Ανάκληση Πληροφορίας

Information Retrieval

Διδάσκων –
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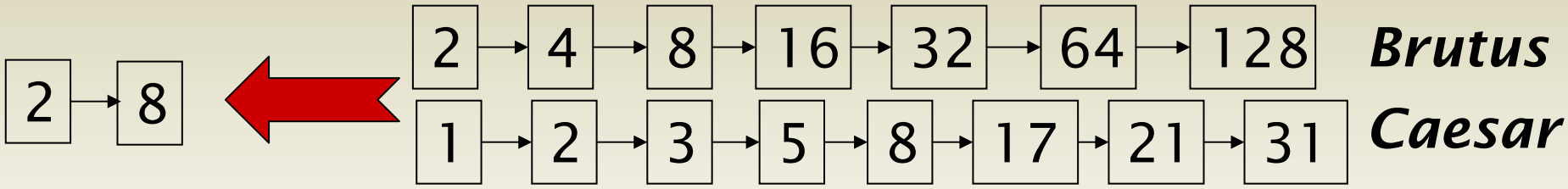
Διάλεξη 4η: 24/02/2014

Faster postings merges: Skip pointers

Recall basic merge

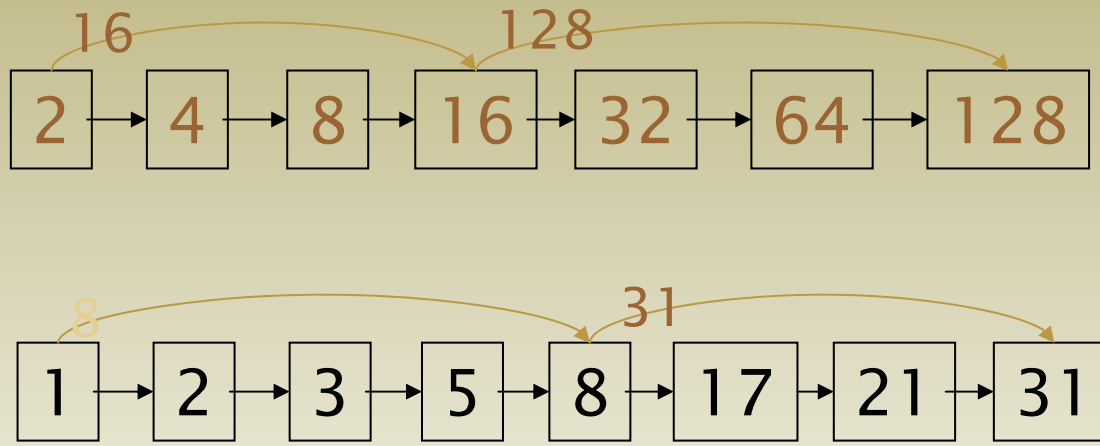
- Walk through the two postings simultaneously, in time linear in the total number of postings entries



If the list lengths are *m* and *n*, the merge takes O(*m*+*n*) operations.

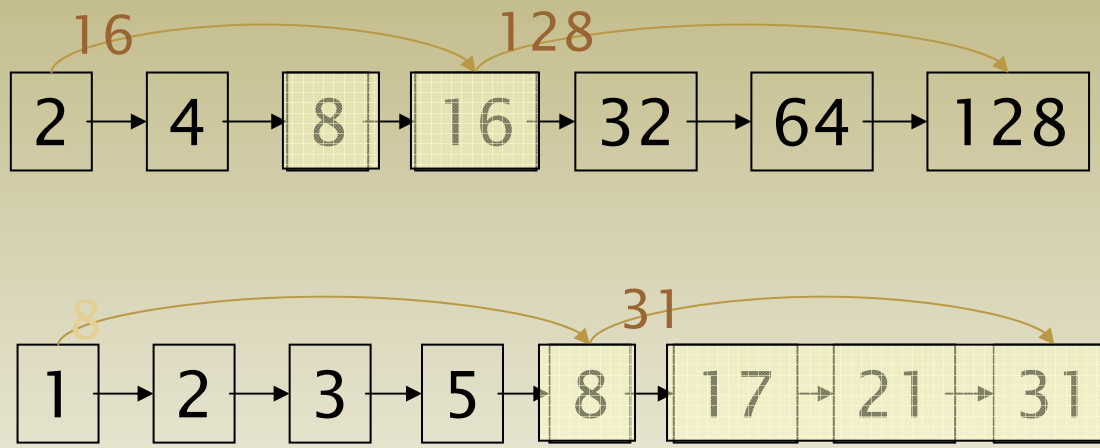
Can we do better?
Yes, if index isn't changing too fast.

Augment postings with skip pointers (at indexing time)



- Why?
- To skip postings that will not figure in the search results.
- How?
- Where do we place skip pointers?

Query processing with skip pointers



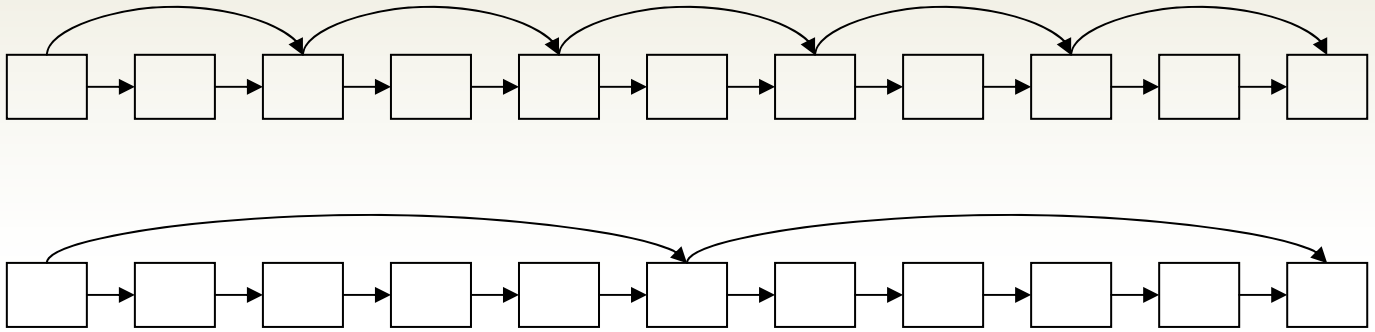
Suppose we've stepped through the lists until we process **8** on each list.

When we get to **16** on the top list, we see that its successor is **32**.

But the skip successor of **8** on the lower list is **31**, so we can skip ahead past the intervening postings.

Where do we place skips?

- Tradeoff:
  - More skips → shorter skip spans ⇒ more likely to skip. But lots of comparisons to skip pointers.
  - Fewer skips → few pointer comparison, but then long skip spans ⇒ few successful skips.



Placing skips

- Simple heuristic: for postings of length L, use $\sqrt{L}$ evenly-spaced skip pointers.
- This ignores the distribution of query terms.
- Easy if the index is relatively static; harder if L keeps changing because of updates.

- This definitely used to help; with modern hardware it may not (Bahle et al. 2002)
  - The cost of loading a bigger postings list outweighs the gain from quicker in memory merging