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A SURVEY ON AUTOMATIC QUESTION-ANSWERING TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

The advent of WWW has reintroduced the need for user-friendly querying techniques that reduce information overflow, and poses new challenges to the research in automated QA. The goal of current works of the unity of research of Technologies is to improve efficiency of e-learning by introducing intelligence into e-learning environments and automating a set of its features. The system allows learners to post subject related questions / doubts to the subject experts. This usually requires the subject expert to answer the same query with different sentence framing a number of times. This paper discusses the development of an automated frequently asked questions retrieval system techniques. This paper discuss few simple FAQ retrieval techniques briefly.

KEYWORDS

FAQ, Frequently Asked Questions, automatic answers.

1. INTRODUCTION

People sitting in front of the computers expect quick solutions. People browsing a website want to get quick answers to their questions. In order to enable the latter, an evolving WWW-based automated FAQ answering system [1] has been developed. This system answers questions when asked in ordinary English, using pre-stored information. eLearning, subject expert consultation, provides a service to the learners to post subject related questions / doubts to the subject expert. The subject expert would then respond to the queries and clarify the doubts. Over a period of time the repository of questions posed by the learners would grow enormously and there is a high probability of posting repeated questions with different sentence framing though they may have similar semantics. The development of automated response generation for frequently asked questions would stimulate faster response. This requires the FAQ retrieval techniques. These techniques were developed in order to make automated FAQ answering affordable for virtually any website. This same concept is also useful in Educational institutes and companies, for customers/users post their questions and get response automatically.

2. FAQ RETRIEVAL TECHNIQUES

As the FAQs and answers are entered into the database, there are three generic approaches[2] how a question-answering system can retrieve them :

- A. *AI (Artificial Intelligence) solutions* use complex knowledge bases in order to comprehend both the query (i.e., user question) and FAQs. AI solutions render good quality of question answering. Unfortunately, they require high qualifications and rare skills of the involved personnel. Development and maintenance of the knowledge bases is expensive. In a multi-lingual environment, the development and maintenance is required not only for the application domain data but also for language specific features in each language.
- B. *Statistical techniques of Information Retrieval* evaluate common terms in the query and each FAQ – how many and how representative they are – and decide whether or not the query and the FAQ are equivalent. Unfortunately, statistical techniques work rather poorly if pieces of text are 1-10 words short. They do not work at all if the query and FAQ use different wording to carry the same meaning. The main advantage of this technique is simple to implement.
- C. *Manual indexing of documents* is done for specialized collections. For example, all pieces of legislation issued by the Swedish parliament have manually assigned keywords used by search systems. Precision of the retrieval of manually indexed documents is high because the keywords are representative, selected using human intelligence.

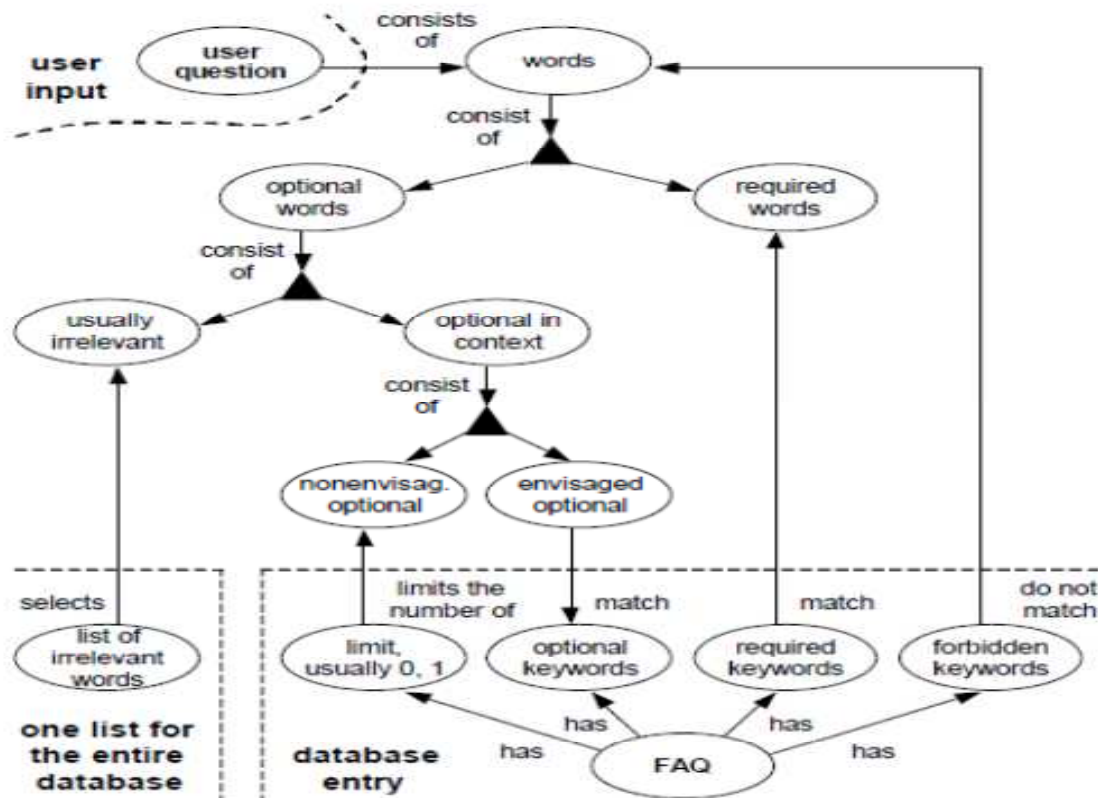
Some question-answering systems, the most well-known of which is Ask Jeeves, use manual indexing of their question templates alias FAQs. A shortcoming of this approach is that each document needs to be processed manually but the question templates are re-usable.

Apparently the multi-lingual environment and the human resources available in the KOM 2002[2] project call for *manual indexing of FAQs*. As far as automatization of such work is considered, today's technologies cannot communicate the meaning of a natural language sentence from the human mind to the computer without any manual work done at some point of the development of the system itself or its imported components. Next sections discussing the two techniques of FAQ retrieval in detail.

3. PRIORITIZED KEYWORD MATCHING

The Prioritized Keyword Matching technique was developed in order to make automated FAQ answering affordable for virtually any website and easy way to comply with the conference paper formatting requirements is to use this document as a template and simply type your text into it[2].

FIG 1: CONCEPTS INVOLVE IN PRIORITIZED MATCHING KEYWORD



BASIC IDEA

As shown in the Fig:1 the idea of Prioritized Keyword Matching is based on the assumption that there are three main types of words in a sentence within a certain context in a certain subject:

- 1) *Required keywords*: are the words important for matching, that convey the essence of the sentence. They cannot be ignored.
- 2) *Optional keywords*: These keywords are not much important as 'Required key words', these keywords help to convey the meaning of the sentence but can be omitted without changing the essence of the sentence. The nuances may change though.
- 3) *"Irrelevant" words*: like "a", "the", "is", etc., are words that are too common in ordinary language or in the subject. The meaning of "irrelevant" words is close to that of stop-words in Information Retrieval. The only difference is that stop-words are assumed always unimportant in a given collection of documents. The Prioritized Keyword Matching technique Matching and the relationship s performs formal keyword matching without understanding the meanings of the words and it is the statically technique.

4. QUESTION TEMPLATE METHOD

Let us introduce a *question template* – a dynamic, parameterized FAQ as opposed to the traditional static FAQ. A question template is a question with entity slots – free space for data instances that represent the main concepts of the question. For example, "When does <performer> perform in <place>?" is a question template where <performer> and <place> are the entity slots. If we fill these slots with data instances that belong to the concepts, we get an ordinary question, e.g., "When does Depeche Mode perform in Globen?" The question template's "answer" is created by the help of a *database query template* – a formal database query having entity slots for data instances, primarily primary keys. After the slots are filled, the template becomes an ordinary executable database query. Processing of a query template and executing the query returns raw data Basing on this raw data Answering a user question takes the following steps. The question assistant:

1. retrieves data instances that are relevant to the user question
2. retrieves question templates that match the user question
3. combines the retrieved data instances and question templates, and creates one or several interpretations of the original question; the user selects a desired interpretation, and the question assistant answers it.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents continued research in automated FAQ answering by using shallow language understanding. The Prioritized Keyword Matching technique discussed here was developed in order to match an arbitrary user question to an FAQ entry in the database. Relative simplicity of the Prioritized Keyword Matching is aimed at making automated FAQ answering affordable for an average website. In the second method, 'Question Template method' is, unlike a static FAQ, a question shape contains entity slots that are replaced by data instances from the underlying database. The entity slots are bound to the concepts, or entities, in the conceptual model of the database while the templates themselves express the relationships between these concepts in form of natural language sentences. The main advantage of the question assistant is its simplicity. The system is recommended in situations where answering of typical questions is appropriate, where the conventional keyword-based search retrieves too much irrelevant information.

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In this age of Commerce, Economics, Computer, I.T. & Management and cut throat competition, a group of intellectuals felt the need to have some platform, where young and budding managers and academicians could express their views and discuss the problems among their peers. This journal was conceived with this noble intention in view. This journal has been introduced to give an opportunity for expressing refined and innovative ideas in this field. It is our humble endeavour to provide a springboard to the upcoming specialists and give a chance to know about the latest in the sphere of research and knowledge. We have taken a small step and we hope that with the active co-operation of like-minded scholars, we shall be able to serve the society with our humble efforts.

Our Other Journals

