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MI Fakultät für Mathematik und Informatik
Department of Computer Science

Bachelorthesis

Link Stealing Attacks on Inductive Trained Graph Neural Networks

submitted by

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on January 01, 1970

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Abstract

Since nowadays graphs are a common way to store and visualize data, Machine Learning algorithms have been improved to directly operate on them. In most cases the graph itself can be deemed confidential, since the owner of the data often spends much time and resources collecting and preparing the data. In our work, we show, that so called Graph Neural Networks can reveal sensitive information about their training graph. We focused on extracting information about the edges of the underlying graph by observing the predictions of the target model in so called link stealing attacks. [present results](#)

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation

A graph is a datastructure which is used to model large data and the relationships between entities [cite](#) . It consists of nodes and edges and can be used to model data in almost every domain. For example in social networks, healthcare analytics or protein-protein interactions. In a social network, the nodes would be the users that are registered and the edges would represent whether the users know each other or not by connecting them or not. A graph itself can be deemed as intellectual property of the data owner, since she may spent lots of time and resources collecting and preparing the data. In most cases the graph is also highly confidential because it contains sensitive information like private social relationships between users in a social network or medical information about specific people in healthcare-analytic datasets. Since nowadays graphs are a common way to store and visualize data, Machine Learning algorithms have been improved to directly operate on them. These Machine Learning Models are called Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) [cite](#) . They can be used in different ways to operate on graphs. For example they can be trained to perform node classification [cite](#) . More precisely, given a graph containing some labeled nodes the model is trained to predict the labels of the other unlabeled nodes in the graph. They can also be used to perform link prediction like in social networks where the friendship between two users is guessed [cite](#) .

A Graph Neural Network can be trained in different ways, depending on the purpose it will be used for. The most common way is to train them transductive [cite](#) . Regarding the node classification problem that means, that test and evaluation node features are given during training. Only the labels are unknown. Nevertheless this training method is possible theoretically, it cannot be applied to real world problems like in social networks. That's why e.g. social networks keep evolving. Every day new users register and other

user delete their accounts. For datasets like that GNNs can also be trained inductive **cite** . Specifically, now not only the labels of the test and evaluation nodes is unknown but also their features and connections. That means, that the model is trained on one graph and will be evaluated on another one. In that way it is now possible to update the model on new nodes without retraining it over and over again on the full graph.

In our work, we show, that inductive trained Graph Neural Networks are very likely to leak sensitive information about the underlying graph that was used for training by performing link stealing attacks on the target models.

1.2 Outline

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Chapter 2

Related Work

Ever since machine learning algorithms were developed, there have been new attacks against these models. In 2004, Dalvi et al. proposed simple evasion attacks to defeat linear classifiers that are used in spam filters [1]. Later in 2006, Barreno et al. outline a broad taxonomy of attacks against linear classifier in their paper *Can Machine Learning Be Secure?*[2]. After in 2012 Deep Neural Networks began to dominate different domains, attacks against these models were also found and further developed [3, 4]. Today it is well know, that machine learning models are vulnerable in a security and privacy manner and that there exist many attacks against Machine Learning Models. With *Membership Inference Attacks* [5–9] an adversary aims to distinguish whether a given data sample was part of the training dataset of the target model or not. Shokri et al. [7] proposed the first Membership Inference Attack on Machine Learning Models. Given a data record and black-box access to a model, they were able to determine if the record was in the target models training dataset. The authors used adversarial machine learning to train an adversary model, that recognizes differences in the target models prediction. They evaluated their experiments on realistic datasets like a hospital discharge, whose membership is sensitive from the privacy perspective and showed that these models can be vulnerable to membership inference attacks. To prevent this attacks, many defenses have been proposed [7, 10–12]. With *Model Inversion Attacks* [13–16], an adversary aims to learn sensitive attributes of the target models training dataset. The first model inversion attack has been proposed by Fredrikson et al. [13]. They showed, that given the target model and some demographic information about a patient, it is possible to predict the patient’s genetic markers. The authors further investigate, that differential privacy mechanisms prevent their model inversion attacks, when the privacy budget is carefully selected. With *Model Extraction Attacks* [17–19], an adversary aims to steal the model internals and uses this information to gradually train a substitute model that immitates the behaviour of the target. Tramèr et al. [19] proposed simple model

extraction attacks, which were able to steal target models with near-perfect fidelity. A similar approach was proposed by Wang and Gong [20], who were able to successfully steal the hyperparameters of target models. To mitigate these attacks, many defenses have been proposed [18, 21–23]. For Example Juuti et al. [18], showed that they were able to detect all prior model extraction attacks with no false positives by raising an alarm when the distribution of consecutive API queries deviates from benign behavior. Hu and Pang [21] proposed an effective defense against model extraction attacks on Generative Adversarial Networks [24], considering a trade-off between the utility and security of GANs.

Since many real world problems can be represented as graphs, it was urgent to develop machine learning algorithms to fully utilize graph data. Therefore, so called Graph Neural Networks have been developed and already used in various tasks [25–28]. Although, recent work shows, that GNNs are vulnerable to adversarial attacks as well [29–33]. More precisely, an adversary can decrease the targets accuracy by manipulating the graph structure or node features. For example, Sun et al. [30] proposed node injection poisoning attacks, where adversarial nodes are injected into existing graphs to reduce the performance of classifying existing nodes. Zügner et al. [32] showed that even with only a few perturbations the accuracy of node classification significantly drops, while focusing on training and testing phase. Our work is different, since we focus on stealing links from GNNs.

In recent work, He et al. proposed the first attacks on Graph Neural Networks to obtain information about the underlying graph [34]. They call their attacks *Link Stealing Attacks*. Our work is different, since we focus on Link Stealing Attacks on inductive trained Graph Neural Networks, instead of transductive trained ones.

Chapter 3

Background

3.1 Neural Networks

3.2 Graphs

As Graph we denote a data structure that contains nodes and edges. A node can have multiple attributes describing it and an edge describes the relationship between them. The most popular example where graphs are used are social networks. The nodes represent the users that have multiple attributes like location, gender, work place etc. In a directed graph user A will have an outgoing edge and user B an ingoing edge if A follows B and vice versa. In an undirected graph the edge won't have a direction. Which means that either A follows B , B follows A or both will lead to the same result, namely only one edge that is drawn, describing their relationship.

3.3 Graph Neural Networks

List of Figures

List of Tables

Appendix A

Additional Something

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