De-googling: My Experience

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Introduction

- ▶ Deep in the google ecosystem
  - ▶ Use Google Pixel Phone
  - ▶ Gmail
  - ▶ Google Photos (plus pay for extra cloud storage)
  - ▶ Youtube Music
- ▶ Trying to move away form Google for about ~2 years
  - ▶ Slowly migrating above services to self hosted and FOSS alternatives
  - ▶ Biggest pain point of has been migrating Android mobile phone

Why?

- Privacy
  - Google collects a lot of data about you
  - More services you use the more data they can collect
- Not FOSS
  - Although Google contributes to FOSS not everything they provide is FOSS
- Google is locking down android
  - Restricting app installation unsigned apps to ADB only
- Avoid Big US Tech companies
  - Feels like a liability today

Why?

- On a stock Android phone many apps are there google equivalent
  - Google Photos for Gallery
  - Gmail for email
  - GBoard for keyboard
  - Google Maps for maps
  - Google Calendar for calendar
  - Google Contacts for contacts
- Send data to google in various ways
- All push notifications go through Google's Firebase Cloud Messenger (FCM)
  - E2EE but they probably collect metadata

My setup - Devices

- Current main phone is a Pixel 6 with stock OS
- Pixel 4a (with damaged screen)
  - Experimented with LineageOS and Postmarket OS
- Modded Blackberry Passport with Lineage OS 18 (Android 11)
  - Cool phone to play around with but slow and out of date

Alternative ROMs

- Haven't used much besides LineageOS
- Provides alternative keyboard, gallery, calendar, contacts, file manager, and SMS
- Also can use Fossify apps for gallery, calendar, contacts, files, and SMS
  - This is what I do on my stock OS pixel phone
  - Eventually want to migrate to a dedicated LineageOS or Postmarket OS (PMOS) device

My setup - Apps

- App Stores
- Notifications
- Email
- Web Browser
- Contact & Calendar
- Camera
- Authenticator (TOTP)
- Password Manager
- Talk applications
- Maps

App Stores

- Mainly use F-Droid
  - Like that apps are guaranteed to not have any google services in them
- Use Izzy-on-Droid & Obtanium for anything else I need
  - Izzy is an FDroid repo that provides APK directly from developers release
  - Obtanium lets you manage apps by just providing a link to the github/gitlab/etc release page

Notifications

- Most FOSS apps when running without google service run in background for notifications
  - when you have ~10 apps doing this can be bad for battery life
- UnifiedPush lets use an alternative notification server or run your own
  - I use NextPush to use my nextcloud server as a unified push notification server

Email

- Migrated to email on my own domain
    - Access through IMAP / SMTP
- Use K9Mail / Thunderbird mobile
    - Strictly better than Gmail IMO
    - Find multi account setup much nicer
    - Supports PGP
    - AFAIK push notification support isn't that great (limitation of IMAP)

Web browser

- Fennec - F-Droid version of Firefox mobile
  - Supports unified push
- Also use firefox from playstore on devices I haven't fully de-googled

Contacts & Calendar

- ▶ DAVx5 lets you sync caldav calendars and carddav contacts to your device
  - ▶ My nextcloud server provides carddav and caldav
- ▶ Use Fossify Contacts app
- ▶ Use Fossify Calendar app

Camera

- Instead of using Google's pixel camera app use Fossify app
  - Feels like a bit of a downgrade
  - There are other FOSS camera apps, but I like Fossify the most

Authenticator (TOTP)

- ▶ Aegis is a good FOSS alternative on F-Droid
  - ▶ Seems to have more security and backup options

Password Manager

- I keep a Keepass DB synced between devices using nextcloud
- Use KeepassDX from F-Droid to access password DB on Android

Talk applications

- Tough to switch because of network effect
- Still rely on proprietary applications for some contacts, but trying to migrate
  - Discord
  - Whatsapp
  - Facebook Messenger
  - RCS Through google text message app
- Use nextcloud talk with my wife
- Use IRC with Goguma
- Use Fluffychat and SchildiChat for matrix
- Experimenting with Jami (FOSS P2P E2EE chat app)
- Not that interested in Signal
  - American company using US big tech infra for servers
  - Open source but not really FOSS
  - Can't host your own server or switch from official server
  - Molly seems promising and their effort for an FOSS signal server

Map applications

- Hard to replace google maps
  - It just works so well
- Co-maps/Organic maps works okay
  - Routing is nice but has no public transit support
- Cardinal works more like google maps with OSM data
  - From the E-Foundation for /e/OS de-googled ROM
  - Routing is not as good as Co-maps/Organic maps
  - Has public transit support, including in ottawa
  - Lack features for routing like depart/arrival time
  - Not on F-Droid, can install with Obtanium
- Experimented with Bimba
  - Only handles transit
  - Works with OC Transpo
  - UI is pretty clunky

Other apps

- Just use their web version if I can
  - Fennec/Firefox lets you "install" web apps
  - Dedicated launcher on home screen, works really well if web page is a PWA
- Do this for
  - Banking (RBC)
  - Parking in Ottawa (PayByPhone)
  - Spliit (expense splitting app)
- Catima is a nice FOSS wallet app
  - Can put codes in for various points cards MOI, Optimum, Aeroplan, etc
- Quillpad is nice FOSS notes app the syncs with Nextcloud or local files

Notes about Nextcloud

- ▶ Works great for carddav/caldav
  - ▶ One way and two sync of folders
  - ▶ Handy for things like my password DB, photos, music, and quick file sharing.
  - ▶ I'm still figuring out how I want to handle music
- ▶ Syncthing also works great
  - ▶ Used it before nextcloud
  - ▶ Migrated to nextcloud since the maintenance of android app was a bit uncertain
  - ▶ Believe maintenance issues have been cleared up now
  - ▶ Nice since you don't need to host your own server
- ▶ Having everything be files and just syncing them is liberating

Ideal future plans

- Switch to LineageOS or PMOS device
- Don't use any google apps at all

The End

Thanks! Questions?