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The Arte of ASCII: Or, An True and Accurate Representation of an
Menagerie of Thynges Fabulous and Wonderful in Ye Forme of Character

Abstract

Ever since Gutenberg discovered and patented ASCII and the corresponding "Courier New" font with its now-famous "ten" point size, artisans and artificers have striven to represent their views of the world in print.

Similarly, starting from Darwin's discovery of the hippogriff and his subsequent registration of the creature as an International Trade Mark, men (and some women) have struggled to catalog the fabulous variety that is called "nature".

This document supplies a number of representations of all manner of things (both elemental and hypothetical) supplied by some of our best collectors of curios and delivered in a manner that may well be reused by the cunning document author.

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1. Introduction

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, where princes were available to those who knew how to kiss, and frogs could be picked up by the handful and were sold in brown paper bags at the shop on the corner of your street, there was an impish discovery made by the appropriately named Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg. His name, it turned out, was coincidentally fortuitous for when he uncovered the Gutenberg Press he was able to claim it as his own.

Amongst Gutenberg's better known discoveries were the ten point font, the Courier New Font (which he is supposed to have found growing in a hedgerow close to his cottage), and the ASCII character set. All of these have been embraced as comforting and warm blankets by the engineers of the IETF as they embark on expeditions to plot the desolated wastes of the Internet.

Although the RFC Editor has recently dragged the IETF kicking and screaming into the twentieth century [RFC7990] [RFC7996], there is a yearning among all right-thinking Internet architects to "keep it simple" and to return to the olden days when pigs could be given thrust without anyone taking undue offence [RFC1925]. This document attempts to address that yearning by demonstrating the full wonder of the natural world in vivid two-dimensional representation and a colour palette that would put even the august L. S. Lowry to shame.

Readers of this document are encouraged to be familiar.

2. Beasts of the Land

"Many and wonderful are the beasts of the land" wrote the poet. And he was right in some ways.

Of these many beasts, the most fabulous are the Troll and the Unicorn. Here are reproduced representations of sightings in the field.

2.1. The Troll

The troll is an evil beast that frequently appears around the IETF. It feeds alternately on passing goats and cookies, but it prefers above all things the taste of distress, especially that expressed in email.

Trolls should be shunned and never fed. Stories about them being sensitive to water or light are unsubstantiated, but it may be true that they can be pacified with alcohol.

The chief weapons of a Troll are its sharp tongue, its blunt phrasing, and its total disregard for doing useful work.



Figure 1: The Troll at Feeding Time

2.2. The Unicorn Rampant

Many things in the IETF rely on majick. Without pixie dust or other artful contributions from the world of faerie, it is unlikely that the Internet would work at all.

Software Defined Networking (SDN) is a concept whereby complex and devious networks may be subjugated to the will of a sorcerer (or an opensourcerer as they are sometimes know). Fundamental to the body of an SDN is the Path Computation Element (PCE) [RFC7399]. Essential to the proper function of the PCE is the Unicorn that roams the dark wood of the Traffic Engineering Database, rearing up and spearing unwitting paths on the horn of its intellect.

Unicorns, it is claimed, can only be captured by the pure of heart who have never operated a real network.

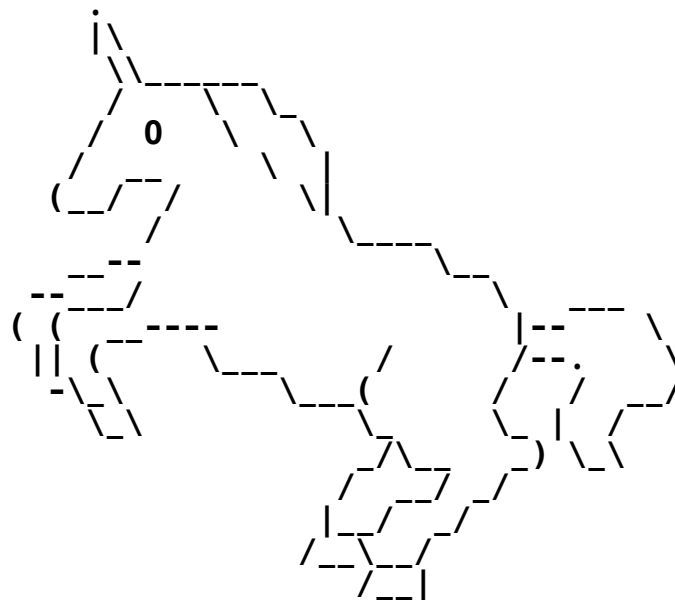


Figure 2: A Unicorn in Rampant State

3. Creatures of the Deep

"Not all that crawls upon the land can rival the creatures of the deep," said the great ethnographer and philanderer. And how often it has been observed that he was both wise and drunk.

The things that slide below the surface of the water remain hidden to most of us, a mystery no less than the ways of the elliptic curve. Most elusive of all is the Loch Ness Monster; most peculiar is the Marlynne.

3.1. The Loch Ness Monster

So rare are the sightings of this beast that we must count ourselves lucky to have presented here a very real etching collected at great expense from a native Scott.

The Loch Ness Monster appears most often on dark nights or in heavy storms when the only thing that parts the fog is the rain that lashes your face. Thus, the creature is most often visible when it can be least well seen. In this respect, it is most like clear text in an RFC, which is most easy to read and comprehend when it is least written.

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Figure 3: The Loch Ness Monster On a Calm Day

3.2. The Marlynne or Sword Fishe

Getting to the point is not always something that is practised in the IETF. But there is one beast that Roams the Deeps and Never Sleeps: The Marlynne, when hauled from its roost by an unsuspecting fisherman for delivery to his equally unsuspecting fishwife has often been mistaken for a very angry mermaid [MTFTW]. Do not mistake its sharp wit for a valid argument.

As can be seen from the rendition here presented, the Marlynne is happy in its work.

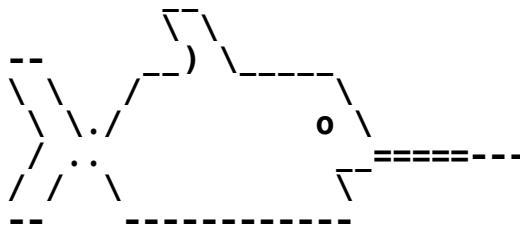


Figure 4: The Sword Fishe - An Happy Fishe

4. Spirits of the Air

Cloud is the latest buzz for the trendy hipster, active in networking. But be careful not to let your feet get off the crowd lest your head become implanted somewhere it shouldn't be.

4.1. Ze Vompyre

Most afearred of all of the creatures is surely the vampire, for it will drain the blood of any good idea until it withers or is completely changed into a problem statement I-D. More scary than the dreaded Old Timer that will suck the air from a room with its hated Process Discussion. More frightening than the RFC 2119 Usage Debate of Doom.

The vampire bat is sometimes mistaken for its third cousin on its mother's side, the fruitbat. That beast is equally evil and will remove whole plates of fruit from refreshment tables, leaving only celery sticks for latecomers.

Data that is once nibbled by a vampire may find that some of its most precious bits become corrupted and drop off. Sure protection may only be achieved by placing garlic in the metadata or overhead of a packet.

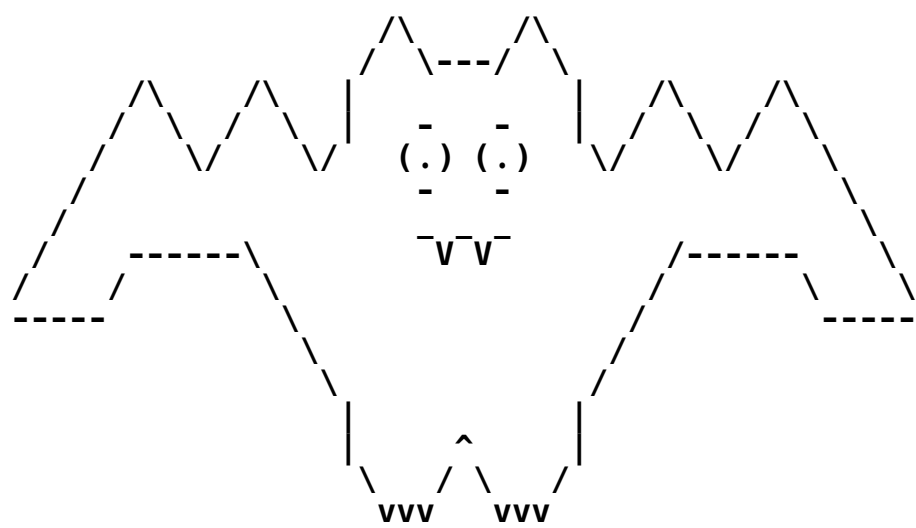


Figure 5: The Cursed Vampire or Fruitbat

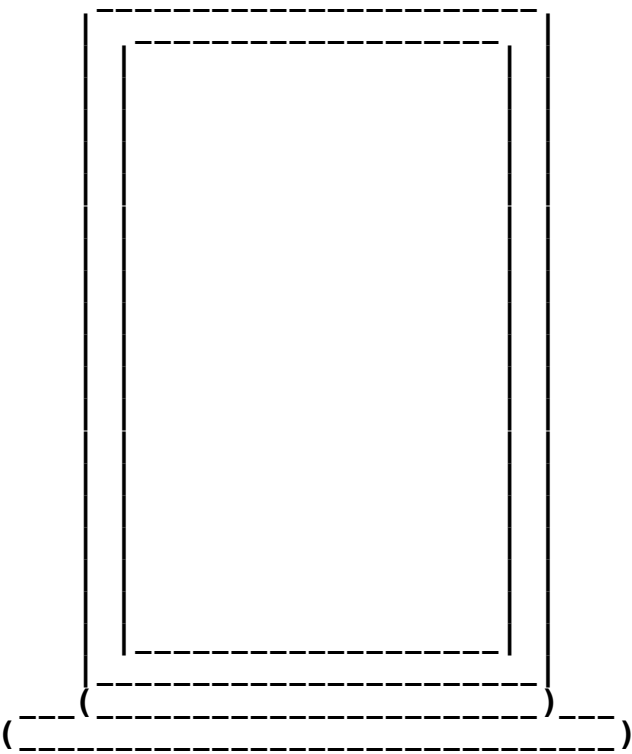


Figure 6: A Fine Mirror Showing The Reflection of a Vampire Bat

4.2. Avian Carriers

More famous than the Thrusted Pig [RFC1925] and more celebrated than the Infinite Monkey [RFC2795] is the Avian Carrier [RFC1149].

This scavenger of the sky comes in a variety of bright colors, perhaps an evolutionary trait enabling a hunter to distinguish the carriers and drop those it considers weakest, or maybe acting as a warning to predatory Buphyres so that they do not attack the carriers deemed most important by the flock.

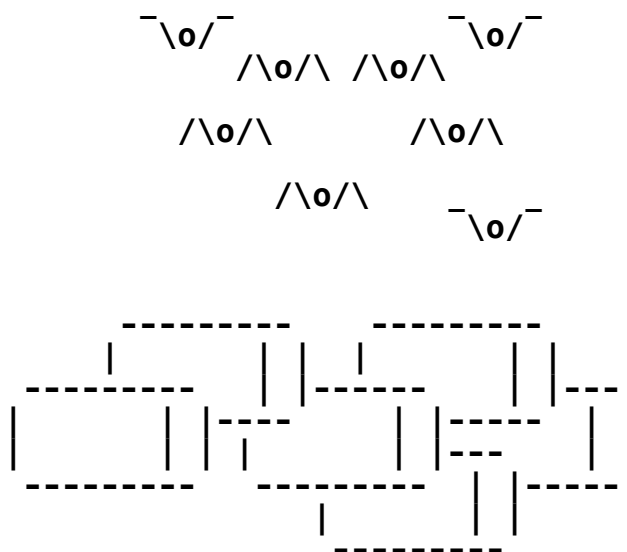


Figure 7: A Flock of Avian Carriers with a Nest of Packets

5. Man-Made Structures

"Man has become God and shapes the world at will" said the slightly disgruntled theologian. And who would dare argue this point that wanted to escape the conversation in time to get home for dinner?

5.1. Bauhaus

When Laura Ingalls Wilder was just starting out on her cover designs, she agonized about what shade her little house should be. She narrowly avoided madness thanks to the timely intervention of Professor Kandinsky, a prominent Moscow lawyer.

It has often been asserted that new art forms are needed to allow the inclusion of colors in IETF publications. Figure 8 clearly demonstrates this to be a fallacy.

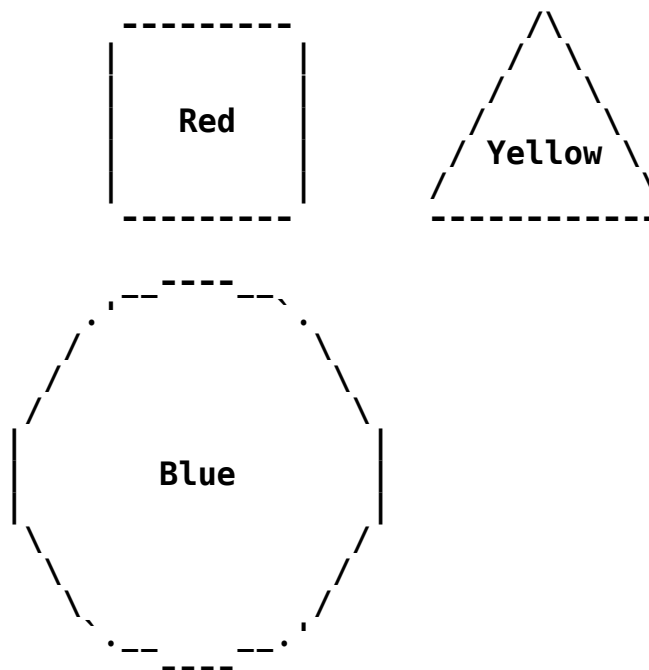


Figure 8: The Fundamentals of Bauhaus

5.2. The Gingerbread House

Many stories have been told of how young Hans and his sister, the equally young Gretha, came to be abandoned in the woods [TFTW]. However, it may have been Herr Grimm and his eponymous brother, Herr Grimm, who first recorded the existence of a house made of gingerbread (with all the trimmings).

Note that attempts to perform packet tracing using breadcrumbs will usually fail owing to avian carriers who like to keep the forest floor tidy (Section 4.2).

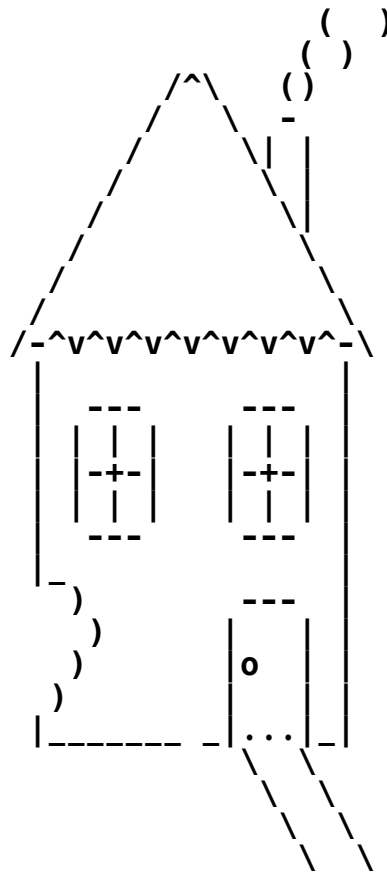


Figure 9: A Deserted and Partially Nibbled (or Byted) Gingerbread House

6. IANA Considerations

IANA might consider introducing a registry for Figure 8 to track the assignment of colours to shapes.

7. Security Considerations

Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage: but they do help. And with this in mind, our elders encourage us always to be mindful of the security and privacy of our eternal souls.

7.1. A Private Key

Keys that are shared are keys that other people have. If someone else has a key, they will use it. If you have a key, you will probably leave it in the lock or drop it in the street. Hence we conclude that keys are a security vulnerability.

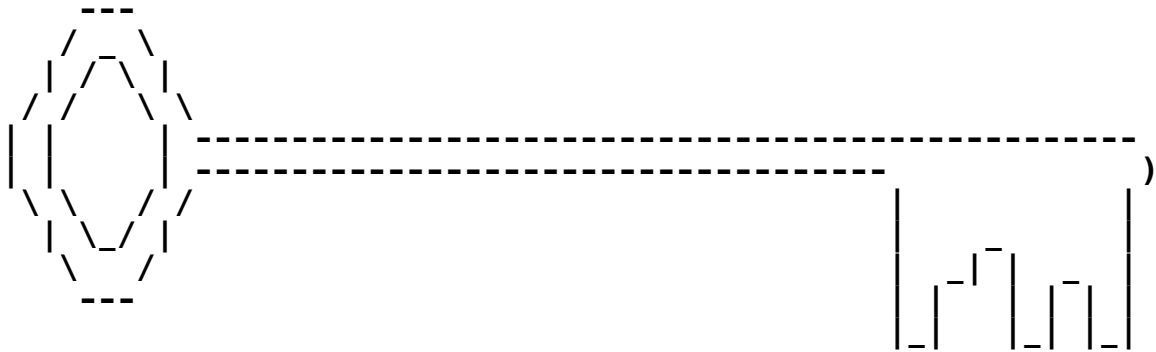


Figure 10: A Security Key

7.2. A Security Mechanism

Locks, on the other hand, are good. They can become rusted solid, meaning that no one can open them. What could be more secure?

And remember, a smile is the key that fits the lock to everybody's heart. So don't trust people who smile.

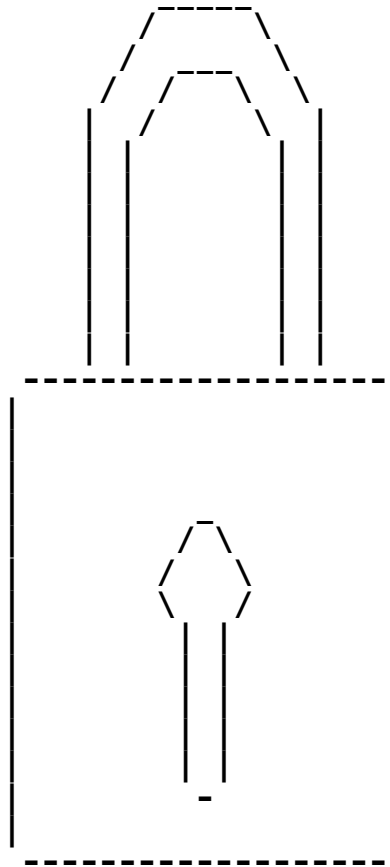


Figure 11: A General Purpose Security Mechanism

7.3. Backdoors

If you have a door, you are admitting (sic) a weakness. A closed door invites opening, and an open door invites ingress. Security lies in bricks and mortar.

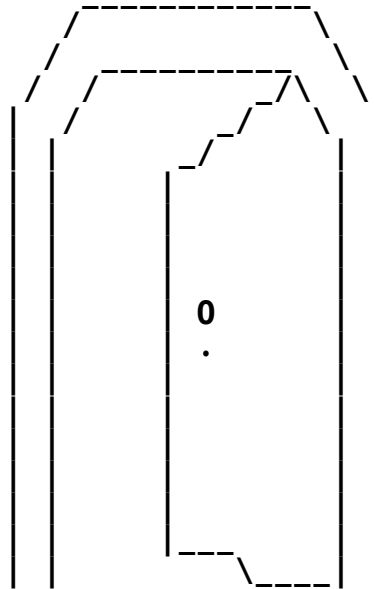


Figure 12: A Backdoor Left Conveniently Open

8. Manageability Considerations

Some of the wild beasts depicted in this tome are best confined to a managerie.

9. Morality Considerations

In accordance with advice offered in [RFC4041], this section considers the impact of this document on the public morals.

It is still the view of popular opinion and can be verified by reliable metrics that moral values are declining and that degeneracy is on the rise. One has only to look at the apostasy surrounding the True Use of Language as set forth in RFC 2119 [RFC2119] to know that the populace has become truly debauched.

9.1. Likelihood of Misuse by the Depraved

Care must be taken lest ASCII fall into the hands of disreputable characters.

9.2. Likelihood of Misuse by the Misguided

We should warn our children against engraving self-portraits in ASCII-art and sharing them with their friends as woodcuts or in other modern media. Recall that a picture, once made, lasts forever.

9.3. Likelihood of Misuse by Corporations

The very idea that someone might patent unicorn DNA is, of course, unthinkable. Large companies only have our best interests at heart.

9.4. Oversight Facilities

Adequate oversight of all things is performed by the RFC Editor. Who has a higher moral compass or a better sense of directional values?

9.5. Other Ways of Doing Things

Radical and subversive cliques, such as that established by the heretics, Georges Seurat and Paul Signac, may also be represented in ASCII art. However, doing so will, in almost every case, exceed the 72 character width limit used by all right-thinking people and must, therefore, be avoided by all who do not wish to be doomed to spend eternity in a dark corner with only dial-up access.

9.6. Concern for Wildlife

Never was a truer word spoken than when it was said that a duck may be somebody's mother. See also Section 4.2

10. References That May Be Informative to Those Who Know How To Read Them

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Acknowledgements

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L. S. Lowry was not harmed in the production of this document.

The work in Section 2.1 is based on an original lithograph by John De Scudder.

Without the very existence of Madame Flanagan, it would not have been possible or necessary to compile this volume.

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