FALL 2021 E-NEWSLETTER

At Digital Mountain, we assist our clients with their electronic discovery, computer forensics, cybersecurity, and data analytics needs. For this E-Newsletter, we discuss the growing business messaging application market, eDiscovery nuances and relevant court cases.

JSON: No Hockey Mask on This Data

JSON, the acronym for JavaScript Object Notation, is the data-interchange format used for exporting data by the three market leaders in the business messaging apps market: Slack, Google Hangouts (now Chats), and Microsoft Teams. If you're not an IT professional, that sentence may feel overwhelming, but at Digital Mountain, we want to assure you, it's not as scary as a guy in a hockey mask at Halloween. In fact, knowing that the data extracted during eDiscovery of a business messaging app is going to be delivered in JSON is reassuring for many eDiscovery professionals because we already know how to deal with the output and how we can prepare it for use by attorneys and legal professionals. We'd like to do a drill-down on JSON and briefly explain some of the not-so-scary steps that we take to extract, render, and prepare data from business messaging apps.

JavaScript Object Notation, JSON, is the format in which data appears when extracted from many storage systems. JSON will display that data as text irrespective of the programming language used to write the particular application or original format of the data. That's good news for eDiscovery practitioners, as it means that once we extract the data, what we see will be immediately readable – at least as words we recognize, and often much more, such as objects, file links, and metadata. For an example of what JSON formatted data looks like, a client's personal information stored in a webstore could look like this:

```
{
     "name": John Smith
     "address": 123 Main Street
     "city": Anytown
     "state": California
     "zip": 95040
```

Not at all scary. However, the apps we interact with are full of images, including photographs and emojis. So, what will a picture "look like" in JSON? Interestingly, we can usually spot a photograph or image quickly because it will show up as an URL link back to where the picture or photograph is stored, including the file extension such as .jpeg. We can use that URL link to capture the image and add it to the final product, if desired. Emojis, because they are coded in a specific language called Unicode, show up as emojis in the JSON output. We see that thumbs up you gave your coworker instead of typing an affirmative response.

While it's fortunate that we can read the data rendered in JSON, the amount of data extracted from just a single day's worth of activity for business messaging can be voluminous. JSON formatted data also includes the metadata, which creates an audit trail of who, what, where, when, and on what device for every single bit of data – one quick chat between colleagues can produce pages upon pages of exported data. That metadata is not always useful to litigators and certainly not in the line-by-line format exported from the app's storage. To make the data useful, eDiscovery practitioners must know how to separate the metadata from the relevant information and provide a useful rendition to the legal team without losing the metadata that may be required for later authentication. Fortunately, there are tools to help with this process, but when extractions can require many hours to multiple days, it's important that your eDiscovery provider be skilled and reliable. Starting over from step one or redoing work when time is of the essence is not an option.

The eDiscovery process for business messaging apps starts long before a preservation order is issued. The process of data preservation is one that organizations should anticipate when initial administration configurations are set up in the app, especially when operating in litigious sectors. Information retention and reasonable deletion/destruction of data are things that need to be considered well before employees begin collaborating on business messaging apps. Sensible pre-launch planning and adherence to best practices at the outset can be a useful defense later, as well as a smart resource-saving strategy. Many business messaging apps have user-controlled options for retaining or eliminating data that can be invoked anytime, and if a preservation order is received, should be immediately initiated.

Once the extraction begins, the eDiscovery practitioner will receive everything stored by the app in accordance with the parameters set for the extraction. The data retrieved will be readable, but cannot be edited or deleted, and only a copy can be altered– all positive aspects when authenticity matters. Digital Mountain eDiscovery professionals are adept at using the right tools to configure the JSON output to provide a second, useful document by isolating relevant material, removing extraneous metadata, replacing image links with images, and finally, recreating the messaging, sharing, and collaborative work into a useful, professional, and accurate product. Accomplishing the tasks required to achieve the desired product is no easy feat – the initial processing of JSON formatted text conversations may take a substantial amount of time.

eDiscovery projects dealing with JSON formatted output can potentially be massive. Many attorneys and investigators are unclear of how to tackle the mountain of overwhelming data. Avoid the nightmares and leave it to professionals, like Digital Mountain, to make eDiscovery a dream any time of the year.

Please direct questions and inquiries about electronic discovery, computer forensics, cybersecurity, and data analytics to info@digitalmountain.com.

UPCOMING INDUSTRY EVENTS

TECHNO SECURITY & DIGITAL FORENSICS CONFERENCE
San Diego, CA: October 25-27, 2021

SEDONA CONFERENCE WORKING GROUP 11 MIDYEAR MEETING 2021
Houston, TX: October 28-29, 2021

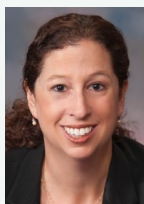INTERNET OF THINGS WORLD
Santa Clara, CA: November 2-4, 2021

ISSA SHOW 2021
Las Vegas, NV: November 15-18, 2021

OPENTEXT WORLD 2021
Virtual: November 16-18, 2021

Click here to see more upcoming events and links.

Digital Mountain, Inc. Founder and CEO, Julie Lewis, will be presenting at various upcoming industry events. Please send requests for speaker or panel participation for her to marketing@digitalmountain.com.

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