

Large Language Models as Control Planes for Industrial-Scale Web Data Extraction

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ABSTRACT

Web-scale information extraction faces a fundamental trade-off: rule-based wrappers are brittle and vulnerable to drift, while end-to-end LLM extraction is accurate but costly and opaque. We introduce a pipeline that promotes the LLM to the *control plane*, leaving fast, transparent wrappers in the data plane and letting the model monitor drift and auto-repair them at scale.

The architecture rests on three pillars to be developed during the PhD. (i) *URL discovery*: an agnostic module that exploits temporal link-graph signals to surface high-value pages without manual seed tuning. (ii) *Structural templating*: a formal grammar-based clustering that groups pages into stable templates and defines reusable wrapper scopes. (iii) *LLM control plane*: agentic LLMs that both supervise the pipeline and repair wrappers when drift is detected.

By fusing URL discovery, theory-grounded templating, and LLM-based wrapper induction, the system aims to transform hand-tuned heuristics into a self-healing, economically sustainable, fully autonomous web data extraction pipeline, orchestrated by a dedicated control plane. The full system will be field-tested in the domain of editorial news, an incremental, high-drift environment where layout changes and semantic diversity make robust extraction especially challenging. While initially developed within the domain of media intelligence, the architecture is designed for generalization to other structured web verticals.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The exponential growth of web-based content has outpaced the capabilities of traditional data extraction methods. Domains such as media monitoring, market intelligence, and competitive analysis require systems that can not only process vast and structurally diverse data sources but also adapt rapidly to frequent layout changes. Manual extraction and semi-automated workflows, while precise, are slow, labor-intensive, and brittle in the face of even minor structural drift. On the other end of the spectrum, direct invocation of large language models (LLMs) for document-level extraction as a

solution for full automation introduces high operational costs and lacks predictable, controllable outputs—both of which are problematic in high-volume, production-grade systems.

Although LLM inference costs are evolving rapidly, a more fundamental challenge is consistently controlling model behavior. Traditional wrapper-based systems retain an advantage in this regard: they expose explicit, tunable logic that remains robust across structural changes. In contrast, modifying LLM outputs typically requires costly model fine-tuning or extensive prompt engineering and retrieval-augmented generation scaffolding. This “control problem” constitutes an additional hurdle to the reliable deployment of LLM-based extraction at industrial scales.

Meltwater, a global media-intelligence provider processing billions of news, blog, and social-media posts daily [9, 26–28, 35], illustrates this tension. Its crawler uses automatically induced wrappers built on shallow NLP heuristics and page descriptors, which require constant human retuning to handle structural drift. This mismatch has left the current system in a suboptimal position: while automation enables rapid expansion of coverage, the human oversight layer cannot keep up with the cases that need intervention. Our goal is to bridge this gap through smarter, modular automation. The architecture will be field-tested in Meltwater’s editorial news pipeline—an environment of constant content churn, layout volatility, and semantic ambiguity; hence, an ideal setting to evaluate system resilience and wrapper adaptability under real-world drift.

We introduce an LLM-driven control plane that continuously evaluates extraction quality by monitoring runtime metrics and cross-referencing them with temporal and structural signals. Upon detecting drift—manifested as divergence between expected and actual extraction patterns—it issues targeted repair or regeneration directives to LLM agents operating in the data plane. This orchestration layer enforces system-wide policies, coordinates wrapper lifecycle events, and maintains consistent performance across heterogeneous and evolving web sources. The underlying architecture comprises three interdependent data plane modules: (1) URL discovery, which leverages temporal link-graph differentials to identify high-value, frequently updated content; (2) structural templating, which applies landmark-grammar clustering to define template-level parsing boundaries; and (3) LLM-based wrapper induction, where agents synthesize or modify extraction logic over clustered page structures under control plane supervision.

The system adopts a closed-loop control model inspired by the control and data plane abstraction in networking, enabling autonomous modules to collaborate through fine-grained signal exchange. The data plane operates at the content level (crawling, parsing, and extraction) while the control plane governs global

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behavior, including drift detection, cost policies, and wrapper synthesis. URL discovery expands the crawl frontier with minimal assumptions; structural templating consolidates new layouts into reusable patterns. Unlike static architectures, this dynamic framework continuously integrates real-time signals across layers, allowing for a self-healing, adaptable, and scalable framework.

2 RELATED WORK

Traditional approaches to web data extraction have relied on manually and semi-automatically engineered wrappers [3], which map the DOM of web pages into structured data formats using predefined extraction rules. The wrappers are able to achieve high accuracy but suffer from substantial drawbacks: they are labor-intensive to create, costly to maintain, and fragile in the face of structural drift. Early systems automated wrapper generation with a mixture of rule-based ontologies, shallow NLP, and explicit page-layout descriptors [4, 7, 10, 15, 16, 23, 30]. While accurate, they remain brittle: at an industrial scale, pages that drift beyond the original distribution emerge regularly and require expensive manual fixes.

Past research has increasingly explored unsupervised template clustering to minimize manual effort and enhance scalability in web data extraction. Systems like iRobot [5] and *boilerplate detection* [22] group structurally similar web pages using DOM-based similarity metrics to identify repeating structural patterns. However, these template clustering methods face challenges in handling dynamic content updates, heterogeneous web structures, and noise from unstructured data or invalid and duplicated pages. To enhance URL discovery, focused crawling approaches like FoCUS [20] and iCrawl [17] integrate URL-based classification and prioritization algorithms. FoCUS, for instance, employs page classifiers and regular expressions to generate crawling specifications tailored to web forums; similarly, iCrawl leverages external signals to prioritize URLs based on relevance to topics of interest. Such URL discovery techniques significantly reduce crawling costs and improve the efficiency and relevance of content retrieval compared to a baseline, but rely on assumptions about the content that must be retrieved, either in terms of URL structure or content semantic similarity.

The emergence of LLMs has opened new avenues for automating extraction with fewer manual interventions and structural assumptions. Evaporate [2] uses LLMs to autonomously structure semi-structured documents without labeled training data. Its successor, Evaporate-Code+ [2] prompts LLMs to emit reusable Python functions, reducing repeated calls. Fine-tuned models advance performance across technical tasks [18, 19, 24], while other work shows off-the-shelf models handle complex challenges like entity matching and schema alignment with strong out-of-distribution robustness [1, 14, 31]. These gains are further enhanced by targeted human oversight, which improves reliability by reviewing ambiguous outputs, validating extractions, and refining clustering or wrapper synthesis pipelines [2, 11, 12]. Together, these methods point toward scalable, semi-autonomous extraction with humans in the loop—though not yet toward full autonomy.

LLMs also power agent frameworks that plan, coordinate, and revise workflows. AutoGen [37], CrewAI [13], and Agent-OM [32] exemplify multi-agent reasoning systems, while platforms like

Kadoa [21] and ScrapeGraphAI [33] explore self-healing scrapers that detect layout drift and regenerate parsing logic. Research prototypes such as HuggingGPT [34] show tool-generation and verification loops, and autonomous agents like AutoGPT and Agent-OM demonstrate outcome monitoring and closed-loop correction. However, production-grade LLM control planes that orchestrate such agents across complex extraction workflows are still lacking.

Large-scale studies now range from AI-native data stores to fine-grained pipeline tools: LLMs can act as a “universal query interface,” fusing search, inference, and transformation across heterogeneous data silos [25]; subsequent work elevates those capabilities into a declarative algebra that an engine can cost-optimize like SQL plans [29]; further research turns complex questions over data lakes into automatically composed, interactively refined workflows that blend retrieval, reasoning, and validation [36]; and another approach compiles natural-language task descriptions into hybrid pipelines that mix LLM calls with cheaper, learned components [8]. Collectively, these systems signal the feasibility of AI-native search, processing, and orchestration, yet each tackles only a slice of the end-to-end problem: none merges continuous quality-versus-cost control, cross-pipeline signal fusion, rigorous SLA enforcement, and human-override paths into a single production-grade control plane. Bridging that gap remains an open research frontier.

Our architecture tackles the core challenges of web-scale extraction by using temporal-signal URL discovery and landmark-grammar structural templating as robust, drift-aware primitives defining the crawl frontier and parsing boundaries. These components provide a stable, interpretable substrate for an LLM-driven control plane that enables closed-loop orchestration without brittle heuristics. While LLMs are leveraged in both operational and strategic capacities, the system distinguishes concerns by delegating routine extraction tasks to data plane agents and reserving high-level responsibilities—such as drift detection, policy enforcement, and wrapper lifecycle management—for the control layer. Fine-grained telemetry, cost-aware policies, and hierarchical escalation protocols ensure responsive behavior and bounded autonomy.

3 THE THREE PILLARS

Building on Meltwater’s existing infrastructure for editorial news, our solution aims to balance scalability, robustness, and interpretability in a high-volume, drift-prone production setting. It replaces reactive maintenance with proactive orchestration by embedding LLM-driven reasoning across the pipeline.

At its core, the system is comprised of three pillars—URL discovery, structural templating, and LLM-based wrapper induction—each designed to replace brittle heuristics with modular, self-adaptive logic. These pillars operate in the *data plane*, performing discovery, parsing, and extraction. Above them sits a dedicated *LLM-driven control plane* that continuously monitors system health, detects drift, and orchestrates repairs, turning manual oversight into a policy-governed loop of autonomous adaptation.

The first pillar, URL discovery, continuously identifies content-rich web pages through dynamic URL discovery based on temporal signals. Starting from a small set of seed pages, it incrementally expands coverage by analyzing link graph changes within domains,

ensuring proactive adaptation to new and evolving content sources without human intervention or domain assumptions [5, 17].

The second pillar, structural template clustering, systematically groups web pages according to structural similarity in their HTML (DOM) layout. Utilizing a landmark grammar approach [6], this clustering isolates and identifies structural patterns across pages, significantly enhancing wrapper generalizability and reducing redundant extraction logic. The landmark grammar method’s practical viability at full production scale remains subject to validation.

The third pillar introduces LLM-based agents that perform wrapper induction within the data plane. When the control plane detects drift—by comparing runtime extraction results with expected patterns derived from URL discovery and template clustering—it triggers these agents to repair wrappers. Operating over structured templates, the agents update extraction logic autonomously, adapting to layout changes without manual input. This targeted activation ensures precise, cost-effective adaptation while maintaining stable, interpretable wrappers across evolving web content.

3.1 Preliminary Results

Pilot evaluations conducted on Meltwater’s editorial news ingestion pipeline have shown that the URL discovery component consistently achieves high coverage with strong precision across web domains. It outperformed a sample of Meltwater’s current system in both resource efficiency—defined as the number of unique publications over the total number of links crawled—and overall content coverage. The module proved robust in surfacing publications through temporal link-graph signals, underscoring its domain-agnostic design and adaptability to shifting web dynamics.

Upcoming development includes lightweight clustering prototypes employing landmark grammar and an essential LLM-agent loop aimed at automating wrapper synthesis and drift detection. These early-stage experiments aim to robustly assess feasibility, guide subsequent iterations, and lay a solid foundation for comprehensive validation prior to full-scale deployment.

4 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Our solution targets automation precisely where human oversight, shallow NLP, and page descriptors have become bottlenecks. The pipeline preserves the transparency and control of wrapper-based logic while adding semantic adaptability via intelligent agents. Field validation focuses on editorial news—a domain central to Meltwater, marked by high turnover and structural volatility. This provides a high-volume, real-world testbed aligned with system assumptions.

Once validated, this architecture is expected to enable end-to-end autonomous operation—minimizing manual intervention, improving resilience to structural drift, and expanding Meltwater’s data ingestion capabilities across a broader spectrum of domains and content types. The system thus represents both a practical advancement in industrial extraction and a model for scalable, LLM-integrated automation in complex web environments.

Future work will consolidate the three pillars—temporal-signal URL discovery, template clustering, and LLM-based wrapper induction—into a unified, production-grade framework orchestrated by a dedicated control plane. The discovery layer will be extended with LLM-guided link-prioritization that estimates content utility

at crawl time, enabling low-latency feedback loops and smarter resource allocation. The templating engine will scale landmark-grammar clustering to millions of pages via algorithms optimized for hierarchical structure and cross-domain generalization. On the control plane side, ongoing research will focus on drift signal modeling, prompt sensitivity analysis, and ambiguity-aware wrapper control. A multi-stage development and validation cycle will stress-test each subsystem under real-time, high-volume conditions.

Taken together, this work delivers a blueprint for re-architecting industrial web extraction pipelines around autonomous orchestration and modular resilience. The system features a closed-loop control plane that ingests extraction telemetry, detects drift, and coordinates agentic repair; a link-graph-driven discovery engine that surfaces fresh, high-yield content while minimizing crawl depth; and a scalable structural-clustering layer that supports robust, reusable wrapper generalization. The architecture combines programmatic wrappers with on-demand LLM augmentation, matching end-to-end accuracy of fully generative models while minimizing inference overhead and preserving operational transparency. Beyond its immediate deployment at Meltwater scale, the architecture establishes a transferable paradigm for LLM-governed automation across data-intensive workflows, redefining the human role from manual maintainer to strategic supervisor under policy-bound autonomy.

A central research challenge is defining rigorous, component-level evaluation criteria across the full architecture. Each pillar is treated as an independent module with task-specific metrics: precision@k and coverage for URL discovery; purity, stability, and compression ratio for structural clustering; and accuracy, latency, and recovery precision for wrapper induction. These metrics will be validated in the editorial news domain, where drift and scale create meaningful pressure on system performance. Although pipeline-wide comparison is inherently complex, the architecture’s modularity enables layered benchmarks and ablation studies. Future work includes defining normalized, cost-aware composite metrics to compare hybrid, LLM-heavy, and rule-based extraction strategies under real-world constraints.

Status of PhD: Currently in the early stages of doctoral research, with the dissertation framework under active development. The direction of the work is highly adaptable, and participation in the VLDB PhD Workshop is expected to provide valuable feedback that will inform system design choices, evaluation methodology, and integration strategies.

Keywords: Intelligent Agents; Web Data Extraction; Wrapper Induction; Template Clustering; Large Language Models; URL Discovery; Automation; Semantic Labeling; Control Plane

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