CSE 3500 Algorithms and Complexity – Fall 2016
Lecture 15: October 18, 2016

Greedy Algorithms

- There are numerous problems for which simple greedy approaches could help in obtaining optimal solutions.
- Consider the following class of problems: Let I be a set of objects. We are interested in finding a subset S of I such that S satisfies a set of constraints and optimizes a given objective function.
- Any subset of I that satisfies the given constraints is called a *feasible solution*. Any feasible solution that optimizes the objective function is called an *optimal solution*.
- We would ideally like to get an optimal solution.
- The minimum spanning tree problem belongs to the above class of problems.

Minimum Spanning Tree (MST) Problem

- The MST problem can defined as follows. Input: A weighted directed graph $G(V, E)$; Output: A spanning tree of G that has the least total edge weight.
- A spanning tree of G is nothing but a subset of the edges of G that will induce a tree on V.
- Note that a spanning tree will have $|V| - 1$ edges.
- Thus the MST problem can be thought of as that of choosing a subset T of E such that T will induce a tree on V and the sum of weights of all the edges in T is as small as possible.

A General Greedy Algorithm

- Let I be the input set of objects. A generic greedy algorithm starts with an empty set S as the solution. It examines each object O of I at a time and makes a decision on whether to include O into S or not. When it finishes examining all the objects of I, it outputs the resultant solution.
- The order in which the objects are examined could make a difference in the quality of the output. A *selection criterion* is used to determine this order.

- A pseudocode for a generic greedy algorithm is given below.

```
Solution = ∅;
for i = 1 to n do
    Select the next object O from I using
       a relevant selection criterion; I = I − {O};
    if Solution ∪ {O} is feasible then Solution = Solution ∪ {O};
Output Solution;
```

- Note that in a greedy algorithm once we make a decision with respect to an object we will never re-examine this decision.

Prim's Algorithm

- In the last lecture we discussed the Kruskal's algorithm. In this lecture we will explore the Prim's algorithm in detail.

- Prim's algorithm always keeps a tree T that is a subtree of a MST of G. To begin with T will have only one edge, namely, the edge of G with the least weight. Ties are broken arbitrarily.

- The algorithm starts with a tree T with one edge and this tree is grown one edge at a time. When the tree has $|V| - 1$ edges, the resultant tree is output.

- An important question here is which edge of G should be added next to T?

- Since we are interested in minimizing the sum of the weights of all the edges in T, a relevant greedy approach for selecting the next edge for T will be to choose the edge whose weight is the least from among all those edges that have one end point in T and the other end point outside T.

- To identify the edge that should enter T next, we define a data structure called *near*. For any node u outside T, we define $near[u]$ to be that node v of T such that $cost(v, u)$ is the least (across all the nodes u in T). Here $cost(i, j)$ refers to the weight of the edge (i, j) for any $(i, j) \in E$.

- To begin with we identify the edge of G with the least weight and T has only this edge at the beginning. Let (a, b) be this edge. For every node u other than a and b we compute $near[u]$ and insert u into a 2-3 tree Q with a key value of $cost(u, near[u])$.

- From thereon, we identify the node u from Q with the least key value. This nodes enters the tree T next. When we insert a new node into T, the *near* values of some of the nodes might change. Luckily the only nodes whose *near* values might change will be those that are

adjacent to u (the node that has just now been inserted into T) in G. We modify the *near* values of the nodes as needed. Followed by this we repeat the process of identifying the next node that should enter T next, and so on. Let $n = |V|$ and $m = |E|$. A pseudocode follows.

1) Identify the edge of G with the least weight. Let (a, b) be this edge;
2) $T = \{(a, b)\}$;
3) **for** every $u \in V - \{a, b\}$ **do**
    4) **if** $cost(u, a) < cost(u, b)$ **then** $near[u] = a$ **else** $near[u] = b$;
    5) Insert u into a 2-3 tree Q with $cost(u, near[u])$ as its key;
6) **for** $i = 1$ **to** $n - 2$ **do**
    7) Identify the node u in Q with the least key;
    8) $T = T \cup \{(u, near[u])\}$; Delete u from Q;
    9) **for** every $w \in Adj(u)$ **do**
        10) **if** $cost(w, u) < cost(w, near[w])$ **then** $near[w] = u$;

- **Run Time Analysis:** Step 1 takes $O(m)$ time. Step 2 takes $O(1)$ time if we keep T as a list of edges. Step 4 takes $O(1)$ time. In step 5, we perform an insert operation into a 2-3 tree. Each insert takes $O(\log n)$ time. Thus step 3 takes a total of $O(n \log n)$ time.

  In step 10, the key value of a node w in Q changes. One way of making this change will be to delete w from Q and insert it back into Q with the new key value. Thus step 10 takes $O(\log n)$ time. If the degree of the node u is d_u, then step 9 takes a total of $O(d_u \log n)$ time. Step 7 takes a total of $O(n \log n)$ time (over all values of i in the **for** loop of line 6). Step 8 takes a total of $O(n \log n)$ time (over all values of i in the **for** loop of line 6).

  The total time step 9 takes (over all values of i in the **for** loop of line 6) is $O\left(n \log n + \sum_{u \in V - \{a,b\}} d_u \log n\right) = O\left(n \log n + \sum_{u \in V} d_u \log n\right) = O(n \log n + m \log n)$, since $\sum_{u \in V} d_u = 2m$ for any undirected graph.

  In summary, the total run time of the algorithm is $O((m + n) \log n)$.