

MAHLON E. SMITH

✉ mahlon@martini.nu
🔗 <https://martini.nu/>
☎ 503.358.5025
🏠 Portland, Oregon



PROFILE

I'm a technology enthusiast with nearly 30 years of experience, who takes pride in being a generalist. Jack of all trades, master of at least a few. Full stack and devops before either of those terms were in circulation.

I strongly value environmental variety, and endeavor to surround myself with talented, funny, intelligent people. I straddle a programming / administration fence, dealing in networking, mass storage systems, machine messaging, VoIP, various databases, embedded devices, Ruby, C, Nim, Lua, Javascript, et al.

I scale out where applicable, and seek performance, security, and long-term maintenance via simplicity. I believe in tests for software, redundancy/failover for hardware, writing the documentation and sweating the details. I've been directly involved with multi-million dollar purchases, and have helped startups that can't afford to buy ink cartridges. I default to healthy skepticism – hunches are a start, but measurements are king. Consistency in whitespace is actually important. I consider dabbling in Blender and Arduino projects a *really* good time.

I make stuff, including mistakes, and have made enough of those to generally avoid them. You can find various projects, interests, and other miscellanea on my website. (<https://martini.nu>)

EDUCATION

Southern Oregon University

Computer Science / 1997 - 1998 (1 year)

I landed a job at an ISP during this time frame, and learned more in my first 6 months than I did in my entire school career. I stopped attending, but never stopped learning.

Portland State University

Computer Science / 1995 - 1997 (2 years)

Portland Community College

Graphic Design / 1995 - 1996 (2 years)

The Art Institute of Seattle

Graphic Design / 1994 - 1995 (2 years)

EXPERIENCE

Staff Software Engineer | *Ravn, Inc (Pharos Defense)* | 2021 - 2026 (5 years, 4 months)

Built a modern, event driven communications platform for active military service, with components designed to flow critical data upwards through chains of command via unreliable networks. This provided near real-time knowledge for accurate decision making, while keeping radios comms free for emergency priority needs.

I was involved in all aspects of architecture and implementation – operating system, networking, and software stack on an in-house Linux embedded device. Everything from web interfaces for user administration and human workflow design, to hardware integrations to numerous display and control devices (Android and Android WearOS, custom internal gadgets, and various military mesh network radios.) Traveled regularly to Navy and Army bases, gathering user requirements and providing support where required. Held secret security clearance.

Senior Technologist | *LAIKA, LLC* | 2005 - 2021 (15 years, 3 months)

LAIKA is a commercial animation studio that produces full length motion features. I was involved with 5 films: Coraline, Paranorman, The BoxTrolls, Kubo and the Two Strings, and Missing Link.

In my time at LAIKA, I was largely responsible for the design and implementation of the majority of the IT technology environment. I worked with the Director of Technology to keep hundreds of systems current and running smoothly. Many things changed at LAIKA over my tenure, and at one time or another I wore a lot of hats. I managed an internal software development group for three years, writing software in Ruby, C, Perl, and Javascript. I designed and implemented our Asterisk phone system, DNS/DHCP, systems monitoring, internal IT tools for user and host management, intranet/wiki systems, PostgreSQL database warehouse, mercurial code repositories, OpenLDAP environment, and LAN/WAN network architecture – VLAN design, VPNs, security cameras, WiFi at scale, etc. I wrote RFPs, evaluated storage subsystems, managed render farms, dealt with vendor relations, and deeply integrated 3rd party toolchains. We built data centers from the ground up, spent money when it made sense to, and happily invented our own things otherwise. All of that was across multiple geographic locations in the greater Portland metropolitan area, supporting an artist crew of 400-600.

I wrote lots of code and wrangled lots of tech – so others could just worry about making enjoyable animation.

Occasionally, my work was highlighted in case studies - some notable examples:

- Digium, on our Asterisk VoIP integrations. (<https://tinyurl.com/4zv9uvfw>)
- TimescaleDB, on our long term data collection and trending. (<https://tinyurl.com/y7v7k2z4>)
- RabbitMQ, on our internal messaging systems. (<https://tinyurl.com/cxvytswt>)

Core Programmer | *LiveJournal* | 2004 - 2005 (2 years)

Part of a small team of Perl and C developers working on the LiveJournal.com and ScrapBook code bases. LiveJournal was purchased by SixApart (the creators of TypePad), and I stayed on as a remote worker, commuting to San Francisco frequently. Some popular projects included Atom XML protocol integrations, cryptographically secure post-via-email gateway, rich text WYSIWYG posting interface, UI theme designs, voice posting via Asterisk and Gizmo VOIP (later became Google Voice), captcha challenges and challenge/response secure login, sharded SQL schema design, and local office phone system and networking.

Research and Development | *Danga Interactive* | 2003 - 2004 (2 years)

Danga was the idea incubator for LiveJournal and related support projects. Many pieces of technology invented by Danga during this timeframe became foundational (memcached, OpenID) for early large sites such as Facebook and Slashdot. (<https://tinyurl.com/58k58nj3>)

* *There's a good deal more, but in the interests of conserving page space, I'm omitting employment older than ~20 years. These include early peer-to-peer content delivery services, small business hosting (web/email), and internet service provisioning for small town dialup and DSL. I'm happy to answer any questions and/or provide extensive references upon request.*