QSLing

Ed Callaway, N4II

N4II@arrl.net

Boca Raton ARC

W6RGG operating from BS7H (Scarborough Reef, in the South China Sea) in 2007

Today's Topics

- QSLing – what and why
  - Goal: Maximize your return rate
- Paper QSLing
  - Direct or via manager
  - OQRS
  - QSL bureaus
- Electronic QSLing
  - LoTW
  - eQSL
- Record-keeping

You've Worked 'em …
Now What?

- Part 2 of the process: Getting confirmation of the contact from the other side – a QSL.

- Confirmation of the QSO:
  - Convinces a third party (e.g., the ARRL DXCC Desk) that the contact did, in fact, occur when and how you say it did
  - Confirms to _you_ that you worked a valid station, and not a pirate
  - Can add to a collection of beautiful, educational memorabilia from around the world

Paper QSL Cards

Basic Process

- Send one to get one
  - Theirs is rare; yours, probably not so much
  - Exceptions:
    - Major DXpeditions may have web-based requests
    - Some small stations may QSL 100% via bureau
    - County or grid square hunters
- Motivate recipient to reply by:
  - Making it as easy as possible, and
  - Avoiding common problems and sources of error

Issues

- *Your* card design
- Where to send your card
- How to send return postage
- How to send your card (a.k.a. beating postal thieves, surviving post office machines, et al.)

Your card design

- Should include both stations' call signs, QSO date and time (both in UTC), band, mode, and signal report
  - All on the _same side_ of the card
  - And _legible_, with no corrections or cross-outs
  - With month spelled out (is 3/1/2009 in January, or March?)
- Your return address – including _country_ – should also be legible, and in a copy-and-paste format
- Your county, state, Maidenhead grid locator, CQ and ITU Zone may make your QSL more valuable to the recipient
- n.b.: Your card should not be anywhere near anyone's definition of obscenity or poor taste (you'd be surprised…)
- Artistic qualities may or may not improve your response rate – YMMV

Where to send your card

- Direct

- QSL manager

- OQRS (don't send at all)

- Bureau

Sending Direct

- Addresses available online
  - http://www.qrz.com
  - http://hamcall.net/call
  - http://www.google.com
  - DX bulletins
  - Stubborn cases: http://mailman.qth.net/mailman/listinfo/dx-qsl; ON4KST Chat rooms http://www.on4kst.org/chat/start.php

- Follow QSL instructions
  - Preferred return postage method
  - Envelope details

- Foreign QSLs often larger than US standard 3.5" x 5.5"
  - Larger return envelopes needed!

Postal rate, anywhere
outside the US: $1.15
Use "Global Forever" stamps!
http://postcalc.usps.gov/

QSL Managers

- Many DX stations have poor postal systems, or need help with the workload, and so engage a QSL Manager.
  - "QSL via W3HNK", for example
  - The manager is the "correspondence secretary" for the DX station
  - The DX station sends his manager his logs, and the manager handles all the QSLing chores
  - DXers send their cards to the manager – not the DX station directly – and the manager replies on behalf of the DX station
- QSL managers are usually well-advertised
  - http://www.ik3qar.it/manager/ (specializing in managers)
  - http://www.qrz.com
  - DX bulletins
- All other direct QSLing rules apply

On-line QSL Request Service (OQRS)

- Usually, but not always, linked to http://clublog.org
- Steps:
  - DX station uploads his log to Clublog.org, and activates OQRS
  - You enter your call on the DX's OQRS form (either on Clublog.org or embedded elsewhere on the web)
  - You enter the date and time of your QSOs (or upload your log to Clublog, and this will happen automatically)
  - Those that match the DX's log are eligible for direct or bureau cards to be sent, with return postage payment made via PayPal (usually)
  - DX's card arrives by postal mail
- Much faster, and more secure, than sending GS through the mail; less work for both you and the DX op
- Typical charge is $2 - $5

Forms of Return Postage

- US dollar bills
- International Reply Coupons
- Local stamps
- PayPal

US dollar bills ("Green Stamps" or "GS")

- *Minimum* of $2; sometimes more
  - Germany $3
  - Iran $15
- Crisp, new bills preferred, with no folds, tears, or writing
  - In some places, easier to exchange for local currency
- Sometimes illegal though, so check first
  - India and Indonesia, for example
- Some major DXpeditions now accepting PayPal from their websites
  - Don't forget to include your callsign!
  - Early donors to major DXpeditions often get early QSLing in return for their donation before the DXpedition

International Reply Coupons (IRCs)

• Exchangeable for overseas airmail letter postage <u>almost</u> world-wide (even in the US)

• …but no longer *<u>**sold**</u>* in the US

• Available from foreign post offices via the Internet, and second-hand from QSL managers

• Left side <u>may be</u> round-stamped at purchase, right side <u>must</u> be round-stamped at redemption

• Some DX POs only accept left-stamped IRCs, so beware
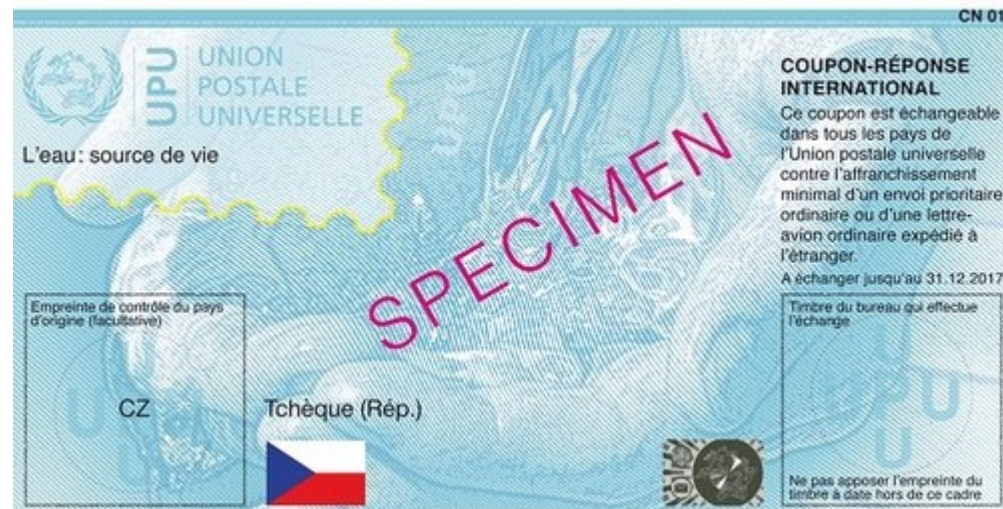
• <u>**They expire.**</u> Today's version expires 31 December 2017; next version available after 1 July 2017

Local Stamps

- Often the most convenient for DX when travel to convert IRCs is difficult, if GS possession inconvenient, or the DX is an individual operator
- Often not the best for DXpeditions, which may need GS to fund the trip, etc.
- Don't attach stamps to the envelope
  - QSLs may be sent from another country, via a postal meter, etc.
- Don't send US stamps overseas!
- Sources advertise in some DX bulletins (e.g., QRZ DX)

PayPal

- Becoming very popular, either as part of OQRS or as an independent transaction
- All that's needed is an email address for the DX station
- If an independent (non-OQRS) operation, be sure to include QSO information <u>and your call sign</u> in PayPal note (or separate email)
  - PayPal should send mailing address automatically, but it's a good idea to include that, too

So, which to use?

- Prime Directive: **<u>Do what the DX says.</u>**
  - Usually will say on QRZ.com, or DXpedition web site
- But if you have no information, some *general* suggestions (YMMV):
  - OQRS, PayPal or GS to "major" DXpeditions, that have "major" expenses
  - PayPal when operator indicates he'll accept it (OQRS or independently); GS otherwise
  - Foreign stamps to native individual operators, especially in places where travel to convert IRCs might be difficult
    - And especially if the op is not a "DX" op, just in a DX entity ☺
  - IRCs otherwise
    - Sometimes cheaper than stamps. . .

International Mailing

- This just in:
  - Mail theft is a near-certainty in some parts of the world
  - Postal machines found to lack tenderness and sensitivity
- Defenses:
  - Good envelope strategy
  - Registered mail

Envelope Strategy

- Opaque, _robust_ mailing envelope

- Avoid lumps, indicative of a folded return envelope inside (and associated $$?)

  – Size of mailer and return envelope should match closely

  – Envelope pairs available from Bill Plum (PlumDX@msn.com), et al.

- Reinforce mailing envelope with white glue at _all_ seals

  – Unobtrusive, yet hardens envelope to attack

- No callsigns or other indication of amateur radio on mailing envelope

- Place return envelope _upside down_ in mailing envelope

  – Prevents letter opener from cutting return envelope flap

- Include country in reply envelope address

- Frank's Compulsive Guide to Postal Addresses is your friend: http://www.columbia.edu/~fdc/postal/ . Highly recommended!

International Registered Mail

- Expensive, and not a panacea, but beats the alternative
- Requires a signature of every postal employee that handles the envelope, door-to-door (in theory)
- Do not use any plastic tape on envelope
  - An international regulation (not tamper-evident)
  - Paper tape okay (postal clerk should add to all seals, and round-stamp)
  - White glue on all seals also okay (do this first, at home)
- If desperate, consider adding Return Receipt Requested (proof of delivery):
  - You receive a pink post card, possibly with recipient's signature
  - not available to all entities
- USPS' International Mail Manual is your friend
  - http://pe.usps.gov/text/imm/welcome.htm
  - §330 Registered Mail; §381 IRCs; etc.

Hints and Kinks 1

- Postal codes usually go before, not after, the city name
  - QRZ.com very misleading – don't trust it for address formatting
  - See Frank's Compulsive Guide (http://www.columbia.edu/~fdc/postal/)
- Mail to French possessions (e.g., Reunion Island) goes to <u>France</u> first:
  - Last lines of address should be:
    - <postal code> <City>
    - FRANCE
  - Postal code indicates which possession
  - "Reunion Island" in address → lost mail!
  - http://www.upu.int/post_code/en/countries/REU.pdf
- Addressing style in the former USSR is inverted, with country on the <u>first</u> line of address
  - Cyrillic translation of "USA" is "С Ш А"
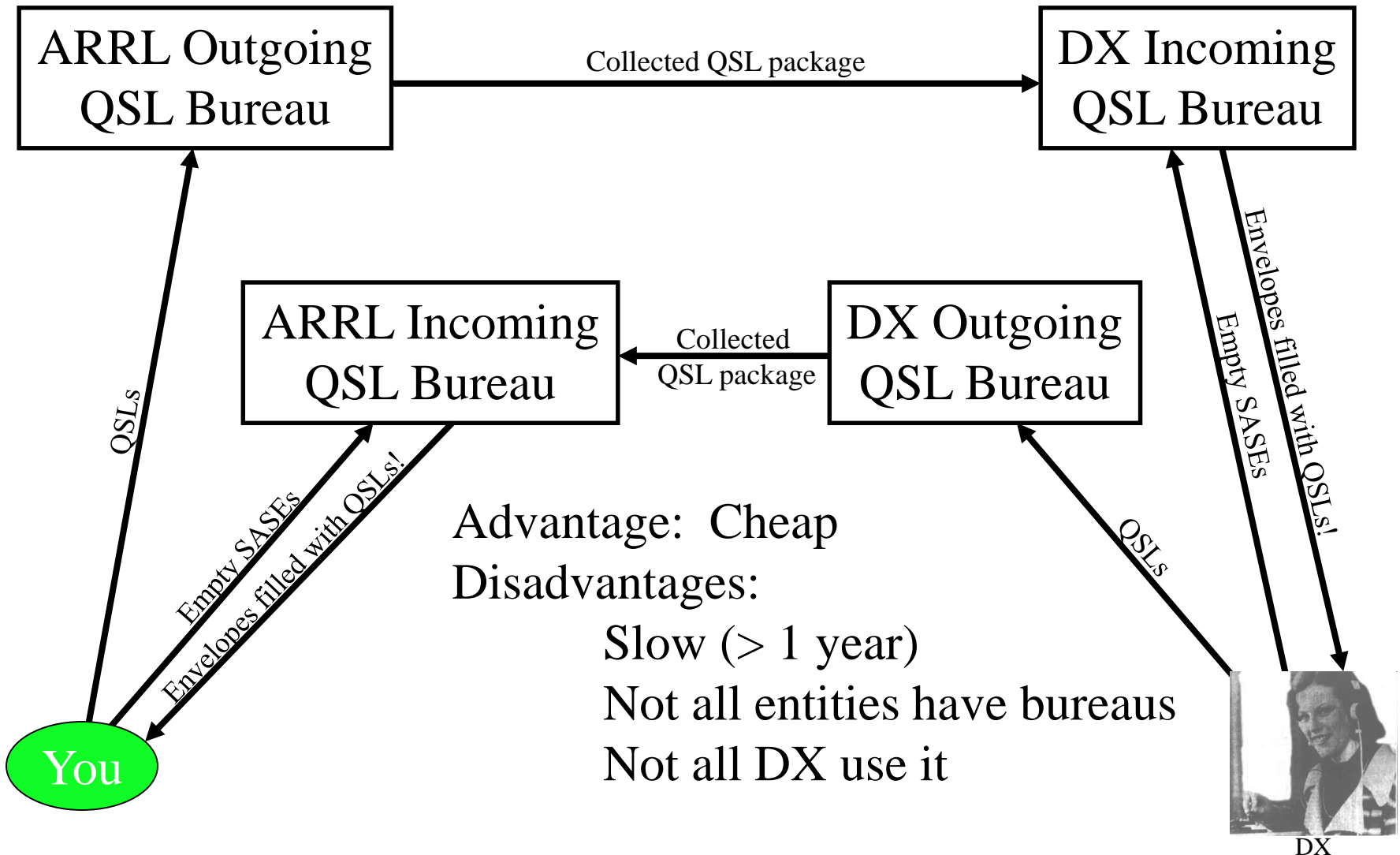 - Writing "С Ш А" on top line of return envelope helps return rate

Hints and Kinks 2

- Address labels not permitted on Registered Mail – write or machine-print both destination and return addresses
- The country name, the last line of the address, should be capitalized (improves machine readability → speeds delivery)
- Write *your* callsign on the *inside* of the return envelope flap – where it can be read by the DX, but not seen when sealed – so that the DX can connect your callsign with the return envelope
  - Otherwise, your QSL might get put in someone else's envelope . . .
- Sometimes the DX might put additional US QSLs in the return envelope, along with yours
  - Please forward them to the correct recipient – I'd do it for you
- Don't use a standard return address label as the destination address on the return envelope
  - Font too small for postal regulations

Hints and Kinks 3

- Sometime the DX will ask for a return address label, not an envelope; be sure to comply
  - Local regulations may require locally-supplied envelopes be used for outgoing mail
  - Send a full-size label (Avery 8660 or equivalent)
- Don't be bashful about using email to ask the DX (or anyone else) how to QSL, or how to pay for return postage
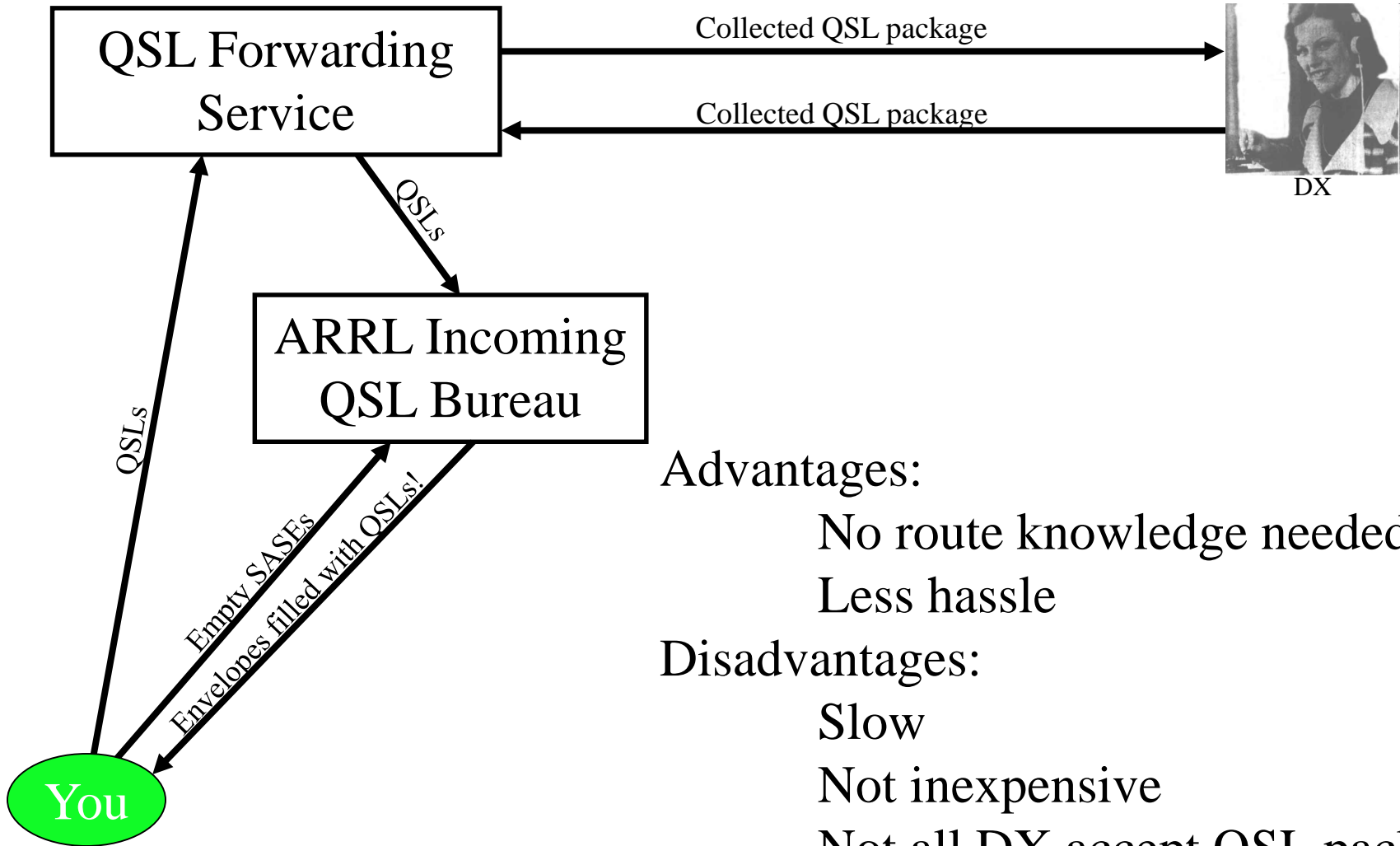
The QSL Bureau System

ARRL Outgoing
QSL Bureau

→ Collected QSL package →

DX Incoming
QSL Bureau

ARRL Incoming
QSL Bureau

← Collected QSL package ←

DX Outgoing
QSL Bureau

QSLs

Empty SASEs

Envelopes filled with QSLs!

QSLs

Empty SASEs

Envelopes filled with QSLs!

You

DX

Advantage: Cheap
Disadvantages:
　　　Slow (> 1 year)
　　　Not all entities have bureaus
　　　Not all DX use it

Using the QSL Bureau

- Incoming (open to all US amateurs):
  - Keep several _manila_ (not flimsy white) 5" x 7-1/2" envelopes on file
    - Clear packing tape on edges and all the way around a good idea; remove clasp
    - Your callsign in upper left corner
    - Self-addressed
    - One "Forever" stamp attached, with additional stamps clipped on
- Outgoing (ARRL members only):
  - Sort your cards alphabetically, by "parent" callsign prefix
    - 2E → G, RA → UA, etc.
    - Note that some entities do not have QSL bureaus…
  - Enclose proof of ARRL membership (copy of _QST_ mailing label)
  - Enclose check for fee ($1.15 per ounce, plus $7.00 service fee)
- On the web:
  - Incoming bureau: http://www.arrl.org/incoming-qsl-service
  - Outgoing bureau: http://www.arrl.org/Outgoing-QSL-Service

QSL Forwarding Services

QSL Forwarding Service	Collected QSL package →
	← Collected QSL package

DX

QSLs

ARRL Incoming QSL Bureau

QSLs

Empty SASEs

Envelopes filled with QSLs!

You

Advantages:
  No route knowledge needed
  Less hassle
Disadvantages:
  Slow
  Not inexpensive
  Not all DX accept QSL packages

Electronic QSLing

Basic Process

- Upload (or email) an electronic log to a web site

- DX does the same

- Claimed QSOs common to both logs compared via the web site

  – Manually or automatically

- When matches are found, confirmations (electronic QSLs) are issued to both stations

- Can be very fast – and inexpensive

Logbook of The World (LoTW)

- http://www.arrl.org/lotw/
- Operated by the ARRL
- Confirmations valid for the DXCC program, WAS, TPA **_only_**
  - No IOTA, WAC, WAZ, etc.
  - But can get WAC, 5BWAC by hand-selecting QSLs
- Integrated with your DXCC account
  - Totals available on the web
  - Apply for awards electronically
- Very (some would say too) secure
  - Logs authenticated via digital signature
  - Public-key cryptography

- No printable card involved
  - "Bits in a database"

Your Logbook DXCC Account (W4MOT - UNIT				
Account Status				
Award	Selected	Applied	Awarded	Total / Current
Mixed *	0	0	319	319 / 315
CW *	6	0	221	227 / 227
Phone *	2	0	154	156 / 156
RTTY *	2	0	109	111 / 111
160M	3	0	22	25 / 25
80M	1	0	51	52 / 52
40M *	1	0	101	102 / 102
30M	3	0	71	74 / 74
20M *	3	0	196	199 / 199
17M *	3	0	123	126 / 126
15M *	3	0	110	113 / 113
12M	3	0	27	30 / 30
10M	0	0	63	63 / 63
6M	2	0	5	7 / 7
2M	0	0	1	1 / 1
Challenge	22	0	769	--- / 791

* = Award has been issued

Logbook of The World (LoTW)

LoTW

Uploads (or emails) signed log to LoTW web site

Matches QSOs in the two logs

Uploads (or emails) signed log to LoTW web site

Digitally signs log with TQSL ("Trusted QSL") program

Updates awards database

Digitally signs log with TQSL ("Trusted QSL") program

Exports log from logging program

List of QSLs available for viewing on web site

Exports log from logging program

You

DX
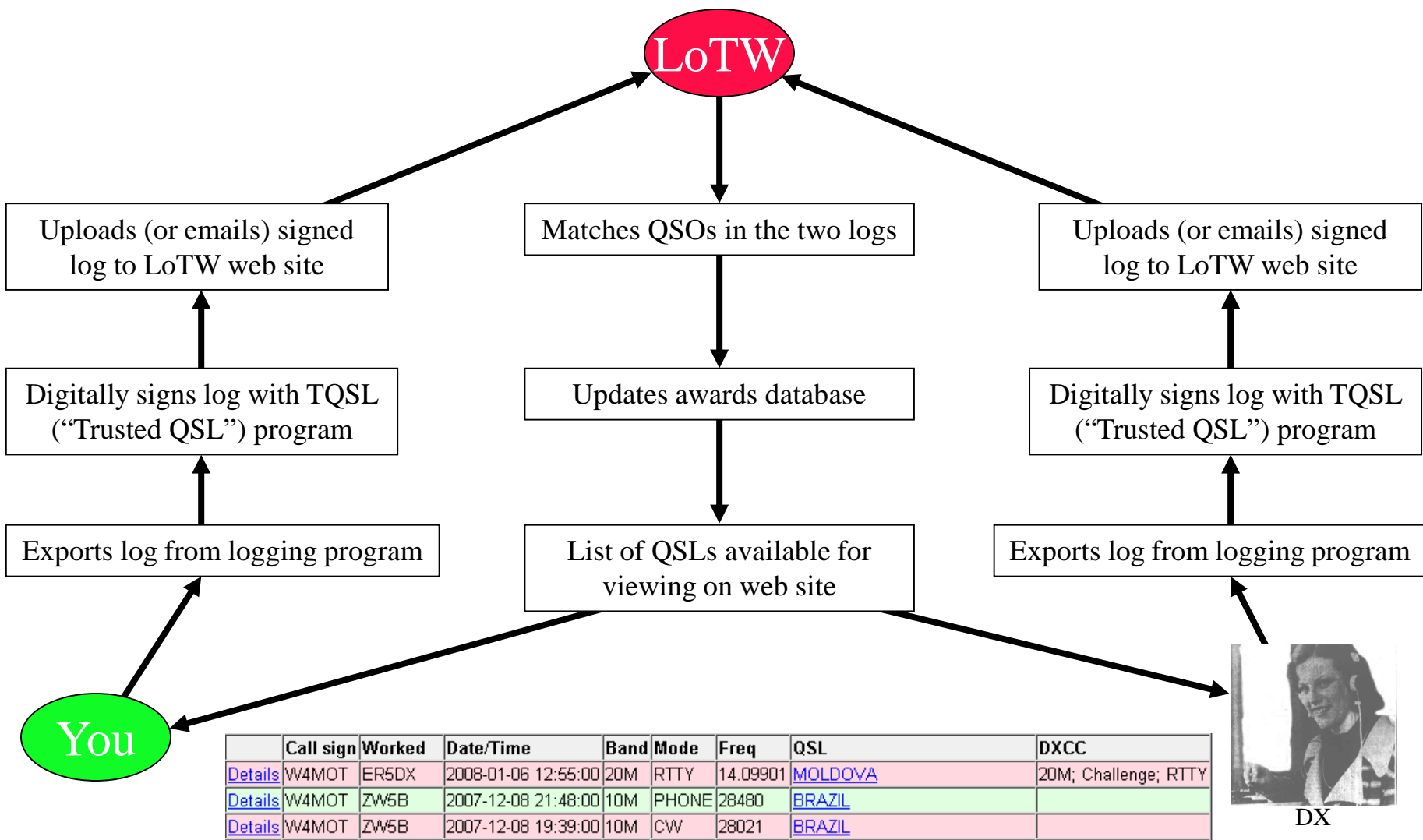
	Call sign	Worked	Date/Time	Band	Mode	Freq	QSL	DXCC
Details	W4MOT	ER5DX	2008-01-06 12:55:00	20M	RTTY	14.09901	MOLDOVA	20M; Challenge; RTTY
Details	W4MOT	ZW5B	2007-12-08 21:48:00	10M	PHONE	28480	BRAZIL	
Details	W4MOT	ZW5B	2007-12-08 19:39:00	10M	CW	28021	BRAZIL	

eQSL

- http://www.eqsl.cc
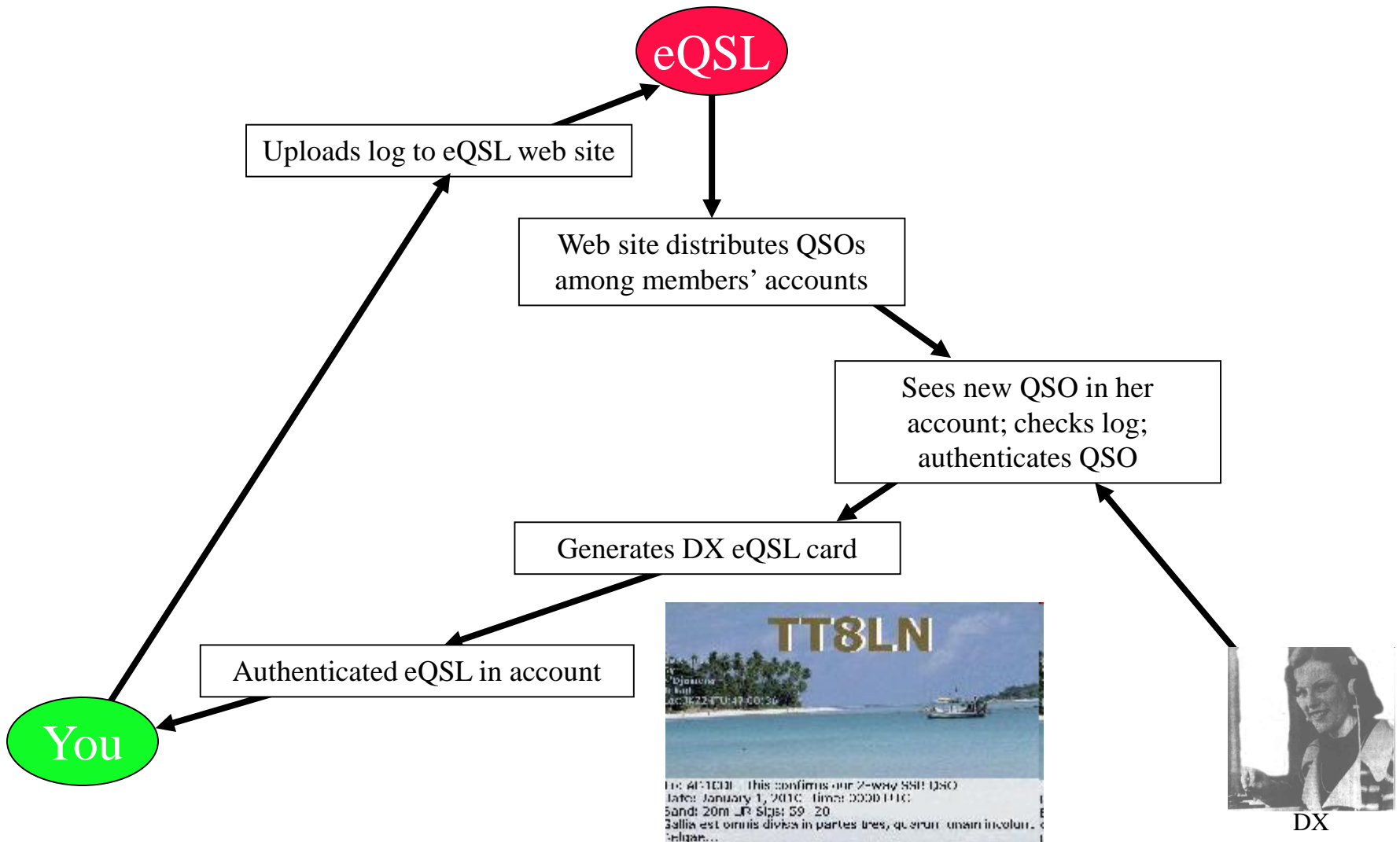- Since 1998; operated by Dave Morris, N5UP
- Confirmations valid for the CQ awards program (WAZ, WPX, US Counties, etc.) in addition to separate eQSL awards
  - But only QSLs from "authenticity guaranteed" participants with "Bronze" or higher membership level
  - **NOT** valid for ARRL awards (DXCC, etc.) or IOTA!
- Auto-match or manually confirm received eQSLs
- Less (some would say not) secure
  - Submitters, not logs, authenticated
  - No cryptography
  - . . . but probably not significantly less secure than paper QSLs
- Printable card available; also supports SWLs

eQSL

eQSL

Uploads log to eQSL web site

Web site distributes QSOs among members' accounts

Sees new QSO in her account; checks log; authenticates QSO

Generates DX eQSL card

Authenticated eQSL in account

You

TT8LN

To AF1001 This confirms our 2-way SSB! QSO
Date: January 1, 2010 Time: 0000 UTC
Band: 20m R Sigs: 59 20
Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres, quorum unam incolunt...
aliqae...

DX

Record-keeping Advice

- Keep good records (via electronic log or otherwise) of when you sent your QSL, where it was sent, and with what return postage method
  - Recheck and resend at least annually
  - Third time can be the charm

- Never give up!
  - Personal Record: VP8SO (South Orkney Islands)
    - QSO: 1 March 1979
    - QSL: 22 March 2007

Questions?