News Item

Twitter's API Crackdown Will Hit More Than Just Bots | WIRED

By Chris Stokel-Walker

February 13, 2023

> On February 13, Twitter is expected to end free access to its API, or application programming interface, the backend access that lets people build bots to automatically post and respond to tweets on the site. Elon Musk, who took over Twitter in October last year, has long said he wants to scour the platform of bots, and has said that charging a minimum of $100 a month to access the API will "clean things up greatly."
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> But by cutting off free access to its API, Twitter will also prevent many researchers from accessing its data, stopping them from analyzing how misinformation and hate speech spreads on social media.
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> In the past few weeks alone, academic researchers have used free API access to track all activity on the platform in a 24-hour period, map how insurrectionists who tried to overthrow the US government on January 6, 2021 coordinated on the platform—and even estimate the proportion of users that are bots on the platform. This kind of research will now become much harder.The impact is potentially devastating," says David Lazer, a computational social scientist at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. "Twitter had been the most common source of data for studying the information ecosystem, especially misinformation, to understand what content was flowing out there and why."

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