

Ctrl-ZINE
Issue 23
Vol 2

SEAS OF THOUGHT --- ALONE

A MIND FOREVER VOYAGING THROUGH STRANGE

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

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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INDEX

As the Last Ember Goes Unglow by Inquiry

Kobo Hacking by ~pgadey

Diagrams/maps — the past, the present

Thoughts on weathering software winter *by ~nttp*

^zbb (Ctrl-ZINE Bulletin Board)

SMOL "AD": solicitation for POSTNET/PONET participants. Zines, letters, one-page short fiction, anything uncumbersome and approachable. Legal, too, of course. E-mail loghead[at]ctrl-c[dot]club to request PO Box address. All entries will be vetted for safe redistribution (amongst members). All (approved) incoming entries, become outgoing.

As the Last Ember Goes Unglow by *Inquiry*

The whole idea of "being online" seems a special case of insanity to me, anymore. I've not poured over newsgroups, blogs, forums, etc. in several months. Do I miss the invariable stress of it? And I say "invariable", because stress was easily what I mostly got from it, i.e. from congregations of the mentally ill blathering on in languages far more private than any participant could emotionally survive realizing.

We desperately need to believe our selfhoods aren't nearly the isolated, lonely disasters that they are. We'll tell each other that throwing word combinations each others' directions will salve - if not solve - it.

But it doesn't. At best, words exacerbate the situation.

It's not unlike the craps table at the casino. The casino has done the math. They are guaranteed to win over time. All strategies ultimately run into the math, and the math resolutely screams that the casino will win because their payouts guarantee an edge in the long run.

Not that temporarily believing one can't devise a winning strategy can't seem fun for a while, mind you.

But likewise with selfhood. It's a losing proposition, pure and simple, a straitjacket that captives thereof attempt to find wiggle-room joy in.

Fortunately, there is a way out, and it just so happens to be in.

Kobo Hacking by *~pgadey*

Last summer, I got myself a Kobo Clara Colour. I was going travelling for two weeks, and was in the middle of reading War and Peace, and didn't want to lug the book around with me. An e-reader seemed like it might be a nice gadget.

And, wow, I had no idea how awesome e-readers are!

It has had such a profound impact on me that I've had to ask myself: "Who would I be now if I had got my hands on one of these sooner?"

It's a little miracle.

Until getting an e-reader, I read books on paper. Every time I came across a word I didn't know, I'd raise an eyebrow and move on. My vocabulary grew slowly by sheer volume of exposure. If something didn't get repeated a bunch, then I didn't learn it.

This week, I just finished up reading some trashy pulp fiction on the Kobo and it made the all weapon jargon so much more enjoyable. "He carried a fiece glaive." What's that? I just tap it and boom! There's a brief OED entry. Who would I be if my early years of reading were this way? (Certainly, there are teens and young folks who did their formative years of reading on e-ink screens. I'd love to hear from them.)

The purpose of this note is to share a little bit of hacker mindset.

The Kobo is really neat but its handling of PDFs is a bit clunky. Suppose that you are looking at page 23 of a book, zoomed in the bottom of the page to improve visibility, and you click to turn to the next page. The default Kobo software will take you to the zoomed in bottom of page 24. What the heck? What about the top? Also, the Kobo can switch various ebook formats to "white on black" in order to produce a sort of dark mode effect. It's great for reading at night. However, it doesn't do this for PDFs.

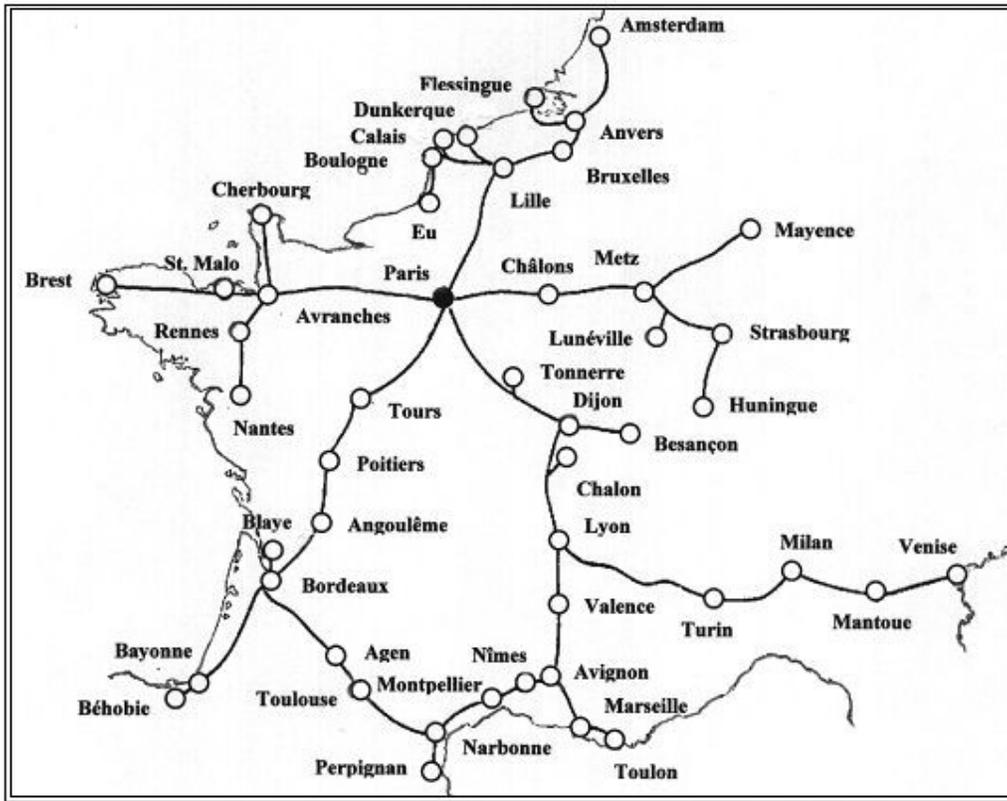
I wasn't about to go and hack the Kobo firmware or install KOReader to fix these issues. (Though, really, KOReader looks rad. Definitely a next step!)

One evening, I realized that I should just fi<http://www.douglas-self.com/MUSEUM//COMMS/telegraf/telegraf.htm> the zooming / scrolling / dark mode weirdness at the level of the PDF. If I made a weird amber-on-black version of the text with "zoomed in" sub-pages, then the Kobo could just do its own thing and the experience would be so much better. An evening of hacky coding using ghostscript, pdftk, and imagemagick and I had a crazy shell script for making "shredded" versions of PDFs.

The moral of this story is two fold: First, go get an e-reader. They're magic. Second, a bit of shell scripting can go a long way. If you can come up with an idea of what you want to do, and invoke a couple command line programs, then you're basically a wizard. I don't think

that a non-hacker would have even come up with the zany idea of making these "shredded" PDFs. Programming enlarges your imagination and gives you the magic to make those dreams real.

Diagrams/maps - *the past, the present*



MAP OF OPTICAL TELEGRAPH

(CREDIT: <http://www.douglas-self.com/MUSEUM//COMMS/telegraf/telegraf.htm>)



MAP OF MESHTASTIC NODE NETWORK

(CREDIT: <https://meshtastic.liamcottle.net/?lat=0.3515602939922709&lng=285.46875000000006&zoom=1>)

Thoughts on weathering the software winter *by ~nttp*

So, we were hanging out on IRC, as one does, and x2600 mentioned Weathering Software Winter, a long read by the Hundred Rabbits collective. Let's just say I have a few thoughts about that.

To make one thing clear: I don't care about "collapse computing". If civilization ever collapsed Mad Max-style (it doesn't work that way, thankfully) then keeping computers in working condition would be the least of our worries.

That said, I do care very much if war or worsening climate makes it prohibitive or impossible to bring more cheap hardware from China. We've long stopped making our own because who needs it, right? And look where we are now. Where does Broadcom make the chips that go into the Raspberry PI? I couldn't find a quick answer on Wikipedia. At least the Atmel microcontrollers that go into Arduino boards are built in the US and possibly Europe.

Luckily for now I can keep using my refurbished desktop originally built in 2008, with RAM measured in gigabytes (not a lot of them). Think that's hardcore? There are people online who struggle with much less. Luckily there are suitable operating systems for them, too... if you're willing to accept some limitations.

Look. If I ever have to settle for using OpenBSD in text mode, that's going to be very inconvenient. But you'd be surprised how much I could still get done even so. Writing, obviously. Browsing the web (not all of it). Chatting with friends. Even looking at pictures. Yes, you can do that in text mode. You can even keep making art.

Computers are universal, meaning they can in theory do anything. That doesn't mean we have to use them for everything. We were wrong to try.

As for the programming angle? I tried making my own languages. I never used them. It taught me a lot, but programming communicates to other people as much as it does to computers. Oh, you can make a program that works... but nobody else can understand or improve. That's not a conversation anymore.

Sure, a smaller language is better. Like Awk, that can be completely described on a man page of reasonable length. It can be memorized in its entirety! But you can only do so much with such a language (though I used it for serious work). As for esoteric programming languages? I write software for fun, not as a joke.

You know what else Awk has going for it? Multiple implementations maintained by different people. It's the same with shell script or Lua, for example: more little languages with minimal dependencies. Means your code will always be able to run somewhere. Call it insurance.

It's the same reason why I stick to Unix-like operating systems. Not only they help me work and respect my intelligence, but as long as I write my code with a little care it can run on Linux, Haiku, any BSD

flavor... even MacOS. Notice which major operating system is missing from this list?

I don't know what the computing landscape will look like in five or ten years. Hopefully we're not going back to computers with only a few kilobytes of RAM, that can barely run a UXN virtual machine, let alone FreeDOS. But e-mail clients bigger than Emacs and using gigabytes of RAM are a recipe for disaster. We can't go on like this.

Just, please, don't tell me to use Forth. I tried. Ended up writing more code in Prolog, not to mention Scheme. It's really not as hard as it looks.

^zbb (Ctrl-ZINE Bulletin Board)

- [] Version 2.0 of cool-retro-term has been released with tab support, new fonts and profiles and new frame with customizable size, colors, shininess -
<https://github.com/Swordfish90/cool-retro-term>

- [] The Ctrl-ZINE Homepage is now being mirrored on SDF (WIP). Will be a direct mirror of Ctrl-ZINE page on ctrl-c.club (only a swapped BW color scheme (also Moore's Computer font)) -
<http://ttt2600.sdf.org/ctrl-zine.html>

- [] Ctrl-ZINE will now be offered in a dual-folded PDF format (replacing the quarter-fold versions), offering easier readability. Software used for this is TheZineArranger by Nash High on itch.io -
(<https://itch.io/nashhigh/thezinearranger>)

- [] CLI interface for telegram -
<https://github.com/mindhuntr/dark-send>

[TO SUBMIT A POSTING TO THE ^zbb, SEND AN E-MAIL WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO loghead@ctrl-c.club]

^z schema:

cover artwork/font: varying

Cover details: Ctrl-ZINE logo, Issue #, Volume #, date published, catchphrase for that issue

About ^Z (blurb)

Editorial (info)

INDEX (list of entries, each title BOLD, author name ITALICS)

Each entry (entered in order of submission)

Title on each post: BOLD

Author name next to post title: ITALICS
^zbb (Ctrl-ZINE Bulletin Board)
^z schema (small font, very bottom of last page)
Font throughout: Px437 ApricotXenC