

Elementary IR: Scalable Boolean Text Search

(Compare with R & G 27.1-3)



Information Retrieval: History

- A research field traditionally separate from Databases
 - Hans P. Luhn, IBM, 1959: "Keyword in Context (KWIC)"
 - G. Salton at Cornell in the 60's/70's: SMART
 - Around the same time as relational DB revolution
 - Tons of research since then
 - Especially in the web era
- Products traditionally separate
 - Originally, document management systems
 - Libraries, government, law, etc.
 - Renaissance due to web search and advertising
 - Still a small market in "Enterprise search"



Today: Simple (naïve!) IR

- Boolean Search on keywords
- Goal: course checkpoint
 - You're ready to build something useful!
- Postponing:
 - Intelligent result ranking (hopefully later!)
 - Parallelism
 - Critical for modern relational DBs too
- We'll skip:
 - Text-oriented index compression
 - Various bells and whistles (lots of little ones!)
 - Engineering the specifics of (written) human language
 - E.g. dealing with tense and plurals
 - E.g. identifying synonyms and related words
 - E.g. disambiguating multiple meanings of a word
 - E.g. clustering output



IR vs. DBMS

- Seem like very different beasts

IR	DBMS
Imprecise Semantics	Precise Semantics
Keyword search	SQL
Unstructured data format	Structured data
Read-Mostly. Add docs occasionally	Expect reasonable number of updates
Page through top k results	Generate full answer

- Under the hood, not as different as they might seem
 - In practice, no product does both well (yet)
- IR engines more "custom" than most DBMSs



IR's "Bag of Words" Model

- Typical IR data model:
 - Each document is just a bag of words ("terms")
- Detail 1: "Stop Words"
 - Certain words are not helpful, so not placed in the bag
 - e.g. real words like "the"
 - e.g. HTML tags like <H1>
- Detail 2: "Stemming"
 - Using language-specific rules, convert words to basic form
 - e.g. "surfing", "surfed" --> "surf"
 - Unfortunately have to do this for each language
 - Yuck!
 - Lots of open source libraries for this



Boolean Text Search

- Find all docs matching a Boolean expression:
 - "Windows"
 - AND ("Glass" OR "Door")
 - AND NOT "Microsoft"
- Note: query terms are stemmed/stopped
- When web search engines say "10,000,000 documents found", that's the Boolean search result size
 - More or less ;-)



Text "Indexes"

- When IR folks say "text index"...
 - usually mean more than what DB people mean
- In our terms, both "tables" and indexes
 - Really a logical schema (i.e. tables)
 - With a physical schema (i.e. indexes)
 - Usually not stored in a DBMS
 - Tables implemented as files in a file system



A Simple Relational Text Index

- Given: a *corpus* of text files
 - Files(docID string, content string)
- Create and populate a "bag of words" table
 - `InvertedFile(term string, docID string)`
- Build a B+-tree index on `InvertedFile.term`
 - Something like "Alternative 3" critical here!!
 - Keep lists of dup keys *sorted by docID*
 - Will provide "interesting orders" later on!
 - Fancy list compression on the docIDs is important, too
 - Typically called a *postings list* by IR people
 - Note: URL instead of RID, the web is your "heap file"!
 - Can also *cache* pages and use RIDs
- This is often called an "inverted file" or "inverted index"
 - Maps from words -> docs, rather than docs -> words
- Given this, you can now do single-word text search queries!



An Inverted File

- Snippets from:
 - Old class web page
 - Old microsoft.com home page
- Search for
 - databases
 - microsoft

Term	docID
acc	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
database	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
date	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
day	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
dbms	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
decision	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
demonstrate	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
description	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
design	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
desire	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
developer	http://www.microsoft.com
differ	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
disability	http://www.microsoft.com
discussion	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
division	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
do	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
document	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
document	http://www.microsoft.com
microsoft	http://www.microsoft.com
microsoft	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
midnight	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
midterm	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
minibase	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
million	http://www.microsoft.com
monday	http://www.microsoft.com
more	http://www.microsoft.com
most	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
ms	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
msn	http://www.microsoft.com
must	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
necessary	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186
need	http://www-inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs186



Handling Boolean Logic

- "term1" OR "term2":
 - Union of two postings lists (docID sets)!
- "term1" AND "term2":
 - Intersection of two postings lists!
 - Can be done via merge of postings lists
 - Remember: postings list per key sorted by docID in index
- "term1" AND NOT "term2":
 - Set subtraction
 - Also easy because sorted (basically merge logic again)
- "term1" OR NOT "term2":
 - Union of "term1" with "NOT term2".
 - "Not term2" = all docs not containing term2. Yuck!
 - Usually not allowed!
- Optimizations: What order to handle terms if you have many ANDs? Can you do better than merge? How does this interact with postings list compression?



Boolean Search in SQL

"Windows" AND ("Glass" OR "Door")
AND NOT "Microsoft"

- ```
(SELECT docID FROM InvertedFile
 WHERE word = "window"
 INTERSECT
 SELECT docID FROM InvertedFile
 WHERE word = "glass" OR word = "door")
 EXCEPT
 SELECT docID FROM InvertedFile
 WHERE word="Microsoft"
 ORDER BY magic_rank()
```
- There's only one SQL query (template) in Boolean Search
  - Single-table selects, UNION, INTERSECT, EXCEPT
  - Customize everything for this!
    - What tricks have you seen already?
- `magic_rank()` is the "secret sauce" in the search engines
  - We'll study this later in the semester
  - Combos of statistics, linguistics, and graph theory tricks!



## A bit fancier: Phrases and "Near"

- Suppose you want a phrase
  - E.g. "Happy Days"
- Augment the schema:
  - `InvertedFile (term string, docID string, position int)`
  - Index on term, Alternative 3 style
  - Postings lists sorted by (docID, position)
- Post-process the results
  - Find "Happy" AND "Days"
  - Keep results where positions are 1 off
    - Can be done during the merging of the 2 lists during AND!
- Can do a similar thing for "term1" NEAR "term2"
  - Position < k off
  - Think about the refinement to merge...



## For better compression

- InvertedFile (term string, position int, **docID int**)
  - IDs smaller, compress better than URLs
- Files(**docID int**, **docID string**, snippet string, ...)
- Btree on InvertedFile.term
- Btree on Docs.docID
- Requires a final "join" step between typical query result and Files.docID
  - Do this *lazily*: one results page at a time!



## Updates and Text Search

- Text search engines are designed to be query-mostly
  - Deletes and modifications are rare
  - Can postpone updates (nobody notices, no transactions!)
    - Can work off a union of indexes
    - Merge them in batch (typically re-bulk-load a new index)
  - Can't afford to go offline for an update?
    - Create a 2nd index on a separate machine
    - Replace the 1st index with the 2nd!
  - So no concurrency control problems
  - Can compress to search-friendly, update-unfriendly format
  - Can keep postings lists sorted
- See why text search engines and DBMSs are separate?
  - Also, text-search engines tune that one SQL query to death!
  - The benefits of a special-case workload.

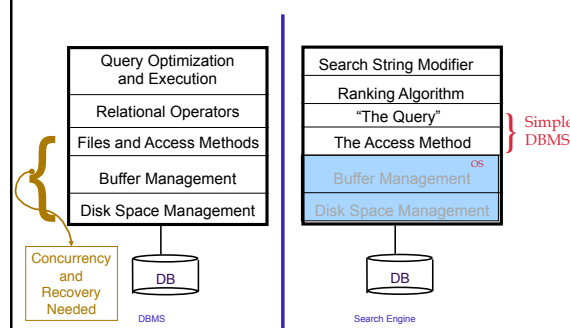


## Lots more tricks in IR

- How to "rank" the output?
  - Simple text tricks works well (we'll learn the main one: TFxIDF)
  - Hyperlink graph helps on the web (we'll learn PageRank)
- Other ways to help users paw through the output?
  - Document "clustering" (e.g. Clusty.com)
  - Document visualization
- How to use compression for better I/O performance?
  - E.g. making postings lists smaller
  - Try to make things fit in RAM
    - Or in processor caches
- How to deal with synonyms, misspelling, abbreviations?
- How to write a good web crawler?
- We'll return to some of these later
  - The book *Managing Gigabytes* covers some of the details



## Recall From the First Lecture



## You Know The Basics!

- "Inverted files" are the workhorses of all text search engines
  - Just B+-tree or Hash indexes on bag-of-words
- Intersect, Union and Set Difference (Except)
  - Usually implemented via pre-sorting and merge
  - Or can be done with hash or index joins
- Most of the other stuff is not "systems" work
  - A lot of it is cleverness in dealing with language
  - Both linguistics and statistics (more the latter!)



## Revisiting Our IR/DBMS Distinctions

- Semantic Guarantees on Storage
  - DBMS guarantees transactional semantics
    - If an inserting transaction commits, a subsequent query *will* see the update
    - Handles multiple concurrent updates correctly
  - IR systems do not do this; nobody notices!
    - Postpone insertions until convenient
    - No model of correct concurrency.
    - Can even return incorrect answers for various reasons!
- Data Modeling & Query Complexity
  - DBMS supports any schema & queries
    - But requires you to define schema (?)
    - And SQL is hard to figure out for the average citizen
  - IR supports only one schema & query
    - No schema design required (unstructured text)
    - Trivial (natural?) query language for simple tasks
    - No data correlation or analysis capabilities -- "search" only



## Revisiting Distinctions, Cont.

- Performance goals
  - DBMS supports general SELECT
    - plus mix of INSERT, UPDATE, DELETE
    - general purpose engine must always perform “well”
  - IR systems expect only one stylized SELECT
    - plus delayed INSERT, unusual DELETE, no UPDATE.
    - special purpose, must run super-fast on “The Query”
    - users rarely look at the full answer in Boolean Search
      - Postpone any work you can to subsequent index joins
      - But make sure you can rank!



## Summary

- IR & Relational systems share basic building blocks for scalability
  - IR internal representation is relational!
  - Equality indexes (B-trees)
  - Dataflow (iterators) and parallel dataflow
  - “Join” algorithms, esp. merge-join
  - “Join” ordering and selectivity estimation
- IR constrains queries, schema, promises on semantics
  - Affects storage format, indexing and concurrency control
  - Affects join algorithms & selectivity estimation
- IR has different performance goals
  - Ranking and best answers **fast**
- Many challenges in IR related to “text engineering”
  - But don’t tend to change the scalability infrastructure



## IR Buzzwords to Know (so far!)

- Learning this in the context of relational foundations is fine, but you need to know the IR lingo!
  - *Corpus*: a collection of documents
  - *Term*: an isolated string (searchable unit)
  - *Index*: a mechanism mapping terms to documents
  - *Inverted File (= Postings File)*: a file containing terms and associated postings lists
  - *Postings List*: a list of pointers (“postings”) to documents



## Exercise for the Curious!

- Implement Boolean search as described in Postgres
  - Using the schemas and indexes here.
    - Write a simple script to load files.
    - You can do stemming and stop-words with a package from the net
  - Run the SQL versions of Boolean queries
    - Measure how slow search is
  - Identify contributing factors in performance
    - E.g. how much disk space does this version use (including indexes) vs. the raw documents vs. the documents gzip’ed
    - E.g. is PG identifying the “interesting orders” in the postings lists? (use EXPLAIN) If not, can you force it to do so?
- Compare to Postgres’ tsearch2 facility
  - Two indexes choices, GIN and GiST. GIN is an inverted index.
  - Use the cost models for IndexScan and MergeJoin to calculate the expected number of IOs. Distinguish sequential and random IO’s.
  - Why is the naive solution slow? Storage overhead? Optimizer smarts?