

Ctrl-Zine

April 2025

Created By All
For the Curious and Confused

About ^Z

Ctrl-ZINE (^Z) is a Ctrl-c.club/Smol Web collaborative zine that celebrates tech and the Smol Web. Started in March 2023, Ctrl-ZINE publishes a monthly issue, where anyone can download a PDF version and a pre-folded PDF version for home printing. No digital format of the content is maintained on a Website whatsoever. Some of the topics within these issues range from Smol Web protocols and communities (ActivityPub, Tildeverse), Web-adjacent protocols (Gopher, Gemini), alternative forms of communication (HAM radio, LoRa, finger), snippets of code, artwork, and anything tech-related that is an expression of self.

Those who contribute to ^Z are passionate about what they share. They want what is best for Us, the citizens of the Web. With that, anyone with that same passion is welcome and encouraged to contribute to future issues. Further info can be found in the Editorial section of this issue. May the Smol Web live forever!

Editorial:

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ZINEHEAD Press

Submissions contact: singletona082@ctrl-c.club

Comments/questions contact: singletona082@ctrl-c.club

Ctrl-C Server Info

Gemini Server: Molly Brown*

*CGI Scripts disabled for Security Reasons

<https://pkg.go.dev/tildegit.org/solderpunk/molly-brown>

HTML/Web Server: nginx

<https://www.nginx.com/>

One gigabyte storage limit

Feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns you have.

Email: admin@ctrl-c.club

Email: eric@pencricket.com

IRC: #ctrl-c on Tildechat

IRC: DM "calamitous" on Tildechat

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What members are not allowed to do

(Because at some point someone ruined it for everyone else.)

- No Eggdrop bots.
- No services that duplicate Ctrl-C.club services (email, IRC, web, Gemini, etc.)
- No virtualized/subsystem OSes (docker, junest, vagrant, etc.)
- No Bitcoin/crypto mining
- No hosting/storage of illegal (in the US) or pirated material.
- No spamming of any kind
- No hacking or attempting to get into other people's accounts/servers.

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Housekeeping/Server News

To get the unfortunate out of the way. March had some unignoreable hiccups, seemingly mostly space related, but also matters of maintenance. Nothing too alarming and all thankfully sorted in short order, however it is a thing that happened and while I do not want to leave readers alarmed I do want this zine's audience aware that not everything is running as smoothly as it could.

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With that unpleasantness aside here is what's going on in the world of Iris

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Topic [496]: 2025-03-13, skf@ctrl-c.club posted
updated .plan & .project files

Hi all!

I have written a bash script that looks for new or updated .plan or .project files on ctrl-c.club.

It seems to work though the script is clumsy written.

If you want to try it, get it here:

/home/skf/projects/plup

and make it executable.

The first time you run it, it will only make a file with all found .plan & .project file names.

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I hope this gets worked on, as do several others.

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Topic [493] On 2025-02-26, lettuce@ctrl-c.club posted
co-sysop needed for managing doorgame Swords of Freeport

Hi folks, I could use some help managing the Swords of Freeport doorgame I've purchased and installed here. I have a lot going on outside of ctrl-c these days, and when I am able to make time here I'm just not good at managing file permissions and the like and I could use help managing users (occasional emails from folks when they need to reset their password, etc).

Game is installed: ~lettuce/swords-of-freeport

To run it: `./sfp` from that folder.

General info on the game: <https://swordsoffreeport.com/>

The sysop guide: <https://swordsoffreeport.com/md.html?src=sysop.md>

Send me an email if you're interested. I'll respond when I can.
Thanks.

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For a variety of reasons this game isn't exactly my bag, but I'm glad
It's there, and if anyone's willing to step up that'd be great.

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Topic [501] On 2025-03-31, gome@ctrl-c.club posted
Server Pets beta release

Hi everyone,

I made a pet game for the server called Server Pets.
It's something I've wanted to do since I joined Ctrl-C three years
ago.

To run it:

`~gome/bin/pets gome`

(the argument is necessary because it tells the client who's hosting
the server)

Or, add an alias to your `.*rc` file:

`alias pets='~gome/bin/pets gome'`

- Adopt a pet!
- Feed it and play with it every day!
- It will visit other users!
- Other users' pets will visit you!
- (In the future) add a widget to your user site that displays
visiting pets!

If you try it out, I would love to hear your feedback!

If anything doesn't work, please let me know and share error messages
with me.

If you have thoughts on the interface or the game design, you can tell me that too.

You can message me on this thread or email me at gome@ctrl-c.club.

DISCLAIMER

It's still in beta, so don't get too attached to your pets.
The server may go down intermittently (let me know if it's down), and the save data could get corrupted.

I wrote a little more about the process of making the game here:
<https://ctrl-c.club/~Lome/journal/unreleased.html>
I'll probably write a new post now that the project is out in the open.

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Given tilde.team has 'Botany' I'm glad Ctrl-C has a thing all it's own. Then again I was a teenager in the 90's so I know well the appeal of tamagachi and always get a kick out of attempts at recreating the little guys. Rock on Gome. Rock on.

Technology and Low Vision

Singletona082

To get ahead of everything: I am fortunate in that all I need is magnification. Even then, though, it's not a 'here just scale everything by this much and call it good.'

Looking at you Windows 8, 10, 11...

Windows 3.1 through windows 7 allowed the end user to change and scale individual elements size, fonts, and in short there was a lot of granularity at play. More than a few linux desktops allow this now (IceWM comes to mind.) To me this is far better than what windows 8 - 11 do which is 'here we will put a global scale increase on ALL screen elements and leave the rest for You to figure out.' Frankly that one size fits all approach not only fails, but is just plain lazy not just for those like me with poor vision, but even someone with normal vision might simply Want their interface to be a little more comfortable for whatever reason.

Sadly linux mint's cinnamon desktop went with less granularity than I like, but it lets you change fonts on several elements rather than a global. Plus there's global scaling, plus there's being able to edit how elements are presented. It's not all in one place, which is why it gets a minus from me. However a positive that I consider an auto-enable regardless is to go into accessibility settings and enable desktop zoom.

From there, regardless of what you're doing, ctrl+mousewheel up to zoom in, ctrl+mousewheel down to zoom out. Sadly ctrl and plus/minus keys do nothing, which can be a minus if you don't have a mouse with a scroll-wheel. I won't say that's impossible, even though I've had such for twenty five years now. I view that as an oversight that should be corrected.

What about phones? I'm not going to advertise what I'm using for home screen and the like. So to summarize. Accessibility settings, large font size, bump display size up for a global zoom, and Bold text. Apple, I have been told, has some interesting accessibility features however I do not have apple. Also I use PipePipe for Youtube both for the features it offers and more importantly for me? I find the interface to be cleaner and easier on me. Plus I can keep the thing

playing when I swap apps out, which can be helpful when I want to listen to something while I'm working. Not strictly an accessibility thing, but that has come up from time to time when I've needed to listen to a how-to, or even one of those tone generator/anti-tinnitus sound 'videos' while working since it helps blot out audio clutter so I can try mentally sorting through the visual clutter. Also, phone camera. That is one of the main reasons I'm actually using a smart phone instead of still rocking a flip phone. I use the camera constantly to zoom in on text I want to read, or to get a better look at since it helps with contrast (I have a secondary device essentially for youtube/peertube/etc on the go along with local audio to listen to as I do farm work.)

There won't be a program by program breakdown on accessibility features. I simply wanted to use computer desktops as a showcase and my phone because otherwise people would ask. All of that though? It demonstrates that while I'm not going to be as quick on the draw as someone who is as familiar as I am with computers, I can function even in the here and now where web design is Maximalist clutter and visual noise everywhere even with ad blocker going.

For those worse off than me that need screen readers and optical character recognition? For all the complaints of smart assistants like siri, or alexa, or the like (even before AI-Everything those had complaints,) I am glad those got popular because I have had to endure computer voices since the days of DEctalk, and having a more naturalistic voice, even if it is stilted, helps in message clarity.

That's a key takeaway. Even with things getting more expensive as more assistance is needed, I am on the whole hopeful. Used to be you had no screen reading anything built in by default and 'zoom' was 'here let's bump the text up for you.' Even though the hoops are still there to be jumped, there's a higher baseline of help for those that are disabled and wanting to computer. That isn't to say the future is all sunshine and roses for those that need assistance, but I remember the bad old days of having poor vision and trying to do things in DOS.

I am grateful, for all that is wrong in the world, there is a thought given to those of us who have poor vision and want to Computer.

Accessibility on the small web: dark mode

Felix

While the small web has its roots in the Geocities era and all those handcrafted websites with their (in)famous animated GIFs, it's now 2025, and the world has changed. Accessibility matters now, and it has many faces, beginning with simple stuff like mobile support. Why care? Because I have a smartphone, that's why. Of course my sites should work on my phone: I use them!

A hot topic these days is dark mode. For those who don't know, dark mode is when apps and the operating system as a whole draw their user interface with white text on a black background or what have you. (Ironically, that's exactly how terminal emulators work by default.) Guess it looked scary to laypeople or something, so computers moved away from that for a few decades. Now, ironically, the trend is reversing.

I don't care much either way, but for the longest time my web pages usually had a light theme, except on Ctrl-C.club where it was all dark. But some people get eyestrain from light mode (or more rarely the other way around). Dark mode is also better for OLED screens. What to do?

Turns out, web pages can be made one way then given alternate colors the browser can pick up automatically as needed. You can even have two different stylesheets. Either way, it's easy to set up.

The very first step is to add a meta element in the head section of your page, like this:

```
```html
<meta name="color-scheme" content="light dark">
```
```

Absent a stylesheet or color declarations, the browser will know what to do. But if your page already has a color scheme, you're going to need a second one. Add this to your CSS code:

```
```css
@media (prefers-color-scheme: dark) {
```

```
}
...
```

Inside the braces you can give alternative color declarations for any element that needs one. (You can also hide borders completely and stuff like that.) You can also go "dark light" instead, and give different colors for light mode. If it's too complicated, telling browsers your page is "only light" is courteous. Just "dark" works too.

To test if your alternate colors work, manually toggle dark mode in your browser (in Firefox, open the settings and search for "dark"). Beware of surprises! It's often not enough to simply invert the foreground and background. You'll get the hang of it.

# An Either/Or

Mindhunter

I have been preoccupied with a morbid thought ever since I began writing about the limitations of human language. The fact that language sometimes falls short in expressing what we think and feel is by no means a novel idea. Philosophers, immemorially, have debated on the nature of human language and perhaps ironically have attempted to demonstrate through words how inadequate they can be. This realization is quite frightening, partly because it implies that regardless of how clearly or brilliantly we endeavour to express ourselves, the essential substance of our experience will remain within us, forever inaccessible to anyone outside our physical self.

However behind this peculiar idea, something even stranger was peering through. I have always conceived words and perhaps even thought itself to be categorical in nature. Words, to me, are a vessel of thought and through its utterance we differentiate human experience. By ascribing symbols to objects and communicating those symbols with each other, we attempt to share our experiences hoping at least tentatively to bridge the gulf that separates one individual from another. But the purpose of words and as an extension of thought itself is to grasp something for what it is in its "totality". We do not rest content with symbols themselves but through them always try to portray and infer the objects they represent. Through differentiation, we want to find that which is being differentiated.

This relationship between words and things also seemed to belie the relationship between form and substance. Any work of literature, art or music harboured this essential quality of trying to grasp substance devoid of form. Through words, we try to negate language. Through music we try to transcend sound. Through art we try to push the boundaries of space and time. Every human endeavour is a constant striving to negate form through form. However, the laws of perception dictate the impossibility of apprehending such a formless entity. And besides, differentiation is also the essential condition of human existence. Without form, substance is merely a seething mass of nothingness.

It seemed to me that all of human activity was essentially an attempt to undo the evolutionary gift of consciousness. We are clearly separate from each other but there is something in us that yearns to

be one. That yearns to return to the oblivion from which it sprang.  
That yearns to remember life before remembering. Such an inexplicable  
yearning which peered through all human endeavours makes life now for  
me all the more frightening.

# The Money Monster of AI

Loghead

AI news permeates the Webscape. I am assuming Microsoft/OpenAI will "win", but it will be followed by immediate loss - for all industry. Beyond tech. Shuffling customers in (even if all AI users went to OpenAI) means Meta, Google, Apple, etc., are then on the hook for hundreds of billions of dollars (each) to financial institutions, hedge fund speculators and solo investors, whom want to not just "break even" but turn a profit. In their lifetime! They pull out, and the stock(s) sink of those companies. So AI is a game bourne to lose. And yes, the capabilities of AI are (essentially) limitless with enough hardware, more sophisticated LLMs (Large Language Models), infrastructure, knowledge/data pools, and, of course, money. However none of these things grow on trees, and near all are finite. Throwing money at it (AI) may mean faster/more growth, but the investors who put that cash in, want the money thrown back at them, and with a yield.

The petty and superfluous world we live limits our abundant ambition(s) for software to make gaudy art and illegible code.

It (a scenario as such) serves us, and them right, though. Not just in regards to invasive tech, and "indeencies" of data hoarding, but in regards to creating (or pursuing) an ever-mounting type of software that "is" (or seems) limitless (remember, a lot of the proposed possibilities are theories as of date - Generative AI and all things it suggests are likely not ever to see the light of reality).

Reason why I think tech co's undertook AI as the topic of disease, is because ads went away. DAU (Daily Active Users) of social media fled to TikTok, as did ad monies, as did time of all those users. The users, their attention, and their traffic, now are spent on an app whose ad revenue goes off US shores, and stays off US shores, and hence the boys club of Silicon Valley and the hacky sack of advertising firms with "most points (contracts) for who had the best quarter on Wall St", find themselves without a game, and scrambling to keep their companies profitable, via a model that wasn't ad-driven. So paid models obviously had to happen, and not for a service that was once free, either. Their high card was (is) a fuckton of user data, and data centers, and supercomputers to undertake a



winner-take-all game of "Software-ify the data" amongst each other. Charge up front for it, muster as many customers as they can, and try to lead the (at the time, still non-existent) market for it, even if future profits (or even revenue) could never meet expectations for the money originally invested. Short-sightedness in a time where they (the companies) had to see an end game before delving in.

And now, the AI monster was born, and as far as I can see it, is pre-predicted history that it (AI) cannot be "satiated" or complete - the money runs out, the infra progress slows down, one (or several) competing co's get cold feet (or lose investments - either way), the stock markets get shakier and shakier, and all the infra, data, and other mandatory components mentioned above fall short of keeping the "infinite knowledge machines" oiled and rolling.

Like an insane, hallucinating butterfly armed with everybody else's information, the AI entity falls short, leaving bankruptcies and recession in its wake.

# Outro

Well, I was hoping that the move to quarterly rather than monthly would have improved the content to zine, and after a fashion it has. I am still unhappy with how few people seem to be contributing, either directly or via projects. However, it is what it is and yelling about it or to people won't fix the problem.

With that said, there is more on offer here as opposed to in issues past, so I will call the swap over a success, even if like a fat man waddling up to the buffet at a Golden Corral I'd always like a bit more.

Stay safe out there.  
See you folk in July!

[EOL]