R&S Enterprises

Model railroad "manufacturers" are wherever you find them. And you'll find R&S Enterprises in a partly-log farmhouse on sixty-six very rural acres near Lebanon, PA. In many ways, this location represents quite a change for Russell Becker, owner of R&S. Russell grew up in Corpus Christi, TX. At one point, he owned the usual kid's Christmas train set. But, if anything, sailing may have been a more important hobby interest. College years found him attending Texas A&M. In due course, he went to work for Bell Labs in northern New Jersey as a condensed matter physicist.

Sensing a dormant but potentially strong interest, his wife gave him a new standard gauge train set for Christmas about ten years ago. This triggered the "collecting virus," an ailment which all of us have observed, and with which many of us are infected. Russell now has about thirty three-rail O-gauge locomotives in addition to his standard gauge equipment.

Under the circumstances, it was hard to not start playing with layout design. To borrow a phrase from his web page, he quickly tired of templates and messy erasing and scribbling. This led to experimenting with layout design via computer, which in turn evolved into RR-Track!, the layout design software Russell now sells. He left AT&T in 1993 to devote nearly full time to his layout design software business.

There are versions of RR-Track for everything from Z through G gauge. Most buyers currently are O-gauge people, with G and HO following behind in that order. The software accommodates sectional track, and the available graphical options include all turnout manufacturers. Most readers of The Local are probably HO folks who use flextrack or who hand lay their own. They may ask themselves: could I use RR-Track when I design my next layout? The answer is yes. The software includes provisions to insert easements and to specify your own curvature radius. Voila! A flextrack design. The software will run on a 486/Windows 3.1 or better personal computer. For people with Windows 95 or 97, a 3-D add-on is available free from the R&S website, or direct from Russell for a nominal charge.

Model railroaders come in all sizes and shapes. The difference in orientation between the toy, the model, and the outdoor people presents a major challenge to a software designer. Another challenge involves usability vs. complexity. Past a certain point, adding options, bells and whistles, introduces so too much complexity even for a person comfortable with personal computers. The learning curve becomes forbidding, and the software sits there on the hard disc unused. Russell's aim has been to keep it simple, and to make it manageable for anyone with a little PC experience.

Anyone trained as a physicist has a hard time avoiding R&D, and Russell is no exception. The gleam in his eye for future offerings includes tying computers in with command control, plus the added possibility of voice recognition control.

Most sales of RR-Track are direct from R&S Enterprises, PO Box 643, Jonestown, PA, 717-865-3444. Russell personally exhibits twice a year at the TCA shows in York, PA.

[The informative R&S Enterprises website](#)