

# **Week 1: Data Collection for Machine Learning**

**CS 203: Software Tools and Techniques for AI**

Prof. Nipun Batra  
IIT Gandhinagar

# The Netflix Movie Recommendation Problem

**Scenario:** You work at Netflix as a data scientist.

Your manager asks:

"We need to decide which movies to add to our catalog next month. Build a system to predict which movies will be successful with our subscribers."

**This is a machine learning problem.**

But before we can build any model, we need data.

**Today's focus:** Where does data come from and how do we collect it?

# The ML Pipeline

Every machine learning project follows this pipeline:

```
DATA COLLECTION → DATA CLEANING → FEATURE ENGINEERING →  
MODEL TRAINING → EVALUATION → DEPLOYMENT → MONITORING
```

**Week 1 (Today):** Data Collection - the foundation of everything

**The principle:** "Garbage in, garbage out"

- Bad data leads to bad models
- No amount of sophisticated algorithms can fix poor quality data
- Data collection is often 60-80% of the work in real ML projects

# Understanding the Problem: Movie Success Prediction

**Question:** What makes a movie successful?

**Hypothesis:** Success depends on multiple factors

**To build a prediction model, we need features:**

**Basic Information:**

- Title, Year of Release
- Genre (Action, Drama, Comedy, etc.)
  - Runtime (minutes)

**Performance Metrics:**

- IMDb Rating (1-10 scale)

# Understanding the Problem (continued)

## Production Details:

- Director (track record matters)
  - Lead Actors (star power)
    - Production Budget
  - Studio/Production Company

## Additional Signals:

- Social media mentions and sentiment
  - Award nominations and wins
  - Critical reviews (count and sentiment)

**The Challenge:** All this data lives on different websites!

# Today's Agenda

1. Understanding the Web (HTTP, URLs, requests)
2. Tool #1: curl (command-line HTTP)
3. Tool #2: Chrome DevTools (inspect websites)
4. Tool #3: Python requests (automate data fetching)
5. Tool #4: BeautifulSoup (parse HTML)
6. Tool #5: APIs (structured data)

*(Note: Advanced scraping with Playwright is covered in a separate module)*

# Data Sources on the Web

## Option 1: Public APIs

- IMDb API, OMDb API, TMDb API
- Structured, reliable, well-documented
- Rate limits, authentication required

## Option 2: Web Scraping

- Extract data directly from HTML pages
- Flexible, can get data not available via API
- More fragile, can break if site changes

**Today:** We'll learn both approaches

# Part 1: Understanding the Web

How does the web actually work?

# Client-Server Architecture

Source: [\*diagrams/generate\\_client\\_server.py\*](#)

**Client:** Your web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Safari)

**Server:** Computer hosting the website (e.g., netflix.com)

Communication happens via HTTP protocol

# HTTP Request-Response Cycle

**Step 1:** You type URL in browser or click a link

**Step 2:** Browser sends HTTP request to server

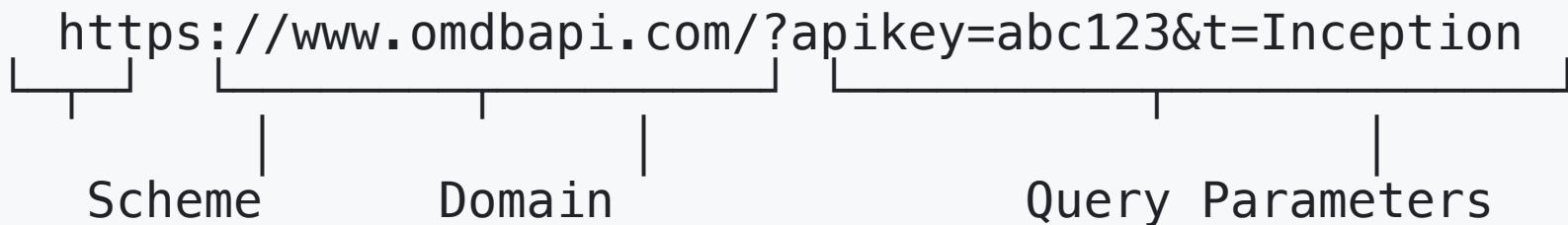
**Step 3:** Server processes request

**Step 4:** Server sends HTTP response back

**Step 5:** Browser renders the page

**Key insight:** Every web page you see is the result of this cycle

# Anatomy of a URL



**Scheme:** Protocol (http vs https)

**Domain:** Server address

**Query Parameters:** Data sent to server (key=value pairs)

# HTTP Methods

**GET:** Retrieve data from server

- Example: Get movie information
- Safe operation, doesn't change server state

**POST:** Send data to server

- Example: Submit a form, upload a file
  - Can modify server state

**Others:** PUT, DELETE, PATCH

- For updating and deleting resources

# HTTP Status Codes

## 2xx - Success:

- 200 OK : Request succeeded
- 201 Created : Resource created successfully

## 4xx - Client Error:

- 400 Bad Request : Invalid request
- 401 Unauthorized : Authentication required
- 404 Not Found : Resource doesn't exist

# HTTP Status Codes (continued)

## 5xx - Server Error:

- 500 Internal Server Error : Server crashed
- 503 Service Unavailable : Server overloaded

**Why this matters:** Your data collection code needs to handle these!

# HTTP Headers

Headers provide metadata about the request/response

## Common Request Headers:

```
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (identifies your browser)  
Accept: application/json (what format you want)  
Authorization: Bearer token123 (authentication)
```

## Common Response Headers:

```
Content-Type: application/json (what format you're getting)  
Content-Length: 1234 (size in bytes)
```

# Data Formats on the Web

**HTML:** Markup language for web pages

```
<h1>Inception</h1>
<p>Rating: 8.8</p>
```

**JSON:** JavaScript Object Notation (most common for APIs)

```
{"title": "Inception", "rating": 8.8}
```

**XML:** Extensible Markup Language (older APIs)

```
<movie><title>Inception</title></movie>
```

## **Part 2: curl - Command Line HTTP**

Testing APIs from the terminal

# What is curl?

**curl:** Command-line tool for making HTTP requests

## Why use it?

- Quick API testing without writing code
  - See exact request/response data
    - Debug API issues
    - Works on any platform

**Installation:** Already on Mac/Linux, Windows: download from [curl.se](http://curl.se)

# Basic curl Syntax

```
curl "https://api.example.com/movies"
```

This sends a GET request and prints the response to terminal

## Common options:

```
-X POST          # Specify HTTP method  
-H "Header"      # Add custom header  
-d "data"        # Send data in request body  
-o file.json     # Save response to file
```

# curl Example: OMDB API

Get information about "Inception":

```
curl "http://www.omdbapi.com/?apikey=YOUR_KEY&t=Inception"
```

Response (JSON):

```
{
  "Title": "Inception",
  "Year": "2010",
  "Rated": "PG-13",
  "imdbRating": "8.8",
  "Genre": "Action, Sci-Fi, Thriller"
}
```

# Making curl Output Readable

Raw JSON is hard to read. Use `jq` to format it:

```
curl "http://www.omdbapi.com/?apikey=KEY&t=Inception" | jq
```

`jq`: JSON processor that pretty-prints and filters JSON

Output is now nicely formatted with colors and indentation

# Extracting Specific Fields with jq

Get only the title and rating:

```
curl "http://www.omdbapi.com/?apikey=KEY&t=Inception" | \
      jq '{title: .Title, rating: .imdbRating}'
```

Output:

```
{
  "title": "Inception",
  "rating": "8.8"
}
```

**jq syntax: `.FieldName`** accesses a field

## Part 3: Chrome DevTools

Inspecting web traffic in your browser

# What is Chrome DevTools?

**DevTools:** Built-in browser tool for web development and debugging

## How to open:

- Mac: Cmd + Option + I
- Windows/Linux: F12 or Ctrl + Shift + I
  - Right-click on page then "Inspect"

**Key tabs:** Elements, Network, Console

# The Network Tab

**Purpose:** See all HTTP requests your browser makes

**How to use:**

1. Open DevTools
2. Go to Network tab
3. Reload the page
4. See list of all requests

**What you can see:** URL, method, status, size, time

# Inspecting a Request

Click on any request in Network tab to see:

## **Headers tab:**

- Request URL, method, status code
- Request headers (what you sent)
- Response headers (what you got back)

## **Preview/Response tab:**

- Actual data returned by server
- Preview shows formatted version

# Finding API Calls

**Technique:** Look for XHR/Fetch requests

1. Filter by "Fetch/XHR" in Network tab
2. These are AJAX requests (data fetched after page load)
  3. Click to see the API endpoint
  4. Copy the URL to use in your code

**Example:** Go to IMDb, search for a movie, watch Network tab

# Copying as curl

**Useful trick:** Right-click request then "Copy as curl"

This gives you exact curl command to reproduce the request:

```
curl 'https://api.example.com/data' \
      -H 'authorization: Bearer token' \
      -H 'user-agent: Mozilla/5.0....'
```

Now you can test API outside the browser!

# The Elements Tab

**Purpose:** Inspect HTML structure of a page

**How to use:**

1. Right-click element then "Inspect"
2. DevTools opens with that element highlighted
3. See HTML structure and CSS styles

**Why this matters:** Essential for web scraping!

## Part 4: Python requests Library

Making HTTP requests programmatically

# Why Python for Data Collection?

**Automation:** Collect data for hundreds of movies

**Error Handling:** Retry on failure, handle rate limits

**Data Processing:** Clean and structure data immediately

**Integration:** Save to database, CSV, or use in ML pipeline

**requests library:** Most popular HTTP library for Python

# Installing requests

```
pip install requests
```

Import in your code:

```
import requests
```

Documentation: <https://requests.readthedocs.io/>

# Basic GET Request

```
import requests

url = "http://www.omdbapi.com/"
       params = {
"apikey": "YOUR_KEY",
       "t": "Inception"
       }

response = requests.get(url, params=params)
       print(response.status_code) # 200
print(response.json())      # Python dict
```

**Note:** `params` dict is converted to query string automatically

# Handling the Response

```
response = requests.get(url, params=params)

        # Status code
if response.status_code == 200:
    print("Success!")

        # Headers
print(response.headers["Content-Type"])

        # Body as text
print(response.text)

# Body as JSON (parsed into Python dict)
data = response.json()
print(data["Title"]) # "Inception"
```

# Error Handling: Network Errors

Network requests can fail! Always handle exceptions:

```
try:  
    response = requests.get(url, timeout=10)  
    response.raise_for_status()  
    data = response.json()  
except requests.exceptions.Timeout:  
    print("Request timed out")  
except requests.exceptions.ConnectionError:  
    print("Network error")  
except requests.exceptions.HTTPError as e:  
    print(f"HTTP error: {e}")
```

# Error Handling: Invalid JSON

API might return invalid JSON:

```
try:  
    data = response.json()  
except requests.exceptions.JSONDecodeError:  
    print("Response is not valid JSON")  
    print(response.text) # Print raw response
```

**Common cause:** API returned error page in HTML instead of JSON

# Error Handling: Missing Fields

API might not return expected fields:

```
data = response.json()

# Bad: Will crash if Title doesn't exist
title = data["Title"]

# Good: Provide default value
title = data.get("Title", "Unknown")

# Better: Check if key exists
if "Title" in data:
    title = data["Title"]
else:
    print("No title in response")
```

# Complete Example: Fetch Movie Data

```
import requests

def get_movie_data(title, api_key):
    url = "http://www.omdbapi.com/"
    params = {"apikey": api_key, "t": title}
    try:
        response = requests.get(url,
                                params=params,
                                timeout=10)
        response.raise_for_status()
        data = response.json()
    if data.get("Response") == "False":
        return None
    return data
except requests.exceptions.RequestException:
    return None
```

# Using the Function

```
    api_key = "YOUR_KEY"
movie = get_movie_data("Inception", api_key)

        if movie:
            print(f"Title: {movie['Title']}")"
            print(f"Year: {movie['Year']}")"
            print(f"Rating: {movie['imdbRating']}")"
            print(f"Genre: {movie['Genre']}")"
```

Output:

```
Title: Inception
Year: 2010
Rating: 8.8
Genre: Action, Sci-Fi, Thriller
```

# Collecting Multiple Movies

```
titles = ["Inception", "The Matrix", "Interstellar"]
movies = []

for title in titles:
    movie = get_movie_data(title, api_key)
    if movie:
        movies.append(movie)

print(f"Collected {len(movies)} movies")
```

**Problem:** What if we have 1000 movies? This is slow!

# Rate Limiting

**Problem:** APIs limit how many requests you can make

OMDb Free Tier: 1000 requests per day

**Solution:** Add delay between requests

```
import time

for title in titles:
    movie = get_movie_data(title, api_key)
        if movie:
            movies.append(movie)
time.sleep(1) # Wait 1 second between requests
```

# Exponential Backoff

Better solution: Retry with increasing delays

```
import time

def get_movie_with_retry(title, api_key, max_retries=3):
    for attempt in range(max_retries):
        movie = get_movie_data(title, api_key)
        if movie:
            return movie
        wait_time = 2 ** attempt
        print(f'Retry {attempt + 1} after {wait_time}s')
        time.sleep(wait_time)
    return None
```

# **Part 5: BeautifulSoup - Web Scraping**

Extracting data from HTML pages

# When to Use Web Scraping

**Use scraping when:**

- No API available
- API doesn't provide all needed data
- API is too expensive or restrictive

**Example:** Rotten Tomatoes audience reviews

- No public API
- Must scrape from website

# How Web Scraping Works

1. Send HTTP request to get HTML page
2. Parse HTML into a tree structure
3. Find specific elements (e.g., all movie titles)
4. Extract text or attributes
5. Clean and structure the data

**Tool:** BeautifulSoup library

# Installing BeautifulSoup

```
pip install beautifulsoup4  
pip install lxml # HTML parser
```

Import:

```
from bs4 import BeautifulSoup  
import requests
```

# Basic BeautifulSoup Example

```
html = """
    <html>
        <h1>Inception</h1>
    <p class="rating">Rating: 8.8</p>
        <p class="genre">Sci-Fi</p>
    </html>
"""

soup = BeautifulSoup(html, 'lxml')

        # Find first h1 tag
    title = soup.find('h1')
print(title.text) # "Inception"

        # Find element by class
rating = soup.find('p', class_='rating')
print(rating.text) # "Rating: 8.8"
```

# Scraping a Real Website

```
url = "https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1375666/"
      response = requests.get(url)
soup = BeautifulSoup(response.text, 'lxml')

      # Find movie title
title_elem = soup.find('h1')
      if title_elem:
title = title_elem.text.strip()
      print(f"Title: {title}")
```

**Warning:** Websites change! This might break.

# Finding Elements

By tag name:

```
soup.find('h1')          # First h1  
soup.find_all('p')       # All p tags
```

By class:

```
soup.find('div', class_='movie-info')  
soup.find_all('span', class_='rating')
```

By id:

```
soup.find('div', id='main-content')
```

# Finding Elements (continued)

By CSS selector:

```
soup.select('div.movie > h1')
soup.select('#main-content')
soup.select('.rating')
```

**CSS selectors** are very powerful for complex queries

# Extracting Data

```
# Get text content
elem = soup.find('h1')
text = elem.text.strip()

# Get attribute value
link = soup.find('a')
href = link['href']
# or: href = link.get('href')

# Get all text in children
div = soup.find('div', class_='info')
all_text = div.get_text(strip=True)
```

# Finding Multiple Elements

```
# Find all movie cards on a page
movies = soup.find_all('div', class_='movie-card')

        for movie in movies:
            title = movie.find('h2').text.strip()
            rating = movie.find('span', class_='rating').text
            print(f'{title}: {rating}')
```

**Pattern:** Find container elements, then extract data from each

# Handling Missing Elements

```
movie = soup.find('div', class_='movie-card')

# Bad: Crashes if h2 doesn't exist
title = movie.find('h2').text

# Good: Check if element exists
title_elem = movie.find('h2')
if title_elem:
    title = title_elem.text.strip()
else:
    title = "Unknown"

# Alternative: Use try-except
try:
    title = movie.find('h2').text.strip()
except AttributeError:
    title = "Unknown"
```

# Complete Scraping Example

```
def scrape_imdb_top_movies():
    url = "https://www.imdb.com/chart/top/"
        response = requests.get(url)
    soup = BeautifulSoup(response.text, 'lxml')
        movies = []

for row in soup.select('tbody.lister-list tr')[:10]:
    title_col = row.find('td', class_='titleColumn')
    rating_col = row.find('td', class_='ratingColumn')
        if title_col and rating_col:
            title = title_col.a.text
            rating = rating_col.strong.text
            movies.append({'title': title,
                           'rating': rating})
        return movies
```

# Web Scraping Ethics

## Important rules:

1.

**Check robots.txt:** example.com/robots.txt

- Specifies what bots can/can't scrape

2.

**Respect rate limits:** Don't overload servers

- Add delays between requests

3.

**Check Terms of Service:** Some sites prohibit scraping

4.

## Part 6: Working with APIs

Best practices for production data collection

# REST API Basics

**REST:** Representational State Transfer

**Key concepts:**

- Resources identified by URLs
- HTTP methods indicate action (GET, POST, PUT, DELETE)
  - Stateless (each request independent)
    - Responses usually in JSON

**Example:** OMDB API is a REST API

# API Authentication

**Why:** Prevent abuse, track usage, monetize

**Common methods:**

1. **API Key** (simplest):

```
params = {"apikey": "YOUR_KEY"}
```

2. **Bearer Token**:

```
headers = {"Authorization": "Bearer YOUR_TOKEN"}
```

3. **OAuth** (complex): Multi-step authentication flow

# API Keys Best Practices

Never hardcode API keys!

```
# Bad  
api_key = "sk_live_abc123xyz"  
  
# Good: Use environment variables  
import os  
api_key = os.environ.get("OMDB_API_KEY")  
  
# Better: Use python-dotenv  
from dotenv import load_dotenv  
load_dotenv()  
api_key = os.getenv("OMDB_API_KEY")
```

# Using .env Files

Create `.env` file:

```
OMDB_API_KEY=your_key_here  
TMDB_API_KEY=another_key
```

Add to `.gitignore`:

```
.env
```

Load in code:

```
from dotenv import load_dotenv  
import os  
  
load_dotenv()  
api_key = os.getenv("OMDB_API_KEY")
```

# Rate Limiting

**APIs limit requests to prevent abuse**

**OMDb:** 1000/day (free tier)

**TMDb:** 40 requests per 10 seconds

**How to handle:**

1. Read API documentation
2. Add delays between requests
3. Implement exponential backoff
4. Cache responses locally

# Implementing Rate Limiting

```
import time
from datetime import datetime, timedelta

class RateLimiter:
    def __init__(self, max_calls, period):
        self.max_calls = max_calls
        self.period = period
        self.calls = []

    def wait_if_needed(self):
        now = datetime.now()
        self.calls = [c for c in self.calls
                     if now - c <
                        timedelta(seconds=self.period)]
        if len(self.calls) >= self.max_calls:
            sleep_time = self.period - \
                         (now - self.calls[0]).seconds
            time.sleep(sleep_time)
        self.calls.append(now)
```

# Pagination

**Problem:** APIs don't return all data at once

**Example:** TMDb returns 20 movies per request

**Solution:** Make multiple requests with page parameter

```
all_movies = []
for page in range(1, 6): # Get 5 pages
    params = {"apikey": key, "page": page}
    response = requests.get(url, params=params)
    data = response.json()
    all_movies.extend(data["results"])
    time.sleep(1) # Rate limiting
```

# Caching API Responses

Why: Avoid redundant requests, save API quota

```
import json
import os

def get_cached_or_fetch(movie_id, api_key):
    cache_file = f"cache/{movie_id}.json"
    if os.path.exists(cache_file):
        with open(cache_file) as f:
            return json.load(f)
    data = get_movie_data(movie_id, api_key)
    os.makedirs("cache", exist_ok=True)
    with open(cache_file, 'w') as f:
        json.dump(data, f)
    return data
```

# Combining Multiple APIs

Strategy: Use IMDb ID as common key

```
def enrich_movie_data(imdb_id):
    omdb_data = get_omdb_data(imdb_id)
    tmdb_data = get_tmdb_data(imdb_id)

        movie = {
            "title": omdb_data.get("Title"),
            "year": omdb_data.get("Year"),
            "rating_imdb": omdb_data.get("imdbRating"),
            "rating_tmdb": tmdb_data.get("vote_average"),
            "budget": tmdb_data.get("budget"),
            "revenue": tmdb_data.get("revenue")
        }
    return movie
```

# Handling API Changes

APIs change! Be defensive:

1. Version your API calls:

```
url = "https://api.example.com/v3/movies"
```

2. Validate responses:

```
required_fields = ["title", "year", "rating"]
if not all(field in data for field in required_fields):
    print("API response missing required fields")
```

3. Monitor for errors: Log when structure changes

# Data Collection Best Practices

- 1. Start small:** Test with 5-10 items before scaling
- 2. Save raw responses:** Keep original JSON for debugging
- 3. Handle errors gracefully:** Don't crash on one failure
- 4. Log progress:** Know where you stopped if interrupted
- 5. Validate data:** Check for missing/invalid fields
- 6. Document your process:** Future you will thank you!

# Building a Production Collector

```
import logging

logging.basicConfig(level=logging.INFO)
logger = logging.getLogger(__name__)

def collect_movies(movie_ids, api_key):
    results = []
    for i, movie_id in enumerate(movie_ids):
        logger.info(f"Collecting {i+1}/{len(movie_ids)}")
        try:
            data = get_movie_data(movie_id, api_key)
            if data:
                results.append(data)
            if i % 10 == 0:
                save_results(results,
                             "partial_results.json")
        except Exception as e:
            logger.error(f"Failed: {e}")
    return results
```

# Saving Progress

```
import json

def save_results(results, filename):
    with open(filename, 'w') as f:
        json.dump(results, f, indent=2)

def load_results(filename):
    try:
        with open(filename) as f:
            return json.load(f)
    except FileNotFoundError:
        return []

# Resume from where you left off
existing = load_results("partial_results.json")
existing_ids = {r["imdbID"] for r in existing}
remaining = [id for id in all_ids
             if id not in existing_ids]
```

# Summary: Data Collection Workflow

For our Netflix movie dataset:

- 1. Identify data sources:** OMDb API, TMDb API, IMDb scraping
- 2. Test with small sample:** 5-10 movies
- 3. Implement collectors:** Functions for each source
- 4. Handle errors:** Try-except, retries, validation
- 5. Respect rate limits:** Delays, exponential backoff
- 6. Combine data:** Merge using IMDb ID
- 7. Save incrementally:** Don't lose progress
- 8. Validate output:** Check for missing fields

# Next Steps

## Week 2: Data Validation

- Clean and validate the collected data
- Handle missing values and inconsistencies
  - Use Pydantic for validation
  - Analyze with csvkit and pandas

## Week 3: Data Labeling

- Learn about annotation tasks
- Use Label Studio for labeling
- Measure inter-annotator agreement
- Build high-quality training datasets

# Key Takeaways

1.

**Data collection is foundational:** Bad data = bad models

2.

**Multiple approaches:** APIs (preferred) and web scraping

3.

**Error handling is critical:** Network issues, missing fields, rate limits

4.

**Be a good citizen:** Respect robots.txt, rate limits, ToS

5.

Savvy raw data. You can always reprocess.

# Resources

## APIs:

- OMDb API: <http://www.omdbapi.com/>
- TMDb API: <https://www.themoviedb.org/documentation/api>

## Libraries:

- requests: <https://requests.readthedocs.io/>
- BeautifulSoup: <https://www.crummy.com/software/BeautifulSoup/>
  - Playwright: <https://playwright.dev/python/>

## Tools:

- curl: <https://curl.se/>
- jq: <https://stedolan.github.io/jq/>

# Questions?

**Next class:** Lab session - hands-on data collection practice