

PRESS RELEASE

Blockchain Commons and Bitmark introduce Charter, a new Social Media Architecture

Dear Friends,

Corporate social media has failed us.

When social networks first appeared, they offered the hope of human connection: the promise that we could gather our friends and families online together; that we could connect to businesses of our choice; that we could select news from sources that appealed to us most. It was to be the dawn of the citizen-journalist and the global family. In the modern day, with its social distancing and sheltering in place, these goals are more important than ever, but our hopes and the promises of a new, more open, respectful social institution have been dashed.

Facebook is the biggest culprit. Facebook cuts us off from our family and friends with arbitrary algorithms. It severs us from our news services and favored businesses in order to gain favor and advertisements. Their corporate greed led directly to the misappropriation of our personal information, adversely impacting the US 2016 election. Even today, they encourage blatant falsehoods to propagate across their platform, simply because doing so makes them more money. They have literally sold out our democracy.

It doesn't have to be that way.

Charter reimagines social media to recover its initial promise, with new safeguards so that no single vendor one can steal it away. Its architecture ensures that every social-media participant has both autonomy and agency. As individuals we control and govern our own data, deciding for ourselves how online information is shared, used, and deleted. For social media, this means we have authority over not just a timeline of posts, but also our social graph of connections. Every individual gets to decide who reads our posts, and also what we see ourselves. That's what Charter does.

This new initiative is founded upon individual rights recognized by Europe in the GDPR and by California in the CCPA, both of which ensure that individuals may request copies of any personal data held by a vendor. This has forced Facebook to make archives of accounts available to all Facebook users. Using Bitmark's Spring app, people can download their Facebook timeline and its graph of social connections. It's the dawn of data independence.

[...]

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Bitmark Inc.
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TAIWAN, Taipei

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This is just the first step. Blockchain Commons and Bitmark are now working in concert to develop an engagement model for what comes next. We are expanding the well-tested and trusted Bitmark Protocol, which protects digital assets using blockchain technology, to offer cryptographic object capabilities. This will allow individuals to create a graph of online connections under their own control.

People also gain personal agency that simply doesn’t exist on Facebook. Anyone can charter community groups based on any criteria: geographic location, topical interest, old friendships, or something else. Individuals get to decide which groups to join, and each group gets to decide what the rules are for participating. Meanwhile, personal data and community data will be protected in online data stores cryptographically restricted to only the appropriate people.

How is Charter different from Facebook? The underlying algorithms and protocols are open source and will be open standards, not owned by any single company. Personal data is stored in a private vault, but the rights to it are recorded on a public blockchain, maximizing the balance between privacy and public needs. When someone uses Charter, the platform itself doesn’t limit what posts they get to see; it won’t boot people for violations of arbitrary rules; and it can’t sell personal data to advertisers. Instead, Charter is under the control of individuals and the groups that people create and join.

Charter replaces corporate social media with open infrastructure: everyone can use it, anyone can improve it, and no one can take it away.

We expect the first deployment of the Charter architecture to be in Bitmark’s Autonomy app, which uses Charter’s social graphs for public health by defining neighborhoods that can share information. We’ll be talking about that in the near future.

To take the next step in developing Charter, we need your help. We invite you to join us at a virtual conference to discuss how to reinvent our social institutions through new collaborations. Join [our mailing list](#) to stay informed and to be a part of this new initiative. We welcome futurists, developers, and social-media users alike, so that we can have a wide spectrum of views. Together, we can create a social network built upon social independence, where we decide with whom we associate.

Sincerely,

Christopher Allen, Founder & Principal Architect, Blockchain Commons
Sean Moss-Pultz, Co-Founder & CEO, Bitmark Inc.

#digitalrights

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About Blockchain Commons

The open infrastructure of Charter is being designed with Blockchain Commons, who is proudly a “not-for-profit” social benefit corporation and champion for decentralization on the internet, giving power to the people instead of to corporations. Its founder, Christopher Allen, is the co-author of the TLS standard that is used today to protect almost all secure connections on the internet, granting people the power to make purchases on the internet, securely bank online, and more. He has championed object capabilities for use on the decentralized web at the Rebooting the Web of Trust design workshops, which he founded; the first such papers, “Identity Hubs Capabilities Perspective” and “Linked Data Capabilities”, were authored by participants at RWOT V in Boston, 2017.

[<https://www.blockchaincommons.com/>]

About Bitmark

Charter is being developed by Bitmark, who has been working on empowering people online since 2014. Bitmark’s best-known product, the Bitmark Protocol, allows people to autonomously govern their digital properties and gives them the agency to use them as they see fit. Charter is a new initiative for Bitmark, built on the Bitmark Protocol and the company’s core principles. It is a response to the 2016 attacks on democracy.

[<https://www.bitmark.com>]