File Over App
A Philosophy for Digital Longevity
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Key Takeaways
✓ Own your data in open formats
✓ Prefer plain text / Markdown
✓ Store locally first, sync second
✓ Choose tools that respect ownership
✓ Apps are ephemeral; files are forever

Durable File Formats
- .txt Plain Text
- .md Markdown
- .jpg Images
- .pdf Documents
- .html Web Pages

→ Readable for centuries

The Problem: Cloud Lock-In
- Data on Someone Else's Computers
- Proprietary File Formats
- Trapped Behind Logins & APIs

Example: Dropbox Paper
.paper files store URLs, not actual content

→ Services Shut Down

The Durability Test

The Time Test
"If you want your writing to still be readable on a computer from 2060 or 2160, it must be readable on a computer from 1960"

1960 ← TODAY → 2160
Plain text readable across all eras

Historical Precedent
- Egyptian Hieroglyphs — Ideas outlasted the chisels
- Paper Documents — Reading requires only eyeballs

FILE OVER APP
"The files you create are more important than the tools you use to create them"

The Solution: Local-First
- Data Stored Locally First
- Open Standard Formats
- Works Offline

Example: Obsidian
Plain Markdown files in a local folder you own

→ Full User Ownership

solves ... *enables* ... *inspires* ... *informs*

Tools That Embrace File Over App
- Obsidian (Markdown PKM)
- Logseq (Outliner)
- SilverBullet (Open-source PKM)
- Emacs + Org (Plain text)
- iA Writer (Markdown)
- Zettlr (Academic writing)

7 Ideals of Local-First Software (Ink & Switch)
1. No Spinners (Instant response)
2. Multi-Device (Sync everywhere)
3. Optional Network (Works offline)
4. Seamless Collab (Real-time editing)
5. The Long Now (Data lasts forever)
6. Security & Privacy (E2E encryption)
7. Ownership (User control)