Route Finding

Programming Project 2 Report

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# Project Summary

A graph or network is collection of points (nodes) connected by a series of lines (edges). Graphs are used in an area of maths called discrete maths to model optimisation problems that involves finding an efficient solution to a problem. Solving an optimisation problem means finding the best solution out of many feasible solutions.

This project will involve creating an application that will find the shortest path between two nodes on a network. The network will be given in the form of a file; the application will then read this and output the shortest path. In order to create such an application, the following things need to be taken into consideration: importing the data, the data structure used to store the network and the algorithm used to determine the shortest path.

# Design Plan

## Large scale design plan

### Aim of the project

The ultimate aim of the project is to find the shortest path between two input nodes. This can be done using Dijkstra’s algorithm in O((E + N) log N) time using a priority queue with a binary heap (where E is the number of edges and N is the number of nodes). The program must be able to accept an XML input from a file, read the nodes and edges from such file and then output the shortest path in a graphical way to the user.

### Program input

The programs input will consist of an XML file containing the data used to represent the network. Some of this data will be used and other parts won’t. A plugin called libxml2 can be used to read and parse XML files I will therefore use this in my project to read the data file.

Upon further inspection I decided against using libxml2 and instead using the built in sscanf() and fgets() functions instead. It was simpler to read the file this way as libxml2 required a complex setup and contained many features the program wouldn’t need. However, this alternative method has limitations. The structure of the XML file must remain consistent and use the same <link> and <node> tags to denote an edge and node.

Another input from the user will the 2 points to find the shortest path between. The user will enter these once prompted through the command line.

### Program output

The program will output a graphical network consisting of nodes and edges. I will do this using GNUplot as we have already used it before and it is an easy to use application. With gnuplot you can change the line colour of elements. Therefore, it will be easy to display the shortest path calculated by the program.

## Medium scale design plan

### Code modules

The program will consist of the following files:

* main.c – the main file where the program is run
* tests.c – various tests implemented here which can be run from main
* readFile.c – takes the input XML file and reads it, adding the nodes and edges
* buildNetwork.c – contains functions to ‘build’ the network such as addNodes() and createNetwork()
* networkUtils.c – contains standard functions to use on the network such as getNode()
* binaryHeap.c – implements a binary min heap to use with the priority queue
* priorityQueue.c – implements a priority queue to use with djikstras algorithm
* djikstrasAlgorithm.c – implements dkikstra’s algorithm to find the shortest path between two nodes
* outFile.c – takes the resulting graph and outputs it to a file so it can be read by gnu plot

And the following header files:

* networkStructure.h – defines the structure of the network, nodes and edges
* Header files for each of the ‘.c’ files above

### Dijkstra’s algorithm

Djikstra’s algorithm can be used to calculate the shortest path between two nodes on a network. This algorithm originally had a runtime of O(N2) where N is the number of nodes in the network. However once implemented with a min-priority queue with a binary heap, the efficiency is increased giving it a run time of O((E + N)log(N)) where E is the number of edges and N is the number of nodes in the network.[1] This is the pseudo code I will base my implementation off of in c:

"Find shortest path"

FOR x IN numberOfNodes

distance(x) ← infinity

processed(x) ← false

parent (x) ← null

ENDFOR

distance(SourceNode) ← 0

WHILE (there are still nodes left to process)

Let 'sNode' be a node which hasn't been processed that has the smallest distance(node)

ENDWHILE

IF (sNode ← destinationNode) THEN

Exit While Loop

ENDIF

processed(sNode) ← true

FOR Each unprocessed parent node, dNode

IF (distance(node) + weight(sNode, dNode) < distance(dNode)) THEN

distance(dNode) ← distance(sNode) + weight(sNode, dNode)

parent(dNode) ← sNode

ENDIF

ENDFOR

# Find path

node ← destinationNode

WHILE node != sourceNode

Append node to the beginning of the path list

node ← parent(dNode)

ENDWHILE

Append sourceNode to the beginning of the path list

### Priority queue implementation

To implement the min-priority queue for use with djikstra’s algorithm, we will use a min-binary heap. This is a data structure that guarantees the item with the lowest priority will be at the top of the structure. This means that finding the item with the minimum priority can be found in O(1) time and found and removed in a worst case run time of O(log n).[2]

Whilst a more efficient implementation with better time complexity is possible using a Fibonacci heap, this is often inefficient in practice due to the complexity of the algorithm. They are only typically efficient on sparse networks with less edges between nodes.

A min-binary tree is ordered in such a way so that the first item on the tree has the lowest priority. For any node N, if P is the parent of N, then the priority of P is less than or equal to the priority of N[4].

### Hashing algorithm to efficiently find nodes

Dijkstra’s algorithm requires nodes to be ‘found’ amongst all nodes that were added. Instead of searching through each node and checking its ID (which would take at most O(n) time), a technique called hashing can be used. This has an average time complexity of O(1) meaning it is much more efficient, especially on a large dataset like the one we have.

In order to form a hash of the data, I will use a library called uthash. This provides a way to make a hash table and handle hash clashes that occur.

# Test Plan

* Testing using valgrind
* Tests using precalculated inputs
* Unexpected data testing
  + Wrong ids
  + Same id
  + Path doesn’t exist

# Schedule

# References

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dijkstra%27s\_algorithm Retrieved 22/3/2018

[2] https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~adamchik/15-121/lectures/Binary%20Heaps/heaps.html Retrieved 22/3/2018

[3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fibonacci\_heap Retrieved 22/3/2018](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fibonacci_heap%20Retrieved%2022/3/2018)

[4] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heap_(data_structure)> Retrieved 25/3/2018