

# Information retrieval I

Introduction : how to organize big data for efficient look-ups

Clovis Galiez

Mastère Big Data

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# Objectives of the course

- Acquire a culture in information retrieval
- Master the basics concepts allowing to understand:
  - what is at stake in novel IR methods
  - what are the technical limits

This will allow you to have the basics tools to analyze current limitations or lacks, and imagine novel solutions.

# Today's outline

- What is information retrieval (in general)?
- Querying (correctness) and ranking (relevance)
- IR in the context of the web
  - Elements of web protocols and languages
  - Gathering data on the web: crawling
  - What data size is at stake?
- How to represent the information?
  - Indexing
  - Sparse representations
  - Reverse indexing
- Practicals: understanding and selling your patent!

# What is information retrieval (IR)?

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## Definition

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## Typical example

Google.

# What is "document" and "information"?

## Information retrieval

Answering a query by extracting **relevant information** from **a collection of documents**.

Here, **documents** are web pages, images, pdf, etc.

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## Information

Subset of documents relevant to a query.

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Answering a query by extracting **relevant information** from a **collection of documents**.

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How would you define **information** in the context of information retrieval?

## Information

Subset of documents relevant to a query.

How could you qualify or measure information, e.g. relevance?

When was the last US presidential elections?

## Correctness, relevance and truth

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**correct** or **incorrect**

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- Blue
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**Relevance**

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### Relevance

- Same time as the previous ones, but 5 years later

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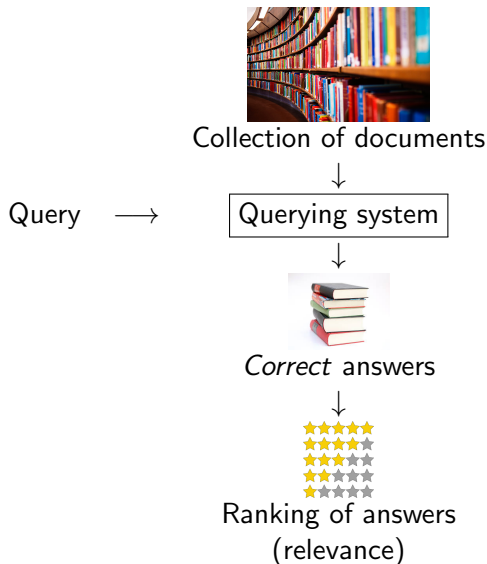
### Relevance

- Same time as the previous ones, but 5 years later
- during the 21st Century
- 1478563200s since Unix Epoch<sup>a</sup>

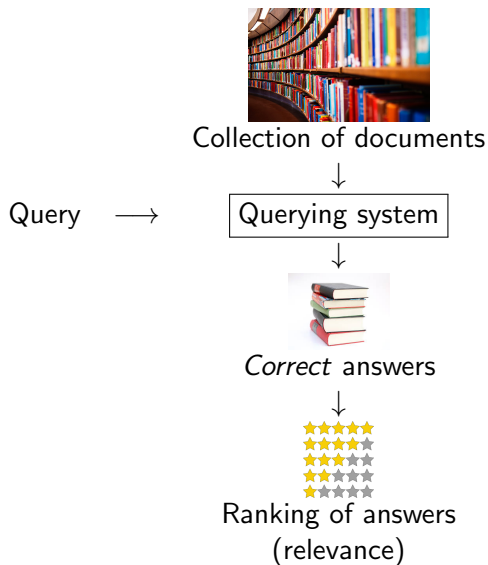
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<sup>a</sup>Number of seconds elapsed since 1st of January 1970

# Querying and ranking systems



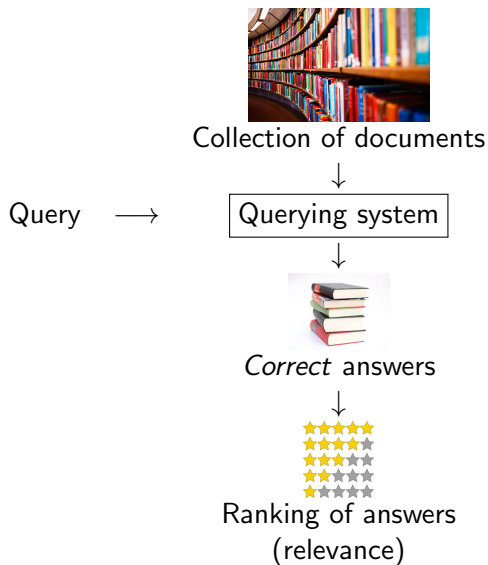
# Querying systems deal with correctness



Filter documents that *correctly* answers a given query

- Boolean queries
  - Checks if a word is present or not in a document
- Probabilistic models
  - Naïve Bayes model
- Vector-based models

# Ranking systems deal with relevance



Ranking methods:

- structure-agnostic algorithms
- unsupervised ranking
  - PageRank
- supervised ranking
  - machine learning

# What are the pitfalls?

## Exercise

Take few minutes to list what could be the different pitfalls for querying and ranking systems.

# What are the pitfalls?

## Exercise

Take few minutes to list what could be the different pitfalls for querying and ranking systems.

- Complexity of natural language
- Ambiguity of natural language
- Size of the data
- ...



# IR specific to the World Wide Web

# IR and the web



Collection of documents



Query →

Querying system



*Correct* answers



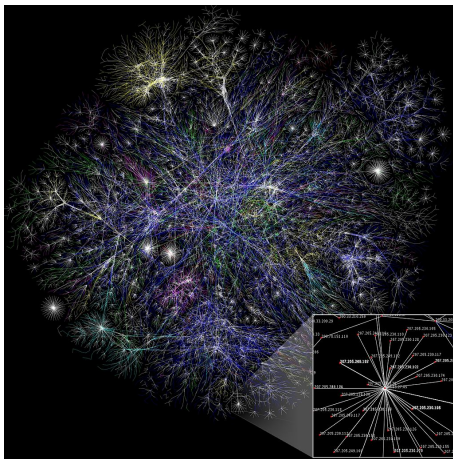
Ranking of answers  
(relevance)

2 specificities:

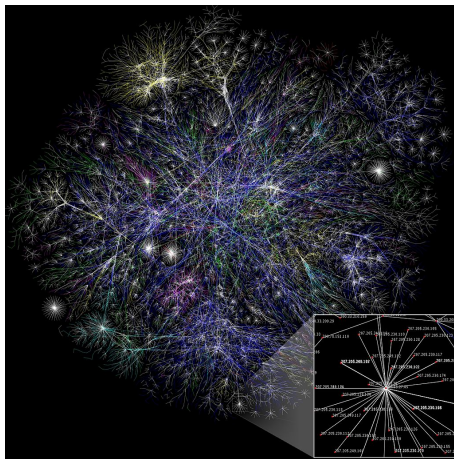
- Building the collection of documents
  - **Crawling** the web
  - **Indexing** documents
- Ranking the documents (next lecture)

# Gathering data on the web (crawling)

# The web structure: a huge graph



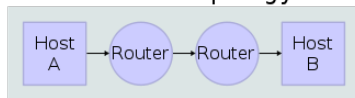
# The web structure: a huge graph



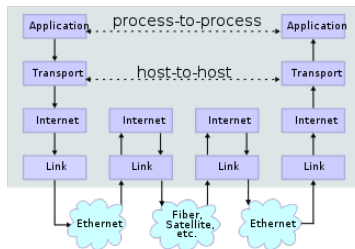
Initiated in 70's with ARPANET. In 2017, >8 Billion "nodes"

# The web protocols

## Network Topology



## Data Flow



The textual web uses the HTTP<sup>1</sup> over TCP/IP protocol<sup>2</sup>.

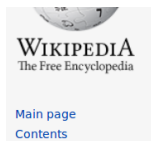
<sup>1</sup>T. Berners-Lee in 90 at CERN

<sup>2</sup>Cerf and Kahn, 74

# The web structure: languages

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information\\_retrieval](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_retrieval):



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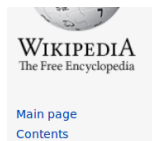
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HTML source code behind:

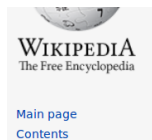
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How would you collect information from the web?

# The web structure: crawling

Hopping from link to link, one can collect/process data on the web:

Web crawling  
JumpStation (1993)



Must keep track of already visited pages (e.g. trie).

# Parsing links from a web page

With regular expressions (regex) for instance.

Regex	Match examples	
a <sup>*</sup>	aaa	a
M.x	Max	Mix
M. <sup>*</sup> x	Max	Matrix

Regex is a simple pattern matching formalism.

## Regex: groups

Regex	data	1st group
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## Exercise

Find a regex that extracts the URL of an HTML link.

```
<a href="http://www.wikipedia.org">The linked text</a>
```

Extend your regex to extract both the URL and the linked text.



Quality of the data: HTML errors, difficult parsing.

# What is the size of the crawled data?

Quizz:

Number of pages indexed by Google	
Data size crawled by Google	
Number of pages with $k/2$ incoming links	
Number of pages of length $L/2$	

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<sup>3</sup>[Pandya et al. IJIRST 2017]

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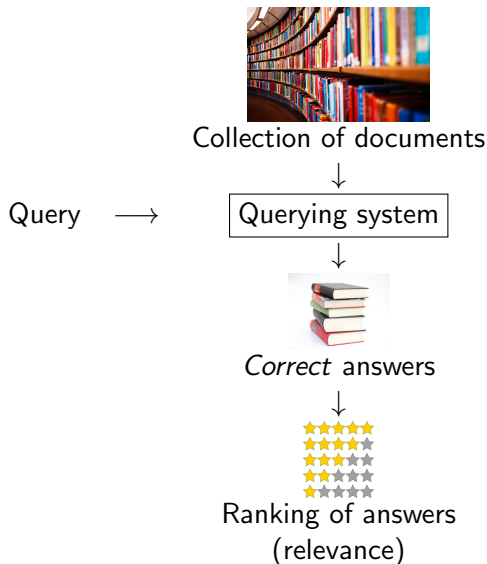
Between 0.2% and 4% of the web is accessible by crawling<sup>3</sup>.

What is "uncrawlable" is coined the **deep web**.

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# From gathering to representation



# Representations of a web document

# How to query for correct documents?

## Exercise

Take few minutes to think how you would retrieve the web documents corresponding to the query:

result last elections president united states

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You may have encounter the following issues:

- how to correctly match words in the document (tokenization)
- how to match equivalent word (e.g. plural)
- how to implement it



# Tokenization

Process of chopping the text of a document in atomic elements:

Brian is in the kitchen      →    Brian is in the kitchen

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United States president	→	

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Usually, tokenizers remove the punctuation.

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Usually, tokenizers remove the punctuation.

May be difficult: `United States`  $\neq$  `United` + `States`!



- Data mining approaches help to extract the right tokens: if two words are significantly seen one after the other, may be consider as a token.
- Some languages are agglutinative (e.g. Turkish).

# Stemming

Language-specific rules defining equivalent words up to a usual transformation (e.g. -ing, -ed, -s, etc.).

For instance, we would transform:

plural forms:	elections	→	election
substantive/adjectival forms:	presidential	→	president
stop-words removal:	in	→	NULL

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Again, same difficulties could appear:



- ambiguity: police, policy → polic
- Non-conflating: mother, maternal

# Naive representation: vector of tokens

Matrix with the occurrence of tokens in documents.

	tok 1	tok 2	tok 3	tok 4	tok 5	...
	election	president	crazy	united	United States	...
doc 1	1	1	0	0	1	...
doc 2	0	1	1	0	1	...
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...	...	...	...	...	...	...

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### Exercise

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Can you foresee any practical problem? What is the size of the matrix?  
Can it fit in **memory**?

# Sparse representation

Since documents contain only a small fraction of existing tokens, most of the vector of token entries are null.

We can use a sparse encoding of the same information:

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doc 1→tok 1, tok 2, tok 5

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## Exercise

What is the size of the sparse encoding data structure?

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## Hmmm

Write an algorithm extracting the matching documents from a sparse encoding doc-tok.

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Write an algorithm extracting the matching documents from a sparse encoding doc-tok. **How long** would it take to process a query?

# Elements in complexity

## Definition

The complexity is the measure the of the size an algorithm needs of memory and the time it takes to process.

It is usually measured in terms of order of magnitude of the size of the input data.

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<sup>4</sup> $k$  can be related to the length of the document through Heap's law:  $k = K.L^\beta$ . In practice,  $K = 50, \beta = 0.5$



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Can we do better?

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## Elements in complexity: sorting

Action	Complexity
Accessing an element of a matrix	$\mathcal{O}(1)$
Sorting	$\mathcal{O}(N \log N)$
Searching a sorted list	$\mathcal{O}(\log N)$

### Exercise

Imagine a way of improving how to query a big set of documents.



# Inverse sparse index

## Idea

Inverting the sparse representation and sorting by document allows to reduce the complexity.

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doc 3 → tok 1, tok 2, tok 3, tok 5

tok 1 → doc 1, doc 3, ...

tok 2 → doc 1, doc 2, doc 3, ...

tok 3 → doc 2, doc 3, ...

tok 4 → doc 102, ...

tok 5 → doc 1, doc 2, doc 3, ...

## Exercise

Write an algorithm that indexes a document using a reverse sparse index. Compute the time complexity for querying an inverse sparse index.

# Building an inverted index in practice

The full sparse index does not fit in memory.

Block Sort-Based Indexing is a simple algorithm allows to invert big dictionaries that do not fit in main memory, at low cost, and that can even be parallelized<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>[https://westmont.instructure.com/files/51060/download?download\\_frd=1](https://westmont.instructure.com/files/51060/download?download_frd=1)

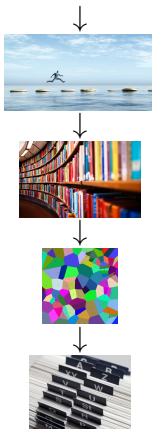
# Summary



## Information retrieval

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Information retrieval (IR)** is the activity of obtaining [information system](#) resources relevant to an information need from a collection of information resources. Searches can be based on [full-text](#)



## Glimpse of next week: the boolean queries are not flexible

### Example

Query: result elections United States

Doc title: "White House election: live results!"

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With a good stemming and tokenization, we will match result and election... we miss the match between United States and White House :-/

Any solution?

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### Example

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Any solution?

- Use semantics (ontologies)
- Next week: Use query expansion (add related terms to the query)
- Next week: Use a more flexible querying system



# Glimpse of next week: the boolean queries do not rank

## Example

Query: result elections United States  
matching results: 718,698,789

## How to pick up most relevant results first?

- Next week: With more complex querying and representation of the information
- Next week: By exploiting the graph structure of the web (Google)





# How to store already crawled URLs?

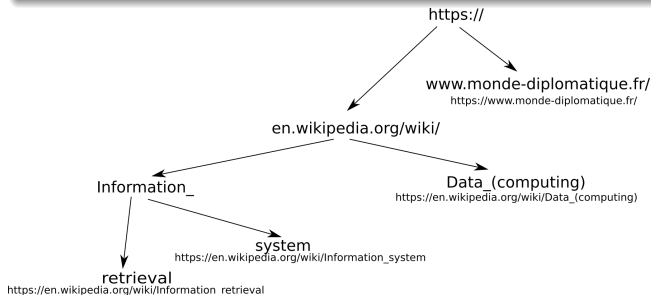
## Exercise

What is the cost of checking if the crawler already visited a web page? Is it reasonable?

# How to store already crawled URLs?

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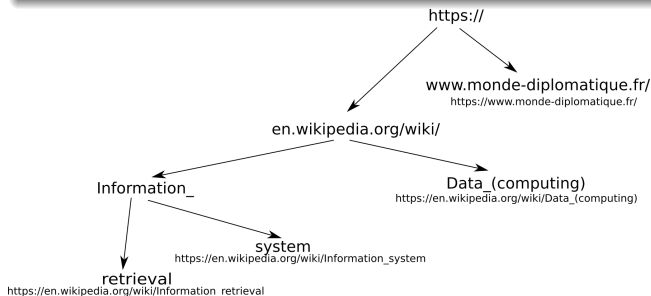


A *trie* structure.

# How to store already crawled URLs?

## Exercise

What is the cost of checking if the crawler already visited a web page? Is it reasonable?



A *trie* structure.

## Exercise

What is the complexity in time?

# Examples of (successful) companies in IR

ElasticSearch	Distributed, RESTful <sup>6</sup> search and analytics engine capable of solving a growing number of use cases. [...] centrally stores your data so you can discover the expected and uncover the unexpected.
swiftype	All-in-one relevance, lightning-fast setup and unprecedented control.
blekko	Now in IBM Watson

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<sup>6</sup>i.e. based on HTTP