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# Multi-Armed Bandits for Optimizing New Peers in Peer-to-Peer Networks

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## Abstract

Write this last (fewer than 300 words). The completed document should be 5-9 pages.

## 1. Introduction

Peer-to-peer computer networks create a unique environment for content distribution wherein the integrity of the system is not compromised by the failure of a single, centralized node in the network. According to (Schollmeier, 2001), true peer-to-peer systems require peers to be mutually directly accessible (without intermediate entities), as well as the network state or quality of service being preserved in the advent of a peer being removed from the network, for any reason.

The requirements for peer-to-peer networks in different application domains vary. However, new peers that are directly accessing the server for the first time have no information on the network state. New peers therefore cannot be held accountable to preserve the network state and its content if other nodes disconnect. It is essential that this new peer is fed the relevant data as fast as possible in order to fulfill both the requirements of a true peer-to-peer environment, as well as any necessary quality of service targets. With the added volatility of a dynamic network setting, the rate at which a new peer can be brought "up to speed" becomes far more crucial.

In this study, we abstract the new peer scenario described above as a reinforcement learning problem with multi-armed bandits. The multi-armed bandit problem involves  $k$  slot machines (slot machines are sometimes called one-armed bandits) which pay out reward values according to an internal distribution, of which the agent cannot know. The goal is to pick a strategy to learn which arms pay out the most in order to maximize total reward over a set number of rounds (Vermorel & Mohri, 2005).

Various algorithms to solve the multi-armed bandit problem

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are considered, and a select few are implemented in order to evaluate their efficacy against this problem. Related literature is surveyed in order to compare our work with solutions to similar problems and verify the validity of our results. Formulation of this challenge as a reinforcement learning problem precedes an explanation of the approach and a discussion of the results. First, a survey of related work concerning the application of multi-armed bandits to computer networking problems.

## 2. Related Work

Multi-armed bandits serve as a useful abstraction for optimization problems that require decision making with reward outcomes that are initially unknown. In a study concerning cognitive radio networks (Modi et al., 2017), secondary user (SU) nodes select a single channel for information exchange at one time, with no knowledge about channel quality or availability. The authors use a variation on the upper confidence bound (UCB) algorithm, namely QoS-UCB. Their scenario is called "restless", meaning that the states of the arms can fluctuate over time, affecting their internal distributions and the resulting payouts.

The task of wireless network selection, with the goal of maximizing perceived quality for the end user, is handled by extending the bandit model to be more flexible (Boldrini et al., 2018). In this formulation, the agent can take one of two actions (which can span multiple time steps): measure or use. The difference is that measurement allows only evaluation, whereas using adds exploitation. Measuring takes less time than using, which can span a set number of time steps. Results showed that the choice of algorithm depended on the payout distributions. Conservative UCB1 is useful when arm rewards are similar, MLI when one arm is clearly better. More aggressive algorithms like POKER can lead to low regret but high variability, and are therefore less reliable (Boldrini et al., 2018).

Anver and Mannor share methods for multiple multi-armed bandit agents, coordinating with each other and learning stochastic network conditions, which may vary between users (Avner & Mannor, 2019). Their problem formulation is similar to our intentions, but with the agent transmitting instead of receiving. Further, they bound their rewards on the interval  $[0, 1]$ . The problem with this reward for-

mulation when it comes to receiving is that, while outward transmission speed or success may be measurably bounded, reception rate is not necessarily bounded. In fact, there may be conditions when the end receiver does not have the resources to unpack the transmission packages in time, and will become congested. This paper uses techniques to deal with collisions when two or more users transmit in a single channel (Avner & Mannor, 2019). In our problem, we are only operating with unicast in a channel selected by the requesting peer. A last thing of note is Avner and Mannor’s use of UCB in the channel ranking part of their algorithm selection.

Another paper surveys resource scheduling with multi-armed bandits in wireless networks (Li et al., 2020). They mention that  $\epsilon$ -greedy, an algorithm that balancing exploration and exploitation, has shortcomings in its “pure” randomness, and does not take into account confidence intervals on the reward estimates of each arm. UCB exploits this, and also tapers off exploration over time. The authors make the distinction between single- and multi-player multi-armed bandits (SMAB and MMAB), where the former involves a single agent operating the bandit selection mechanism. SMAB have applications in our single peer leeching scenario, as well as centralized network algorithms. MMAB often involve distributed selection that sacrifices independence for synchronization overhead (Li et al., 2020).

### 3. Problem Formulation

Consider the setting of a peer-to-peer network wherein a new peer joins with the intent to be brought “up to speed” with the rest of the network as soon as possible (i.e. download all the data in the network from other peers). However, the new peer does not know the network speeds of its seeds, just how much data it receives over time when it chooses a peer and receives data from them for one time step. The reward is how many bytes received in that time slot. We will assume that data packets are UDP datagrams.

We want to be careful about defining the reward, because we want the agent to choose the peer that is transmitting the fastest. However, consider that network speeds may change, and the optimal seed to leech from will not always be the best. We call this a “restless” scenario.

### 4. Approach

### 5. Results

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#### 5.1. Theoretical Results

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### 5.2. Experiment Results

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### 6. Discussion

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### 7. Conclusion and Future Research

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