

Commodore 64 Scene Database Quantified!

CSDb analyses (31st of July 2010) - by Mr. Mouse / XeNTaX

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20 Years!

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The Commodore C64 Scene Database (CSDb) is the principal archive of all Commodore 64 software that the C64-scene produced, since 1982. Set up by No Name in 2001, it has since collected and archived 88309 titles (31-07-2010), created by 16364 sceners that were active in 5728 groups around the globe. From the start, the CSDb has grown to be the most important place where C64-sceners still gather to show off their new releases, discuss coding, music and what have you. Having joined the scene in 1988 myself I have never experienced a more rewarding community. Since I am a scientist by heart, I thought it might be interesting to do a little analyses of the data gathered at the CSDb thus far. Currently, I am targeting just the superficial data. At this page I will show some of the results.

First off, let us start with calculating the total releases per year, and show the total number of releases after ~28 years of scene activity. Note: CSDb has a substantial number of missing Release Date values (N=11884), along with 4711 deleted/empty rows in it's database. Therefore, the per-year data is based on 76425 entries. Also, the CSDb currently lists 88380 instead of the afore mentioned 88309. This discrepancy could be explained by a number of non-software releases that my analysis did not take into consideration. Finally, of these 76425 entries, 3986 entries did not have any group specified.

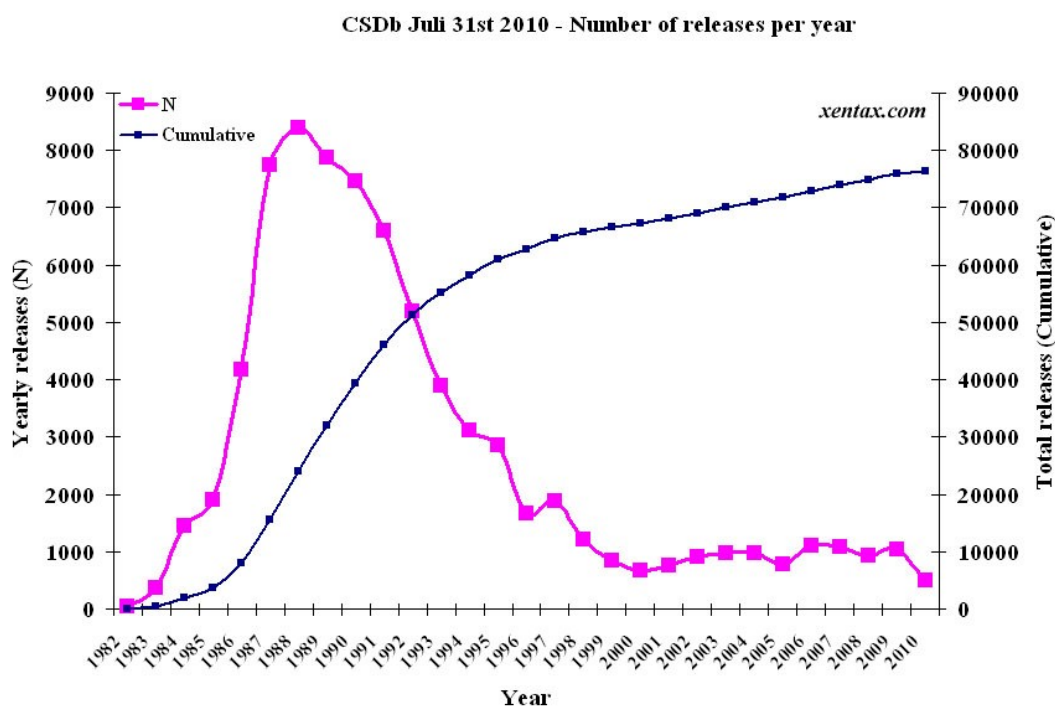


Figure 1. Number of scene releases by CSDb-archived year.

As you can see in Figure 1, there is a dramatic increase from 1985 on, while the first releases started to appear already in 1982. The scene reached it's peak year in 1988 with 8405 titles that averages to about 23 releases per day! After that golden year there were two strong

years still, but from 1990 on the scene more or less crashed to a bottom plateau of around 1000 releases per year, with a steady 10-year average of 2.7 releases per day from 1999 - 2009. Overall, the rise and fall took ~12 years (from 1985 to 1997), with a Golden Age that started in 1987 and lasted until the end of 1990. Of course, there is a limitation to this figure. As said, some 11.000 releases are unaccounted for in terms of Year of Release. The figure might change a bit. For instance, from 2001 on, it is quite clear when a new release came about, since CSDb started. However, especially in the early years of the scene, people forgot to put a date in a new release. Therefore, those early years might have different numbers once those 11.000 have been sorted out. This, on the other hand, is mere speculation, and we won't know the full details until most of the unknowns have been filled in there.

Well, before we continue to look in more detail into the different types of software released, let's get a global overview of the products released during the last 28 years (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of types of valid releases at CSDb and missing release dates.				
Type	ValidYear	MissingYear	Total	Percentage
BBS Graphics	7	2	9	22,22%
BBS software	3	3	6	50,00%
C128 Release	32	6	38	15,79%
C64 1K Game	57		57	0,00%
C64 1K Intro	52	1	53	1,89%
C64 256b Intro	77		77	0,00%
C64 2K Game	20	1	21	4,76%
C64 32K Game	14		14	0,00%
C64 4K Game	42		42	0,00%
C64 4K Intro	253	1	254	0,39%
C64 512b Game	15		15	0,00%
C64 Basic Demo	180	16	196	8,16%
C64 Charts	280	29	309	9,39%
C64 Crack	38024	4856	42880	11,32%
C64 Crack intro	1944	187	2131	8,78%
C64 Demo	3333	202	3535	5,71%
C64 Dentro	114	10	124	8,06%
C64 Disk Cover	377	28	405	6,91%
C64 Diskmag	2362	216	2578	8,38%
C64 DTU	74	1	75	1,33%
C64 Fake Demo	148	<i>xentax.com</i>	148	0,00%
C64 Fake Game	9	28	37	75,68%
C64 Game	1105	220	1325	16,60%
C64 Game Preview	148	13	161	8,07%
C64 Graphics	3850	571	4421	12,92%
C64 Graphics Collection	668	112	780	14,36%
C64 Hardware	28	6	34	17,65%
C64 Intro	812	236	1048	22,52%
C64 Intro Collection	74	9	83	10,84%
C64 Invitation	164	5	169	2,96%
C64 Misc	957	340	1297	26,21%
C64 Music	5596	1069	6665	16,04%
C64 Music Collection	1345	189	1534	12,32%
C64 One-File Demo	9990	2360	12350	19,11%
C64 Papermag	200	20	220	9,09%
C64 Tool	3114	1055	4169	25,31%
C64 Tool Collection	336	60	396	15,15%
C64 Votesheet	52	18	70	25,71%
IDE64 Release	133		133	0,00%
Other Platform C64 Tool	428	12	440	2,73%
SuperCPU Release	8	2	10	20,00%
Total	76425	11884	88309	13,46%

Table 1. Release types (valid and missing)

As shown in Table 1, the missing Release Dates total up to 13,46% of all releases. This is statistically rather unacceptable and effort should be made into dating those.

Cracks, One-File Demos and Demos

Let's look at the historical data on the number of released Cracks, One-File Demos and Demos (multi-part assumed). Figure 2 shows the number of releases per year.

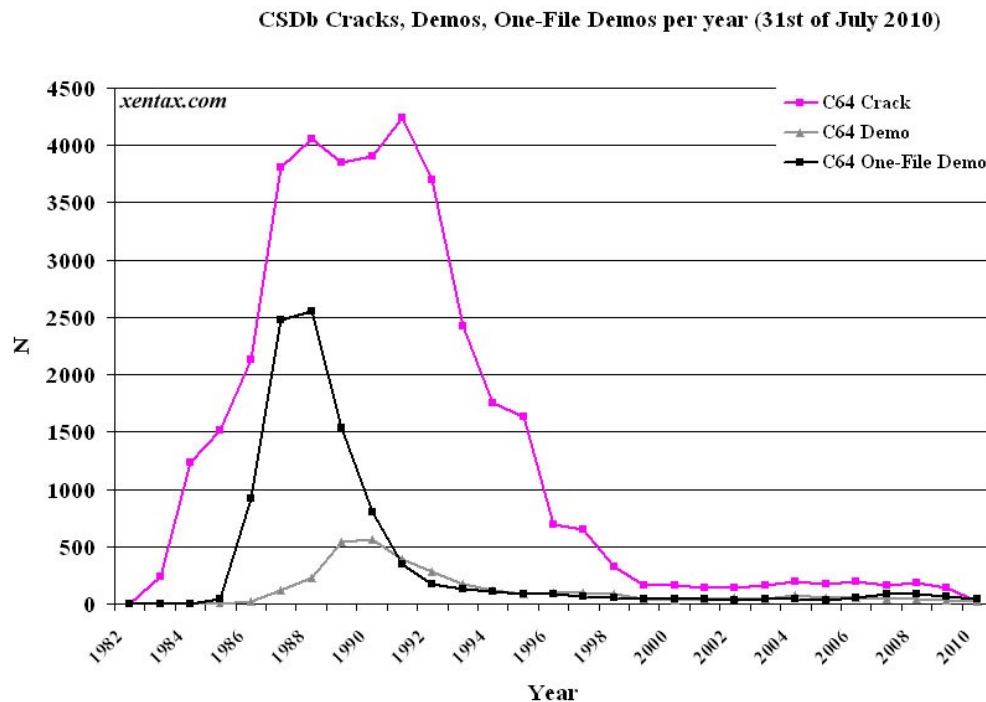


Figure 2. Number of cracks, one-file demos and demos released by the scene by CSDb-date.

A number of observations can be made from this figure. Cracks emerged practically immediately after the machine came to the market. Between 1983 and 1984 there was a steep increase, and again between 1986 and 1987. In 1987 a plateau phase began, no doubt caused by a thriving game industry at its max, that lasted to and including 1992. During these 6 years, an average of 3929 cracks were released by the scene per year (total of 23578). As we know, from then on publishers dropped the C64 as platform, hence the crash in the number of cracks released. Still, from 1999 - 2009 each year an average of 165 cracks (1816 in total) were released at a steady level, but the nature of most of these "cracks" is questionable. To compare, in 1991 alone the scene released 4240 cracks.

Switching to demos, one can see the first one-file demos truly appear in 1985 (44 in total), and booming to ~1000 in 1986 and rocketing further to 2500 per year in both 1987 and 1988. Interestingly, multi-part demos started to come a year later than one-file demos, in 1986, and grew steadily until 1989 where a steep increase is visible, neatly coinciding with a sharp decrease in the number of one-file demos. The maximum number of multi-part demos releases was 559 in 1990. Looking at 1999-2009, the scene released an average of 46 multi-part demos and 52 one-file demos per year. In other words, once a week.

Graphics and Music

Stand-alone music and graphics releases are an important part of the scene today and have always been (Figure 3).

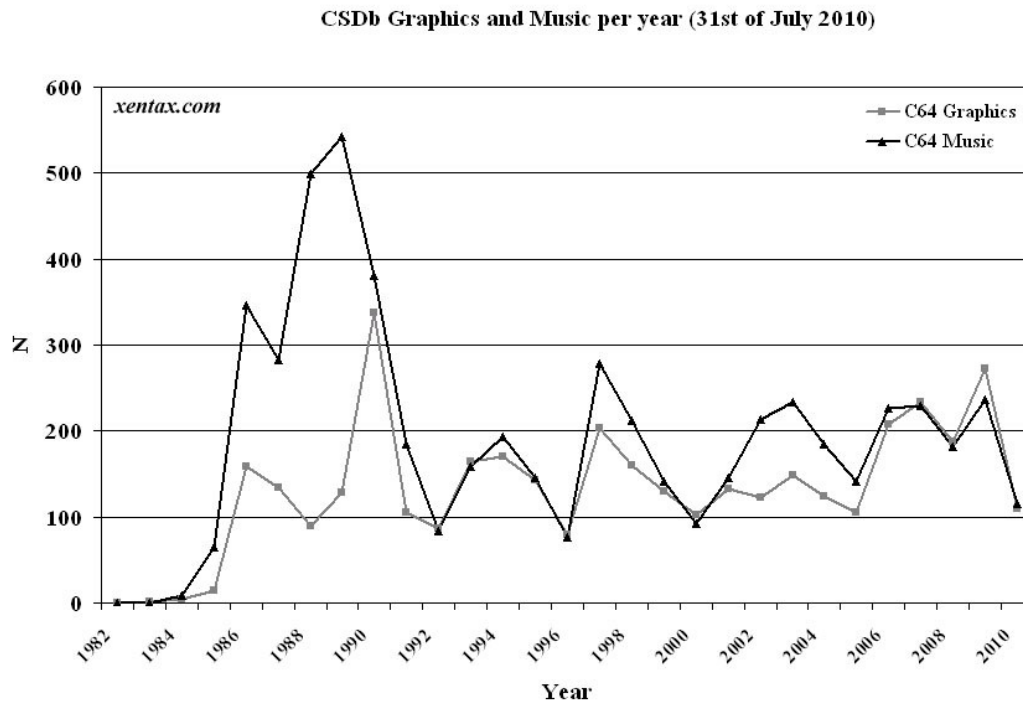


Figure 3. Music and Graphics stand-alone releases per year.

C64 Music releases really kicked off from 1986 with 346 stand-alone tunes released, up to a peak in 1989 with 543 releases. The few years after matched the crash in one-file demos when from 1990 to 1992 rock bottom was hit with only 83 music releases in 1992. From then on, both the graphic releases and music releases follow a wave-like path, and the number of graphic releases largely follows the trail of the music releases. The moving average of the music releases of this time period (Figure 4) suggests that the popularity of the C64 music chip is increasing, last year (2009) we saw a moving average of 217 tunes and actual number of 236 releases. That last number is still 43% of the number of tunes in 1989, and 284% of that from 1992.

The wave-like pattern would suggest to match the occurrence of scene-events, such as demo parties, and perhaps the rise of CSDb itself from 2001 offered a new and fast platform to show off new tunes and graphics, encouraging sceners to step up creation of new work.

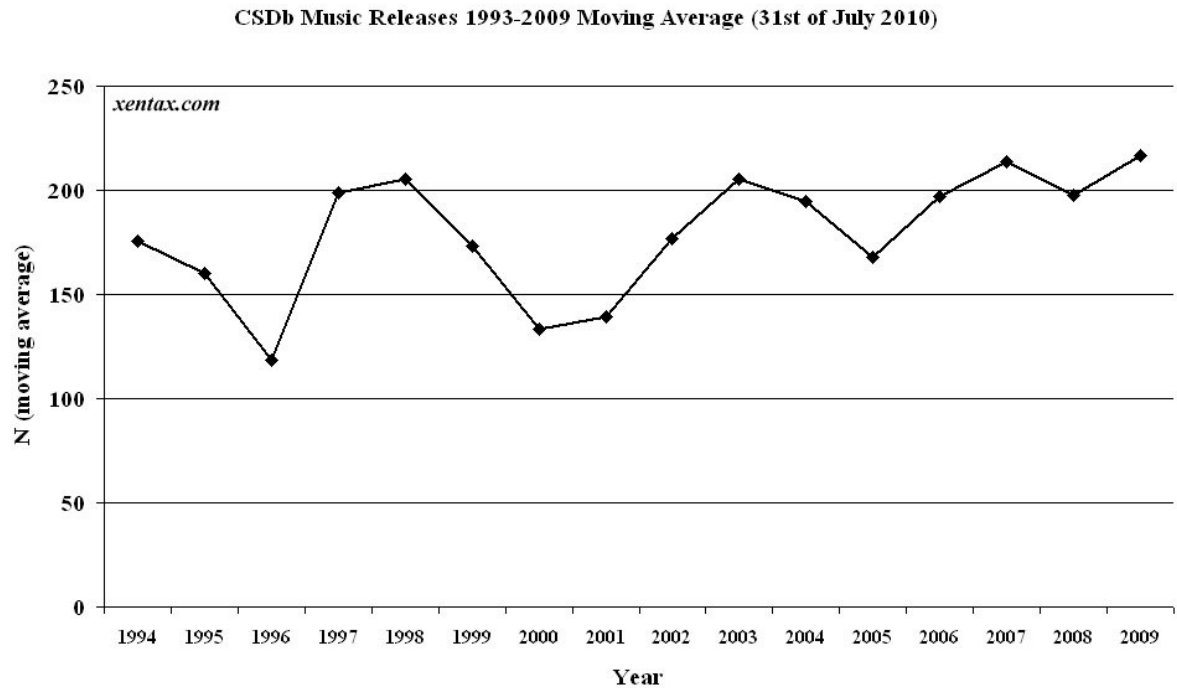


Figure 4. Moving average of Music stand-alone releases from 1994 to 2009.

Coming to the Graphics Collections and Music Collections, these follow their own routine apparently (Figure 5).

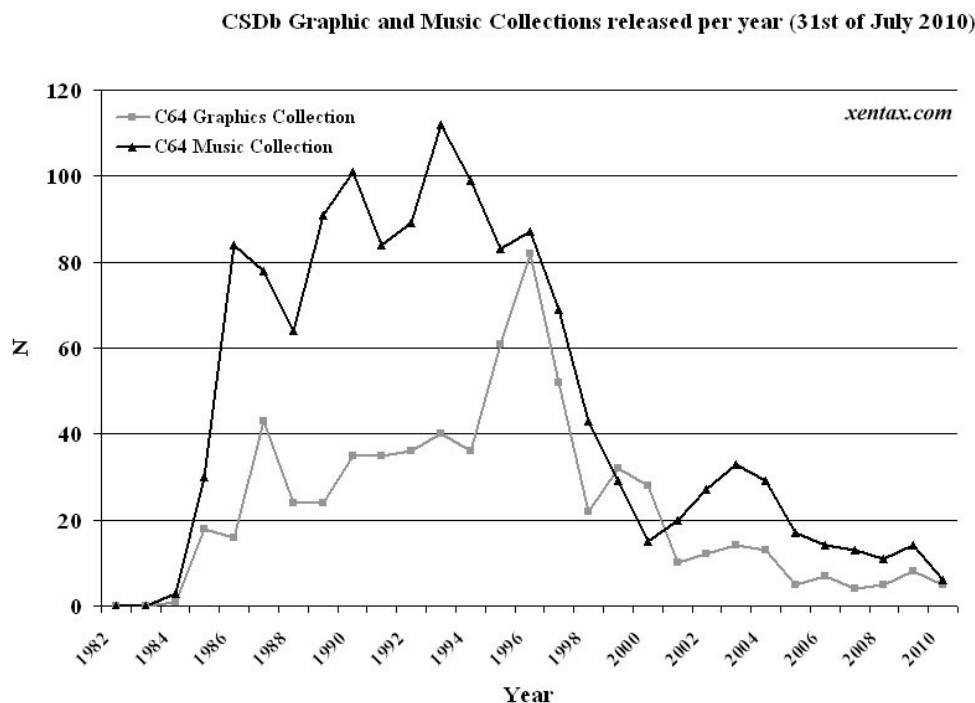


Figure 5. Music and Graphic Collections released by CSDb date per year.

From 1984 with 3 releases, the number of music collections shot to 84 in 1986, thereafter increasing to a peak in 1993 with 112 music collections released. Only in 1996 did the number fall to 87, matching that of 1986. This 11 year period of a steady high number of music collections released is quite extraordinary. It did soon after collapse to 15 in 2000.

Then, from 2001 there was briefly a renewed interest in releasing collections (possibly caused by the start of CSDb), but it lasted only 5 years and ended in 2005. Since then it has been steadily decreasing to 14 last year (2009). Comparing this to the number of stand-alone tunes released since 1993 it is obvious that the internet and CSDb has made it unnecessary to create collections, when the audience can get and listen to each tune only seconds after the musician finishes it.

Graphics Collections never reached sky-high numbers of releases. While the first listed was in 1984, and while it seemed to follow the trail of music collections in 1987, interest dropped in 1988 after which there was a much slower increase. In 1995, something sparked a sudden strong surge of Graphic Collection releases that lasted for two years (peak of 82 in 1996) until things fell back to 22 releases in 1998. From 2001 on, the number of releases decreased to around 7 per year.

Diskmags

Diskmags are just that: magazines on disks. And these scene magazines kept sceners informed of what was going on elsewhere. People, parties, release reviews, editorials, voting, charts, addies and what have you: everything was published. Of course, also sceners like the gossip, so many Diskmags were launched by various groups. Brutal Recall, Addybook, Script, Vandalism, Smash, Style and many, many more. The advent of Diskmags and releases per year surely shows an interesting pattern (Figure 6).

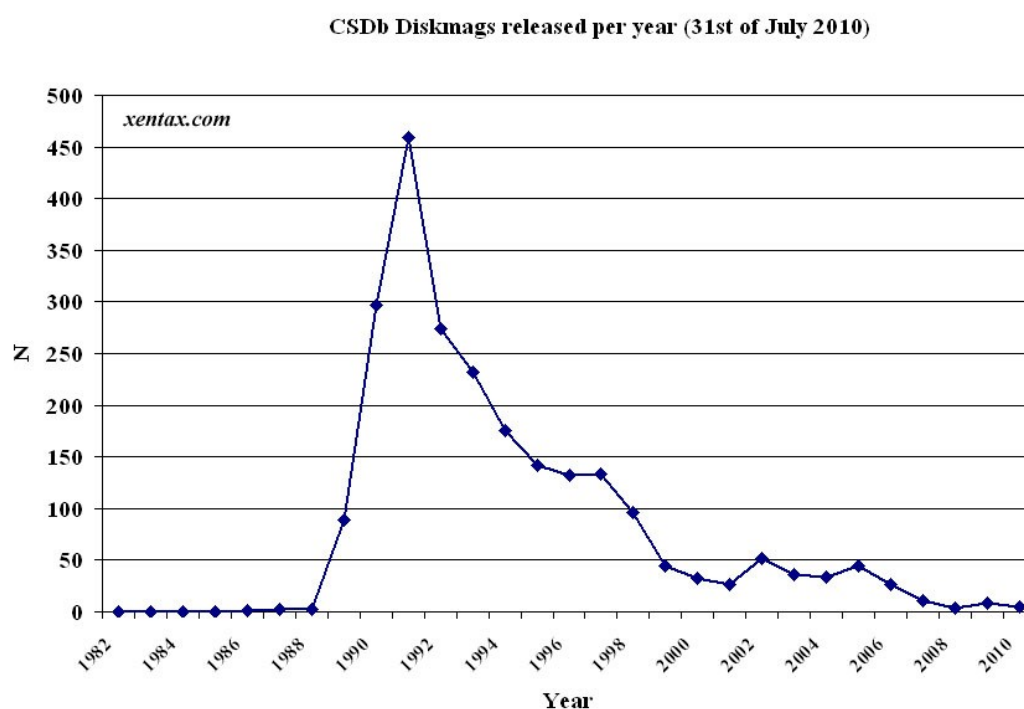


Figure 6. Diskmags released per year by CSDb-date.

CSDb lists the first Diskmag released in 1986, with one added each year until 1989 when things seriously kicked off. In 1988 there were 3, in 1989 there were 89, in 1990 there were 297 and the sky-high value of 459 Diskmags released in 1991. In 1991, one could read 1.3 Diskmag per day, ~9 Diskmags per week, ~40 a month! Sadly, I would say, we probably did not have time to read them all. But if we wanted, we could have read a new Diskmag each

day in 1991. From 1991 on however, the overkill in Diskmags resulted in the obligatory crash in 1992 back to the level of 1990. From 1992, with 274 Diskmags released, things halved to 133 releases in 1997 (5 year period). Again, a drop to 45 in 1999 and after 7 years the numbers are going down again to about 6 per year currently.

Tools of the trade

The scene always created her own tools to help create new stuff. Figure 7 lists the tools released per year.

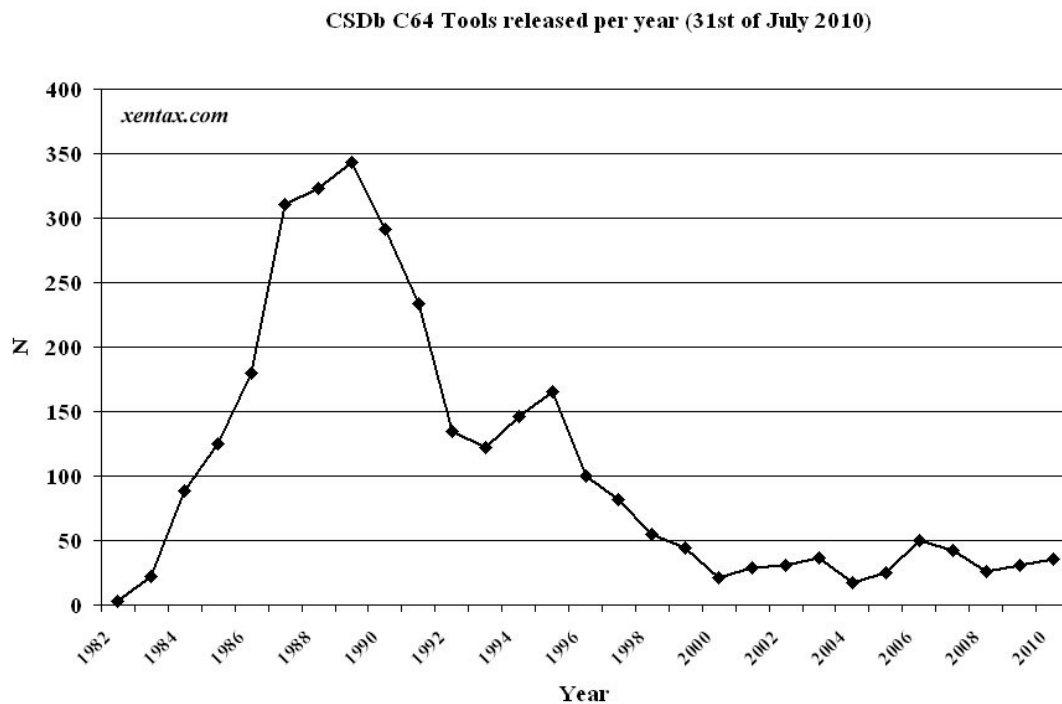


Figure 7. Tools released per year by CSDb date.

We can be brief here. From 1983 on tools were released a plenty with the Golden Age (1987-1990) having the most tools released per year, with a maximum in 1989 (343 tools) and dropping to 1985 level in 1992. During the Golden Age, you could get almost a new tool each day. Something sparked a sudden increase in 1994-1995, but from then on things went downhill to a steady average of about 32 tools per year from 1999-2009.

Groups

Sceners united into Groups, and each year new groups would form and sceners could be a member of multiple groups. Figure 8 shows the number of unique and newly formed groups each year.

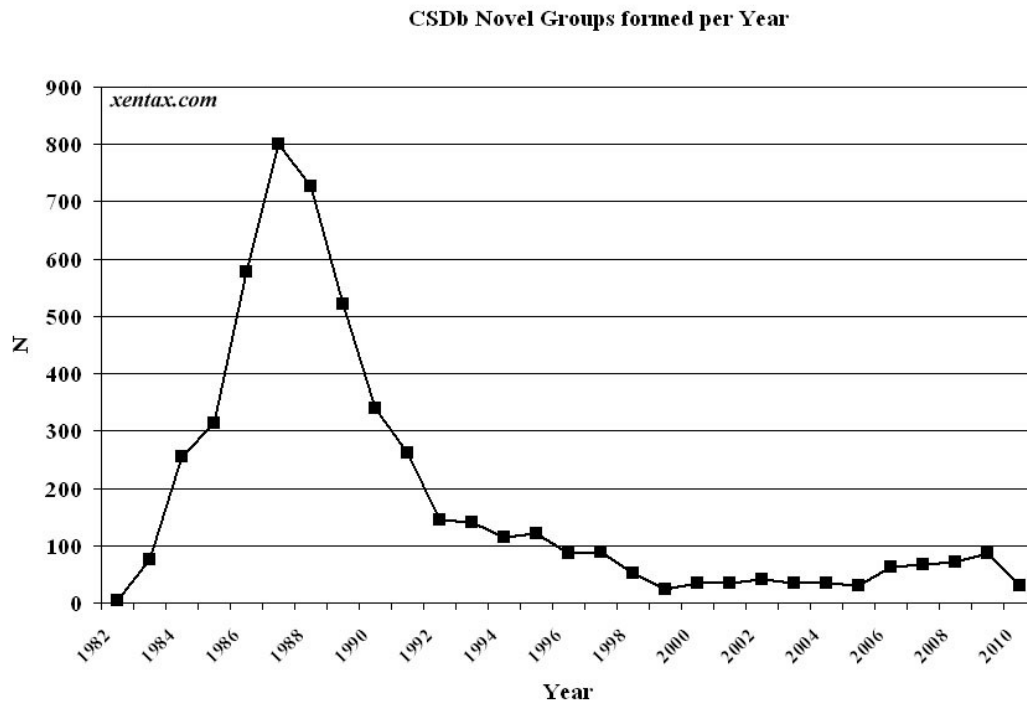


Figure 8. Novel Groups formed per year by CSDb-date.

Note that the figure shows the year when first a new group name emerged attached to a release. From 1982 with 4 Groups listed (although there is probably one faulty entry there with a screw up regarding Plutonium Crackers), to 1983 with 76 groups (and individuals, some sceners were their own "group" as well, like 1103) in 1984 all the way up to 800 new groups in 1987, the maximum number of Groups/Entities formed per year. Imagine that in 1987 2 Groups were formed each day around the globe. Per 1992 146 Groups were set-up and the number thereafter decreased to the bottom of 24 in 1999. Between 1999 and 2009, an average of 48 new Groups per year are formed.

Coops

CSDb lists certain cooperations (coops) between groups and individuals as well. If we take just these, and see whenever the combination appeared for the first time, we get the following Figure 9.

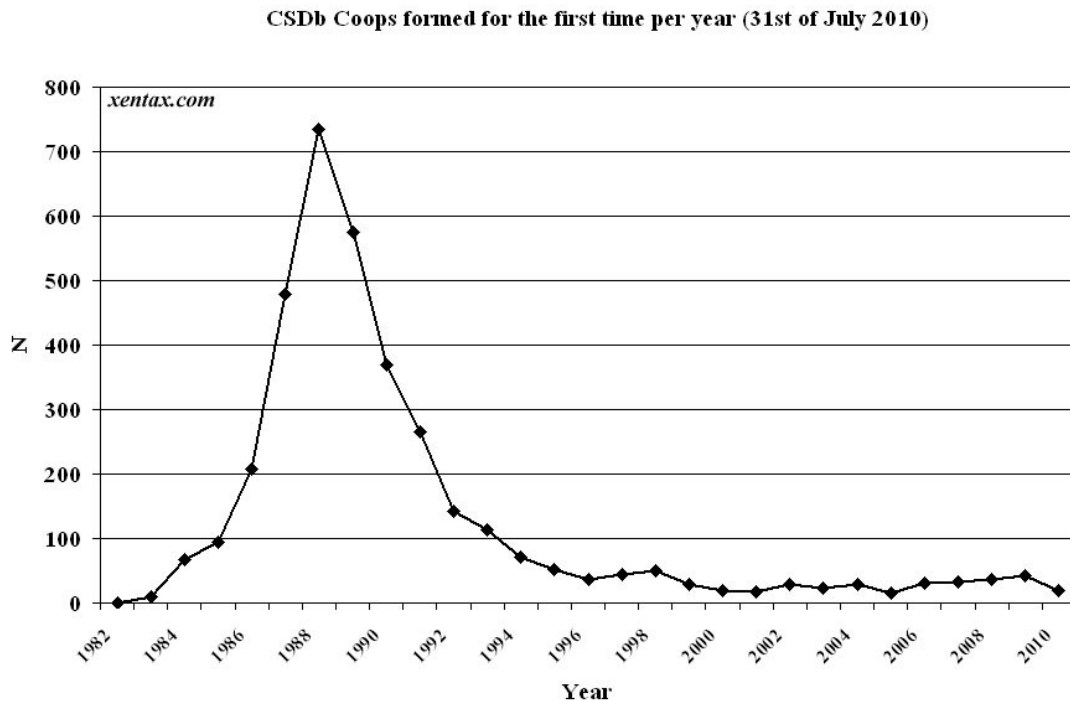


Figure 9. Novel Coops per year by CSDb-date.

Indeed, Sceners were already cooperating by 1984 (10 coops) and swiftly increased the combined efforts to 734 new coops in 1988! Not surprisingly, the year that the most releases ever were created! By 1993 the number of new coops dropped to 1985 levels. Mind, this tells about new combinations, it does not tell about continued cooperations that were previously started. From 1996 on to 2009, 31 new combinations are made per year.

And there we have it. My first raw analyses of shaky, fishy and questionable data. But it is as good as it is going to get at this point, while the large numbers ensures some accuracy. Future analyses could take into account specific events in time to explain the numbers.

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http://www.xentax.com/?page_id=235