“Association Rules”

Market Baskets

Frequent Itemsets

A-priori Algorithm

The Market-Basket Model

- A large set of *items*, e.g., things sold in a supermarket.
- A large set of *baskets*, each of which is a small set of the items, e.g., the things one customer buys on one day.

Support

- Simplest question: find sets of items that appear "frequently" in the baskets.
- *Support* for itemset I = the number of baskets containing all items in I.
- Given a support threshold *s*, sets of items that appear in $\geq$ *s* baskets are called *frequent itemsets*.

Example

- Items={milk, coke, pepsi, beer, juice}.
- Support = 3 baskets.

B1 = {m, c, b}	B2 = {m, p, j}
B3 = {m, b}	B4 = {c, j}
B5 = {m, p, b}	B6 = {m, c, b, j}
B7 = {c, b, j}	B8 = {b, c}

- Frequent itemsets: {m}, {c}, {b}, {j}, {m, b}, {c, b}, {j, c}.

Applications --- (1)

- Real market baskets: chain stores keep terabytes of information about what customers buy together.
  - Tells how typical customers navigate stores, lets them position tempting items.
  - Suggests tie-in "tricks," e.g., run sale on diapers and raise the price of beer.
- High support needed, or no $$'s .

Applications --- (2)

- "Baskets" = documents; "items" = words in those documents.
  - Lets us find words that appear together unusually frequently, i.e., linked concepts.
- "Baskets" = sentences, "items" = documents containing those sentences.
  - Items that appear together too often could represent plagiarism.

Applications --- (3)

- "Baskets" = Web pages; "items" = linked pages.
  - Pairs of pages with many common references may be about the same topic.
- "Baskets" = Web pages *p* ; "items" = pages that link to *p* .
  - Pages with many of the same links may be mirrors or about the same topic.

Important Point

- "Market Baskets" is an abstraction that models any many-many relationship between two concepts: "items" and "baskets."
  - Items need not be "contained" in baskets.
- The only difference is that we count co-occurrences of items related to a basket, not vice-versa.

Scale of Problem

- WalMart sells 100,000 items and can store billions of baskets.
- The Web has over 100,000,000 words and billions of pages.

Association Rules

- If-then rules about the contents of baskets.
- $\{i_1, i_2,\ldots,i_k\} \rightarrow j$ means: "if a basket contains all of $i_1,\ldots,i_k$ then it is likely to contain j.
- *Confidence* of this association rule is the probability of j given $i_1,\ldots,i_k$.

Example

+ B1 = {m, c, b}　B2 = {m, p, j}

– B3 = {m, b}　B4 = {c, j}

– B5 = {m, p, b}　+ B6 = {m, c, b, j}

B7 = {c, b, j}　B8 = {b, c}

- An association rule: {m, b} → c.
  - Confidence = 2/4 = 50%.

Interest

- The *interest* of an association rule is the absolute value of the amount by which the confidence differs from what you would expect, were items selected independently of one another.

Example

B1 = {m, c, b}

B2 = {m, p, j}

B3 = {m, b}

B4 = {c, j}

B5 = {m, p, b}

B6 = {m, c, b, j}

B7 = {c, b, j}

B8 = {b, c}

- For association rule {m, b} → c, item *c* appears in 5/8 of the baskets.
- Interest = | 2/4 - 5/8 | = 1/8 --- not very interesting.

Relationships Among Measures

- Rules with high support and confidence may be useful even if they are not "interesting."
  - We don't care if buying bread causes people to buy milk, or whether simply a lot of people buy both bread and milk.
- But high interest suggests a cause that might be worth investigating.

Finding Association Rules

- A typical question: "find all association rules with support $\geq$ *s* and confidence $\geq$ *c*."
  - Note: "support" of an association rule is the support of the set of items it mentions.
- Hard part: finding the high-support (*frequent*) itemsets.
  - Checking the confidence of association rules involving those sets is relatively easy.

Computation Model

- Typically, data is kept in a “flat file” rather than a database system.
  - Stored on disk.
  - Stored basket-by-basket.
  - Expand baskets into pairs, triples, etc. as you read baskets.

Computation Model --- (2)

- The true cost of mining disk-resident data is usually the number of disk I/O's.
- In practice, association-rule algorithms read the data in passes --- all baskets read in turn.
- Thus, we measure the cost by the number of passes an algorithm takes.

Main-Memory Bottleneck

- In many algorithms to find frequent itemsets we need to worry about how main memory is used.
  - As we read baskets, we need to count something, e.g., occurrences of pairs.
  - The number of different things we can count is limited by main memory.
  - Swapping counts in/out is a disaster.

Finding Frequent Pairs

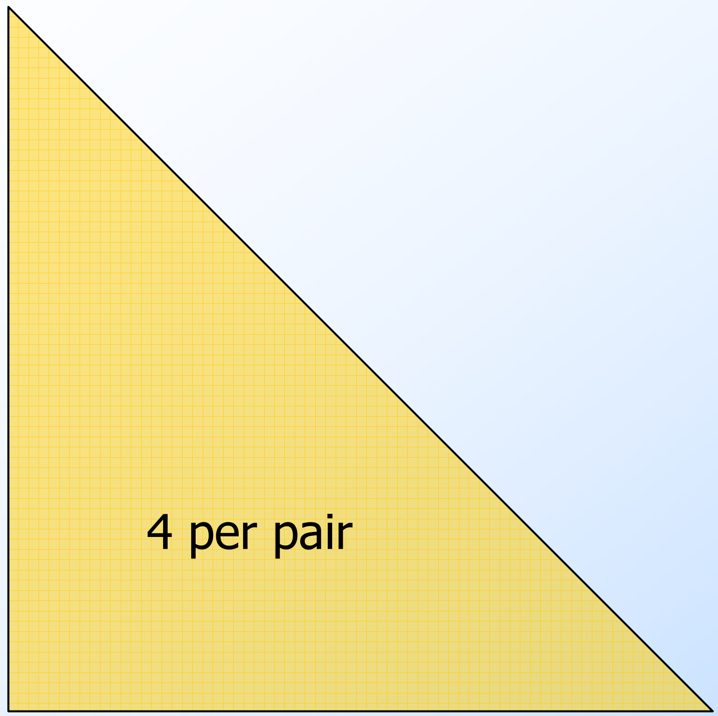
- The hardest problem often turns out to be finding the frequent pairs.
- We'll concentrate on how to do that, then discuss extensions to finding frequent triples, etc.

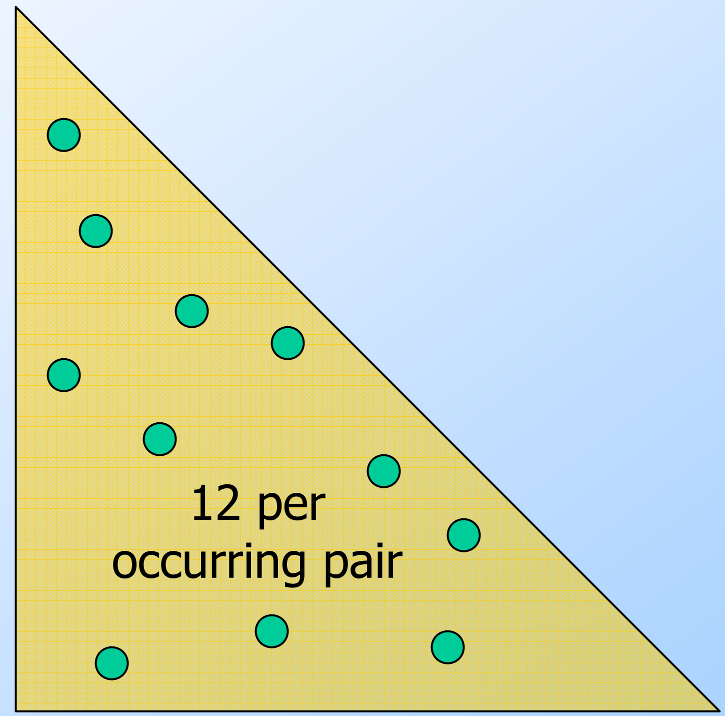
Naïve Algorithm

- A simple way to find frequent pairs is:
  - Read file once, counting in main memory the occurrences of each pair.
    - Expand each basket of n items into its $n(n-1)/2$ pairs.
- Fails if #items-squared exceeds main memory.

Details of Main-Memory Counting

- There are two basic approaches:
  1. Count all item pairs, using a triangular matrix.
  2. Keep a table of triples [*i*, *j*, *c*] = the count of the pair of items {*i*,*j* } is *c*.
- (1) requires only (say) 4 bytes/pair; (2) requires 12 bytes, but only for those pairs with >0 counts.





Method (1)

Method (2)

Details of Approach (1)

- Number items 1,2,…
- Keep pairs in the order {1,2}, {1,3},…, {1,n}, {2,3}, {2,4},…,{2,n}, {3,4},…, {3,n},…{n-1,n}.
- Find pair {i, j} at the position
  $(i-1)(n-i/2) + j - i$.
- Total number of pairs $n(n-1)/2$; total bytes about $2n^2$.

Details of Approach (2)

- You need a hash table, with *i* and *j* as the key, to locate (*i*, *j*, *c*) triples efficiently.
  - Typically, the cost of the hash structure can be neglected.
- Total bytes used is about 12*p*, where *p* is the number of pairs that actually occur.
  - Beats triangular matrix if at most 1/3 of possible pairs actually occur.

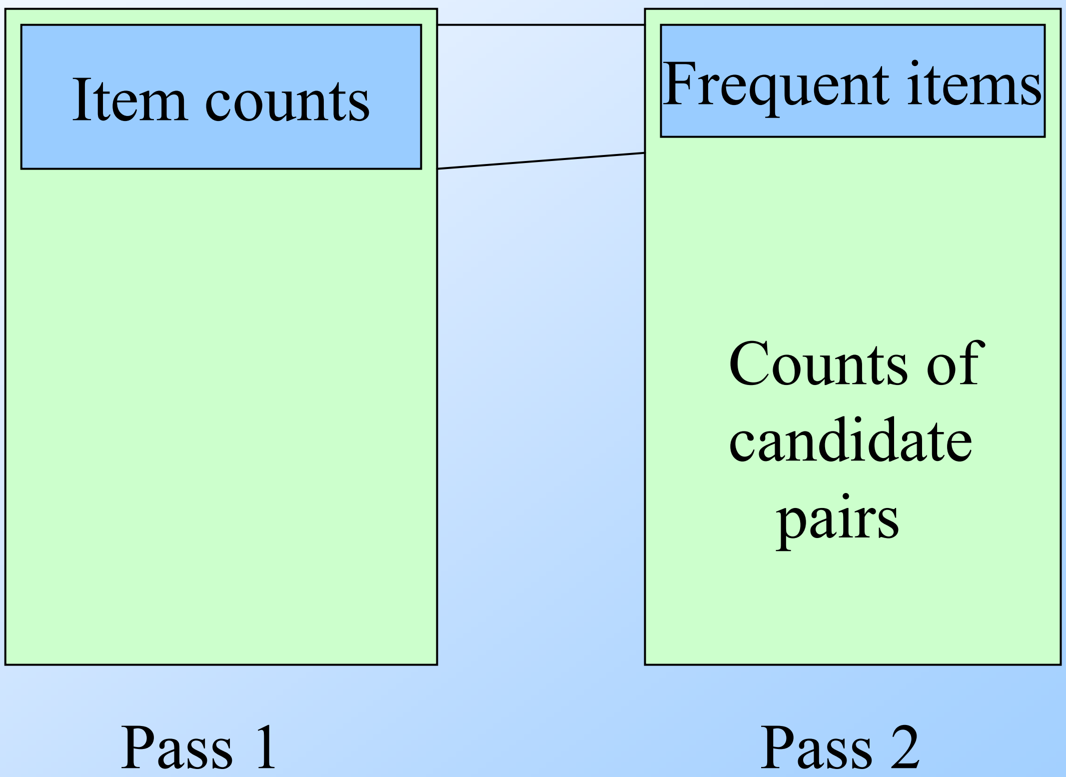
A-Priori Algorithm --- (1)

- A two-pass approach called *a-priori* limits the need for main memory.
- Key idea: *monotonicity* : if a set of items appears at least *s* times, so does every subset.
  - Contrapositive for pairs: if item *i* does not appear in *s* baskets, then no pair including *i* can appear in *s* baskets.

A-Priori Algorithm --- (2)

- Pass 1: Read baskets and count in main memory the occurrences of each item.
  - Requires only memory proportional to #items.
- Pass 2: Read baskets again and count in main memory only those pairs both of which were found in Pass 1 to be frequent.
  - Requires memory proportional to square of frequent items only.

Picture of A-Priori

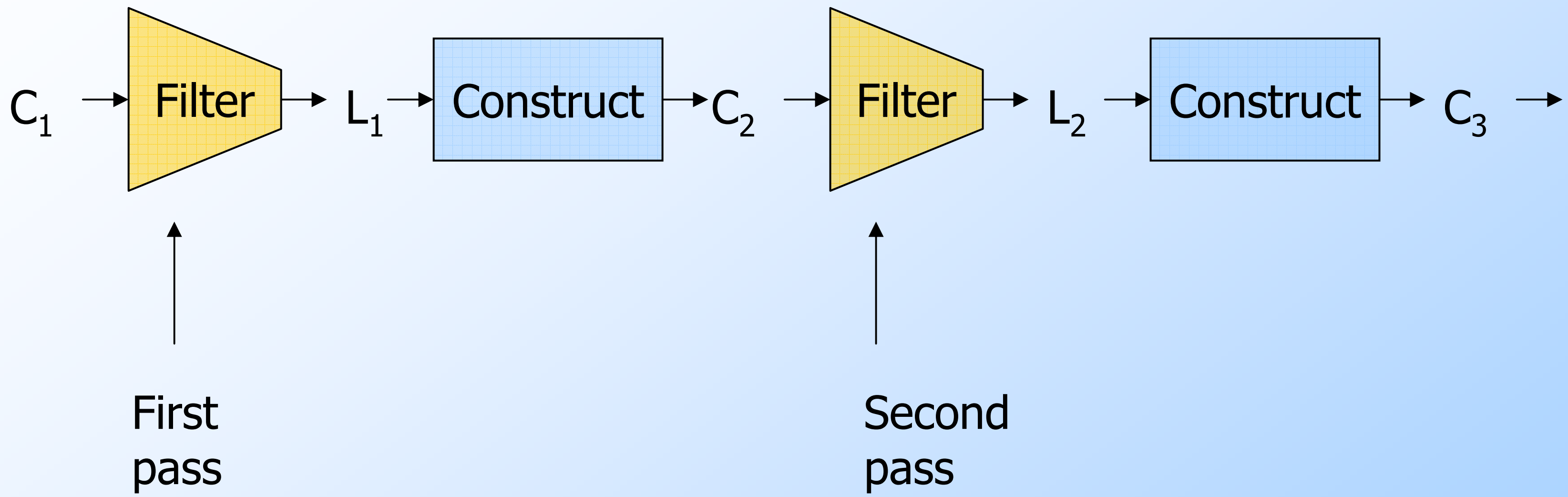


Detail for A-Priori

- You can use the triangular matrix method with n = number of frequent items.
  - Saves space compared with storing triples.
- Trick: number frequent items 1,2,… and keep a table relating new numbers to original item numbers.

Frequent Triples, Etc.

- For each k, we construct two sets of k–tuples:
  - C_k = candidate k– tuples = those that might be frequent sets (support $\geq s$) based on information from the pass for k–1.
  - L_k = the set of truly frequent k–tuples.


C1
Filter
L1
Construct
C2
Filter
L2
Construct
C3
First pass
Second pass

A-Priori for All Frequent Itemsets

- One pass for each k.
- Needs room in main memory to count each candidate k–tuple.
- For typical market-basket data and reasonable support (e.g., 1%), $k = 2$ requires the most memory.

Frequent Itemsets --- (2)

- C_1 = all items
- L_1 = those counted on first pass to be frequent.
- C_2 = pairs, both chosen from L_1.
- In general, C_k = k–tuples each k–1 of which is in L_{k-1}.
- L_k = those candidates with support $\geq s$.