

# Online LEGO Community

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# Intro

- A part of the LEGO Fan Community since 1998.
- Co-founder of COLTC, current member of GFLUG & GFLTC.
- Attended various LEGO conventions since 2002.
- Web-Site Coordinator for Brickworld.
- Creator of BrickBuildr and iPick-a-Brick.



# How Long Have You Been a Part of the LEGO Community?

- BrickBuildr
- The Brothers Brick
- EuroBricks
- Bricklink
- BrickShelf
- BrickBay
- Peeron
- LUGNET
- Brickset
- 1000steine.de
- Fibblesnork
- LEGO Maniacs' Guide
- AUCzilla
- RTL (or ATL)

# Online LEGO Community Timeline

- 1993: (Feb 18) alt.toys.lego
- 1994: (Jan 10) rec.toys.lego
- 1995: Adequate.com LEGO Maniacs's Guide
- 1996: Fubblesnork, Auczilla
- 1997: Brickset
- 1998: LUGNET, Peeron
- 2000: Brickshelf
- 2001: Brickbay (Bricklink)
- 2004: Eurobricks
- 2005: The Brothers Brick
- 2007: BrickBuildr



# Diverse Community

- Diversity of fan of LEGO interest along product lines & themes
- Geographic specific groups
- Explosion of web-sites as well as specialized groups (see: Flickr & MOCpages groups)
- Licensed products have brought in a new influx of fans by the geek culture (Batman, Star Wars, Indiana Jones)

# Popular Sites

- General Community:

- LEGO.com
- LUGNET
- 1000Steine.de
- EuroBricks
- LEGOFan

- Shopping/Market Place:

- LEGO.com
- eBay
- BrickLink
- Craigslist



# Popular Sites (cont.)

- Set/Part Inventory:
  - Brickset
  - LUGNET
  - Peeron
  - Bricklink
- MOC/Image Hosting:
  - Brickshelf
  - Flickr
  - MOCPages
  - MOCshow
  - BrickBuildr

# Popular Sites (cont.)

- Themed:
  - FBTB (Star Wars)
  - (Pre.)Classic-Space
  - Classic-Castle
  - Classic-Pirate
  - Forbidden Cove
  - Trains-n-Town
  - Classic-Town.net
  - BZPower
  - MechaHub
  - Mindstorms
  - FIRST LEGO League International
  - etc.



# Popular Sites (cont.)

- Fan Magazines:
  - BrickJournal
  - RailBricks
  - HispaBricks
- 3rd Party Bricks:
  - BrickArms
  - BrickForge
- Blogs:
- Pod-casts/Films:
  - LAMRadio
- Virtual LEGO:
- LEGO Based Comics:

# Popular Sites (cont.)

- LEGO User Groups (LUGs):
  - *over 30+ LUGs in North America alone*
- LEGO Train Clubs (LTCs):
  - ILTCO
  - *over 30+ LTCs world-wide*
- International LUGs:
  - Brickish Association
  - FreeLUG
  - HispaLUG
  - HKLUG
  - ItLUG
  - LUGPol
  - *(many, many more)*



# Popular Sites (cont.)

(LEGO Fans are everywhere)

- Social Networks:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Linked In

# Popular Sites (cont.)

(I mean everywhere)

- BoingBoing.net
- Make Magazine
- Fashion/Craft/Art/Gadget blogs
- Wikipedia



# Problems Facing The Fan of LEGO Community

- Some problems aren't new:
  - Signal vs. Noise
  - Language Barrier
  - Adult vs. Child Audience
  - Online Predators
  - Fraud

# (New) Problems Facing The Fan of LEGO Community

- Some problems are:
  - Isolation/Fragmentation
  - Collection of Usernames/ Passwords
  - More work to post announcements
  - Avatars & Hidden Identities
  - Limited “off the shelf” software
  - Duplication of announcements
  - MOC fraud



# Old Problems

- Signal vs. Noise:
  - Mindless chatter vs. useful information
  - Harness mindless chatter
    - Rating system (Like/Dislike)
    - Digg.com
  - Some chatter can't be quantified
    - Politics, religion, point-of-views, building philosophies, arguments

# Old Problems (cont.)

- Language Barrier:
  - Becoming less of a problem with time
  - Tools to translate a page (or whole web-site) into your language
  - Now able to get announcement (RSS) feeds in your language



# Old Problems (cont.)

- Adult vs. Child audience:
  - Flag inappropriate content
  - Self govern behavior, language, and subject matters
- On-line Predators:
  - How protect the children?
  - Take a “transparent” approach vs. anonymous
  - Don’t give out personal information on the internet

# Old Problems (cont.)

- Fraud:
  - Becoming less of a problem
    - Pre-Bricklink days, depended upon “online” reputation
    - Leverage buyer/seller ranking system on eBay and Bricklink
    - “Buyer Protection” through PayPal & eBay



# New Problems

- Fragmentation/Isolation:
  - As the community grows, groups split off and become isolated from the whole
  - Groups become more focused (positive), but creates a “us vs. them” point-of-view
- Collection of Usernames/Passwords:
  - Each web-site requires a different username/password

# New Problems (cont.)

- More Work to Post Announcements:
  - Hours spent sending out announcements for events, display & MOCs; not central location to post & distribute
- Avatars/Hidden Identities:
  - Good when privacy is concern
  - Bad when it protects online predators
  - Further fragments community
    - Disconnect from real name, username, and MOCs



# New Problems (cont.)

- Limited “off the shelf” software:
  - Forums, Bulletin Boards, Frameworks (what many fan of LEGO community web-site are based on) don’t play well with other web-sites.
    - not all offer RSS feeds
    - many have their own account management & don’t support OpenID
    - many have their own calendars, photo galleries, etc. with little or no integration support
  - Software written to be the “focus” of a community, not a part of the larger online community

# New Problems (cont.)

- Limited “off the shelf” software (cont.)
  - No common API (or application programming interface) for sharing information
- Duplication of announcements
  - Good because it gets the word out to the larger community
  - However, for some things like MOC announcements, the same MOC will show up on several different blogs
  - Lazy bloggers will rehash other blog content
- MOC Fraud
  - A fan will try to pass a MOC off as their own for a contest (LEGO Universe)



# Tools

- Tools for keeping up with the community:
  - Fan of LEGO Event Calendars:
    - Based on Google's Shared Calendars
    - Helps to get your word out about your event/display/convention
    - Anyone can subscribe to the calendars
    - There's a Google API for adding events automatically via a programming language
    - Anyone can contribute events to the calendars! (just e-mail me)
    - Anyone can add it to their web-site! (e-mail me, and I'll show you how)



# Fan of LEGO Event Calendars

**LEGO Fan Activities**

Today ◀ ▶ June 2009 ▼

Print **Week** **Month** **Agenda** ▼

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31 ◀ BayLUG: MakerFa	Jun 1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 7pm SLTC Meet-up	12	13
14	15	16	17 BrickWorld 2009	18	19	20
21 ◀ BrickWorld 2009	22	23	24	25	26	27 Fana'Briques 2009
28 ◀ Fana'Briques 2009 BayLUG: Meeting a	29	30	Jul 1	2	3	4

Events shown in time zone: Eastern Time

Google Calendar



# Tools (cont.)

- RSS (News) Feeds:
  - Aggregators: Google Reader, Bloglines, etc.
  - Need a jump start in Fan of LEGO RSS feeds?  
(E-mail me and I'll send you a OPML export, a collection of 300+ fan of LEGO related RSS feeds).

# Tools (cont.)

- Pros:
  - Help gets the word out.
  - Separates the signal from the noise.
- Cons:
  - Subject to editorial whim
  - no filter controls
  - not all web-sites support it



# Google Reader

Google Reader (1000+)

http://www.google.com/reader/view/#stream/user%2F02325989714449402073%2Flabel%2Flego-afols RSS Google

Gmail Calendar Documents Photos Reader Sites Web more ▾ michael.mhuffman@gmail.com Settings My Account Help Sign out

Google reader All items Search

+ Add a subscription

All items (1000+) Friends' shared items (11) Subscriptions

lego-afols (2)

- a LEGO a day...
- Annoyingly Cheerful
- Anonymous Zombie
- beauty and the brick
- Bellaire Historic Soc...
- Bill Ward - LEGO
- Bill Ward's Brickpile
- Blending with the Bri...
- Brick Brick: A Collec...
- Brick Brick: A Collec...
- Brick Masterpieces - ...
- BRICK STAR
- Brick Town Talk
- Brick Trader
- Brickapolis™
- Brickblog
- BrickBlog
- BRICKBOX
- BrickJournal Journal
- BrickJournal Journal
- Brickness
- BrickPlayer
- Brickportal.com RSS News
- Bricks and Trains
- BricksABillion

Manage subscriptions »


lego-afols Show: Expanded - List

Show: 2 new items - all items Mark all as read Refresh Folder settings... - show details

★ Green flags in Tehran » 11:40 AM (1 hour ago)

from The Brothers Brick by Thanel

Moritz ([nolnet](#)) watches the news, and so do I.



Previous item Next item 4 items

# Bloglines

Bloglines | My Feeds (25636) (3)

http://www.bloglines.com/myblogs

BrickBuilder Flickr: Blog this Your Photostream Google Reader (...) BrickLink Links ... Bloglines | My F... Alien Ant Farm -...

**Bloglines**

Feeds Blog Clippings Playlists

Add Edit Options

212 feeds Mark All Read

- Animation & Comics (3416)
- Auctions (2328)
- Disney (3573)
- Food (52)
- GI Blogs (2)
- Jobs (1800)
- LEGO (General) (1725)
  - 1000steine.de - Die Seite über LEGO® (200)
  - 9 Volt Trains (1)
  - 9 Volt Trains Forum (16)
  - [Technorati] Tag results for LEGO (200)
  - Brickset: Sets added to the database (200)
  - ILENN Paradise
  - JLUG.net
  - lego - Google News [!]
  - LEGO Sets on Amazon.com (200)
  - legocollectorshangout at Yahoo! Groups (40)
  - Nextbrick (14)
  - Nxtbot.com (21)
  - Recent Brickshelf Postings (200)
  - Recent LUGNET news (200)
  - Recent News from Peeron.com (200)
  - Recent updates to LUGNET's Guide (200)

Welcome mhuffman

New! Select & Search Learn More

Search

3 subscribers related feeds mark all new unsubscribe edit subscription

## The RED BRICK Road

A companion blog for my Bricks and Blocks website.


45 Items | Sort Oldest First | Updated: Fri, Jun 12 2009 8:49 PM

### Been awhile...

By noreply@blogger.com (Janey Red Brick)

Been awhile since I have posted some of my favourite Brickshelf finds...

Posted by Johnnytang, check out their creations [here](#). Transformers... there is more than meets the eye, and in this case, I love all the little details, like the wiper blades on the front "windows".



JOHNNY'S CREATION

<http://uk.myblog.yahoo.com/johnnyscreation-hobbys>



# The Future

- Technologies the LEGO fan community should look at, if not embrace:
  - OpenID
    - The Holy Grail of IT: Single Sign-on
    - One single point of account authentication
    - Fan of LEGO web-sites query same authentication server for credentials; no longer a need to sign into each different Fan of LEGO web-site
    - Problem: when one account is hack, all accounts are susceptible
  - Google Waves
    - E-mail, communication, and collaboration re-imagined by Google
    - Take one part e-mail, one part wiki, one part conversation recorder, and one large part centralized communication; simmer at Google for a few years, and you have Google Waves

# The Future (cont.)

- OpenSocial
  - Share data & contacts across different social networking web-sites
  - API could be developed (on the backbone) to share information across fragmented LEGO communities
- iPhone Apps/Mobile Devices
  - Access the LEGO community on your mobile device
  - New ways to push out content



# The Future (cont.)

- A LEGO news-wire service?
  - Like the AP, news worthy subjects from various Fan of LEGO web-sites could be pushed to a central location
  - Articles can be redistributed (with minimal moderation) to the larger community
  - Web-site contributors would have rights/access to republish the content, applying their own editorial filters (leverage article tagging)
  - Could leverage RSS technology with some modifications
  - Allows web-sites to publish once, and get the word out to many locations
  - A framework, not a total solution

# The Future (cont.)

- A LEGO digg service?
  - Problem: Reading only blog posts, general conversations are missed
  - Conversation threads could be spot-lighted
  - Enough people say “I like this”, a canned message relating to the item could be sent to the LEGO news-wire service
- A LEGO digg service could work like LUGNET’s Top Stories
- Tagging would allow for more ways to view “Top Stories” (ie. top stories in Pirate, top stories relating to new building techniques, etc.)



# Preservation Society

- Should we preserve our online LEGO community past? If so, how?
- Is there a need for a trust?
- Are current fan sites doing enough?
  - At IT level: Back-ups, redundancy, fail-over
  - At a social level: Multiple admins, people to carry on the project
- The first step, contribute to Brickwiki!

# Brickwiki

COLTC – Brickwiki

http://www.brickwiki.org/wiki/COLTC

Google

BrickFair LEGO Fan Festival, Augu...Facebook | HomeGoogle Reader (1000+)COLTC – Brickwiki

Log in / create account



navigation

- Main Page
- Main Page (Simple)
- Browse BrickWiki
- Random page
- Recent changes
- Open Questions
- FAQs
- Help

search

GoSearch

toolbox

- What links here
- Related changes
- Upload file
- Special pages
- Printable version
- Permanent link

articlediscussionedithistory

## COLTC

The Central Ohio LEGO Train Group (**COLTC**) is the **LTC** for central **Ohio** and the surrounding areas (Cleveland, Cincinnati)

Contents [hide]

- 1 History
- 2 Meetings
- 3 Displays
- 4 Honors

### History

COLTC is the **Central Ohio LEGO Train Club** -- with website located [here](#) -- was founded on February 9, 2003 by five adult fans of LEGO® (**AFOL**). The non-profit club participates and organizes displays of creations made of the popular LEGO® brand building bricks. Currently, the club has around 20 adult members and two junior members and has expanded to include members in [Dayton](#), [Cleveland](#) and [Cincinnati](#).

### Meetings

Meetings are held about every other month, often at one of the many [Panera Bread](#) locations around Columbus. A typical meeting lasts several hours, often encompassing an entire afternoon. New and prospective adult members are welcome at attend at any time.

### Displays

COLTC holds a major display at various locations about once a month. Most displays are within the state of Ohio, with occasional excursions to neighboring states and [BrickFest](#). Some 2005 displays include the Ohio State Fair, the National Train Show, Marcon, COSI Toledo and Columbus **GATS**. Listings and photos from past displays can be seen on the COLTC website.



Logo for COLTC

COLTC	
Website URL	[ <a href="#">www.coltc.org</a> COLTC site]
Services and activities	Real Life: Meetings, shows and displays Online: website and forums
Year founded	2003
Membership type(s)	2 classes, Associate for 14 to under 18, Full for 18 and over. Participation at display and meeting is required to gain membership
Membership cost	\$20/year
Target audience	General interest but geographic: <a href="#">AFOLs</a> in the central Ohio, USA area.
Discussion groups?	Yes, open to all except one group which requires registration

Friday, July 17, 2009



# Q & A

- Should we be more diversified or unified? Or is there a balance?
- What level of involvement should TLG play in fan of LEGO community development?
- How would you like to see the fan of LEGO community evolve next?
- What would you like to see different? What frustrates you (online) that would like to see change?