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Apple likes Facebook on new iOS 6, but dumps Google from maps

Latest power struggle in Silicon Valley sees search giant about to be ousted from next version of Apple software, while Siri and Facebook take higher profile - and Apple releases new 'retina display' laptop

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Apple's Worldwide Developer Conference gets underway in San Francisco. Photograph: Charles Arthur for the Guardian

Apple is forging new ties with Facebook but will dump Google from its maps on the iPhone and iPad this autumn, in the latest realignment of forces in Silicon Valley.

Scott Forstall, Apple's senior vice president of iOS software, showed off the new version of the Maps app on the still-unreleased iOS 6 mobile operating system at the company's Worldwide Developers Conference in San Francisco.

"We're doing all the cartography ourselves," said Forstall. "This is a worldwide effort, we're covering the world." The software, to be released later this year, includes turn-by-turn navigation and voice direction - finally putting it on a par with Google's Maps app on Android phones - and adds crowdsourced traffic conditions from other iOS users, putting it marginally ahead of Google's product.

Earlier versions of iOS will possibly continue to use Google's map data, because the new app uses different software interfaces, or APIs. It's also unclear whether Google will be allowed to submit its own Maps app to Apple's App Store, where it might be deemed to "duplicate existing functionality" of inbuilt iPhone software. Neither company had responded to a request for clarification by the time of publication.

The source of the mapping data appears to be TomTom, which in turn owns the world mapping service TeleAtlas, purchased in 2008.

Forstall pointed out that iPhone and iPad users update the software on their devices much more quickly than Android users, pointing to statistics saying that over 80% of iOS devices now run iOS 5, released in October, compared to just 7% for Android 4.0, aka "Ice Cream Sandwich".

He also demonstrated new tieups that will build Facebook deeply into the iPhone's

software, letting users update their walls with pictures, posts, "Likes" and calendar entries from almost any application.

Do Not Track Safari

In a further cut at Google, the next version of the MobileSafari browser will also incorporate "Do Not Track" functionality, which makes it harder for advertisers such as Google's DoubleClick network to aim higher-paying targeted ads at users based on their browsing history. MobileSafari dominates mobile web browsing, used for 64% of all such surfing according to NetMarketShare. Without the ability to serve targeted ads, DoubleClick - and so Google - will see lower payments per ad served on iPhones, a trend that is already evident in its pay-per-click revenues.

Microsoft, which has made no secret of its antipathy to Google, is also promoting Do Not Track for the next version of Internet Explorer on the desktop.

Other changes highlighted during the keynote were improved privacy controls to match those in Google's Android, with users able to control what personal data apps are able to access.

Siri expansion

Siri, the "voice assistant" technology which Apple quietly purchased in 2010 and subsequently limited to the iPhone 4S, will be extended to the third-generation iPad launched in March. It will also expand "local search" facilities to more countriesthrough new partnerships with third-party services such as Yelp and Opentable for local restaurant recommendations and bookings. It is also expanding to the iPad.

Siri will also now respond to sports-related enquiries with match results, league tables and player profiles for sports including baseball, basketball, American football and football – including the Premier League in England – while also pulling in reviews and trailers for film queries, and launching apps when told by the user.

Francisco Jeronimo, smartphones and tablets analyst at the research company IDC, commented: "Apple will try to close the gap with Android in terms of market share, but it will continue to lead the user experience and usability race. Among the most relevant features presented today are the Facebook integration, the improvements on Siri and availability on the new iPad, and the new Maps. The reason is simple: they create value!"

Carolina Milanesi, smartphones analyst at Gartner, said that the focus was clearly on adding value for the user - and that even where Apple had lagged in adding software features compared to Android, it had implemented them in more effective ways for the user.

The abandonment of Google for map data, which had been supplying Apple since the iPhone's launch in 2007, marks a significant step. Apple has repeatedly showed that it dislikes being dependent on outside companies for essential elements of its devices - and will change them even at some cost to itself. Its decision not to allow Adobe's Flash on the iPhone and iPad became a source of contention with both users and developers, but eventually Adobe gave in.

Now Google has been ousted from the maps app, where it would have been able to acquire a significant amount of user location data and serve location-based ads.

Separately, in an echo of the way that iPods docks began to become part of US cars in the mid-2000s, Forstall said Apple is also working with carmakers including BMW, General Motors and Land Rover to embed physical buttons on steering wheels to trigger Siri in a docked iPhone without illuminating the screen. That will enable drivers to control Siri without being tempted to look at the screen.

Facebook: Apple Likes this

The deeper inclusion of Facebook, which will be baked into the iOS operating system rather as Twitter was into iOS 5, means users will log in once with their Facebook details, and will then be able to easily post to Facebook from within their apps, to 'Like' apps, and see which apps their Facebook friends are 'Liking', and see Facebook events, contacts and birthdays within the iOS calendar and contacts apps.

Apple and Facebook had a complicated relationship in the past: a deal to include Facebook integration in Apple's Ping music social network foundered just before it launched in September 2010 due to what then-chief executive Steve Jobs described publicly as "onerous terms".

But on stage at WWDC on Monday, Forstall, described the new integration as "the best Facebook experience ever on a mobile device". It may not scotch ongoing talk of a fully-fledged Facebook phone rumoured to be in development, but the partnership looks like a win for Apple, Facebook and iOS users.

As predicted, Apple's new Maps app dispenses with Google for data. One hundred million local business listings have already been incorporated into the maps, as well as Yelp listings, Forstall said. The app also includes a 3D vector graphics view of cities and landmarks, and a feature called Flyover, with 3D photographic models of cities and landmarks – similar to new features shown off earlier in the month by Google for its Google Earth apps.

Apple will also run its own crowdsourced traffic service, alerting iOS users to congestion when travelling. "We're using anonymous, real-time crowdsourced data right from our iOS users," said Forstall – a feature seen already in third-party apps like Waze and Research In Motion's BlackBerry Traffic, but leveraging the large installed base of iPhone users in the US.

No TV SDK

Despite rumours leading up to the show, there was no software development kit that would let iOS developers write apps for the Apple TV set-top box.

Instead a demonstration of a game called CSR Racing, developed by NaturalMotion, hinted at a different strategy: the app will be released simultaneously for iOS devices and Macs, with both able to play it on Apple TV-connected televisions using the AirPlay Mirroring feature. In effect, Apple is encouraging its developers to put their apps on televisions, but using an existing feature rather than a new SDK.

iOS 6 will have some other new apps too. Passbook collects QR codes downloaded within other iOS apps, such as movie tickets and airline boarding passes. Guided Access is an accessibility app with features enabling parents and teachers to block children from triggering specific buttons within apps, and a "single app mode" to stop them from exiting an app.

Improvements to existing iOS apps included better sharing features in Apple's Photo Streams app, making it easier for people to choose a set of photos and share them with specific friends: a sign that despite the company's partnerships with Facebook and Twitter, it retains its own social ambitions.

New laptops - and retina display

The company also announced new MacBook Air and MacBook Pro laptops, including a pro product which includes a "retina display", with a total of 5.18m pixels in a 2880 x 1800 display, doubling the number of pixels per side from a standard 1440 x 900 display, and giving resolution of 220 pixels per inch.

The next version of the desktop Mac OSX software will be released in July as a download, costing $19.99 in the US; UK prices have not yet been set. Craig Federighi,

head of Mac OSX development, said that the number of Mac users has tripled in the past five years to 66m, of whom 50% had upgraded to the existing "Lion" version after nine months - compared to 27 months, he said, for Windows 7

iOS and Mac OSX developers will now be getting their teeth into hundreds of new APIs and consumer features in the new software during the rest of the week at WWDC.

Those developers can download the iOS 6 beta and latest build of Mac OS X now; the former is expected to see a consumer release in the autumn - which will heighten expectation of a new iteration of the iPhone to accompany it.

iOS momentum

There was the customary blizzard of iOS momentum stats and digs at Android during the keynote session, too.

Apple's App Store has now reached 30bn downloads, with developers earning $5bn from paid sales and in-app purchases in their iOS apps. There are more than 650k iOS apps available, with 225k of them native iPad apps. Apple has sold more than 365m iOS devices, has more than 400m registered iTunes user accounts, and 125m registered users for its iCloud services.

Forstall also said that there are 140m iOS users of the iOS 5 "iMessage" service, which bypasses SMS systems, who are sending more than 1bn messages a day. He noted that Twitter has done well from its partnership with Apple in iOS 5, tripling its number of registered iOS users. He also claimed that 47% of photos being shared on Twitter come from iOS devices.

In a video to warm up the crowd featuring Siri telling a number of jokes ("welcome to Silicon Valley, the ATM for America"), Apple also took a dig at its biggest smartphone rival, Korea's Samsung. "I'm really looking forward to the new Samsung," said the computerised voice, and then paused. "Not the phone. The refrigerator."