Model train building and computers 11676

The world of Model Train Building has grown greatly with the aid of computers and technology to enhance the fun of building. Technology has long been a part of Model Train building with the adding of lights, bells, and whistles to capture your interest and imagination. But with the latest generation of building comes the influx of technology and the computer. The computer brings along a new breed of builders who plan track layout, buy parts on the Internet, receive updated news, and chat with other enthusiast.

The most notable difference that computers have brought to the world of Model Train building is in software programming. Now on the market there are numerous different packages of software that enable hobbyist in the challenge of real yard operations on a smaller scale. These programs allow the person to move loads between depots and keep track of your revenues. They allow simulations of operational switches between tracks, multiple train operation, coupling/uncoupling of railcars. But the greatest benefit that they bring is allowing the person to design a layout using an electronic template and ensuring that all measurements in the layout will work before a single piece of track is laid. Many of these software programs even play off on the hype of using a computer for design in their name, with names of CyberTrack, The Right Track Software, and Design Your Own Railroad, who could not want to become involved in there use.

This software ties into many other aspects of building that encourage the use of the Internet in this hobby. Many of these programs allow the hobbyist a realistic railyard action complete with sights, sounds and even planned crashes. With the event of a crash you are always going to need replacement parts for repair or maybe you just want to upgrade or expand you track

system. This brings in the convenience of the use of the Internet in product ordering. With few stores in scattered areas it may be difficult or expensive for some hobbyist to get to these locations for the parts that they need. The Internet brings this store right into their home with online catalogs and parts stores. One mainstream over the counter catalog, The Atlas Catalog, provides an electronic version, The Atlas Online Catalog, for internet users to order parts on a secure online catalog.

Even more important for some people are the Online Magazines that provide up to the minute news breaking information. Online magazines such as Where Bigger is Better or The Nickel Plate Road Historical and Technical Society offer many services and information such as; Workshops online, product reviews, clubs list, train shows, technology updates, and even Toy Train links. These sites have exploded in size and number with the easy use of building Web Pages. Almost anyone with a Personal Computer can create a page to contact other hobbyist.

With this contact comes the use of Chat rooms for these hobbyist to talk shop about their mutual interest. Of course many of these rooms are just a place for people with the same interest to socialize, they also allow them to finds others to trade, get ideas, and receive updated news.

As always, manufactures are into selling their product and with all these flashy new selling points of use of a Personal Computer, how could hobbyist in this field not want to become involved? One of the leading factors driving the trend toward these high-tech trains is the growing power and falling prices of the parts. Computer chips and memory that once cost hundreds of

dollars can now be had for a fraction of the cost. As the price of personal computers falls, so does the price of software and components for the home user making the appeal to there use even stronger.

The growing use of high-tech components in traditional train building brings, A blurring of the lines between what is a software product and what is a toy product, says Lego spokesman John Dion. Regardless if the hobbyist is an experienced train builder or a novice in train building, it can be said that the influence of computers and technology will continue to grow as computers expand into more aspects of our modern life. Children are born into a technological world. Their frame of reference is that there s always technology, says Chris Byrne of Playthings Marketwatch. What electronics does is it simply enhances and adds a level of reality to the play experience, Byrne said.

As the world of computers expands, so does too the world of Model Train building. The use of software programming gives the builder a way to build complex and innovative tracks only limited to his imagination with the resources a computer will give him. Ryan Slata, director of marketing for Playthings Toys says, I think kids expect more in their toys these days because technology is all around them, we re in the computer age and I think that translates down to the toys. To say that someone has an interest in Model Trains is always an understatement, and with the use of computers and technology this interest brings the experience to a new level.