



10 Year Anniversary of Ctrl-c.club!

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:

Ctrl-ZINE

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[EDITORIAL BACKLOG OF CHANGES: 1.changed the Submissions contact to loghead@ctrl-c.club from previous Fastmail address - 2.changed the "About ^Z" section to include LoRa and finger as examples of alternative forms of communication - 3.fixed grammatical issues in About ^Z section, added clarity]

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In 2018 blogging saw a renaissance. Another in 2020 (thin silver lining due to the pandemic), and yet another in 2022 (look through blogs these days, SO many started in 2022). But 2018 was the start. The re-(re)-introduction of the blogroll amongst weekly bloggers. The cozying up to writing about one's personal life (online). The flirting with Webrings, and spread of them. All this saw a spread of small, independent blogs that previous to 2018, didn't exist.

Rewind: 2014 and going into 2015, blogging was entering a vapid wasteland. People wrote online still, but less so than 2012. WAY less than 2010. Further back still, a small fraction remained of the early-ought bloggers and their respective domains. I had just left the "pro" blogging world, writing of celebs and tabloids. It was there I cut my teeth on daily writing, and also needing the post to be readable/shareable at time of publishing. Few typos, formatted decently, not slopped out gibberish. And nearly a dozen of them (blog posts) a day, to keep the advertising money coming in, on two separate publications. When social media took the helm (of attention, traffic, readership and ad sales), I left the pro blog world and started an online journal/diary on Tumblr - tomskee.com. It was on here that I explored journaling online, personal blogging. I updated the blog daily, with the same length and frequency of every post as I had been doing when writing for ad dollars. This was 2011, and then into 2012, 2013, 2014, but by 2015 I saw many many MANY more people becoming power users of social media. In lieu of their once-sacred domiciles online, their blog.

Namely Twitter. Influencers had gone full-tilt and streamlined their "brand" on their social network of choice. People had become openly acknowledging of the fact that blogs were less present online (some said "blogs are dead!") as well as RSS (makes sense at the time - without blogs what all can one subscribe to on RSS?), and people seemed content, or maybe complacent, with just using social feeds for news, activity. Not 100% of course. Many (including myself) trudged on, blogging aimlessly and keeping social media at the furthest distance possible. Though some never explored either category, blogs

or social media. But to say the era of 2014-2017 was a blog wasteland, is putting it mildly. Like a pit in the desert in the middle of Death Valley. Blogs, as a thing, a trend, was as finished as the old media they had once conquered.

What changed?

Upsets and continued tension at Twitter - it was basically known by 2018 that Twitter wouldn't "go back to how it used to be". Facebook was under intense scrutiny (rightfully so) from the revelations in the book "Mindf***: Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break America", causing many to leave (or begin flirting with leaving) large social media platforms.

The platforms remaining, or the one with the most headway - Mastodon. Mastodon was mostly new in 2017, growing in popularity throughout 2017, 2018 due to people quitting Twitter en masse because of the turmoil there. Mastodon offered a decentralized and ad-free alternative. When people saw that if they wrote a blog post and shared it on Mastodon, it would be read (yes, READ by people and not spat into an algorithmic void!) and that others there would reply to their entry. It showed that Mastodon was a legitimate and truly organic alternative to the most social media before it. With this new blogging dynamic in mind (*brand* new to some), the "publish > share > feedback > publish > repeat" practice, stoked confidence and encouragement for the new (or new again) blogger. So grow the blogs did. And still do. Webrings, blogrolls, weekly, bi-weekly, and even daily bloggers sprawl the WWW. To the numbers comparable to the early-2000's? I don't know. Who cares? It's a great thing (blogging), comparisons don't matter. Numbers don't matter. Money and advertisements don't matter. Ambiguity from centralized platforms, sustaining personal privacy, having a true hub and voice online - these things matter.

Our Place in the Future and Digital Independence by *~Singletona082*

Preface

Funny how these things go sometimes. I'd known this would need writing for over a month thanks to the in-tilde Iris (think very primitive bulletin board.) posting. In that time Isaac Arthur had a video on his schedule about off grid technology. Given my own life experiences include decent stretches of being disconnected from the internet and having largely lived on one hobby farm or another? This has shaped my priorities.

The video, for those interested.

<https://youtu.be/ENDLuN34ZEw?feature=shared>

People far smarter than me have tried and consistently failed at predicting the future. I'm not going to try doing more than give my opinion. I'm in no privileged position other than having had several programmers as friends, and been a technology and computing enthusiast since the eighties. Again, given the target audience, not a privileged or special position other than that I saw the teething years of personal computing as it happened, the dominance of x86, and the current age where desktop computing is becoming far less important for the majority of people for their non-working day to day needs.

This was going to be a fiction piece, but to be blunt? I have no drive to write one of those concept fiction pieces that will be pretty hilarious in a few years when it's abundantly clear how wrong it is.

The Past

Let's be perfectly blunt. The Wild West of Anything goes? Gone. If the nineties were the wild lawless stampede of settlers? The 2000's and 2010's were the decades of rampant speculation and the infestation of Big Money to extend, embrace, and Eat the startups that didn't immediately die because they had no model for sustainability. The 2020's so far have been the decade of all those chickens coming home to roost.

That is to say look at Twitter (*I am not calling it X!*) Facebook, and all and how they've essentially become platforms spewing misinformation. Oh there are absolutely valuable and insightful communities. Good places therein, but you have to work to find them. Plus, you are the product. The more you put in, the more information that platform has and thus the more they can sell.

I don't like it but these platforms. These Reddits, Twitters, Facebooks, and the like are the internet as far as most people are concerned. Even 'news' sights often are extended platforms for social media.

Youtube has gone from a wild west free for all, to automated bots, filtering algorithms that ensure those with money get filtered to the top, and the 'kids friendly' platform? YouTube Kids is home of some of the most deranged turbo cursed material on the planet. So, y'know, the perfect outgrowth of YTMND if it had gotten monetized.

I am sorry if this is not new or news. I'm simply trying to put down my views of the Now so everyone has a basic idea of what I feel may yet be.

The LLM Question

'But AI is ruining everything!'

Yes and No.

I've been around long enough to see 'But X is Ruining Y. Y was great until X happened!' happen with a distressing degree of regularity regardless of community. Everything is ruined Everywhere All at Once All the Time. That's the big secret.

AI isn't ruining the world for people. People are ruining the world for people. Greed is ruining the world for people. People wanting to kick down at someone else with no power to fight back rather than punching up at the actual people hurting everyone are the problem.

However LLMs are not the same as past problems. When the machine can convincingly talk like it's a person does it matter that there is no

sense of self or interior dialogue? When a faceless corporation can spin up dozens or hundreds of LLM instances to give human-esque positive responses and false engagement with whatever they're trying to pass off, or politicians doing the same to try shaping online discussion?

The news isn't covering it. The six or less companies that own the major outlets dare not tell the dirty secret that everyone kinda already knows. They're afraid of what will happen when the meme of 'Everyone is a guy on the internet, especially the girls' turns into 'everyone is a bot on the internet. Especially your relatives.'

Fragmentation

I feel we are going to see in the next ten years a fragmentation of the internet. I'm not talking about the boogeyman of cutting undersea cables, or countries refusing to let other countries have digital traffic go through their borders (See also Egypt turning off the internet in its borders, and Arab Spring in general.) What I'm talking about is the fact that we can no longer trust the wider web to be more than a manufactured echo chamber where people are told what to think and not how to think.

Yet while one might believe that things are becoming more unified with less choice in that the door has been slammed on startups and the existing platforms are courting money and lawmakers specifically to shut down competition in their niches? Within those platforms, people are made demonstrably less mentally well. Constant 'my in-group is being assaulted. kick at people I already didn't like! Raaaaah' sort of reducing everything to sports-ball like tribalism with the added 'twist' that actual out-groups and minority voices are being shoved around while given the thin veneer of acceptance in select non threatening spaces, or in ways specifically crafted to enrage other groups into pointing at them rather than at the people in charge.

Now all of these platforms are introducing LLM-based 'AI' into things. I'll spare everyone the tinfoil hat and simply go with my above statements on seeing it being another tool used to divide and keep everyone arguing with everyone else instead of looking at the bigger picture.

Tilde is not a Magic Bullet. The community I'm writing this for is enthusiastic about Tilde, pubnix, whatever you want to call it. I happen to enjoy this approach to keeping a close knit community. That, however, will not work for most people, as most people will view it as too much hassle, too much work, and are happy with just finding niche communities where they're at.

That said, where it works, it works very well. Tilde/pubnix servers are by definition very low bandwidth and very lean in terms of drive space used. Yes, there is the problem that without running through an increasingly convoluted set of hoops, Google and other large mail couriers auto flag the email addresses as spam, but they can receive mail from most anyone, and there is a tilde-based Usenet type server going, an internet radio station, a mess of game servers, and other niceties available to the wider community beyond the means of just one server to provide.

So while it is not for everyone. It is a place that leverages being somehow stuck in time to avoid the downhill rut that everything seems to be going down. As with every community, it has its own issues and quirks, but that is part of the human condition.

Digital Independence

Bit of an oxymoron there. We want to be independent in a medium that by its nature is all about connections. So, narrow that down. Independent of what?

We're never going to be completely independent of ISP's without a complete fragmentation into the era of what one can connect to locally. In the past that was via direct phone dialing. Now it's whatever open network you can get off WiFi. See, this is where I had the idea of the anniversary piece of fiction to go; explore the idea

of 'no IP networking' and it boiling down to everyone either having a dedicated server, or using their phone to plug into servers and data going server to server with the users as a migration layer. Don't get me wrong I love that idea, but most people don't want that ultra local vibe with media and news dependent on Users traveling physically from A to B and having their phones set to get the kind of data to bring back you might actually want. What if, like me, you're the lone oddball in a given place?

While I honestly would love to explore what that might look like, here I will instead advocate a path that may be more attainable.

Independence from corporate funneled social media platforms. This isn't a guide going 'hey use this, this, and that platforms instead.' This is, rather, me advocating an evaluation of one's online presence and asking if you really need Facebook as much as you do (some people do need it a little for the sake of work.) Ditto Twitter, or even Reddit.

Are these things needed?

What of YouTube? Sadly, while Peertube is a thing and there are other platforms? The hosting of video in any real degree with any real resolution requires more space and bandwidth that is compatible with tilde as hobby projects.

I had pitched the idea in the past of trying to recreate a YTMND esque experience, but either one has to make it using HTML5, or live with the fact that modern browsers by default don't allow auto-playing audio. All that kinda kills the draw of the original YTMND. No bandwidth, so simple to make an idiot can do it, and the end user just clicks a link.

Fortunately there are people out there far smarter than I am that actually know what they're doing. I view my talents and skills, such as they are, as pointing towards things and hopefully envisioning solutions that might see use.

Past that example though? Varying one's digital diet is healthy, if for no other reason than *'corporations are begging you to glue yourself to these sites feeding you rage and hopelessness.'*

Tilde isn't the answer for everyone, but By God it's an answer for some, and we can hopefully help others find their own answers. While having these places as a hobby is nice, part of a community is helping those around you, and no community exists in isolation. This place has been going for ten years. Let's try making the next ten better.

-we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph.

- T.S. Eliot

Iris Summary (2024) by ~loghead

- [378] Ctrl-ZINE continued on with ~singletona082 at the helm
- [393] ~jameschip made blogging software using fish
- [397] ~loghead takes over as ZiC (Zinester-in-Chief) of Ctrl-ZINE again
- [416] ~calamitous releases version 1.1.3 of Iris
- [419] ~lettuce brings to focus that this will be the 10 Year Anniversary of Ctrl-c
- = [421] the first incarnation of Ctrl-c Book Club came to be via ~lettuce and everyone's participation on Iris. The book explored: "A People's History of Computing in the United States"
- [424] ~kiseratu explores "How can we replace web search with offline data?"
- [423] the second edition of the Ctrl-c Book Club continues with "Human Convenience vs Computer Efficiency"
- [432] ~singletona082 preps for Terminal Challenge 2024
- [433] ~gome starts the Ctrl-C Webpage Jam 2023 Official Thread!
- [460] ~jules suggests a list of programs available to users on Ctrl-c
- [461] ~loghead suggests a ^C 10 Year Project, which came as a collaborative story titled "^u (for untitled)"
- [464] ~chiptune asks what everyone's plans are for 2025
- [467] ~pgadey recounts their years spent on Ctrl-c, a Decade of Fun!

W3bK3rN3l radio outpost

wbkn1-000003

by W3bK3rN3l

KG-84 encrypted MIL-STD 188-110B

Message made on an ISB circuit

--> Croughton (AJE)

--> Sigonella (NSY)

```
{
Several theorists suggest that this is a secret communication
station for a secret society, agency, or government, to be used
to communicate in an unbreakable, bizarre cipher. Several major
events and military exercises that have taken place during
intercepts of w3bk3rn3l's radio transmissions back the theory
}
```

1....<|.|>.....19.....35.....|*...\$!.....%"...:wq

==> BEGIN ENCRYPTION

VVV DE WBKNL

>BOT

I sent my first radio message exactly one week ago. Since then, every noise or static coming from the speaker of my transmitter feels like a desperate cry from someone yearning to establish contact. However, it all turns out to be just a simple illusion. I even doubt whether any of this is real. I can no longer remember the smell of the trees in the forest near the НЖТИ transmitter station. I miss the times when everything seemed extremely dull yet profoundly real. We only truly appreciate life when it appears to be a distant mirage.

Not everything was routine at НЖТИ. When there was no urgency, messages were declared "ordinary" (обыкновенная). Otherwise, there were four standard levels of emergency, ordered by increasing risk:

#	Level	Voice	Morse
1	Самолет	(Samolet)	SML
2	Ракета	(Raketa)	RKT
3	Воздух	(Vozdukh)	WZD
4	Монолит	(Monolit)	XXX XXX

At this moment, I find myself in Monolit mode, waiting for someone to manifest their presence near Lagrange L73. I still hold hope of receiving one of those messages here in the SOL system.

[#\$%&"/&&"%!\$\$\$\$ --> noise]

>EOT

==> END OF ENCRYPTION