Semantic Entity Retrieval Toolkit

Christophe Van Gysel  
University of Amsterdam  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
cvangysel@uva.nl

Maarten de Rijke  
University of Amsterdam  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
derijke@uva.nl

Evangelos Kanoulas  
University of Amsterdam  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
e.kanoulas@uva.nl

ABSTRACT
Unsupervised learning of low-dimensional, semantic representations of words and entities has recently gained attention. In this paper we describe the Semantic Entity Retrieval Toolkit (SERT) that provides implementations of our previously published entity representation models. The toolkit provides a unified interface to different representation learning algorithms, fine-grained parsing configuration and can be used transparently with GPUs. In addition, users can easily modify existing models or implement their own models in the framework. After model training, SERT can be used to rank entities according to a textual query and extract the learned entity/word representation for use in downstream algorithms, such as clustering or recommendation.

KEYWORDS
Neural information retrieval; Entity retrieval; Toolkit

1 INTRODUCTION
The unsupervised learning of low-dimensional, semantic representations of words and entities has recently gained attention for the entity-oriented tasks of expert finding [9] and product search [8]. Representations are learned from a document collection and domain-specific associations between documents and entities. Expert finding is the task of finding the right person with the appropriate skills or knowledge [1] and an association indicates document authorship (e.g., academic papers) or involvement in a project (e.g., annual progress reports). In the case of product search, an associated document is a product description or review [8].

In this paper we describe the Semantic Entity Retrieval Toolkit (SERT) that provides implementations of our previously published entity representation models [8, 9]. Beyond a unified interface that combines different models, the toolkit allows for fine-grained parsing configuration and GPU-based training through integration with Theano [3, 6]. Users can easily extend existing models or implement their own models within the unified framework. After model training, SERT can compute matching scores between an entity and a piece of text (e.g., a query). This matching score can then be used for ranking entities, or as a feature in a downstream machine learning system, such as the learning to rank component

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2.2 Representation learning

After the collection has been processed and packaged in a machine-friendly format, representations of words and entities can be learned. The toolkit includes implementations of state-of-the-art representation learning models that were applied to expert finding [9] and product search [8]. Users of the toolkit can use these implementations to learn representations out-of-the-box or adapt the algorithms to their needs. In addition, users can implement their own models by extending an interface provided by the framework. Code snippet 1 shows an example of a model implemented in the SERT toolkit where users can define a symbolic cost function that will be optimized using Theano [6]. Due to the component-wise organization of the toolkit (Fig. 1), modeling and text processing are separated from each other. Consequently, researchers can focus on modeling and representation learning only. In addition, any improvements to the collection processing (§2.1) collectively benefits all models implemented in SERT.

2.3 Entity ranking & other uses of the representations

Once a model has been trained, SERT can be used to rank entities w.r.t. a textual query. The concrete implementation used to rank entities depends on the model that was trained. In the most generic case, a matching score is computed for every entity and entities are ranked in decreasing order of his score. However, in the special case when the model is interpreted as a metric vector space [2, 8], SERT casts entity ranking as a k-nearest neighbor problem and uses specialized data structures for retrieval [5]. After ranking, SERT outputs the entity rankings as a TREC-compatible file that can be used as input to the trec_eval evaluation utility.

Apart from entity ranking, the learned representations and model-specific parameters can be extracted conveniently from the models through the interface\(^2\) and used for down-stream tasks such as clustering, recommendation and determining entity importance as shown in [10].

3 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we described the Semantic Entity Retrieval Toolkit, a toolkit that learns latent representations of words and entities. The toolkit contains implementations of state-of-the-art entity representations algorithms [8, 9] and consists of three components: text processing, representation learning and inference. Users of the toolkit can easily make changes to existing model implementations or contribute their own models by extending an interface provided by the SERT framework.

Future work includes integration with Pyndri [11] such that document collections indexed with Indri can transparently be used to train entity representations. In addition, integration with machine learning frameworks besides Theano, such as TensorFlow and PyTorch, will make it easier to integrate existing models into SERT.

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\(^2\)See get_representations in Snippet 1.

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Code snippet 1: Illustrative example of the SERT model interface. The full interface supports more functionality omitted here for brevity. Users can define a symbolic graph of computation using the Theano library [6] in combination with Lasagne [3].