# newsmast

## Knowledge for all for good

## MAPPING SOCIAL WEB COMMUNITIES
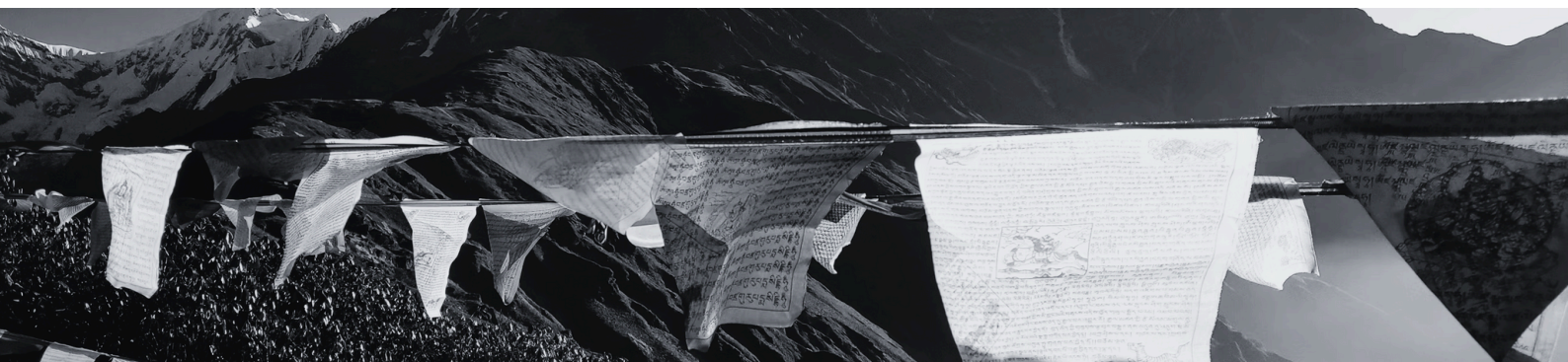
**30/05/24**

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# THE NEWSMAST FOUNDATION

**The Newsmast Foundation is creating extended communities for knowledge sharing on the social web.**

Back in March we published our study of Fediverse Communities, *Mapping the Fediverse*. We're now **publishing a second study**, incorporating research into communities on Bluesky and Threads. Our goal is to link up these different communities, and the people who post to them, using the **Fediverse as a hub**.

The original research was based on data gathered from posts to Newsmast Communities. **This latest research adopts a different methodology**. Two of our team members researched key contributors - people who post regularly on a particular topic - on Bluesky and Threads, mapping them to the 62 Newsmast Communities.

The people we've found are the people we'll now approach to bring in to Newsmast Communities, over the Bridgy Fed Bluesky bridge, and through Fediverse Sharing on Threads.

We've also looked at Custom Feeds on Bluesky. At the moment we can't import these Feeds into the Fediverse, but we can look at exporting our own Community Feeds to Bluesky.

# Communities Across Platforms

Comparing the sets of large and small communities to Fediverse Communities, **we've found big differences**, and a few areas of overlap.

The Fediverse has been established for longer and appears, over time, to have attracted a broader spread of participants across knowledge sharing Communities with fewer gaps.

**Only Politics and US Politics are strong communities on all three platforms**. As on the Fediverse, Photography is strong on Threads, due to the link with Instagram, but has a limited presence on Bluesky.

**The impact of Twitter migration patterns is also apparent.**

The tech community was an early adopter of the Fediverse, and this is evident in the strength of Technology, Programming and AI Communities, but which are largely absent on the other two platforms.

**Academics have migrated to Bluesky in a number of fields**, driving strong communities in Environment, Climate Change, Space, Philosophy, Science, Social Science and Academia & Research. However, **very few academics have joined Threads**, with some Communities completely absent.

**Threads has become a home for some news organisations and journalists**, despite Meta's public lack of interest in news & politics. Bluesky has publicly welcomed journalists, but not many have made the transition.

In contrast, a handful of well known tech commentators have made a home on each of the platforms.

Some communities have successfully migrated to Bluesky with high numbers of casual posters rather than being centred around knowledge sharing contributors: **Blacksky is a notable success, as is science.**

In other cases, **attempts made to migrate ultimately didn't work**. Philips P O'Brien, a key actor in the Ukraine Invasion community on Twitter, attempted to lead a move to Bluesky in the summer of 2023. He's now back on Twitter with the rest of the community, and hasn't posted on Bluesky in four months.

Looking further at the smallest Communities, one common trend across all three platforms is that **non-profits and the people who work for them are not using any of these social media platforms**. From our research they are posting on LinkedIn, which has been adopted as a home by many socially oriented organisations.

**Sport is also notably absent** across both Bluesky and Threads, remaining heavily entrenched on Twitter.

# Bringing Communities Together

The advent of the Bridgy Fed Bluesky bridge (thanks to Ryan Barrett), combined with one-way Fediverse Sharing on Threads, gives Newsmast the opportunity to bring together key contributors across all three platforms.

The big differences in strength across the platforms makes the Fediverse uniquely situated to be a knowledge-sharing hub, bringing key voices together.

Looking across all three platforms, we have identified the top ten Communities for us to work with as:

**Politics**
**Photography**
**US Politics**
**Climate Change**
**Space**
**Science**
**Technology**
**Philosophy**
**Journalism & Comment**
**Communities & Allies**

The second set of Communities where we are going to cross-promote knowledge-sharing are:

**Social Science**
**Books & Literature**
**Music**
**Nature**

These Communities and collections of Communities are strong prospects for knowledge-sharing on the wider social web.

# Hashtags and Communities

The conscious lack of an algorithm in the Fediverse, together with limited opt-in to full search, makes hashtags a heavily used means of bringing together communities of interest.

Hashtags have played a part on Bluesky due to the success of Custom Feeds, but are only just picking up on Threads - with each post limited to one hashtag. Migrating from Instagram, #PhotographersofThreads is a notable success.

Differences in technology (Custom Feeds) and less regular use of hashtags makes creating wider Feeds across common interests more difficult. This is why we are starting by following key contributors - we can reach these across both platforms.

Once hashtags are enabled over Bridgy Fed, we'll look at bringing over hashtagged posts from our top target communities on Bluesky:

**#Photography**

**#AcademicSky**

**#PoliSky**

**#Nature**

**#ClimateChange**

**#Gaming**

**#BookSky**

**#Technology**

And ideally translating emojis (used as tags for feeds) to the relevant hashtag, like the test tube emoji to #Science or the camera to #photography.

However, at the moment the success of this will depend on everyone using those hashtags on Bluesky also opting in to the bridge.

# Bluesky Feeds

Our research team also looked at Bluesky Feeds which map closely onto Newsmast Community Feeds.

As the number of followers of each Bluesky Feed is not publicly available, we have mapped the popularity, and presumed use, against the publicly available 'likes' of each Feed. **The more liked a Feed is, the more popularity it holds on Bluesky.**

We found some clear cases where the addition of Fediverse content could enhance Custom Feeds.

# Feeds That Overlap in Terms of Followers

| Top 10 | Community | Likes |
|---|---|---|
| Science | Science | 4505 |
| Blacksky | Black Voices | 2616 |
| Political Science | Politics | 1652 |
| News | Journalism & Comment | 1275 |
| Greensky | Environment / Climate Change | 1023 |
| AcademicSky | Academia & Research | 801 |
| SciArt 🐟 | Creative Arts | 670 |
| Marine Life! 🐙 | Nature & Wildlife | 547 |
| #ChronicIllness | Healthcare | 537 |
| Women in STEM | Science | 487 |

# Feeds That Overlap in Terms of Followers

| Bottom 5 | Community | Likes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Public Health 🛟 | Healthcare | 125 |
| Environmental History | History | 114 |
| #History | History | 114 |
| Plant Biology 🌾 | Biology | 113 |
| CogSci | Social Sciences | 72 |

# Bridging Feeds

Custom Feeds on Bluesky are created in quite complex ways, with many variables.

At the moment it isn't possible to bring a Feed over the Bridgy Fed bridge, so we will need to concentrate on **bringing over the key contributors within each feed**. It is also possible that hashtags could be followed, where these are used to make up a Feed (see below).

Looking the other way, there are some **gaps on Bluesky when compared to the 62 Community Feeds run by Newsmast**.

As a first step, we can import these to Bluesky as bridged accounts, incorporating posts from opted-in users, which anyone can follow.

Going forward we will look at ways to convert these into full Custom Feeds, rather than relying on reposts.

# Conclusion

The wider social web - the Fediverse, Bluesky and Threads - offers an exciting opportunity for **Newsmast to spread knowledge-sharing on social media** more widely, starting with key contributors in twenty top Communities.

There is also space for us to launch Community Feeds, and in time our own Custom Feeds, onto Bluesky.

Going forward, establishing a common set of hashtags, emojis, search - and in time, Feeds - across all three platforms would greatly benefit community creation and engagement.

# Fediverse Communities

Recapping our original research, the top knowledge-sharing Communities (excluding more lifestyle oriented ones) on Newsmast by number of participants are:

| Biggest Communities | Posters | Smallest Communities | Posters |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Music | 4,636 | 53. Energy & Pollution | 478 |
| 2. Social Media | 4,464 | 54. Biology | 472 |
| 3. Programming | 3,478 | 55. Philosophy | 444 |
| 4. Journalism & Comment | 2,903 | 56. Performing Arts | 423 |
| 5. Photography | 2,800 | 57. Hunger, Disease & Water | 339 |
| 6. Politics | 2,591 | 58. Physics | 298 |
| 7. Technology | 2,217 | 59. Disabled Voices | 293 |
| 8. Visual Arts | 2,002 | 60. Indigenous Peoples | 240 |
| 9. Ukraine Invasion | 1,960 | 61, Mathematics | 240 |
| 10. US Politics | 1,956 | 62. Chemistry | 109 |

As Laurens Hof of the [Fediverse Report](#) notes, there is a long tail of small communities in the Fediverse where people are happy to regularly post without many followers.

# Bluesky & Threads Communities

Looking at key contributors, rather than overall participants, the top five Communities on Bluesky are:

1. Politics (80 KCs)
2. US Politics (73 KCs)
3. Climate Change (69 KCs)
4. Space (72 KCs)
5. Philosophy (60 KCs)

There are also Communities where there are clear gaps, with almost no regular contributors:

- Chemistry (0 KCs)
- Engineering (0 KCs)
- AI (0 KCs)
- Hunger, Disease & Water (0 KCs)
- Food & Drink (0 KCs)

Again, looking at key contributors, the top Communities on Threads are:

1. Photography (103 KCs)
2. Politics (57 KCs)
3. US Politics (56 KCs)
4. Technology (39 KCs)
5. Healthcare (33 KCs)
6. Music (33 KCs)

With gaps in a different set of Communities:

- Academia & Research (4 KCs)
- The Science collection (1 KC in Physics only)
- Social Sciences (0 KCs)
- The Global Issues collection (1 KC in Poverty only)
- Ukraine Invasion (1 KC)

In general we found that knowledge sharing on Threads is very limited, outside official accounts from mainstream publications.