



CONSTRUCTING YOUR OWN SPACE ONLINE

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THE PROBLEM

EXPLORING ONLINE OWNERSHIP AND CREATIVE CONTROL



Walled
Gardens



Ownership of
Audience and
Data



Algorithmic
Engagement



Platform
Uncertainty



WALLED GARDENS

- Platforms that control access, features, and data
- Closed ecosystems: you play by their rules
- Easy to join, hard to leave

Walled gardens make the rules, not you. They may be convenient, but they are also fragile for creators.

Tip: think of social sites as storefronts, not your home.



OWNERSHIP OF AUDIENCE & DATA

- Followers belong to the platform, not you
- Platform controls contact channels and analytics
- Data about your audience is monetized

No matter how many followers you have, the platform controls how you can reach and interact with them.

Tip: collect at least one direct contact method (email/newsletter).



ALGORITHMIC ENGAGEMENT

- Algorithms decide who sees what and when
- Prioritizes attention-grabbing content
- Rewards frequency and format over substance

Algorithms are made to keep people on-site and looking at ads. Their focus is not what is best for you or your community.

Tip: use RSS or newsletters to bypass the algorithm.



PLATFORM UNCERTAINTY

- Policies, ownership, and features change unpredictably
- Business shifts can impact visibility and content rules
- Past examples: sudden content policy overhauls at Tumblr and Twitter

Platforms get acquired or change. A policy shift can destroy communities overnight.

Tip: keep an off-platform archive of your work and contacts.



DATA HARVESTING & AD TARGETING

- Platforms track interactions, clicks, and preferences
- Data sold or used to target ads and shape feeds
- Your audience behavior becomes a product

You are the product. You cannot trust platforms to keep you safe.

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ENGAGEMENT OVER AUTHENTICITY

- Virality mechanics favor sensational content
- Nuanced work gets deprioritized
- Pressure to optimize content for reach, not meaning

Creators feel forced to make content to please algorithms over than their community or art.

Tip: schedule intentional posts that reflect your interests, not trends.



LIMITED REACH WITHOUT PAYING (BOOSTS/ADS)

- Organic reach often declines unless amplified
- Paid boosts and ads gate visibility
- Small creators can be priced out of discovery

To reach an audience, many creators have to pay for promotion.

Tip: build up your own mailing list.



PLATFORM CHAOS (TUMBLR PORN BAN, TWITTER NAZIS)

- History shows sudden bans or policy shifts can remove communities
- Niche subcultures especially vulnerable
- Recovery is often slow and partial

Corporate owned community spaces and archives can be wiped out without warning.

Tip: mirror important galleries/posts to your own site or backup service.



DMCA TAKEDOWNS OR ACCOUNT DELETIONS

- Copyright claims can remove content quickly
- Accounts may be suspended or deleted with limited recourse
- Automated systems often make mistakes

Copyright claims and false reports can take down your content. Appeals are slow, if they work at all.

**Tip: keep local copies and upload originals elsewhere.
Document ownership (timestamps, source files).**



PORTABILITY: NO EASY WAY TO MOVE YOUR FOLLOWERS

- Followers don't transfer if you leave a platform
- No universal "follow" across networks (except some federated systems)
- Rebuilding an audience is time-consuming

Moving platforms means rebuilding audiences from scratch, unless you already can directly contact them.

Tip: ask followers to subscribe to your newsletter or follow a permanent link on your domain.



KEY TAKEAWAY:

**IF YOU DON'T HOST YOUR
CONTENT, YOU DON'T
CONTROL IT.**



SOLUTIONS

EXPLORING ONLINE OWNERSHIP AND CREATIVE CONTROL



Low Effort -
Use Existing
Tools



Medium Effort -
Hosted
Alternatives



High Effort -
Owning Your
Space



LOW EFFORT - USE EXISTING TOOLS

- Cross-post among platforms (Postybirb)
- Create a link hub (Carrrd, Linktree, PawPals someday?)
- Backup your content regularly
- Add clear licenses (Creative Commons, custom terms)

Tip: small steps help. Using cross-posters and link hubs keeps you from being tied to one platform.



MEDIUM EFFORT - HOSTED ALTERNATIVES

- Federated Platforms (Mastodon, Pixelfed, etc)
- Ethical Centralized sites (RIP Cohost, Dreamwidth, Neocities)
- **Pros:** Better community, more control
- **Cons:** Smaller audiences, learning curve

Niche platforms are smaller neighborhoods. You still get visibility and social features, but with healthier communities.



HIGH EFFORT - OWNING YOUR SPACE

- Buy your own domain like barks.cafe or david.garden)
- Use it as an identifier where you can (verify on Mastodon, or use for bsky like bowie.barks.cafe)
- Build a website (so many tools exist for this)
- Add RSS, ActivityPub, and a Newsletter for reach

Tip: your own site is your home base. It can grow and change with you over time.



BONUS TIPS

- Start small, iterate over time.
- Cross-post.
- Back up everything regularly.
- Join small communities that share values (furry Mastodon servers, art rings, etc.)
- Collaborate - link to each other's independent sites to grow your networks.



QUESTIONS!



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