

Lawsuit slams 'apps' for mining smartphone contacts

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Numerous models of Nokia phones are pictured in 2010. A small group of US smartphone owners has filed a lawsuit demanding that Facebook, Twitter and other makers of smartphone "apps" pay dearly for mining people's contact lists.

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The suit filed in federal court in Austin, Texas on Monday listed Apple among the defendants, arguing that mini-programs are not allowed on the company's coveted iPads, iPhones and [iPod Touch](#) devices without its approval.

Lawyers representing the 13 Austin smartphone owners argue that the applications invaded people's privacy by "stealing" personal address book data.

A hot trend toward making applications "mobile and social" resulted in smartphone users' contact lists being tapped into to help find friends or family members that people might want to connect with in online communities.

But the lawsuit argues that delving into address book data without express permission is an [invasion of privacy](#).

The list of defendants included "Angry Birds" game creator [Rovio](#) and US videogame giant Electronic Arts, as well as career-centered social network LinkedIn.

"Essentially, on the cheap and on the sly these defendants have impermissibly mined their App users' phones for contact data," lawyers stated in court documents made available online Thursday.

The suit calls for a court order barring the practice and for the 18 companies listed as defendants, including [Facebook](#) and Twitter, to pay substantial cash damages.

For such a case to succeed, lawyers must prove app users suffered quantifiable harm. Attorneys also want class-action status to represent anyone who may have used one of the offending apps.

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