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Berkeley Planning Journal

Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6838c5mn>

Journal

Berkeley Planning Journal, 9(1)

Author

Simpson, David M

Publication Date

1994

DOI

10.5070/BP39113076

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THE URBAN FRINGE:
Diary of a (wannabe) Information Superhighway Cruiser

david@m.simpson

Editors' note: We received a partially legible diary regarding one individual's struggle into the information age. We've included those passages that were legible (many appeared stained by water—we believe tears to be the cause) and coherent (in some places it does babble on a bit). The diary was handwritten (gasp) on unlined paper. We expect only the worst has befallen this poor misguided individual—just another casualty statistic on the information superhighway.

Monday, October 10

Dear Diary: Today is the day. My machine is ready to hit the information blacktop. Just got it tuned up at the shop, and I had 'em install a new addition: the Zippy-Zippo 280Z, or something like that. A real road hog, the techno-dweeb told me. I just smiled and nodded, like I would really know the difference between a Zippy-Zippo and any other modem. I had just finished my third cup of coffee and it was the crack of dawn (well, actually, about 10:30 AM, but I figured Information Superhighway Cruisers travel at their leisure, right?). Spent the next few hours spinning my wheels 'til a call to the Zippy-Zippo help-line informed me that the modem actually had to be connected to a phone line. Hmmph. They didn't have to laugh so hard when they told me that. Decided to keep it in the garage for today.

Wednesday, October 12

...(unintelligible)...Before throwing the computer and modem in the garbage, I was once again reminded by friends that this was the wave of the future. Planners really had to have this sort of thing, to uh, well, they had some other good reasons that don't come to mind but I'm sure they were good ones. So today I was ready—up and at 'em early this time (10:26), and rarin' to go. I revved my motor and was ready to enter the information superhighway. And then...stalled! My on-ramp was clogged—nothing but a busy signal. Apparently I'm not the only leisurely cruiser. [**Lesson #1: Information Superhighway Cruisers sleep later than normal people.**] Tried 'til noon, but to no avail. Played DOOM instead. No work accomplished, but I did kill a bunch of bad guys and weird-looking little creatures...heh-heh.

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Thursday, October 13

Keeping lesson #1 in mind, I awoke with the early birds this morning. I passed on the worm. I must have gotten in before the rush hour because I actually made it to the highway this time. I stayed in the slow lane, and thought I would just browse some of the informational rest stops along the way. There were rest stops (or interest groups, depending on your perspective) for all kinds of people: those interested in bats, MST 3000, the role of alternative music in our elementary schools and other (excuse me...yaaawn) exciting topics. I searched in vain for a group called "information superhighway cruiser wannabees," but with no success. The closest I came was "superhybrid-workerbees.alt," which, though interesting enough I suppose, didn't help me much.

Friday, October 14

Spent a little more time browsing through the abundance of information that this new world has opened up for me. Amazed at the number of fascinating people spending lots of their time and energy discussing the vital topics of our day, such as the clear superiority of cafe latte to cafe mocha, or the deeper social meaning of the Rocky Horror Picture Show. It is now clear to me that the superhighway is bumper-to-bumper with all sorts of people, doing all sorts of things. ***[This leads me to lesson #2: those riding the highway should be identified by their activities: Information Download, Input, Output & Transfer on the Superhighway, or IDIOTS for short.]***

Monday, October 17

Out of gas.

Tuesday, October 18

Today I decided to gopher it. I was ready to cruise the dragstrips of other universities and systems. I learned several interesting tidbits along the way. For instance, did you know that in Univ.Minn.gopher if the hacker comes out of hibernation and sees his shadow, we'll have another six months of useless software? Oops, sorry. I forgot, that's for groundhogs, not gophers.

Friday, October 21

Dear Diary: Today I discovered e-mail. I think it stands for "elaborately-more-difficult-but-cheaper-than-calling-in-person" communication, but I'm not 100% sure. I also discovered many of my friends live somewhere in the land of "edu." Apparently to live there you must perform strange rituals to your given name and then add a secret code that only the recipient ever understands. Just as an example, my

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good friend William (most people call him Bill) Oliver Loney, lives at: Boloney@mtsuvius.daemonchild.bugswallow.univ.edu. I told Bill he was full of it, but I don't think he gets it.

Monday, October 24

Dear e-diary, this weekend I have an e-date. It was quite accidental I assure you. I was e-mailing an acquaintance, and accidentally typed a semi-colon and a bracket together, thusly— ;} (i am not the world's best typist, you know). Well, wouldn't you know it, she thought that was a wink, and now she wants to "talk" this Friday night. **[Lesson #3: be careful who you wink at!]**

Thursday, October 27

Dearest diary...today is my 4th day without sleep. Lo! I am one with the superhighway. Information is my drug and I can build and conquer the universe with my ... (*garbled garbled something*)

...(pages missing)...

Thursday, November 3

Man, that was a bad trip. There is nothin' like a bad trip on the ol' superhighway. My friends brought me down last week. Before I was fully conscious, they had me strapped down and were stuffing bits of warm bran muffin in my mouth and dripping all-natural carrot juice to wash it down (this is Berkeley, you know). I promised them I would stay off the road (Friends don't let friends drive...) or something like that—I wasn't really listening. They unplugged my Zippy-Zippo and left. **[Lesson #4: Stay away from friends who constantly eat warm bran muffins and all-natural carrot juice (eych.)]**

Mon.day Nov.emb.er 14.alt.edu

...(scrambled eggs...or something, eds.) It's been two weeks, man. I gotta have my fix. They can't keep me off the open road—it's callin to me man...I can hear those lanes a hummin. I'm goin back. & i'm ready. I need info...now! I'm ready to surf the net, to ride the big data Kahuna. It's all there, everything I need...I'll live on knowledge, I'll (*unintelligible*) and then I'll sit back and laugh at those poor info pedestrians. Hey get off the sidewalk before I run you down...I'm free! I'm free, I'm...

(end of legible diary—eds.)

Editors' note: While we do not mean to admonish or preach, this is a case where driver's ed was clearly needed. Remember: this is your brain: :-) and this is your brain on the superhighway: > :- (... any questions?