

Bluesky or Mastodon? Pros and cons for scientists

[Bluesky](#) and [Mastodon](#) are becoming more popular. UG researchers are also increasingly creating accounts on one or both of these platforms. Would you like to be active on these platforms but don't know which one to choose? We briefly explain them and list some pros and cons.

About Mastodon

Mastodon is an open, federated decentralized social media platform. It is non-commercial and not controlled by a single company. Mastodon consists of independent servers that together form a network (federation).

Users on Mastodon have control over what they get to see and from whom, without an algorithm determining it for them. They can choose a server based on their values or interests and communicate with each other independent of the server they are on (similar to e-mail technology).



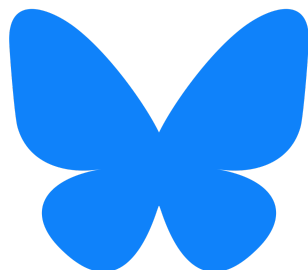
This can be done through posts (messages), boosts (reposts), favorites (likes) and direct posts (private messages). Mastodon emphasizes privacy and transparency. The user at the center.

Control at Mastodon

Mastodon is driven by users, giving them more control over the policies of a particular server and their presence on this medium. Users are not dependent on large companies.

In the Netherlands, [SURF has set up a Mastodon server](#) for educational and research institutions, their staff and students. This [server](#) is not managed by a company, but entirely by SURF and thus indirectly by the Dutch academic community.

The user data and policies are exclusively governed by Dutch and European legislation (such as the AVG privacy law). SURF offers good support and content moderation. Within the UG, several departments, faculties, researchers and staff members are active on Mastodon. The University Library [shared its experiences](#) with Mastodon.



About Bluesky

Bluesky is a, for now, centralized social media platform. Users on Bluesky have control over what they get to see and from whom, without an algorithm determining it for them. Bluesky is reminiscent of the “old” Twitter. As a user, you can follow, post, share and respond to all kinds of accounts.

While users have significantly more influence over their individual experience on Bluesky compared to traditional platforms, they do not collectively create the fundamental policy framework for the entire platform as with Mastodon. Indeed, there is content moderation from the top down. About the ways of moderation, Bluesky is [transparent](#).

Control at Bluesky

Currently, almost the entire infrastructure of Bluesky is controlled by one company (Bluesky LLC). In principle, it would be possible for other providers to also manage part of the infrastructure, but this has not happened so far, although there are [ambitions](#) to do so.

As UG, we currently have an active corporate account on Bluesky on which we share news about research, education and other matters: [@unigroningen.bsky.social](#).

Pros and cons

Both platforms offer great opportunities for science communication, but those opportunities are different. We listed some pros and cons.

Mastodon

Pros:

- **Emphasis on community-building:** Mastodon is for the community, by the community; users build their own communities around the same topics. This makes it easy to connect with peers from all over the world. As a result, there is a lot of interaction on Mastodon.
- **Customizable:** Each server has its own layout, rules and moderation. Therefore, you can choose what suits you well. You can also switch servers if you find the rules no longer suit you.
- **Privacy:** On Mastodon there are extensive privacy options. For example, you can control who can follow an account and make certain posts visible only to your followers.
- **Long-term sustainability:** Because Mastodon is non-commercial and community-owned, it offers more long-term stability and independence. This prevents re-dependence on a commercial platform where terms and moderation policies can be changed unilaterally.

Cons:

- **Ease of use:** Mastodon is sometimes perceived as too technical. Because of the different servers, users sometimes experience it as difficult to build a community. Fortunately, there is a [list of academically relevant accounts and servers](#) to consult. In addition, the University Library of the UG has published a [quick guide Mastodon for researchers](#).
- **Lower network effect:** Many influential users, policy makers and journalists joined Bluesky and took their audience with them. Mastodon has fewer users overall than Bluesky and therefore the maximum number of people you can reach there is lower.



Bluesky

Pros:

- **Potentially greater reach:** posts on Bluesky may have a greater reach. In fact, there are more users on Bluesky: around 32 million (Feb. 25, 2025). Mastodon has around 9.3 million users (Feb. 25, 2025).
- **Reaching policy makers and journalists:** unlike Mastodon, policy makers and journalists are increasingly on Bluesky. If you want to reach these specific groups, Bluesky may be a better option.
- **Easy to use:** are you used to the old Twitter? Then Bluesky won't be too difficult. In fact, it is in many ways a copy of the Twitter of several years ago.

Cons:

- **Less flexible to customize to your liking:** Bluesky does not work with decentralized servers. There is centralized moderation. As a result, like Mastodon, you cannot choose a server that suits you well.
- **Decentralized, but not federated:** Bluesky may not be run by a giant corporation, but users have less control over the platform than with Mastodon. There is a group of investors who build out and financially support the platform and thus have potential influence. While servers on Mastodon follow the laws of the country where they are located, Bluesky is subject to U.S. law and the policies of the current U.S. government.
- **Fewer responses:** compared to Mastodon, interaction in the form of responses to posts is lower at Bluesky. Bluesky, like the old Twitter, is more focused on broadcasting in the form of news items.
- **Privacy:** although users can set visibility options on Bluesky's web interface, all underlying data is public to all and accessible with certain tools, even without an account. This includes all posts, likes and which accounts one has blocked. Such actions should be considered permanently public.

Using both platforms

Do both platforms seem interesting to you? Of course, you can always choose to create an account on both Mastodon and Bluesky. Just be aware that it takes time to maintain two accounts.

Finally, there is also the option of bridging posts you make on one of the platforms to the other platform. This means that if you post a message on Bluesky, for example, it will automatically appear on Mastodon as well and, of course, vice versa.

- [More information about bridging posts.](#)