



## The Value of Membership

As we wearily make our way through the event called 2020, the annual clamor over the cost of membership in our organization has reached new heights, along with dissatisfaction of how the NMRA is being conducted. This article is not going to deal with the dissatisfaction. If you are in this group, you have two choices, get involved and make the changes you desire or quit.

Currently, a lot of people are having income problems. Be it either a fixed income that is losing its buying power or a reduction, maybe a total loss, of income because of career field decline (unemployment). Let's be clear, if you are having to decide between membership or maintaining your household and standard of living, you have only one choice. Life trumps hobby.

Your membership gives you access to the three levels of the NMRA represented above. So, let's get to the heart of the subject. Is NMRA worth \$50 or \$82 a year? The \$32 is for the magazine, which is a full color, monthly periodical called "NMRA Magazine". Of the three names our magazine has had, this is the least imaginative, but we have come a long way from issue after issue of articles on outhouses.

A recent mailing from "Model Railroader" offer a one-year subscription for approximately \$30. If you were to go to the newsstand it would be \$98. A subscription on their website is \$45. The value of a magazine or just about anything, is related to your interest in what it contains. The value of a book on yachts for sale has more value, to you, if you are interested in buying a yacht.

Since both magazines can be had for almost the same amount. The value is in the articles of interest to you. Only you can determine that. Both magazines accept articles from anyone. If they do not publish what is of interest to you, consider writing an article and submitting it to the publishers. Confer with others to get them to submit articles. You can submit articles to division or regional newsletters for publication.

The \$50 membership fee is a little harder to quantify. It can be argued that part of the value is a legacy fee. That is, we are paying for the work done 75+ years ago to make our hobby what it is today. In the 1930's-40's a group of hobbyists got together and convinced the manufactures that it was in their best interest to follow a set of standards and recommended practices when producing their products.

That is why , you can go to a hobby location either brick and mortar or online, get a piece of track, select a power pack, choose an engine and grab some rolling stock, get it home, put it together and it will run. No need to buy only one company's product. Before you wave that off as nothing, go buy Ford or Toyota parts and try putting them on a Chevy. But how much is this worth, to you?

The real value of a NMRA membership is totally intangible. How much value do you put on the friendships you have made, the knowledge you have gained and the fun/entertainment you have had by being a member? Membership entitles you to attend meetings during the year, and an opportunity to attend conventions, both regional and national.

Have you given any thought to how many of the region's train shows are sponsored by local NMRA groups and how many of those shows would not be presented without that local group? How many clinics

have you attended to pick up new skills and get new ideas? How many discussions have you been involved in for planning, building, operating, and maintaining the layout, maybe even yours? Have you entered a contest that displayed your talent and interest? Would that contest have been held without the local NMRA?

In my opinion, the local part of the organization is where the value is. Most of my dealings with the Regional and the National entities have been confusing, to say the least. But this division is what keeps me writing that check each year. To do what I can to make model railroading a hobby I want to be in.

But, if you are one of the "I need to see how much being a member gives me" types, we need go no farther than the NMRA Partnership Program. NMRA has approached model railroad vendors to provide a discount to its members. Currently, there are 47 companies offering up to 45% discounts on orders. Go to [NMRA.org](http://NMRA.org) for details. These companies cover a wide area of the hobby. Paint, scenery, decals, electronics, tools, videos and more. Depending on how much you purchased, these discounts could pay for your membership. These are not just Mom and Pop shops. Among them is Micro-Mark, Trainmasters TV, Badger Airbrush, Tichy Train Group, Scalecoat Paint, MCR, and Train Show, Inc. The last is the presenter of the national traveling train shows. Greenberg's, The Great Train Show, Worlds Greatest Hobby on Tour, and the Great Midwest Train Show. 20% discount on ticket. Check the website for details.

Is the NMRA worth whatever amount of money you invest in it? Only you can answer that but consider there is a value, you will not find it in your pocket.

Many times, the amount of your return is related to the amount of your input.

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