

# A Running List

MAZZY BELL

I am and have always...  
jotting down mi...

I am and have always been a habitual note taker and list maker, constantly jotting down miscellaneous pieces of information that I think will be useful in the future. For the most part, these seemingly useful facts are not quite useful at all; I rarely really look back at them and when I do I find them unorganized and relatively incomprehensible. I found a note recently that just read "magician's 25th" and I truly have no idea what that means, nor do I ever think I will.

One note that has gotten particularly extensive and out of hand, is an open sourced themed document, which was started in September of 2017. I had just learned the meaning of open source and felt fervent in reading all that I could on the subject, potentially overly enthusiastic as I often am when I find something new to fixate on. The initial entry reads "open source!!!!!! I was doing this already and I didn't even know" followed by like 6 links, some of which do actually deal with open source things, others that do not. For the record, I would like to add that I am not quite sure what I meant by "doing" open source, but you get the gist.

The note continues on with a lot more links that I will probably never click on and some more stream of consciousness ramblings. It wasn't until January of this year, 2018, when I entered this class, Open Source Design,

The screenshot shows a digital note-taking application interface. At the top, there is a toolbar with several icons: a window control bar, a file icon, a grid icon, a trash bin icon, a pencil icon, a lock icon, and a user profile icon. To the right of the toolbar is a double arrow icon.

The main area contains two notes. The first note has a grey header bar with the text "I am and have always..." followed by "jotting down mi...". The body of this note is empty. The second note, which is larger and has a white background, begins with the text "that my note spun out of control and off the rails." Below this, there is a large amount of text describing the author's investigation into open source and their own experiences with it. The text continues with a description of how their note turned sour over time, mentioning "frivolous fragments and one liners" that "snowballed into frenzied rhetoric brimming with f bombs occasionally typed out IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS". The final part of the note discusses the author's initial planned contribution to a book, which was an essay consisting of 16 pages of disconnected paragraphs.

I think in my own investigation of what it meant for something to be open source, in the few months leading up to January, I was discovering things that probably didn't even know they were open source, a lot of hardware and general instructions to building things that most of the time predated the phrase itself. I certainly don't develop software and I only very recently finally figured out how to use Github. While I was engaging with open source content I wasn't really integrating, or trying to integrate myself in the "open source community". I am not even sure I knew there was an "open source community" until this class began.

At some point, I'm going to say a third through the semester, my note turns sour. What started out as frivolous fragments and one liners, quickly snowballed into frenzied rhetoric brimming with f bombs occasionally typed out IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, just to emphasize the metaphorical steam that was blasting through my ears.

My initial planned contribution to this book was an essay, a mashup of all of the writing I had so feverishly been typing away at all semester. However, when I pulled the paragraphs out of my note it was 16 pages long and each chunk of writing had a huge disconnect to the next. It was also one of the grumpiest things I had ever written,

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highly unproductive at the very least.

In the spirit of my instinctive list making, and knowing that it would be borderline torturous for anyone to read 16 pages of me yelling at them, I have gone through The Note and made a pros and cons list based on all of the weird things I have typed out on the benefits and downfalls of what it means for something to be open source. Obviously, the list is coupled with this long winded explanation of how I got here and a little bit of reflection. I hope you enjoy, and remember, if you get bored, because who am I kidding, this will probably be rather boring for most people, just be grateful you didn't have to read the other thing.

\*the part in quotation marks are pulled directly from my open source note

**Pros**

- If you really wanted to build a house on your own, you could definitely do that without having to pay for the instructions or come up with them on your own
- If you really wanted to build all of the furniture in your house (the one you built on your own), you could definitely do that without having to pay for the instructions or come up with them on your own
- "there are so many dank fonts that are open source that I already had on my computer that I didn't even know were open source"

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- Inkscape is a better/more user-friendly vector creating software than illustrator
- If you are using something that is open source, and you don't like something about it, you can (in theory) just modify and amend
- Free/cheaper than things (software) that aren't open source
- "inherently collaborative :)" (I suppose this could be a con but for me it's a pro)
- "design/software that are open source are never really 'finished', they can always be ameliorated into better, more helpful versions of themselves. While this could be true with other design/software that isn't open source, it is theoretically more likely for things to be improved based on the nature of what it means for something to be open source... anyone that finds a problem with something can fix it"
- Projects and iterations of things are far more documented and logged than things that are not open source

**Cons**

- "I really can't figure out how to use Github, I feel really goofy for not understanding it and I feel like normally it wouldn't matter but it feels quintessential to being involved in the open source community"

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- While the term open source is seemingly universal, it isn't. Most people don't know what it is and, in my opinion, that takes away from so many aspects of what would otherwise be highly beneficial. This feels especially true since I often have a difficult time explain what open source is without simultaneously critiquing it
- The phrase 'too many cooks in the kitchen' is probably grossly applicable
- In regards to the open source community, "my assumption— because it is called 'open source' people (of privilege) who historically have never had issues speaking up and voicing their opinions, provide little room for people who have never had the space to speak when they feel necessary."
- In reference to the previous con, "it feels arduous to integrate yourself into the open source community, it is intimidating and while it seems that this community should be centered around learning, it doesn't really seem like it is."
- Most websites that I have come across that deal with hardware/software that are open source were certainly not easy to find and for the most part not very easy to navigate.

While I'm sure I could continue on, these were the things that felt the most veracious. In the spirit of open source I'm housing this list on a google doc (more accessible) for

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<https://bit.ly/2rlgyHf>