Reddit groups go silent in AI-linked fee clash

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Reddit, the hugely popular discussion platform, suffered a major outage on Monday as the site's communities protested new fees being charged to provide access to developers.

The row is the latest fallout in the recent artificial intelligence revolution, with Reddit CEO Steve Huffman unwilling to allow companies that build AI chatbots like ChatGPT to have [free access](#) to the site to perfect their large-language models.

AI companies have used the free availability of something called an API, or [application programming interface](#), that is used by developers to build their own versions or have access to the data of another platform.

Through APIs, OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google's Bard use massive amounts of data from sites such as Reddit in order to refine the human-like content they churn out with impressive results.

Elon Musk-owned Twitter has also stopped allowing developers and third-party websites to access the platform's API for free, in an effort to boost revenues at the struggling business.

"Reddit needs to be a self-sustaining business, and to do that, we can no longer subsidize [commercial entities](#) that require large-scale data use," Huffman wrote in a Reddit post on Friday.

However, Reddit's API is also used by members of its vast online community that have built their own apps to access the platform.

Because of the new fees for accessing Reddit data, these usages will become too expensive for many third-party apps, triggering the protest.

At one point on Monday, more than 45,000 outages were reported on the Downdetector website, with Reddit struggling to cope with the unprecedented shutdowns.

Many of the site's biggest communities, known as subreddits, were expected to remain private for 48 hours as part of the protest, including r/Music, r/funny, r/gadgets and r/todayilearned—each of which has millions of followers.

Moderators of these chat rooms shut them down, and this caused the whole site to sputter badly for a few hours.

According to a group supporting the protest on the site Twitch, more than 7,000 groups had gone dark to oppose Reddit's new fees.

Later on Monday, Reddit posted that it was "observing improvements across the site and expect issue to recover for most users."

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