DePaul University

AUTOMATED DATA COLLECTION WITH PYTHON

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CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON DATA

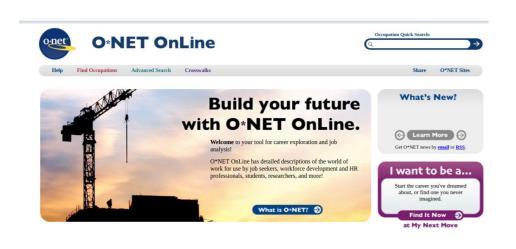
Data driven decisions being emphasized

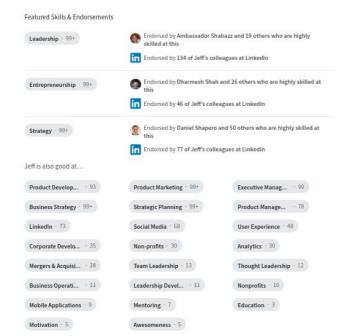
Age of Big Data

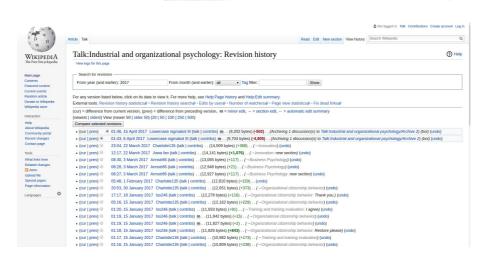
- •Larger
- •More Frequent
- More Varied

Where to access this data?

SOURCES OF BIG DATA







Candidate Interview Reviews

Consultant Interview

Accepted Offer

confident in your answers

before writing the counter offer.

Application

A day later I...

Show More

Negotiation

Your trust is our top concern, so companies can't alter or remove reviews.

I applied online. The process took 4+ weeks. I interviewed at Deloitte in August 2014.

I applied online (I currently work in this field for a competitor) for a consultant position

within the Human Capital Practice: Organization, Transformation & Talent Group.

reasons for applying to Deloitte. Lasted 30 mins, was pretty straight forward. Just be

I countered the salary (which was already at the top of the Glassdoor range) and they

met me in the middle. Always negotiate. One email that took 10 mins to craft pocketed

me a decent sum. Also, don't sound too eager when you are offered, and take your time

Phone Interview: Basic questions about my background, current employer, and

Within a week a Lheard from a recruiter, who setup a phone interview.

Positive Experience Average Interview

Sort: Popular Date Difficulty

Helpful (601)

Industries

Helpful (601)

Filter V

Sep 3, 2014





How to collect this available data?

Human collection method:

- Sit in front of a computer
- •Go to a website of interest
- Copy the relevant data
- Paste into a common file
- •Repeat 1,000,000 times



Limitations of Human Collection:

Mental Demands

Cost

•Inaccuracy

•Scalability





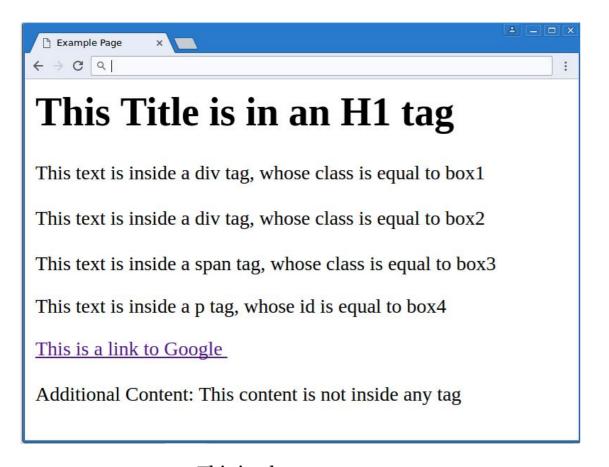


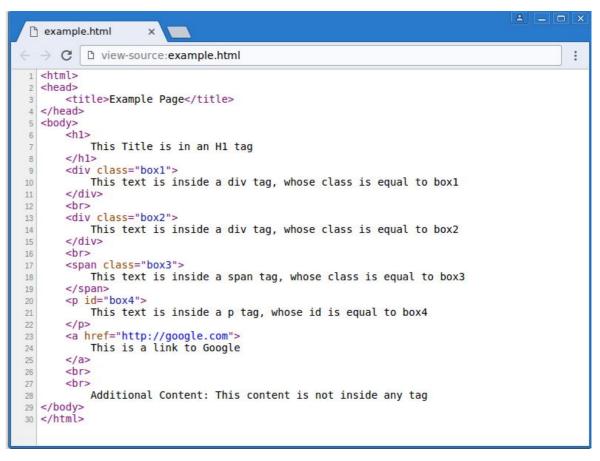
AUTOMATED DATA COLLECTION EXAMPLE

- Automated Data collection is about being able to translate what **you would do** as a human collecting the data to what your **computer can do**
- Give a computer a set of instructions to follow
 - First do this
 - Then do that
 - Finally do this
- Let the computer carry-out those instructions, and you come back to a completed project
- How do you talk to a computer?

THINKING LIKE A COMPUTER

Automating requires you to consider what are the capabilities and limitations of a computer





This is what you see

This is what your computer sees

AUTOMATED DATA COLLECTION EXAMPLE

Automated Data collection is about being able to translate what **you would do** as a human collecting the data to corresponding steps of what your **computer can do**

Example: Download the Main Headline from the New York Times

What you would do:

Go to the New York Times website

Look at the text in the main heading

Copy that headline with the mouse

Open a text file called "data.txt"

Paste the copied text in the file

Save it

What your computer can do:

```
Ppage = requests.get("http://nyt.com").text
Pheadline = page.find("h1")
Ptext = headline.text
Pfile = open("data.txt","wb")
Pfile.write(text)
Pfile.close()
```

THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WOULD DO IT FIRST

You have to think about everything you <u>would</u> do, and how your computer <u>can</u> do it.

First, think how would you download the latest stock prices for Apple?

- I would go to Google Finance (https://www.google.com/finance)
- I would type in "Apple" at the search bar
- I would look for the bold number
- I would copy the price
- I would open a text file
- I would paste the price into the file
- I would save the file and close it



TRANSLATING TO A COMPUTER

How can you have your computer do those steps:

- It would be hard to have a computer type in a search box, so I have to think of a way for it to access a stock another way THINK ABOUT WHAT A COMPUTER CAN DO
- Notice that the url for Apple's stock price page is:
 - https://www.google.com/finance?q=APPL
 - The stock name always comes after "q="
- If I know the stock name, I can tell a computer to go to that page
- I can tell a computer to look for text tagged as bold
- I can tell a computer to save the bold text as a variable called "price"
- I can tell the computer to open a file
- I can tell the computer to write the stock price variable in the file
- I can tell the computer to save and close the file

The underlined text are all things that your computer knows how to do

FOUR STEPS OF AUTOMATED DATA COLLECTION

- Four Steps to Automatically Collecting Data (Scraping)
 - Download the HTML source of a page
 - Extract the content from the HTML
 - Save the content
 - Repeat the process on a different Page

Each of those steps has specific commands in Python (and R) associated with it

•Successfully collecting data requires chaining those commands together

STEP 1: DOWNLOAD THE HTML SOURCE

Download the HTML source of a page

Python command:

```
page = requests.get("http://nyt.com").text
```

R Command

```
library(RCurl)
page <- getURL("http://nyt.com")</pre>
```

STEP 2: EXTRACTING THE CONTENT

Extract the content

We'll get to this part in a minute...

STEP 3: SAVE THE CONTENT

Save the Content

Python command:

```
textfile = open("data.txt", "a")
textfile.write(content)
textfile.close()
```

R Command

```
write(content, "data.txt", append=TRUE)
```

STEP 4: REPEAT THE PROCESS

Repeat the Processes

Python command:

```
stocks = ["AAPL", "GOOGL", "MSFT"]
for stock in stocks:
   *** extract content ***
```

R Command

```
stocks <- c("AAPL", "GOOGL", "MSFT")
for (stock in stocks){
   *** extract content ***
}</pre>
```

STEP 2: EXTRACTING THE CONTENT

The hardest part of automated data collection is extracting the content

Code must be customized to your particular situation

Depends on:

- How much content is needed (one thing or many?)
- The structure of the HTML (is it bold?, is it a heading?, is it italicized?)
- The kind of content (is it text?, is it a url?, is it an image?)
- •We will go over the major cases/situations that you could have

THE STRUCTURE OF A WEBSITE

Extracting content from a website requires understanding how websites are written

Websites are written in HTML

- Text is formatted by putting it in between "tags", which describe the way it should be displayed in a browser
- Typically each tag has an opening tag and a closing tag, which isolate the specific text to be formatted

Example:

- ><h1>**Hello**</h1>
- ><i>Hello</i>
- >Hello

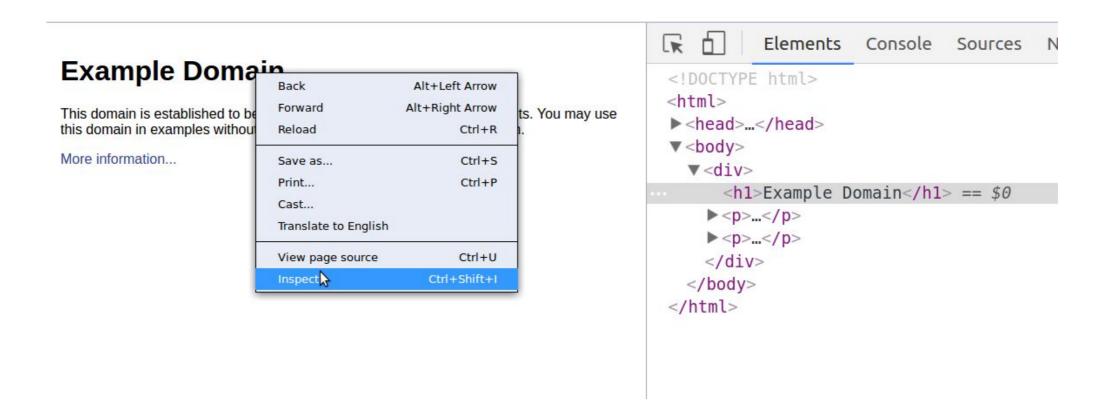
To view the raw HTML of a website (i.e., the source), you can

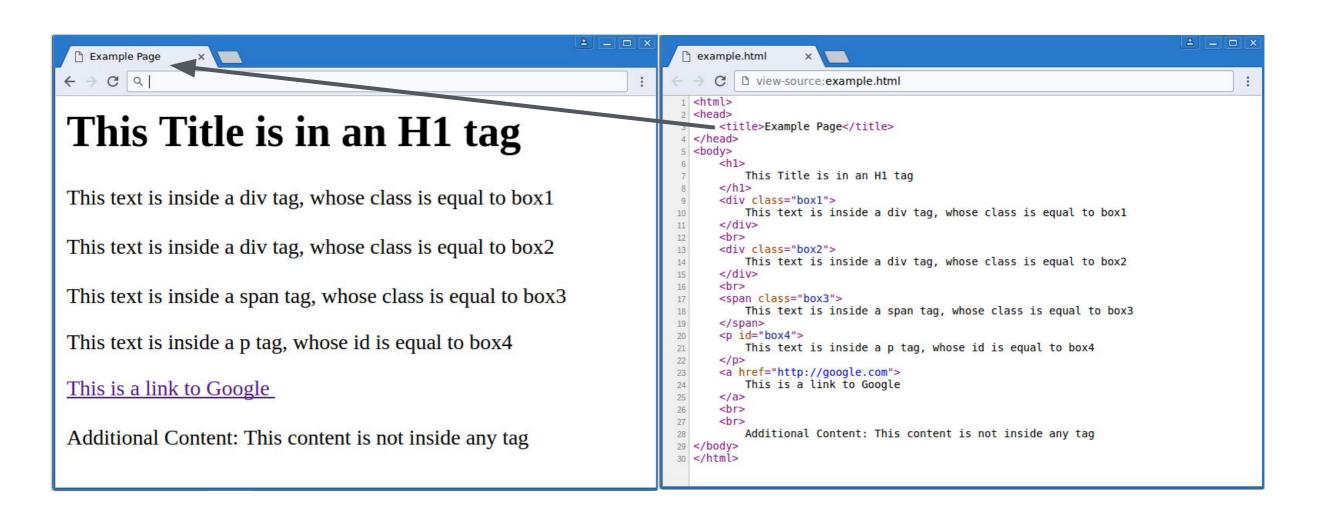
Chrome/Firefox/Opera/Internet Explorer: Ctrl + U
Safari: Command + Option + U

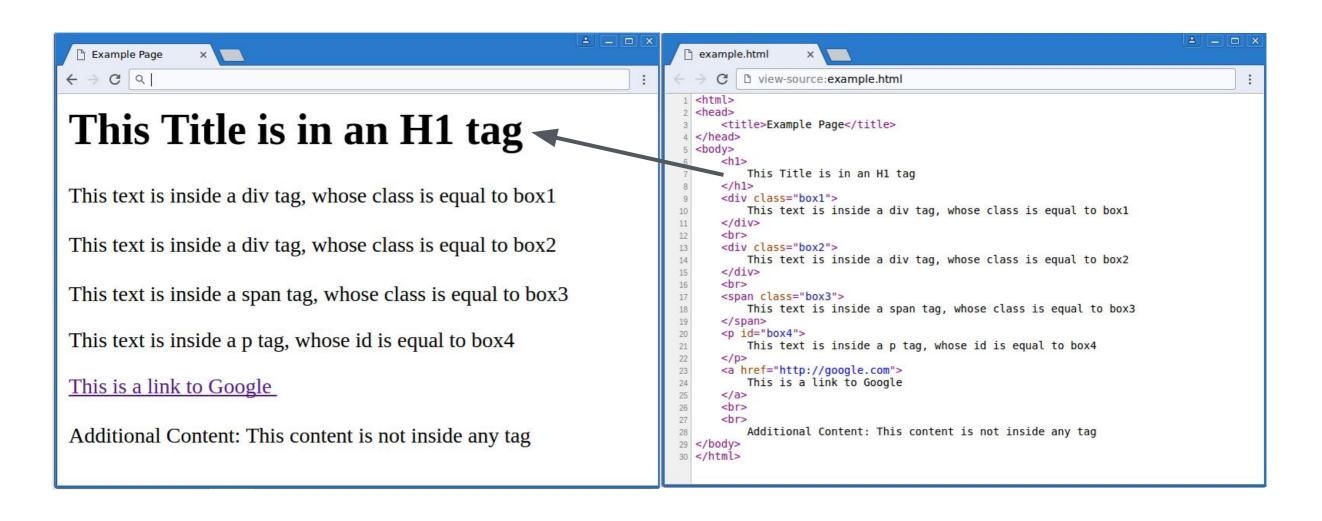
```
<html>
▼<head>
   <title>Example Domain</title>
 </head>
▼ <body>
 ▼ <div>
     <h1>Example Domain</h1>
       "This domain is established to be used for illustrative examples in documents.
       You may use this
           domain in examples without prior coordination or asking for permission."
     ▼ 
       <a href="http://www.iana.org/domains/example">More information...</a>
     </div>
 </body>
</html>
```

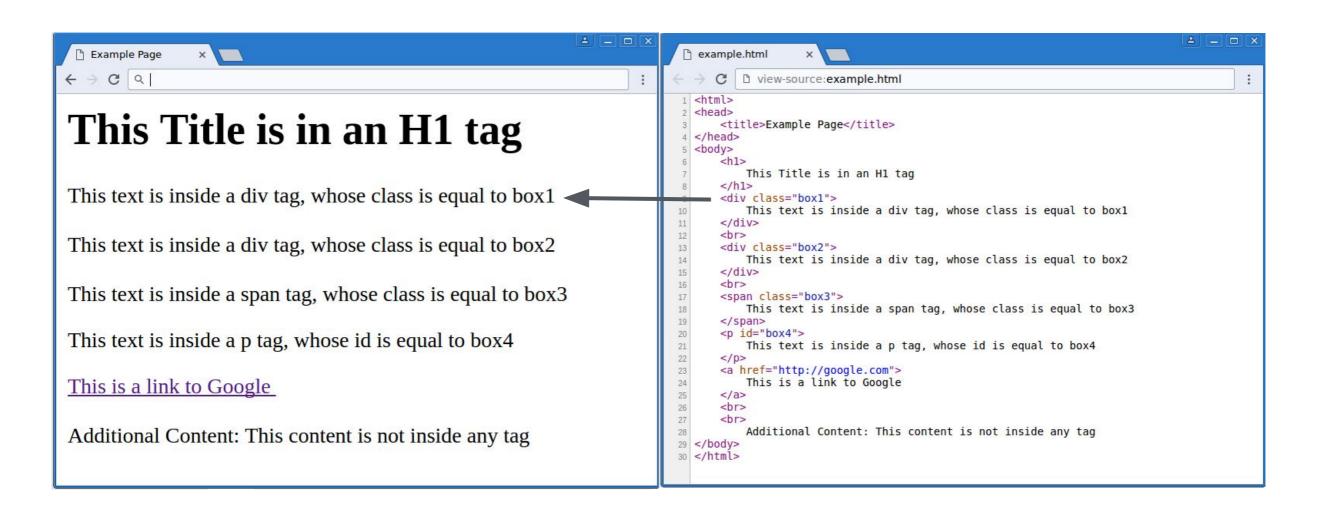
The HTML source of a http://example.com

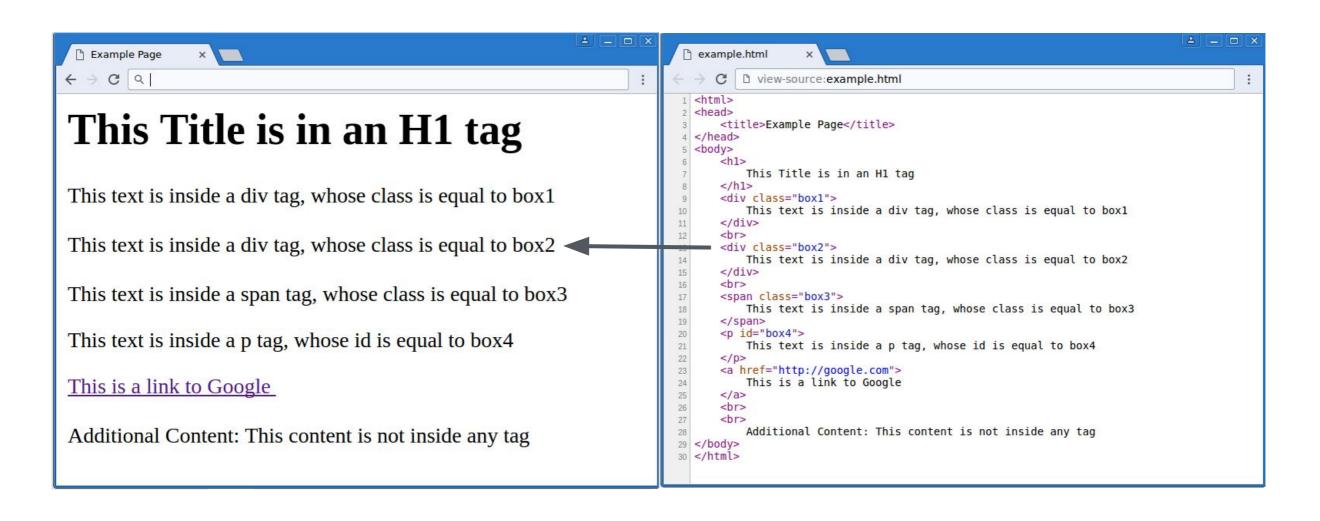
You can also right-click on a specific part of a website and select "Inspect" to more easily examine a specific part of the HTML

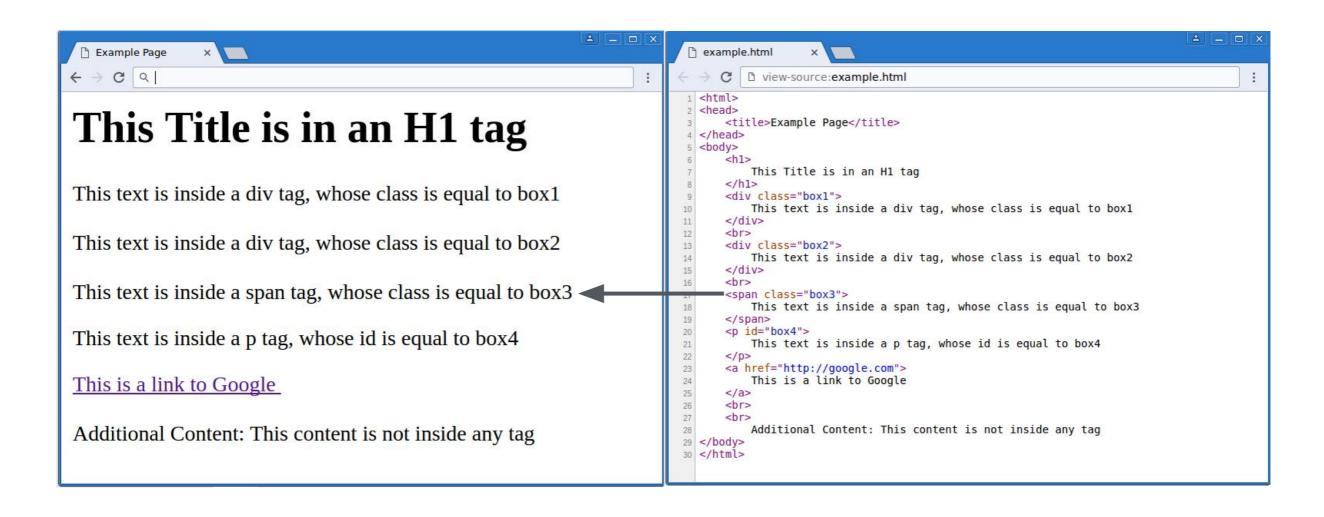


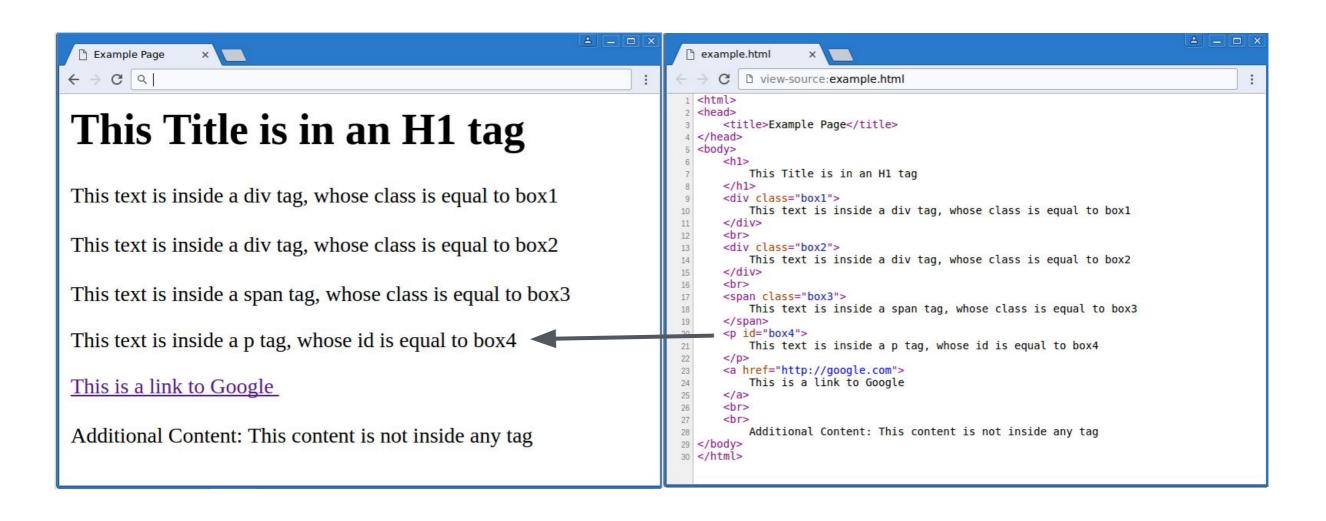


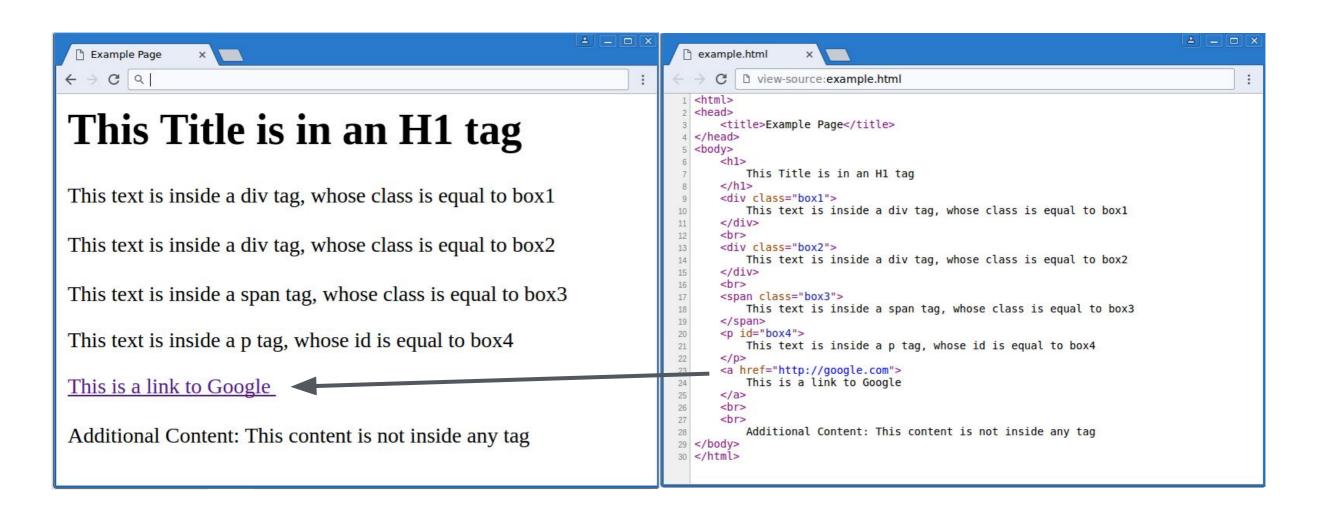


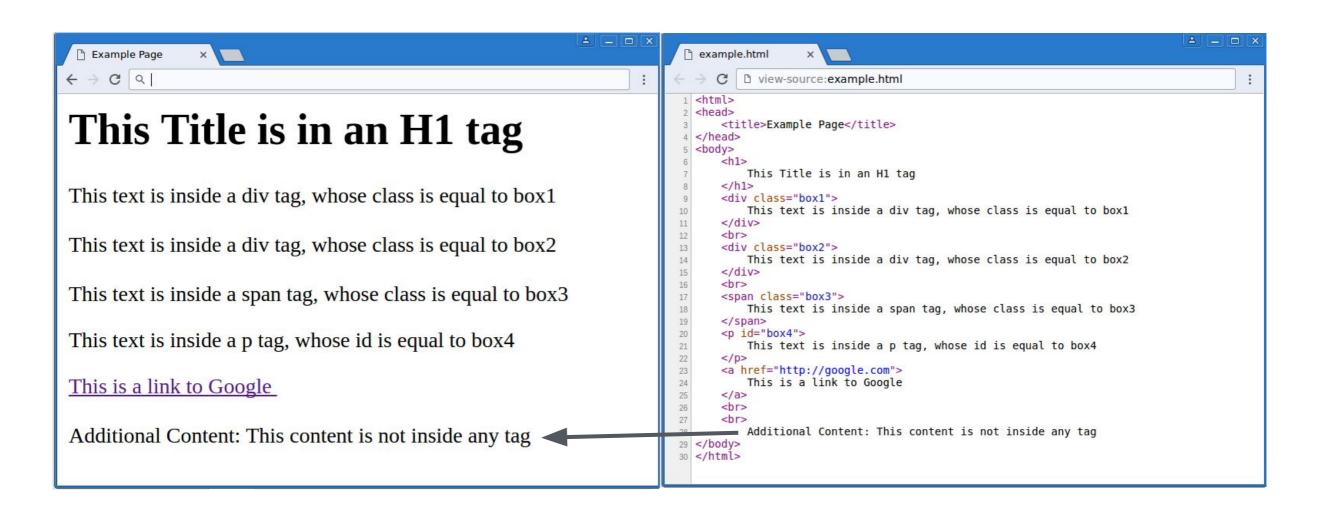












EXTRACTING THE CONTENT

Extracting Content

- When you have the HTML source of a website, you can see where the content you want is in that source
 - What are its closest tags?
 - Are those tags unique to the content?
 - Does the tag have an id or class name?
 - Does some specific word or character always precede the content of interest?
- When you know the answers to the above questions, you direct Python to extract the content based on the identifying information.

SUMMARY