Another one for the graveyard: Google to kill Instant Apps in December

But that was then, and this is now. Today, an increasing number of mobile apps are functionally identical to the mobile websites they are intended to replace, and developer uptake of Instant Apps was minimal. Even in 2017, loading an app instead of a website had limited utility. As a result, most of us probably only encountered Instant Apps a handful of times in all the years it was an option for developers.

To use the feature, which was delivered to virtually all Android devices by Google Play Services, developers had to create a special “instant” version of their app that was under 15MB. The additional legwork to get an app in front of a subset of new users meant this was always going to be a steep climb, and Google struggles to incentivize developers to adopt new features. Plus, there’s no way to cram in generative AI! So it’s not a shock to see Google retiring the feature.

This feature is currently listed in the collection of Google services in your phone settings as “Google Play Instant.” Unfortunately, there aren’t many examples still available if you’re curious about what Instant Apps were like—the Finnish publisher Ilta-Sanomat is one of the few still offering it. Make sure the settings toggle for Instant Apps is on if you want a little dose of nostalgia.

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