



# Helping Hand

Joe Robinson VA3MRE, 4 Hatchet Place, Scarborough,  
Ontario M1B 1C7 (416)297-0449 [odxa@rogers.com](mailto:odxa@rogers.com)

*Helping Hand is a column that focuses upon questions, advice, assistance and other items of discussion that our readership requires from time to time. This 'post-it' column will allow hobbyists to inquire about various aspects of radio listening and receive answers from the readership either directly or through this column.*

## Helping Hand Column - November 2012

The nights are getting longer... which hopefully means better reception for SW, LW and MW... with a little help from good propagation conditions! This month we have some pertinent info on a telecommunications course that may be of interest to ham/radiotelephone operators, and a notice concerning the preservation of shortwave broadcast recordings.

Jeremy Clark wrote to our ODXA stating, "I have created a course "**Learn Telecommunications by Simulation**" which may be of interest to your members. The idea is to learn telecommunications by actually building circuits using powerful open source software. The course starts at baseband and concludes with modern wireless topics of PSK, QAM, OFDM and CDMA. The course includes all text, code and instructional videos. It is available as an e-book. A free version (*see explanation below - ed.*) can be downloaded at:  
[www.scicos.org/Download/learn\\_tel\\_by\\_sim\\_short.zip](http://www.scicos.org/Download/learn_tel_by_sim_short.zip)."

Jeremy was kind enough to send me a complete copy of the course on a CD, and he is correct in stating that the free version listed above is more than half the entire course. There is an eBook (.pdf) as one of the files, which outlines the course, provides text and diagrams, and also provides links to video lectures, video and audio files, and much more.

In order to properly utilize all of the course material, it is necessary to download and install two pieces of software. One is called ScicosLab version 4.1 and the other is a Modnum binary/toolbar file. Make sure you have over 300 Mb of space free in your computer in order to install and run these programs, which assist in the mathematics of the course.

The eBook is fairly easy to follow, and the .mp4 video lectures/explanations are straightforward and to the point. I would say that the audio/video lectures complement the reading of the text well. Once you learn how to utilize the hypertext files and the above mentioned programs, you can fall into a nice rhythm and learn at your own pace.

The eBook covers Analog and Digital signals, Amplitude/Frequency/Phase Modulation and much, much more. The audio files provided give concrete examples of the topics discussed. If you are serious about learning the theory and practice of various broadcasting modes, then this course could be beneficial to you. One note: there is a lot of mathematics and mathematical equations in this course; they are explained well, but they are not for the "math faint" of heart.

If you are interested in the entire course or would like to ask Jeremy any questions, e-mail or phone me and I will give you Jeremy's e-mail address.

Harold Sellers sent me a forward from Dan Robinson on "**Preserve Your Historic Shortwave Recordings!**" He has begun with I would call a labour of love, attempting to have as much audio material as possible placed in a central location from shortwave broadcasters. He has allowed me to reprint a revised version of his plea to the DXPlorer group in this column:

"Many of you know me from my five decades of activity in the shortwave hobby. You may also be aware that I have spent a great deal of time involved in transferring recordings from the best years of the shortwave broadcast era from tape (reel or cassette) to digital format.

"Such recordings have historic value, with shortwave broadcasting in rapid decline, in fact on the way to eventual disappearance sooner than we may expect, and it becomes ever more important by the day to preserve

recordings made by members of the SWL/DX'ing community.

"Some of you may have already been doing this, in which case you won't need anyone to do it for you. But we are losing colleagues, and it's a tragedy when reel to reel or cassette collections, often containing quite historic and rare material, are dumped. Unless family members are aware of the value of this content, tapes can end up in the dumpster.

"While there are a number of websites where such material is posted and accessible, often these contain only brief excerpts. Tragically, whole collections with longer recordings of historic importance go out on the trash heap.

"So, I'm putting out an appeal through this and other groups. If you have recordings made over the course of your 'career' in the SW hobby, perhaps have not been able to apply the time to ensuring their preservation in digital audio form, please get in touch with me.

"For individuals sending me their collections, I place the material in my job lineup for eventual conversion. I preserve the cassettes/reels and can return them to you, or not, provided you pay USPS/UPS for this. I accept PayPal. Digital recordings are labeled and associated with the name of the SWL/DX'er so there is a record of the specific personal listening accomplishment.

"I need to make clear, in response to some inquiries, that my **focus in this project is on SHORTWAVE BROADCASTS and to an extent SW utility recordings that were especially**

**common at one time.** I cannot afford to take the time to transfer AM or FM recordings. In cases where SWBC recordings are mixed on a reel or cassette with medium wave or FM I will consider taking these on because of the value of preserving the shortwave material.

"If you are looking to have a digital copy of your entire collection or certain recordings, I can do that, but there will be a fee associated with this, based on the number of hours required for the work, and type and cost of the medium you prefer to be used. I recommend SDHC cards for this rather than CD's -- it's just simpler, and flash memory can be used to replay material in a variety of solid state devices and laptops.

"So, that's the story. Whether it's your own tape collection, or you know of someone who has been lost to us but their recordings are still obtainable, please do get in touch. We have all spent decades enjoying the SW hobby, and should all do our part to try to preserve the sounds of these times. Contact me at: Dan Robinson, 11700 Charen Lane, Potomac, MD 20854 EMAIL: [dxace1@gmail.com](mailto:dxace1@gmail.com)

"A brief final note. Those who do still have their reel to reel or cassette collections may have recordings of specific SWBC stations that are of particular historic value and significance and I have a high priority in getting such material transferred. This would be due to political events over the decades, the rarity of a station, or indeed because certain broadcasters were, at the time they were on the air, considered so routine that many people actually DID NOT make recordings of them.

"Examples would include: Radio Tahiti, which was so common and easily-heard that many would listen to it but not record it . . . VTVN Saigon around or at the time of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam or the Communist takeover. . .or something like Falkland Islands at or around the time it went off shortwave. . . Portuguese Timor before the transition to Indonesian rule. . .or even Tristan da Cunha (one that to my knowledge no recording of exists).

"So-- thanks again for your attention. Preservation of the sounds of our hobby is important and I urge you to do your part." Please contact Dan if you have anything to contribute to this wonderful endeavour.

That's about all for November. Remember, if you have a question, comment or response to any topic brought up in the Helping Hand column, please pass it along. I would like to wish a very Happy Thanksgiving to all of you living in the United States!

73      J O E