Abtact

SimRank is an influential link-based similarity measure that has been used in many fields of Web search and sociometry. The best-of-breed method by Kusumoto et al. [7], however, does not always deliver high-quality results, since it fails to accurately obtain its diagonal correction matrix \( D \). Besides, SimRank is also limited by an unwanted “connectivity trait”: increasing the number of paths between nodes \( a \) and \( b \) often incurs a decrease in score \( s(a, b) \). The best-known solution, SimRank++, [1], cannot resolve this problem, since a revised score will be zero if \( a \) and \( b \) have no common in-neighbors.

In this paper, we consider high-quality similarity search. Our scheme, \( \text{SR}^\# \), is efficient and semantically meaningful: (1) We first formulate the exact \( D \), and devise a “varied-\( D \)” method to accurately compute SimRank in linear memory. Moreover, by grouping computation, we also reduce the time of [7] from quadratic to linear in the number of iterations. (2) We design a “kernel-based” model to improve the quality of SimRank, and circumvent an argument in [7]: “if \( D \) is replaced by a scaled identity matrix \( (1 - \gamma) I \), top-K rankings will not be affected much”. The experiments confirm that \( \text{SR}^\# \) can accurately extract high-quality scores, and is much faster than the state-of-the-art competitors.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.3.3 [Information Search and Retrieval]: Information Storage and Retrieval

Keywords

Link Analysis; Graph-Based Similarity; High Quality Search

1. Introduction

The Web today is a huge, self-organized, and hyperlinked network. These salient features bring striking challenges to data management, and call for new search abilities to extract meaningful knowledge automatically from the gigantic Web. Link-based similarity search is a modern means to quantify node-to-node relationships based on graph topologies, with a wide range of successful applications, e.g., link prediction, collaborative filtering, and co-citation analysis.

SimRank, conceived by Jeh and Widom [5], is one of the most influential similarity measures. The central idea underpinning SimRank is a simple recursion that “two nodes are assessed as similar if they are in-linked from similar nodes”. For a digraph \( G = (V, E) \) with \( |V| \) nodes and \( |E| \) edges, let \( N_a = \{ x \in V | (x, a) \in E \} \) be the in-neighbor set of node \( a \). Then, SimRank score between nodes \( a \) and \( b \) is defined by

\[
s(a, b) = \begin{cases} 
1 & (a = b) \\
\gamma \sum_{i,j} e_{x,a} e_{y,b} & (a \neq b)
\end{cases}
\]

where \( \gamma \in (0, 1) \) is a decay factor. Generally, \( \gamma = 0.6 \) [12] or 0.8 [5], which penalizes long paths relative to short ones.

In contrast with other similarity measures, SimRank has the following prominent features: (a) It takes a concise form that captures both direct and indirect neighbors recursively, unlike Bibliographic Coupling and Co-citation that focus only on direct neighbors. (b) It considers structural equivalence of two nodes, whereas Personalized PageRank focuses on reachability from every node to a query. Therefore, SimRank has attracted increasing attention in recent years [3, 4, 12].

1.1 The Quality of SimRank Search

Despite much effort devoted to fast SimRank computation (e.g., [2, 7, 8, 12, 13]), the quality of SimRank search is still less desirable, due to the following two reasons:

1. Superfluous Diagonal Correction Error \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \). The best-of-breed SimRank method by Kusumoto et al. [7] is based on the following “linearized SimRank formula”:

\[
s(a, b) = e_a^T D e_b + \gamma (P e_a)^T D (P e_b) + \gamma^2 (P^2 e_a)^T D (P^2 e_b) + \cdots
\]

where \( D \) is a precomputed diagonal correction matrix, \( e_a \) is a unit vector with a 1 in the \( a \)-th entry, and \( P \) is the column normalized adjacency matrix, with \( P_{a,b} = \{ 1 / |N_a|, \text{ if } (a, b) \in E; 0, \text{ if } (a, b) \notin E \} \).

According to [7], before Eq.(2) is computed, \( D \) requires to be determined in advance. However, it is too difficult to compute the exact \( D \) (not to mention within linear memory) since SimRank results have a recursive impact on \( D \). Note that even Kusumoto et al. [7] have not obtained the exact \( D \), but simply approximated \( D \) by \( \tilde{D} := (1 - \gamma) I \). Consequently, the diagonal correction error is produced:

\[
\epsilon_{\text{diag}} := |s(a, b) - s_D(a, b)|
\]

To avoid division by 0 in Eq.(1), \( s(a, b) = 0 \) if \( |N_a| |N_b| = 0 \).

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SIGIR’13, August 09 - 13, 2015, Santiago, Chile.
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These revised “evidence factors” have a good property: \( \sim \) in a nutshell, consists of two ingredients: 

\[ \epsilon \sim \text{direct} \]

increasing with respect to \( \gamma \).

Thus, node-pair \( s \) has no common in-neighbors between \( a \) and \( b \). The best-known treatment is due to Antonellis et al., who proposed SimRank++ [1] that replaces \( \gamma \) in Eq.(1) by the following “evidence factor”:

\[ \tilde{\gamma} := \gamma (1 - e^{-|N_a \cap N_b|}) \quad \text{or} \quad \tilde{\gamma} := \gamma \sum_{i=1}^{l} |N_a \cap N_b| \frac{1}{i} \tag{4} \]

These revised “evidence factors” have a good property: \( \tilde{\gamma} \) is increasing with respect to \( |N_a \cap N_b| \). Hence, a larger \( \tilde{\gamma} \) means that there are more common direct in-neighbors (i.e., more paths of length 2) between \( a \) and \( b \).

However, we observe a weakness of SimRank++ [1]: SimRank++ score \( \tilde{s}(a,b) \) is always zero if nodes \( a \) and \( b \) have no common (direct) in-neighbors. This is because, by the definition in Eq.(4), if \( N_a \cap N_b = \emptyset \), then \( \tilde{\gamma} = 0 \). Thus, \( \tilde{s}(a,b) = 0 \), regardless of how many common l-hop in-neighbors (\( l > 2 \)) exist between \( a \) and \( b \).

Other pioneering works (e.g., RoleSim [6], PSimRank [2], and MatchSim [11]) to quantify \( s(a,b) \) also resort to common direct in-neighbors between \( a \) and \( b \), all of which can resolve the special case (1-hop) of the SimRank “connectivity trait” problem (see related work in Section 1.3.2 for more details). However, increasing the number of paths with length \( \geq 2 \) between \( a \) and \( b \) may still lead to a decrease in \( s(a,b) \).

**Example 1.** Consider a real Web graph \( G \) in Figure 1. We evaluate the similarity of each node-pair by 4 measures:

(a) \( \text{SR} \) (Jeh and Widom’s SimRank \([5]\));
(b) \( \text{SR}^+ \) (SimRank++ \([1]\));
(c) \( \text{RS} \) (RoleSim \([6]\));
(d) \( \text{SR}^w \) (our method).

The results are partly depicted in the table. We notice that \( \text{SR}^+ \) and \( \text{RS} \) do not well resolve the \( \text{SR} \) “connectivity trait”.

For example, most people may agree \( s(1, 2) > s(4, 5) \) since node-pair (1, 2) has 3 common in-neighbors \([4, 6, 3]\) whereas \( (4, 5) \) has only 2 in common \([11, 12]\). However, although \( \text{SR}^+ \) narrows the gap between \( s(1, 2) \) and \( s(4, 5) \), it gives the same counter-intuitive answer \( s(1, 2) < s(4, 5) \) as \( \text{SR} \).

Another example is the comparison of \((2, 8)\) and \((s, 10)\). For \( \text{SR}^+ \), \( s(2, 8) = s(8, 10) = 0 \). This is because \((2, 8)\) has no common direct in-neighbors, \( N_2 \cap N_8 = \emptyset \); neither has \((8, 10)\). Thereby, their “evidence factors” \( \tilde{\gamma} \) = 0. However, there are 4 indirect path-pairs in-linked from \((2, 8)\):

- \( 2 \leftrightarrow 4 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 8 \)
- \( 2 \leftrightarrow 4 \rightarrow 12 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 8 \)

as opposed to only 1 from \((8, 10)\): \( 8 \leftarrow 5 \rightarrow 12 \rightarrow 9 \rightarrow 10 \).

Thus, node-pair \((2, 8)\) has a higher connectivity than \((8, 10)\), but this connectivity trait is ignored by \( \text{SR}^+ \). Regarding \( \text{RS} \), since it is a “role” similarity measure, it emphasizes more on similar node degrees than high connectivities. Thus, \( \text{RS} \) can only partially resolve the \( \text{SR} \) “connectivity trait” problem.

**1.2 Our Contributions**

Our main contributions are summarized as follows:

- We formulate the exact diagonal correction matrix \( D \) and propose a “varied-D” method to accurately compute SimRank with no \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \) and in linear memory. Moreover, by grouping computation, we also optimize the algorithm \([7]\) from quadratic to linear time \( \text{w.r.t.} \protect \).

- We observe a “connectivity trait” problem for SimRank, which SimRank++ [1] cannot resolve in a recursive style. To circumvent this problem, we design a “kernel-based” model and improve the search quality. (Section 3)

- We give mathematical insights to the semantic difference between Jeh and Widom’s model \([5]\) and its variant \([9]\), and correct an argument \([7]\): if \( D \) is replaced by \((1 - \gamma)I \), top-K rankings will not be affected much. (Section 4)

The comprehensive experiments verify that our methods (1) improve an accuracy of average NDCG@200 by \( \sim 30\% \) over SimRank on various real networks, and (2) are \( \sim 10x \) faster than the state-of-the-art competitors on large datasets with 65.8M links for 1000 queries.

**1.3 Related Work**

**1.3.1 SimRank Computation**

Recent years have witnessed a surge of efficient methods to compute SimRank. They can be categorized as follows:

- **Single-source SimRank** \([3, 7, 8]\). Compute all \( s(i, \ast) \).

- **All-pairs SimRank** \([9, 12, 13, 16]\). Compute all \( s(\ast, \ast) \).

- **Single-pair SimRank** \([2, 7, 10]\). Compute \( s(i, j) \).
In Table 1, we briefly summarize the accuracy, time, and memory of previous works for each type of SimRank search.

Compared with the best-known method [7], our techniques not only preserve the scalability of [7], but also achieve high accuracy and fast computational time. Furthermore, for high accuracy methods, our only non-remove superfluous error \(\epsilon_{\text{diag}}\) but also attain a better bound on \(\epsilon_{\text{iter}}\) than [7].

### 1.3.2 SimRank “Connectivity Trait”

Fogaras et al. [2] is the first to notice one special case of the “connectivity trait” problem: “if two nodes \(a\) and \(b\) have \(\beta\) common (direct) in-neighbors, then \(s(a,b) < 1/\beta.\)”

To address this problem, they employed an unwieldy method that divides the entire search space into three probabilities: \(|V|, |V|/2, \) and \(|V|/4\). This complicates the revised SimRank equation, which is rather tedious.

Recently, Antonellis et al. [1] gave an excellent revision, called SimRank++, by introducing the “evidence factor” \(\gamma\). Unfortunately, \(\gamma\) can only, in part, alleviate a special case of the “connectivity trait” problem, since, if \(|N_a \cap N_b| = 0\), then \(\gamma = 0\) has no recursive impact on SimRank any more.

Jin et al. [6] also gave an excellent exposition on “role similarity”. Their proposed model, namely RoleSim, has the advantage of utilizing “automorphic equivalence” to improve the quality of similarity search in “role” based applications. Their initial intention, however, was not to deal with the SimRank “connectivity trait” problem.

There is also a SimRank-like “connectivity trait” problem in other SimRank variant models, such as MatchSim, SimRank*, SimFusion+ [15]. Our proposed methods for SimRank are also extensible to SimRank*. Due to space limitation, we omit it in this paper.

### 1.3.3 Semantics between SimRank and Its Variant

There are some interesting works (e.g., [3, 4, 9, 14, 17]), based on the following model, to evaluate similarity \(\tilde{S}\):

\[
\tilde{S} = \gamma P^T \hat{S} P + (1 - \gamma) I.
\]

[7] argued that “the top-K rankings of \(\tilde{S}\) in Eq.(5) and \(S\) in Eq.(1) are not affected much”. However, we correct this argument, and provide new mathematical insights into the subtle difference of \(\tilde{S}\) and \(S\) from a semantic perspective.

### 2. ACCURATE AND FAST SIMRANK

We first show the sensitivity of diagonal connection matrix \(D\) to SimRank matrix \(S\), and formulate the exact \(D\). Then, we devise an accurate fast “varied-D” model to compute \(S\).

#### 2.1 Sensitivity of Diagonal Correction Matrix

In matrix forms, SimRank in Eq.(1) can be rewritten as

\[
S = \max \gamma P^T SP, 1\]

where \(\max\{\ast\}\) denotes the matrix entry-wise maximum, i.e., \((\max\{A, B\})_{i,j} = \max\{a_{i,j}, b_{i,j}\}\).

Kusumoto et al. [7] have showed that there exists a unique diagonal matrix \(D\) such that Eq.(6) can be converted to

\[
S = \gamma P^T SP + D,
\]

where \(D\) is called the diagonal correction matrix, which needs to be determined beforehand.

However, [7] did not mention how to accurately compute the exact \(D\), but simply approximated \(D\) by \(\tilde{D} = (1 - \gamma) I\).

In fact, \(D\) is very sensitive to the resulting \(S\). Even small errors in \(D\) may lead to large changes in SimRank scores \(S\) by a factor of up to \(1/\gamma\), as shown in Lemma 1.

**Lemma 1.** Let \(S\) be the solution to Eq.(7), and \(S_0\) be the solution to the equation:

\[
S_0 = \gamma P^T S_0 P + \tilde{D},
\]

and let \(\Delta D := D - \tilde{D}\) and \(\Delta S := S - S_0\). Then,

\[
\|\Delta S\|_{\max} \leq \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \|\Delta D\|_{\max}^2.
\]

**Proof.** The recursion of \(S_0\) in Eq.(10) naturally leads to the following series:

\[
S_0 = \tilde{D} + \gamma P^T \tilde{D} P + \gamma^2 (P^T)^2 \tilde{D} P^2 + \cdots,
\]

We subtract Eq.(10) from Eq.(2), and then take \(\|\ast\|_{\max}\) norms on both sides:

\[
\|\Delta S\|_{\max} \leq \|\Delta D\|_{\max} + \sum_{i=1}^\infty \gamma^i (P^T)^i \|\Delta (D P^i)\|_{\max}
\]

\[
\leq (1 + \gamma + \gamma^2 + \cdots) \|\Delta D\|_{\max} = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \|\Delta D\|_{\max}.
\]

#### 2.2 Formulating Diagonal Correction Matrix

We next derive an exact explicit formulation of \(D\) in Eq.(7). For ease of exposition, the following notations are adopted.

**Definition 1 (Entry-Wise Product).** For matrices \(X\) and \(Y\), their entry-wise product \(X \circ Y\) is defined as

\[
(X \circ Y)_{i,j} = X_{i,j} Y_{i,j}.
\]

Let \(\text{diag}(Z)\) be a diagonal matrix whose diagonal entries are those of \(Z\), i.e., \((\text{diag}(Z))_{i,i} = Z_{i,i}\).

Using this notation, Eq.(6) can be represented as

\[
S = \gamma P^T SP + I - \gamma \text{diag}(P^T SP).
\]

Due to \(D\) uniqueness, Eqs.(7) and (11) imply that

\[
D = I - \gamma \text{diag}(P^T SP).
\]

To formulate the exact \(D\) in Eq.(12) only in terms of \(P\), we introduce the following lemma.

**Lemma 2.** Let \(\text{diag}(Z)\) be a column vector of the diagonal entries of \(Z\), i.e., \((\text{diag}(Z))_{i,i} = Z_{i,i}\). For two \(n \times n\) matrices \(X\) and \(Y\), and an \(n \times n\) diagonal matrix \(Z\), we have

\[
\text{diag}(X^TZY) = (X \circ Y)^T \text{diag}(Z).
\]

\[\|\ast\|_{\max}\] returns the maximum element of a matrix.
Combining Lemma 2 with Eq.(12), we next formulate:

**Theorem 1.** The diagonal correction matrix $D$ in Eq.(7) can be explicitly formulated as

$$\overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D) = \left( \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k (P^k \circ P^k) \right)^{-T} \overrightarrow{1},$$

where $\overrightarrow{1}$ is a $|V| \times 1$ vector of all 1s, and $(*)^{-T} := ((*)^T)^{-1}$.

**Proof.** Taking $\overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(\cdot)$ on both sides of Eq.(2) produces

$$\overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(S) = \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D) + \gamma \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}((P^T D P) + \gamma^2 \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}((P^T)^2 D P^2) + \cdots)$$

By SimRank definition Eq.(6), we have $S_{i,i} = 1$ (\(i \in V\)), which implies that $\overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(S) = \overrightarrow{1}$. Applying Lemma 2 to the right-hand side of Eq.(14) yields

$$\overrightarrow{1} = \left( I + \gamma (P \circ P) + \gamma^2 (P^2 \circ P^2) + \cdots \right)^{-T} \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D),$$

(15)

Since $0 \leq (P \circ P)_{i,j} \leq P_{i,j} \leq 1$, one can readily show that 

$$(I + \gamma (P \circ P) + \gamma^2 (P^2 \circ P^2) + \cdots)^{-T}$$

is diagonally dominant. Multiplying both sides by its inverse produces Eq.(13). $\square$

Theorem 1 characterizes the exact $D$ as an infinite series. Hence, prior to computing $S$, it is too difficult to obtain the exact $D$ in only a finite number of iterations. This tells us that using the method of [7] will inasmuch produce $\epsilon_{\text{diag}}$.

Theorem 1 also implies that the estimation $D \approx (1 - \gamma) I$ in [7] is not appropriate for accurately computing $S$ in Eq.(7). This is because replacing $(P^k \circ P^k)$ by $P^k$ in Eq.(13) yields

$$\overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D) \approx \left( \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k P^k \right)^{-T} \overrightarrow{1} = \left( I - \gamma P \right)^{-T} \overrightarrow{1} \approx (1 - \gamma) I,$$

which suggests that the approximation $D \approx (1 - \gamma) I$ in [7] is equivalent to the approximation $P^k \approx P^k$. Clearly, most people will not agree that $((P^k)_{i,j})^2 \approx (P^k)_{i,j}$ is reasonable. In Section 4.2, we will further discuss $D \approx (1 - \gamma) I$ from the viewpoint of semantics.

One benefit of Theorem 1 is that it narrows the boundaries for the range of $D$ in [7], based on the following corollary.

**Corollary 1.** $(1 - \gamma) I \leq D \leq I - \gamma \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(P^T P)$

**Proof.** Since $0 \leq P_{i,j} \leq 1$, we can readily show that

$$(P \circ P) \leq (P^k \circ P^k) \leq P^k.$$

Applying this to Eq.(13) yields

$$\left( \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k P^k \right)^{-T} \overrightarrow{1} \leq \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D) \leq \left( \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k (P \circ P^k) \right)^{-T} \overrightarrow{1}.$$

Since $\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} X^k = (I - X)^{-1}$, it follows that $(I - \gamma P)^{-T} \overrightarrow{1} \leq \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D) \leq (I - \gamma P)^{-T} \overrightarrow{1}$. Then, applying Lemma 2 on both sides, we obtain the results. $\square$

In comparison, the best-known bounds for the range of $D$ in Proposition 2 of [7] (i.e., $(1 - \gamma) I \leq D \leq I$) are loose, and independent of $P$, which is isolated from graph structures.

### 2.3 A “Varied-D” Iterative Model

Another important consequence of Theorem 1 is to derive an accurate SimRank algorithm without $\epsilon_{\text{diag}}$.

Instead of determining the exact $D$ in advance, our method is to iteratively update $D$ and $S$ at the same time. Precisely, we leverage the “varied-D” SimRank model as follows:

$$S^{(k)} := D_k + \gamma P^T D_{k-1} P + \cdots + \gamma^k (P^T)^k D_0 P^k,$$

where $\{D_k\}$ is a diagonal matrix sequence (convergent to $D$), which can be iteratively obtained while $S$ is being iterated.

Different from the model Eq.(2) by Kusumoto et al. [7], our “varied-D” model Eq.(16) replaces all $D$s by a convergent sequence $\{D_k\}$. The main advantage of our replacement is that Eq.(16) can avoid determining the exact $D$ beforehand, and thereby, will not produce the superfluous error $\epsilon_{\text{diag}}$.

The correctness of our “varied-D” model can be verified by taking limits $k \to \infty$ on both sides of Eq.(16). As $k \to \infty$, $D_k \to D$ and $S^{(k)} \to S$. Thus, Eq.(16) converges to Eq.(2).

### 2.3.1 Finding $D_k$ in “Varied-D” Model

The challenging problem in our “varied-D” Eq.(16) is to determine the diagonal matrix $D_k$. Our main idea is based on two observations: (a) $S^{(k)}$ in Eq.(16) can be iterated as

$$S^{(i)} = \gamma P^T S^{(i-1)} P + D_i \quad \text{with} \quad S^{(0)} = D_0.$$  

(b) To ensure $\overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(S^{(i)}) = I$, $D_i$ in Eq.(17) must satisfy

$$D_i = I - \gamma \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(P^T S^{(i-1)} P).$$

Coupling these observations, we can compute $D_k$ in Eq.(16).

**Theorem 2.** The diagonal correction matrices in Eq.(16) can be iteratively obtained as follows:

$$(D_k)_{i,i} = 1 - \sum_{l=1}^{k} (h_l \circ h_l)^T \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D_{k-l}) \quad \text{with} \quad D_0 = I,$$

where the auxiliary vectors $h_1, \ldots, h_k$ are derived from

$$h_l = \sqrt{P} e_l \quad (l = 1, 2, \ldots, k).$$

**Proof.** First, we derive a complete matrix formula of $D_k$.

By Lemma 2, Eq.(19) can be converted to

$$(D_k)_{i,i} = 1 - \sum_{l=1}^{k} h_l \circ D_k - h_l$$

Successive substitution applied to Eq.(20) yields $h_l = \sqrt{\gamma} P^l e_i$

Then, substituting this back into Eq.(21) produces

$$D_k = I - \sum_{l=1}^{k} \gamma \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}((P^l)^T D_{k-l}(P^l))$$

Next, we show that $D_k$ in Eq.(22) satisfies Eqs.(16)–(18). It follows from Eq.(16) that

$$\overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(\gamma P^T S^{(k-1)} P) = \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(\sum_{l=1}^{\infty} \gamma^l (P^l)^T D_{k-l-1}(P^{l+1}))$$

Thus, the above equation implies that

$$I - \gamma \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(\gamma P^T S^{(k-1)} P) = I - \sum_{l=1}^{k} \gamma^l \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}((P^l)^T D_{k-l})(P^l)$$

Applying Eq.(22) to the right-hand side yields Eq.(18). $\square$

Theorem 2 provides a simple efficient way to compute $D_k$.

**Algorithm 1:** Compute Diagonal Matrix $D_k$

1. Initialize $t := 0$, $h_0 := e_i$, $D_0 := I$;
2. For $l := 1, 2, \ldots, k$ do
3. Compute $h_l := \sqrt{\gamma} P h_{l-1}$;
4. Update $t := t + (h_l \circ h_l)^T \overrightarrow{\text{diag}}(D_{k-l})$;
5. Return $(D_k)_{i,i} := 1 - t$;

The correctness of Algorithm 1 is verified by Theorem 2.

Regarding complexity, we have the following result.

$^3$The convergence of $S^{(k)}$ will be proved in Section 2.3.2.
THEOREM 3. Given the total iteration number \( k = 1, 2, \ldots \), Algorithm 1 is in \( O(k|V|) \) memory and \( O(k(|E|+|V|)) \) time.

In contrast to the linear-memory SimRank method in [7], Theorem 3 implies that our “varied-D” method to compute \( D_k \) will not compromise the scalability of [7] for high quality search, since \( D_k \) can be computed in linear memory as well.

2.3.2 Fast Convergence of “Varied-D” Model

Besides no \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \) and no need to precompute the exact \( D \), our “varied-D” model Eq.(16) also converges faster than [7].

THEOREM 4. Let \( S^{(k)} \) and \( S \) be the \( k \)-th iterative and the exact SimRank in Eqs.(16) and (7), respectively. Then,

\[
\|S^{(k)} - S\|_{\text{max}} \leq \gamma^{k+1}.
\]

Proof. We subtract Eq.(7) from Eq.(17) to obtain, \( \forall k, \)

\[
S^{(k)} - S = \gamma P^T(S^{(k-1)} - S)P + (D^{(k)} - D).
\]

We notice from Eq.(18) that \( (S^{(k)})_{i,i} = S_{i,i} = 1, \forall i \in V \). Thus, when \( i \neq j \), it follows from Eq.(24) that, \( \forall i,j \in V, \)

\[
(S^{(k)} - S)_{i,j} = (\gamma P_i)^T(S^{(k-1)} - S)P_j.
\]

\[
\leq \|S^{(k-1)} - S\|_{\text{max}} \leq \cdots \leq \gamma^k \|I - S\|_{\text{max}}.
\]

By Eq.(1), \( \|I - S\|_{\text{max}} \leq \gamma \). Thus, Eq.(23) holds. \( \square \)

In comparison to the bound \( \left( \frac{1+\epsilon}{\gamma} \right) \) (see Eq.(10) of [7]), Theorem 4 shows that our “varied-D” model not only eliminates \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \), but also has a better bound on \( \epsilon_{\text{iter}} \) than [7]. Thus, our “varied-D” model achieves both high-quality and fast convergence rate at the same time.

2.4 Efficiently Computing \( S^{(k)} \)

Having determined \( D_k \) in our “varied-D” model Eq.(16), we next propose our method to efficiently compute \( S^{(k)} \).

The method [7] requires \( O(k^2|E|) \) and \( O(k^2|V||E|) \) time, respectively, to compute single-source and all-pairs SimRank. If we merely apply the method [7] and replace \( D \) with \( D_k \), then our “varied-D” Eq.(16) to compute \( S^{(k)} \) will retain the same complexity as [7] except with no \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \), as follows:

Procedure 2: Single-Source “Varied-D” SimRank(i)

\[
1 \text{ initialize } h := 0, \ x := e_1; \hfill
2 \text{ for } l := 0, 1, \ldots, \ k \text{ do } \hfill
3 \quad \text{ update } h := h + (P^T)^l(D_{k-1} x) \quad x := Px \hfill
4 \text{ return } (S^{(k)})_{\ast,i} = h; \hfill
\]

However, we observe that there exist many duplicate products in [7]. Precisely, to obtain the result of the sums

\[
(S^{(k)})_{i,i} = D_k x_0 + \gamma P^T D_{k-1} x_1 + \cdots + \gamma^k (P^T)^k D_{0} x_k,
\]

the method [7] separately computes every \( (P^T)^l(D_{k-1} x_l) \) and then adds them together. Its main limitation is that, to compute any power of \( (P^T) \), [7] has to go through all of the previous powers from scratch. As a result, there are \( l \) matrix-vector products to compute each \( h \) in Line 3, leading to \( \sum_{l=1}^{\infty} l = O(k^3) \) products for \( k \) iterations in total.

We now propose an efficient method for Procedure 2, which reduces \( O(k^2|E|) \) to \( O(k|E|) \) time, with no loss of accuracy. Our key observation is that “doing each matrix-vector multiplication separately is equivalent to multiplying a matrix

Thus, when \( k \rightarrow \infty \), the result of the sums by a group of the resulting vectors added together”. Hence, we rearrange the computation of Eq.(26) as follows:

\[
(S^{(k)})_{i,i} = D_k x_0 + \gamma P^T (D_{k-1} x_1 + \gamma P^T (D_{k-2} x_2 + \cdots + \gamma^P T (D_{l} x_k + \gamma P^T (D_0 x_k))))
\]

and obtain the result by starting with the innermost brackets and working outwards. In contrast with the method [7], Eq.(27) has only \( O(k) \) matrix-vector products in \( k \) brackets, as opposed to \( O(k^3) \) products in Procedure 2.

Based on Eq.(27), we give an efficient way of Procedure 2.

Algorithm 3: Optimized Single-Source SimRank(i)

\[
1 \text{ initialize } x_0 := e_1; \hfill
2 \text{ for } l := 1, 2, \ldots, k \text{ do } \hfill
3 \quad \text{ update } x_l := P x_{l-1}; \hfill
4 \text{ initialize } y_0 := \text{diag}(D_0) \circ x_k; \hfill
5 \text{ for } l := 1, 2, \ldots, k \text{ do } \hfill
6 \quad \text{ update } y_l := \text{diag}(D_l) \circ x_{k-l} + \gamma P^T y_{l-1}; \hfill
7 \text{ return } (S^{(k)})_{\ast,i} := y_k; \hfill
\]

Algorithm 3 can reduce not only the time of single-source SimRank from \( O(k^2|E|) \) [7] to \( O(k|E|) \), but also the time of all-pairs SimRank from \( O(k^2|V||E|) \) [7] to \( O(k|V||E|) \), since all-pairs SimRank runs \( |V| \) times of single-source SimRank.

3. Enhancing SimRank Quality

After the superfluous \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \) is avoided, we next focus on the “connectivity trait” problem of SimRank.

3.1 The “Connectivity Trait” Problem

We observe that the root cause of the “connectivity trait” problem is that the order of the normalized factor \( \frac{1}{\gamma^{k+1}} \) in the SimRank definition Eq.(1) is too high. To clarify this, let us consider the following situation in Figure 2:

Let \( \delta \) be the number of paths \( \{a \leftarrow x \rightarrow b\} \) to be inserted between nodes \( a \) and \( b \). By SimRank definition Eq.(1), after insertions, \( s(a,b) \) will become a function of \( \delta \):

\[
s_k(a,b) = \gamma \cdot \frac{N_k \cdot \sum_{(a,b) \in E}}{|(N_k + 1)|^{(N_k + 1)^2}} \sim \gamma \cdot \frac{\delta}{\delta^2} \rightarrow 0. \quad (\delta \rightarrow \infty)
\]

This suggests that, for large \( \delta \), \( s_k(a,b) \) behaves like \( (\gamma \cdot \frac{\delta}{\delta^2}) \), which is eventually decreasing \( w.r.t. \delta \).

3.2 Our Kernel-Based SimRank Model

To avoid the order inconsistency between denominator and numerator in Eq.(28), our goal is to judiciously adjust the order of \( \frac{1}{\gamma^{k+1}} \) while normalizing \( s(a,b) \) correctly.

Definition 2. Let \( A \) be an adjacency matrix. The “cosine-based” SimRank \( S_{a,b} \) between \( a \) and \( b \) is defined by \(^*\)

\[
S_{a,b} = (1 - \gamma) \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k \frac{e_a^T (A^k)^T e_b}{\|A^k e_a\|_2 \|A^k e_b\|_2}.
\]

\(^*\)To prevent division by zero in Eq.(29), we define the \( k \)-th term of the sums to be 0 if \( (A^k)_{a,a} \) or \( (A^k)_{a,b} = 0 \).
where $\|x\|_2 := \sqrt{\sum|x|^2}$ denotes the L2-norm of vector $x$.

Our cosine-based SimRank $\hat{S}_{a,b}$ integrates weighted cosine similarities between $a$'s and $b$'s multi-hop in-neighbor sets. This can be seen more clearly when we rewrite Eq.(29) as

$$\hat{S}_{a,b} = (1 - \gamma) \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k \phi(A^k e_a, A^k e_b) \text{ with } \phi(x,y) := \frac{x^\top y}{\|x\|_2 \|y\|_2}.$$  

(30)

We call $\phi(x,y)$ a kernel similarity function. In Definition 2, we take $\phi(x,y)$ as the well-known cosine similarity function. The vector $A^k e_a$ (resp. $A^k e_b$) in Eq.(30) collects the information about k-hop in-neighbors of node a (resp. b). Hence, the term $\phi(A^k e_a, A^k e_b)$ in Eq.(30) evaluates how similar node a's and b's k-hop in-neighbor sets are likely to be in terms of the number of length-k paths in-linked from both a and b. The factor $\gamma^k$ penalizes connections made with distant k-hop-in-neighbors, and $(1 - \gamma)$ normalizes $\hat{S}_{a,b}$ into $[0,1]$. Thus, $\hat{S}_{a,b}$ not only distills the self-referentiality of SimRank, but also extends a one-step cosine similarity to a multi-step one.

**Theorem 5.** The cosine-based SimRank model in Eq.(29) can circumvent the SimRank “connectivity trait” problem.

**Proof.** Let $\text{hop}_k(x) = \{i \in V | (A^k e_x)_i > 0\}$ be the k-hop in-neighbor set of node x. Then, we have

$$e_a^\top (A^k - 1) A^k e_b = |\text{hop}_k(a) \cap \text{hop}_k(b)|, \|A^k e_b\|_2 = \sqrt{e_a^\top (A^k - 1) A^k e_b} = \sqrt{|\text{hop}_k(a)|}.$$  

Plugging these into Eq.(29) produces

$$\hat{S}_{a,b} = (1 - \gamma) \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k \frac{|\text{hop}_k(a) \cap \text{hop}_k(b)|}{|\text{hop}_k(a)| \cdot |\text{hop}_k(b)|}.$$  

(31)

When inserting the following δ paths between a and b:

$$a \leftarrow o \leftarrow \cdots \leftarrow o \leftarrow k_1 \text{ edges} \leftarrow o \leftarrow \cdots \leftarrow o \leftarrow b$$  

(32)

we notice that, only for $k_1 = k_2$, the k-1-th term of the series Eq.(31) will be changed to a function of $\delta$:  

$$f(\delta) = \gamma^{k_1} \frac{|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a) \cap \text{hop}_{k_1}(b)| + |\text{hop}_{k_1}(a) \cap \text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|}{\sqrt{|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a)| \cdot |\text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|}}.$$  

(33)

To show $f(\delta)$ increases w.r.t $\delta$, we take log(s) on both sides, and then use implicit differentiation w.r.t $\delta$ on both sides:

$$f'(\delta) = \frac{f(\delta)}{2} (\frac{1}{|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a)| \cdot |\text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|} \cdot \frac{|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a) \cap \text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|}{|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a)| \cdot |\text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|} - \frac{1}{|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a) \cap \text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|} - \frac{1}{|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a) \cap \text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|}).$$

Since $f'(\delta) > 0$ and $|\text{hop}_{k_1}(a)| \geq |\text{hop}_{k_1}(a) \cap \text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|$ and $|\text{hop}_{k_1}(b)| \geq |\text{hop}_{k_1}(a) \cap \text{hop}_{k_1}(b)|$, we can obtain $f'(\delta) > 0$. Thus, $f(\delta)$ increases w.r.t $\delta$, which implies that paths (32) insertion will not decrease $\hat{S}_{a,b}$.  

Indeed, by using $P e_b = A e_b / \|A e_b\|_1$ to the original SimRank-Eq.(2), we notice that both Eqs.(2) and (29) tally the same paths in-linked from a and b. The difference is norms $\|\cdot\|_2$ and $\|\cdot\|_1$ used by Eq.(29) and Eq.(2)\textsuperscript{7} respectively. Since the SimRank “connectivity trait” problem is due to the high order of $1/\|A e_b\|_1$ in Eq.(1), it is reasonable for us to prevent its high order by replacing $\|\cdot\|_1$ with $\|\cdot\|_2$ since $\|x\|_2 \leq \|x\|_1$. Moreover, by using $\|\cdot\|_2$, $\hat{S}_{a,b}$ can be correctly normalized into $[0,1]$. This is because $\phi(\cdot, \cdot) \in [0,1]$, which indicates that $0 \leq \hat{S}_{a,b} \leq (1 - \gamma) \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k \leq 1$ in Eq.(30).

**Example 2.** Recall the δ paths $\{a \leftarrow x \rightarrow b\}$ to be added into G in Figure 2. After insertion, $\hat{S}_{a,b}(\delta)$ in Eq.(29) can circumvent the “connectivity trait” problem. This is because

$$\hat{A} e_b = (1, 1, \ldots, 1, 0, \ldots, 0, 0, \ldots, 0, 1, 1, \ldots, 1) \mathbf{1}^\top, \hat{A} e_b = (0, 0, \ldots, 0, 1, 1, \ldots, 1, 1, \ldots, 1) \mathbf{1}^\top$$

Then, we have $(\hat{A} e_b)^\top \hat{A} e_b = [N_{b} \cap N_{a}] + \delta$ and

$$\|\hat{A} e_b\|_2 = \sqrt{(1 + \gamma^1 + \gamma^2 + \cdots + \gamma^\infty)^2} = \sqrt{\|A e_b\|_2 + \delta}.$$  

Therefore, it follows from Eq.(29) that

$$\hat{S}_{a,b}(\delta) = (1 - \gamma) \gamma \cdot \frac{|N_{b} \cap N_{a}| + \delta}{\sqrt{|N_{b} \cap N_{a}| + \delta}} \rightarrow (1 - \gamma) \gamma \cdot (\delta \rightarrow \infty)$$  

(34)

Comparing this with Eq.(28), $\hat{S}_{a,b}(\delta)$ is not eventually decreasing w.r.t. $\delta$, which is due to norm $\|\cdot\|_2$ used in Eq.(29).

In contrast to SimRank++ [1] and PSimRank [2] whose revised weight factors rely only on common $N_a$ and $N_b$, our method Eq.(29), even if $N_a \cap N_b = \emptyset$, can evaluate $s(a, b)$ from common multi-hops neighbors $\text{hop}_k(a) \cap \text{hop}_k(b)$.

To compute the cosine-based SimRank score $\hat{S}_{a,b}$, if $a = b$, Eq.(29) implies $\hat{S}_{a,b} = 1$. If $a \neq b$, we compute $\hat{S}_{a,b}$ as

$$\hat{S}_{a,b}^{(k+1)} = \hat{S}_{a,b}^{(k)} + (1 - \gamma) \gamma^k (u(k)^\top v(k))$$  

(35)

where the auxiliary vectors $u(k)$ and $v(k)$ are obtained by

$$\begin{cases}
  v(0) = e_a \\
  v(k) = \frac{A u(k-1) + v(k-1)}{\|A u(k-1) + v(k-1)\|_2} = \frac{A v(k-1) + u(k-1)}{\|A v(k-1) + u(k-1)\|_2}
\end{cases}$$

Eqs.(34)–(35) provide an algorithm to compute $\hat{S}_{a,b}^{(k)}$, which is in $O(k|E|)$ time and $O(|E| + k|V|)$ memory for k iterations.

**4. Semantic Difference**

Apart from Jeh and Widom’s SimRank model [5]:

$$S = \max(\gamma P^T S, I).$$  

(36)

recent years have witnessed many studies (e.g., [3, 4, 9, 14]) to compute similarity, based on Li et al. model [9]:

$$S = \gamma P^T S P + (1 - \gamma) I.$$  

(37)

In this section, we explore their relationship from a semantic perspective, and correct two arguments in [9] and [7].

**4.1 A Fly in the Ointment of [7, 9]**

There are only two works [7, 9] that have mentioned the relationship between $\hat{S}$ and $S$. (a) Li et al. [9] argued that “$\hat{S}$ affects only the absolute similarity value of $S$, but not the relative similarity ranking of $S$. ” (b) The recent work by Kusumoto et al. [7] states that “$\hat{S}$ does not much affect the top-k ranking of $S$. ” However, either of them implies a limitation, as disproved by the following counterexample.

**Example 3.** Consider graph G in Figure 3, for $\gamma = 0.6$, the top-10 similarity rankings by $S$ and $\hat{S}$ are shown in part:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>node pairs</th>
<th>(3, 3)</th>
<th>(6, 6)</th>
<th>(1, 2)</th>
<th>(7, 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rank by $S$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rank by $\hat{S}$</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*In essence, $\hat{S} \approx \hat{S}$ is equivalent to $D \approx (1 - \gamma) I.$
From the table, we can discern the following:
(a) $\tilde{S}$ does not preserve the relative similarity rankings of $S$;
(b) At least $4$ out of top-$10$ rankings of $S$ are affected by $\tilde{S}$. Thus, neither of the statements by [7,9] is correct. $\blacksquare$

### 4.2 Semantic Relationship Between $S$ and $\tilde{S}$

To “rekindle” the semantic relationship between $S$ and $\tilde{S}$, let us first introduce the following notation:

**Definition 3 (Off-diagonal Operator).** For square matrix $X$, let $(\cdot)_{\text{off}}$ be a matrix operator defined by

$$(X)_{\text{off}} := X - \text{diag}(X).$$

This notation is introduced to bring new insights into $S$.

**Theorem 6.** The similarity $S$ in Jeh and Widom’s model Eq.(36) can be characterized as follows:

$$S = I + \gamma(P^T P)_{\text{off}} + \gamma^2(P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}} + \cdots + 
\gamma^k((P^T \cdots (P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}} \cdots P)_{\text{off}} + \cdots)_{\text{off}} =: (P^k)_{\text{off}}$$

**Proof.** Applying $(\cdot)_{\text{off}}$, Eq.(36) can be iterated as

$$S_k = \gamma(P^T S_{k-1} P)_{\text{off}} + I.$$  (39)

We now construct the iterations: starting with $R_0 = I$, $R_k = \gamma(P^T \cdots (P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}} \cdots P)_{\text{off}} + R_{k-1}$. (40)

Using induction on $k$, we next show that $S_k = R_k$ $(\forall k)$. Clearly, $S_0 = I = R_0$. Assume $S_k = R_k$ holds, we consider

$$S_{k+1} = \gamma(P^T S_k P)_{\text{off}} + I \quad \text{(using the hypothesis $S_k = R_k$)}$$

$$= \gamma(P^T \cdots (P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}} \cdots P)_{\text{off}} + \gamma(P^T R_{k-1} P)_{\text{off}} + I$$

$$= \gamma(P^T \cdots (P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}} \cdots P)_{\text{off}} + R_k = R_{k+1}. \blacksquare$$

By Theorem 6, $S$ in Eq.(36) is the weighted sums of

$$\frac{(P^T \cdots (P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}} \cdots P)_{\text{off}}}{k \text{ nested } (\cdot)_{\text{off}}} \forall k = 1, 2, \cdots$$

In contrast, $\tilde{S}$ in Eq.(37) is the weighted sums of the terms

$$\frac{(P^T \cdots (P^T (P^T P)P) \cdots P)}{k \text{ nested brackets}} \forall k = 1, 2, \cdots$$

To find out the semantic difference between $S$ and $\tilde{S}$, we merely need to compare the paths tallied by (41) and (42):

**Theorem 7.** Given a graph $G$, the terms in Eq.(41) tally the following paths in $G$:

- $x_0 \leftarrow x_1 \leftarrow \cdots \leftarrow x_{k-1} \leftarrow x_k \cdots \leftarrow x_{2k-1} \rightarrow x_{2k}$

**Example 4.** Recall the graph in Figure 3. By Theorem 7, the path $7 \leftrightarrow 6 \leftarrow 5 \leftarrow 3 \rightarrow 4 \rightarrow 6 \rightarrow 8$ is tallied by the term $(P^3)_{\text{off}}$, but not by $(P^7 (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}}$. Indeed, regarding the term $(P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}}$, the innermost $(\cdot)_{\text{off}}$ disallows paths with repetition of nodes 5 and 4; the second nested $(\cdot)_{\text{off}}$ disallows the repetition of nodes 6 and 8 (which the considered path violates); the outermost $(\cdot)_{\text{off}}$ disallows the repetition of nodes 7 and 8. $\blacksquare$

In light of Theorem 7, the semantic relationship between $S$ and $\tilde{S}$ is evident: $\tilde{S}$ often aggregates more paths than $S$, and $S$ excludes the paths with self-intersecting nodes that are considered by $\tilde{S}$. Figure 4 depicts an illustrative comparison of the paths tallied by $(S_k)_{i,j}$ and $(\tilde{S}_k)_{i,j}$ for $k = 0, 1, 2$. For verification, let us apply $(\cdot)_{\text{off}}$ definition to expand, e.g., the term $(P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}}$ as follows:

$$((P^T (P^T P)_{\text{off}} P)_{\text{off}})_{i,j} = (P^2)^T P_{i,j} - (P^\text{diag}(P^T P) P)_{i,j}$$

$$- (\text{diag}(P^T P_{i,j}))_{i,j} + (\text{diag}(P^\text{diag}(P^T P) P))_{i,j}$$

where a circled number beneath each term is associated with a path numbered in the upper-left corner of Figure 4.
The following result shows the specific types of paths that are tallied by $S$ but not by $B$.

**Corollary 2.** Let $P(S)$ and $P(B)$ be the sets of paths tallied by $S$ and $B$, respectively. Then, $P(S) \supseteq P(B)$, and $P(S) - P(B)$ is the set of "special" cycles of length $2k$ ($k = 1, 2, \cdots$), with first $k$ contiguous edges oriented in one direction, and next $k$ contiguous edges in the opposite direction.

5. Experimental Studies

5.1 Experimental Setting

(1) Real Data. The details are described below:

| Dataset | \(|V|\) | \(|E|\) | \(|E|/|V|\) | Type |
|---------|--------|--------|------------|------|
| WikiV   | 7,115  | 103,689| 14.57      | Directed |
| CaD     | 15,683 | 55,064 | 5.31       | Undirected |
| CitH    | 34,546 | 421,578| 12.20      | Directed |
| WebN    | 325,729| 1,497,134| 4.59      | Directed |
| ComY    | 1,134,890| 2,987,624| 2.63     | Undirected |
| SocL    | 4,847,571| 68,993,773| 14.23    | Directed |

(a) WikiV, a Wikipedia who-votes-on-whom graph\(^9\), where nodes are users, and an edge $i \rightarrow j$ means user $i$ voted on $j$.

(b) CaD, a collaboration graph, where each node is an author, and edges co-authorships. The graph is derived from 6-year publications (2006-2011) in seven major conferences.

(c) CitH, a citation graph from arXiv high energy physics theory, where each node is a paper labeled with meta information (e.g., title, authors, abstract) and an edge a citation.

(d) WebN, a web graph from University of Notre Dame, where a node is a page (from nd.edu) and an edge a link.

(e) ComY, an undirected Youtube social graph, where a node is a user and an edge a friendship.

(f) SocL, a friendship graph of a LiveJournal community, where $i \rightarrow j$ is a recommendation of user $j$ from user $i$.

(2) Synthetic Data. To produce SYN, we adopt a scale-free graph generator based on the Barabasi-Albert model\(^10\). This generator takes as input two parameters: $(|V|, |E|)$.

(3) Query Generator. (i) To evaluate all-pairs $s(\ast, \ast)$, we generate the query-pair set $(A, B)$ by using two criteria:

(a) **Importance coverage** is to ensure the selected $(A, B)$ to comprehensively contain a broad range of any possible pairs.

(b) **Overlapping coverage** is to ensure that $(A, B)$ contains node-pairs with many multi-hop in-neighbors overlapped. To achieve this, we first sort all nodes in $V$ in descending order by PageRank (PR), and split them into 10 buckets: nodes with $PR \in [0.9, 1]$ are in the first bucket; nodes with $PR \in [0.8, 0.9]$ the second, etc. We next randomly select $\lceil \frac{|V|}{10} \rceil$ nodes from each bucket to $(A, B)$.

5.2 Experimental Results

5.2.1 Semantic Quality

We first evaluate the high semantic quality of $SR^\#$ against $SR^{++}$, JSR, $LSR^{13}$, RS, COS, RWR on real WikiV, CitH, CaD. For each dataset, we randomly issue 300 queries for $s(\ast, \ast)$ and $s(\ast, \ast)$ via importance coverage criterion, and use 3 metrics (NDCG, Kendall, Spearman) to evaluate each method, respectively. Fig. 5a shows the average quantitative results.

(1) In all cases, $SR^\#$ exhibits higher semantic quality than the other methods. This is because $SR^\#$ can avoid "connectivity trait" issue by utilizing a "cosine" kernel recursively in a SimRank-like style, whereas COS considers only direct overlapped in-neighbors, and JSR and $LSR^{++}$ both have a "connectivity trait" problem. (2) In several cases, the NDCG of $SR^{++}$ (on CitH) and RS (on CaD) may even worse than that of JSR and $LSR^{++}$. This is because, for $SR^{++}$, its evaluation is based on evaluator’s knowledge and public votes on promotion of individuals to admixture. (b) To mark ground truth labels for similar authors on CaD, 30 members from 5 database groups are invited. Each pair of authors is given a score based on the collaboration distance between authors. The judgment relies on evaluator’s knowledge and "separations" of Co-Author Path in Microsoft Academic Search.\(^12\)

(c) To establish the ground truth of similar articles on CitH, 28 research associates from the School of Physics are hired. Each pair of articles is assigned a score based on evaluator’s knowledge on paper abstracts and citation relations.

All experiments are run with an Intel Core(TM) i7-4700MQ CPU @ 2.40GHz CPU and 32GB RAM, on Windows 7.

(4) Algorithms. We implement the following, all in VC++.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SR$^#$</td>
<td>our scheme (&quot;cosine&quot; kernel + computation sharing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSR</td>
<td>the state-of-the-art SimRank \cite{7}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QP</td>
<td>all-pairs SimRank (fine-grained clustering) \cite{13}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSUM</td>
<td>all-pairs SimRank (partial sum memoization) \cite{12}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMAT</td>
<td>single-source SimRank (matrix decomposition) \cite{3}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSR</td>
<td>Jeh and Widom’s SimRank \cite{5}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSR</td>
<td>Li et al’s SimRank \cite{9}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR$^{++}$</td>
<td>SimRank++ (revised “evidence factor”) \cite{1}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>RoleSim (automorphism equivalence) \cite{6}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWR</td>
<td>Random Walk with Restart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COS</td>
<td>classic cosine similarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Parameters. We set $\gamma = 0.6$, as suggested in \cite{12}, $k = 10$, guaranteeing $S^k$ accurate to 2 decimal places.

(6) Evaluation Metrics. To evaluate the semantic quality of the similarity search, we consider four metrics:

(a) **Normalized Discounted Cumulative Gain at position $p$:**

\[
\text{NDCG}_p := \frac{1}{\log_p |E|} \sum_{i=1}^{|E|} \frac{1}{\log_2 \left( \frac{|E|}{i} \right)} \text{rel}_i
\]

(b) **Spearman’s $\rho$:**

\[
\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^{|E|} (d_i - 1)^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}
\]

(c) **Kendall’s $\tau$:**

\[
\tau = \frac{\text{# of discordant pairs}}{\text{# of discordant pairs} + \text{# of concordant pairs}}
\]

(d) **Query coverage** is the queries from our query sample.

(7) Ground Truth. (a) To label ground truth for similar users on WikiV, a manual evaluation is carried out by 50 professional members who have accumulated a long history of activity on Wikipedia. Each pair of users is considered by an evaluator, and is assigned a score on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 meaning irrelevant, 4 meaning completely relevant, and 2 and 3 meaning “somewhere in between”. The judgement is based on evaluator’s knowledge and public votes on promotion of individuals to admixture. (b) To mark ground truth labels for similar authors on CaD, 30 members from 5 database groups are invited. Each pair of authors is assigned a score based on evaluator’s knowledge on paper abstracts and citation relations.

\(^9\) http://snap.stanford.edu/data/index.html

\(^10\) http://graphstream-project.org/doc/Generators/

\(^11\) All paths of length up to 10 between $a$ and $b$ can be tallied by our queries, ensuring results accurate to 2 decimal places.

\(^12\) http://academic.research.microsoft.com/VisualExplorer

\(^13\) For semantics evaluation, MSR produces the same similarity values as LSR, since \cite{7} approximates $D$ by $(1 - \gamma)I$. 

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\[^{10}\text{http://graphstream-project.org/doc/Generators/}

\[^{11}\text{All paths of length up to 10 between } a \text{ and } b \text{ can be tallied by our queries, ensuring results accurate to 2 decimal places.}

\[^{12}\text{http://academic.research.microsoft.com/VisualExplorer}

\[^{13}\text{For semantics evaluation, MSR produces the same similarity values as LSR, since } [7] \text{ approximates } D \text{ by } (1 - \gamma)I.\]
dence factor will be 0 whenever there are no common direct in-neighbors; for RS, automorphism equivalence has priority over connectivity in similarity assessment. Thereby, SR++ and RS may not resolve the “connectivity trait” problem.

Fig. 5b compares the percentage of queries from the 300 queries sample (based on importance coverage criterion) that SR-, SR++, JSR, LSR, RS, COS, RWR provide similarities for on real Wikiv, CitH, CaD, respectively. For each dataset, SR- substantially improves the coverage of JSR/LSR (~0.73) and SR+/RS (~0.81) to ~0.95. This can be considered as expected, since (a) the “connectivity trait” problem of JSR and LSR will downrgrade similarities of node-pairs with high connectivity, and (b) SR++ can only partially fix the “connectivity trait” issue within 1-hop in-neighborhood.

Fig. 5c depicts the percentage of queries with overlapped multi-hop in-neighbors from the 300 queries sample (via overlapping coverage criterion) that SR-, SR++, JSR, LSR, RS, COS, RWR are able to identify on real Wikiv, CitH, CaD, respectively. (1) For each dataset, SR- significantly achieves ~0.95 coverage of common multi-hop in-neighbors, much superior to JSR/LSR (~0.20), SR++ (~0.51) and COS (~0.41). The reason is that our “cosine” kernel provides an appropriate normalization factor ∥x∥∥y∥ that can recursively fix the “connectivity trait” problem. In contrast, the ||x|| normalization factor of JSR/LSR excessively squeezes the range of similarity [0,1]. (2) Under overlapping coverage criterion, COS (~0.41) outperforms JSR/LSR (~0.20) since COS is not limited by the “connectivity trait” problem.

To further evaluate the search depth of SR-, SR++, JSR, LSR, RS, COS, RWR, we first apply overlapping coverage criterion to generate 2,000 queries, and then generate 300 queries via importance coverage criterion, and classify them into 4 groups, e.g., “4-5” collects queries (a, b) whose path length between a and b is 8–10. Fig. 5d depicts the search depth of all the methods on Wikiv. (1) For each group, SR++ and COS have the lowest quality of depth search among all the methods, since they cannot capture the paths of length > 2 between nodes. (2) SR- achieves the highest quality, and its superiority is more pronounced in the groups that have longer paths. This tells us that the “connectivity trait” issue has a large influence on node-pairs with long paths.

5.2.2 Time Efficiency

Fig. 5e illustrates the running time of SR-, MSR, PSUM, OIP, SR-, SMAT for single-source s(*, q) on 6 real datasets. (1) In all cases, SR- always substantially outperforms the other methods. This is because SR- can eliminate duplicate computations for maximal sharing, whereas MSR computes each term separately. (2) PSUM, OIP, SR-, SMAT will crash on large WebN, SocL, ComY, due to the memory allocation. On Wikiv and CaD, they are 3–4 orders of magnitude slower than SR-, since their iterative models to compute s(*, q) rely on all-pairs outputs of the previous iteration.

Fig. 5f shows the time of SR-, MSR, PSUM, OIP, SR- for all-pairs s(*, *) on 6 real datasets. (1) Only SR-, MSR survive on all datasets, whereas PSUM, OIP, SR- fail on large
WebN, SocL, ComY, due to the memory allocation. (2) MSR is slower than others as it sacrifices speed for scalability. In contrast, SR\textsuperscript{#} not only scales well on large graphs, but also has comparable speed to those of PSUM, OIP, SR\textsuperscript{*}.

Fig. 5g presents the impact of the iteration number \( k \) on the time of SR\textsuperscript{#} and MSR. When \( k \) grows from 5 to 30, the time of SR\textsuperscript{#} does not increase significantly (just from 42s to 301s), as opposed to the time of MSR growing from 152s to 3744s. The reason is that MSR contains many duplicate computations among different iterations, whereas SR\textsuperscript{#} can merge these results after rearranging the computation order. It is consistent with our analysis in Subsection 2.4.

Fig. 5h demonstrates the impact of network density on the computational time of SR\textsuperscript{#} and MSR on synthetic data. Fixing \( |V| = 1,000 \), we generate a synthetic dataset by increasing the graph density from 2 to 25. (1) When the density increases, the time of both algorithms will increase. (2) For dense graphs, the speedup for SR\textsuperscript{#} is significantly higher than MSR, due to the number of iterations with a huge influence on MSR compared with SR\textsuperscript{#}. This is in agreement with the complexity of SR\textsuperscript{#} and MSR.

5.2.3 Memory Efficiency

Fig. 5i shows the memory of SR\textsuperscript{#}, MSR, PSUM, OIP, SR\textsuperscript{*} on six real datasets. (1) For large WebN, SocL and ComY, only SR\textsuperscript{#} and MSR survive, highlighting their scalability. (2) For each dataset, SR\textsuperscript{#} requires slightly more memory than MSR because it requires to store \( D_{k} \).

Fig. 5j reports the impact of the iteration number \( k \) on the memory of SR\textsuperscript{#} and MSR on SocL. (1) When \( k \) varies from 5 to 25, the memory requirements of SR\textsuperscript{#} and MSR increase, since they need to memorize the \( k \) intermediate vectors from previous iterations, as expected. (2) The disparity in the memory between SR\textsuperscript{#} and MSR is due to storing \( D_{k} \).

5.2.4 Relative Order

Fig. 5k compares the relative order between LSR and JSR for the top \( K \) results on 6 real datasets (\( K = 50, 200, 500 \)). The order gap is measured by Kendall’s \( \tau \). (1) For different graphs, the quality of the relative order is irrelevant to top \( K \) size. For instance, on SocL, top 500 (0.94) is better preserved than top 200 (0.91) and top 50 (0.9), whereas on CaD, top 500 (0.84) is worse than both top 200 (0.9) and top 50 (0.92). (2) On each dataset, the average Kendall’s \( \tau \) for top 50 is 0.77–0.92, which indicates that LSR does not maintain the relative rank of JSR, even for top 50. Thus, approximating \( D \) by \((1-\gamma)I\) would adversely affect the top \( K \) ranking.

Further, a qualitative result on WikiV is depicted in Fig. 5l, where \( x-y \) axis is the ranking by JSR (LSR). Other datasets also statistically exhibit similar phenomena. (1) Many points below the diagonal imply that low-ranked node-pairs by JSR have greater likelihood to get promoted to a high rank of LSR. This association does not imply a (near) linear relationship between the rankings of JSR and LSR. (2) For high top-\( K \) ranking (e.g., \( K = 15 \)), the top 15 of JSR may be inconsistent with those of LSR. Hence, the relative order preservation of JSR and LSR hinges on network structure.

Fig. 5m tests \( (\epsilon_{\text{diag}} + \epsilon_{\text{iter}}) \) of MSR and SR\textsuperscript{#} w.r.t. \( k \). (1) When \( k \) increases from 1 to 15, the error of each algorithm decreases. While the error of SR\textsuperscript{#} approaches 0, MSR levels off at 0.28. The large disparity between their convergent solutions is due to the approximation of \( D \) by \((1-\gamma)I\) in MSR; our “varied-\textsuperscript{D}” iterative model can guarantee the error to be 0 when \( k \) increases. (2) The SR\textsuperscript{#} curve is always below the Est. Bound curve, showing the correctness of Theorem 4.

Fig. 5n statistically shows the percentage of node-pairs with the “connectivity trait” problem over all real datasets. From the results, we see that the percentages are all high (e.g., 82.7% on WebN, 62.3% on SocL, 78.1% on ComY), showing the seriousness of this problem in real scenarios.

6. CONCLUSIONS

We consider the problem of high-quality similarity search. Observing that (1) the best-of-breed SimRank [7] produces diagonal correction error \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \) and (2) SimRank++ [1] does not well resolve the “connectivity trait” problem, we proposed our scheme, SR\textsuperscript{#}. First, we characterize the exact \( D \), and devise a “varied-\textsuperscript{D}” model to compute SimRank with no \( \epsilon_{\text{diag}} \) in linear memory. We also speed up the computational time from quadratic [7] to linear in terms of \( k \). Next, we devise a “kernel-based” model to circumvent the “connectivity trait” problem. Finally, we give new insights into the semantic difference between Jeh and Widom’s SimRank and its variant, and correct an argument in [7]. We empirically show that SR\textsuperscript{#} (1) improves an accuracy of average NDCG\textsubscript{200} by \( \approx 30\% \) on real graphs, and (2) is \( \approx 10\times \) faster than [7] on SocL with 65.8M links for 1000 queries.

Acknowledgment. This work forms part of the Big Data Technology for Smart Water Network research project funded by NEC Corporation, Japan.

7. REFERENCES