

SPARQL-Based Search Engine and Agent for Finding Biomedical Literature and Converting References to NPDS Metadata Records

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Abstract—CoVaSEA (Concept-Validating Search Engine Agent) has been developed as a semantic search engine with automated search agents that interoperate with the Nexus-PORTAL-DOORS System (NPDS). CoVaSEA consists of 3 components. The focused crawler searches multiple external databases for scholarly articles potentially relevant to a query; downloads their titles, abstracts, and other lexical metadata; derives RDF triples from the metadata; and embeds these triples in NPDS records. The quadstore stores the RDF triples in named graphs to enable provenance-aware semantic search. The SPARQL engine searches the quadstore and returns an answer to the query along with a list of the articles used to derive it. Acting in concert, these provide a composite open-web SPARQL search utility, enabling researchers to use semantic queries to search external databases that lack built-in semantic markup. Here we describe the system architecture and implementation of CoVaSEA and demonstrate example results for queries involving neuroscience and other biomedical topics.

Index Terms—Nexus-PORTAL-DOORS System, CoVaSEA, SPARQL, web-crawler, semantic web

INTRODUCTION

The Nexus-PORTAL-DOORS System (NPDS) [1] is a system that provides the capability to publish both semantic and lexical resources regarding specific target areas. NPDS has inbuilt REST API services via the Scribe Registrar [2] along with a standardized messaging protocol, enabling exchange among client applications and servers. The structure of the Nexus PORTAL-DOORS System is sub-divided according to the Hierarchically Distributed Mobile Metadata architectural style into three parts: Nexus, PORTAL, and DOORS [3]. The PORTAL registry controls entities that have unique labels and their associated lexical metadata. The DOORS directory contains semantic metadata which is primarily comes in the form of RDF descriptions. The Nexus diristry (an aggregation of the terms DIRectory and regISTRY) is a single server that serves as a combination of the PORTAL registry and DOORS directory.

Integrated with NPDS, CoVaSEA (Concept-Validating Search Engine Agent) [4] aims to allows users to apply a SPARQL-query based search to external biomedical literature databases. This approach may be valuable in a variety of tasks which benefit from a combination of a

web-crawler's capability to search the open web with the versatility of a semantic query engine. CoVaSEA uses NPDS DOORS directories as a storage basis for the records that it has retrieved, which means that it can also serve as a utility to search and expand NPDS metadata records.

METHODS

Acting as a successor to the past CoVaSEA, CoVaSEA integrates several features which augment the utility of NPDS including: **(A)** An implementation of SPARQL query based semantic search to allow retrieval and manipulation of linked data descriptions **(B)** Targeted web-crawling for relevant articles from external biomedical literature databases to expand NPDS records **(C)** Automated translation of free-form text abstracts into RDF triples to derive the semantic representations of lexical data. First, the user inputs a Natural Language Query (NLQ) and a SPARQL query, which also has the option to be constructed via a SPARQL builder form, into the CLI. These are passed to the webcrawler which combs through the various databases and retrieves the abstract text and metadata for a multitude of articles. On each article, the natural language parser transforms the text and metadata into semantic triples, which are stored in a local quadstore or DOORS directory. These are searched with the provided or constructed SPARQL query and the results are returned to the user. CoVaSEA consists of a number of interdependent components, each of which fulfills a general purpose. The methods are:

Web Crawler: The webcrawler combs through literature databases in order to retrieve relevant articles. Currently the system can search through the literature records on DOAJ, PubMed, Elsevier ScienceDirect, and CORE [5]. Using provided REST API services, the crawler obtains a list of relevant articles via a general lexical search. From there, the basic metadata, consisting of the abstract, title, author(s), database of origin, DOI(if available), and date of publication, from each article is retrieved and passed to the natural language parser. An RDF representation of the abstract will be constructed and the rest of the metadata will be included in the named graph of the article via the DublinCore ontology [6].

Natural Language Parser: The Natural Language Parser receives the raw abstract text from the web

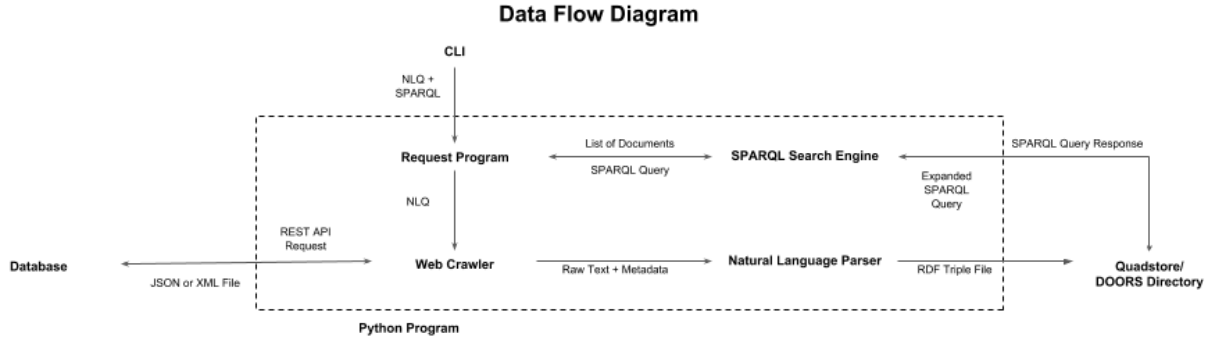


Fig. 1. Data flow diagram of CoVaSEA

crawler and parses it into logical form triples. This section utilizes the Stanford Core NLP library [7] and NLTK [8].

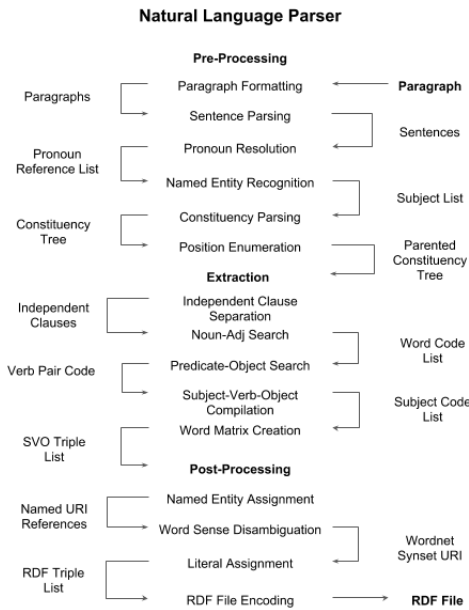


Fig. 2. Data flow diagram of the Natural Language to RDF parser

Pre-processing: A step in which the raw text is prepared for parsing and to perform tasks that depend on the text itself such as Named Entity Recognition [9] and Co-Referencing [10]. Pre-processing preparation includes re-spacing the text and parsing the paragraphs into sentences.

Extraction: A constituency parse is used to build a tree representation of the sentence. Independent clauses are separated into different trees. The highest noun phrase in the tree is found using breadth-first search. The noun phrase is split up if there are conjunctions and any adjectives are linked to the nouns. Then the highest verb phrase is found using breadth-first search and the verb is separated from the prepositional or adverb sections with

depth-first search. The verbs and noun phrases are then tagged with positions and put into triples.

Post-processing: The logical form triples are translated into RDF triples by assigning Unique Resource Identifiers (URI) to each part of the triples. Field-specific language and some named entities are assigned URI's via databases such as MeSH. Then standard words are assigned via WordNet [11] synsets using Lesk [12]. Finally, named entities and numbers are assigned to literals. These steps aid in graph-compression and also allows for the full semantic meaning to be captured rather than just the lexical data. The triples are all packaged into the article's named graph to be stored in a local quadstore or DOORS directory.

SPARQL Analysis Engine: A SPARQL query is received and then used to search through the triple store to extract relevant data for the user. The query engine supports a SPARQL builder, thus circumventing the need to know SPARQL syntax. The system works by having the user create a series of either filtering, mandatory, or optional conditions in either an independent or nested connection. Thus the user can build a search query via simple fill-in-the-blank statements. Though it cannot replicate the full power of SPARQL syntax, it is a potent resource for users who do not want to use SPARQL. Due to the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of the data that CoVaSEA handles, the SPARQL query engine divides up the queries into sub-queries such that only the articles that are needed are compiled. This federated approach avoids the necessity of having to compile a computationally expensive local graph.

QuadStore: To prevent redundant re-rendering of articles, CoVaSEA records the triples that are built by the web-crawler in either a local quadstore or a DOORS directory. Each of the articles has its own named graph, allowing for the identification of the origin of triples. The graph is divided into two sections: the metadata section and the semantic representation section. The metadata section stores key information about the article such as author, title, and publication date. The semantic representation section stores a set of triples which are a RDF portrayal of the article's abstract. The RDF files are

sent and retrieved from the DOORS directory utilizing the Scribe API.

RESULTS

**Computer spec: 16 GB RAM, i7-8750H. Connection speeds: Download of 18.40 Mgbps, Upload of 1.68 Mgbps.*

**For all tests the SPARQL query requested the basic meta-data and the NLQ was the name of the condition*

Input	Result	Runtime
Parkinson's Requested: 20 articles	20 articles 120 results	243.05 seconds
Parkinson's Requested: 100 articles	100 articles 581 results	1189.61 seconds
Dementia Requested: 20 articles	20 articles 120 results	245.12 seconds
Dementia Requested: 100 articles	100 articles 596 results	1307.42 seconds
Melanoma Requested: 20 articles	20 articles 118 results	232.12 seconds
Melanoma Requested: 100 articles	100 articles 587 results	1350.78 seconds

DISCUSSION

CoVaSEA offers capabilities that can facilitate a variety of tasks. Primarily, the role of CoVaSEA is a utility to apply a SPARQL-query based search to external biomedical literature databases. For researchers, this may be useful in situations for which the versatility and adaptability that is offered by a SPARQL query needs to be applied to lexical data on the open-web. However, CoVaSEA is not just limited to serving the user, but also, due to its relationship with NPDS, is a utility to search and expand semantic records on the DOORS directory. Since system is automated, and can furnish large amounts of semantic descriptions on a regular basis, CoVaSEA lays the groundwork for a variety of future NPDS applications(i.e. automated meta-analysis).

The primary point of possible expansion for CoVaSEA is the Natural-Language Parser. Currently, the parser faces difficulty in 3 main areas: relevance of triples, accuracy of triples, and runtime. The long runtime of CoVaSEA impedes us from performing whole article parses with reasonable run-times. The largest reasons for the long run-times are co-reference resolution and constituency parsing. Another section of improvement is the SPARQL query engine. The two biggest improvements that could be made are SPARQL query expansion and a semantic reasoning engine, both of which increase the breadth of the search.

CONCLUSION

Here we presented CoVaSEA: a system in which resources from the open-web can be translated into machine-understandable semantic information and be searched via SPARQL. CoVaSEA has the capability to both search externally with the web crawler for semantic data to expand the NPDS knowledge base and internally

with SPARQL to navigate the data inside the DOORS directory. These capabilities combine to offer a utility which can semantically search external biomedical literature databases. The application of the wide range of possibilities offered by semantic search to the array of lexical information present on the open-web renders many services, both for users and for the Nexus PORTAL-DOORS System.

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