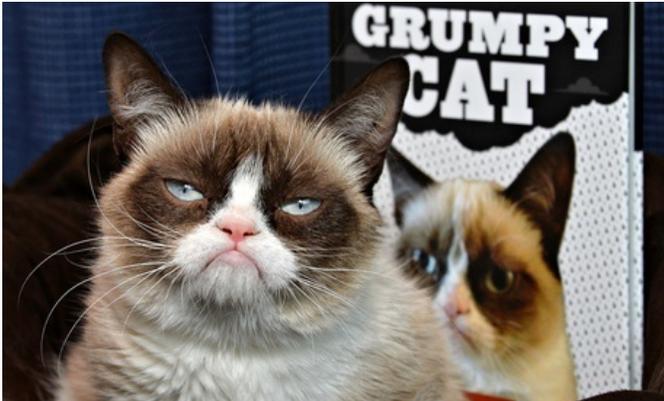


## Why the internet loves cats - not dogs

Cats rule the internet, but why? Other animals are cute and funny too. BuzzFeed's 'beastmaster' runs through the theories



Online sensation Grumpy Cat. Photograph: Amanda Edwards/WireImage

**Jack Shepherd**

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**T**he internet is one giant, virtual cat park, its foundation is one of cat fur, and its currency is the miaows of millions of kittens who lie patiently in wait for you on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, acting like they pretty much own the place. These are indisputable facts, but nobody has ever been able to come up with a suitable answer to the attendant question: why? Why are there so many cats on the internet?

The problem is that they are asking the wrong question, which should not be "Why cats?" so much as "Why not dogs?" And the answer is that dogs are trying too hard. When a dog gets in a box or hides under the duvet or wears a funny hat, it is because he is desperately trying to impress you - longing for your validation and approval. When a cat does one of those things, it is because it felt like the right thing to do at the time. And it usually was. It is cool, and effortless, and devoid of any concern about what you might think about it. It is art for art's sake.



Jack Shepherd and his cat Princess. Photograph: Jack Shepherd

This, at any rate, is one of the theories (of which there are an awful lot) about why content related to cats seems to gain so much traction online. As BuzzFeed's Beastmaster (which means that I run the hard-hitting Cute Animals section), I've had occasion to contemplate these theories a good deal. And, having looked at the data, which reveals that readers are just as likely to search for things about dogs as they are to search for things about cats, I've grown partial to another, somewhat less fanciful, theory, which is that those of us who write about animals on the internet have unquestioningly bought into the cat hype and are perpetuating it.

There is actually no good reason why cats should gain more traction online than dogs, or indeed any other animal (sloths, for instance, had a huge year online in 2013). But the cat propaganda machine is ruthlessly effective, and the online animal media is almost completely under the sway of the powerful cat lobby. I also think that this is an excellent thing for society, as cats are both furry and nice. I, for one, welcome our feline overlords.