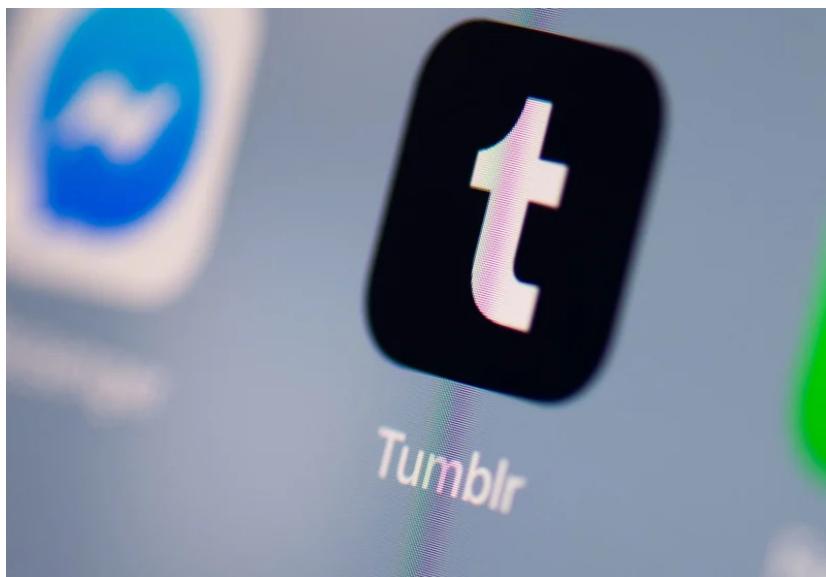


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Tumblr to add support for ActivityPub, the social protocol powering Mastodon and other apps

Sarah Perez @sarahintampa / 10:20 PM UTC • November 21, 2022



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Tumblr will add support for [ActivityPub](#), the open, decentralized social network that is powering social networking software like [Twitter alternative Mastodon](#), the live video streaming service PeerTube, and others. The news was revealed in response to a user's complaint about Mastodon's complexities. Automattic CEO Matt Mullenweg, whose company [acquired Tumblr from Verizon in 2019](#) — [suggested](#) the user "come back" and that Tumblr would soon "add activitypub for interconnect."

"Don't stress," he said, before [clarifying](#) that Tumblr first has to deal with the work coming in right now from Twitter but that support for "interop and activitypub" will happen "ASAP."

In short, this announcement means Tumblr would move from being only a niche platform becoming a part of a larger, decentralized social network of sorts — and one very much controlled by Automattic.

[Join](#)[Login](#)[TechCrunch+](#)Come to [@tumblr](#). We'll add activitypub for interconnect. Don't stress.— Matt Mullenweg (@photomatt) [November 21, 2022](#)Search 

We are mostly dealing with the waves of new users right now and keeping everything simple. Adding ActivityPub to Tumblr and getting our servers up and running with activitypub are ASAP.

— Matt Mullenweg (@photomatt) [November 21, 2022](#)

The ActivityPub protocol, its [website](#) explains, provides a client-to-server API for creating, updating, and deleting content, as well as a federal server-to-server API for delivering notifications and content. It also provides a way for users to subscribe to content. In practice, this means that Mastodon users can interact with other instances (independently run nodes) and on other social apps (like Pinterest). This makes it easier for users to support the implementation of ActivityPub. It makes for a web of social networks where users can find and follow each other without having to set up new accounts on each new platform.

This is the opposite approach to today's "walled garden" social networks, where content on one platform can't be viewed by those on others, unless you re-upload or repost the content or share a link to the other site where the content can be found.

If Tumblr were to add ActivityPub support, it means users on Mastodon could interact with posts from their own Mastodon instance — without having to use the Tumblr app. This would provide Tumblr users with an entry point into the so-called [fediverse](#) without having to deal with the complexities that are involved with [signing up for Mastodon](#) for the first time.

Tumblr [was already benefiting](#) from the Twitter exodus, having grown its U.S. user base by 10% over-week from the week prior to the acquisition and the 7 days after, [data.ai](#) found. And, as of 12 days after Twitter's acquisition, Tumblr's worldwide download count grew by 301,000 up from 170,000 in the 12 days before the acquisition, [Sensor Tower](#) reported.

Mullenweg later offered a glimpse into Tumblr's metrics, noting to [The Atlantic](#) that the number of users who downloaded the Tumblr app were up 62% the week after Musk took over Twitter.

But even before Musk took Twitter's helm, Mullenweg had been thinking [about how Tumblr could better compete with Twitter in the future](#).

"I just want there to be an open alternative, I want you to be able to choose your own path... I'm trying to make Tumblr a space for art and artists...," he had said earlier this year. "It's not doomscrolling, you're joy-scrolling."

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Matt Mullenweg thinks Tumblr can be a better Twitter than



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More recently, Mullenweg has been trying to directly [recruit former Twitter employees](#) for [Automattic](#), setting up a dedicated website for the purpose.

I think the biggest opportunities for influencing [@Tumblr](#) come from people who helped build the platform, ranking, and self-serve ad systems.

— Matt Mullenweg (@photomatt) [November 21, 2022](#)

Automattic, we should note, already has some experience with ActivityPub.

In addition to Tumblr, Automattic runs the blogging service WordPress.com and the open source WordPress blogging software platform. The latter today offers [an API](#) for connecting with other federated social platforms. One could imagine a similar situation for ActivityPub support if it were added.

Mullenweg did not offer an ETA as to how “ASAP” this support would be added.

Tumblr was not able to provide an immediate comment when reached.

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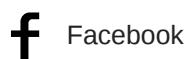
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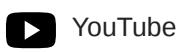
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