Inter.txt Press: Pocket Essays

The tl;dr is that I'm looking for folks who might be interested in publishing very short essays as a part of a one-sheet zine series! Feel free to share this open call with your friends and peers.

Inter.txt Press is a Chicago-based micro publishing practice that seeks to make speculative worlds tangible through print. It is currently in a soft launch stage with the goal of slow emergence over the next few years.

OPEN CALL: Currently seeking **essays** that engage with topics of craft, queer and trans possibility, technology, radical care, games, publishing, worldmaking, and/or the internet. I'm especially interested in essays that offer fresh perspectives or deep dives into particular facets of a hobby (for example: radio, card games, paper engineering, sculpting, stargazing, cooking, puppetry, and so on... the more specific the better!). I'm also open to proposals if you have something different in mind!

Guidelines:

- **1,000 to 1,200 words.** That's around 2 pages single-spaced in 12pt Times New Roman font. There'll be some word limit flexibility with font sizes and line height, but I've found this range to be a good average for the overall shape of the zine.
- **Text only.** Certain exceptions: if you're writing about a piece of visual art, you can have a slightly shorter essay with one image or graphic on the last fold of the zine. Please try to avoid unusual formatting. And no links! The piece should be 99% analog — you can of course include your socials or email at the end.
- **Nonfiction only**, with certain allowances for experiments in genre (your "essay" can be a guise for a manifesto, a guide, a review, and so on).
- **Titles should be relatively short,** around 10-20 characters. You may include a subtitle if you wish (see the "Girlhood 2" example below).

- ❖ **Please don't send previously published work**, unless you have a specific reason for wanting to publish it in a pocket zine format!
- ❖ If you've read all this and are interested in submitting, please send a Word doc or Google doc of your piece to intertxtpress@protonmail.com, with the email title: "PE Submission - [Your Name]."

What you'll get from me:

- ➔ Free printing & layout services! Though please note that even with variation in things like font choice or paper color, the layout of each zine will largely remain the same, due to this being a ~series~.
- ➔ Light editing & feedback on your piece.
- ➔ Light publicity & distribution. I'm famously not a marketing person but I will sell copies of your zine at future zine fests/art book fairs that I table at, and I'll talk about it on my socials & in my friend circles! (And once I get an online shop set up, sometime in the near future, I'll stock your zine there as well.)

Publishing details for contributors:

- ★ Pocket essays will appear solely in print form and will not be published digitally.
- ★ Each pocket essay will have an initial print run of 50 copies, with the possibility of additional print runs. Out of each print run, I'll send 10 of the copies directly to you, of which you can price and distribute however you see fit.
- ★ When selling your pocket essay online or at fairs, I will price each copy at $3. For the initial print run, you will receive 100% of the sales revenue from sold copies. Subsequent print runs will follow a split: per copy, $1 for the press, and $2 for the author.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

What is a pocket essay?

- ➔ Pocket essays are short and thought-provoking pieces of writing.
- ➔ Pocket essays are ginger chews: tiny bursts of flavor that settle your soul.
- ➔ Pocket essays are hand warmers for your mind.
- ➔ Pocket essays are conversation starters (& fire starters, in an emergency).
- ➔ Pocket essays are amulets and spell components for working great magic.
- ➔ Pocket essays are bookmarks and dog-ears for further research.
- ➔ Pocket essays are fashion statements: pocket squares with something to say.
- ➔ Pocket essays are talismans kept close to your chest.
- ➔ There is no topic too small or too big for a pocket essay to approach!

What's the idea behind this series?

One of my long-term goals for Inter.txt is to collaborate with more folks and spotlight the work of friends and peers. I've been interested in publishing a "series of things" for a while, but I have also been figuring out how that can happen in a sustainable way — as in, Inter.txt is a micropress and I don't have buckets of free time to be making whole books or even booklets. A while ago, I was looking at Athena Tacha's accordion-fold pocket books, and I thought, wait a minute! This format is neat! It's cheap to print and easy to assemble; it's accessible; it emphasizes the text itself; it looks nice as a collection.

Who is this project for?

Here's the truth of it: Inter.txt is a micropress that's still in a soft launch stage, and my goal for the next few years is to move slowly and deliberately through the indie publishing world, rather than try to broaden my audience as quickly as possible. If you're an emerging writer looking to rapidly expand your reach and audience, I can recommend a handful of other journals and magazines that would be much better suited to your goals!

If, on the other hand, you're willing to experiment alongside me and want to dip your toes into the world of zines — a niche world with a relatively small audience, I might add — and want to make something for the sake of making it, then this series might be a good fit for your work.

Why is this a print-only series?

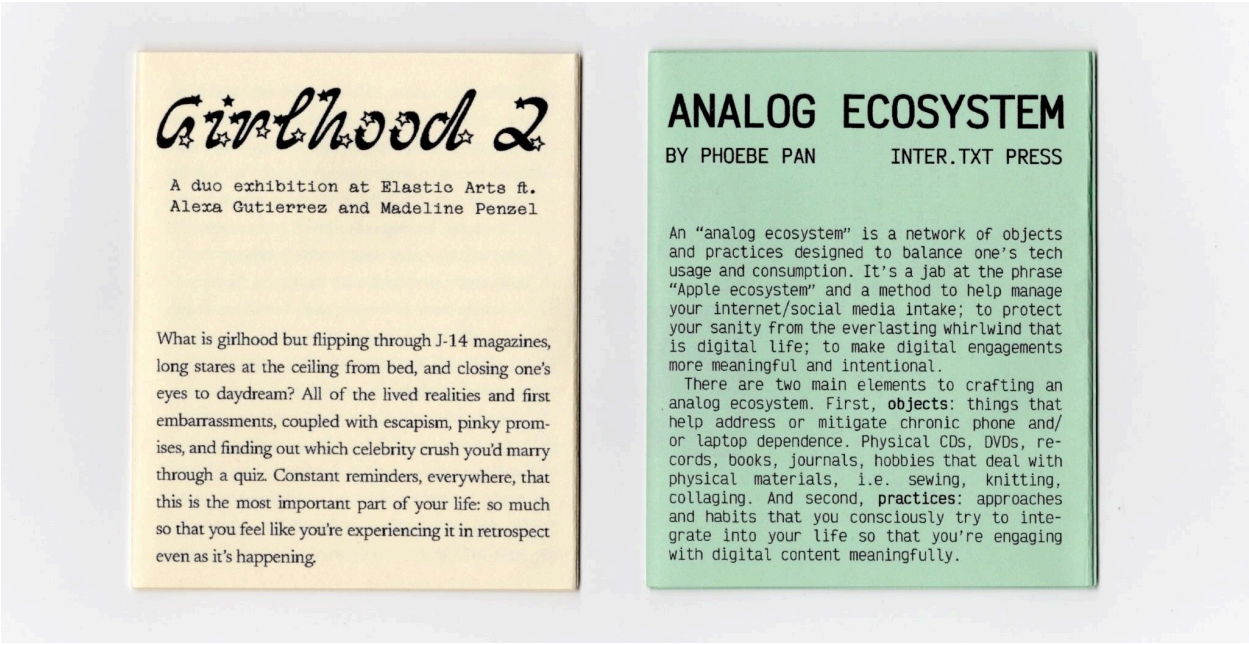
Because I love print media. I want this series to be a celebration of the single-sheet zine format and all the wonders it can contain. Print is tactile, durable, giftable. It will survive a power outage. It's clandestine and can't be easily surveilled. It can't be gobbled up by AI.

Why are you doing this for free??

I'm essentially treating the first few years of this project as a learning period, where I get to hone my printing practice and experiment and make mistakes. I'm not doing this for the money — zines have never been profitable, and probably never will be. It's much more important for me to make lasting relationships with people whose work I want to share with the world. This isn't to ignore the labor that goes into printing and publishing, but I'm cognizant of the fact that these are... single-page zines, as opposed to booklets/books.

What format will the pocket essay appear in?

A subtle spin on the classic single-sheet, eight-fold zine! Essays will be printed on colored sheets of legal sized paper. Here is what the form factor looks like (3.5 inches wide, 4.25 inches tall):



And this is what it looks like unfolded:

ANALOG ECOSYSTEM

BY PHOEBE PAN INTER.TXT PRESS

An "analog ecosystem" is a network of objects and practices designed to balance one's tech usage and consumption. It's a jab at the phrase "Apple ecosystem" and a method to help manage your internet/social media intake; to protect your sanity from the everlasting whirlwind that is digital life; to make digital engagements more meaningful and intentional.

There are two main elements to crafting an analog ecosystem. First, **objects**: things that help address or mitigate chronic phone and/or laptop dependence. Physical CDs, DVDs, records, books, journals, hobbies that deal with physical materials, i.e. sewing, knitting, collaging. And second, **practices**: approaches and habits that you consciously try to integrate into your life so that you're engaging with digital content meaningfully.

If you're interested in thinking critically about new technologies, check out Low Tech Magazine [lowtechmagazine.com], a digital publication that runs on a solar powered server and publishes a lot of great content on low tech approaches to modern conundrums.

Other readings: Jose Briones' Substack newsletter, Louise Amore's *Cloud Ethics*, and Justin E. H. Smith's *The Internet Is Not What You Think It Is*.

Tired of subscribing your life away to Tech Oligarchs? Curious about building a personalized media ecosystem outside of what companies try to force-feed you? Yearning for your algorithms to recommend something other than "songs to scream in the car"? Trying to avoid mindless scrolling and browsing? Hoping to retain important info from the things you read and see online?

Craft your own analog ecosystem!

[Last updated: November 7, 2025]

OBJECTS

The lodestars of my analog ecosystem are my notebooks: a bullet journal, a commonplace, and a small memo pad. This might seem like a lot to keep track of, but in practice, it's a lightweight system, especially since I'm often only carrying or using one or two notebooks at a time. Each notebook has a specific purpose and isn't bloated with extra functions. You'll find this in a lot of other "low tech" setups, as well: people who carry multiple tools and devices, such as an mp3 player and a camera, to split up the different functions that a smartphone would usually consolidate.

The bullet journal is where I set up my yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily schedule, along with various task lists and habit trackers. You can use preprinted planners, of course, but I'm a tinkerer at heart, so a bullet journal is the perfect way to fine-tune different layouts and setups from month to month (or even week to week).

The commonplace is where I jot down specific quotes or passages that I want to remember. A commonplace is especially handy for writing down sentences and quotes from online articles or essays, as it helps me materialize what tend to be ephemeral reads.

The memo pad is the central star of this notebook constellation. It's the "collection bin" for my thought processes; it's where I scribble anything and everything, from schedule reminders to poetry fragments to shortHand recipes. Everything in the memo pad is entirely unsorted and remains that way throughout. Think of the memo pad as a replacement for your "Notes" app on your phone; because of its portability, I carry mine everywhere, and it is often the first place I write things down before transferring notes to my commonplace or journals. I like palm-sized, spiral-bound memo pads for the form factor, but pocket notebooks will also work.

Note Zines! When I find myself going down an Internet rabbit hole on some obscure or niche topic, I'll make a note to craft a zine about said topic. These are often single sheet, 8-page zines, and I write or doodle in them by hand. In some ways, this practice is just a more engaging and fun version of note-taking; it's a method to process the information through creative means. You don't have to be an expert on a topic to make a zine about it. In this context, they're just a means to process the information you learn online into a material, tangible form.

Keep an ongoing paper "Wish List." This is especially important if you have a tendency to buy things impulsively. The Wish List is a monthly list of things you want, and with each impulse to buy something, list out at least three reasons why you want that thing. Then, wait for a week to see if your desire for that item is still strong. If I still want that item after a week, I'll re-evaluate my reasons for wanting it and see if any of those reasons can be met through other means, such as borrowing a book from the library, or making that item through DIY methods. Usually, by this step, I've moved past the initial dopamine rush of desire and talked myself out of at least a dozen items on the list.

Go on smart walks. Whenever I feel frustrated with social media, or when I catch myself mindlessly scrolling and browsing, I'll go on a short walk without my phone. I'll bring my watch and sometimes a memo pad + pen for doodles or random observations. As the kids say these days, you gotta remember to "touch grass" once in a while.

Keep a book and a pencil on the nightstand. It's important to identify when and where you tend to reach for your phone the most: a large chunk of my phone usage is actually in bed, just before I sleep, scrolling social media or reading random articles. Nowadays I'm trying to keep my phone in a different room before going to bed, and I'll use my watch to set up a wakeup alarm, though there are definitely better options (sunrise alarm clocks). Having enough to help calm my mind, and I've noticed that my quality of sleep has improved immensely with reading instead of scrolling.

These are just some of my analog practices, and my goal, eventually, is that they can become habits. These practices may vary for you, or you might consider building on them, tinkering to your own needs and wants.

PRACTICES

Usually, practices start with identifying what it is you want to address or "fix." For example, I was frustrated with how easily I would forget articles or essays I read online, so I started including quotes and snippets from those pieces into my commonplace. Here are some of my own in-progress practices that I'm trying to incorporate into my daily life:

Write Letters! Send postcards! The best way for me to keep in touch with friends while maintaining my phone and laptop use is to send physical mail to them. While the frequency of my writing is not as high as texting or even emailing, the act itself is so much more meditative and reflective. Physical mail is such a joy to receive, too!

PLATFORMS

Avoid Spotify. Apple Music, Youtube Music, Qobuz, and Tidal are slightly better alternatives. Soundcloud, Bandcamp, and radio (online/local) are my preferred platforms. NTS is great! Follow college radio stations if you're craving new and zany stuff.

Make use of your local library. You can find so much physical media and even rent CD/DVD players at certain branches. Make use of your library's digital platforms as well: Libby is great for audiobooks and ebooks; MUSICat for streaming alternatives; Kanopy for films, and PBS for TV shows.

If you're still craving boutique streaming services, go for ones that actually care about their creators: Dropout (for comedy and D&D); Criterion Channel (for the film buffs); Nebula (creator-owned).

Social media alternatives: Make a blog! Join or start a local book/film club! Exchange music with friends! Start a newsletter! Sign up for Goodreads, Letterboxd, or Musicboard instead of Twitter or Facebook!

For my commonplace, I use the Nanami Seven Seas A5 Writer (any kind of notebook will do, though I would recommend one with sturdy binding for archival purposes).

Above: I carry a physical map with me when cycling. Slowly trying to learn the grid system & curb my GPS dependency... Below: my current Kleid Notes A7 memo pad, and a Uni Jetstream 0.7 ballpoint pen.

For my bullet journal, I use a Leuchtturm1917 80gsm A5 dot grid hardcover, mostly because it has a built-in index, numbered pages, and the spacing of the dot grid suits my handwriting.

Above: the physical dice version of Q-less. Below: some of the various spiral memo notebooks I've tried recently. The Kokuyo Soft Ring memo pads are great to shove in pockets, since the rings don't snag on fabric. Don't spend over $10 for a memo pad: the cheaper it is, the less stressed you'll feel about scribbling in it.

Pretty neat! All the text fits on a single legal sized sheet (8.5”x14”). There’s also room to print bonus content on the interior spread, like so: