

Mining Facebook

Facebook is arguably the heart of the social web and is somewhat of an all-in-one wonder, given that more than half of its 1 billion users are active each day updating statuses, posting photos, exchanging messages, chatting in real time, checking in to physical locales, playing games, shopping, and just about anything else you can imagine.

From a social web mining standpoint, the wealth of data that Facebook stores about individuals, groups, and products is quite exciting, because Facebook's clean API presents incredible opportunities to synthesize it into information (the world's most precious commodity), and glean valuable insights. On the other hand, this great power commands great responsibility, and Facebook has instrumented the most sophisticated set of online privacy controls that the world has ever seen in order to help protect its users from exploit.

It's worth noting that although Facebook is self-proclaimed as a social graph, it's been steadily transforming into a valuable interest graph as well, because it maintains relationships between people and the things that they're interested in through its Facebook pages and "Likes" feature.

In this regard, you may increasingly hear it framed as a "social interest graph." For the most part, you can make a case that interest graphs implicitly exist and can be bootstrapped from most sources of social data. Facebook data mining lets you dive deeper into market demographics, helps you to offer products based on people's personal choices, and makes it possible to identify consumer behaviour.

What data can I extract from Facebook?

With a Facebook scraping tool, you can crawl, extract, and mine all publicly available data from Facebook pages, such as:

- posts
- likes
- comments
- reviews
- contact details
- profiles
- addresses