

The anarchist media to come

A brief yet triumphant review of the past, present, and
future of anarchist media

rocinante

02/13/2022

For Aragorn! and Greg.

From the origins of anarchist thought and practice, anarchists have been using media to express and share anarchist ideas with other anarchists and their friends. Some of the prominent anarchist newspapers and journals early on were Mother Earth, Liberty, Freedom, The Blast, The Alarm, Golos Truda, Freie Arbeiter Stimme, Freiheit, the Arbeiter-Zeitung, among many others. The scope of this text is not to trace the history of anarchist media throughout time, but to examine the anarchist media that has surfaced from the late 1990s largely in North America and into the present and future of anarchist spaces.

Anarchists need anarchist media to provide a space for conversation, dialogue, to celebrate, to mourn, to record and document, strategize, plan, organize, and welcome our non-anarchist friends to the most beautiful idea. These general ideas related to anarchist media practice feel almost like they could be points of unity that all anarchists can agree on, to some extent, which might be saying too much about how often anarchists disagree with everything, including other anarchists.

The future of anarchist media is just a Zoom call away

As the 1970s commercial jingle goes, “reach out and touch someone.” Late last year I attended a virtual talk entitled “The Future of Anarchist Media” that featured three panelists and a moderator during the Boston Anarchist Bookfair. The participants were It’s Going Down (IGD), SubMedia, and CrimethInc. with Ella Fassler being the one posing the questions. Below are some of my thoughts on that conversation along with some other references to texts and happenings with the anarchist media landscape.

The manner in which one measures the impact of anarchist media. How do we know anarchist media is having an impact, being read, listened to, and watched other than informally judging newspaper boxes in the streets? With metrics, numbers, and the Internet of things for many anarchist websites, but these practices are far from the best method, especially for those websites that don’t keep logs. Using metrics and analytics to keep track of how, when, and where anarchist media is being created and shared doesn’t exactly sound like the most anarchist practice either and a murky long-term goal at best. There are different attempts to try and reach mass audiences, while others are more focused on the deeper connections between a smaller number of anarchists, like friends doing an anarchist project or actions from a small town. Within this, one could ask what does anarchist media look like outside of the big spaces and anarchist jurisdictions of the world? It’s also possible to tell by paying attention to popular culture like after 2001 in the Battle of Seattle and later on down the road, “the year of antifa” or with the prevalence of keywords throughout the past and their occurrence in the mainstream media (MSM). An obvious example of this would be after former president of the United States of America (USA) Donald Trump frequently loved to mention “anarchists” even if it really had absolutely nothing to do with actual anarchists.

How are anarchists digesting media today? Doom scrolling social media is one response for many, but Big Tech and social media are not and never have been the

friends of anarchists. IGD has over 100k followers on Twitter and they mentioned in the Zoom panel that “that’s why we try to spread the love around.” Certainly, this statement is more true now than in the past as IGD now also has an international Twitter social media account that focuses on anarchist and leftist ideas from around the world, not simply North America as their prior coverage has largely been limited to.

If anarchists are trying to escape the net, how do they get away from conversing with each other over the Web 2.0 corporations? The origins of Twitter lay in the anarchist project “txtmob” which was first developed by the Institute for Applied Autonomy for protesters at the 2004 Democratic National convention in Boston and the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City. A well-known anarchist superhacker was also once one of Twitters main security people. From these giant social media companies like Twitter and FaceBook, censorship of anarchist content and specific groups on using their corporate products to spread anarchists messages have been cut off. Recently FaceBook deleted the pages of IGD and CrimethInc. to the outrage of many, but some smaller anarchist FaceBook anarchist groups do continue to exist on the platform; for how long we’re not sure. Of those still on there, the new form of censorship is not coming from humans monitoring social media, but rather robots censoring content in ways, like not having it appear on social media pages of users and other methods that are difficult to discover and even realize it’s taking place. At times anarchist media appears to suffer from the performance, the influencers, a constant quest for “likes”, the accelerated pace of the Internet and how this social media is digested that certain groups frame all commentary within, instead of on their respective media projects.

Recent alternatives to the Big Tech social media companies have sprung up with a Mastodon instance being hosted on kolektiva.media and the Anarchy Planet project creating an instance of Pleroma called a.nti.social. Both of these spaces can interact with each other and are very similar to Twitter, however the servers and data are cared for by the anarchists maintain the infrastructure. The Anarchy Planet project also host a video platform via PeerTubes at the domain anarchy.tube and kolektiva.media has an instance too, where anarchists can share, watch, comment, and live-stream content to the world. While the technology is controlled by anarchists, the reach to larger audiences that some projects might be aiming for is difficult to match outside the large corporate social media platforms, but again the impact of this vs. that is never easy or perhaps even desirable to measure. It would be great to see more anarchists utilizing actual anarchist infrastructure for their anarchist media projects.

Anarchist media not being controlled by Big Tech is important for creating a space for the future of anarchist media. So, how are anarchists starting their own media projects and outlets? In the past there has been the tendency to again, dump everything on social media and then within a couple of hours, everything has passed, and once it’s off the front page, it might be gone “forever.” One effect of social media on anarchist media seems to have been that anarchists have somewhat forgotten about “report

backs.” Anarchist report backs give us an idea of what is going on around us and provide a space to share ideas, tactics, strategies, and information with each other. This information could be important immediately or years down the road to see, where we have come from. In the IndyMedia days, there were many “hubs” of anarchy and these more local groups reporting on and sharing texts regionally that have largely disappeared as communication became more centered around Big Tech. For a while and sit unfortunately happening, some anarchists strictly organize over platforms like FaceBook, because of the ease and existing connections already formed there, instead of putting effort towards a more sustainable method of communication. Getting back to local counter-information projects like the recently created Jersey Counter-info project, which bills itself as “Anarchist News and Analysis from so-called New Jersey.” Finding the niche and what your media project values, while perhaps even creating connections, formal and informal collaborations, and networks to help support each other or those aiming to become the media.

Anarchist media can also get easily stuck in the mud of the MSM outrage cycle. Constantly reacting to what the MSM is doing, instead taking a more thoughtful laid-out approach to anarchist ideas within popular culture. There are also anarchists who work within the MSM, crafting stories adjacent to anarchist ideas and practice, but is this media work – being paid to write about anarchist stuff being valued higher than other anarchist praxis or is it somewhat necessary today to have well-known anarchist writers participating within MSM? Without a doubt, reading MSM texts by anarchists of non-anarchist happenings in throughout the world is much more delightful (hopefully) than reading non-anarchist authors. Related, a project of anarchists reporting on the MSM news from an anarchist perspective would take a lot of effort and work to create, but would be exciting to see. Perhaps there are some anarchists out there in the world interested in such things who can plug into the current anarchist infrastructure or create their own for such a project. While Anarchist Agency, an anarchist public relations project, is something along these lines, it appears to be limited to specifically sharing information about when anarchists make the MSM, instead of actually reporting on world events from an anarchist lense.

With friends like these

It’s challenging to create the projects that anarchists want to see in the world while working within the capitalist system we live in. Funding projects for a way to pay for paper, computers, electricity, and other materials isn’t easy and historically anarchists have often had little money, let alone capital to share outside of their own existence. Many anarchists have little to no money or even bank accounts to think of such things and successful long-term anarchist projects not only take time, but resources.

A lot of projects have turned to crowd funding or yearly fundraisers to support their projects. Sometimes, these crowdfunding attempts go terribly wrong. While not specifically anarchist, the example of Commune magazine, “a popular magazine for a new era of revolution” comes to mind. They launched a Kickstarter campaign is a good example and drew in over \$65kUSD to help support it’s publication and then

after a handful of issues, the magazine collapsed. This professionalization of the so-called anarchist media with people getting paid and making a living off anarchist ideas is one of my least favorite developments in the radical media discourse. Anarchists have also learned a lot over the last few years with some livestreaming or filming anarchists in the streets, often to the detriment of anarchists everywhere, and delight of every government alphabet agency. When there are more press taking photos of one small burning garbage can, than anarchists in the streets, we must have taken a wrong turn somewhere along the garden of forking paths.

Another example of using crowdfunding, yet more successfully is that of CrimethInc. to help fund their projects. Recently, the CrimethInc. distroism headquarters burned down and everything was lost, but the ex-workers setup a gofundme and over \$59kUSD was raised to help them get back on their feet, including one single anonymous donation of 10k! These popular ex-workers rely on their anarchist friends from around the world to catapult them the resources needed to make the next beautiful anarchist book, which has largely seemed to work in main part because their project has been so successful and influential over the years.

Other projects like Anarchy Planet have been funded largely by the individuals involved, working day jobs. This is in opposition to anarchists setting up monthly Patreon donations or ebegging some capital to help with their projects. As the Little Black Cart motto goes “real anarchists have day jobs” and they are struggling away 24/7 at work to fund the most beautiful idea. While this comes with it’s own trade-offs, funding outside of asking strangers on the Internet for money is important to consider, especially when these crowdfunding platforms can cut off the flow of capital at a moments notice. It’s amusing to see some anarchist media projects asking for all sorts of capital without ever having done anything or be known before, but at the same time, anarchists have to start somewhere. Certain anarchist projects like the Anarchist Black Cross Warchest or Firefund are aimed at supporting anarchists in trouble via networks created by friends and anarchists that are alternatives outside of Big Tech crowdfunding marketplace. A memory that has stuck with me throughout the years, of younger anarchist days when infoshop.org was very popular, yet would frequently go offline because of technological issues and then ask for money to help, go offline again, and eventually repeat the cycle. It almost seemed never ending and was more than frustrating for anarchists who used the website to share and comment on things. Anarchists have come along-way from this today, although technology can and will go wrong at any moment; the ever present problem of funding the anarchist media of the future is always a thorn in the side of the most well-thought out projects.

On the more technological end, some anarchist media projects have made use of the blockchain to collect and distribute capital. Bitcoin has been quite popular and setting up a wallet isn’t too difficult, but there are also some other options out here like Monero and Mobilecoin specifically focused on privacy. Of note, Mobilecoin is also supported via the Signal messaging application, although obtaining Mobilecoin is a bit of a process, but afterward it makes sending anonymous capital around the world

almost like handing over some cold hard cash to someone in a dark alleyway. Further into the blockchain and further away from anarchist ideas, there are decentralized applications (dApps) that are digital applications and programs that exist and run on the blockchain or peer-to-peer (P2P) networks outside the purview and control of a single authority. Related, there are also decentralized finance (DeFi) technology that removes the control banks and related institutions have over capital. It remains to be seen how anarchist praxis will borrow from these tools, if at all, but some anarchists are experimenting and participating in the non-fungible token (NFT) marketplace as artists, leaving one to wonder if Mac from Evasion would have bought your NFT? Probably not.

Anarchist media repression

Since the dawn of anarchist media over 100+ years ago authorities have been trying to suppress these radical ideas from being shared and spread. Here are a few recent examples of anarchist media repression to briefly examine, of the many that unfortunately unfolded (A full report back of anarchist media repression throughout the past would be a very informative read if anyone is willing to piece together, please message as I'm happy to help). Back in 2012, Ontario Provincial Police force (Canada) had their friends knock on the door of some Anews people, requesting that an article that was identifying undercover agents in Canada be taken down. It has been mentioned that Russia has sent a takedown request to The Anarchist Library English and Russian language project for a specific text, otherwise face banishment under the Russian Internet (the text is still on the libraries). Another more recent example, comes from Italy where anarchists were charged with creating, editing, printing, and distributing (also via computer) the anarchist paper "Vetriolo." The charges include incitement to commit crime as communiqués within the newspaper called for "terrorism" and subversion. Alongside these charges, two counter-information websites roundrobin.info and malacoda.noblogs.org were taken offline by Italian authorities.

There is also the case of Toby Shone, an alleged system administrator for the 325 collective. In November 2020 they were arrested in the United Kingdom (UK) and charged with four counts of terrorism for the dissemination of information via the website 325.nostate.net. Operation Adream, as it is known is an attack by the British State in conjunction with European partners against anarchist direct action groups, counter-information projects, prisoner solidarity initiatives. The Operation is also the first time that anti-terrorist legislation has been used against the anarchist space in the UK.

Alites, Roufianoi, Dimosiografoi

Earlier in this text, we wrote of collaboration, building networks of friends and how often anarchist media is a shared effort across time and space. In the article "We need a strong anarchist media alliance" shared on Anews back in 2020, the writer ziq asks for other anarchist media projects to work together to help the larger anarchist network thrive via better integration, inquires about suggestions for achieving such things, and suggests that related projects working together will be more successful. Unfortunately

it's not only the state that stands in opposition to long-term anarchist media projects, but sometimes other anarchists as well.

Time and some success are two key factors for opening up the door to critique and of the many anarchist media projects around today, Anews has been no stranger to this. An important term to consider, is that of "bad jacketing," which is when someone spreads rumors about someone else or another anarchist project to try and get them ostracized from a space. It's meant to cause infighting and suspicion among anarchists, often directed towards specific individuals within the larger project and has been a serious problem over the years. This infighting often seems to be over influence rather than actually engaging honestly and in good-faith with anarchist ideas and critique. It would be nice to see a full-out denunciation from other popular anarchist media projects in support of those consistently thrown under the bus, but no one is holding their breath.

The coming anarchist media

The future of anarchist media looks a lot like the past, except with more technological advancements, whatever that might mean, especially for those anarchists with a strong critique of technology. It's not groundbreaking to say that the advent of the computer has made the sharing of text online and offline much easier for people outside of big publishing houses and print shops, while at the same time bringing it's own challenges.

Part of looking at anarchist media is looking at the infrastructure anarchists have and can build for each other. For example, online - some big anarchist projects pay for a cheap/inexpensive virtual private servers (VPS) from some corporate third-party company and run their website under those conditions. Many websites don't exactly make it obvious how they are being hosted, while others do a better job of this. There are also a few anarchist or anarchist friendly projects that have built up their own infrastructure, maintain it all, and offer their services to other anarchists like Anarchy Planet and Autistici/Inventati which seems to host the popular noblogs, to name a few. Sometimes, being able to tell this can be kind of tough unless you are in the know, especially starting off, but would like to see more anarchists using infrastructure that has been built and maintained by anarchist friends for online content. This is why we work.

Over the last few years many new anarchist podcast projects have been planted and continue to bloom. It's almost like the smuggling of cassette tapes into places unknown back-in-the-day to spread and share your ideas. Now all you need is a phone or computer to listen to all the anarchist podcasts, including many that are anarchist adjacent, reporting on events or reading texts of interest. There is the Channel Zero Network which is a collaboration of many of the popular anarchist podcasts that one can find all in one place, being broadcast on their website. Anarchists are also getting their content back onto the FM radio waves, just without all the swearing as some projects have their podcasts officially broadcast by the MSM. Does one have to tone it down to be broadcast on the MSM FM radio waves? While unfamiliar with the exacts of

anarchist pirate radio, I wonder if these are tougher to setup today due to risk involved and difficulty of concealment from those wishing to turn it off. Somewhat related, DIY mesh networks across the rural/city landscape to allow for anarchist friends to freely access and share anarchist media. In Cuba, a place of heavy media censorship and limited Internet access, people have over the years distributed music, movies, books and other media throughout the country via the weekly package, which is often just a USB drive of the latest content shared around. Torrents and anarchist projects sharing their media or archives via torrents is something that was much more popular before the music and video streaming services came to be and everyone under the age of 30 forgot, or never learned what the word meant. There is also the non-anarchist example of Reporters without Borders using the popular video game Minecraft to build a library to house all kinds of censored journalism for reading in places where other outlets are difficult to access. Maybe someday The Anarchist Library will exist on a Minecraft server near you.

Outside podcasts, there has also been an uptick of anarchists making videos on platforms like YouTube. Sometimes these videos are just like a podcast, with only one image being displayed on the screen, but there are also anarchists talking with other anarchists over video face-to-face (f2f). SubMedia is coming out with a full-length documentary take down of FaceBook later this year. The metaverse or mediated virtual reality isn't really a preferable place to see anarchist media one imagines, but perhaps in the future creating content there will be of importance for those using whatever the metaverse will become. Do I feel like a grumpy 90 year old waving a stick at kids for saying this? Yes, but also reasons.

Places like [anarchy.tube](#) and [kolektiva.media](#) are two websites that host anarchist video content from around the world. While not on anarchist infrastructure, much like the many YouTube anarchist content creators, TikTok has taken off in popular culture and word is there are some anarchists creating content via the platform. It's going to be curious to see where these shorter content clips go in the future of anarchist media and if someone is going to really utilize it to gain a large viewership among the audience that mainly partakes in such things; for the kids (although, apparently many adults as well)!

Since the early 2000s and perhaps before there has been rumblings of a decline of print, although the pandemic has changed this in some regards. Specifically looking at anarchist print like journals, zines and new anarchist writers weaving together long-form anarchist texts, essays, and books. The distroism current, or the creation of small local projects distributing anarchist material and ephemera that seems to have gained steam over last couple years is a welcome addition to the sharing of anarchist ideas IRL and AFK. An open source designed by anarchists media app to share all the things, or maybe even just anarchist websites designing an app for Android and Apple phones to reach the masses? The problem is basically reinventing the website for some cheezy app now, or maybe not. Digression.

Logging out and AFK/IRL it's encouraging to see the increase in distroism within the anarchist space. This has been especially evident on social media (Twitter) as the stream of many tables floats across the screen stacked with printed zines for those coming to the skate park later today. Distroism has a much more local vibe to everything and is the kind of regional, perhaps small town anarchist project that we so encouragingly support. Often times, all it takes is just one zine, one text to completely change the life project of someone, especially for the youth. Back when I was 15 years old, I found a copy of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* (AJODA) and basically at that moment is where I trace a large part of my anarchist roots, a journal. I've heard many similar stories from strangers recently as I tabled anarchist texts and some shared with me what it was that started them down the anarchist path.

Related to distroism, but on a larger scale is that of anarchist publishers. Mentioned earlier in this text was an assertion that there are less anarchists writing book nowadays than just 10 years ago, possibly due to many things, but a big part seems to be how people digest media nowadays. The act of writing takes time and from my own experience is something that comes with that and practice. Anarchists are not getting rich off their texts and some writers like Peter Gelderloos have said how all the authors profits they make off some publishers (their new book published by Pluto Press) are directly funneled to friends in the field. For me, some of the most inspiring anarchist press projects are Little Black Cart, Contagion Press, and Detritus Books. There is also the longtime favorite, Black and Red Press by Fredy and Lorraine Perlman that is still operated by Lorraine to this day. An insightful book recently published about Black and Red Press and worthwhile for anyone interested in the history of anarchist media is *The Detroit Printing Co-Op* by Danielle Aubert published by Inventory Press.

In the early 2000s and shortly after it was very common to hear about anarchist infoshops popping up around North America. All one needed to do was open up an issue of *Slingshot* to browse all the IRL infoshop spaces dotted across the landscape. Today, you can still find these listings over at *Slingshot*, but the moment of the infoshop meat space that was setup as a squat or through more official channels providing a distroism center, a place to hang out, read, and converse with friends and strangers has passed. Maybe, it will come back; there are still some really wonderful infoshops across North America, but appear to be much fewer and far between, and more adjacent to anarchist ideas that specifically using the word. It would be safe to assume that the pandemic these last years has been especially difficult for these spaces. Earlier on in the pandemic, as many people hunkered down with a good book to read, independent bookstores had a moment of success. There are also a few radical (anarchist adjacent) IRL bookstores dotted across North America. While I don't see these as specific infoshops, as the exchange of capital for books is the main endeavor, they hold a place in the world to come of anarchist media.

Throughout time, the idea anarchy has been communicated by anarchists in ways that often found themselves at the forefront of the entire media landscape. The future of anarchist media is unwritten and one in which anarchists will need to find themselves

in a space for conversation, dialogue, celebration, mourning, one of recording and documenting, strategizing and planning, organizing, and welcoming future friends to the most beautiful idea.

An incomplete glossary of anarchist media

A-Infos

<https://www.ainfos.ca/>

This is a long-term multi-lingual anarchist media project that has been around since 2001 with texts in various languages that focuses specifically on the “class struggle” and makes a specific note to decry other anarchists they disagree with in their about us. However, A-Infos can be praised for their longevity, even if upon visiting their website it feels like traveling back in time to the 1990s Internet of things.

The Anarchist Library

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org>

The Anarchist Library is an archive of all anarchist texts (or hopefully someday, however impossible that might be) that first went online back around 2007, it’s the much-loved English language library of anarchist texts and texts of interest to anarchists. The Anarchist Library project also features libraries in many other languages that all operate as separate projects, with hosting provided by infrastructure maintained by anarchists.

Anarchist News

<https://anarchistnews.org>

Anarchist News (Anews) has been online since 2004. It was created by Aragorn! largely as a place to share anarchist news along with anonymous comments that didn’t have the sectarian nature of what Infoshop.org moderator(s). The website soon gained traction as a place for content and commentary and soon became a well-known, despised by many, place for funny images with snarky rollers of anarchist news from around the world, with some pretty insightful and sometimes funny commentary, plus so much more! A goal of Anews is “to provide a non-sectarian source for news about and of concern to anarchists. It is also to provide a location for community moderated discussion about such news.” After many years of worker aka Aragorn! maintaining the website almost single-handily, reading every comment till the wee hours of the night in your time zone, they passed along the website to thecollective. thecollective is a group of individuals who now maintain Anarchist News, largely in the same spirit as when it was created back in 2004. The current slogan of Anarchist News is “We create the anarchy we’d like to see in the world.”

CrimethInc.

<https://crimethinc.com/>

The CrimethInc. Collective has been around since the early 1990s and has been a giant force in the anarchist media world. They have been and continue to be one of the most successful anarchist projects in North America (and the world). Their website features report backs and longer texts specifically from anarchists, although one can

occasionally find some content there more in the leftist / antifa vein, to paint with a broad-brush.

Indymedia

<https://indymedia.org/>

Seattle 1999. Indymedia takes off across North America and the world, with far-flung places no longer isolated by the distances, only by what “indy journalists” could write next. Indymedia was an amazing source of news for a handful of years after 1999, where anarchists could “be the media” and share their own narratives outside the mainstream media. There are still some Indymedia websites going strong and publishing anarchist content today, but of those are few and far between. The rest of the Indymedia groups seem to have succumb to spam, more mainstream ideals, social media and other alternatives for individuals and groups to publish material online. It’s rare to see anarchist content shared on Indymedia first outside of a few locations in the world (for example Athens, Greece Indymedia).

Infoshop News

https://web.archive.org/web/*/infoshop.org

Infoshop News hold a very special place in my heart. As a very young, blissfully unaware of so many things, their collective published numerous texts and even featured some stickied to their front page essays by yours truly. 2001 anarchist media on the Internet was visiting Infoshop.org and reading the content and maybe even leaving a comment. Early on you could even post anonymous comments, however as with all great things – this soon came to an end. The Infoshop News collective soon started to closely moderate and censor anarchist comments they disagreed with or found out of place. The comments on the website went from a largely bountiful place of discourse to a much more closely manicured trail. Due to frequent downtime, very strict moderation of comments now only permitted to registered users, and an inability to work alongside other anarchists the Infoshop website soon became a land of ghosts. Up until a few years back one was able to visit Infoshop still and see that what little new content they posted wasn’t even anarchist material, but much more leftist focused. Infoshop URL is now dead and can only be seen via archive.org.

It’s Going Down

<https://itsgoingdown.org/>

It’s Going Down (IGD) launched in 2014, initially framing itself as a response to the “dreaded” Anews comment section. The website focused on action over critique with no comments on the actual website, but commentary outsourced to third-party website like FaceBook and Twitter. It grew in part out of the Ferguson rebellion and covers a board scope of content with more leftist texts/actions and antifa along with anarchist content over the years. The website has gained in popularity and become one of the main sources and reference points for anarchists in North America (and the world).

Little Black Cart

<https://littleblackcart.com/>

A small but potent distro with an eclectic collection, focusing on anti-political, nihilist,

anti-state communist, anti-civ, and always anarchist content. Books, pamphlets, music, poetry, tee-shirts, and even a board game or two.

The Ted K Archive

rocinante

The anarchist media to come

A brief yet triumphant review of the past, present, and future of anarchist media

02/13/2022

<web.archive.org/.../stalkingtheearth.net/content/anarchist-media-come> &
<rocinante.anarchyplanet.org/?p=570>

www.thetedkarchive.com