

Northeastern University

College of Computer and Information Science
Information Retrieval CS6200 – Spring 2018
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Overview: You have been introduced to the core information retrieval concepts and processes throughout the course of this semester. In this project, you will get to put these into practice by building and using your very own retrieval systems!

Goals: Design and build your information retrieval systems, evaluate and compare their performance levels in terms of retrieval effectiveness

Dataset: CACM test-collection which is comprised of the following:

- 1- Textual corpus: cacm.tar.gz (3204 raw documents – except for Task 3 part B: use stemmed version [cacm_stem.txt](#))
- 2- Queries (64 unprocessed [cacm.query](#) – except for Task 3 part B: use [cacm_stem.query](#))
- 3- Relevance judgments ([cacm.rel](#))
- 4- Stoplist: [common_words.txt](#)

Team: Teams of 3 members are to be formed. Declare team members on the designated Piazza post by Monday November 27 5:00pm. **Once formed, teams cannot be altered.**

Milestones:

April 9: Release of the online description for the project

April 12: Team declaration due date

~~April 24 by NOON~~ **April 25 by 11:59pm:** Project & report (implementation & documentation) submission due date

Assessment: The project will be graded out of 100 points and then scaled to 20% of your overall grade (see syllabus for course grade details)

Implementation: 75 points (detailed point breakdown in project task descriptions)

Documentation: 25 points. **Project submissions lacking documentation (report) will NOT be accepted and hence will NOT be graded at all.**

Extra credit: 20 points: All or nothing. Awarded credit applies to project & homeworks.

Academic honesty: If you get help from others, you must write their names down on your submission and explain how they helped you. If you use external resources you must mention them explicitly. You may use third party libraries but you need to cite them, too.

Project Description:

Implementation – Phase 1 :: Indexing and Retrieval

Task 1 (15 points: 3pts + 12pts for LM): Build your own retrieval systems:

- A- From scratch! (You may re-use your indexer and searchers from HWs 3 and 4)
- B- Using Lucene: an open source library that provides indexing and searching functionalities (you may re-use your code from HW 4)

Task 1 Output: *Four baseline runs.*

Setup: Use *BM25*, *tf-idf*, and *Smoothed Query Likelihood Model* ($\lambda = 0.35$) as retrieval models combined with your word unigram indexer. The fourth run uses Lucene's default retrieval model. The top 100 (at most) retrieved ranked lists (one list per run/retrieval system) are to be reported.

Task 2 (15 points): Pick *one*¹ of the four runs above and perform *query enrichment*. You may use the any approaches explained in the course (e.g.: query time stemming, pseudo relevance feedback, semantic query expansion, etc.) or adopt other ones. Make sure to properly cite related literature and resources. Justify your design decisions, technical choices, and parameter setting and back them up with demonstrated evidence from literature and/or experiments whenever applicable.

Task 2 Output: *One* query enrichment run.

Task 3 (20 points): Perform the following on *three* baseline runs of your choice:

- A- Stopping (using [common_words.txt](#)) with no stemming.
- B- Index the stemmed version of the corpus ([cacm_stem.txt](#)). Retrieve results for the queries in [cacm_stem.query](#). Perform a query-by-query analysis for three queries that you find interesting.

Note: When parsing the documents, you may ignore the digits that commonly appear in the end of the documents' content.

Task 3 Output: *Six runs:* using *three* baselines X 2 variations (with stopping, with the stemmed corpus and stemmed query subset).

Implementation – Phase 2 :: Displaying Results (10 points)

Implement a *snippet generation* technique and *query term highlighting* within results in one of the baseline runs. It is for you to figure out the techniques,

¹ In practice, it is advised to perform Tasks 2 and 3 using all three base search engines from Task 1 to obtain a broad view of indexing strategies and retrieval models combinations. This, however, is not mandatory for this project

however, you are required to back up your choices with the algorithm(s)/ technique(s) details and cite the respective literature.

Implementation – Phase 3 :: Evaluation (15 points)

By now, you should have *eight* distinct runs with results for all 64 queries. Namely, 4 baseline runs, 1 query refinement run, and 3 stopping runs (we're not counting the stemming runs here). It is now time to assess the performance of your retrieval systems (runs) in terms of their effectiveness.

Implement and perform the following (**do NOT use TREC-Eval**):

- 1- MAP
- 2- MRR
- 3- P@K, K = 5 and 20
- 4- Precision & Recall (provide full tables for all queries and all runs)

Note: Queries that don't have any entries in the relevance judgment should be excluded from evaluation.

Documentation (25 points):

A- ReadMe.txt: Explain in detail how to setup, compile, and run your project.

B- Report **NOT to exceed 2000 words**² in PDF format, named as follows:

firstNameInitialLastName1_firstNameInitialLastName2[_firstNameInitialLastName3].pdf

Please follow this structure:

- i. First page: Project members' names, course name and semester, instructor name.
- ii. Introduction: Short description of your project, detailed description of each member's contribution to the project and its documentation
- iii. Literature and resources: overview of the techniques used (chosen query refinement approach, snippet generation approach) citing the scholarly work and research articles you used to back up your technique and algorithm choices.
- iv. Implementation and discussion: More thorough description of your project and design choices. Include query-by-query analysis in this section.
- v. Results: tables reporting all results obtained for all runs and queries for all required metrics. For query level results, please provide tables/spreadsheets, too.
- vi. Conclusions and outlook: state your findings, observations and analyses of the results. Which system do you think works best? Why? For "outlook": write a few sentences stating what you would envision doing to improve your project, what other features would choose to incorporate.

² This document's word count is about 1000 words

- vii. Bibliography: citations and links to resources and references
- viii. Don't forget to submit your code! Make sure to include intermediate result files (e.g. estimated language models)

Extra credit (20 points):

This part is optional, and is all or nothing. Awarded extra credit points apply to project and homeworks.

- 1- Design and implement a synthetic spelling-error generator. The underlying error model is simply a character shuffler that randomly shuffles non-boundary characters in a given token (a query term). Assume that the error rate on a query level is no higher than 40%, that is, in a 10-term query, 4 terms (or fewer) are to be affected by synthetic noise. Longer tokens should have higher probability of being affected by the noise than shorter ones. Report the overall effectiveness levels when running noisy queries and compare them to those of the noise-free baseline.
- 2- Design and implement a soft-matching query handler that doesn't correct the synthetic noise but rather minimizes its impact on effectiveness as much as possible. Your soft-matching model MUST NOT (attempt to) reverse the noise generator model, but rather be designed independently as if the error model is unknown. You may use any (combination) of the indexing and retrieval, and query handling techniques that you've learned throughout the course or adopt other ones. Compare overall effectiveness levels to those in the previous task and with the noise-free baseline (you may include the overall results of all three runs in one table).
- 3- Explain your solutions/approaches for the tasks above in the documentation part and include citations to all bibliography and/or resources.