Search: the beginning

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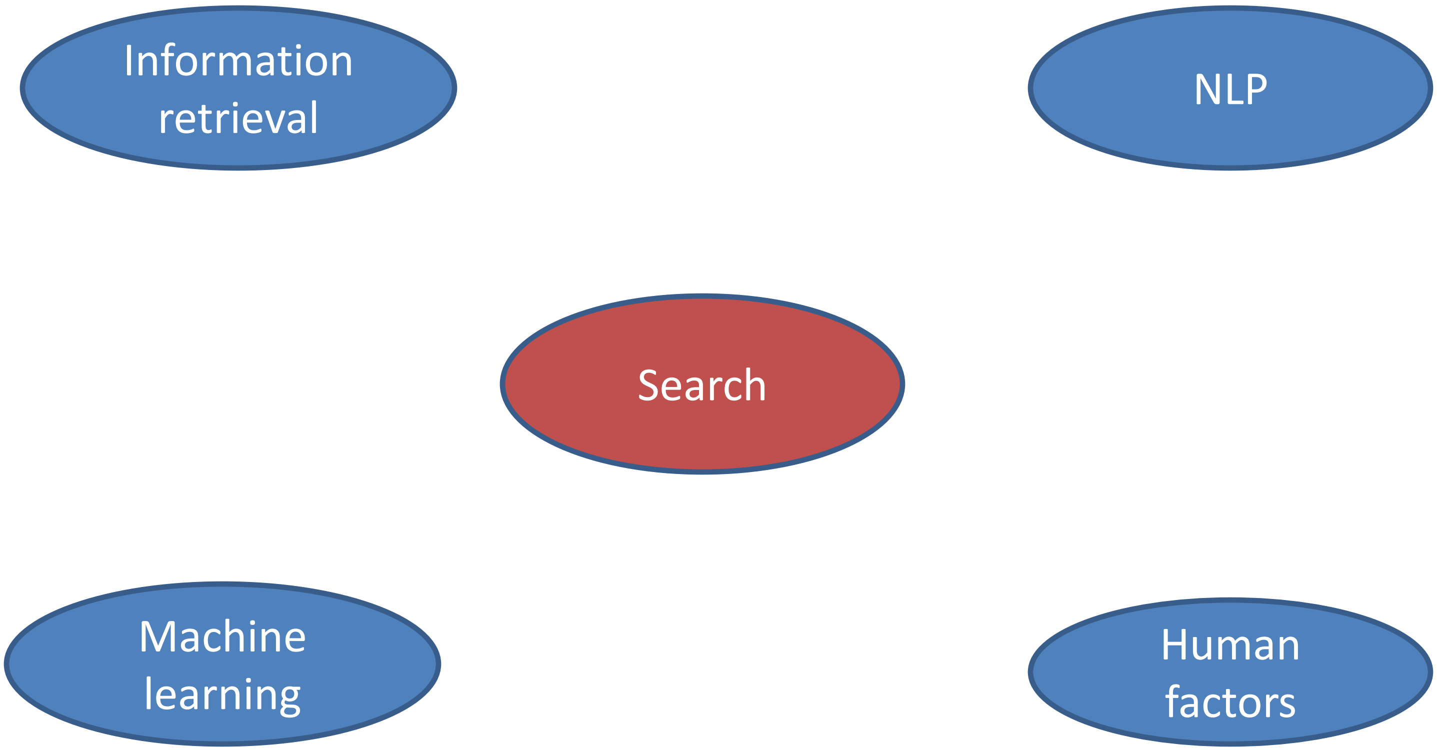
Interdisciplinary area



Outline

- Components
  - Crawling
  - Processing
  - Indexing
  - Retrieval
  - Evaluation
- Research areas
  - Text processing
    - Beyond bag-of-words representations
  - Retrieval algorithms
    - Context sensitivity
    - Personalization
    - Diversity and serendipity
  - Evaluation methods
    - Usability studies
    - Real-time tracking

Emphasis areas

- Text processing
  - Basic algorithms
  - Criteria for model selection
  - Data transformations
- Retrieval
  - Algorithms
  - Ranking schemes
  - Research foci
- Evaluation
  - Existing methods
  - Problems
  - Research foci

De-emphasized areas

- Search engine architecture
- Crawling
- Indexing
- Scalability concerns
- Privacy concerns

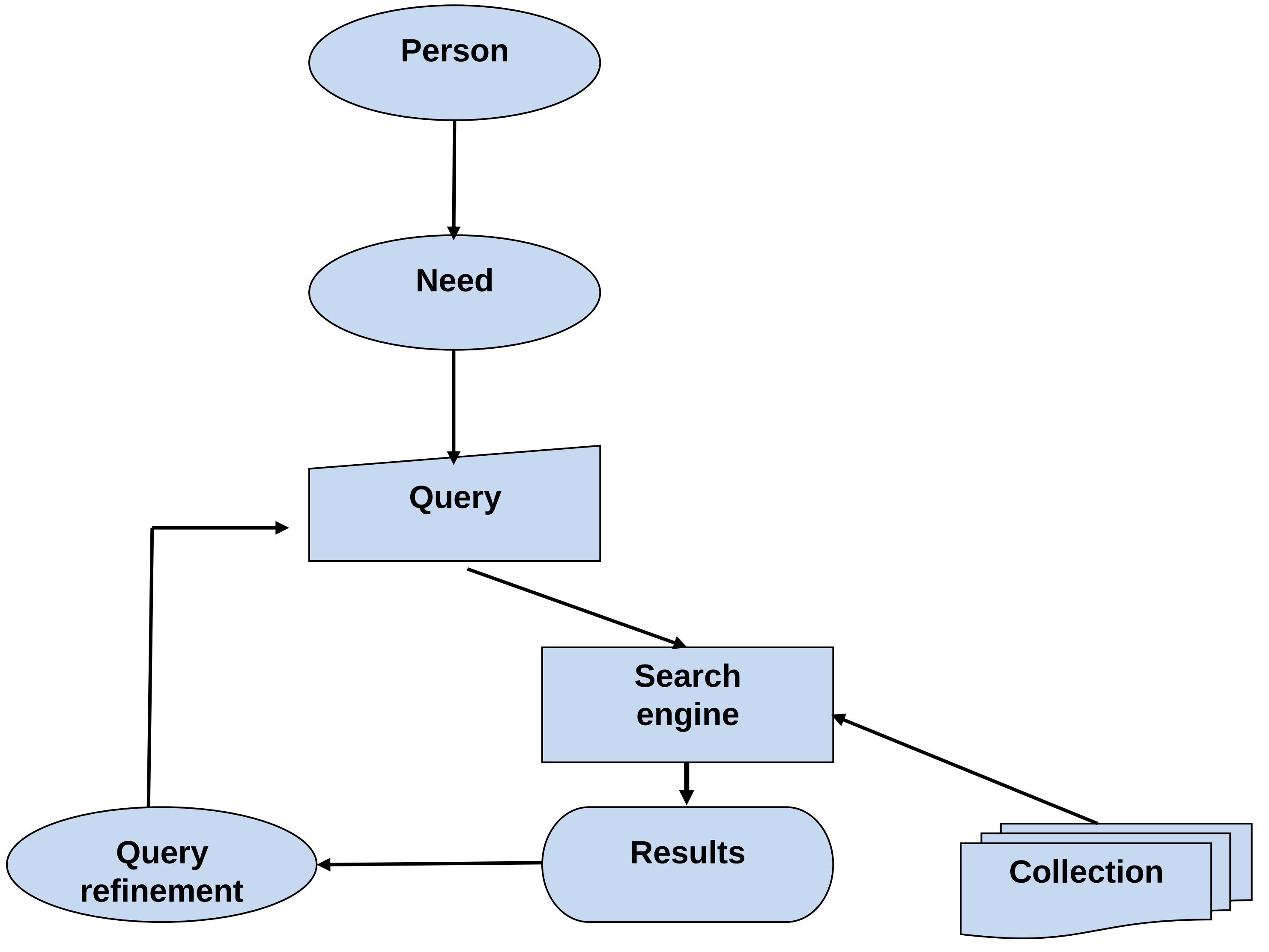
Resources

- Croft, Metzler & Strohman (ex-Google)
  - Search Engines: Information Retrieval in Practice (pdf on HCC webpage)
- Chapters 1,2,4,6,7,8
- Other research papers and books as we go along

The simplest possible search model

BOOLEAN SEARCH

The classic search model



Boolean search

- Search queries <u>always</u> Boolean formulae
  - Later deal with natural language queries
- No uncertainty about corpus membership
  - Later deal with document clusters
- Search intent is known
  - Later deal with context, personalization
- Great example – Gmail search
- Reading material
  - Manning, Raghavan & Schutze, Intro to IR
  - Chapter 1
  - Available online

Boolean retrieval: Exact match

- The Boolean retrieval model is being able to ask a query that is a Boolean expression:
  - Boolean Queries are queries using *AND, OR* and *NOT* to join query terms
    - Views each document as a set of words
    - Is precise: document matches condition or not.
  - Perhaps the simplest model to build an IR system on
- Primary commercial retrieval tool for 3 decades.
- Many search systems you still use are Boolean:
  - Email, library catalog, Mac OS X Spotlight

Example document corpus

- Which plays of Shakespeare contain the words ***Brutus*** *AND* ***Caesar*** but *NOT* ***Calpurnia***?
- One could `grep` all of Shakespeare's plays for ***Brutus*** and ***Caesar,*** then strip out lines containing ***Calpurnia***?
- Why is that not the answer?
  - Slow (for large corpora)
  - *NOT* ***Calpurnia*** is non-trivial
  - Other operations (e.g., find the word ***Romans*** near ***countrymen***) not feasible
  - Ranked retrieval (best documents to return)
    - Later lectures

Term-document incidence matrices

	Antony and Cleopatra	Julius Caesar	The Tempest	Hamlet	Othello	Macbeth
Antony	1	1	0	0	0	1
Brutus	1	1	0	1	0	0
Caesar	1	1	0	1	1	1
Calpurnia	0	1	0	0	0	0
Cleopatra	1	0	0	0	0	0
mercy	1	0	1	1	1	1
worser	1	0	1	1	1	0

1 if play contains word, 0 otherwise

Brutus *AND* ***Caesar*** *BUT NOT* ***Calpurnia***

Incidence vectors

- So we have a 0/1 vector for each term.
- To answer query: take the vectors for ***Brutus, Caesar*** and ***Calpurnia*** (complemented) ➔ bitwise *AND*.
  - 110100 *AND*
  - 110111 *AND*
  - 101111 =
  - **100100**

	Antony and Cleopatra	Julius Caesar	The Tempest	Hamlet	Othello	Macbeth
Antony	1	1	0	0	0	1
Brutus	1	1	0	1	0	0
Caesar	1	1	0	1	1	1
Calpurnia	0	1	0	0	0	0
Cleopatra	1	0	0	0	0	0
mercy	1	0	1	1	1	1
worser	1	0	1	1	1	0

Answers to query

- Antony and Cleopatra, Act III, Scene ii

Agrippa [Aside to DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS]: Why, Enobarbus,
When Antony found Julius ***Caesar*** dead,
He cried almost to roaring; and he wept
When at Philippi he found ***Brutus*** slain.

- Hamlet, Act III, Scene ii

Lord Polonius: I did enact Julius ***Caesar*** I was killed i' the
Capitol; ***Brutus*** killed me.

Bigger collections

- Consider *N* = 1 million documents, each with about 1000 words.
- Avg 6 bytes/word including spaces/punctuation
  - 6GB of data in the documents.
- Say there are *M* = 500K *distinct* terms among these.

Can’t build the matrix

- 500K x 1M matrix has half-a-trillion 0’s and 1’s.

- But it has no more than one billion 1’s.
  - matrix is extremely sparse.

Why?

- What’s a better representation?
  - We only record the 1 positions.

Inverted index

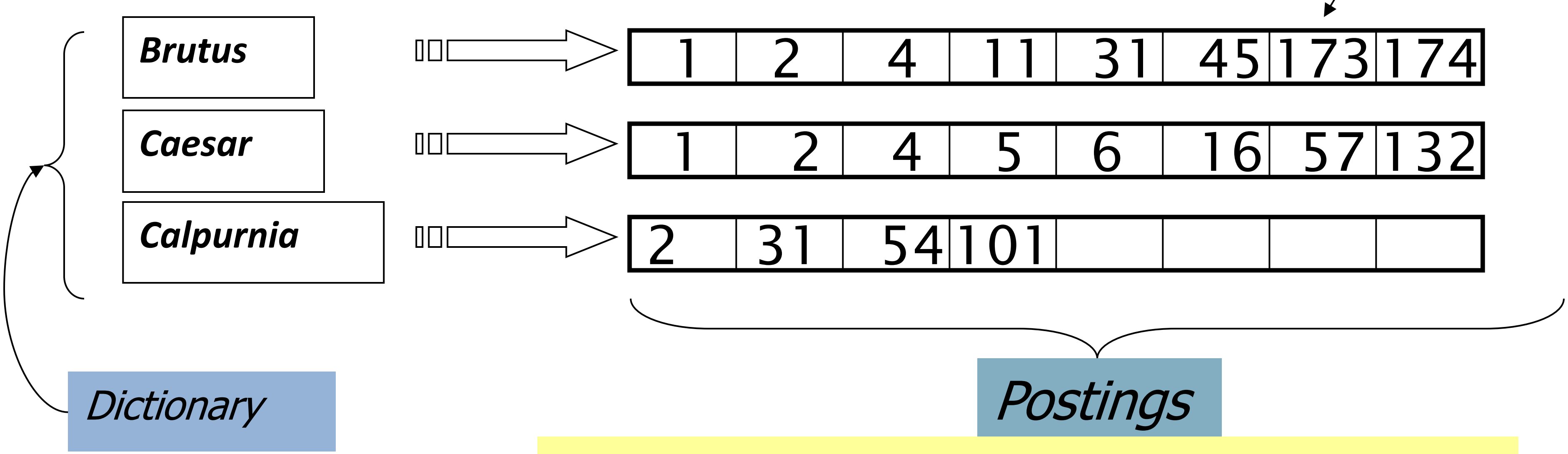
- For each term *t*, we must store a list of all documents that contain *t*.
  - Identify each doc by a **docID**, a document serial number
- Can we used fixed-size arrays for this?

Brutus	1	2	4	11	31	45	173	174
Caesar	1	2	4	5	6	16	57	132
Calpurnia	2	31	54	101				

What happens if the word ***Caesar*** is added to document 14?

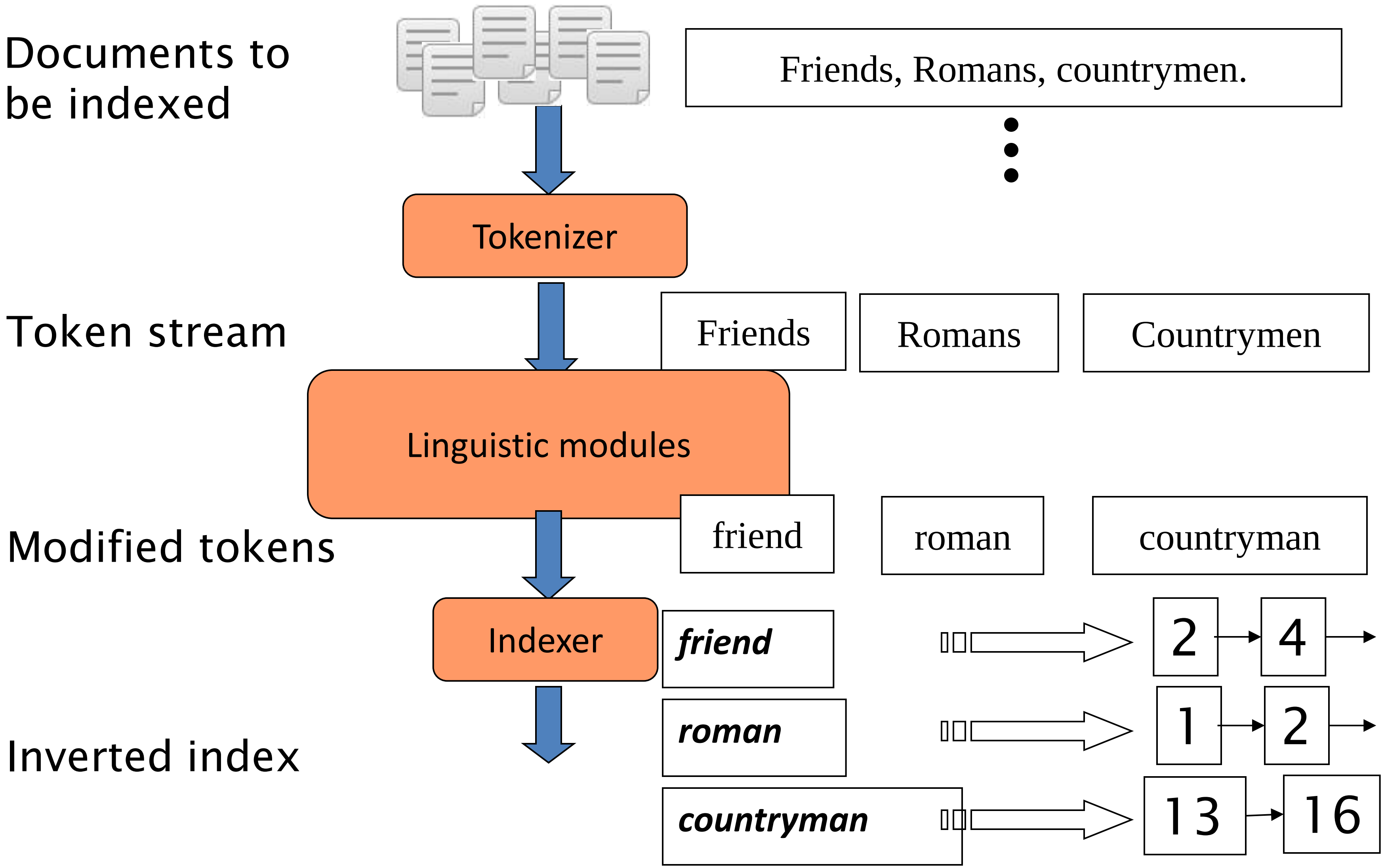
Inverted index

- We need variable-size postings lists
  - On disk, a continuous run of postings is normal and best
  - In memory, can use linked lists or variable length arrays
    - Some tradeoffs in size/ease of insertion



Sorted by docID (more later on why).

Inverted index construction



Initial stages of text processing

- Tokenization
  - Cut character sequence into word tokens
    - Deal with ***"John's"***, ***a state-of-the-art solution***
- Normalization
  - Map text and query term to same form
    - You want ***U.S.A.*** and ***USA*** to match
- Stemming
  - We may wish different forms of a root to match
    - ***authorize***, ***authorization***
- Stop words
  - We may omit very common words (or not)
    - ***the, a, to, of***

Indexer steps: Token sequence

- Sequence of (Modified token, Document ID) pairs.

Doc 1

I did enact Julius Caesar I was killed i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

Doc 2

So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious

Term	docID
I	1
did	1
enact	1
julius	1
caesar	1
I	1
was	1
killed	1
i'	1
the	1
capitol	1
brutus	1
killed	1
me	1
so	2
let	2
it	2
be	2
with	2
caesar	2
the	2
noble	2
brutus	2
hath	2
told	2
you	2
caesar	2
was	2
ambitious	2

Indexer steps: Sort

- Sort by terms
  - And then docID

Core indexing step

Term	docID
I	1
did	1
enact	1
julius	1
caesar	1
I	1
was	1
killed	1
i'	1
the	1
capitol	1
brutus	1
killed	1
me	1
so	2
let	2
it	2
be	2
with	2
caesar	2
the	2
noble	2
brutus	2
hath	2
told	2
you	2
caesar	2
was	2
ambitious	2

Term	docID
ambitious	2
be	2
brutus	1
brutus	2
capitol	1
caesar	1
caesar	2
caesar	2
did	1
enact	1
hath	1
I	1
I	1
i'	1
it	2
julius	1
killed	1
killed	1
let	2
me	1
noble	2
so	2
the	1
the	2
told	2
you	2
was	1
was	2
with	2

Indexer steps: Dictionary & Postings

- Multiple term entries in a single document are merged.
- Split into Dictionary and Postings
- Doc. frequency information is added.

Why frequency?
Will discuss later.

Term	docID
ambitious	2
be	2
brutus	1
brutus	2
capitol	1
caesar	1
caesar	2
caesar	2
did	1
enact	1
hath	1
I	1
I	1
i'	1
it	2
julius	1
killed	1
killed	1
let	2
me	1
noble	2
so	2
the	1
the	2
told	2
you	2
was	1
was	2
with	2

term	doc. freq.	→	postings lists
ambitious	1	→	2
be	1	→	2
brutus	2	→	1 → 2
capitol	1	→	1
caesar	2	→	1 → 2
did	1	→	1
enact	1	→	1
hath	1	→	2
i	1	→	1
i'	1	→	1
it	1	→	2
julius	1	→	1
killed	1	→	1
let	1	→	2
me	1	→	1
noble	1	→	2
so	1	→	2
the	2	→	1 → 2
told	1	→	2
you	1	→	2
was	2	→	1 → 2
with	1	→	2

Where do we pay in storage?

term	doc. freq.	→	postings lists
ambitious	1	→	2
be	1	→	2
brutus	2	→	1 → 2
capitol	1	→	1
caesar	2	→	1 → 2
did	1	→	1
enact	1	→	1
hath	1	→	2
i	1	→	1
i'	1	→	1
it	1	→	2
julius	1	→	1
killed	1	→	1
let	1	→	2
me	1	→	1
noble	1	→	2
so	1	→	2
the	2	→	1 → 2
told	1	→	2
you	1	→	2
was	2	→	1 → 2
with	1	→	2

Terms and counts

Lists of docIDs

Pointers

IR system implementation

- How do we index efficiently?
- How much storage do we need?

Query processing

- How do we process a query?
  - Later - what kinds of queries can we process?

Query processing: AND

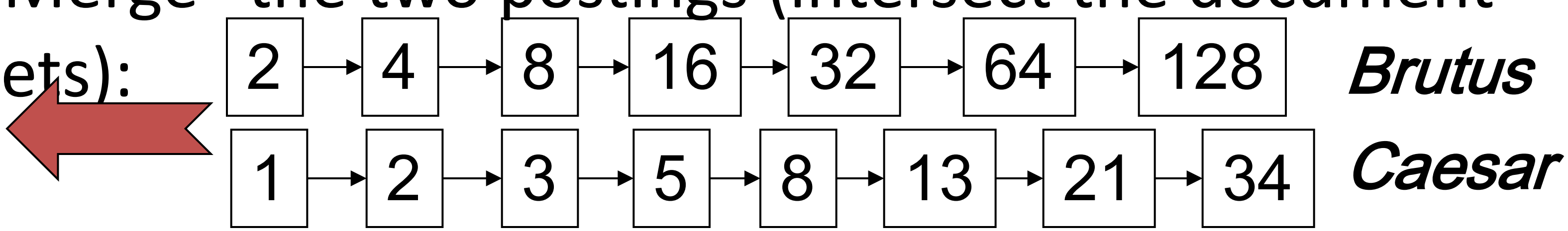
- Consider processing the query:

  Brutus *AND* ***Caesar***

  – Locate ***Brutus*** in the Dictionary;
    - Retrieve its postings.

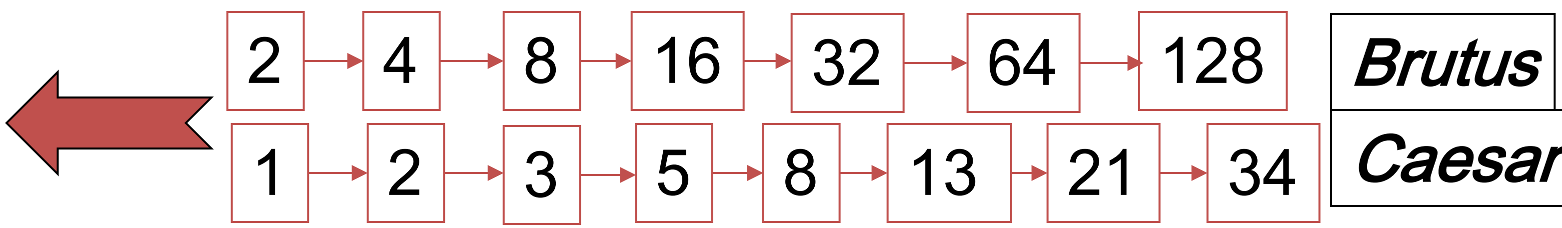
  – Locate ***Caesar*** in the Dictionary;
    - Retrieve its postings.

  – "Merge" the two postings (intersect the document sets):



The merge

- Walk through the two postings simultaneously, in time linear in the total number of postings entries



If the list lengths are *x* and *y*, the merge takes O(*x*+*y*) operations.
<u>Crucial</u>: postings sorted by docID.

Intersecting two postings lists (a "merge" algorithm)

```
INTERSECT(p1, p2)
answer ← ⟨ ⟩
while p1 ≠ NIL and p2 ≠ NIL
do if docID(p1) = docID(p2)
      then ADD(answer, docID(p1))
           p1 ← next(p1)
           p2 ← next(p2)
      else if docID(p1) < docID(p2)
              then p1 ← next(p1)
              else p2 ← next(p2)
return answer
```

Boolean queries: More general merges

- Exercise: Adapt the merge for the queries:

  Brutus *AND NOT* ***Caesar***

  Brutus *OR NOT* ***Caesar***

- Can we still run through the merge in time O(x+y)? What can we achieve?

Merging

What about an arbitrary Boolean formula?

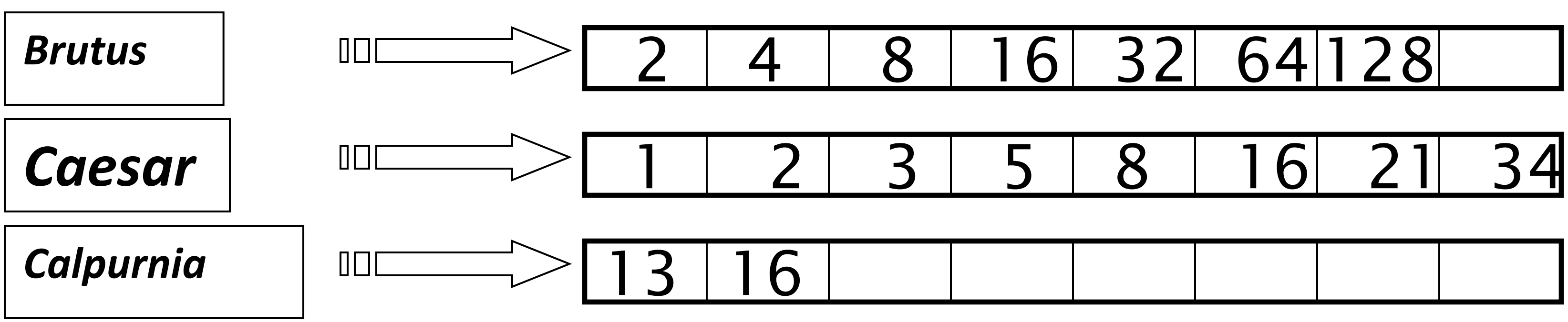
(Brutus *OR* ***Caesar)*** *AND NOT*

(Antony *OR* ***Cleopatra)***

- Can we always merge in "linear" time?
  - Linear in what?
- Can we do better?

Query optimization

- What is the best order for query processing?
- Consider a query that is an *AND* of *n* terms.
- For each of the *n* terms, get its postings, then *AND* them together.

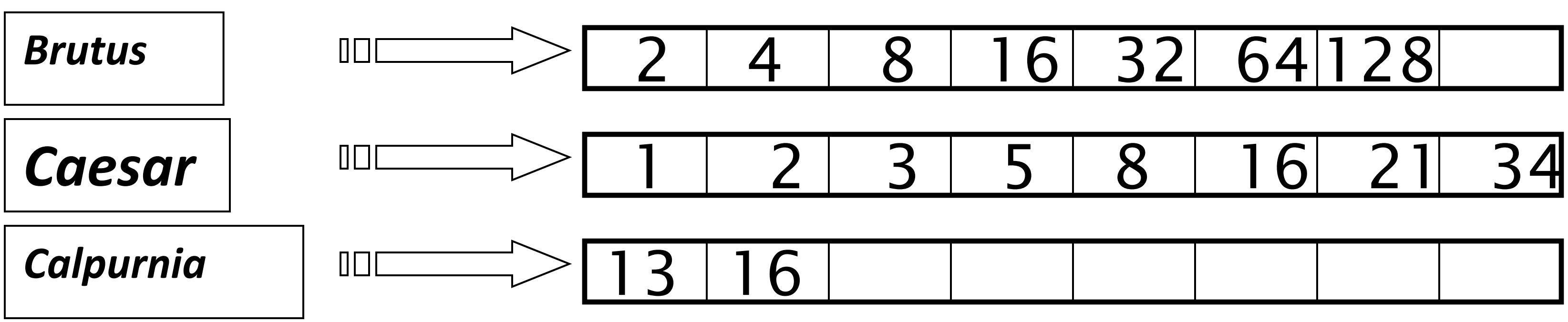


Query: ***Brutus*** *AND* ***Calpurnia*** *AND* ***Caesar***

Query optimization example

- Process in order of increasing freq:
  - *start with smallest set, then keep cutting further.*

This is why we kept document freq. in dictionary



Execute the query as (***Calpurnia*** *AND* ***Brutus)*** *AND* ***Caesar***.

More general optimization

- e.g., *(**madding** OR **crowd**) AND (**ignoble** OR **strife**)*
- Get doc. freq.'s for all terms.
- Estimate the size of each *OR* by the sum of its doc. freq.'s (conservative).
- Process in increasing order of *OR* sizes.

Quick review

term	doc. freq.	→	postings lists
ambitious	1	→	2
be	1	→	2
brutus	2	→	1 → 2
capitol	1	→	1
caesar	2	→	1 → 2
did	1	→	1
enact	1	→	1
hath	1	→	2
i	1	→	1
i'	1	→	1
it	1	→	2
julius	1	→	1
killed	1	→	1
let	1	→	2
me	1	→	1
noble	1	→	2
so	1	→	2
the	2	→	1 → 2
told	1	→	2
you	1	→	2
was	2	→	1 → 2
with	1	→	2

Terms and counts

Lists of docIDs

Pointers

Exercise

- Recommend a query processing order for

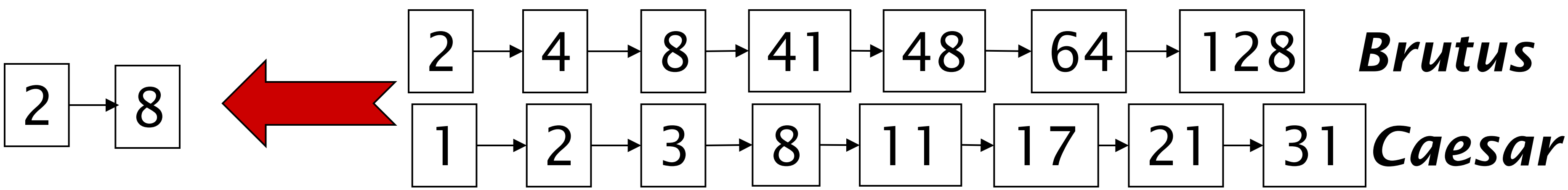
(tangerine *OR* ***trees)*** *AND*
(marmalade *OR* ***skies)*** *AND*
(kaleidoscope *OR* ***eyes)***

- Which two terms should we process first?

Term	Freq
eyes	213312
kaleidoscope	87009
marmalade	107913
skies	271658
tangerine	46653
trees	316812

More optimization: skip pointers

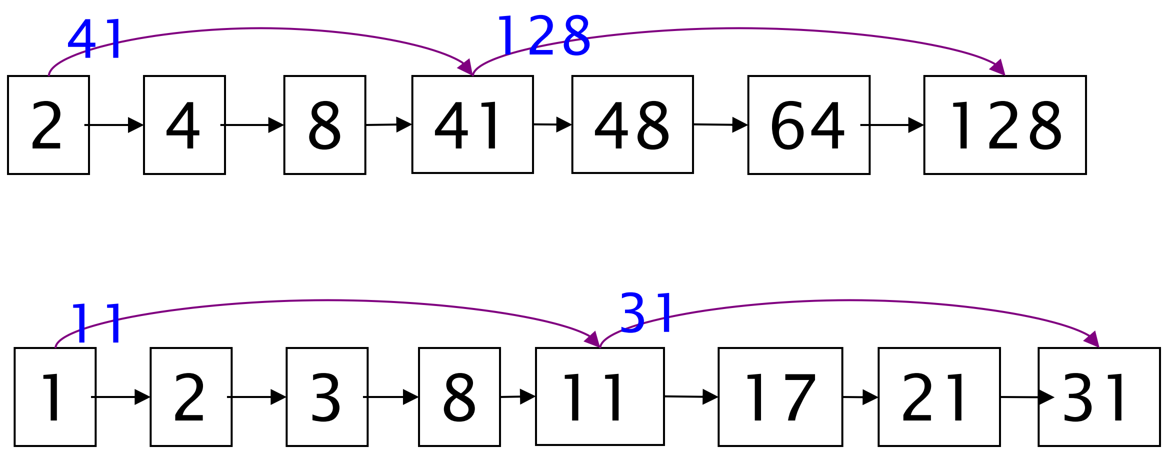
- Walk through the two postings simultaneously, in time linear in the total number of postings entries



If the list lengths are *m* and *n*, the merge takes O(*m*+*n*) operations.

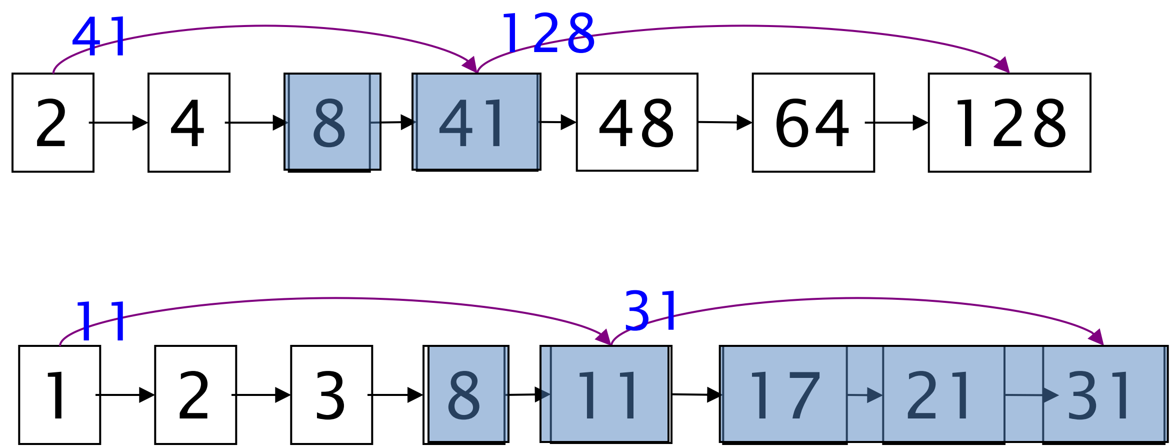
Can we do better?
Yes (if the index isn't changing too fast).

Augment postings with skip pointers (at indexing time)



- Why?
- <u>To skip postings that will not figure in the search results.</u>
- How?
- Where do we place skip pointers?

Query processing with skip pointers



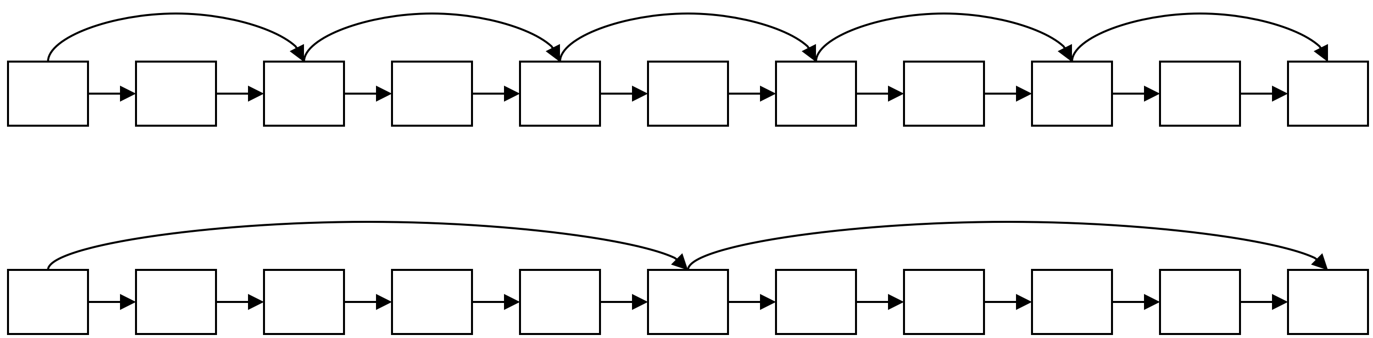
Suppose we’ve stepped through the lists until we process **8** on each list. We match it and advance.

We then have **41** and **11** on the lower. **11** is smaller.

But the skip successor of **11** on the lower list is **31**, so we can skip ahead past the intervening postings.

Where do we place skips?

- Tradeoff:
  - More skips → shorter skip spans ⇒ more likely to skip. But lots of comparisons to skip pointers.
  - Fewer skips → few pointer comparison, but then long skip spans ⇒ few successful skips.



Placing skips

- Simple heuristic: for postings of length *L*, use $\sqrt{L}$ evenly-spaced skip pointers [Moffat and Zobel 1996]
- This ignores the distribution of query terms.
- Easy if the index is relatively static; harder if *L* keeps changing because of updates.

- This definitely used to help; with modern hardware it may not unless you're memory-based [Bahle et al. 2002]
  - The I/O cost of loading a bigger postings list can outweigh the gains from quicker in memory merging!

Phrase queries

- We want to be able to answer queries such as ***"stanford university"*** – as a phrase
- Thus the sentence *"I went to university at Stanford"* is not a match.
  - The concept of phrase queries has proven easily understood by users; one of the few "advanced search" ideas that works
  - Many more queries are *implicit phrase queries*
- For this, it no longer suffices to store only

  <*term* : *docs*> entries

Naïve method: Biword indexes

- Index every consecutive pair of terms in the text as a phrase
- For example the text "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" would generate the biwords
  - ***friends romans***
  - ***romans countrymen***
- Each of these biwords is now a dictionary term
- Two-word phrase query-processing is now immediate.

Longer phrase queries

- Longer phrases can be processed by breaking them down
- ***stanford university palo alto*** can be broken into the Boolean query on biwords:

stanford university *AND* ***university palo*** *AND* ***palo alto***

Without the docs, we cannot verify that the docs matching the above Boolean query do contain the phrase.

Can have false positives!

Issues for biword indexes

- False positives, as noted before
- Index blowup due to bigger dictionary
  - Infeasible for more than biwords, big even for them

- Biword indexes are not the standard solution (for all biwords) but can be part of a compound strategy

Solution 2: Positional indexes

- In the postings, store, for each ***term*** the position(s) in which tokens of it appear:

<***term**,* number of docs containing ***term***;

doc1: position1, position2 … ;

doc2: position1, position2 … ;

etc.>

Positional index example

<***be***: 993427;
1: 7, 18, 33, 72, 86, 231;
2: 3, 149;
4: 17, 191, 291, 430, 434;
5: 363, 367, …>

Which of docs 1,2,4,5 could contain "***to be or not to be***"?

- For phrase queries, we use a merge algorithm recursively at the document level
- But we now need to deal with more than just equality

Processing a phrase query

- Extract inverted index entries for each distinct term: ***to, be, or, not.***
- Merge their *doc:position* lists to enumerate all positions with "***to be or not to be***".
  - ***to**:*
    - *2*:1,17,74,222,551; *4*:8,16,190,429,433; *7*:13,23,191; ...
  - ***be**:*
    - *1*:17,19; *4*:17,191,291,430,434; *5*:14,19,101; ...
- Same general method for proximity searches

Positional index size

- A positional index expands postings storage *substantially*
  – Even though indices can be compressed
- Nevertheless, a positional index is now standardly used because of the power and usefulness of phrase and proximity queries … whether used explicitly or implicitly in a ranking retrieval system.

Positional index size

- Need an entry for each occurrence, not just once per document
- Index size depends on average document size
  - Average web page has <1000 terms
  - Novels … easily 100,000 terms
- Consider a term with frequency 0.1%

Document size	Postings	Positional postings
1000	1	1
100,000	1	100

Rules of thumb

- A positional index is 2–4 as large as a non-positional index
- Positional index size 35–50% of volume of original text
  - At this point you can start thinking about compressing the index itself

Proximity queries: example

- Largest commercial (paying subscribers) legal search service (started 1975; ranking added 1992; new federated search added 2010)
- Tens of terabytes of data; ~700,000 users
- Majority of users *still* use boolean queries
- Example query:
  - What is the statute of limitations in cases involving the federal tort claims act?
  - LIMIT! /3 STATUTE ACTION /S FEDERAL /2 TORT /3 CLAIM
    - /3 = within 3 words, /S = in same sentence

Example: WestLaw

- Another example query:
  - Requirements for disabled people to be able to access a workplace
  - disabl! /p access! /s work-site work-place (employment /3 place
- Note that SPACE is disjunction, not conjunction!
- Long, precise queries; proximity operators; incrementally developed; not like web search
- Many professional searchers still like Boolean search
  - You know exactly what you are getting
- But that doesn't mean it actually works better....

Proximity queries

- LIMIT! /3 STATUTE /3 FEDERAL /2 TORT
  - Again, here, /*k* means "within *k* words of".
- Clearly, positional indexes can be used for such queries; biword indexes cannot.
- Adapt the linear merge of postings to handle proximity queries.
  - Can you make it work for any value of *k*?
    - This is a little tricky to do correctly and efficiently

Combination schemes

- These two approaches can be combined
  - For particular phrases (***"Michael Jackson", "Britney Spears"***) it is inefficient to keep on merging positional postings lists
- Williams et al. (2004) evaluate a more sophisticated mixed indexing scheme
  - A typical web query mixture was executed in ¼ of the time of using just a positional index
  - It required 26% more space than having a positional index alone