

Gamin' Like It's 1979: A Brief History of Interactive Fiction

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<http://pr-if.org/play>

You just started up a game and now you're staring at text and a blinking cursor and you *don't know what to do!* Don't panic kids – Crazy Uncle Zarf is going to help you *get started...*

These commands are very common:

EXAMINE it PUSH it
TAKE it PULL it
DROP it TURN it
OPEN it FEEL it

PUT it IN something
PUT it ON something

This is not French technology.

SO....

READ CARD

When in doubt, examine more.

You can try all sorts of commands on the things you see.

You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door. There is a small mailbox here.

Try opening!

You could also try:

EAT it CLIMB it
DRINK it WAVE it
FILL it WEAR it
SMELL it TAKE it OFF
LISTEN TO it TURN it ON
BREAK it DIG IN it
BURN it LOOK UNDER it
UNLOCK it WITH something

Or even:

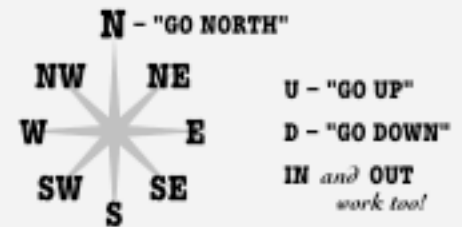
LISTEN YELL
JUMP SING
SLEEP PRAY
WAKE UP CURSE

Yes, we're getting silly.

Try the commands that make sense! Doors are for opening; buttons are for pushing; pie is for eating.

Mmmm, pie.

The most important abbreviations



L - "LOOK AROUND"
(what do you see around you?)

I - "TAKE INVENTORY"
(what are you carrying?)

X - "EXAMINE that"
(take a closer look at it!)

Z - "WAIT"
(do nothing, see what happens!)

Does the game intro suggest

ABOUT, INFO, HELP ?

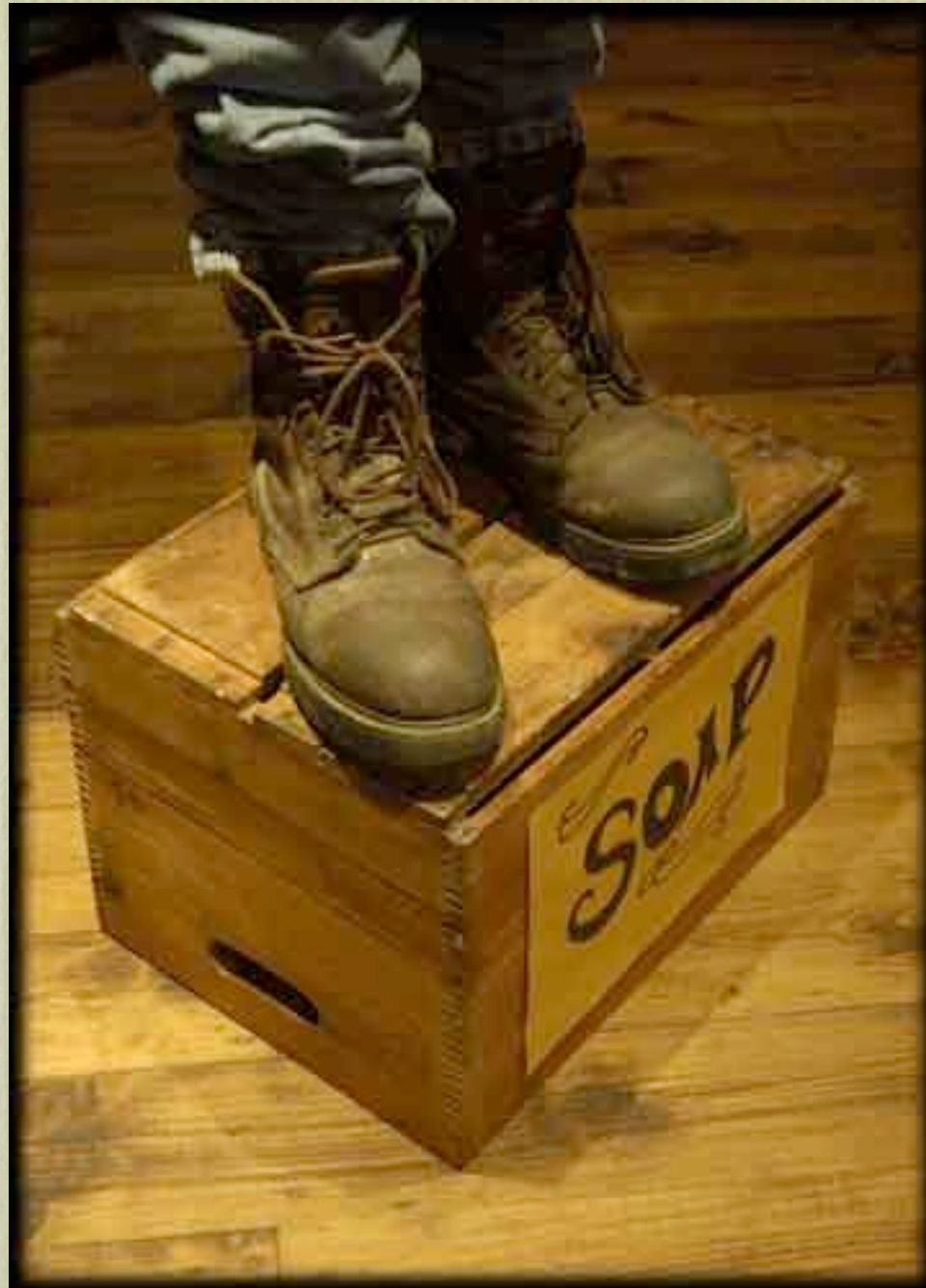
Try them first!

Special control commands:

UNDO - take back one command
RESTART - from the beginning
SAVE - your game
LOAD - a saved game
QUIT - goodbye

Each game has slightly different commands, but they all look pretty much like these.

What did you think?



1977:
Twisty Little Passages

Colossal Cave Adventure

```
PAUSE INIT DONE statement executed
To resume execution, type go. Other input will terminate the job.
go
Execution resumes after PAUSE.
WELCOME TO ADVENTURE!! WOULD YOU LIKE INSTRUCTIONS?

y
SOMEWHERE NEARBY IS COLOSSAL CAVE, WHERE OTHERS HAVE FOUND
FORTUNES IN TREASURE AND GOLD, THOUGH IT IS RUMORED
THAT SOME WHO ENTER ARE NEVER SEEN AGAIN. MAGIC IS SAID
TO WORK IN THE CAVE. I WILL BE YOUR EYES AND HANDS. DIRECT
ME WITH COMMANDS OF 1 OR 2 WORDS.
(ERRORS, SUGGESTIONS, COMPLAINTS TO CROWTHER)
(IF STUCK TYPE HELP FOR SOME HINTS)

YOU ARE STANDING AT THE END OF A ROAD BEFORE A SMALL BRICK
BUILDING . AROUND YOU IS A FOREST. A SMALL
STREAM FLOWS OUT OF THE BUILDING AND DOWN A GULLY.
```


1979:
MIT Guys

Dungeon (Zork)

You are in an open field west of a big white house with a boarded front door.

There is a small mailbox here.

>open mailbox

Opening the mailbox reveals:

 A leaflet.

>read leaflet

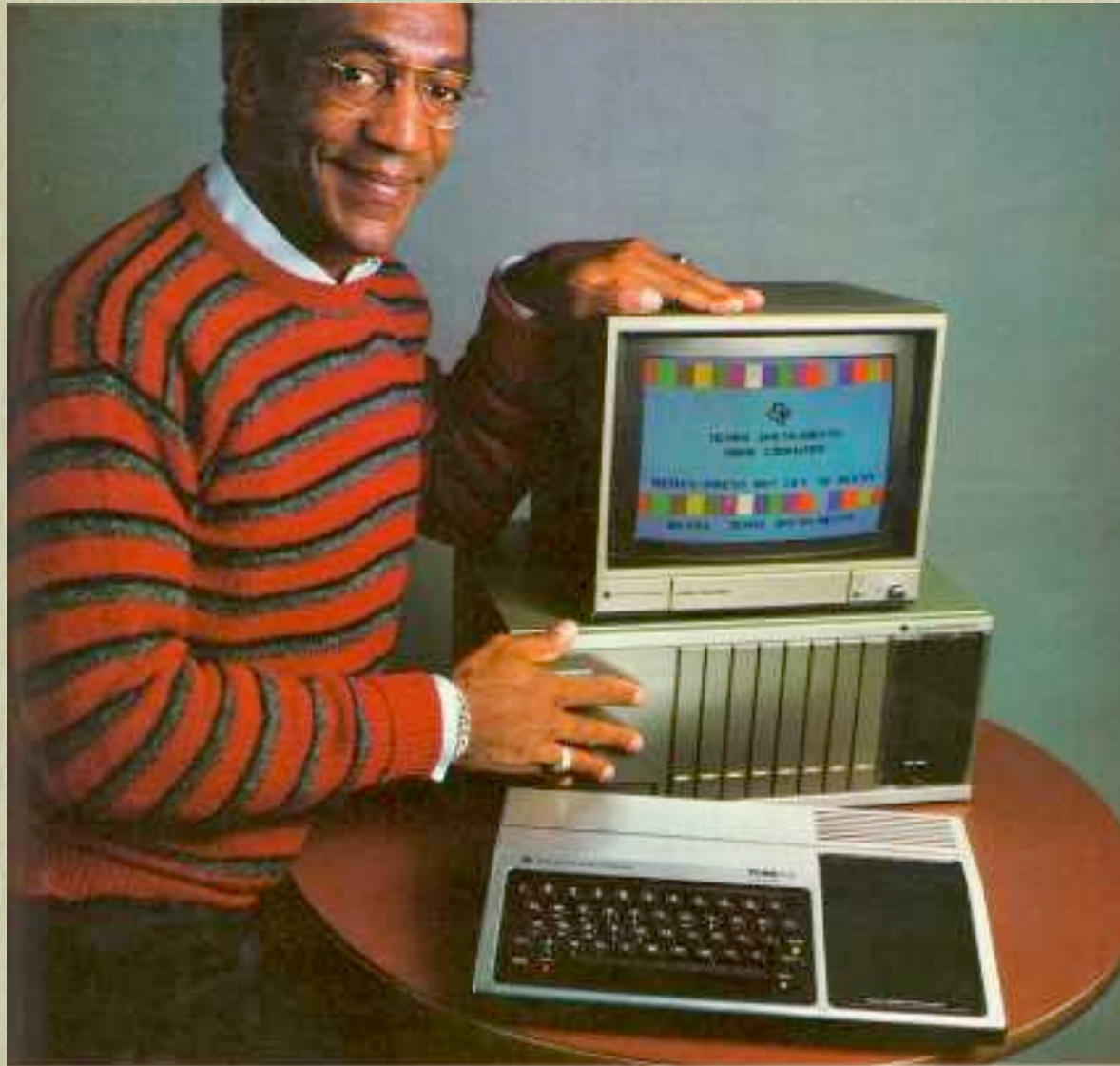
Taken.

 Welcome to Dungeon!

Dungeon is a game of adventure, danger, and low cunning. In it you will explore some of the most amazing territory ever seen by mortal man. Hardened adventurers have run screaming from the terrors contained within.

Problem: Portability





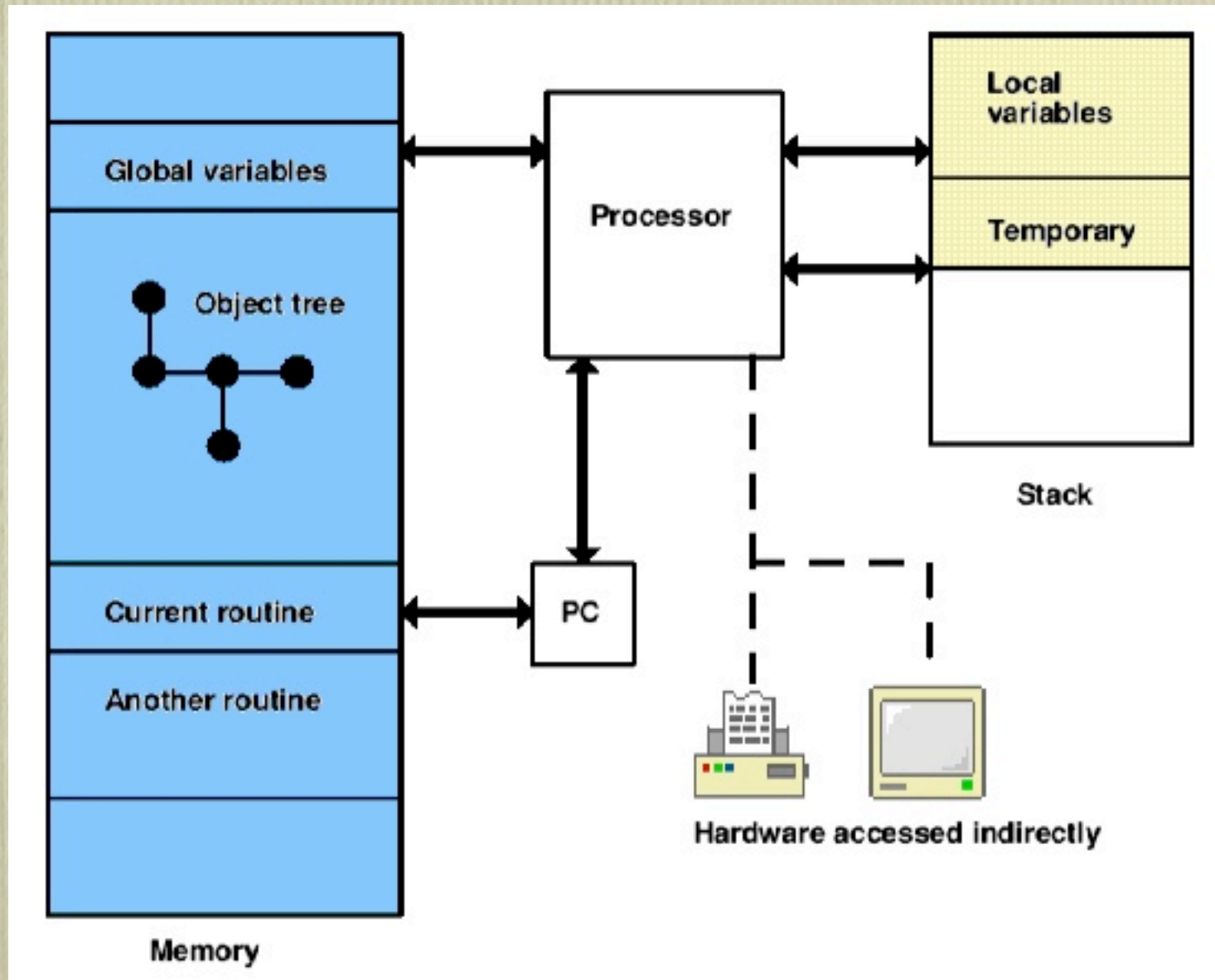
**"TI's Home Computer.
This is the one."**

Answer: write a VM!

Tools

- MDL shrinks to ZIL (Zork Implementation Lang)
- ZIL compiles to “Z-code” bytecode
- Z-code executed by ZIP (Zork Interpreter Program) on each platform
- Not limited by native RAM capacity

The Zork Machine



You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door. There is a small mailbox here.

>open mailbox

Opening the small mailbox reveals a leaflet.

```
[ 41] ""
. [ 68] "West of House"
. . [ 21] "you"
. . [239] "small mailbox"
. . . [ 80] "leaflet"
. . [127] "door"
```

239

```
239. Attributes: 30, 34
Parent object: 68
Sibling object: 127
Child object: 80
Property address: 2b53
Description: "small mailbox"
Properties:
  [49] 00 0a
  [46] 54 bf 4a c3
  [45] 3e c1
  [44] 5b 1c
```


ZSCII

```
--first byte-----  --second byte---  
7      6 5 4 3 2  1 0    7 6 5  4 3 2 1 0  
bit  --first--  --second---  --third--
```

```
A0      abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
A1      ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
A2      ^0123456789.,!?'"/\-:()
```


ZIL / ZILCH

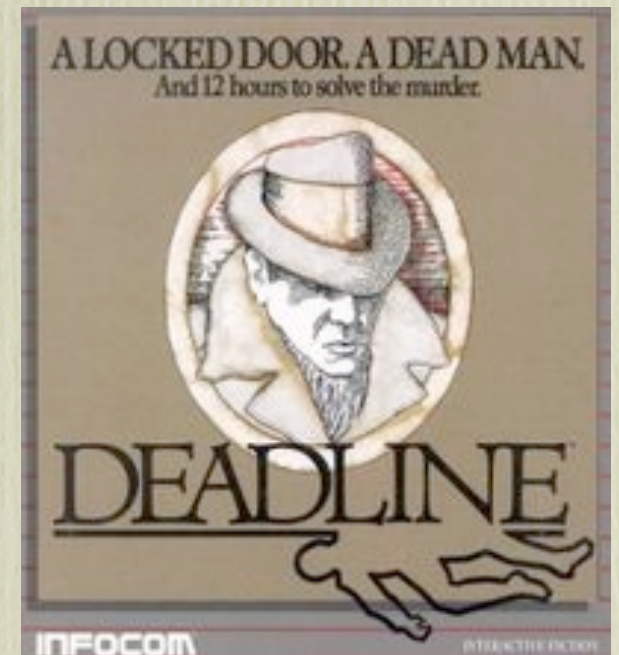
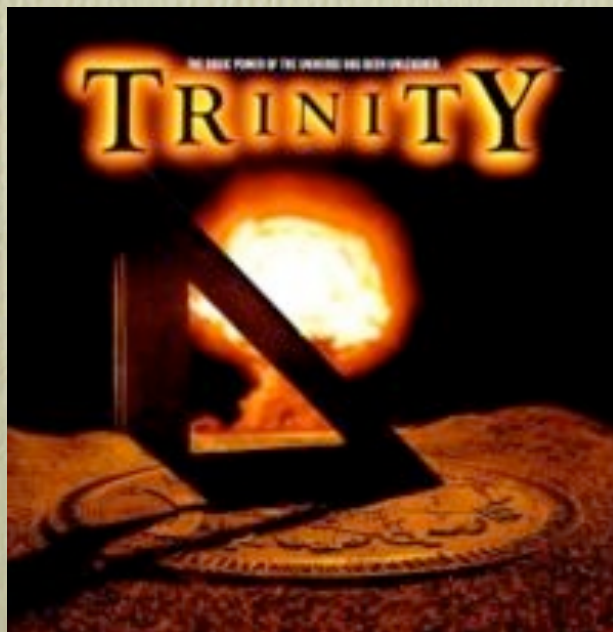
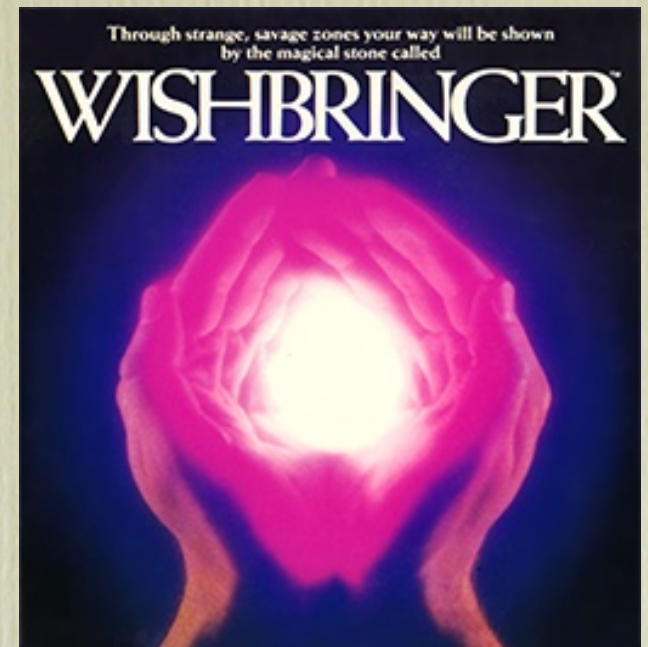
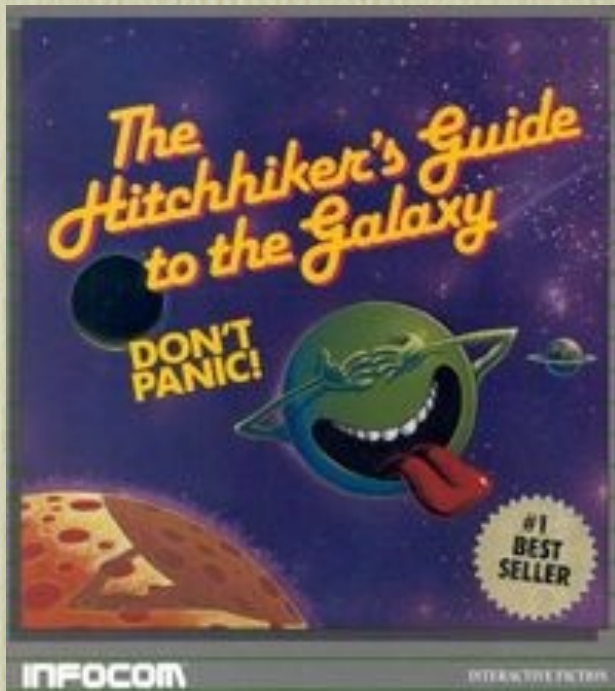
```
<OBJECT LANTERN  
  (LOC LIVING-ROOM)  
  (SYNONYM LAMP LANTERN LIGHT)  
  (ADJECTIVE BRASS)  
  (DESC "brass lantern")  
  (FLAGS TAKEBIT LIGHTBIT)  
  (ACTION LANTERN-F)  
  (FDESC "A battery-powered lantern is on the trophy  
case.")  
  (LDESC "There is a brass lantern (battery-powered)  
here.")
```


1980-1989:
Reign of Infocom



© Erik Klooster





Why did Infocom die?

1993:
Archeology and Renaissance

Graham Nelson

Reverse-engineered Z-machine

Inform Language

```
Object -> Salesman "insurance salesman"
  with
    name 'insurance' 'salesman' 'man',
    description "An insurance salesman in a tacky polyester
      suit. He seems eager to speak to you.",
    before [;
      Listen:
        move Insurance_Paperwork to player;
        "The salesman bores you with a discussion
          of life insurance policies. From his
          briefcase he pulls some paperwork which he
          hands to you.";
    ],
  has animate;
```


Curses

Attic

Score: 0

(in Meldrew Hall)

Turns: 1

June 3rd, 1993

great-grandfather was the last person to tidy up these lofts...

CURSES

An Interactive Diversion

Copyright (c) 1993, 1994, 1995 by Graham Nelson.

Release 16 / Serial number 951024 / Inform v1600 Library 5/12

Standard interpreter 1.0

Attic

The attics, full of low beams and awkward angles, begin here in a relatively tidy area which extends north, south and east. The wooden floorboards seem fairly sound, just as well considering how heavy all these teachests are. But the old wiring went years ago, and there's no electric light.

A hinged trapdoor in the floor stands open, and light streams in from below.

> |

rec.arts.interactive-fiction

2007:
“Natural” Inform

Natural Language Preprocessor

A briefcase is carried by the insurance salesman. The description is "A slightly worn, black briefcase." Understand "case" as the briefcase.

The insurance paperwork is in the briefcase. The description is "Page after page of small legalese." Understand "papers" or "documents" or "forms" as the paperwork.

Instead of listening to the insurance salesman:

say "The salesman bores you with a discussion of life insurance policies. From his briefcase he pulls some paperwork which he hands to you.";

now the player carries the insurance paperwork.

GLK

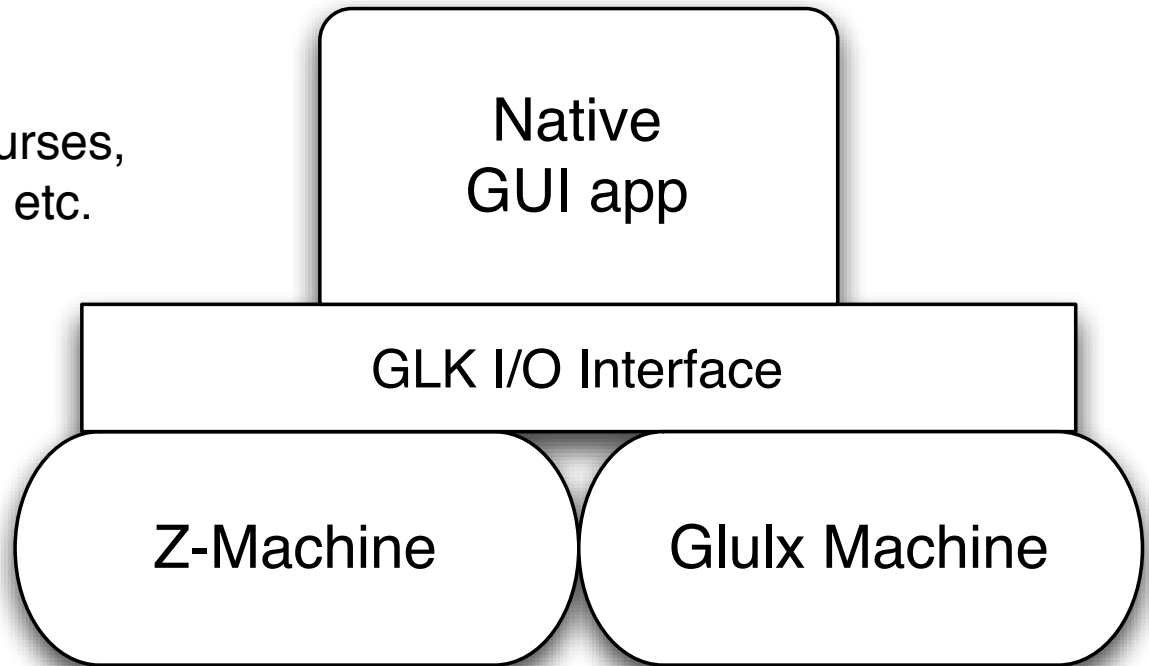
Win32, Cocoa, Java, GTK, curses,
iPhone, Android, javascript, etc.



glk.h



C Language

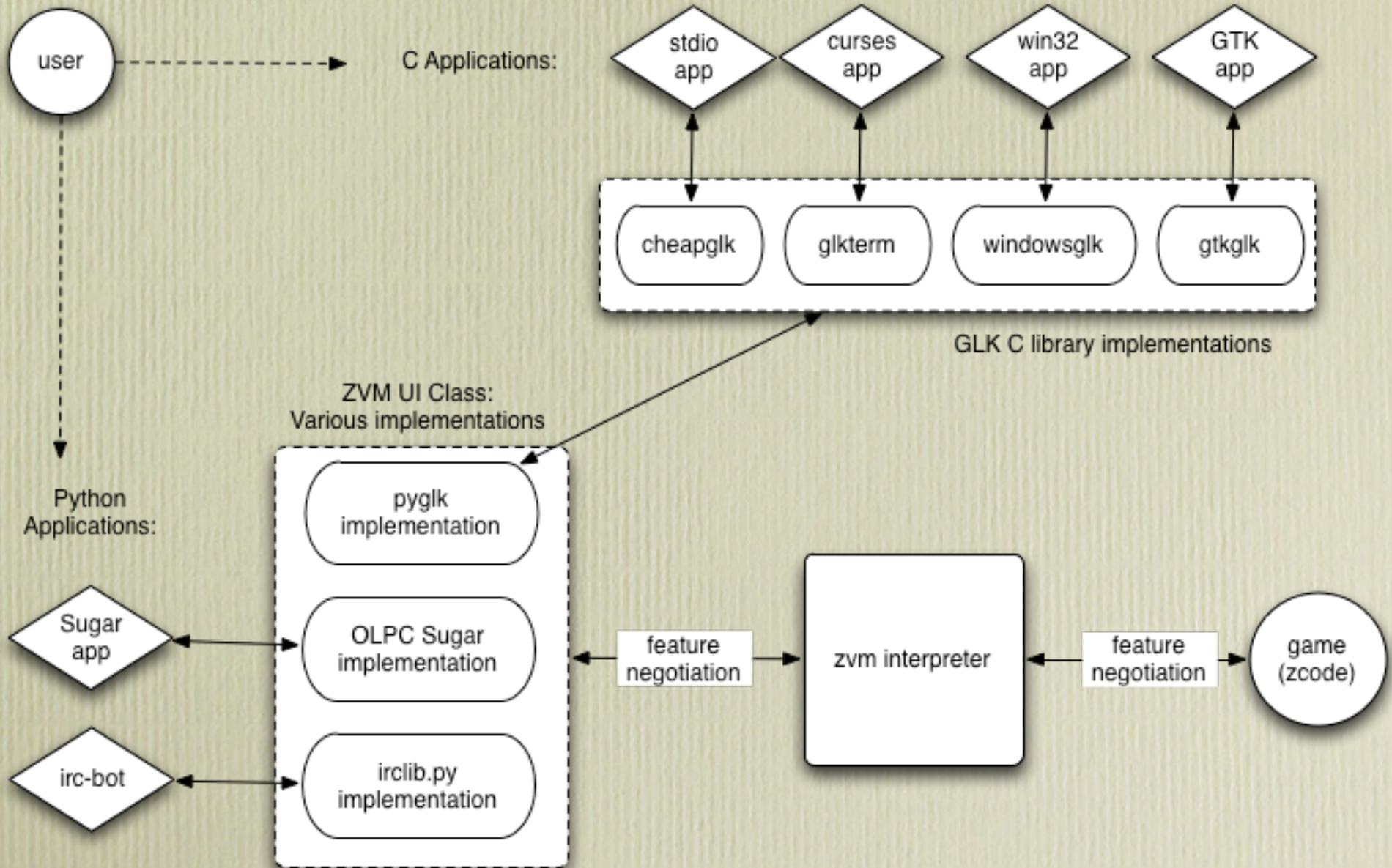


Other Systems

- Hugo
- Alan
- TADS
- Adrift

2006-present:
My Involvement

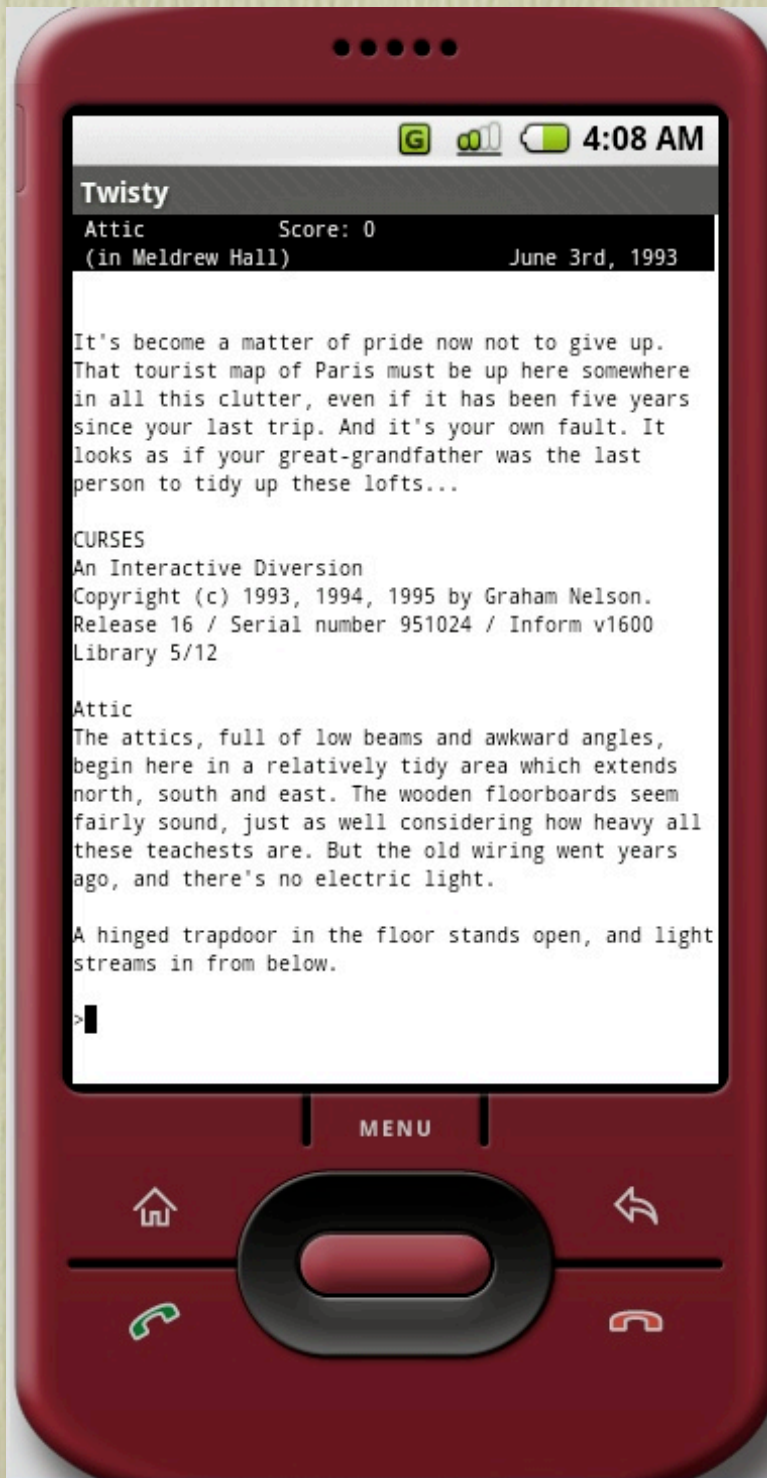
ZVM



Trainstopping



Twisty



Rover's Day Out



Hoosegow



How Do I Get Involved?

- Discussion forums:
 - [rec.arts.interactive-fiction](https://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.interactive-fiction) (google group)
 - <http://www.intfiction.org/forum/>
- IF Wiki: <http://ifwiki.org>
- IFDB: <http://ifdb.tads.org>
- “Desert island” games:
 - <http://www.red-bean.com/sussman/if/shortlist.html>

Inform Demo