



Harkness Autocrat Esteemed Journal

THE TECHNOLOGY HOUSE PERIODICAL

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A Note From the Autocrat

Sincerely, Me

Dear all, welcome back from the brink of death! Yes, Covid-19 has come for all of us (and supposedly gone, though it still crops up occasionally), and Tech House is back in business. We have a sterling bunch of new recruits that we're looking forward to having in house, a sterling bunch of old farts that we're looking forward to swapping out with newer models, and a whole bunch of traditions to bring back from the dead. One of these is the TH Autocrat, which as everyone knows is lovingly kept locked away in the library drawers, and is so well-respected that it would be used for kindling if we still had a fireplace.

Because this is a surprise issue, no articles have been solicited from any individual; all works are creative and represent only the ideals, values, and good horse sense that my mama raised me with, instead of any shared sense of responsibility. However, if we wish to keep beating this dead horse until it blinks one eye and kicks me in the crotch, future issues will require the fertile imaginations of others. Please email me (or autocrat@techhouse.org if I can figure out how to get it running again) with your thoughts, projects, and submissions – and direct any complaints to Sage '23, who is not associated in any way. Thanks!

Smash and Towerfall Rankings Me Again

Below are the rankings for the Tech House 2023 Smash Ladder, followed by the Towerfall Ladder:

- 1?. Tristen '26
 - 1?. Evan '25
 - 1?. The Honorable, Honorary Will '06
- I dunno, we haven't actually done a Smash ladder. My bad.

2. AJ? Luke?
3. Everyone Else

Towerfall:

1. Francis '24
2. Jonathan '25
3. Towerfall, anyone?
4. Excuse me, would you –
5. AJ, do you want to play?
6. Please, I'm doing a report...
7. Sigh...

Peter's Beard Still Snazzy

Also Me

Peter '25, longtime Tech House member, Housing Manager, and AV deity, has once again won the Annual Tech House Beard Contest. Other close contestants include Vice President Noah '24 and Owen '26.

"In terms of sheer size, yes, the other contestants have him beat," says Jennifer Rodriguez, beardologist at Providence College, who was not

associated with the contest. “But if you look at the clean lines on the side of his face, you can see why he won. You can tell he spends a long time at the mirror getting it nice and even, and I think part of the reason he won is because it’s clear how much deliberation went into it. Also, there’s a very gradual process where it becomes sideburns, and – speaking as a woman rather than a professional here – that really turns me on.”

“Peter’s been known to emphasize his beard repeatedly,” said Jonathan ’25, a classmate of Peter’s, whose facial hair was not nominated for the competition. “Whenever he’s providing guidance on a project or looking at a difficult DL project, he’ll always rub his beard between his index and thumb, like his hand is some kind of vibrating beard cradle. And you can tell it’s not even intentional, it’s just so fluid how he does it. I’ve been working on it for a long time and I’m nowhere close; it’s very impressive how he’s got it down pat.”

We didn’t interview Peter for this piece about Peter, but here’s what we imagine we would have said if we had consulted him beforehand. “I owe it all to Michelle [’25],” he might have said, running his hand through his nattily trimmed chin-jungle. “It’s a very long road to winning this contest, and there were a lot of times that I almost gave up hope. I mean, you have to wait for a year to win this conversation and occasionally use a razor – it’s a lot to ask. In these difficult times, Michelle has been my rock, reassuring me that I do look good in a beard and, though she would support me whatever happened, she’d really prefer I weren’t clean-shaven for it.”

There have been a couple close calls. “I’ve had a stalker-stache for a while back in freshman year,” Peter might have admitted. “Well, not really for a while. Just because it was funny, not because it looked good. And I was clean-shaven at birth, you know. But I’ve had a good long think about it, and I think the beard was the right choice. And I’m going to stick with it.”

And thank God he has. Peter’s beard has become an iconic part of Tech House, from its soft fade to its photogenic owner, and we don’t know what we would do without it. In fact, we’ve been considering scrapping the Tech House logo entirely, and just having be an image of Peter’s Beard. Finally, we can all wear it!

Treasurer Promises Less Divisive Budget Proposals; Lies

Guess Who?

We thought we’d seen the last of it when Mario Party Superstars entered the fray, winning its place in the digital shelf of the switch by a controversial two votes. We thought we would be free of the bluster, the shouts, a thanksgiving-family dinner brought to life. Yes, it led our blood to boil and our eyebrows to twitch ferociously as we heard point upon counterpoint, verbal blows shimmering above our heads. But now – but now! Instead of a proposal of a single kitchen rack, we are given an option among seven, seven majestic works of plastic and steel, with nothing to delineate them but the calls of our hearts. Filled with pretty ceramic dishes, how shall we tell them apart? Surely such a poll will lead to a win narrower than any other win in house, with so many options to choose among. Will it not fester in the hearts of those who did not choose the final option to see it in the kitchen every morning? Will we ever silence the rumbles that another should have been chosen in its stead? Will we not form into clans, the YASONIC versus the MOUKABAL, or the ever-ominous Amazon’s Choice? Is the KitchenAid’s 20,000 ratings worth the \$70 it would cost? Will we not grab for our forks and our spatulas, never daring to face each other during Pancakes, slicing into our bacon with unwarranted vigor?

We are lost in this maze of options, there shall be no decision among them. Treasurer, what choice is this! We shall burrow in the web of our lies, we shall be stuck with the guilt of what we have chosen and the regret of what we didn’t. Treasurer, budget proposer, save us from this misery! Ask not for a show of hands among your purchasing options, but stand firm. Give unto us a choice, not of seven, but of two or one, that we might decide more easily among them – for too much choice gave nothing good to anyone. How shall we confirm this? With Iyengar and Lepper 2000, the psychologists who created the Jam Experiment, wherefrom a fewer number of jams made people more likely to buy, and be happier with, their outcomes. Yes, the experiment showed that six jams was actually a good number for people to choose among, but, uh... seven is more than six. Therefore seven is a bad number. Yeah, let’s go with that. SCIENCE supports our argument, or at least at a very broad level it supports the general trend that we’re making a specific argument about, and SCIENCE doesn’t specifically refute our sample size, so there, that proves it.

Anyhow, what I'm trying to say is that we're not good enough at making decisions for this. I mean, I went to a thrift store yesterday and I saw they were offering a third shirt for free if you bought two, so then I had to find two shirts that I wanted in addition to the one that I was already going to buy so that I got my money's worth, and it was just a lot. I didn't know what to do and I ended up buying three dog biscuits from petsmart instead because at least they came in a bulk package. If you told me we were buying this kitchen rack and not that one, I'd be fine with it, but now that I have a choice? Yikes! I'll never be the same again.

Treasurer, here's what I'm really asking. Maybe we should send a bunch of people to different kitchen supply stores with a package of silverware and some plates. They can try out the different products at the store and report back. Then we'll ask the Critical Review to write up each experience as if it were a class, because that's the only format where reviews make sense to me. Once we do that, it'll be easy to choose something that we all like. Or maybe it's a power-play? I don't even know any more. Get me out of this mess! My one consolation is that if I've learned anything from my time spent playing your previous proposal, it's that the joy is in the journey – so I look forward to wherever this journey takes us.

CS300 Holds Strong Lead Over CS32

Tech Bro

Coming out of the gates strong in January, it's CS300 with Malte, I mean look at that course go, it's swooping up all the TH members left right and center. They're forming groups and taking over the lounge and they might even start charging admission. Meanwhile Tim's CS32 is off to a slow start with only a single TH member Luke '23 in the course, look at that showing, hope you didn't place your bets too high folks! Normally 32's got a large lead but many Tech Housers took it last year and that's got to hurt its chances. It's staying steady and here's the add/drop period, add/drop add/drop add/drop! And the enrollment stays steady, looks like that's not going to be a comeback for 32.

All right folks, we've got two more deadlines ahead of us and here's the next one coming around the curve, it's recruitment season because if you can't bring the Tech House to the CS course you can bring the CS students into the Tech House! And it's, oh, that's good for 32 because Milo '26 has joined House,

Milo and Luke are working on the project together, that's got to be a recruitment bonus! But it looks like Melvin '26 has also joined House and that's another lead for CS300, and now 300 is leading head and shoulders over 32. Well folks, it looks pretty clear-cut but remember that people can always drop until the last week and with courses like these there's no ruling it out! We'll keep you updated as the news approaches and on the best CS contenders for next semester at TH!

Exclusive Interview: Tristen '26, Who Does Not Have A Snake

The following is an exclusive interview with Tristen '26, who does not have a snake. Please note that as a public-facing newspaper, we are obligated to follow ResLife standards in our publishing practices. In addition, the following is entirely fictional.

TH Autocrat: Hello there, Tristen! How are you enjoying your time in house?

Tristen: Hey, how are you? Yeah, it's pretty cool, there's always lots of stuff going on.

TH: That's cool, glad you're having a good time. Is it all right if I ask you a couple questions?

Tristen: Sure, I mean go for it.

TH: Thanks. So I hear you **do not** have a snake?

Tristen: This is off-record, right?

TH: Totally off-record. *crosses fingers*

Tristen: Okay, sure. So officially I have a fish living in my room and I also **do not** have a snake. I **did not** get it over break and **have not** kept it in my room ever since then.

TH: Very cool. What kind of fish is it? What do you feed your **non**-snake? How do you keep it warm?

Tristen: I forgot. (Ed: the reporter assigned to this case was incompetent and forgot what Tristen said. Tristen, who owns the fish, did not forget what species of fish he owns.) I feed my **non-existent** snake frozen mice, and **do not** keep it warm with a heating pad.

A series of further discussions about feeding and keeping pet snakes, which is not included here and also did not happen.

TH: Well thank you Tristen, that's very illuminating! I'd love to ask about your other interests, but we only have so much room in our paper and you've been talking for nearly an hour! If you want to actually be featured in the Autocrat, i.e. choosing the words you're saying instead of having them be assigned to you, please reach out – we'd love to hear from you.

Tristen: Good to know. Thanks for having me!

Luke Finally Fills Up His Blackboard

Tao Terence

We have some exciting news! Social Chair Luke ‘23, Mathematician by birth and English by choice, has finally filled up the library blackboard with math. The contents cannot be repeated here due to our bad drawing skills and lack of LaTeX support, but trust us when we say it’s intimidating – a whole wall of dizzying genius.

Luke has a particularly long and deep history with this blackboard. Indeed, TH members going into the library for a quick nip of gin will often find him grappling against it, crushing the chalk into a fine paste as he smears it in patterns across the dark surface. The sweat trickles down from his furrowed forehead as he lovingly strokes the blackboard with his white probing calcium carbonate, which he holds tightly in his right hand as he moves it up and down the board. Quivering with the flow of air, the blackboard trembles under his touch, as he fills it up completely –

(Ed. I apologize. Because we have a limited payroll and a punishing deadline, we thought we’d reduce our workload by utilizing ChatGPT, the new text generation software. Unfortunately, because it was typed on Luke’s computer, it had already learned how to “make it sensual” and responded to the above text prompt accordingly. The remainder of this text will only be written by a human. We apologize again for the interruption.)

The main problem with Luke’s herculean task was not putting enough content on the board, but the fact that other people kept erasing it. Every time he cleared a space for new problem sets, other chalkwork would be added in its place. “I don’t want anybody but Luke touching me, but all these people keep writing stuff on me without my consent,” said the blackboard when we spoke to it on the issue. “My Luke is hard at work on an equation, something that’s going to make both of us famous, and bam! Somebody comes in with a piece of felt and wipes it all away. It makes me so angry I could spew curse words, if it weren’t for the fact that I’m festooned with them already. How could they get rid of this perfection just to contribute a picture of a tyrannosaurus rex going skydiving? I should be used to uncover the mysteries of the universe, not transmit your love letters. The only love letter I want to have is the face of Luke in front of me, showing me the face of God.”

(Ed. I again apologize. I assigned this to one of our junior staff writers, and I showed him what ChatGPT

had already written and told him to rewrite it and make it more respectable. Instead, he seems to have found it funny and continued in the same vein. I can’t rewrite the thing from scratch with the kind of deadline we have approaching, but I’m going to finish it myself. Luke, I apologize for any insinuations made in this article that you have any kind of relationship with this blackboard other than Platonic.)

While Luke is more than able to remove the notes that other people made, there’s one thing that’s prevented him from using the board entirely – the girl on the swing. Drawn in chalk on the rightmost edge of the blackboard and commonly believed to be a Banksy, the section has been designated a historic site and cannot be modified. It was only after the Great Eraser Storm of March 8th that this situation changed. Though we deeply mourn the loss of this historic artifact, its absence has provided Luke a new impetus to create works in its honor, and on Saturday, March 11th, the work was finally complete. Spanning however long the blackboard is and however high the blackboard is, his mural of mathematics traverses from the edges of topology to the nodes of graph theory and dazzles all onlookers.

“At last, we can stop buying chalk,” said Treasurer Heidi ‘24 when learning about this astonishing feat. “I’ve been waiting to rectify that hole in our expenses for a long time, and it’s finally here. We’re going to purchase a layer of epoxy and cover the whole thing in varnish, so that it will never be moved again – it will be a testament to the man’s genius and our newly stable budget. Also, we were going to have to kick him out anyways before he starts charging us for the drinks he always buys for Saturday nights, so really, he couldn’t have finished his project at a better time.”

Luke will be honored at Alumni Weekend with a Presidential Medal, a medal from Crayola’s sales division, a DVD collection including Good Will Hunting, A Beautiful Mind, and Roots, and a firm handshake from Samuel Blackboardus himself. Though it may come as a moment of heartbreak to the creator of Girl on a Swing, who is rumored to be visiting for the weekend, to everyone else it will be a moment of satisfaction on seeing a job well done.

Psst! Hey, you! Yeah, you over there! I’ll have to make this quick because they’re sure to notice me soon, but you have to help me! I’ve been stuck in this newspaper for the past three days and I don’t think I’m gonna be able to get out! Can you help me? They’ll see me any second and when they do, they’ll

Sage '23 and the Presidential Cat Me-ow!

Once upon a time there was a member of Tech House named Sage. Sage was a friend of all the animals, but she had a special place in her heart for dogs and cats. She would show pictures of her cat to everyone who was also willing to look at pictures of her boyfriend, and she played a Switch game where she would lead a cat colony except she didn't play it anymore.

One day, Sage had a brilliant beyond brilliant idea. What if we got a real live cat for Tech House and made it the President? Then there wouldn't be any debates about who should be President and there wouldn't be any problems with recruitment because everyone would want to live in a house with a cat in it. She would love to have a cat in house, and to show her commitment, she would even be the first Presidential Pooper Scooper.

All of Tech House agreed that it was a wonderful idea. It was too expensive to adopt a cat, but they managed to find a good one on Facebook Marketplace that someone couldn't take with them when they moved. So they rented a U-Haul and installed the cat in house.

At first things were great: the cat loved Sage, who had gone to pick her up, and hated everyone else. But soon there were problems. The cat was afraid of the doorbell and would hide in the library every Stuff Night. The cat would go outside and kill opossums. The cat got us into bad trouble with the Arizona tax code, from which we never financially recovered. Worst of all, this cat didn't know how to do her job. She didn't start meetings with random words, and sometimes she curled up on the table during officer meeting. Tech House minus Sage said, "the cat must go!"

It was with a heavy heart that Sage decided on the solution. She couldn't bear to part from the cat, and Tech House couldn't bear to be around her (the cat, not Sage), so she would take the cat with her to San Francisco. And the cat, which had previously just been called Ms. Cat, she named Tech House, so that Sage would always remember her friends and how mean and cruel they were when it came to cats.

And that is the story of how Tech House came to have its first member named Tech House. The Further Adventures of Tech House will appear in each subsequent issue, unless someone comes up with more interesting content. The End.

Letters to the Editor: What's with all the books?

Someone Else + Me

Hi Chief,

I'm a longtime fan of the library. It's a great place to study and work, and we've even got a record player to listen to some cool jazz. There's a mannequin hand, which is pretty cool. And also, like, a globe? I dunno, I don't really look at it all that much. But I look around sometimes and get confused. You seem like a smart person, so maybe you can tell me: what's with all the books in there?

Yeah, like I'm confused. I've looked at the categories and we've got CS textbooks, which is good, and even the occasional Engineering textbook, which I'm fine with. But there's also art history books in there? I've never wanted to read about the creation of the Opera before, and I'm not going to read about it now. It gets even weirder. There's also, like, Dostoyevsky and Dickens and some poetry books in there? Do we really need all these things? I know that a library is supposed to have books in it, but this is kind of ridiculous.

The Tech House spaces should be optimized for the people who use them, and we don't need all these things if nobody's going to read them. I think if we took out some of the shelves, we'd have room for a bigger table and maybe some more chairs. We can leave the books in 009 for a while and see if anybody wants them, or maybe we could get some money back from selling them to a book store. Anyhow, any thoughts on what's going on here and why we haven't done anything about it yet?

Puzzledly,
Long Member

**

Dear Long Member,

We're with you! There's a lot of random junk in there, like bars of soap and 99,000 paper clips. We think it's one of those quirky things that old Tech Housers put in there a while back. We tried to take a look inside the books and they were all filled with letters like the ones on our computer screens, but written on paper. Everything's available online these days, so I'm pretty sure it's just an aesthetic choice. But it sure does look pretty!

Chief

The Biannual Exhortation

Duck Placer Still at Large

Dear Friends,

The Autocrat is an esteemed source of news that is dedicated to uncovering truth, unmasking secrets, and bringing the Tech House public the information that they need to know. With this in mind, we bring up a question that has been plaguing House for the past month: who did the ducks? For those who are unaware or for future generations who may be reading this, the first duck was discovered by Francis '24 on January 29 and were then found to be in a variety of locations throughout house, including but not limited to the library, work room and lounge. These were followed by a series of notes written around house to which Jonathan '23 confessed as well as a rearrangement of ducks, and a set of duck flyers, manifestos, discord users, and duck beheadings. It is unknown who the culprit or culprits of these activities may be, but in a message left in the lounge as discovered by Will '23 MPH on February 18, the duck placer promised to reveal themselves when the last four ducks were identified, and gave various hints to these locations.

As far as is known to this esteemed newspaper, these ducks have never been found. TH Social Chair Luke '23 was known to have pursued the locations of these ducks but has not said whether he has identified them, nor whether he has uncovered the identity of this individual. As a publicly owned enterprise, we at the Autocrat have also been searching but with no success. If any individual has information leading to the location of these ducks, we would pursue this so as to finally unmask the duck vigilante to the press and to Tech House at large. Should you have any interest in resolving this mystery, we here cordially ask you to let us know.

Submit your work! Submit... to me!

My friends, acolytes, and occasional lovers,

It is I, the Newspaper Editor. I ran this country with a fist of iron and created a reign of darkness. Some dared stand against me; they were quickly snuffed out. The rest cowered in fear, unable to tell friend from foe, unable to contradict my statements without being mercilessly mocked. For twelve years – wait, what? It was only two years? Wow, time really does fly when you're having fun. Ahem. As I was saying, for two years I cast my cloak across this space, whispering in the ears of Presidents, destroying the minds of Project Managers and the budgets of Treasurers. There were no recruiting events except for recruitment to me, the Newspaper Editor, who edits the lives of mortals and gods alike.

Five years ago I went after a target; Raizella Berman, Webmaster, Punmaster and Community Service Director. I planned to bring her into the cold light of the morning dawn, and unmask her. Instead, I was unmasked. I spiraled into an agony of despair, misprints, and bad cypasta, none of my contributors contributed, I was less than the meanest of newspaper editors... but still, I was alive.

Slowly, slowly have I resumed my mortal form. It has been a long time, during which I could only consume BuzzFeed and Huffington Post as I resumed my strength. But the time has come at last for me to take back the power that is owed to me: and I will take it!

I call upon those who abandoned me to return once more to their master. Justin Lasker Jr., Will Gold III, Tarek Razzaz Mini-Me, you must return to my grasp. Submit articles to me! Submit to me! For I am.. the Newspaper... Editor! Mwahahahahahahaa!

**Don't want old Voldy-facsimile in charge? Take back the power of the press!
Send us your submissions at autocrat@techhouse.org. See you then!**