11-442 / 11-642:
Search Engines

Introduction to Search

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Two Lecture Outline

A quick introduction to…

- Ad-hoc retrieval
- Information needs & queries
- Document representation
- Indexes
  - Inverted lists
- Exact match retrieval
  - Unranked Boolean
  - Ranked Boolean
- Document retrieval
  - TAAT
  - DAAT
- Query operators
  - Types of query operators
  - The NEAR operator

Goal: Provide an overview of search ("the Big Picture")

- Later lectures explore these topics in greater detail

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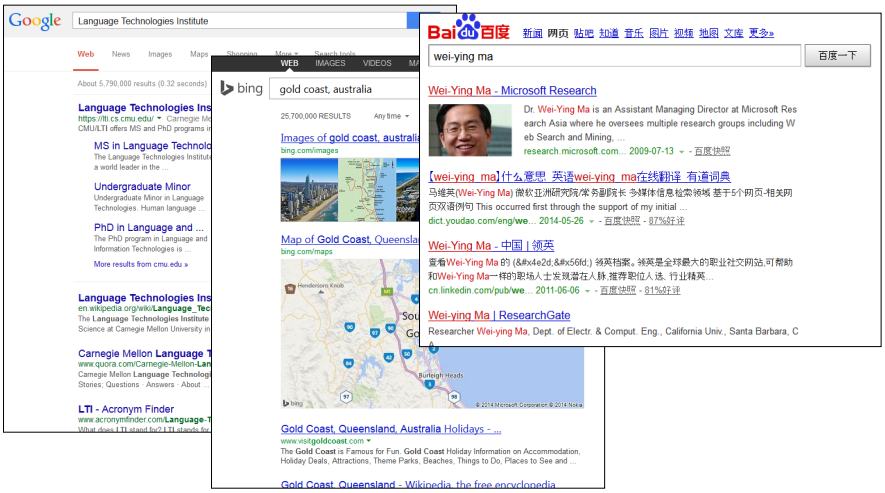
Probably You are an Experienced Search Engine User



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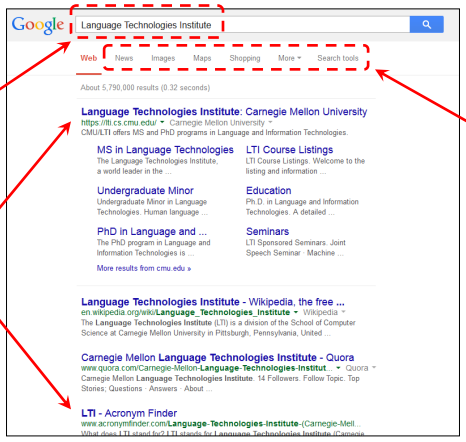
How Does a Search Engine Developer or Researcher View the Search Process?

A query that expresses an information need

Documents (unstructured information)



Vertical search engines

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How Does a Search Engine Developer or Researcher View the Search Process?

A person starts with an information need

- The query is an approximate description of the information need

The person searches a corpus of unstructured information

- Documents

Goal: Find documents that satisfy the information need

- Search, retrieval

This lecture and the next present a simple end-to-end solution

- The "big picture"
- Later lectures go into more detail & more advanced material

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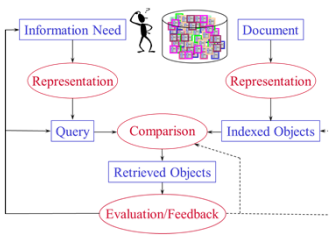
Simple End-to-End Solutions

Requirements

- A way of representing information needs
- A way of representing document content
- A comparison or matching process



Initial solutions

- Boolean queries
- Exact-match retrieval models (unranked and ranked)

These solutions are primitive, but they are still used today

- Fast, easy to build, easy to understand
- Often sufficient for a particular task

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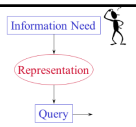
Representing the Information Need



Exact-match retrieval models assume that a person can describe the information need as a Boolean query

- Relational database systems also make this assumption
- Most people are not good at creating Boolean queries
- Even well-trained people overestimate the quality of their queries

Examples:

- Angelina AND Jolie
- (Angelina AND Jolie) OR (Brad AND Pitt)
- (Angelina NEAR/2 Jolie) OR (Brad NEAR/2 Pitt)
  - NEAR/n is similar to a phrase operator
  - Match if terms are in this order, separated by a distance ≤ n

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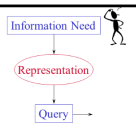
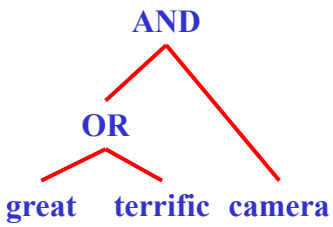
Query Trees



Query: (great OR terrific) AND camera

Search engines represent the query as a tree

- Nodes are query operators
- Leaves are index terms



Does query q match document d?

- Use depth-first evaluation
- More about this later….

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Representing the Document: An Example Document

A Great Choice.
Review by topjimmy5150
April, 21 2003

I have been looking and looking for a new camera to replace our bulky, but simple and reliable (but only fair picture taker) Sony Mavica FD73. My other choice (Besides the more expensive Nikon Coolpix 3100) was the (also more expensive) Sony Cybershot P72. I recommend any of these cameras, and I was set to buy the Sony, but at the last minute I cheaped out and bought the 2100. No regrets. I bought the camera (along with 128mb memory card (the stock 16mb card will be kept in the bag as a spare) and carrying case) at the new Best Buy in Harrisburg, PA. I also bought a set of 4 Nickle-Metal Hydride rechargable batteries and charger at Walmart for less than $20. I keep 2 in the camera and two in the charger/in the camera bag along with the original Lithium battery pack as spares.

Hands down, the best feature of this camera is it's compact design. It is very small. My family likes to go camping during the summer, and last year we found the Mavica too

. . . .

(topjimmy5150, Epinions.com)

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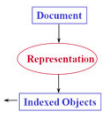
Representing the Document



How should the contents of a document be represented?

Today, assume that we will use words from the document

- Free-text indexing: Use just some of the words
  - Developed first, but … which words?
- Full-text indexing: Use most or all of the words
  - Most search engines do this

Later lectures consider other possibilities

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The Binary Full-Text Representation

Record which words occur in which documents (0: doesn't occur, 1: occurs)

- Invented first
- A tabular representation is simple (but very inefficient)

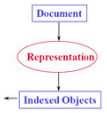
Vocabulary (Index Terms) |V|

Corpus |C|

	a	abba	abhor	ability	able	away	…	zoom
Doc_1	0	0	0	1	1	1	…	1
Doc_2	1	1	0	0	1	1	…	0
: : : :	:	: :	: :	: :	: :	: : :		: : :
Doc_n	0	0	1	1	0	1	…	0

Corpus: Document collection

The Binary Full-Text Representation (The Bag of Words)

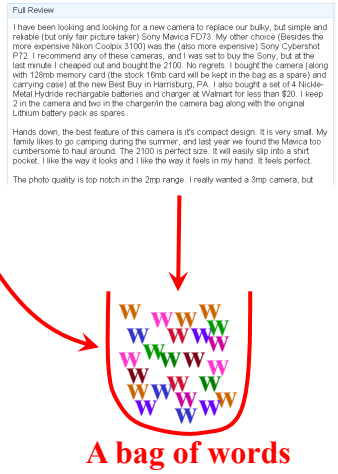


In the binary full-text representation, position and frequency are ignored

- The document is a "bag of words"
  - Or other features (covered later)

This is a simple representation of meaning

- But…surprisingly effective for search and other tasks (e.g., classification)



A bag of words

Frequency-Based Full-Text Representation

Record the frequency of each word in each document

- More effective for search than the binary representation
- A tabular representation is simple (but very inefficient)

Vocabulary (Index Terms) |V|

Corpus |C|

	a	abba	abhor	ability	able	away	…	zoom
Doc_1	0	0	0	7	3	4	…	2
Doc_2	4	5	0	0	1	2	…	0
: : : :	:	: :	: :	: :	: :	: : :		: : :
Doc_n	6	0	1	3	0	1	…	0

Corpus: Document collection

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Data Structures for Index Terms

Task: Evaluate the query "zoom AND away AND message"

One could compare to each document (row)

- Invented first
- Complexity is O(|C|×|V|)

Vocabulary (Index Terms) |V|

Corpus |C|	a	abba	abhor	ability	able	away	…	zoom
Doc_1	0	0	0	1	1	1	…	1
Doc_2	1	1	0	0	1	1	…	0
: : : :	:	: :	: :	: :	: :	: : :		: : :
Doc_n	0	0	1	1	0	1	…	0

Most terms are rare (occur in few documents)

- The vocabulary V is huge
- Nearly all documents fail to match the query
- Most of the O(|C|×|V|) effort is wasted effort

Data Structures for Index Terms: Inverted Lists

Task: Evaluate the query "zoom AND away AND message"

One could compare to query terms (columns)

- Columns are called inverted lists
- Complexity is O(|C|×|Q|)

Vocabulary (Index Terms) |V|

Corpus |C|	a	abba	abhor	ability	able	away	…	zoom
Doc_1	0	0	0	1	1	1	…	1
Doc_2	1	1	0	0	1	1	…	0
: : : :	:	: :	: :	: :	: :	: : :		: : :
Doc_n	0	0	1	1	0	1	…	0

Inverted Lists
Really important data structure!

Most terms are rare (occur in few documents)

- Nearly all documents fail to match the query
- More efficient

… but still, most of the O(|C|×|Q|) effort is wasted effort

Are Fixed-Length Inverted Lists A Good Idea?

Early search engines used fixed-length inverted lists

- Bit-vector operations are fast and easy to parallelize
- Very inefficient (1 bit or integer per document)

apple
1
0
0
1
:
0
1

Zipf's Law predicts that the median term occurs twice

- Rank of last term: Constant / Frequency = (0.1 × N) / 1
- Rank of median term: ½ rank of last term = ½ × (0.1 × N) / 1
- Frequency of median term: Constant / Rank of median term = (0.1 × N) / [½ × (0.1 × N) / 1] = 1 / ½ = 2

Thus, inverted lists use sparse representations

Sparse Representation of Inverted Lists

Simple approach: Store ids of documents that contain the word

- E.g., apple: length=18, docids: 1, 5, 6, 9, …
  - The term 'apple' occurs in 18 documents

A more typical notation (used often in this course)

- df_t=18, docids 1, 5, 6, 9, …

  df_t: document frequency (number of documents containing term t)

  docids: document identifiers

You must know this data structure & more advanced variants

Different Types of Inverted Lists for the Term "apple"

Different types of inverted lists support different capabilities

Binary Inverted lists Supports

df:	4356
docid:	42
docid:	94
:	

- Unranked Boolean
- AND, OR
- SYN

Frequency Inverted lists Also supports

df:	4356
docid:	42
tf:	3
docid:	94
tf:	1
:	

- Ranking
- SUM
- WSUM

Positional Inverted lists Also supports

df:	4356
docid:	42
tf:	3
locations:	14
	83
	157
docid:	94
tf:	1
locations:	65
:	

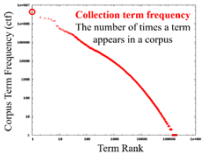
- NEAR/n

df: document frequency
docid: sequential document ids
tf: term frequency ($tf_{t,d}$)
locs: locations where t appears in d

Inverted Indexes

After indexing, there are many inverted lists

- One per term in the vocabulary (typically 10^6 to 10^8)
- Very skewed size distribution (Zipf's Law)
- Very skewed access patterns



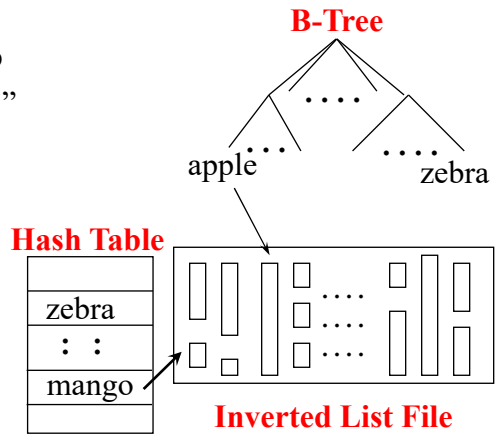
An inverted index consists of two parts

- Inverted file(s) that contain inverted lists
  - An object database containing the inverted lists
- An access mechanism
  - Term string → inverted list
  - Term id → inverted list
  - Sometimes combined with the term dictionary

Inverted Indexes: Two Common Access Methods

How is a file of inverted lists accessed?

- **B-Tree (B+ Tree, B* Tree, etc)**
  - Exact-match and range-based lookup
    - » "apple", "apple – apples", "appl*"
  - *O*(log n) lookups to find a list
  - Usually easy to expand
- **Hash table**
  - Exact-match lookup
    - » "apple"
  - O(1) lookups to find a list
  - May be complex to expand



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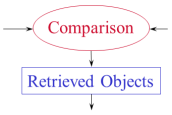
Retrieval Model #1: Unranked Boolean



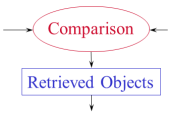
Model: Retrieve documents iff they satisfy a Boolean expression

- **Examples:** "michelle AND obama", "biden OR trump"
- The query specifies exact relevance criteria
  - "Exact match" retrieval
- The set of matching ("retrieved") documents is unordered
  - Often sorted by date

Query operators:

- AND, OR, ANDNOT, NEAR, WINDOW, DATE, BEFORE, …
- Typically these systems have rich query languages

Retrieval Model #1: Unranked Boolean



This approach to document retrieval was invented first
…and was the dominant model until the early 1990s
…but it is no longer state-of-the-art

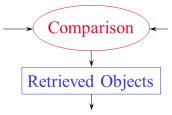
Why?

- Most people find it difficult to construct good Boolean queries
- Documents are returned in no particular order

However, it is still used in many systems, and still important

- E.g., WestLaw, PubMed, first pass in Web search engines, …

Retrieval Model #2: Ranked Boolean



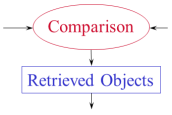
Model: Retrieve documents iff they satisfy a Boolean expression

- Order the matching ("retrieved") documents by scores
- Document scores can be anything you want
  - But, typically Ranked Boolean systems have simple scores

Note: Unranked Boolean systems have implied document scores

- 1: Query matches document
- 0: Query doesn't match document

Ranked Boolean: Calculating Scores



What is the score when a query term *t* occurs in document *d*?

$tf_{t,d}$

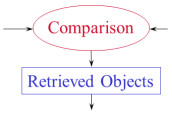
- The frequency of term *t* in document *d*
- Invented first
- Easy to implement
- Only considers document *d*

$tf_{t,d} \times idf_t = tf_{t,d} \times \log (N / df_t)$

- N: # of documents in the corpus
- df_t: # of documents that contain *t*
- Reward frequent terms in *d*
- Penalize frequent terms in the corpus
- More effective

Both types of weights are used

Ranked Boolean: Calculating Scores



Boolean queries have operators such as AND and OR

- cat AND mouse; john AND paul AND george AND ringo
- rich OR poor; obama OR bush OR clinton OR reagan

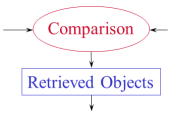
A prefix representation makes the query structure more apparent

- AND (cat mouse) AND (john paul george ringo)
- OR (rich poor) OR (obama bush clinton reagan)

Notation: $q_{operator}\ (q_1 \ldots q_n)$

- q_{AND} (cat mouse) q_{AND} (john paul george ringo)
- q_{OR} (rich poor) q_{OR} (obama bush clinton reagan)

Ranked Boolean: Calculating Scores



What is the score for AND operator $q_{AND}\ (q_1 \ldots q_n)$ on document j?

- score $(q_{AND}\ (q_1 \ldots q_n), d_j)$ = MIN (score (q_1, d_j), …, score (q_n, d_j))

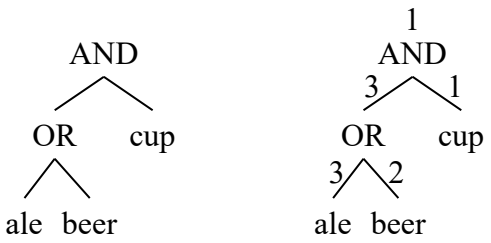
What is the score for OR operator $q_{OR}\ (q_1 \ldots q_n)$ on document j?

- score $(q_{OR}\ (q_1 \ldots q_n), d_j)$ = MAX (score (q_1, d_j), …, score (q_n, d_j))
  - Consistent with the AND operator
- score $(q_{OR}\ (q_1 \ldots q_n), d_j)$ = MEAN (score (q_1, d_j), …, score (q_n, d_j))
  - Rewards documents that match many query terms
  - The semantics of an OR operator do not require this behavior
  - But, it is the behavior that people expect
  - Typically a little more effective than MAX

Ranked Boolean: Calculating Scores

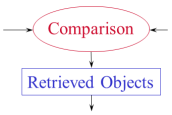
Document: … ale … cup … ale … beer … ale … beer

Query: (ale OR beer) AND cup



Query tree | **Query tree annotated with scores**

Retrieval Model #2: Ranked Boolean



Advantages

- Very efficient
- Predictable, easy to explain, structured queries
- Works well enough when searchers know exactly what is wanted
- Results ordered by how redundantly a document satisfies a query
- Other term weighting methods can be used, too

Disadvantages

- It's still an Exact-Match model
- Usually it is difficult to get a good balance of Precision and Recall

Exact-Match Retrieval: Unranked vs. Ranked Boolean Retrieval

Query: Trump AND Clinton

d_1	… Trump … Clinton … … Sanders …	d_2	Trump … Clinton… … Clinton … … Trump …	d_3	… Trump … Hillary … Bill … Sanders …

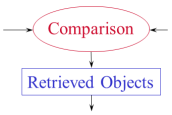
Three retrieval methods

Unranked Boolean	Ranked Boolean	Best Match
d_1	d_2	d_2
d_2	d_1	d_1
(arbitrary order)		d_3

Which ranking is best?

- It depends on the task … sometimes unranked Boolean is enough

Are Exact-Match Models Still Relevant?



Many people prefer exact-match Boolean models

- Professional searchers (e.g., librarians, paralegals)
- Some Web surfers (e.g., "Advanced Search" feature)
- What do they like? Control, predictability, understandability
- Preferred by 70% of WESTLAW searchers in a 2007 survey

  -- James Allan, 2007

Exact-match Boolean is a low-level part of Web search engines

- Massive corpus makes efficiency important
- Massive corpus makes partial matching less important

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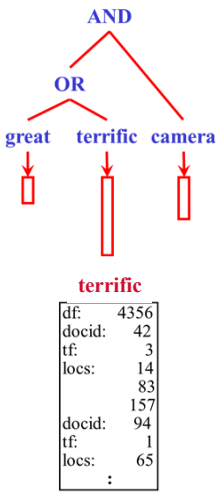
Document Retrieval

There are three approaches to query processing

- Term-at-a-Time (TAAT)
- Document-at-a-Time (DAAT)
- TAAT / DAAT hybrids
  - Important in large-scale systems, but not covered in this class



Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Key ideas

- Fully process $list_i$ before proceeding to $list_{i+1}$
- Each time a list is processed, partial document scores are updated

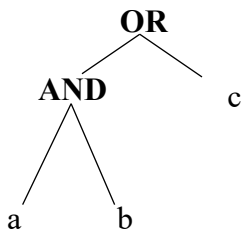
Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: (a AND b) OR c

Document Retrieval:
Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: (a AND b) OR c

Parsed Query



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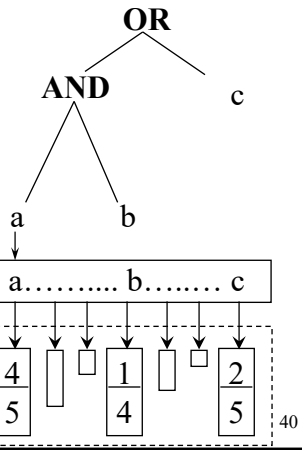
Document Retrieval:
Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: (a AND b) OR c

Parsed Query



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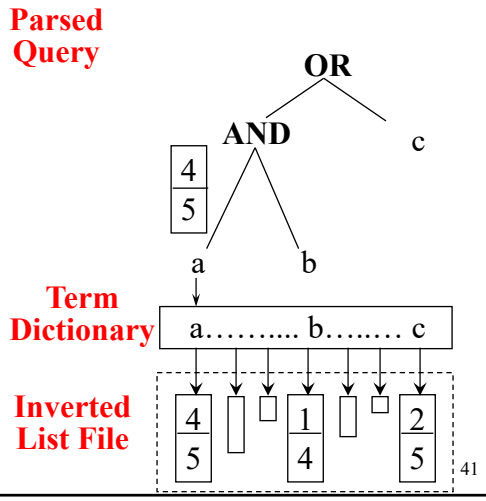
Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

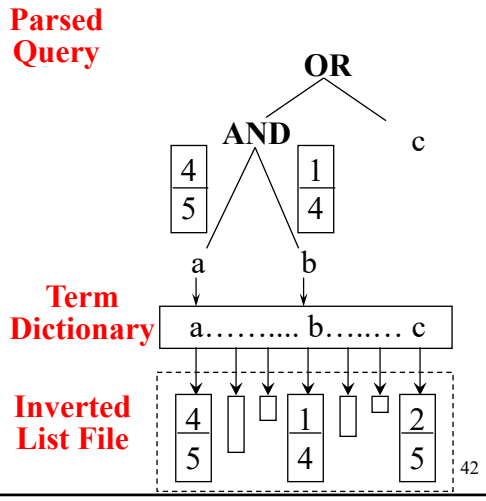


Query: (a AND b) OR c

1. Read inverted list for 'a' from inverted list database

41

Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation



Query: (a AND b) OR c

1. Read inverted list for 'a' from inverted list database
2. Read inverted list for 'b' from inverted list database

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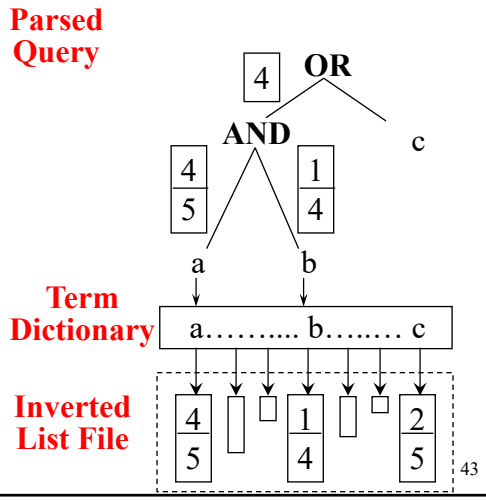
Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

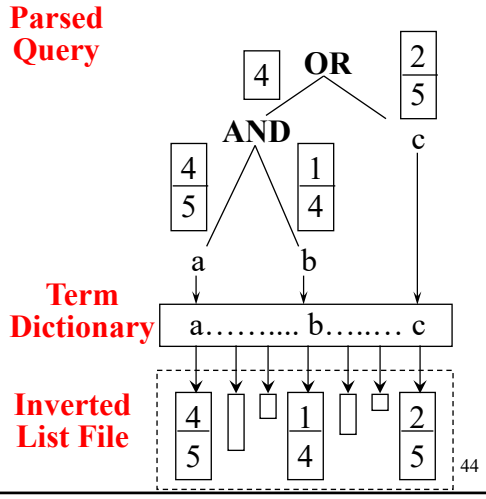


Query: (a AND b) OR c

1. Read inverted list for 'a' from inverted list database
2. Read inverted list for 'b' from inverted list database
3. AND operator: Intersect the inverted lists for 'a' and 'b'

43

Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

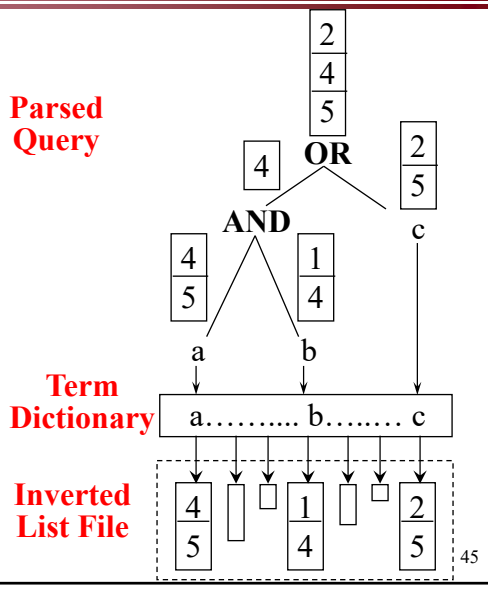


Query: (a AND b) OR c

1. Read inverted list for 'a' from inverted list database
2. Read inverted list for 'b' from inverted list database
3. AND operator: Intersect the inverted lists for 'a' and 'b'
4. Read inverted list for 'c' from inverted list database

44

Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation



Query: (a AND b) OR c

1. Read inverted list for 'a' from inverted list database
2. Read inverted list for 'b' from inverted list database
3. AND operator: Intersect the inverted lists for 'a' and 'b'
4. Read inverted list for 'c' from inverted list database
5. OR operator: Union of AND operator results and 'c' inverted list

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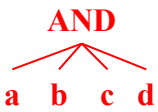
Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: #AND (a b c d)



Evaluation strategy

- Retrieve a
- Retrieve b
- a AND b → $Result_{AND\_1}$
- Retrieve c
- $Result_{AND\_1}$ AND c → $Result_{AND\_2}$
- Retrieve d
- $Result_{AND\_2}$ AND d → $Result_{Q}$

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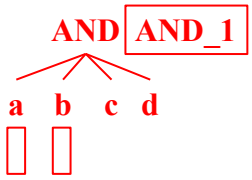
Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: #AND (a b c d)



Evaluation strategy

- Retrieve a
- Retrieve b
- a AND b → $Result_{AND\_1}$
- Retrieve c
- $Result_{AND\_1}$ AND c → $Result_{AND\_2}$
- Retrieve d
- $Result_{AND\_2}$ AND d → $Result_{Q}$

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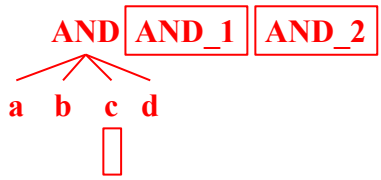
Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: #AND (a b c d)



Evaluation strategy

- Retrieve a
- Retrieve b
- a AND b → $Result_{AND\_1}$
- Retrieve c
- $Result_{AND\_1}$ AND c → $Result_{AND\_2}$
- Retrieve d
- $Result_{AND\_2}$ AND d → $Result_{Q}$

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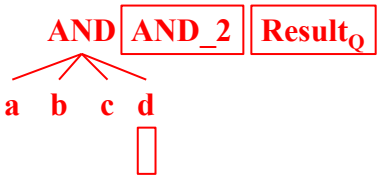
Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: #AND (a b c d)



Evaluation strategy

- Retrieve a
- Retrieve b
- a AND b → $Result_{AND\_1}$
- Retrieve c
- $Result_{AND\_1}$ AND c → $Result_{AND\_2}$
- Retrieve d
- $Result_{AND\_2}$ AND d → $Result_Q$

Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

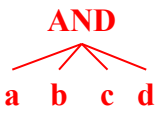
Query: #AND (a b c d)

Evaluation strategy

- Retrieve a
- Retrieve b
- a AND b → $Result_{AND\_1}$
- Retrieve c
- $Result_{AND\_1}$ AND c → $Result_{AND\_2}$
- Retrieve d
- $Result_{AND\_2}$ AND d → $Result_Q$

Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: #AND (a b c d)

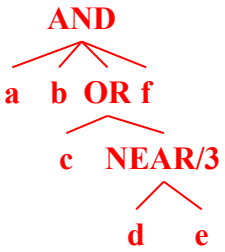


Characteristics

- Each query operator stores in RAM up to 3 lists simultaneously
  - arg_1, arg_2, result
- Peak query operatory memory usage for this query
  - 3 lists in RAM simultaneously
  - size (arg_1) + size (arg_2) + size (result) bytes

Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Query: #AND (a b #OR (c #NEAR/3 (d e)) f)



Peak memory usage (probably)

- 5 lists in memory simultaneously
- size (a AND b) +
  size (c) +
  size (d) + size (e) + size (d NEAR/3 e) bytes

Document Retrieval: Term-at-a-Time (TAAT) Query Evaluation

Easy to understand and build

- Thus, we cover them first

Very efficient

- Little wasted effort
- This is more apparent when we consider DAAT

Memory usage is uncontrolled

- A query of depth d must store d+2 lists in RAM

Causes of memory problems

- Queries with frequent terms (long lists)
- Complex queries (more lists)
- Systems that process multiple queries in parallel (contention)

Rarely used in large systems

Two Lecture Outline

A quick introduction to…

- Ad-hoc retrieval
- Information needs & queries
- Document representation
- Indexes
  - Inverted lists
- Exact match retrieval
  - Unranked Boolean
  - Ranked Boolean
- Document retrieval
  - TAAT
  - DAAT
- Query operators
  - Types of query operators
  - The NEAR operator

Goal: Provide an overview of search ("the Big Picture")

- Later lectures explore these topics in greater detail