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Top Amateur Radio Development Communities: Forums, Discords, and Open-Source Project Hubs

Survey of amateur radio's internet hubs as of August 2026: general forums (QRZ, eHam, Reddit, Stack Exchange), the fragmented Discord scene, and the project-specific channels (M17, GNU Radio, FreeDV, OpenRTX, WSJT-X, AREDN, AllStarLink) where open-source radio software is actually built, mostly on groups.io lists, Matrix and GitHub.

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Amateur radio's internet communities split into two very different worlds. The general hubs — QRZ, eHam, Reddit, Stack Exchange — are where hundreds of thousands of hams talk about equipment, licenses and operating. But the "development community" proper lives in a second, quieter layer: the Discord servers, Matrix rooms, groups.io mailing lists and GitHub repos clustered around specific open-source projects like M17, GNU Radio, FreeDV, OpenRTX and WSJT-X. If you want to find people actually writing radio software, that second layer is where the signal is. This document maps both, as of mid-August 2026.

The general forums: QRZ, eHam and the Q&A sites

QRZ Forums (forums.qrz.com) is the largest traditional forum, run alongside the QRZ.com callsign database. Its numbers are enormous by ham-radio standards: the Amateur Radio News subforum alone holds **14,128 discussions and 321,142 messages**, the Contests/DXpeditions area **16,552 discussions**, and Silent Keys **10,860 discussions** [1]. It also hosts the "Ham Made Software" forum —

but it is private, requiring login, and is not a development hub. Reputation among Redditors is mixed: one r/amateurradio thread describes QRZ as having an “old boys club” attitude with “huge jilted assholes 99% of the time,” while conceding “the homebrew forum is good”[2]. It is best treated as the mainstream water cooler, not a place to build software.

eHam.net calls itself “the Internet’s #1 Amateur Radio Community” — its own branding — and backs it with product reviews, classifieds, a callbook, ham exams and a “Speak Out” editorial forum[3]. Its forum is generally regarded as more civil than QRZ’s, per the same Reddit discussion (“The discussion forums on eHam.net are much more civil”)[2]. Neither eHam nor QRZ is a development venue; both are general-purpose community sites.

Amateur Radio Stack Exchange (ham.stackexchange.com) is the Q&A outlier: strictly question-and-answer, “no chit-chat,” with voted answers and an accepted-answer mechanism[4]. It is where technical questions — antenna theory, SDR setup, GNU Radio signal chains, WSJT-X configuration — get durable, well-vetted answers. It launched in public beta in 2013 and carries a deep archive of questions on software-defined radio, digital modes and DIY construction[4]. For a developer, it is a reference library rather than a chatroom: ask a precise question, get a precise answer, and move on.

Reddit: the friendly front door

Reddit hosts the biggest single general communities in the hobby.

- **r/amateurradio** — roughly **219,000 subscribers** and **116,000 weekly visitors** with about **3,700 contributions per week** (Reddit’s own figures for the about page, August 2026)[5]. It is deliberately beginner-friendly: a weekly mentor/new-license thread, an explicit rule against discouraging newcomers, and a 2025 rule update banning AI-assisted content sharing[5].
- **r/HamRadio** — the secondary sub, around **121,000 subscribers**[6], overlapping heavily with r/amateurradio.
- **r/RTLSDR** — the software-defined-radio sub, **24,000 weekly visitors and 542 weekly contributions**[7]. This is where the SDR development crowd congregates: antenna builds, decoding projects, always-on monitoring nodes, and the SDR++ Community Edition fork get discussed here[8].

Reddit’s role in development is mostly as a discovery and support layer: project maintainers announce releases there, and users triage problems before filing issues. Actual code discussion happens on the project channels below.

219K	33.6K	7,977	6,280
r/amateurradio subscribers	HRCC Discord members	WSJT-X groups.io members	AREDN forum users
`largest general hub`	`largest ham Discord`		

Discord: chat, divided

There is no single dominant ham-radio Discord. Directory listings (disboard, top.gg, discord.me, discadia) show only a handful of ham-tagged servers, most with a few hundred members or fewer [9] [10]. The notable exceptions:

- **Ham Radio Crash Course (HRCC) Discord** — the largest ham Discord by a wide margin. Discord's own invite page shows **33,659 members** [11]; a third-party tracker (Dyno) shows **17,284** [12], so the real number sits somewhere in that range and has grown over time. It grew out of Josh Nass's YouTube channel and is described as "an inclusive community focused on normalizing ham radio, getting people licensed, having fun… and keeping the bands alive," with channels spanning licensing help, operating and general chat [13].
- **SDR++ Discord** — **~5,600 members** around the open-source SDR receiver software [14].
- **Project Discords** — M17 Project, FreeDV, OpenRTX and others each run a Discord as one of several parallel channels (see below).

The pattern: Discord servers are the friendly, high-traffic front rooms, while the harder engineering conversation happens on Matrix, GitHub and the mailing lists. The M17 Project's contact page says as much — its Matrix and Discord chat "are **not guaranteed** to be linked together at all times," and it lists Matrix, Discord, Mastodon, a groups.io list and email side by side [15].

Where the development actually happens: project communities

The real development community is organized around open-source projects, each with its own mix of channels. This is where code, firmware, protocols and digital modes get built.

PROJECT	WHAT IT BUILDS	PRIMARY CHANNELS	SCALE (MID-2026)
M17 Project	Open-source digital voice/data protocol (Codec 2 based, no proprietary codec)	Discord, Matrix `#m17-public-chat:matrix.org`, Mastodon, M17-Users groups.io, GitHub [15] [16]	251 M17-Users list members, 103 topics [16]
GNU Radio	Software-defined-radio signal-processing toolkit	discuss-gnuradio@gnu.org list, Matrix on chat.gnuradio.org, GitHub, annual GRCon conference [17]	Established community project, GSoC mentor program [17]
FreeDV / Codec 2	Open-source HF digital voice; flagship RADE mode; the Codec 2 speech codec	digitalvoice Google group, Discord, IRC `#freedv` on Libera.Chat, GitHub [18]	6-person Project Leadership Team; ARDC-funded; sponsored by Software Freedom Conservancy [18]
OpenRTX	Open-source firmware for digital HTs (MD-380/390, MD-UV380, GD-77, DM-1801, Module17, CS7000-M17, Talkpod A36Plus)	Matrix `#openrtx`, Discord, Mastodon, GitHub [19]	4 core maintainers (IU2KIN, IU2KWO, IU2NUO, IU2NRO) [19]
WSJT-X	Weak-signal digital modes: FT8, FT4, WSPR, EME	WSJTX groups.io (users), wsjt-devel SourceForge list (developers) [20] [21]	7,977 members / 9,939 topics on groups.io [20]
AREDN	Amateur Radio Emergency Data Network mesh firmware	Own self-hosted forums (General, Development, Features, Possible Bugs, Nightly Builds), groups.io [22]	4,443 topics, 28,610 posts, 6,280 users; Dev forums separate from user support [22]
AllStarLink	VoIP repeater linking (app_rpt on Asterisk)	Allstar@groups.io (user-to-user support), GitHub app_rpt repo [23]	363 group members; 18,496 users / 14,463 nodes network-wide (2020 figure) [23]
N1MM Logger+	Contest logging software	N1MMLoggerPlus groups.io forum, trouble-ticket system [24]	4,000+ members, 21,038 topics [24]

KEY FINDING

The M17-Users mailing list is explicit about the split: “Although inevitably there will be discussion of development of M17… this list isn’t intended for development of M17 — that work is better discussed on other venues such as Github and Discord that the M17 developers favor.” [16] The same division of labour repeats across the hobby: users on groups.io, developers on GitHub/Matrix/Discord.

Mailing lists and groups.io: the backbone

Groups.io has effectively replaced Yahoo Groups as the mailing-list platform for amateur radio, and the lists remain the hobby’s most active development-adjacent spaces — email is where long-lived, searchable technical discussion still lives.

- **WSJTX@groups.io** is the single most active: **7,977 members, 9,939 topics**, with hundreds of messages monthly (308 in Jan 2026, 371 in Jun 2026), hashtag-organized by problem class (`#WSJTX_config` 662 topics, `#FT8` 656, `#Cat_RigControl` 647, `#IssueReport` 512)[20]. New topics from new users require moderator approval, and topics auto-close after 15 days to keep it focused[20].
- **N1MMLoggerPlus@groups.io** carries **21,038 topics** and is the mandated first line of support for the free contest logger, with a "pay it forward" expectation that users answer others' questions before escalating to bug reports[24].
- **AMSAT-BB** is the satellite community's primary list, for "general discussion about all aspects of amateur radio satellites," with public archives continuous back to 2001 — an unbroken quarter-century of space-radio discussion[25][26].
- Smaller dev-adjacent lists include M17-Users (251 members, sponsored by the Zero Retries newsletter)[16] and Allstar@groups.io (363 members, callsign required to join)[23].

The IRC legacy lingers: FreeDV still maintains `#freedv` on Libera.Chat[18], and Reddit threads note that channels like `#amateurradio` on GeekShed and `#hamradio` on Libera.Chat "are usually pretty quiet, as are most IRC" channels[27].

2001 — **AMSAT-BB archives begin**
Continuous public archive of the amateur satellite mailing list starts.

11 Aug 2012 — **WSJTX@groups.io created**
Now the hobby's largest groups.io community (7,977 members).

2012 — **FreeDV GUI written from scratch**
David Witten (GUI) and David Rowe VK5DGR (Codec 2, modem) launch the open-source HF digital voice effort.

7 Feb 2013 — **N1MM+ reflector rules posted**
Tom N1MM sets the 'pay it forward' support culture for contest logging.

9 Mar 2020 — **Allstar@groups.io created**
VoIP repeater-linking support group forms after Yahoo Groups decline.

31 May 2024 — **M17-Users list created**
User-facing list for the open digital voice protocol; dev stays on GitHub/Discord.

> CAUTION
> Member counts for Discord servers are volatile and tracker-dependent. HRCC shows 33,659 members on Discord's own invite widget[11] but 17,284 on the Dyno tracker[12] — the two snapshots are from different dates, so treat any single number as an approximation.

The organizations funding the builders

Two non-profits sit behind much of the open-source development, worth knowing because their project channels are where deep technical work happens.

TAPR (Tucson Amateur Packet Radio, "Tomorrow's Ham Radio Technology Today") is the oldest digital-communications group, publishing the PSR journal (issue #161, Spring 2026) and running a technical forum and banquet at Hamvention; its 2026 talks covered an open SDR design and WSPR antenna comparisons [28]. TAPR's historical role — packet radio, then digital modes — makes it the institutional ancestor of today's open-source projects.

Open Research Institute (ORI) runs the "No Secrets!" open-source philosophy across ambitious projects: the Phase 4 Ground Station (open-source DVB-S2/X digital microwave for amateur satellite work), Opulent Voice (OPUS-based high-bitrate voice/data protocol), the RFBitBanger kit radio with the SCAMP protocol, and Ribbit, a smartphone-based digital text mode for emergency VHF/UHF [29]. ORI work happens on GitHub and its project pages rather than a central forum.

Funding flows through **ARDC** (Amateur Radio Digital Communications), which has awarded the grants that pay for FreeDV's current development program [18] and M17's early work — a reminder that this community's "development" is often grant-funded volunteer engineering, not corporate product development.

Bottom line

If you want to *participate* in amateur radio development, skip the big forums and head for the projects:

1. **For general chat and questions:** r/amateurradio (219K subscribers) is the friendliest on-ramp; QRZ and eHam are the legacy giants (QRZ's numbers are biggest but its tone is roughest); Amateur Radio Stack Exchange is the best reference for technical Q&A.
2. **For live conversation with builders:** join the project Discords/Matrix rooms — M17 (Discord + Matrix), FreeDV (Discord + Libera.Chat IRC), OpenRTX (Matrix + Discord), SDR++ (Discord). Ham Radio Crash Course is the largest general ham Discord at ~20–34K members.
3. **For actual development work:** the mailing lists are still where decisions and support get recorded — WSJTX@groups.io, N1MMLoggerPlus, AMSAT-BB — while code lives on GitHub (M17-Project, GNU Radio, OpenRTX, drowe67's codec2/freedv-gui). Join the list, read the archives, then open a pull request; that is the well-trodden path in this hobby.

SOURCES

1 QRZ Forums — forum index with per-forum statistics
https://forums.qrz.com/index.php

2 r/amateurradio — what are some good ham forums (community reputation discussion)
https://www.reddit.com/r/amateurradio/comments/y56773/what_are_some_good_ham_forums/

3 eHam.net — About page
https://www.eham.net/site/page?view=about

4 Amateur Radio Stack Exchange — Tour
https://ham.stackexchange.com/tour

5 r/amateurradio — About (Reddit traffic statistics)
https://www.reddit.com/r/amateurradio/about/

6 r/HamRadio — About
https://www.reddit.com/r/HamRadio/about/

7 r/RTLSDR — About (Reddit traffic statistics)
https://www.reddit.com/r/RTLSDR/about/

8 M17 Project — Contact page
https://m17project.org/contact/

9 M17-Users@groups.io — Home
https://groups.io/g/M17-Users

10 GNU Radio — Community page
https://www.gnuradio.org/community/

11 FreeDV — Open Source HF Digital Voice for Amateur Radio
https://freedv.org/

12 OpenRTX — free and open source firmware for digital ham radios
https://openrtx.org/

13 WSJTX@groups.io — Home
https://groups.io/g/WSJTX

14 AREDN — Forums index
https://www.arednmesh.org/forum

15 Allstar@groups.io — Home
https://groups.io/g/Allstar

16 N1MM Logger Plus — Support page
https://n1mmwp.hamdocs.com/support/

17 AMSAT — e-Mail Lists
https://www.amsat.org/amsat-email-lists/

18 AMSAT-BB Archives
https://mail.amsat.org/archives/amsat-bb/index.html

19 TAPR — Tomorrow's Ham Radio Technology Today
https://www.tapr.org/

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https://www.openresearch.institute/projects/

21 Ham Radio Crash Course — Discord invite
https://discord.com/invite/YGTJx8E

22 Dyno server tracker — Ham Radio Crash Course
https://dyno.gg/server/418333367537369088/Ham-Radio-Crash-Course

23 Ham Radio Crash Course — Getting Started
https://hamradiocrashcourse.com/getting-started/

24 SDR++ — Discord invite
https://discord.com/invite/aFgWjyD

25 top.gg — ham radio Discord servers directory
https://top.gg/discord/servers/tag/ham-radio

26 r/amateurradio — Amateur Radio Discord? (IRC channel discussion)
https://www.reddit.com/r/amateurradio/comments/1envs4q/amateur_radio_discord/

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