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Text Generation from Knowledge Graphs with Graph Transformers

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Abstract

Generating texts which express complex ideas spanning multiple sentences requires a structured representation of their content (document plan), but these representations are prohibitively expensive to manually produce. In this work, we address the problem of generating coherent multi-sentence texts from the output of an information extraction system, and in particular a knowledge graph. Graphical knowledge representations are ubiquitous in computing, but pose a significant challenge for text generation techniques due to their non-hierarchical nature, collapsing of long-distance dependencies, and structural variety. We introduce a novel graph transforming encoder which can leverage the relational structure of such knowledge graphs without imposing linearization or hierarchical constraints. Incorporated into an encoder-decoder setup, we provide an end-to-end trainable system for graph-to-text generation that we apply to the domain of scientific text. Automatic and human evaluations show that our technique produces more informative texts which exhibit better document structure than competitive encoder-decoder methods.

1 Introduction

Increases in computing power and model capacity have made it possible to generate mostly-grammatical sentence-length strings of natural language text. However, generating several sentences related to a topic and which display overall coherence and discourse-relatedness is an open challenge. The difficulties are compounded in domains of interest such as scientific writing. Here the variety of possible topics is great (e.g. topics as diverse as driving, writing poetry, and picking stocks are all referenced in one subfield of one scientific discipline). Additionally, there are strong constraints on document structure, as scientific communication requires carefully ordered explanations of processes and phenomena.

Many researchers have sought to address these issues by working with structured inputs. Data-to-text generation models (Konstas and Lapata, 2013; Lebret et al., 2016; Wiseman et al., 2017; Puduppully et al., 2019) condition text generation on table-structured inputs. Tabular input representations provide more guidance for producing longer texts, but are only available for limited domains as they are assembled at great expense by manual annotation processes.

The current work explores the possibility of using information extraction (IE) systems to automatically provide context for generating longer texts (Figure 1). Robust IE systems are available and have support over a large variety of textual domains, and often provide rich annotations of relationships that extend beyond the scope of

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¹Data and code available at https://github.com/rikdz/GraphWriter

Figure 1: A scientific text showing the annotations of an information extraction system and the corresponding graphical representation. Coreference annotations shown in color. Our model learns to generate texts from automatically extracted knowledge using a graph encoder-decoder setup.
a single sentence. But due to their automatic nature, they also introduce challenges for generation such as erroneous annotations, structural variety, and significant abstraction of surface textual features (such as grammatical relations or predicate-argument structure).

To effect our study, we use a collection of abstracts from a corpus of scientific articles (Ammar et al., 2018). We extract entity, coreference, and relation annotations for each abstract with a state-of-the-art information extraction system (Luan et al., 2018), and represent the annotations as a knowledge graph which collapses co-referential entities. An example of a text and graph are shown in Figure 1. We use these graph/text pairs to train a novel attention-based encoder-decoder model for knowledge-graph-to-text generation. Our model, GraphWriter, extends the successful Transformer for text encoding (Vaswani et al., 2017) to graph-structured inputs, building on the recent Graph Attention Network architecture (Veličković et al., 2018). The result is a powerful, general model for graph encoding which can incorporate global structural information when contextualizing vertices in their local neighborhoods.

The main contributions of this work include:
1. We propose a new graph transformer encoder that applies the successful sequence transformer to graph structured inputs.
2. We show how IE output can be formed as a connected unlabeled graph for use in attention-based encoders.
3. We provide a large dataset of knowledge-graphs paired with scientific texts for further study.

Through detailed automatic and human evaluations, we demonstrate that automatically extracted knowledge can be used for multi-sentence text generation. We further show that structuring and encoding this knowledge as a graph leads to improved generation performance compared to other encoder-decoder setups. Finally, we show that GraphWriter’s transformer-style encoder is more effective than Graph Attention Networks on the knowledge-graph-to-text task.

2 Related Work

Our work falls under the larger scope of concept-to-text generation. Barzilay and Lapata (2005) introduced a collective content selection model for generating summaries of football games from tables of game statistics. Liang et al. (2009) jointly learn to segment and align text with records, reducing the supervision needed for learning. Kim and Mooney (2010) improve this technique by learning a semantic parse to logical forms. Konstas and Lapata (2013) focus on the generation objective, jointly learning planning and generating using a rhetorical (RST) grammar induction approach.

These earlier works often focused on smaller record generation datasets such as WeatherGov and RoboCup, but recently Mei et al. (2016) showed how neural models can achieve strong results on these standards, prompting researchers to investigate more challenging domains such as ours.

Lebret et al. (2016) tackles the task of generating the first sentence of a Wikipedia entry from the associated infobox. They provide a large dataset of such entries and a language model conditioned on tables. Our work focuses on a multi-sentence task where relations can extend beyond sentence boundaries.

Wiseman et al. (2017) study the difficulty of applying neural models to the data-to-text task. They introduce a large dataset where a text summary of a basketball game is paired with two tables of relevant statistics and show that neural models struggle to compete with template based methods over this data. We propose generating from graphs rather than tables, and show that graphs can be effectively encoded to capture both local and global structure in the input.

We show that modeling knowledge as a graph improves generation results, connecting our work to other graph-to-text tasks such as generating from Abstract Meaning Representation (AMR) graphs. Konstas et al. (2017) provide the first neural model for this task, and show that pretraining on a large dataset of noisy automatic parses can improve results. However, they do not directly model the graph structure, relying on linearization and sequence encoding instead. Current works improve this through more sophisticated graph encoding techniques. Marcheggiani and Perez-Beltrachini (2018) encode input graphs directly using a graph convolution encoder (Kipf and Welling, 2017). Our model extends the graph attention networks of Veličković et al. (2018), a direct descendant of the convolutional approach which offers more modeling power and has been
shown to improve performance. Song et al. (2018) uses a graph LSTM model to effect information propagation. At each timestep, a vertex is represented by a gated combination of the vertices to which it is connected and the labeled edges connecting them. Beck et al. (2018) use a similar gated graph neural network. Both of these gated models make heavy use of label information, which is much sparser in our knowledge graphs than in AMR. Generally, AMR graphs are denser, rooted, and connected, whereas the knowledge our model works with lacks these characteristics. For this reason, we focus on attention-based models such as Veličković et al. (2018), which impose fewer constraints on their input.

Finally, our work is related to Wang et al. (2018) who offer a method for generating scientific abstracts from titles. Their model uses a gated rewriter network to write and revise several draft outputs in several sequence-to-sequence steps. While we operate in the same general domain as this work, our task setup is ultimately different due to the use of extracted information as input. We argue that our setup improves the task defined in Wang et al. (2018), and our more general model can be applied across tasks and domains.

3 The AGENDA Dataset

We consider the problem of generating a text from automatically extracted information (knowledge). IE systems can produce high quality knowledge for a variety of domains, synthesizing information from across sentence and even document boundaries. Generating coherent text from knowledge requires a model which considers global characteristics of the knowledge as well as local characteristics of each entity. This feature of the task motivates our use of graphs for representing knowledge, where neighborhoods localize important information and paths through the graph build connections between distant nodes through intermediate ones. An example knowledge graph can be seen in Figure 1.

We formulate our problem as follows: given the title of a scientific article and a knowledge graph constructed by an automatic information extraction system, the goal is to generate an abstract that a) is appropriate for the given title and b) expresses the content of the knowledge graph in natural language text. To evaluate how well a model accomplishes this goal, we introduce the Abstract GENERATION DATaset (AGENDA), a dataset of knowledge graphs paired with scientific abstracts. Our dataset consists of 40k paper titles and abstracts from the proceedings of 12 top AI conferences (Ammar et al., 2018).

For each abstract, we create a knowledge graph in two steps. First, we apply the SciIE system of Luan et al. (2018), a state-of-the-art science-domain information extraction system. This system provides named entity recognition for scientific terms, with entity types Task, Method, Metric, Material, or Other Scientific Term. The model also produces co-reference annotations as well as seven relations that can obtain between different entities (Compare, Used-for, Feature-of, Hyponym-of, Evaluate-for, and Conjunction). For example, in Figure 1, the node labeled “SemEval 2011 Task 1” is of type ‘Task’, “HMM Models” is of type ‘Model’, and there is a ‘Evaluate-For’ relation showing that the models are evaluated on the task.

We form these annotations into knowledge graphs. We collapse co-referential entities into a single node associated with the longest mention (on the assumption that these will be the most informative). We then connect nodes to one another using the relation annotations, treating these as labeled edges in the graph. The result is a possibly unconnected graph representation of the SciIE annotations for a given abstract.

Statistics of the AGENDA dataset are available in Table 1. We split the AGENDA dataset into 38,720 training, 1000 validation, and 1000 test datapoints. We offer standardized data splits to facilitate comparison.

4 Model

Following most work on neural generation we adopt an encoder-decoder architecture, shown in
Figure 2: Converting disconnected labeled graph to connected unlabeled graph for use in attention-based encoder. $v_i$ refer to vertices, $R_{ij}$ to relations, and $G$ is a global context node.

Figure 3, which we call GraphWriter. The input to GraphWriter is a title and a knowledge graph which are encoded respectively with a bidirectional recurrent neural network and a novel Graph Transformer architecture (to be discussed in Section 4.1). At each decoder time step, we attend on encodings of the knowledge graph and document title using the decoder hidden state $h_t \in \mathbb{R}^d$. The resulting vectors are used to select output $w_t$ either from the decoder’s vocabulary or by copying an entity from the knowledge graph. Details of our decoding process are described in Section 4.2. The model is trained end-to-end to minimize the negative log likelihood of the mixed copy and vocabulary probability distribution and the human authored text.

4.1 Encoder

The AGENDA dataset contains a knowledge graph for each datapoint, but our model requires unlabeled, connected graphs as input. To encode knowledge graphs with this model, we restructure each graph as an unlabeled connected graph, preserving label information by the method described below and sketched in Figure 2.

**Graph Preparation** We convert each graph to an unlabeled connected bipartite graphs following a similar procedure to Beck et al. (2018). In this process, each labeled edge is replaced with two vertices: one representing the forward direction of the relation and one representing the reverse. These new vertices are then connected to the entity vertices so that the directionality of the former edge is maintained. This restructures the original knowledge graph as an unlabeled directed graph where all vertices correspond to entities and relations in the SciIE annotations without loss of information. To promote information flow between disconnected parts of the graph, we add a global vertex which connects all entity vertices. This global vertex will be used to initialize the decoder, analogously to the final encoder hidden state in a traditional sequence to sequence model. The final result of these restructuring operations is a connected, unlabeled graph $G = (V, E)$, where $V$ is a list of entities, relations, and a global node and $E$ is an adjacency matrix describing the directed edges.

**Graph Transformer** Our model is most similar to the Graph Attention Network (GAT) of Veličković et al. (2018), which computes the hidden representations of each node in a graph by attending over its neighbors following a self-attention strategy. The use of self-attention in GAT addresses the shortcomings of prior methods based on graph convolutions (Defferrard et al., 2016; Kipf and Welling, 2017), but limits vertex updates to information from adjacent nodes. Our model allows for a more global contextualization of each vertex through the use of a transformer-style architecture. The recently proposed Transformer (Vaswani et al., 2017) addresses the inherent sequential computation shortcoming of recurrent neural networks, enabling efficient and paralleled computation by invoking a self-attention mechanism for global context modeling. These models have shown promising results in a variety of text processing tasks (Radford et al., 2018).

Our Graph Transformer encoder starts with self-
attention of local neighborhoods of vertices; the key difference with GAT is that our model includes additional mechanisms for capturing global context. This additional modeling power allows the Graph Transformer to better articulate how a vertex should be updated given the content of its neighbors, as well as to learn global patterns of graph structure relevant to the model’s objective.

Specifically, $V$ is embedded in a dense continuous space by the embedding process described at the end of this section, resulting in matrix $V^0 = [v_i], v_i \in \mathbb{R}^d$ which will serve as input to the graph transformer model shown in Figure 4. Each vertex representation $v_i$ is contextualized by attending to the other vertices to which $v_i$ is connected in $G$. We use an $N$-headed self attention setup, where $N$ independent attentions are calculated and independent attentions are calculated and concatenated before a residual connection is applied:

$$\tilde{v}_i = v_i + \| \sum_{n=1}^{N} \alpha^n_{i,j} W^n Q v_j$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)

$$\alpha^n_{i,j} = a^n(v_i, v_j)$$ \hspace{1cm} (2)

Here, $\|$ denotes the concatenation of the $N$ attention heads, $N_i$ denotes the neighborhood of $v_i$ in $G$, $W^n \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times d}$, and where $a^n$ are attention mechanisms parameterized per head. In this work, we use attention functions of the following form:

$$a(q_i, k_j) = \frac{\exp((W_K k_j)^T W_Q q_i)}{\sum_{z \in N_i} \exp((W_K k_z)^T W_Q q_i)}$$  \hspace{1cm} (3)

Each $\alpha$ learns independent transformations $W_Q, W_K \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times d}$ of $q$ and $k$ respectively, and the resulting product is normalized across all connected edges. To reduce the tendency of these dot products to impede gradient flow, we scale them by $1/\sqrt{d}$, following Vaswani et al. (2017).

The Graph Transformer then augments these multi-headed attention layers with block networks. Each block applies the following transformations:

$$\tilde{v}_i = \text{LayerNorm}(v'_i + \text{LayerNorm}(\tilde{v}_i))$$ \hspace{1cm} (4)

$$v'_i = \text{FFN}(\text{LayerNorm}(\tilde{v}_i))$$ \hspace{1cm} (5)

Where FFN($x$) is a two layer feedforward network with a non-linear transformation $f$ between layers i.e. $f(xW_1 + b_1)W_2 + b_2$.

Stacking multiple blocks allows information to propagate through the graph. Blocks are stacked $L$ times, with the output of layer $l - 1$ taken as the input to layer $l$, so that $v'_i = \tilde{v}_i^{l-1}$. The resulting vertex encodings $V^L = [v'_i]$ represent entities, relations, and the global node contextualized by their relationships in the graph structure. We refer to the resulting encodings as graph contextualized vertex encodings.

**Embedding Vertices, Encoding Title** As stated above, the vertices of our graph correspond to entities and relations from the SciIE annotations. Because each relation is represented as both a forward- and backward-looking vertex, we learn two embeddings per relation as well as an initial embedding for the global node. Entities correspond to scientific terms which are often multi-word expressions. To produce a single $d$-dimensional embedding per phrase, we use the last hidden state of a bidirectional RNN run over embeddings of each word in the entity phrase, i.e. BiRNN($x_1 \ldots x_m$) for dense embeddings $x$ and phrase length $m$. The output of our embedding step is a collection $V^0$ of $d$-dimensional vectors representing each vertex in $V$.

The title input is also a short string, and so we encode it with another BiRNN to produce $T = \text{BiRNN}(x'_1 \ldots x'_m)$ for title word embedding $x'_i$.

### 4.2 Decoder

We decode with an attention-based decoder with a copy mechanism for copying input from the knowledge graph and title. At each decoding timestep $t$ we use decoder hidden state $h_t$ to compute context vectors $c_g$ and $c_s$ for the graph and
\begin{align*}
c_g &= h_t + \sum_{n=1}^{N} \alpha_j \mathbf{W}_G \mathbf{V}_j \quad (6) \\
\alpha_j &= a(h_t, \mathbf{V}_j) \quad (7)
\end{align*}

for \(a\) as described in Equation (1) by attending over the graph contextualized encodings \(\mathbf{V}_j\). \(c_s\) is computed similarly, attending over the title encoding \(T\). We then construct the final context vector by concatenation, \(c_t = [c_g || c_s]\). We use an input-feeding decoder (Luong et al., 2015) where both \(h_t\) and \(c_t\) are passed as input to the next RNN timestep.

We compute a probability \(p\) of copying from the input using \(h_t\) and \(c_t\) in a fashion similar to See et al. (2017), that is:

\[
p = \sigma(\mathbf{W}_{copy} [h_t || c_t] + b_{copy}) \quad (8)
\]

The final next-token probability distribution is:

\[
p \ast \alpha_{copy} + (1 - p) \ast \alpha_{vocab}, \quad (9)
\]

Where the probability distribution \(\alpha_{copy}\) over entities and input tokens is computed as \(\alpha_{copy} = a([h_t || c_t], x_j)\) for \(x_j \in V \parallel T\). The remaining \(1 - p\) probability is given to \(\alpha_{vocab}\), which is calculated by scaling \([h_t || c_t]\) to the vocabulary size and taking a softmax.

5 Experiments

Evaluation Metrics We evaluate using a combination of human and automatic evaluations. For human evaluation, participants were asked to compare abstracts generated by various models and those written by the authors of the scientific articles. We used Best-Worst Scaling (BWS; Louviere and Woodworth, 1991; Louviere et al., 2015), a less labor-intensive alternative to paired comparisons that has been shown to produce more reliable results than rating scales (Kiritchenko and Mohammad, 2016). Participants were presented with two or three abstracts and asked to decide which one was better and which one was worse in order of grammar and fluency (is the abstract written in well-formed English?), coherence (does the abstract have an introduction, state the problem or task, describe a solution, and discuss evaluations or results?), and informativeness (does the abstract relate to the provided title and make use of appropriate scientific terms?). We provided examples of good and bad abstracts and explain how they succeed or fail to meet the defined criteria.

Because our dataset is scientific in nature, evaluations must be done by experts and we can only collect a limited number of these high quality datapoints.\(^2\) The study was conducted by 15 experts (i.e. computer science students) who were familiar with the abstract writing task and the content of the abstracts they judged. To supplement this, we also provide automatic metrics. We use BLEU (Papineni et al., 2002), an n-gram overlap measure popular in text generation tasks, and METEOR (Denkowski and Lavie, 2014), a machine translation with paraphrase and language-specific considerations.

Comparisons We compare our GraphWriter against several strong baselines. In GAT, we replace our Graph Transformer encoder with a Graph Attention Network of (Veličković et al., 2018). This encoder consists of PReLU activations stacked between 6 self-attention layers. To determine the usefulness of including graph relations, we compare to a model which uses only titles and entity (EntityWriter). Finally, we compare with the gated rewriter model of Wang et al. (2018) (Rewriter). This model uses only the document title to iteratively rewrite drafts of its output.\(^3\)

Implementation Details Our models are trained end-to-end to minimize the negative joint log likelihood of the target text vocabulary and the copied entity indices. We use SGD optimization with momentum (Qian, 1999) and “warm restarts”, a cyclic regimen that reduces the learning rate from 0.25 to 0.05 over the course of 5 epochs, then resets for the following epoch. Models are trained for 15 epochs with early stopping (Prechelt, 1998) based on the validation loss, with most models stopping between 8 and 13 epochs. We use single-layer LSTMs (Hochreiter and Schmidhuber, 1997) as recurrent networks. We use dropout (Srivastava et al., 2014) in self attention layers set to 0.3. Hidden states and embedding dimensions are fixed at 500 and attentions learn 500 dimen-

\(^2\)Attempts to crowd source this evaluation failed.

\(^3\)Due to the larger size and greater variety of our dataset and accompanying vocabularies compared to theirs, we were unable to train this model with the reported batch size of 240. We use batch size 24 instead, which is partially responsible for the lower performance.
Table 2: Automatic Evaluations of Generation Systems.

|          | BLEU     | METEOR   |
|----------|----------|----------|
| GraphWriter | 14.3 ± 1.01 | 18.8 ± 0.28 |
| GAT       | 12.2 ± 0.44 | 17.2 ± 0.63 |
| EntityWriter | 10.38 | 16.53 |
| Rewriter  | 1.05     | 8.38     |

In Block layers, the feedforward network has an intermediate size of 2000, and we use a PReLU activation function (He et al., 2015). GraphWriter and GAT use $L = 6$ layers. The number of attention heads is set to 4. In all models, for both inputs and output, we replace words occurring fewer than 5 times with $<unk>$ tokens. In each abstract, we replace all mentions in a coreference chain in the abstract with the canonical mention used in the graph. We decode with beam search (Graves, 2012; Sutskever et al., 2014) with a beam size of 4. A post-processing step deletes repeated sentences and repeated coordinated clauses.

5.1 Results

A comparison of all systems in terms of automatic metrics is shown in Table 2. Our GraphWriter model outperforms other methods. We see that models which leverage title, entities, and relations (GraphWriter and GAT) outperform models which use less information (EntityWriter and Rewriter).

We see that GraphWriter outperforms GAT across metrics, indicating that the global contextualization provided by GraphWriter improves generation. To verify the performance gap between GraphWriter and GAT, we report the average test metrics for 4 training runs of each model along with their variances. We see that the variance of the different models is non-overlapping, and in fact all training runs of GraphWriter outperformed all runs of GAT on these metrics.

Table 3: Does knowledge improve generation? Human evaluations of best and worst abstract.

|          | Best | Worst |
|----------|------|-------|
| Rewriter (No knowledge) | 12% | 64% |
| GraphWriter (Knowledge) | 24% | 36% |
| Human Authored | 64% | 0% |

Table 4: Does Knowledge Help? Human judgments of GraphWriter and EntityWriter models.

|          | Win | Lose | Tie |
|----------|-----|------|-----|
| Structure | 63% | 17% | 20% |
| Informativeness | 43% | 23% | 33% |
| Grammar | 63% | 23% | 13% |
| Overall | 63% | 17% | 20% |

Wang et al. (2018) considers the task of generating an abstract with only the paper’s title as input. We compare against this model because it is among the first end-to-end systems to attempt to write scientific abstracts. However, the task setup used in Wang et al. (2018) differs significantly from the task introduced in this work. In order...
GraphWriter Sparse representations have recently been shown to be effective in many optimization problems. However, existing dictionary learning methods are limited in the number of dictionary blocks, which can be expensive to obtain. In this paper, we propose a novel approach to dictionary learning based on sparse coding.

GAT In this paper, we consider the problem of dictionary learning in well-known datasets. In particular, we consider the problem of dictionary learning, where the goal is to find a set of dictionary blocks that maximize the likelihood of a given set of dictionary blocks.

EntityWriter We propose a novel dictionary learning framework for reconstructed block/group sparse coding schemes. The dictionary learning framework is based on the descent, which is a block structure of the group structure.

Rewriter This paper presents a new approach to the k-means of the algorithm. The proposed approach is based on the basis of the stationarity algorithm. The algorithm is based on the fact that the number of bits is a constant of the base of the input.

Gold This paper proposes a dictionary learning framework that combines the proposed block/group (BGSC) or reconstructed block/group (R-BGSC) sparse coding schemes with the novel Intra-block Coherence Suppression Dictionary Learning algorithm. An important and distinguishing feature of the proposed framework is that all dictionary blocks are trained simultaneously.

Table 5: Example outputs of various systems versus Gold.

| System            | BLEU | METEOR |
|-------------------|------|--------|
| Rewriter          | 1.05 | 8.38   |
| InferEntityWriter | 3.60 | 12.2   |

Table 6: Comparison of generation without knowledge and with Inferred Knowledge (InferEntityWriter)

5.2 Analysis

Table 5 shows examples of various system outputs for a particular test instance. We see that GraphWriter makes use of more entities from the input, arranged with more articulated textual context. It demonstrates less repetition than GAT. Both GraphWriter and GAT show much better coherence.
ence than EntityWriter, which copies entities from the input into unreasonable contexts. Rewriter, while fluent and grammatical, jumps from topic to topic, failing to relate as strongly to the input as the knowledge-aware models.

To determine the shortcomings of our model, we calculate rough error statistics over the outputs of the GraphWriter on the test set. We notice that 40% of entities in the knowledge graphs do not appear in the generated text. Future work should address this coverage problem, perhaps through modifications to the inference procedure or a coverage loss (Tu et al., 2016) modified to the specifics of this task. We find that 18% of all sentences generated by our model repeat sentences or clauses and are subjected to the post-processing pruning mentioned in Section 5. While this step is a simple solution to improve generated outputs, a more advanced solution is required.

6 Conclusion

We have studied the problem of generating multi-sentence text from the output of automatic information extraction systems, and have shown that incorporating knowledge as graphs improves performance. We introduced GraphWriter, featuring a new attention model for graph encoding, and demonstrated its utility through human and automatic evaluation compared to strong baselines. Lastly, we provide a new resource for the generation community, the AGENDA dataset of abstracts and knowledge. Future work could address the problem of repetition and entity coverage in the generated texts.

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