# Regular Expressions, Web Scraping, APIs

JSC 370: Data Science II

• Learn how to use an API

# **Regular Expressions: What is it?**

A regular expression (shortened as regex or regexp; also referred to as rational expression) is a sequence of characters that define a search pattern. -- <u>Wikipedia</u>

WHENEYER I LEARN A NEW SKILL I CONCOCT ELABORATE HANTASY SCENARIOS WHERE IT LETS ME SAVE THE DAY.

OH NO! THE KILLER BUT TO FIND THEM WE'D HAVE TO SEARCH THROUGH 200 MB OF EMAILS LOOKING FOR HER ON VACATION! SOMETHING FORMATTED LIKE AN ADDRESS!



- IT'S HOPELESS!





# Regular Expressions: Why should you care?

We can use Regular Expressions for:

- Validating data fields, email address, numbers, etc.
- Searching text in various formats, e.g., addresses, there are many ways to write an address.
- Replace text, e.g., different spellings, Storm, Stôrm, Stórm to Storm.
- Remove text, e.g., tags from an HTML text, <name>George</name> to George.

#### **Regular Expressions 101: Metacharacters**

What makes *regex* special is metacharacters. While we can always use *regex* to match literals like dog, human, 1999, we only make use of all *regex* power when using metacharacters:

- Any character except new line
- ^ beginning of the text
- \$ end of the text
- [regex] Match a single character in regex, e.g.
  - [0123456789] Any number
  - [0-9] Any number in the range 0-9
  - ∘ [a−z] Lower-case letters
  - ∘ [A–Z] Upper-case letters
  - [a-zA-Z] Lower or upper case letters.
  - [a-zA-Z0-9] Any alpha-numeric
- [^regex] Match any except those in regex, e.g.
  - o [^0123456789] Match any except a number
  - ∘ [^0-9] Match anything except in the range 0-9
  - o [^./] any except dot, slash, and space.

#### **Regular Expressions 101: Metacharacters (cont. 1)**

Ranges, e.g., 0-9 or a-z, are locale- and implementation-dependent, meaning that the range of lower case letters may vary depending on the OS's language. To solve for this problem, you could use <u>Character classes</u>. Some examples:

- [:lower:] lower case letters in the current locale, could be [a-z]
- [:upper:] upper case letters in the current locale, could be [A-Z]
- [:alpha:] upper and lower case letters in the current locale, could be [a-zA-Z]
- [:digit:] Digits: 0123456789
- [:alnum:] Alpha numeric characters [:alpha:] and [:digit:].
- [:punct:] Punctuation characters: ! " # \$ % & '() \* + ,- ./:; <=>? @ [\]^\_`{|}~.

For example, in the locale  $en_US$ , the word H'ola IS NOT fully matched by [a-zA-Z]+, but IT IS fully matched by [:alpha:]]+.

Other important Metacharacters:

- \S white space, equivalent to [\r\n\t\f\v ]
- | or (logical or).

# Regular Expressions 101: Metacharacters (cont. 2)

These usually come together with specifying how many times (repetition):

- regex? Zero or one match.
- regex\* Zero or more matches
- regex+ One or more matches
- regex{n,} At least n matches
- regex{,m} at most m matches
- regex{n,m} Between n and m matches.

Where regex is a regular expression

## Regular Expressions 101: Metacharacters (cont. 3)

There are other operators that can be very useful,

- (regex) Group capture.
- (?:regex) Group operation without capture.
- (?=regex) Look ahead (match)
- (?!regex) Look ahead (don't match)
- (?<=regex) Look behind (match)
- (?<! regex) Look behind (don't match)

Group captures can be reused with 1, 2, ..., n.

More (great) information here <a href="https://regex101.com/">https://regex101.com/</a>

# **Regular Expressions 101: Examples**

Here we are extracting the first occurrence of the following regular expressions (using stringr::str\_extract()):

regex	Hanna Perez [nar	ne] The 年 year wa	<sub>is</sub> 1999 HaHa, @abc sa	aid that GoGo trojans #2020!
.{5}	Hanna	The 年	НаНа,	GoGo
n{2}	nn			
[0-9]+		1999		2020
$\s[a-zA-Z]+\s$	Perez	year	said	trojans
$\s[:alpha:]]+\s$	Perez	年	said	trojans
[a-zA-Z]+[a-zA-Z]-	⊦ Hanna Perez	year was	abc said	GoGo trojans
$([a-zA-Z]+\s?){2}$	Hanna Perez	The	НаНа	GoGo trojans
$([a-zA-Z]+)\1$	nn		НаНа	GoGo
(@l#)[a-z0-9]+			@abc	#2020
(?<=# @)[a-z0-9]+			abc	2020
r 1.				

[a-z]+ [name]

#### **Regular Expressions 101: Examples (cont. 1)**

- 1. .{5} Match any character (except line end) five times.
- 2. n{2} Match the letter **n** twice.
- 3. [0-9]+ Match any number at least once
- 4. \s[a-zA-Z]+\s Match a space, any lower or upper case letter at least once, and a space.
- 5. \s[[:alpha:]]+\s Same as before but this time.
- 6. [a-zA-Z]+ [a-zA-Z]+ Match two sets of letters separated by one space.
- 7. ([a-zA-Z]+\s?){2} Match any lower or upper case letter at least once, maybe followed by a white space, twice.
- 8. ([a-zA-Z]+)\1 Match any lower or upper case letter at least once, and then match the same pattern again.
- 9. (@|#)[a-z0-9]+ Match either the @ or # symbol, followed by one or more **lower case letter** or **number**.
- 10. (?<=#|@)[a-z0-9]+ Match one or more lower case letter or number that follows either the @ or # symbol.
- 11.\[[a-z]+\] Match the symbol [, at least one **lower case letter**, and the symbol ].

# **Regular Expressions 101: Functions in R**

```
    Lookup text: base::grepl(), stringr::str_detect().
    Similar to which(), which elements are TRUE base::grep(), stringr::str_which()
    Replace the first instance: base::sub(), stringr::str_replace()
    Replace all instances: base::gsub(), stringr::str_replace_all()
    Extract text: base::regmatches(), stringr::str_extract() and stringr::str_extract_all().
```

# **Regular Expressions 101: Functions in R (cont.)**

For example, like in Twitter, let's create a regex that matches usernames or hashtags with the following pattern:

(@|#)([[:alnum:]]+)

@Hanna Perez [name] #html	The @年 year was 1999	HaHa, @abc said that @z
TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
@Hanna	@年	@abc
[@Hanna,#html]	[@年]	[@abc, @z]
@justinbieber Perez [name] #html	The @justinbieber year was 1999	HaHa, @justinbieber said that @z
@justinbieber Perez [name] #justinbieber	The @justinbieber year was 1999	HaHa, @justinbieber said that @justinbieber
	#html TRUE @Hanna [@Hanna, #html] @justinbieber Perez [name] #html @justinbieber Perez	#html 1999  TRUE TRUE  @Hanna @年  [@Hanna, #html] [@年]  @justinbieber Perez [name] #html year was 1999  @justinbieber Perez The @justinbieber Perez Year was 1999

Note: While it is not showing in the table, the group replacement was scaped, i.e.,  $\1$  instead of  $\1$  in the code.

#### **Data**

This week we will use a dataset consisting of medical transcriptions from <a href="https://www.mtsamples.com/">https://www.mtsamples.com/</a>. See the readme on the <a href="course git">course git</a>. The dataset consists of 4999 rows and 6 columns: "X", "description", "medical\_specialty", "sample\_name", "transcription" and "keywords".

```
library(data.table)
library(stringr)

fn <- "mtsamples.csv"
if (!file.exists(fn))
   download.file(
      url = "https://github.com/JSC370/jsc370-2023/blob/main/data/medical_transcriptions/mtsamples
      destfile = fn
   )

mtsamples <- fread(fn, sep = ",", header = TRUE)
names(mtsamples)

## [1] "V1" "description" "medical_specialty"
## [4] "sample_name" "transcription" "keywords"</pre>
```

#### **Regex to Lookup Text: Tumor**

We would like to see if this is a tumor-related entry. For that we can search through the "description" using grepl in the following code:

Notice the ignore.case = TRUE. This is equivalent to transforming the text to lower case using tolower() before passing the text to the regular expression function.

#### **Regex Lookup text: Pronoun of the patient**

Now, let's try to guess the pronoun of the patient. To do so, we could tag by using the words he, his, him, they, them, theirs, ze, hir, hirs, she, hers, her (see this article on sexist text):

```
mtsamples[, pronoun := str_extract(
    string = tolower(transcription),
    pattern = "he|his|him|they|them|theirs|ze|hir|hirs|she|hers|her"
)]
mtsamples[1:10,pronoun]

## [1] "his" "his" "his" "ze" "he" "he" "he" "he" "ze"

mtsamples[, table(pronoun, useNA = "always")]

## pronoun
## he him hir his she them ze <NA>
## 2558 6 14 934 46 13 43 68
```

What is the problem with this approach?

## **Regex Lookup text: Pronoun of the patient (cont. 1)**

For this we use the following regular expression:

```
(?<=\W|^)(he|his|him|they|them|theirs|ze|hir|hirs|she|hers|her)(?=\W|$)
Bit by bit this is:
 • (?<=regex) lookback search.
     • \W any non alpha numeric character, this is equivalent to [^[:alnum:]], | or
      • ^ the beginning of the text,
  • he | his | him... any of these words,
  • (?=regex) followed by,
      • \W any non alpha numeric character, this is equivalent to [^[:alnum:]], | or
      • $ the end of the text.
mtsamples[, pronoun := str_extract(
   string = tolower(transcription),
    pattern = "(?<=\W|^)(he|his|him|they|them|theirs|ze|hir|hirs|she|hers|her)(?=\W|^)" 
mtsamples[1:10, pronoun]
## [1] "she" "he" NA NA
                                       "she" "she" NA
                                                                   NA
```

# **Regex Lookup text: Pronoun of the patient (cont. 2)**

```
## pronoun
## he her him his she them they <NA>
## 767 394 29 361 870 18 67 1176
```

# **Regex Extract Text: Type of Cancer**

- Imagine now that you need to see the types of cancer mentioned in the data.
- For simplicity, let's assume that, if specified, it is in the form of TYPE cancer, i.e. single word.
- We are interested in the word before cancer, how can we capture this?

#### **Regex Extract Text: Type of Cancer (cont 1.)**

We can just try to extract the phrase "[some word] cancer", in particular, we could use the following regular expression

```
[[:alnum:]-_]{4,}\s*cancer
```

#### Where

- [[:alnum:]-\_]{4,} captures any alphanumeric character, including and \_. Furthermore, for this match to work there must be at least 4 characters,
- \s\* captures 0 or more white-spaces, and

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• cancer captures the word cancer:

```
mtsamples[, cancer_type := str_extract(tolower(keywords), "[[:alnum:]-_]{4,}\\s*cancer")]
mtsamples[, table(cancer type)]
## cancer type
##
          anal cancer
                          bladder cancer
                                              breast cancer
                                                                   colon cancer
##
                    1
                                                         16
                                                                             12
## endometrial cancer
                       esophageal cancer
                                                lung cancer
                                                                 ovarian cancer
                                                                              1
     papillary cancer
                         prostate cancer
                                             uterine cancer
```

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## **Fundamentals of Web Scrapping**

#### What?

Web scraping, web harvesting, or web data extraction is data scraping used for extracting data from websites -- Wikipedia

#### How?

- The <u>rvest</u> R package provides various tools for reading and processing web data.
- Under-the-hood, rvest is a wrapper of the xml2 and httr R packages.

(in the case of dynamic websites, take a look at selenium))

#### Web scraping raw HTML: Example

We would like to capture the table of COVID-19 death rates per country directly from Wikipedia.

```
library(rvest)
library(xml2)

# Reading the HTML table with the function xml2::read_html
covid <- read_html(
    x = "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_death_rates_by_country"
    )

# Let's the the output
covid

## {html_document}
## <-html class="client-nojs vector-feature-language-in-header-enabled vector-feature-language-in-main-page |
## [1] <-head>\n<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=UTF-8 ...
## [2] <-body class="skin-vector skin-vector-search-vue vector-toc-pinned mediawi ...</pre>
```

## Web scraping raw HTML: Example (cont 1.)

- We want to get the HTML table that shows up in the doc. To do this, we can use the function xml2::xml\_find\_all() and rvest::html\_table()
- The first will locate the place in the document that matches a given **XPath** expression.
- XPath, XML Path Language, is a query language to select nodes in a XML document.
- A nice tutorial can be found <u>here</u>
- Modern Web browsers make it easy to use XPath!

Live Example! (inspect elements in Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari)

# Web scraping with xml2 and the rvest package (cont. 2)

Now that we know what is the path, let's use that and extract

```
table <- xml2::xml_find_all(covid, xpath = "/html/body/div[3]/div[5]/div[1]/table[2]")
table <- html_table(table) # This returns a list of tables
#head(table)
table
## list()</pre>
```

#### **Web APIs**

#### What?

A Web API is an application programming interface for either a web server or a web browser. -- Wikipedia

Some examples include: twitter API, facebook API, Gene Ontology API

#### How?

You can request data, the GET method, post data, the POST method, and do many other things using the HTTP protocol.

#### How in R?

For this part, we will be using the httr() package, which is a wrapper of the curl() package, which in turn provides access to the curl library that is used to communicate with APIs.

#### Web APIs with curl



Structure of a URL (source: "HTTP: The Protocol Every Web Developer Must Know - Part 1")

#### Web APIs with curl

Under-the-hood, the httr (and thus curl) sends request somewhat like this

```
curl -X GET https://google.com -w "%{content_type}\n%{http_code}\n"
```

A get request (-X GET) to https://google.com, which also includes (-w) the following: content\_type and  $http\_code$ :

```
<HTML><HEAD><meta http-equiv="content-type" content="text/html;charset=utf-8">
<TITLE>301 Moved</TITLE></HEAD><B0DY>
<H1>301 Moved</H1>
The document has moved
<A HREF="https://www.google.com/">here</A>.
</B0DY></HTML>
text/html; charset=UTF-8
301
```

We use the httrR package to make life easier.

#### Web API Example 1: Gene Ontology

- We will make use of the Gene Ontology API.
- We want to know what genes (human or not) are **involved in** the function **antiviral innate immune response** (go term <u>GO:0140374</u>), looking only at those annotations that have evidence code <u>ECO:0000006</u> (experimental evidence):

```
library(httr)
go_query <- GET(
    url = "http://api.geneontology.org/",
    path = "api/bioentity/function/GO:0140374/genes",
    query = list(
        evidence = "ECO:00000006",
        relationship_type = "involved_in"
    ),
    # May need to pass this option to curl to allow to wait for at least
    # 60 seconds before returning error.
    config = config(
        connecttimeout = 60
     )
)</pre>
```

We could have also passed the full URL directly...

# Web API Example 1: Gene Ontology (cont. 1)

Let's take a look at the curl call:

```
curl -X GET "http://api.geneontology.org/api/bioentity/function/GO:0140374/genes?evidence=ECO%3A
What httr::GET() does:

> go_query$request
## <request>
## GET http://api.geneontology.org/api/bioentity/function/GO:0140374/genes?evidence=ECO%3A000000
## Output: write_memory
## Options:
## * useragent: libcurl/7.58.0 r-curl/4.3 httr/1.4.1
## * connecttimeout: 60
## * httpget: TRUE
## Headers:
## * Accept: application/json, text/xml, application/xml, */*
```

## Web API Example 1: Gene Ontology (cont. 2)

Let's take a look at the response:

```
go_query

## Response [http://api.geneontology.org/api/bioentity/function/GO:0140374/genes?evidence=ECO%3A0000006&i
## Date: 2023-02-13 16:16

## Status: 200

## Content-Type: application/json
## Size: 74.5 kB
## {"associations": [{"id": "4d4749094d47493a31313030353235094e6d62720909474f3a3...
```

#### Remember the codes:

- 1xx: Information message
- 2xx: Success
- 3xx: Redirection
- 4xx: Client error
- 5xx: Server error

## Web API Example 1: Gene Ontology (cont. 3)

We can extract the results using the httr::content() function

```
dat <- content(go_query)</pre>
dat <- lapply(dat$associations, function(a) {</pre>
  data.frame(
    Gene
                = a$subject$id,
              = a$subject$taxon$id,
    taxon_label = a$subject$taxon$label
})
dat <- do.call(rbind, dat)</pre>
str(dat)
## 'data.frame':
                   61 obs. of 3 variables:
              : chr "MGI:1100525" "MGI:2441706" "MGI:2385051" "MGI:1099786" ...
## $ Gene
## $ taxon_id : chr "NCBITaxon:10090" "NCBITaxon:10090" "NCBITaxon:10090" "NCBITaxon:10090" ...
## $ taxon_label: chr "Mus musculus" "Mus musculus" "Mus musculus" ...
```

#### Web API Example 1: Gene Ontology (cont. 4)

The structure of the result will depend on the API. In this case, the output was a JSON file, so the content function returns a list in R. In other scenarios it could return an XML object (we will see more in the lab)

```
knitr::kable(head(dat),
  caption = "Genes experimentally annotated with the function\
**antiviral innate immune response** (G0:0140374)"
)
```

Table: Genes experimentally annotated with the function antiviral innate immune response (GO:0140374)

Gene taxon\_id taxon\_label
MGI:1100525 NCBITaxon:10090 Mus musculus
MGI:2441706 NCBITaxon:10090 Mus musculus
MGI:2385051 NCBITaxon:10090 Mus musculus
MGI:1099786 NCBITaxon:10090 Mus musculus
MGI:1099786 NCBITaxon:10090 Mus musculus
MGI:1913565 NCBITaxon:10090 Mus musculus

# Web API Example 2: Using Tokens

- Sometimes, APIs are not completely open, you need to register.
- The API may require to login (user+password), or pass a token.
- In this example, I'm using a token which I obtained here
- You can find information about the National Centers for Environmental Information API here

#### Web API Example 2: Using Tokens (cont. 1)

- The way to pass the token will depend on the API service.
- Some require authentication, others need you to pass it as an argument of the query, i.e., directly in the URL.
- In this case, we pass it on the header.

```
stations_api <- GET(
  url = "https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov",
  path = "cdo-web/api/v2/stations",
  config = add_headers(
    token = "[YOUR TOKEN HERE]"
    ),
  query = list(limit = 1000)
)</pre>
```

This is equivalent to using the following query

```
curl --header "token: [YOUR TOKEN HERE]" \
https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cdo-web/api/v2/stations?limit=1000
```

Note: This won't run, you need to get your own token

# Web API Example 2: Using Tokens (cont. 2)

Again, we can recover the data using the content() function:

```
ans <- content(stations_api)</pre>
ans$results[[1]]
## $elevation
## [1] 139
## $mindate
## [1] "1948-01-01"
## $maxdate
## [1] "2014-01-01"
## $latitude
## [1] 31.5702
## $name
## [1] "ABBEVILLE, AL US"
## $datacoverage
## [1] 0.8813
## $id
## [1] "COOP:010008"
```

## Web API Example 3: HHS health recommendation

Here is a last example. We will use the Department of Health and Human Services API for "[...] demographic-specific health recommendations" (details at health.gov)

```
health_advises <- GET(
    url = "https://health.gov/",
    path = "myhealthfinder/api/v3/myhealthfinder.json",
    query = list(
        lang = "en",
        age = "32",
        sex = "male",
        tobaccoUse = 0
    ),
    config = c(
        add_headers(accept = "application/json"),
        config(connecttimeout = 60)
    )
)</pre>
```

# Web API Example 3: HHS health recommendation (cont. 1)

Let's see the response

health\_advises

```
## Response [https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/api/v3/myhealthfinder.json?lang=en&age=32&sex=male&tobaccc
## Date: 2023-02-13 16:16
## Status: 200
## Content-Type: application/json
    Size: 359 kB
## {
##
       "Result": {
##
           "Error": "False",
##
          "Total": 18,
           "Query": {
              "ÁpiVersion": "3",
##
              "ApiType": "myhealthfinder",
##
              "TopicId": null,
##
              "ToolId": null,
              "CategoryId": null,
## ...
```

# Web API Example 3: HHS health recommendation (cont. 2)

```
# Extracting the content
health_advises_ans <- content(health_advises)

# Getting the titles
txt <- with(health_advises_ans$Result$Resources, c(
    sapply(all$Resource, "[[", "Title"),
    sapply(some$Resource, "[[", "Title"),
    sapply(`You may also be interested in these health topics:`$Resource, "[[", "Title")))
cat(txt, sep = "; ")</pre>
```

Hepatitis C Screening: Questions for the Doctor; Protect Yourself from Seasonal Flu; Talk with Your Doctor About Depression; Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation; Get Vaccines to Protect Your Health (Adults Ages 19 to 49); Get Tested for HIV; Get Your Blood Pressure Checked; Quit Smoking; Talk with Your Doctor About Drug Misuse; Watch Your Weight; Eat Healthy; Testing for Syphilis: Questions for the Doctor; Protect Yourself from Hepatitis B; Testing for Latent Tuberculosis: Questions for the Doctor; Manage Stress; Alcohol Use: Conversation Starters; Get Active; Quitting Smoking: Conversation Starters

#### **Summary**

- We learned about regular expressions with the package **stringr** (a wrapper of **stringi**)
- We can use regular expressions to detect (str\_detect()), replace (str\_replace()), and extract (str\_extract()) expressions.
- We looked at web scraping using the **rvest** package (a wrapper of **xml2**).
- We extracted elements from the HTML/XML using xml\_find\_all() with XPath expressions.
- We also used the html\_table() function from rvest to extract tables from HTML documents.
- We took a quick review on Web APIs and the Hyper-text-transfer-protocol (HTTP).
- We used the httr R package (wrapper of curl) to make GET requests to various APIs
- We even showed an example using a token passed via the header.
- Once we got the responses, we used the content() function to extract the message of the response.

## **Detour on CURL options**

Sometimes you will need to change the default set of options in CURL. You can checkout the list of options in curl::curl\_options(). A common hack is to extend the time-limit before dropping the conection, e.g.:

Using the **Health IT** API from the US government, we can obtain the **Electronic Prescribing Adoption and Use by County** (see docs <a href="https://example.com/here">here</a>)

The problem is that it usually takes longer to get the data, so we pass the config option <code>connecttimeout</code> (which corresponds to the flag <code>--connect-timeout</code>) in the curl call (see next slide)

#### **Detour on CURL options (cont.)**

```
ans <- httr::GET(</pre>
  url = "https://dashboard.healthit.gov/api/open-api.php",
  query = list(
    source = "AHA_2008-2015.csv",
    region = "California",
    period = 2015
    ),
  config = config(
    connecttimeout = 60
> ans$request
# <request>
# GET https://dashboard.healthit.gov/api/open-api.php?source=AHA_2008-2015.csv&region=California
# Output: write_memory
# Options:
# * useragent: libcurl/7.58.0 r-curl/4.3 httr/1.4.1
# * connecttimeout: 60
# * httpget: TRUE
# Headers:
# * Accept: application/json, text/xml, application/xml, */*
```

## **Regular Expressions: Email validation**

This is the official regex for email validation implemented by RCF 5322

See the corresponding post in **StackOverflow**