An introduction to Mastodon and the Fediverse.
Introduction:

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Overview

- The fediverse (a portmanteau of "federated" and "universe") is a collection of protocols, servers, and users.
- Together they form communities that can communicate together.
- Users can exchange short messages, blog-style posts, music, and videos between services.
Some history

- In 2008, Evan Prodromou created a microblogging service called identi.ca using the Ostatus protocol and status.net server software.

- In about 2012, he changed his service to use a new protocol, pump.io. He released the Ostatus protocol to the Free Software Foundation, where it got incorporated into GNU/social. The fediverse continued along for several years.

- March 2016, Eugen Rochco (Gargron) created Mastodon, which used GNU/social with a tweetdeck-like interface. This gained some popularity.

- In 2018, a new protocol called ActivityPub was accepted as a standardized protocol by the W3C. Most Fediverse platforms have adopted it. It was authored by Evan Prodromou, Christine Lemmer-Weber, and others, and it expanded upon the previous services to provide a better and more flexible protocol.
Federation

- Most services are run by a single company or organization. A single silo that your data is trapped in, the only way to share with others is to have them join that service.

- Federation allows users of different services to inter-operate with one another, without creating an account for each shared resource. (Largely)

- System operators can block other instances in case of egregious issues, and users can likewise block users or instances to improve their experience.
Illustration of federation

Centralized

Federated

Fediverse
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services available (partial)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mastodon, pleroma, misskey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pixelfed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lemmy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Write.as, read.as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peertube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Funkwhale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mobilizon, gettogether.community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More services

- There are many new services that all use the ActivityPub protocol to work together.
- More are being created every day, development is rapid.
Example: Mastodon (default)
Example: Mastodon (advanced)
Example: Pixelfed
How to find people to follow

- Look in your local timeline.
- Find interesting people, and follow them.
- See what they post and boost, and look at the people that follow them.
- Search for hashtags that interest you.
- You can follow hashtags in your Home timeline.
- From there, find the people posting about what interests you.
Will the Fediverse stick around?

- Some people reported that since many of the Twitter users that tried Mastodon moved back, that Mastodon is doomed to fail.
- Since the fediverse is not tied to a company that has to provide immediate profits, slow growth is OK, it allows communities to work to accept new people.
New services that federate?

- Bluesky
  - Controlled by one rich dude. (Sound familiar?)
  - Not yet federated with anyone.
  - Moderation seems iffy
- Threads
  - Controlled by one rich dude (again?)
  - Seems to have died down after a big initial splash
  - Also does not federate with anyone yet.
Conclusion:

- The Fediverse is a way to use the web in a more individual way, either by choosing an instance with a community that suits your needs, or running your own server, and making it exactly the way you want.
- It avoids the advertising, algorithms, and other unpleasantries that plague some other social networks.
- When you join the fediverse, you are joining a community of the instance that you choose, you are not a way for a company to figure out how to make profit from your communication.
Where to learn more:

A few links to find more about the Fediverse:
- General info:
  - fediverse.info -- Nice video explanation, also, subject-based way to find (self-selected) users.
  - fedi.tips -- Comprehensive guide for users.
- Where to start
  - joinmastodon.org -- largest list of Mastodon servers
  - joinfediverse.wiki -- Great information on different fediverse services and instances
  - Fedi.garden – well-curated list of instances
- Which instance to join (assuming you don’t want to spin up your own just yet):
  - fediverse.party/en/portal/servers
- Stats, monitoring service, and list of the known Fediverse:
  - the-federation.info - charts and graphs of fediverse use.

this slide shamelessly stolen from Mauricio Uribe (with permission) and subsequently vandalized beyond recognition.
Thank you.

- I’ll be happy to entertain any questions, or further demonstrate what I can on the fediverse.

- Contact information:
  - https://identi.ca/murph
  - @murph@hackers.town  https://hackers.town/@murph
  - murph@weirdness.com (email)
How the timelines work:

What makes up each Mastodon timeline?

This flow chart might help explain.

To look at it from the other direction:
Your public toots will always be in your instance’s local timeline.
If even one person from example.instance follows you, your public toots will be visible in the federated timeline for everyone on example.instance. (Replies don’t make it into the public or federated timelines!)

Chart by:
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