

Ersei 'n Stuff

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Saying Goodbye to GitHub

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I've been using GitHub since I was eleven years old. To be fair, I didn't really *understand* git at the time, but I was able to fumble my way through it (barely). I do remember getting banned because eleven year old me decided to tell the internet my age on GitHub, and the ToS prohibited me from using the service until I was at least thirteen.

Anyway.

GitHub and I have had some nice times together. And I think it's time for me to say goodbye.

Way back when, young little Ersei was learning Python. I made a little program that extracts the Exif geolocation data from pictures and puts them on a map. The source code is available [here](#). I needed a way to distribute that app, and I don't remember how but I found GitHub.

My memory is a little fuzzy, so bear with me.

I remember uploading the .exe for the Windows-only [PyInstaller](#) app to the GitHub releases of the original [repository](#). I remember going through that first "create your repository" setup for the first time. I can just *upload* what I've made and the whole world can use it!

Every time I found a repo there that I enjoyed, I gave it a star. Every time someone liked one of my repos, they give it a star. There was discovery of new programs, libraries, things I would've never found without GitHub. There was magic in that discovery, that starry-eyed time where I could explore and learn and *grow*.

I feel like GitHub has lost that magic.

Before, what felt like an interesting and *independent* website, has gone to shit. Yes, the [Microsoft acquisition](#) changed things, but I was willing to give things a shot. Hopefully, not much will change, right?

And not much did. Everything kept chugging on. I don't remember any grievances. Everything kept going. I remember the GitHub dashboard changing from whatever it was then to whatever it was now. I remember being mad at that, then getting used to it.

And something has happened that I don't think I can overlook. GitHub started **training AI** on code hosted on their website. I looked at it with the same glee as I did with every other discovery on GitHub. I didn't understand what it meant at the time (how far I've come in two years, I guess). Then I started reading reports of Copilot regurgitating GPL code. I really didn't understand how these AI tools worked at the time. I thought it was more human. That it was learning.

Lies. All of it. It's a stochastic parrot. No learning is going on. It's guessing based off the billions of parameters it has ingested.

All those years ago, when I started using GitHub, I found a love for open source. I became (and still am) a believer in the **copyleft movement**. It let me learn, to gain the skills I have now. It let me grow to who I am today. I felt righteous anger at news of GPL violations by soulless corporations stealing the hard work of independent programmers and assimilating it into their own proprietary software. I was distraught over the open-source community being *exploited*. That there was nothing being given back.

On June 21, 2022, GitHub Copilot is now a subscription service for \$10 a month, or \$100 a year (for individuals).

*On March 22, 2023, GitHub releases **Copilot X** based on the new GPT-4 models by OpenAI.*

For just \$10 a month or \$100 a year, you too can get programming help with no obligation to give back to anyone!

I love open-source. And I love giving back. Using GitHub does not align with that goal. The code that was regurgitated by the model is marketed as "AI generated" and available for use for any project you want. Including proprietary ones. It's **laundering** open-source code. All of the decades of knowledge and uncountable hours of work is being, well, stolen. There is nothing being given back.

It's not an equal exchange. I can't, in good consciousness, support GitHub. I can't betray the community that sparked and grew my interest in software. I can't betray those millions of people whose shoulder I am standing on. I can't betray what I believe in—giving back.

So I've left GitHub. It was nice while it lasted.

Q: So why switch now, if these issues have been going on for years?

A: Well, there just aren't many places I can go. I could go to GitLab, but they have their own fair share of issues and a disgusting UI/UX. Codeberg was nice too, and was very GitHub-like so the transition would be easier. But I wanted something that would last and be reliable. Something that aligned with my philosophy of open-source. As I was on a student discount spree as of late (including GitHub Pro, yes), I decided to go with **SourceHut**. I'm going to try it out, and see how it goes. So far, it's a wonderful experience.

Q: But Ersei, you still have a GitHub account! Why?

A: I can't quite delete my account since there are still contributions I wish to make to other projects. I won't let my personal philosophy restrict my contributions based on where they are hosted. I also have a large project that will be infeasible to move over, due to user contributions and general lock-in. Ah yes, the lock-in. I've been using GitHub for so long that I've been completely absorbed into their platform. Pull requests, issues, GitHub Actions, etcetera etcetera. It's hard to move, and this is by design. Remember, GitHub is a for-profit company run by Microsoft.

Q: What about the social features of GitHub? I enjoy the discovery and star features. There just isn't any community like it. Where can I get that?

A: The TL;DR is that you can't. A large social network (and that is what GitHub is) is large because everyone joined it, and everyone is making content for it. There really can't be anything quite like it. If you're looking for discovery, there are other places, but GitHub's recommendation algorithm (as basic as it is) is going to find you projects that you wouldn't have otherwise. It's unfortunate.

I think the tradeoffs are worth it. Do you?

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