



A report on potential Discord alternatives for Amaranth Legacy

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Published 2026-02-14 on amaranth-legacy.community
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1. Background

Discord is an instant messaging and voice call platform owned, operated, and developed by Discord Inc., a for-profit company based in San Francisco^[1] with 600 employees^[2]. With over 200 million monthly active users^[3], they unfortunately have a massive captive audience.

Because of their large market share and leverage, they have been enshittifying^[a] the platform—slowly at first, but now at a rapid and accelerating pace. For example, they have:

- locked features for servers—such as additional emoji slots, increased file size limits, and the ability to add a server banner—behind payment (*Boosts*)^[5]
- locked features for users—such as using custom emojis in other servers, better screen sharing quality, and custom official client themes—behind payment (*Nitro*)^[6]
- introduced games (*Activities*) inside the Discord app^[7]
- introduced advertisements for games (*Quests*) inside the Discord app^[8]
- broken external links to files uploaded onto Discord^[9]
- opened a Discord profile cosmetics store (*Shop*)^[10]
- increased the non-Nitro file size limit from 8 MB to 25 MB,^[11] then a year later reduced it to 10 MB^[12]
- implemented a way to buy in-game items using Discord^[13]
- surveyed sentiment on adding AI features to Discord, including AI summaries of voice chats and direct messages^[14]

In addition, they are planning to:

- implement an age verification requirement in March, which would use either a face scan, an ID submission, or an age estimation algorithm using your messages and activity; if you don't, you will have restrictions imposed^[15]
- go public on the stock market (an IPO), which would put the company and platform at the whims of shareholders^[16]

This is in conjunction with the inherent issues of Discord, such as:

- its closed-source apps and server
- its for-profit nature
- the lack of control over governance or hosting
- the erosion of publicly searchable information and documentation

Amaranth Legacy currently uses Discord as one of its main platforms for communication, recreation, and collaboration. There have been preparations and intent to move off of Discord in the past; however, now is the time when we have enough momentum to do so.

[a] Noun: The phenomenon of online platforms gradually degrading the quality of their services, often by promoting advertisements, recurring payments, and sponsored content, in order to increase profits.^[4]

2. Alternatives

As a result of Discord's large market share, there are very few viable alternatives that have been developed fully and weren't abandoned or bought out. This was, in fact, one of the reasons we didn't migrate earlier.

To determine if an alternative is suitable, it must pass these criteria:

1. Instant messaging (💬)
 1. Message channels
 2. Direct messages
 3. Long or multiline messages
 4. Emoji picker
 5. Custom emojis (optional)
 6. File uploading (including images, videos, and GIFs)
 7. Message reactions (optional)
 8. Message replies
 9. Message deletion
10. Mentions/pings
11. Offline notifications
12. IRC bridging (optional)
13. Bots (optional)
2. Voice calls^[b] (🗣️)
 1. Voice channels (optional)
 2. Video calls (📹) (optional)
 3. Screen sharing (📺) (optional)
3. Functional core features^[c]
4. Permission system support
5. Mobile-friendly
6. Public access
7. Easy to use
8. Active support
9. Growing or large userbase (optional)
10. Self-hosted (optional)
11. Federation support^[d] (optional)

[b] This can be a separate service; some alternatives only implement instant messaging and some only implement voice calls.

[c] Some examples are creating an account and/or logging in, joining servers, and sending messages.

[d] The ability to communicate with other servers which support the same decentralized protocol.

2.1. Campfire

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging	Unknown	Insufficient	Irrelevant	Non-viable due to design differences with Discord

Campfire is marketed towards businesses as a competitor to Slack and Teams. However, it is open-source and free to self-host (there is no central, default, or example server). Currently, we have not done testing with a live instance. Thus, this review is based on what the website states, including the guide video.

When hosting, instances are single-tenant (there is no equivalent to Discord servers); federation is unsupported. Notably, it does not require an Internet connection to function.

In regards to features, most of the features listed in the criteria are present, such as message reactions, message replies, file uploading, and bot support. (One notable feature missing is custom emojis.) It does not have a native mobile app, but it can be added as a progressive web app (PWA) with notification support.

Development concerns include a use of Claude in the latest commit and a significant gap in updates between July 2024 and September 2025. Given that it is open-source and tinkerable, it is less of an issue than if it was a centralized platform. Regardless, it appears to be “complete” and it is reasonable to assume that support will not be given.

However, design-wise, it is closer to text messaging and significantly different from Discord. In addition, its login/invite system would not work for us, as public access is one of our requirements. There would also be significant user friction due to its user interface and paradigm.

2.2. IRC

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging	Functional	Insufficient	None	Intended to be the final stop, but requires substantial development

IRC, a protocol first introduced in 1988, is extremely barebones *per se*. For example, it does not natively support message deletion, multiline messages, profile pictures, or file

uploading. Luckily, it has several extensions developed by the IRCV3 Working Group which can be used to bring it closer to its more modern counterparts.

Amaranth Legacy currently has an IRC server set up. However, it uses an off-the-shelf web client, which limits our ability to customize and develop.

With additional development on our own web client, we could implement these features using IRCv3 extensions, like message deletion and multiline messages. It would certainly be a significant amount of work, but it is lesser than if we did it from scratch. Other features like profile pictures or file uploading can be bolted onto the web app, especially with the versatility of the metadata extension.

2.3. Jitsi

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Voice calls Video calls Screen sharing	Unknown	Satisfactory	Lacking	Potentially viable for voice calls

Jitsi is a video call platform similar to Zoom, and lacks the persistent joinable “channels” that constitute a regular voice chat in Amaranth Legacy. While a viable option for hosting meetings, the emphasis on cameras conflicts with most members’ desire to not show their faces. As a result, the UI would be somewhat clunky to navigate.

By itself, it is not viable due to the lack of text chat features and its general ephemerality. In the worst-case scenario where the only available options have no ability to host any sort of voice call, Jitsi could fill that role, potentially even into the future when our IRC is developed enough to meet our instant messaging needs.

2.4. Matrix

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls Video calls Screen sharing	Broken	Satisfactory	Abundant	Non-viable due to broken functionality

Matrix is a decentralized and federated protocol developed *de jure* by the Matrix.org Foundation, but *de facto* by Element Creations Limited. It has existed since 2014, which would make you hope that it works smoothly. However, it has significant usability issues that make it a non-starter.

When using Matrix, you must first choose a client, which all vary in their supported feature set and development. After logging into the server, you will hit your first roadblock: “Unable to decrypt message.” This is a notorious issue inherent to the Matrix protocol’s end-to-end encryption (which had a security vulnerability for several years^[17]) that has not been fixed meaningfully since its creation. Its paradigm is also significantly different from Discord—the closest equivalent to a Discord server is a Space, which only provides a listing (no automatic joining) of their equivalent to a Discord channel, a Room. This is only a few issues from a very long list, which also includes sluggish performance, server software and SDK fragmentation, and unreliable access.

In addition to usability issues, Element, the primary contributor to Matrix, sells their services to governments and police departments.^[18] In the pursuit of a more ethical service than Discord to host our community, this is a major downside.

2.5. Mattermost

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls Video calls Screen sharing	Unknown	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Non-viable due to financial cost and corporate/government marketing

Mattermost is not an option due to its extreme financial cost; it is marketed towards corporations and governments.

2.6. Mumble

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls	Functional	Insufficient	None	Non-viable due to lack of mobile support

Mumble, an open-source voice call client and server initially released in 2005, is still being actively maintained (although with significant gaps between updates). It supports instant messaging, but it is not the primary focus.

While mature and good in its focus (voice calls), with excellent quality and low latency, it lacks significantly in other ways. Notably, it does not have a web app or maintained iOS app, which is a dealbreaker as voice chat is often used on mobile. In addition, it lacks video call or screen sharing support, both of which are present in modern alternatives.

2.7. Nextcloud Talk

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls Video calls Screen sharing	Unknown	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Non-viable due to significant set-up work

Nextcloud Talk is a communication and productivity platform focused on collaboration through shared calendars and video conferences. While the features look promising, the amount of work needed to set up a Nextcloud Talk instance is too much of a burden to justify its use. Its orientation towards professionals is a neutral trait; some of its UI is easily translatable into our own purposes and it looks intuitive.

The time required to give Nextcloud Talk a viable space for Amaranth Legacy to migrate to would be better spent developing our on-site IRC, and therefore it is not being considered as an option. Optics and attrition are also concerns, as it's unlikely that casual site-goers would find the platform anything but intimidating, and our use of it may contribute to an unwanted corporate vibe. Its marketing including an "AI assistant" does not instill confidence that our existing userbase would adopt it either.

2.8. Rocket.Chat

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls Video calls Screen sharing	Unknown	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Non-viable due to financial cost and corporate/government marketing

Rocket.Chat is not an option due to its extreme financial cost; it is marketed towards corporations and governments.

2.9. Root

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls Video calls Screen sharing	Unknown	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Non-viable due to corporate structure and existing enshittification

Root was, admittedly, not experimented with before being written off. A quick survey of their website revealed some concerning tendencies that led us to believe they will enshittify similarly to Discord in the future. Additionally, they have existing guidelines and features that make it non-viable as a Discord replacement.

Root has no available web app, which hinders accessibility and makes it more frustrating to download and migrate. Like Discord, they are centralized and closed-source, two issues that make it very hard to trust the service. Their UI does seem passable, though somewhat different from Discord's, but it is much more focused around action and scheduling the way a guild in an MMO might.

Root's tendencies towards capital gain cannot be understated. The marketing feels very corporate, and the privacy policy explicitly states that they will collect data from users to sell to brokers to show ads on external sites. They were additionally started up with a large venture capital fund—something we see as an ill omen for a platform or company.^[19] This data collection, as well as their draconian policy on NSFW content (none is allowed whatsoever, even in private), are signs of an over-sanitized corporate farm. Anyone hoping for a serious Discord replacement based on any ethical concern would not give Root an hour of their time.

2.10. Signal

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls	Functional	Insufficient	Abundant	Non-viable due to private group focus

Signal is intended as a private personal/group instant messaging app, primarily to friends and family. Unfortunately, this means that it falls flat as an alternative to our Discord server, given that it would be the equivalent of adding 100 people to a text message group.

However, for staff use or other small groups, it works exceptionally well. It enforces strong end-to-end encryption and supports reactions, file uploading, voice calls, video calls, and screen sharing. In addition to iOS and Android clients, you can link it to your desktop. One slight downside is that you must provide a valid phone number. However, you can hide it from other users; usernames are also supported for initial contact.

2.11. Spacebar

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls Video calls Screen sharing	Rough	Satisfactory	Lacking	Barely viable but with significant usability issues

Experimentation with **Spacebar** was brief and painful. Notifications were glitchy and the sound design was physically disconcerting to hear. The faux-Discord UI was changed in only the ways that seemed to make it more confusing; user friction upon migrating would be very high. DMs were rough and pinged the sender instead of the receiver, and settings reverted at random and whenever the app was closed. Voice calls were functional, if barely, though camera and screen streaming were both non-functional, with no indication that it was being worked on.

Throughout the tests, Spacebar disappointed almost enough to make it a non-option, but not quite to that point. Regardless, while theoretically viable, the energy of the community would be greatly diminished by this. It is with a heavy heart that we must consider it the grungy, malodorous nuclear bunker option if every better one is exhausted.

2.12. Stoa

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls	Functional	Satisfactory	Lacking	Viable as one of the top contenders

Initial experiments into **Stoa** were done by SunlitSmoothie, ThatVenusian and TheStellarExplorer. Account creation was very delayed due to the immense inflow of users backing up their verification servers, which has caused persistent issues with getting on the platform. For those on Stoa, the platform functioned much like Discord, with a functioning VC and instant messaging core, custom emojis, servers and channels, and built-in roles.

Forum-style text channels and stage voice channels are unavailable, and the audit log system is more barebones than Discord's. These features are not entirely necessary and will cause minimal friction in server setup. Both test servers created were deprecated due to miscommunication and the inability of Stoa servers to be transferred to a new owner. SunlitSmoothie has created a ready-to-ship Amaranth Legacy server port on Stoa, including roles, channel descriptions, and relevant permissions as a stress test of

administrative friction. This server porting experience shows that Stoa is by far the easiest platform to port to.

Screensharing and webcam support is unavailable, but is actively being worked on. The platform's influx of new users is motivating the team to work harder on development. Stoa, unlike many of our top contenders, has an app that can be accessed outside the browser and on mobile.

One major concern with Stoa is that the company is based in the UK, where it is subject to the Online Safety Act 2023—the progenitor of much of the age-verification policies that we now strive to break away from. While they currently have no system for this, it is likely that the UK government will force them to implement such a system, given that they are growing significantly larger. The platform may opt to keep this system UK-only, but it still poses a potentially existential threat. Use of this platform would have to be wary and with another off-road planned in case of the worst.

An additional concern was the use of Claude (AI) in some **now-reverted** minor code commits.^[20]

2.13. TeamSpeak

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging Voice calls	Unknown	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Non-viable due to closed-source nature and gaming-oriented marketing

TeamSpeak is a closed-source voice call client and server, with two versions: TeamSpeak 3, which is not in development; and TeamSpeak 6, which is being actively developed as the successor to TeamSpeak 3. It was not tested due to concerns over the company and software. While supporting instant messaging, it is not the primary function of the platform.

The frankly aggressive marketing towards gamers in particular echoes some of Discord's own "by gamers for gamers" marketing early in its lifespan. This together with its closed-source nature casts doubt on its viability as a company. In all likelihood, any iteration of TeamSpeak that gained an audience would be no better ethically than Discord itself, and at that point we may as well not migrate in the first place.

2.14. Valour

Purpose	Functionality	Features	Comforts	Verdict
Instant messaging	Functional	Satisfactory	Abundant	Viable as one of the top contenders

Initial experiments with **Valour** showed a lot of promise. Core functionality like the creation of a planet (equivalent to a Discord server) and the recreation of the Amaranth Legacy Discord's layout were easy, according to ThatVenusian, who created the planet. Instant messaging, much like Discord, is the chosen medium of communication. Voice chats exist as well, though streaming remains unavailable for now. The UI of the voice chats is clunky and does not show who is in there. They also lack functionality at the moment due to "insufficient funds" and lower priority of development, as was sourced from the FAQ channel of Valour Central.

Voice channels, once implemented, may become even less viable due to plans to mostly lock them behind a subscription service, likely on a per-user basis. This is due to a lack of resources necessary to support a free voice chat service. There may be a limited voice chat feature for free, but any hard limit on how much time users can spend in voice channels before having to pay for it is a dealbreaker, especially for Amaranth Legacy, given that other options offer free voice call services.

There is no mobile app (though there are eventual plans for one). GIF search using Tenor, as well as an extensive library of default emojis, are available. Image embeds function just fine, as well as video. Custom emojis are currently not implemented. Bot support is built into the platform, though how well it can be bridged to the IRC remains to be seen.

The greatest boon of Valour, however, is the current situation and the attentiveness of its developers. Communication is open and easy, and motivation from Discord's recent shakeup is high. Issues we had that were critical were acknowledged directly by SpikeViper (owner and lead developer) within two days. Adding on features can be done through suggestions or GitHub pull requests, as indicated by SpikeViper. In short, Valour as a platform can grow in response to our, and many others', needs.

In response to age verification law concerns, SpikeViper stated that he intends to sacrifice his own ability to travel to the UK and EU before complying with any laws from those countries requiring age verification. He went on to state that should the US, where Valour is based, require such a system, he will resign from full control and federate Valour to be decentralized among the people. In short, SpikeViper is dedicated fully to preventing age verification from impacting the platform in any way.^[21]

3. Conclusion

None of these options are perfect. Even the best options available to us have substantial flaws or risks that make long-term use anything but guaranteed. A majority of these platforms have limited functionality, extreme paywalls or advertising, or other insufficiencies and have been entirely ruled out. With this many available to choose from, it was inevitable that some would fall this far, but it is still disappointing to see so few good options.

From what we've compiled, it is clear that TeamSpeak, Matrix, and Root are non-options because of significant issues. In regards to popular opinion, Stoa appears to be gaining the majority of the exodus' traffic, with Valour additionally gaining a large influx of users.

Using separate services to retain the text and voice functionality of Discord would cause significant user friction for this initial migration. It seems inevitable that we will have a secondary migration at some point, given the short-term solution nature of this plan.

3.1. Selected alternative

Despite the legal concerns with it being based in the UK, Stoa is the best alternative we have access to for the time being. Where other communities might prioritize long-term sustainability, Amaranth Legacy intends to have a secondary migration to our self-hosted IRC, with this intermediary giving us more time to develop it. Stoa has by far the least friction to joining and re-learning UI. It has functional voice chat built in, something its runner-up competitors lack for the time being. What we need right now is a short-term and easy to use platform while we work on our self-hosting. For outreach and gaining new users, Stoa's active community will not be a hindrance like many other options.

Should Stoa implement age verification sooner than we have enough functionality on the IRC to migrate (with a global rollout, a UK-only system may be acceptable), we will use the Valour planet set up during testing as a backup. Valour is much safer in the long-term, given SpikeViper's extensive plans to combat age verification laws, but the UX is much different, the site itself is buggy, and there is a lack of voice chat support.

3.2. Future of the Discord server

It is extremely unlikely that we will fully delete the Amaranth Legacy Discord. It seems like the most extreme option that we would undertake only if forced. Unlike the Fandom, which we would probably have deleted by now if we were capable, the Discord serves as a good place to redirect users from.

At time of writing, there are just over 200 members in the Amaranth Legacy Discord. A large amount will not migrate; regardless, it will certainly take a long time. Phasing out use of the Discord as our members migrate to the new platform is probable, with some

ideas including locking all channels to read-only or, in a more extreme case, reworking the whole server to essentially be a link to our new location. In addition, we are able to archive the current content in every channel into ZIP files, which we can put on our website as an archive and publish on the new platform.

Unfortunately, regardless of our decision, this will be a painful migration with losses in the short-term. However, we hope that in the long-term, breaking off to a community-run and self-hosted option will free us from the endless cycle of chat startups.

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