Data scraping tools for marketers who don’t know code

We have all been there before. You need the right data from a website for your next content marketing project. You have found your source websites, the data is just there waiting for you to grab it and then the challenge emerges. You have 500 pages and wonder how to extract all this data at once.

It doesn’t help if you have the data if you can’t grab it. Without proper data scraping software, you won’t get it.

If you are like me, you had to learn Python so Scrapy can get the job done for you. Alternatively, you have to learn XPath for Excel, which is also something that takes quite a bit of time.

And since time is our most precious commodity, there is software available that doesn’t require learning a line of code to complete this task.

I have tried the following software as they all provide a free account and quite a good number of features to get the job done for a small to medium data set.

Definition of data scraping

The definition of data scraping is:

> *“…a technique in which a computer program extracts data from human-readable output coming from another program.”*
>
> *– Wikipedia*

Essentially, you can crawl entire websites, extract pieces of information from several pages and download this information into a structured Excel file. This is what I have done

recently to build a sharable piece of research.

Data scraping can be used in many projects, including the following:

- Price-monitoring projects, where you want to keep track of price changes;
- Lead generation, where you can download your leads information for sales analysis;
- Influencers and bloggers outreach, when you need to get information about name, surname, email address, tel number usually from a directory of influencers;
- Extracting data for your research on any topic and website, this is my most used need of data.

Parsehub

This is by far my favorite tool for crawling data on big publications and blogs. You can do very advanced data segmentation and crawling with Parsehub, to extract pieces of information for each page. With Parsehub, you can collect information about calendars, comments, infinite scrolling, infinite page numbers, drop downs, forms, javascript and text.

The main features are:

- Great customer support
- Fairly intuitive
- Very fast (if you are not using proxies and VPN)
- Easy to use interface

Octoparse

With the free Octoparse account, you can scrape up to 10,000 records. If you need more records and you are working on one data scraping project, Octoparse offers the project-based one-time fee for unlimited records.
The other service that I really like about Octoparse is that

they offer to scrape data for you. All you need to provide if the website and the data input you want to download, they do the rest.

The main features are:

- Click to extract
- Scrape behind a login and form
- Scheduled extraction
- Easy to use

Import.io

This tool is expensive for a single individual starting at $299/month but luckily, they offer a free account. The reason why it’s more costly is that you can do more than just organizing unstructured data. With Import.io you can also do these tasks:

- Identify the URL where your data is located
- Extract the hidden content
- Prepare the data with 100+ spreadsheet-like formulas
- Integrate to your business systems with their API
- Visualize data with custom reports

As you can see, Import.io serves the entire project-cycle, from data collection to visualization.

Grepsr

What interests me about Grepsr is the opportunity to manage the data scraping projects with a project management tool available of users. This allows many applications for the scraping project since these projects usually are very complicated. With the messaging and tasks apps in Grepsr you can quickly grab all requirements, answer to tickets and speak directly to all stakeholders involved.

The other very useful feature is automation. Instead manually set up each scraping project, you can set it up once and set a rule to the software for scheduled scrapes.

All of these extra features also come at a higher price of $199/ month, which can be expensive for a single user. So Grepsr is more suitable for team and big data projects, rather than single individuals. The free version for small projects is an option in the Chrome app.

Conclusion

We use big data to make essential business decisions. Having a reliable partner that can automate tasks will save you time. Whether you are doing market research, monitoring price changes on Amazon and eBay (or even Google), grabbing information for your next blogger outreach project, data scraping software can help you. Just make sure you try and test each one of them before committing.

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ImnPls/data-scraping-tools-for-marketers-who-dont-know-code-319446