

Social Media Landscape in December 2022

This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

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The social media world is in turmoil, and its future is unclear. It should be noted up front that ad revenue is required to keep social media afloat. Remember MySpace, the most visited social network from 2005-2008 when it was mostly younger folks using it? At that time it was responsible for 80% of social media traffic and was visited more times than Google Search. MySpace is still out there, but mostly with musicians and bands using it. Facebook launched in 2004 to an audience mostly northeastern US colleges, but in 2006 it opened up to anyone with a valid e-mail address, effectively shutting down most of MySpace usage and triggering rising Facebook usage.

Elon Musk, owner of Tesla and SpaceX, purchased Twitter for \$44 billion last month. Since then, chaos has reigned, some calling Twitter a “dumpster fire.” Elon has fired 50% of staff, others have quit, subscribers have closed accounts to join other social media sites, advertisers are fleeing, subscription plan ideas have been floated, “verified” account ideas tried (and failed), banned users allowed back on, and news outlets are looking for alternative social media options.

Many Oakmonters might say “well I don’t use Twitter,” but it’s a source for breaking news, especially with wildfires and emergencies and a way to “follow” journalists and pundits in their specialized fields. Reputable news sources often use Twitter as their first place to post breaking news, and it’s unclear where these folks are heading if Twitter isn’t around.

New alternatives to Twitter mentioned most often are: Mastodon (Mastodon.social), Post (post.news), and Hive (hivesocial.app). Mastodon in particular has seen the most new subscribers, the week after Musk purchased Twitter it added 500,000 users, and one recent day added 180,000 new users. Mastodon is a decentralized, open-source social media platform. If you are interested in signing up, do a Google search on “how to” since it’s not obvious with distributed servers. Some journalists and political figures seem to be trying out Post (post.com).

Meta, parent company to Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, also laid off 13% of its workforce in November. Facebook has seen declining ad revenue in 2022 for the first time. Nextdoor is widely used in Oakmont and is good for sharing neighborhood information, but it has a mixed reputation, fostering petty disputes and suspicions, making people more wary of their neighbors. Other social media sites, such as Parler and Truth Social cater to the far right political arena and are having their own challenges. There are other popular social media sites: TikTok, Tumblr, Flickr, to name a few of them.

Apple News and Google News apps are always excellent sources for curated news from a wide variety of magazines, newspapers, and TV news, though they may not have breaking news as fast as Twitter does. Stay tuned for where social media is going in 2023.

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