

Shortest Path Challenging Problem

Context of Mobile Devices in Urban Area Considering Weakened GPS Signal and Data Network Traffic

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Abstract: The shortest path problem is a well know routing problem which received a considerable amount of attention for several decades. This problem is the cornerstone of any real-world routing problem including the VRP or the Hub Location. The majority of efficient methods dedicated to these problems consist in computing first the matrix of shortest path between nodes. Furthermore, in recent years there has been a revival of interest in the shortest path problem used in the context of various transportation engineering applications. This paper relates to the conception of efficient routing algorithms tuned for mobility. More precisely, it is targeted to the field of pedestrian mobility in an urban environment. In a mobile environment, specific constraints as wireless network traffic disturbances must be taken into account. The architecture that we tune for the project is based on an active monitoring system, which required new shortest path calculation using the exposed web service API. The web service is performed when a specific constraint appears or a new part of the path is required. Using of such architecture offers a new approach in operational research algorithms and our contribution stands at the crossroads of optimization research community and the web service community expectations.

1 INTRODUCTION

Distributed Computing Technologies and Web services are growing rapidly in importance in today's computing environment and are already widely accepted as industrial standards. By combining modern computing technologies and Operations Research, Optimization Services will reach a larger audience informed of, and benefit from, an increasing amount of OR software implemented gaining gradual quality.

Moreover advances in digital electronics and wireless communications have enabled the development of low-cost Global Positioning Systems (GPS) which can be used by pedestrian mobility in urban environment. In wireless network traffic, loss of connection due to network overload and bad localization lead to a significant increase in travel times and a decrease in the probability of being on-time at the final destination.

Generally, pedestrians using GPS have a very little knowledge on the path they walk. When the

GPS signal is broken, pedestrian can easily be lost by taking a wrong direction or can be forced to wait for GPS signal. Never mind the case, regarding pedestrian needs, an inadequate paths planning can lead to an "unfriendly walking environment" with people feeling insecurity.

From a road safety viewpoint, pedestrians should be provided with safe conditions where they avoid being distracted by watching their GPS until the signal returns. However, that cannot always be achieved. A series of measures should be considered to improve pedestrian safety and mobility. Therefore, it is essential to use routing that effectively respond to the wirelee network disruptions and give high quality solutions within acceptable calculation times. One important question to be answered is how to use the level of online information needed to obtain higher solution quality with lower calculation times.

In this paper, we focus on the dynamic shortest path problems with stochastic disruptions in the wireless network. We are particulary interested in networks where a single pedestrian has a certain

origin–destination pair. The pedestrian gets the real-time information from the GPS at each node which is an intersection of roads and/or streets. At every intersection, the GPS determines the next road to follow depending on the current state of the pedestrian.

We concentrate more particularly on the design of efficient routing algorithms tuned for pedestrian mobility in an urban environment. The main contributions of this paper are as follows: 1) we develop a dynamic shortest path algorithm dedicated to a mobility implementation; 2) we package this operational research algorithm as a software service based on Web services paradigm that facilitate distributed computing; 3) next to this we design a basic pedestrian system for Android using the exposed web service API; 4) we test the efficiency of our dynamic shortest path algorithm and compare this to the optimal solutions found with Dijkstra algorithm. The numerical results show that the average gap is promising.

The paper is organised as follows: the section 2 presents the context of this research. Section 3 describes the system architecture for pedestrian guidance system in an urban environment. An example on the creation of a client is explained in section 4. In Section 5, the numerical results and the important insights are discussed before the conclusion.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 Shortest Path

In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in the shortest path problem for use in various transportation-engineering applications. Without any doubt it could be directly attributed to the recent developments in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), particularly in the field of Route Guidance System (RGS) and real time Automated Vehicle Dispatching System (AVDS). In both cases, there is a definite need to find the shortest paths from an origin to a destination in a quick and accurate manner.

In the above applications, the traditional optimal shortest path algorithms often cannot be used because in a large dense network the computation of the shortest path can take a long time and is too computationally intensive to be feasible for real-time systems.

A number of heuristic search strategies have been developed for increasing the computational

efficiency of shortest path search.

Most of these heuristic search strategies originated in the artificial intelligence (AI) field including but not limited to (Hart et al., 1968), (Nilsson, 1971), (Pearl, 1984) where the shortest path problem is used as a mechanism to validate the effectiveness of these heuristics.

The current RGS field in both North America, and Europe have generated renewed interest in using heuristic algorithms to find shortest paths in a traffic network for real-time vehicle routing operations. (Guzolek and Koch, 1989) discussed how heuristic search methods could be used in vehicle navigation system. (Kuznetsov, 1993) debated applications of an A* algorithm (first proposed by Hart et al. 1968), a bi-directional search method, and a hierarchical search method.

Since then, a huge number of researchers have followed the trend and tried to introduce a worldwide strategy for improving the efficiency of the shortest path search process. These efforts have resulted in a large literature including a wide spectrum of search strategies and mechanisms.

For a recent survey it is possible to refer to (Fu et al., 2006) who proposes a state of the art and examines the implementation and performance of numerous heuristic algorithms. A recent survey of (Garropo et al., 2010) focuses on the multi-constrained approximated shortest path algorithms representing by recent publications of (Gubichev et al., 2010) or (Willhalm, 2005).

2.2 Web Services

2.2.1 Historical Perspective

In recent decades, web services based solver servers offered access to commercial or non-commercial implementation of algorithms for solving non-linear and linear problems. The well known formats as MPS (Mathematical Programming System (IBM 1976)) and some others (MPL (Maximal Software, 2002), LINGO (Lindo Systems Inc, 2008), and CAMPS (Lucas and Mitra, 1988)) specific to a given solver are commonly used as a file format for presenting and archiving linear programming (LP) and mixed integer programming (MIP) problems. Each client submits a text file which contains the model and the data to a server. The results were sent back to the client either via email or via a file which could be downloaded from the server using the ftp or http protocol. A comprehensive review of modelling systems, formats and their features can be found in (Dominguez-Ballesteros et al., 2002).

The design, development, implementation and deployment of decision support systems have been transformed by web based technologies. (Cohen et al., 2001) give examples of web-based decision support systems in Supply Chain Management, Inventory Control or supplier management. (Bhargava et al., 2007) reviews and summarises recent technology developments, current usage of Web-based DSS, and trends in the deployment of such systems.

2.2.2 Definition and Standard

Web service is defined as a communication technology between two devices over Internet. It relies on the using of HTTP with an XML serialization. Web services are characterized by their great interoperability and extensibility due to the use of XML, and they can then be combined in a loosely coupled way in order to achieve complex operations (Wang et al., 2004). During the last decade several technologies have been used including: XML-RPC (Remote Procedure Call), REST (REpresentational State Transfer (Fielding 2002)) and lately SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol (Gudgin et al., 2003) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Client-Server architecture evolution.

According to W3C, the difference between REST architecture and SOAP architecture concerns the data exchange and the availability of some language description which is a guaranty of an easy to use and easy to spread web service (Figure 2). In this paper, we are interested more particularly in SOAP architecture.

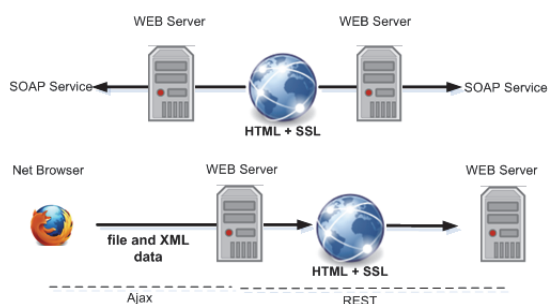


Figure 2: Difference between REST and SOAP.

2.2.3 Soap Web Services

SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol) is

fundamentally a stateless, one-way message exchange paradigm that enables applications to create more complex interaction patterns (e.g., request/response, request/multiple responses, etc.) by combining one-way exchanges with features provided by an underlying protocol and/or application-specific information. SOAP provides automatic discovery of the service and take advantages of several languages and protocol wide spread on the web:

- XML (eXtensible Mark-up Language) to underlay representation format of the data exchanged. The language is used to specify the header and body elements of the SOAP message;
- WSDL (Web Service Definition Language) used to described the public interface of the service (Chinnici et al., 2007), i.e. computer-readable description of Web services;
- UDDI (Universal Description, Discovery and Integration) to register and spread a web service (UDDI, 2002).

Messages must be carried by the SOAP and formatted by the rules of it, and the description (exposed interface) of the service must be defined in WSDL, i.e. the XML based language used to describe and locate a SOAP web service).

3 SHORTEST PATH WEB SERVICE

3.1 Proposed Web Service

The definition of the system architecture is based on the SOAP Web Service definition that exposed 4 methods:

- Demarrer_Guidage is an asynchronous method which starts the shortest path computation on the server;
- TesterEtatDemande allow checking the state of the execution of Demarrer_Guidage method which returns 1 if the job is in progress, 0 otherwise;
- RecupererEtatGuidage permits to obtain the shortest path computed;
- LireCodeRetour permits to decode a state code.

3.2 Network Data Source

The first step to compute a shortest path is to obtain a **real-world road network data**. To do so, there exist numerous sources including but not limited to

Google Maps, ArcGis, Bing Maps, Mapquest, Via Michelin and OpenStreetMap (OSM). Among them, OSM has the great advantage to be an open-source collaborative project that has reached 1 million users in 2013. Around 30% of users have contributed to OSM database. OSM consists of open data that are freely available and it offers a data source for researchers in the area of OR.

3.3 Proposed Shortest Path Algorithm

This paper aims to elaborate a dynamic shortest path algorithm. As shown in Algorithm 1, the main loop (lines 10-17) takes advantages of three considerations:

- since it has been commonly recognized that the computational effort required solving a generic search grows faster than the size of the problem, the original problem can be decomposed into small sub-problems (lines 11-13), substantial computational time saving can be achieved;
- the branch pruning techniques is considered. It consists in discarding nodes from the scan eligible nodes list after proving to be located out of the assumed good solutions area (line 14). The branch pruning algorithm maintains a strongly limited set of eligible nodes as compared to A^* and provided a better complexity;
- a sub-goal based method (lines 15-16) can be defined into a sub-problems especially for shortest path problem in a road traffic network where goals could be nodes or links located between the origin and destination localization.

3.4 Integration of a Shortest Path Algorithm into the Web Method

The web method Demarrer_Guidage is asynchronous: it closes the communication immediately and launches a long time process into a thread. The main advantage is that one client can continue its execution (Figure 3) in very short delays.

The thread is linked to the client and more precisely to the API Key which is used as session identification. Into the thread the following operations are achieved:

- The step 1 consists in verification of the API key with the objective to check its validity and the reach of maximal number of requests per day.
- The step 2 consists in downloading the road network map from OpenStreetMap using the corresponding web service (<http://api.openstreetmap.org/>).
- The step 3 consists in creation of the graph representing the road network.

The step 4 is the computation of the shortest path using the method Shortest_Path on the obtained graph.

Algorithm 2 gives some details on the thread. The procedure first checks the key and stops immediately if the key is not valid (line 11). The line 12 consists in using the SOAP OSM API to obtain a road network.

Line 13 involves extra web communication and could be time consuming depending on the network size. Line 14 consists in transforming the road

Algorithm 1: Shortest Path algorithm.

```

1. procedure Shortest_Path
2.   Global parameters
3.     L : sub-graph size
4.   input parameters
5.     G : the graph which models the urban network
6.     Nx : initial nodes in the graph (pedestrian localization)
7.     Ny : final nodes in the graph
8.   output parameters
9.     trip : set of nodes
10. begin
11.   Compute the Euclidean distance from Nx to Ny
12.   Compute the line equation from Nx to Ny
13.   Define G'a subgraph around node Nx which models a sub-network around L meters
14.   Reduce the number of nodes and arcs in G'
15.   Determine Nout the output node closest to the right intersection between the
       line Nx_Ny and the border of rectangle including G'
16.   Call Dijkstra algorithm to find shortest path in G' between Nx and Nout
17. end

```

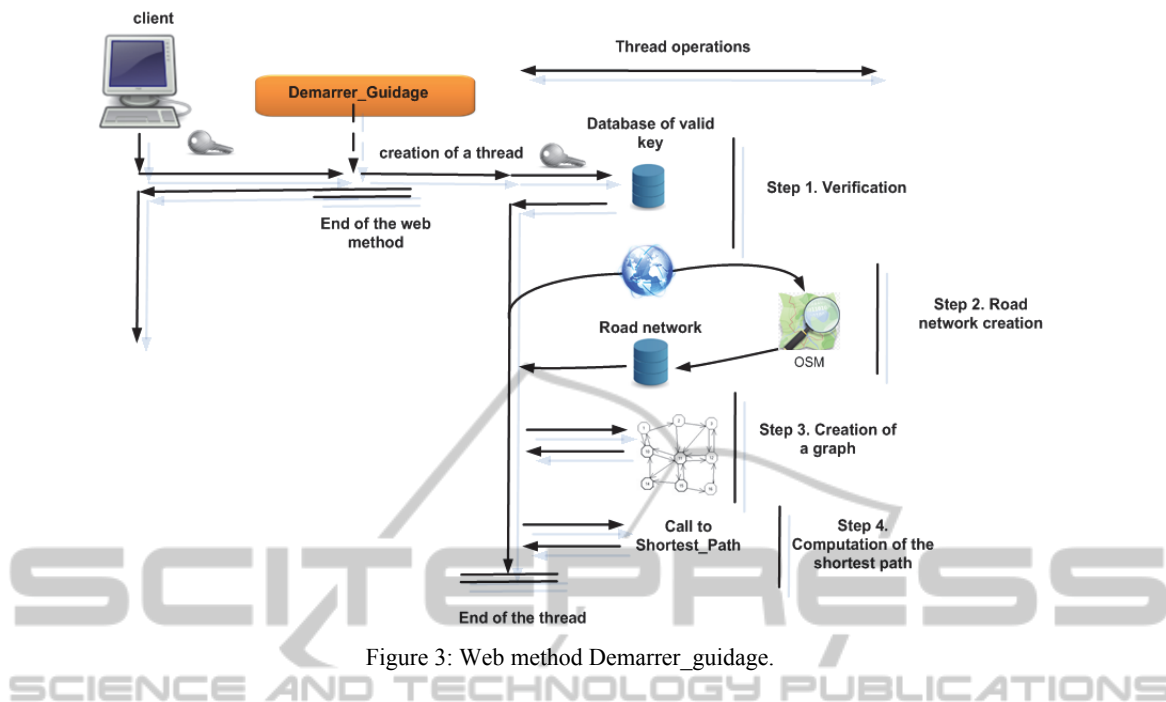


Figure 3: Web method Demarrer_guidage.

Algorithm 2: Thread_computation.

```

1. procedure Thread_computation
2.   input parameters
3.   G : the graph which modelize the urban network
4.   (latx, longx) : the current position
5.   (laty, longy) : the final position
6.   Nx : initial nodes in the graph
7.   Ny : final nodes in the graph
8.   output parameters
9.   trip : set of nodes
10. begin
11.   call procedure Key_verification ()
12.   if (key invalid) stop;
13.   Connect to the mapquest web service and download the road network
14.   Transform the road network into a graph (G)
15.   Convert the position (latx, longx) into a node Nx in the graph
16.   Convert the position (laty, longy) into a node Ny in the graph
17.   Trip = call Shortest_Path (G, Nx, Ny)
18.   T' = Convert trip into positions into the road network
19.   return T'
20. end
    
```

network into a graph G. Line 15 consists in conversion of position (latitude/longitude) into one node in the graph. Note that this conversion could require (according to the road network coding of MapQuest) creation of new nodes. Similar remarks hold for line 16. Line 17 consists in using the short path procedure which provides a shortest path as a sequence of nodes in G. The shortest path is then transformed into a sequence of (latitude/longitude) points on the road network.

3.5 Wireless Traffic Disturbances

In urban area mainly, the connection to the mobile network depends on numerous parameters including the internet provider quality equipment; the number of users connected at the same time and modulation of electromagnetic waves propagation. The last point means that radio waves interact with the environment though exotic physical mechanisms including reflection, refraction, fast fading, slow

fading and of course attenuation. Experts in wireless networks stated it is impossible to predict the real-life performances of such system one fully deployed and that performances can be strongly modulated especially in a mobile scenario.

The consequence is that mobile device connection to a web service could be delayed or impossible and could require conception of a mobile solution where a graph is saved into the mobile device allowing computation of a shortest path using the mobile CPU only.

4 CONCEPTION OF CLIENT USING WEB SERVICE

A client application using the proposed web service contains three components: User interface, business layer and SOAP layer. Among those three components, SOAP layer could be created automatically by a modern integrated development environment.

The business layer can be divided into 3 steps to make a demonstration of the different methods execution:

- Step 1.** The client has to create a instance of the class `RecuperationDonnee` and to define a port assigned with `getRecuperationDonneePort`.
- Step 2.** The client can access to the asynchrone `DemarrerGuidage` method providing a valid API key, and two (latitude/longitude) positions.
- Step 3.** The client can periodically investigate if the result is available or not using the `RecupererResultatGuidage` method providing only the key which is the session identification.

With the objective to validate the principle and the performance of the tune shortest path algorithm in the real life conditions, an android application has been created and it could be downloaded at: http://www.isima.fr/~lacomme/ORWebServices/GPS4pedestrian/source/Gps_android.apk

5 COMPUTATIONAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this paragraph we present the performance of the proposed dynamic shortest path algorithm in real problem. The network corresponds to the urban

traffic system of Clermont-Ferrand city. Based on these data, 27 instances were randomly generated. The Origin and destination points are chosen such that their distance corresponds to an hour walk (in average 2,5km).

Two types of experiments have been performed. The first one concerns the hypothesis that the pedestrian does not deviate from the path proposed by the algorithm (he never loses his way). The second one concerns the hypothesis that the pedestrian loses his path with a given probability. The following notations are used in table 1 and 2:

- N : instance number;
- h^* : optimal distance found by Dijkstra algorithm (in meters) ;
- $h(p\%)$: distance found by the proposed algorithm with p probability that the user loses its way (in meters);
- $Gap\%$: percentage deviation of optimal solution;
- I : number of algorithm iterations needed to reach final destination;
- $\bar{h}(x, p\%)$: average distance from x executions of 27 instances (in meters).

Test results show that average gap from the optimal solution is 5.62% and for 10 of instances the algorithm found the optimal value.

Table 2 shows the results for the second hypothesis: the pedestrian loses at each intersection his way with a given probability p ($p=1, 2, 5$ and 10%). All results in table 2 are average values from 100 executions on the all 27 instances. Results prove that the proposed algorithm has a promising performance. The added distance is due to the likelihood of pedestrian to lose his way. This distance is near 7% the path in the case of probability $p=10\%$.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The shortest path routing problem which is well-known as a seminal problem in routing has been chosen to study how constraints linked to mobility push us into modifying routing algorithms to provide efficient services. The Web services technologies offer also to a community the possibility to reuse the methods for a very small programming effort. The Web Service paradigm is a new approach in spreading operational research algorithms and our contribution stands at the crossroads of optimization research community and the web service community expectations.

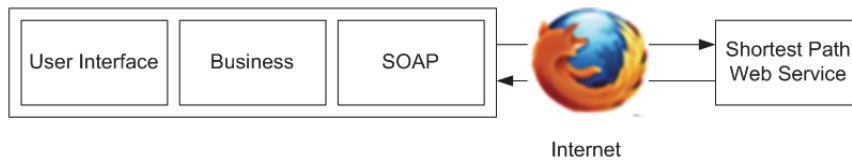


Figure 4: Example design of a client application using the Web service.

Table 1: Test results for first hypothesis.

N°	Origin point		Destination point		h^*	$h(0\%)$	Gap %	I
1	45.7581	3.1101	45.7780	3.0831	3629.80	3812.60	5.04	14
2	45.7792	3.1168	45.7580	3.0784	4509.11	5613.92	24.50	22
3	45.7848	3.1028	45.7746	3.0947	1639.40	1639.40	0.00	4
4	45.7890	3.0951	45.7704	3.1188	4047.20	4496.63	11.10	11
5	45.7780	3.1104	45.7884	3.0983	1866.19	1882.40	0.87	6
6	45.7751	3.0829	45.7710	3.0926	1245.82	1289.56	3.51	5
7	45.7701	3.0808	45.7801	3.1184	3278.60	3388.53	3.35	20
8	45.7821	3.0985	45.7636	3.1078	2737.98	2737.98	0.00	7
9	45.7705	3.0656	45.7651	3.0769	1525.79	1699.48	11.38	6
10	45.7819	3.1027	45.7647	3.0974	2417.21	3079.71	27.41	8
11	45.7590	3.1159	45.7856	3.0735	5440.46	5659.44	4.03	20
12	45.7789	3.0836	45.7823	3.1019	1789.43	1943.73	8.62	8
13	45.7890	3.1001	45.7707	3.0757	3383.98	3741.73	10.57	14
14	45.7683	3.1066	45.7816	3.1239	2750.92	2770.76	0.72	8
15	45.7645	3.1053	45.7812	3.0903	2529.81	2529.81	0.00	7
16	45.7728	3.0727	45.7662	3.0680	1260.14	1260.14	0.00	3
17	45.7805	3.1001	45.7763	3.0770	2074.18	2137.08	3.03	12
18	45.7592	3.0841	45.7777	3.0703	2588.66	2588.66	0.00	8
19	45.7620	3.1248	45.7612	3.0934	3033.87	3094.42	2.00	12
20	45.7691	3.1079	45.7879	3.0997	3103.75	3703.95	19.34	7
21	45.7773	3.0907	45.7877	3.0861	1677.82	1682.47	0.28	4
22	45.7764	3.0713	45.7664	3.0796	1454.39	1454.39	0.00	5
23	45.7725	3.0936	45.7668	3.1143	2047.18	2373.95	15.96	9
24	45.7613	3.0906	45.7867	3.0788	3356.14	3356.14	0.00	10
25	45.7682	3.0893	45.7654	3.0984	1127.62	1127.62	0.00	5
26	45.7654	3.0892	45.7654	3.0882	884.33	884.33	0.00	1
27	45.7659	3.1079	45.7804	3.0874	2594.19	2594.19	0.00	13
Avg.	-	-	-	-	<u>2518.30</u>	<u>2686.78</u>	<u>5.62</u>	<u>9.22</u>

Table 2: Test results for second hypothesis.

	Value (m)	GAP %	Distance added (m)	Standard deviation (m)	I
h^*	2518,30	-	-	-	1
$h(0\%)$	2686,78	5,62	-	-	9,22
$\bar{h} (100,1\%)$	2704,57	6,32	17,79	58,87	9,39
$\bar{h} (100,2\%)$	2725,76	7,18	38,98	88,18	9,55
$\bar{h} (100,5\%)$	2783,59	9,49	96,81	139,47	10,12
$\bar{h} (100,10\%)$	2896,78	13,96	210,00	206,35	11,20

The first experimentation reported in this paper pushes us into considering that complexity and proof of optimality are not the only key of efficient algorithms in the context of mobility but persuade us that a valuable quality of service strongly depends of a correct integration of components into a global system.

Also, the following developments are suggested for the future research; Besides Dijkstra's algorithm, other algorithms can also be applied in the dynamic approach to improve the computational aspects of the proposed algorithm.

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