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Reconstructing Textual File Fragments Using Unsupervised Machine Learning Techniques

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Reconstructing Textual File Fragments Using Unsupervised Machine Learning Techniques

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Brother Neal Golden, S.C., Ph.D., of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart who taught me to write my first programs in basic, introduced me to boolean logic, and kindled in me a love for Computer Science. It is to him I owe the awe and wonder I feel every time my thoughts play out in code building sandcastles in the clouds. His patience and wisdom have touched many lives; I am privileged to have been one of his students.

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Abstract

This work is an investigation into reconstructing fragmented ASCII files based on content analysis motivated by a desire to demonstrate machine learning's applicability to Digital Forensics. Using a categorized corpus of Usenet, Bulletin Board Systems, and other assorted documents a series of experiments are conducted using machine learning techniques to train classifiers which are able to identify fragments belonging to the same original file. The primary machine learning method used is the Support Vector Machine with a variety of feature extractions to train from. Additional work is done in training committees of SVMs to boost the classification power over the individual SVMs, as well as the development of a method to tune SVM kernel parameters using a genetic algorithm. Attention is given to the applicability of Information Retrieval techniques to file fragments, as well as an analysis of textual artifacts which are not present in standard dictionaries.

Keywords: Machine Learning, File Carving, Fragmented Files, Support Vector Machines, SVM, Digital Forensics, Information Retrieval

Chapter 1

Introduction

Digital forensics is a subfield of computer science dealing primarily with the acquisition, preservation, and analysis of data from computer or computer related systems, media, and other similar sources. Part of digital forensic practice deals with acquiring data from systems damaged or compromised in some way from intentional spoliation, damage to either the physical data storage medium or logical damage to the medium's underlying file structure (disk formatting, damage to the file table, etc), or an inaccessible storage mechanism (either through being unknown, encrypted, or otherwise obfuscated from the investigator.) In circumstances where the information cannot be directly accessed through normal operations or interfaces digital forensic investigators must use alternative channels and tools to locate the data and make it accessible again.

The most common situation in the current landscape of digital forensics an investigator is likely to encounter is a reformatted hard drive or deleted files. Most laymen do not understand the internal mechanics of the operating system / file system at work when a file is deleted, and because of this deleted data is often still resident on the storage medium. This deleted data can be made accessible again using a forensic technique called file carving.

File Carving & Fragmentation

Many file types have invariant sections which are collectively referred to in digital forensic research as file "headers" and "footers" depending on their position at the start or end of a file respectively. By knowing these invariant bytes and their position within a given file it is possible to search through the raw data on a storage medium and identify where files of a known type start or end. Authors of modern file systems have worked diligently to minimize file fragmentation so often the files searched for are contiguous, having no fragmentation between the beginning header and ending footer; such contiguous files become easy to recover by extracting or "carving" out the contiguous data between the header and footer thus delivering the original file.

While fragmentation is minimized in modern file systems when the drives are not filled to capacity, a recent study shows some fragmentation still occurs in 6% of files present on the system. This fragmentation is most likely to occur in cases where data is appended to an existing file and is expected to occur disproportionately in user generated files such as documents, email stores, or databases as well as system generated files such as system logs (1).

Fragmentation is a difficult problem to deal with on a generalized level because traditional approaches of file carving are intended to deal with file recovery where the complete or near complete recovery of the file is necessary for the data to be useful; for example Jpeg images where missing portions disrupt the decompression and rendering process are not useful unless the majority of the data is present. In cases where binary or media based files are the primary target of the investigation this type of reconstruction requires (in the case of bi-fragmentation) the location of two pieces, and an attempt to pair header pieces with footer pieces until a successful rendering is accomplished. This, at best, is highly complex and often requires *a priori* knowledge of the specific file type's internal structure for reconstruction or validation. Prior work in this regard is discussed in the Related Work section dealing with object validation.

Text Based Targets

Data comes in two basic forms: binary, and text. When an investigation is not primarily driven by image or similar binary media based targets then the target is usually one of information or communication. As previously mentioned, a disproportionate amount of fragmentation occurs where data is appended rather than overwritten as is the case with documents, email stores, databases, system log files and other similar information containing files; in fact user generated content (which generates binary only data) is more likely to overwrite the file with a new one than append to the file (as is the case with many graphic or multimedia applications). These file types all convey textual information and communication either generated by the user and thus about the user directly (including instant message conversations, emails, spreadsheets, documents, etc), or generated by the system often about the activities the user is engaged in thusly about the user indirectly (login / logout times, accessed resources on the network or internet, etc.)

Textual data differs from its binary counterparts in that it requires no rendering or preprocessing and chunks of it, even if from only a portion of the overall file, are useful to an investigator. Because of this property textual information is paradoxically both more resilient for recovery, and more resistant to recovery where its resiliency stems from the usefulness of the fragments independent of the overall file's recovery, and its resistance from the common lack of header or footer information for a file carving application to lock on to. While chunks of textual data are useful, it is nearly impossible to determine if a given chunk of textual data is a single fragment from one original document, or if the chunk is composed of multiple fragments contiguously stored on the medium. This indeterminate problem stems from the aforementioned lack of file headers and footers causing both cases (one chunk from an original document, or multiple fragments from different documents in a single contiguous chunk) to be indistinguishable from the other on a structural level due to this absence.

Growing Data Size

Another problem compounding efforts in file carving techniques is the growing size of storage medium and decreasing price per gigabyte. In the course of one decade (1996-2006) hard drive size increased by over 23,437% (3.2 GB to 750GB) but rotational speed only increased by a little over 33% (5400RPM to 7200RPM) in commodity drives. Already in late 2007 / early 2008 we are seeing terabyte size drives, and multi-terabyte devices at the consumer level. This continuing increase in consumer drive size effectively makes current fragmented reconstructions infeasible for large data stores due to the exponential number of comparisons required in the recovery. Specifically, finding all other fragments which match a specific one even using an impossible classifier with perfect accuracy requires (N^2)-1 comparisons if the files are, on average, bi-fragmented and (N^3)-1 comparisons for tri-fragmentation, and so forth.

Forensic investigators are innately limited in the length of time they can function continuously without hampering their performance. Because the individual cannot work longer without degrading their work quality as they fatigue in conjunction with the resources required to train additional investigators the human component of the forensic investigation is the primary bottleneck. File carving techniques which must be carefully reviewed and/or generate significant false positive percentages are unduly taxing on the digital forensic investigator. Forensic tools must be designed to minimize the demand on an investigator's time.

Purpose

I have made several assumptions about the nature of textual communication keeping in mind three axioms: (a) user or system generated data with a textual component is more likely to be appended than other sources of data, (b) appended data is disproportionately fragmented even in modern file systems which strive for minimal fragmentation, and (c) textual data is resistant to current generation file carving techniques, but resilient to total removal as even chunks of textual data independent of the complete file are usable.

First, textual communication, whether human generated or automatically generated by the system, is generated with a communicative purpose. On a generic level it is written to communicate something: a system log may show activities, and email to your family may convey information on current events in your life, or a work document may show status updates on current projects. In general the communication is going to be concise. A document is going to tend to cover fewer (or even one) rather than many topics and documents communicating multiple topics will do so because of some relation between the topics.

Secondly, natural languages with which textual documents are written convey information through grammatical constructs of nouns, verbs, and other assorted words. These words together convey more information than an individual word would. Words and the meanings they convey form, when brought together in a document, an underlying meaning thread ("Meaning Thread"). We as humans fluent in the language the document is written in pickup on these underlying Meaning Threads as a subject. Depending on what a document conveys it is likely to have multiple meaning threads in it. For example, a paper dealing with file carving will have an underlying meaning thread of digital forensics, file systems, files, and so forth as it deals with all of those subjects.

Thirdly, by analyzing the words and associated meanings of various documents both in comparison to parts of themselves and against other documents both related and unrelated it should be possible to differentiate between related documents and portions of the same document based on the combination of meaning threads as conveyed by word/meaning content.

My work applies machine learning techniques and uses existing tools from other research areas in a cross-disciplinary manner to create a process using automated unsupervised machine learning to identify textual fragments belonging to the same original document. I will do this by analyzing the word and meaning content of a pre-existing set of classified text documents and applying techniques from Natural Language Processing ("NLP") and other Information Retrieval techniques to train several Support Vector Machines ("SVM") to classify fragments which have the same original document source based on the similarities between fragments from the same document and differences between fragments from different documents whether similar or not in subject.

In the course of this research and tool development I take special care in ensuring the implementation is both scalable and distributable with minimal attention or feedback required from the forensic investigator. These two factors are essential for future forensic tool development to account for problems in growing data set size and the limited attention a forensic investigator can devote to a tool; in particular it is my opinion future tools will have to be completely automated in the near future to be of any use in forensic investigations.

Organization

In this thesis I will present results from my research into reconstructing non-contiguous fragments from ASCII text files using novel techniques drawn in a cross-disciplinary approach between Artificial Intelligence, Information Retrieval, Digital Forensics, and other fields. In chapter 2 I will discuss background, related work, and the state of the art. In chapter 3 I will discuss the methods used as part of the overall system. In chapter 4 I will discuss the experimental data set, the experiment setup, and results. In chapter 5 I will conduct a more in-depth analysis of the results from my experiments in chapter 4. Finally, in chapter 6 I will present my conclusions and future directions of my research.

Chapter 2

Background & Related Work

File Carving

Computer files often contain information at the beginning or end which deals with format, length, file ending, and so forth. In many cases certain byte positions within these header and footer regions is invariant between files. These invariant header portions are often the same magic numbers used by the Linux file command to deduce file type from the header portion, but do not have to be intentional magic numbers; any byte sequence which is invariant or near invariant will do so long as it is consistent.

Current generation file carving tools use a two pass approach to carve files from raw data. In pass one they search byte by byte comparing what is found with a list of known header and footers while taking note of type and offset for each located header or footer. Using the information gleaned from pass one the file carving utility then examines headers and footers as they are positioned on disk to identify which match ups are likely to be contiguous files (such as a header for file type X followed by a footer for file type X a few blocks later.) Alternatively files can be partially recovered by reading data until an unanticipated header or footer is encountered which does not correspond to the initial header (such as reading an image header and then later encountering a non-image header or footer.) Depending on the file type, partial recovery can be useful if the entire file is not necessary to glean some information.

The first file carving application was produced by the Defense Computer Forensics Lab in 1999 and was called CarvThis. Kris Kendall developed snarfit shortly afterward in 2001. Later both Kris Kendall and Jesse Kornblum worked together to produce Foremost. (1)

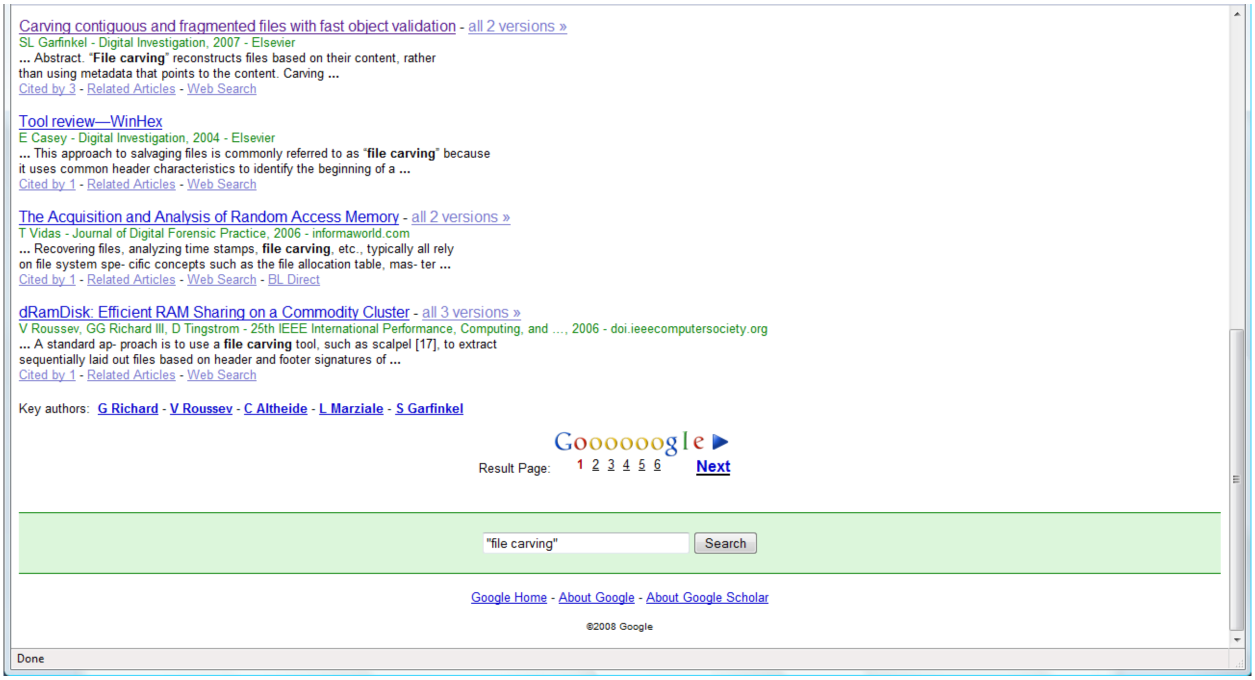
Foremost itself started as a standard file carver based on header / footer identification. In 2005 Nick Minkus published his thesis which extended foremost with several new heuristiscs including support for Object Linking and Embedding ("OLE") file types opening up file carving to a host of Microsoft Office ("MSOffice") files. His work modified an API package developed by the Chicago Project (http://chicago.sourceforge.net/) to be usable by Foremost. The Chicago Project provided functionality specifically for dealing with excel files. Prior to his contribution Foremost was only able to handle Microsoft Word files. (2)

Also in 2005 Dr. Golden Richard and Dr. Vassil Roussev published Scalpel as a new file carving tool which corrected inefficiencies in the Foremost to create a much faster file carving utility. (3)

The research and technical advances in file carving have primarily manifested increases in efficiency with the introduction of Scalpel and newer revisions of Foremost. File fragmentation still remains a significant problem with minimal advances in comparison to the advances in efficiency. The only solution hitherto proposed for dealing with fragmented file reconstruction is to use object validation wherein blocks of data are identified as belonging to specific file types and different algorithms with in depth *a priori* knowledge of the file type take over reconstruction. (1)

Information Retrieval

Information Retrieval ("IR") is a cross disciplinary venture primarily concerned with searching for information pertinent to a query. The most obvious and visible IR applications are search engines such as Google and Yahoo. The primary aim of IR, arguably, is to allow an individual to rapidly winnow down a large repository of information down to documents specific to the individual's search goals. The information used includes not only the internal document text, but also metadata such as dates, authors, and organizations. In figure 1 we see an example of this where a simple search for file carving research also lists key authors to narrow the total search population by.



Carving contiguous and fragmented files with fast object validation - all 2 versions »
SL Garfinkel - Digital Investigation, 2007 - Elsevier
... Abstract. "**File carving**" reconstructs files based on their content, rather
than using metadata that points to the content. Carving ...
Cited by 3 - Related Articles - Web Search

Tool review—WinHex
E Casey - Digital Investigation, 2004 - Elsevier
... This approach to salvaging files is commonly referred to as "**file carving**" because
it uses common header characteristics to identify the beginning of a ...
Cited by 1 - Related Articles - Web Search

The Acquisition and Analysis of Random Access Memory - all 2 versions »
T Vidas - Journal of Digital Forensic Practice, 2006 - informaworld.com
... Recovering files, analyzing time stamps, **file carving**, etc., typically all rely
on file system spe- cific concepts such as the file allocation table, mas- ter ...
Cited by 1 - Related Articles - Web Search - BL Direct

dRamDisk: Efficient RAM Sharing on a Commodity Cluster - all 3 versions »
V Roussev, GG Richard III, D Tingstrom - 25th IEEE International Performance, Computing, and ..., 2006 - doi.ieeecomputersociety.org
... A standard ap- proach is to use a **file carving** tool, such as scalpel [17], to extract
sequentially laid out files based on header and footer signatures of ...
Cited by 1 - Related Articles - Web Search

Key authors: **G Richard** - **V Roussev** - **C Altheide** - **L Marziale** - **S Garfinkel**

"file carving"

Gooooooogle ▶
Result Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Next
Search
Google Home - About Google - About Google Scholar
©2008 Google
Done

Figure 1 Scholar.google.com Example of Information Retrieval

Document Clustering & Text Classification

Document Clustering and Text Classification are subfields of IR where the primary goal is not to retrieve information by query, but to automatically put a new document into a category with other documents with related topics. An individual document may belong to multiple categories or topics which could be activated by a search query.

Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency (4)

Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency ("TFIDF") is a statistically derived weight for how important a specific term is within a specific document modified by its pervasiveness within a document corpus. More simplistically the more often a term appears in a given document, the more important it is for classification; however, the more often a term appears in documents throughout the corpus the less important it is for classification. Therefore TFIDF is a balancing of a term's importance to the document diminished by how commonplace it is within documents in general.

Mathematically the two component parts, Term Frequency ("TF") and Document Frequency ("DF"), are defined as:

$$TF(i,j) = \frac{n_{i,j}}{\sum_k n_{k,j}}$$

$$IDF(i) = \log \frac{|D|}{|\{d_i : t_i \in d_i\}|}$$

$$TFIDF(i,j) = TF(i,j) \times IDF(i)$$

Where:

- TF(i,j) is the Term Frequency of term **i** in document **j**
- $n_{i,j}$ is the number of occurrences for term **i** in document **j**
- $\sum_k n_{k,j}$ is the number of occurrences of all terms in document **j**
- $IDF(i)$is the Inverse Document Frequency of term **i** in the corpus
- $|D|$ is the number of documents in the corpus
- $|\{d_i : t_i \in d_i\}|$ is the number of documents in the corpus containing term t_i
- TFIDF(i,j) is the Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency of term **i** in document **j** in the corpus

Cosine Similarity& Tanimoto Coefficient (4)

Cosine Similarity in a text mining / IR context refers to the similarity, expressed as an angle in the range [0,π] with 0 denoting equivalence and π denoting complete dissimilarity. Recall the equation for expressing the dot product of two vectors in terms of the angle between them:

$$V \cdot W = \|V\| \|W\| \cos\theta$$

The cosine similarity function uses the TFIDF values as vectors for each document, and computes the angle between the TFIDF vectors as a measure of similarity for the documents being compared. The end computation to determine this similarity is as follows:

$$C(V,W) = \cos^{-1} \frac{V \cdot W}{\|V\| \|W\|}$$

The function yielding the cosine similarity may be further extended to produce the Tanimoto coefficient which yields the Jaccard index when the input vectors are binary as follows:

$$T(V,W) = \frac{V \cdot W}{\|V\|^2 + \|W\|^2 - V \cdot W}$$

The Jaccard index itself is a measure of similarity within a sample set.

Support Vector Machines (5)

SVMs provide a system for supervised learning which is robust against over training and capable of handling non-separable cases. Learning with structural risk minimization is the central idea behind SVMs, and this is elegantly accomplished by obtaining the separating hyperplane between the binary labeled data sets (±1) that separates the labeled data sets with a maximum possible margin (6) (7). The power of this approach is greatly extended by the added modeling freedom provided by a choice of kernel. This is related to preprocessing of data to obtain feature vectors, where, for kernels, the features are now mapped to a much higher dimensional space (technically, an infinite-dimensional space in the case of the popular Gaussian Kernel).

The hyperplane itself is centered at $\mathbf{w}\bullet\mathbf{x} - b = 0$ where **w** is the normal vector to the separating hyperplane, **x** is the vector of points satisfying the above equation, and *b* is the offset from the origin. Given this, **w** and *b* are chosen to maximize the distance or gap between parallel hyperplanes $\mathbf{w}\bullet\mathbf{x} - b = -1$ and $\mathbf{w}\bullet\mathbf{x} - b = 1$. The separable case for the SVM occurs where there is no crossover from the labeled groups over the hyperplane. Non-separable cases are handled through the use of slack values (6) (see Fig. 2) to allow for some cross over in order to still obtain the largest possible margin between the bulk of the labeled groups. One of the strengths of SVMs is that the approach to handling non-separable data is almost identical to that for separable data. (8)

Upon introducing Kernels, the SVM equations are solved by eliminating w and b to arrive at the following Lagrangian formulation: max $\sum_{(i=1\ldots n)} \alpha_i - \frac{1}{2}\sum_{(i,j=1\ldots n)} \alpha_i\alpha_j y_i y_j\, K(x_i,x_j)$, subject to $\alpha_i \geq 0$ and $\sum_{(i=1\ldots n)} \alpha_i y_i = 0$, where the decision function is computed as $f(x) = \mathrm{sign}(\sum_{(i=1\ldots n)} \alpha_i y_i K(x_i,x_j) + b)$, and where $K(x_i,x_j)$ is the kernel generalization to the inner-product term, $<x_i,x_j>$, that is obtained in the standard, intuitively geometric, non-kernel based SVM formulation. (5)

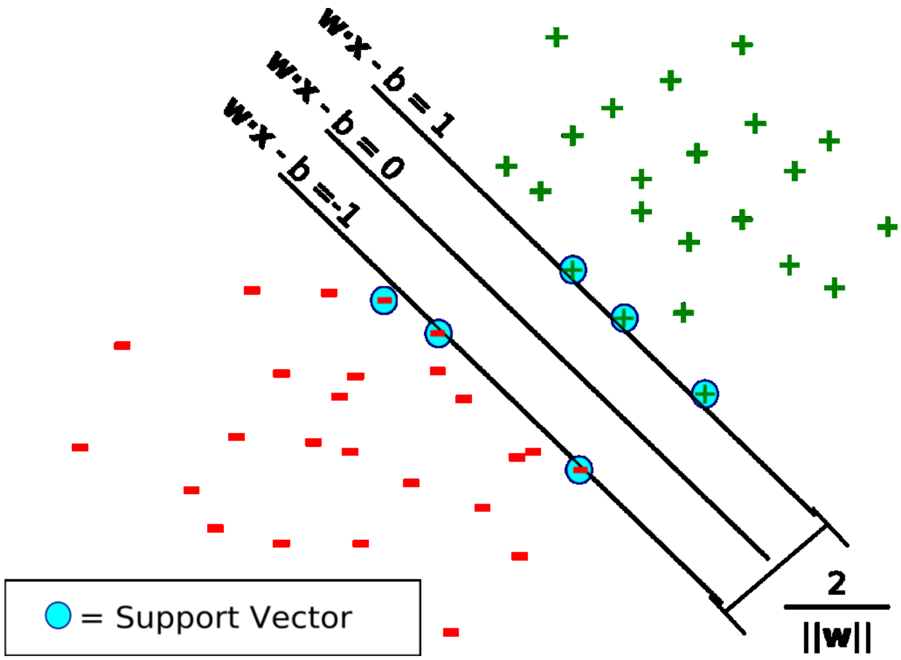


Figure 2 Hyperplane With Seperable Case

This figure shows two clusters of labeled data which can be completely separated by a hyperplane.

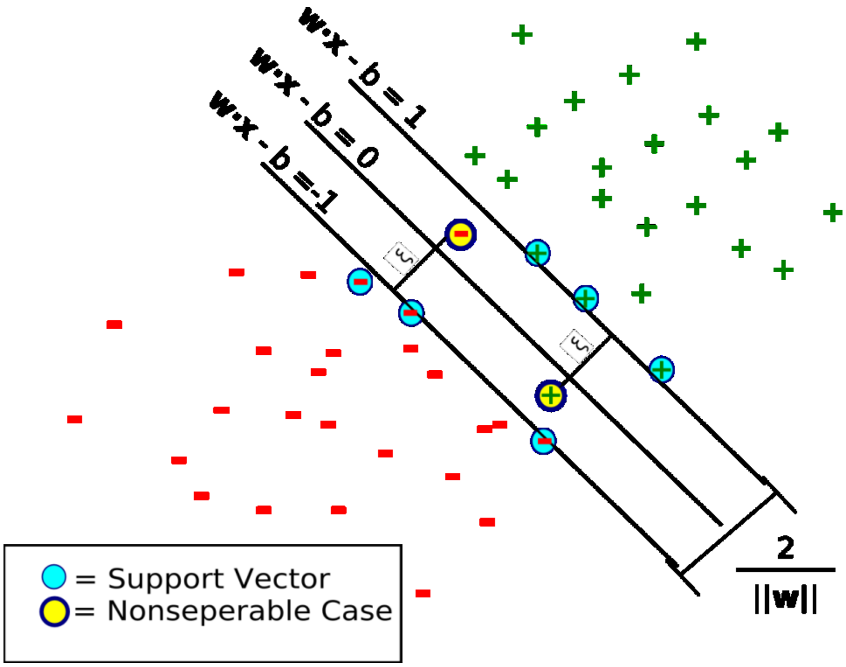


Figure 3 Hyperplane With Non-Seperable Case

This figure shows two clusters of labeled data which are not separable because there is no hyperplane which can be drawn between the two clusters due to the crossover.

Chapter 3

Methods

In conducting my study of fragmented text documents I explored numerous methods for representing the meaning content of a given document. For most machine learning applications natural language texts such as those I am dealing with must be translated into a numerical representation for comparison against other documents. In this thesis I refer to this process as feature extraction and the resulting mathematical representations as a feature singularly or collectively as a feature vector.

Novelty & Divergence from IR

Traditional methods of Information Retrieval or Document Clustering / Text Classification rely on existing broad predefined topics for classification. In its simplest form this process can be manual such as tags in blogs, journals, or Content Management Systems, or it can be more complex in systems which automatically classify documents into existing taxonomical systems. In all cases the topic structures are self-evidently broad and intended to encompass numerous document populations for easy searching. If we were to look at this process as book classification, IR / Document Clustering would be the classification of a new book into its correct location within the Dewey Decimal (9) system. The goal of my thesis work is to identify fragments of the same original document as they relate to each other and, viewed in a similar abstraction, this would be akin to taking chapters torn from random books and grouping them back together based on the book they originated in without the benefit of titles (headers/footers).

Feature Extraction

Numerous methods of feature extraction were evaluated in the course of this work. Because of the work's nature approaches which in prior work were not effective for document clustering or text classification were evaluated anyway to evaluate whether the methods may have been inappropriate to document clustering due to being too specific to the document (a failure in document clustering, but a potential success in reconstructing document fragments.) In all cases the text is processed by treating non-alphanumeric characters as delineators and processing all text between the delineators as individual tokens.

Word Frequency & Natural Language Processing

By using a NLP database it is possible to analyze the individual tokens to discern two items of information. Firstly, tokens which do not exist in the NLP database (or in a dictionary) ("unknown tokens") are likely to be either misspelled, names, or highly specific terms. Secondly, tokens which do exist in the NLP database can be collapsed such that words with identical meanings can be combined in occurrence rather than counting them separately. This second point allows meanings present in a document to be fully accounted for in their pervasiveness as a ratio over total meanings rather than diluting its importance by accounting for synonymous tokens individually. Specifically in a document discussing dogs, accounting for dog and canine separately dilutes its importance as a ratio of total terms, further in cases where a one term is used more frequently at the start of a document and another in the later section reconstruction would be affected by not counting the terms similarly.

Terms which do not occur in the NLP database (or a dictionary) including misspelled words, proper names, and highly specific terms will be each referred to as a Highly Specific Term (“HST”) in the remainder of this text. HSTs offer potential for identifying characteristics of the author in cases where words are misspelled consistently, of subject where proper names are used both for people (Alice, Bob, etc) or for programs/services in log files (Apache, IIS, etc), or finally of terms with very technical or specific connotations such as those invented for use in a document.

For the Word Frequency & Natural Language Processing (“WF&NLP”) feature extraction the fragment being compared (“target”) and the files the target is compared to (“comparison”) are processed to compute the (a) Meaning Term Frequency for each NLP based meaning, (b) the standard deviation by occurrence the meaning falls into, and (c) the list of unknown tokens in the document.

TFIDF Automatic Keyword Extraction

TFIDF as a general concept has long been used in IR for determining the importance of a particular term within a document by taking the product of its occurrence as a ratio of terms in the document and the number of documents sampled in which the term occurs. TFIDF was formally defined previously in the background section. Here it is used to select specific terms within the document as keywords. By selecting n keywords with the highest TFIDF weight it is possible to select keywords for classification in an unsupervised manner.

Chapter 4

Results

Datasets

The experimental datasets come from the textfiles.com archive ("datastore") which consists of over 55,000 text documents archived from Usenet, Bulletin Board Systems, and other similar sources. The data is published in hand classified categories based on topic, with sub categories relating to more specific aspects. The datastore's total size is approximately 1.2GB of ASCII text files.

Dataset 1 ("Random1") consists of approximately 100 files selected randomly from the total datastore. Files were selected without regard to file size.

Dataset 2 ("Random2") consists of approximately 100 files selected randomly from the total datastore. File with a total size of less than 8k were discarded from consideration.

Dataset 3 ("HamRadio") consists of approximately 100 files selected randomly from the Ham Radio subset of the total datastore. This is a subject specific data set dealing with Ham Radio, and other related technologies and discussions. Files with a total size of less than 8k were discarded from consideration.

Dataset 4 ("RPG") consists of approximately 100 files selected randomly from the Role Playing Games subset of the total datastore. This is a subject specific data set dealing with Role Playing Games such as Dungeons and Dragons, and similar publications.

Dataset Selection

Random2 and HamRadio were created without files smaller than 8k to more realistically simulate ondisk fragmentaiton of NTFS file systems whose default block size is 4k thus representing at minimum 2 blocks of textual data. Random1 and RPG were created without regard to this limit to evaluate differences in performance on sets using smaller datasets.

Random1 and Random2 are randomly selected datasets thus having little if any noise from fragmented documents with similar topics. These two datasets are the optimistic baseline for estimating maximum accuracy. RPG and HamRadio are subject specific datasets and serve as worst case, or pessimistic baseline for the hardest case of classification where all fragments share a topic. Further, many of the documents in RPG are game mechanics related documents which differ from standard documents such as emails, essays and so forth in that they communicate discrete sections of rules which may or not be content related.

Feature Extraction

There are, collectively, 5 separate feature extraction processes which generate feature vectors of varying lengths. In the course of the experiments the vectors were evaluated individually, and in various combinations to gage the overall contribution of the features to the training Sensitivity ("SN") and Specificity ("SP") where:

SN = $\frac{Correctly\ Identified\ Positives}{Total\ Positives}$ Or the percentage of true matches detected.

SP = $\frac{Correctly\ Identified\ Negatives}{Total\ Negatives}$ Or the percentage of false positives.

Figure 4 - Sensitivity ("SN") / Specificity ("SP") Definition

Feature Vector 1 (“Cos/Tan FV”) is a magnitude 2 feature vector consisting of the Cosine Similarity, and Tanimoto coefficient. Cosine similarity is a measure of how similar two documents are with 0 denoting identical documents, and π denoting completely dissimilar documents. The Tanimoto coefficient is an extension of Cosine similarity which produces some additional data in the event of binary attributes. These two measures are well established in text mining and search engine optimization. (10)

Feature Vector 2 (“Keyword FV”) is a magnitude N feature vector consisting of a keyword comparison between the Target and Comparison files. Each document has a ranked list of keywords automatically extracted by taking the tf-idf for each term appearing in the document and selecting the N highest ranking (relevance by tf-idf weight) terms in the Target. Keyword FV is then constructed as a binary (1,0) vector with a 1 indicating the appropriate keyword from the Target fragment is present in the Comparison fragment. N=10 was used for these experiments.

Feature Vector 3 (“Unknown FV”) is a magnitude N feature vector consisting of comparisons between the unknown tokens in the Target fragment, and those in the Comparison fragment. The comparison is similar to the Keyword FV in that it selects the N most occurring unknown tokens from the Target fragment and produces a quotient between it and the token's number of occurrences in the Comparison. N=5 was used for these experiments.

Feature Vector 4 (“Unknown Ratio FV”) is a magnitude 1 feature vector consisting of a ratio between the number of unknown tokens the two fragments have in common and the total number of unknown tokens in the Target fragment.

Support Vector Machine Parameters & Performance Evaluation

The primary mechanism altering effectiveness of the SVM is the selection of a kernel which performs well for the feature vectors being studied, as well as a set of parameters for the selected kernel which are stable for the feature vectors. The general aim for kernel and parameter selection is to maximize accuracy where accuracy = (SN + SP) / 2. Due to the nature of fragment reconstruction, the number of correct combinations is far outnumbered by incorrect combinations. For example, 100 files split into 200 fragments have N*(N-1) comparisons which works out to 200 * (200-1) = 200 * 199 = 39,800 total comparisons of which there are 2N-1 correct combinations (Fragment A matched with Fragment B, and Fragment B matched with Fragment A) giving 2*200-1 or 399 correct combinations, and 39,800 – 400 = 39,401 incorrect combinations. The aim of automated digital forensic tools is to lessen the workload of a human analyst, so an increase in SN at the expense of a decrease in SP becomes self defeating as the erroneous classifications drown out the correct reconstructions. In perspective, 30% SN with 99.9% SP would involve the identification of approximately 119 correct reconstructions and 39 incorrect reconstructions, leaving a total of 158 of the possible 39,800 comparisons for a human to manually review or 0.39% of the total brute force work. However, if SN was increased to 40% at the expense of a

0.5% decrease in SP there would be a total of approximately 160 correct reconstructions, and 236 incorrect reconstructions increasing the manual review process to almost 1% of the total brute force work. Following from this, anything under 99% SP quickly becomes untenable as the noise drowns out any correct reconstructions.

Current practice in SVM usage is to perform kernel selection and parameter tuning through a repeated retraining process in an attempt to find a kernel which has a good general performance for the feature vector, and kernel parameters which provide stable performance. Stable performance, as referred to here, is defined as performance for which minor modifications of a kernel parameter have a performance change proportional to the change in the kernel parameter e.g. minor changes in a kernel parameter yield minor changes in performance. Conversely, unstable performance occurs where minor changes in a kernel parameter result in erratic or disproportionate changes in performance results. This process can be quite tedious, and requires the user to hand select parameters. Because the effectiveness of a kernel and its parameters can be easily and accurately evaluated against a given training and testing data set the overall problem screams for the application of a genetic algorithm to automatically tune the kernel parameters in finding the most effective settings for the training and classification process. To this end a prototype SVM auto-tuning genetic algorithm was applied in the training process:

> **Step 1: Initial Population** – A given kernel is selected for testing and an initial population of parameters is randomly generated. For these experiments a population size of 50 was chosen.
>
> **Step 2: Evaluation & Selection** – Given two datasets (training and testing) each member of the kernel population is used to train an SVM, and then classify the testing set. The genetic algorithm evaluation function uses the exact measures of SN and SP to determine success of the member, and the average performance of the population is computed. A cut off point is set midway between the average and best performance in the population with members falling below the cut off selected for extinction and those above or at it allowed to breed.
>
> **Step 3: Breeding** – The surviving members of the current generation are preserved in the next, and are randomly bred with each other to refill the population to its maximum level. Again, for these experiments maximum population is set at 50. When two members are bred, their parameters are blended by averaging between the parents.
>
> **Step 4: Mutation** – Mutate a portion of the population to have their parameters randomly mutated by + or – 1 for integer parameters, or a decimal in the [0,1) range for double parameters. For this application 10% of the population was selected for mutation at each generation.
>
> **Repeat 2-4** until the population becomes homogeneous or performance gains cease or become negligible (bellow a threshold value.) The final generation contains the best performing parameters found for this kernel type, but while not necessarily optimal, they are well performing.

The method of breeding chosen (averaging the kernel parameters) causes breeding to perform an exaggerated form of hill climbing akin to a binary search. Specifically given two well performing points A and E will breed to average out to C, a mid point, in the next generation. Depending on the performance at the three points, in successive generations a survival of A and C will breed to produce B while alternatively E and C will produce D. This behavior diverges from a binary search though in that performance is not a linear increase coupled to kernel parameter, instead there are peaks and valleys in performance so points B and D could both be well performing values better than their ancestors A, C, and E. The random mutation aspect also serves to knock out unstable regions where a single value performs well for the specific data set, but doesn't have a generally good performance over similar data sets in that along the way. For example if the specific B performs well, but B ±0.000001 performs badly, then B is not a good value to use; in such a case the "jittering" of the parameter through mutation will help knock the population out of such an oddity. If the jittered value performs well, but not quite as well as the original it will eventually find its way back through successive breeding. The end result of a good run with this method of auto tuning is a range of kernel parameters with a similar performance, where the parameters are numerically close.

Kernel selection is not the sole determinant for SVM performance; the feature vectors themselves are equally important to the success of learning. Rerunning a genetic algorithm for near optimal performance is unnecessary to evaluate whether the addition of alternative features to the feature vector could increase performance. For a given set of kernel parameters with stable performance, the change in performance with the addition of new features can be used to determine if they should be included without requiring the kernel parameters to be tuned. Once additional features are evaluated as increasing the performance of a SVM the augmented feature vectors can be tuned with the genetic algorithm without expending the computational resources and time to tune for each considered feature addition. More simply, we only tune for near optimal performance on additional features which are shown to provide a benefit and discard those features which provide no appreciable benefit. For these experiments the radial kernel with gamma = 2 was selected as it has previously been observed as a generally well performing kernel to evaluate addition or subtraction of features in prior unrelated work. (5) Though gamma = 2 is a stable kernel parameter used for much of the early work, once the auto-tuning SVM algorithm was introduced a significant performance increase was obtained as detailed in the results section.

Preliminary Investigation

A preliminary investigation was conducted into the problem under the assumption NLP information could be used to deduce an underlying set of topics from a document based on extracting and comparing the meanings from the fragments via comparison against an NLP database. (11) Specifically text intended for human or machine consumption takes several forms. Human readable documents contain articles dealing with a given topic, or subject which leads to the document as a whole having a thread of meaning throughout. A paper dealing with dogs, for example, will use vocabulary relating to dogs as well as the paper topic itself. A document dealing with a topic such as "pack habits of dogs" would also include vocabulary relating to pack behavior. Similarly log files will detail the same types of information in quantity; i.e. an apache log will contain data relating to an apache process, and use some terminology specific to apache log files or web servers.

Most human readable documents convey information in a discrete manner dealing with a single topic thread or subject. Longer documents will tend to have broader subjects to deal with while shorter ones will tend towards being concise.

The pervasive meaning thread in a document is conveyed by words, but there are many words in a language to describe the same meaning. Half of a paper on dogs may use the word “dog” while the second half could favor “canine” if shifting focus, but the meaning throughout refers to the same subject. NLP provides a way to map dissimilar words to a common meaning through databases which map the relationships words have to each other.

It was initially assumed fragments of the same document should have similar frequencies of common meanings since they 1) deal with the same subject, 2) are part of the same document, and 3) have a common writing flow. Therefore, it was further assumed analyzing the common meaning and their frequency in one fragment as compared to another should allow fragments to be clustered into the documents they came from.

The NLP Ratio FV was originally derived from this approach, and in the course of preprocessing the documents' terms into NLP meanings the idea to target unknown tokens was adopted shortly after. The unknown tokens themselves were compared as a simple ratio of occurrences which became the Unknown Ratio FV. Prior to the adoption of the SVM as the preferred learning method, very small datasets were compared using the J4.8 decision tree algorithm. The input data consisted of the NLP Ratio FV, and the Unknown Ratio FV expressed for both possible comparisons (e.g. with FileA as the Target and FileB as the comparison, and vice versa.)

Preliminary work was done on the concepts presented here. The original experiments used a smaller dataset from the same document corpus. In the experiments the original aim was to look at only NLP meaning matches grouped by standard deviation. The mapping of data to its meaning via an NLP database was what brought out an awareness of the large quantities of “unknown tokens” and their viability as an information source. The original data was analyzed against a J4.8 decision tree classifier (12). The testing and training sets were generated from a subset of the UFO category of the total corpus. The decision tree itself showed high classification power for the unknown token ratio and resulted in a 39% SN with 99.76% SP. It deduced either of the two Unknown Ratio FV fields being less than approximately 0.30 resulted in a negative classification, and worked out a noisy decision tree based on the Unknown Ratio FV fields for comparisons where both Unknown Ratio FV fields were greater than approximately 0.30. Due to the similarity of training set to testing set as well as the limited size of the training and testing sets (roughly 35 files) the overall results were positive but inconclusive for general applicability. They did, however, indicate a higher degree of classification power for unknown token data and provided initial observations for the experiments used in this thesis. This sets the baseline performance level which the remainder of this thesis seeks to increase.

Moving to a SVM

Increasing the training size did not give any significant increase in performance from the decision tree classifier so the experiments were moved to SVM based learning. In the process more research was examined into document clustering techniques. The problem of fragment reconstruction has some similarities to Information Retrieval in that some topic common between the two fragments is sought in a similar way to document clustering where some topic common between two documents is sought. The complication in identifying two fragments from the same document is many fold: First, to somehow identify a difference between fragments of the same source, and fragments of different documents of the same category. Second, to make the resulting classifier general to any document. Third, to increase SN to a point where the process is useful to a forensic analyst but keeping SP high enough so that the useful information is not drowned out by the noise.

The overarching theme here can be summarized as detecting the similarities between the fragments as well as the differences between the document and other similar documents. Detecting that fragments of a pie recipe are different from a tutorial on poker is significantly easier than detecting fragments of a peach pie recipe are from a fragment of another recipe for peach cobbler, and detecting the differences between two peach pie recipes may be nigh impossible.

The Cos/Tan FV consists of two measures, Cosine Similarity and Tanimoto Coefficient, commonly used in Information Retrieval for measuring document similarity with the Tanimoto Coefficient being a variation of the Cosine Similarity. This feature vector was lifted directly from common Information Retrieval techniques. Similarly, the Keyword FV was derived from Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency ("tf-idf"), another common technique for IR, with the tf-idf used in such a way to extrapolate, unsupervised, a list of the N most important keywords in a document and compare them as previously described to another document.

The datasets as previously described were processed to produce the feature vectors also previously defined. These feature vectors were then evaluated on their own, and in combination to determine effectiveness. Afterward, the promising combinations were put through an automatic tuning process using the aforementioned genetic algorithm to determine the parameters needed for near optimal performance. The results from this process are presented below.

SVM Results

Individual Feature Vector Results

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV1	**SN**	**SP**	**SN**	**SP**	**SN**	**SP**	**SN**	**SP**
HamRadio	**32.07%**	**99.90%**	32.07%	99.82%	20.11%	99.85%	0.00%	100.00%
Random1	18.09%	99.98%	**20.21%**	**99.99%**	12.77%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Random2	33.33%	99.81%	36.87%	99.90%	**29.29%**	**99.99%**	0.00%	100.00%
RPG	47.37%	98.19%	58.42%	98.47%	42.63%	99.34%	**0.00%**	**100.00%**

Table 1 FV1 Results

Table 1 summarizes results from FV1 consisting of the Cosine Similarity and Tanimoto coefficient of two compared fragments. Initial results here are from the Radial kernel operating with Epsilon 0.02, Gamma = 2.67812144546692 and C = 1. This classifier is running at an average SN of 23.95% with a 99.70% SP translating into almost ¼ of the fragments being correctly grouped into the original document, and only a 0.30% false positive rate on all possible comparisons. Of specific note is the abysmal performance on the RPG set. Even with an inability for RPG to converge, however, it still has some strong classification power on the other data sets.

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV2	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**14.13%**	**99.98%**	23.37%	99.29%	41.30%	98.61%	11.96%	99.82%
Random1	5.32%	99.99%	**30.85%**	**99.98%**	26.60%	99.78%	7.98%	100.00%
Random2	8.59%	99.99%	27.78%	99.85%	**28.79%**	**99.98%**	9.09%	99.96%
RPG	3.68%	99.91%	22.11%	99.70%	34.21%	99.28%	**22.63%**	**99.96%**

Table 2 FV2 Results

Table 2 FV2 Results summarizes results from FV2 consisting of a keyword comparison between the Target and Comparison files. Initial results here are from the Radial kernel operating with Epsilon 0.02, Gamma = 2 and C = 1. This classifier is running at an average SN of 19.90% with a 99.75% SP.

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV3	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Random1	0.00%	100.00%	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Random2	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	0.00%	100.00%
RPG	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	**0.00%**	**100.00%**

Table 3 FV3 Results

As seen from Table 3 FV3 Results, FV3 (the presence or absence of the top N occurring unknown tokens of the target fragment in the comparison fragment) performance was an across the board failure. Unlike the results about to be presented for FV4, FV3 had no additional classification power when combined with other feature vectors. Possible reasons for this occurrence will be explored in chapter 5 under deeper analysis in the unknown token subsection. As will be explored later the probable reason for this failure in what otherwise seems to be an information rich data source may be explained by a significant amount of noise which will require filtering before FV 3 becomes viable as a classification mechanism in future work.

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV4	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Random1	0.00%	100.00%	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Random2	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	0.00%	100.00%
RPG	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	**0.00%**	**100.00%**

Table 4 FV4 Results

Table 4 FV4 Results summarizes results from FV4 consisting of a ratio between the number of unknown tokens the two fragments have in common and the total number of unknown tokens in the Target fragment . Performance on FV4 is on first inspection a complete failure. However, as will be shown later, there is information content in FV4 but either not enough or the FV magnitude is too small to classify with an SVM. Later examples with combination feature vectors show a marked increase in SN power when FV4 is combined with one of the other FVs.

FV1 and FV2 have very similar performance; performance for both is around 20% for SN, and at or above 99.70% for SP. Each has slight variations in performance seemingly indicative of weaknesses or strengths with certain kinds of dataset comparisons such as random to subject specific, or vice versa. Moving forward, the next section examines performance gains or losses for combinations of the simple feature vectors. Henceforth analysis will concentrate on the three most effective feature vectors: FV1, FV2, and FV4.

Combination Feature Vectors Results

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV1+2	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**39.67%**	**99.97%**	14.67%	99.70%	26.63%	99.77%	1.63%	99.99%
Random1	10.64%	100.00%	**50.00%**	**99.96%**	16.49%	99.97%	4.26%	100.00%
Random2	19.70%	99.91%	33.84%	99.82%	**61.62%**	**99.99%**	10.61%	99.99%
RPG	16.32%	99.33%	23.68%	99.35%	31.58%	99.47%	**42.11%**	**99.99%**

Table 5 FV1+2 Results

Table 5 FV1+2 Results summarizes the results from Combination Feature Vector ("CFV") FV1+2 (a feature vector formed by combining FV1 and FV2.) FV1 and FV2 yielded an average SN of 23.95% and 19.90% respectively, the combined vector FV1+2 raised the average SN to 25.21% for a performance gain of 1.26-5.31% with an increase to SP versus FV2 of 0.08% and a decrease to SP versus FV1 of 0.13%. Initial results here are from the Radial kernel operating with Epsilon 0.02, Gamma = 1.340775 and C = 1.

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV1+4	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**40.22%**	**99.90%**	32.61%	99.85%	23.91%	99.82%	2.17%	99.97%
Random1	20.74%	99.96%	**23.94%**	**99.97%**	12.77%	100.00%	2.66%	100.00%
Random2	38.89%	99.66%	40.91%	99.73%	**32.83%**	**99.98%**	0.00%	100.00%
RPG	65.26%	96.88%	71.05%	96.77%	53.68%	99.04%	**6.32%**	**100.00%**

Table 6 FV1+4 Results

Table 6 FV1+4 Results summarizes the results from FV1+4 a CFV combining FV1 and FV4. FV4 yielded an average SN of 0% making a comparison to FV1+4 irrelevant and a SN increase of 9.35% over the aforementioned FV1 average SN with a decrease in SP versus FV1 of 0.23%. As previously mentioned even though FV4 had no classification power on its own in the SVM, when combined with FV1 it either

has enough to push the gray area back or the addition of the FV4 components to the FV1+4 vector open up a clearer separating hyperplane within the dataset. Initial results here are from the Radial kernel operating with Epsilon 0.02, Gamma = 1.08855013343707 and C = 1.

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV2+4	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**17.39%**	**99.99%**	24.46%	99.55%	23.37%	99.52%	14.13%	99.82%
Random1	5.85%	100.00%	**40.43%**	**99.96%**	21.81%	99.96%	7.98%	100.00%
Random2	11.11%	99.99%	37.88%	99.79%	**42.42%**	**99.99%**	9.09%	100.00%
RPG	4.74%	99.89%	32.63%	99.46%	22.63%	99.75%	**26.32%**	**99.98%**

Table 7 FV2+4 Results

Table 7 FV2+4 Results summarizes the results from FV2+4 a CFV combining FV2 and FV4. Of this group of CFVs formed from two individual feature vectors, the FV2+4 group is the worst performing. It provides an SN increase of 1.49% SN over FV2 alone. Again here, while modest, the addition of the previously badly performing FV4 to the FV2 results in a performance increase. Initial results here are from the Radial kernel operating with Epsilon 0.02, Gamma = 0.19601 and C = 1.

The next stage was to continue the path of combining the FVs to squeeze out additional performance.

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
FV1+2+4	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**42.93%**	**99.98%**	11.41%	99.91%	15.22%	99.90%	2.17%	99.99%
Random1	10.11%	100.00%	**51.60%**	**99.99%**	15.43%	99.99%	1.60%	100.00%
Random2	15.66%	99.93%	28.28%	99.88%	**64.65%**	**99.99%**	5.05%	100.00%
RPG	19.47%	98.81%	16.84%	99.56%	24.74%	99.48%	**20.53%**	**100.00%**

Table 8 FV1+2+4 Results

Table 8 FV1+2+4 Results summarizes the results from FV1+2+4 a CFV combining all three of the simple feature vectors under consideration. SN increase was slightly over the FV2+4 CFV, but underperforming against FV1+2 and FV1+4. Initial results here are from the Radial kernel operating with Epsilon 0.02, Gamma = 0.5167 and C = 1.

Summary of Combination Feature Vectors

It is clear from the previous results the combination of individual feature vectors does provide an increase in performance, but the performance increase is not as substantial as was hoped for. All results in the previous two sections were first evaluated on the previously explained default gamma value of 2 then, as discussed, tuned using a genetic algorithm to determine a more optimal setting for the kernel function with the tuned results presented above. These will be considered optimal or as near optimal as practical for the remainder of this text.

Committee of SVMs

Given the increase in results from the combining the individual feature vectors into combinations of feature vectors it is easy to guess there is either some information too weak in the IFVs alone for the SVM to pick up on or which when combined with other information from other IFVs produces a better separation point between the true and false comparisons. In this next set of experiments SVMs trained on each individual feature vector are used to generate a new training set based on their classification which will in turn train a "higher order" SVM functioning similarly to a committee style classifier such as is often used with neural networks and SVMs (13).

This committee approach differs somewhat from classic committees which produce their decisions based on simple voting, or weighted voting methodologies. Here, instead, the classifications from the individual SVMs for the above IFV and CFV sets were extracted as features in a new feature vector and retrained into a Committee. It, in turn, was tuned by genetic algorithm and used as a classifier. For this experiment each individual feature vector and combination feature vector (FV1, FV2, FV1+2, FV1+4, FV2+4, FV1+2+4) is classified and the resulting classifications are used to form a new magnitude 6 feature vector. The more optimal gamma values previously determined using the automatic tuning genetic algorithm are used for the respective feature vector it performed well for.

Specifically given SVMs trained on data sets FV1, FV2, FV1+2, FV1+4, FV2+4, and FV1+2+4 the training set was reclassified to produce the functional values for each vector. (FV3, and FV4 were omitted as they had no classification power on their own, and FV3 was not used in combination with other FVs due to its lack of "bosting" power) Normally the functional value's sign is used to determine classification (±1), but here the functional values for the comparison (Fragment A compared to Fragment B) for the 6 trained SVMs is fed into another "committee" training set, with the committee SVM trained from it. The process is repeated on testing data with the test set first classified by the individual SVMs, then the functional values combined to create a vector for the committee SVM to classify.

Radial	HamRadio		Random1		Random2		RPG	
Com.	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**72.83%**	**99.89%**	46.81%	99.33%	66.16%	98.95%	84.74%	93.14%
Random1	78.26%	97.84%	**64.89%**	**99.99%**	73.74%	99.02%	89.47%	93.93%
Random2	71.20%	97.53%	48.40%	98.73%	**73.23%**	**99.99%**	78.95%	97.00%
RPG	44.02%	98.63%	31.38%	99.57%	40.91%	99.86%	**56.84%**	**100.00%**

Table 9 SVM Committee Results

Table 9 SVM Committee Results summarizes results from the committee approach. The data shows a significant gain for training maximum SN, as well as a significant gain for testing SN with a small decrease in SP performance for testing sets. This approach over all allows the trade off of small SP decreases for large SN increases. In many cases 1-2% of SP degradation is matched by a 40-50% SN gain. Clearly the SVM applied in a committee fashion is able to use weaker information from the member SVMs which did not quite push a specific test case over the threshold and use it to deduce a positive classification from a weaker signal in effect taking advantage of multiple separating hyperplanes. Initial results here are from the Radial kernel operating with Epsilon 0.02, Gamma = 0.2089679855192752 and C = 1.

Non-ASCII Files

ASCII files are common in a system for numerous purposes of interest including log files, instant message conversations, and web caches. This next section evaluates the effectiveness of the techniques developed for ASCII files when applied to non-ASCII files which include some ASCII data. The most interesting target for forensic examiners is the .doc file or another equivalent. These word processing files have supplanted text files as the preferred format for reports, memos, and other information sources.

A collection of 74 .doc files were gathered randomly from the Internet using Google. They were split in half based on byte count, and then the linux strings program was used to extract ASCII data from each fragment. The amount of ASCII data extractable from documents is only due to increase in the future with the shift of various popular document formats to XML rather than binary based files, and other non-word processing files such as PDF often also store ASCII data from an OCR process to allow document searches. (14)

Radial	FV1		FV2		FV4		FV1+2	
	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**5.64%**	**98.34%**	6.45%	99.96%	0.00%	100.00%	1.61%	99.76%
Random1	**8.06%**	**97.80%**	10.48%	98.64%	0.00%	100.00%	6.45%	99.41%
Random2	**4.84%**	**98.11%**	26.61%	93.29%	0.00%	100.00%	4.84%	99.36%
RPG	0.00%	100.00%	**5.65%**	**99.93%**	0.00%	100.00%	1.61%	99.96%

Table 10 .DOC Results pt 1

Radial	FV1+4		FV2+4		FV1+2+4		Committee	
	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	6.45%	98.64%	4.03%	100.00%			31.45%	85.76%
Random1	6.45%	98.90%	5.65%	99.33%	1.61%	99.87%	31.45%	89.24%
Random2	3.23%	98.90%	14.52%	99.26%	2.42%	99.81%	37.18%	80.82%
RPG	0.00%	99.99%	**8.87%**	**99.97%**	0.00%	100.00%	31.45%	86.89%

Table 11 .DOC Results pt 2

Table 10 .DOC Results pt 1 and Table 11 .DOC Results pt 2 summarize the results from the classification process. For comparison the HamRadio and Random1 datasets were used as training sets to classify the .doc set for each of the eight feature vector sets (FV1, FV2, FV4, FV1+2, FV1+4, FV2+4, FV1+2+4, and Committee of SVMs.) Results across the board were in the 50-60% range, with most near 54% for SN, and most SP performance near 98-99%. Performance is on par with a pure ASCII file format making the approaches previously presented for ASCII files directly applicable to non-ASCII files which contain string data.

Higher Fragmentation

Previous work in the area of file carving has identified documents which are often appended as experiencing a higher than average fragmentation rate. Specifically fragmentation of log and temp files were cited as among those with the highest levels of fragmentation as well as those with database like characteristics (doc for example). (1) To be effective any technique for fragment reconstruction must be able to degrade gracefully in the face of increased fragmentation. Specifically this means the technique's performance, while necessarily degraded due to reduced information to draw on as fragment size decreases, must still be able to perform a proportionally effective classification.

To test this, the previous HamRadio sample was divided into three parts rather than two as in the earlier results. HamRadio was chosen in particular as well representative of standard prose, as well as being subject specific and thusly difficult to classify by pure subject specific words.

3 Frag	FV1		FV2		FV4		FV1+2	
Train/Test	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**10.58%**	**99.81%**	**1.78%**	**99.96%**	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	**6.46%**	**99.89%**
Random1	11.69%	99.80%	41.65%	99.71%	0.00%	100.00%	12.03%	99.74%
Random2	**7.68%**	**99.84%**	**43.32%**	**99.60%**	**0.00%**	**100.00%**	**9.35%**	**99.85%**
RPG	0.00%	100.00%	2.12%	99.96%	0.00%	100.00%	1.89%	99.98%

Table 12 Tertiary Fragmentation Results pt 1

	FV1+4		FV2+4		FV1+2+4		Committee	
	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP	SN	SP
HamRadio	**11.36%**	**99.87%**	**2.67%**	**99.95%**	**4.01%**	**99.93%**	**29.18%**	**99.35%**
Random1	10.25%	99.87%	11.47%	99.83%	9.58%	99.84%	66.37%	98.96%
Random2	**5.90%**	**99.91%**	**7.68%**	**99.88%**	**7.57%**	**99.90%**	**58.57%**	**99.02%**
RPG	0.56%	100.00%	**1.45%**	**99.99%**	0.89%	99.99%	14.14%	99.65%

Table 13 Tertiary Fragmentation Results pt 2

From Table 12 Tertiary Fragmentation Results pt 1 and Table 13 Tertiary Fragmentation Results pt 2 we can see a similar theme from the 2 fragment of .doc file classification in that FV2 and Committee classifiers are the strongest performing, with the straight ASCII data better performing than the .doc extracted ASCII data. Performance on the FV2 actually increases over relevant performance from ASCII files with 2 fragment fragmentation due to the increased classification value of high tf-idf keywords as the population of words (noise) decreases. Performance on the Committee classifier degrades gracefully for both Random populations as expected, but more steeply for HamRadio and RPG. Evidence points to random samplings being more optimal for training the classifier to capture more general classification power as shown above by the higher performance for SVMs trained using Random1 and Random2 sets. This is further supported by the relative lack luster performance for the HamRadio set against itself making it probable the subject specific sets, when used for training, contain too much noise from subject similarity to produce a good classifier.

Chapter 5

Deeper Analysis

Unknown Tokens

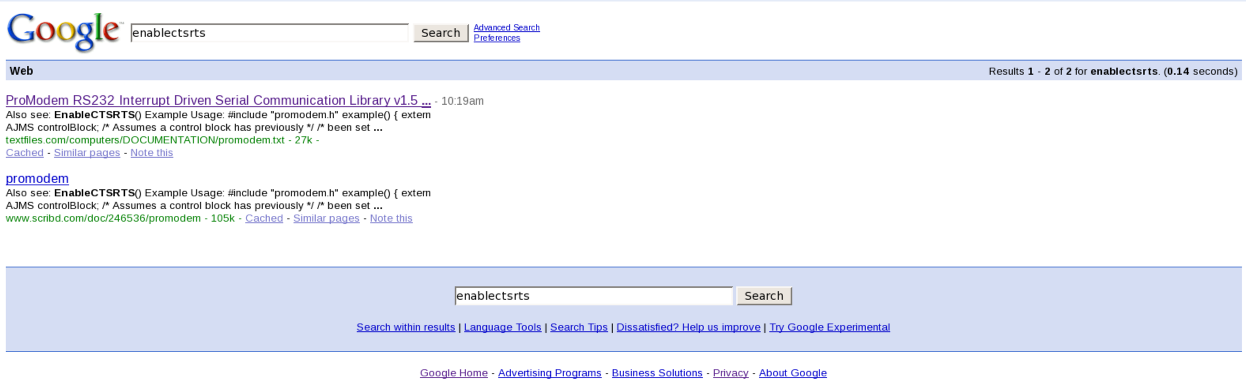
For the following analysis the unknown tokens for the Random2 data set were used. In the 200 fragments there were a total of over 18k unknown tokens. The early experimental work concentrated on determining a ratio between total unknown tokens in a fragment and the number it shared in common with a comparison fragment. These results, as previously demonstrated, were not as successful as was hoped for in expanding results through SVM classifiers. However, there still appears to be significant classification potential within the unknown token sets.

File 1	File 2	Unknown Token
promodem.txt.00	promodem.txt.01	enablectsrts
pcgpe10.txt.00	pcgpe10.txt.00	feldman
p123.txt.00	p123.txt.01	endor
Bangsonic-1.7.00	Bangsonic-1.7.01	frankie
area709doc.phk.00	area709doc.phk.01	grbank
DLPH05_25.txt.00	DLPH05_25.txt.01	johnreed
kfyi-593.hac.00	kfyi-593.hac.01	kommando
rzr1292.nfo.01	solar.nfo.01	hoppermania
aspbb4.lst.00	pcgpe10.txt.00	hillcrest
Gmj46.d70.00	govtbbs.phk.01	kimberly
jonsj2.txt.00	blooprs1.asc.00	magna
fido1102.nws.01	rrr199402.txt.00	netware

Table 14 Unknown Token Sample

Table 14 Unknown Token Sample shows a selection of unknown tokens contained in exactly two fragments in the Random2 dataset. This example shows 7 tokens where the value existed only in both fragments of the same original document and 5 tokens where the value exists in fragments of different original documents.

Promodem.txt contains the token **enablectsrts** in both fragments of the original document. It turns out the token is a function call EnableCTSRTS for the *ProModem RS232 Interrupt Driven Serial Communication Library v1.5* by Adrian J. Michaud. From the document title, and a brief review of the introduction to it, it appears to be a manual for serial modems used with Bulletin Board Systems. The function in question turns CTS/RTS hardware handshaking on. Interestingly enough the unknown token enablectsrts when used as a search term in google, produces only two search results with one being the original document I procured from textfiles.com and the other being a duplicate of this document stored on scribd.com.



Results **1** - **2** of **2** for **enablectsrts**. (**0.14** seconds)

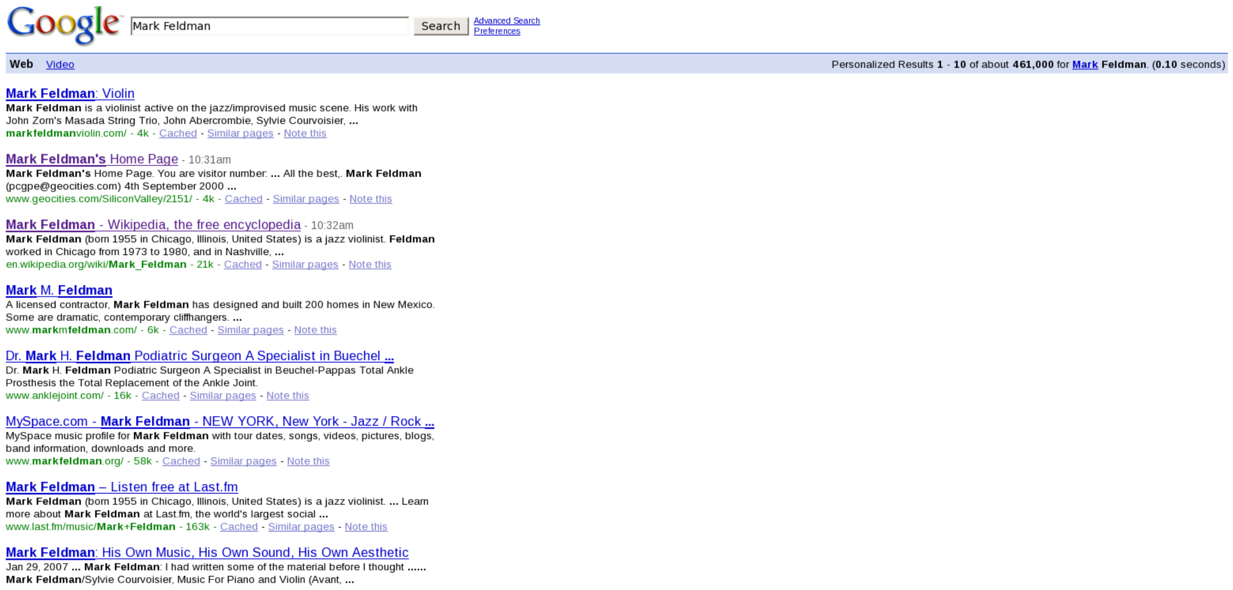
ProModem RS232 Interrupt Driven Serial Communication Library v1.5 ... - 10:19am
Also see: **EnableCTSRTS**() Example Usage: #include "promodem.h" example() { extern AJMS controlBlock; /* Assumes a control block has previously */ /* been set **...**
textfiles.com/computers/DOCUMENTATION/promodem.txt - 27k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

promodem
Also see: **EnableCTSRTS**() Example Usage: #include "promodem.h" example() { extern AJMS controlBlock; /* Assumes a control block has previously */ /* been set **...**
www.scribd.com/doc/246536/promodem - 105k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

enablectsrts
Search
Search within results | Language Tools | Search Tips | Dissatisfied? Help us improve | Try Google Experimental
Google Home - Advertising Programs - Business Solutions - Privacy - About Google

Figure 5 EnableCTSRTS

pcgpe10.txt contains the word **feldman** in both fragments of the original document. The document in question is entitled *THE PC GAMES PROGRAMMERS ENCYCLOPEDIA 1.0 ("PCGPE")* whose author, upon cursory inspection, appears to be Mark Feldman. His name appears in several segments of the file as an author annotation to source code snippets. Again using Google to identify any other relevance as a search term the unknown token might have, the second search result yields the original home of PCGPE along with information it was discontinued in September 2000 after 3 years without updates.



Personalized Results **1** - **10** of about **461,000** for **Mark Feldman**. (**0.10** seconds)

Mark Feldman: Violin
Mark Feldman is a violinist active on the jazz/improvised music scene. His work with John Zorn's Masada String Trio, John Abercrombie, Sylvie Courvoisier, **...**
markfeldmanviolin.com/ - 4k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Mark Feldman's Home Page - 10:31am
Mark Feldman's Home Page. You are visitor number: **...** All the best,. **Mark Feldman** (pcgpe@geocities.com) 4th September 2000 **...**
www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/2151/ - 4k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Mark Feldman - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - 10:32am
Mark Feldman (born 1955 in Chicago, Illinois, United States) is a jazz violinist. **Feldman** worked in Chicago from 1973 to 1980, and in Nashville, **...**
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/**Mark_Feldman** - 21k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Mark M. **Feldman**
A licensed contractor, **Mark Feldman** has designed and built 200 homes in New Mexico. Some are dramatic, contemporary cliffhangers. **...**
www.**markmfeldman**.com/ - 6k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

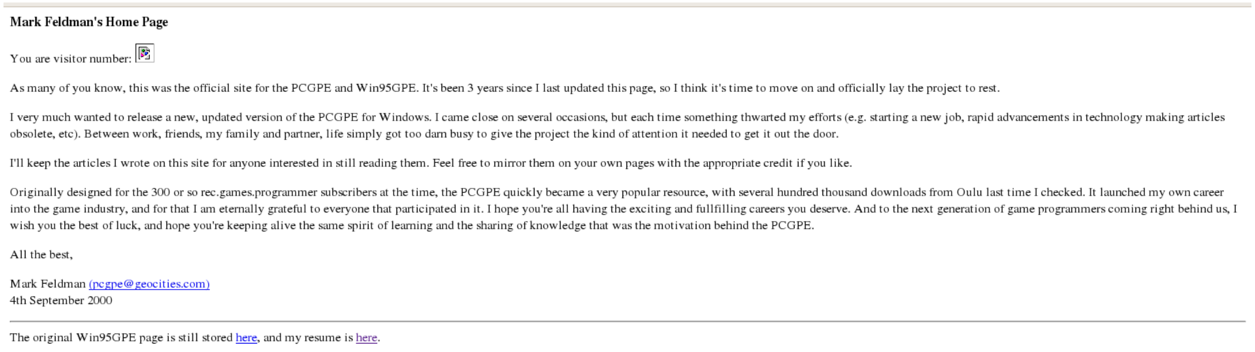
Dr. **Mark** H. **Feldman** Podiatric Surgeon A Specialist in Buechel ...
Dr. **Mark** H. **Feldman** Podiatric Surgeon A Specialist in Beuchel-Pappas Total Ankle Prosthesis the Total Replacement of the Ankle Joint.
www.anklejoint.com/ - 16k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

MySpace.com - **Mark Feldman** - NEW YORK, New York - Jazz / Rock ...
MySpace music profile for **Mark Feldman** with tour dates, songs, videos, pictures, blogs, band information, downloads and more.
www.**markfeldman**.org/ - 58k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Mark Feldman – Listen free at Last.fm
Mark Feldman (born 1955 in Chicago, Illinois, United States) is a jazz violinist. **...** Learn more about **Mark Feldman** at Last.fm, the world's largest social **...**
www.last.fm/music/**Mark+Feldman** - 163k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Mark Feldman: His Own Music, His Own Sound, His Own Aesthetic
Jan 29, 2007 **... Mark Feldman**: I had written some of the material before I thought **......** **Mark Feldman**/Sylvie Courvoisier, Music For Piano and Violin (Avant, **...**

Figure 6 Feldman Google Search



Mark Feldman's Home Page

You are visitor number:

As many of you know, this was the official site for the PCGPE and Win95GPE. It's been 3 years since I last updated this page, so I think it's time to move on and officially lay the project to rest.

I very much wanted to release a new, updated version of the PCGPE for Windows. I came close on several occasions, but each time something thwarted my efforts (e.g. starting a new job, rapid advancements in technology making articles obsolete, etc). Between work, friends, my family and partner, life simply got too darn busy to give the project the kind of attention it needed to get it out the door.

I'll keep the articles I wrote on this site for anyone interested in still reading them. Feel free to mirror them on your own pages with the appropriate credit if you like.

Originally designed for the 300 or so rec.games.programmer subscribers at the time, the PCGPE quickly became a very popular resource, with several hundred thousand downloads from Oulu last time I checked. It launched my own career into the game industry, and for that I am eternally grateful to everyone that participated in it. I hope you're all having the exciting and fullfilling careers you deserve. And to the next generation of game programmers coming right behind us, I wish you the best of luck, and hope you're keeping alive the same spirit of learning and the sharing of knowledge that was the motivation behind the PCGPE.

All the best,

Mark Feldman (pcgpe@geocities.com)
4th September 2000

The original Win95GPE page is still stored here, and my resume is here.

Figure 7 Feldman Original Website

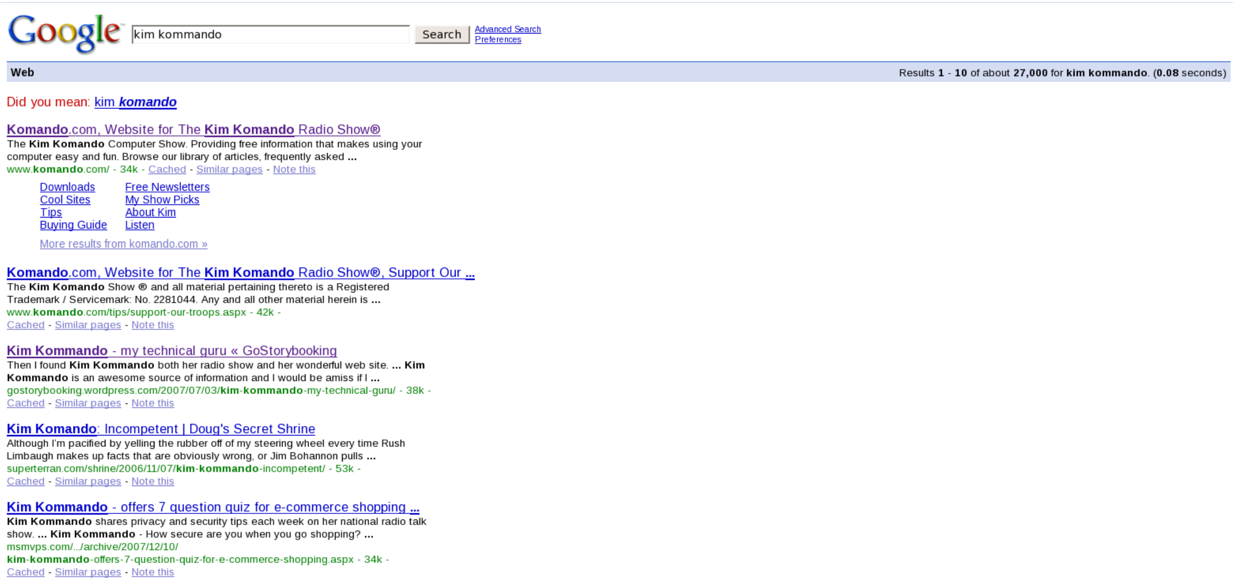
P123.txt contains the unknown token **endor** in both fragments of the original document. This match surprised me as I was expecting something related to Star Wars and Ewoks as Endor is more commonly associated with the Star Wars movie franchise. To my surprise the text is in fact a text on the early childhood of Jesus, and Endor is listed as one of the places Joseph worked. Google search, naturally, brings up Ewoks rather than Jesus.

Bangsonic-1.7 contains the unknown token **frankie** in both fragments of the original document. This document is actually a Usenet posting from alt.rec.music.comp of an “E-mag” and the token in question is picked up in both fragments as one of the contributing authors' names “Frankie Machine.”

Area709doc.phk contains the unknown token **grbank** in both fragments of the original document. This document is a listing of telephone exchanges in Newfoundland as of December 1991. The token in question is an index abbreviation used to denote which portions of the 709 area code its corresponding municipalities belong to. The tail end of the second fragment shows the token corresponds to “Grand Bank.”

DLPH05_25.txt contains the unknown token **johnreed** in both fragments of the original document. It is interesting because it occurs more than once for what prior to inspection seems a typographic error. Upon inspection the document appears to be an archive of BBS postings in which John Reed was taking part. The system displayed user names presumably based on email addresses and in the case of John Reed displayed him as JOHNREED thus dispelling the assumption as to its nature.

Kfyi-593.hac contains the unknown token **kommando** in both fragments of the original document. Upon inspection the original file is actually a tar archive containing a 4 part transcript of a radio show with one of the speakers named Kim Kommando. Trusty Google again demonstrated Kim is still around, and hosting in radio.



Results **1** - **10** of about **27,000** for **kim kommando**. (**0.08** seconds)

Did you mean: kim ***komando***

Komando.com, Website for The **Kim Komando** Radio Show®
The **Kim Komando** Computer Show. Providing free information that makes using your computer easy and fun. Browse our library of articles, frequently asked **...**
www.**komando**.com/ - 34k - Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Downloads
Cool Sites
Tips
Buying Guide

Free Newsletters
My Show Picks
About Kim
Listen

More results from komando.com »

Komando.com, Website for The **Kim Komando** Radio Show®, Support Our **...**
The **Kim Komando** Show ® and all material pertaining thereto is a Registered Trademark / Servicemark: No. 2281044. Any and all other material herein is **...**
www.**komando**.com/tips/support-our-troops.aspx - 42k -
Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Kim Kommando - my technical guru « GoStorybooking
Then I found **Kim Kommando** both her radio show and her wonderful web site. **... Kim Kommando** is an awesome source of information and I would be amiss if I **...**
gostorybooking.wordpress.com/2007/07/03/**kim**-**kommando**-my-technical-guru/ - 38k -
Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Kim Komando: Incompetent | Doug's Secret Shrine
Although I'm pacified by yelling the rubber off of my steering wheel every time Rush Limbaugh makes up facts that are obviously wrong, or Jim Bohannon pulls **...**
superterran.com/shrine/2006/11/07/**kim**-**kommando**-incompetent/ - 53k -
Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Kim Kommando - offers 7 question quiz for e-commerce shopping **...**
Kim Kommando shares privacy and security tips each week on her national radio talk show. **... Kim Kommando** - How secure are you when you go shopping? **...**
msmvps.com/.../archive/2007/12/10/
kim-**kommando**-offers-7-question-quiz-for-e-commerce-shopping.aspx - 34k -
Cached - Similar pages - Note this

Figure 8 Kommando Google Search

The previous seven examples demonstrated unknown tokens with a high degree of classification value within the data set. Within the limited dataset examined, Random2, each would have had enough classification power to correctly classify the two fragments in and of itself, but this is unlikely to be the case in larger scale datasets. Still, the results so far are optimistic for the power of unknown tokens despite the lack luster performance in the SVM experiments. Next I analyze five instances where the unknown token is present in two fragments from different original documents.

Both rzr1292.nfo fragment 2, and solar.nfo fragment 2 contain the unknown token **hoppermania**. The original location of the two fragments reveals they were randomly selected from the same subsection of the archive piracy/RAZOR. The fragments appear to be identification sections of information files which would accompany pirated software distributions (“warez”). The token Hoppermania appears to be the alias for a member of the group who administrated one of the warez group RAZOR 1911 (“razor”)'s BBSes. As an interesting side note the razor group membership dynamics can be observed by comparing hoppermania's listing as an “outpost” (likely a denotation of rank or acceptance within the group) in the time of rzr1292.nfo's posting for the game Legends of Valour in December 1992, and solar.nfo's posting for the game Solar Winds: Episodes 1&2 in March 1993 where hoppermania's BBS was upgraded to an “affiliate.”

Both aspbb4.lst fragment 1 and pcgpe10.txt fragment 1 contain the unknown token **hillcrest**. Aspbb.lst is from an **Association of Shareware Professionals** BBS listing (“A.C.S. BBS”), and pcgpe10.txt is as previously discussed. In this case Hillcrest is a street name in the former, and a city in the later, both used as part of an address though the addresses themselves are unrelated.

Both gmj46.d70 fragment 1 and govtbbs.phk fragment 2 contain the unknown token **kimberly**. Gmj46.d70 appears to be another E-mag from Usenet or some such, and Kimberly is listed as a name in the staff list. Govtbbs.phk is a listing of government controlled bulletin boards as of November 1993.

Both jonsj2.txt fragment 1 and blooprs1.asc fragment 1 contain the unknown token **magna**. As a side note Magna is not truely an unknown token unless one concentrates only on English language information, it is actually the latin adjective magnus, magna, magnum meaning great, or large. Jonsj2.txt is from the archive subsection on erotica stories in which one of the characters is described as graduating magna cum laude whereas the second document blooprs1.asc is a text from the humor subsection mentioning the Magna Carta.

Finally, both fido1102.nws fragment 2 and rrr1994002.txt fragment 1 contain the unknown token **netware**. Netware in this example belongs the the unknown token category of highly specific terms. The former fragment contains a short passage on AT&T selling Unix to Novell in which Novell's production of Netware is identified, and the later contains another passage on the release of Dr. Dos 7 containing a version of Netware.

The twelve examples demonstrated here show a small glimpse into the possible reasons an unknown token may exist within a document as well as the classification power they may have from the highly relevant ones such as EnableCTSRTS to the near irrelevant Magna. The examples were pulled only from those tokens matched in only two fragments. Next I will examine the statistical distribution of unknown tokens by the number of fragments they occur in.

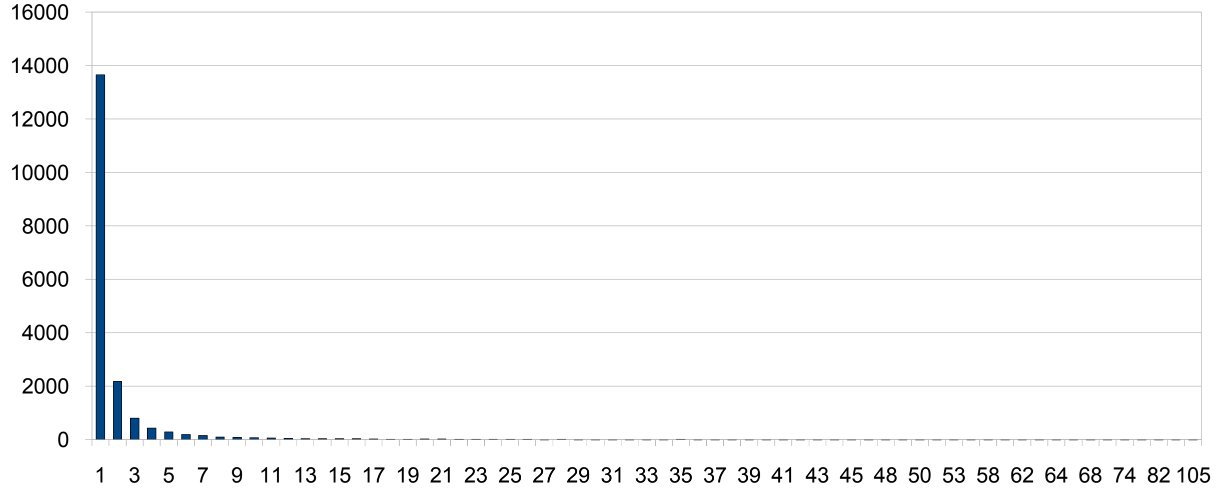


Figure 9 Fragment Frequency

As can be seen above the significant bulk of unknown tokens exist in a single fragment (roughly 13.6k of 18.4k or 74%). Contrary to my initial hypothesis, the bulk of misspelled words exist in the 74% of unknown tokens which exist in only one fragment. This thus eliminates any classification power a misspelling may have if it is not misspelled consistently and pervasively within the document. This bulk also supports the idea unknown tokens do have significant classification potential in the face of lack luster results from the SVM experiments in that the bulk of possible comparisons between fragments will be specific to only one and will drown out classification potential of the intersecting unknown tokens through sheer number. The future work section details additional steps to be taken in investigating this phenomenon, but significant work on filtering will be required before unknown tokens can be applied with precision.

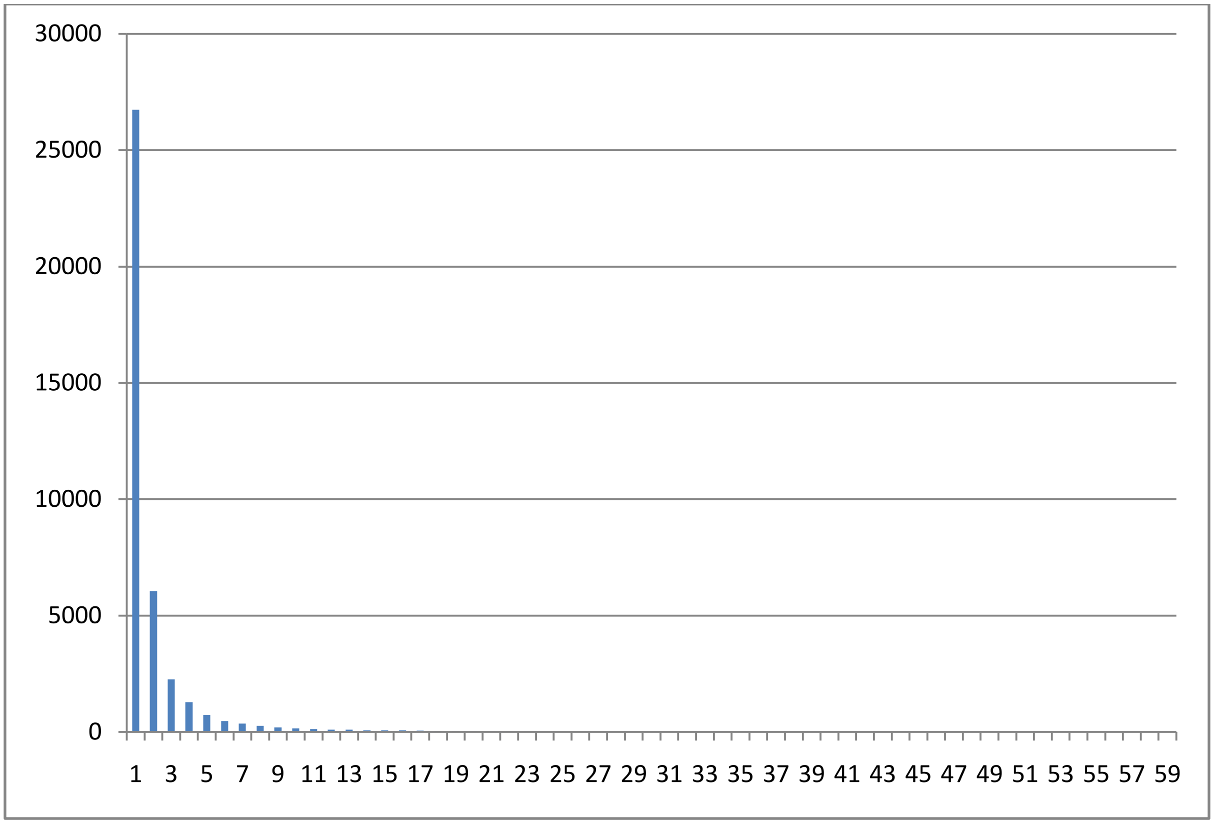


Figure 10 Fragment Occurrence

Figure 10 Fragment Occurrence is a chart detailing distribution by Occurrence. The Y axis denotes the number times an individual fragment has a token occurring a number of times specified by the X axis. As expected from Figure {Distribution Chart} the single occurrence of a token within a fragment is the majority case, and while there is no direct overlaps the curve decrease is relatively similar to Figure {Distribution Chart}. By comparing Figure {Distribution Chart} and Figure {Occurrence Distribution Chart} the populations of tokens with 2-5 occurrences which occur in 2-7 fragments seem to be the most interesting for further study. These numbers are, of course, subject to change with larger data sets under consideration.

RPG Dataset

Ham False Positives

When dealing with false positives the inherent question is: why do some files classify as positive. In some cases it is a simple inescapable aspect of inseparable cases (see Figure 3 Hyperplane With Non-Seperable Case) where the positive and negative data points overlap in some way. In other cases it is because the data files are extremely similar as in the following examples from the Ham false positives.

First is fragment 1 from cbbook.txt and fragment 1 from copcode.txt. When manually inspected it is obvious these two files not only deal with the same topic, Ham Radio, but with a very specific subject matter: radio codes. The specific subject is so specific in this case, the files contain almost identical sections of information:

10-0	Exercise great caution.
10-1	Reception is poor.
10-2	Reception is good.
10-3	Stop transmitting.
10-4	Message received.
10-5	Relay message.
10-6	Change channel.
10-7	Out of service/unavailable for assignment.
10-7A	Out of service at home.
10-7B	Out of service - personal.
10-7od	Out of service - off duty
10-8	In service/available for assignment.
10-9	Repeat last transmission.
10-10	Off duty.
10-10A	Off duty at home.
10-11	Identify this frequency.
10-12	Visitors are present (be discrete).
10-13	Advise weather and road conditions.
10-14	Citizen holding suspect.
10-15	Prisoner in custody.
10-16	Pick up prisoner.
10-17	Request for gasoline.
10-18	Equipment exchange.
10-19	Return/returning to the station.
10-20	Location?

Figure 11 Excerpt from copcode.txt

10-1	Receiving poorly.
10-2	Receiving well.
10-3	Stop transmitting.
10-4	OK, message received.
10-5	Relay message.
10-6	Busy, stand by.
10-7	Out of service, leaving air, not working.
10-8	In service, subject to call, working well.
10-9	Repeat message.
10-10	Transmission completed, standing by.
10-11	Talking too fast.
10-12	Visitors present.
10-13	Advise weather/road conditions.
10-16	Make pickup at ___________.
10-17	Urgent business.

10-18 Anything for us?
10-19 Nothing for you, return to base.
10-20 Location; My location is __________.

Figure 12 Excerpt from cbbook.txt

What is easy to see here is the unknown tokens, which have been shown as the more powerful classifier, as well as the various similarity functions are going to pick up not only the matching 10-0 etc codes, but similar word usages within the document as a whole because essentially the two fragments, while not coming from the same document, are effectively the same.

In a similar vein other fragments such as fragment 2 of epfreq.txt have false matches to many fragments (around 10) for similar reasons. In this case epfreq.txt contains lists of radio frequencies with which government or other agency it is assigned to, and so do the fragments it matches too. Despite the name differences, these lists could be different versions of the same file.

The presence of these fragments with almost identical sections mitigates, to some extent, the false positive rates exhibited by the classifiers. It also leaves hope for future improvements by more carefully filtered training data (e.g. labeling files with near identical sections can erroneously skew the training.)

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Fragment reconstruction is still in its infancy in Digital Forensics, and ASCII files in particular have been ignored in current research due to their lack of header and footer information for file carving applications to lock on to. Unlike binary files such as images, executables, and the like, textual data is usable in an incomplete form so even partial reconstruction is usable to a forensic examiner. Further, unlike Digital Forensics, areas of research dealing with document classification are very mature and though these fields do not concern themselves with fragmented files, as they have no reason to, their techniques can be easily ported to apply in digital forensics. Further, the application of machine learning, another field more mature than digital forensics, also contributes to the process of automating ever growing datasets and mitigating the overwhelming size of the information. Again, while many of the techniques in machine learning have not been applied to digital forensics for lack of a reason for researchers in that field to do so, the techniques are nevertheless effective and easily usable.

The research presented here demonstrates reconstruction of ASCII text fragments is possible (for binary fragmentation), and degrades gracefully (for tertiary fragmentation). Further it demonstrates the ability to use existing tools to extract ASCII data from non-ASCII files (.doc files shown with results) with similarly effective results. Surprisingly it was not the traditional Information Retrieval / Text Mining / Document Clustering techniques involving Cosine similarity which showed the best classification potential, but rather the identification of unknown keywords consisting of either highly specific terminology, proper nouns, or misspelled / similar artifacts, and the extraction of a subset of those with the highest tf-idf weight.

Additionally, while related work has been done on committee based SVM classifiers (13) the approach used in this research to retrain a new SVM classifier based on the results from member classifiers proved more effective for this application than classic committee approaches (voting or weighted voting based.) The committee SVM classifier outperformed even the FV2 classifier which proved quite effective in its own right. While there were some SP performance issues with the extracted .doc files, these will be addressed in future work.

A limited application of NLP databases to the classification problem in an attempt to collapse natural language words into meanings to reduce the noise inherent in the classification process of textual data proved to be ineffective at least in the limited application attempted here. The NLP database was far more effective when reduced to a dictionary function to discern whether a specific word was part of the unknown set. The unknown set proved to be far more effective as previously discussed as a classification tool.

ASCII documents are pervasive in the modern personal computer in the form of system log files, web caches, configuration files, and IM conversation logs. As previously mentioned textual data can also be extracted from non-ASCII files which contain segments of ASCII such as word documents which was demonstrated with results previously. Beyond that, files such as the Portable Document Format (PDF) often contain OCR textual data to allow the document to be searched which could be mined in a similar way to doc files.

In fact, if all files were categorized as those we read, view, or execute, those we read would be the most interesting for analysis. Excluding criminal cases of child pornography which is becoming the classic example for forensic applications, there is a much larger and more difficult application of digital forensics in both criminal and civil litigation where evidence comes from files which may have been deleted, hidden, or buried among piles of others. In particular, large scale corporate environments which digital forensics has yet to address adequately where it addresses it at all are almost entirely document based often with decentralized storage. In fact with the recent changes to the federal rules of civil procedure increasing the relevance of electronic documents in the discovery process (15) the need for Digital Forensics to address textual content based techniques is due to grow as need does. In particular we will be looking at two types of important situations: (a) in criminal investigations where an individual or a group of individuals' documents must be located in the context of a larger file storage system in a corporate environment, or (b) in a civil investigation where relevant documents may need to be ferreted out from an untenably large repository or where purged files will need to be recovered or located from alternate sources.

With the increase in individual storage capacity (16) dwarfed by the prospect of many times that capacity present in a corporate environment we must accept is will never be feasible for all available data to be analyzed. Our only hope is to prioritize the data we should examine using automated tools to reduce the human time requirement. In some instances data should be processed in such a way that an untrained observer can make a human classification call. In the case of research presented here paring down the exponential number of comparisons between fragments to a post-classification review of the two fragments for each classification is akin to reducing the solving of a jigsaw puzzle into a much smaller set of "Does piece A connect to piece B" decisions with the significant number of presented choices being yes.

Finally, in conclusion, the research presented here demonstrates it is possible to reconstruct ASCII file fragments in a meaningful way based on content by using machine learning techniques. The process is effective at different fragment sizes, different levels of fragmentation, and even in cases of fragments concerning the same topic. It further demonstrates a new application of genetic algorithms for tuning SVM kernel parameters using a hybrid concept for breeding offspring similar to both hill climbing and binary search, as well as the applicability of another form of committee based SVM classification which proves effective for this application.

Future Work

Further performance advances in the techniques presented here will rely on producing a more robust set of SVMs drawn from much larger training sets. By producing SVMs based on specific characteristics of the data being compared such as relative size (is one larger than the other, and by how much), actual size (10k, 100k, 1m?), and character ratios (alphanumeric, punctuation, and remaining ASCII.) The hope is to establish a standard set of SVMs more effectively trained to deal with data bearing specific characteristics. Datasets of homogenous topic (such as the HamRadio set) vs randomized data (such as Random1 and Random2) will also be examined in more detail.

Efficiency is also important and will be addressed in the context of producing the feature vectors, and the process as a whole will be expanded to be done in a distributed / parallel manner. The prototype tool will be further developed into a more useful, robust tool which is easy to use.

The application of the same techniques used in fragment reconstruction will also be evaluated against documents which are near duplicates for de-duplication, which is the identification and grouping of documents which are the same but slightly different such as different revisions of the same document. This has current application to the review of large document populations in a corporate environment where many drafts of a single document or many copies of similar form style documents may be present. The possibilities of this approach can be seen from the analysis of the HamRadio false positive sets containing near duplicate sections within some false positive pairs.

The techniques for identifying highly relevant unknown tokens will also be further evaluated to identify whether it can be used to cluster documents from multiple sources in a social network.

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Vita

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