Discrete Optimization

Quentin Louveaux

ULg - Institut Montefiore

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Polynomial running time algorithms for the max flow problem

- The generic augmenting path algorithm runs in $\mathcal{O}(mnU)$
- Ways to improve the algorithm and make it run in polynomial time
  - Augmenting in large increments of flows
    $\rightarrow$ Capacity scaling algorithm
  - Augment on shortest paths in the residual network
  - Relax the mass balance constraints and only augment locally
    $\rightarrow$ The push-relabel algorithm which is the most efficient one !

In order to implement the last two algorithms, we need to rely on distance labels.

Distance labels

Definition

A distance function gives a numeric label to each node.
The distance function is valid if

$$\begin{aligned} d(t) &= 0 \\ d(i) &\leq d(j) + 1 \quad \text{for every arc } (i,j) \text{ in } G(x) \end{aligned}$$

Property

If d is valid, $d(i)$ is a lower bound on the length of the shortest path from i to t in the residual graph.

Corollary

If $d(s) \geq n$, there exists no path from s to t in the residual graph.

Distance labels

The distance labels are exact if each label indicates the exact length of the shortest path to t in the residual graph.

An exact labeling can be determined in $\mathcal{O}(m)$ by backward breadth-first search.

An arc $(i,j) \in G(x)$ is admissible if

$$d(i) = d(j) + 1,$$

otherwise it is inadmissible.

An admissible path is a path consisting only of admissible arcs.

An admissible path is a shortest augmenting path !

The shortest augmenting path algorithm

- Augmenting on shortest paths in the residual network guarantees a polynomial running time !
- We could rerun backward breadth-first search at each iteration $\rightarrow$ very inefficient but runs in $\mathcal{O}(nm^2)$
- The minimum distance from each node to the sink is monotonically increasing.

The shortest augmenting path algorithm

- Perform an initial labeling by backward breadth-first-search
- Repeat : Perform an advance operation (finding an admissible arc from the current last node in the admissible path)
- If we find an augmenting path, then we augment along it !
- If at some node i, we do not find any admissible arc, we relabel the node

$$\min\{d(j) + 1 \mid (i,j) \in \delta(\{i\}) \text{ and } rij > 0\}$$

and remove the node i from the current admissible path.

Correctness of the algorithm

- Every operation maintains a valid distance labeling.
- Each relabel strictly increases the distance label of a node.
- The shortest augmenting path algorithm correctly computes a mximum flow.

Complexity of the algorithm

- Between two relabels, if an arc becomes inadmissible, it stays inadmissible.
- If the algorithm relabels any node at most k times, the complexity of finding admissible arcs and relabeling the nodes is $\mathcal{O}(km)$ and the algorithm saturates arcs at most $\frac{km}{2}$ times.
- Each distance label increases at most n times. The total number of relabeling is n^2 and the total number of augment operations is $\frac{nm}{2}$.

The shortest augmenting path algorithm runs in $\mathcal{O}(n^2 m)$.

Preflow-push algorithm

Drawback of the augmenting path algorithm : the expensive operation of sending flow along a path.

Many of these augmentations may share the same subpath !

Idea of preflow-push : augment along arcs and we therefore have to relax the flow balance constraints.

Preflows

Definition

A preflow is a function $x : A \to \mathbb{R}_+$ such that

$$\sum_{j|(j,i)\in A} x_{ji} - \sum_{j|(i,j)\in A} x_{ij} \geq 0. \quad \text{for all } i \in V \setminus \{s, t\}.$$

Definition

The excess at a node i of a given preflow x is given by

$$e(i) := \sum_{j|(j,i)\in A} x_{ji} - \sum_{j|(i,j)\in A} x_{ij}.$$

A node with positive excess is said to be active because we need to recover the mass-balance constraint at some point.

Preflow-push algorithm

- Compute exact distance labels $d(i)$
- Push flows along all arcs emanating from s : $x_{sj} := u_{sj}$
- $d(s) := n$
- If a node is active, push-relabel
  - If (i,j) is admissible, push $\delta := \min\{e(i), r_{ij}\}$
  - Else $d(i) := \min\{d(j) + 1 \mid (i,j) \in \delta(\{i\}) \text{ and } r_{ij} > 0\}$

Complexity of the algorithm

- Distance labels are always valid during the algorithm
- At any stage, a node i with excess $e(i) > 0$ has a path from i to s in the residual network
- For each i, $d(i) < 2n$
- The total number of relabels is $2n^2$
- The algorithm performs at most nm saturating pushes.
- The algorithm performs at most n^2m nonsaturating pushes
- The algorithm runs in $\mathcal{O}(n^2m)$