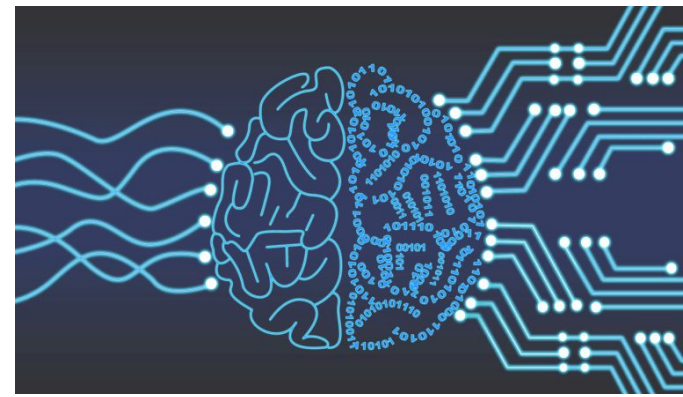# How I'm building my second brain

Dave Cohen June 2022

What's a "second brain?"

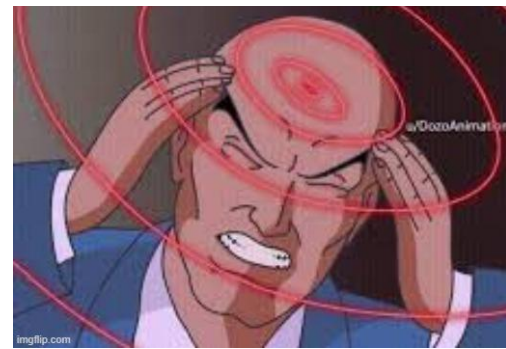
Concept	Practice
external information collection that aids thinking and memory	Notes linked with bi-directional **[[backlinks]]**

related concepts: [Personal Knowledge Management (PKM)](#), wiki, Zettelkasten, digital gardening, life operating system, "Linking your Thinking"

One brain is limited

Juggling projects

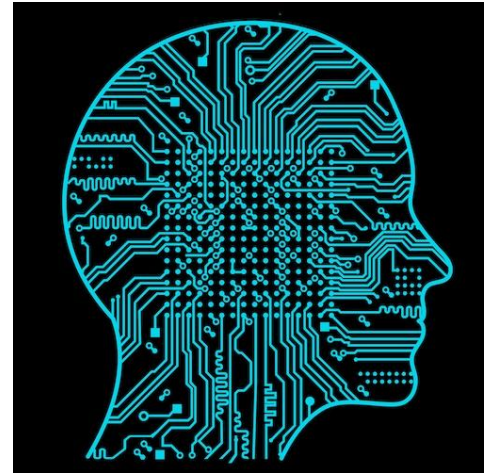Learning something new can be intimidating

Disparate sources: Slack, emails, bookmarks, notes, etc
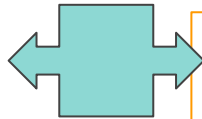
Googling repeatedly (but...sites go down)

Are we able to make notes and discover them without too much friction?

Second brain benefits

- Solidify knowledge
- Readily search and share ideas
- Consolidate and reduce clutter ([collector's fallacy](#))
- Structure emerges from links within notes, not directories

About backlinks:

Weblinks are uni-directional - the destination has no knowledge of the source that linked to it. **Backlinks are bi-directional - the destination links back to all of its sources.**

Demo

note-making
https://blog.appsignal.com/2021/09/01/best-practices-for-logging-in-nodejs.html into reference schema. backlink syntax: `[[link-to-note]]`

writing: linking thoughts to reference material

task management: Todo list that links to project docs

Parting thoughts

Experiment to find *your* way

collect -> synthesize -> manage

Make a habit of connecting as much as you can

creative synthesis: new ideas form effortlessly from linked ideas

Compound growth

In ~6 months, work/personal second brains: 870 backlinks in 226 files. >50 article highlights, ~12 book takeaways, weekly micro-blogging

Resources: methodology

[Zettelkasten, Linking Your Thinking, and Nick Milo's Search for Ground | The Daily Pony](#)

- [Hacker News comments for ^](#)
- [Podcast episode with Nick Milo](#)

[Introduction to the Zettelkasten Method](#)

- [collector's fallacy](#)

[The PARA Method: A Universal System for Organizing Digital Information - Forte Labs](#)

[How to Manage Your Digital Files: 9 Tips and Tools to Keep You Organized](#) see The Noguchi Filing System

Resources: tools

- [Copy As Markdown](#) browser extension
- [Docs to Markdown](#): convert formatted text to markdown

"VS Code - flavored" second brain:

- [vscodium](#) (vscode "core" built without telemetry)
- [svsool.markdown-memo extension](#) for backlinks
- You might instead like *Obsidian, logseq, Notion, Roam, etc.*

Example sites:

- [Software comparison – PKM Zettelkasten](#)
- [Andy Matuschak's backlinked notes](#)

Knowledge site generators:

- https://github.com/binyamin/eleventy-garden
- https://github.com/mathieudutour/gatsby-digital-garden/

Questions?

thank you!

Demo: writing and task management

Writing: separating reference material from thoughts about it

Task Management:

- Todo lists / links to project docs
- Tagging (like @! for in progress)
- Folder structure ideas: Current/Backlog, PARA