

North Central O Gaugers

Model Railroad Club, Inc.

Our Story



Index

Club History	Page 3
Community Engagement	Page 5
Traveling Layout	Page 9
Visited Locations	Page 11
Media Coverage	Page 13
Friends and Visitors	Page 15
Purpose	Page 16

Quick Facts

- Club founded in 2000
- Permanent layout on the 2nd floor of the Fremont Public Library in Mundelein, IL
- Main three track layout measures 21 x 48 feet
- Train runs are held monthly on the second Saturday except in November
- Compatible with equipment from all 3-rail train vendors
- Runs digital and conventional engines
- Main layout attendance varies from 400 to 1500 per weekend
- Special runs 4 times per year with 12 x 20 foot traveling layout
- Special run attendance varies between 800 and 1500 visitors
- Blanket email area promotions sent out by special run host libraries
- Train set raffles where permitted at special runs
- Free admission to all club activities and train runs
- Internet connections and YouTube videos
- Seasonal decorations

Club History

The Beginning

The North Central O Gaugers Model Railroad Club was the idea of two fellows, Dave Groh and Wayne Willis, who worked together in a hobby shop. They loved model railroading and wanted to share it with those who had a common passion. The club was conceived in November, 1999 and the first meeting took place in April, 2000. (Dave and Wayne were members of other clubs, but the distance to those clubs locations required long drives to reach the club's facilities.) They talked to friends they knew to inquire about the possibility of forming a club.

Club Members

Individuals and families that joined the club, and those today, come from communities in and around Lake County, IL. Vocations include a wide field, as do the backgrounds of the retired individuals who are members of the club. The common bond for all the members is a strong desire to run trains, whether they are big or small engines, long trains or short ones.

Partnering with the Library

After some searching, a club home location was found that seemed to meet the interests of two parties: club members and the elected representatives of a convenient public library. Negotiations proved satisfactory to both parties and the club had space for a permanent layout. Since 2002, this layout, made by club members, has proudly made its home at

Fremont Public Library

1170 N Midlothian Road

Mundelein, IL 60060



Club History (continued)

The second floor had an area that was unfinished, while the rest of the large room was used by the Friends of the Fremont Public Library to sell slightly-used, donated books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks, puzzles, music CDs, and other library materials.



Building a Layout

Combining their skills and knowledge of model railroading, the goal of a layout brought together a handful of men and women, who were otherwise strangers, to work long hours and most weekends. The result was a modular O-gauge 3-rail triple mainline 21 x 48 feet layout designed with wide sweeping curves (up to 1200 radius) to accommodate all varieties of locomotives and rolling stock. The plans for the modules were a combination of designs from other clubs, but modified to work for this group. The acquisition of materials such as lumber, track, wiring, and paint were done by contributions from the members and local hobby shops.

Expansion for a Train Yard and Storage Area

Those early efforts provided a base for additions to the layout, such as a 17 foot long, 9-track yard and roundhouse. These have been added to the area inside the original loops.



Club History (continued)

The train yard is a great setup area when getting ready to run a train. It also serves as a display area for trains donated by folks who just want to get rid of those old trains. Donors tell us they don't have room for them anymore and they know the club members will fix them up and run them. These trains are especially handy when it comes time for members to pack up their own trains, but visitors still want to see trains run. These tracks also provide a great display area for member's trains and also those that belong to the club, such as a Thomas set and the Harry Potter train set, which the children really enjoy.

Track Power and Speed Control

With the diversity of member's trains and train vendors, the layout is well powered and wired to operate conventional and digitized models. Any of the 3 tracks on the outside loop, as well as the yard tracks, can be controlled by hand-held remotes. With remote operation and digitized control, more than one train can be operated on the same loop.

Community Engagement

Working Together

The train club shares their home on the second floor of the library with the Friends of the Fremont Public Library. This sharing includes holding train operating sessions at the same time as the Friends book sales. While the book sale operates from 10 AM to 5 PM on the second Saturday of every month, and on Sundays from 1 PM to 5 PM of every month, members can run trains from 9 AM to 4 PM on Saturdays. Often a member or two runs trains on Sundays as well. An exception is the month of November when members take the weekend off to visit Trainfest in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Run days and times are regularly published in the bulletins the library sends out to its patrons on its email list.

Seasonal Window Decorations



Community Engagement (continued)

The library encourages the club to place train decorations in one of their lobby windows with scenery to match an up-coming train run, especially in the fall and winter. The goal is to make these eye-catching scenes attractive enough to draw visitors to the layout. The window decorations include a posting on the date and time of the next run in the library.

Layout Scenery for the Seasons

With the monthly train runs at the library, seasonal decorations are placed on the layout, so the background for the trains is continually changing. Halloween and winter scenes draw the largest attendance, with write-ups included by the library in their monthly email newsletters to patrons. The club supplies photos for the library to use in their newsletters which further promotes the coming train run.



An area with a coal mine and appropriate accessories was built in one area to demonstrate finished scenery on the layout, and even this area can be decorated for the seasons, as appropriate.



Community Engagement (continued)

When the Doors Open

It is not unusual to see families with children lined up, ready to dash through the doors at 10 AM, to get to the layout and see the trains run. Of course, there are the buttons to push on the layout to activate the accessories. This makes it more interesting too. Some of these children will spend several hours at the layout, while their parents or grandparents watch. They may also walk over to check out the items at the Friend's Book Sale, while keeping an eye on their own youngsters.



Sharing Materials

The club has several stacks of donated train magazines, both big trains and model trains that are available for the visitors to take home and read at their leisure. The magazines are free to anyone who wants them. The library also keeps an excellent inventory of train videos and DVDs for patrons to check out, as well.

Community Engagement (continued)

Children's Layout

The area for the main layout has room for a 6 x 8 foot layout with three independent loops of tracks, for 2-rail and 3-rail trains. This layout also has lots of accessories and buttons to push, with flashing lights and train whistles and bells.



Test Track

This smaller layout also serves as a test track for visitors who have been encouraged to bring an engine or even an entire train to try out, as it may have been in a closet or packed away in a box for a long time. Of course before the engine and gets a test run, one of the club members looks it over and checks it out with a test transformer, maybe even giving it a tune-up. This would include an explanation on how to lubricate the engine or cars before they are placed on the smaller layout and given a test run. This layout and train table is operational at all the regular train runs.

Sometimes the test run may be for a member's engine, if it seems to be having trouble running on the big layout.

Traveling Layout

Traveling (Portable) Layout

In 2004, the club built a small 12 x 20 foot modular traveling layout, for the purpose of setting up and running trains at area libraries, or similar places.



A small nominal fee to cover the cost of transporting the modules in the club's small trailer was requested, and libraries quickly found that the investment in this attraction brought hundreds of visitors to their library. Special holiday events such as in the fall and at year end are particularly popular, and requests are often made a year or more in advance to ensure the layout will be available to match their date.

Four Special Runs a Year

The club has found that four special runs at selected area libraries work best to promote the hobby and keep the club members happy. Members particularly enjoy running trains, and to show a recently acquired set or a favorite from the past, at these special runs. It is especially gratifying when one sees the smiles and happy faces of those who watch them run.

More Than Running Trains



Traveling Layout (continued)

The members use these opportunities to display additional sets on tables adjacent to the layout. Often times these areas provide places to stage trains for the next turn on the layout. It is also a great opportunity to talk with visitors who stop buy to watch the trains, view the display, and maybe share a story or two about when they had trains themselves. Some may know a relative who had a gigantic basement layout they still remember from their childhood. Maybe they have some trains sitting in a closet or attic or garage that hasn't been run in years. Members use these occasions as times to encourage them to visit our main layout at our next regularly scheduled run, and bring the trains along and get them checked out by one of our club members. The club has at least one member who really enjoys helping them unpack the train or set, checking it out, tuning it up, and then running it. The return for doing these things is to encourage them to get back into trains, build a layout, or if the time isn't right for that, to join the club and run trains with others who enjoy doing just that.

Flexibility and Portability

While the finished layout measures 12 by 20 ft, it can be arranged in a 16 by 16 ft configuration, if the site available is limited in space. Track is permanently fixed to the modules, as is the wiring for each module. The club owns a small trailer to store and transport the modules to the location of a special run.



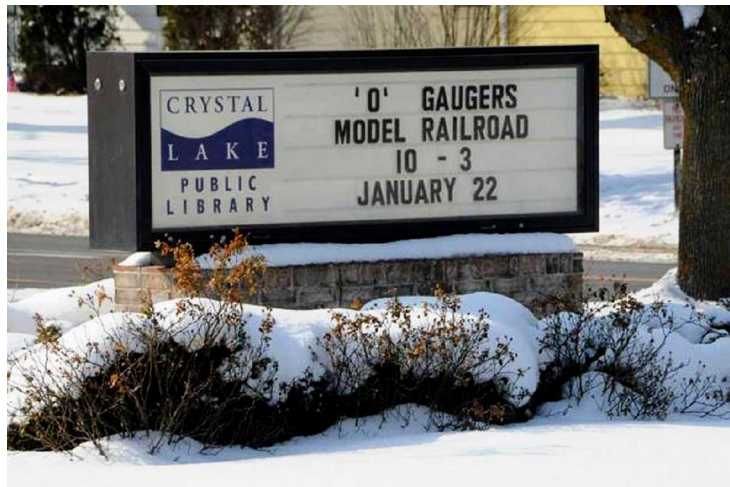
All O Gauge Equipment

The layout is powered so that all O Gauge train engine manufacturers' equipment will run on the layout, including conventional or digitized engines. Either type of engine can be controlled with hand held remotes. While steam engines have great action, the diesel engines provide plenty of color and both are fun to watch.

Traveling Layout (continued)

Special Run Details

The club has a Liaison Director who works with local libraries to arrange for the timing of the special run, and also the type of scenery they would prefer. Setup times for the club to bring in the layout, and tear-down times also need to be scheduled. Decorations on the layout can be arranged to fit the season or interest. The decorations include winter and holiday scenery, a circus carnival setting, farming or city setting, or a Halloween theme. As the club often has more requests than it can accommodate, scheduling for these special run dates must be decided many months in advance. This gives the libraries an opportunity to develop their publicity materials for their patrons, as well as preventing scheduling conflicts with other organizations. Consideration includes location of the community and ease of travel for members and transportation of the trailer with the modules.



Visited Locations

A Bit of Traveling

Over the past 12 years, the club has taken the traveling layout to 30 different communities in the 3 counties in and around Lake County, Illinois. Runs are most often on a Saturday in the local library. Many of these communities request a return visit within a year or so of the special run at their facility, so the club has found it necessary to limit the special runs to 4 in a calendar year, although by special request, the club did 5 in 2011. The club has been as far northwest as Twin Lakes, WI, as far northeast as Kenosha, WI, as far west as West Dundee, IL, as far south as Chicago, and as far southeast as Highland Park, IL.

Visited Locations (continued)

Most Popular Places

Two libraries that have been frequently visited by the club are Highland Park and Deerfield. The staffs at these 2 libraries do an excellent job of promoting the event and the attendance shows it. Highland Park Public Library, for instance, has requested the club for the past 5 years, and the club will be returning there again in 2012. In 2011, the visitor attendance was over 1,000. Deerfield Public Library also enjoyed the visits by the club's traveling layout. Visitor attendance has been as high as 1,500 for a 1 day event at this location.

The club has been told that this single event at the Highland Park Public Library, the Halloween Railroad, draws more visitors than all the other programs combined, for the year.

Children Remember

Often a return visit to a library brings out the same families from the previous year or years. From discussions with parents, they tell us their children are ready to go to the library as soon as they wake up on the morning of the special run. They can't wait to watch the trains run, and see the display. Parents will tell us the children remember how to get to the library in case they have forgotten.



Media Coverage

U.S. Mail

In the first few years of the club's existence, publicity announcements and newsletters were sent out via US mail. Quarterly newsletters contained pictures of special runs and announcements of club activities were published.

Computer Links

In 2004, one of the club members felt it would be in the best interest of the club to have a website, (www.ncogtrains.com) where information would be more readily available about the club, including:

- membership information and forms,
- regular run scheduled days and times,
- directions and links to the libraries home site,
- as well as special run information.

In addition, it would be more accessible to visitors wanting to visit the permanent layout as well as visitors to the traveling layout.

After many months of diligent effort and a good learning experience, the club launched its website in 2005. Pictures of visits to local libraries and the home library from the past are posted, as well as current news. There is also information that would be of interest to model train fans.

YouTube Videos

In the past year, additional videos of train runs were posted via a link to YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/user/Trainsarunning#p/u>, showing trains running as well as views of accessories and the visitors themselves. Visitors to the website continue to grow as do visitors to the permanent and traveling layouts. Another addition to the club's communication tools is a link to facebook, <http://www.ncogtrains.com/facebook.htm>.

Personal Invitations

Visitors to the special runs are encouraged to visit our home layout at the Fremont Public Library, and if they have a train at home, bring it along when they visit and run it on the club's layout. They receive a card with the club's website address which has a link to a map for driving directions.

Media Coverage (continued)

Always Free Admission

The club has a policy of not charging admission to any of its open runs or layouts, and our reward is the smiles that show on the faces of the visitors to our train runs.

Getting the Word Out

The staffs at those libraries have posters placed around the village weeks in advance, as well as sending out emails and mailing printed notices to their patrons. Most of the libraries use this same approach to advertise when "The Trains are coming".



Over the past several years, the club has held learning sessions on building a layout and operating trains. These free sessions are always well attended.

Friends and Visitors



Trains run at Crystal Lake Public Library in January 2011.

Purpose

The purpose of the club shall be to promote the hobby of model railroading and its allied fields. To accomplish this purpose, the club will:

- Organize and operate for pleasure, recreation, and other non-profit purposes as set forth by IRS regulations,
- Raise money through the collection of dues and fees,
- Organize social activities and events,
- Establish rules and codes of conduct,
- Maintain a club headquarters which includes:
 - A library of railroading and model railroading materials,
 - At least one operating 0 gauge layout, and
 - A place to hold business meetings.
- Elect officers and directors as necessary to promote operations,
- Establish rules and guidelines as necessary, and
- Establish publicity media as deemed appropriate.