

Project 2: Web Service Documentation— New York Times Bestsellers API  
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1. First, I visited the website for the NYT Bestsellers API:

[http://developer.nytimes.com/docs/best\\_sellers\\_api](http://developer.nytimes.com/docs/best_sellers_api)

2. From looking at the “at a glance” section at the beginning, I learned that the base URL needs to be formatted as follows:

`http://api.nytimes.com/svc/books/{version}/lists`

In this URL, the {version} is the version of the API (v2).

3. From skimming the page with example requests I can see that there are four main types of requests: getting a bestseller list, searching a bestseller list, getting the history of one bestseller, and getting the set of bestseller list names (Hardcover Fiction, etc.). For our purposes the main one we will use is getting the overall bestseller list, so I will focus on that section.

4. The template URL for getting a bestseller list is as follows:

`http://api.nytimes.com/svc/books/{version}/lists/[date/]{list-name}[.response_format]?[optional-param1=value1]&[...]&api-key={your-API-key}`\*

\*The items in curly braces are required, the items in brackets are optional. I shouldn't need to include any of the optional items, especially considering that we have the correct JSON format as a default and that the list is automatically sorted in ascending order, which is what we want for our app.

For the URL above, the required parameters are the version, the API key (whose acquisition I will talk about soon), and the list name. I was confused about how to specify that I want the overall bestsellers across all categories— on the website it directs me to a way to request the complete set of list names through an additional URL, so as of now I will do that to determine which argument I should use for list name.

5. Below the requests section on the website is a responses section. I learned that the service returns 20 results at a time. It then lists the attributes of each object in the JSON file the service returns. The following attributes were of particular interest:

- `author`
- `bestsellers_date` (at the top of the page we could show a “bestsellers as of \_\_\_\_ label”)
- `book_review` (includes URLs to New York Times book reviews on the title, in `book_review_link` format— it might be cool to have these links visible at the top of the book page where the tweets and Goodreads reviews will be)

I was a little confused as to how we will get the titles of the books— assumedly this is the “name” of each JSON object.

6. At the bottom of the page there is an example of a JSON response file to a request for a Trade Paperback list.

Here is an example of one object:

```
"book_details":[
  {
    "title":"THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO",
    "description":"A hacker and a journalist investigate the disappearance
      of a Swedish heiress.",
    "contributor":"by Stieg Larsson",
    "author":"Stieg Larsson",
    "contributor_note":"",
    "price":14.95,
    "age_group":"",
    "publisher":"Vintage Crime\Black Lizard",
    "primary_isbn13":"9780307454546",
    "primary_isbn10":"0307454541",
  }
],
"reviews":[
  {
    "book_review_link":"http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/30/
      books/30kaku.html",
    "first_chapter_link":"",
    "sunday_review_link":"http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/
      books/review/Berenson-t.html",
    "article_chapter_link":""
  }
]
},
```

Here, I learned that there is, in fact, a “title” attribute where the title of the book is in all caps (something we will need to modify). There is also a “description” where I think it would be cool to have that be visible on mouseover of the book cover.

I can access data within the JSON like this:

```
response.book_details.title
response.reviews.sunday_review_link
```

One question I have is how we are going to iterate through all the objects in the JSON file and display them one by one. I’m sure there is some quick JQuery code for this.

7. After reading through the main API page, I read up on how to register an app with the New York Times Developer portal. It turns out this is easy—you only need a free NYT account associated with your email, and then in the portal, under “API Documentation and Tools,” you click “Register an App” (<http://developer.nytimes.com/apps/register>). I had to enter the name of the app, the website, and which API we will be using. I learned when checking off “Bestsellers” that we will have 5,000 requests available per day. This shouldn’t be a problem

seeing as one bestseller list is released each week, for our purposes. I was given a key after I registered:

**Key:** 708f761b8b89a7be0af6ba036a16b24c:8:67493838

**Application:** Bookfolio

**Key:** 708f761b8b89a7be0af6ba036a16b24c:8:67493838

**Status:** active

**Registered:** 2 seconds ago

**KEY RATE LIMITS**

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8 Calls per second

5,000 Calls per day