

# Twitter client for R

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March 6, 2011

## 1 IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING OAUTH

The old Twitter authentication mechanism is being removed in August 2010 in favor of OAuth. As of this writing there is not an OAuth solution for R, so unless someone (or myself) writes such a beast you will not be able to access any authenticated aspects of Twitter. Many functions that you might be familiar with using will no longer work properly, if at all. These have been set to be defunct.

Also note that it is not simply a matter of having an OAuth interface, but also that Twitter's usage of OAuth is very tied to having stable applications as opposed to scripts being written. There are currently various potential workarounds for this that I'm looking into.

## 2 Disclaimer

Because vignettes are built at various points of time (often automatically), and because a lot of the examples are pulling live data from Twitter at the time of being built, it is possible that some of the content in the examples of this document will be unsavory. I've tried to use users and feeds that are unlikely to be this way, but particularly when looking at the public timeline all bets are off.

## 3 Introduction

Twitter is a popular service that allows users to broadcast short messages (*'tweets'*) for others to read. These can be used to communicate with friends, to display headlines, for restaurants to list daily specials, and more. The *twitteR* package is intended to provide access to the Twitter API within R. Users can make access large amounts of Twitter data for data mining and other tasks. As of this writing, posting tweets, direct messaging and many other tasks are not supported due to lack of authentication options.

## 4 Getting Started

As of this writing, the following functionality is supported: Searching Twitter, scanning the public timeline, looking at the timeline of a specific user and looking at the followers and followees of a specific user. Due to the lack of authentication, protected accounts and tweets will not be visible to the *twitteR* package.

```
> library(twitteR)
```

## 5 Time to talk about timelines

A Twitter *timeline* is simply a stream of tweets - this might be the *public timeline* which is comprised of all public tweets, it might be a user's timeline which would be all of their tweets, or it might even be a timeline to look at one's friend's tweets. Just as there are various *timelines* in Twitter, the *twitteR* package provides various interfaces to access them. The first and most obvious would be the *public timeline*, which retrieves the 20 most recent public tweets on Twitter.

```
> publicTweets <- publicTimeline()
> length(publicTweets)

[1] 20

> publicTweets[1:5]

[[1]]
[1] "KetlynCarolinaa: n\ue3o ligo oq as pessoas falam"

[[2]]
[1] "MicheLindoTelo: cad\uea a @team_micheltelo??/ Saudadessssssss da minha amiga =/"

[[3]]
[1] "Ruthi333_SB: I can no longer button down this button down. Damn lol"

[[4]]
[1] "MitchSchutte: I have spent 303 days, 7272 hours on Twitter. How much have you? Find ou

[[5]]
[1] "giuliamarante: eu estou assistindo #oamor\ue9cego na #fox ... =D"
```

Similarly, we can look at a particular user's timeline. This will only work properly if that user has a public account, and can take either a user's name or an object of class *user* (more on this later). For this example, let's use the user *cranatic*.

```
> cranTweets <- userTimeline("cranatic")
> cranTweets[1:5]
```

```

[[1]]
[1] "cranatic: Update: DoE.wrapper, Epi, GeneReg, R2Cuba, SubpathwayMiner. http://bit.ly/90f

[[2]]
[1] "cranatic: Update: GenABEL, Mifuns, Mifuns, OrdFacReg, PairViz, RExcelInstaller, SPOT. h

[[3]]
[1] "cranatic: New: CFL. http://bit.ly/braBwy #rstats"

[[4]]
[1] "cranatic: Update: R.matlab, RcmdrPlugin.qual, SMCP. http://bit.ly/9wY0ju #rstats"

[[5]]
[1] "cranatic: New: LVQTools. http://bit.ly/9wY0ju #rstats"

```

By default this command returns the 20 most recent tweets, as is common with all of these functions. As with most (but not all) of the functions, it also provides a mechanism to retrieve an arbitrarily large number of tweets (warning: At least as of now there is no protection from overloading the API rate limit so be reasonable with your requests).

```

> cranTweetsLarge <- userTimeline("cranatic", n = 100)
> length(cranTweetsLarge)

[1] 100

```

## 5.1 Searching Twitter

The `searchTwitter` function can be used to search for tweets that match a desired term. Example searches are such things as hashtags, basic boolean logic such as AND and OR. The `n` argument can be used to specify the number of tweets to return, defaulting to 25.

```

> sea <- searchTwitter("#twitter", num = 50)
> sea[1:5]

[[1]]
[1] "Qooz10: Picking the appropriate items to deal in on ebay canada http://goo.gl/fb/EEE01

[[2]]
[1] "OsPCOnline: http://ospconline.blogspot.com/ \xbfYa tienes Obra social para tu ordenador

[[3]]
[1] "2Thick4Bullshit: RT @LiteBrite_Jazzy Ilike how @SusanNIMChoosin tried to talk about my

[[4]]
[1] "Lahys2: as vexes tenho a sensa\xe7\xe3ode q as pessoas naun tem mais nada pra fazer e f

```

```
[[5]]
[1] "PamellaBorsarii: \xe9 cada coisa que eu leio nesse #twitter"
```

## 5.2 Seeing what other R folks are up to

The `Rtweets` function will retrieve the 25 most recent tweets that carry the *rstats* hash tag, which is commonly used by members of the *R* community. As with other functions, the number of returned tweets can be modified.

```
> rt <- Rtweets(n = 50)
> rt[1:5]

[[1]]
[1] "pacoid: heatmap of covariance rendered in #rstats turns out in this case to be worth mo

[[2]]
[1] "andrewjdyck: RT @markschaver: My Experiments with R on how to easily make choropleth ma

[[3]]
[1] "decaux: Thanks, I like this way with 95% CIs http://bit.ly/dRss7e RT @Rbloggers 5 ways

[[4]]
[1] "markschaver: My Experiments with R on how to easily make choropleth maps. Created gener

[[5]]
[1] "anjarmay: RT @Rbloggers: R Package Automated Download: There are situations where we mi
```

## 6 Looking at users

To take a closer look at a Twitter user (including yourself!), run the command `getUser`. This will only work correctly with users who have their profiles public.

```
> crantastic <- getUser("crantastic")
> crantastic

[1] "Crantastic"
```

Furthermore, we can look at this user's friends, as well as those following them (same disclaimer regarding public profiles applies here):

```
> friends <- userFriends("crantastic")
> friends[[1]]

[1] "hhoagie"

> followers <- userFollowers("crantastic")
> followers[1:5]
```

```
[[1]]
[1] "pip_squeaker"

[[2]]
[1] "Kamilaahh"

[[3]]
[1] "theames"

[[4]]
[1] "TriangleJazz"

[[5]]
[1] "ohnonoel"
```

## 6.1 The user class

In both of the above cases, the argument can be a string noting the user's screen name, or a *user* object. Let's look more closely at the *user* class to see what is available within it.

The following is a look at the collection of available get methods for the *user* class:

```
> curUser <- friends[[1]]
> screenName(curUser)

[1] "hhoagie"

> description(curUser)

[1] "Just a girl, standing in front of a fandom, asking it to love her. "

> tweetCount(curUser)

[1] 5698

> followersCount(curUser)

[1] 2814

> favoritesCount(curUser)

numeric(0)

> friendsCount(curUser)

[1] 92

> name(curUser)
```

```

[1] "Heather Hogan"

> protected(curUser)

[1] FALSE

> verified(curUser)

[1] FALSE

> location(curUser)

[1] "Hogwarts "

> id(curUser)

[1] 21411216

> lastStatus(curUser)

[1] "Unknown: @ellegrrrrl Ohh! Well, I had my reasons; they were three-fold."

```

## 7 Dissecting a tweet

The *status* class has the following methods defined:

- *text*: Retrieves the text of the tweet
- *screenName*: Screen name of the sender
- *id*: Retrieves the ID of the tweet
- *created*: Retrieves the date the tweet was created, in POSIX date format
- *replyToSN*: If this is a reply, the screen name for the reply
- *replyToSID*: If this is a reply, the message this is in reply to
- *replyToUID*: If this is a reply, the user this is in reply to
- *favorited*: If this reply is favorited
- *statusSource*: Source of the tweet

## 8 Session Information

The version number of R and packages loaded for generating the vignette were:

R version 2.12.2 (2011-02-25)

Platform: x86\_64-apple-darwin9.8.0/x86\_64 (64-bit)

locale:

[1] C/en\_US.UTF-8/C/C/en\_US.UTF-8/en\_US.UTF-8

attached base packages:

[1] stats graphics grDevices utils datasets methods base

other attached packages:

[1] twitterR\_0.9.3 RJSONIO\_0.5-0 RCurl\_1.4-3 bitops\_1.0-4.1

loaded via a namespace (and not attached):

[1] tools\_2.12.2