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Introduction to
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Information Retrieval
<https://powcoder.com>

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Lecture 4: Dictionaries and tolerant retrieval

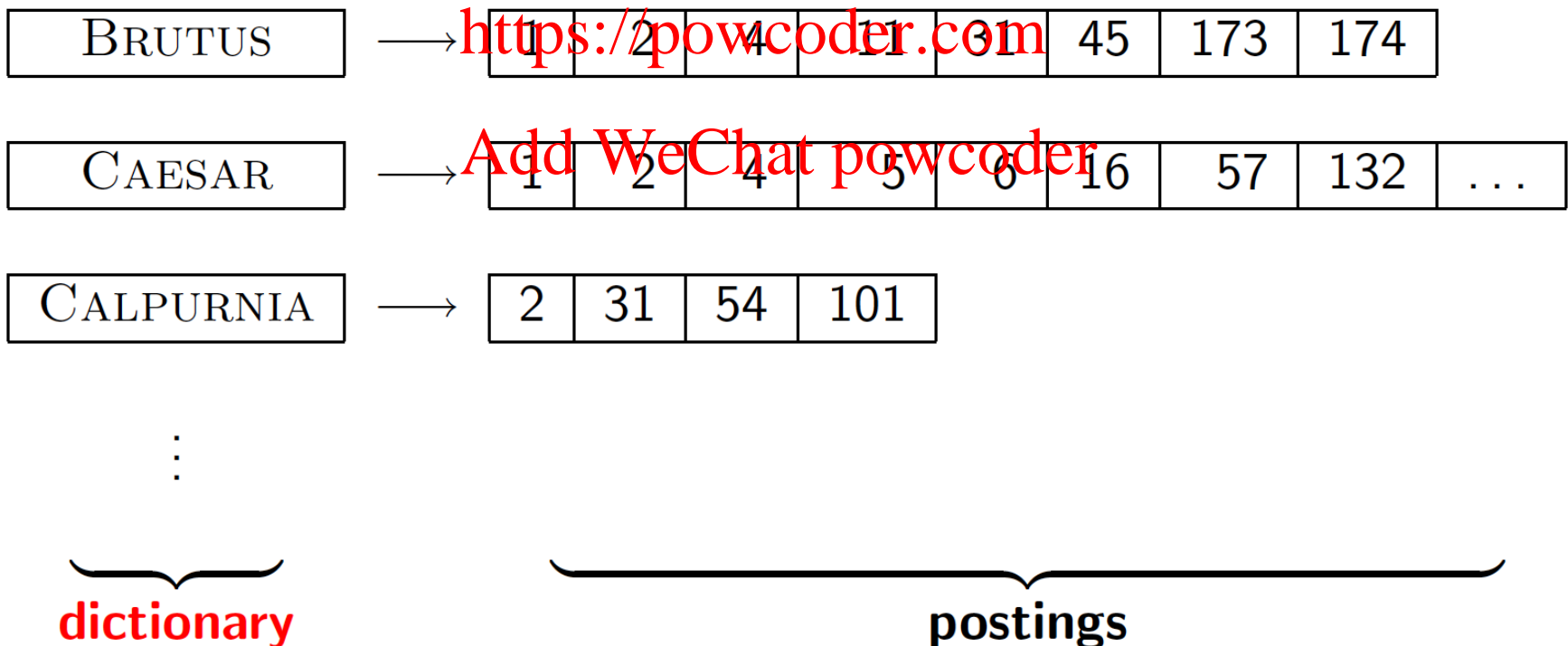
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This lecture

- Dictionary data structures
- “Tolerant” retrieval
 - Wild-card queries
 - Spelling correction
 - Soundex

Dictionary data structures for inverted indexes

- The dictionary data structure stores the term vocabulary, document frequency, pointers to each postings list ...



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A naïve dictionary

- An array of struct:

term	document frequency	pointer to postings list
a	656,265	→
aachen	65	→
...
zulu	221	→

char[20] int Postings *

20 bytes 4/8 bytes 4/8 bytes

- How do we store a dictionary in memory efficiently?
- How do we quickly look up elements at query time?

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Dictionary data structures

- Two main choices:
 - Hash table
 - Tree
- Some IR systems use hashes, some trees

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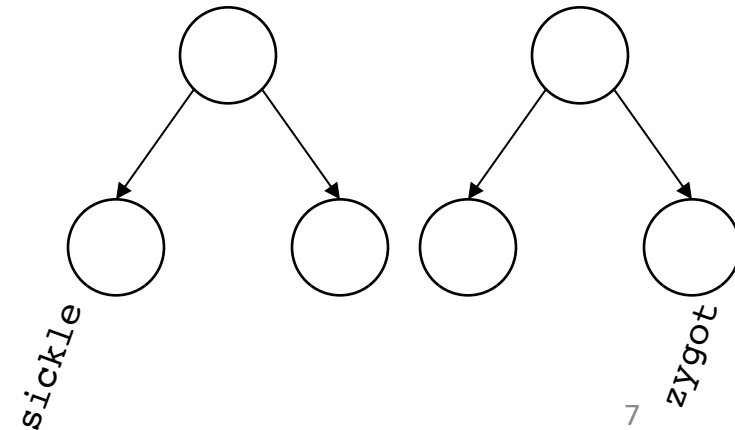
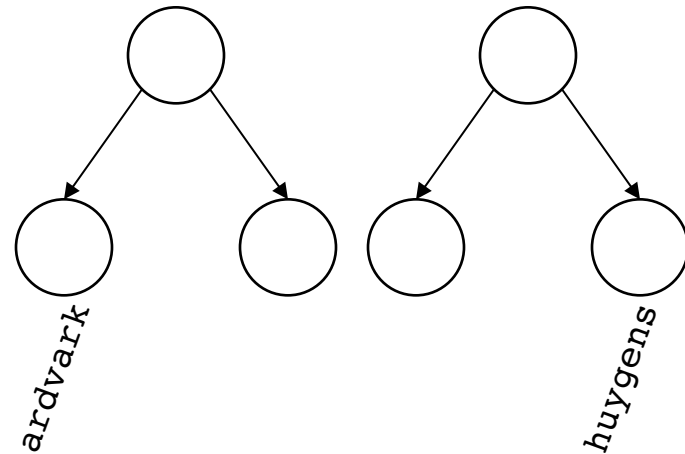
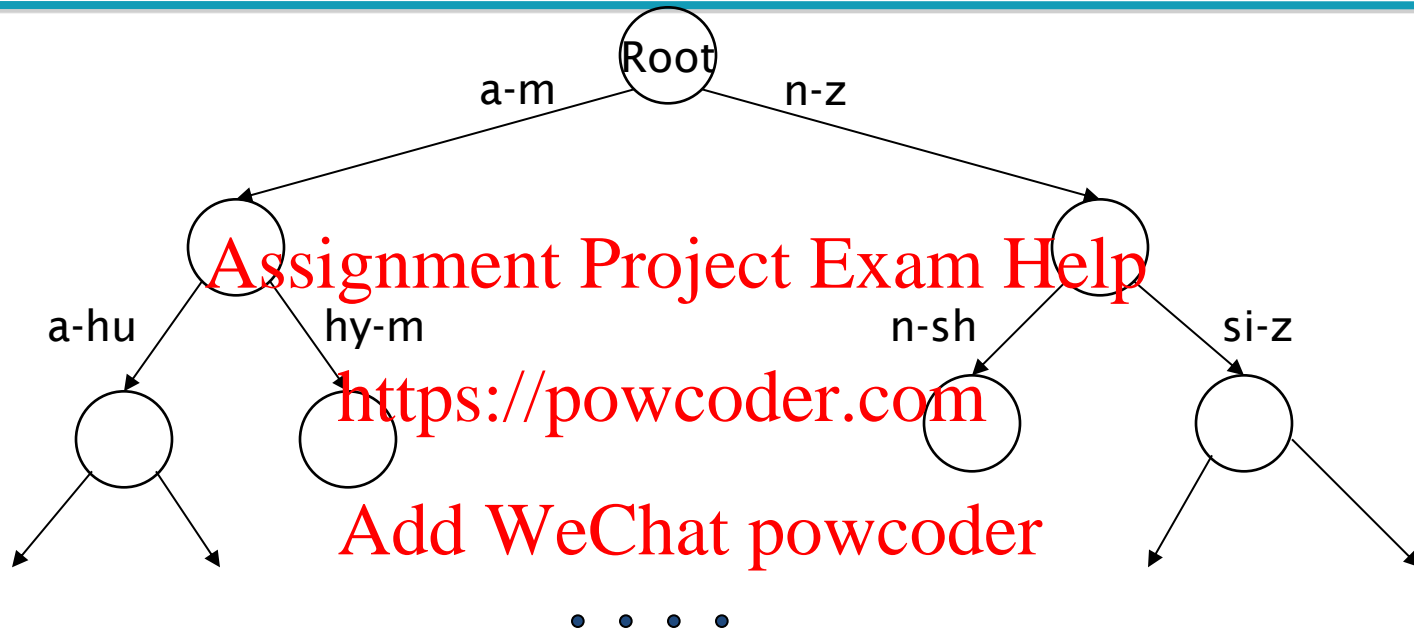
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Hashes Add WeChat powcoder

- Each vocabulary term is hashed to an integer
 - (We assume you've seen hashtables before)
- Pros: Assignment Project Exam Help
 - Lookup is faster than for a tree: $O(1)$ <https://powcoder.com>
- Cons: Add WeChat powcoder
 - No easy way to find minor variants:
 - judgment/judgement
 - No prefix search [tolerant retrieval]
 - If vocabulary keeps growing, need to occasionally do the expensive operation of rehashing *everything*

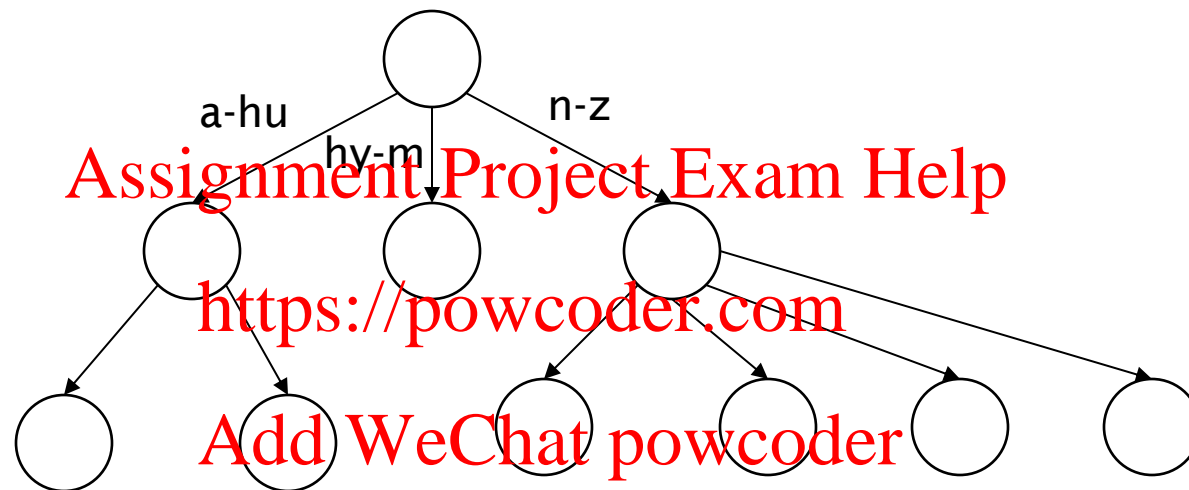
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Tree: binary tree



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Tree: B-tree



- Definition: Every internal node has a number of children in the interval $[a, b]$ where a, b are appropriate natural numbers, e.g., $[2, 4]$.

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Trees

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- Simplest: binary tree
- More usual: B-trees
- Trees require a standard ordering of characters and hence strings ... but we standardly have one
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- Pros:
 - Solves the prefix problem (terms starting with *hyp*)
- Cons:
 - Slower: $O(\log M)$ [and this requires *balanced* tree]
 - Rebalancing binary trees is expensive
 - But B-trees mitigate the rebalancing problem

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WILD-CARD QUERIES

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Wild-card queries: *

- ***mon****: find all docs containing any word beginning “mon”.
- Easy with binary tree (or B-tree) lexicon: retrieve all words in range: ***mon ≤ w < moo***
- ****mon***: find words ending in “mon”: harder
 - Maintain an additional B-tree for terms *backwards*.
Can retrieve all words in range: ***nom ≤ w < non***.

Exercise: from this, how can we enumerate all terms meeting the wild-card query ***pro*cent***?

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Query processing

- At this point, we have an enumeration of all terms in the dictionary that match the wild-card query.
- We still have to look up the postings for each enumerated term.
- E.g., consider the query:
se*ate AND fil*er

This may result in the execution of many Boolean *AND* queries.

B-trees handle *'s at the end of a query term

- How can we handle *'s in the middle of query term?
 - *co*tion*
- We could look up *co** AND **tion* in a B-tree and intersect the two term sets
 - Expensive
 - Still need *verification* to remove *false-positives*
- The solution: transform wild-card queries so that the *'s occur at the end
- This gives rise to the **Permuterm** Index.

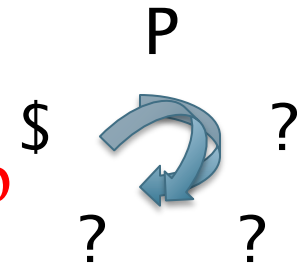
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Permuterm index

- For term **hello**, index under:

- hello\$, ello\$h, llo\$he, lo\$hel, o\$hell**

where \$ is a special symbol.



- Queries:

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- P** Exact match **P\$**
 - P*** Range match **\$P***
 - *P** Range match **P\$***
 - *P*** Range match **P***
 - P*Q** Range match **Q\$P***
 - P*Q*R** ??? Exercise!

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Q: Why not **P*\$***

Query = **hel*o**
P=hel, Q=o
 Lookup **o\$hel***

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Permuterm query processing

- Rotate query wild-card to the right
- Now use B-tree lookup as before.
- *Permuterm problem: \approx quadruples lexicon size*

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Empirical observation for English.

How to perform a precise analysis?

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Bigram (k -gram) indexes

- Enumerate all k -grams (sequence of k chars) occurring in any term
- e.g., from text **April is the cruellest month** we get the 2-grams (*bigrams*)

\$a,ap,pr,ri,Add,WeChat,powcoder\$, \$t,th,he,e\$, \$c,cr,ru,ue,el,le,es,st,t\$, \$m,mo,on,nt,h\$

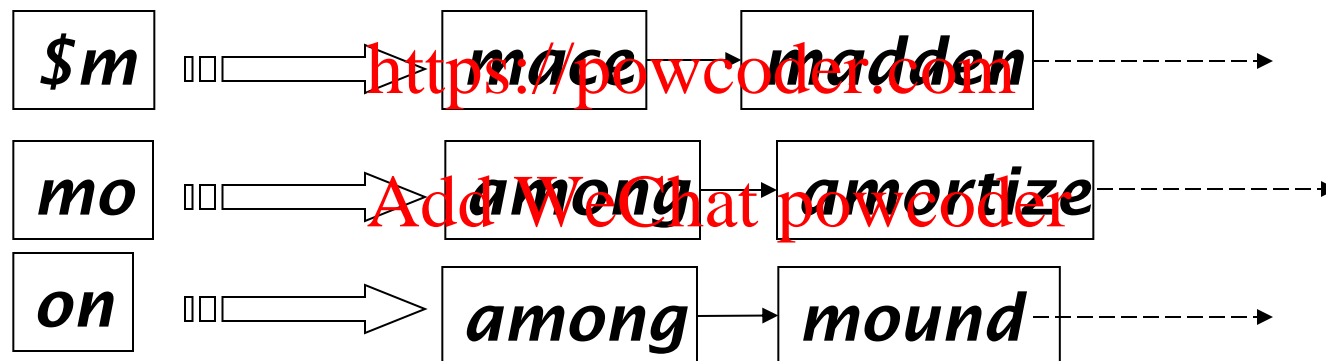
- \$ is a special word boundary symbol
- Maintain a second inverted index from bigrams to dictionary terms that match each bigram.

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Bigram index example

- The k -gram index finds *terms* based on a query consisting of k -grams (here $k=2$).

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Processing wild-cards

- Query ***mon**** can now be run as
 - ***\$m AND mo AND on***
- Gets terms that match AND version of our wildcard query.
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- But we'd enumerate ***moon***.
- Must **verify** these terms against query.
- Surviving enumerated terms are then looked up in the term-document inverted index.
- Fast, space efficient (compared to permuterm).

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Processing wild-card queries

- As before, we must execute a Boolean query for each enumerated, filtered term.
- Wild-cards can result in expensive query execution (very large disjunctions...)
 - `pyth* AND prog*`
- If you encourage “laziness” people will respond!

Search

Type your search terms, use '*' if you need to.
E.g., `Alex*` will match Alexander.

- Which web search engines allow wildcard queries?

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Resources

- IIR 3, MG 4.2
- Efficient spell retrieval:
 - K. Kukich. Techniques for automatically correcting words in text. ACM Computing Surveys 24(4), Dec 1992.
 - J. Zobel and P. Dart. Finding approximate matches in large lexicons. Software - practice and experience 25(3), March 1995.
<http://citeseer.ist.psu.edu/zobel95finding.html>
 - Mikael Tillenius: Efficient Generation and Ranking of Spelling Error Corrections. Master's thesis at Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology.
<http://citeseer.ist.psu.edu/179155.html>
- **Nice, easy reading on spell correction:**
 - Peter Norvig: How to write a spelling corrector
<http://norvig.com/spell-correct.html>