

Facebook's Giphy acquisition might have big implications for iMessage and Twitter

Facebook is buying Giphy, and that means how you send and receive GIFs on the internet could change forever. The service claims that more than 700 million people see Giphy content every day, and many of those views come from some of the internet's most popular apps— from Apple's iMessage to TikTok and Twitter – most of which rely on Giphy's API and archives to let users share and post GIFs.

It's likely that at least some of those services won't want to have a Facebook-owned platform integrated with their products moving forward. Not only do these companies generally prefer not to rely on major competitors, but Facebook's services have had issues with privacy (like the Cambridge Analytica scandal) and reliability (like when a small Facebook SDK bug took down many major mobile apps earlier this month).

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Facebook says developers will be able to rely on Giphy as they had before the acquisition, and as of this writing, it appears you can still use Giphy in most apps just as you could before. "People will still be able to upload GIFs; developers and API partners will continue to have the same access to GIPHY's APIs; and GIPHY's creative community will still be able to create great content," Vishal Shah, Instagram's vice president of product, said in a blog post on Friday.

It's also important to note that there are no tracking pixels, cookies, or any other embedded user tracking mechanisms in

Giphy's GIFs or stickers, the company tells *The Verge*. And the Giphy API can see your search terms, but not any of your data, according to the Twitter account for the messaging service Telegram. Giphy confirmed to *The Verge* that Telegram's tweet is accurate. But there's always the chance Facebook could change the way Giphy works down the line. And apps and services that use Giphy now could drop support for the service at any moment, regardless of what Facebook decides to do with the service.

Here are some apps and services with built-in Giphy integrations that could be affected by the acquisition, and we've asked each of them if they plan to change how they work with Giphy. This really just speaks to the start of Giphy's reach. There are a lot more services that we haven't listed, like Pinterest and Reddit, that let you share and post files from Giphy, but that don't have a direct integration with the service as of now.

iMessage

When you send a GIF in iMessage via the #images app that's built into iOS, Apple sources some of those GIFs from Giphy. Apple has not responded to a request for comment. This integration seems likely to pose some tension moving forward, given Apple's pro-privacy stance and Facebook's tendency to absorb user data from its products.

Mailchimp

Mailchimp lets you insert GIFs sourced from Giphy while creating an email campaign via a built-in tool. Mailchimp tells *The Verge* that it plans to continue offering Giphy integration. Mailchimp also offers an official Facebook integration that lets you add an email signup form to a Facebook page and publish ads for your Mailchimp campaign to Facebook.

Signal

Signal lets you search for GIFs that you can include in messages on iOS and Android, and Giphy is one of the services from which Signal sources GIFs. Signal bills itself as an end-to-end encrypted privacy- and security-focused messaging service, and the company did not say whether it plans to remove Giphy as a source of GIFs following this acquisition.

The app already implements its GIF search in a privacy-preserving way, according to Signal founder Moxie Marlinspike. That means Facebook may not be able to get any data from Giphy GIFs shared on Signal.

Now that Giphy has been acquired by FB, many have reached out to ask whether we should be concerned about Giphy search in Signal.

Signal already uses a privacy preserving approach to prevent gif search providers from receiving user data:<https://t.co/PhfdHb9aJ0>

– Moxie Marlinspike (@moxie) May 15, 2020

Signal also shared this statement with *The Verge*:

Privacy and security are at the heart of everything that we do at Signal. From the very beginning, Signal has hidden search terms from gif search providers using a privacy-preserving proxy, and the Giphy SDK isn't included in the app at all.

The Signal service never sees the plaintext contents of what is transmitted or received during gif searches because the TLS connection is negotiated directly with Giphy, and Giphy doesn't know who issued the request because the TCP connection is proxied through the Signal service.

This privacy-preserving functionality has been built into

Signal since November of 2016, and further expanded with additional enhancements in November of 2017. You can read more on our blog here:

<https://signal.org/blog/signal-and-giphy-update/>

Slack

Slack offers a Giphy integration that you can install in your workspace, and you can read more about it on Giphy's website.

"Slack is committed to protecting user and company data," said Brian Elliott, vice president and general manager of the Slack platform, in a statement to *The Verge*. "Giphy doesn't receive any information about users or even companies using the Giphy for Slack integration, and only sees Slack usage of the Giphy API in aggregate."

Snapchat

Snapchat launched an integration that lets you add Giphy animated stickers into snaps in 2018. Snapchat declined to comment.

Telegram

Telegram lets you search for GIFs from Giphy to add to your messages.

In a statement, Telegram tells *The Verge* that Giphy has never received any data about Telegram users. "No IP addresses or IDs, let alone phone numbers or other data, have ever been shared with Giphy," said a Telegram spokesperson. Telegram is also in the middle of transitioning away from Giphy, the spokesperson said.

TikTok

TikTok allows you to post GIFs and GIF stickers on your TikToks that are sourced from Giphy. TikTok has not replied to a request for comment. TikTok also offers the option to log in with your Facebook account.

Tinder

Tinder lets you send GIFs from Giphy to people you match with. Tinder has not replied to a request for comment. Tinder already lets you log into the service with a Facebook account.

Trello

Trello offers a Giphy “power-up” so you can add GIFs from Giphy to Trello cards. Trello has not replied to a request for comment.

Twitter

When you search for GIFs from the compose box on Twitter, they’re sourced in part from Giphy. Twitter also relies on Tenor (formerly known as Riffsy) for GIFs, so perhaps Twitter’s native GIF search will soon rely on that instead of Giphy.

Twitter and Facebook have a long-running spat. After Instagram was acquired by Facebook in 2012, Twitter cut off Instagram’s access to an API feature that let users find their friends on a new service. Instagram later cut off Twitter’s ability to display its photos inside of tweets, which has held to this day.

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