interest and contribution of time and effort of the community members that JMRI feature are expanded and technology updated. Interest in JMRI extends over dozens of user forums and social media platforms, with over 8,000 users participating in the primary user forum on groups.io, asking questions and contributing answers and suggestions that are used to expand and improve JMRI capabilities.

Congratulations and thanks to all who have participated in using and improving JMRI, now and into the future.

About JMRI

The Java Model Railroad Interface project was initially a modest undertaking of some dozen model railroad hobbyists who wanted to bring their computer skills to the emerging field of

digitally controlled model trains. Forming an open source software development project, their first output was called DecoderPro® and provided easy-to-use screens for managing "configuration variables" in the small computers that manufacturers and hobbyists were installing in train engines. The effort expanded to create PanelPro™ with features for controlling all types of electronic devices and automating train operations by monitoring sensors around the layout.

Unfortunately, the community was soon embroiled in a copyright and patent dispute that resulted (after seven years of litigation) in the landmark Jacobsen v. Katzer case that helped establish the legal basis for today's open software movement. The Electronic Frontier Foundation cites this case as one that has allowed the internet to flourish and find its way into millions of computers in homes, offices, and businesses.

JMRI today provides functions including management of Digital Command Control decoders in train engines, cars, and other devices, graphic display of small and large train layouts, on-line real-time operational monitoring of sensors and other devices, automation of train operations, and management of realistic train operation scenarios. JMRI also provided the first widespread implementation of the WiThrottle protocol.

New releases of JMRI are made available to users approximately monthly. JMRI is comprised of several thousand source files available at GitHub, the free open source code repository, and is maintained and expanded by community members. One of the milestones celebrated today is the 10,000th developer update to the JMRI repository on GitHub, indicating the robustness and on-going development of this important open source project.

For more information, contact Bob Jacobsen via email: info@jmri.org