SPECTRAL RANKING USING SERIATION

FAJWEL FOGEL, ALEXANDRE D’ASPREMONT, AND MILAN VOJNOVIC

ABSTRACT. We describe a seriation algorithm for ranking a set of \( n \) items given pairwise comparisons between these items. Intuitively, the algorithm assigns similar rankings to items that compare similarly with all others. It does so by constructing a similarity matrix from pairwise comparisons, using seriation methods to reorder this matrix and construct a ranking. We first show that this spectral seriation algorithm recovers the true ranking when all pairwise comparisons are observed and consistent with a total order. We then show that ranking reconstruction is still exact even when some pairwise comparisons are corrupted or missing, and that seriation based spectral ranking is more robust to noise than other scoring methods. An additional benefit of the seriation formulation is that it allows us to solve semi-supervised ranking problems. Experiments on both synthetic and real datasets demonstrate that seriation based spectral ranking achieves competitive and in some cases superior performance compared to classical ranking methods.

1. INTRODUCTION

We study the problem of ranking a set of \( n \) items given pairwise comparisons between these items. In practice, the information about pairwise comparisons is usually incomplete, especially in the case of a large set of items, and the data may also be noisy, that is some pairwise comparisons could be incorrectly measured and incompatible with the existence of a total ordering.

Ranking is a classic problem but its formulations vary widely. For example, website ranking methods such as PageRank [Page et al., 1998] and HITS [Kleinberg, 1999] seek to rank web pages based on the hyperlink structure of the web, where links do not necessarily express consistent preference relationships (e.g. \( a \) can link to \( b \) and \( b \) can link \( c \), and \( c \) can link to \( a \)). The setting we study here goes back at least to [Kendall and Smith, 1940] and seeks to reconstruct a ranking between items from pairwise comparisons reflecting a total ordering.

In this case, the directed graph of all pairwise comparisons, where every pair of vertices is connected by exactly one of two possible directed edges, is usually called a tournament graph in the theoretical computer science literature or a “round robin” in sports, where every player plays every other player once and each preference marks victory or defeat. The motivation for this formulation often stems from the fact that in many applications, e.g. music, images, and movies, preferences are easier to express in relative terms (e.g. \( a \) is better than \( b \)) rather than absolute ones (e.g. \( a \) should be ranked fourth, and \( b \) seventh).

Assumptions about how the pairwise preference information is obtained also vary widely. A subset of preferences is measured adaptively in [Ailon, 2011; Jamieson and Nowak, 2011], while [Negahban et al., 2012], for example, assume that preferences are observed iteratively, and [Freund et al., 2003] extract them at random. In other settings, the full preference matrix is observed, but is perturbed by noise: in e.g. [Bradley and Terry, 1952; Luce, 1959; Herbrich et al., 2006], a parametric model is assumed over the set of permutations, which reformulates ranking as a maximum likelihood problem.

Loss function and algorithmic approaches vary as well. Kenyon-Mathieu and Schudy [2007], for example, derive a PTAS for the minimum feedback arc set problem on tournaments, i.e. the problem of finding a ranking that minimizes the number of upsets (a pair of players where the player ranked lower on the ranking beats the player ranked higher). In practice, the complexity of this method is relatively high, and
other authors [see e.g. Keener, 1993; Negahban et al., 2012] have been using spectral methods to produce more efficient algorithms (each pairwise comparison is understood as a link pointing to the preferred item). Simple scoring methods such as the point difference rule [Huber, 1963; Wauthier et al., 2013] produce efficient estimates at very low computational cost. Ranking has also been approached as a prediction problem, i.e. learning to rank [Schapire and Singer, 1998], with [Joachims, 2002] for example using support vector machines to learn a score function. Finally, in the Bradley-Terry-Luce framework, the maximum likelihood problem is usually solved using fixed point algorithms or EM-like majorization-minimization techniques [Hunter, 2004] for which no precise computational complexity bounds are known.

Here, we show that the ranking problem is directly related to another classical ordering problem, namely seriation: we are given a similarity matrix between a set of $n$ items and assume that the items can be ordered along a chain such that the similarity between items decreases with their distance within this chain (i.e. a total order exists). The seriation problem then seeks to reconstruct the underlying linear ordering based on unsorted, possibly noisy, pairwise similarity information. Atkins et al. [1998] produced a spectral algorithm that exactly solves the seriation problem in the noiseless case, by showing that for similarity matrices computed from serial variables, the ordering of the second eigenvector of the Laplacian matrix (a.k.a. the Fiedler vector) matches that of the variables. In practice, this means that spectral clustering exactly reconstructs the correct ordering provided items are organized in a chain. Here, adapting these results to ranking produces a very efficient polynomial-time ranking algorithm with provable recovery and robustness guarantees. Furthermore, the seriation formulation allows us to handle semi-supervised ranking problems. Fogel et al. [2013] show that seriation is equivalent to the 2-SUM problem and study convex relaxations to seriation in a semi-supervised setting, where additional structural constraints are imposed on the solution. Several authors [Blum et al., 2000; Feige and Lee, 2007] have also focused on the directly related Minimum Linear Arrangement (MLA) problem, for which excellent approximation guarantees exist in the noisy case, albeit with very high polynomial complexity.

The main contributions of this paper can be summarized as follows. We link seriation and ranking by showing how to construct a consistent similarity matrix based on consistent pairwise comparisons. We then recover the true ranking by applying the spectral seriation algorithm in [Atkins et al., 1998] to this similarity matrix (we call this method SerialRank in what follows). In the noisy case, we then show that spectral seriation can perfectly recover the true ranking even when some of the pairwise comparisons are either corrupted or missing, provided that the pattern of errors is relatively unstructured. We show in particular that, in a regime where a high proportion of comparisions are observed, some incorrectly, the spectral solution is more robust to noise than classical scoring based methods. Finally, we use the seriation results in [Fogel et al., 2013] to produce semi-supervised ranking solutions.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we recall definitions related to seriation, and link ranking and seriation by showing how to construct well ordered similarity matrices from well ranked items. In Section 3 we apply the spectral algorithm of [Atkins et al., 1998] to reorder these similarity matrices and reconstruct the true ranking in the noiseless case. In Section 4 we then show that this spectral solution remains exact in a noisy regime where a random subset of comparisons is corrupted. Finally, in Section 5 we illustrate our results on both synthetic and real datasets, and compare ranking performance with classical maximum likelihood, spectral and scoring based approaches.

2. **Seriation, Similarities & Ranking**

In this section we first introduce the seriation problem, i.e. reordering items based on pairwise similarities. We then show how to write the problem of ranking given pairwise comparisons as a seriation problem.

2.1. **The Seriation Problem.** The seriation problem seeks to reorder $n$ items given a similarity matrix between these items, such that the more similar two items are, the closer they should be. This is equivalent to supposing that items can be placed on a chain where the similarity between two items decreases with the distance between these items in the chain. We formalize this below, following [Atkins et al., 1998].
Definition 2.1. We say that the matrix $A \in S_n$ is an R-matrix (or Robinson matrix) if and only if it is symmetric and $A_{i,j} \leq A_{i,j+1}$ and $A_{i+1,j} \leq A_{i,j}$ in the lower triangle, where $1 \leq j < i \leq n$.

Another way to formulate R-matrix conditions is to impose $A_{i,j} \leq A_{k,l}$ if $|i-j| \leq |k-l|$ off-diagonal, i.e. the coefficients of $A$ decrease as we move away from the diagonal. We also introduce a definition for strict R-matrices, whose rows/columns cannot be permuted without breaking the R-matrix monotonicity conditions. We call reverse identity permutation the permutation that puts rows and columns $\{1, \ldots, n\}$ of a matrix $A$ in reverse order $\{n, n-1, \ldots, 1\}$.

Definition 2.2. An R-matrix $A \in S_n$ is called strict-R if and only if the identity and reverse identity permutations of $A$ are the only permutations producing R-matrices.

Any R-matrix with only strict-R constraints is a strict R-matrix. Following [Atkins et al., 1998], we will say that $A$ is pre-R if there is a permutation matrix $\Pi$ such that $\Pi A \Pi^T$ is a R-matrix. Given a pre-R matrix $A$, the seriation problem consists in finding a permutation $\Pi$ such that $\Pi A \Pi^T$ is a R-matrix. Note that there might be several solutions to this problem. In particular, if a permutation $\Pi$ is a solution, then the reverse permutation is also a solution. When only two permutations of $A$ produce R-matrices, $A$ will be called pre-strict-R.

2.2. Constructing Similarity Matrices from Pairwise Comparisons. Given an ordered input pairwise comparison matrix, we now show how to construct a similarity matrix which is strict-R when all comparisons are given and consistent with the identity ranking (i.e. items are ranked in the increasing order of indices). This means that the similarity between two items decreases with the distance between their ranks. We will then be able to use the spectral seriation algorithm by [Atkins et al., 1998] described in Section 3 to recover the true ranking from a disordered similarity matrix.

We first explain how to compute a pairwise similarity from binary comparisons between items by counting the number of matching comparisons. Another formulation allows to handle the generalized linear model.

2.2.1. Similarities from Pairwise Comparisons. Suppose we are given a matrix of pairwise comparisons $C \in \{-1, 0, 1\}^{n \times n}$ such that $C_{i,j} + C_{j,i} = 0$ for every $i \neq j$ and

$$C_{i,j} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } i \text{ is ranked higher than } j \\ 0 & \text{if } i \text{ and } j \text{ are not compared or in a draw} \\ -1 & \text{if } j \text{ is ranked higher than } i \end{cases}$$

(1)

and, by convention, we define $C_{i,i} = 1$ for all $i \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$ ($C_{i,i}$ values have no effect in the ranking method presented in algorithm SerialRank). We also define the pairwise similarity matrix $S_{\text{match}}$ as

$$S_{i,j}^{\text{match}} = \sum_{k=1}^{n} \left( \frac{1 + C_{i,k}C_{j,k}}{2} \right).$$

(2)

Since $C_{i,k}C_{j,k} = 1$ if $C_{i,k}$ and $C_{j,k}$ have same signs, and $C_{i,k}C_{j,k} = -1$ if they have opposite signs, $S_{i,j}^{\text{match}}$ counts the number of matching comparisons between $i$ and $j$ with other reference items $k$. If $i$ or $j$ is not compared with $k$, then $C_{i,k}C_{j,k} = 0$ and the term $(1+C_{i,k}C_{j,k})/2$ has an average effect on the similarity of $1/2$. The intuition behind this construction is easy to understand in a tournament setting: players that beat the same players and are beaten by the same players should have a similar ranking. We can write $S_{\text{match}}$ in the following equivalent form

$$S_{\text{match}} = \frac{1}{2} \left( n11^T + CC^T \right).$$

(3)

Without loss of generality, we assume in the following propositions that items are ranked in increasing order of their indices (identity ranking). In the general case, we simply replace the strict-R property by the pre-strict-R property.

The next result shows that when all comparisons are given and consistent with the identity ranking, then the similarity matrix $S_{\text{match}}$ is a strict R-matrix.
Proposition 2.3. Given all pairwise comparisons \( C_{i,j} \in \{-1, 0, 1\} \) between items ranked according to the identity permutation (with no ties), the similarity matrix \( S^{\text{match}} \) constructed as given in (2) is a strict R-matrix and
\[
S^{\text{match}}_{i,j} = n - (\max\{i, j\} - \min\{i, j\})
\]
for all \( i, j = 1, \ldots, n \).

Proof. Since items are ranked as \( \{1, \ldots, n\} \) with no ties and all comparisons given, \( C_{i,j} = -1 \) if \( i < j \) and \( C_{i,j} = 1 \) otherwise. Therefore we get from definition (2)
\[
S^{\text{match}}_{i,j} = \sum_{k=1}^{\min\{i,j\}-1} \left( \frac{1+1}{2} \right) + \sum_{k=\min\{i,j\}}^{\max\{i,j\}-1} \left( \frac{1-1}{2} \right) + \sum_{k=\max\{i,j\}}^{n} \left( \frac{1+1}{2} \right) = n - (\max\{i, j\} - \min\{i, j\}).
\]
This means in particular that \( S^{\text{match}} \) is strictly positive and its coefficients are strictly decreasing when moving away from the diagonal, hence \( S^{\text{match}} \) is a strict R-matrix. Formally, using equation (4), we have for any \( i < j \)
\[
S^{\text{match}}_{i,j} = n - (\max\{i, j\} - \min\{i, j\}) = n - j + i > n - (j + 1) + i = S^{\text{match}}_{i,j+1},
\]
and similarly \( S^{\text{match}}_{i+1,j} = S^{\text{match}}_{i,j} \), which proves that \( S^{\text{match}} \) is a strict R-matrix. \( \blacksquare \)

2.2.2. Similarities in the Generalized Linear Model. Suppose that paired comparisons are generated according to a generalized linear model (GLM), i.e. we assume that the outcomes of paired comparisons are independent and for any pair of distinct items, item \( i \) is observed to be preferred over item \( j \) with probability
\[
P_{i,j} = H(\nu_i - \nu_j)
\]
where \( \nu \in \mathbb{R}^n \) is a vector of strengths or skills parameters and \( H : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow [0, 1] \) is a function that is increasing on \( \mathbb{R} \) and such that \( H(-x) = 1 - H(x) \) for all \( x \in \mathbb{R} \), and \( \lim_{x \to -\infty} H(x) = 0 \) and \( \lim_{x \to \infty} H(x) = 1 \). A well known special instance of the generalized linear model is the Bradley-Terry-Luce model for which \( H(x) = 1/(1 + e^{-x}) \), for \( x \in \mathbb{R} \).

Let \( m_{i,j} \) be the number of times items \( i \) and \( j \) were compared, \( C^s_{i,j} \in \{-1, 1\} \) be the outcome of comparison \( s \) and \( Q \) be the matrix of corresponding empirical probabilities, i.e. if \( m_{i,j} > 0 \) we have
\[
Q_{i,j} = \frac{1}{m_{i,j}} \sum_{s=1}^{m_{i,j}} C^s_{i,j} + 1 \frac{1}{2}
\]
and \( Q_{i,j} = 1/2 \) in case \( m_{i,j} = 0 \). We then define the similarity matrix \( S^{\text{glm}} \) from the observations \( Q \) as
\[
S^{\text{glm}}_{i,j} = \sum_{k=1}^{n} \mathbb{1}_{\{m_{i,k}m_{j,k} > 0\}} \left( 1 - \frac{|Q_{i,k} - Q_{j,k}|}{2} \right) + \frac{1}{2} \mathbb{1}_{\{m_{i,k}m_{j,k} = 0\}}.
\]
Since the comparisons are independent we have that \( Q_{i,j} \) converges to \( P_{i,j} \) as \( m_{i,j} \) goes to infinity and
\[
S^{\text{glm}}_{i,j} \rightarrow \sum_{k=1}^{n} \left( 1 - \frac{|P_{i,k} - P_{j,k}|}{2} \right).
\]
The result below shows that this limit similarity matrix is a strict R-matrix when the variables are properly ordered.

Proposition 2.4. If the items are ordered according to the order in decreasing values of the skill parameters, in the limit of large number of observations, the similarity matrix \( S^{\text{glm}} \) is a strict R matrix.
Proof. Without loss of generality, we suppose the true order is \( \{1, \ldots, n\} \), with \( \nu(1) > \ldots > \nu(n) \). For any \( i, j, k \) such that \( i > j \), using the GLM assumption (i) we get
\[
P_{i,k} = H(\nu(i) - \nu(k)) > H(\nu(j) - \nu(k)) = p_{j,k}.
\]
Since empirical probabilities \( Q_{ij} \) converge to \( p_{ij} \), when the number of observations is large enough, we also get \( Q_{i,k} > Q_{j,k} \) for any \( i, j, k \) such that \( i > j \geq k \) (we focus wlog on the lower triangle), and we can therefore remove the absolute value in the expression of \( S_{ij}^{\text{glm}} \) for \( i > j \). Hence for any \( i > j \) we have
\[
S_{i+1,j}^{\text{glm}} - S_{i,j}^{\text{glm}} = \frac{1}{2} \left( -\sum_{k=1}^{n} |Q_{i+1,k} - Q_{j,k}| + \sum_{k=1}^{n} |Q_{i,k} - Q_{j,k}| \right) < 0.
\]
Similarly for any \( i > j \), \( S_{i,j-1}^{\text{glm}} - S_{i,j}^{\text{glm}} < 0 \), so \( S^{\text{glm}} \) is a strict R-matrix. \( \blacksquare \)

Notice that we recover the original definition of \( S^{\text{match}} \) in the case of binary probabilities, though it does not fit in the Generalized Linear Model. Note also that these definitions can be directly extended to the setting where multiple comparisons are available for each pair and aggregated in comparisons that take fractional values (e.g. in a tournament setting where participants play several times against each other).

3. Spectral Algorithms

We first recall how the spectral clustering approach can be used to recover the true ordering in seriation problems by computing an eigenvector, with computational complexity \( O(n^2 \log n) \) [Kuczynski and Wozniakowski, 1992]. We then apply this method to the ranking problem.

3.1. Spectral Seriation Algorithm. We use the spectral computation method originally introduced in [Atkins et al., 1998] to solve the seriation problem based on the similarity matrices defined in the previous section. We first recall the definition of the Fiedler vector.

Definition 3.1. The Fiedler value of a symmetric, nonnegative matrix \( A \) is the smallest non-zero eigenvalue of its Laplacian matrix \( L_A = \text{diag}(A) - A \). The corresponding eigenvector is called Fiedler vector and is the optimal solution to \( \min \left\{ y^T L_A y : y \in \mathbb{R}^n, y^T 1 = 0, \|y\|_2 = 1 \right\} \).

The main result from [Atkins et al., 1998], detailed below, shows how to reorder pre-R matrices in a noise free case.

Proposition 3.2. [Atkins et al., 1998, Th.3.3] Let \( A \in S_n \) be an irreducible pre-R-matrix with a simple Fiedler value and a Fiedler vector \( v \) with no repeated values. Let \( \Pi_1 \in \mathcal{P} \) (respectively, \( \Pi_2 \)) be the permutation such that the permuted Fiedler vector \( \Pi_1 v \) is strictly increasing (decreasing). Then \( \Pi_1 A \Pi_1^T \) and \( \Pi_2 A \Pi_2^T \) are R-matrices, and no other permutations of \( A \) produce R-matrices.

The next technical lemmas extend the results in Atkins et al. [1998] to strict R-matrices and are used to prove proposition 3.6 in next section. They can be skipped at first read.

The first one shows that without loss of generality, the Fiedler value is simple.

Lemma 3.3. If \( A \) is an irreducible R-matrix, up to a uniform shift of its coefficients, \( A \) has a simple Fiedler value and a monotonic Fiedler vector.
Proof. We use [Atkins et al., 1998, Th. 4.6] which states that if \( A \) is an irreducible R-matrix with \( A_{n,1} = 0 \), then the Fiedler value of \( A \) is a simple eigenvalue. Since \( A \) is a R-matrix, \( A_{n,1} \) is among its minimal elements. Subtracting it from \( A \) does not affect the positivity of \( A \) and we can apply [Atkins et al., 1998, Th. 4.6]. Monotonicity of the Fiedler vector then follows from [Atkins et al., 1998, Th. 3.2]. ■

The next lemma shows that the Fiedler vector is strictly monotonic if \( A \) is a strict R-matrix.

**Lemma 3.4.** Let \( A \in S_n \) be a R-matrix. Suppose there are no distinct indices \( r < s \) such that for any \( k \not\in [r; s], A_{r,k} = A_{r+1,k} = \ldots = A_{s,k} \), then, up to a uniform shift, the Fiedler value of \( A \) is simple and its Fiedler vector is strictly monotonic.

**Proof.** By Lemma 3.3, the Fiedler value of \( A \) is simple (up to a uniform shift of \( A \)). Let \( x \) be the corresponding Fiedler vector of \( A \), \( x \) is monotonic by Lemma 3.3. Suppose \([r; s]\) is a nontrivial maximal interval such that \( x_r = x_{r+1} = \ldots = x_s \), then by [Atkins et al., 1998, lemma 4.3], for any \( k \not\in [r; s], A_{r,k} = A_{r+1,k} = \ldots = A_{s,k} \), which contradicts the initial assumption. Therefore \( x \) is strictly monotonic. ■

We now show that the condition of 3.4 on \( A \) is equivalent to \( A \) being strict-R.

**Lemma 3.5.** An R-matrix \( A \in S_n \) is strictly R if and only if there are no distinct indices \( r < s \) such that for any \( k \not\in [r; s], A_{r,k} = A_{r+1,k} = \ldots = A_{s,k} \).

**Proof.** Let \( A \in S_n \) a R-matrix. Let us first suppose there are no distinct indices \( r < s \) such that for any \( k \not\in [r; s], A_{r,k} = A_{r+1,k} = \ldots = A_{s,k} \). By lemma 3.4 the Fiedler value of \( A \) is simple and its Fiedler vector is strictly monotonic. Hence by proposition 3.2, only the identity and reverse identity permutations of \( A \) produce R-matrices. Now suppose there exist two distinct indices \( r < s \) such that for any \( k \not\in [r; s], A_{r,k} = A_{r+1,k} = \ldots = A_{s,k} \). In addition to the identity and reverse identity permutations, we can locally reverse the order of rows and columns from \( r \) to \( s \), since the sub matrix \( A_{r:s,r:s} \) is an R-matrix and for any \( k \not\in [r; s], A_{r,k} = A_{r+1,k} = \ldots = A_{s,k} \). Therefore at least four different permutations of \( A \) produce R-matrices, which means that \( A \) is not strictly R. ■

### 3.2. SerialRank: a Spectral Ranking Algorithm

In Section 2, we showed that similarities \( S_{\text{match}} \) and \( S_{\text{glm}} \) are pre-strict-R when all comparisons are available and consistent with an underlying ranking of items. We now use the spectral seriation method in [Atkins et al., 1998] to reorder these matrices and produce an output ranking. We call this algorithm SerialRank and prove the following result.

**Proposition 3.6.** Given all pairwise comparisons for a set of totally ordered items and assuming there are no ties between items, performing algorithm SerialRank, i.e. sorting the Fiedler vector of the matrix \( S_{\text{match}} \) defined in (3) recovers the true ranking of items.

**Proof.** From Proposition 2.3 we get that, under our assumptions, \( S_{\text{match}} \) is a pre-strict R-matrix. Now combining the equivalent definition of strict-R matrices in lemma 3.5 with lemma 3.4, we deduce that Fiedler value of \( S_{\text{match}} \) is simple and its Fiedler vector has no repeated values. Hence by theorem 3.2, only the two permutations that sort the Fiedler vector in increasing and decreasing order produce strict R-matrices and are therefore candidate rankings (since from Proposition 2.3 \( S_{\text{match}} \) is a strictly R-matrix when ordered according to the true ranking). Finally we can choose between the two candidate rankings (increasing and decreasing) by picking the one with the least upstets. ■

Similar results applies for \( S_{\text{glm}} \) when we are given enough comparisons in the Generalized Linear Model. This last result guarantees recovery of the true ranking of items in the noiseless case. In the next section, we will study the impact of corrupted or missing comparisons on the inferred ranking of items.
Algorithm 1 Using Seriation for Spectral Ranking (SerialRank)

**Input:** A set of pairwise comparisons $C_{i,j} \in \{-1, 0, 1\}$ or $[-1, 1]$.

1: Compute a similarity matrix $S$ as in §2.2
2: Compute the Laplacian matrix

$$L_S = \text{diag}(S1) - S$$  \hspace{1cm} \text{(SerialRank)}

3: Compute the Fiedler vector of $S$.

**Output:** A ranking induced by sorting the Fiedler vector of $S$ (choose either increasing or decreasing order to minimize the number of upsets).

### 3.3 Hierarchical Ranking

In a large dataset, the goal may be to rank only a subset of top rank items. In this case, we can first perform spectral ranking (cheap) and then refine the ranking of the top set of items using either the SerialRank algorithm on the top comparison submatrix, or another seriation algorithm such as the convex relaxation in [Fogel et al., 2013]. This last method would also allow us to solve semi-supervised ranking problems, given additional information on the structure of the solution.

### 4. Robustness to Corrupted and Missing Comparisons

In this section we study the robustness of SerialRank using $S_{\text{match}}$ with respect to noisy and missing pairwise comparisons. We will see that noisy comparisons cause ranking ambiguities for the standard point score method and that such ambiguities can be lifted by the spectral ranking algorithm. We show in particular that the SerialRank algorithm recovers the exact ranking when the pattern of errors is random and errors are not too numerous.

We first study the impact of one corrupted comparison on SerialRank and then extend the result to multiple corrupted comparisons. A similar analysis is provided for missing comparisons and results are summarized in corollary 4.6. Finally, proposition 4.7 provides an estimate of the number of randomly corrupted entries that can be tolerated for perfect recovery of the true ranking.

We recall the definition of the point score of an item.

**Definition 4.1.** The point score $w_i$ of an item $i$, also known as point-difference, or row-sum is defined as $w_i = \sum_{k=1}^{\gamma} C_{k,i}$, which corresponds to the number of wins minus the number of losses in a tournament setting.

In the following we will simply call the vector of point scores $w$ the score vector.

**Figure 1.** The matrix of pairwise comparisons $C$ (far left) when the rows are ordered according to the true ranking. The corresponding similarity matrix $S_{\text{match}}$ is a strict R-matrix (center left). The same $S_{\text{match}}$ similarity matrix with comparison $(3, 8)$ corrupted (center right). With one corrupted comparison, $S_{\text{match}}$ keeps enough strict R-constraints to recover the right permutation. In the noiseless case, the difference between all coefficients is at least one and after introducing an error, the coefficients inside the green rectangles still enforce strict R-constraints (far right).
Proposition 4.2. Given all pairwise comparisons $C_{s,t} \in \{-1,1\}$ between items ranked according to their indices, suppose the sign of one comparison $C_{i,j}$ is switched, with $i < j$. If $j - i > 2$ then $S_{\text{match}}$ defined in (3) remains strict-R, whereas the score vector $w$ has ties between items $i$ and $i+1$ and items $j$ and $j-1$.

Proof. We give some intuition on the result in Figure 1. We write the true score and comparison matrices $S_{\text{true}}$ and $C_{\text{true}}$ respectively. This means in particular that $C_{i,j} = C_{i,j} = 1$. To simplify notations we denote by $S$ the similarity matrix $S_{\text{match}}$ (respectively $\hat{S}$ when the similarity is computed from observations). We first study the impact of a corrupted comparison $C_{i,j}$ for $i < j$ on the score vector $\hat{w}$. We have

$$\hat{w}_i = \sum_{k=1}^{n} \hat{C}_{k,i} = \sum_{k=1}^{n} C_{k,i} + \hat{C}_{j,i} - C_{j,i} = w_i + 2 = w_{i+1},$$

similarly $\hat{w}_j = w_{j-1}$, whereas for $k \neq i,j, \hat{w}_k = w_k$. Hence, the incorrect comparison induces two ties in the score vector $w$.

Now we show that the similarity matrix defined in (3) breaks these ties, by showing that it is a strict R-matrix. Writing $\hat{S}$ in terms of $S$, we get

$$[\hat{C}\hat{C}^T]_{i,t} = \sum_{k \neq j} (\hat{C}_{i,k} \hat{C}_{t,k}) + \hat{C}_{i,j} \hat{C}_{t,j} = \sum_{k \neq j} (C_{i,k} C_{t,k}) + \hat{C}_{i,j} C_{t,j} = \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} [CC^T]_{i,t} - 2 & \text{if } t < j \\ [CC^T]_{i,t} + 2 & \text{if } t > j. \end{array} \right.$$

We thus get

$$\hat{S}_{i,t} = \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} S_{i,t} - 1 & \text{if } t < j \\ S_{i,t} + 1 & \text{if } t > j, \end{array} \right.$$ (remember there is a factor 1/2 in the definition of $S$). Similarly we get for any $t \neq i$

$$\hat{S}_{j,t} = \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} S_{j,t} + 1 & \text{if } t < i \\ S_{j,t} - 1 & \text{if } t > i. \end{array} \right.$$

Finally, for the single corrupted index pair $(i,j)$, we get

$$\hat{S}_{i,j} = \frac{1}{2} \left( n + \sum_{k \neq i,j} (\hat{C}_{i,k} \hat{C}_{j,k}) + \hat{C}_{i,i} \hat{C}_{j,j} + \hat{C}_{i,j} \hat{C}_{j,i} \right) = S_{i,j} - 1 + 1 = S_{i,j},$$

For all other coefficients $(s,t)$ such that $s, t \neq i,j$, we have $\hat{S}_{s,t} = S_{s,t}$. Meaning all rows or columns outside of $i, j$ are left unchanged. We first observe that these last equations, together with our assumption that $j - i > 2$ and the fact that the elements of the exact $S$ in (4) differ by at least one, mean that

$$\hat{S}_{s,t} \geq \hat{S}_{s+1,t} \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{S}_{s,t+1} \geq \hat{S}_{s,t},$$

for any $s < t$

so $\hat{S}$ remains an R-matrix. Note that this result remains true even when $j - i = 2$, but we need some strict inequalities to show uniqueness of the retrieved order. Indeed, because $j - i > 2$ all these R constraints are strict except between elements of rows $i$ and $i+1$, and rows $j - 1$ and $j$ (idem for columns). These ties can be broken using the fact that

$$\hat{S}_{i,j} - 1 = S_{i,j} - 1 < S_{i+1,j-1} - 1 = \hat{S}_{i+1,j-1} - 1 < \hat{S}_{i+1,j-1}$$

which means that $\hat{S}$ is still a strict R-matrix (see Figure 1) since $j - 1 > i + 1$ by assumption. $\blacksquare$

We now extend this result to multiple errors.

Proposition 4.3. Given all pairwise comparisons $C_{s,t} \in \{-1,1\}$ between items ranked according to their indices, suppose the signs of $m$ comparisons indexed $(i_1,j_1), \ldots, (i_m,j_m)$ are switched. If the following condition (7) holds true,

$$|s - t| > 2, \text{ for all } s, t \in \{i_1, \ldots, i_m, j_1, \ldots, j_m\} \text{ with } s \neq t,$$

(7)
here then $S_{\text{match}}$ defined in (3) remains strict-R, whereas the score vector $w$ gets $2m$ ties.

**Proof.** We write the true score and comparison matrix $w$ and $C$, while the observations are written $\hat{w}$ and $\hat{C}$ respectively, and without loss of generality we suppose $i_l < j_l$. This means in particular that $\hat{C}_{i_l,j_l} = -C_{i_l,j_l} = 1$ for all $l \in \{1, \ldots, m\}$. To simplify notations we denote by $S$ the similarity matrix $S_{\text{match}}$ (respectively $\hat{S}$ when the similarity is computed from observations).

As in the proof of proposition 4.2, corrupted comparisons indexed $(i_l, j_l)$ induce shifts of $\pm 1$ on columns and rows $i_l$ and $j_l$ of the similarity matrix $S_{\text{match}}$, while $S_{\text{match}}$ values remain the same. Since there are several corrupted comparisons, we also need to check the values of $\hat{S}$ at the intersections of rows and columns with indices of corrupted comparisons. Formally, for any $(i, j) \in \{(i_1, j_1), \ldots, (i_m, j_m)\}$ and $t \notin \{i_1, \ldots, i_m, j_1, \ldots, j_m\}$

$$\hat{S}_{i,t} = \begin{cases} S_{i,t} + 1 & \text{if } t < j \\ S_{i,t} - 1 & \text{if } t > j \end{cases}$$

Similarly for any $t \notin \{i_1, \ldots, i_m, j_1, \ldots, j_m\}$

$$\hat{S}_{j,t} = \begin{cases} S_{j,t} - 1 & \text{if } t < i \\ S_{j,t} + 1 & \text{if } t > i \end{cases}$$

Let $(s, s')$ and $(t, t') \in \{(i_1, j_1), \ldots, (i_m, j_m)\}$, we have

$$\hat{S}_{s,t} = \frac{1}{2} \left( n + \sum_{k \neq s', t'} (\hat{C}_{s,k} \hat{C}_{t,k}) + \hat{C}_{s,s'} \hat{C}_{t,s'} + \hat{C}_{s,t} \hat{C}_{t,t'} \right)$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} \left( n + \sum_{k \neq s', t'} (C_{s,k} C_{t,k} - C_{s,s'} C_{t,s'} - C_{s,t} C_{t,t'}) \right)$$

Without loss of generality we suppose $s < t$, and since $s < s'$ and $t < t'$, we get

$$\hat{S}_{s,t} = \begin{cases} S_{s,t} + 2 & \text{if } t > s' \\ S_{s,t} & \text{if } t < s' \end{cases}$$

Similar results apply for other intersections of rows and columns with indices of corrupted comparisons (i.e. shifts of $0$, $+2$, or $-2$). For all other coefficients $(s, t)$ such that $s, t \notin \{i_1, \ldots, i_m, j_1, \ldots, j_m\}$, we have $\hat{S}_{s,t} = S_{s,t}$. We first observe that these last equations, together with our assumption that $j_l - i_l > 2$, mean that

$$\hat{S}_{s,t} \geq \hat{S}_{s+1,t} \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{S}_{s,t+1} \geq \hat{S}_{s,t}, \quad \text{for any } s < t$$

so $\hat{S}$ remains an R-matrix. Moreover, since $j_l - i_l > 2$ all these R constraints are strict except between elements of rows $i_l$ and $i_l + 1$, and rows $j_l - 1$ and $j_l$ (similar for columns). These ties can be broken using the fact that for $k = j_l - 1$

$$\hat{S}_{i_l,k} = S_{i_l,k} - 1 < S_{i_l+1,k} - 1 = \hat{S}_{i_l+1,k} - 1 < S_{i_l+1,k}$$

which means that $\hat{S}$ is still a strict R-matrix since $k = j_l - 1 > i_l + 1$. Moreover, using the same argument as in the proof of proposition 4.2, corrupted comparisons induces $2m$ ties in the score vector $w$. ■

Using similar arguments as above, we study exact ranking recovery conditions with missing comparisons.

**Proposition 4.4.** Given pairwise comparisons $C_{s,t} \in \{-1, 0, 1\}$ between items ranked according to their indices, suppose only one comparison $C_{i,j}$ is missing, with $j - i > 1$ (i.e. $C_{i,j} = 0$), then $S_{\text{match}}$ defined in (3) remains strict-R and the score vector remains strictly monotonic.

**Proof.** We use the same proof technique as in proposition 4.2. We write the true score and comparison matrix $w$ and $C$, while the observations are written $\hat{w}$ and $\hat{C}$ respectively. This means in particular that $\hat{C}_{i,j} = 0$. To simplify notations we denote by $S$ the similarity matrix $S_{\text{match}}$ (respectively $\hat{S}$ when the
similarity is computed from observations). We first study the impact of the missing comparison \( C_{i,j} \) for \( i < j \) on the score vector \( \hat{w} \). We have

\[
\hat{w}_i = \sum_{k=1}^{n} \hat{C}_{k,i} = \sum_{k=1}^{n} C_{k,i} + \hat{C}_{j,i} - C_{j,i} = w_i + 1,
\]

similarly \( \hat{w}_j = w_j - 1 \), whereas for \( k \neq i, j \), \( \hat{w}_k = w_k \). Hence, \( w \) is still strictly increasing if \( j > i + 1 \). If \( j = i + 1 \) there is a tie between \( w_i \) and \( w_{i+1} \). Now we show that the similarity matrix defined in (3) is a R-matrix. Writing \( \hat{S} \) in terms of \( S \), we get

\[
[\hat{C}\hat{C}^T]_{i,t} = \sum_{k \neq j} (\hat{C}_{i,k}\hat{C}_{t,k}) + \hat{C}_{i,j}\hat{C}_{t,j} = \sum_{k \neq j} (C_{i,k}C_{t,k}) = \left\{ \begin{array}{ll}
[CC^T]_{i,t} - 1 & \text{if } t < j \\
[CC^T]_{i,t} + 1 & \text{if } t > j.
\end{array} \right.
\]

We thus get

\[
\hat{S}_{i,t} = \begin{cases} 
S_{i,t} - \frac{1}{2} & \text{if } t < j \\
S_{i,t} + \frac{1}{2} & \text{if } t > j,
\end{cases}
\]

(remember there is a factor 1/2 in the definition of \( S \)). Similarly we get for any \( t \neq i \)

\[
\hat{S}_{j,t} = \begin{cases} 
S_{j,t} + \frac{1}{2} & \text{if } t < i \\
S_{j,t} - \frac{1}{2} & \text{if } t > i.
\end{cases}
\]

Finally, for the single corrupted index pair \((i, j)\), we get

\[
\hat{S}_{i,j} = \frac{1}{2} \left( n + \sum_{k \neq i,j} (\hat{C}_{i,k}\hat{C}_{j,k}) + \hat{C}_{i,i}\hat{C}_{j,j} + \hat{C}_{i,j}\hat{C}_{j,j} \right) = S_{i,j} - 0 + 0 = S_{i,j}.
\]

For all other coefficients \((s, t)\) such that \( s, t \neq i, j \), we have \( \hat{S}_{s,t} = S_{s,t} \). Meaning all rows or columns outside of \( i, j \) are left unchanged. We first observe that these last equations, together with our assumption that \( j - i > 2 \), mean that

\[
\hat{S}_{s,t} \geq \hat{S}_{s+1,t} \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{S}_{s,t+1} \geq \hat{S}_{s,t}, \quad \text{for any } s < t
\]

so \( \hat{S} \) remains an R-matrix. To show uniqueness of the retrieved order, we need \( j - i > 1 \). Indeed, when \( j - i > 1 \) all these R constraints are strict, which means that \( \hat{S} \) is still a strict R-matrix, hence the desired result.

We can again extend this result to the case where multiple comparisons are missing.

**Proposition 4.5.** Given pairwise comparisons \( C_{s,t} \in \{-1, 0, 1\} \) between items ranked according to their indices, suppose \( m \) comparisons indexed \((i_1, j_1), \ldots, (i_m, j_m)\) are missing, i.e. \( C_{i_l,j_l} = 0 \) for \( i_l = l, \ldots, m \). If the following condition (8) holds true,

\[
|s - t| > 1 \text{ for all } s \neq t \in \{i_1, \ldots, i_m, j_1, \ldots, j_m\}
\]

then \( S_{\text{match}} \) defined in (3) remains strict-R and the score vector remains strictly monotonic.

**Proof.** Proceed similarly as in the proof of proposition 4.3, except that shifts are divided by two.

We also get the following corollary.

**Corollary 4.6.** Given pairwise comparisons \( C_{s,t} \in \{-1, 0, 1\} \) between items ranked according to their indices, suppose \( m \) comparisons indexed \((i_1, j_1), \ldots, (i_m, j_m)\) are either corrupted or missing. If condition (7) holds true then \( S_{\text{match}} \) defined in (3) remains strict-R.
Proof. Proceed similarly as the proof of proposition 4.3, except that shifts are divided by two for missing comparisons.

For the case of one corrupted comparison, note that the separation condition on the pair of items \((i, j)\) is necessary. When the comparison \(C_{i,j}\) between two adjacent items according to the true ranking is corrupted, no ranking method can break the resulting tie. For the case of arbitrary number of corrupted comparisons, condition (7) is a sufficient condition only.

We now estimate the number of randomly corrupted entries that can be tolerated for perfect recovery of the true ranking.

**Proposition 4.7.** Given a comparison matrix for a set of \(n\) items with \(m\) corrupted comparisons selected uniformly at random from the set of all possible item pairs. Algorithm SerialRank guarantees that the probability of recovery \(p(n, m)\) satisfies \(p(n, m) \geq 1 - \delta\), provided that \(m = O(\sqrt{\delta n})\). In particular, this implies that \(p(n, m) = 1 - o(1)\) provided that \(m = o(\sqrt{n})\).

**Proof.** Let \(\mathcal{P}\) be the set of all distinct pairs of items from the set \(\{1, 2, \ldots, n\}\). Let \(\mathcal{X}\) be the set of all admissible sets of pairs of items, i.e. containing each \(X \subseteq \mathcal{P}\) such that \(X\) satisfies condition (7). We consider the case of \(m \geq 1\) distinct pairs of items sampled from the set \(\mathcal{P}\) uniformly at random without replacement. Let \(X_i\) denote the set of sampled pairs given that \(i\) pairs are sampled. We are interested in the following quantity:

\[
p(n, m) = P(X_m \in \mathcal{X}).
\]

Given a set of pairs \(X \in \mathcal{X}\), let \(T(X)\) be the set of nonadmissible pairs, i.e. containing \((i, j) \in \mathcal{P} \setminus X\) such that \(X \cup (i, j) \notin \mathcal{X}\).

We have

\[
P(X_m \in \mathcal{X}) = \sum_{x \in \mathcal{X} : |x| = m-1} \left(1 - \frac{|T(x)|}{|\mathcal{P}| - (m-1)}\right) P(X_{m-1} = x). \tag{9}
\]

Note that every selected pair from \(\mathcal{P}\) contributes at most \(6n - 10\) nonadmissible pairs, hence, for every \(x \in \mathcal{X}\) we have

\[|T(x)| \leq 2(3n - 10)|x|.
\]

Combined with (9) and the fact \(|\mathcal{P}| = \binom{n}{2}\), we have

\[
P(X_m \in \mathcal{X}) \geq \left(1 - \frac{2(3n - 5)}{(\frac{n}{2}) - (m-1)}(m-1)\right) P(X_{m-1} \in \mathcal{X}).
\]

From this it follows

\[
p(n, m) \geq \prod_{i=1}^{m-1} \left(1 - \frac{2(3n - 5)}{(\frac{n}{2}) - (i-1)}i\right)
\]

which further implies

\[
p(n, m) \geq \prod_{i=1}^{m-1} \left(1 - \frac{i}{a(n, m)}\right)
\]

where

\[
a(n, m) = \frac{(\frac{n}{2}) - (m-1)}{2(3n - 5)}
\]

Notice that for \(m = o(n)\) we have

\[
\prod_{i=1}^{m-1} \left(1 - \frac{i}{a(n, m)}\right) \sim \exp \left(-6 \frac{m^2}{n}\right) \text{ for large } n.
\]
Hence, given $\delta > 0$, $p(n, m) \geq 1 - \delta$ provided that $m = O(\sqrt{n\delta})$. If $\delta = o(1)$, the condition is $m = o(\sqrt{n})$.

5. Numerical Experiments

We conducted numerical experiments using both synthetic and real datasets to compare the performance of SerialRank with several classical ranking methods.

5.1. Synthetic Datasets. The first synthetic dataset consists of a binary matrix of pairwise comparisons derived from a given ranking of $n$ items with uniform, randomly distributed corrupted or missing entries. A second synthetic dataset consists of a full matrix of pairwise comparisons derived from a given ranking of $n$ items, with added uncertainty for items which are sufficiently close in the true ranking of items. Specifically, given a positive integer $m$, we let $C_{i,j} = 1$ if $i < j - m$, $C_{i,j} \sim \text{Unif}[-1, 1]$ if $|i - j| \leq m$, and $C_{i,j} = -1$ if $i > j + m$. In Figure 2, we measure the Kendall $\tau$ correlation coefficient between the true ranking and the retrieved ranking, when varying either the percentage of corrupted comparisons or the percentage of missing comparisons. Kendall’s $\tau$ counts the number of agreeing pairs minus the number of disagreeing pairs between two rankings, scaled by the total number of pairs, so that it takes values between -1 and 1. Experiments were performed with $n = 100$ and reported Kendall $\tau$ values were averaged over 50 experiments, with standard deviation less than 0.02 for points of interest (i.e. here with Kendall $\tau > 0$).

5.2. Real Datasets. The first real dataset consists of pairwise comparisons derived from outcomes in the TopCoder algorithm competitions. We collected data from 103 competitions among 2742 coders over a period of about one year. Pairwise comparisons are extracted from the ranking of each competition and then averaged for each pair. TopCoder maintains ratings for each participant, updated in an online scheme after each competition, which were also included in the benchmarks. To measure performance in Figure 3, we compute the percentage of upsets (i.e. comparisons disagreeing with the computed ranking), which is closely related to the Kendall $\tau$ (by an affine transformation if comparisons were coming from a consistent ranking). We refine this metric by considering only the participants appearing in the top $k$, for various values of $k$, i.e. computing

$$l_k = \frac{1}{|C_k|} \sum_{i,j \in C_k} 1_{\{r(i) > r(j)\}} 1_{\{C_{i,j} < 0\}},$$

(10)

where $C$ are the pairs $(i, j)$ that are compared and such that $i, j$ are both ranked in the top $k$, and $r(i)$ is the rank of $i$. Up to scaling, this is the loss considered in [Kenyon-Mathieu and Schudy, 2007].

5.3. Semi-Supervised Ranking. We illustrate here how, in a semi-supervised setting, one can interactively enforce some constraints on the retrieved ranking, using e.g. the semi-supervised seriation algorithm in [Fogel et al., 2013]. We compute rankings of England Football Premier League teams for season 2013-2014 (cf. figure 4 for seasons 2011-2012 and 2012-2013). Comparisons are defined as the averaged outcome (win, loss, or tie) of home and away games for each pair of teams. As shown in Table 1, the top half of SerialRank ranking is very close to the official ranking calculated by sorting the sum of points for each team (3 points for a win, 1 point for a tie). However, there are significant variations in the bottom half, though the number of upsets is roughly the same as for the official ranking. To test semi-supervised ranking, suppose for example that we are not satisfied with the ranking of Aston Villa (last team when ranked by the spectral algorithm), we can explicitly enforce that Aston Villa appears before Cardiff, as in the official ranking. In the ranking based on the semi-supervised corresponding seriation problem, Aston Villa is not last anymore, though the number of disagreeing comparisons remains just as low (cf. Figure 3, right).
Figure 2. Kendall $\tau$ (higher is better) for SerialRank (SR, full red line), row-sum (PS, [Wauthier et al., 2013] dashed blue line), rank centrality (RC [Negahban et al., 2012] dashed green line), and maximum likelihood (BTL [Bradley and Terry, 1952], dashed magenta line). In the first synthetic dataset, we vary the proportion of corrupted comparisons (top left), the proportion of observed comparisons (top right) and the proportion of observed comparisons, with 20% of comparisons being corrupted (bottom left). We also vary the parameter $m$ in the second synthetic dataset (bottom right).

Figure 3. Percentage of upsets (i.e. disagreeing comparisons, lower is better) defined in (10), for various values of $k$ and ranking methods, on TopCoder (left) and football data (right).

REFERENCES

Ailon, N. [2011], Active learning ranking from pairwise preferences with almost optimal query complexity., in ‘NIPS’, pp. 810–818.
Table 1. Ranking of teams in the England premier league season 2013-2014.

| Official     | Row-sum       | RC          | BTL          | SerialRank   | Semi-Supervised |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Man City (86)| Man City      | Liverpool   | Man City     | Man City     | Man City        |
| Liverpool (84)| Liverpool | Arsenal     | Liverpool    | Chelsea      | Chelsea         |
| Chelsea (82) | Chelsea       | Man City    | Chelsea      | Liverpool    | Liverpool       |
| Arsenal (79) | Arsenal       | Chelsea     | Arsenal      | Arsenal      | Everton         |
| Everton (72) | Everton       | Everton     | Everton      | Everton      | Arsenal         |
| Tottenham (69)| Tottenham | Tottenham   | Tottenham    | Tottenham    | Tottenham       |
| Man United (64)| Man United | Man United  | Man United   | Southamton  | Southamton      |
| Southamton (56)| Southamton| Southamton  | Southamton   | Southamton   | Southamton      |
| Stoke (50)   | Stoke         | Stoke       | Stoke        | Stoke        | Newcastle       |
| Newcastle (49)| Newcastle | Newcastle  | Newcastle    | Swansea      | West Brom       |
| Crystal Palace (45)| Crystal Palace| Swansea | Crystal Palace | Newcastle | West Brom       |
| Swansea (42) | Swansea       | Crystal Palace| Swansea    | West Brom   | Swansea         |
| West Ham (40)| West Brom     | West Ham    | West Brom    | Hull         | Crystal Palace |
| Aston Villa (38)| Aston Villa | Aston Villa | Aston Villa  | Cardiff      | West Ham        |
| Sunderland (38)| Sunderland   | West Brom  | Sunderland   | Crystal Palace| Fulham          |
| Hull (37)    | Hull          | Sunderland  | Hull         | Fulham       | Norwich         |
| West Brom (36)| West Brom   | Sunderland  | Hull         | Fulham       | Sunderland      |
| Norwich (33)| Norwich       | Fulham      | Norwich      | Norwich      | Sunderland      |
| Fulham (32)  | Fulham        | Norwich     | Fulham       | Sunderland   | Aston Villa     |
| Cardiff (30) | Cardiff       | Cardiff     | Cardiff      | Aston Villa  | Cardiff         |

Figure 4. Percentage of upsets (i.e. disagreeing comparisons, lower is better) defined in (10), for various values of $k$ and ranking methods, on England Premier League 2011-2012 season (left) and 2012-2013 season (right).

Atkins, J., Boman, E., Hendrickson, B. et al. [1998], ‘A spectral algorithm for seriation and the consecutive ones problem’, SIAM J. Comput. 28(1), 297–310.

Blum, A., Konjevod, G., Ravi, R. and Vempala, S. [2000], ‘Semidefinite relaxations for minimum bandwidth and other vertex ordering problems’, Theoretical Computer Science 235(1), 25–42.

Bradley, R. A. and Terry, M. E. [1952], ‘Rank analysis of incomplete block designs: I. the method of paired comparisons’, Biometrika pp. 324–345.

Feige, U. and Lee, J. R. [2007], ‘An improved approximation ratio for the minimum linear arrangement problem’, Information Processing Letters 101(1), 26–29.

Fogel, F., Jenatton, R., Bach, F. and d’Aspremont, A. [2013], ‘Convex relaxations for permutation problems’, NIPS 2013, arXiv:1306.4805.

Freund, Y., Iyer, R., Schapire, R. E. and Singer, Y. [2003], ‘An efficient boosting algorithm for combining preferences’, The Journal of machine learning research 4, 933–969.
Herbrich, R., Minka, T. and Graepel, T. [2006], Trueskill™: A bayesian skill rating system, in ‘Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems’, pp. 569–576.

Huber, P. J. [1963], ‘Pairwise comparison and ranking: optimum properties of the row sum procedure’, The annals of mathematical statistics pp. 511–520.

Hunter, D. R. [2004], ‘MM algorithms for generalized bradley-terry models’, Annals of Statistics pp. 384–406.

Jamieson, K. G. and Nowak, R. D. [2011], Active ranking using pairwise comparisons., in ‘NIPS’, Vol. 24, pp. 2240–2248.

Joachims, T. [2002], Optimizing search engines using clickthrough data, in ‘Proceedings of the eighth ACM SIGKDD international conference on Knowledge discovery and data mining’, ACM, pp. 133–142.

Keener, J. P. [1993], ‘The perron-frobenius theorem and the ranking of football teams’, SIAM review 35(1), 80–93.

Kendall, M. G. and Smith, B. B. [1940], ‘On the method of paired comparisons’, Biometrika 31(3–4), 324–345.

Kenyon-Mathieu, C. and Schudy, W. [2007], How to rank with few errors, in ‘Proceedings of the thirty-ninth annual ACM symposium on Theory of computing’, ACM, pp. 95–103.

Kleinberg, J. [1999], ‘Authoritative sources in a hyperlinked environment’, Journal of the ACM 46, 604–632.

Kuczynski, J. and Wozniakowski, H. [1992], ‘Estimating the largest eigenvalue by the power and Lanczos algorithms with a random start’, SIAM J. Matrix Anal. Appl 13(4), 1094–1122.

Luce, R. [1959], Individual choice behavior, Wiley.

Negahban, S., Oh, S. and Shah, D. [2012], Iterative ranking from pairwise comparisons., in ‘NIPS’, pp. 2483–2491.

Page, L., Brin, S., Motwani, R. and Winograd, T. [1998], ‘The pagerank citation ranking: Bringing order to the web’, Stanford CS Technical Report.

Schapire, W. W. C. R. E. and Singer, Y. [1998], Learning to order things, in ‘Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 10: Proceedings of the 1997 Conference’, Vol. 10, MIT Press, p. 451.

Wauthier, F. L., Jordan, M. I. and Jojic, N. [2013], Efficient ranking from pairwise comparisons, in ‘Proceedings of the 30th International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML)’

C.M.A.P., ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE,
PALAISEAU, FRANCE.
E-mail address: fajwel.fogel@cmap.polytechnique.fr

CNRS & D.I., UMR 8548,
ÉCOLE NORMALE SUPÉRIEURE, PARIS, FRANCE.
E-mail address: aspremon@ens.fr

MICROSOFT RESEARCH,
CAMBRIDGE, UK.
E-mail address: milanv@microsoft.com