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LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

WACOSS CONFERENCE 2025

12 - 14 MAY 2025

A Casual Chat About What's Wrong With Technology And How To Fix It

Keynote Speaker: Stefan Prandl
CTO, Hyprfire

Who Am I?

Stefan Prandl
CTO of Hyprfire

Have been (and sometimes are):

- **Lecturer**
- **Engineer**
- **Speaker (Cybercon, Blackhat, Cyberwest etc.)**
- **Mentor**
- **Hacker**
- **Am also recently: Dad**

Disclaimer: **All views and opinions expressed are my own, and do not reflect the views of my employer / company.**

So I've been thinking about tech recently…

Introducing: The computer I used in high school

Who does your tech really work for?

Here's The Problem

enshittification 🔊

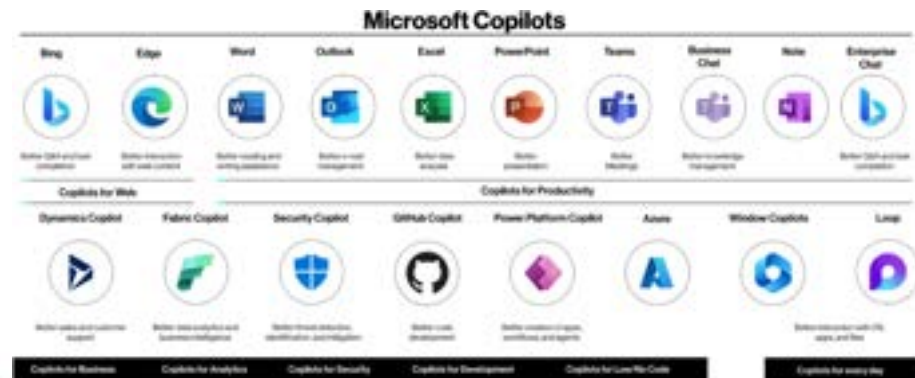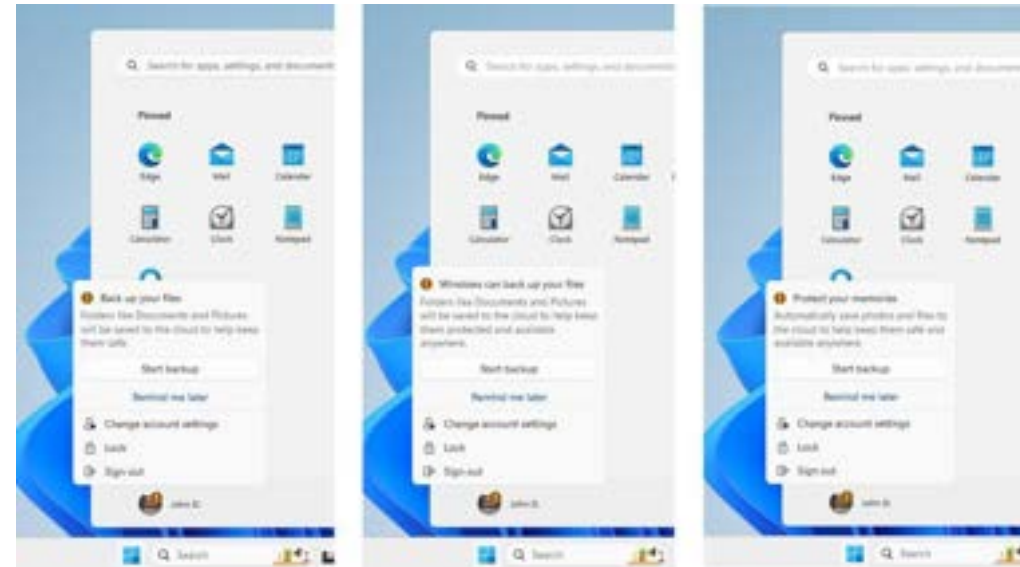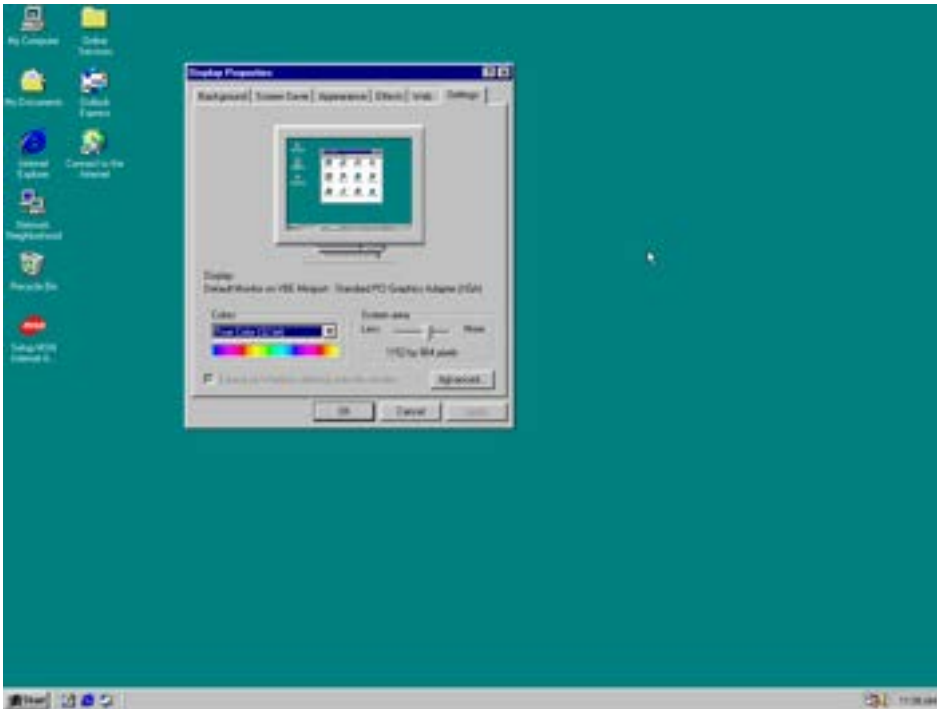[en-shit-*uh*-fi-**key**-sh*uh*n]   ⦿ Phonetic (Standard)   ○ IPA

noun

1   the gradual degradation of an online platform or service's functionality, as part of a cycle in which the platform or service first offers benefits to users to attract them, then pursues more and more profits at the expense of users:

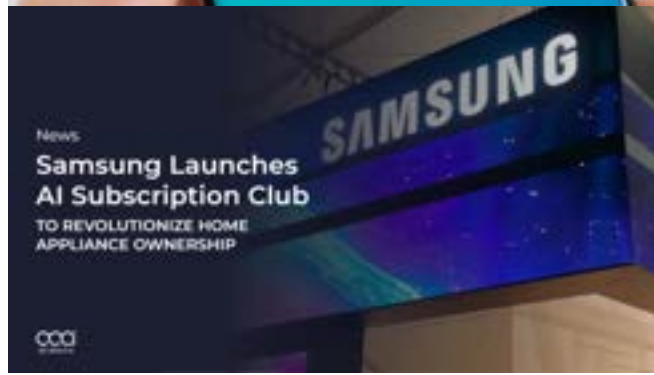> *There's been a significant enshittification of the website in just this year alone.*

We *used* to have helpful technology…

But now it's *everywhere*

Samsung Launches AI Subscription Club
TO REVOLUTIONIZE HOME APPLIANCE OWNERSHIP

Free shipping over $49!

BMW rolls out heated seat, steering wheel subscriptions – UPDATE: Not in Australia yet

BMW will now sell you the heated seats in your car as a monthly subscription, for a little more than a high-resolution Stan or Netflix subscription.

Alex Misoyannis   16:24 12 July 2022   50 comments

What is Enshittification?

Term coined by Cory Doctorow:
Describes platform decay as they shift value from users to themselves.

Goal is to be a platform nobody can escape that you need to pay to use forever.

Has bled over to other products like TV and that's why you need a
million subscriptions.

How to get to Enshittification

Have a monopoly of some kind

Have a lot of cheap money or some way to get it

Eliminate external or internal resistance

The Three Stages

1.

Be Really Really Good To Users

2.

Stop Being Good To Users, Be Good To Businesses

3.

Pull The Rug Out From Everyone, Profit Forever
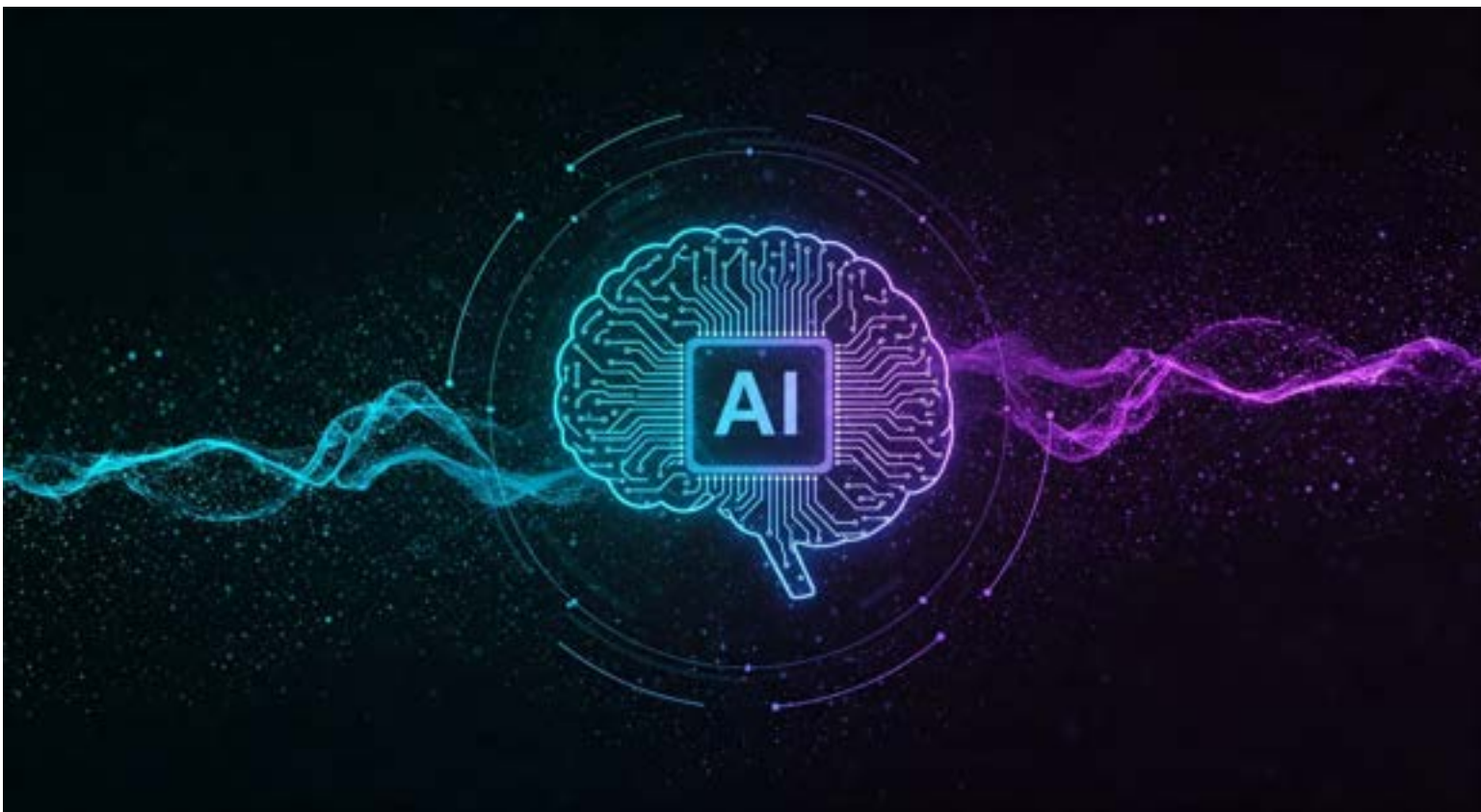
Evacuate To Your Cool Supervillain Bunker In NZ

Turbocharge
Enshittificaction
with AI

Generative AI: The Future?

What Is A Generative AI Exactly?

**Large language models
(programs that are good with language)**

**Good at predicting words!
(autocomplete, but better!)**

Still a cold, unthinking, unfeeling machine.

Fun fact:

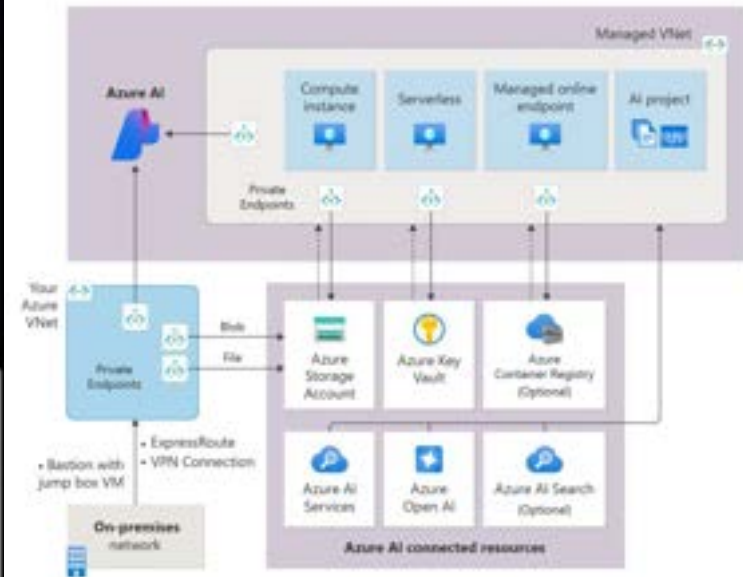**We use language as a proxy for intelligence, so being good with language is a good way to fake being intelligent!**

Why is this in *everything?*

Hidden Cost 1: Your Data

Colossus: Total GPUs: **200,000**

Phase 1: **122 days** - 100k GPUs fully training synchronously. From scratch.

Phase 2: **92 days** to expand to 200K GPUs

Targeted Online Advertising

Half Recalled Targeted Ads

No 44%
Yes 56%

Perceptions of Targeted Ads

24% ■ Disagree (1-3)
12% ■ Neutral (4)
63% ■ Agree (5-7)

The ads made me feel like I have less privacy online

Base: Internet users: n=1,272

Base: Internet users who recalled ads: n=693

The Explosive Growth of AI-Powered Fraud

Countries per region with biggest increases in deepfake-specific fraud cases from 2022 to 2023 (in %)*

Canada 477
Slovakia 1,500
Romania 1,766
Belgium 2,950
U.S. 3,000
Japan 2,800
Mexico 700
Vietnam 3,050
Philippines 4,500
Brazil 828
UAE 2,200
Argentina 766
Algeria 1,000
South Africa 1,200

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Hidden Cost 2: Environmental Impact

AI DATA CENTERS ARE DRAINING WATER FROM THIS DROUGHT-STRICKEN MEXICAN TOWN

The city of Colón in Queretaro state is now home to three massive data centers run by Google, Microsoft, and Amazon—and the companies are refusing to disclose how much local water they use.

Why Microsoft made a deal to help restart Three Mile Island

A once-shuttered nuclear plant could soon return to the grid.

By Casey Crownhart   September 26, 2024

SCIENCE / ENVIRONMENT / CLIMATE

Microsoft's AI obsession is jeopardizing its climate ambitions

/ After pledging to slash its greenhouse gas emissions, Microsoft's climate pollution has grown by 30 percent as the company prioritizes AI.

Microsoft Copilot

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella delivers a speech during an event called Microsoft Build: AI Day in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on May 2nd, 2024. Photo by MOHD RASFAN / AFP via Getty Images

by Justine Calma
May 16, 2024, 4:29 AM GMT+8

Hidden Cost 3: Stolen Training Data

Authors outraged to discover Meta used their pirated work to train its AI systems

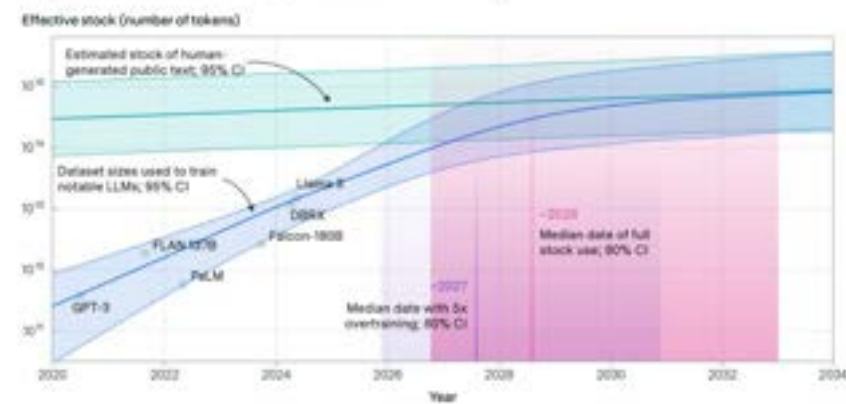By Nicola Heath for Arts in 30

ABC Arts   Books

Fri 28 Mar

Meta launched Llama 3, an open large language model trained using pirated material, in 2024. (Getty: Jonathan Raa/NurPhoto)

Mass theft or luxury art? World-first AI art auction faces a massive backlash

Thousands of artists are saying the world's first large-scale high-end art auction featuring AI models is an act of mass theft. Others are claiming its the new frontier for art practice.

12 Feb 2025 10:48

David Burton

VISUAL ARTS

Artists are trying to shut down a large-scale auction of works built with AI. Image Generated by ChatGPT, using concepts explored by artists Mat Dryhurst and Holly Herndon, supplied.

Projections of the stock of public text and data usage

EPOCH AI

Meta STOLE 38 of my NOVELS

Hidden Cost 4: Human Exploitation

Meet Mercy and Anita - the African workers driving the AI revolution, for just over a dollar an hour

Amazon's Just Walk Out technology relies on hundreds of workers in India watching you shop

By Alex Bitter

Unlike in 2009, when the main crowdworking platform was Amazon's Mechanical Turk, there is currently an explosion of data labeling companies. These companies are raising tens to hundreds of millions in venture capital funding while the data labelers have been estimated to make an average of $1.77 per task. Data labeling interfaces have evolved to treat crowdworkers like machines, often prescribing them highly repetitive tasks, surveilling their movements and punishing deviation through automated tools. Today, far from an academic challenge, large corporations claiming to be "AI first" are fueled by this army of underpaid gig workers, such as data laborers, content moderators, warehouse workers and delivery drivers.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

How the AI industry profits from catastrophe

As the demand for data labeling exploded, an economic catastrophe turned Venezuela into ground zero for a new model of labor exploitation.

RADIO NATIONAL BREAKFAST →

Rise in young people creating AI child abuse material

Wed 29 Jan 2025 at 3:35am

▶ Play 6 m

📷 Gulu, northern Uganda's largest city, is home to a large business process outsourcing centre. P

Social media content and AI training data are processed in outsource centres in the global south, where long hours, low pay and exposure to disturbing material are the norm

Okay… so what are we doing with this?

1. Non-consensual porn in schools
2. AI "Slop" overwhelming social media & search results
3. Mass disinformation and manipulation
4. Undermining academic integrity
5. Eroding critical thinking skills

So I mean it's all worth it right?

What *could* we be doing?

Examples:

Real time translation on your phone
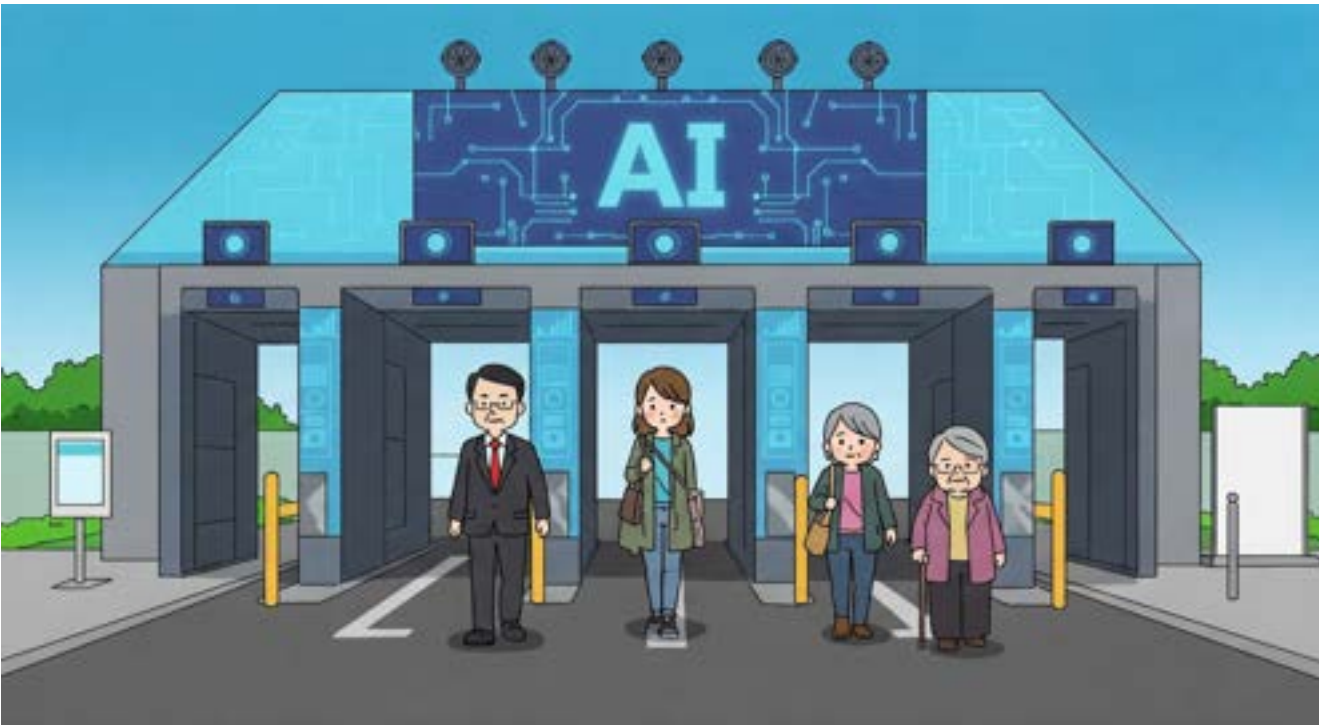
Smart, personalised autocorrect

Helpful image tools

Natural text to speech

And all without doing anywhere near as much damage!

So… why aren't we doing that?

Fixing Things

We should probably be doing some weeding.

Fix 1: Voting With Your Wallet

1. **Buy Local, Buy Small Business**
2. **Avoid Monopolies**
3. **Ask Some Questions:**
   a. My Data: Where is it stored? How long is it stored? Can I have it deleted?
   b. Data Portability: Can I export my data and take it somewhere else?
   c. Interoperability: Does it give access to my data to other tools?
4. **If possible, look for Open Technologies first**

Fix 2: Regulation

Regulate stronger privacy to neutralise the business model

Mandate interoperability to break down walled gardens (EU's DMA for example)

Fix 3: Change the Moral Imperatives

Buy better sourced technologies!

Good: Somewhere with better privacy laws (EU or similar)

Better: Australia!

Best: West Australia!

Make a market for local products, we export the expertise on how to do this to other countries because we don't buy it here!
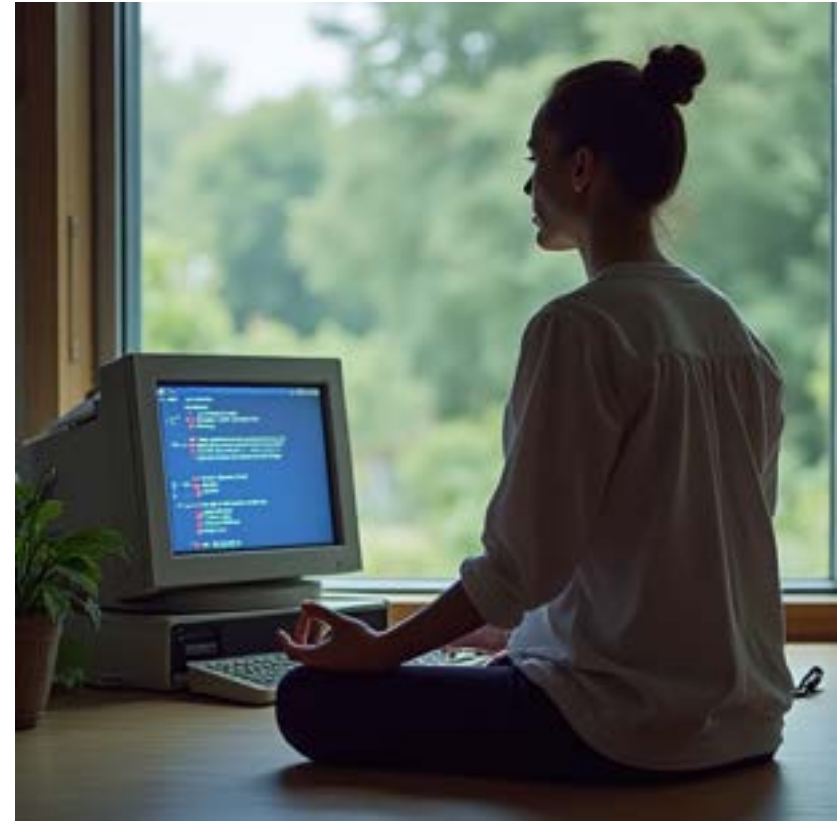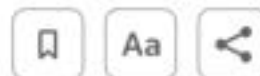
Back to Basics

Be More Mindful

Greece presents strategy to combat youth internet addiction

By Reuters

December 31, 2024 6:10 AM GMT+8 · Updated 4 months ago

Thank you!

Reach me on the internet:
- **LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/redezem**
- **Mastodon: https://aus.social/@redezem**

Further reading:

- **Cory Doctorow's Blog: https://pluralistic.net**
- **Sarah Wynn William's book "Careless People"**
- **Paris Marx's "Tech Won't Save Us" podcast: https://techwontsave.us**

Q&A