The RRMA Exhibits At Its First Model Railroad Show!

The RRMA modules included two main lines, two long runaround tracks and several sidings.

Just a few months after our formation, we participated in the recent Echo Valley Model Railroad Show in Regina on October 18th and 19th!

The Regina Railway Modellers Association had two "learning modules" in place just inside the front doors of the show held at the Orr Centre.

The platform for the RRMA modules were two used modules that had been donated to the group. Members decided to use these as "learning modules" to help build our track laying and wiring skills.

It took at good bit of effort and hard work but two modules had track bed and track laid, wired and tested for full DCC operation.

Skirting was sewed by Tom Mulligan's wife and rolling stock, locomotives, a few buildings and some other pieces were supplied by members. We added two colourful signs as well.
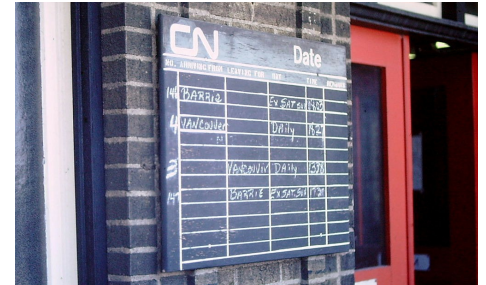
Our "temporary" layout worked almost flawlessly thanks to everyone's efforts. The

The modules featured one eight foot straight section and a five by seven foot corner section - all wired for DCC operation.

RRMA attracted a lot of attention and left everyone with a good impression of our fledgling group.

Stay tuned - there's more coming for our next showing! ◀◀

THE LINE UP

A nicely weathered Canadian Pacific switcher passes some great, custom detailed containers, one on a custom-built chassis.

A pair of grain elevators, a cement plant, a Dairy Queen and a scratch built Esso station added some more interest to the RRMA "learning modules on display at the Echo Valley Model Railroad Show.

Starting Out? A Powerful Primer

So, you're just getting started in model railroading (or thinking about it)/ Here's a very simple primer on powering your electric trains.

A Basic DC System

First, we'll talk about HO scale trains that operate on a nominal 16-18 volts of direct current - a "DC" system. In order to provide power to the tracks, you'll have to have a transformer that converts 110 volt household AC current into the required DC current.

On your transformer (or power pack, if you prefer), you'll find two terminals marked for DC track power. One terminal is positive and the other is negative.

Let's assume you have a locomotive on your track and you have wired one terminal to each of the rails. With the throttle off, there would be no power going to the rails and the locomotive would not move.

0 volts   stopped
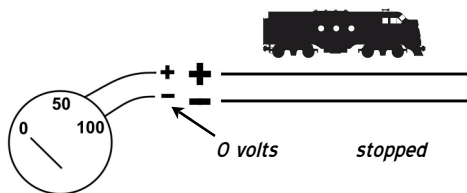
Now, if you dial up the throttle to about halfway (50%), you would supply about 8-9 volts of power to the rails. Your locomotive would begin to move in one direction, reaching about half speed.

8-9 volts   half speed
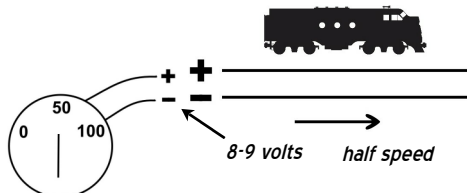
Keep dialling up the power to full throttle and the train will move faster (unless it derails!). At 100% power, your locomotive will be travelling at full speed.

18 volts   full speed
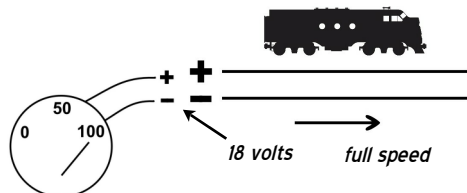
To reverse the direction of travel, you reverse the polarity of the power to the rails by moving the direction switch on your transformer and dial up the throttle. Your locomotive will then move backwards.
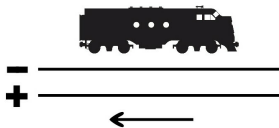
If your locomotive or any of your cars are equipped with lights, they will only come on when power is supplied to the rails unless there is another power source such as a battery.

If you try to run a DCC (Digital Command Control) unit equipped with sound, you may get sound from the unit after you supply enough power to activate the system (usually about 50% power). Depending on the DCC system manufacturer, you will then have "automatic/default" sounds and lights but you will not be able to control them individually.

The Basics of Going Digital (DCC)

DCC systems provide you with the ability to operate much more realistic trains on your model railway by providing a number of enhanced operating features such as realistic sound, control of locomotive lights, and operation of couplers or switches.

With a DCC system, you must have a DCC power system (Digitrax and NCE are two manufacturers) and DCC-equipped locomotives.

Each DCC locomotive needs a separate address so that the control system can communicate with the locomotive. By default, a unit's address is 3, so we'll start there.

When wire your track for DCC operation, power is supplied to each rail as in the DC system. However, the DCC system supplies the full 18 volts to the track whenever the system is turned on, even if the throttle is set to zero. You can

*18 volts   stopped*
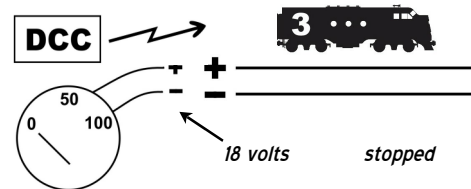
now switch the unit's lights off and on, sound the horn or the bell.

When you dial up the throttle, the DCC system tells the locomotive to move in the direction you specified. The more you dial up the throttle, the faster the unit will move.

18 volts   half speed
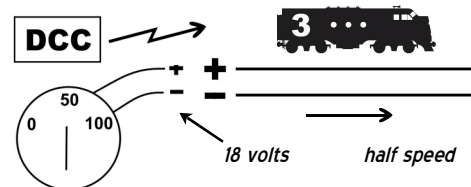
If you have two locomotives on the track at the same time, only the unit being addressed by the DCC system responds. In the example shown below, unit 3 moves while unit 4 remains stationary.

stopped   half speed
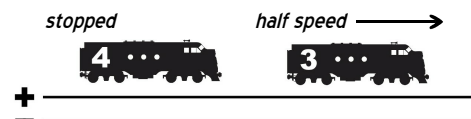
With a DCC system, is possible to create a multi-locomotive consist where multiple units can be run at the same time in a single train. By programming a consist (locomotives 3 and 4, for example), both units can be controlled at the same time.

half speed
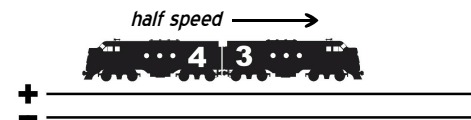
That's a very basic primer on DC and DCC systems for model railroads. Of course, there's more to it than we've included here.

For one thing, there's the cost of the DCC system and DCC- *(Continued on page 4)*

The Prototype Page - Who is TTX? - Part 1

If you're a real train watcher, you've no doubt noticed many cars that carry the TTX logo - either the current red and black version or the older black and white version. What you may not know is the story behind TTX.

According to the TTX web site (ttx.com), TTX is a railcar pooling company. It was founded as Trailer Train in 1955 by the Pennsylvania Railroad. They began by building special flat cars that would haul highway trailers.

More rail carriers came onboard with the concept and in 1974 a pooling agreement was put into place that was approved by the U.S. Government.

By pooling rail cars, railroads improve their car utilization rates, increase efficiency and reduce capital costs. Today, TTX Corporation owns over 200,000 cars that can be seen across North America daily.

TTX is privately-owned by nine of North America's leading railroads and functions as the industry's railcar cooperative. In TTX's own words, TTX is "about delivering a right-sized, well-maintained fleet, with the lowest possible costs that serve the railroads' customer's needs.

TTX owns five basic types of rail equipment - intermodal cars, automotive flat cars, general merchandise flat cars, box cars and gondolas.

Intermodal cars

Most common are the intermodal cars that can be found in single car (40, 48 and 53 foot container lengths), triple units (48 and 53-foot containers) and five packs (40-foot containers).

A single 40-foot car can carry two 20-foot containers or one 40-foot container on the bottom with a 40, 45, 48 or 53-foot container on top. (The car is of course longer than 40 feet - we're referring to container lengths here.)

The triple and five pack units share a common truck between two platforms.

TTX has over 97,500 wells of capacity in service. The cars carry the DTTX number series.

TTX also has spine cars and 89-foot flat cars for containers and trailers.

DTTX 469763 shown above is a single 53-foot container car loaded with two Canadian Tire containers.

Automotive cars

TTX operates a variety of multi-level, single level and flat cars for automotive traffic.

Cars in the TTGX number series are bi-level cars that can carry cars, light trucks and SUVs. Cars in the ETTX series are tri-level units for automobiles. Newer cars with yellow top ends use a flexible ramp configuration (CTTX and other cars).

TTX also has articulated auto racks in the BTTX-series that provide a longer car with only three trucks.

Generally TTX owns the flat car base and railroads own the rack structure. (Of course there are exceptions - cars that are fully owned by TTX and similar cars that are owned by individual railroads.) In the accompanying photo above of TTX 704408, note the Norfolk Southern logo and the small NS 49089 number on the left side.

CTTX 690474 / BNSF 34324 is a new flexible configuration

Redline Hobby News

Redline Hobby, Regina's only full-line hobby shop, has a new owner. As of October 1st, Wade Nyirfa took ownership from Henry Redekop.

Henry had owned the shop for over 22 years and has become a fixture on the local hobby scene. He'll be there until the end of January next year during a transition period.

The store will still carry all of its existing product lines, including trains! Custom orders will still be filled.

Why not stop on by Redline at 308 McDonald Street and say hello to the Redline crew. Please support your local business! ◀◀

The Prototype Page

auto carrier where the intermediate level is hinged and can be adjusted for different vehicle types and heights. Note the yellow tops at ends of the car compared to the white end of the car to the right.

While most auto rack cars are based on TTX platforms, you find many examples that are fully railroad-owned. In Canada, CP-owned cars are often TTX yellow in colour but carry no CP logo, while TTX cars with CP-owned racks usually display a CP, CPR or CP Rail logo. (CP and CN also own aluminum cars which look a bit different than a standard TTX car.

More on TTX and its car fleet in a future issue. ◀◀

A Powerful Primer

equipped locomotives. Simple DC locomotives can run from about $60 up to $200 depending on the level of detail and the manufacturer. A DCC and sound-equipped locomotive costs around $300. A starter DCC control system can be purchased for less than $200 and a full DCC system can run about $400-500.

Join us at an RRMA meeting if you'd like to know more or have any questions. You can also check out any of the information resources available at your local model train store or on-line.

Once you've sampled a DCC system, it's very hard to run anything else! ◀◀

Walthers 2015 HO Reference Book Features a Historical Look Back

Many of us in this hobby eagerly await the arrival of the new Walthers Reference Book every year. For those of us who are regular buyers, it's like the arrival of the old Eaton's Christmas catalogue - only way better!

This year's version of the HO scale book weighs in at a lofty 1,016 pages. Eight of those feature a look back over almost 190 years of railroad and model railroading history.

Here are a couple of items of note - in 1825, Colonel John Stevens built a steam locomotive and a circle of track at his New Jersey estate. The book notes that it may be the first hobby, garden railway and the first live steam model railroad.

Märklin introduced its first electric toy trains in 1898. The Lionel Manufacturing Corporation was founded in 1901.

In 1922, Bing unveiled a smaller scale of trains called "half-o" or more simply HO, at 4 mm scale running on 16.5 mm gauge track.

William K. Walthers begins operations in 1932 and the Model Railroad Club of Milwaukee is formed in 1934 with Bill Walthers as a charter member.

The first National Model Railroads Association (NMRA) conference was held in 1935.

Today, Walthers is one of if not the largest model railroad supplier in North America. Now in its fourth generation, the Walthers family is still active in the company. ◀◀
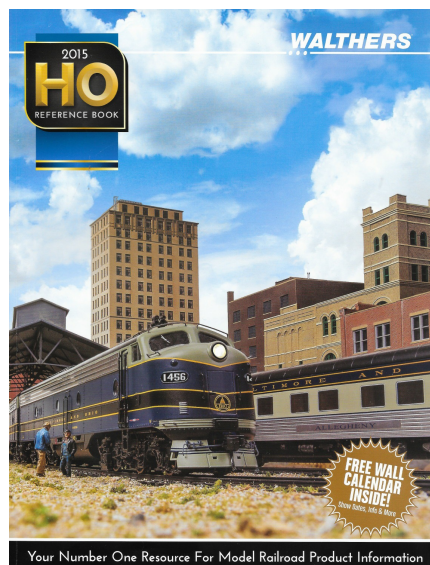
About On Track and the RRMA

ON TRACK is a publication of the Regina Railway Modellers Association. The members of the RRMA are dedicated to promoting model railroading in all scales. We're also building an RRMA Saskatchewan HO scale modular layout.

You are invited to join our group and help build the railway! You can join as a full participating member or as an observer. For more information, please contact us.