

MASTODON & BLUESKY & THREADS, OH MY!

“DECENTRALIZED” SOCIAL MEDIA:

- **WHAT IT IS,**
- **WHAT IT DOES**
- **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

WHY DECENTRALIZED?



**User Control, Free Speech,
and Censorship Resistance**

**Personal Data, Privacy,
and Security**

**Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles
harvested for Cambridge Analytica in
major data breach**

Whistleblower describes how firm linked to former Trump adviser Steve Bannon compiled user data to target American voters

- [‘I made Steve Bannon’s psychological warfare tool’: meet the data war whistleblower](#)
- [Mark Zuckerberg breaks silence on Cambridge Analytica](#)

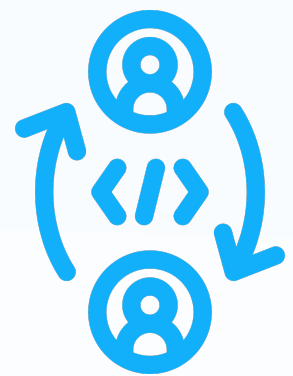


Economic Neutrality

WHAT MAKES SOMETHING DECENTRALIZED?



Not controlled or owned by a single entity.



**Open development & code,
driven by the community.**



Owner-controlled data (“credible exit”)



**“Federated”: can communicate
with other platforms directly**

LET'S GET THIS OUT OF THE WAY:



THREADS...
IS NOT DECENTRALIZED
SOCIAL MEDIA.



Entirely controlled and owned by a single entity.



Proprietary code, driven by profit.

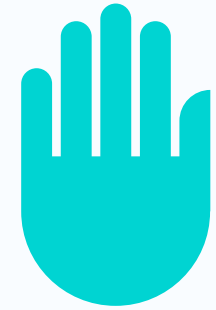


User data owned & sold by Meta



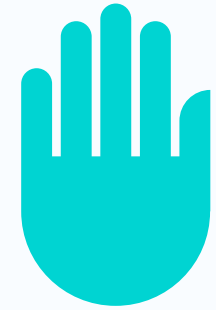
“Federated” (sorta): can communicate with some other platforms (with limitations)

“DECENTRALIZED APPS ARE LIKE EMAIL”



RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU HAVE EVER INSTALLED AND CONFIGURED AN EMAIL SERVER.

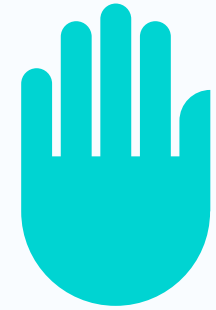
“DECENTRALIZED APPS ARE LIKE EMAIL”



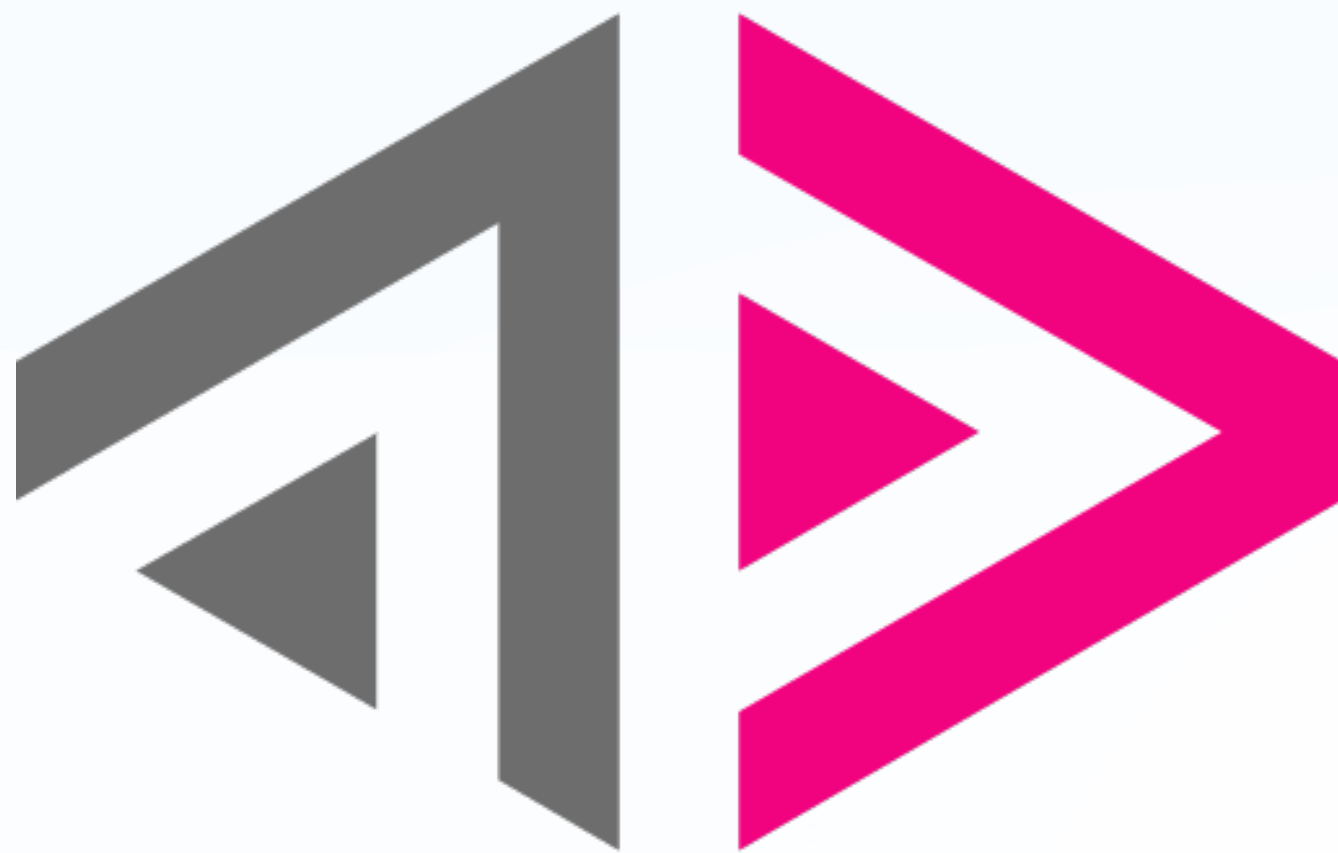
RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU KNOW WHAT THE “P” STANDS FOR:

udp http pop3 imap
tcp icmp
ip
ftp
smtp
ipv4
sftp
ppp https ipv6

“DECENTRALIZED APPS ARE LIKE EMAIL”



RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU HAVE EVER HEARD OF THESE PROTOCOLS:



ACTIVITYPUB



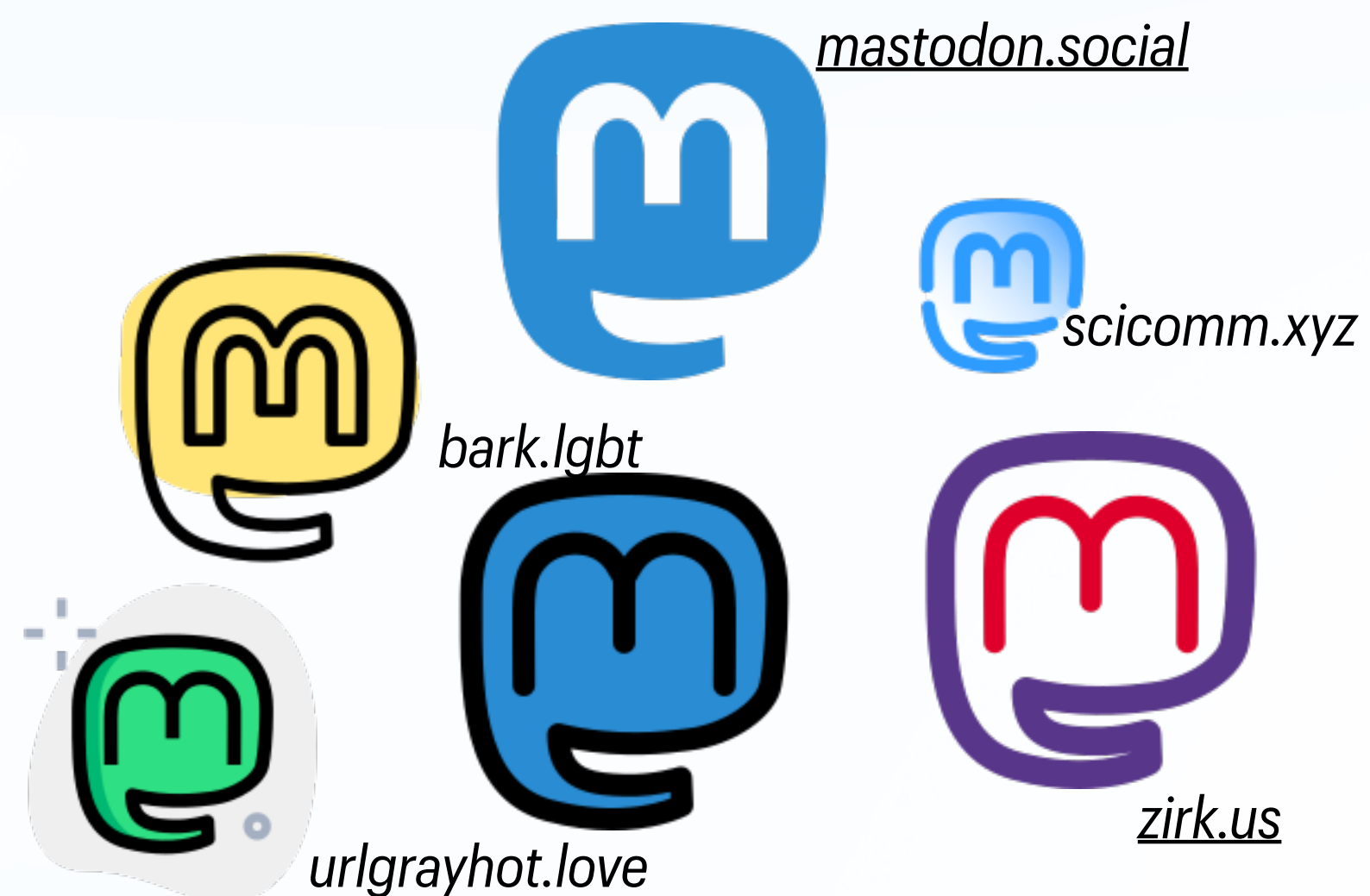
THE AT PROTOCOL



ACTIVITYPUB

Released in 2018 by a working group from the World Wide Web Consortium

**DECENTRALIZED & OPEN SOURCE:
CHOOSE YOUR FLAVOR
OR ROLL YOUR OWN**



778,598 MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS (MAU)

SOURCE: [FEDIDB.ORG](https://fedidb.org)

**FEDERATED: ALLOWS INTERACTIONS
ACROSS DIFFERENT SERVICES**

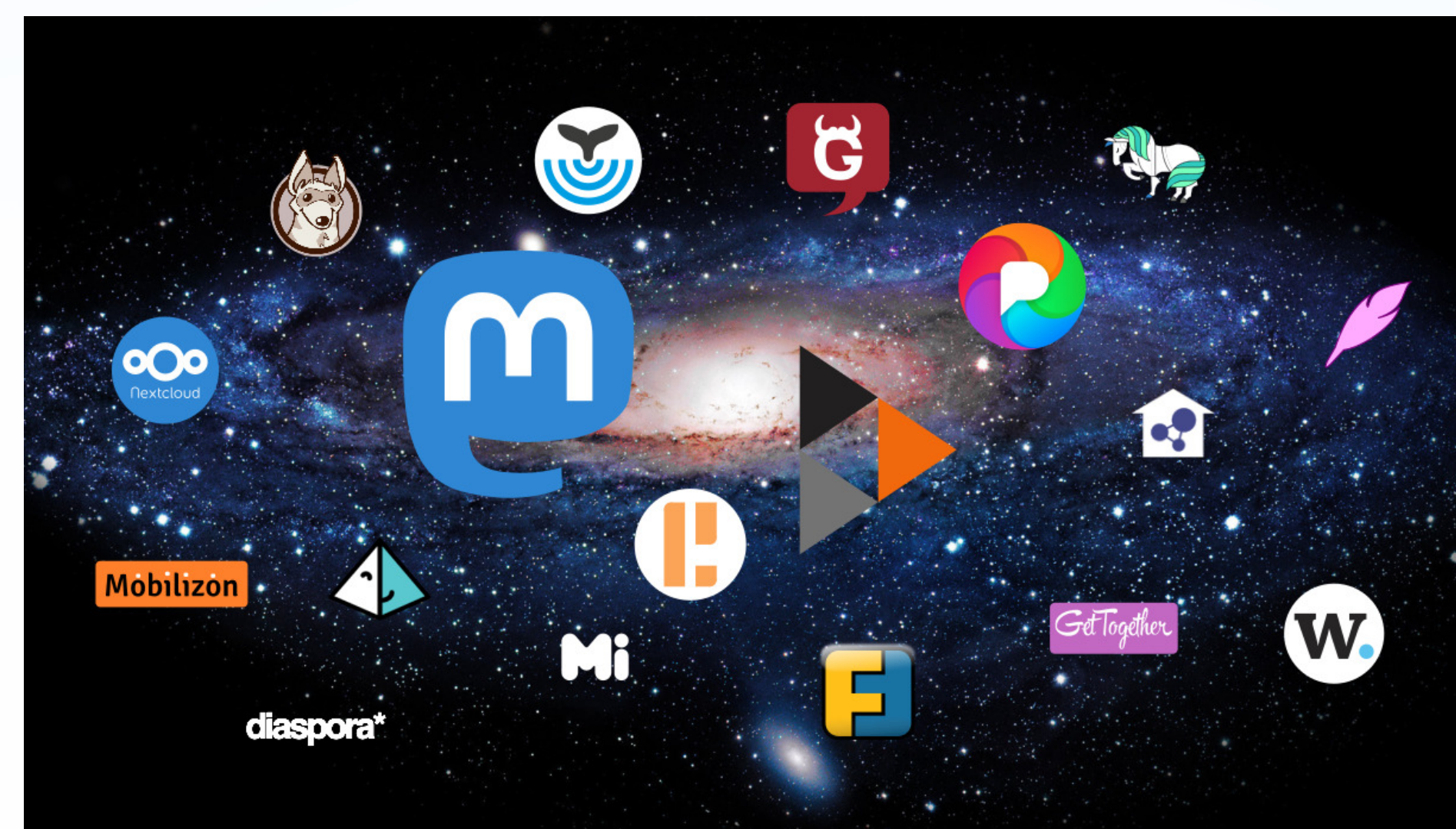


Image source: mastodon.help

1,331,826 MAU ACROSS ALL APPS



AT PROTOCOL

Developed by Twitter, released in 2022 by BlueSky Social PBC

~~DECENTRALIZED~~ & "OPEN SOURCE":

FEDERATED: WELL...



<https://pinksy.social/>



Flashes (iOS, beta)



Flipboard

3.2 MILLION DAILY ACTIVE USERS (DAU)

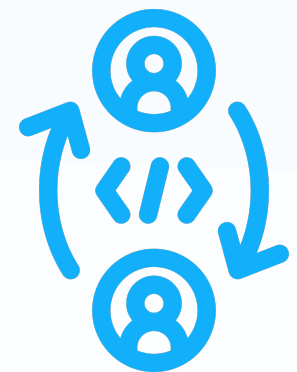
SOURCE: SIMILARWEB

ALL DESIGNED TO WORK WITH BLUESKY

BLUESKY-MASTODON DECENTRALIZE-OFF!



Not controlled or owned by a single entity.



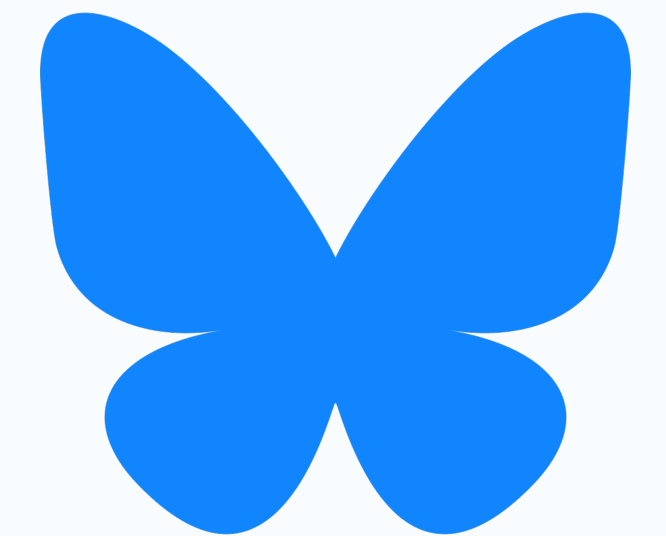
Open development & code,
driven by the community.



Owner-controlled data (“credible exit”)



“Federated”: can communicate
with other platforms directly



PROS & CONS OF DECENTRALIZED SOCIAL MEDIA:



Build authority in a growing space, and a haven for users leaving centralized platforms.

Authentic engagement with niche audiences, esp. privacy & tech.

“Billionaire-proof”: being part of the next wave of social media evolution.

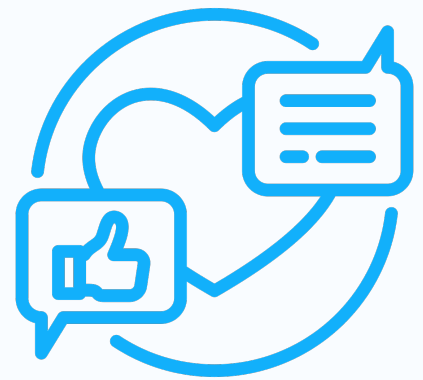


MUCH smaller userbase, by multiple orders of magnitude.

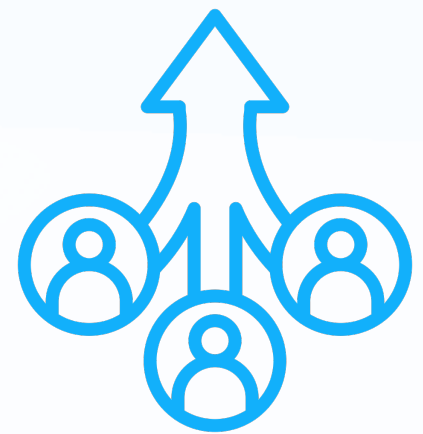
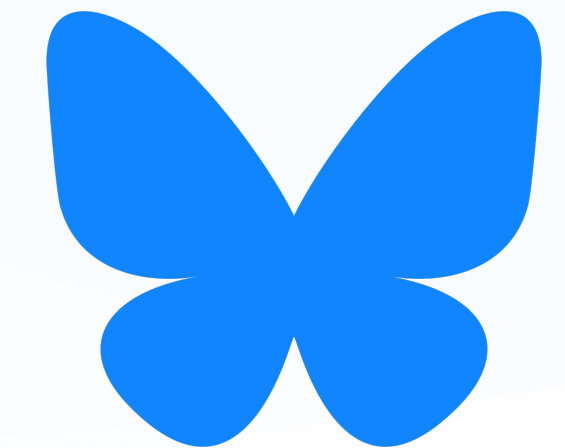
Steeper learning curve for setup and/or management.

Limited analytics and advertising tools (for now).

BEFORE DECENTRALIZING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE, ASK YOURSELF:



Is your target audience active on these platforms?



Does your content align with the platform's culture (for example, a particular Mastodon niche server)



Do you have resources (time, attention, expertise) for community building with uncertain ROI?



Are you open to testing new platforms with smaller, engaged audiences?



CASE STUDIES: WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?



Which decentralized (-ish) social media might be useful for each of the following **COMPLETELY HYPOTHETICAL** organizations?



A small independent feminist/queer bookstore, looking to connect with local patrons and niche online customers.

CASE STUDIES: WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?



Which decentralized (-ish) social media might be useful for each of the following **COMPLETELY HYPOTHETICAL** organizations?

TheBigShare.org



An established nonprofit federation looking to promote buzz and engagement about an upcoming fundraiser (hypothetically, March 4, maybe?)

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

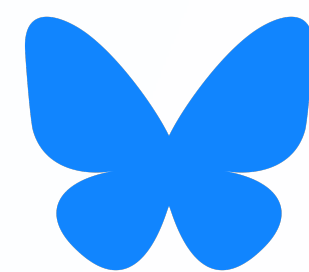


- Sam Liebeskind ("Summer of Decentralized Social")
- David Pierce (potential benefits of decentralized social media)
- Jay Graber (technical aspects of decentralized networks)
- Sasha Shilina (user empowerment and privacy in decentralized social media)
- Ben Goertzel (broader implications of decentralizing the social media landscape)
- Cory Doctorow ("enshittification" and credible exit strategies)
- Christine Lemmer Webber (part of original BlueSky team, co-author of ActivityPub)

GRAY MILLER

- Writing: graymiller.medium.com
- Work: [community shares.com](https://communityshares.com)
- Visual facilitation: creativegray.me
- ADHD Advocacy: adhdopen.space

graymiller@me.dm



graymiller.me.dm.ap.brid.gy