



# Reading data from the web

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# Webscraping

**Webscraping:** Programatically extracting data from the HTML code of websites.

- It can be a great way to get data [How Netflix reverse engineered Hollywood](#)
- Many websites have information you may want to programatically read
- In some cases this is against the terms of service for the website
- Attempting to read too many pages too quickly can get your IP address blocked

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_scraping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_scraping)

# Example: Google scholar

**Jeff Leek** Edit  
 Assistant Professor of Biostatistics, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Edit  
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<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Capturing heterogeneity in gene expression studies by surrogate variable analysis</b> JT Leek, JD Storey PLoS Genetics 3 (9), e161	171	2007
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>EDGE: extraction and analysis of differential gene expression</b> JT Leek, E Monsen, AR Dabney, JD Storey Bioinformatics 22 (4), 507-508	140	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Tackling the widespread and critical impact of batch effects in high-throughput data</b> JT Leek, RB Scharpf, HC Bravo, D Simcha, B Langmead, WE Johnson, D Geman, K ... Nature Reviews Genetics 11 (10), 733-739	133	2010
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>The optimal discovery procedure for large-scale significance testing, with applications to comparative microarray experiments</b> JD Storey, JY Dai, JT Leek UW Biostatistics Working Paper Series, 260	107	2005
<b>Systems-level dynamic analyses of fate change in murine embryonic stem</b>		

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<http://scholar.google.com/citations?user=HI-I6C0AAAAJ&hl=en>

# Getting data off webpages - readLines()

```
con = url("http://scholar.google.com/citations?user=HI-I6C0AAAAJ&hl=en")
htmlCode = readLines(con)
close(con)
htmlCode
```

```
[1] "<!DOCTYPE html><html><head><title>Jeff Leek - Google Scholar Citations</title><meta name=\"robots\">"
```

# Parsing with XML

```
library(XML)
url <- "http://scholar.google.com/citations?user=HI-I6C0AAAAJ&hl=en"
html <- htmlTreeParse(url, useInternalNodes=T)

xpathSApply(html, "//title", xmlValue)
```

```
[1] "Jeff Leek - Google Scholar Citations"
```

```
xpathSApply(html, "//td[@id='col-citedby']", xmlValue)
```

```
[1] "Cited by" "397"      "259"      "237"      "172"      "138"      "125"      "122"
[9] "109"      "101"      "34"       "26"       "26"       "24"       "19"       "13"
[17] "12"      "10"       "10"       "7"        "6"
```

# GET from the httr package

```
library(httr); html2 = GET(url)
content2 = content(html2,as="text")
parsedHtml = htmlParse(content2,asText=TRUE)
xpathSApply(parsedHtml, "//title", xmlValue)
```

```
[1] "Jeff Leek - Google Scholar Citations"
```

# Accessing websites with passwords

```
pg1 = GET("http://httpbin.org/basic-auth/user/passwd")  
pg1
```

```
Response [http://httpbin.org/basic-auth/user/passwd]  
Status: 401  
Content-type:
```

<http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/htr/htr.pdf>

# Accessing websites with passwords

```
pg2 = GET("http://httpbin.org/basic-auth/user/passwd",  
          authenticate("user", "passwd"))  
pg2
```

```
Response [http://httpbin.org/basic-auth/user/passwd]  
Status: 200  
Content-type: application/json  
{  
  "authenticated": true,  
  "user": "user"  
}
```

```
names(pg2)
```

```
[1] "url"          "handle"      "status_code" "headers"     "cookies"     "content"  
[7] "times"        "config"
```



# Using handles

```
google = handle("http://google.com")  
pg1 = GET(handle=google,path="/")  
pg2 = GET(handle=google,path="search")
```

<http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/htr/htr.pdf>

# Notes and further resources

- R Bloggers has a number of examples of web scraping <http://www.r-bloggers.com/?s=Web+Scraping>
- The httr help file has useful examples <http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/httr/httr.pdf>
- See later lectures on APIs