Introduction to Information Retrieval

CS276 Information Retrieval and Web Search
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Lecture 7: Scoring and results assembly
Recap: tf-idf weighting

- The tf-idf weight of a term is the product of its tf weight and its idf weight.

\[ w_{t,d} = (1 + \log tf_{t,d}) \times \log_{10}(N / df_t) \]

- Best known weighting scheme in information retrieval
- Increases with the number of occurrences within a document
- Increases with the rarity of the term in the collection
Recap: Queries as vectors

- **Key idea 1**: Do the same for queries: represent them as vectors in the space
- **Key idea 2**: Rank documents according to their proximity to the query in this space
- proximity = similarity of vectors
Recap: cosine(query, document)

\[ \cos(\vec{q}, \vec{d}) = \frac{\vec{q} \cdot \vec{d}}{||\vec{q}|| ||\vec{d}||} = \frac{\vec{q}}{||\vec{q}||} \cdot \frac{\vec{d}}{||\vec{d}||} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{||V||} q_id_i}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{||V||} q_i^2} \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{||V||} d_i^2}} \]

\[ \cos(\vec{q}, \vec{d}) \] is the cosine similarity of \( \vec{q} \) and \( \vec{d} \) ... or, equivalently, the cosine of the angle between \( \vec{q} \) and \( \vec{d} \).
This lecture

- Speeding up vector space ranking
- Putting together a complete search system
  - Will require learning about a number of miscellaneous topics and heuristics
Computing cosine scores

\textbf{COSINE\textsc{Score}}(q)
1 \hspace{1em} float Scores[N] = 0
2 \hspace{1em} float Length[N]
3 \hspace{1em} for each query term $t$
4 \hspace{1em} do calculate $w_{t,q}$ and fetch postings list for $t$
5 \hspace{1em} \hspace{1em} for each pair($d$, $t$f_{t,d}) in postings list
6 \hspace{1em} \hspace{1em} do Scores[$d$] + = $w_{t,d} \times w_{t,q}$
7 \hspace{1em} Read the array Length
8 \hspace{1em} for each $d$
9 \hspace{1em} do Scores[$d$] = Scores[$d$]/Length[$d$]
10 return Top $K$ components of Scores[]
Efficient cosine ranking

- Find the $K$ docs in the collection “nearest” to the query $\Rightarrow K$ largest query-doc cosines.
- Efficient ranking:
  - Computing a single cosine efficiently.
  - Choosing the $K$ largest cosine values efficiently.
    - Can we do this without computing all $N$ cosines?
Efficient cosine ranking

- What we’re doing in effect: solving the $K$-nearest neighbor problem for a query vector
- In general, we do not know how to do this efficiently for high-dimensional spaces
- But it is solvable for short queries, and standard indexes support this well
Special case – unweighted queries

- No weighting on query terms
  - Assume each query term occurs only once
- Then for ranking, don’t need to normalize query vector
  - Slight simplification of algorithm from Lecture 6
Faster cosine: unweighted query

\textbf{FastCosineScore}(q)
1 \quad \text{float } Scores[N] = 0
2 \quad \text{for each } d
3 \quad \text{do Initialize } Length[d] \text{ to the length of doc } d
4 \quad \text{for each query term } t
5 \quad \text{do calculate } w_{t,q} \text{ and fetch postings list for } t
6 \quad \quad \text{for each pair}(d, tf_{t,d}) \text{ in postings list}
7 \quad \quad \quad \text{do add } wf_{t,d} \text{ to } Scores[d]
8 \quad \text{Read the array } Length[d]
9 \quad \text{for each } d
10 \quad \text{do Divide } Scores[d] \text{ by } Length[d]
11 \quad \text{return Top } K \text{ components of } Scores[]

Figure 7.1 A faster algorithm for vector space scores.
Computing the $K$ largest cosines: selection vs. sorting

- Typically we want to retrieve the top $K$ docs (in the cosine ranking for the query)
  - not to totally order all docs in the collection
- Can we pick off docs with $K$ highest cosines?
- Let $J =$ number of docs with nonzero cosines
  - We seek the $K$ best of these $J$
Use heap for selecting top $K$

- Binary tree in which each node’s value > the values of children
- Takes $2J$ operations to construct, then each of $K$ “winners” read off in $2\log J$ steps.
- For $J=1M$, $K=100$, this is about 10% of the cost of sorting.
Bottlenecks

- Primary computational bottleneck in scoring: \textit{cosine computation}
- Can we avoid all this computation?
- Yes, but may sometimes get it wrong
  - a doc \textit{not} in the top $K$ may creep into the list of $K$ output docs
  - Is this such a bad thing?
Cosine similarity is only a proxy

- User has a task and a query formulation
- Cosine matches docs to query
- Thus cosine is anyway a proxy for user happiness
- If we get a list of $K$ docs “close” to the top $K$ by cosine measure, should be ok
Generic approach

- Find a set $A$ of contenders, with $K < |A| \ll N$
  - $A$ does not necessarily contain the top $K$, but has many docs from among the top $K$
  - Return the top $K$ docs in $A$
- Think of $A$ as pruning non-contenders
- The same approach is also used for other (non-cosine) scoring functions
- Will look at several schemes following this approach
Index elimination

- Basic algorithm FastCosineScore of Fig 7.1 only considers docs containing at least one query term
- Take this further:
  - Only consider high-idf query terms
  - Only consider docs containing many query terms
High-idf query terms only

- For a query such as *catcher in the rye*
- Only accumulate scores from *catcher* and *rye*
- Intuition: *in* and *the* contribute little to the scores and so don’t alter rank-ordering much
- Benefit:
  - Postings of low-idf terms have many docs → these (many) docs get eliminated from set A of contenders
Docs containing many query terms

- Any doc with at least one query term is a candidate for the top $K$ output list
- For multi-term queries, only compute scores for docs containing several of the query terms
  - Say, at least 3 out of 4
  - Imposes a “soft conjunction” on queries seen on web search engines (early Google)
- Easy to implement in postings traversal
3 of 4 query terms

Scores only computed for docs 8, 16 and 32.
Champion lists

- Precompute for each dictionary term $t$, the $r$ docs of highest weight in $t$’s postings
  - Call this the champion list for $t$
  - (aka fancy list or top docs for $t$)
- Note that $r$ has to be chosen at index build time
  - Thus, it’s possible that $r < K$
- At query time, only compute scores for docs in the champion list of some query term
  - Pick the $K$ top-scoring docs from amongst these
Exercises

- How do Champion Lists relate to Index Elimination? Can they be used together?
- How can Champion Lists be implemented in an inverted index?
  - Note that the champion list has nothing to do with small docIDs
Static quality scores

- We want top-ranking documents to be both *relevant* and *authoritative*
- *Relevance* is being modeled by cosine scores
- *Authority* is typically a query-independent property of a document
- Examples of authority signals
  - Wikipedia among websites
  - Articles in certain newspapers
  - A paper with many citations
  - Many diggs, Y!buzes or del.icio.us marks
  - (Pagerank)
Modeling authority

- Assign to each document a query-independent quality score in [0,1] to each document $d$
  - Denote this by $g(d)$
- Thus, a quantity like the number of citations is scaled into [0,1]
  - Exercise: suggest a formula for this.
Net score

- Consider a simple total score combining cosine relevance and authority
  
  $\text{net-score}(q,d) = g(d) + \text{cosine}(q,d)$
  
  - Can use some other linear combination than an equal weighting
  - Indeed, any function of the two “signals” of user happiness – more later

- Now we seek the top $K$ docs by net score
Top $K$ by net score – fast methods

- First idea: Order all postings by $g(d)$
- Key: this is a common ordering for all postings
- Thus, can concurrently traverse query terms’ postings for
  - Postings intersection
  - Cosine score computation
- Exercise: write pseudocode for cosine score computation if postings are ordered by $g(d)$
Why order postings by $g(d)$?

- Under $g(d)$-ordering, top-scoring docs likely to appear early in postings traversal
- In time-bound applications (say, we have to return whatever search results we can in 50 ms), this allows us to stop postings traversal early
  - Short of computing scores for all docs in postings
Champion lists in $g(d)$-ordering

- Can combine champion lists with $g(d)$-ordering
- Maintain for each term a champion list of the $r$ docs with highest $g(d) + \text{tf-idf}_{td}$
- Seek top-$K$ results from only the docs in these champion lists
High and low lists

- For each term, we maintain two postings lists called *high* and *low*
  - Think of *high* as the champion list
- When traversing postings on a query, only traverse *high* lists first
  - If we get more than $K$ docs, select the top $K$ and stop
  - Else proceed to get docs from the *low* lists
- Can be used even for simple cosine scores, without global quality $g(d)$
- A means for segmenting index into two tiers
Impact-ordered postings

- We only want to compute scores for docs for which $w_{f,t,d}$ is high enough
- We sort each postings list by $w_{f,t,d}$
- Now: not all postings in a common order!
- How do we compute scores in order to pick off top $K$?
  - Two ideas follow
1. Early termination

- When traversing $t$’s postings, stop early after either
  - a fixed number of $r$ docs
  - $wf_{t,d}$ drops below some threshold
- Take the union of the resulting sets of docs
  - One from the postings of each query term
- Compute only the scores for docs in this union
2. idf-ordered terms

- When considering the postings of query terms
- Look at them in order of decreasing idf
  - High idf terms likely to contribute most to score
- As we update score contribution from each query term
  - Stop if doc scores relatively unchanged
- Can apply to cosine or some other net scores
Cluster pruning: preprocessing

- Pick $\sqrt{N}$ docs at random: call these leaders
- For every other doc, pre-compute nearest leader
  - Docs attached to a leader: its followers;
  - Likely: each leader has $\sim \sqrt{N}$ followers.
Cluster pruning: query processing

- Process a query as follows:
  - Given query $Q$, find its nearest leader $L$.
  - Seek $K$ nearest docs from among $L$’s followers.
Visualization

Query

Leader

Follower
Why use random sampling

- Fast
- Leaders reflect data distribution
General variants

- Have each follower attached to $b1=3$ (say) nearest leaders.
- From query, find $b2=4$ (say) nearest leaders and their followers.
- Can recur on leader/follower construction.
Exercises

- To find the nearest leader in step 1, how many cosine computations do we do?
  - Why did we have $\sqrt{N}$ in the first place?
- What is the effect of the constants $b1$, $b2$ on the previous slide?
- Devise an example where this is *likely* to fail – i.e., we miss one of the $K$ nearest docs.
  - *Likely* under random sampling.
Parametric and zone indexes

- Thus far, a doc has been a sequence of terms
- In fact documents have multiple parts, some with special semantics:
  - Author
  - Title
  - Date of publication
  - Language
  - Format
  - etc.
- These constitute the **metadata** about a document
Fields

- We sometimes wish to search by these metadata
  - E.g., find docs authored by William Shakespeare in the year 1601, containing *alas poor Yorick*
- Year = 1601 is an example of a field
- Also, author last name = shakespeare, etc
- Field or parametric index: postings for each field value
  - Sometimes build range trees (e.g., for dates)
- Field query typically treated as conjunction
  - (doc *must* be authored by shakespeare)
Zone

- A zone is a region of the doc that can contain an arbitrary amount of text e.g.,
  - Title
  - Abstract
  - References ...
- Build inverted indexes on zones as well to permit querying
- E.g., “find docs with merchant in the title zone and matching the query gentle rain”
Example zone indexes

Encode zones in dictionary vs. postings.
Tiered indexes

- Break postings up into a hierarchy of lists
  - Most important
  - ...
  - Least important
- Can be done by $g(d)$ or another measure
- Inverted index thus broken up into tiers of decreasing importance
- At query time use top tier unless it fails to yield $K$ docs
  - If so drop to lower tiers
Example tiered index

Tier 1
- auto → Doc2
- best
- car → Doc1 → Doc3
- insurance → Doc2 → Doc3

Tier 2
- auto
- best → Doc1 → Doc3
- car
- insurance

Tier 3
- auto → Doc1
- best
- car → Doc2
- insurance
Query term proximity

- **Free text queries**: just a set of terms typed into the query box – common on the web
- Users prefer docs in which query terms occur within close proximity of each other
- Let $w$ be the smallest window in a doc containing all query terms, e.g.,
- For the query *strained mercy* the smallest window in the doc *The quality of mercy is not strained* is 4 (words)
- Would like scoring function to take this into account – how?
Query parsers

- Free text query from user may in fact spawn one or more queries to the indexes, e.g. query *rising interest rates*
  - Run the query as a phrase query
  - If <K docs contain the phrase *rising interest rates*, run the two phrase queries *rising interest* and *interest rates*
  - If we still have <K docs, run the vector space query *rising interest rates*
  - Rank matching docs by vector space scoring
- This sequence is issued by a query parser
Aggregate scores

- We’ve seen that score functions can combine cosine, static quality, proximity, etc.
- How do we know the best combination?
- Some applications – expert-tuned
- Increasingly common: machine-learned
  - See Nov 12th lecture
Putting it all together
Resources

- IIR 7, 6.1