CS317

Information Retrieval

Week 02

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Phrase and Positional Indexing

Sec. 2.4

Phrase queries

- Want to be able to answer queries such as "***stanford university"*** – as a phrase
- Thus the sentence *"I went to university at Stanford"* is not a match.
  - The concept of phrase queries has proven easily understood by users; one of the few "advanced search" ideas that works
  - Many more queries are *implicit phrase queries*
- For this, it no longer suffices to store only <*term* : *docs*> entries

Sec. 2.4.1

Solution 1: Bi-word indexes

- Index every consecutive pair of terms in the text as a phrase
- For example the text "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" would generate the biwords
  - ***friends romans***
  - ***romans countrymen***
- Each of these biwords is now a dictionary term
- Two-word phrase query-processing is now immediate.

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Longer phrase queries

- Longer phrases are processed as we did with wild-cards:
- ***stanford university palo alto*** can be broken into the Boolean query on biwords:

stanford university *AND* ***university palo*** *AND* ***palo alto***

Without the docs, we cannot verify that the docs matching the above Boolean query do contain the phrase.

Can have false positives!

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Extended biwords

- Parse the indexed text and perform part-of-speech-tagging (POST).
- Bucket the terms into (say) Nouns (N) and articles/prepositions (X).
- Call any string of terms of the form NX*N an extended biword.
  - Each such extended biword is now made a term in the dictionary.
- Example: ***coins are in pocket***

  N X X N
- Query processing: parse it into N's and X's
  - Segment query into enhanced biwords
  - Look up in index: ***coin pocket***

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Issues for biword indexes

- False positives, as noted before
- Index blowup due to bigger dictionary
  - Infeasible for more than biwords, big even for them
- Biword indexes are not the standard solution (for all biwords) but can be part of a compound strategy

Sec. 2.4.2

Solution 2: Positional indexes

- In the postings, store for each ***term*** the position(s) in which tokens of it appear:

  <***term***, number of docs containing ***term***;
  doc1: position1, position2 … ;
  doc2: position1, position2 … ;
  etc.>

Sec. 2.4.2

Positional index example

<***be***: 993427;
1: 7, 18, 33, 72, 86, 231;
2: 3, 149;
4: 17, 191, 291, 430, 434;
5: 363, 367, …>

Which of docs 1,2,4,5 could contain "***to be or not to be***"?

- For phrase queries, we use a merge algorithm recursively at the document level
- But we now need to deal with more than just equality

Sec. 2.4.2

Processing a phrase query

- Extract inverted index entries for each distinct term: ***to, be, or, not.***
- Merge their *doc:position* lists to enumerate all positions with "***to be or not to be***".
  - ***to****:*
    - *2*:1,17,74,222,551; *4*:8,16,190,429,433; *7*:13,23,191; ...
  - ***be****:*
    - *1*:17,19; *4*:17,191,291,430,434; *5*:14,19,101; ...
- Same general method for proximity searches

Positional Intersect

```
POSITIONALINTERSECT(p1, p2, k)
answer ← ⟨ ⟩
while p1 ≠ NIL and p2 ≠ NIL
do if docID(p1) = docID(p2)
     then l ← ⟨ ⟩
          pp1 ← positions(p1)
          pp2 ← positions(p2)
          while pp1 ≠ NIL
          do while pp2 ≠ NIL
             do if |pos(pp1) − pos(pp2)| ≤ k
                  then ADD(l, pos(pp2))
                  else if pos(pp2) > pos(pp1)
                         then break
                pp2 ← next(pp2)
             while l ≠ ⟨ ⟩ and |l[0] − pos(pp1)| > k
             do DELETE(l[0])
             for each ps ∈ l
             do ADD(answer, ⟨docID(p1), pos(pp1), ps⟩)
             pp1 ← next(pp1)
          p1 ← next(p1)
          p2 ← next(p2)
     else if docID(p1) < docID(p2)
            then p1 ← next(p1)
            else p2 ← next(p2)
return answer
```

Sec. 2.4.2

Proximity queries

- LIMIT! /3 STATUTE /3 FEDERAL /2 TORT
  - Again, here, /*k* means "within *k* words of".
- Clearly, positional indexes can be used for such queries; biword indexes cannot.
- Exercise: Adapt the linear merge of postings to handle proximity queries. Can you make it work for any value of *k*?
  - This is a little tricky to do correctly and efficiently
  - See Figure 2.12 of IIR
  - There's likely to be a problem on it!

Sec. 2.4.2

Positional index size

- You can compress position values/offsets: we'll talk about that in lecture 5
- Nevertheless, a positional index expands postings storage *substantially*
- Nevertheless, a positional index is now standardly used because of the power and usefulness of phrase and proximity queries … whether used explicitly or implicitly in a ranking retrieval system.

Sec. 2.4.2

Positional index size

- Need an entry for each occurrence, not just once per document
- Index size depends on average document size
  - Average web page has <1000 terms **Why?**
  - SEC filings, books, even some epic poems … easily 100,000 terms
- Consider a term with frequency 0.1%

Document size	Postings	Positional postings
1000	1	1
100,000	1	100

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Rules of thumb

- A positional index is 2–4 as large as a non-positional index
- Positional index size 35–50% of volume of original text
- Caveat: all of this holds for “English-like” languages

Sec. 2.4.3

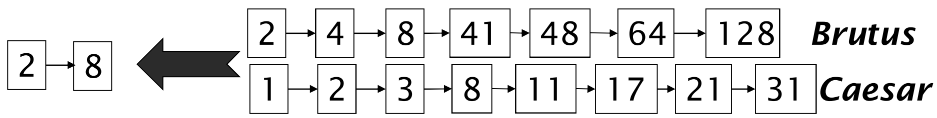
Combination schemes

- These two approaches can be profitably combined
  - For particular phrases (***“Michael Jackson”, “Britney Spears”***) it is inefficient to keep on merging positional postings lists
    - Even more so for phrases like ***“The Who”***
- Williams et al. (2004) evaluate a more sophisticated mixed indexing scheme
  - A typical web query mixture was executed in ¼ of the time of using just a positional index
  - It required 26% more space

Sec. 2.3

Recall basic merge

- Walk through the two postings simultaneously, in time linear in the total number of postings entries

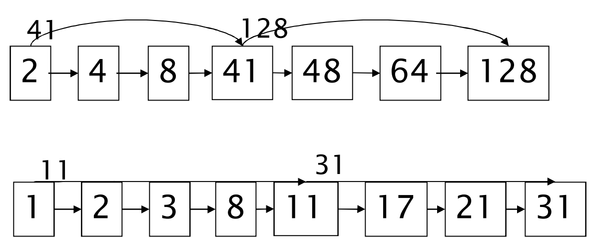


If the list lengths are *m* and *n*, the merge takes O(*m*+*n*) operations.

Can we do better?
Yes (if the index isn't changing too fast).

Sec. 2.3

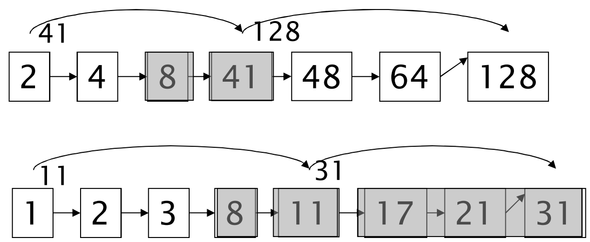
Augment postings with skip pointers (at indexing time)



- Why?
- <u>To skip postings that will not figure in the search results.</u>
- How?
- Where do we place skip pointers?

Sec. 2.3

Query processing with skip pointers



Suppose we've stepped through the lists until we process **8** on each list. We match it and advance.

We then have **41** and **11** on the lower. **11** is smaller.
But the skip successor of **11** on the lower list is **31**, so we can skip ahead past the intervening postings.

Faster Skip Lists

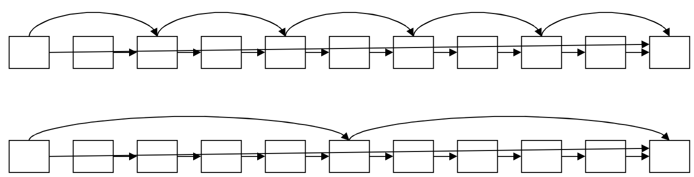
```
INTERSECTWITHSKIPS(p1, p2)
answer ← ⟨ ⟩
while p1 ≠ NIL and p2 ≠ NIL
do if docID(p1) = docID(p2)
     then ADD(answer, docID(p1))
          p1 ← next(p1)
          p2 ← next(p2)
     else if docID(p1) < docID(p2)
            then if hasSkip(p1) and (docID(skip(p1)) ≤ docID(p2))
                   then while hasSkip(p1) and (docID(skip(p1)) ≤ docID(p2))
                          do p1 ← skip(p1)
                   else p1 ← next(p1)
            else if hasSkip(p2) and (docID(skip(p2)) ≤ docID(p1))
                   then while hasSkip(p2) and (docID(skip(p2)) ≤ docID(p1))
                          do p2 ← skip(p2)
                   else p2 ← next(p2)
return answer
```

► **Figure 2.10** Postings lists intersection with skip pointers.

Sec. 2.3

Where do we place skips?

- Tradeoff:
  - More skips → shorter skip spans ⇒ more likely to skip. But lots of comparisons to skip pointers.
  - Fewer skips → few pointer comparison, but then long skip spans ⇒ few successful skips.



Sec. 2.3

Placing skips

- Simple heuristic: for postings of length L, use $\sqrt{L}$ evenly-spaced skip pointers [Moffat and Zobel 1996]
- This ignores the distribution of query terms.
- Easy if the index is relatively static; harder if L keeps changing because of updates.
- This definitely used to help; with modern hardware it may not unless you're memory-based [Bahle et al. 2002]
  - The I/O cost of loading a bigger postings list can outweigh the gains from quicker in memory merging!