EVIN: Building a Knowledge Base of Events

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ABSTRACT

We present EVIN: a system that extracts named events from news articles, reconciles them into canonicalized events, and organizes them into semantic classes to populate a knowledge base. EVIN exploits different kinds of similarity measures among news, referring to textual contents, entity occurrences, and temporal ordering. These similarities are captured in a multi-view attributed graph. To distill canonicalized events, EVIN coarsens the graph by iterative merging based on a judiciously designed loss function. To infer semantic classes of events, EVIN uses statistical language models. EVIN provides a GUI that allows users to query the constructed knowledge base of events, and to explore it in a visual manner.

Categories and Subject Descriptors
H.1 [Information Systems]: Models and Principles

1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation: A named event is an entity that happened at a certain time point or during a certain time period. Examples include battles, elections, concerts, championships, disasters, fairs, summits, etc. Named events are particularly important for knowledge bases such as dbpedia.org, yago-knowledge.org, or freebase.com which is the core of the Google Knowledge Graph. These knowledge bases already contain entities of type event, fine-grained semantic classes to which they belong, and facts about them such as temporal positioning and location of events, involved people, etc. This kind of knowledge enables a new semantic awareness in search, summarization, analytics, and recommendations.

However, knowledge bases have fairly limited coverage of events, as they mostly rely on extracting entities and facts from Wikipedia and similar curated sources. None of the major knowledge bases taps into online news for increasing its population of named events. There is no methodology for harvesting events in the long tail, such as concerts of independent bands, and for capturing brand-new events, such as hurricanes or political scandals. For example, we would like to automatically capture an event like the UEFA Champions League Final 2013, along with its involved entities such as the winning team Bayern Munich, and also a subsequent event like the Bayern Munich Triple, referring to this team’s winning of three championships a week later. The former is meanwhile captured in a Wikipedia article, but the latter is too specific for Wikipedia yet would be desirable to include in a high-coverage knowledge base.

Problem Statement: The EVIN (Events In News) project addresses the problem of populating a knowledge base with fine-grained events from news, along with detailed semantic typing (e.g., using classes like rock concerts or hurricanes), relationships among events (sub-events, temporal order, etc.), as well as people and organizations participating in events.

Prior Work: There are prior methods for mining events and storylines from a batch or stream of news articles (e.g., [2, 3, 7]). However, the problem with these methods is that their output contains high redundancy, e.g., by yielding 5 or 10 semantically overlapping events such as “Bayern wins Champions League”, “Bayern beats Borussia”, “Bayern’s triumph in London”, “Bayern overcomes last year’s final trauma”, etc. Instead, we would like to reconcile all these cues into a single named event in a canonicalized representation. Moreover, the prior works’ output lacks semantic organization; none of the methods would attach fine-grained class labels such as soccer finals or European sports championships to the event. So there is a fundamental difference between traditional event mining and the goal of populating a knowledge base, as the latter requires semantic rigor and does not tolerate semantic redundancy.

Contribution: The EVIN project has developed methods and software tools for populating event classes (concerts, ceremonies, elections, conflicts, accidents, disasters, tournaments, etc.) of high-quality knowledge bases by extracting, cleaning, and canonicalizing fine-grained named events from news corpora. Our methodology involves the following components:

- mapping news articles onto semantic event classes;
- a multi-view graph model that captures relationships and relatedness measures between news items;
- a graph-coarsening algorithm for inferring canonicalized events and sub-events for knowledge base population;
- a GUI for querying, exploring, and visualizing the events in the knowledge base and their provenance.

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2. NAMED EVENT EXTRACTION

News articles are modeled as sets of features that are used to compute different distance measures between news articles. Our task entails a grouping and a chaining problem: combining thematically highly related news into a single event, and ordering related events along the timeline. For example, for the news related to “UEFA Champions League 2012/2013” theme, ideal groups would be “Champions League draws”, “Group matches”, “Quarter-final matches”, “Semi-final matches”, and “Champions League final”. Moreover, events should be chained among each other in temporal order. For instance, the event “Champions League draws” should be chained to the event “Champions League group matches”. To jointly solve the problem of grouping and chaining, we have devised a novel graph coarsening technique applied to a multi-view attributed graph of news articles.

2.1 Computational Model

**Feature sets:** We exploit four kinds of feature groups that are provided by each news article $n$ or can be derived from it by information extraction and other methods:
- the *textual content* of the article $d$,
- the publication date $t$,
- the set of entities $A$ (people, organizations, etc.) appearing in the content, and
- the semantic types $T$ of events covered by an article.

The entity names appearing in a news article are extracted using the Stanford NER tagger. As these are used as features for subsequent processing, we do not attempt to disambiguate entities onto canonical representations in a knowledge base, but simply accept a tolerable level of ambiguity and noise. Nevertheless, any named entity disambiguation method can be used to link entities onto canonical representations. We obtain ontological types for news articles by constructing statistical language models (LMs) for articles and types and mapping an article to similar types using Kullback-Leibler divergence. This is further discussed in Subsection 2.2.

Features are used to compute different kinds of similarity measures between news articles:
- The *content distance* is the cosine of the articles’ $tf \cdot idf$ vectors over a bag-of-words model:
  \[
  dist_{content} = \cos(\mathcal{V}(n_i), \mathcal{V}(n_j))
  \]
  where $\mathcal{V}(n_i)$ and $\mathcal{V}(n_j)$ are the $tf \cdot idf$ vectors of news articles $n_i$ and $n_j$, respectively.
- The *temporal distance* is the normalized time distance between the publication dates of news articles:
  \[
  dist_{temp}(n_i, n_j) = \frac{|t(n_i) - t(n_j)|}{H}
  \]
  where $H$ is the time horizon of the corpus. $H$ is calculated as the difference between the earliest and the latest timestamps in the corpus.
- The *entity distance* between articles is the weighted Jaccard coefficient capturing the overlap of the entity sets:
  \[
  dist_{entity}(n_i, n_j) = \frac{\sum_{a \in A(n_i) \cap A(n_j)} \text{weight}(a)}{\sum_{a \in A(n_i) \cup A(n_j)} \text{weight}(a)}
  \]
  where the weight of an entity is its $tf \cdot idf$ value.
- The *type distance* between articles is the weighted Jaccard coefficient capturing the overlap of the type sets:
  \[
  dist_{type}(n_i, n_j) = \frac{\sum_{\tau \in T(n_i) \cap T(n_j)} \text{weight}(\tau)}{\sum_{\tau \in T(n_i) \cup T(n_j)} \text{weight}(\tau)}
  \]
  where the types are weighted by their $idf$ values.}

Multi-view attributed graph (MVAG): All these components are used together to construct a multi-view attributed graph (MVAG) of news articles such that a vertex $v$ is a news item with a set of attributes: its timestamp, its associated entities $A$ and its types $T$. The graph has two kinds of edges: undirected ones and directed ones. Two vertices are connected by undirected edges if they share at least one entity and at least one type. The weight of the edge is the content distance between two vertices. Two vertices are connected by a directed edge if their timestamps indicate that they are ordered on the timeline. The weight of a directed edge is the temporal distance between the vertices.

2.2 Mapping News to Semantic Classes

We have devised a two-step approach to map news articles to ontological event types. First, news are mapped to Wikipedia categories using statistical language models (LMs). Second, Wikipedia categories are mapped to WordNet event classes by the heuristic method of [8].

The first step is based on a linearly interpolated language model for news articles and categories. The LM of a news article is constructed as a mixture model of two LMs capturing i) the news contents in terms of title and body words, and ii) the entities including normalized date literals that appear in the article. The LM of a Wikipedia category is defined analogously and constructed from all Wikipedia articles that belong to the category.

The LMs are estimated in a standard way with Jelinek-Mercer smoothing (using the overall features in the entire collection). To compare how close a Wikipedia category is to a news article, we use the Kullback-Leibler (KL) divergence between the corresponding LM’s. This is a standard measure in IR and NLP. For each news article, we compute the top-k categories based on this distance measure, and accept those categories whose KL divergence is above some threshold.

The second step of the two-step approach then maps the accepted Wikipedia categories to their lowest event type in the WordNet taxonomy DAG. The method of [8] parses the category name to identify its head word, and then maps this to the best matching WordNet type. If the head word is ambiguous, the sense frequency information of WordNet is used to make the choice. For example, for the category name “General elections in Italy”, the word “elections” is found as the head word, and it is mapped to “wordnet:-election”.

2.3 From News to Named Events

The MVAG of news articles is coarsened in a way that the nodes reporting on the same event will be merged. The decision whether to merge two nodes is driven by a judiciously designed loss function. Given a multi-view attributed graph $G$ with node set $V$, undirected edges $E$, directed edges $F$, entity sets $A$, and types $T$, where all components are weighted, EVIN computes a coarser graph $G^*$ with $|V^*| \leq 2^{|V|}$ (i.e., forming equivalence classes of nodes) and $E^*, F^*, A^*, T^*$ such
Table 1: 28 examples of semantic classes out of 217.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>scandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bombing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>referendum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insurgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carnival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inauguration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outbreak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>concert</td>
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<tr>
<td>acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>final</td>
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<tr>
<td>protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tournament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Coarsening a multi-view attributed graph.

3. DEMONSTRATION OF THE SYSTEM

3.1 Implementation

EVIN is implemented in Java and uses the Stanford NER tagger for detecting entity names.

EVIN computes the semantic types of news items in the corpus, all similarity measures between news items, builds and coarsens the MVAG for the news corpus. After the thresholding, the qualitative events are put into a knowledge base. Moreover, EVIN finds representative images for events via querying a search engine based on the important entities appearing in the event. The relevance of the images to the event shows the quality of the coarsening, as coarsening can successfully induce the important entities of an event. EVIN provides querying and explorative navigation by its Web-browser-based GUI over the knowledge base.

Figure 2 shows a screenshot of the EVIN prototype. The screenshot has three parts: the search and filter section at the top, the chaining band, and the grouping band. These serve the following purposes:

- EVIN uses keyword/semantic queries to retrieve events from the populated knowledge base.
- The chaining of events is shown at the chaining band.
- The grouping of events is shown in the grouping band.
- Upon clicking on an event, the lower band shows the semantic types, the entities, the images, and the news belonging to an event. The news items along with detailed info is also shown for the clicked event.

The EVIN system can be examined online at http://www.mpi-inf.mpg.de/yago-naga/evin. This demo uses a sample of about 100 events from the EVIN knowledge base, since these events are enriched by images via image search.

3.2 Scenarios

The system supports three ways of interactive search and exploration: keyword-based querying, navigation by semantic classes, and the combination of these two modes.

Keyword-based querying: Users type keyword queries such as “Champions League” to retrieve events matching the query. EVIN finds events like “Event_10: Wembley chosen to host 2013 Champions League Final”, “Event_102: Bayern Munich’s victory”, “Event_104: Champions League Final preview”, etc. The first event includes news articles about the UEFA announcing the venue of the final, the second event includes Bayern Munich’s victory, the third event includes news from the week before the final. Figure 2 shows the chaining and sub-event information between these online sources, crawled by following external references in the Wikipedia articles about 700 major events from 2010 to 2013. From this input, EVIN built a knowledge base with 1,072 named events, organized in 217 different semantic classes. Some examples of the semantic classes can be seen at Table 1.
Figure 2: Screenshot of EVIN.

Figure 3: Grouping of the news into events.

dense clusters in graphs. However, an event here is merely a set of temporally co-occurring entities and/or keywords. Thus, events are only implicitly represented; they are not canonicalized and cannot be used to populate a knowledge base.

Mapping documents to Wikipedia categories: There are numerous studies on using Wikipedia categories for clustering documents, e.g., [4, 5]. These methods exploit the semantic relatedness of documents to Wikipedia concepts and the link structure of Wikipedia categories. Our approach uses statistical language models to map news articles to YAGO classes, via specific Wikipedia categories.

4. RELATED WORK

Story mining from news: There is large amount of work on topic detection and story mining on news, e.g., [3, 7, 9, 6]. However, the events found by these systems are not ontological events and not clean enough for populating a knowledge base. Knowledge bases i) require canonical representations and ii) semantic typing of the events, which are among the objectives of the EVIN project.

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