Retrieval Explorables

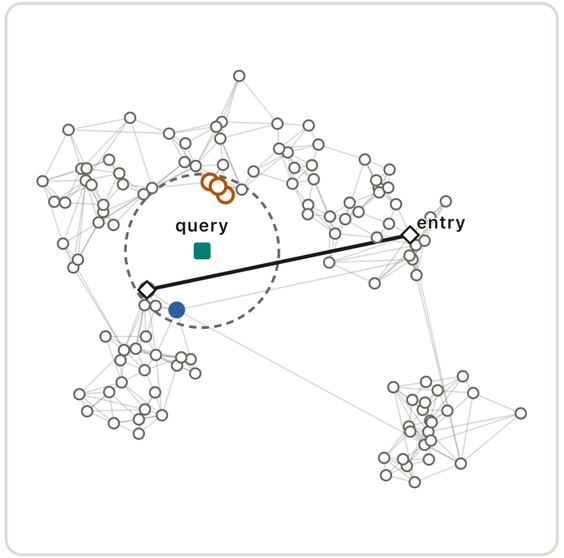
(and why you should build something similar as well)

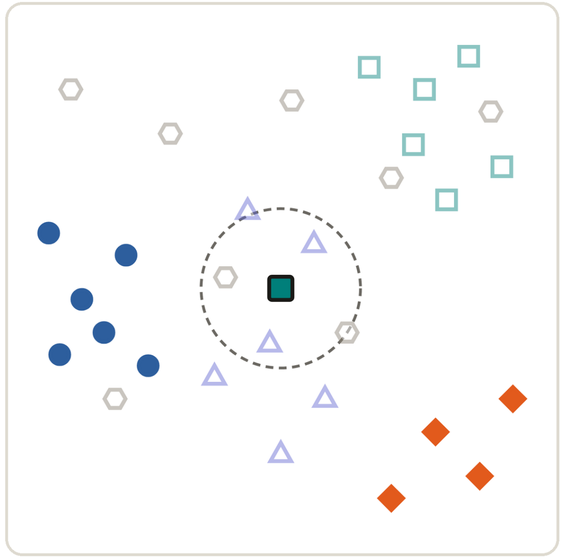
Alper Nebi Kanlı

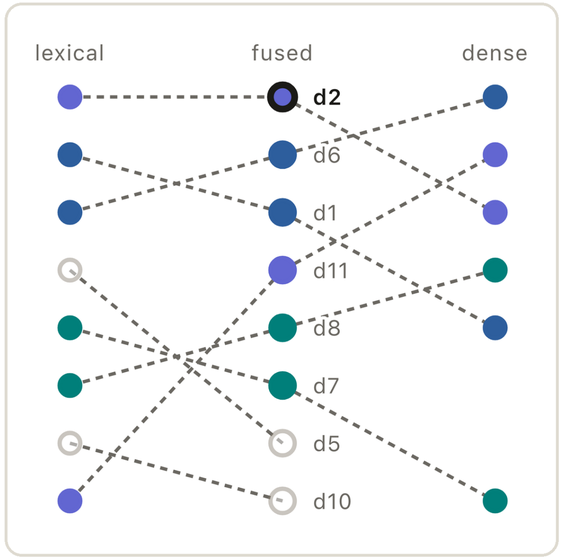
What is It

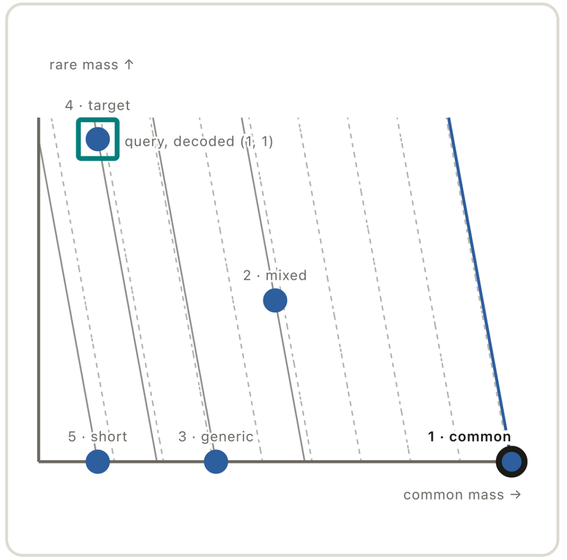
Explanations and interactive figures to learn about search/information retrieval

retrieval-explorables.com









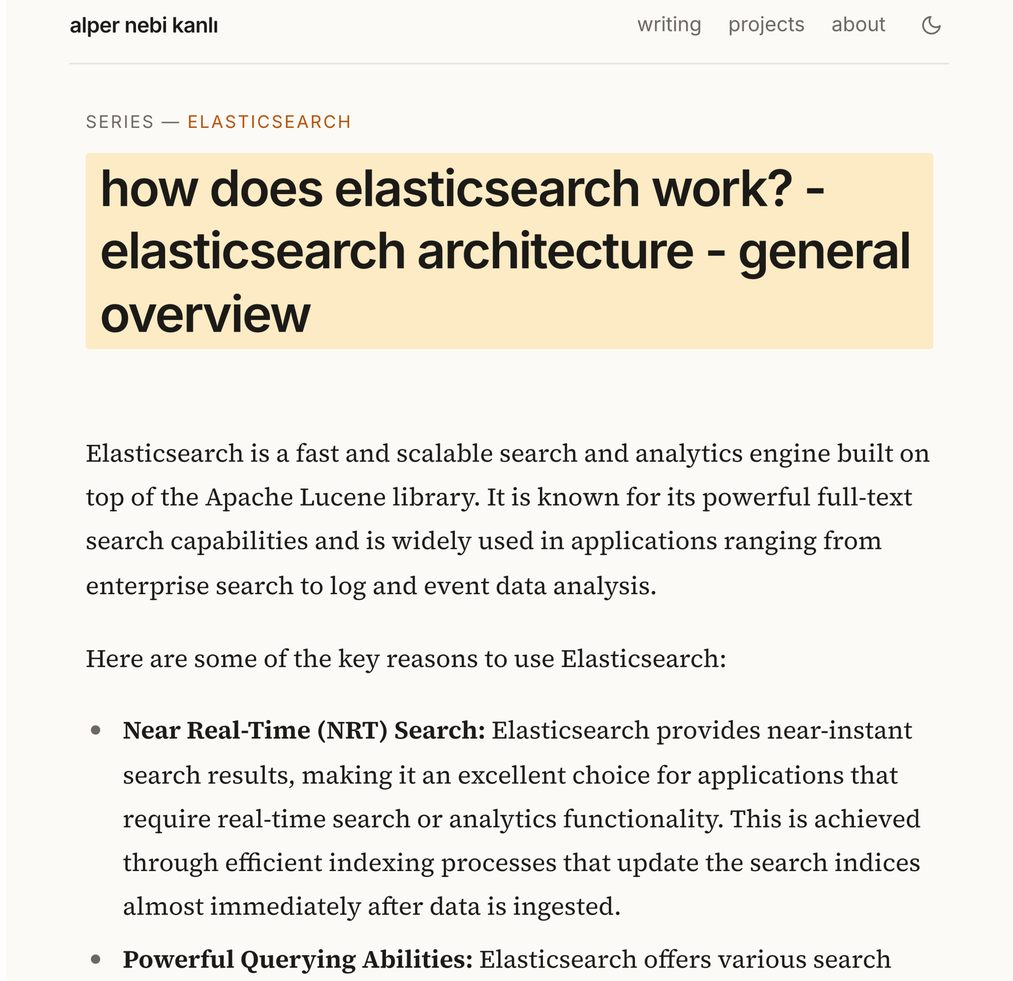
A Clear Explanation Can Feel Like Learning

- Andy Matuschak, “Why Books Don’t Work”. Reading (and I think, watching as well) does not by itself teach you a subject in depth

- Derek Muller (of Veritasium) tested two physics videos:
  - A clear explanation: students called it clear, and still did badly on the test
  - A video that voiced their wrong ideas: students called it confusing, and their scores nearly doubled

- Andrej Karpathy: “The primary feeling should be that of effort.” I think the feeling of effort is a side effect, like soreness in lifting.

- And what kind of effort? Switching between a video and your code is busywork, instead of deep work.



An Example

Some Examples I Liked

Distill



distill.pub

Complexity Explorables



complexity-explorables.org

Maybe You Should Build One As Well

- Interactive pages were very expensive: Distill's editors wrote that they would often spend 50 or more hours improving an article
- But that was in 2021. Now coding agents cut part of the cost
- Constraints shaped our media. As they loosen, maybe our media can catch up
- Steve Jobs called the computer a **bicycle for the mind**. We should build things lives up to this idea

Thank You!

- www.alpernebikanli.com
- representationlayer.substack.com
- www.linkedin.com/in/alpernkanli
- alpernkanli.bsky.social

