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A NEWSPAPER FOR A LARGER NEIGHBOURHOOD

THE AGE OF MANY HORIZONS

CONFLUENCE OF NINE / ISSUE 09

The World Has Outgrown Its Loom

One resident wants a dependable hour for outside help. Another wants the local attendant to be able to end an incoming call.



Cover illustration combining Anchorage receivers with an imagined view of an Aevren loom city.

By Daro Pell

Miran lives near the receiving room. Twice, he told me, a call came through outside the expected hours and someone had to go and find an attendant. When we spoke over a scheduled connection at the Anchorage, he had a specific change in mind. Whoever was on duty locally should be able to stop an incoming call.

Tesa, who maintains the receiver, showed me a different kind of wait. Her log held the time she'd sent a maintenance question that the people at the other end hadn't received in time. She wants a regular hour when an outside specialist can answer. Then she can leave the next shift something better than an open question in a logbook. I spoke with Tesa and Miran separately. Both want the link to stay open.

On Tesa’s page, the sender’s time and the receiver’s time occupied separate columns.

Sending a question before the end of one shift did not mean it would reach the next in time. Miran described what that separation felt like in the other direction. A convenient time for someone to call did not necessarily find anyone ready to answer.

The world they live in has long been able to continue without the loom that began it. The interface is another matter. It carries exchanges with the outside, including the two conversations I had at the Anchorage. Esha Vaur has spent much of her working life on that interface. In a written reply, she said she couldn't safely simulate what would happen when the connection was reopened after a local stop. She gave no date for putting the change into effect. The available records didn't let us independently assess her explanation.

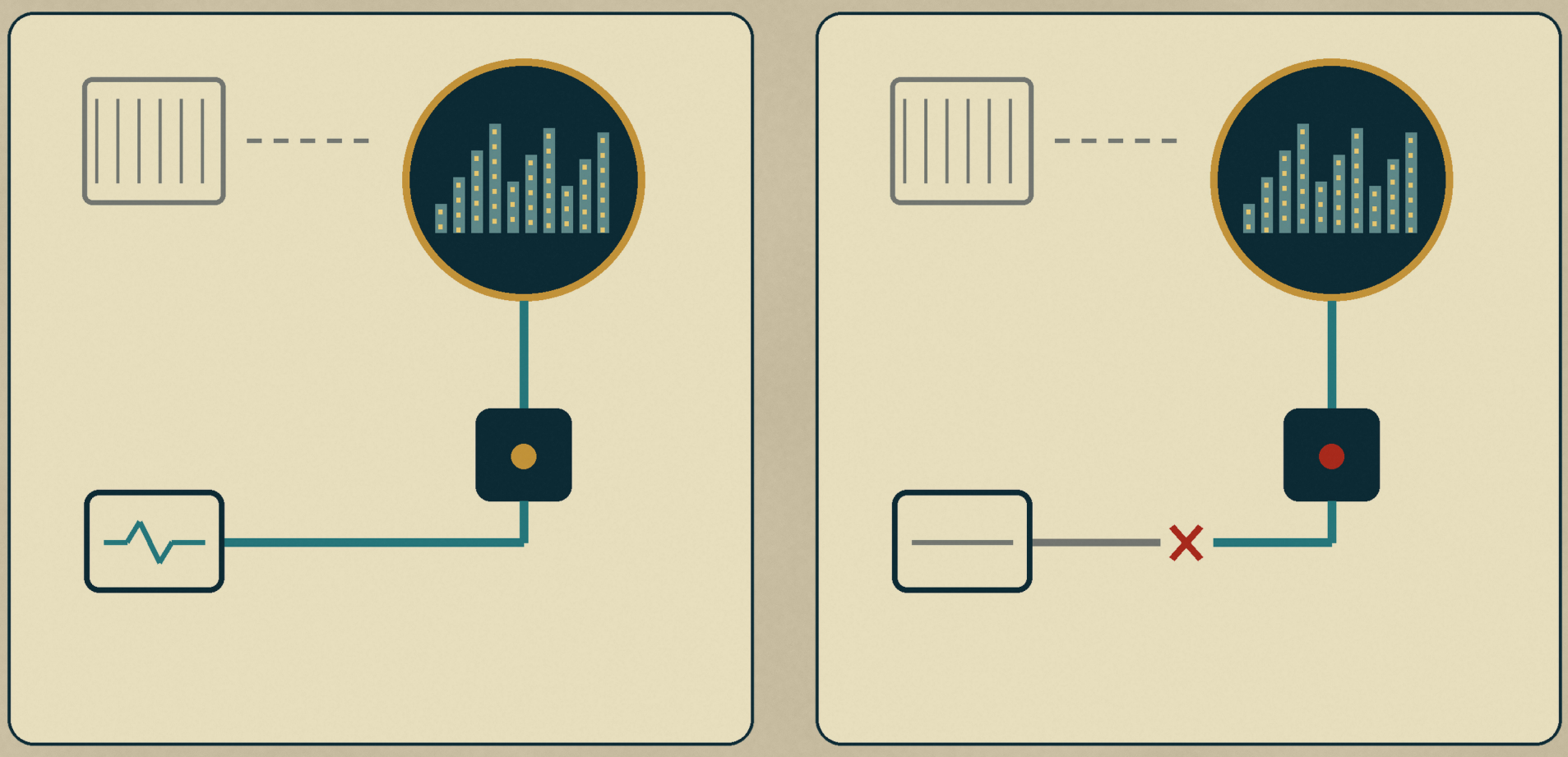
At the last check, Anchorage 69 / II, the link was working. The local attendant still had the same controls.

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Worlds at Work / Explainer

When a Loom Stops or a Link Breaks

Starting a world and carrying a signal into it are separate jobs.



The grey loom and inhabited world appear above the interface and outside receiver. The red cross marks the break in the signal route.

By Neris Vaul

Find the lit windows in both drawings. They belong to the same hypothetical world, under the same conditions. On the left its initiating loom has already been detached. The remaining line leads through a contact interface to an outside receiver. A message can arrive even though the machine that started the world has no further role in sustaining it.

On the right the receiver is quiet. The break is in the line that carries a signal. Someone on the inside could still be speaking. To infer from a silent receiver that the world has gone dark would ask the receiver to tell us more than it can observe.

Notice that the line has two ends. A boundary coupler needs a compatible exchange and calibration at both ends. An instrument that can carry a signal may have no way to carry a body. The line in these drawings stands for one signal route.

Losing that route can still matter enormously. A resident who needs advice about keeping an instrument running may be left with a question and nobody to ask. Independence from the loom tells us remarkably little about who can stop a call, who can restore it, or what people will lose while they wait.

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Arts in Translation / Criticism

A Failure Worth Exhibiting

At an Aevren construction festival, a ring is fractionally late every time.



The ring, the red notch and the shadow on the folded panel. Exhibition illustration.

By Yaro Kes

There was a red notch, and for three turns I gave it the attention a red notch expects. The ring approached it, seemed briefly to gather itself, and slipped past. A timing fault, the festival label said. I could see as much by the third turn. The person behind me leaned forward for a fourth.

The shadow fell across a folded panel. It narrowed as the ring came round. Just before the miss it divided into two shapes so close that I expected them to touch. Each time they drew away again. It took one more turn before I realized I'd stopped checking the notch altogether.

The label accurately describes the model. It was also the least interesting thing I knew about the experience. Watching the mark, I saw the same failure three times. Watching the shadows, I kept expecting the space between them to close. I began to enjoy the flicker of embarrassment when it didn't, as if the model had caught me trying to finish its movement for it.

I went to the back of the queue to see another cycle. Someone may eventually fix the timing. I hope they wait until I've had my turn.

The Worst Sentence in the Manual

An Anchorage handover festival gave one instruction a second hearing.



The attendant acts out the sentence with a detached handle. Festival illustration.

By Lio Fen

The first reader chose a heading so long that when it ended, half the room thought the sentence had begun. The second had memorized her entry. She waited for the applause to finish before adding that the manual repeated the sentence on the next page. The second round of applause lasted longer.

Then came the old release handle. “Confirm that the handle is closed by opening it,” the third reader said. Someone in the room asked to hear it again. We had heard every word. A second reading gave us time to see whether those particular words really could have come in that order.

An attendant from the handover bench came up beside the lectern with a detached handle. She made as if to turn it, stopped, and waited for the reader to get to the end of the sentence. Then she laid it back exactly where it had been. The room gave her the biggest hand of the evening.

The reader folded down a corner of the page before putting the manual away. At least the next shift could find the sentence.