

An empirical lower-bound on the number of pages you can spend talking about SIGHORSE in SIGHORSE

— Kart

There are three parts to this article:

1. Why the word “horse”? Why is it relevant? What does it mean to Purdue Hackers?
2. Why work on this journal? What forces made us want to create SIGHORSE?
3. Can I see the process of making the cover? I’m sure it wasn’t too much work.

1. Bringing forth a longing for horsing into the world

Purdue Hackers: a community of students who collaborate, learn, and build kick-ass technical projects.

— Purdue Hackers website, but I removed the emojis

1.1. The origins of horses

Since forever, horses have been intertwined with the Purdue Hackers brand.

Discord¹ archaeology points to a particular member starting the conversation off in September 2022 with messages like:

- our mascot should be an 8-bit horse
Also the horse should be yellow
- Here’s every horse: <https://every.horse/>
- Here’s a horse that’s shaking: <https://shakingmy.horse/>

The discussion significantly escalated on the next day, when the same member posted:

Today I forked my personal link shortener to use it for Purdue Hackers. Introducing puhack.horse²

...

This member then served as the President of Purdue Hackers for three years, and led its rise from a 20 person meetup to a 80-100 person organization with sprawling projects, ideas, and coolness.

¹Discord is an online group messaging platform used by Purdue Hackers. It is a centerpiece of the community, and many important discussions happen there.

²It redirects to <https://www.purduehackers.com/>

1.2. Towards honse

The word “horse”—and its diminutive derivative “honse”—are now recurring themes in many Discord conversations.

Purdue Hackers as a club often emphasizes engaging in whimsy and creating things that bring joy. It follows that the community has latched on to “horse” in some of the things we talk about.

2. Putting the Special Interest Group in the Horse

2.1. BURSTing from creativity

In Fall 2024, Purdue Hackers hosted a showcase called BURST³. It was glorious. Seriously. Here’s a mini photo collage from BURST to show you just how glorious it was.



It was so glorious, in fact, that it challenged my imagination to think of it even *could* get more glorious. How could we ever top the projects that we’d showcased this year? How could we inspire more members of Hackers to make contributions to the next showcase we hosted?

I’d built and presented a project at BURST out of a desire to give back to the community for all the joy I’d gotten from it.

How could I engage more members and spread the joy of creating and presenting?

³<https://burst.purduehackers.com/>

2.2. Commit Overflow

For the past two years, Purdue Hackers has hosted the “Commit Overflow” event during Purdue University’s winter break.

Winter break is here; it’s the perfect time to make the things you didn’t have time to make this semester.

During the last 10 days of the year, we’re running Commit Overflow. The challenge: every day, commit to GitHub & post an update of what you’re working on in 🏔 checkpoints

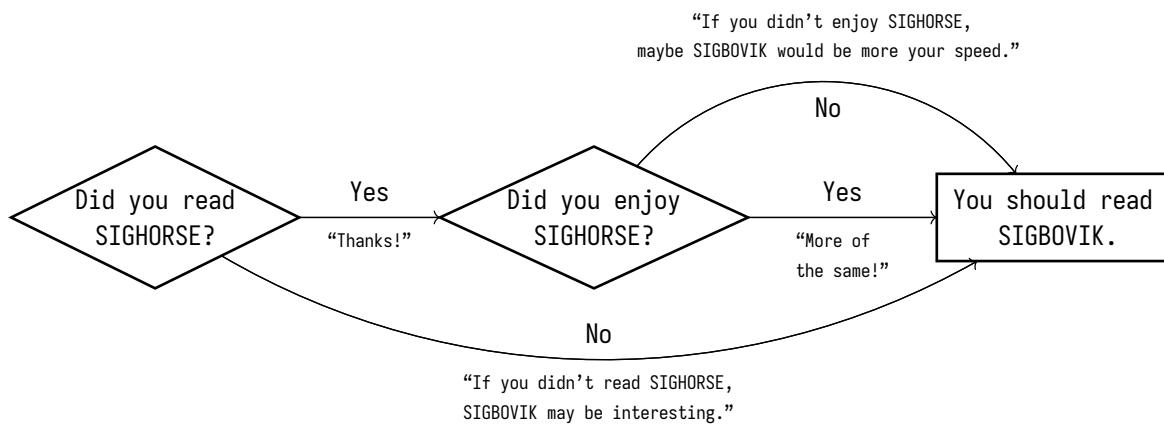
If you make it all 10 days, we’ll send you stickers and a custom laser-cut badge that will never be made or distributed again.

— The first Commit Overflow announcement in 2022

This event saw great participation from the community: people shipped commits and maintained a sense of connection over the break. I personally wrote a lot of documentation for keymashed⁴, a project I’d showcased at BURST.

2.3. SIGBOVIK

Now to talk about something completely different: SIGBOVIK⁵ is an yearly joke journal organized primarily by grad students from Carnegie Melon University with clearly too much time on their hands. The latest edition is just over 400 pages long. Papers published in this illustrious journal have had titles such as “An Empirically Verified Lower Bound for The Number Of Empty Pages Allowed In a SIGBOVIK Paper” or “A Genius Solution: Applications of the Sprague–Grundy Theorem to Korean Reality TV”.



3. Messily pushing the horsing out to the world

3.1. Defining SIGHORSE

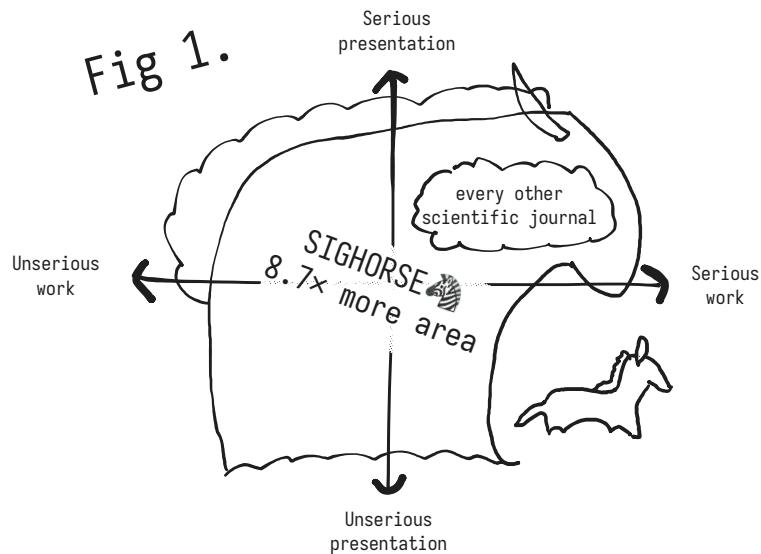
Finally, we can unify the two topics we discussed in the previous section: “what if we ran something like Commit Overflow but in the summer and with a focus on whimsy and silliness?” Our tenets would be:

- encourage people to build cool things over the summer!
- talk about said things!
- get those things to a presentable state so we could put them in the journal!

⁴<https://github.com/kartva/keymashed>

⁵<https://sigbovik.org/>

To give an idea of the things SIGHORSE would cover, the following diagram was produced:



3.2. Enough about SIGHORSE, what about the cover?

I'm so glad you asked about the cover! I first learned Blender⁶, then Krita⁷, then Inkscape⁸, and then finally handed it off to an artist to finish because I sure couldn't.



counterclockwise: first Blender draft, alternate Blender draft, Krita draft

⁶3D modeling software: <https://www.blender.org/>

⁷Vector/Raster painting software: <https://krita.org/en/>

⁸Raster drawing software: <https://inkscape.org/>

4. As the show curtains descend on the horse

SIGHORSE has been a blast. I hope you'll enjoy reading the submissions as much as the authors enjoyed creating them.