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10 **Scaling XML Query Processing: Distribution, Localization**  
11 **and Pruning**

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22 **Abstract** Distributing data collections by fragmenting them is an effective way of  
23 improving the scalability of a database system. While the distribution of relational  
24 data is well understood, the unique characteristics of the XML data and query model  
25 present challenges that require different distribution techniques. In this paper, we  
26 show how XML data can be fragmented horizontally and vertically. Based on this, we  
27 propose solutions to two of the problems encountered in distributed query processing  
28 and optimization on XML data, namely localization and pruning. Localization takes  
29 a fragmentation-unaware query plan and converts it to a distributed query plan that  
30 can be executed at the sites that hold XML data fragments in a distributed system.  
31 We then show how the resulting distributed query plan can be pruned so that only  
32 those sites are accessed that can contribute to the query result. We demonstrate that  
33 our techniques can be integrated into a real-life XML database system and that they  
34 significantly improve the performance of distributed query execution.  
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37 **Keywords** Distributed · XML · Localization · Pruning  
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39 **1 Introduction**

40 Over the past decade, XML has become a commonly used format for storing and ex-  
41 changing data in a wide variety of systems. Due to this widespread use, the problem  
42 of effectively and efficiently managing XML collections has attracted significant at-  
43 tention in both the research community and in commercial products. One can claim  
44 that techniques for the management and querying of XML data residing on a single  
45 system are now well understood. However, because these techniques are inherently  
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based on centralized execution on a single machine, their scalability is limited when faced with large collections (or single, large documents) and heavy query workloads.

In relational database systems, these scalability challenges have been successfully addressed by partitioning data collections and processing queries in parallel in a distributed system [1]. Our work is focused on similarly exploiting distribution in the context of XML database systems. While there are some similarities between the way relational database systems can be distributed and the opportunities for distributing XML database systems, the significant differences in both data and query models make it impossible to directly apply relational techniques to XML. Therefore, new solutions need to be developed to distribute XML database systems.

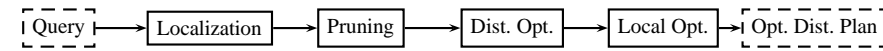
While there has been research interest in distributed XML query processing for a while, much of the existing work has focused on the problem of integrating multiple repositories into a single XML view [2–4]. It is important to point out that, while data integration also deals with optimizing queries over fragmented collections of XML data, its goals and the constraints it faces are decidedly different from those seen in a scenario where we are distributing to improve scalability. For instance, whereas data integration requires a fragmentation model that can express the complex ways in which we might need to integrate individual and possibly redundant data sources, in this work, we optimize our fragmentation model entirely for query performance.

A few publications have focused on distribution as a means to improve scalability. These either rely heavily on replicated index structures that complicate the handling of updates [5] or they focus primarily on minimizing network communication cost [6–8]. In this paper, in contrast, we look at end-to-end solutions and take into account all components of the cost of query evaluation, including communication and processing. Our experiments show that our technique, which is specifically designed for this purpose, outperforms techniques that focus on communication cost alone.

In this paper, we focus on the following three aspects of the problem of improving the scalability of XML query evaluation through distribution:

- First, we present a *distribution model* for XML. We have chosen to focus on a fragmentation approach that partitions a collection of XML data (consisting of one or multiple documents) based on characteristics of its content and structure. A key advantage of this model is that it is simple and yet sufficiently powerful to significantly improve the scalability of distributed query evaluation. This simplicity makes it easier to identify a suitable fragmentation for a given query workload.

Our distribution model supports horizontal fragmentation (based on selection operators and predicates) and vertical fragmentation (based on a partitioning of the set of element types in a schema). Both types of fragmentation are designed to be orthogonal, which means they can be used together to achieve hybrid fragmentation. While the semantics of this model are inspired by relational fragmentation techniques, it is important to point out that the characteristics of XML, such as its nested data model and structure-based queries, lead to a set of challenges and optimization opportunities that differ significantly from what is encountered in the relational context.



**Fig. 1** Phases of distributed query evaluation

– Second, we focus on the problem of evaluating queries over a distributed XML database. This problem is solved in a number of phases (shown in Figure 1), turning a fragmentation-unaware query into an optimized distributed plan.

1. To evaluate a fragmentation-unaware query, the query is first localized. *Localization* (as defined in [1]) is the process of transforming a fragmentation-unaware query into a set of sub-queries that can be evaluated in parallel at the individual sites in the system. Based on these local sub-queries, an initial distributed execution plan is generated, which determines how sub-query results are combined to the overall query result.
2. Next, a *pruning* strategy is applied, which identifies fragments that do not contribute to the query result. The sub-queries corresponding to these fragments are removed from the distributed execution plan.
3. After pruning, further *distributed optimization* techniques can be applied to improve the performance of the distributed execution plan.
4. Finally, each site independently performs *local optimization* of the sub-queries assigned to it.

In this paper, we focus on the first two steps of distributed query evaluation. Localization yields an initial strategy that allows us to evaluate queries over horizontally and vertically fragmented collections. Applying the novel pruning techniques presented in this paper then allows us to improve the performance of this strategy. The reason why pruning helps improve query performance is twofold. First, it allows us to avoid accessing the sites that hold irrelevant fragments. In addition, by not processing these irrelevant fragments, we can reduce the overall computation and memory cost of evaluating a query.

As we show in this paper, distributed query evaluation based on localization and pruning alone is sufficient to significantly improve the performance and scalability of XML query processing. To further improve performance, additional optimizations can be applied to the distributed execution plan after pruning is complete. Some of these optimizations have been published separately [9] and further work along these lines is the subject of ongoing research. In addition, the sub-queries resulting from localization can be optimized independently at each site. Since our techniques place no constraints on the local query evaluation techniques used, existing optimization techniques for centralized XML query evaluation can be applied.

The query evaluation techniques presented in this paper do not require a globally replicated index structure, which could limit the scalability of a distributed system and negatively affect the performance of updates.

– Based on our query evaluation techniques, we then propose a set of *workload-aware fragmentation algorithms*. These algorithms are designed to determine a fragmentation layout that will optimize performance for a given set of queries.

To motivate our work, consider Figure 2, which shows a horizontally fragmented data collection consisting of four documents representing information about authors and their publications. The horizontal fragmentation is defined based on the first letter

of the authors' last names, placing "John Adams" in fragment  $f_1^H$ , "Jane Dean" in fragment  $f_2^H$  and "John Smith" as well as "William Shakespeare" in fragment  $f_3^H$ .

Figure 3 shows a similar collection that has been fragmented vertically. Ignoring the nodes labeled as  $P_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  and  $RP_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  for now, we can see that author and agent nodes are stored in fragment  $f_1^V$ , the nodes related to the author's name are stored in fragment  $f_2^V$ , pubs and book nodes are stored in fragment  $f_3^V$  and chapter and reference nodes are stored in fragment  $f_4^V$ .

Consider evaluating the following XPath query ( $q$ ):

```
/author[name[first='William' and last='Shakespeare']]//book//reference
```

In the horizontal case, it is easy to see that the fragments  $f_1^H$  and  $f_2^H$  cannot possibly contribute to the result of this query since they correspond to authors whose last names start with the letters "A" and "D", respectively. Pruning these fragments allows us to answer the query without contacting the sites at which they are stored.

When evaluating  $q$  on the vertically fragmented collection, we generally have to access all four fragments. Fragment  $f_2^V$  is needed to evaluate the value constraint predicates, fragment  $f_4^V$  is needed to obtain result nodes and fragments  $f_1^V$  and  $f_3^V$  are needed to evaluate structural constraints. We later present a technique that allows us to avoid accessing some of the fragments only needed for structural constraints.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the technical background of our work. Section 3 introduces our model of horizontal and vertical fragmentation. In Section 4, we propose techniques for evaluating queries over distributed collections. In Section 5, we describe how the performance of distributed query evaluation can be improved by pruning the set of fragments accessed. Based on these techniques, Section 6 describes our algorithms for fragmenting an XML collection such that performance for a given workload is optimized. In Section 7, we present a thorough evaluation of the performance impact of the techniques presented

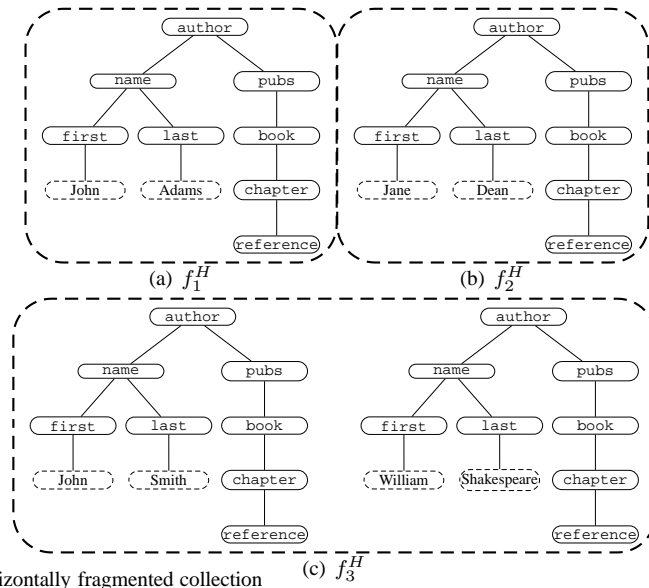


Fig. 2 A horizontally fragmented collection

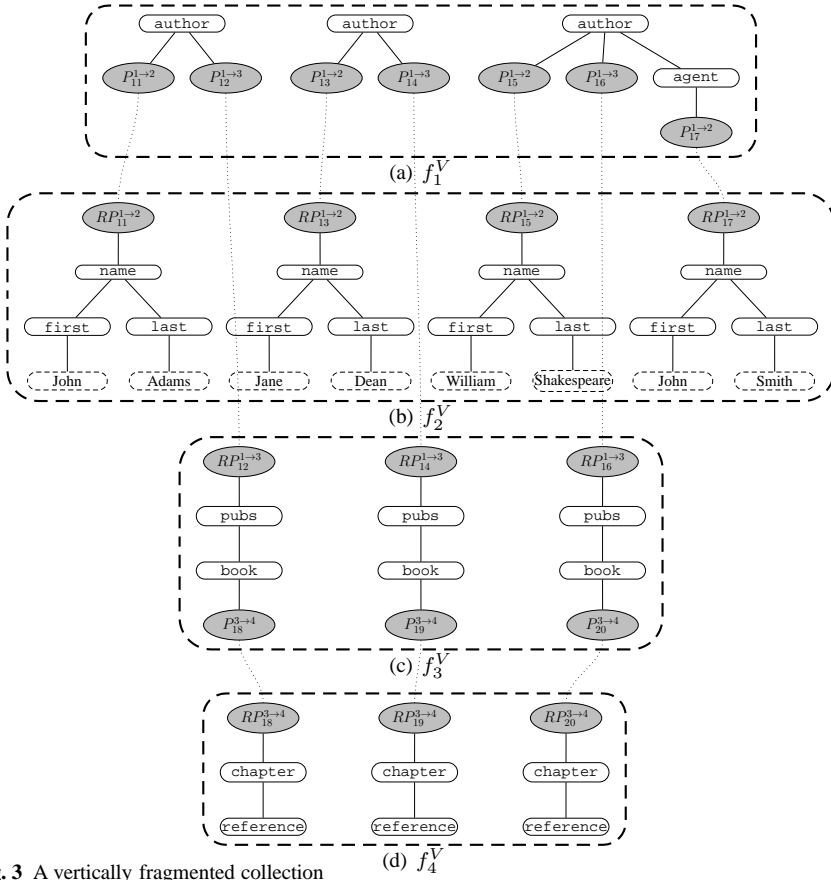


Fig. 3 A vertically fragmented collection

in this paper. Section 8 discusses related work. In Section 9, we summarize our work and present our conclusions.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Data model

An XML collection can be described as a set of labeled, ordered trees. While XML is a self-describing format that can be used without a schema, in practice, the structure of document trees is usually constrained by a schema that specifies how elements may be nested and what the domain of their textual content is. A schema is usually defined in a language such as DTD or XML Schema. In this paper, we use a simple directed graph representation that covers only the aspects of the schema that are important for our purposes. For example, our representation ignores the distinction between XML elements and attributes by treating both of them uniformly as *nodes*. Similarly, we refer to element types and attribute names as *node types*. Assuming that the original schema definition does not contain unspecified portions (such as those defined using the DTD keyword ANY), it is straightforward to extract the information captured by

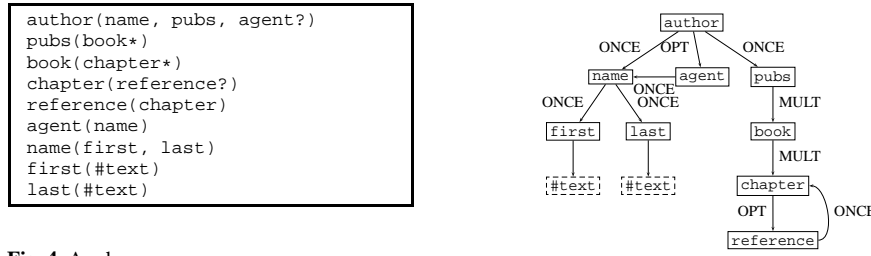


Fig. 4 A schema

our graph representation from a DTD<sup>1</sup> or an XML Schema. Extracting schema information yields a schema graph that may be less restrictive than the original schema, but since the schema graph is never used for the validation of documents this does not pose a problem [10].

**Definition 1** An XML *schema graph* is defined as a 5-tuple  $\langle \Sigma, \Psi, s, m, \rho \rangle$  where  $\Sigma$  is an alphabet of node types,  $\rho$  is the root node type,  $\Psi \subseteq \Sigma \times \Sigma$  is a set of directed edges between node types,  $s : \Psi \rightarrow \{\text{ONCE}, \text{OPT}, \text{MULT}\}$  and  $m : \Sigma \rightarrow \{\text{string}\}$ .

The semantics of this definition are as follows: An edge  $\psi = (\sigma_1, \sigma_2) \in \Psi$  denotes that a node of type  $\sigma_1$  may contain a node of type  $\sigma_2$ .  $s(\psi)$  denotes the cardinality of the containment represented by this edge: If  $s(\psi) = \text{ONCE}$ , then a node of type  $\sigma_1$  must contain exactly one node of type  $\sigma_2$ . If  $s(\psi) = \text{OPT}$ , then a node of type  $\sigma_1$  may or may not contain a node of type  $\sigma_2$ . If  $s(\psi) = \text{MULT}$ , then a node of type  $\sigma_1$  may contain multiple nodes of type  $\sigma_2$ .  $m(\sigma)$  denotes the domain of the text content of a node of type  $\sigma$ , represented as the set of all strings that may occur inside such a node. Figure 4 shows an example of a schema, represented both as a simplified DTD and as a schema graph.

## 2.2 Query model and tree patterns

The query model used in this paper is a subset of XPath, which we call XQ. XQ consists of absolute location paths consisting of node tests with and without wildcards, child (/) and descendant (//) axes and predicates. Predicates may consist of (i) a relative location path with the same restrictions (with XPath’s existential semantics); (ii) a textual constraint of the form “. $\theta_s s$ ”, where  $s$  is a string constant and  $\theta_s$  is either = or !=; or (iii) a numeric constraint of the form “. $\theta_n n$ ”, where  $n$  is a numeric constant and  $\theta_n$  is one of <, <=, =, >, >=, or !=. As in XPath, XQ steps return nodes in document order (since both axes we support are forward axes).

XQ queries are not only commonly used on their own, but they also represent an important building block of more complex XPath or XQuery queries (containing additional axis types, explicit joins or full FLWOR expressions) [11, 12]. Therefore, solving the problem of evaluating XQ queries in a distributed fashion is an important contribution to distributed XQuery evaluation.

It is convenient to represent XQ queries as tree patterns [13, 14], which we formalize as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Note that a DTD does not explicitly specify the root element type of a document. However, the root element type can be inferred from the DOCTYPE declarations of documents conforming to a DTD.

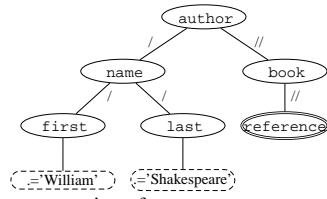


Fig. 5 Query tree pattern (QTP) representation of query  $q$

**Definition 2** Let  $\langle \Sigma, \Psi, s, m, \rho \rangle$  be a schema. A *tree pattern* is a 7-tuple  $\langle N, E, r, \nu, \epsilon, T, c \rangle$  where  $N$  is a set of pattern nodes,  $E \subseteq N \times N$  is a set of pattern edges and  $\langle N, E, r \rangle$  is a tree rooted at  $r \in N$ . For each  $n \in N$ ,  $\nu(n) \in \Sigma \cup \{*\}$  denotes a node test. For each  $e \in E$ ,  $\epsilon(e) \in \{\text{child}, \text{descendant}\}$  denotes the axis type.  $T \subseteq N$  denotes the set of extraction points. For each  $n \in N$ ,  $c(n) \subseteq m(\nu(n))$  denotes a value constraint on the text content of nodes of type  $\nu(n)$ .

In the following, we will refer to the tree pattern representation of a query as a *query tree pattern* (QTP). It is interesting to note that, in addition to XQ queries, QTPs can be used to express queries with multiple extraction points. While this may be useful for supporting a larger class of queries, in this paper, our focus is on queries with a single extraction point. Sub-queries resulting from vertical fragmentation, however, frequently contain multiple extraction points.

Figure 5 shows the QTP representation of query  $q$  from Section 1. The double-outlined node labeled with `reference` is an extraction point and the edge labels “/” and “//” denote child and descendant steps, respectively.

A match for a QTP assigns a node from a document to each pattern node such that all node tests, value constraints, and structural constraints (expressed as axis relationships) are satisfied. While all pattern nodes in the QTP have to be matched to nodes in a document, only the nodes associated with pattern nodes that are designated as extraction points are returned as part of the result.

### 3 Fragmentation

Distribution of an XML collection over multiple sites requires the fragmentation of the collection. In this work, the motivation for distributing data is query performance and scalability (rather than integrating data from multiple sources) and our fragmentation model reflects this motivation.

We have developed a fragmentation model that partitions a collection based on characteristics of the content and the structure of the XML data. This yields a succinct specification for a given fragmentation layout, which – as we will show – is a valuable asset when optimizing query evaluation.

It is important to realize that our fragmentation model does not aim to capture arbitrary fragmentation of XML collections, as would be needed in a data integration scenario but instead focuses on simplicity and utility for query optimization. Also, while our focus is on partitioning a collection, other techniques, which replicate all or part of the collection, can be used in conjunction with our techniques for further performance improvement.

In particular, our work is based on two techniques for fragmenting XML collections. Horizontal fragmentation is based on predicates and results in a collection that is partitioned into fragments that all follow the same schema. Vertical fragmentation, on the other hand, is based on partitioning the schema.

### 3.1 Horizontal fragmentation

By itself, horizontal fragmentation is particularly useful for improving query response times because it allows for easy parallelization of query evaluation. When combined with the pruning techniques presented later in this paper, it can also yield a significant improvement in query throughput by reducing the amount of data that needs to be processed to answer a query.

Our model of horizontal fragmentation assumes a collection that consists of multiple document trees. These document trees can either be entire XML documents or they can be the result of a previous fragmentation step. In either case, we require that all document trees correspond to the same schema. Multiple-document collections where all documents follow the same schema are a common use case for XML. Popular examples include MathML [15] and CML [16].

A horizontal fragmentation is defined by a set of predicates. In the relational scenario, fragmentation predicates are commonly expressed as algebraic expressions. In our case, tree patterns represent a convenient abstraction. Therefore, we express horizontal fragmentation predicates as tree patterns without extraction points, which we refer to as *fragmentation tree patterns* (FTPs).

**Definition 3** A tree pattern  $fp = \langle N, E, r, \nu, \epsilon, T, c \rangle$  is a *fragmentation tree pattern* if  $T = \emptyset$ . A document tree  $d$  matches the fragmentation tree pattern  $fp$  if evaluating  $fp$  over  $d$  yields at least one match.

A document matches an FTP if evaluating this FTP over the document yields at least one result. For notational convenience,  $fp(d)$  denotes that the document  $d$  matches the FTP  $fp$ .

**Definition 4** Let  $D = \{d_1, d_2, \dots, d_n\}$  be a collection of document trees such that each  $d_i \in D$  corresponds to the same schema. Further, let  $FP = \{fp_1, fp_2, \dots, fp_m\}$  be a set of FTPs. Then  $F = \{\{d_i \in D \mid fp_j(d_i)\} \mid fp_j \in P\}$  is the set of *horizontal fragments* of  $D$  corresponding to the FTPs in  $FP$ .

Each fragment consists of the document trees that match the FTP corresponding to that fragment. To ensure that the fragmentation is lossless and complete and that the fragments are disjoint, we require that whenever a document tree conforms to the schema of the collection, it matches exactly one of the predicates.

**Definition 5** Let  $F = \{f_1, f_2, \dots, f_m\}$  be a set of horizontal fragments of the documents  $D$  corresponding to the FTPs in  $FP = \{fp_1, fp_2, \dots, fp_m\}$ . Then  $F$  is a *horizontal fragmentation* of  $D$  if  $\forall d_i \in D : \exists$  unique  $fp_j \in FP$  where  $fp_j(d_i)$ .

The losslessness of a fragmentation can be enforced by carefully crafting the value constraints in the FTPs so that they cover the entire domain of the values to which they refer.

If we assume that the document trees in the fragmented collection shown in Figure 2 conform to the schema in Figure 4 and that  $m(\text{last})$  is the set of strings that start with upper-case letters of the English alphabet, then the fragmentation of this collection can be described by the set of FTPs shown in Figure 6.

### 3.2 Vertical fragmentation

Vertical fragmentation allows us to improve both query response time and throughput. The main difference between both types of fragmentation is that vertical fragmentation defines fragments based on the structure of the data, whereas horizontal



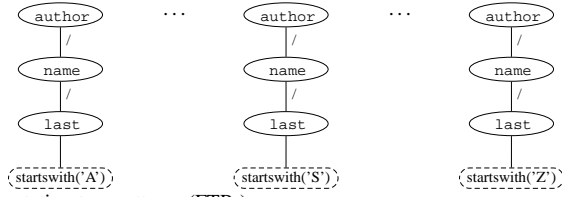


Fig. 6 Set of fragmentation tree patterns (FTPs)

fragmentation defines them based on the content. As we will see later, this heavily influences how efficiently we can answer certain types of queries.

Our model of vertical fragmentation can handle collections that consist of a single or multiple document trees. Again, it is possible that these trees are the result of a previous fragmentation step, which allows us to combine horizontal and vertical fragmentation.

A *vertical fragmentation schema* is defined by fragmenting the schema graph of the collection into connected subgraphs:

**Definition 6** Let  $\langle \Sigma, \Psi, s, m, \rho \rangle$  be a schema graph. A *vertical fragmentation schema* is defined by a partitioning  $F_\Sigma$  of the set of node types  $\Sigma$  such that for each  $f_\Sigma \in F_\Sigma$   $\langle f_\Sigma, (\Psi \cap (f_\Sigma \times f_\Sigma)) \rangle$  is weakly connected.

The dashed outlines in Figure 7 show how the node types in this schema have been partitioned into four disjoint subgraphs. Fragment  $f_1^V$  consists of the node types *author* and *agent*; fragment  $f_2^V$  consists of the node types *name*, *first* and *last* along with their text content; fragment  $f_3^V$  consists of *pubs* and *book*; fragment  $f_4^V$  includes the node types *chapter* and *reference*.

Since we require the schema graph to be connected, after fragmentation, there will be graph edges that cross fragment boundaries. Whenever the schema contains an edge from a fragment  $f_i^V$  to another fragment  $f_j^V$ , we refer to  $f_j^V$  as a *child fragment* of  $f_i^V$  and to  $f_i^V$  as a *parent fragment* of  $f_j^V$ . There is exactly one fragment  $f_\rho^V \in F_\Sigma$  that contains the root node type  $\rho$  (the *root fragment*). While the schema graph may contain cycles, for performance reasons, we require that the fragmentation schema be a DAG (i.e., each cycle has to be contained within a single fragment).

When a collection is partitioned according to a vertical fragmentation schema, there will be document edges that cross fragment boundaries. We represent a document edge from fragment  $f_i^V$  to fragment  $f_j^V$  by inserting a pair of artificial nodes  $P_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  and  $RP_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  into fragments  $f_i^V$  and  $f_j^V$ , respectively.  $P_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  denotes a *proxy node* in fragment  $f_i^V$  (the originating fragment) with ID  $k$ , whereas  $RP_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  denotes a *root proxy node* in fragment  $f_j^V$  (the target fragment) with ID  $k$ . Since  $P_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  and  $RP_k^{i \rightarrow j}$  share the same ID ( $k$ ) and reference the same fragments ( $i \rightarrow j$ ), they correspond to each other and together represent a single cross-fragment edge.

The collection shown in Figure 3 has been fragmented according to the vertical fragmentation schema shown in Figure 7. The proxy pair consisting of  $P_{11}^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  in fragment  $f_1^V$  and  $RP_{11}^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  in fragment  $f_2^V$ , for example, represents an edge from an *author* node in  $f_1^V$  to a *name* node in  $f_2^V$ .

Vertical fragments generally consist of multiple unconnected pieces of XML data, which we refer to as *document subtrees*. In Figure 3, for example, fragment  $f_1^V$  con-

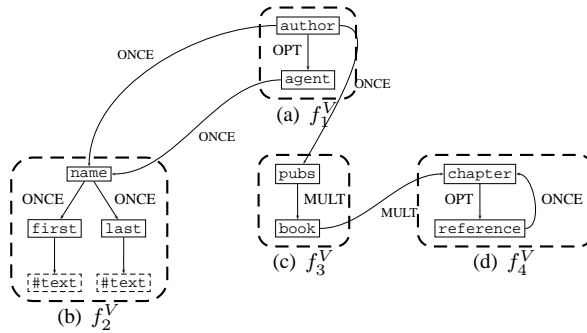


Fig. 7 A vertical fragmentation schema

tains three subtrees, each of which consists of the `author` and `agent` nodes of one of the documents in the collection.

#### 4 Distributed query evaluation

In this section, we propose a technique for evaluating queries over horizontally and vertically distributed collections. There are two main components to this technique: First, we describe how a fragmentation-unaware query can be *localized* and thereby transformed into multiple sub-queries corresponding to individual fragments. Then, we describe an initial strategy for combining the results of individual sub-queries to the overall query result. This strategy will then serve as the foundation for the pruning techniques described in Section 5 and for further optimizations.

##### 4.1 Querying horizontally fragmented collections

With horizontal fragmentation, it is possible to evaluate a query by computing the union of all fragments and then executing a centralized query plan over the result. While this leads to the correct result, to improve scalability it is better to distribute query evaluation throughout the system. Our query model implies that each result is derived from exactly one document tree in the collection. This allows us to push the (unchanged) fragmentation-unaware query down to the individual fragments:

**Definition 7** If  $q$  is a plan that evaluates the query on an un-fragmented collection of document trees  $D$  and  $F$  is a horizontal fragmentation of  $D$ , then

$$q_f(F) := \text{sort}(\bigoplus_{f \in F} q(f))$$

is a *distributed execution plan* that evaluates the same query on  $F$ , where  $\bigoplus$  denotes concatenation of results, and  $q_f(F) \equiv q(D)$ .

As shown in the definition, it may be necessary to sort the results received from the individual fragments in order to return them in a stable global order as required by the XQuery data model [17]. For unordered queries, or if we are willing to relax the ordering constraint, we can reduce the amount of sorting-induced buffering by only maintaining a stable order between nodes in the same document. This may be a reasonable trade-off in many use cases.

##### 4.2 Querying vertically fragmented collections

In this section, we define an initial strategy for evaluating queries over a vertically fragmented collection. In relational systems, query localization is usually done based

on an algebraic representation of a distributed query [1]. For the technique presented here, however, the QTP represents a simpler abstraction that contains all the information necessary for localization. We therefore describe vertical query localization in terms of the QTP representation of the query:

- First, we decompose the QTP representation of the query (the global QTP) into a set of *local QTPs* corresponding to individual fragments.
- Then, we use an existing, centralized tree pattern evaluation strategy to obtain a local plan for each local QTP (the specific strategy is left to each site to decide).
- After evaluating the local plans over their corresponding fragments, the resulting pattern matches are joined based on their proxy/root proxy IDs to obtain the overall query result. How this is done is specified by a *distributed execution plan*.

#### 4.2.1 Localization of QTPs

Localization is the process of decomposing a query into sub-queries that can be evaluated over individual fragments. The decomposition of a global QTP into a set of local QTPs directly follows the schema graph. After unrolling wildcard nodes using schema information, the global QTP is divided into a set of sub-patterns, each of which consists of pattern nodes that match nodes in the same fragment. Edges between pattern nodes in the same subtree are assigned the same axis type as the corresponding edge in the global QTP.

A child edge from a pattern node in sub-pattern  $a$  to one in sub-pattern  $b$  is converted to a pattern node matching a proxy in  $a$  and a pattern node matching a root proxy in  $b$ . These new pattern nodes are marked as extraction points because they are needed to join the results of local QTPs to generate the final result.

When descendant edges across fragment boundaries are encountered, we need to identify all paths in the fragmentation schema that satisfy the descendant edge. If a descendant step traverses multiple fragments, additional local QTPs have to be generated for the fragments that are traversed. Consider, for example, the descendant step `author//reference`. Since this step traverses fragment  $f_3^V$ , a local QTP has to be generated for this fragment even when no pattern node in the global QTP refers to node types in this fragment. The resulting local QTP consists solely of a pattern node matching a root proxy node and a pattern node matching a proxy node, connected by a descendant edge.

If the global QTP does not reach a certain fragment (because even when taking cross-fragment descendant steps into account no local QTP is generated for it), then distributed query evaluation will not access this fragment. Therefore, the localization technique eliminates some vertical fragments even without further pruning.

Localizing query  $q$  (shown in Figure 5) yields the set of local QTPs shown in Figure 8(a)–(d). Each cross-fragment edge in the global QTP is represented by a pair

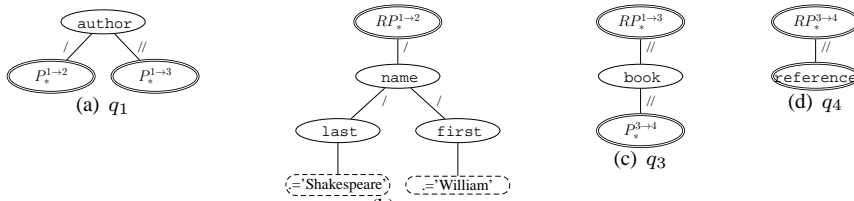


Fig. 8 Local QTPs corresponding to query  $q$  (b)  $q_2$

of pattern nodes that match a proxy/root proxy pair. The edge from `author` to `name`, for example, is replaced by the pattern node  $RP_*^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  in  $q_2$  and the pattern node  $P_*^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  in  $q_1$ . The pattern node  $RP_*^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  matches all of the root proxy nodes  $RP_i^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  in  $q_2$ 's fragment  $f_2$ . The pattern node  $P_*^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  matches the proxy nodes  $P_i^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  in  $f_2$ 's parent fragment  $f_1$ ; these are the proxy nodes that correspond to  $RP_i^{1 \rightarrow 2}$ . Since the original pattern edge is a child edge, edges to and from the generated pattern nodes are also child edges. In the case where the original pattern edge is a descendant edge (such as the edge between `author` and `book`, which is represented by the pattern nodes labeled  $P_*^{1 \rightarrow 3}$  and  $RP_*^{1 \rightarrow 3}$ ), edges to and from the generated pattern nodes are also descendant edges.

Whenever we decompose a global QTP, there will be exactly one local QTP that does not contain a pattern node that matches a root proxy node. We refer to this local QTP as the *root QTP*. In our example,  $q_1$  is the root QTP. All other local QTPs contain exactly one pattern node that matches root proxy nodes in their fragments. If local QTP  $q_s$  contains a pattern node labeled  $RP_*^{i \rightarrow j}$  and local QTP  $q_t$  contains the corresponding pattern node labeled  $P_*^{i \rightarrow j}$ , then we call  $q_s$  a *child QTP* of  $q_t$  and  $q_t$  a *parent QTP* of  $q_s$ .

#### 4.2.2 Conversion of local QTPs to local plans

Each local QTP  $q_i$  is then transformed into a local query plan  $p_i$ . This is done at the site holding the fragment corresponding to  $q_i$ , using centralized XML query evaluation strategies (e.g., [18, 19]). The techniques presented in this paper are independent of the techniques used by local query plans. We therefore omit a detailed description of local plan generation and the algebra used in these local plans.

#### 4.2.3 Distributed execution plans

To obtain the overall query result, the results of local plans need to be “combined” based on the IDs of their proxy and root proxy nodes. A *distributed execution plan* specifies how exactly this is done. In this section, we explore how distributed execution plans can be constructed and what their properties are.

**Definition 8** Let  $P = \{p_1, \dots, p_n\}$  be the set of local query plans corresponding to a query  $q$ . For each  $p_i \in P$ , let  $f_i$  denote the vertical fragment corresponding to  $p_i$ . Further, let  $P' \subseteq P$ . Then  $G_{P'}$  is a *distributed execution plan* for  $P'$  iff

1.  $P' = \{p_i\}$  and  $G_{P'} = p_i$ , or
2.  $P' = P'_a \cup P'_b$ ,  $P'_a \cap P'_b = \emptyset$ ;  $p_i \in P'_a, p_j \in P'_b$ ,  $p_i = \text{parent}(p_j)$ ;  $G_{P'_a}$  and  $G_{P'_b}$  are distributed execution plans for  $P'_a$  and  $P'_b$ , respectively; and  $G_{P'} = G_{P'_a} \bowtie_{P_*^{i \rightarrow j}.id=RP_*^{i \rightarrow j}.id} G_{P'_b}$ .

If  $G_P$  is a distributed execution plan for  $P$  (the entire set of local query plans), then  $G_q = G_P$  is a distributed execution plan for  $q$ .

A distributed execution plan must contain all the local plans corresponding to the query. As shown in the recursive definition above, an execution plan for a single local plan is simply the local plan itself (condition 1). For a set of multiple local plans  $P'$  we assume that  $P'_a$  and  $P'_b$  are two non-overlapping subsets of  $P'$  such that  $P'_a \cup P'_b = P'$ . We require that  $P'_a$  contains the parent local plan  $p_i$  for some local plan  $p_j$  in  $P'_b$ . An execution plan for  $P'$  is then defined by combining execution plans for  $P'_a$  and  $P'_b$  using a join whose predicate compares the IDs of root proxy nodes

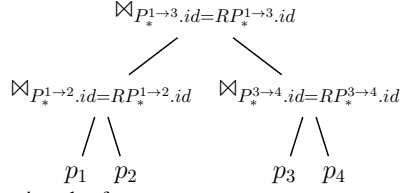


Fig. 9 Initial distributed execution plan for query  $q$

derived from  $p_j$  to the IDs of corresponding proxy nodes derived from  $p_i$  (condition 2). We refer to this join as a *cross-fragment join*.

If  $G'_P$  consists of a single local plan  $p_i$ , then the set of attributes returned by  $G'_P$  (referred to as  $M_{G'_P}$ ) is identical to the set of attributes returned by  $p_i$ . If  $G_{P'} = G_{P'_a} \bowtie_{P_*^{i \rightarrow j}.id=RP_*^{i \rightarrow j}.id} G_{P'_b}$ , then  $M_{G'_P} = M_{G_{P'_a}} \cup M_{G_{P'_b}} \setminus \{P_*^{i \rightarrow j}, RP_*^{i \rightarrow j}\}$ .

Figure 9 shows a distributed execution plan that combines the results of the local plans  $p_1$  through  $p_4$ , corresponding to the local QTPs  $q_1$  through  $q_4$  (shown in Figure 8). There are usually many different vertical execution plans that all yield the correct result but that may vary in cost. Since the focus of this paper is on localization and pruning, we do not discuss the problem of picking the most advantageous plan.

## 5 Pruning fragments

In many cases it is not necessary to access all fragments of a collection in order to answer a query. This section focuses on exploiting this insight by pruning irrelevant fragments from a distributed execution plan. Pruning decisions are made based on the QTP representation of the query.

### 5.1 Pruning horizontal fragments

As discussed before, to evaluate query  $q$  (shown in Figure 5) over the horizontally fragmented collection shown in Figure 2, only the documents contained in the fragment  $f_3^H$  need to be accessed. The initial distributed execution plan described in Section 4.1, in contrast, accesses every fragment in the collection, which can significantly reduce query throughput.

In this section, we propose a procedure that detects irrelevant horizontal fragments and prunes them from a distributed query plan. This procedure relies on the schema of the collection and the FTPs that define the fragmentation. Both of these are static over time, do not depend on the size of the collection and can be encoded in a compact manner. This makes it feasible to replicate them at all sites as metadata.

To eliminate a fragment from the distributed query plan, we need to show that the FTP corresponding to this fragment cannot be satisfied by a document that matches the QTP. While this problem could be solved by a general-purpose query intersection algorithm, we present a schema-aware algorithm that supports QTPs with multiple extraction points as are frequently encountered in hybrid fragmentation (for a discussion of this, see Section 8.3.4).

As a first step, the algorithm transforms QTP and FTP into a simplified form. While this form is less expressive than general tree patterns, it is sufficient to detect contradictions. We then traverse both simplified patterns simultaneously, pruning all but the shared branches, and check for contradictory constraints. If we find such a contradiction, there cannot be any results for the query in the fragment corresponding to the FTP and the fragment can thus be eliminated from the distributed plan.

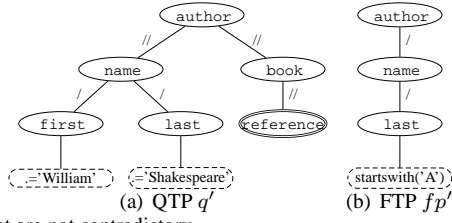


Fig. 10 QTP and FTP that are not contradictory

### 5.1.1 Transformation to simplified form

The goal of transforming tree patterns into a simplified form is to make sure that each pattern node refers to a unique node within the context of a single document tree. In general, pattern nodes may match more than one node in a given document tree. A constraint associated with such a pattern node is satisfied if one of the matching nodes conforms to the constraint. This makes it impossible to exploit contradictory constraints associated with such pattern nodes. Even if the constraints themselves are contradictory, they may be satisfied by different nodes in the same document.

With QTPs, there are three sources of pattern nodes that may match multiple nodes in the same document tree:

*Node types reached via MULT edges.* Node types that are reached via an edge in the schema that has a cardinality of MULT may occur multiple times in the same context. Based on the schema in Figure 4, for example, the step `pubs/book` may yield multiple `book` nodes corresponding to a single `pubs` node.

*Descendant steps* can also yield multiple results in the same context. In the QTP  $q'$  shown in Figure 10(a), for example, the descendant edge between `author` and `name` can be satisfied either by a `name` node that is the direct child of a given `author` node or by a `name` node that is reachable through an intermediate `agent` node. Because of this, even though the constraints on the author's last name imposed by the FTP  $fp'$  and the QTP  $q'$  seem to cause these two patterns to be contradictory, they actually are not. Document trees in the fragment corresponding to the FTP  $fp'$  will only contain information about authors whose last names start with the letter "A". The QTP  $q'$ , on the other hand, matches books that are either authored by "William Shakespeare" or by someone whose agent is "William Shakespeare" and whose last name might well start with the letter "A".

*Wildcards* are another source of multiple matches in the same context whenever the schema specifies that a node type may contain multiple other node types.

We define simplified tree patterns as tree patterns that do not contain any of these primitives:

**Definition 9** A tree pattern  $\langle N, E, r, \nu, \epsilon, T, c \rangle$  is a simplified tree pattern iff  $\forall n \in N, \nu(n) \in \Sigma$  and  $\forall (x, y) \in E, \epsilon((x, y)) = \text{child} \wedge (\nu(x), \nu(y)) \in \Psi \wedge s((\nu(x), \nu(y))) \neq \text{MULT}$ .

To convert a tree pattern into a simplified tree pattern, all disallowed primitives have to either be removed or converted into an equivalent simplified form. It is important to note that simplified tree patterns are strictly less expressive than arbitrary tree patterns. Therefore, when a tree pattern is transformed to a simplified tree pattern, the result is not generally equivalent to the original tree pattern. Instead, the

simplified tree pattern matches a superset of the document trees that match the original tree pattern. Since simplified tree patterns are only used to identify fragments that can be pruned, but not for the subsequent query evaluation on those fragments, this loss of expressiveness does not pose a problem. Nevertheless, it is important that the transformation retains as much of the information present in the original pattern as possible so that this information can be exploited for pruning.

The transformation of a tree pattern into a simplified tree pattern is based on the following principles. A formal algorithm is given in [20].

- Using schema information, descendant steps are unrolled into equivalent paths comprised entirely of child steps. If there is more than one path, artificial nodes representing a choice (denoted as  $\oplus$ ) are inserted and the branch below the descendant step becomes reachable via more than one path, thus turning the tree pattern into a directed, acyclic graph (DAG).
- Wildcard node tests are converted to non-wildcard node tests wherever this is unambiguously possible. Otherwise, the corresponding pattern nodes are removed along with their descendants.
- Pattern nodes matching nodes from the collection for which the schema allows multiple occurrences in the same position are removed along with the branches below them.

### 5.1.2 Unrolling descendant steps

The unrolling of descendant steps can be succinctly implemented as a manipulation of the directed graph representation of the schema. To unroll a descendant step from a pattern node labeled  $a$  to a pattern node labeled  $b$ , we consider the subgraph of the schema graph that consists of all nodes that are reachable from  $a$  and from which  $b$  is reachable. This yields a graph that contains all the intermediate node types that may occur on a downward path from  $a$  to  $b$ .

If there exists a cycle in this schema subgraph, we discard the descendant step and all the pattern nodes that occur below it. This is necessary because the presence of a cycle implies that a matching node may occur at different levels in the document tree. This creates ambiguity, making it impossible to take advantage of the value constraints associated with such a node. Assume, for example, that we want to unroll the step `book//reference`. We can observe that there is a cycle involving the node types `chapter` and `reference`. This corresponds to the fact that the path can be satisfied either by a reference in a chapter of the book where we start out, or by a reference in a chapter referenced by this chapter, and so on.

If the subgraph is acyclic, we introduce a new pattern node for each of the intermediate schema nodes such that the node test of the pattern node matches the name of the corresponding schema node. In cases where a schema node has more than one child, an intermediate choice node is inserted (denoted by  $\oplus$ ), signifying that the subsequent branch of the pattern can be satisfied by a match for any of the child nodes.

After these intermediate nodes have been inserted, the pattern has been transformed from a tree into a DAG. We can reconstruct a tree representation by duplicating nodes that are reachable through more than one path. In general, however, this is not necessary since we can directly traverse the more compact DAG, which yields the same result as traversing the equivalent tree.

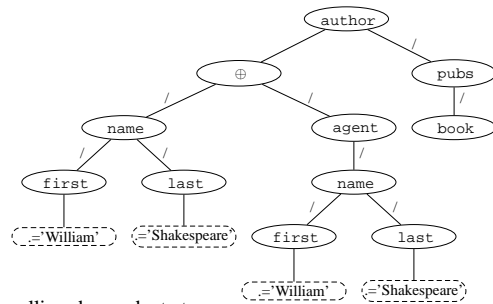


Fig. 11 QTP  $q'$  after unrolling descendant steps

Figure 11 shows  $q'$  after unrolling descendant steps. Note that while the step `author//book` can simply be unrolled into a sequence of child steps, unrolling `author//name` requires the insertion of a choice node and the duplication of the branch below it. This is because the schema contains two paths from `author` to `name`, as is shown in Figure 4.

### 5.1.3 Removing wildcard nodes

We convert wildcard nodes whenever they unambiguously refer to a specific node type. For example, by relying on the schema shown in Figure 4, we can determine that the step `agent/*` can be translated to the step `agent/name`. It is also possible to convert wildcard nodes that can refer to more than one node type by introducing choice nodes into the pattern in a procedure that is largely analogous to the way descendant steps are unrolled.

### 5.1.4 Removing pattern nodes that match nodes with multiple occurrences

In general, a meaningful conversion of pattern nodes corresponding to nodes with multiple occurrences in the same context is not possible and we need to eliminate these nodes from the pattern. For query  $q'$ , we need to remove the `book` node since the schema indicates that a `pubs` node may have multiple children of type `book`. The resulting simplified pattern is shown in Figure 12.

### 5.1.5 Traversal and pruning

After transforming both QTP and FTP into simplified tree patterns, we traverse both patterns simultaneously. Only pattern nodes occurring in both patterns are visited. For each pair of corresponding pattern nodes, we check whether the value constraints in one pattern contradict those in the other pattern. Since in simplified tree patterns each pattern node corresponds to a unique node from the collection within the context

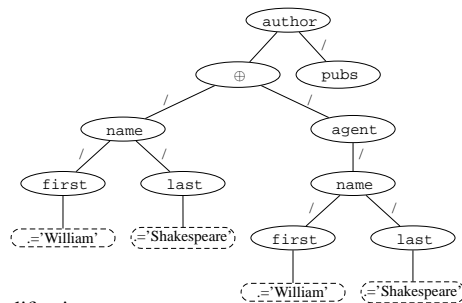


Fig. 12 QTP  $q'$  after simplification



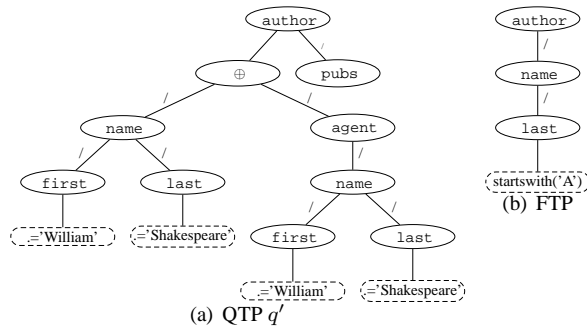


Fig. 13 Simplified QTP and FTP that are not contradictory

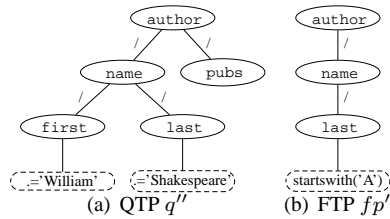


Fig. 14 Simplified QTP and FTP that are contradictory

of a single document tree, a contradiction between patterns allows us to immediately eliminate the fragment corresponding to the FTP from further consideration.

Special care has to be taken when a choice node is encountered. In this case, a contradiction exists only if we can find contradictory constraints regardless of which branch of the choice we follow. If there is at least one choice without a contradiction, which may be a choice that leads to a branch that is not present in the other pattern, it is not possible to conclude that the fragment can be eliminated.

In the example shown in Figure 13, the traversal proceeds as follows. First, the `author` nodes in QTP and FTP are visited. Since there is no value constraint associated with this node in either pattern, there is no conflict, therefore we move on to the children of the `author` nodes. The `pubs` node is only present in the QTP and is therefore not visited. As the other child of the `author` node, the QTP contains a choice node. We now have to check both branches for conflict. The left branch leads to the `name` node, for which there is an equivalent node in the FTP. In both patterns the `name` node has a child with node test `last`. When inspecting the value constraints associated with the `last` nodes, the algorithm detects a contradiction because the content of the corresponding document node cannot be equal to the string 'Shakespeare' and at the same time start with the letter 'A'. Therefore, we know that there is a contradiction for the left branch of the choice node. In order for there to be a global contradiction, however, the patterns have to be contradictory for both branches of the choice node. Therefore, the algorithm still has to inspect the right branch, for which it encounters a node with the node test `agent`. For this node, there is no equivalent in the FTP and therefore no contradiction. Since the algorithm only found a contradiction for one branch of the choice node, there is no global contradiction and the fragment corresponding to the FTP  $fp'$  cannot be pruned for query  $q'$ .

For the example in Figure 14, on the other hand, the traversal algorithm does detect a contradiction. After inspecting the `author` and `name` nodes in both patterns,

the algorithm reaches the `last` nodes and their contradicting value constraints. This time, the `last` node does not occur as the descendant of a choice node so this contradiction is sufficient to prune the fragment corresponding to the FTP  $fp'$ .

### 5.1.6 Abstract FTPs

Since horizontal fragmentation is defined as a partitioning of the data collection, FTPs need to be disjoint and cover the entire collection. Because of this, we expect that in many instances the FTPs will only differ in their value constraints but not in their structure. It is therefore possible to simplify the traversal process by traversing the QTP together with a single abstract FTP rather than with each FTP in the fragmentation. In this abstract FTP, value constraints are replaced with variables. Traversal of QTP and abstract FTP results in an expression that describes the conditions under which there is a contradiction between the QTP and an FTP. Figure 15(b) shows an abstract FTP, in which a value constraint has been replaced with the variable  $x$ . Traversing this abstract FTP with the QTP in Figure 15(a) shows that there is a contradiction if  $\neg(='Shakespeare' \wedge x)$  holds.

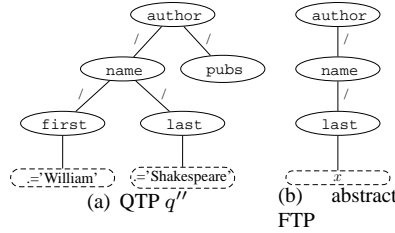


Fig. 15 Simplified QTP and abstract FTP

We can now instantiate  $x$  with the corresponding value constraint from each of the original simplified FTPs, i.e., with the expressions

$$\text{startswith('A')}, \dots, \text{startswith('S')}, \dots, \text{startswith('Z')}$$

Solving this formula yields a contradiction for all of these cases except  $x = \text{startswith('S')}$ . A similar technique can be applied to QTPs if we assume that the structure of a query is known at compile time whereas the constants used in value constraints are known only at run time.

### 5.1.7 Analysis

While it may seem that the transformation and traversal of QTP and FTPs could pose a significant overhead, there are a number of considerations that reduce this impact. The transformation of the FTPs only has to be performed once when the fragmentation is set up. Therefore, it does not pose a run-time overhead during query execution.

During the transformation of the QTP, child steps are either copied from the QTP to the simplified QTP or omitted. Both the size of the simplified QTP and the time consumed by the transformation are therefore linear in  $|E_{\text{child}}^{\text{QTP}}|$ , which is the number of child steps in the QTP. Unrolling each descendant step, in the worst case, introduces one choice node and one non-choice pattern node for each  $\sigma$  in  $\Sigma$ . Therefore, the size of the simplified QTP is linear in  $|E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{QTP}}| |\Sigma|$ . To analyze the time complexity, we also have to take into account the time consumed by computing the reachable schema subgraph and by detecting cycles in the resulting graph. We can compute the

subgraph consisting of nodes that are reachable from node  $a$  and from which  $b$  is reachable by first marking all nodes reachable from  $a$ , then marking all nodes from which  $b$  is reachable and finally choosing all nodes that were marked both times. Assuming a suitable representation of the graph, this can be done in  $O(|\Sigma| + |\Psi|)$  time. Using Tarjan’s algorithm [21], we can detect cycles in  $O(|\Sigma| + |\Psi|)$  time. Therefore, the transformation of a QTP takes  $O(|E_{\text{child}}^{\text{QTP}}| + |E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{QTP}}| (|\Sigma| + |\Psi|))$  time and yields a result containing  $O(|E_{\text{child}}^{\text{QTP}}| + |E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{QTP}}| |\Sigma|)$  nodes. Since the result is also a directed graph, in which nodes may be shared among multiple branches, the equivalent tree pattern is of size  $O(|E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{QTP}}| |\Sigma| |E_{\text{child}}^{\text{QTP}}| + |E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{QTP}}|^2 |\Sigma|^2)$ . This is important, because the time consumed by the subsequent traversal step depends on the size of the equivalent tree.

The time required to traverse the QTP and the FTPs is linear in the size of the tree representations of the simplified QTP and the FTPs. Because the traversal has to be performed for each fragment, it is also linear in the number of fragments. This leads to an overall time complexity of  $O((|E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{QTP}}| |\Sigma| |E_{\text{child}}^{\text{QTP}}| + |E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{QTP}}|^2 |\Sigma|^2) (|E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{FTP}}| |\Sigma| |E_{\text{child}}^{\text{FTP}}| + |E_{\text{desc}}^{\text{FTP}}|^2 |\Sigma|^2) |F|)$ . Note that run-time of the pruning algorithm depends solely on the size of the patterns, the number of fragments and the size of the schema. It is independent of the size of the collection.

## 5.2 Pruning vertical fragments

The localization strategy for vertical fragmentation avoids accessing fragments whose node types are not reached by the global QTP. It does not, however, address a scenario where node types in a fragment are reached by the global QTP but no constraints are placed on these node types. Consider, for example, the local QTP  $q_3$  shown in Figure 8(c), which is evaluated on fragment  $f_3^V$ . Its sole purpose is to determine which proxy nodes in  $f_1^V$  lead to which root proxy nodes in fragment  $f_4^V$ . Since the only way from a root proxy node in  $f_3^V$  to a proxy node in the same fragment is through a `book` node, no further constraints are placed on  $f_3^V$ . We now propose a technique that allows us to avoid accessing such intermediate fragments, and, thereby, prune the local QTPs corresponding to these fragments from a distributed query plan.

We achieve this by storing information that allows us to identify all ancestor proxy nodes for any given root proxy node. Using this information, we can then determine for any root proxy node in  $f_4^V$  which proxy node in  $f_1^V$  is its ancestor. This, in turn, allows us to answer the query without accessing  $f_3^V$  or evaluating the local QTP  $q_3$ . The benefits of this are twofold: it reduces load on the intermediate fragments (since they are not accessed) and it avoids the cost of computing intermediate results and joining them together.

While it would be possible to store the ancestor-descendant join information in a centralized (or replicated) index structure, this could severely limit the scalability of distributed query processing. In addition, it would make update management more difficult. Therefore, we store the join information by numbering proxy nodes according to a scheme based on the Dewey decimal system<sup>2</sup> [22].

<sup>2</sup> We have also experimented with other numbering schemes, such as one where each proxy pair is identified by its pre-order and post-order position in the collection. Our techniques are applicable to these alternate representations as well.

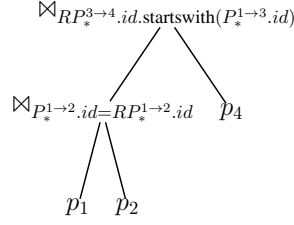


Fig. 16 Skipping vertical plan for query  $q$

To define this numbering scheme (referred to as *skipping IDs*), we need to distinguish between the following two cases: **(i)** If a document subtree does not have a root proxy node as its root (i.e., if the subtree contains the root element of a document tree in the collection, which can only occur in the root fragment), then the proxy nodes in this subtree (and, of course, the root proxy nodes in other fragments that correspond to these proxy nodes) receive simple numeric IDs. In the collection shown in Figure 3, this can be seen in all subtrees in fragment  $f_1^V$ . The proxy nodes in this fragment therefore receive numeric IDs, which means that all  $(R)P_*^{1 \rightarrow 2}$  and  $(R)P_*^{1 \rightarrow 3}$  are already numbered in accordance with our numbering scheme. **(ii)** If a document subtree is rooted at a root proxy node then the ID of each of its proxy nodes is prefixed by the ID of the root proxy node of the subtree, followed by a numeric identifier that is unique within this subtree. In Figure 3, fragments  $f_2^V$ ,  $f_3^V$  and  $f_4^V$  consist of subtrees that are rooted at a root proxy. However, only fragment  $f_3^V$  contains proxy nodes. Therefore, only  $P_{18}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$ ,  $P_{19}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$  and  $P_{20}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$  have to be renumbered.  $P_{18}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$  is part of a subtree that is rooted at the root proxy node  $RP_{12}^{1 \rightarrow 3}$ . We would therefore have to renumber it to  $P_{12.1}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$ . Similarly,  $P_{19}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$  would be renumbered to  $P_{14.1}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$  and  $P_{20}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$  to  $P_{16.1}^{3 \rightarrow 4}$ .

If all proxy pairs are numbered according to this scheme, a root proxy node is the descendant of a proxy node precisely when the ID of the proxy node is a prefix of the ID of the root proxy node. When evaluating query patterns, we can exploit this information by removing local QTPs from the distributed query plan if they contain no value or structural constraints, and no extraction point nodes other than those corresponding to proxies. These local QTPs are only needed to determine whether a root proxy node in some other fragment is a descendant of a proxy node in a third fragment, which we can now infer from the skipping IDs. Using this technique, we can rewrite the query plan from Figure 9 to the simpler plan shown in Figure 16, which avoids accessing fragment  $f_3^V$ .

It is important to note that our numbering scheme does not complicate update management. Subtrees can be inserted or removed from a document collection without having to modify other parts of the collection and without having to maintain a centralized index.

### 5.2.1 Structural constraints in skipped fragments

While skipping IDs allow us to skip fragments on which no constraints are placed, sometimes structural constraints make it necessary to access intermediate fragments, even if they are not needed for evaluating value constraints. To illustrate this, consider the modified fragmentation schema shown in Figure 17, which adds the additional type of publication `article`. If we evaluate the local QTPs shown in Figure 8 on this modified schema, we can no longer eliminate the local QTP  $q_3$  because skipping

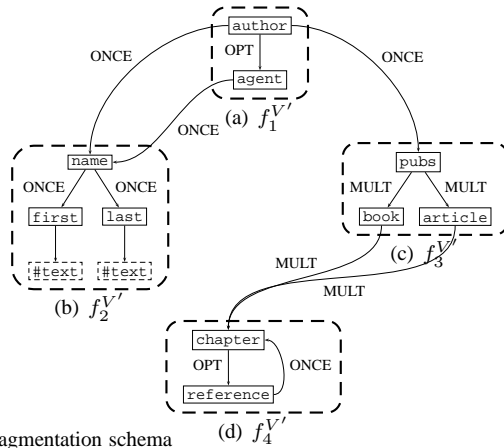


Fig. 17 A modified fragmentation schema

the corresponding fragment would mean that we could no longer distinguish between the subtrees in fragment  $f_4^{V'}$  that are part of a book and those that are part of an article.

We propose a technique that allows us to skip such fragments. In addition to storing skipping IDs, we use the proxy IDs to keep track of some structural information for cases where there is ambiguity. We define structural ambiguity as follows:

**Definition 10** Let  $f_b$  be a child fragment of the non-root fragment  $f_a$ . Then  $f_a$  is *structurally ambiguous* with respect to  $f_b$  if there is more than one path in the schema of  $f_a$  from a root proxy node in  $f_a$  to a proxy node in  $f_a$  corresponding to  $f_b$ .

If  $f_a$  is structurally ambiguous with respect to  $f_b$ , then we add label path information to the proxy ID of each proxy node in  $f_a$  that corresponds to  $f_b$ . This information consists of the labels encountered on a path from the root proxy of the subtree in which the proxy occurs to the proxy itself. Since the label path information is part of the locally unique identifier specified by our numbering scheme, it is also part of the prefix of the IDs of proxy nodes that are descendants of the proxy node for which it was inserted.

In the case of the fragmentation schema shown in Figure 17, there is one instance of structural ambiguity: fragment  $f_3^{V'}$  is structurally ambiguous with respect to  $f_4^{V'}$ . This is because there are two label paths from a root proxy in  $f_3^{V'}$  that could lead to a proxy node that corresponds to  $f_4^{V'}$ :  $\text{pubs}/\text{book}$  and  $\text{pubs}/\text{article}$ . We therefore store the label path as part of the ID of each proxy node in  $f_3^{V'}$  that corresponds to  $f_4^{V'}$ . Figure 18 shows a sample instance of fragment  $f_3^{V'}$  with label path IDs.

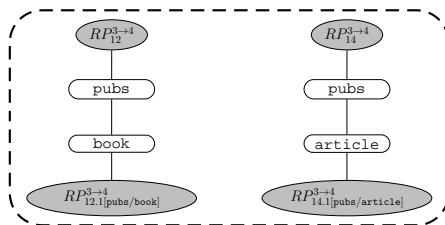


Fig. 18 Fragment  $f_3^V$  with label path IDs

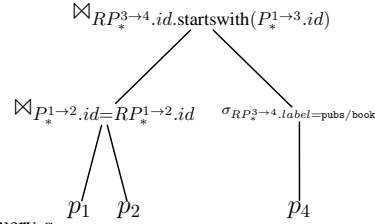


Fig. 19 Label path plan for query  $q$

Label paths as defined here can be viewed as a materialization of structural selections on linear paths through a particular fragment. Thus, they contain sufficient information to evaluate structural constraints in a linear path, as seen in the QTP  $q_3$ . In combination with skipping IDs, label paths therefore allow us to evaluate the query using the plan shown in Figure 19, which avoids accessing  $f_3^{V'}$ .

### 5.2.2 Analysis

Both skipping IDs and label paths are inserted at fragmentation time and whenever data are added to the collection. Since they are not replicated, local insertions and deletions can be handled without having to modify other fragments.

The vertical pruning techniques proposed here operate solely on the QTP and the fragmented schema graph. They are independent of the size of the data and of the constants used in value constraints. This allows us to perform pruning at query compile time, thereby minimizing the run-time overhead introduced by our technique.

Label paths are useful not only for localization but also for pruning irrelevant subtrees within fragments [9]. Studying further uses of label paths in a distributed context is the subject of ongoing research.

## 6 Workload-aware distribution design

To obtain the maximum benefit from our distribution techniques, it is important to choose a fragmentation layout that is suitable for the workload at hand. There are two main considerations when deciding between horizontal and vertical fragmentation (or when designing a hybrid fragmentation consisting of both):

- Since horizontal fragmentation defines fragments based on the textual content of XML nodes, it is particularly suitable for a query workload that contains a large number of constraints on these values. Furthermore, for pruning to be effective, the nodes on which such constraints are placed in the workload should be used when defining fragmentation predicates.
- Vertical fragmentation, on the other hand, is based on a fragmentation of the schema. Therefore, it is especially useful when queries consist mainly of structural constraints (i.e., path expressions) because this scenario maximizes pruning opportunity and allows us to limit query processing to few, small fragments.

In the remainder of this section, we propose a set of techniques for determining a horizontal or vertical fragmentation that is suitable for a given workload. While a complete solution to this problem is the subject of ongoing research, these techniques serve as valuable building blocks.

For both the horizontal and the vertical scenario, we will make the simplifying assumption that each site in the distributed system holds exactly one fragment. In the case of horizontal fragmentation, it is important that the FTPs are defined such

Q1	/author[name/last='Shakespeare' or name/last='John'] /pubs/book
Q2	/author[name/first='William']/pubs/book

**Table 1** Sample workload

Path	Constraint
/author/name/last	.=='Shakespeare' ∨ .=='John'
/author/name/first	.=='William'

**Table 2** Constraints

/author/name/last=='Shakespeare'
/author/name/last=='John'
/author/name/first=='William'

**Table 3** Simple Predicates

/author/name/last=='Shakespeare' ∧ /author/name/first=='William'
/author/name/last=='Shakespeare' ∧ /author/name/first!='William'
/author/name/last=='John' ∧ /author/name/first=='William'
/author/name/last=='John' ∧ /author/name/first!='William'
/author/name/last!='Shakespeare' ∧ /author/name/last!='John' ∧ /author/name/first=='William'
/author/name/last!='Shakespeare' ∧ /author/name/last!='John' ∧ /author/name/first!='William'

**Table 4** Minterm Predicates

that for a given QTP in the workload contradictions can be found that allow us to exclude some of the fragments. For vertical fragmentation, a suitable fragmentation schema should aim to maximize parallelism between the (non-skippable) sub-queries of a given query while avoiding excessively large intermediate results. In either case, what constitutes a good fragmentation schema cannot be defined independently of the query evaluation strategy used. While in practice fragmentation is performed before query evaluation, we have chosen to present our fragmentation algorithms after our query evaluation strategies in order to better illustrate this dependency.

### 6.1 Horizontal distribution design

Horizontal fragmentation allows us to directly apply a fragmentation algorithm that was originally developed for relational systems. This relational fragmentation algorithm is based on minterm predicates, which are conjunctions of simple predicates on individual attributes. Minterm predicates are obtained by extracting the predicates found in the query workload, decomposing them into simple predicates consisting of a single (in)equality and finally combining these simple predicates such that all possible combinations of simple predicates are covered [1].

To apply this technique, we need to transform the predicates found in tree patterns into simple predicates from which minterm predicates can be constructed. We do this by first unrolling descendant steps into child steps (using schema information). Then, each value constraint in the pattern can be transformed into a set of simple predicates whose left-hand side is the path from the root of the unrolled tree pattern to the node with which the value constraint is associated.

Performing this transformation for the workload shown in Table 1 yields the constraints shown in Table 2. We then extract the simple predicates from these constraints, i.e. predicates that do not contain conjunction or disjunction. The result of this is shown in Table 3.

From these simple predicates, we can then construct minterm predicates using the same techniques applied to the relational scenario. The minterm predicates derived from the simple predicates in Table 3 are shown in Table 4. These minterm predicates can then be transformed into FTPs, resulting in a horizontal fragmentation of the collection.

## 6.2 Vertical distribution design

To evaluate a query over a vertically fragmented collection, we evaluate each sub-query on its corresponding fragment and then join the intermediate results to obtain the overall query result. Depending on how the collection is fragmented, the intermediate results may be large and the sub-queries may be expensive to evaluate. In extreme cases, this can lead to a scenario where it is more expensive to evaluate a query on a vertically distributed collection than it is to evaluate the same query in a centralized fashion. To avoid this situation and to take full advantage of the potential of vertical distribution, we have to ensure that the vertical fragmentation schema is well suited to the query workload.

In the following, we propose a vertical fragmentation algorithm that chooses a suitable vertical fragmentation schema for a given query workload. Our algorithm is based on a cost model, which estimates the response time of a query when evaluated over a vertically fragmented collection.

### 6.2.1 Cost model

We define the following cost metrics for each local plan  $p_j$  and its corresponding fragment  $f(p_j)$ :

- $\text{cost}(p_j)$ , the response time of evaluating  $p_j$  on  $f(p_j)$ ,
- $\text{scancost}(p_j)$ , the time it takes to scan the root proxy nodes in  $f(p_j)$  that are accessed by  $p_j$ ,
- $\text{card}(p_j)$ , the number of tuples returned by  $p_j$  when evaluated on  $f(p_j)$ ,
- $\text{subt}(p_j)$ , the number of document subtrees in  $f(p_j)$  that are accessed by  $p_j$ .

While it is possible to obtain these metrics experimentally, this can be expensive and in practice it may be preferable to estimate these values using one of the various cost estimation techniques that have been developed for the centralized evaluation of XML queries (e.g., [23,24]). Our distributed cost model functions regardless of which local cost estimation technique is used. For notational convenience, we do not distinguish between estimated cost metrics and their precise counterparts.

Since the local plans can be evaluated independently of each other in parallel, we can model the cost of a query  $q$  as  $\text{cost}(q) = \max\{\text{cost}(p_j) \mid p_j \in P\}$  where  $P$  is the set of local plans (after pruning) corresponding to  $q$  for a given vertical fragmentation schema.

### 6.2.2 Heuristic fragmentation algorithm

The naïve strategy for determining the best fragmentation schema for a given workload would be to exhaustively enumerate all possible vertical fragmentation schemas, compute the total cost for each of them and then choose the schema with the lowest cost. While this is guaranteed to yield the optimal result, the large number of possible vertical fragmentation schemas generally makes this strategy infeasible (there are  $B_n$



alternatives, where  $B_n$  is the  $n^{\text{th}}$  Bell number and  $n$  is the number of node types in the schema).

To obtain a feasible fragmentation algorithm, we instead propose a heuristic strategy that starts out with an initial fragmentation schema in which each node type is placed in its own fragment and then greedily merges fragments until we can no longer reduce the estimated workload cost. While this strategy is not guaranteed to find the global optimum, it produces a valid vertical fragmentation schema and, as shown by our experiments, leads to good performance in practice.

In the following, we explain how the greedy strategy proceeds for a single query. A formal algorithm is given in [20]. After determining the local cost metrics for each local plan based on the initial fragmentation, we identify the plan with the highest local cost  $p_{\max}$  (ignoring local plans that can be pruned) and its corresponding fragment  $f(p_{\max})$ . Since the overall cost of the query is determined by the cost of the most expensive local plan, we can focus on decreasing the cost of  $p_{\max}$ .

To do this, we attempt to merge  $f(p_{\max})$  with one of its ancestor fragments. We start with  $f(p_{\max})$ 's parent fragments. For each parent fragment  $f_i$ , we merge  $f(p_{\max})$  and  $f_i$ , and then determine the cost of each non-prunable local plan corresponding to  $f_i \cup f(p_{\max})$ . If the cost of all of these plans is lower than  $\text{cost}(p_j)$ , we remove  $f_i$  and  $f(p_{\max})$  from the fragmentation schema and insert  $f_i \cup f(p_{\max})$ . We then repeat the procedure by determining the most expensive local plan for the modified fragmentation schema and attempting to reduce its cost.

If none of the parent fragments of  $f(p_{\max})$  allow us to reduce the maximum local plan cost, we try  $f(p_{\max})$ 's "grand-parent" fragments, "great grand-parent" fragments, and so forth. When merging with an ancestor fragment  $f_i$  that is not a direct parent of  $f(p_{\max})$ , we merge all the fragments on the path from  $f(p_{\max})$  to  $f_i$ . If no ancestor fragment of  $f(p_{\max})$  allows us to reduce the maximum local plan cost, the algorithm terminates without making further modifications to the fragmentation schema.

### 6.2.3 Estimating local plan costs after merging

Our fragmentation algorithm relies on frequent tentative merges between fragments. While it is possible to re-estimate the cost of all affected local plans after each such merge, this can be expensive. To address this, we propose a method for estimating the cost of a local plan  $p_{ij}$  corresponding to the fragment  $f(p_i) \cup f(p_j)$  based on cost estimates for  $p_i$  (corresponding to  $f(p_i)$ ) and  $p_j$  (corresponding to  $f(p_i)$ 's parent fragment  $f(p_j)$ ):

$$\text{cost}(p_{ij}) = \text{cost}(p_j) + \frac{\text{card}(p_j)}{\text{subt}(p_i)} (\text{cost}(p_i) - \text{scancost}(p_i))$$

The rationale behind this is as follows:  $\text{cost}(p_{ij})$  includes all of the cost of the local plan corresponding to the parent fragment,  $\text{cost}(p_j)$ . The cost of the child fragment is scaled by the selectivity of the parent fragment, represented as the fraction of the subtrees in  $f(p_i)$  for which corresponding proxy nodes are returned by  $p_j$ . This is because pipelined execution allows us to restrict local evaluation to these subtrees [9]. We also subtract the portion of the cost that can be attributed to scanning the root proxy nodes in  $f(p_i)$ . Our experiments show that using this approximation does not prevent us from identifying good vertical fragmentation schemas.

#### 6.2.4 Handling multiple-query workloads

So far, for simplicity, we have focused on identifying a fragmentation schema for a single query. In practice, however, workloads generally consist of more than one query. It is possible to adapt our algorithm by modifying the termination condition: instead of terminating when the cost of the most expensive local plan cannot be reduced further, we check the most expensive local plans of each query in descending order of cost and only terminate once we cannot further reduce the cost of any of those.

### 7 Performance evaluation

We have enhanced the native XML database system NATIX [18] with distributed capabilities and implemented our techniques within this system. This allows us to validate our approach and to perform realistic experiments. Our experiments are structured as follows:

- The first set of experiments evaluate how our techniques improve the performance of distributed query evaluation in a realistic scenario. To do this, we conduct a set of experiments based on the XPathMark benchmark [25] that combine both the horizontal and the vertical techniques presented in this paper and verify that they lead to a significant improvement in performance when compared to centralized techniques (Section 7.1).
- In the second set of experiments, we compare our approach with existing techniques (Section 7.2) by implementing the core phases of these techniques within our NATIX testbed.
- Finally, to analyze how our techniques improve performance, a third set of experiments perform a number of stress tests that explore the behaviour of horizontal

XPathMark	A1	/site/closed_auctions/closed_auction/annotation/description/text/keyword
	A2	//closed_auction//keyword
	A3	/site/closed_auctions/closed_auction//keyword
	A4	/site/closed_auctions/closed_auction[annotation/description/text/keyword]/date
	A5	/site/closed_auctions/closed_auction[descendant::keyword]/date
	A6	/site/people/person[profile/gender and profile/age]/name
	A7	//person[profile/@income]/name
Horizontal stress	Q1	/open_auction[./interval/end[.= xs:date('12/28/2001')]] [initial > 120]//item/name
	Q2	/open_auction[./interval/end [. >= xs:date('01/01/1998')][.< xs:date('12/28/1998')]] [initial > 120]//item/name
	Q3	/open_auction[./interval/end [. >= xs:date('01/01/1998')][.< xs:date('12/28/1999')]] [initial > 120]//item/name
	Q4	/open_auction[./interval/end [. >= xs:date('01/01/1998')][.< xs:date('12/28/2000')]] [initial > 120]//item/name
	Q5	/open_auction[./interval/end [. >= xs:date('01/01/1998')][.< xs:date('12/28/2001')]] [initial > 120]//item/name
Vertical stress	Q6	/open_auction[initial > 200 ]/interval/end
	Q7	/open_auction//person//category[id='category10']
	Q8	/open_auction/bidder//person//category[id='category10']
	Q9	/open_auction/bidder//person[creditcard]//category[id='category10']
	Q10	/open_auction/bidder//person[creditcard]/profile[education] //category[id='category10']

**Table 5** Queries used in experiments

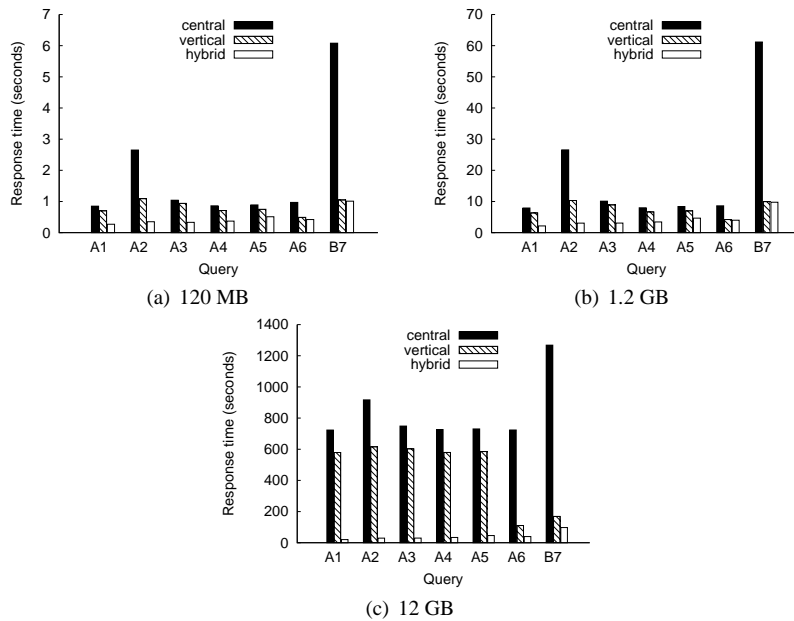


Fig. 20 Response time, vertical and hybrid fragmentation

(Section 7.3) and vertical fragmentation (Section 7.4) separately. For these experiments, we use a set of carefully selected queries and fragmentation layouts that exercise the different scenarios our localization and pruning techniques may encounter, ranging from a case in which the fragmentation is highly advantageous for answering the query at hand to one where it is adversarial.

All of our experiments rely on collections of on-line auction data generated by the XMark benchmark [26], which is one of the standard benchmarks for evaluating XML query performance. The experiments are conducted on virtualized Linux machines within Amazon’s Elastic Compute Cloud, each providing 1.7 GB of memory and a single CPU core. We use a separate instance for each fragment, with an additional instance for dispatching queries. All instances run in the same availability zone, ensuring low-latency, high-throughput communication.

### 7.1 XPathMark benchmark

To evaluate the performance of our techniques in a realistic scenario, we use a subset of the queries in the XPathMark benchmark (those that can be expressed in our query model, i.e., A1-A6 and B7, as shown in Table 5). We evaluate these queries on an XMark collection consisting of documents that are approximately 40 MB each. To evaluate the scalability of our techniques, we use 3 different collection sizes: 120 MB, 1.2 GB and 12 GB. We first vertically fragment this collection into 3 fragments using our vertical fragmentation algorithm. Then, we use a manually tuned hybrid fragmentation consisting of 5 fragments.

In Figure 20, we show the response time results obtained by centralized query execution over an un-fragmented collection (*central*), distributed execution with pruning over the vertically fragmented collection (*vertical*), and distributed execution with pruning over the collection with hybrid fragmentation (*hybrid*). We can see that for

all queries, distributed query execution over the vertically fragmented collection outperforms centralized execution by a significant margin. Distributed query execution over the hybrid fragmentation yields even better results. The performance advantage of the hybrid technique over centralized execution increases with the collection size, illustrating the superior scalability of this technique. For the largest collection size, hybrid fragmentation is in some cases more than 30 times faster than centralized execution. Together, these results confirm that our techniques for localization and pruning significantly improve the performance of distributed query execution in realistic scenarios.

## 7.2 Comparison with other techniques

While much of the existing work either focuses primarily on data integration [2–4] or relies heavily on a replicated index structure [5], there are two techniques that follow a performance motivation that is similar to ours: Cong et al.’s technique for distributed query evaluation [6] and Suciu’s query evaluation technique for semistructured data [8]. While both papers use a definition of performance that is somewhat different from ours (focusing primarily on communication cost rather than end-to-end response time), they are nevertheless the best candidates for a direct comparison.

Cong et al. present two multi-phase algorithms for distributed query evaluation, named PaX3 and PaX2. Both algorithms feature a phase during which all fragments are traversed in their entirety and in parallel (phase 2 in PaX3 and phase 1 in PaX2). Based on the description in their paper, we suspected that this phase would dominate the overall response time of their technique. Therefore, for our comparison, we have chosen to implement this traversal within NATIX. In Figure 21, we report the response time (*PaX*) of executing this traversal on those hybrid fragments of the 12 GB collection that remain after applying their simple pruning strategy<sup>3</sup>. While this does not capture the total response time cost of evaluating PaX3 or PaX2, the traversal is a necessary step for either algorithm that cannot be avoided or parallelized with other phases. Therefore, the time consumed by this parallel traversal can serve as a lower bound on the overall response time of PaX3 and PaX2.

For Suciu’s distributed evaluation algorithm, we use a similar insight: while the paper does not give any experimental results, we suspected that the response time cost of applying this technique would be dominated by the generation of partial results using an automaton that accepts the query. Unlike our work, this technique does not take advantage of a fragmentation specification. Therefore, the starting state of the automaton at a given root proxy node cannot be determined and all states have to be examined, increasing the processing cost of this phase.

We have implemented the partial result generation phase of Suciu’s algorithm within NATIX and report the response time as *disteval* in Figure 21. As in the case of Cong et al.’s work, this phase is not parallelized with other phases of the algorithm and it cannot be avoided, which allows us to use it to obtain a lower bound on the performance of Suciu’s algorithm. The query model used in Suciu’s paper is somewhat different from the XPath-based models seen in more recent work and only appears

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<sup>3</sup> For both Cong et al.’s and Suciu’s technique, the hybrid fragmentation turned out to be more advantageous, which is why we have omitted results for running these techniques on the vertical fragmentation.

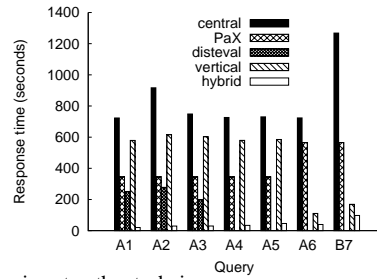


Fig. 21 Response time, comparison to other techniques

to support linear path queries. Therefore, we only report results for the linear queries A1-A3 for this technique.

Comparing the lower bounds on the cost of the existing techniques with the total cost of our techniques allows us to make a number of observations:

- Most importantly, our best technique (*hybrid*) achieves the best (lowest) response time for all queries and collection sizes and is always significantly better than both of the existing techniques.
- The result of comparing the existing techniques to our vertical technique varies. We suspect that the cases where our vertical technique does worse are caused by the larger fragment sizes of the 3-fragment vertical fragmentation compared to the 5-fragment hybrid fragmentation.

Overall, these results are encouraging because they allow us to show that our techniques successfully improve the scalability of distributed query evaluation. While both Cong’s and Suci’s techniques offer impressive guarantees with regard to communication cost, we have shown that when optimizing for end-to-end performance, our technique, which is specifically designed for this purpose, yields significantly better results.

### 7.3 Horizontal fragmentation stress test

We now take a closer look at our horizontal techniques. The goal of this evaluation is twofold: First, we want to verify that horizontal distribution allows us to improve both query response time and throughput. Then, we want to show that our pruning techniques allow us to further improve throughput beyond the level achieved by distributed execution alone without any adverse effects on response time.

Since our definition of horizontal fragmentation assumes a multiple-document collection, we conduct these experiments on an XMark collection that has been decomposed into multiple small documents, placing each `open_auction` element into its own document along with its descendants and document subtrees referenced via ID/IDREF. This results in documents of regular structure with an average size of approximately 30 KB. We scale this collection to 350 MB, 3.5 GB, and 35 GB<sup>4</sup>.

#### 7.3.1 Balanced fragmentation

Each `open_auction` element generated by XMark contains an auction end date and these dates are uniformly distributed across the years 1998-2001. We can therefore

<sup>4</sup> Since the decomposition of the collection increases the size by a factor of about three, the collections used in this experiment correspond to the same data as the collections used in the previous experiments.

obtain a balanced horizontal fragmentation schema (i.e., a fragmentation schema in which all fragments are approximately the same size) by dividing this date range into non-overlapping periods of equal length, with each such period corresponding to one horizontal fragment. For this experiment, we use fragmentation schemas consisting of 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 and 99 fragments<sup>5</sup>.

On this distributed collection, we evaluate 5 classes of queries, which we have chosen to illustrate the behaviour of our techniques in different scenarios. Q1 consists of queries that contain a point predicate on the auction end date, i.e., each query returns auctions that end on exactly one date within the 4 year period. Q2-Q5 represent range queries that cover 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of the date range, respectively. These queries correspond to different scenarios for our horizontal pruning algorithm: whereas Q1 can be answered using a single fragment, Q2-Q5 need to access an increasingly large fraction of all fragments. Thus, Q1 is a good fit for this fragmentation and Q5 is an extremely poor fit. It is important to note that each time we run a query in one of these classes, we randomly choose a date/date range within the 4-year range. Table 5 shows an example of a query in each class.

We first measure the response time of evaluating the queries on the horizontally distributed collection. As in all measurements in this paper, the results reported in Figure 22(a) include the cost of constructing sub-query results at the individual sites, shipping them to the dispatcher and assembling them to the overall query result<sup>6</sup>. In the case of the 35 GB collection, some data points are missing for centralized execution and the fragmentation schemas with a lower number of fragments. In these cases, the query did not finish within 2 hours.

When interpreting the results, we can see that horizontal distribution allows us to reduce query response time when compared to centralized execution (i.e., the scenario with a single fragment on a single machine). The more machines we add to the system (by fragmenting the collection into more fragments), the faster response time becomes. Similarly, adding more machines allows us to manage larger collections while maintaining the same level of response time. We can also observe that pruning does not result in a major improvement of response time when compared to distributed execution without pruning. This is expected since pruning is primarily intended to improve throughput. It is important, however, to point out that pruning has no negative impact on response time.

Next, we consider the impact of distribution and pruning on throughput. To measure query throughput, we use multiple dispatcher processes to keep the system loaded with queries. In Figure 22(b), we report the maximum throughput rates we were able to achieve for each class of queries. Even without pruning, distribution significantly increases throughput and this increase in throughput is proportional to the number of fragments. Enabling pruning further improves throughput by a significant margin. Naturally, the impact of pruning is most pronounced for the class of point queries Q1, where a single date is selected and where our pruning algorithm can therefore avoid accessing all but one of the fragments for each query. Pruning

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<sup>5</sup> We were limited to 100 EC2 instances running simultaneously. Since one instance is needed for the dispatcher, this means that we can use at most 99 instances to store fragments.

<sup>6</sup> Note that we use a logarithmic scale on the x-axis.

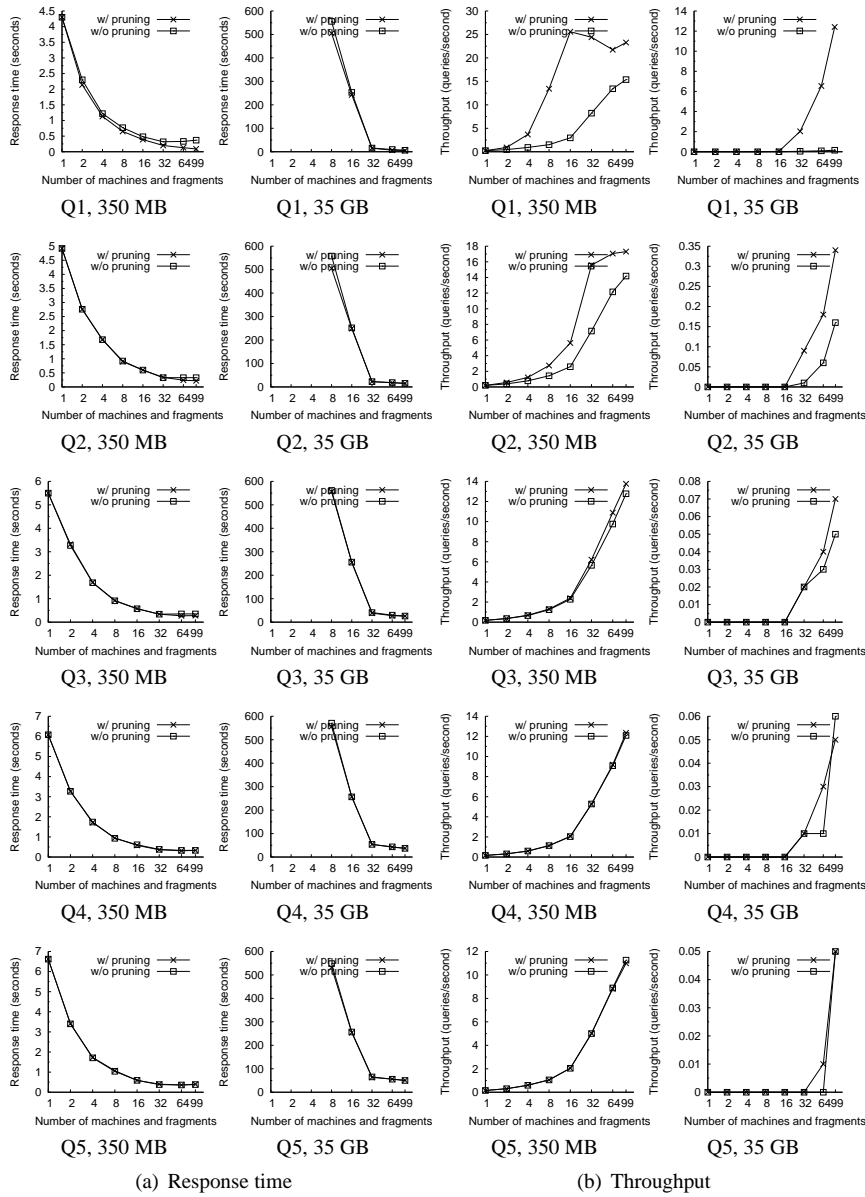
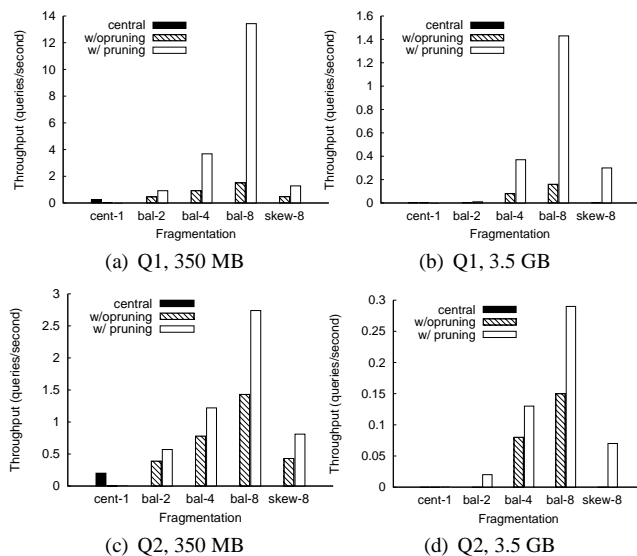


Fig. 22 Balanced horizontal fragmentation



**Fig. 23** Throughput, balanced and skewed horizontal fragmentation

also helps for the queries that involve a range of dates, particularly when this range is small, though the effect is less pronounced. For Q4 and Q5, where a large portion of the fragments or all fragments have to be inspected, pruning offers no advantage over simple distribution but it also does not harm performance (apart from some insignificant anomalies in the case of the 35 GB collection where throughput rates are very low).

This illustrates the importance of a fragmentation schema that is well suited to the workload: fragmenting on attributes on which single-value selections are performed leads to greater pruning opportunities than fragmenting on attributes that are used in wide range predicates. Even in the latter case, however, distributed evaluation by far outperforms centralized querying.

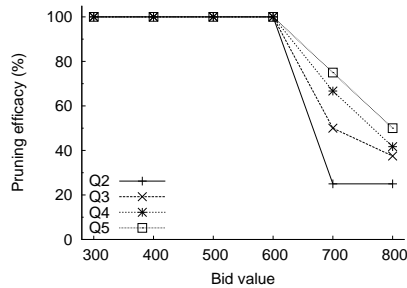
Our results also show that once a throughput of approximately 20 queries per second is achieved, further increasing the number of machines does not lead to improved performance. This is because, for simplicity, our experimental setup uses a single dispatcher, which becomes saturated at this point so that distributed query evaluation is no longer the bottleneck. In practice, this problem can easily be avoided by dispatching queries from multiple sites.

### 7.3.2 Skewed fragmentation

While pruning performs well on a balanced fragmentation, in practice it is not always possible to achieve this balance. We therefore measure the effect of pruning with a skewed fragmentation consisting of 8 fragments. Our skewed fragmentation is defined as follows: The first fragment contains half of the entire collection (corresponding to the first 2 years of the 4-year period), the next fragment contains half of the remaining collection (i.e., 25% of the data), and so forth, with the last fragment containing the remainder of the collection data.

Figure 23 shows the throughput rates achieved by centralized query execution (which is vanishingly low in some of the cases shown), as well as distributed query





**Fig. 24** Pruning efficacy

execution (with and without pruning) on a balanced fragmentation consisting of 2, 4 and 8 fragments and on the skewed fragmentation. We use queries Q1 and Q2, for which pruning has been shown to be particularly effective. Even in the presence of skew, distribution results in a significant boost in performance over centralized querying in all cases. As with a balanced fragmentation schema, pruning further improves throughput.

The throughput rates obtained on the skewed fragmentation tend to fall between that of a balanced fragmentation with 2 fragments and 4 fragments. This can be explained by the fact that the largest fragment in the skewed fragmentation, which is the same size as a fragment in the balanced fragmentation with 2 fragments, represents a throughput bottleneck.

To further improve querying performance on a skewed distribution, it could be beneficial to replicate the most heavily loaded fragments. We plan to examine replication as part of our future work.

### 7.3.3 Pruning efficacy

In addition to evaluating the performance impact of pruning, we are interested in how effectively the pruning technique limits query execution to the fragments that actually yield part of the result. To determine this, we measure the fraction of those sites accessed by a pruned query plan that yield part of the query result. The results (based on a balanced fragmentation consisting of 16 fragments) are shown in Figure 24. We omitted Q1 from this experiment, since it can be answered using a single fragment. We vary the cut-off value for the initial bid of the auction, which affects the selectivity of the queries, with a lower value yielding more query results. We can see that pruning is more effective for the queries that select a large number of results (corresponding to lower bid values). This is because a query that selects a larger portion of the collection is more likely to find a match within a given fragment. The results reported here are derived from the 35 GB collection. With the smaller collections, efficacy tends to be slightly lower, which can be attributed to the lower numbers of results derived from these collections.

## 7.4 Vertical fragmentation stress test

The experimental evaluation of our vertical techniques focuses on response times. In a vertically fragmented system, a single type of query always accesses the same fragments resulting in a closed system in which throughput can only be improved by reducing the response time. This makes a separate study of throughput unnecessary.

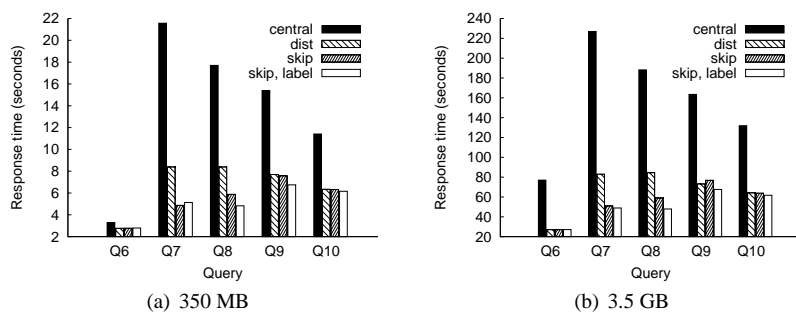


Fig. 25 Response time, vertical fragmentation

We again use the multiple-document XMark collection described in the previous section, which we partition into six vertical fragments. This results in a skewed fragmentation because different node types in the collection occur with different frequencies. We scale the collection to 350 MB and 3.5 GB.

We evaluate queries Q6-Q10 shown in Table 5. Q6 only involves a single fragment. Previous work has shown that this is the ideal case for vertical fragmentation [27]. The remaining queries, however, reach five of the six fragments in the collection. Traversing such a large number of vertical fragments poses a challenge for distributed query evaluation because the large number of joins required to assemble the results from individual fragments can degrade performance. A carefully designed fragmentation schema will therefore aim to avoid this scenario, although this is not always possible. One of the goals of this experiment is to show that our distributed execution and pruning techniques allow us to achieve good performance even in this adversarial case. While Q7 to Q10 reach the same number of fragments, they differ in the number of structural and value constraints they contain, which increases as we go from Q7 to Q10.

Figure 25 shows, for each collection and query, the response time obtained by centralized query execution, distributed execution without any pruning, distributed execution with pruning based on skipping IDs and distributed execution with pruning based on skipping IDs as well as label paths. We can observe that distributed execution significantly outperforms centralized execution in all cases.

To closely analyze the impact of the various distributed techniques, it is useful to consider the number of fragments that they access for each query, which is shown in Table 6. For Q6, which can be answered by accessing a single fragment, all distributed execution techniques yield approximately the same response time. For Q7, naïve distributed execution needs to access 5 fragments, whereas both pruning techniques access only a single fragment. This explains why both pruning techniques yield comparable response times, which are approximately half of that of naïve distributed execution. In the case of Q8, pruning with skipping IDs performs better than naïve distributed execution and pruning with label paths in turn performs better than pruning with skipping IDs. Again, these results are reflected in the number of fragments accessed by each of these techniques. For Q9 and Q10, finally, where even with pruning a large number of fragments need to be accessed, response times for all distributed techniques are approximately on par with each other.

Query	Fragments accessed		
	Dist	Skip	Label
Q6	1	1	1
Q7	5	1	1
Q8	5	2	1
Q9	5	3	2
Q10	5	4	3

**Table 6** Number of fragments accessed, vertical fragmentation

## 8 Related work

There exist significant bodies of work on both querying XML data in a centralized environment and distributed query evaluation in relational systems. Due to space constraints, we will restrict our discussion of related work to XML query evaluation in distributed systems and to techniques that are directly related to our work.

### 8.1 Specifying XML fragmentation

Existing work has focused on two main approaches to fragmenting a collection of XML data: *ad-hoc fragmentation* and *structure-based fragmentation*.

#### 8.1.1 Ad-hoc fragmentation

Ad-hoc fragmentation is a flexible fragmentation model that does not rely on an explicit fragmentation specification. Instead, it allows us to fragment XML data by arbitrarily cutting edges in XML documents.

One approach that follows the ad-hoc fragmentation model is Active XML, which represents cross-fragment edges as calls to remote functions. When a remote function call is activated, the data corresponding to the remote fragment is retrieved and is then available for local query processing [4, 28–30]. Active XML provides a flexible model for describing how multiple sources of XML data can be integrated.

Based on this work, Abiteboul et al. present a technique for ensuring that an Active XML document conforms to a specified type [2]. This is achieved by reasoning about how the types of individual document fragments affect the overall type of a document, thereby combining Active XML with a more structure-based fragmentation approach.

Cong et al.'s work on partial query evaluation is also based on ad-hoc fragmentation although their single-document data model allows the authors to infer certain structural relationships between fragments, which can then be used for distributed query optimization [6, 7]. Therefore, this work can be considered a hybrid case that has certain structure-based characteristics.

Deutsch and Tannen describe a technique for publishing an XML view over existing relational and XML data [3]. Their model uses XQuery expressions to map between the published view and the (possibly redundant) data sources. While the authors do not describe their work in a distributed context, they present a query rewriting technique that could be used to answer queries in a data integration scenario. When distributing to improve scalability, their technique seems less useful since the rewriting procedure is relatively complex and the complete freedom given by an XQuery-based fragmentation model with overlapping fragments would further increase the already large search space encountered when fragmenting for a given workload.

The representation of cross-fragment edges as pairs of proxy nodes is a technique that has been used successfully to fragment XML document trees onto pages in the

native XML database system NATIX, albeit at a much smaller level of granularity than in the work presented here [18].

### 8.1.2 Structure-based fragmentation

Structure-based fragmentation is based on the concept of fragmenting a collection based on some properties of the schema or the data itself. As in the relational context, we can distinguish between *horizontal fragmentation*, which defines fragments by *selecting* subsets of the collection, and *vertical fragmentation*, in which fragments are defined by *projecting* to different parts of the schema. In addition to these options, it is possible to define a *hybrid fragmentation* by concatenating selection and projection steps.

One of the first attempts to transfer the relational concepts of horizontal and vertical fragmentation to the realm of XML was made by Ma and Schewe [31, 32]. However, their definition of vertical fragmentation is limited to elements whose content is a sequence of other elements. Under these constraints, it is straightforward to extend the relational definition of vertical fragmentation by treating the containing element type as a relation that contains attributes corresponding to the contained element types. As in the relational case, we can then simply project to subsets of the contained elements. The authors also assume a single-document collection, which means that a horizontal fragmentation step always has to be preceded by an implicit vertical fragmentation step. In addition, their approach is based on modifying the schema by renaming elements and rearranging their nesting. Therefore, unlike later techniques, it is not transparent and it requires queries to be formulated explicitly for a particular fragmentation specification.

Bremer et al. present another mechanism for specifying a vertical fragmentation of XML data [5]. They call such a specification a Repository Guide. In a Repository Guide, a fragment is defined by a selection path expression identifying the root nodes of the subtrees contained, as well as a set of exclusion paths representing nodes whose descendants are excluded from the fragment. The set of fragments is required to be both disjoint and complete. The authors argue that this approach can be expanded to horizontal fragmentation by allowing branching and value constraints in the defining path expressions. However, this would make it more difficult to enforce completeness and disjointness.

Andrade et al. expand Bremer's specification method by adding explicit support for horizontal and hybrid fragmentation [27]. They define each horizontal fragment by giving a selection predicate in the form of a Boolean path expression with value constraints. This predicate is used to determine whether a given document is part of the fragment. The predicates are required to cover all documents (completeness) and be mutually exclusive (disjointness). The authors also make the observation that by nesting horizontal and vertical fragmentation, both single-document and multiple-document scenarios can be accommodated.

In addition to predicate-based horizontal fragmentation, Kido et al. introduce a novel definition of vertical fragmentation that is based on partitioning the schema graph, rather than on inclusion and exclusion paths [33]. This definition closely resembles the way we define vertical fragmentation.

While not directly related to fragmentation, Marian et al. propose a technique that improves query performance by projecting away irrelevant portions of an XML collection [34]. The goal of this technique is to reduce the size of the relevant portion of the collection and thus be able to process the query in main memory.

In summary, we can observe that ad-hoc fragmentation offers great flexibility in how a collection can be distributed, which makes it a good candidate for a data integration scenario. This flexibility, however, comes at the cost of decreased opportunity for distributed query optimization. Structure-based fragmentation, on the other hand, is less flexible but yields a well-defined specification of the fragmentation layout, which is a valuable asset during distributed query optimization and which makes structure-based fragmentation a good candidate when fragmenting for performance reasons.

## 8.2 Representing XML schema information

A concise graph representation of the schema of an XML collection has been used to convert XML data to relational tuples [10]. As in our work, the authors capture only the relevant aspects of the original DTD or XML Schema.

## 8.3 Query evaluation

A number of techniques have been developed to evaluate queries on distributed XML collections. In this section, we classify these existing techniques based on their approach to optimizing distributed query evaluation.

### 8.3.1 Query models

Query models similar to XQ and their connection to standard XPath and XQuery have been considered in related work [11, 12]. The representation of such queries as tree patterns is also an established technique [13, 14].

### 8.3.2 Fragmentation in centralized query processing

The problem of centralized query processing on fragmented collections of XML data has been studied within the context of streamed XML data on devices with limited resources [35] and as a means to implement publish/subscribe systems [36]. Fragmentation-aware query evaluation techniques have also been used within the context of a centralized XML database system [37].

### 8.3.3 Distributed query language extensions

A simple way to query distributed collections is to make the distribution explicit in the query language. Zhang and Boncz have developed the query language XRPC [38, 39], which is a superset of XQuery that has been enriched with facilities for shipping queries to remote sites. When XRPC queries are evaluated, these requests are forwarded and the results are used during local query processing. If a remote site does not support XRPC but supports plain XQuery, an adapter can be used to translate. This allows queries to make use of remote data sources without requiring any changes to those sources, which is desirable since a user might not have administrative control over them. While Zhang and Boncz do not describe any optimizations that go beyond what is explicitly specified in the query, XRPC may be well suited to serve as a target language for a distributed optimizer.

XQueryD [40] and DXQ [41] provide XQuery extensions that are similar to XRPC. All these approaches cater primarily to a data integration scenario. They might, however, be useful as a backend language for a distributed database system.

#### 8.3.4 Pruning irrelevant fragments

Pruning is an important step in distributed query optimization. The idea behind pruning is to identify which fragments are irrelevant for a given query and then refraining from accessing these fragments altogether. This can help improve the query throughput of a distributed system and can also reduce latency by eliminating the need to wait for processing of irrelevant fragments to finish.

Based on their partial evaluation strategy, Cong et al. present a simple technique for pruning fragments [6]. They identify fragments that can be pruned by examining the structural relationship between fragments. Unlike our pruning techniques, however, they cannot eliminate intermediate fragments. Their pruning technique is therefore largely equivalent to the initial vertical localization we perform before applying our more advanced pruning techniques.

Within the context of Active XML, Abiteboul et al. present a technique that avoids calling certain remote functions and thereby limits the number of fragments that have to be retrieved to answer a given query [4]. Due to the ad-hoc fragmentation of Active XML documents, it is not possible to identify in advance the set of irrelevant fragments. Instead, a lazy approach to retrieving fragments is employed, and fragments are only shipped to the central query processing site when the corresponding function call is reached during query evaluation. This is consistent with Active XML's focus on querying over integrated XML data services.

On the structure-based side, Andrade et al. allude to the possibility of pruning irrelevant horizontal fragments but do not provide details on how this pruning could be performed [27,42].

Hammerschmidt et. al have developed a technique that uses automata to determine whether two XPath expressions intersect [43]. While this technique could be used as an alternate strategy for pruning horizontal fragments, the authors do not appear to support queries with multiple extraction points, as are frequently encountered in sub-queries resulting from vertical fragmentation, preventing us from using this technique in a hybrid scenario. Furthermore, the automaton-based technique is likely to be less performant since (potentially large) product automata have to be constructed, whereas our technique aggressively prunes branches that are not shared between QTP and FTP.

#### 8.3.5 Distributed query execution

An important consideration when evaluating queries on a distributed system is the trade-off between shipping data and shipping queries. On one hand, it is possible to ship all relevant data to a central location where all query processing is performed. On the other hand, it is possible to ship the query or parts of the query to the sites storing the individual fragments and perform as much as possible of the query processing work distributed throughout the system, thereby taking advantage of parallelism and reducing communication cost; finally, only the (partial) results derived from each fragment are shipped back to the originating site.

While most of the literature on Active XML employs a data shipping approach [4,28] there has been some work on distributing query processing [30]. Distributing query processing is complicated by the ad-hoc fragmentation of Active XML, which

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6 makes it difficult to determine which part of the query has to be executed on which  
7 fragments.

8 Based on a hybrid of ad-hoc and structure-based fragmentation, Cong et al. pres-  
9 ent a distributed query evaluation strategy that computes partial matches at each frag-  
10 ment and then combines them at a central location [6,7]. The authors start with a  
11 technique that is designed to answer Boolean queries and then expand the scope of  
12 their work to include data-selecting queries with a single extraction point while main-  
13 taining impressive performance guarantees. The main goal of their strategy is to limit  
14 the number of times that each fragment has to be accessed and to provide a bound  
15 on the amount of network traffic incurred. Our technique, in contrast, considers the  
16 overall cost of evaluating a query, including the computation cost at each site. Our  
17 performance evaluation shows that our technique indeed yields better results when  
18 optimizing for overall cost (cf. Section 7.2). Also, unlike our technique, Cong et al.'s  
19 partial evaluation approach requires that a specific technique be used for local sub-  
20 query evaluation at each fragment, limiting the potential for local query optimization.

21 Suciú presents a technique for evaluating queries on an ad-hoc distributed col-  
22 lection of semistructured data [8]. As in Cong et al.'s work, the main focus is on  
23 bounding the number of communication steps and the amount of data transferred,  
24 rather than on overall query performance, which explains why our technique leads to  
25 better performance when considering overall query cost (as shown experimentally in  
26 Section 7.2).

27 Within the context of vertical fragmentation, there is a large optimization space  
28 in how sub-queries are executed and how their results are combined to the overall  
29 query result. We discuss this problem in [9] and suggest a number of plan alterna-  
30 tives that improve query performance. Another aspect of this problem is related to  
31 how distributed joins are ordered and executed. This has been studied in detail in the  
32 relational context and many of those results are applicable here [1].

### 33 8.3.6 *Query decomposition*

34 Another important aspect of distributed query evaluation, particularly in the context  
35 of vertical fragmentation, is the problem of decomposing a query into sub-queries  
36 that can be evaluated on the individual fragments.

37 Suciú describes a limited class of queries that can be decomposed and for which  
38 it can be shown that evaluating the decomposed queries is efficient [8].

39 Based on the XRPC extension of XQuery, Zhang et al. describe a technique that  
40 transforms a centralized, data shipping-oriented query into a distributed, query ship-  
41 ping equivalent [44]. This is achieved by decomposing the query and pushing part  
42 of the query execution to remote sites. This work supports all of XQuery, although  
43 certain query primitives make it impossible to perform effective query decomposition  
44 while maintaining result correctness. In these cases, the technique falls back to a data  
45 shipping approach.

46 Le et al. present a schema-based technique for decomposing a global query into  
47 local queries within the context of a data integration system [45]. They identify which  
48 of the local schemas contain information that can be mapped to the global schema  
49 types used in the query. While their technique is not directly applicable to the dis-  
50 tributed database scenario, one might employ a similar method to identify which  
51 fragments in a vertically fragmented collection are relevant for a given query.  
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### 8.3.7 Representing partial results

A common problem encountered when using a query shipping approach to distributed query evaluation is how to represent the partial results that need to be shipped from one site to another. If more than one of these results contain the same node, it may be advantageous not to send multiple copies of this redundant node.

Tajima and Fukui present a technique that can be used to solve this problem by sending a minimal view that contains all results rather than sending each result separately [46]. While their work is primarily intended for querying a single XML database instance over a network, it could also be used to ship partial results within a distributed system.

### 8.3.8 Index structures

Another option for enabling distributed query processing is the use of index structures, which can provide a compact summary of the data stored in other fragments and thereby enable some amount of local query processing over remote data.

Bremer et al. employ this approach to evaluate queries on a collection that is fragmented based on structure [5]. One of their indexes stores label path information for all the nodes in the collection. Our technique, on the other hand, only stores label path information for proxy nodes and only if there is ambiguity. By replicating the indexes across the system the bulk of the query processing work can be performed efficiently and at a single site. Remote fragments only need to be accessed to evaluate value constraints in the query. While replicated indexes allow the authors to achieve good query performance, this comes at the potential cost of decreased scalability and more complicated update management (since replicated indexes have to be updated when changes are made to the collection). The centralized nature of index-based query processing might also lead to reduced intra-query parallelism and can potentially cause bottlenecks in the system when queries are not evenly distributed across all sites.

Koloniari and Pitoura present a Bloom filter-based index structure that can be used to derive top-k results for an approximate structural query on a distributed XML collection [47]. This index is used to prune fragments that will not yield top-k results. It can also serve to determine the order in which fragments are accessed, with the most promising fragments being accessed first.

Dewey IDs, first proposed in [22] are another technique that has been used to index structural information within the context of XML documents [48].

Index structures are also widely used for the centralized querying of XML collections. For an overview of these techniques, refer to [49].

## 9 Conclusion and future work

We have shown how tree pattern queries can be evaluated in a distributed system by employing a predicate-based definition of horizontal fragmentation and a schema-based definition of vertical fragmentation. We have proposed pruning techniques for horizontal and vertical fragmentation. Our performance experiments show that, when combined, these techniques lead to a significant improvement in query performance, both when compared to centralized query execution and to existing distributed techniques.



One direction of future work is to examine the optimization opportunities of our fragmentation model that go beyond localization and pruning. Some of these optimizations are discussed in our companion paper [9]. Expanding our query model such that it can express a larger subset of XQuery is another important goal. It would also be interesting to investigate what additional optimizations are possible for a hybrid of vertical and horizontal fragmentation and how we can determine hybrid fragmentation schemas automatically. Another interesting direction for future work would be to combine the fragmentation-based distribution model with (selective) replication of heavily loaded fragments.

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