

subconscious.substack.com

Date: 2021-05-27

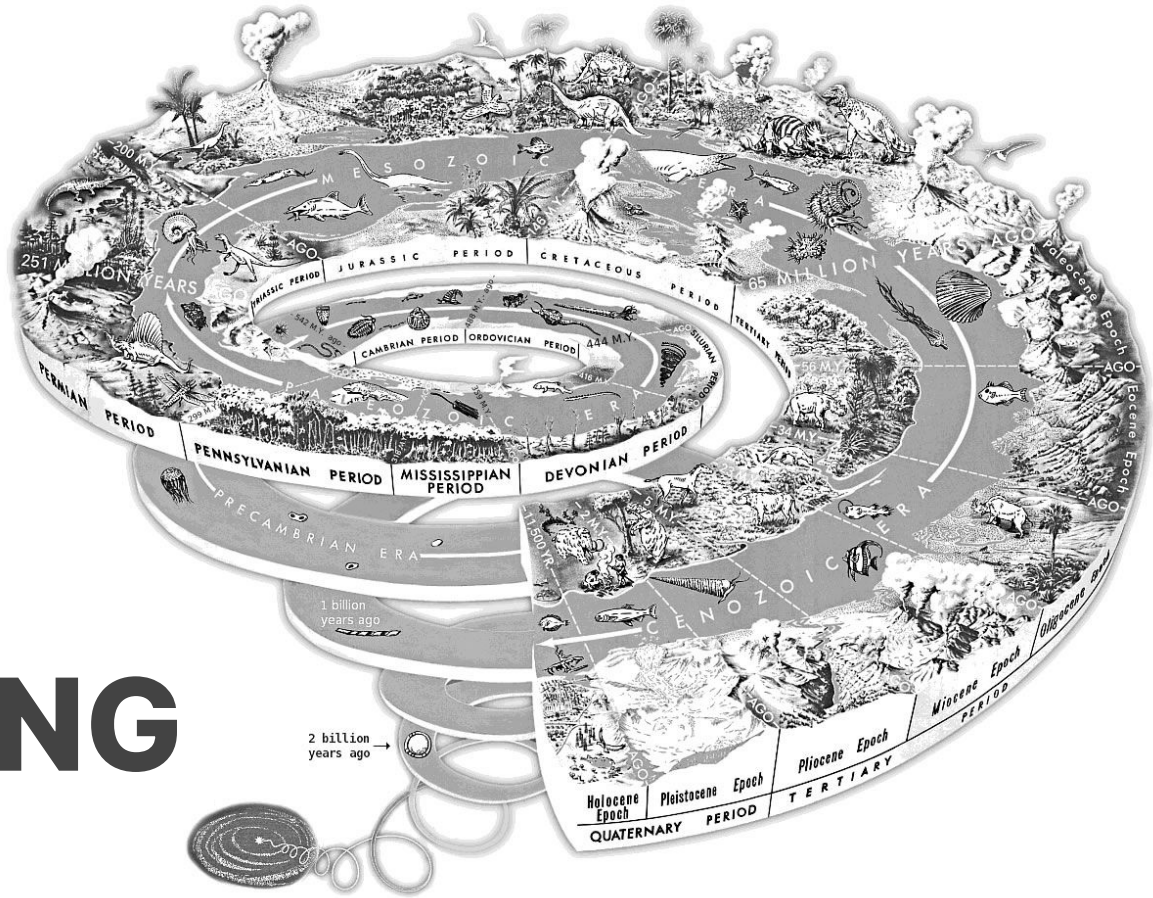
Author: Gordon Brander

Subtext: markup for note-taking

Subconscious: an internet of ideas.

A distributed hypertext system
for note-taking

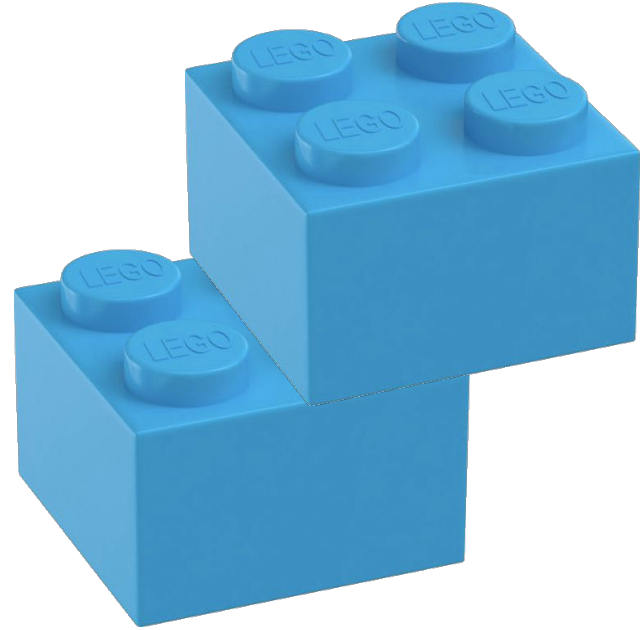
SELF- ORGANIZING IDEAS



Self-organization requires...



A unit



A mechanism of composition



Prose is hard to
decompose



1 unit = 1 idea

Today the book is already...
an outdated mediation
between two different filing
systems. For everything
that matters is to be found
in the card box of the
researcher who wrote it,
and the scholar studying it
assimilates it into his own
card index.

Walter Benjamin

Writings 1913-1926



Evolution

Evolution emerges in any system with mutation, heredity, selection.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution



Evolution

Evolution is change in heritable...

en.wikipedia.org



"Evolution is the general condition to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must bow and which they must satisfy henceforward if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a curve that all lines must follow."

Teilhard de Chardin

Teilhard de Chardin

Jesuit priest, scientist, paleontologist, theologian, philosopher and teacher.
Popularized the concept of the Noosphere.

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Heading

Text

Text

Transclude

Image

Text

Text

Transclude



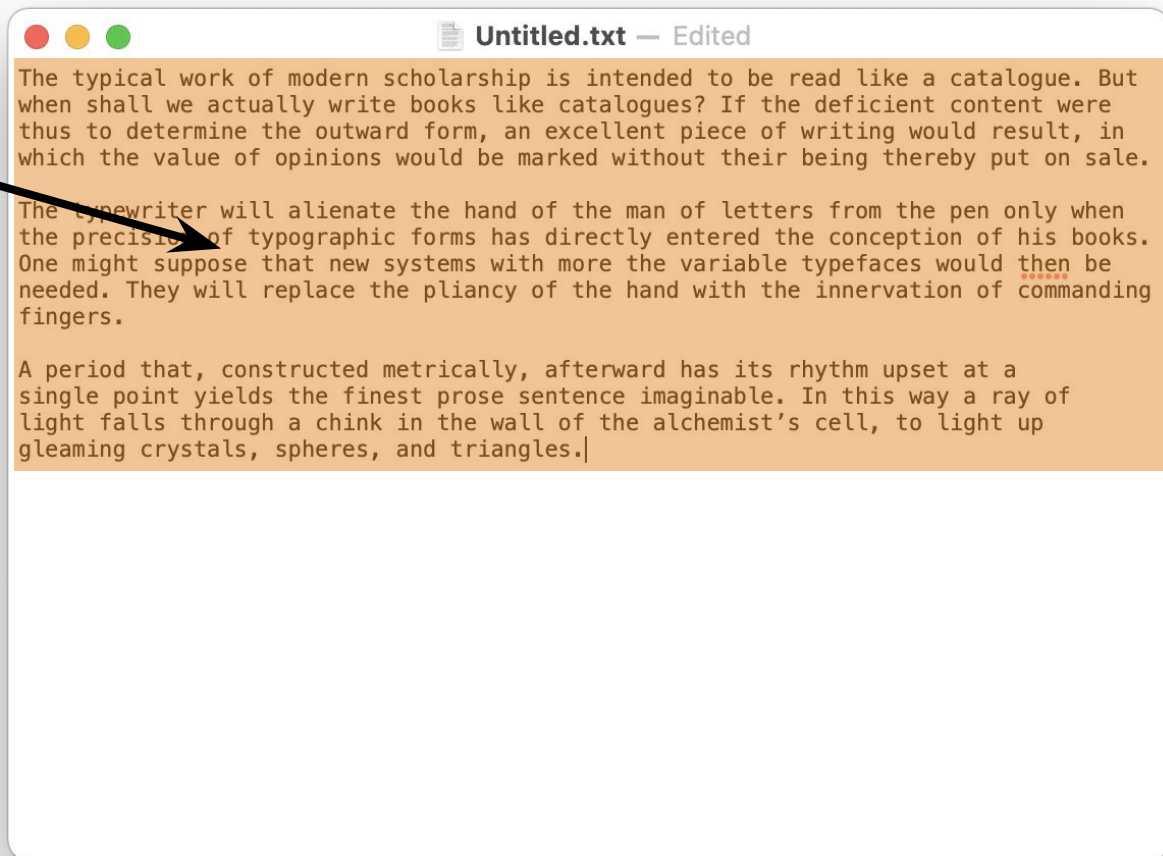
Untitled.txt — Edited

The typical work of modern scholarship is intended to be read like a catalogue. But when shall we actually write books like catalogues? If the deficient content were thus to determine the outward form, an excellent piece of writing would result, in which the value of opinions would be marked without their being thereby put on sale.

The typewriter will alienate the hand of the man of letters from the pen only when the precision of typographic forms has directly entered the conception of his books. One might suppose that new systems with more the variable typefaces would then be needed. They will replace the pliancy of the hand with the innervation of commanding fingers.

A period that, constructed metrically, afterward has its rhythm upset at a single point yields the finest prose sentence imaginable. In this way a ray of light falls through a chink in the wall of the alchemist's cell, to light up gleaming crystals, spheres, and triangles.]

One big chunk





What about HTML?

DevTools - www.reddit.com/r/adventuretime/

Elements Console Sources Network Performance Memory Security Application Lighthouse

▼<div id="2x-container">
▼<div class="1VP69d9lK-Wk9zok0ayll isNotInIcons2020" style="--background:#FFFFFF;--canvas:#DAE0E6">
<div tabindex="1"></div>
▼<div class="hci0r5UGrnYrZxB1tX9s" id="SHORTCUT_FOCUSABLE_DIV" tabindex="1">
▶<style>...</style>
▶<div class="subredditvars-r-adventuretime">...</div>
▶<style>...</style>
▼<div class="subredditvars-r-adventuretime">
▼<div class="_inxEQ15D2bx2jxDILRHemb" aria-hidden="false">
▼<div>
▼<div class="qYj03fU5CXf5t2Fc5iSvq ListingLayout-outerContainer"> flex
▼<div class="_33erTQ46yfKeF286B--oMJ ListingLayout-backgroundContainer" style="--pseudo-before-background:#DAE0E6">...</div>
▼<div class="_3ozFt0e6WpJEMUtXD0IvtU">
▶<div class="q4a8asW0WfdniAbgNhMh">...</div>
<div style="max-width:100%">...</div>
▼<div style="max-width:100%" class="_1vylCp-v-tE5QvZovwrAsa"> flex
▼<div class="_10VBWltHoSPfGCRaPzPtf_3nSp9cdBqqlC3jCqdMr2L">
▶<div class="wBtDilkw_rtT2K5x3eie">...</div> flex
<div tabindex="0">...</div>
▼<div class="_2w46Gjy0K9f8VUpIbu6q1B"> flex
▼<div class="CSWTyRErVZSY90MmYtVb_2KYStU8hK1Y9Pz3XXd9zFo_2G32Ut0BL64CVk7JruZiZ"> flex
▶<button class="_1NwneimPwP34LMpJkmKhk">...</button> flex
▶<button class="_2t7CUoNL1Bt20iCmaqpTi">...</button> flex
</div>
▼<div class="rpBJOHq2PR60pnwJlUyP0">
▶<div>...</div>
▼<div>
▼<div>
▼<div class="_1oQyIsiPHYt6nx7V0md1sz_3xuFbFM3vCqdGuGhghn0 scrollerItem_30kp11fjcAw9I9wtLo8frE_1qftyZQ2bhqP62lbPjoGAh Post_t3_nd7qtj" id="t3_nd7qtj" tabindex="1">
▶<div class="_23h0-EcaBUorIHC-J2yh6J" style="width:40px;border-left:4px solid transparent">...</div>
flex
▼<div class="_1poyrkZ7g36PawDueRza-J_2uazWzYzM0Qndpzt5Fu3EX" style="background:#FFFFFF" data-click-id="background">
▼<article class="yn9v_hQEhJlRNZ10xspBA"> flex
▼<div class="_32pB70DBwG30Sx1u_17g58" data-click-id="body"> flex
▼<div class="_14-YvdFIW5iVve5wdgmET"> flex
▼<div class="cZPZHMe-UCZ8htPodMyJ5"> flex
▼<div class="_3AStxqlmQsrZuIIFP9xSg nU4Je7n-eSXSTBAPMYt8">
Posted by
▶<div class="_2mHuuvyV9doV3zwbZPtIPG">...</div> == \$0
▶<div class="NAURX0ARMMhJ5eqxQrLQW">...</div> grid

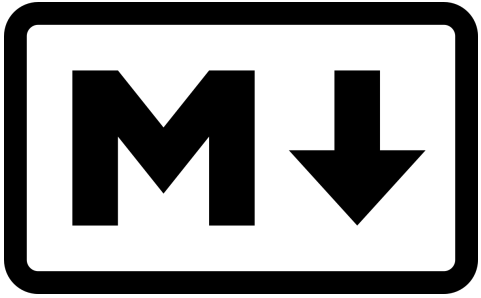
... iVve5wdgmET div.cZPZHMe-UCZ8htPodMyJ5 div_3AStxqlmQsrZuIIFP9xSg.nU4Je7n-eSXSTBAPMYt8 div_2mHuuvyV9doV3zwbZPtIPG ...

Styles Computed Layout Event Listeners >>

Filter :hov .cls +

element.style {
}
}_2mHuuvyV9doV3zwbZPtIPG { index.m.less:1
display: inline-block;
-ms-flex: 0 0 auto;
flex: 1 0 0 auto;
}
}_2mHuuvyV9doV3zwbZPtIPG { index.m.less:1
display: inline-block;
-ms-flex: 0 0 auto;
flex: 1 0 0 auto;
}
html, body, div, span, applet, (index):43
object, iframe, h1, h2, h3, h4, h5,
h6, p, blockquote, pre, a, abbr, acronym,
address, big, button, cite, code, del, dfn, em,
img, input, ins, kbd, q, s, samp, small,
strike, strong, sub, sup, tt, var, b, u, i,
center, dl, dt, dd, ol, ul, li, fieldset, form,
label, legend, table, caption, tbody, tfoot,
thead, tr, th, td, article, aside, canvas,
details, embed, figure, figcaption, footer,
header, hgroup, menu, nav, output, ruby,
section, summary, time, mark, audio, video {
margin: 0;
padding: 0;
border: 0;
font-size: 100%;
font: inherit;
vertical-align: baseline;
}
div { user agent stylesheet
display: block;
}
Inherited from div_3AStxqlmQsrZuIIFP9xS...
}_3AStxqlmQsrZuIIFP9xSg { (index):653
font-size: 12px;
font-weight: 400;
line-height: 16px;
-ms-flex-align: center;
align-items: center;
color: inherit;
}

More **structural variation**
= more **context** needed
to determine **meaning**




```
**bold** vs __bold__  
*italic* vs _italic_
```

```
[link](http://example.com)  
[link][id]
```

```
# Heading  
## Heading  
### Heading
```

```
Heading  
=====
```

```
Heading  
-----
```

```
***  
---
```

```
[id]: http://example.com "An example"
```

= Structural variation
= Text formatting matters
= Complicated AST

No official spec, ambiguity.

Text style = implicit part of format.

Many syntax variants.

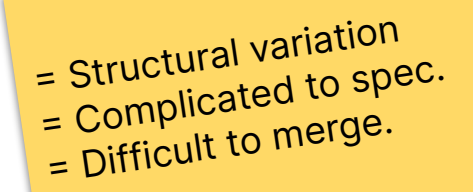
Many flavors.

Many heading levels, many list levels.

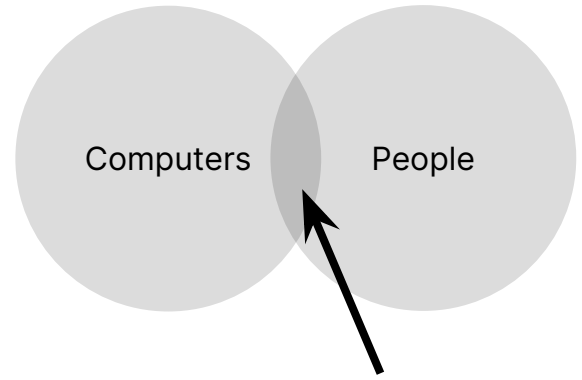
HTML escape hatch.

✓ Hand-authoring HTML

✗ Stand-alone structural markup language

A yellow sticky note with a slight shadow, tilted at an angle. It contains three lines of text, each preceded by an equals sign.

= Structural variation
= Complicated to spec.
= Difficult to merge.



- ✓ Simple for people
- ✓ Simple for computers
- ✓ Meaningful for both
- ✓ Easy to read and write as text



Untitled.txt — Edited

Heading

Plain text

- List item
- List item

> Quoted text

& example.csv

& <https://example.com>

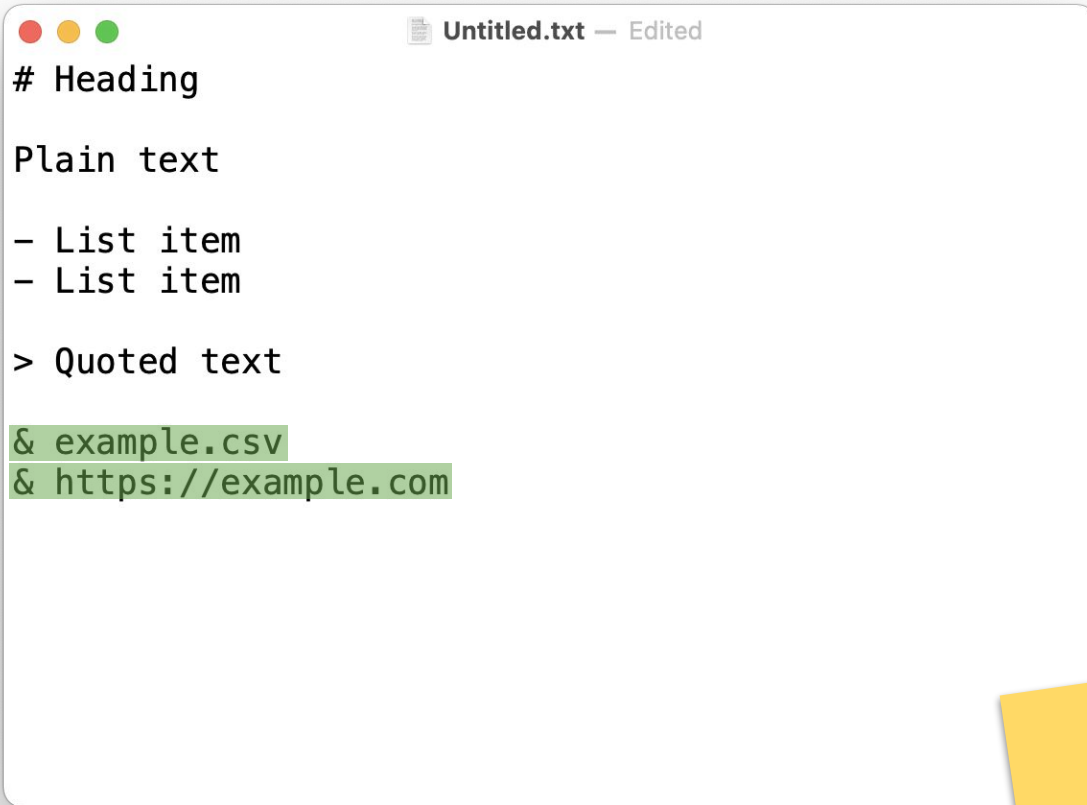
Line-oriented



Flat list of
typed blocks

Notes as data: “CSV for thought”

- ✓ Merge docs = concat
- ✓ Excerpt = take first text block
- ✓ Select all quotes from notes
- ✓ Generate TOC from heading blocks
- ✓ Generate link graph from link blocks
- ✓ Find all backlinks, append them



Untitled.txt — Edited

Heading

Plain text

- List item
- List item

> Quoted text

& example.csv

& <https://example.com>

Transcludes!

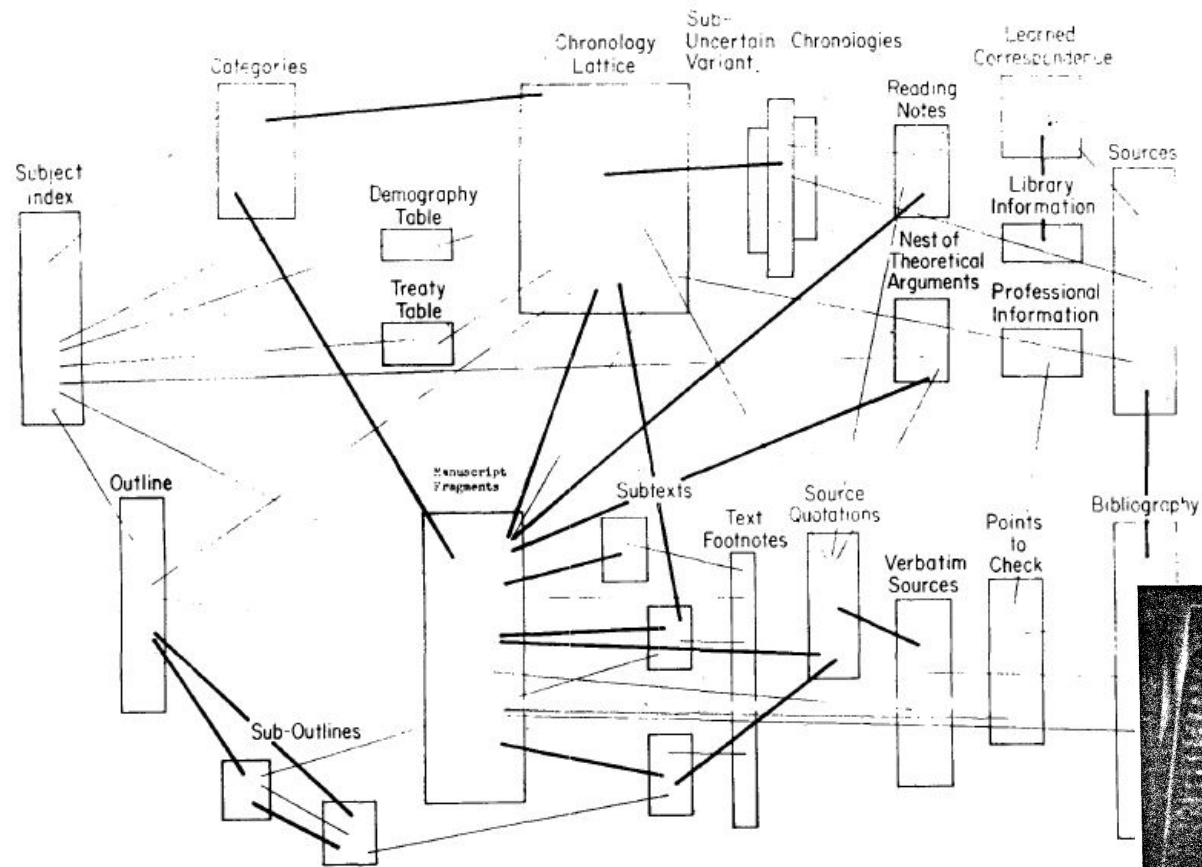
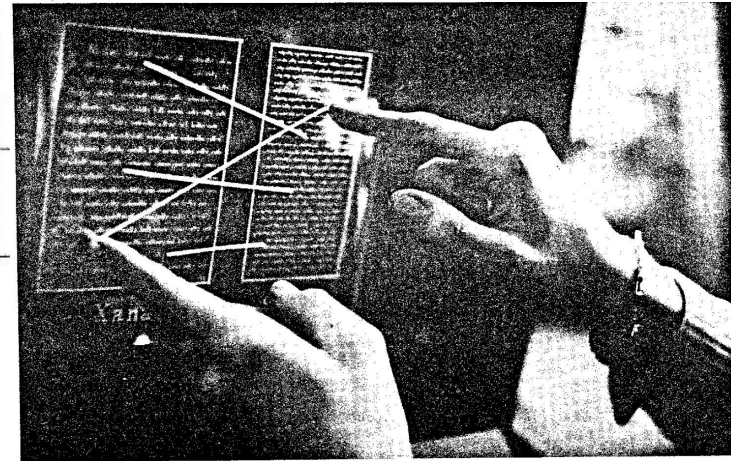


FIGURE 4—ELF's capacity for total filing: hypothetical use by historian. Thin lines indicate links; heavy rules indicate some of same entries.

Xanadu by way
of Markdown?



**github.com/gordonbrander/subtext
subconscious.substack.com**

subconscious.substack.com

Date: 2021-05-27

Author: Gordon Brander

Thanks

Prior art

- [CSV](#) - spiritual inspiration
- [Runic](#) - initial syntax inspiration
- [Gemini](#) - another line-oriented hypertext format
- ELF (Nelson, 1965) - flat-list hypertext
- [Emacs Outline Mode](#)
- [Markdown](#)