October 26, 2015

The Bot! Zine Issue #1

by [Stefan](#)

Hello

Hey there, and thanks for signing up!

This is the very first issue of the **Bot!** newsletter/zine/*e-zine*. Boy, did it take forever to decide what the name of this thing should be!

This being my first newsletter altogether, it will be mostly improvisation. I'm aiming to release an issue every week (if a week happens to be slow on bot-related news, I will probably just try to say something clever or funny instead).

Ready? *Let's do this!*

Botwiki.org updates

[Botwiki.org](#) had tremendous first three months. Yes, the site is three months old now, which is a bit hard for me to believe.

Some of the major recent updates are:

- An [events page](#), a great idea by [Terian Koscik](#), who also hosted a recent [Build-a-Bot](#) workshop.
- I made a neat little [Submit Your Bot](#) page/form, which is now semi-automated thanks to [Hugo](#) (well done, Hugo!)
- Many sections of the site were re-organized into sub-categories, it's much easier to browse them now
- Many parts of the site have been improved, like the search functionality (most updates are ["under the hood" improvements](#) that just make the overall experience better)

And people started using the bot submission form to add their bots, which is pretty ⬚⬚⬚ The site can finally start growing to its full potential!

Bots

Some of the new bots from last week:

- [@muffinista](#) turned the [Wayback Machine](#) into a [bot](#); read more about it [on his site](#).
- [@hologramvron](#) made a [planet generator](#)
- [@dscovr_epic](#) tweets images of Earth, a bot by [Russ Garrett](#)
- [Ben Brown](#) and [friends](#) announced [Howdy](#), "your new digital coworker for Slack".
- [@swayandsea](#) is here to remind us of [our own mortality](#)
- [@onethingplease](#), a Twitter bot by [@vasilis](#), will give you anything you want, if you ask politely
- And a very freshly made [@needsref](#) by [Allison Parrish](#) will catalogue the failed assertions of Wikipedia

Also check out the Twitter bots most recently added to [Botwiki.org](#).

Events

Last week was pretty eventful, with three different meetups happening.

- the first [ATX Bot Talk](#)
- a [Journocoders](#) workshop
- and since the 2015 Bot Summit was [delayed](#), a few of the #botALLY folks threw together a [small meetup in NYC](#)

Follow the links above for notes and slides! Also, [Darius](#) announced that the next Bot Summit will be taking place on [April 9th, 2016 in London](#) (exact location pending) and the 2015 [NaNoGenMo](#) is starting n.

Botmaker Profiles

Finally, the first *Botmaker Profile*! *Botmaker Profiles* is a series of short interviews that introduce the members of the botmaking community.

For the first Botmaker Profile, I spoke with the founder of Wordnik, [Erin McKean](#). We covered a few things from Australians to teenagers and Wordnik itself. [Go check it out](#)!

Reading list

- [Auto-Generating Clickbait With Recurrent Neural Networks](#) by [Lars Eidnes](#)
- [Sampling a Dataset to Maximize Diversity](#) by [Leonard Richardson](#)
- [Bot Techniques: The Wandering Monster Table](#) by [Leonard Richardson](#)
- [Humans prefer 'flawed' robots, study finds](#) (The Telegraph)
- [This News Writing Bot Is Now Free for Everyone](#) (WIRED)
- [Staying Human in the Robot Age](#) (Harvard Business Review)

Not an article per se, but an interesting website nonetheless: [robotsupremacy.wikia.com](#).

Wrap up

I had an idea to make a Slack-powered MMORPG (apparently Slack -- and Flickr -- originally started as online games, what do you know). If this idea sounds

interesting to you, join the **#slackbots** channel over at Botmakers.org.

Also, I'm working on a Botmaking with OpenShift series, so if you're not too busy, I would really appreciate if you could fill this out for me, thank you!

By the way, you should just check openshift.com yourself, if you're looking for a place to host your new bot. It is a much better alternative to Heroku. OpenShift has an actual free plan that doesn't force your app into sleep for several hours every day. What's up with that? OpenShift also supports cron.

If you're interested in contributing to the OpenShift series, let me know (useful links below). On top of this, I am also thinking about another series that would look at some tools like Dexter that would make creating bots easier for non-coders who are not really all that interested in learning to use the command line. I also learned that CBDQ is open source, and I thought it would be cool to look into adding support for third-party APIs and data sets to make it possible to use CBDQ to create more advanced bots.

Well, that's about it for issue #1. Any questions/comments/suggestions, find me on Twitter or send me an email.

See you next week!

-- Stefan

PS: You can support Botwiki.org, Botmakers.org and The Bot Zine via the following channels:

- Gratipay
- Patreon
- PayPal (this is a personal account, include a note, please!)
- Bitcoin

If you'd like to join any of the projects, let me know at stefan@fourtonfish.com.

(Or anytime at botmakers.org.)