LEAVING LAS BIRDAS

[*NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne*]

Marcy asked Sunday about a checklist of actions:

> It'd be useful for someone to put together a checklist for journalists to prepare for the inevitable banning: download archive, delete DMs and phone number, update Masto follows… What else?

I started drafting one but as I was doing so, Elmo was changing the rules. I had to toss some parts, rewrite others, do more research than I expected all because Elmo decided he was going to ban a journalist permanently (WaPo's Taylor Lorenz) and ban all references to certain other social media platforms.

And then Musk did a 180-degree turn and deleted a bunch of the new rules late Sunday evening.

A flood of new users over the weekend combined with increased posting volume flooded Mastodon servers again, making everything a bit slow. It will speed up again once everything settles down into a new stasis.

Anyhow, here's the list journalists probably could have used already.

1) **Get your Archive** — Do not pass go, do not collect $200 until you have requested an archive of your Twitter history which includes all your tweets, retweets, quote tweets, media, more.

> — Select Settings and privacy.
> — Choose Your account.
> — Select Download an archive of your data.
> — Confirm your password, then select Request archive.
> — Watch for notice in your Settings within the next 2-5 days that your archive is ready to download. Don't count on an email notification as those appear to be spotty.

This archive will not be readily readable to

folks who don't code, but there are tools to format it into readable structure.

2) **Obtain 2FA backup passcodes** — you need a way to access your account if Twitter's 2FA service crashes. It has in Ukraine and India and spottily in the US since November 1.

Once you have your 2FA backup passcodes, make sure you have 2FA set up on your account. Next step will help a lot with 2FA.

3) **Remove your phone number** from your Twitter account. Lifehacker published a how-to. If you must keep a phone number attached, consider either switching it to a dedicated cheap burner or leave the existing number but get a new number wholly separate from Twitter for everything else.

Unauthorized use and sale of phone numbers may violate the FTC's consent decree, but Musk has already proven repeatedly he doesn't care what the FTC's consent decree says, having violated it multiple times since taking control of Twitter. Don't assume regulation can restrain him or that regulatory bodies in the U.S. or EU can act before the damage is done.

4) **Leave contact information** as to where else you can be found.

Musk is now suspending accounts for sharing Mastodon, Facebook, Instagram, Post, Tribel, TruthSocial, Nostr addresses and links. To ensure readers can still obtain addresses at these platforms, try these alternatives:

> — There are three open source link shorteners available which can mask an underlying link. See https://opensource.com/article/17/3/url-link-shortener for information about Lessn More, Polr, and Yourls; or

> — Use Glitch.com to cite all your social media addresses and identities in one link. You can 'hide' your Mastodon address in it and use the URL on your Twitter profile;

— Another approach is to collect your identities and put them in an image file and add it to a pinned tweet (do not include any text referring to the image's content). So far I haven't seen any indication Twitter is using OCR to detect 'forbidden' addresses except perhaps in profile header images;

— If you already have a blog, you can draft a post or a page with all your contact information in it and link to that page/post. (I've done this, it's very easy.)

5) **Delete your Direct Messages (DMs)** — this may take some time if you haven't had a practice of deleting them as you go along. In the future use Signal for private messages with auto-deletion so you don't have this albatross to deal with if you need to leave another social media platform.

Protect your sources and ask them to make sure they've deleted on their end as well.

6) **Delete your Tweets** — this is not a necessity and may actually cause problems if others have relied on your tweets in their reporting. Unlike DMs, tweets are assigned a unique URL; deleting one can create a 404 error for anyone who cited one of your tweets. Think long and hard about doing this.

It may be difficult to delete more than your last 3200 tweets. I couldn't; the service I used choked on the copy of my archive for one of my accounts. So I left it as it was.

If you have sensitive tweets which could end up deleted by Twitter's current or future regime, consider archiving them in the Wayback Machine at the Internet Archive.

7) **Pull a list of follows/followers** if you're headed to Mastodon — technically speaking, this information is in your archive copy but without the right tool it can be difficult for the non-coder to read. Use tools like Fedifinder or Twitodon to pull a list of follows/followers

identifying those who've migrated to Mastodon already. Log into your Mastodon account and follow the emigres as desired.

8) **Nuclear Options:** a) Lock your account, or b) Deactivate/Delete your account.

> a) **Locking your account** means it is only visible to your existing followers at the time it is locked. You won't get spammed/trolled by non-following accounts while you're locked. Other accounts may try to follow you but you'll have to approve them and at this point most may be spammers or troll/bot accounts not worth your time to screen let alone approve.

> b) **Deactivating/Deleting your account** will freeze your username for 30 days but after that the username is available for use by another new user. I do NOT recommend this; if your name is your brand, you don't want someone misusing it. Just make sure the account is secured by 2FA and walk away.

Between my two accounts I have less than 3000 followers and I'd informed them the account was going on hiatus and left info on how to find me. I locked my accounts and haven't logged back in.

9) **Prep your other social media/future social media home** — I'm not going to assume journalists are headed to Mastodon though many are. Some media figures are heading elsewhere.

> — Make sure to update your other/new media accounts with new addresses as appropriate;

> — Make sure you've activated 2FA or MFA secured logins on your other/new accounts;

> — If you're leaving Twitter, remove buttons and links from your social media accounts and — blog/website which take readers to your Twitter account;

> — Share a post as soon as possible on your alternate platform(s) advising your status, and then make sure to sustain some level of consistency in posting there to develop

audience.

10-a) **If you are moving to Mastodon** — find the circulating lists of journalists who've opened a Mastodon account. Follow your peeps from that list, have yourself added to that list.

> — **an ongoing Google Doc** of journalists prepared by Tim Chambers, administrator of indie.social (@tchambers@indieweb.social):
>
>> https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13No4yxY-oFrN8PigC2jBWXreFCHWwVRTftwP6HcREtA/htmlview
>
> The list is at least 1280 entries long. When clicking through the link above, note the link at the top to a form to collect new entry's personal information.
>
> — **an ongoing active list** of *verified* journalists prepared by Dave Lee of the Financial Times (@daveleeFT@mastodon.social):
>
>> https://www.presscheck.org/
>
> Caveat: Dave is swamped, there's a backlog of requests by new accounts.

10-b) **If you are moving to Mastodon** — you have a lot to learn in a short period of time; make sure you understand how Mastodon's culture differs from Twitter's, and how the lack of algorithms and nominal analytics may change your mode of operation.

> — YouTube video introduction by Jeff Jarvis (@jeffjarvis@mastodon.social), journalism prof at CUNY Newmark School:
>
>> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xnbct41Sxnk
>
> — Introduction to Mastodon at Washington Post:
>
>> A guide to getting started with Twitter alternative Mastodon (gift link)

There was another intro at Wall Street Journal this weekend as well — which says something interesting, doesn't it? I don't have a link to it, though, as I don't have a subscription.

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Now, a note about reporting on Elmo and Twitter going forward: ARCHIVE TWEETS BEFORE REPORTING ABOUT THEM. Make this an automatic practice.

I've run in to a number of situations where journalists have posted in Mastodon about Twitter rules and Elmo's tweets, sharing links to the Twitter-based content. Because I refuse to give Twitter traffic I copy the URL of the tweet and check the Internet Archive first for an archived copy instead.

I can't tell you how many times the shared tweet url had NOT been archived, even this Sunday during the height of Musk-ian confusion about the new rule regarding mentions of social media competitors.

Do not trust Elmo not to delete content whether tweets or administrative content under Help, Twitter Support, or other Twitter organization account. Take a screenshot, document the hell out of it. Add any links to the Wayback Machine at the Internet Archive.

Polititweet had been archiving Musk's tweets including tracking those deleted, but I can't be certain it's up to date.

Just don't trust him or the business he runs because it's not the Twitter you once knew.

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Go. Remember you're supposed to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. Do it from a better place than the circus Twitter has become.