

August 12, 2024

Dear Members of Congress,

Thank you for your July 24, 2024 letter and for the opportunity to address how Meta provides access to publicly-accessible content across Facebook and Instagram.¹

We appreciate the role rigorous, independent research plays in understanding the impact social media apps like Facebook and Instagram have on the world. That is why we are committed to a privacy-protective approach to research, such as making data-sharing tools available to support public interest research.

As technology and the regulatory landscape evolve, it is important that our data-sharing tools do, too. CrowdTangle was built 10 years ago on its own technical infrastructure, does not integrate directly with our other systems, and does not fully align with our internal standards for new tools we build from the ground up. This means that it is difficult to add new data types, and decreases reliability for researchers. More specifically, when we acquired CrowdTangle in 2016, researchers only had access to Facebook data and people primarily used it as a marketing tool. CrowdTangle has been hard to maintain because it was built on an outdated codebase. It also does not provide a representative picture of what is happening on our platforms, as it only has a fraction of the publicly accessible data compared to what Meta Content Library and API provide today. That is why last year we announced the launch of Meta Content Library and Content Library API. We developed these tools with the input of the research community, which has helped us improve the utility of the tools.

Together, Meta Content Library and Content Library API provide the most comprehensive access to publicly-available content across Facebook and Instagram of any research tool we have built to date. The tools provide a far more comprehensive view of what people see with data and features that were not previously available in CrowdTangle, including:

- Post views, or the number of times a post or Reel was on screen, which offers a better picture of what content on Facebook and Instagram is most popular;
- Public comments on public content across Facebook and Instagram;
- Public posts to all public Events on Facebook; and
- Reels, Meta's short-form video for Facebook and Instagram.

We believe these new tools increase transparency about what is happening on Facebook and Instagram and the impact these apps have, while also helping us meet new data-sharing and transparency obligations.

¹ Please note that publicly-accessible content from Threads content will be added later this year.



Earlier this year we announced that CrowdTangle will no longer be available, to give people time to complete their ongoing projects and, if eligible, to get up to speed on Meta Content Library and API, or other tools that serve their needs. Meta Content Library is grounded in product developments we have been working on since 2020 when we first launched early access versions of Pages API for researchers and then, subsequently, in 2021, Researcher API. These tools have iterated on researcher feedback. We will continue to make improvements to these offerings as we collect feedback from researchers. With this context in mind, we provide additional information below regarding the tools we built to provide access to more comprehensive data from our platforms.

Meta Content Library & Content Library API

Meta Content Library is a web-based tool that allows researchers to explore and understand data across Facebook and Instagram by offering a comprehensive, visual, and searchable collection of publicly accessible content. Through this tool, researchers can search public posts across Facebook and Instagram with useful sorting and filtering options. Post results can be filtered by language, view count, media type, content producer and more. Meta Content Library also provides insight into trends in posts created. For example, a graph shows a normalized trend of how often content matching search keywords were posted on Facebook and Instagram within a chosen date range. Our Third Party Fact-Checking partners also have access to Meta Content Library to help them investigate misinformation.

Meta Content Library API enables programmatic queries of the data to be analyzed in a virtual clean room that provides safeguards against unauthorized access and use of data. It also supports leading data analysis tools and provides shared access to researcher notebooks, facilitating direct collaboration with research teams. With multiple dedicated endpoints, Meta Content Library API can search across over 100 data fields. For Instagram, this includes public posts and comments from Creator, Business, and a subset of personal accounts (*i.e.*, those with high follower counts). For Facebook, this includes Pages, posts, Groups, Events, comments, and a subset of profiles (*i.e.*, those with high follower counts).

One of the biggest requests we received was to make content from widely-known individuals and businesses more accessible to researchers so it is easier to study the impact their Facebook and Instagram activity may have on politics, society and culture. Earlier this year, we made it possible for researchers to download publicly-accessible content posted by widely-known figures and organizations. This data is accessible in a downloadable CSV format through the Meta Content Library user interface and does not require access through a virtual clean room.

Additionally, we have added comments as a new data type within the Meta Content Library. This helps researchers study how people around the world receive, discuss and reinterpret content across publicly-accessible pages and posts. We will be starting with comments from public forums on Facebook, which researchers will be able to analyze within the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research's (ICPSR) virtual clean room.



Access to Meta Content Library & Content Library API

Individuals who conduct scientific or public interest research and maintain an affiliation with a qualified academic or non-profit institution are welcome to apply for access to Meta Content Library. Individuals without academic or non-profit affiliations can continue to use Insights within Meta Business Suite, and they may choose to partner with third-parties. Within Meta Business Suite, users can find a series of insights tools that can help advertisers do analysis and reporting of their advertising activities, learn about audience trends, including age and location, top performing content, and more.

To help support a fair and independent application process, Meta has partnered with ICPSR to assess qualifications and review submissions from global applicants to Meta Content Library and API. All applications are processed and reviewed by ICPSR. ICPSR also offers the social science research community—including researchers who use Meta Content Library—training in data access, curation, and methods of analysis.

To apply, individuals submit an application through ICPSR's Social Media Archive (SOMAR) initiative's [webpage](#). Those who are interested in obtaining access to data in SOMAR's virtual data enclave (which hosts the Content Library API) via controlled download must complete the required application fields, including their name, affiliated organization's email address, a summary of their research, and related data experience.

We continue to accelerate our efforts to onboard individuals from universities and not-for-profit organizations, as well as third-party fact checkers to Meta Content Library. This includes working with ICPSR to improve the overall process by streamlining requirements and providing additional application options requested by researchers. The [SOMAR Application Guide](#) for Meta Content Library and Content Library API is also available to help individuals complete SOMAR's application form and prepare the required documentation for upload.

Thank you again for the opportunity to answer your questions. We look forward to working with your offices going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin J. Martin".

Kevin Martin
V.P. North America Policy