



Organization

Problems in the Fediverse

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This is on the FSF's main page.

Quote taken from Edward Snowden's speech at LibrePlanet 2016

"This community that we have, that we're building, that does so much, has to grow. We can't compete with Apple, we can't compete with Google, directly, in the field of resources. What we can eventually do is head count and heart count. We can compete on the ground of ideology because ours is better."

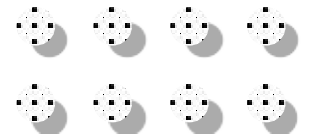




**No battle has ever been
won on ideology alone.**

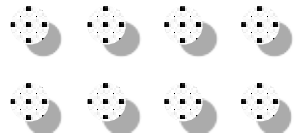
Reframing our Perspective

- We tend to think in either-ors: either ideological or pragmatic
- Thinking ideologically: trusting in our morals to deliver results
- Thinking pragmatically: seeing morals as getting in the way of results
- Thinking strategically: using our results to build a moral world



What it Means to Think Strategically

- Putting our goal first
- Understanding the world we're trying to change
- Taking nothing for granted
- Finding where our advantages really lie



The GPL: A Strategy Success Story

- The impact it has had
- Why it has had that impact
- The strategic nature of the GPL

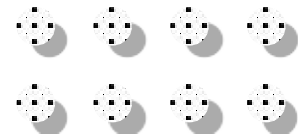
GNU is not in the public domain. Everyone will be permitted to modify and redistribute GNU, but no distributor will be allowed to restrict its further redistribution. That is to say, [proprietary](#) modifications will not be allowed. I want to make sure that all versions of GNU remain free.

JUNE 1, 2001

Microsoft's Ballmer: Linux is a cancer

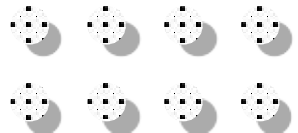
Author: [JT Smith](#)

[The Chicago Sun-Times](#) has an [interview](#) with Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer. Here's what he has to say about Linux: "It's good competition. It will force us to be innovative. It will force us to justify the prices and value that we deliver. And that's only healthy ... Open source is not available to commercial companies. The way the license is written, if you use any open-source software, you have to make the rest of your software open source. If the government wants to put something in the public domain, it should. Linux is not in the public domain. Linux is a cancer that attaches itself in an intellectual property sense to everything it touches. That's the way that the license works."



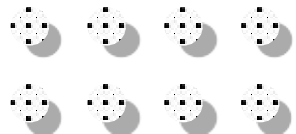
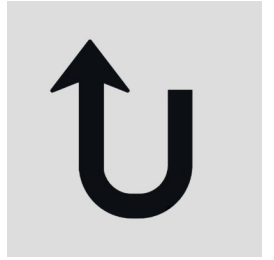
What This Talk is About

- What it means to think strategic
- The current landscape
- What this means for the Fediverse
- What needs to happen for the Fediverse to remain competitive
- What we can do to make that happen



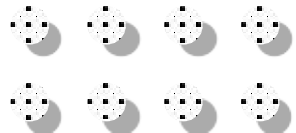
Who am I?

- I'm a student, grew up around the Internet
- Have been involved with cultivating the Fediverse since around 2018
- Also an essayist, interested in laying a theoretical foundation for the movement



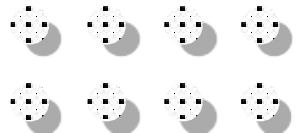
Why Theory?

- A lot of people are doing things with different plans
- We cannot rely on the market
- The world is evolving around us as we speak



What Has Changed in the World

- How free is the technology that we currently have?
- How has our community responded?
- What is the internet's place in the modern world?



Judging Our Freedom

- What do we own?
- How connected are we?
- Who is our web designed for?

HOME > EXTREME > ADOBE TRIES OUT DRM IN PHOTOSHOP

Adobe Tries Out DRM In Photoshop

By Mark Hachman on July 25, 2003 at 4:01 pm [Comments](#)

Majority of Americans feel as if they have little control over data collected about them by companies and the government

% of U.S. adults who say ...

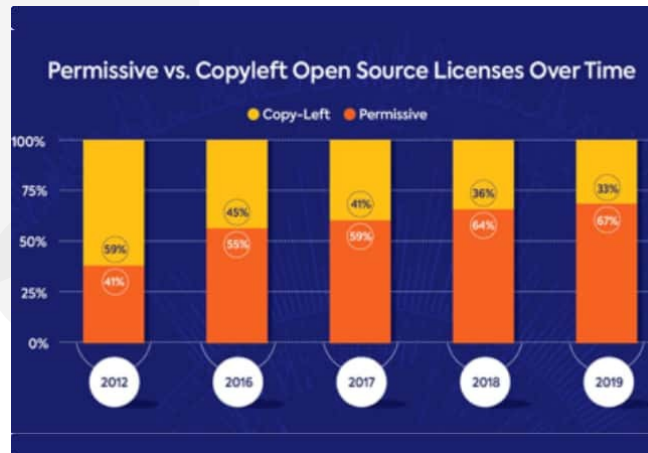
		Companies	The government
Lack of control	They have very little/no control over the data ___ collect(s)	81%	84%
Risks outweigh benefits	Potential risks of ___ collecting data about them outweigh the benefits	81%	66%
Concern over data use	They are very/somewhat concerned about how ___ use(s) the data collected	79%	64%
Lack of understanding about data use	They have very little/no understanding about what ___ do/does with the data collected	59%	78%

Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

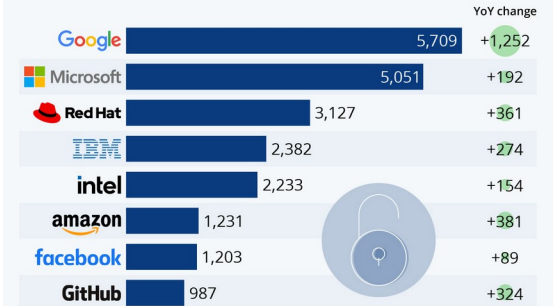
What Has Changed In the Community

- Increased corporate presence
- “Pragmatism” as predominant
- Increase in permissive-licensing schemes



How Big Tech Contributes to Open Source

Active GitHub contributors by employer by Dec 31st 2020*



* Active contributors: More than ten commits on GitHub
Source: GitHub



statista

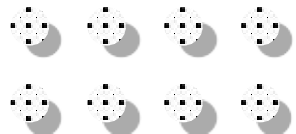




**We have laid the
foundation to respond.**

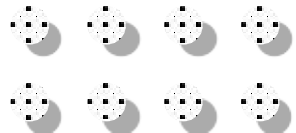
The Unique Hurdles to Social Media

- Network effect
 - the value of a product scales with the amount of people using it
- Tension between choice and growth
- Serious but not unsolvable



What is the Fediverse?

- Network of decentralized services running on a common protocol (ActivityPub)
- A suite of decentralized (and free-software) social media
 - Decentralized, but common feed
- Resolves the tension
 - Conflicts over administration
 - Conflicts over software



Mastodon

Mastodon/Pleroma are microblogging platforms, modeled after Twitter. They are also the most popular platforms.

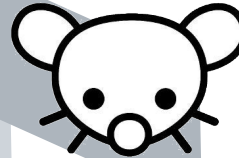


PeerTube

Video sharing site (like YouTube). Uses WebTorrent to distribute traffic loads. Supports livestreaming.

BookWorm

Social reading platform (think Goodreads), lets you manage a collection and discuss with others. Very active dev, eager to onboard new ones.



Lemmy

A link aggregator in the vein of Reddit, decently active community with a solid feature-set.

FunkWhale

Audio-sharing service akin to SoundCloud. Meant for music, Castopod is another project targeting podcasters.

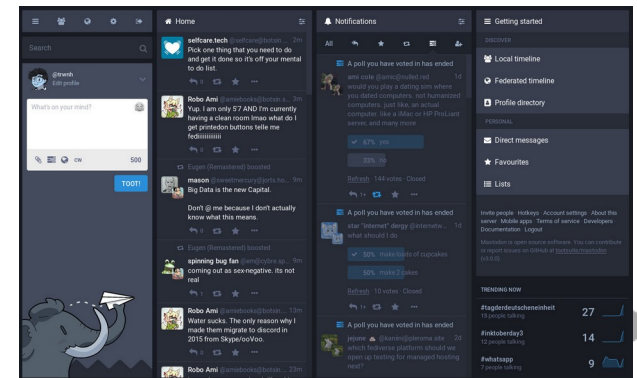


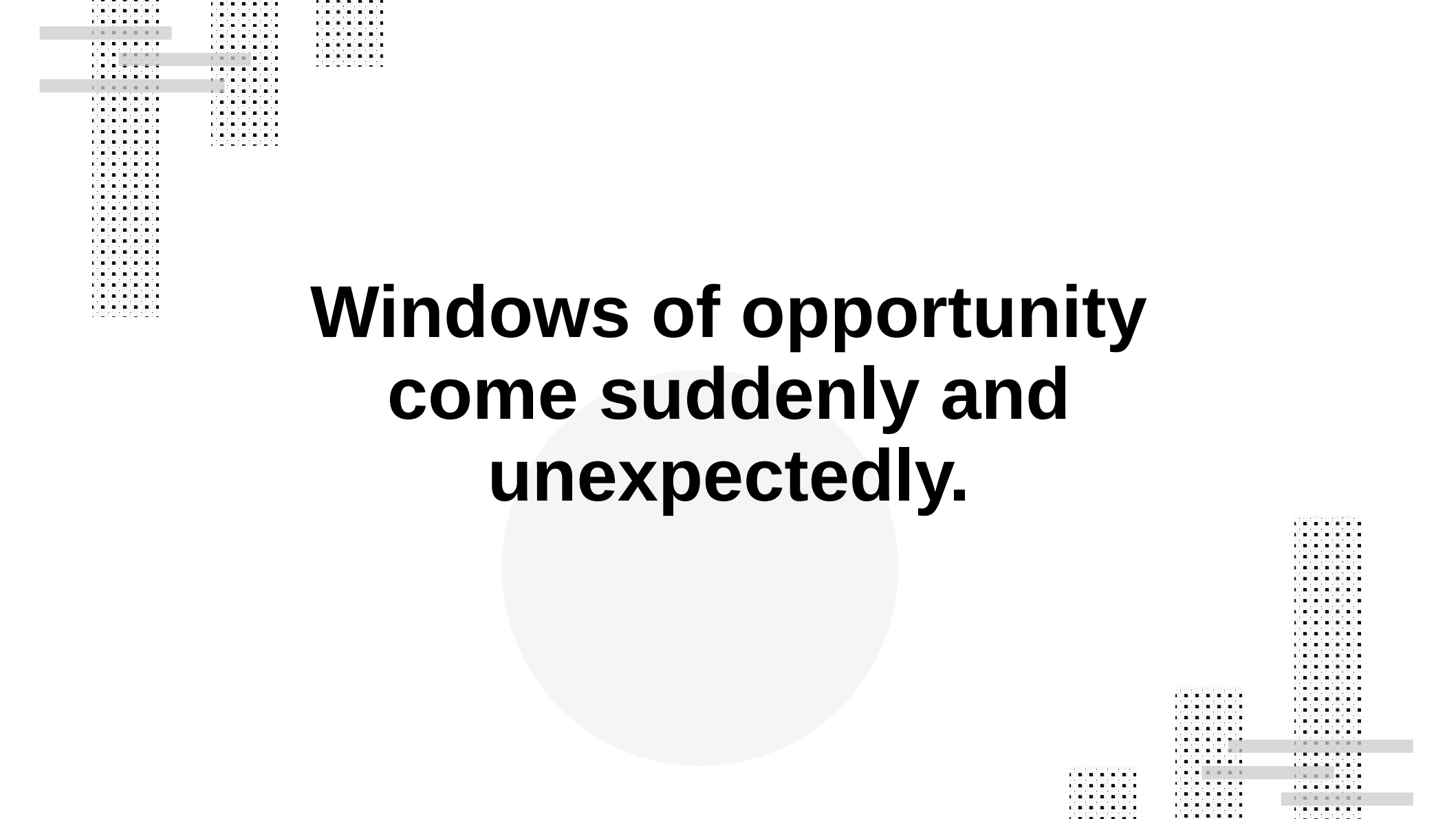
PixelFed

Image-sharing site (akin to Instagram). Great for sharing photos and art.

Mastodon: A Case Study

- The most popular of these, acts as a Twitter clone of sorts
- Most Fediverse discussion and development ends up focused here
- Started in 2016, has a consistently active community





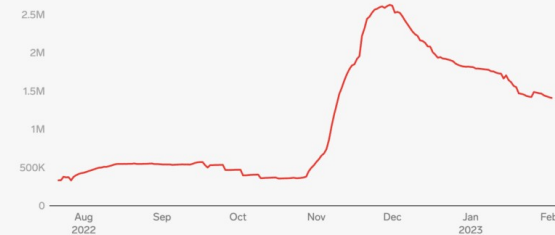
**Windows of opportunity
come suddenly and
unexpectedly.**

The Twitter Exodus

- Twitter before Elon's takeover
- Elon Musk takes over Twitter
- The mainstream spotlight is turned on Mastodon
- People joined en masse, but aren't staying

Mastodon Users Surged, Then Slumped

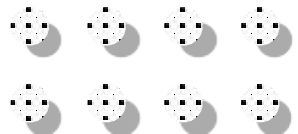
Active users on the decentralized platform soared after Elon Musk bought Twitter in October. Not all of them have stuck around.



SOURCE: MASTODON

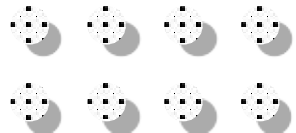
The Key Takeaways From This Incident

- Impossible to have predicted; happened over the course of a few months
- Mastodon's biggest advantage: the already-existing foundation
- People were looking for an alternative, not focused on the principles
 - They expect a seamless experience, judged relative to Twitter



The Problems


- Sign-up is confusing
- Lack of spam-filtering exacerbates this
- No instance migration
- Difficulty connecting content creators and audiences



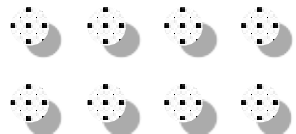
The Deeper Problem

- Issues not getting fixed
 - Expectation is placed on the central team to handle all this
- People who want to help don't know how to
- No real consensus on priorities or general direction

Support Post Migration #12423

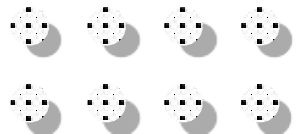
 Open

SilverWolf32 opened this issue on Nov 18, 2019 · 154 comments



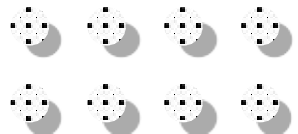
How Features are Typically Delivered


- Competitiveness requires timeliness and the ability to prioritize users' needs
- Any vision whatsoever requires some level of organization in order to materialize
- Traditional business structure
 - Vertical and centralized decision-making
 - Coordinate and incentivize people through money (wages, bounties, etc.)



How Free Software Is Delivered

- No true chain of command
- Very little (or no) money to throw around
- Admirable, still need to get stuff done regardless
 - How do you coordinate labor absent of the traditional monetary and structural tools?
 - The new potential provided by an open web requires us to think of new solutions

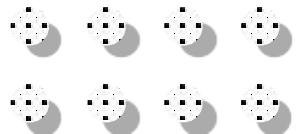




**The foundations you start
with are what end up
defining the future you
create.**

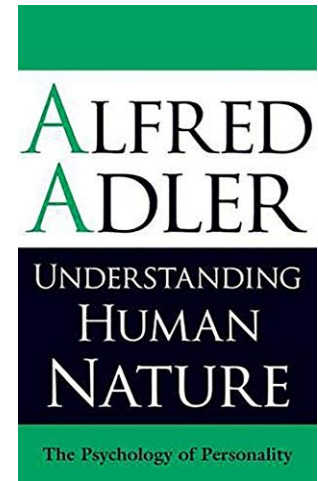
The Peer Production Model

- The open and decentralized nature requires we organize spontaneously
 - The lines between producer and consumer blur
 - Agency: anyone can contribute or steer the vision
 - Non-commercial: not bound to the rules of the market



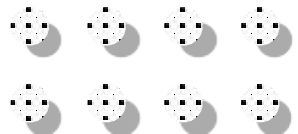
What Motivates People?

- Taking a broader look will help us
- According to Adler:
 - A sense of accomplishment (goal-directedness)
 - A sense of community (social feeling)
- Free software has long relied on these unconsciously



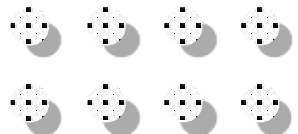
Yes, You Can Contribute

- Are you able to code, translate, or perform UI design?
- Are you a creative or a content creator?
- Do you have either the time or the funding to administer/moderate instances?
- Do you have an active presence on other social media platforms?



How to Strategically Organize

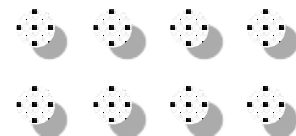
- We've talked about the why and what of contribution, and now the how
- My own efforts acted as experiments of sorts
 - Could serve as inspiration to individuals and small teams
 - The lessons I learned from them



W

Experiment #1: Fediverse Curator

- Problem: creators and audiences weren't finding each other
- Semi-regular newsletter highlighting high-effort creators who may be overlooked
 - Just scroll the timeline until you find something interesting
 - Give a review, interview with the creator, and links
- Well received, lots of potential to do good here especially with a larger platform
- Others have compiled their own lists



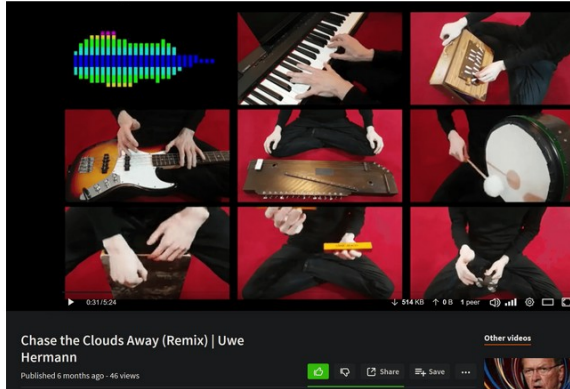
The Creative Commons Musician

With a blog like this, it's important to find a solid work to start off on. After all, first impressions matter, and in order to encourage more people to explore the creative side of the FediVerse, you have to demonstrate what is possible. Music is fantastic in this regard as even a few minutes can densely pack in so much meaning and effort. So when I noticed [Uwe Hermann's](#) channel on PeerTube, my interest was piqued.

And upon further inspection of his content, I was not at all disappointed.

What does uwehermann do?

Typically his videos consist of recordings of multiple percussion instruments being laid out in a tile-like fashion (see below) edited to form a full song. Songs covered range from standard grooves to full remixes of songs in the Creative Commons.



Tomat0's Thoughts

- The content does fit on PeerTube; while one could argue that music would be a better fit on FunkWhale, the video component itself does actually contribute to the impact of the work as a whole. Hermann is able to use a wide array of live instruments and by showcasing them through the video, not only does he distinguish his work from purely digital music, but also breaks down the process in a fashion that potential viewers could be inspired.
- The choice to remix Creative Commons songs exclusively is a bold one, but also a very admirable one. By promoting music available to the public and redistributing his own work under a CC Share-Alike license, the derivability is clearly demonstrated in a fashion that benefits the Free Culture movement as a whole.
- His video descriptions are comprehensive, naming all the instruments he uses and also providing complete credit to all work utilized.

Interview with Creator:

1. What does your video creation process look like?

I generally record 1080p/60fps videos using a smartphone, with a Zoom H5 used as USB "soundcard". Most of my editing is done on Linux using open-source software: e.g. Audacity for

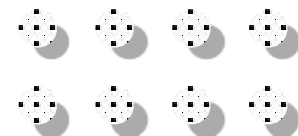
With the preliminaries out of the way, here is a list of PeerTube accounts I have found to offer insightful and enjoyable content (alphabetically sorted):

- [9to5Linux.com](#) – Lots of linux distro reviews, a fairly regular uploader
- [Alliterative](#) – Lots of great linguistics short videos, very frequent poster. Some older long-form videos as well
- [Blender](#) – Official Blender account on PeerTube, frequent uploads
- [blender_docs](#) – no recent uploads, but lots of blender tutorials
- [BSDTV](#) – No recent uploads, various interesting BSD talks
- [Cantankerous Tech](#) – long-standing peertuber and Mastodon contributor; regular linux-centric uploads
- [Chris Were Videos](#) – another very long-standing PeerTuber and Mastodon user ("tooter!")
- [DebConf Videos](#) – LOTS of Debian content, what's not to love?
- [GamingOnLinux](#) – very frequent uploader, if gaming's your thing
- [Gentle Living Shop](#) – It's honestly nice to see non-techie/non-nerdy content on PeerTube. Very wholesome.
- [geotechdigital](#) – Frequent uploader, general nerdy content – linux distro



Experiment #2: watch.breadtube.tv

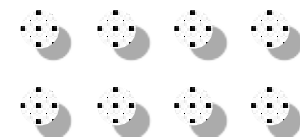
- Problem: Not many PeerTube instances good for creators
- Instance syndication as a possible solution
- Assisted DirkKelly as part of realizing this theory
 - Helped administer and install the server
 - Regularly moderated the instance to keep out spam
 - DMed smaller creators to get them on here
- Instance was very active, although it's down currently





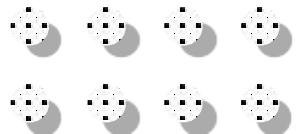
Experiment #3: Mastodon In Under a Minute

- Problem: Finding a good Mastodon instance isn't straightforward
- Create a manually curated list in an easy-to-find place
 - Essentially a one-stop shop for starting with Mastodon
 - Geared to non-technical people
- Currently a work in progress and my main focus



Some Takeaways

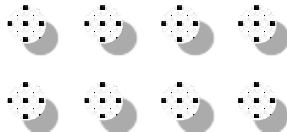
- A lot of agency present in these strategies
 - Who I was versus what I was getting done
- Often felt as if I was gunning at it alone, demotivating
 - Wanted to talk with and coordinate with others
 - Basis of next project, arguably the most important one





Experiment #4: The Open Web Project

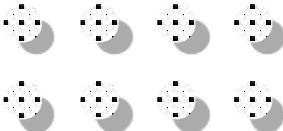
- A model for organization in free-software
- Takes the form of an unofficial Matrix server
 - Somewhere between “team” and “community”
- How this sort of “forum” plays to our strengths
- The video I put out





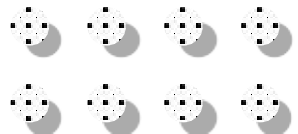
The Rationale

- “What you put in is what you get out”
- How community can lend itself to mutual motivation
 - Ask for and provide feedback on stuff you’ve created
 - Seek out people and projects to collaborate on
 - Just chat with and get to build connections with others in the community
- Prioritizing organic growth



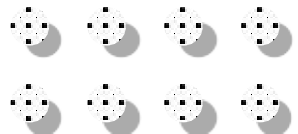
The Snowball Effect

- The unique difficulties of this effort
- The snowball effect
- The value of a few
- Slow and steady



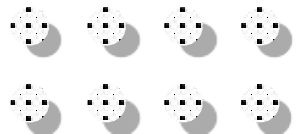
Lessons Learned

- Initial reception showed a lot of interest
- Major problem was indecision
- Handling logistics
- Onboarding new users



Conclusion

- The future of the OWP
- Takeaways
 - No success without consistent results
 - Strategy guides us on what we can/should do
 - Organization is how we begin translating that into practice
- Use the above suggestions or build on them



Join the OWP!



<https://reentry.co/about-cc>

