

The ABC of Computational Text Analysis

#7 WORKING WITH (YOUR OWN) DATA

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Recap last lecture

- introducing Python 
- learning programming concepts & syntax
 - data types, loops, indexing, functions...
- working with VS Code Editor

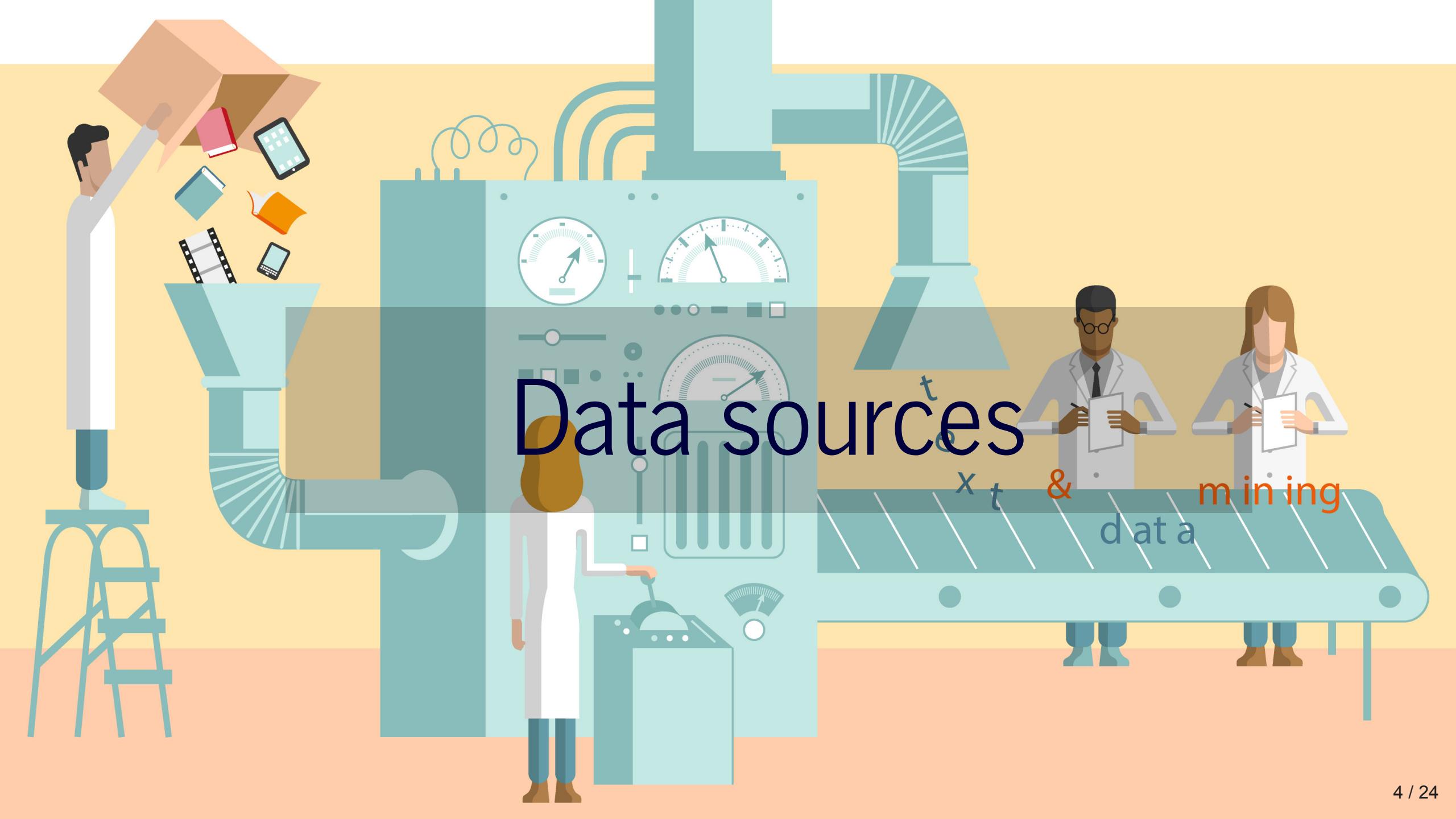
Outline

- learn about available data sources
- analyze and justify your own data

any text 

from anywhere 

.txt or .pdf format 



Data sources

The illustration depicts a factory conveyor belt system. On the left, a worker on a ladder is pouring various items (books, a tablet, a smartphone, a film strip) into a hopper. These items enter a processing unit consisting of pipes and valves. A woman in a lab coat stands next to a control panel with three circular gauges and a bar chart. The conveyor belt itself has the words "Data sources", "x t", "&", "data mining", and "dat a" written on it. Two workers in lab coats are standing at the end of the belt, writing in notebooks.

What data sources are there?

- broadly social
 - newspapers + magazines
 - websites + social media
 - reports by NGOs/GOs
- scientific articles
- economic
 - business plans/reports
 - contracts
 - patents

👉 basically, any textual documents...

How does the data look like?

Any text is data, yet some formats are more suitable.

1. datasets like `.csv` 😍
2. plain text like `.txt` 😊
3. text in other formats like `.pdf` 😬

Some great (historical) datasets

. csv ready off-the-shelf

- [1 August speeches by Swiss Federal Councilors](#)
provided via [course repo](#)
- [Human Rights Reports by various NGOs](#)
- [United Nations General Debate Corpus](#)
- [Corpus of Resolutions: UN Security Council](#)
- [Inaugural Speeches by US Presidents](#)
- [NewsWire](#)
2.7M US news articles, 1878-1977



There are still not many.

Dedicated search engines for datasets

Use case: Search for existing datasets

- [Harvard Dataverse](#)
open scientific data repository
- [Google Dataset Search](#)
Google for datasets basically

👉 search for a topic followed by `corpus`, `text collection` or `text as data`

Search techniques



Make your (Google) web search more efficient by using dedicated tags.

Examples:

- "computational social science"
- site:nytimes.com
- nature OR environment

Swissdox: A game changer

Assemble a news dataset and export as `.csv`

- over 250 Swiss [newspapers](#)
- historical and updated daily
- needs registration (free)

The screenshot shows the 'Corpus query' section of the Swissdox interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with tabs: 'Start', 'Projects', 'Corpus query' (which is active), 'Retrieved datasets', and 'Manual'. Below the navigation bar, the title 'Corpus query' is centered. There are three main filter sections: 'Languages *' with a dropdown menu labeled 'Select languages', 'Source *' with a dropdown menu labeled 'Select sources', and 'Date ranges' with a date range set to '2023-04-01 ~ 2023-04-30' and a calendar icon. At the bottom of the form, a note says '* no filtering is applied if no option is selected'. Two buttons are at the bottom right: 'Reset filters' (in a light green box) and 'Next' (in a dark green box).

More publishers

- [Project Gutenberg](#) and [HathiTrust](#)
 - massive collection of books
 - open, HathiTrust requires agreement
 - [Nexis Uni](#)
 - international newspaper, business + legal reports
 - licensed by the university
 - [Constellate](#)
 - scientific articles of JSTOR across disciplines
 - provides an easy dataset builder
-  check out other resources licensed by [ZHB](#)

Interesting sources as PDFs

Any organization of your interest 

- [Party Programmes across Europe](#)
covers over 1000 parties from 1920 until today in over 50 countries
- [Swiss voting booklets](#)
from 1978 until today
- [Swissvotes](#)
collection of resources on Swiss public votings
- [Curia Vista](#)
Swiss parliamentary debates
- [1 August speeches by Swiss Federal Councillors](#)
- [Nestlé Annual Reports](#)
- [University of Zurich Annual Reports](#)

Scraping PDFs from websites

Use case: Swiss voting booklets

- `wget` to download any files from the internet

```
# get a single file
wget EXACT_URL

# get all linked pdf from a single webpage
wget --recursive --accept pdf -nH --cut-dirs=5 \
--ignore-case --wait 1 --level 1 --directory-prefix=data \
https://www.bk.admin.ch/bk/de/home/dokumentation/abstimmungsbuechlein.html

# --accept FORMAT_OF_YOUR_INTEREST
# --directory-prefix YOUR_OUTPUT_DIRECTORY
```

Data is no free lunch



Data is property

... and has rights too

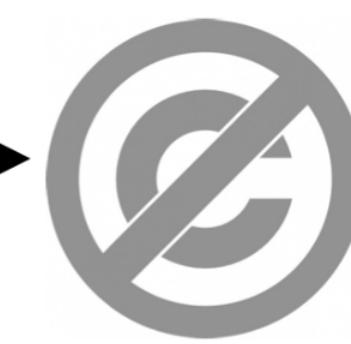
- copyrights may further limit access to high quality data
- check the rights before processing data



Copyright
All Rights Reserved



Creative Commons
Some Rights Reserved



Public Domain
No Rights Reserved

Imperfect data: A tail of bias

- **noise in text**
 - non-content (e.g. table of content), inconsistent spelling
- **archive holes**
 - lost or uncollected data
- **selective corpus curation**
 - supposition that key-word(s) captures topic
- **social bias**
 - view from somewhere, stereotypes



think about the data and mitigate issues

.DOC

.JPG

.PNG

.PSD

.EPS

.CDR

.TXT

.GIF

.PPT

.MP3

.WAV

.AI

.MOV

.EXE

.DMG

.RAR

.ZIP

.PDF

**A world for humans ...
... and a jungle of file
formats.**

Common conversions

Your text is of a particular type



digital native documents
.pdf, .docx, .html



scans of (old) documents
.pdf, .jpg, .png



convert to .txt



Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

machine-readable A green square icon containing a white checkmark symbol.

What data are you interested in?

Think about your mini-project



Illustration of text analysis generated by Image Creator from Microsoft Copilot

Assignment #2



- get/submit via OLAT
 - starting tonight
 - deadline: 19 April 2025, 23:59
- discuss issues on OLAT forum

Let's start coding ✨



Questions?

In-class: Exercises I

1. Make sure that your local copy of the Github repository KED2025 is up-to-date with `git pull`. Check out the data samples in `ked/materials/data` and the scripts to extract their text in `ked/materials/code`.
2. Decide on one use-case that interests you most.
3. **Apply the commands to reproduce on the given data. Test them on your own data. Check the resources. Ask questions. Think about your mini-project.**

In-class: Exercises II

1. Use `wget` to download *cogito* and its predecessor *uniluAKTUELL* issues (PDF files) from the [UniLu website](#). Start with downloading one issue first and then try to automatize the process to download all the listed issued using arguments for the `wget` command.
2. Convert the *cogito* and *uniluAKTUELL* PDF files into TXT files. You can use the code given for native, digital PDFs (no OCR needed). Try with a single issue first and then write a loop to batch process all of them.
3. What is the University of Lucerne talking about in its issues? Use the commands of the previous lectures to count the vocabulary.
4. Do the same as in 3.), yet analyze the vocabulary of *cogito* and *uniluAKTUELL* issues separately. Does the language and topics differ between the two magazines?