Introduction to Graph Database with Cypher & Neo4j

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History

- Lots of logical data models have been proposed in the history of DBMS
  - Hierarchical (IMS), Network (CODASYL), Relational, etc
- What Goes Around Comes Around
  - Graph database uses data models that are “spiritual successors” of Network data model that is popular in 1970’s.
  - CODASYL = Committee on Data Systems Languages
Edge-labelled Graph

• We assign *labels* to *edges* that indicate the different types of relationships between *nodes*

• **Nodes** = {Steve Carell, The Office, B.J. Novak}

• **Edges** = {(Steve Carell, acts_in, The Office), (B.J. Novak, produces, The Office), (B.J. Novak, acts_in, The Office)}

• Basis of Resource Description Framework (RDF) aka. “Triplestore”
The Property Graph Model

• Extends Edge-labelled Graph with labels
  • Both edges and nodes can be labelled with a set of property-value pairs attributes directly to each edge or node.
  • The Office crew graph

- Node $n_1$ has node label Person with attributes: <name, Steve Carell>, <gender, male>
- Edge $e_1$ has edge label acts_in with attributes: <role, Michael G. Scott>, <ref, Wikipedia>
Property Graph v.s. Edge-labelled Graph

- Having node labels as part of the model can offer a more direct abstraction that is easier for users to query and understand
  - *Steve Carell and B.J. Novak can be labelled as Person*
- Suitable for scenarios where various new types of meta-information may regularly need to be added to edges or nodes
Same Data, Different Model

- The same data represented in relational model

Redundant!
Schema Extensibility (and/or) Link Discovery

CREATE TABLE TVSHOW(title, year);
CREATE TABLE Production_Company(name, exec_prodcr);

**graph:** add an edge

**SQL:** redefine relational schema
ALTER TABLE TVSHOW(title, year,
production_company references ...);
-- foreign key constraint

**Link Discovery:** Data mine to determine new information
Property Graph v.s. Relational Model

• Graph Structure is more intuitive than a collection of tables (e.g., org chart)
• Ambiguity in graph representation using relational model (directed or undirected?)
• Avoid repetitive data storage from user perspective (e.g., primary key & foreign key)
• Enable same relation name with different attributes
  • CREATE TABLE TVSHOW(title, year);
  • CREATE TABLE TVSHOW(title, year, production_company); // Not possible!
• Nice query language for graph problems
Neo4j

• Neo4j is a graph database that uses property graph data model with a query language called Cypher.

• In graph database domain, there is no standard query language (yet). Many vendor-dependent flavors
  • SPARQL for RDF
  • Cypher, Gremlin, etc. for property graph
  • Ex: Find co-stars of The Office

```
MATCH (x1:Person)-[:acts_in]-> (:TVSHOW {title: "The Office"})<-[:acts_in]- (x2:Person)
RETURN x1, x2
```

```
g.V().has("TVSHOW", "title", "The Office").in('acts_in').hasLabel("Person").values("name")
```

```
PREFIX : <http://ex.org/#>
SELECT ?x1 ?x2
WHERE {
  FILTER(?x1 != ?x2)
}
```
Graph Query Language (GQL)

- Ongoing standardization effort just like SQL for relational model
First Property Graph with Neo4j

• Demo: Create *The Office crew graph* in Neo4j

```
CREATE
(n1:Person {name: "Steve Carell", gender: "male"}),
(n2:Person {name: "B.J. Novak", gender: "male"}),
(n3:TVShow {title: "The Office"}),
(n1)-[:acts_in {role: "Michael G. Scott", ref: "Wikipedia"}]->(n2),
(n2)-[:acts_in {role: "Ryan Howard", ref: "Wikipedia"}]->(n3),
(n2)-[:produces]->(n3);
```
Let’s Practice

• Let’s create the org. chart of the paper company Dunder Mifflin, Scranton Branch in The Office.

• All edges have labels $e_i$: manages with $i$ being numbers from 1 to $n$, the number of edges

• Some useful commands & notes
  • See the graph - MATCH (n) RETURN n LIMIT 50
  • Delete the graph - MATCH (n) DETACH DELETE n
  • To create list of values, use ”[]”
    • For example, role: ["Sales", "Assistant Regional Manager"]

If some text is illegible, please reference http://my.ilstu.edu/~llipper/com329/dunder_mifflin_org_chart.pdf
Graph Query Languages

• Two important usage patterns for graph query languages:
  • Graph Pattern Matching
  • Graph Navigation

• We’ll focus on Cypher in this tutorial. However, any significant graph query languages will have these two important patterns in their languages.
Graph Pattern Matching

• Graph Pattern Matching
  • A *match* is a mapping from variables to constants such that when the mapping is applied to the given pattern, the result is, roughly speaking, contained within the original graph (i.e., subgraph).

• $Q_1$: Find co-stars of *The Office*

  The Office Crew graph

  Result set (i.e., *matching*) for $Q_1$

  graph pattern for $Q_1$
Graph Pattern Matching in Cypher

• Cypher has no-repeated-edges, bags semantics

• $Q_1$: Find co-stars of The Office

$\text{MATCH (x1:Person)}$
$\text{-[:acts_in]-> (:TVShow}{\text{title: "The Office"})}$
$\text{-[:acts_in]-> (x2:Person)}}$
$\text{RETURN x1, x2}$

Match pattern $x_1$ has to connect to TVShow node through an incoming edge with edge label acts_in

We want to match variable $x_1$ to node with node label Person

• Cypher manual:
  • https://neo4j.com/docs/cypher-manual/current/syntax/patterns/
Example

• Who’s inside Party Planning Committee (PPC)? *(hint: PPC is a dept)*

  MATCH (p:Person)
  WHERE "Party Planning Committee" in p.dept
  return p.name

• How many people does Michael directly manage? *(hint: use count())*

  MATCH (p:Person)<-[:manages]-(n:Person)
  WHERE n.name = "Michael Scott"
  RETURN count(p)
Let’s Practice

• Find all the employees that are directly managed by someone that reports to Michael

MATCH (p {name: 'Michael Scott'})-[[:manages]->(n)-[:manages]->(q)
RETURN q.name

• Does Michael directly manage more employees than Jim Halpert?

MATCH (p:Person)<-[[:manages]-(n:Person)
WHERE n.name = "Michael Scott"
WITH count(p) AS c1
MATCH (p:Person)<-[[:manages]-(m:Person)
WHERE m.name = "Jim Halpert"
RETURN c1 > count(p)

Each MATCH ... WHERE can be thought as a SELECT ... FROM ... WHERE
MATCH (p:Person)<-[[:manages]-(n:Person)
WHERE n.name = "Michael Scott"
MATCH (q:Person)<-[[:manages]-(m:Person)
WHERE m.name = "Darryl Philbin"
RETURN p.name, q.name
Graph Navigation

• A mechanism provided by graph query languages to *navigate* the topology of the data.

• Two important query classes:
  • Path Query
  • Path Query + Graph Pattern Matching (i.e., navigational graph pattern)
Path Query

• Previously, we match a graph pattern; now, we match a path pattern.

• Path query has the general form \( P = x \rightarrow y \) where \( \alpha \) specifies conditions on the paths we wish to retrieve and \( x \) and \( y \) are the endpoints of the path.

\[ P := x \xrightarrow{\text{acts_in} \cdot \text{acts_in}} y \]

\[ Q_1: \text{Find co-stars of The Office} \]

The Office Crew graph

- Often represented using Regular Expressions
Path Query in Cypher

- Cypher has no-repeated-edge, bags semantics
- $Q_1$: Find co-stars of *The Office*

MATCH path=(p:Person)-[:acts_in]->(:TVShow)<-[:acts_in]-(q:Person)
return path

- Nothing new but we return a path now!
Navigational Graph Pattern in Cypher

• We can combine path query with graph pattern matching by allowing edge labels in the graph pattern to be paths
• Q2: Find all the people that Michael Scott manages

MATCH path=(p:Person)-[:manages*1..]->(q:Person)
WHERE p.name = "Michael Scott"
return q.name

• Resources: https://neo4j.com/docs/cypher-manual/current/syntax/patterns/#cypher-pattern-relationship
Example

• Get the Dunder Mifflin employees that are on the same level as “Michael Scott” *(hint: use length( ) on path)*

MATCH p1 = (n:Person)<-[[:manages*]-(p:Person)
MATCH p2 = (m:Person)<-[[:manages*]-(p:Person)
WHERE length(p1) = length(p2) AND m.name <> n.name AND n.name = "Michael Scott"
RETURN m
Same Data, Different Model

• Let’s query the same data in Relational Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>emplID</th>
<th>name</th>
<th>role</th>
<th>dept</th>
<th>mgrID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>David Wallace</td>
<td>{&quot;CFO&quot;}</td>
<td>{&quot;management&quot;}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ryan Howard</td>
<td>{&quot;VP, North East Region&quot;}</td>
<td>{&quot;management&quot;}</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tobby Flenderson</td>
<td>{&quot;HR Rep.&quot;}</td>
<td>{&quot;HR&quot;}</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Michael Scott</td>
<td>{&quot;Regional Manager&quot;}</td>
<td>{&quot;management&quot;}</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Creed Bratton</td>
<td>{&quot;Regional Manager&quot;}</td>
<td>{&quot;management&quot;}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Actual schema and data see “sql-ex-2.sql”
Same Data, Different Model

- Get the Dunder Mifflin employees that are on the same level as “Michael Scott”

with recursive samelevel(s1, s2, s3, s4) as (  
  (select a1.name, a1.mgrID, a2.name, a2.mgrID  
   from dunderMifflin a1, dunderMifflin a2  
   where a1.mgrID = a2.mgrID)  
  union  
  (select a1.name, a1.mgrID, a2.name, a2.mgrID  
   from dunderMifflin a1, dunderMifflin a2, samelevel l1  
   where a1.mgrID = l1.s2 and a2.mgrID = l1.s4)  
) select l2.s3 from samelevel L2 where l2.s1 = 'Michael Scott' and l2.s1 <> l2.s3;

Base case: if two people are at the same level, their manager has to be the same.

Recursion: Same idea as base case but use the base relation and the result table we just computed in base case.
Let’s Practice

• Does Jim Halpert manage Phyllis Lapin?

MATCH path=(p:Person)-[:manages*1..]->(q:Person)
WHERE p.name = "Jim Halpert" and q.name = "Phyllis Lapin"
return count(path) > 0

• Find all people that are indirectly managed by Michael Scott (**hint: use distinct**)

MATCH path=(p1:Person {name: "Michael Scott"})-[:manages*1..]->()
-[:manages*1..]->(p2:Person)
return distinct p2

Why do we use distinct p2 rather than distinct path?
Graph Algorithms in Cypher

• Cypher and many graph query languages allow user to directly embed graph algorithms inside the query

• Q3: Find the shortest path between David Wallace and Andy Bernard

MATCH path = shortestPath(
  (p:Person {name: "David Wallace"})-[[:manages*1..]]-(q:Person {name: "Andy Bernard"}))
RETURN path

• More graph algorithms: PageRank, Centrality, Connected Component algorithms, etc.
Understand a Cypher Query

• Neo4j has `EXPLAIN` command; just like `EXPLAIN` in any RDBMS vendor

• Running example for this section
  
  • Data modelled in Relational Model

  ```sql
  CREATE TABLE R3(a char(1));
  CREATE TABLE R2(a char(1), b integer);
  CREATE TABLE R1(b integer);

  INSERT INTO R3(a) VALUES ('A'),('B'),('B');
  INSERT INTO R2(a,b) VALUES
  ('A',1),('A',1),('B',1),('B',2);
  INSERT INTO R1(b) VALUES (2),(3);
  ```

• Query: `SELECT * FROM r1 NATURAL JOIN r2 NATURAL JOIN r3;`
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

• The plan for SQL query looks like

```sql
\$ explain select * from r1 natural join r2 natural join r3;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUERY PLAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merge Join (cost=2507.23..6928.67 rows=293913 width=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merge Cond: (r1.b = r2.b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Sort (cost=179.78..186.16 rows=2550 width=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort Key: r1.b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Seq Scan on r1 (cost=0.00..35.50 rows=2550 width=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Sort (cost=2327.45..2385.08 rows=23052 width=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort Key: r2.b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Merge Join (cost=301.05..657.03 rows=23052 width=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merge Cond: (r2.a = r3.a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Sort (cost=142.54..147.64 rows=2040 width=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort Key: r2.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Seq Scan on r2 (cost=0.00..30.40 rows=2040 width=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Sort (cost=158.51..164.16 rows=2260 width=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort Key: r3.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; Seq Scan on r3 (cost=0.00..32.60 rows=2260 width=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(15 rows)
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

• Let’s model the same data in property graph model
• Guidelines to map relational model to graph model
  • A row is a node
  • A table name is a label name
  • A join or foreign key is a relationship (i.e., edge)
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

Not So Correct Attempt

```
CREATE
(n1:R3 {a: "A"}),
(n2:R3 {a: "B"}),
(n3:R3 {a: "B"}),
(n4:R2 {a: "A", b: 1}),
(n5:R2 {a: "A", b: 1}),
(n6:R2 {a: "B", b: 1}),
(n7:R2 {a: "B", b: 1}),
(n8:R1 {b: 2}),
(n9:R1 {b: 3});
```

```
MATCH (r1:R1),(r2:R2)
CREATE (r1)-[:e]->(r2)
MATCH (r2:R2),(r3:R3)
CREATE (r2)-[:e]->(r3)
```

Violates a join or foreign key is a relationship: we have cartesian product
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

Better Attempt

CREATE
(n1:R3 {a: "A"}),
(n2:R3 {a: "B"}),
(n3:R3 {a: "B"}),
(n4:R2 {a: "A", b: 1}),
(n5:R2 {a: "A", b: 1}),
(n6:R2 {a: "B", b: 1}),
(n7:R2 {a: "B", b: 2}),
(n8:R1 {b: 2}),
(n9:R1 {b: 3});

MATCH (r1:R1),(r2:R2)
WHERE r1.b = r2.b
CREATE (r1)-[:e]->(r2)

MATCH (r2:R2),(r3:R3)
WHERE r2.a = r3.a
CREATE (r2)-[:e]->(r3)
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

• Resulting graph in Neo4j

• Observation
  • Neo4j doesn't have notion of undirected edges during graph creation; user can ignore directions when they query the graph
  • Unlike relational model, part of join computation is done during the graph model creation (e.g., when create relationships)
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

• Recall SQL query
  • SELECT * FROM r1 NATURAL JOIN r2 NATURAL JOIN r3;

• In Cypher
  MATCH (r1:R1),(r2:R2),(r3:R3)
  WHERE r1.b = r2.b AND r2.a = r3.a
  RETURN r2.a, r1.b

• Let’s check the query plan
  • EXPLAIN MATCH (r1:R1),(r2:R2),(r3:R3) WHERE r1.b = r2.b AND r2.a = r3.a RETURN r2.a, r1.b
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

- Three-way join is computed using hash join in a pipeline fashion in Neo4j 4.2 optimizer

This query builds a cartesian product between disconnected patterns.

If a part of a query contains multiple disconnected patterns, this will build a cartesian product between all those parts. This may produce a large amount of data and slow down query processing. While occasionally intended, it may often be possible to reformulate the query that avoids the use of this cross product, perhaps by adding a relationship between the different parts or by using OPTIONAL MATCH (identifier is: (3))

```
EXPLAIN MATCH (r1:R1),(r2:R2),(r3:R3) WHERE r1.b = r2.b AND r2.a = r3.a RETURN r2.a, r1.b
```

Suggests the above Cypher query is "anti-pattern"
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

• Recall in HW4, we saw the semantics of semi-join in graph
  • $A \bowtie B$ means given a set of starting vertices in $B$, return the set of vertices in $A$ that connect to those starting vertices via edges
• A multi-way join query = Graph Pattern Matching query
• Cypher query

```cypher
MATCH (r3:R3)-[:e]-(r2:R2)-[:e]-(r1:R1)
WHERE r2.a = r3.a and r2.b = r1.b
RETURN r2.a, r1.b
```
Understand a Cypher Query (cont’)

- **Expand(All)**
  - Given a start node, and depending on the pattern relationship, the Expand(All) operator will traverse incoming or outgoing relationships.
  - = breadth-wise expansion of the search tree

- **Join = Expand(All) + Filter**
  - The execution starts with \( r_1 \) and follows the edges from \( r_1 \) by one more level to find all \( r_2 \) that satisfies \( (r1) - [\text{anon}_27:e] - (r2) \)
  - Then Filter is applied with predicate \( r2.b = r1.b \).

Recall: Each MATCH ... WHERE can be thought as a SELECT ... FROM ... WHERE

MATCH (r2:R2)-[:e]-(r3:R3)  
WHERE r2.a = r3.a  
with r2  
MATCH (r2)-[:e]-(r1:R1)  
WHERE r2.b = r1.b  
RETURN r2.a, r1.b
Relational vs. Graph: A Case Study

• A term project done by a student in the same class in Spring 2019
• The goal is to enable run queries against a large collection of data (~2.2M rows) gathered from student’s workplace
  • Example query: Where are all my photos?
  • Similar scenarios:
    • Query against files stored in S3 bucket
    • Query against log files collected over time from different services on AWS
• Method: model data in relational model (Postgres 11) and graph model (Neo4j 3.5) and compare performance
• Independent of the DBMS, the raw data comprised a labeled directed graph
Relational vs. Graph: A Case Study (cont’)

- Query 1: Exact Filename Match
  - Return full paths of files that match a given file name

```
WITH RECURSIVE filetree AS (  
  select file_id, filename, parent_file_id, host, path as path_org,  
  filename as path, 0 as depth, parent_file_id as tpid from files  
  where filename = 'all.txt'  

UNION  
select ft.file_id, ft.filename, ft.parent_file_id, ft.host,  
  ft.path as path_org, f.filename || '/' || ft.path as path,  
  ft.depth + 1 as depth, f.parent_file_id as tpid  
from files f  
join filetree ft  
on ft.tpid = f.file_id  
)  

match(f:file) where f.name = "all.txt"  
match(r:is_root)  
match p = (r)-[:parent_of*]->(f)  
// The reduce notation concatenates the parent nodes to reconstruct the path  
return reduce(acc = "/", x IN nodes(p)[1..] | acc + "/" + x.name),  
      reduce(acc = 0, x IN nodes(p)[1..] | acc + 1)

select * from filetree where tpid = -1
```

Cypher query is much shorter* than SQL counterpart \( \rightarrow \) easier development and code maintenance

*average < 1/3 LoC. Newer, similar studies show even greater reduction (e.g., occasionally < 1/10 LoC)
Relational vs. Graph: A Case Study (cont’)

- Postgres outperforms Neo4j for certain queries
- Cypher query still needs many hand tuning* to reach acceptable performance → indicates lack of maturity for Neo4j optimizer

*writing query in a different way, and/or overriding Neo4j’s Cypher Query Optimizer’s choice of query plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query</th>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find exact “all.txt”</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>1 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find exact “all.txt”</td>
<td>Postgresql</td>
<td>1 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt (using :is_root)</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>4013 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt (using WITH)</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>777 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt (using WHERE)</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>947 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt</td>
<td>Postgresql</td>
<td>5949 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 10 (executing limit late)</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>833 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 10 (push limit early)</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>236 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 10 (executing limit late)</td>
<td>Postgresql</td>
<td>6008 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 10 (push limit early)</td>
<td>Postgresql</td>
<td>32 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 1000</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>636 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 1000</td>
<td>Postgresql</td>
<td>56 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 10000</td>
<td>Neo4j</td>
<td>636 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 10000</td>
<td>Postgresql</td>
<td>5720 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find all *.txt ordered limit 10000 (no recursion)</td>
<td>Postgresql</td>
<td>183 ms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

• Introduced Edge-label Graph, Property Graph
  • Discussed their difference with each other and with Relational Model

• Introduced graph query languages
  • SPARQL for RDF (i.e., Edge-label Graph), Gremlin and Cypher for Property Graph
  • Introduced three important usage patterns in graph query languages
    • Graph Pattern Matching
    • Path Query
    • Navigational Graph Pattern Matching
  • Demonstrated and practiced those usage patterns in Cypher with Neo4j
  • Introduced Cypher query profiling in Neo4j

• A real world case study on relational model vs. graph model
  • Graph query is easier to write and maintain
  • Neo4j has a long way to go to build a sophisticated optimizer like Postgres
Moving Forward

• Gremlin
  • [https://kelvinlawrence.net/book/Gremlin-Graph-Guide.html](https://kelvinlawrence.net/book/Gremlin-Graph-Guide.html)
  • [https://tinkerpop.apache.org/docs/current/tutorials/getting-started/](https://tinkerpop.apache.org/docs/current/tutorials/getting-started/)

• Contrast among Cypher, SQL, and Datalog on the same data

• Code for this tutorial

• Slides available
  • [https://zhu45.org/introduction-to-graph-database-with-neo4j.pdf](https://zhu45.org/introduction-to-graph-database-with-neo4j.pdf)