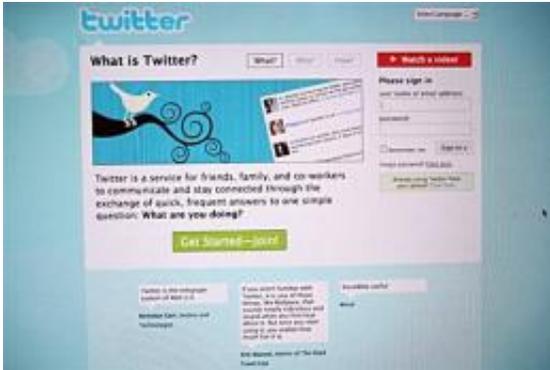


Twitter to show whereabouts of tweeters

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"We're gearing up to launch a new feature which makes Twitter truly location-aware," Twitter co-founder Biz Stone said in a message posted Thursday at the San Francisco-based Internet firm's website.

"A new API (application programming interface) will allow developers to add latitude and longitude to any [tweet](#)."

Accurate "tweet-level" location data would let people switch from tracking messages based on individuals or topics to following microblogging by neighborhood or city, according to Stone.

"It's easy to imagine how this might be interesting in an event like a concert or something more dramatic like an earthquake," Stone wrote.

"There will likely be many use cases we haven't even thought of yet which is part of what makes this so exciting."

Outside [software developers](#) who create applications for Twitter will be able to experiment with the location API prior to the feature being added to the microblogging service.

Twitter users interested in letting their whereabouts be known will need to activate the new feature, which will be "off" as a default setting. Exact location data will not be stored for extended periods, according to Twitter.

"If people do opt-in to sharing location on a tweet-by-tweet basis, compelling context will be added to each burst of information," Stone said.

Outside developers have been incorporating location into Twitter applications "for some time despite having access to only a rudimentary level" of support, according to the microblogging service.

"Most of the location-based projects we see are built using the simple, account-level location field folks can fill out as part of their profile," Stone said. "Since anything can be written in this field, it's interesting but not very dependable."

An everyday chatting tool for many, [Twitter](#) has also become a weapon for dissidents to circumvent censorship in places where freedom of speech is suppressed.

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