Query Recommendation in the Information Domain of Children

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Children represent an increasing group of web users. Some of the key problems that hamper their search experience is their limited vocabulary, their difficulty in using the right keywords, and the inappropriateness of their general-purpose query suggestions. In this work, we propose a method that uses tags from social media to suggest queries related to children's topics. Concretely, we propose a simple yet effective approach to bias a random walk defined on a bipartite graph of web resources and tags through keywords that are more commonly used to describe resources for children. We evaluate our method using a large query log sample of queries submitted by children. We show that our method outperforms by a large margin the query suggestions of modern search engines and state-of-the art guery suggestions based on random walks. We improve further the quality of the ranking by combining the score of the random walk with topical and language modeling features to emphasize even more the child-related aspects of the query suggestions.

Introduction

Children encounter many difficulties while searching the web using state-of-the-art search engines. In particular,

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children have been found to struggle with formulating keyword queries, exploring a list of web results, and finding relevant information (Bilal, 2002; Druin et al., 2009). Children may be exposed to inappropriate material given the lack of constant parental supervision and the vast amount of information online. In this work, we propose a query suggestion method to help children find keywords that are more likely to be relevant for them. Query suggestions alleviate the problem of finding the right keywords to search the web, which is particularly challenging for children (Druin et al., 2009). Extensive research has been carried out on general-purpose query suggestion (Baeza-Yates & Tiberi, 2007; Wang & Zhai, 2008). This work deviates from previous studies in the following ways: (a) The suggestions are aimed at children's search intentions, (b) the suggestions are constructed in the absence of query logs, (c) the suggestions are ranked based on a novel biased random walk to promote suggestions aimed at childspecific topics, and (d) we combine the results of our random walk in a learning-to-rank approach with topic and language modeling features to focus the ranking on more child-friendly suggestions.

The query suggestions of our method are based on tags from the bookmarking system *Delicious* that are associated with query web results and to previously seen web resources intended for children. We consider tags a reasonable source of terms for query expansion given the high overlap of tags and query terms found in large query logs (Yanbe et al., 2007). These types of tags are a valuable resource in the information retrieval (IR) domain for

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children because we can exploit the collaborative information provided by users sharing web resources for children. The method proposed in this work also mitigates the problem of finding irrelevant and unsuitable information because our suggestions boost search aspects that are related to children's search intentions.

Concretely, we propose a novel way to boost tags in a random walk that are frequently used to describe resources for children. The assumption of our method is that tags frequently associated with URLs focused on children's topics are better candidates to construct query suggestions for children. For instance, consider the query *cars*. According to Google's query suggestions, common aspects of this query are *car rentals*, *cars for sale*, *used cars*, *new cars*, *disney cars*, and *car pictures*. On the other hand, aspects oriented to satisfy children's information needs should include *car movies*, *car games*, *car toys*, *car coloring pages*, *car pictures*, and *car crafts*. Our system ranks higher the latter tags, providing more focused suggestions on content for children.

We refine the ranking of the query suggestions obtained by the random walk using a learning-to-rank approach. We use the random walk score along language modeling and topic features based on the category structure of the Dmoz *Kids and Teens* section; in this way, we emphasize further the suitability of the suggestions for children, and the system is informed about the relevant topics associated with the query. It is important to mention that our query expansion method is complementary to recent approaches found in the literature to improve the search experience of children by filtering inappropriate content (Eickhoff, Serdyukov, & de Vries, 2010) and other search functionality such as AgeRank (Gyllstrom & Moens, 2010).

The quality of the results is evaluated using a large, anonymized log sample of queries and query reformulations from users aged 8 to 18 years extracted from the Yahoo! search engine. We show that the results also hold when using the AOL query log with query reformulations of queries used to retrieve content aimed at children.

The organization of this article is as follows: The Related Work section discusses the relevant related work to this article. The Method section describes our method. The Data Set Extraction section describes the data acquisition process. The Random Walk Evaluation section presents the results obtained by our random walk method. The Learning-to-Rank Tags section presents the features used to improve further the ranking of results and the experimental results. In the last section, conclusions of this work and some directions for future work are discussed.

Related Work

This work is related to the areas of query suggestion, query expansion, tag ranking, and biased random walks.

Query Recommendation

Extensive research has been carried out on query recommendation based on query click-through data from query logs (Baeza-Yates & Tiberi, 2007; Gao et al., 2010). In these methods, the association between query and documents in the search graph is mined to infer related queries. More recently, random walk frameworks have been proposed to rank documents and queries using hitting time (Mei, Zhou, & Church, 2008) and based on the query-document frequency in the graph (Boldi, Bonchi, Castillo, Donato, & Vigna, 2009; Craswell & Szummer, 2007).

The method we propose uses Craswell and Szummer's (2007) framework. However, our work differs from theirs in the definition of the transition probabilities and the normalization of these probabilities. Our motivation is to bias the walk toward suggestions more appropriate for a specific niche of users (i.e., children) that is not addressed by their work.

Recently, two random walk frameworks have been proposed to leverage query log and social media annotation within the same graph. The first exploits the latent topic space of the graph (Bing et al., 2011) and the second uses the graph hitting time (Mei et al., 2008). Their focus is to refine queries by exploiting the tag vocabulary of social media and to provide exploratory and search query suggestions within the same framework. Our work also exploits the annotations of social media for the generation of query suggestions. However, our work differs in that the query suggestions are generated in the absence of query logs, which is solely based on social media. Their work also does not address the generation of suggestions for a specific group of users, which we address by introducing a novel bias into the random walk. Finally, our work differs in that we integrate the scores of the random walk in a learning-to-rank approach to emphasize further the suitability of the suggestions for children.

IR for Children

Duarte Torres, Hiemstra, Weber, and Serdyukov (2012) presented a biased random walk to recommend tags as query suggestions for children aged 10 to 12 years old. Partial results were shown using the AOL query log. In this work, we greatly improve and extend this random walk model by using backward propagation probabilities and a learning-to-rank approach in which the random walk score is combined with novel topical language modeling and tag similarity features. We also show that our method is suitable for other age groups (e.g., teenagers) by evaluating the proposed method on a set of queries submitted by actual young users.

Gyllstrom and Moens (2010) presented a variation of PageRank to rank web pages that are more suitable for children. They used label propagation to score documents. Our work deviates in the characteristics of the graph used (we use social media, whereas they use web documents) and in that we boost query suggestions associated with content for children through information metrics between a foreground model of tags used to describe content for children and a background model. Moreover, we improve on the results of our random walk using a learning-to-rank framework by introducing features that are not trivial to add in a graph-based model. Gyllstrom and Moens (2011) presented a method to detect queries that represent controversial topics and topics for children. Their method filters topics by relying on the query suggestions of a commercial search engine. In our work, we provide query suggestions in the absence of a search engine's query suggestion functionality. Eickhoff et al. (2010) proposed a machine learning approach to filter content unsuitable for children. Although both problems are different (they addressed a binary classification problem), some of the features we use are similar to the ones used in their research. Nonetheless, the main feature in our approach is the random walk proposed.

It is also worth mentioning other efforts from the PuppyIR European project¹ in which some of the content filtering, query suggestion, and topic detection mentioned have been applied and presented as showcases (Azzopardi, Dowie, Duarte, et al., 2012; Azzopardi, Dowie, & Marshall, 2012; Azzopardi, Dowie, Marshall, & Glassey, 2012).

Tag Ranking

Tag ranking has recently received attention, given the proliferation of social media sharing sites. Liu et al. (2009) proposed a method to estimate the relevance score of a tag to an image based on probability density estimation. The estimation is further refined using a random walk over a tag similarity graph. Several tag ranking methods have been proposed in the domain of Image tagging (Feng, Lang, & Li, 2012; Li, Snoek, & Worring, 2008; Li, Tang, Li, & Zhao, 2012; Zhu et al., 2010; Zhuang & Hoi, 2011). Overall, these methods exploit the similarity between tags based on the neighboring tags in the graph. Additional evidence such as visual and semantic features are also used to reduce noise and disambiguate the meaning of the tags.

Our work differs in the structure of the graph and the bias introduced into the random walk. In the previous work mentioned, the graphs consist only of tags, and in our problem it consists of tags and web resources. This graph structure is important because we exploit the characteristics of web resources aimed at children to bias the random walk. Moreover, they do not consider the age dimension of the users.

Biased Random Walks

Biased random walks have been proposed previously in different problem domains. Haveliwala (2002, 2003) proposed the Topical Page Rank. This is a variation of PageRank in which the topic of the query and the URLs are taken into account. The PageRank score is refined by calculating multiple scores for each page, each score representing the importance of the page in respect to a topic. These scores are then combined according the importance of each query for the topic. The performance of this method is further explored by Kohlschütter, Chirita, and Nejdl (2007). They found that the performance of this method varies according to the specificity of the topics considered and that more specific topics tend to lead to better results. Qiu and Cho (2006) build on the Topical Page Rank and include the user clicking story to enhance the ranking. Abou-Assaleh et al. (2007) present a similar method to Topical Page Rank, in which the search is focused on specific topics. They obtained comparable results with less computational overhead.

Wu and Chellapilla (2007) proposed a biased random walk to extract link spam communities when at least one of the members of this community is known. Their method is referred to as Spam Rank. The bias is introduced by using decay probabilities in which nodes having a greater distance from the seed set are penalized. Zhang, Han, and Liang (2009) expanded Wu and Chellapilla's work by proposing a method to automatically enlarge the seed set. Gyöngyi, Garcia-Molina, and Pedersen (2004) addressed the problem of ranking pages avoiding spam. They used a seed set of trusted resources to avoid spam instead of having a seed set to detect spam communities.

Fuxman, Tsaparas, Achan, and Agrawal (2008) presented a random walk with absorbing states for the generation of keywords in the domain of sponsored search. The random walk is defined on a bipartite graph of queries and URLs constructed from query logs. A set of seed queries or URLs is set as absorbing states to bias the random walk toward these states, and the relationship between queries and URLs in the graph is exploited to generate keyword suggestions. Their approach relates to our problem in that we are interested in biasing the random walk from a seed set of URLs and tags. The generation of keywords in this domain has been explored further (Hui, Gao, He, & Luo, 2013; Ravi et al., 2010).

In the Related Biased Random Walks section, we present a more detailed description of three methods: Topical Page Rank, Spam Rank, and the generation of keywords proposed by Fuxman et al. (2008). We describe details on how these methods can be mapped to the scenario addressed in this article.

Method

We envisage a search service that uses state-of-the art search engines to deliver content aimed at children. In this system, the query submitted by the user is sent to several search engines to retrieve keywords from the snippets and titles of the web results. These keywords represent the possible topics associated with the user's query. Our task is to generate these keywords and rank them to construct query suggestions. The ranking is carried out by first generating a ranked list of candidate suggestions using the

¹http://puppyir.eu



FIG. 1. Query suggestions framework. [Color figure can be viewed in the online issue, which is available at wileyonlinelibrary.com.]

random walk. Second, the candidate ranking is refined by using a learning-to-rank approach in which the random walk score is combined with topical and language modeling features. Figure 1 depicts the framework used to rank query suggestions. Note that under this scenario we do not have access to search engine query logs that are widely used for query recommendation (Boldi et al., 2009; Ma, Lin, & Lin, 2011). Although in our architecture it would be possible to register log activity, we would still face the cold start problems of not having data to generate the query suggestions. Moreover, given increasing privacy concerns and the characteristics of the audience targeted by our system (i.e., children), it is desirable to avoid gathering user information. Recent search engines such as *DuckDuckGo²* and *Yippy³* are gaining popularity in part for their policy of not storing user data.

Random Walk Toward Content for Children

Our random walk model uses a bipartite graph of web resources (i.e., URLs) and tag nodes. Previous research on tag ranking (Liu et al., 2009) used random walks methods for tag recommendation systems using a graph composed solely of tags. In the setting of our problem, we found it useful to treat URLs as nodes as well because our methods rely on a trusted set of web resources, which are used as seeds to bias the random walk toward more relevant tags for the targeted audience. That is, tags more frequently associated with URLs that are known to be targeted at a certain niche of users (i.e., children) will be promoted over tags used more frequently to describe URLs for a different niche of users (i.e., adults). Note that it is not straightforward to represent this information in the case where the graph is composed of only tag nodes; moreover, this graph representation allows for adding a measure of how reliable or trustful a seed URL is. In this work, the graph was created using a set of the Del.icio.us bookmarks from the collection presented

²https://duckduckgo.com/privacy.htm

³http://yippy.com/main/privacy_detail.asp

by Wetzker, Zimmermann, and Bauckhage (2008) and Wetzker et al. (2008). Our random walk method is based on the framework proposed by Craswell and Szummer (2007). Formally, the graph is defined as:

Definition 1. a (bipartite graph of URLs and tags): G = (U, $T, E = \{(u, t) | (u, t) \in U \times T\}$, where $U = \{u_1, u_2, \dots, u_n\}$ is the set of URLs described by tags $T = \{t_1, t_2, \ldots, t_m\}$, and E is the set of edges in the graph.

Craswell and Szummer (2007) define the transition probabilities as follows:

$$p_{jw}(i|j) = (1 - \alpha) \begin{cases} \frac{c(i, j)}{\sum_{k:(j,k) \in E} c(j, k)} & \text{if } i \neq j \\ \alpha & \text{for } i = j \end{cases}$$
(1)

$$p_{bw}(i|j) = \begin{cases} (1-\alpha) \frac{p_{fw}(j|i)}{\sum_{k:(i,k)\in E} p_{fw}(k|i)} & \text{if } i \neq j \\ \alpha & \text{for } i = j \end{cases}$$
(2)

for the cases of forward and backward random walk, respectively. The term c(i, j) represents the number of times a tag *i* was used to describe a web resource *j*, and the term α is the self-transition probability that is used to slow the diffusion of the scores. We used both types of weight functions as baselines. As observed by Boldi et al. (2009), we found that the backward weight performs better, although only marginally for our problem, as shown in the next section.

We propose to bias the random walk by introducing a weight based on the pointwise Kullback-Leibler (KL) divergence metric. Intuitively, this metric allows promotion of those tags that are more likely to appear in a collection of content for children (our foreground model) than in a corpus of content for adults (background model). This intuition is exemplified in Figure 1 using the query cars. In this example, the most popular keywords associated to the query are jobs, rentals, and reviews. Using the baseline random walk, we obtain pixar, jobs, and reviews as the top-ranked results.

However, when the *KL* weight is introduced, the latter two keywords are penalized further, allowing keywords such as *pictures, games,* and *coloring* to be better ranked. Equations 3 and 4 reflect the new transition functions.

$$p_{fwKL}(i|j) = p(i)\log\frac{p(j)}{g(j)}p_{fw}(i|j)$$
(3)

$$p_{bwKL}(i|j) = \begin{cases} (1-\alpha) \frac{p_{fwKL}(j|i)}{\sum_{k:(i,k)\in E} p_{fwKL}(k|i)} & \text{if } i \neq j \\ \alpha & \text{if } i = j \end{cases}$$
(4)

where p(i) is the probability of a tag (or URL) to appear in the collection of resources for children, and g(j) is the probability of *i* to appear in the collection of resources for the general public. We normalize the pointwise KL distances to lie between 0 and 1 to introduce them into the random walk framework. The normalization was carried out using the maximum and minimum KL pointwise distance in the collection in the following manner: $kl_n(p||q) = (kl[p||q]) - \min[KL]/(\max[KL] - \min[KL]).$

We also found that using a uniform normalization for the transition of *URLs* to *tags* improves the performance of the random walk. Intuitively, this occurs because the standard transitions of URLs to tags tend to promote the most popular tags. However, our focus is to promote tags that are more children oriented, which are not necessarily the most popular for a given URL. Thus, a uniform normalization emphasizes the effect of the KL weight introduced in Equations 3 and 4. Using this observation, we renormalized the forward probability as follows:

$$p_{fwN}(i|j) = \begin{cases} (1-\alpha) \frac{c(i,j)}{\sum_{k:(j,k)\in E} c(j,k)} & \text{if } i \neq j, j \in T \\ (1-\alpha) \frac{p_{fw}(j|i)}{\sum_{i:(j,i)\in E} p_{fw}(j|i)} & \text{if } i \neq j, j \in U \\ \alpha & \text{if } i = j \end{cases}$$
(5)

From Equation 3, we need to estimate the probabilities of the tags and URLs in the two corpora. These probabilities are estimated based on a set of *Del.icio.us* bookmarks that represent the interests of the target group.

We define a *bookmark* as a tuple containing a URL and a tag that describes the URL: $b = \langle u_i, t_i \rangle$, where $u_i \in U$, $t_i \in T$, the set of URLs and tags, respectively. A collection of bookmarks is defined as a bag of *N* bookmarks $B = \{1, b_2, \ldots, b_N\}$.

We use a set of bookmarks that contains trusted URLs oriented toward a specific audience: children and teenagers.

Definition 2. The (*bag of bookmarks of trusted and oriented URLs for a target audience*) is defined as:

 $B_k = \{b_1, b_2, \dots, b_N | URL(b_i) \in U_k\}$, where U_k is the set of seed URLs and $URL(b_i)$ extracts the URL from the bookmark b_i .

The estimation of the transition probabilities depicted in Equation 3 is calculated using maximum-likelihood estimation (MLE) using B_k for the foreground model and B for the background model.

$$p(t) = \frac{cf_{B_k}(t)}{T}, \ p(u) = \frac{cf_{B_k}(u)}{|U|}$$

$$g(t) = \frac{cf_B(t)}{|T|}, \ g(u) = \frac{cf_B(u)}{|U|}$$
(6)

where |T| and |U| are the raw size of tags and URLs in the collection B_k .

Query Representation

The query is represented as a single node in the graph, and we define a special transition probability from the query node to the tag nodes of the graph. We do not include transition probabilities from the query to URL nodes because the user's query is represented as a bag of tags. The query representation is constructed from the query itself and the tags found in the titles and snippets of the top-ranked web results. The query can also be seen as a document constructed with the tags found in the web results and the query. Formally we define the user's query and the tag set of a query as:

Definition 3. (*Query*) A query q of length *l* is represented as the sequence of words (w_1, w_2, \ldots, w_l) .

Definition 4. (*Tag set of a query*) The tag set of a query q consists of the m tags extracted from a social bookmarking system *S*, which are associated to the top web results of query q: $Q = \{t_1, t_2, ..., t_m\}$.

This representation is convenient because query suggestions can often be obtained directly from the keywords appearing in the snippets of the web results (Yanbe et al., 2007). Using this query representation, we define the transition probability p(t|Q) as:

$$p(t|Q) = \frac{p(Q|t)p(t)}{p(Q)}$$

$$p(t|Q) \propto p(t)p(Q|t)$$

$$p(t|Q) \propto p(t)\prod_{i=1}^{|Q|} p(q_i|t)$$
(7)

The first term on the right-hand side is the likelihood of the candidate tag t in the collection, and the second term describes the likelihood of t co-occurring between the tags in the query and the collection. These probabilities are estimated using MLE in a similar fashion as in Equation 6.

$$p(q_i|t) = \frac{cf(q_i, t) + \mu \ p(q_i)}{|T| + \mu}$$
(8)

where $p(q_i)$ is the prior probability of q_i , and μ is the Dirichtlet smoothing parameter.

Related Biased Random Walks

In the following paragraphs, we present the description of other biased random walks that can be applied to our problem. We point out the differences between these methods and our approach, and we provide relevant implementation details adopted for their comparison against our method.

Topic-Sensitive Page Rank

The topic-sensitive page rank proposed by Haveliwala (2002) builds on the definition of PageRank, in which the scores of the nodes are computed in the following manner:

$$\vec{S}core_{t+1} = (1 - \alpha)M \times \vec{S}core_t + \alpha \vec{p}$$
(9)

where the element $m_i j$ of matrix M is equal to $1/N_j$ (the inverse of the number of outgoing links of node j) if there is a link from node j to node i and 0 otherwise. And $\vec{n} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$

$$P = \left\lfloor \frac{|N|}{|N|} \right\rfloor_{N \times 1}$$

Thus, the prior probabilities are uniform for all the nodes, and the transition probabilities are normalized uniformly by the number of outgoing edges. The bias is introduced by using as vector \vec{p} the topic vector \vec{v} (i.e., $\vec{p} = \vec{v}$), in which each element in this new vector is defined in the following manner:

$$v_i = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{|T_j|} & i \in T \\ 0 & i \notin T \end{cases}$$
(10)

Haveliwala (2002) defines the query representation based on the probability of the query given the target topic:

$$p(c_j|q) = \frac{p(c_j)p(q|c_j)}{p(q)} \propto p(c_j)\prod_i p(q_i|c_j)$$
(11)

where $p(c_j)$ is the probability of topic c_j (set uniformly in Haveliwala, 2002) and $p(q_i|c_j)$ is estimated using MLE based on the documents of the Dmoz category c_j . The scores of all the topics are combined in the following manner:

$$s_{qn} = \sum_{j} p(c_j | q) score_{jn}$$
(12)

where $score_{qn}$ is the score of node *n* in the graph (e.g., a URL in PageRank) for the query *q*.

The first key difference of the topic-sensitive PageRank method with the method proposed in our work is that all the nodes are considered of the same class, whereas we propose a graph that distinguishes between tag and URL nodes. Also note that the main bias introduced by this method arises in the nonuniform probabilities in vector \vec{v} , which makes use of the number of outgoing links belonging to the target topic. This bias is implicit in our method by the construction of the graph in which only URLs and tags from trusted resources for children are used. We implement the topic-

sensitive PageRank by considering that we are only targeting topics for children (or teenagers). Thus, we do not use a vector of scores of different topics; instead, we estimate the scores for the children's set of URLs found in Dmoz as we do for our method. We also use the query definition proposed in Equation 8 to make the results comparable with our method.

Seed-Based Random Walk

Fuxman et al. (2008) proposed a random walk using a bipartite graph of URLs and queries (tags in our problem scenario) from query logs. Their algorithm assumes as input the graph, a set of concepts, and a set of seeds of URLs or tags in which a seed is mapped to a specific class. Their task is to recommend URLs or tags related to the seed set representing the concepts. We map their model to our settings by using only one class (i.e., content for children) and by using the bag of tags that represents the user's query as the set of seeds. The task in our problem is to find other tags related to the seed tags. The transition probabilities of this random walk are defined in the following fashion (Fuxman et al., 2008):

$$p(l_t = c) = (1 - \alpha) \sum_{u:(t,u) \in E} w_{tu} \cdot p(l_u = c)$$
(13)

$$p(l_u = c) = (1 - \alpha) \sum_{t:(u,t) \in E} w_{ut} \cdot p(l_t = c)$$
(14)

where the weight values $w_{tu} = \frac{c(t, u)}{\sum_{k:(t,k)\in E} c(t, u)}$ and

 $w_{ut} = \frac{c(u, t)}{\sum_{k:(u,k)\in E} c(u, k)}$ are the transition probabilities from

node *t* to node *u* and vice versa. The value $p(l_t = c)$ represents the probability of a tag or URL being absorbed by the nodes in the set seed during the random walk. In practice, these values are the accumulated random walk score.

Note that these transition probabilities are equivalent to the transition probabilities defined in Equation 1. The main difference between the method proposed by Fuxman et al. (2008) and our method is the way the bias is introduced to the random walk. Fuxman et al. introduce the bias by establishing all the nodes from the seed set (either URLs or tags) as absorbing states. This is accomplished by setting $p(l_t) = 1$ if the node t belongs to the seed set and $p(l_t) = 0$ otherwise. Note that this implies that the values of the nodes belonging to the seed set are not updated with the random walk because they are set to 1 in the initialization step. Another difference is the special normalization scheme adopted for the random walk (Equation 5) and the use of a special query node to represent the query tags. In addition, a threshold is used by Fuxman et al. to set as null absorbing states (nodes with $p[l_t] = 0$ those nodes in which the accumulated probability falls below the threshold. This threshold is also used for efficiency purposes in the implementation.

Spam Detection Random Walk

Wu and Chellapilla (2007) used a biased random walk to extract spam communities. The input of the algorithm is a graph (all the nodes are of the same type) and a seed set of nodes, which are used to bias the random walk. We map this method to our problem scenario by using the query bag of tags as the seed set. In this case, the tags related to the seed tags are seen as the spam community to be detected.

The node probabilities are updated using the following expression:

$$p(i)_{t+1} = \frac{1}{2} [I + AD] p_t(i)$$
(15)

where *I* is the identity matrix, *A* is the adjacency matrix of the graph, and *D* is the diagonal matrix in which the elements $d_{ii} = \frac{1}{d(i)}$, where d(i) is the degree of node *i*. The bias is introduced in the initialization step of the random walk, by setting the node probabilities in the following fashion:

$$p(i)_{t} = \begin{cases} 1/|S| & \text{if } i \in S \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$
(16)

where S is set of seed nodes and |S| is the size of the set.

Wu and Chellapilla (2007) added four additional constraints to the random walk in the implementation: First, the probability scores are truncated to zero if they fall under a specified threshold or if they fall in the bottom of the k-percentile probability distribution. We adopted the former in our implementation. Note that an analogous parameter is used by Fuxman et al. (2008) for optimization purposes. Second, the probabilities are renormalized to sum to one after each random walk iteration. This process is carried out if there are leaf nodes with no children nodes. However, this situation does not occur given the construction of our bipartite graph. Third, a list of trusted (white) domains are considered to prevent the random walk from following links to these set of domains. This restriction is reasonable in the case of spam detection because trusted domains are unlikely to link to spam. However, we believe this restriction is specific to the problem of spam detection and we did not consider it in our problem scenario. Fourth, the node probabilities are biased by penalizing those nodes that have a greater distance in respect to the seed nodes. This is carried out by weighting the node probability $p(i)_t = p(i)_t \cdot 2^{\delta}(i)$, where $\delta(i)$ is the shortest path distance of node *i* to the nodes in the seed set. This restriction was considered.

This method differs from our method in that it does not distinguish the types of nodes (as was the case with the topic-sensitive PageRank), and the transition probabilities are defined based on the number of nodes in the seed set; thus, the information about the relationship of tags and URLs is not captured by this method. As was the case with the previous methods, the information on suitability for children represented through the pointwise KL divergence metric is not captured.

Data Set Extraction

Training Data

As training data, we created a set of *Del.icio.us* bookmarks from the collection created by Wetzker et al. (2008). To the best of our knowledge, this is the largest collection of social tagged data available for research. The collection contains 132 million bookmarks and 420 million tag assignments, and was retrieved between December 2007 and April 2008. The set was created by extracting the bookmarks of the URLs listed in the Kids and Teens section of Dmoz. These URLs link to "web sites that have been selected for age-appropriate content by a team of volunteer editors."⁴ These resources have also been used in other IR problems for young users (Eickhoff et al., 2010; Gyllstrom & Moens, 2010) with positive results.

The data cleaning process has particular importance in our problem because we require well-formed and meaningful tags to construct query suggestions. We observed that tags are noisy and their usage varies greatly among users. We estimated that 9% of the tag volume was not useful as candidates for query expansion, either because the tags were not descriptive or because they referred to web addresses (e.g., to-see, www.sfgate.com). We also found a high percentage of illformed descriptive tags (e.g., artist [music]) and a large percentage of multiworded tags, both with and without token separators (e.g., *new-york, avrillavigne*). Traditionally, these problems are addressed by relying on the redundancy of the data. However, in our problem, other strategies are required given that the volume of information aimed at children (and in general to a niche of users) is significantly smaller than the volume of data aimed at the average user.

The data cleaning process was carried out in two steps: tag normalization and tag filtering. For the normalization we first follow a rule-based approach to generate a homogeneous representation of the multiworded tags. Token separators such as "_", ".", "" were normalized to the character "_". For example, this procedure maps the tags *star.wars* and *star-stars* to *star_wars*. To normalize multiworded tags (e.g., *avrillavigne*), we define a relation *R* between the set of tags without token separation *T* and the set of known multiworded tags in the collection *MT*, in which each tag of the form $x_1 x_2 ... x_n$ is associated to one or more of their split forms (if any) $x_1_x_2_..._x_n$. The relation is defined as

$$R = \{(a, B) | a \in T, B \subseteq T_h, b \in T_h \land a = b_{untokenized}\}$$
(17)

where $b_{untokenized}$ is equal to the tag *b* without any token separation. This relation gives us a set of candidate split forms for a target tag. However, it is still necessary to decide when the tag has to be split because the split form of a tag is not always the correct form (it may be because of misuse language). Three features were used to decide when tags of the form x_1x_2 should be split into $x_1_x_2$: (a) normalized pointwise mutual information (*nPMI*); (b) the ratio between the

⁴http://www.dmoz.com

frequency of the tag in the form $x_1 x_2$ and the form $x_1 x_2$

 $(\frac{f_{x_1,x_2}}{f_{x_1,x_2}})$; and (c) the frequency of the tag in the form $x_1_x_2$.

PMI is commonly used in natural language processing for mining collocations. A drawback of *PMI* is its sensitivity to the frequency of the terms involved in the calculation (Van de Cruys, 2011). Higher *PMI* values indicate a higher association between the terms; nonetheless, high values can also hold even if the two terms rarely occur in the collection. For this reason, we used *nPMI*, which is less sensitive to the sparsity of the data. Equation 18 shows how the *nPMI* is calculated for two terms. To calculate the *nPMI* for *n* terms, we used the total correlation information metric, which is one of the possible generalizations of *PMI*. This metric measures the amount of information that is shared among a set a random variables (Van de Cruys, 2011). Equations 18 and 19 shows its definition.

$$pmi(x_{1}, x_{2}) = \log\left[\frac{p(x_{1}, x_{2})}{p(x_{1})p(x_{2})}\right],$$

$$npmi(x_{1}, x_{2}) = \frac{pmi(x_{1}, y_{2})}{-\log[\max(p(x_{1}), p(y_{2}))]}$$
(18)

$$pmi(x_{1}, x_{2}, ..., x_{n}) = \log \left[\frac{p(x_{1}, x_{2}, ..., x_{n})}{\prod_{i=1}^{n} p(x_{i})} \right],$$

$$npmi(x_{i}, x_{2}, ..., x_{n}) = \frac{pmi(x_{1}, x_{2}, ..., x_{n})}{pmi(x_{1}, x_{2}, ..., x_{n})}$$
(19)

$$npmt(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = \frac{1}{-\log[\max(p(x_1), p(x_2), \dots, p(x_n))]}$$

The ratio $\frac{f_{x_1,x_2}}{f_{x_1,x_2}}$ was used as a feature to decide when to split hyphenized tokens because, in some cases, the terms within a

split tag have a high level of association, but the correct form is as a single token (e.g., hummingbird). The threshold values for the three features were set experimentally to maximize precision on a sample of 2,000 tags without being split and their manually annotated correct split form. Concretely, by setting the parameter *npmi* to 0.4, the ratio to 0.015, and the frequency threshold to 3, we were able to obtain a maximum precision of 87% on the sample extracted.

We also filter out tags satisfying any of the following conditions: (a) is in the dictionary of tags that refer to adult or explicit content, (b) is used for personal administrative purposes (i.e., *to-do, to-see*), (c) contains nonalphanumerical characters, (d) is a URL or points to a web service, or (e) was submitted by less than three users in the entire collection.

Test Data

We used a large, anonymized sample of search logs from the Yahoo! search engine from May 2010 to August 2010. We used only logs from registered users who provided birth date, sex, and a valid zip code. We segmented the log into the following age groups relying on the birth date:

- Young children: 8 and 9 years old
- Children: 10 to 12 years old
- Teenagers: 13 to 15 years old
- Adults: older than 18 years

Similar age groups have been used in previous research on children's search behavior on the web and represent marked stages of child development (Duarte Torres & Weber, 2011). These groups were also selected because we can create models from the age ranges defined in the Dmoz directory. We left out the group of users aged 16 to 18 years for simplicity. Also note that the focus of the Dmoz Kids and Teens section is on children and *young* teenagers.

For each group of users, we create a set of query tuples containing the query submitted by the user and a query reformulation that occurred within the same search session. In this work, a search session is defined as a sequence of events $S = \langle e_1, e_2, \ldots, e_n \rangle$ ordered in chronological order such that $timestamp(e_{i+1}) - timestamp(e_i) \leq 30$ minutes for every *i*. Each event can be either a query submission (e_i^q) or a click on a URL (e_i^c). The time window length of 30 minutes is widely used in the literature (Huang & Efthimiadis, 2009; Jensen, Beitzel, Chowdhury, & Frieder, 2006; Wang & Davison, 2008), and it has also been shown to be appropriate for search sessions of young users (Bilal, 2002; Druin et al., 2009).

A query $e_{i+1}^{q'}$ is a query reformulation of e_i^q if: (a) the former is a prefix (e.g., *brit*, *britney spears*) or a suffix of the latter (e.g., *wars cheat codes, lego star wars cheat codes*), or the latter contains all the words of the former plus another word, independently of the order in which the words appear (e.g., *york giants, super bowl york giants xxv*); and (b) there are no query events between them, although there can be an arbitrary number of click events between the two queries (i.e., $S = \langle e_{i+1}^q, e_{i+2}^c, e_{i+3}^c, e_{i+4}^{q'} \rangle$ is allowed).

Using this procedure, we obtained on the order of thousands of query tuples submitted by users aged 8 to 12 years and hundreds of thousands for users older than 12 years.

We follow an analogous procedure to extract query tuples from the AOL search logs. Nonetheless, because no user age information is provided in these logs, we used the method described by Torres, Hiemstra, and Serdyukov (2010) to extract search sessions with clicks landing on trusted content for children. These queries are identified by matching the URLs clicked in the log with the domains listed in the Dmoz Kids and Teens section. Search sessions were grouped according the target audience of the URLs (i.e., kids, teens, and adults) instead of the user age. In Dmoz, URLs tagged as for kids represent URLs appropriate for children aged 8 to 12 years. With teenagers we refer to content appropriate for users aged 13 to 15 years. From the AOL logs, we extracted about 480,000 queries and 20,000 sessions. From these sessions, we obtained on the order of tens of thousands of query pairs for the three age groups.

TABLE 1.	Query	examples	from	the	query	logs.
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Query	Source	Query suggestion
monsters	Bing rw + kl AOL	truck games, jobs, high, jam, energy inc, music, film, pixar, images scary
sol practice quizzes	Bing rw + kl AOL	in computer, fourth grade test, learning, history, science sites world history, history
free jigsaw puzzles	Bing rw + kl Yahoo!	online, online for adults, play, natgeo puzzles games, play, for kids, online play
the cake is a lie	Bing rw + kl Yahoo!	t-shirt, meme, lyrics, song portal, guide, walk-through, games portal

Random Walk Evaluation

Assessing the quality of query suggestions can be a difficult task given that the intent of the user is rarely clear from only a query. However, we consider that the query suggestions that are frequently submitted by users of a given age range represent a good approximation of good query suggestions for this particular segment of users. A similar assumption has been adopted in previous query recommendation studies (Bing et al., 2011; Szpektor, Gionis, & Maarek, 2011).

The performance of the query recommendation task was measured in terms of recall and normalized discounted cumulative gain (NDCG). NDCG is a measure of the effectiveness of IR systems in correctly ranking the results compared with an optimal ranking.⁵ We used the definition proposed by Burges et al. (2005). All the metrics are calculated based on the set of query tuples extracted and described in the Test Data section. Concretely, we have two data sets for testing: query tuples extracted from the AOL search logs, and query tuples extracted from the Yahoo! search logs.

To calculate the performance scores, we define the set of query pairs from the gold standard as $G = \{\langle q, q' \rangle\}$, where q' is a query reformulation of q. And the set $S_n = \{\langle q, q', r \rangle\}$, where q' is a query suggestion of q, and r is the ranked position of q'. For instance, recall is calculated as $r = \frac{|S_n \cap G|}{|G|}$. The intersection between the set of query sug-

|G| gestions and query reformulations was performed using

exact matching. Table 1 presents query examples of the query suggestions provided by our method, Bing, and the gold standard for the

queries extracted from the AOL and Yahoo! logs. We compare the performance of the two variations of our method (Equations 3 and 4 for the forward and backward propagation schemes, respectively) against the random walk baseline (Equation 2) established by Craswell and

Szummer's (2007) framework. In addition, we compare the

results obtained by our method against the Bing query suggestions. The evaluation was carried out using two test sets consisting of query pairs extracted from the AOL logs and from the Yahoo! search logs.

In a later stage of this work, we also compared the performance of our method with the three biased random walks described in the Related Biased Random Walks section using the AOL search logs. This comparison was not carried out using the Yahoo! search logs because this set was no longer accessible to any of the authors at this stage.

Two data models were used for all the methods: *kids* and *teens*. The model *kids* uses the domains from the Dmoz directory labeled as suitable for children up to 12 years old. The *teens* model uses the domains labeled as appropriate for users aged 13 to 15 years old. Recall that the graph is constructed based on the seed URLs from Dmoz.

The graph constructed with the kids model contains 91.6K edges and 20K nodes (12.9K URLs and 7.1K tags). The graph teens contains 1.3M edges and 258K nodes (62.7K tags and 195.4K URLs). In Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, the baseline is referred to as *rw-b*, and the two variations of our method as *rw-kl-f* and *rw-kl-b*, respectively. For each test set (AOL and Yahoo! search logs), we report two types of results: using pairs in which the reformulation lands on a click and using pairs in which this click lasts at least 100 seconds, also referred to as a long click (Hassan, Jones, & Klinkner, 2010). Long clicks have been shown to be a strong predictor of search success. It has been widely reported (Craswell, Zoeter, Taylor, & Ramsey, 2008; Hua, Zhang, Liu, Ma, & Ru, 2011) that users tend to click on top-ranked results even if these results do not contain the information that users are looking for. Duarte Torres and Weber (2011) showed that this behavior is even stronger for younger users. The motivation behind using this restricted query set was to reduce this behavioral bias. It is important to mention that there is a vocabulary gap between the training and test data because the data sets were extracted from different time windows. We found that the vocabulary intersection between the children query reformulations and the tag vocabulary was between 35% and 46% when using the kids and teens model. The intersection for teenager queries was slightly lower (32% and 41%, respectively). Similar percentages were found in the AOL logs. These results indicate that the recall metrics obtained using these data sets are bounded to the percentages mentioned. All the results presented in the following sections were obtained by splitting the data set into 10 folds and averaging the metric estimated (e.g., recall). The results reported were proved to be significant using the t test with .01 level of confidence.

Experimental Parameters

The parameters of our model and the biased random walks were set experimentally to maximize performance on an independent query sample extracted from the AOL log. The best settings were used to evaluate both query sets. In the case of our method, we set the number of iterations of the

⁵http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discounted_cumulative_gain

TABLE 2. Recall comparison using the AOL log.

Query set	Model	Bing	seedRank	TopicalRank	spamRank	rw-b	rw-k-f	rw-k-b	Gain*	Gain bias†
Top 5										
Children	Kids	1.5%	3.7%	2.3%	4.9%	3.3%	9.2%	9.5%	6.2%	4.6%
	Teens		3.7%	2.3%	2.3%	2.4%	6.8%	7.4%	5.0%	5.1%
Teenagers	Kids	2.3%	3.7%	1.0%	2.8%	2.0%	5.2%	5.5%	3.5%	2.7%
	Teens		4.3%	1.7%	3.9%	2.9%	8.0%	8.8%	5.9%	4.9%
Adults	Kids	5.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%
	Teens		0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%
Top 10										
Children	Kids	2.15	7.6%	2.7%	7.6%	4.1%	11.7%	12.1%	8.0%	4.5%
	Teens		7.8%	3.5%	5.1%	4.5%	8.8%	9.7%	5.2%	4.6%
Teenagers	Kids	3.2%	6.3%	1.5%	3.9%	4.2%	6.5%	7.4%	3.2%	3.5%
-	Teens		7.2%	2.4%	4.2%	5.1%	10.5%	11.3%	6.2%	7.1%
Adults	Kids	5.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.5%
	Teens		0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	-0.1%	0.6%
Top 50										
Children	Kids	2.1%	15.0%	9.6%	14.8%	13.2%	15.8%	16.6%	3.4%	1.8%
	Teens		12.7%	8.2%	10.0%	6.9%	12.1%	12.4%	5.5%	2.4%
Teenagers	Kids	3.2%	8.1%	4.3%	8.1%	6.3%	9.9%	9.6%	3.3%	1.5%
	Teens		9.6%	7.0%	11.3%	10.1%	12.7%	13.6%	3.5%	2.3%
Adults	Kids	5.1%	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.3%
	Teens		0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	1.3%	1.2%	1.3%	-0.1%	0.4%

Note. Underlined values were not statistically significant when comparing our two random walks.

*Column expresses the performance difference between rw-k-b and rw-b.

[†]Column refers to the difference between *rw-k-b* and *spamRank*.

random walk to 30, and we set the parameter α to .1. The smoothing parameter μ of Equation 8 was set to 1200. In Tables 2 to 7, the baseline will be referred to as *rw-b* and the two variations of our method as *rw-kl-f* and *rw-kl-b*, respectively. For the topic-sensitive PageRank, we set α to .3 and we used 20 iterations. For the method proposed by Fuxman et al. (2008), we set α to .1 and we used 25 iterations. For the method presented in Wu and Chellapilla (2007), we set the number of iterations to 25. The parameters found are similar to the ones reported by Haveliwala (2002), Fuxman et al., and Wu and Chellapilla. We will refer to these methods in the AOL result tables as *topicalRank, seedRank*, and *spam-Rank*, respectively.

AOL Query Log Results

Table 2 shows the recall values obtained for the query pairs extracted from the AOL query log for the case of having landing clicks with the reformulation. We found that both variations of our method outperform the baseline and the Bing query suggestions for the *children* queries and the *teenager* queries. However, this is not the case for the set of *adults* queries, which was expected, given that our random walk method gives priority to tags that are more popular for children.

We observed that the maximum gain obtained is for the *children* queries when considering the top 10 results: 8.0% with respect to the baseline and 10.0% with respect to Bing. For the teenagers queries, the maximum gain is also obtained when considering the top 10 results with the *teens* model: 6.2% in respect to the baseline and 8.1% in respect to Bing.

We also found that for all the results, the best-performing model is aligned with the queries it targets. For instance, the *kids* models perform better on queries that target content for children and similarly for the *teens* model. This result is interesting because the kids model is considerably smaller than the *teens* models and yet the recall scores are higher. This result suggests that simply adding web resources to the model may not lead to better results. Thus, the usefulness of the web resources seems to play an important role when ranking query suggestions.

From Table 2 we also observed that *rw-kl-b* performs consistently better than *rw-kl-f*, and the performance difference in terms of recall between the two methods is up to 2.1%. The performance trends observed for the recall results were also reflected for the NDCG scores, as is shown in Table 3, which shows that the quality of the ranking is also improved by a reasonable margin.

It can be argued that these results are biased because the same collection of domains is used to extract the set of query pairs and to extract the set of bookmarks used to construct the random walk graph (i.e., build the model). We show in the next section that all trends and results for the AOL logs also hold on the large set of query pairs extracted from Yahoo!

We verified that the results reported in Tables 2 and 3 were statistically significant by applying a paired *t* test at the .01 level of confidence between the mean differences reported for all the possible pairs of methods considered. We found that the differences reported between all the methods (e.g., *Bing* vs. *rw-b*, *Bing* vs. *rw-kl-f*, *rw-b* vs. *rw-kl-f*) were statistically significant for all the results reported. However,

TABLE 3. NDCG comparison using the AOL search logs.

Query set	Model	Bing	seedRank	TopicalRank	spamRank	rw-b	rw-k-f	rw-k-b	Gain	Gain bias
Top 5										
Children	Kids	0.017	0.028	0.025	0.037	0.021	0.069	0.071	0.050	0.034
	Teens		0.027	0.031	0.040	0.018	0.042	0.045	0.027	0.005
Teenagers	Kids	0.024	0.029	0.013	0.030	0.016	0.042	0.048	0.032	0.018
-	Teens		0.035	0.019	0.021	0.031	0.064	0.067	0.036	0.046
Top 10										
Children	Kids	0.026	0.048	0.032	0.053	0.032	0.082	0.086	0.054	0.033
	Teens		0.049	0.039	0.051	0.021	0.053	0.055	0.034	0.004
Teenagers	Kids	0.031	0.042	0.016	0.036	0.017	0.045	0.046	0.029	0.010
e	Teens		0.049	0.022	0.029	0.036	0.075	0.078	0.042	0.049
Top 50										
Children	Kids	0.026	0.081	0.052	0.076	0.076	0.089	0.091	0.015	0.015
	Teens		0.069	0.055	0.068	0.042	0.069	0.071	0.029	0.003
Teenagers	Kids	0.031	0.049	0.023	0.047	0.029	0.045	0.050	0.021	0.003
	Teens		0.059	0.034	0.049	0.069	0.076	0.081	0.012	0.032

TABLE 4. Recall comparison using the AOL search logs (long clicks).

Query set	Model	Bing	seedRank	TopicalRank	spamRank	rw-b	rw-k-f	rw-k-b	Gain	Gain bias
Top 5										
Children	Kids	1.3%	3.9%	2.0%	3.3%	2.7%	8.9%	9.5%	6.7%	6.2%
Teenagers	Teens	2.3%	4.2%	1.9%	4.5%	2.4%	7.8%	8.8%	6.4%	4.3%
Adults	Teens	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	<u>0.3</u> %	<u>0.4</u> %	0.3%	0.4%
Top 10										
Children	Kids	1.8%	5.3%	2.6%	5.9%	3.6%	11.4%	12.0%	8.5%	6.1%
Teenagers	Teens	2.3%	6.5%	2.3%	5.8%	4.9%	10.4%	11.1%	6.3%	5.3%
Adults	Teens	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.7%
Top 50										
Children	Kids	1.8%	13.2%	6.6%	10.5%	12.6%	15.6%	16.4%	3.8%	5.9%
Teenagers	Teens	2.3%	9.0%	6.0%	12.4%	9.8%	12.5%	13.5%	3.7%	1.1%
Adults	Teens	4.7%	0.7%	0.7%	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%	1.3%	0.5%	0.3%

Note. Underlined values were not statistically significant when comparing our two random walks.

the exception was for the set of adult queries for which the difference between the methods *rw-kl-f* and *rw-kl-b* were not statistically significant. Values that were not proved statistically significant (between our two random walk variations) are underlined in the result tables.

Table 4 shows the results obtained for the set of AOL query reformulations in which the reformulation leads to a long click. All the methods obtained lower performance values. For instance, for the children queries, Bing obtains a recall of 1.8% when considering the top 10 results in contrast with the 2.1% obtained when using the first set of query pairs. These results suggest that the problem of predicting query reformulation is harder when we are targeting reformulations that lead to long clicks. It is important to mention that even though we observed lower performance values, the ratio between our method and the two baselines were larger. For instance, when considering the top 10 results, the performance gain of rw-k-b in respect to rw-b was 8.5% and 10.2% in respect to Bing. Using the first set of query reformulations, the performance gains were 8.1% and 10.0%, respectively. This result shows that our method performs better when it comes to predicting query suggestions that lead to long clicks, which is convenient because these query suggestions have a higher likelihood of leading to relevant information.

Biased random walks results. With respect to the three biased random walks, we observed that the TopicalRank has the lowest performance. We observed a performance loss of 1% to 3% in terms of recall in respect to rw-b (our first baseline). In contrast, we observed that the seedRank and spamRank perform similarly, although the latter outperforms the former when considering the top five ranked query suggestions. These two methods outperform rw-b, varying from 1% to 3% (in terms of recall) depending on the query set and the model used. Nonetheless, our method still performs better than all the biased random walks by a significant margin. In particular, we observed that our method outperforms by a larger margin the biased random walks when considering the top five ranked results. For instance, the recall gain with respect to spamRank for the kids model and children query set is of 4.6% and 4.4% at top 5 and top

10, respectively. The precision gain with respect to rw-b is 6.2% and 8.0%, respectively.

From the results obtained for the query suggestions landing on long clicks reported in Table 4, we observed overall lower performance for the three biased random walks considered, as was the case for the Bing query suggestions and the *rw-b* method. For instance, for the children query set and for the *kids* model, the recall for *seedRank*, *TopicalRank*, and *spamRank* was 3.7%, 2.3%, and 4.9% in the query set with all the clicks, whereas in the query set with long clicks, it was 3.9%, 2.0%, and 3.3%, respectively. At top 10, the performance varied from 7.6%, 2.7%, and 7.6% to 5.3%, 2.6%, and 5.9% for the three biased random walks, respectively.

We found that the performance gain of our method with respect to the two best-performing biased random walks for children's queries tend to be higher when the evaluation is carried out on the query set with reformulations landing on long clicks. In contrast, we observed slightly lower performance gains for the teenager query set. For instance, when using the best-performing models (the model kids for the children query set and the model teens for the teenager query set), the recall gain in respect to spamRank for the children query set is 6.2% at top 5 and 6.1% at top 10, whereas the recall gain observed for the query reformulations landing on clicks (not only long clicks) was 4.6% and 4.5% at top 5 and top 10, respectively. For the case of the teenager query set, the gain varies from 4.3% to 4.9% for the query set on clicks and *long* clicks, respectively, when considering results at top 5, and 4.3% to 4.9% when considering results at top 10.

Yahoo! search engine logs. Recall that the previous data set represents queries aimed at retrieving content for children, and this data set represents queries submitted by users for which their age can be estimated using the user profiles. Thus, the results reported from these data provide a clearer picture of the performance of the methods for queries submitted by young users. Tables 5 and 6 report the recall and NDCG scores obtained by all the methods. As was the case with the AOL query log, we observed that our random walk method outperforms the baseline and the query suggestions from Bing. Similarly, *rw-kl-b* consistently performs better than *rw-kl-f*. The performance gain obtained by our method against the baseline and Bing was on the same order (around 6.1% with respect to the baseline and 9.2% with respect to Bing).

Interestingly, we found that the biggest performance gain is obtained for the youngest group of users and the gain decreases for older users. Another important difference observed with respect to the experiments on the AOL data is that the performance gain is higher at top 5 suggestions than at top 10. This is a desirable result given the importance of ranking suggestions at the top positions in the case of children users (Duarte Torres & Weber, 2011). This result is also reflected by the low recall Bing has for the youngest group of users, particularly at top five (3.6% for users aged 8 and 9 years vs. 6.2% for adults). However, at top 10, the recall

TABLE 5. Recall comparison using the Yahoo! search logs.

Query set	Model	Bing	rw-b	rw-k-f	rw-k-b	Gain
Top 5						
8–9	Kids	3.6%	5.3%	11.1%	11.9%	6.6%
	Teens		4.2%	8.0%	8.1%	3.9%
10-12	Kids	3.7%	4.4%	8.3%	10.1%	5.7%
	Teens		4.3%	5.4%	5.7%	1.4%
13-15	Kids	4.1%	1.0%	3.0%	4.3%	3.3%
	Teens		5.0%	8.6%	9.4%	4.4%
Adults	Kids	6.2%	0.3%	1.1%	2.1%	1.8%
	Teens		0.4%	5.0%	5.8%	5.4%
Top 10						
8–9	Kids	7.6%	9.2%	14.0%	15.0%	5.8%
	Teens		8.4%	12.2%	12.2%	3.8%
10-12	Kids	7.6%	8.2%	12.1%	12.8%	4.6%
	Teens		7.5%	8.0%	8.9%	1.4%
13-15	Kids	7.9%	1.7%	7.0%	7.4%	5.7%
	Teens		5.0%	10.2%	11.3%	6.3%
Adults	Kids	7.9%	3.2%	2.8%	3.5%	0.3%
	Teens		6.5%	7.6%	7.8%	1.3%
Top 50						
8–9	Kids	7.6%	15.3%	21.0%	21.5%	6.2%
	Teens		17.1%	22.1%	23.2%	6.1%
10-12	Kids	7.6%	13.1%	16.3%	17.1%	4.0%
	Teens		15.7%	20.6%	21.2%	5.5%
13-15	Kids	7.9%	4.8%	13.1%	13.5%	8.7%
	Teens		15.2%	17.4%	18.5%	3.3%
Adults	Kids	7.9%	4.3%	4.9%	5.6%	1.3%
	Teens		7.1%	8.1%	8.9%	1.8%

performance of Bing is comparable across all the age groups. This trend suggests that queries from the youngest are more frequently on the *long-tail* than queries from adults and teenagers. This observation emphasizes the usefulness of our method to address these types of queries because the best-performing query suggestions for our method are obtained at top five for the youngest group of users.

As was the case with the AOL data, the best-performing model was aligned with its targeting age group. That is, the model *kids*, which targets users younger than 12 years, outperforms the *teens* model for queries of users from 8 to 12 years. Similarly, this model provided a better ranking quality, as is shown in Table 6. We believe that this result is valuable because it suggests that the method proposed can be exploited on different information domains or on a different niche of users by carefully choosing the set of seed URLs (i.e., model).

It is important to mention that the low values of NDCG reported are due to the sparsity of the data. On average, we collected 1.6 query suggestions per query. Nonetheless, numbers on the same order have been reported on query recommendation studies for long-tailed queries (Szpektor et al., 2011).

Table 7 shows the results obtained with the Yahoo! search logs using only the query reformulations that lead to *long* clicks. As we observed with the AOL logs, the performance values were lower than the results obtained with the first set. Importantly, we also observed that the ratio gains between our method and the two baselines were also higher for these

TABLE 6. NDCG	comparison	using the	Yahoo!	search	logs.
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Query set	Model	Bing	rw-b	rw-k-f	rw-k-b	Gain
Top 5						
8–9	Kids	0.023	0.043	0.117	0.121	0.078
	Teens		0.032	0.083	0.084	0.052
10-12	Kids	0.039	0.044	0.105	0.110	0.066
	Teens		0.037	0.052	0.053	0.016
13-15	Kids	0.041	0.017	0.026	0.028	0.011
	Teens		0.034	0.079	0.082	0.048
Adults	Kids	0.055	0.000	0.018	0.020	0.020
	Teens		0.041	0.049	0.051	0.010
Top 10						
8–9	Kids	0.023	0.060	0.130	0.132	0.072
	Teens		0.058	0.129	0.133	0.075
10-12	Kids	0.040	0.061	0.119	0.121	0.060
	Teens		0.051	0.066	0.069	0.018
13-15	Kids	0.041	0.019	0.038	0.040	0.021
	Teens		0.041	0.086	0.088	0.047
Adults	Kids	0.055	0.010	<u>0.033</u>	0.035	0.025
	Teens		0.051	0.054	0.056	0.005
Top 50						
8–9	Kids	0.023	0.079	0.149	0.152	0.073
	Teens		0.076	0.137	0.137	0.061
10-12	Kids	0.040	0.079	0.135	0.137	0.058
	Teens		0.080	0.106	0.109	0.029
13-15	Kids	0.041	0.022	0.068	0.070	0.048
	Teens		0.065	0.118	0.120	0.055
Adults	Kids	0.055	0.005	0.049	0.054	0.049
	Teens		0.005	<u>0.059</u>	0.060	0.055

TABLE 7. Recall comparison using the Yahoo! search logs (long clicks).

Query set	Model	Bing	rw-b	rw-k-f	rw-k-b	Gain
Top 5						
8–9	Kids	2.7%	4.7%	11.0%	11.7%	7.0%
10-12	Kids	3.2%	4.1%	8.2%	8.8%	4.7%
13-15	Teens	3.5%	4.7%	8.5%	9.3%	4.6%
Adults	Teens	5.7%	0.2%	4.8%	5.7%	5.6%
Top 10						
8–9	Kids	7.1%	8.7%	13.9%	15.0%	6.3%
10-12	Kids	7.3%	7.6%	8.9%	9.9%	2.3%
13-15	Teens	7.1%	5.0%	10.1%	11.2%	6.2%
Adults	Teens	7.2%	6.2%	7.3%	7.6%	1.5%
Top 50						
8–9	Kids	6.8%	14.9%	20.9%	21.5%	6.6%
10-12	Kids	7.2%	12.7%	16.1%	17.1%	4.4%
13-15	Teens	7.4%	14.9%	17.3%	18.3%	3.5%
Adults	Teens	7.2%	7.0%	8.0%	8.8%	1.8%

query reformulations, which suggests that the query suggestions provided by our method are more likely to lead to relevant content. For instance, the performance gain with respect to Bing and *rw-b* for the queries of users aged 10 to 12 years at top 10 was 7.9% and 6.3%, respectively, whereas the gain in the set of all clicks (not only *long* clicks) was 7.4% and 5.8%, respectively.

We apply the method described in the previous section to verify the statistical significance of the results. Similarly, we found all the results (when comparing all the combinations of methods and within the models) were statistically significant at the .01 level. However, we found that for a few cases, the difference between our two random models was not statistically significant.

Learning-to-Rank Tags

State-of-the-art search engines use a large number of features to rank web results. In the previous section, we showed that our method outperforms traditional random walks and a state-of-the art search engine in the problem of recommending queries to young users. We consider that the results can be improved further using a learning-to-rank framework in which our random walk method would represent one of the features. We envisage three types of features to improve the system: language modeling, topic features, and distance to seed tags. In the following paragraphs, we describe the features introduced for each one of these categories.

Language Modeling Features

We expect query suggestions to appear more frequently in the same documents in which the query occurs, particularly on documents written with a vocabulary appropriate for children. We build a language model using the websites listed in the Dmoz Kids and Teens directory to estimate the likelihood of a query suggestion candidate co-occurring in the neighborhood of the user's query. The language model is defined in the following way:

$$p(q|Mc_t) = \prod_{i=1}^{|Q|} p(q_i|Mc_t)$$
(20)

where Mc_t is the language model of the context in which the query suggestion *t* occurs. The context is constructed using n-grams in a window of *n* words before and after q_i . Note that this window can be set as the whole document or as fine-grained section of the document. The probability is estimated in the following manner:

$$p(q_i|Mc_i) = \frac{cf_{Mc}(q_i, t) + \mu \ p(q_i|M)}{|C| + \mu}$$
(21)

where *M* is the entire Dmoz collection, |C| is the total of n-grams in the context (i.e., pseudodocument) we are considering, and μ is the Dirichlet smoothing parameter. We estimate these parameters for optimal performance using a set of the queries of the AOL query log. The context window was set to 20 words before and after *t* and μ to 800.

We also expect suggestions more frequently used by children to appear more frequently in the Dmoz Kids and Teens collection. For this reason, we consider as a feature the probability of the query suggestion in this collection: p(t|M).

String Features

We used two simple string features: query length and query suggestion length. We believe children favor shorter query suggestions because these suggestions tend to represent simpler words. We represent the length of the query by the number of tokens and by the number of alphanumerical characters. We report only the latter because the results obtained by both approaches were identical.

Topic Features

We hypothesize that the rank of the suggestions can be improved by informing the system about the topics that the query targets and the candidate suggestions that best represent the content of these topics. Consider the query penguin. The suggestions games, online, and cheats are the three topranked results provided by our random walk. Although these suggestions are coherent and appropriate for children, the user submitting this query may be targeting general information about the flightless bird (e.g., for a school homework), or the user may simply be looking for pictures or videos of penguins instead of gaming-related content. In the Dmoz Kids and Teens directory, penguin is associated with the topics School Time\Science and Games\Computers and Videos. Using this information, our system can boost the suggestions related to the topic school time, which are underrepresented given the dominance of the gaming aspect for this query in our data.

The strategy is to generate a topic representation of the query and the candidate suggestion to estimate the topic coherence between the two elements. For this purpose, a query topic classifier was implemented by indexing the documents in the Dmoz Kids and Teens directory, which are appropriate for children aged up to 12 years old. We indexed about 15,000 websites with this approach. In this collection, each document is located under one or more categories. Documents were mapped to topics by using the most popular (in terms of size) and specific category to which the document belongs. We trim the depth of the category to two levels in an attempt to avoid data sparsity. This procedure led to 60 different categories or topics.

The classification of queries and query suggestions is carried out based on the top 100 matching documents (using standard *tf-idf* ranking). Concretely, the topics associated with each one of the results returned for the query are fetched and the retrieval score are aggregated on a per-topic basis. In this manner, we obtain a weight of the importance of each topic for the query. A vector of topic features is constructed by normalizing the scores in the vector between 0 and 1 (nonmatching topics are assigned a score of zero). Formally, each topic feature is defined in the following manner:

$$cat_q(z) = \sum_{j=1}^{|R_{100}|} I(z = category[doc_j]) * score(doc_j) \quad (22)$$

where I is the identity function and category(d) is the func-

tion that maps a document to a Dmoz category. The $cat_q(z)$ values are normalized by dividing over the sum of all the topic features calculated given a query *q*.

Each document is represented using these features as the vector $V_Q = (cat_q[1], cat_q[2]) \dots, cat_q[|z|])$, where |z| is the total number of topics considered in the system.

Concretely, we used the topic vectors as features in two ways:

- The vector representation of the query as a set of features of size |z|
- By computing the cosine similarity between the topic vector of the query and the candidate query suggestion:

$$sim = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{|s|} A_i \times B_i}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{|z|} A_i \sum_{i=1}^{|z|} B_i}}$$

The motivation of the latter is to capture the topical cohesion between the query and the query suggestion.

Similarity to Seed Keywords

Seed tags as *for kids* and *kids* are often used to signal that a web resource is designed for children. For this reason, we expect children-oriented suggestions to appear more frequently near these seed tags. We estimate the distance between the candidate query suggestion and a predefined set of seeds tags (concretely, *for kids, for children, kids, 4kids*). We expect this feature to stress candidate query suggestions that are more child-friendly. The estimation was carried out by summing the probabilities of the query suggestion being used to describe a web resource in conjunction with the seed tags:

$$sim(t|S) = \sum_{i=1}^{|s|} p(t|s_i) p(t|s_i) = \frac{cf_{B_k}(t, s_i)}{cf_{B_k} s_i}$$
(23)

where *S* is the set of seed tags. For each query, the *sim* values of the query suggestion candidates are normalized between 0 and 1. The probability $p(t|s_i)$ is estimated on the delicious corpus, which was also used for the random walk.

Learning-to-Rank Evaluation

We evaluate the features described in the previous section using the query set of users from 10 to 12 and 13 to 15 years old. Concretely, we used a subset of the query reformulations used in the evaluation of the random walk. The training (and testing) data are on the order of the tens of thousands of query reformulations. The training data were constructed by extracting those queries for which there is at least one correct result in the list suggestions provided by the random walk, considering the top 50 ranked results. We use the gradient boosted regression tree learner⁶ to train the model,

⁶http://people.cs.umass.edu/~vdang/ranklib.html

TABLE 8.	NDCG	scores	for	each	feature.
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Feature	Age	NDCG	NDCG global
All	8–9	0.670	0.189
	10-12	0.642	0.172
	13-15	0.623	0.124
Topic vector	8–9	0.137	0.230
	10-12	0.090	0.021
	13-15	0.111	0.022
Topic sim	8–9	0.146	0.032
-	10-12	0.123	0.028
	13-15	0.142	0.028
$p(q Mc_t)$	8–9	0.343	0.090
	10-12	0.313	0.070
	13-15	0.251	0.050
p(t M)	8-9	0.031	0.012
• · ·	10-12	0.052	0.014
	13-15	0.021	0.004
sim(t S)	8-9	0.052	0.016
	10-12	0.063	0.017
	13-15	0.051	0.015
q. length	8–9	0.006	0.002
1 0	10-12	0.005	0.002
	13-15	0.003	0.001
s. length	8–9	0.001	0.000
C	10-12	0.004	0.002
	13-15	0.003	0.001
rw-kl-b	8–9	0.564	0.132
	10-12	0.541	0.121
	13-15	0.523	0.082

TABLE 9. Leave-one-out NDCG scores.

Feature	Age	NDCG	NDCG total	% Difference
All	8–9	0.670	0.189	0.0%
	10-12	0.642	0.172	0.0%
	13-15	0.623	0.124	0.0%
No topic vector	8–9	0.642	0.181	-4.2%
	10-12	0.639	0.178	-0.5%
	13-15	0.602	0.143	-3.4%
No topic sim.	8–9	0.564	0.159	-15.8%
-	10-12	0.550	0.153	-14.8%
	13-15	0.525	0.138	-15.7%
No $p(q Mc_t)$	8–9	0.555	0.162	-17.2%
	10-12	0.568	0.158	-11.5%
	13-15	0.581	0.138	-6.7%
No $p(t M)$	8–9	0.656	0.182	-2.1%
· · ·	10-12	0.612	0.162	-4.7%
	13-15	0.601	0.143	-3.5%
No <i>sim(t S</i>)	8–9	0.582	0.164	-13.1%
	10-12	0.572	0.159	-10.9%
	13-15	0.590	0.143	-5.3%
No q. length	8–9	0.670	0.189	0.0%
	10-12	0.641	0.171	-0.2%
	13-15	0.621	0.123	-0.3%
No s. length	8–9	0.670	0.189	0.0%
	10-12	0.640	0.171	-0.3%
	13-15	0.621	0.123	-0.3%
No rw-kl-b	8–9	0.172	0.069	-74.3%
	10-12	0.153	0.043	-76.2%
	13-15	0.160	0.038	-74.3%

Note. Underlined values were not proved statistically significant at p < .01.

and we perform 10-fold cross validation on the same data. Default parameters were used.

Results. The best performance is obtained when all the features are combined: The NDCG is increased from 0.564 to 0.670, 0.541 to 0.642, and 0.523 to 0.623 for children aged 8 and 9 years, 10 to 12 years, and for teenagers, respectively, on the training data using 10-fold cross validation. The performance of the entire data set (recall that the training data are a subset of the query reformulations extracted for users aged 10 to 12 years old) is increased from 0.132 to 0.189, 0.121 to 0.172, and 0.082 to 0.124 for users aged 8 and 9, 10 to 12, and 13 to 15, respectively.

Table 8 presents the NDCG scores obtained when each feature is used independently. We found that the random walk score is by a large margin the best predictor (e.g., 0.541 vs. 0.313 for the next best-performing feature in the case of users aged 10 to 12 years). The topic similarity metric and the language model trained on the Dmoz corpus were the next best-performing features. For instance, for users aged 10 to 12 years, these features represent a gain of 0.123 and 0.313 NDCG, respectively. A similar outcome was observed for the other age groups.

The other features perform poorly when they are used in isolation in the system. This result can be explained by the fact that these features do not model the relation between the *Note.* Underlined values were not proved statistically significant at p < .01.

query and the query suggestion. For instance, the feature expressed in Equation 23 provides only information about the similarity of the query suggestion to a predefined set of seed tags. Nonetheless, these features are beneficial when they are used in conjunction with the random walk score.

Table 9 presents the NDCG values obtained by the system when dropping each one of the features. Consistently with the results reported in Table 8, leaving out the random walk feature leads to a performance loss of 74.3% for children between 8 and 9 years old, 76.2% for users aged 10 to 12 years, and 74.3% for teenagers. Interestingly, the biggest performance loss after the random walk feature is obtained by dropping the topic similarity feature (e.g., 14.8% for the 10- to 12-years-old group), which shows the importance of *informing* the system about the topical relation between the topics and the query. We observed that the topic representation of the query did not lead to significant improvements. This may be because of the large number of features that this vector represents (up to 80). Interestingly, the sim(t|S)feature also leads to a significant loss of performance despite its simplicity (e.g., 13.1% for the 8- and 9-years-old group). Given these results, we believe it is worth studying in future work a more formal procedure to select the set of tags because the performance gain is already significant with a small (although representative) set of seed tags. As was the case with the results in Table 8, we observed that the string

features did not influence the overall performance of the classifier; consequently, these features did not provide any performance gain in our experiments. The results presented in Tables 8 and 9 were proved statistically significant using a *t* test at p < 0.1 except for the values underlined in the tables.

Conclusions

In this article, we show how tags from social bookmarking systems can be exploited to produce query suggestions for a specialized group of users using a set of seed web resources and a biased random walk based on the pointwise KL divergence metric between a foreground model and background model. We further improved the ranking of our results using a learning-to-rank approach by using the random walk score along intuitive features to boost query suggestions oriented on children topics. Our method can be used to improve current search assistance functionality for children since it performs the best for the youngest groups of users considered (8 and 9 years old). This segment of users is not served as well, as older users partly because of the long-tail problem, which is more pronounced for these users according to the created test collection.

An important result of our work is the fact that we obtained consistent results in the AOL and Yahoo! logs. This suggests that a similar method to extract log data using quality seed web resources can be exploited to study and evaluate other problems in IR for children, such as content filtering or reranking of child-friendly web results. For future work, we are interested in applying the method proposed in different domains. In this work, we focused on content for children, but potentially we could apply the same principles in domains such as business or other specific fields of expertise.

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