Ethical and legal considerations

Overview

Two key, interrelated questions:

1. Can you use web-scraping/APIs in this instance?

2. Should you use web-scraping/APIs in this instance?

Legal considerations

There is a lack of certainty around the legal basis of web scraping in the UK.

Web scraping may contravene the Terms of Service/Terms of Use/User Agreement of a website.

Web scraping is a means to an end: gathering useful data.

Ethical considerations

Web-scraping is a small part of a larger project which will almost certainly require ethical approval.

Is it ok to deceive the website by masking your identity? By pretending you are a web browser?

Are publicly available data 'fair game' in every instance?

What is the impact of your web scraping activities on the website itself (and ultimately its users)?

Guidance

Seek ethical approval from institution for research project more broadly.

Read and respect Terms of Service/Use/Agreement and robots.txt file.

Seek written permission from website for web-scraping activities.

Clearly identify yourself when requesting web pages.

Try not to circumvent technical barriers in place (e.g., by masking/rotating your IP address).

Questions and Comments

Exercise

You are interested in collecting information on an ongoing appeal for donations by Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity

https://www.gosh.org/donate/time-for-tiny-hearts-appeal/

Answer the following questions:

- Can you use web-scraping to collect information relating to this appeal?

- Should you use web-scraping (or any other method) to collect information relating to this appeal?

Questions and Comments