Epicosm

Dynamic Genetics Lab, MRC IEU, University of Bristol.

How to obtain Twitter API credentials (Summer 2019).

This is a guide, valid as of July 2019, for obtaining Twitter API keys and tokens for academic research purposes. In 2018 Twitter changed its API approval procedure to address the proliferation of automated bot accounts. As such, many guides on social media APIs are now out of date (and one day this one will be too!).

1. Have a Twitter user account. It is a good idea to start a new account for Epicosm, as at times the search program will be "rate limited" (ie paused) for 15 minutes, to allow fair demand on Twitter's systems. This could affect a personal account.
2. Visit the developer area of Twitter, and apply for access. There is also useful documentation in this area, as well as a developer forum.
3. On the next page choose "Academic Research" from the options.
4. Confirm some details on the next page, including providing a valid phone number (a validation code will be sent to this number).
5. You then need to outline your case for requesting API access. For epidemiology and cohort work, Twitter has approved the following (you may want to use this as a template):
   - *We are a research team at _____. We work on large-scale public health programs called "cohort studies", aiming to understand disease and wellbeing, tackle social issues, inform medical treatments, develop healthcare policy, and help medical services effectively deploy their resources. We gather social media data from consenting participants in order to expand the information in our studies. Our work has been approved through comprehensive medical research ethics committees, and continues to be monitored. All data is stored under strict security. Participants are fully informed of our work, and understand and approve of this; they can withdraw consent at any time. Our API activity is passive in that data is only obtained: no posting, liking, following or other activity is carried out. This research has been approved by the United Kingdom Parliament as important for public health, and in particular for promoting the mental health of young people.*
   https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/822/822.pdf
6. Answer further questions on this page as appropriate.
7. You will then be asked to review your information, submit the application, and confirm by checking the account's email address and clicking through the confirmation email.
8. In our experience, in a few hours you will then receive an email from Twitter asking for:
   - *"A list of the government or public sector entities that will have access to Twitter content, or information derived from Twitter content, under this use case."*
   - *"The specific use cases of your product or service by government or public sector entities."*
9. Respond as appropriate (replying along the lines of "nobody will have access", and generally emphasising data protection and ethical compliance seems to be what they need to hear).
10. Review and approval currently takes around one working day, although in the past this has taken up to two weeks.
11. Once approved, you will be able to go to "Apps" on your Twitter Developers page (menu in top right corner), and create a new App (this is just a case of giving the app a name). Then, in the drop-down menu "Keys and Tokens" will be your API credentials.

Please contact Alastair Tanner (alastair.tanner@bristol.ac.uk) with any questions.
22nd July, 2019.