

# Introduction to **Information Retrieval**

CS276: Information Retrieval and Web Search  
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Lecture 2: The term vocabulary and postings  
lists

# Complications: Format/language

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- Documents being indexed can include docs from many different languages
  - A single index may have to contain terms of several languages.
- Sometimes a document or its components can contain multiple languages/formats
  - French email with a German pdf attachment.
- What is a unit document?
  - A file?
  - An email? (Perhaps one of many in an mbox.)
  - An email with 5 attachments?
  - A group of files (PPT or LaTeX as HTML pages)

# **TOKENS AND TERMS**

# Tokenization

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- Input: “*Friends, Romans and Countrymen*”
- Output: Tokens
  - *Friends*
  - *Romans*
  - *Countrymen*
- A **token** is an instance of a sequence of characters
- Each such token is now a candidate for an index entry, after further processing
  - Described below
- But what are valid tokens to emit?

# Tokenization

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- Issues in tokenization:
  - ***Finland's capital*** →  
***Finland? Finlands? Finland's?***
  - ***Hewlett-Packard*** → ***Hewlett*** and ***Packard*** as two tokens?
    - ***state-of-the-art***: break up hyphenated sequence.
    - ***co-education***
    - ***lowercase, lower-case, lower case*** ?
    - It can be effective to get the user to put in possible hyphens
  - ***San Francisco***: one token or two?
    - How do you decide it is one token?

# Numbers

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- *3/20/91*                      *Mar. 12, 1991*                      *20/3/91*
- *55 B.C.*
- *B-52*
- *My PGP key is 324a3df234cb23e*
- *(800) 234-2333*
  - Often have embedded spaces
  - Older IR systems may not index numbers
    - But often very useful: think about things like looking up error codes/stacktraces on the web
    - (One answer is using n-grams: Lecture 3)
  - Will often index “meta-data” separately
    - Creation date, format, etc.

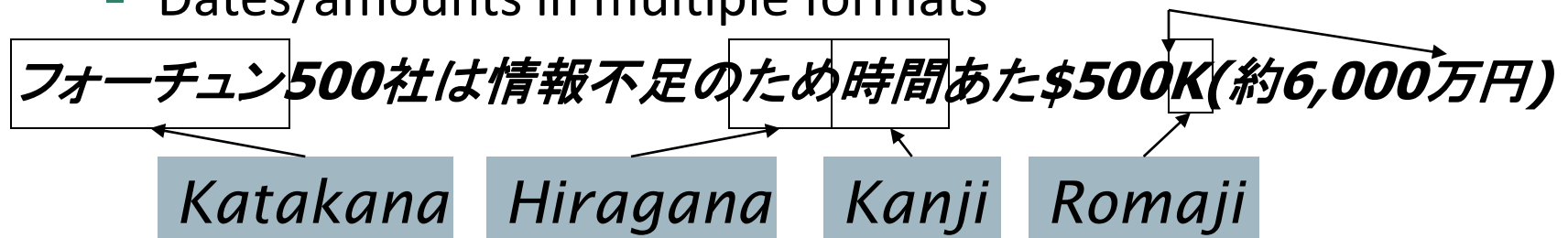
# Tokenization: language issues

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- French
  - *L'ensemble* → one token or two?
    - *L ? L' ? Le ?*
    - Want *l'ensemble* to match with *un ensemble*
      - Until at least 2003, it didn't on Google
        - **Internationalization!**
- German noun compounds are not segmented
  - *Lebensversicherungsgesellschaftsangestellter*
  - 'life insurance company employee'
  - German retrieval systems benefit greatly from a **compound splitter** module
    - Can give a 15% performance boost for German

# Tokenization: language issues

- Chinese and Japanese have no spaces between words:
  - 莎拉波娃现在居住在美国东南部的佛罗里达。
  - Not always guaranteed a unique tokenization
- Further complicated in Japanese, with multiple alphabets intermingled
  - Dates/amounts in multiple formats



*End-user can express query entirely in hiragana!*



- Arabic (or Hebrew) and Persian are basically written right to left, but with certain items like numbers written left to right
  - Words are separated, but letter forms within a word form complex ligatures
- استقلت الجزائر في سنة 1962 بعد 132 عاما من الاحتلال الفرنسي.
- ← → ← → ← start
- 'Algeria achieved its independence in 1962 after 132 years of French occupation.'
  - With Unicode, the surface presentation is complex, but the stored form is straightforward

# Stop words

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- With a stop list, you exclude from the dictionary entirely the commonest words. Intuition:
  - They have little semantic content: *the, a, and, to, be*
  - There are a lot of them: ~30% of postings for top 30 words
- But the trend is away from doing this:
  - Good compression techniques (lecture 5) means the space for including stopwords in a system is very small
  - Good query optimization techniques (lecture 7) mean you pay little at query time for including stop words.
  - You need them for:
    - Phrase queries: “King of Denmark”
    - Various song titles, etc.: “Let it be”, “To be or not to be”
    - “Relational” queries: “flights to London”

# Normalization to terms

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- We need to “normalize” words in indexed text as well as query words into the same form
  - We want to match ***U.S.A.*** and ***USA***
- Result is terms: a **term** is a (normalized) word type, which is an entry in our IR system dictionary
- We most commonly implicitly define equivalence classes of terms by, e.g.,
  - deleting periods to form a term
    - *U.S.A., USA* ( *USA*
  - deleting hyphens to form a term
    - *anti-discriminatory, antidiscriminatory* ( *antidiscriminatory*

# Normalization: other languages

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- Accents: e.g., French *résumé* vs. *resume*.
- Umlauts: e.g., German: *Tuebingen* vs. *Tübingen*
  - Should be equivalent
- Most important criterion:
  - How are your users like to write their queries for these words?
- Even in languages that standardly have accents, users often may not type them
  - Often best to normalize to a de-accented term
    - *Tuebingen, Tübingen, Tubingen* \ *Tubingen*

# Normalization: other languages

- Normalization of things like date forms
  - *7月30日 vs. 7/30*
  - *Japanese use of kana vs. Chinese characters*
- Tokenization and normalization may depend on the language and so is intertwined with language detection

*Morgen will ich in MIT ...*

*Is this  
German “mit”?*
- Crucial: Need to “normalize” indexed text as well as query terms into the same form

# Case folding

- Reduce all letters to lower case
  - exception: upper case in mid-sentence?
    - e.g., *General Motors*
    - *Fed* vs. *fed*
    - *SAIL* vs. *sail*
  - Often best to lower case everything, since users will use lowercase regardless of ‘correct’ capitalization...
- Google example:
  - Query **C.A.T.**
  - #1 result is for “cat” (well, Lolcats) *not* Caterpillar Inc.



# Normalization to terms

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- An alternative to equivalence classing is to do asymmetric expansion
- An example of where this may be useful
  - Enter: ***window***      Search: ***window, windows***
  - Enter: ***windows***      Search: ***Windows, windows, window***
  - Enter: ***Windows***      Search: ***Windows***
- Potentially more powerful, but less efficient

# Thesauri and soundex

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- Do we handle synonyms and homonyms?
  - E.g., by hand-constructed equivalence classes
    - *car* = *automobile*    *color* = *colour*
  - We can rewrite to form equivalence-class terms
    - When the document contains *automobile*, index it under *car-automobile* (and vice-versa)
  - Or we can expand a query
    - When the query contains *automobile*, look under *car* as well
- What about spelling mistakes?
  - One approach is soundex, which forms equivalence classes of words based on phonetic heuristics
- More in lectures 3 and 9



# Lemmatization

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- Reduce inflectional/variant forms to base form
- E.g.,
  - *am, are, is* → *be*
  - *car, cars, car's, cars'* → *car*
- *the boy's cars are different colors* → *the boy car be different color*
- Lemmatization implies doing “proper” reduction to dictionary headword form

# Stemming

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- Reduce terms to their “roots” before indexing
- “Stemming” suggest crude affix chopping
  - language dependent
  - e.g., *automate(s)*, *automatic*, *automation* all reduced to *automat*.

***for example compressed and compression are both accepted as equivalent to compress.***



for exampl compress and  
compress ar both accept  
as equival to compress

# Porter's algorithm

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- Commonest algorithm for stemming English
  - Results suggest it's at least as good as other stemming options
- Conventions + 5 phases of reductions
  - phases applied sequentially
  - each phase consists of a set of commands
  - sample convention: *Of the rules in a compound command, select the one that applies to the longest suffix.*

# Typical rules in Porter

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- *sses* → *ss*
- *ies* → *i*
- *ational* → *ate*
- *tional* → *tion*
  
- Weight of word sensitive rules
- $(m > 1)$  *EMENT* →
  - *replacement* → *replac*
  - *cement* → *cement*

# Other stemmers

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- Other stemmers exist, e.g., Lovins stemmer
  - <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/computing/research/stemming/general/lovins.htm>
  - Single-pass, longest suffix removal (about 250 rules)
- Full morphological analysis – at most modest benefits for retrieval
- **Do stemming and other normalizations help?**
  - English: very mixed results. Helps recall for some queries but harms precision on others
    - E.g., operative (dentistry)  $\Rightarrow$  oper
  - Definitely useful for Spanish, German, Finnish, ...
    - 30% performance gains for Finnish!

# Language-specificity

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- Many of the above features embody transformations that are
  - Language-specific and
  - Often, application-specific
- These are “plug-in” addenda to the indexing process
- Both open source and commercial plug-ins are available for handling these