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s/Twitter/Mastodon/g

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Yeah, it has been hard to miss it (see e.g. Should I join Mastodon? A scientists' guide to Twitter's rival). Twitter is experiencing some turbulence and Mastodon has become a very attractive, open source, community-driven, inclusive alternative. It's been around since 2016 and there is some research literature about it already. I got my account in 2018, but did not start actively using it until earlier this year.

It's a fascinating platform: federated, community driven, and open source. Oh, and it uses an open standard: ActivityPub. I have still a lot to learn, but there are some reasons why Mastodon is better and some reasons why it is worse than Twitter.

First, how can you follow me:

- main scholarly account: https://social.edu.nl/@egonw
- politics, foss, hobby account: https://mastodon.social/@egonw

Better

Well, this is personal, of course, but the following points makes Mastodon for me a better platform:

- distributed, open standard
  - e.g. no more tweeting of new Zotero entries (soon I hope), just follow my Zotero account
- community standards
  - you can pick; if you don't like the terms of your current server (read: service provider), just move to another server
  - images must have alternate descriptions on many servers
- edit button with version control
- content warnings
- ability to hide anything with #caturday (or any other word)
- detailed annotation of privacy (public, unlisted, etc; no encryption, tho)

Worse

Maybe this category can better be called opportunities. After all, it's the community that defines how it will evolve, just like Twitter did (which did not originally have hashtags, retweets). One big elephant in the scientific social media world wright now is the uncertainty about searching and indexing: will it be useful as (post-publication) platform? will we be able to use if for conference tweeting?

Another aspect is that in some countries mobile internet is deeply coupled with big companies. Think coupling of access with free whatsapp.

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Finally: growing pains. The platform is growing fast, and right now it can be hard to find a server that accepts new accounts.

Tips?

Sure. Start with https://fedi.tips/. Have fun! And I love to hear what your tips are :)

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