

# Delete Your Facebook!

An overview of  
**decentralized social  
media** and a guide on  
how to get started.

**big thanks to everyone who helped along the way!**

shoutout to the **cortex implant**, and my **chooms**, and to my favorite editing poppet, **vitt**, and to **my parents**, and my pet **pufferfish**, and to **everyone else** who was super kind as i worked on this!

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# Introduction

I have a prominent gap between my two front teeth. Every day that I'm on mainstream social media, I get an *Invisalign* ad that tells me to fix it.

Never in my life have I searched '*how to fix my teeth,*' or, '*teeth braces clear straight*'. Despite this, an ad promising a better, nicer, straighter smile has followed me across Instagram, Facebook, and other websites for years.

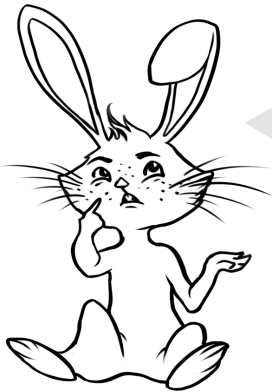
This isn't a conspiratorial zine about how **Mark Zuckerberg's algorithm picked up on my age, my appearance, and my tooth gap with the insidious intention of firing targeted ads capitalizing on an assumed insecurity of mine**—even though that's *exactly* what happened. This is a zine describing some of the ways that the **Big Four** [Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and now Threads] **are actively harming the masses while profiting from their downfall**, and options that you have to avoid this.

As the title of this zine implies, by the end of things, I'll consider my work here done if/when you, dear reader, decide to **delete your corporate social media accounts** and join me in greener pastures.

# What's Wrong With Social Media?

Human beings are social creatures. **We want to connect with others, and there's something beautiful in that.** On its own, I'd say there's *nothing* wrong with the idea of social media nor is there anything wrong with people wanting to share themselves with others.

That said, social media has been blamed for everything from increased mental illness among young people [see every news article ever] to all out war in other countries [see the Myanmar / Rohingya conflict]. **Here, we're not going to be touching on corporate social media's impact but its *infrastructure*.**



Maybe the internet being mostly five corporate websites for the past 15 years was a really bad idea.

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The *social* aspect of social media may as well be an afterthought. 'Social media' is no longer about connecting with others, as we'll learn. **Algorithm-based websites is where the problem starts.**

In a world where everything is harmonious, helpful algorithms are a great feature to have baked into anything. Imagine if your fridge could read your mind and bring the perfect drink right to you each time! How nice would that be?

The difficulties with algorithms is that **companies are notoriously tight-lipped when it comes to what makes them run**. If everyone knew what makes algorithms tick, everyone would try to exploit it. We saw this back in 2017, the era of YouTube where videos targeted at children were suddenly *through the roof* because people were able to make a fortune exploiting the algorithm's penchant for pushing content to kids [Goldman, 2017].

In the case of the Big Four, what a user sees first is **what the algorithm thinks they want to see... which means nothing because algorithms can't think**. What this really means is that, based on past clicks and interests, Facebook makes an assumption about who and what a user wants to see. If each time I log into Facebook, I click on my friend's profile, then Facebook will begin placing that friend's profile in the forefront.

Something like this seems innocuous, **but this means choices are being taken away from the user**.

Finding out that there was a place where there was no algorithm to force-feed me content was the first thing that drew me to the Fediverse. It reminded me of the days before Big Social and being force-fed content.

@SynAck@nightcity.bar



"Algorithms makeup a growing influence of the daily visual consumption of consumers. They influence what we read, what we see advertised, and ultimately what we buy" [Schroeder].

**To make these algorithms run, we are constantly being harvested for data,** and that should concern you. Marginalized people are affected by this more than others. **Women are less likely to see ads about science and technology, and more likely see ads about shopping for clothes** [Schroeder]. Meanwhile, word embedding, **a popular natural-language algorithm, characterizes European-American names as 'pleasant' and African-American ones as 'unpleasant,'** which may lead people with more Black-sounding names to have less discoverability within systems, like Facebook's recommendation feature [Zou].

The caveat of wanting a place to share pictures with my friends is knowing that I'm entering a contract where my photos, bio, scrolling pattern, search history, photos I like, advertisements I look at, and more will all be scrubbed over for clues for the sake of selling me cheap 'African-print' clothing from overseas made by slave labor, most of which will fall apart after three washes. [Bandara, Aggarwal].

These spaces are not built with the user in mind—**they're created for the profit of the company.** Targeted advertising is how the Big Four make the bulk of their money, and it's at the expense of the consumer. Knowing more about the market can be a boon to advertisers, but it's deeply unethical for the average Facebook user to have all of their personal information handed away with no say in how/why it's being used.

Social media as it is today is all about companies trying to monetize our time/attention, but that [is why] the #fediverse is so crucial because we are a place that is designed where people are in control not the companies.  
**@hack13@cyberfurz.social**



# What is the Fediverse?

Academically speaking, the “Decentralised Web” (DW) is an evolving concept, which encompasses technologies broadly aimed at providing greater transparency, openness, and democracy on the web [Raman, 2019].

**Describing the Fediverse feels like describing a piece of music**—not because it’s interconnected, melodic, and harmonious—though it generally is—but because it can be hard to explain without the proper vocabulary. Similarly to how the phrase ‘diminished seventh’ might mean nothing to a non-musician, ‘built upon the ActivityPub protocol’ may draw similarly blank stares from those not in the know with regards to the underworking of federated social media.

For that reason, we’re not going to talk about the underworking. We’re going to talk about those stars we used to draw in middle school.

The pentagram logo looks ominous, I know, but **it’s simply a design meant to show how different hubs interact with one another.**

Though separate, each node is able to engage with others without issue.



'Fedi' stands for 'federated,' which is a way of saying connected, or unionized. So, the Fediverse is just a bunch of **different social media networks all connected, or federated, together**. This is the largest difference from the Big Four. On Facebook, there's no way for me to see someone's tweets unless, a, I have a Twitter account of my own or, b, someone takes a screenshot of their tweet and sends it to me.

I think of the Fediverse as neighborhoods. Each instance is a community unto itself. If you don't like the neighborhood you initially moved into (just like moving into a house sight-unseen in a town you've never been to before), you can either get another home in another neighborhood alongside your current place, or you can move instances entirely.

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On the Fediverse, everything is interconnected, and the Fediverse and all of the applications within it are largely *people-focused*. Instances are created and owned by people. Unlike the formidable, unknowable Zuckerburgs and Musks of the world, **you're able to see just who it is**

**that's running your social media and what they're about.** Because of this, each instance is unique. Instance owners are able to choose how they moderate and what they allow and disallow, and community members can choose which instance works best for them.



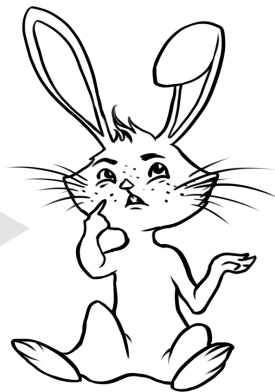
I stayed on Mastodon because it's actually social media - there's so many kind and wonderful people over here, sharing things they're interested in.

**@SirsOri@corteximplant.com**

Instances are generally themed around something, like a hobby, or a location, or a lifestyle, and those who join that instance are able to find community with others. Tech, gaming, and LGBT instances are among the most popular, but there are also instances for residents of New Jersey, and instances for those who like rap music, and instances for enjoy meditation. **Best of all, you don't need to feel as if you need to join all of these.**

When joining one instance, you're able to speak with those from other communities, which takes a bit of the pressure off of choosing the 'right' one.

The biggest hurdle for me, and [my friends], was choosing an instance. This is my third but I intend to stay **@gwync@mastodon.coffee**



Since these platforms aren't running on algorithms that tell you what to see and who to follow, **it's more important than ever to boost and share content you come across on the Fediverse, otherwise it won't be seen.** Fortunately, most members of this community are more than willing to help each other out. Even in the case of this zine, most all of the quotes and the artwork found here were provided to me by community members who wanted to lend their voice to this project.

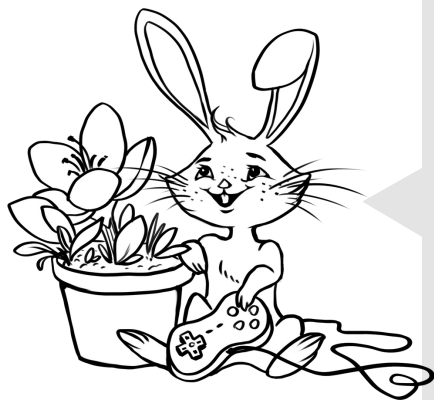


...We are the people who want social media that isn't about the popularity contest, but more about helping people have meaningful interactions. Boosts, Favorites, are way less here but are more meaningful because it isn't a popularity contest.

**@hack13@cyberfurz.social**

Because most instances require manual review before someone allowed in, moderators can be sure that their communities aren't overrun with bad actors. Similarly, *federation* ensures that moderators don't connect with harmful communities by choosing not to connect/federate with them. **This is all about putting power back into the hands of the people.**

There's also the option of creating your own instance if you're more technically minded. Rather than join an existing server, there are ways to create your own instance and have absolute control over your space. Naturally, that comes with its own challenges and rewards.



I'm techy, so wasn't worried about the tech side of things. The responsibility of moderating making decisions on behalf of users is more of a concern.

But I like that the business has its own instance. It feels like we're making a commitment to the Fediverse, and we like the idea of being able to offer that service to the author community.

**@RPBook@historians.social**

# How Do I Join?

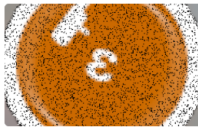
The majority of this zine has been in reference to **Mastodon**, which is absolutely where I'd recommend everyone get started. **joinmastodon.org** is a great way to learn more directly from the source and see which servers might catch your eye.

All topics (301)

General (74)

Regional (53)

Technology (57)



MUSIC

epsilon.social

Mastodon server for nerds who love electronic music, synth DIY and vinyl.

Create account



MUSIC

rap.social

Create account



MUSIC · SIGN-UPS REVIEWED MANUALLY

metalhead.club

Metalhead club is a Mastodon instance hosted in Germany and powered by 100% green energy.

Apply for an account



GAMING · SIGN-UPS REVIEWED MANUALLY

peoplemaking.games

We're a community of folks who celebrate the craft of creating interactive experiences, whether they're working in games or around them! This is a space for games folks...

Apply for an account



ART · SIGN-UPS REVIEWED MANUALLY

sunny.garden

sunny.garden is a community for indie creators who draw, paint, sculpt, write, design, program, play, sing or build, and anyone else who thinks that sounds like a nice place to be.

Apply for an account



ART · SIGN-UPS REVIEWED MANUALLY

mograph.social

mograph.social is a space for the Motion Design community. VFX artists, 3D artists, animators, designers and coders with an interest in moving images are all welcome. NO...

Apply for an account

By clicking 'servers,' you're able to see roughly 100 servers. There are more, thousands more, but most are private, and some simply aren't listed publicly.

Mastodon isn't the only application within the Fediverse, but it is the largest. After Twitter's latest wave of changes in the summer of 2023, Mastodon experienced a surge of newcomers. At time time of writing this, Mastodon sits at around **seven million users!** It may be small potatoes compared to Facebook's *three billion people*, but the smaller community makes for a more a dedicated community in my experience.

If you're a(n)...

...**YouTube** user, consider **PeerTube**—a decentralized platform free from data collection and algorithms.

...**Discord** user, consider **Matrix**—an end-to-end encrypted group messaging app.

...**Instagram** user, consider **PixelFed**—a photosharing platform that values privacy and federates with Mastodon.

...**Twitch** user, consider **Owncast**—a free, decentralized streaming platform with tons of customization ability.

And if I still haven't convinced you to make the switch to decentralized social media, that's alright. At the very least, protect yourself with a **VPN** to help anonymize your data. I recommend **MullvadVPN** for an affordable, efficient option to help keep your data in your hands.

## Learn More

Here are some resources I referred to when researching for this zine. All of these will be linked on my website: **[sinegrave.com/DeleteYourFacebook](https://sinegrave.com/DeleteYourFacebook)**

A. Goldman and P. Voght. *#109 Is Facebook Spying on You?*

A. Goldman and P. Voght. *#138 The Great Momo Panic*

A. Raman, S. Joglekar, E. De Cristofaro, N. Sastry, and G. Tyson. *Challenges in the Decentralised Web: The Mastodon Case*

J. E. Schroeder. *Reinscribing gender: social media, algorithms, bias.*

J. Zou and L. Schiebinger. *Design AI so that it's fair*

M DeVito, D. Gergle, and J. Bernholtz. *"Algorithms ruin everything": #RIPTwitter, Folk Theories, and Resistance to Algorithmic Change in Social Media*

N. Aggarwal and C. More. *Fast Fashion: A Testimony on Violation of Environment and Human Rights*

