

CS3245

Information Retrieval

Lecture 6: Index Compression

6

Last Time: index construction

- Sort-based indexing
 - Blocked Sort-Based Indexing
 - Merge sort is effective for disk-based sorting (avoid seeks!)
 - Single-Pass In-Memory Indexing
 - No global dictionary - Generate separate dictionary for each block
 - Don't sort postings - Accumulate postings as they occur
- Distributed indexing using MapReduce
- Dynamic indexing: Multiple indices, logarithmic merge



Today: Cmprssn

BRUTUS	→	1	2	4	11	31	45	173	174
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CAESAR	→	1	2	4	5	6	16	57	132	...
--------	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	-----	-----

CALPURNIA	→	2	31	54	101
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- Collection statistics in more detail (with RCV1)
 - How big will the dictionary and postings be?
- Dictionary compression
- Postings compression



Why compression (in general)?

- Use less disk space
 - Saves a little money
- Keep more data in memory
 - Increases speed
- Increase speed of data transfer from disk to memory
 - [read compressed data | decompress] is faster than [read uncompressed data]
 - Premise: Decompression algorithms are fast
 - True of the decompression algorithms we use



Lossless vs. lossy compression

- Lossless compression: All information is preserved.
 - What we mostly do in IR.
- Lossy compression: Discard some information
- Several of the preprocessing steps can be viewed as lossy compression: case folding, stop words, stemming, number elimination.
- Later: Prune postings entries that are unlikely to turn up in the top k list for any query.
 - Almost no loss quality for top k list.



Vocabulary vs. collection size

- Heaps' law: $M = kT^b$
- M is the size of the vocabulary, T is the number of tokens in the collection
- Typical values: $30 \leq k \leq 100$ and $b \approx 0.5$
- In a log-log plot of vocabulary size M vs. T , Heaps' law predicts a line with slope about $\frac{1}{2}$
 - It is the simplest possible relationship between the two in log-log space
 - An empirical finding (“empirical law”)

Heaps' Law

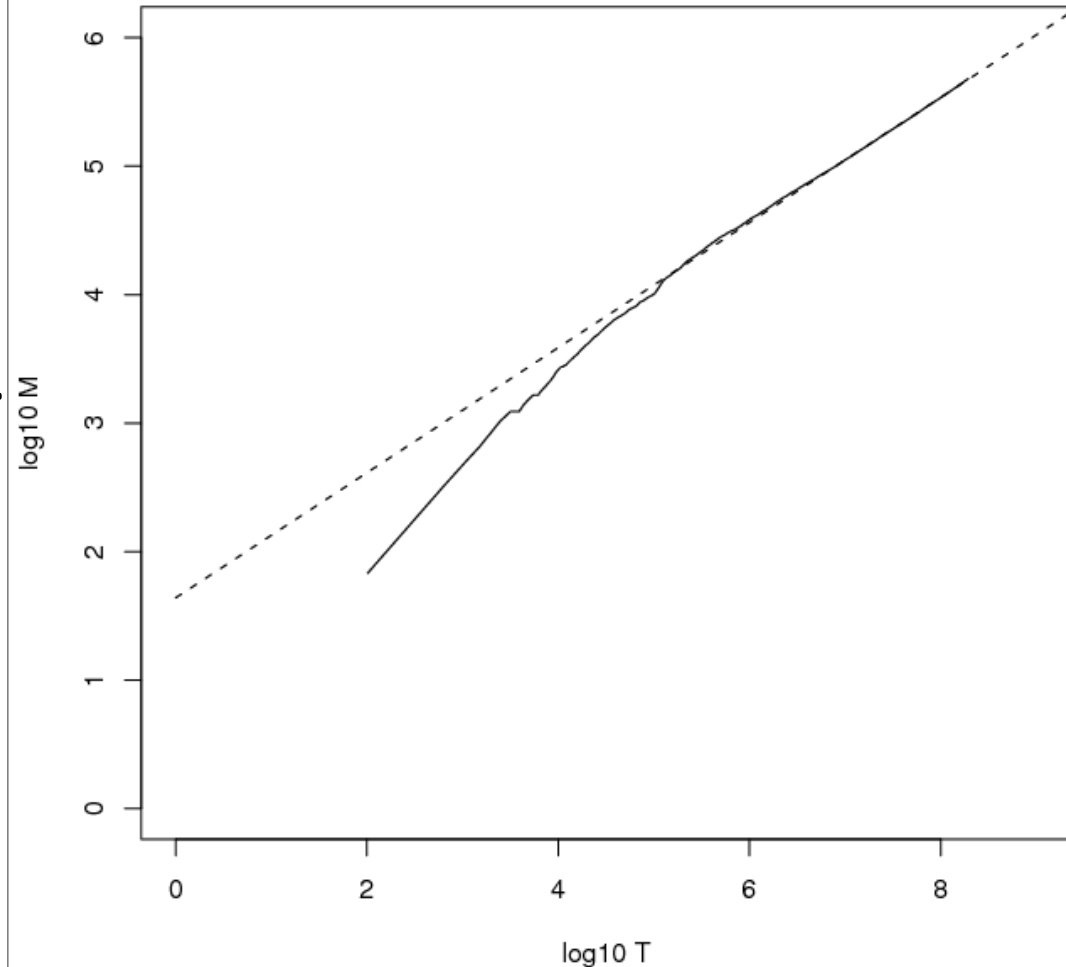
For RCV1, the dashed line

$\log_{10} M = 0.49 \log_{10} T + 1.64$
is the best least squares fit.

Thus, $M = 10^{1.64} T^{0.49}$ so $k = 10^{1.64} \approx 44$ and $b = 0.49$.

Good empirical fit for
Reuters RCV1 !

For first 1,000,020 tokens,
law predicts 38,323 terms;
actually, 38,365 terms



Zipf's law



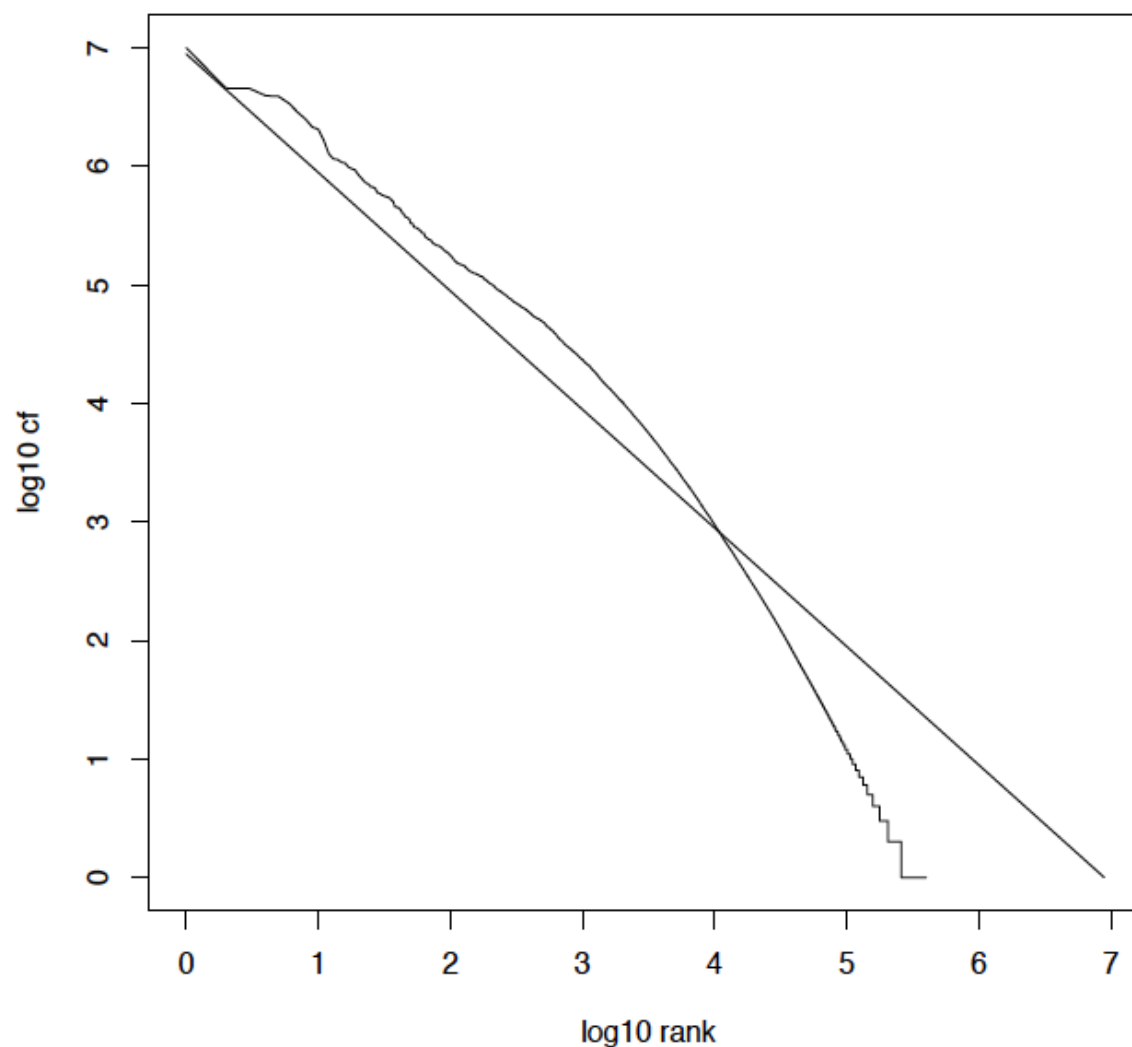
- How about the relative frequencies of terms?
- In natural language, there are a few very frequent terms and very many very rare terms.
- Zipf's law: The i th most frequent term has frequency proportional to $1/i$.
- $cf_i \propto 1/i = K/i$ where K is a normalizing constant
- cf_i is collection frequency (not document frequency): the number of occurrences of the term t_i in the collection.



Zipf consequences

- If the most frequent term (*the*) occurs cf_1 times
 - then the second most frequent term (*of*) occurs $cf_1/2$ times
 - the third most frequent term (*and*) occurs $cf_1/3$ times ...
- Equivalent: $cf_i = K/i$ where K is a normalizing factor, so $\log cf_i = \log K - \log i$
 - Linear relationship between $\log cf_i$ and $\log i$
- Another power law relationship

Zipf's law for Reuters RCV1



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DICTIONARY COMPRESSION



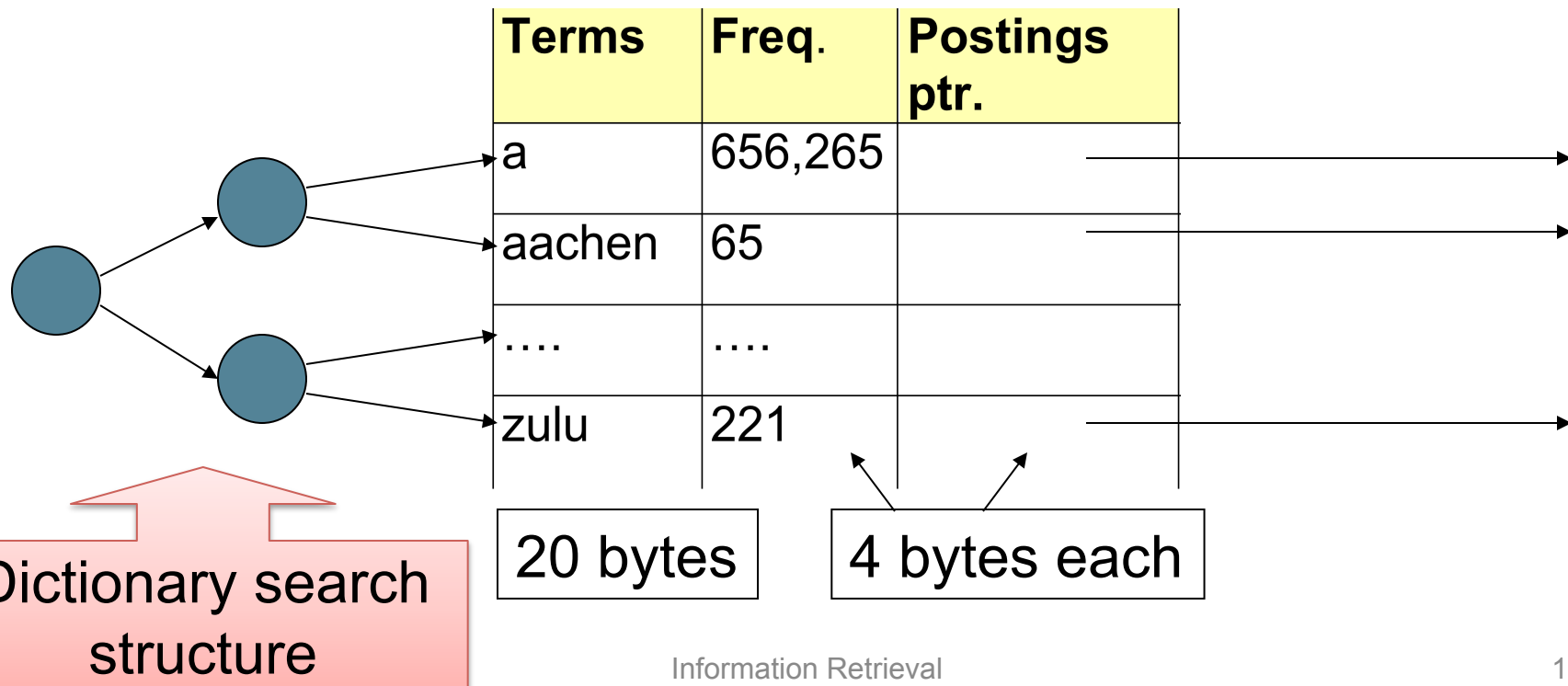
Why compress the dictionary?

- Search begins with the dictionary
- We want to keep it in memory
- Memory footprint competition with other applications
- Embedded/mobile devices may have very little memory
- Even if the dictionary isn't in memory, we want it to be small for a fast search startup time

Compressing the dictionary is important

Dictionary storage - first cut

- Array of fixed-width entries
 - ~400,000 terms; 28 bytes/term = 11.2 MB.





Fixed-width terms are wasteful

- Most of the bytes in the **Term** column are wasted – we allot 20 bytes for 1 letter terms.
 - And we still can't handle *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* or *hydrochlorofluorocarbons*.
- Written English averages ~4.5 characters/word.
- Average dictionary word in English: ~8 characters
 - How do we use ~8 characters per dictionary term?
- Short words dominate token counts but not type average.

Compressing the term list: Dictionary-as-a-String



- Store dictionary as a (long) string of characters:
 - Pointer to next word shows end of current word
 - Hope to save up to 60% of dictionary space.

....systilesyzygeticsyzygialsyzygyszaibelyiteszczecinszomo....

Freq.	Postings ptr.	Term ptr.
33		
29		
44		
126		

Total string length =
 $400K \times 8B = 3.2MB$

Pointers resolve 3.2M
 positions: $\log_2 3.2M =$
 $22\text{bits} = 3\text{bytes}$



Space for dictionary as a string

- 4 bytes per term for Freq.
 - 4 bytes per term for pointer to Postings.
 - 3 bytes per term pointer
 - Avg. 8 bytes per term in term string
 - $400\text{K terms} \times 19 \Rightarrow 7.6 \text{ MB}$ (against 11.2MB for fixed width)
- } Now avg. 11 bytes/term, not 20.



Blocking

- Store pointers to every k th term string.
 - Example below: $k=4$.
- Need to store term lengths (1 extra byte)

....**7***systile***9***syzygetic***8***syzygial***6***syzygy***11***szaibelyite* ...

Freq.	Postings ptr.	Term ptr.
33		
29		
44		
126		
7		

} Save 9 bytes
on 3
pointers.

← Lose 4 bytes on
term lengths.



Net Result

- Example for block size $k = 4$
- Where we used 3 bytes/pointer without blocking
 - $3 \times 4 = 12$ bytes,

now we use $3 + 4 = 7$ bytes.

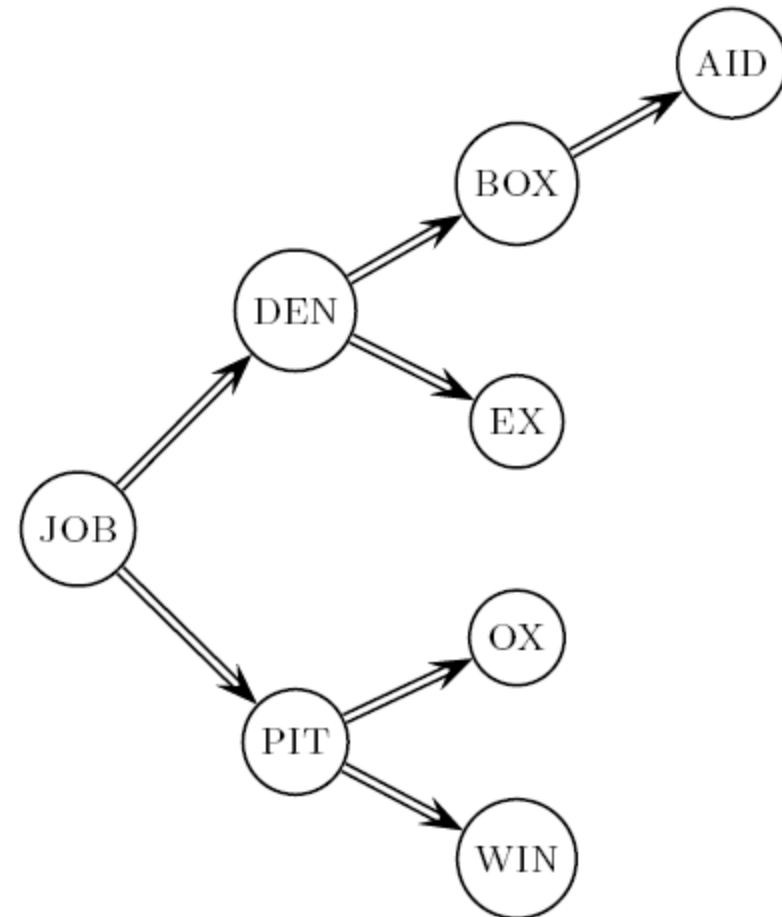
Shaved another ~ 0.5 MB. This reduces the size of the dictionary from 7.6 MB to 7.1 MB.

We can save more with larger k .

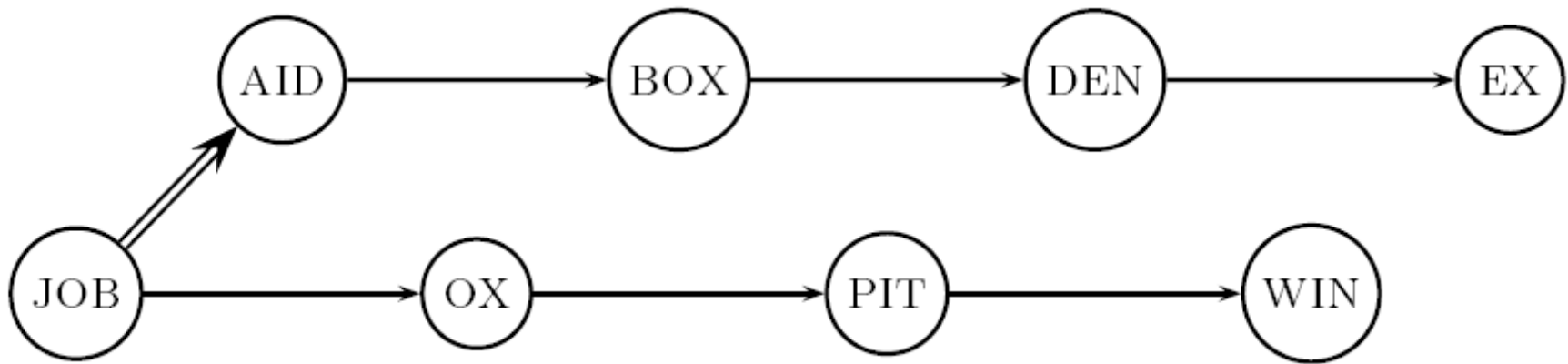
Why not go with larger k ?

Dictionary search without blocking

- Assuming each dictionary term equally likely in query (not true in practice!), average number of comparisons = $(1 + (2 \cdot 2) + (4 \cdot 3) + 4) / 8$
= ~ 2.6



Dictionary search with blocking



- Binary search down to 4-term block;
 - Then linear search through terms in block.
- Blocks of 4 (binary tree), average =
 $(1+(2 \cdot 2)+(2 \cdot 3)+(2 \cdot 4)+5)/8 = 3$ compares



Front coding

- Sorted words commonly have long common prefix – store differences only
 - Used in the (for last $k-1$ in a block of k)

8automata8automate9automatic10automation

→ **8automat*a1♦e2♦ic3♦ion**

Encodes **automat**

Extra length
beyond **automat**.

Begins to resemble general string compression

RCV1 dictionary compression summary

Technique	Size in MB
Fixed width	11.2
Dictionary-as-String with pointers to every term	7.6
Also, blocking $k = 4$	7.1
Also, Blocking + front coding	5.9

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POSTINGS COMPRESSION



Postings compression

- The postings file is much larger than the dictionary, factor of at least 10.
- Key desideratum: store each posting compactly.
- A posting for our purposes is a **docID**.
- For Reuters (800,000 documents), we would use 32 bits per docID when using 4-byte integers.
- Alternatively, we can use $\log_2 800,000 \approx 20$ bits per docID.
- Our goal: use a lot less than 20 bits per docID.



Postings: two conflicting forces

- A term like ***arachnocentric*** occurs in maybe one doc out of a million – we would like to store this posting using $\log_2 1M \sim 20$ bits.
- A term like ***the*** occurs in virtually every doc, so 20 bits/posting is too expensive.
 - Prefer 0/1 bitmap vector in this case



Postings file entry

- We store the list of docs containing a term in increasing order of docID.
 - **computer**: 33,47,154,159,202 ...
- Consequence: it suffices to store *gaps*.
 - 33,14,107,5,43 ...
- Hope: most gaps can be encoded/stored with far fewer than 20 bits.

Three postings entries



	encoding	postings list				
THE	docIDs	...	283042	283043	283044	283045 ...
	gaps		1	1	1	...
COMPUTER	docIDs	...	283047	283154	283159	283202 ...
	gaps		107	5	43	...
ARACHNOCENTRIC	docIDs	252000	500100			
	gaps	252000	248100			

Variable length encoding



- Aim:
 - For *arachnocentric*, we will use ~ 20 bits/gap entry.
 - For *the*, we will use ~ 1 bit/gap entry.
- If the average gap for a term is G , we want to use $\sim \log_2 G$ bits/gap entry.
- Key challenge: encode every integer (gap) with about as few bits as needed for that integer.
- This requires *variable length encoding*
- Variable length codes achieve this by using short codes for small numbers

Variable Byte (VB) codes



- For a gap value G , we want to use close to the fewest bytes needed to hold $\log_2 G$ bits
- Begin with one byte to store G and dedicate 1 bit in it to be a continuation bit c
- If $G \leq 127$, binary-encode it in the 7 available bits and set $c = 1$
- Else encode G 's lower-order 7 bits and then use additional bytes to encode the higher order bits using the same algorithm
- At the end set the continuation bit of the last byte to 1 ($c = 1$) – and for the other bytes $c = 0$.

Example

docIDs	824	829	215406
gaps		5	214577
VB code	00000110 10111000	10000101	00001101 00001100 10110001

$$512 + 256 + 32 + 16 + 8 = 824$$

Postings stored as the byte concatenation

00000110 10111000 10000101 00001101 00001100 10110001

Key property: VB-encoded postings are uniquely prefix-decodable.

For a small gap (5), VB uses a whole byte.

Other variable unit codes



- Instead of bytes, we can also use a different “unit of alignment”: 32 bits (words), 16 bits, 4 bits (nibbles).
- Variable byte alignment wastes space if you have many small gaps – nibbles do better in such cases.
- Variable byte codes:
 - Used by many commercial/research systems
 - Good low-tech blend of variable-length coding and sensitivity to computer memory alignment matches (vs. bit-level codes, which we look at next).



RCV1 compression

Data structure	Size in MB
dictionary, fixed-width	11.2
dictionary, term pointers into string	7.6
with blocking, $k = 4$	7.1
with blocking & front coding	5.9
collection (text, xml markup etc)	3,600.0
collection (text)	960.0
Term-doc incidence matrix	40,000.0
postings, uncompressed (32-bit words)	400.0
postings, uncompressed (20 bits)	250.0
postings, variable byte encoded	116.0



Summary: Index compression

- We can now create an index for highly efficient Boolean retrieval that is very space efficient
- Use the sorted nature of the data to compress
 - Variable sized storage
 - Encode common prefixes only once
 - Encode gaps to reduce size of numbers
- However, here we didn't encode positional information
 - But techniques for dealing with postings are similar



Resources for today's lecture

- *IIR 5*
- *MG 3.3, 3.4.*
- F. Scholer, H.E. Williams and J. Zobel. 2002. Compression of Inverted Indexes For Fast Query Evaluation. *Proc. ACM-SIGIR 2002.*
 - Variable byte codes
- V. N. Anh and A. Moffat. 2005. Inverted Index Compression Using Word-Aligned Binary Codes. *Information Retrieval 8*: 151–166.
 - Word aligned codes