Maschinelle Sprachverarbeitung

Introduction to Information Retrieval

Ulf Leser

Content of this Lecture

- What is Information Retrieval
- Documents & Queries
- Text Preprocessing
- Evaluating IR Systems

Information Retrieval (aka “Search”)

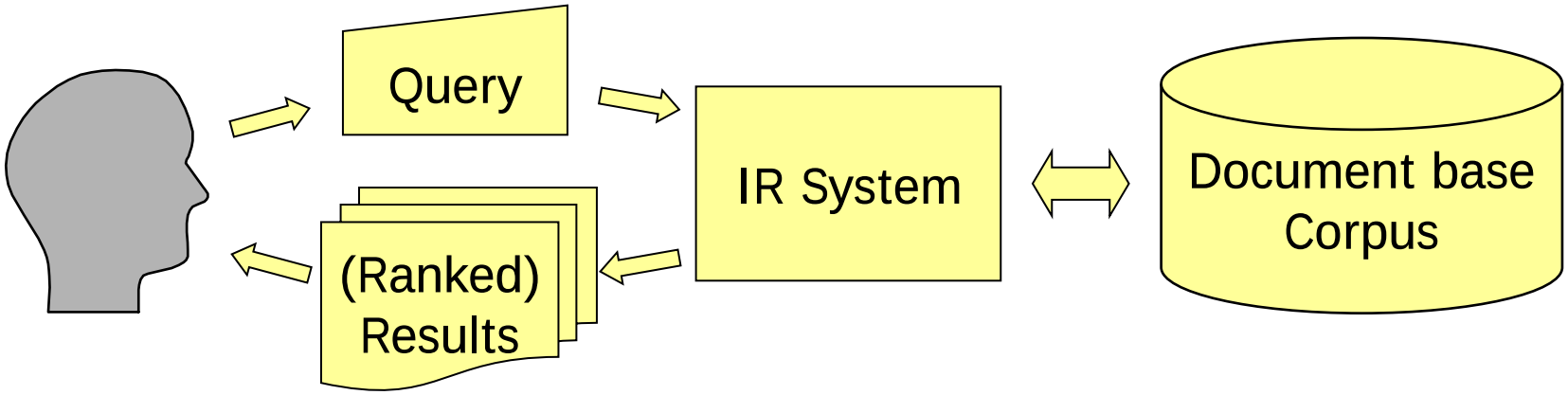
- Naïve: Find all documents containing the following words
- Advanced: „Leading the user to those documents that will best enable him/her to satisfy his/her need for information“[Robertson 1981]
  - A user wants to know something
  - The user needs to tell the machine what he wants to know: query
  - Posing exact queries is difficult: room for interpretation
  - Machine interprets query to compute the (hopefully) best answer
  - Goodness of answer (relevance) depends on original intention of user, not on the query
  - “Leading”: Sensible ranking of all potentially relevant docs

Difference to Database Queries

- Queries: Formal language versus natural language
- Exactly defined result versus loosely described relevance
- Result set versus ranked result list
- DB: Posing the right query is completely left to the user
- IR: Understanding the query is a problem of the software

The Problem

- Help user in quickly finding the requested information from a given set of documents
  - Documents: Corpus, library, collection, ...
  - Quickly: Few queries, fast responses, simple interfaces, ...
  - Requested: The “best-fitting” documents; the “right” passages; the most “relevant” content



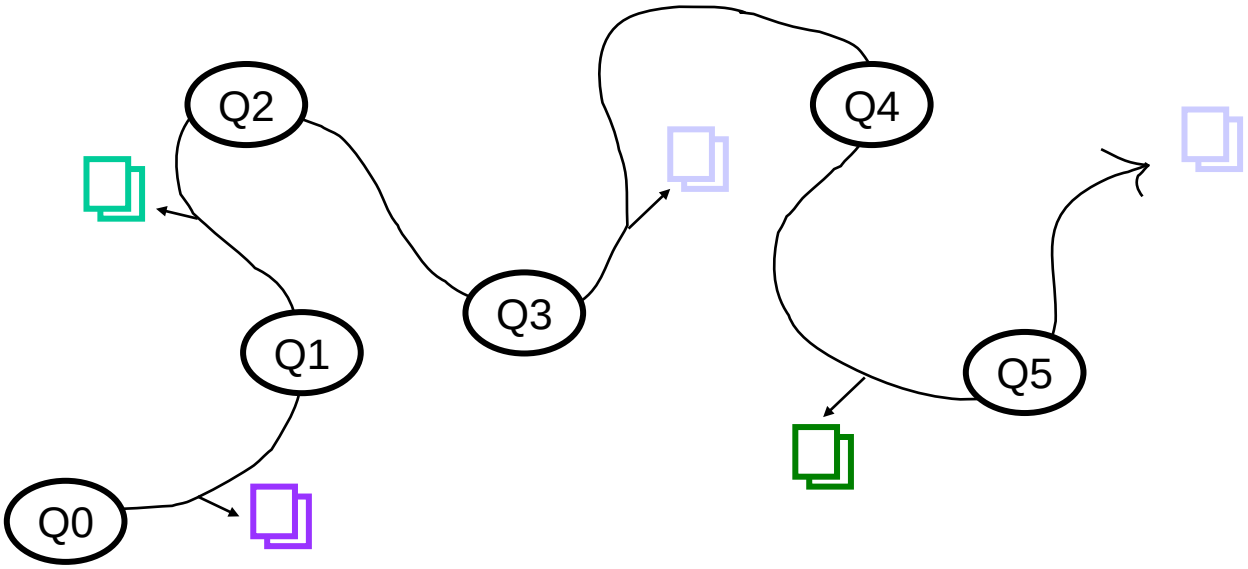
Why is it hard?

- Homonyms (context)
  - Fenster (Glas, Computer, Brief, ...), Berlin (BRD, USA, ...), Boden (Dach, Fussboden, Ende von etwas, ...), ...
- Synonyms
  - Computer, PC, Rechner, Server, ...
- Specific queries (subfield Question Answering)
  - What was the score of Bayern München versus Stuttgart in the DFB Pokal finals in 1998? Who scored the first goal for Stuttgart?
  - How many hours of sunshine on average has a day in Crete in May?
- Typical web queries have 1,6 terms
- “Information broker” was (is?) a profession

Quickly

- Time to execute a query
  - Indexing, parallelization, compression, ...
- Time to answer the request (may involve multiple queries)
  - Understand request, find best matches
  - Success of search engines: Better results (and fast!)
  - Process-orientation: Exploit user feedback, query history, ...
- Information overload
  - If the corpus is large, ranking is a must
  - Result summarization, result clustering
  - Different search modes: What's new? What's certain?

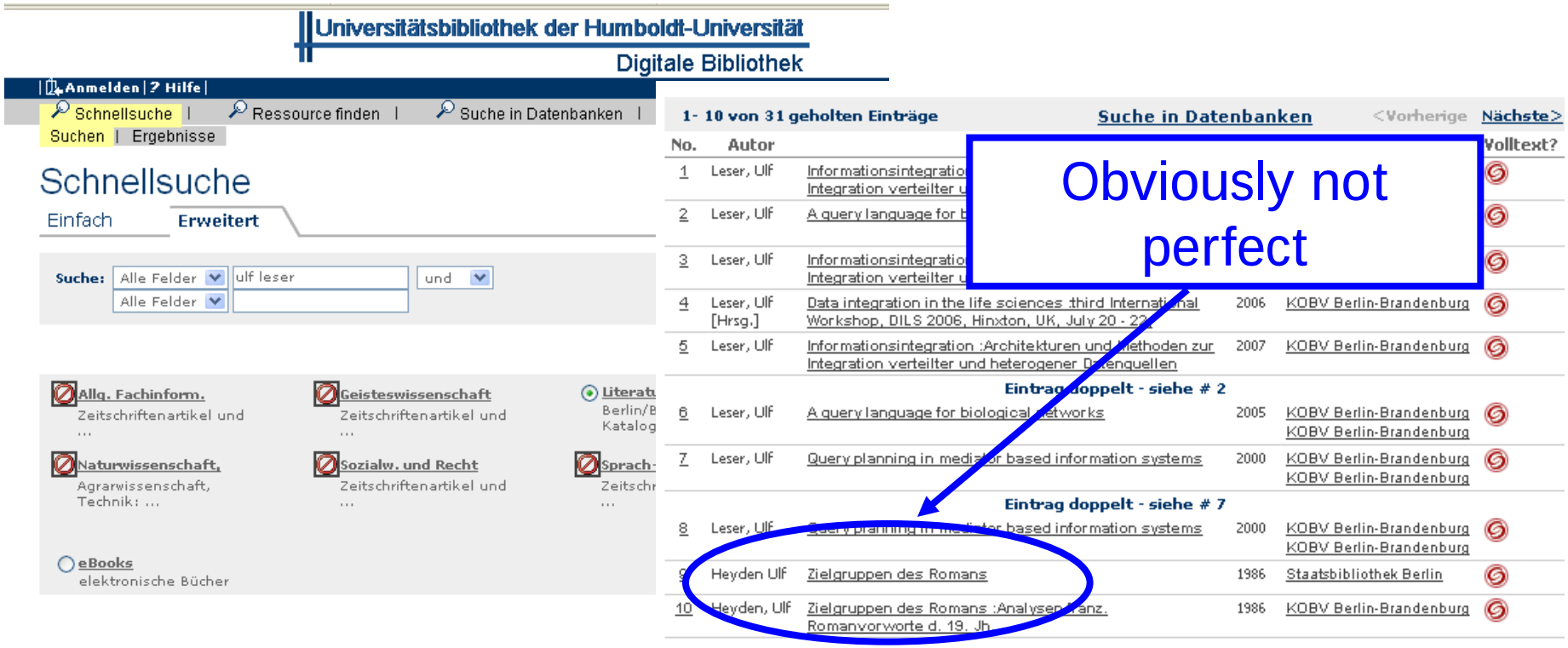
IR: An Iterative, Multi-Stage Process



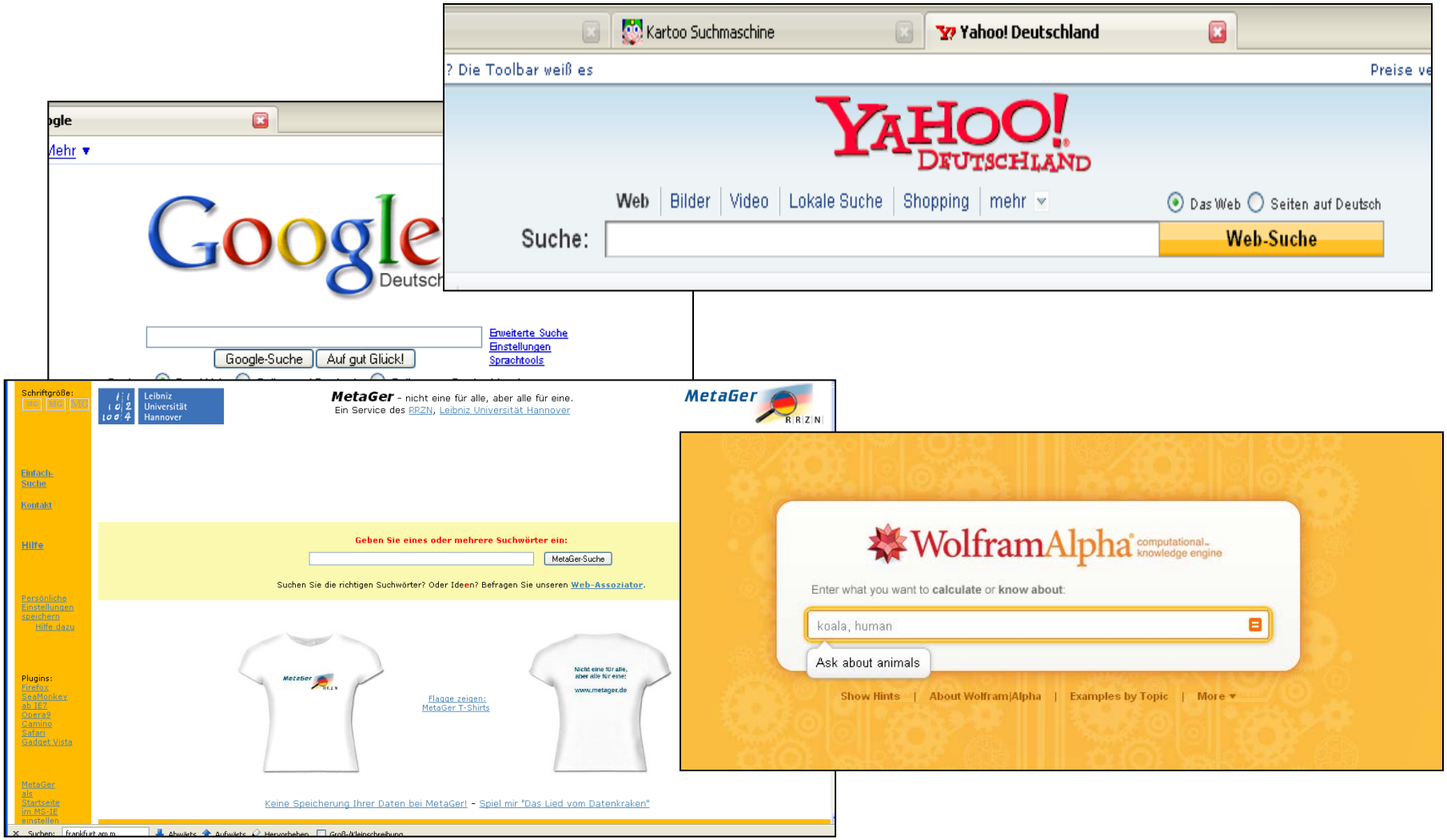
- IR process: “Moving through many actions towards a general goal of satisfactory completion of research related to an information need.”
  - “Berry-picking” [Bates 89]

Prominent Systems I: Digital Libraries

- E.g. OPAC
  - Combination of structured attributes and IR-style queries



Prominent Systems III: Web Search Engines



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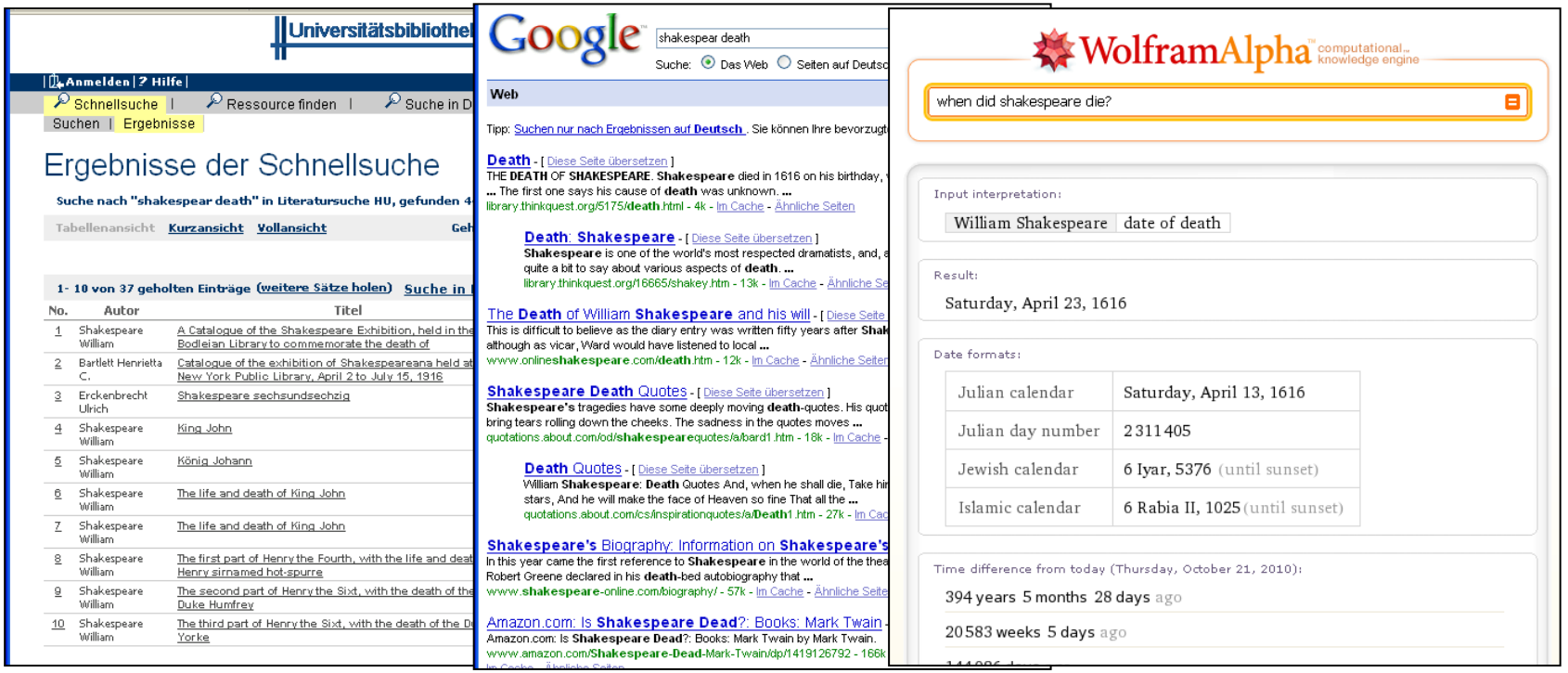
Document or Passage



Searching only metadata

Searching tokens within documents

Interpreting natural text

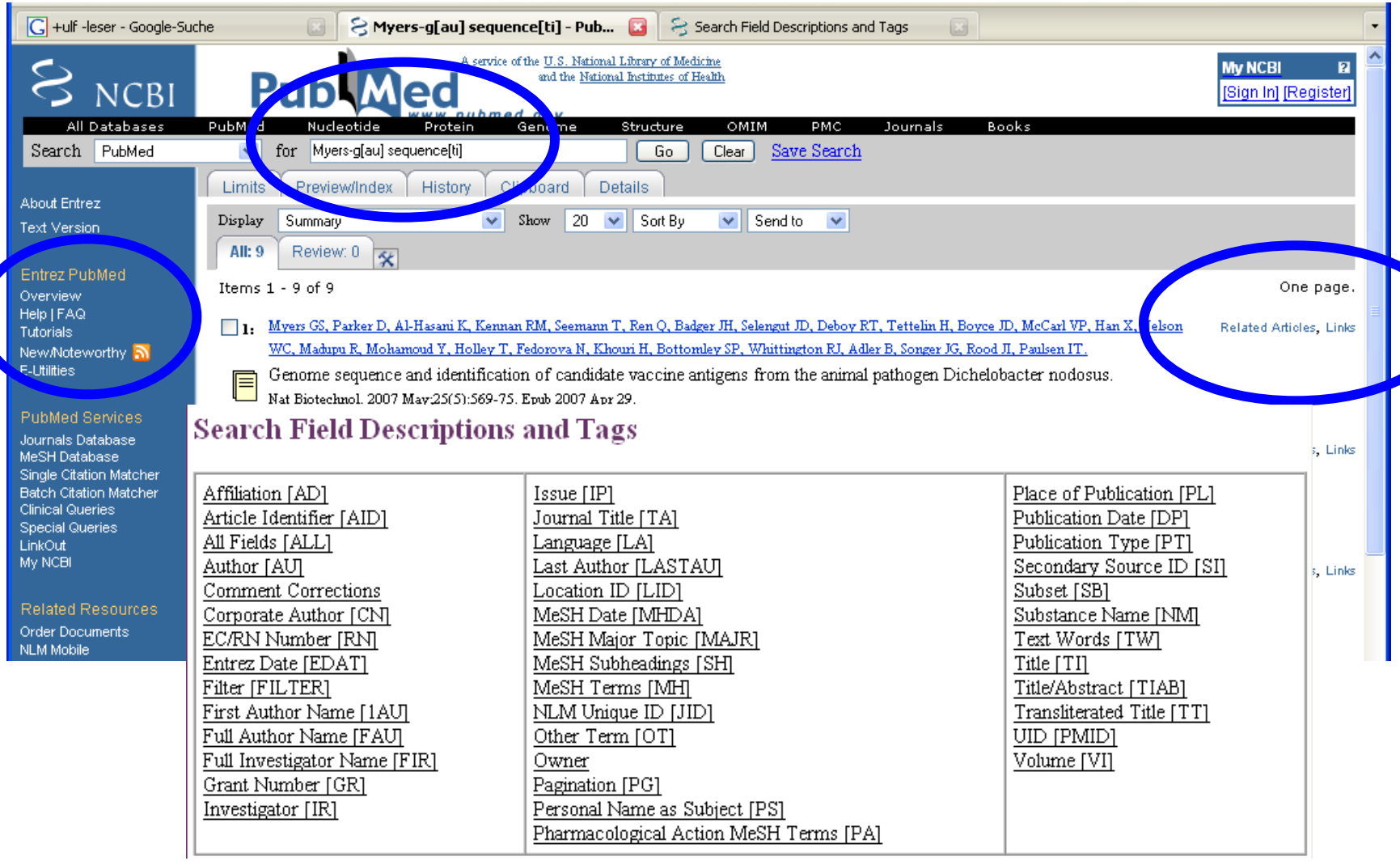
Documents

- This lecture: Natural language text
- Might be grammatically correct (books, newspapers) or not (Blogs, Twitter, spoken language)
- May have structure (title, abstract, chapters, ...) or not
- May have associated (explicit or in-text) metadata or not
- May be in many different languages or even mixed
  - Foreign characters
- May refer to other documents (hyperlinks)
- May have various formats (ASCII, PDF, DOC, XML, ...)

IR Queries

- Elements of IR-style queries
  - Keywords, phrases
  - Logical operations (AND, OR, NOT, …)
    - Web search: “-ulf +leser”
  - Natural language questions (e.g. MS-Word help)
  - Structured queries on metadata (author=… AND title~ …)
- Interface may be voice (Siri)
- Documents as queries: Find documents similar to this one
- Query refinement based on previous results
  - Find documents matching the new query within the result set of the previous search
  - Use relevant answers from previous queries to create next query

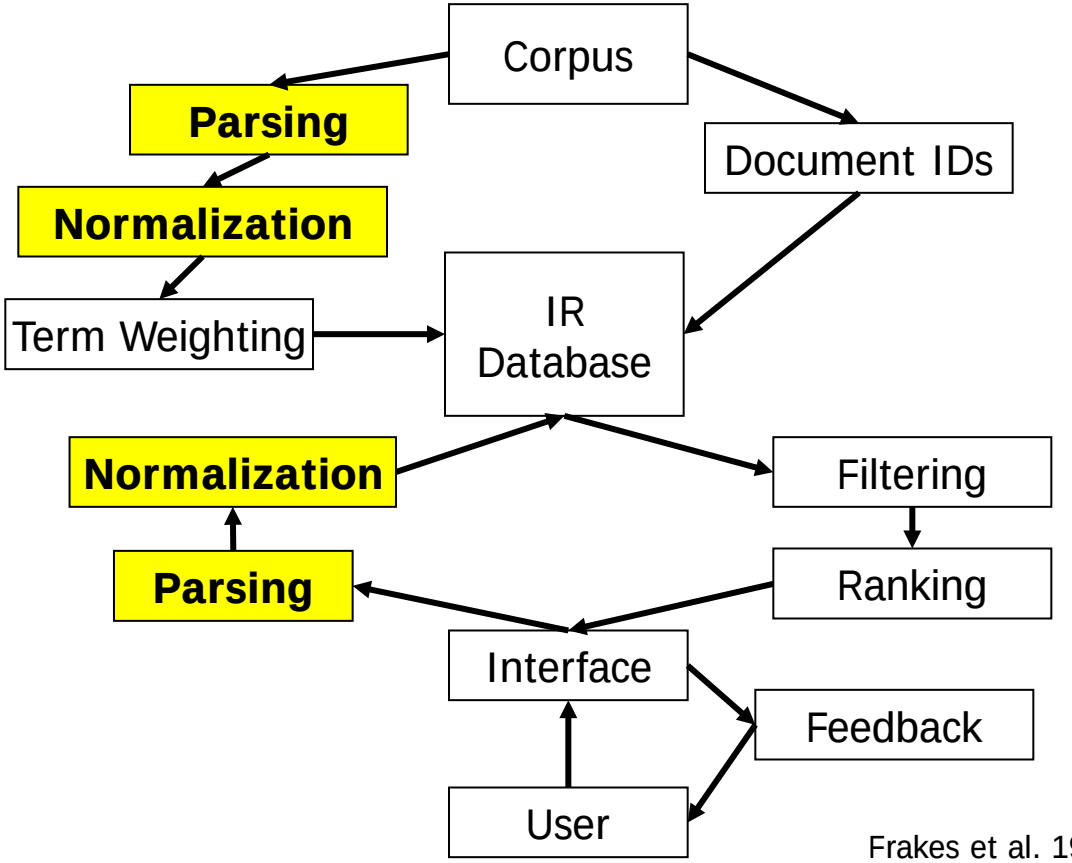
Searching with Metadata (PubMed/Medline)



Content of this Lecture

- What is Information Retrieval
- Documents & Queries
- Text Preprocessing
  - Special characters and case
  - Sentence splitting
  - Tokenization
  - Stop words
  - Zipf's law
- Evaluating IR Systems

Processing Pipeline



Frakes et al. 1992

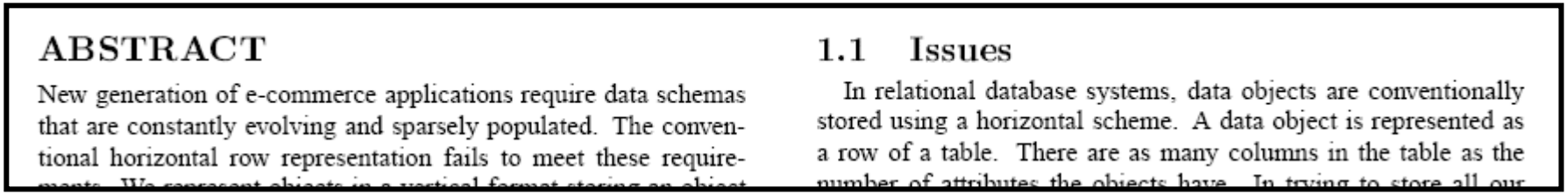
Logical View

- Definition
  - *The logical view of a document denotes its representation inside the IR system*
- Determines what users can address in a query
  - Only metadata, only title, only abstract, full text, phrases, stop words, special characters, ...
- Creating the logical view involves transformations
  - Stemming, stop word removal
  - Transformation of special characters (Umlaute, Greek letters, ...)
  - Removal of formatting information (HTML), tags (XML), ...
  - Bag of words (BoW)
    - Arbitrary yet fixed order (e.g. sorted alphabetically)
    - See next lecture

Definitions

- Definition
  - *A document as a sequence of sentences*
  - *A sentence is a sequence of tokens*
  - *A token is the smallest unit of text (words, numbers, ...)*
  - *A concept is the mental representation of a "thing"*
  - *A term is a token or a set of tokens representing a concept*
    - *"San" is a token, but not a term*
    - *"San Francisco" has two tokens but is only one term*
    - *Dictionaries usually contain terms, not tokens*
  - *A homonym is a term representing multiple concepts*
  - *A synonym is a term representing a concept which may also be represented by other terms*
  - *A syn-set is a set of synonyms representing the same concept*
- "Word" can denote either a token or a term
- We will mostly make no difference between token and terms (sadly ...)

Format Conversion



ABSTRACT

New generation of e-commerce applications require data schemas that are constantly evolving and sparsely populated. The conven-

1.1 Issues

In relational database systems, data objects are conventionally stored using a horizontal scheme. A data object is represented as a row of a table. There are as many columns in the table as the

New generation of e-commerce applications require data schemas In relational database systems, data objects are conventionally that are constantly evolving and sparsely populated. The conven- stored using a horizontal scheme. A data object is represented as tional horizontal row representation fails to meet these require- ...

- Transform PDF, XML, DOC, ... into ASCII / UniCode
- Problems: Formatting instruction, special characters, formulas, tables, section headers, footnotes, ...
- Web: Find the net content (no ads, navigation bars, ...)
- Diplomacy: To what extend can one reconstruct the original document from its logical view?

Special Characters

- Umlaute, Greek letters, math symbols, ...
- Often part of ASCII/Unicode, but IR systems don't like them
  - Small alphabets make indexing, searching, GUIs etc. much easier
- Different way of representation
  - XML/HTML: , ä, <
- Removing special chars makes querying them impossible
  - How to query for α, Σ, €, ?
- Options
  - Remove special characters
  - Transcribe: ü->ue, α-> alpha, $\forall$->for all, Σ->sum? sigma? ...
  - Work with large alphabets (Unicode)

Case – A Difficult Case

- Should all text be converted to lower case letters?
- Advantages
  - Makes queries simpler
  - Decreases index size
  - Allows for some “fuzziness” in search
- Disadvantages
  - No abbreviations
  - Loss of important hints for sentence splitting
  - Loss of important hints for tokenization, NER, ...
  - Loss of semantic info (proper names, Essen versus essen,...)
- Different impact in different languages (German / English)
- Often: Convert only after all other preprocessing steps

Sentence Splitting

- Most linguistic analysis works on sentence level
- Sentences group together entities and statements
- Naive approach: Reg-Exp search for “[.?!;] “
  - (note the blank!)
  - Abbreviations
    - “C. Elegans is a worm which ...”; “This does not hold for the U.S.”
  - Errors (due to previous normalization steps)
    - “is not clear.Conclusions.We reported on ...”
  - Proper names
    - “.NET is a technique for ...”
  - Direct speech
    - “By saying “It is the economy, stupid!”, B. Clinton meant that ...”
  - ...

Tokenization

- Fundamental elements of all IR query languages are tokens
- Simple approach: search for „ „ (blanks)
  - “A state-of-the-art Z-9 Firebird was purchased on 3/12/1995.”
  - „SQL commands comprise SELECT ... FROM ... WHERE clauses; the latter may contain functions such as leftstr(STRING, INT).“
  - “This LCD-TV-Screen cost 3,100.99 USD.”
  - “[Bis[1,2-cyclohexanedionedioximato(1-)-O]-[1,2-cyclohexanedione dioximato(2-)-O]methyl-borato(2-)-N,N0,N00,N000,N0000,N00000)-chlorotechnetium) belongs to a family of ...“
- Typical approach (but many (domain-specific) variations)
  - Treat hyphens / parentheses as blanks
  - Remove “.” (after sentence splitting)

Stop Words

- Words that are so frequent that their removal (hopefully) does not change the meaning of a doc
  - English: Top-2: 10% of all tokens; Top6: 20%; Top-50: 50%
  - English (top-10; LOB corpus): the, of, and, to, a, in, that, is, was, it
  - German(top-100): aber, als, am, an, auch, auf, aus, bei, bin, ...
- Consequences
  - Removing top-100 stop words reduces a positional index by ~40%
  - Hopefully increases precision due to less spurious hits
  - Makes many phrase queries impossible
- Variations
  - Remove top 10, 100, 1000, ... words
  - Language-specific, domain-specific, corpus-specific

Example

The children of obese and overweight parents have an increased risk of obesity. Subjects with two obese parents are fatter in childhood and also show a stronger pattern of tracking from childhood to adulthood. As the prevalence of parental obesity increases in the general population the extent of child to adult tracking of BMI is likely to strengthen.

100 stop words

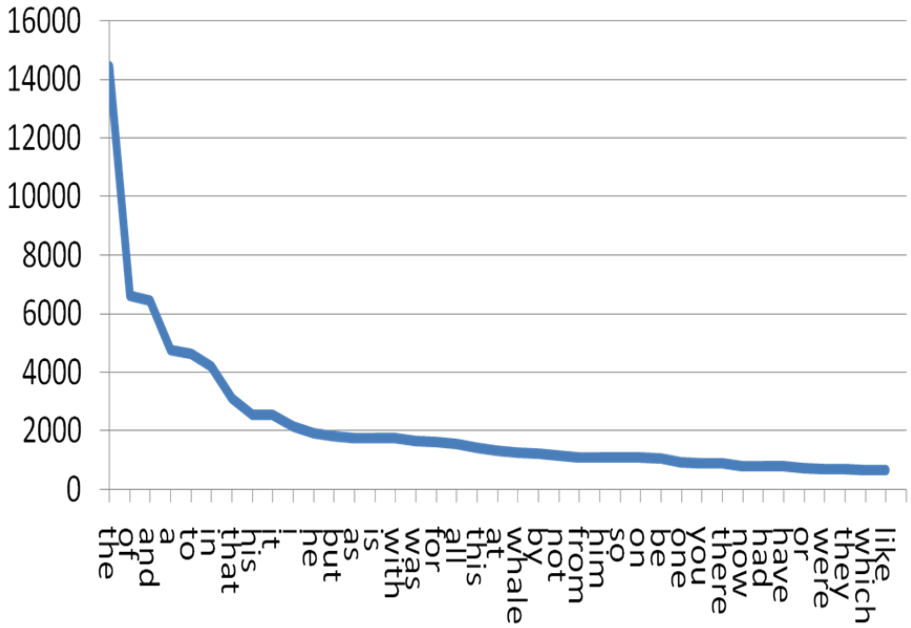
children obese overweight parents increased risk obesity. Subjects obese parents fatter childhood show stronger pattern tracking childhood adulthood. prevalence parental obesity increases general population extent child adult tracking BMI likely strengthen.

10 000 stop words

obese overweight obesity obese fatter adulthood prevalence parental obesity BMI

Zipf‘s Law

- Let f be the frequency of a word and r its rank in the list of all words sorted by frequency
- Zipf’s law: f ~ k/r for some constant k
- Example
  - Word ranks in Moby Dick
  - Good fit to Zipf’s law
  - Some domain-dependency (whale)
- Fairly good approximation for most corpora



Source: http://searchengineland.com/the-long-tail-of-search-12198

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Evaluation: Binary Model

- Assume that for a given query q and many docs $d \in D$, somebody determines whether d is relevant for q or not
  - An expert? An average user?
- The IR systems returns all docs it thinks that are relevant
  - No ranking for now
- Let T be the set of all truly relevant docs, X the set of all returned docs: $|T| = TP + FN$, $|X| = TP + FP$

	Truth: relevant	**Truth: not relevant**
IR: relevant	True positives	False positives
IR: not relevant	False negatives	True negatives

Precision and Recall

- Precision = TP/(TP+FP)
  - What is the fraction of relevant answers in X?
- Recall = TP/(TP+FN)
  - What is the fraction of found answers in T?
- The perfect world

	Real: Positive	Real: Negative
IR: Positive	A	0
IR: Negative	0	B

Example

- Let |D| = 10.000, |X|=15, |T|=20, |X∩T|=9

	Real: Positive	Real: Negative
IR: Positive	TP = 9	FP = 6
IR: Negative	FN = 11	TN= 9.974

  - Precision = TP/(TP+FP) = 9/15 = 60%
  - Recall = TP/(TP+FN) = 9/20 = 45%

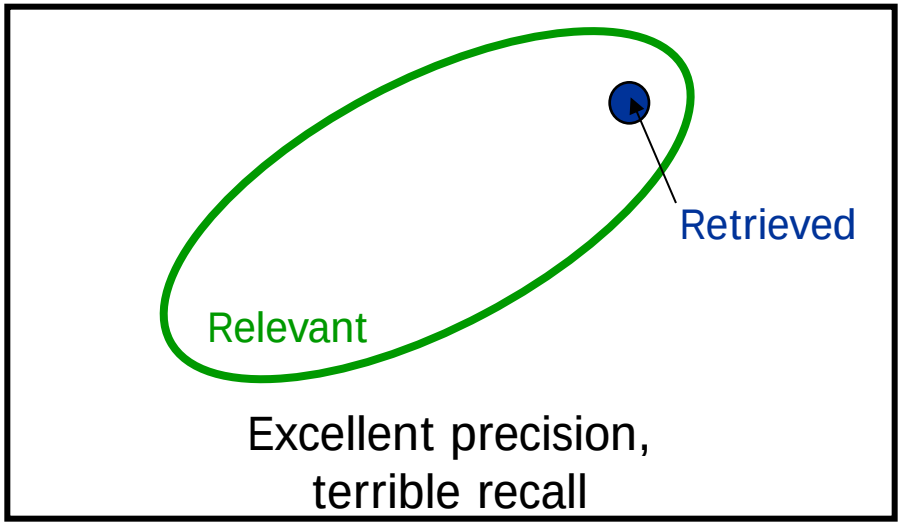
- Assume another result: |X|=10, |X∩T|=7

	Real: Positive	Real: Negative
IR: Positive	TP = 7	FP = 3
IR: Negative	FN = 13	

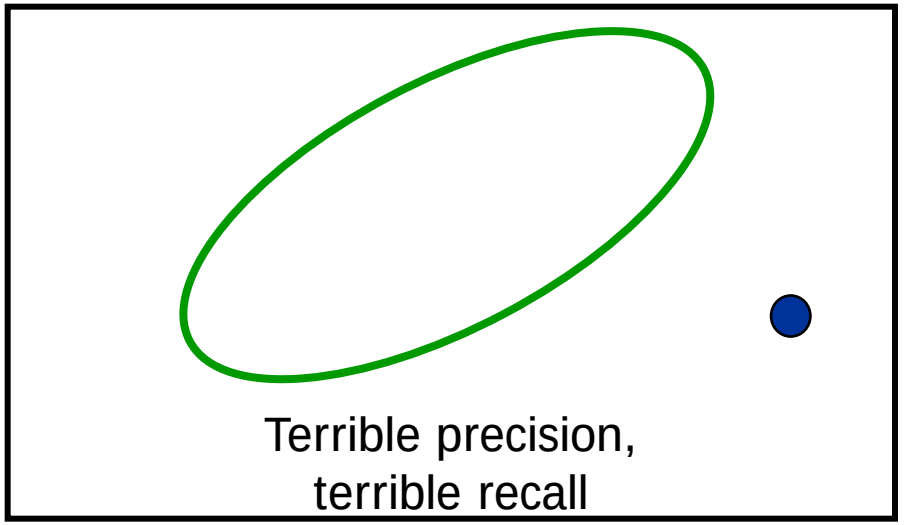
  - Precision: 70%, recall = 35%

A Different View

Quelle: A. Nürnberger, VL IR



Excellent precision,
terrible recall



Terrible precision,
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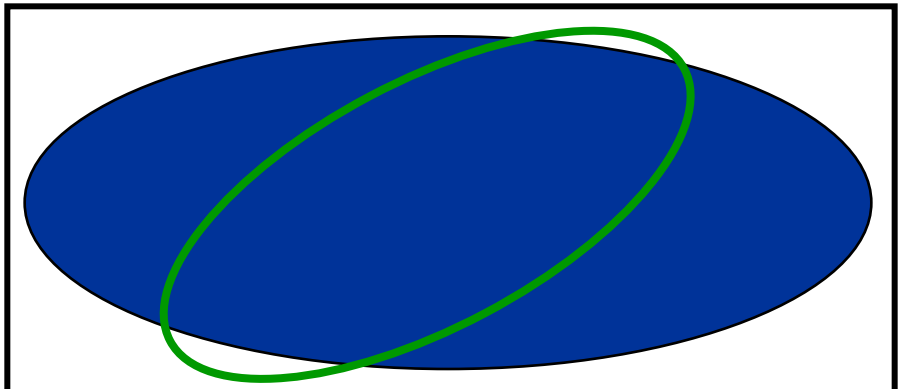

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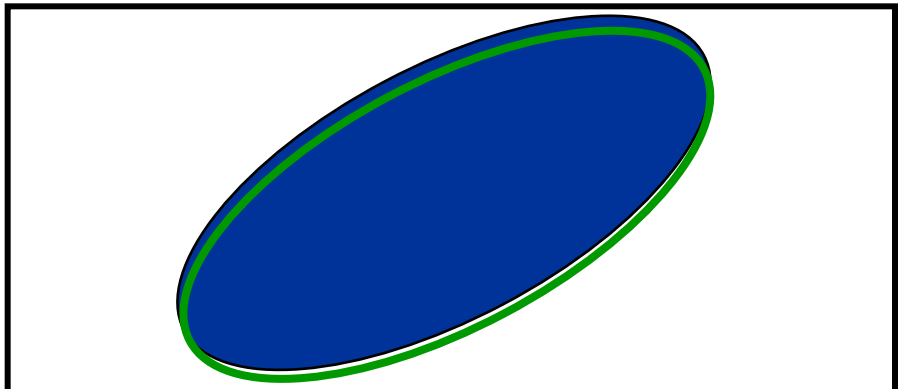


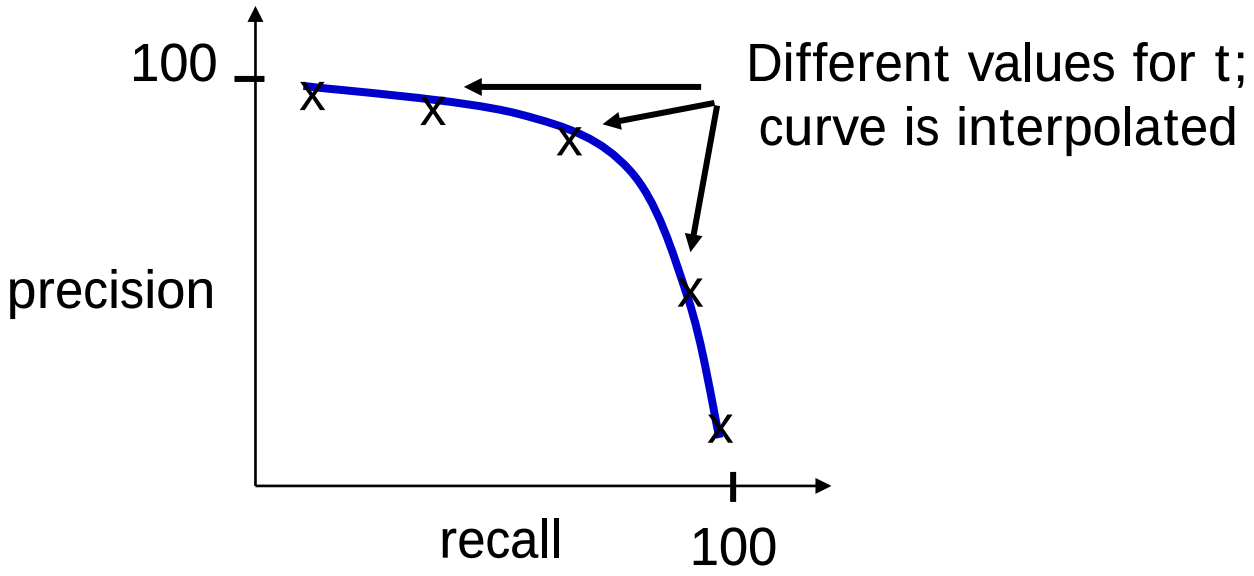
Excellent precision,
Excellent recall

Trade-off

- Inherent Trade-off between precision and recall
- Example
  - Think VSM with a threshold t to enforce a binary decision
  - Assume that docs with high relevance score are most likely also relevant for the user
  - Increase t: Less results, most of them very likely relevant
    Precision increases, recall drops
    Set t=1: P~100%, R=?
  - Decrease t: More results, some might be wrong
    Precision drops, recall increases
    Set t=0: P=?, R=100%

Precision / Recall Curve

- Sliding the threshold t gives a curve
  - Similar to Receiver-Operating-Characteristic (ROC)



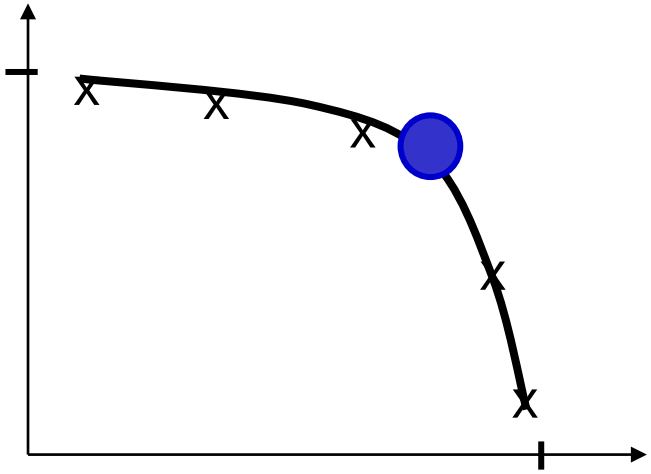
Accuracy

	Truth: relevant	Truth: not relevant
IR: relevant	TP	FP
IR: not relevant	FN	TN

- Sometimes, one wants one measure instead of two
  - E.g. to rank different IR-systems
- Accuracy= (TP+TN) / (TP+FP+FN+TN)
  - Which percentage of the systems decision were correct?
  - Makes only sense with small corpora and large result set
  - Typically in IR, TN >>> TP+FP+FN
  - Thus, accuracy is always good (~0,9999995)
- Used in problems with balanced sets of TN / TP

F-Measure

- F-Measure = 2*P*R / (P+R)
  - F-Measure is harmonic mean between precision and recall
  - Favors balanced P/R values



- Alternative: Area-under-the-curve (AUC)
  - AUC doesn't help in finding the best t

From user/query to users/queries

- What if we have many queries?
  - Evaluation should always use a range of different queries
  - Compute average P/R values over all queries
  - Of course, mean and stddev are also important
- What if we have different users?
  - Different users may have different thoughts about what is relevant
  - Leads to different gold standards
  - Compute inter-annotator agreement as upper bound
- Who can judge millions of docs?
  - Evaluate on small gold standard corpus
    - But: Extrapolation is difficult: Are the properties of application/corpus really equal to properties of GS?
  - Use implicit feedback, e.g. click-through rates in top-K results

Micro- versus Macro Averages

- Two ways of computing an average over many queries
  - Macro-Average: Average P and R over P_1, R_1, ... values of queries
  - Micro-Average: Compute P and R over all TP_1, FP_1, ... values

$$\frac{\sum_{i=1..m} P_i}{m} \neq \frac{\sum_{i=1..m} TP_i}{\sum_{i=1..m} TP_i + \sum_{i=1..m} FP_i}$$

- Comparison
  - Micro-Average can cope with queries without results
  - Micro-Average implicitly weights queries with result size
  - Macro-Average is less affected by outliers (with large result sizes)

Self Assessment

- Give a definition of „Information retrieval“
- How is information retrieval different from database query evaluation?
- What are possible types of answers to a IR query?
- List 5 important steps in document preprocessing and their expected impact on precision and recall
- Give a definition of recall, precision, and accuracy
- What is the difference between micro and macro average
- Which preprocessing steps would be affected if you work with a multi language corpus?