

# Technical Report - Portuguese Web Archive Image Search

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**Abstract** The popular sentence *a picture paints a thousand words* illustrates the information richness an image can provide.

There are billions of images available on the Web. Such graphic and other complex resources require special search capabilities.

In the late 90's, Altavista released the first major text to image search engine on the Web, followed by Google in 2001. Searching for images is a prominent need for users in the live Web. Thus, finding images using text in Web Archives is an important task, as it adds a temporal perspective on how images in the web change.

User studies show that a significant number of users use Web Archives to find past images for a specific subjects or events. In 2016, the Internet Archive has released an image search portal for Animated GIF images harvested from the Geocities website. In 2017 the Royal Danish Library developed a new Wayback software, with image search capabilities, and in 2018 Arquivo.pt has launched an image search beta service, allowing temporal image searches (e.g. to search for images related with the *Olympic games* between 1996 and 2010).

In this report, we will describe how to build a temporal image search system for a Web archive, namely the workflow and technical implementation required to extract, classify, index and rank millions of Web images collected through the years.

The report ends with a brief discussion on possible research applications and future work on image search for Web archives, such as scene classification and automatic object and color detection.

## 1 Introduction

Web archives periodically harvest the web for preservation purposes. However, little advantage is taken from this vast wealth of information if there are no efficient search mechanisms.

Different content type (e.g. web page text, images, videos) requires specialized processing techniques to enable the information to be accessed and searched efficiently.

Fishkin research at the Inbounder<sup>1</sup> shows that images are amongst the most searched forms of content on the Web. Google Image Search has a count of 22,6% of the searches done on the Internet in the USA amongst the major search engines; 15 times more than YouTube; almost 10 times more than Amazon, 10 times more than Bing, and almost 20 times more than Facebook<sup>2</sup>.

However, search on a web archive has characteristics which distinguish it from a conventional search engine. A web archive search system must be able to process large amounts of data and deal with its temporal features. It should easily enable users to efficiently find and access images compiled over the years.

Costa (2014) user study on information needs of web archive users has identified image search as a significantly mentioned users' need, that was not supported at the time of the thesis publication.

This report describes Arquivo.pt Image search platform. Section 2 gives brief overview of the recent advancements on image search systems for web archives. Section 3 describes Arquivo.pt image search, including the Web UI, API and the indexing process. Section 4 shows possible directions for the future of web archive image search.

## 2 Image search in web archives

### 2.0.1 Gifcities

In 2009 Yahoo announced it was closing down the United States version of the Geocities (hosting service where users could build their own websites), containing more than 38 million web pages. The Internet Archive has made a special effort to preserve Geocities web pages<sup>3</sup>.

On the 20th anniversary of Internet Archive in 2016, the project *GifCities: The GeoCities Animated GIF Search Engine* was released. The Internet Archive team has created a text to image search engine for archived animated GIF images from the website geocities.com.

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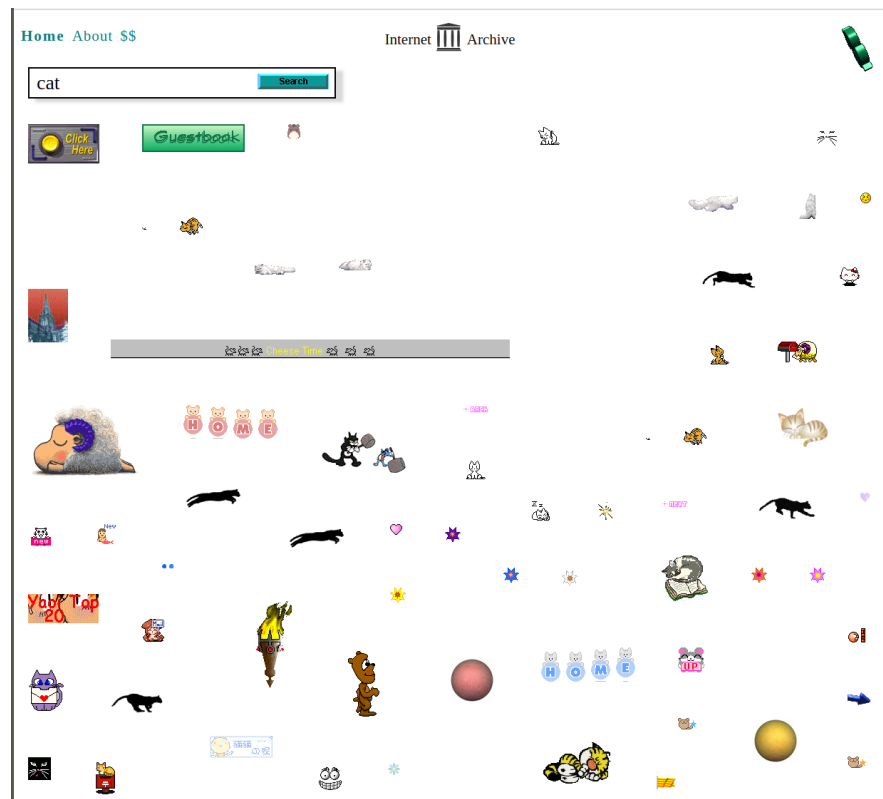
<sup>1</sup> <https://theinbounder.com/videos/search-marketing-s-evolution-2018-and-beyond.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stateofdigital.com/google-images-and-visual-search/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://archive.org/details/geocities&tab=about>

*Gifcities* is available at <https://gifcities.org>. Figure 1 shows a static capture of *Gifcities* animated image search results for the query *cat*.

In order to build *Gifcities* search engine, 4,5000,000 animated GIF images (1,600,000 unique images) were extracted from archived Web resources. Both the directory path and the filenames text were used to build the text to image search engine. When searching in the *Gifcities* portal (e.g. searching for *cat*) a list of animated GIFs related with the search is shown. Each of these animated GIF images links to an archived Web page available at the Wayback machine (i.e. a [web.archive.org](http://web.archive.org) archived URL) which embeds the image.



**Fig. 1** A static frame of the image search results for the query *cat* in the *Gifcities* web portal.

## 2.0.2 SolrWayback

In 2017, the Royal Danish Library<sup>4</sup> released the first version of SolrWayback<sup>5</sup>, a web application for browsing historical harvested ARC/WARC files, similar to the Internet Archive Wayback Machine<sup>6</sup>. The software is open-source and is available at Github<sup>7</sup>. Instead of using the traditional capture indexes (CDX) to replay web archived resources, SolrWayback relies on Apache Solr server(s). ARC/WARC files have been indexed using the British Library WARC-Indexer software<sup>8</sup>.

One of the main novelties of this Wayback software, when comparing with OpenWayback<sup>9</sup> or pywb<sup>10</sup>, is that it ships with image search capabilities. Figure 2 shows the image search results within a Web archive for a single term query (*obama*) using SolrWayback. Below each image there is an option to *Search for image*, in order to find all occurrences of the image within the Web archive. Besides the traditional text to image search, SolrWayback also enables to search for images by uploading an image, i.e. you upload an image, and discover if that particular image has been harvested, and from which domains. Another interesting SolrWayback feature is that it allows to search by location for images that contain (EXIF)<sup>11</sup> location information. Figure 3 shows a location search for all images within a 50 km radius centered on the Royal Danish Library.

## 3 Arquivo.pt Image Search System

In 2018, Arquivo.pt launched a text to image search system for its entire Web archive, comprising a total of 23 million unique images from 1996 to 2017. Inspired by Google Image Search<sup>12</sup>, the goal is to provide a familiar experience when searching for images from the past web.

Table 1 shows the latest set of detailed statistics for the service. The service is available at [arquivo.pt/images.jsp](http://arquivo.pt/images.jsp).

The user inputs a textual query and a set of image results are displayed in a grid, as illustrated in Figure 4. Similarly to Gifcities, each image search result links to an archived Web page that embeds the image. When clicking on an image result, an image viewer is displayed (Figure 5), showing a larger image together with details

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.kb.dk/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://github.com/netarchivesuite/solrwayback>

<sup>6</sup> <https://archive.org/web/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://github.com/netarchivesuite/solrwayback>

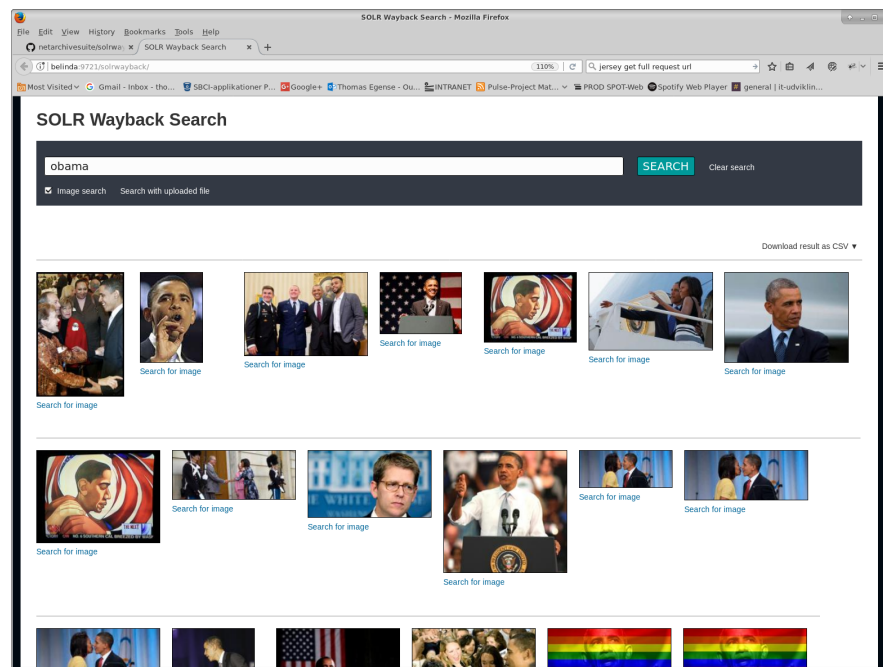
<sup>8</sup> <https://github.com/ukwa/webarchive-discovery/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://github.com/iipc/openwayback>

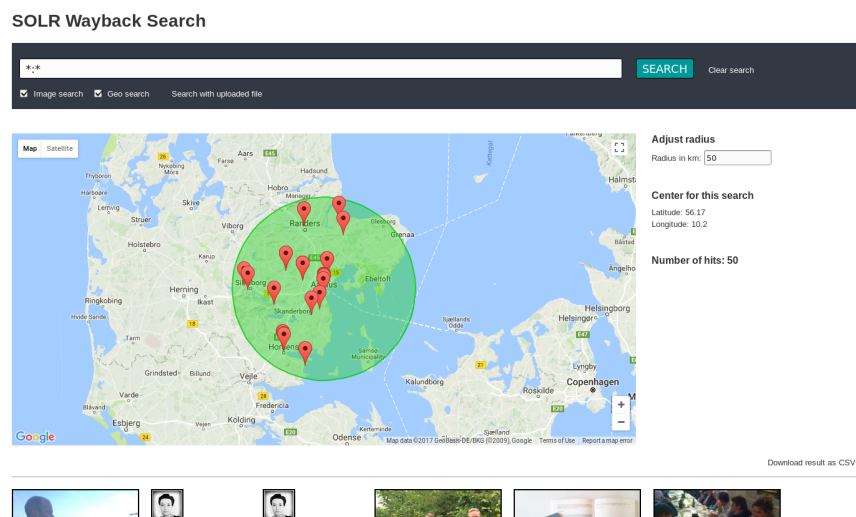
<sup>10</sup> <https://github.com/webrecorder/pywb>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.exif.org/Exif2-2.PDF>

<sup>12</sup> <https://images.google.pt/>



**Fig. 2** Image search results for the query *Obama* in a web archive using SolrWayback.



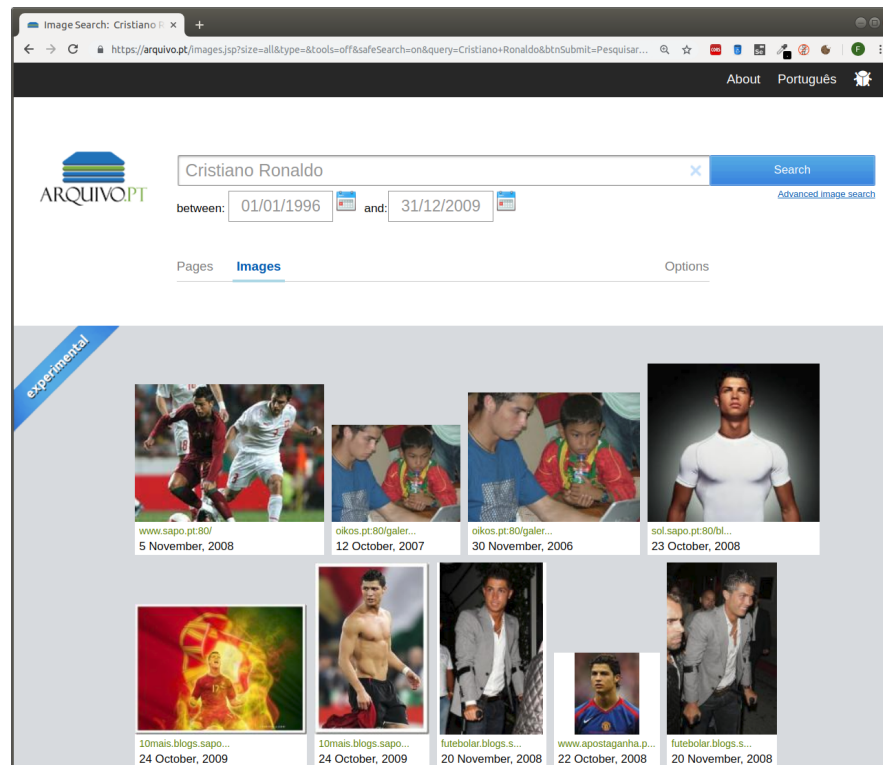
**Fig. 3** SolrWayback geosearch for images within a 50km radius centered on the Royal Danish Library.

about the current image and the web page where it was found. The source code of Arquivo.pt image search system is open-source and is freely available at Github<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://github.com/arquivo/ImageSearchIndexing>

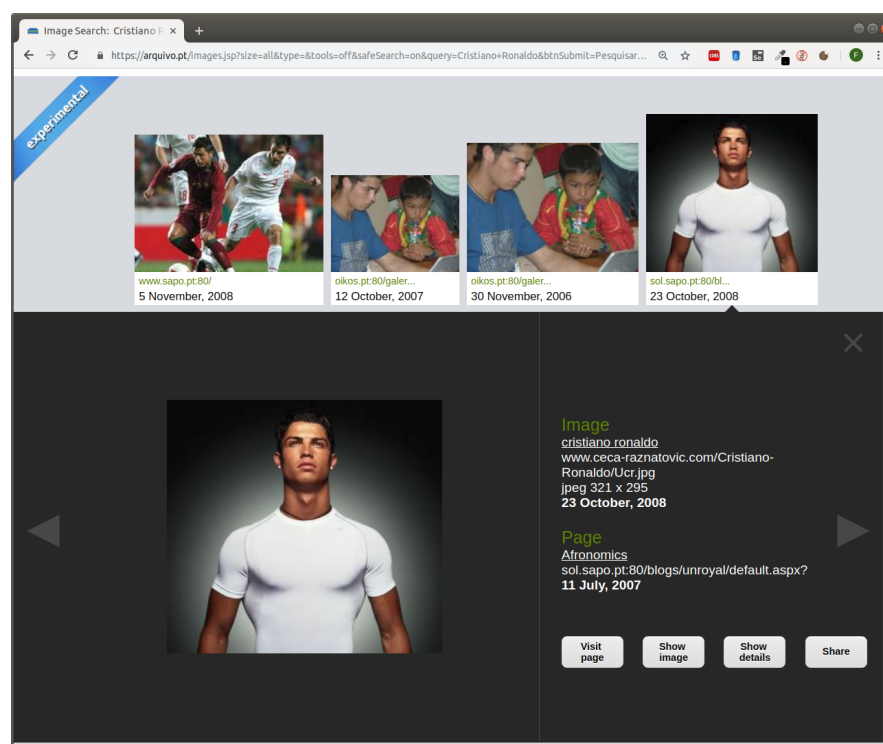
**Table 1** General statistics for the image search system

Indexed images	23,589,395
Crawl/Collection count	88
(W)ARCS	3,414,742 (336.47 TB)
Total collected files	6,086,768,283
Start of crawl	01/01/1996
End of daily crawls	31/12/2018
End of special crawls	14/11/2019
Oldest image date	15/04/1994
Newest image date	14/11/2019

**Fig. 4** Image search results for the query *Cristiano Ronaldo* between the dates 01/01/1996 and 31/12/2009 in Arquivo.pt web archive.

### 3.1 Arquivo.pt Image Search Filters

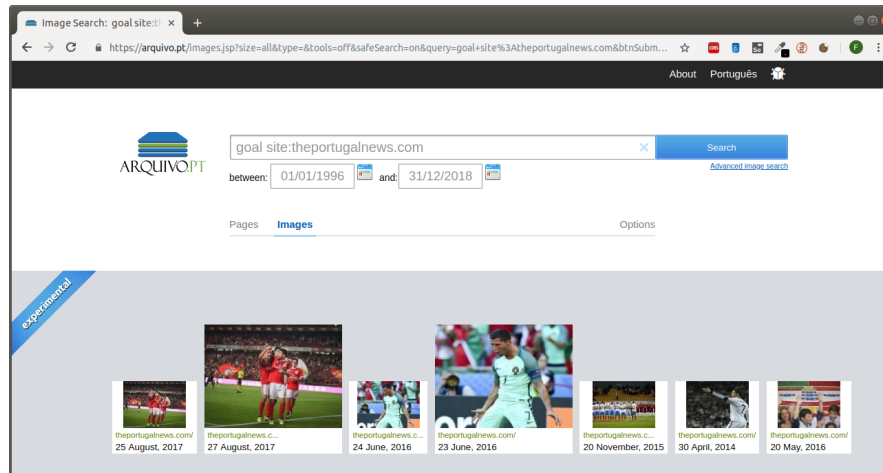
Arquivo.pt's image search system supports multiple filters, to help the user fine tune the displayed search results:



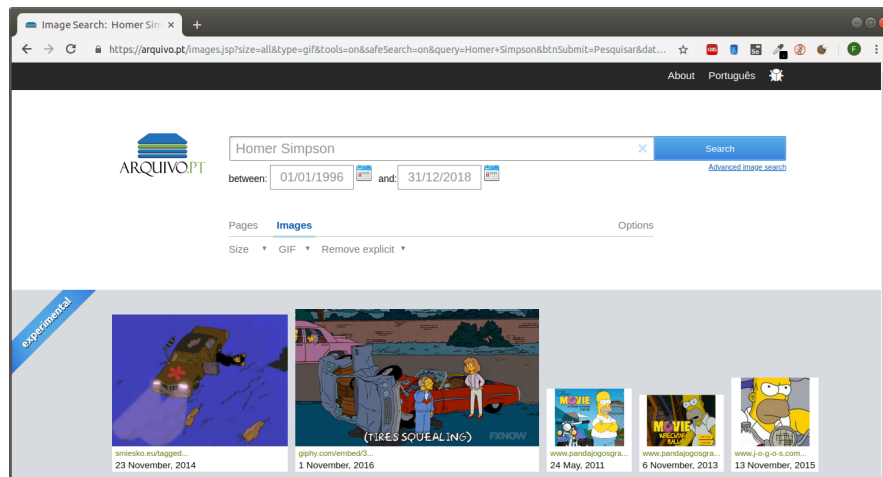
**Fig. 5** Arquivo.pt image viewer. When clicking on an image result, the image is expanded, showing more details the image and the page that contains the it

- Time filter (e.g. find images of *Cristiano Ronaldo* between 1996 and 2000). See Figure 4. This is a key filter for users that are looking for images from the past, as it allows focusing on specific time periods;
- Filter by domain (e.g. find all images related with the term *goal* collected from the website *portugalnews.com*). See Figure 6;
- Filter by mimetype (e.g. search for images related with the term *Homer Simpson* in the *GIF* mimetype) See Figure 7;
- Filter by image size (e.g. search for *large* images of *Lisbon*); See Figure 8;
- Filter by collection (e.g. find only images which belong to a specific collection<sup>14</sup>. A complete list of Arquivo.PT collections is available here <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1SjjjGAMXgUcwBaH>).

<sup>14</sup> Collections are set of related web content, captured together. The relation may be temporal (e.g. AWP30 collection: periodic crawl of the PT domain performed on April 2019) or a part of an thematic crawl (e.g. BlogsSapo2018 collection: deep crawl of all sapo.pt blogs)



**Fig. 6** Arquivo.pt image search by domain. Searching for images related with the term *goal* within the domain *theportugalnews.com*



**Fig. 7** Arquivo.pt image search restricting mimetype. Searching for images related with *Homer Simpson* in the *GIF* image format

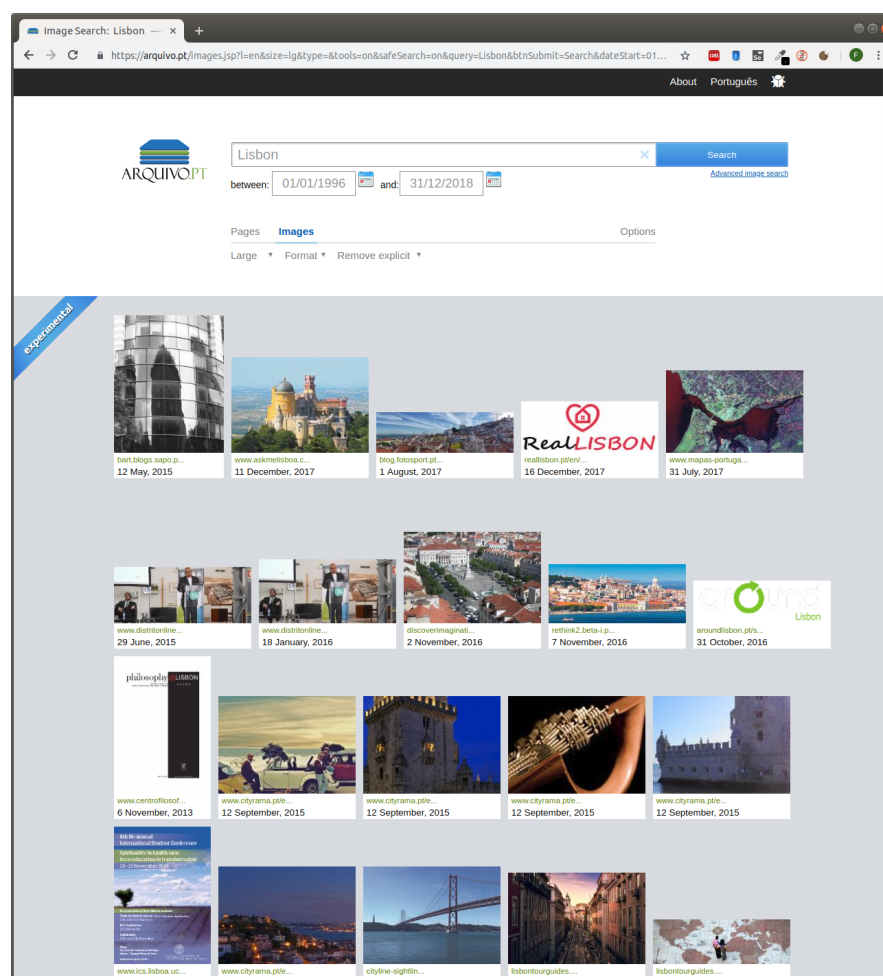
### 3.2 Arquivo.pt Image Indexing Workflow

In order to build a fast image search system for a large Web archive, we created image specific indexes.

Our image indexing system consists of three main steps:

1. Creation of image indexes from ARC/WARC files;
2. Image classification;





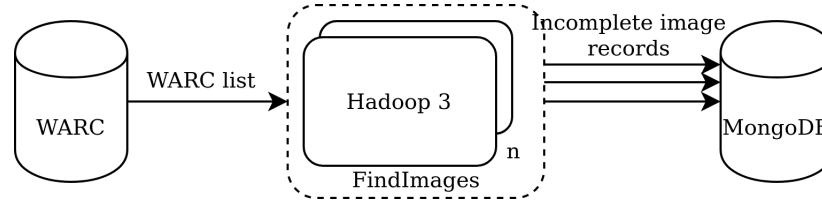
**Fig. 8** Arquivo.pt image search restricting image size. Searching for *large* images related with the term *Lisbon*.

### 3. Solr indexing.

#### 3.2.1 Creation of image indexes from ARC/WARC files.

Creating an index for image search using data captured for archival purposes poses a specific set of challenges, including separating images from the remaining web content, finding the page where images were found and finding which metadata is associated with the image itself.

Arquivo.pt is using a cluster of servers running Apache Hadoop<sup>15</sup> (Lam, 2010), an open-source software library that allows distributed processing of large data, to process hundreds of thousands of ARC/WARC files per collection. To store image metadata, Arquivo.pt chose a MongoDB sharded cluster of servers. MongoDB is a NoSQL (Cattell, 2011) document database, scalable and flexible, which allows to store, and retrieve large volume of data. Each document is a JSON-like object, allowing fields to vary as well as the data structure.



**Fig. 9** Data flow for Image Extraction in (W)ARC files

In order to create image indexes two main jobs are run for each collection of ARC/WARC files:

1. Image Extraction.

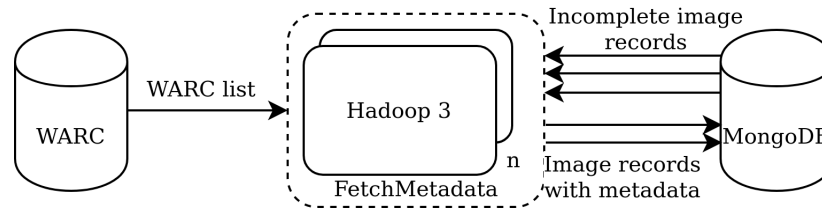
All images are extracted from the ARC/WARC files in a given collection; image records containing image attributes, such as, *image width*, *image height*, *image timestamp*, *image mime type*, together with a generated *image thumbnail in base64* are stored in a MongoDB sharded database, fig. 9.

2. HTML <img> tags extraction.

Figure 10 shows the flow of data for this job. <img> tags are extracted from the HTML records in the ARC/WARC files within the collection. Then, the image record is compared with the image record found in the Image Extraction stage (stored in MongoDB). If no image matches the URL in the found <img>, it is ignored, as this means that the original image was not crawled, and thus, cannot be added to the index. For each matching tag, the following information is extracted and added to MongoDB:

- *imgSrcTokens* - The keywords of the image src attribute. The image src attribute identifies an image by a URL, which often includes the filename of the image;
- *imgTitle* - Image title attribute; it is used to provide additional information about the image;
- *imgAlt* - Image alt attribute; it provides alternative information about an image if a user cannot view it;
- *pageTitle* - Page title attribute; it is used to provide additional information about an HTML page;
- *pageURLTokens* - The keywords of the URL of the HTML page that contains the image.

<sup>15</sup> <https://hadoop.apache.org/>



**Fig. 10** Data flow for <img> tag extraction in (W)ARC files

In addition to the removal of non-crawled images, Arquivo.pt performs two additional filtering steps:

- discard all images with less than 50 pixels of width or less than 50 pixels height, as they are mostly decorative HTML documents from early web design standards (e.g. vertical and horizontal lines, rounded table corners);
- discard image duplicates per collection of ARC/WARC files. Each image has a unique fingerprint (called digest) and for each image digest, only one image index document is created. If multiple websites (or the same website captured at different times) link to an image with the same image digest (SHA-256 file hash), Arquivo.pt only stores the record with the older image timestamp per digest and per collection.

The image indexes from Item 2 are exported from the MongoDB database to JSON files where each line contains an image index.

## Output

MongoDB database with image records. It follows a simplified example of a single image index obtained after the creation of image indexes from ARC/WARC files.

```

{
  "pageURL": "http://www.celticgold.eu/b_en/gold-university/h
ow-bank-guarantys-work.html",
  "imgWidth": 299,
  "imgHeight": 168,
  "pageTstamp": 20141122085132,
  "pageTitle": "How Bank Guarantys work",
  "imgThumbnailBase64": "/9j/4AAQSkZJRgABAg...RRUgf/2Q==",
  "pageProtocol": "http",
  "pageHost": "www.celticgold.eu",
  "imgTstamp": 20141122085145,
  "imgTitle": "Angela Merkel",
  "imgSrc": "http://www.celticgold.eu/media/wysiwyg/CGNews26t
hFeb2012_page6_image9.jpg",
  "imgMimeType": "image/jpeg",
  "imgDigest": "29bae2624f71c1b473...a41f3a068d17e8e17aeeb375",
  "imgAlt": "Angela Merkel",

```

```
}

```

---

### 3.2.2 Image classification.

Arquivo.pt is a public service that does broad domain crawls to the .pt domain, towards preserving as much information that may be of interest for the Portuguese community as possible. In that context, and due to the graphic nature that some images provide, Arquivo.pt enables a default filter in order to exclude pornographic images from the search results, automatically classified as Not Safe for Work (NSFW). This filter can be disabled by the user through the image search interface.

Arquivo.pt has developed a custom NSFW image classifier based on OpenNSFW<sup>16</sup> (Sanzgiri et al., 2018; Gangwar et al., 2017) - a Deep Neural Network (DNN) solution (He et al., 2016; Simonyan and Zisserman, 2014; He and Sun, 2014) released by Yahoo! for classification of NSFW images.

Arquivo.pt is using 2 servers equipped with Nvidia P40 Graphics Processing Units, in order to process and classify hundreds of thousands of images per collection.

Figure 11 shows a simplified representation of how the data goes from MongoDB to the Solr, including NSFW classification. All the images extracted from Section 3.2.1 are exported from MongoDB and classified with Arquivo.pt NSFW classifier. The result from this step is the addition of a field with the name *safe* for each image index. This value varies from 0.000 to 1.000 for each image. The closer this value is to 1.000, the more *safe* the image is according to the automatic classifier.

In the future, more image classifiers may be added in this stage. For example, a scene recognition classifier to extract text categories from images (Zhou et al., 2018), or an image caption sentence generator (Vinyals et al., 2015).

#### Output

A *safe* field is added to each image index from Section 3.2.1.

```
{
  ...
  "safe": 0.997,
}
```

---

<sup>16</sup> [https://github.com/yahoo/open\\_nsfw](https://github.com/yahoo/open_nsfw)

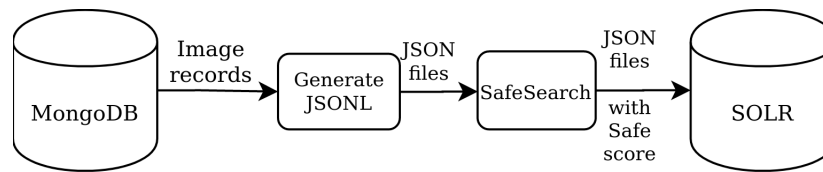


Fig. 11 SafeSearch classification and SOLR index creation

### 3.2.3 Solr indexing.

Solr<sup>17</sup> is an open source enterprise search platform which enables distributed full-text search. It is written in Java and was built on top of Apache Lucene project and is developed and maintained by the Apache Foundation.

Arquivo.pt image search system uses Solr to enable text to image search. In this step, the JSON image indexes from Section 3.2.2 are indexed in Solr, which converts and stores these image records in Apache Lucene indexes.

Arquivo.pt currently has 2 independent servers with Apache Solr software installed. In a near future Arquivo.pt is going to change to a SolrCloud<sup>18</sup> architecture which enables to set up a cluster of Solr servers that combines fault tolerance and high availability. Each server consumes about 4 GB of RAM to enable text to image search.

After Solr indexing is complete, all the images that were indexed are automatically searchable in `arquivo.pt/images.jsp`.

#### Output

Lucene indexes - the underlying structure that Solr uses for its powerful text-search capabilities. Once Solr indexing is completed images are searchable in Arquivo.pt.

## 3.3 Ranking image search

Arquivo.pt image search engine finds images based on the user input text, and retrieves the top results, i.e. the images with higher scores.

Each image index contains text attributes extracted from the `<img>` HTML tags (e.g. alt text, tokenized URL), together with text attributes extracted from the HTML page that contains the image (e.g. original HTML page title).

Thousands of images are returned for certain queries. It is thus of extreme importance to provide the best ranking possible, in order to show to the user the most relevant images from these large sets of results.

<sup>17</sup> <https://lucene.apache.org/solr/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://lucene.apache.org/solr/guide/6\\_6/solrcloud.html](https://lucene.apache.org/solr/guide/6_6/solrcloud.html)

Arquivo.pt is currently ranking the image search results based on the following fields, described in detail in section 1: *imgSrcTokens*, *imgTitle*, *imgAlt*, *pageTitle* and *pageURLTokens*.

The Arquivo.pt image search system uses BM25 (Robertson and Zaragoza, 2009) ranking function for each field. Multiplicative boosts are then given to each field according to their importance. The image search ranking for a single term query is calculated according to Equation (1).

$$\begin{aligned} originalScore = & 4 \times imgTitleBM25 + 3 \times imgAltBM25 + \\ & 2 \times imgSrcTokensBM25 + pageTitleBM25 + \\ & pageURLTokensBM25 \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

In Equation (1), *imgTitleBM25*, *imgAltBM25*, *imgSrcTokensBM25*, *pageTitleBM25* and *pageURLTokensBM25* correspond to the BM25 score of the query term for the ranking fields. As one can observe, the most important field for the image search ranking is the image title, followed by the image alt text.

Additional ranking scores are given to phrases, according to the following Solr query fields<sup>19</sup>:

- *Phrase fields (pf)* - boosts the score of an image index when all the terms of a query exist in a given ranking field in close proximity.
- *Phrase slop (ps)* - specifies the distance the indexed search terms can have in the document and still influence relevancy. The amount of slop, i.e. the distance between indexed search terms, is defined by the *ps* field and affects the phrase fields (pf).  
E.g. if *ps=1* and the input query is *UEFA 2004*, a ranking field containing the text *UEFA Euro 2004*, is considered as a phrase match, because *ps=1* allows up to 1 word of slop between query terms.
- *Phrase bi-gram fields (pf2)* - similar to *pf* field, but it breaks the input down into word bi-grams (Brown et al., 1992).
- *Phrase slop 2 (ps2)* - similar to *ps* field, the amount of slop applied to the *pf2* field.
- *Phrase tri-gram fields (pf3)* - similar to *pf, pf2* fields, but it breaks the input down into word tri-grams.
- *Phrase slop 3 (ps3)* - similar to *ps, ps2* fields, the amount of slop applied to the *pf3* field

Equations (2) to (4) show Arquivo.pt image search ranking boosts for phrase fields (pf), phrase bi-gram fields (pf2) and phrase tri-gram fields (pf3), according to their respective phrase slops (*ps1*, *ps2*, and *ps3*).

<sup>19</sup>

[https://lucene.apache.org/solr/guide/6\\_6/the-extended-dismax-query-parser.html#TheExtendedDisMaxQueryParser-Theps2Parameter](https://lucene.apache.org/solr/guide/6_6/the-extended-dismax-query-parser.html#TheExtendedDisMaxQueryParser-Theps2Parameter)

$$\begin{aligned}
 ps1 &= 1 \\
 pf1 &= 4000 \times imgTitleBM25 + 3000 \times imgAltBM25 + \\
 &\quad 2000 \times imgSrcTokensBM25 + 1000 \times pageTitleBM25 + \\
 &\quad 1000 \times pageURLTokensBM25
 \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 ps2 &= 2 \\
 pf2 &= 400 \times imgTitleBM25 + 300 \times imgAltBM25 + \\
 &\quad 200 \times imgSrcTokensBM25 + 100 \times pageTitleBM25 + \\
 &\quad 100 \times pageURLTokensBM25
 \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 ps3 &= 3 \\
 pf3 &= 40 \times imgTitleBM25 + 30 \times imgAltBM25 + \\
 &\quad 20 \times imgSrcTokensBM25 + 10 \times pageTitleBM25 + \\
 &\quad 10 \times pageURLTokensBM25
 \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

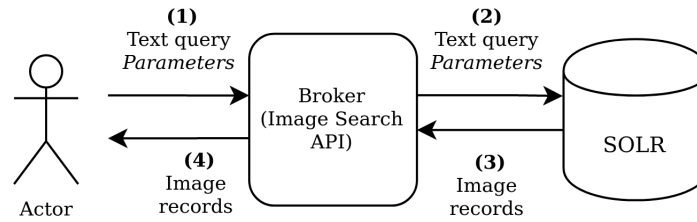
The rationale between choosing this boosting structure is that it ensures that documents that have all query terms close together, but still ensuring partial query matches are still part of the search results. This process matches users expectation and feedback, as most queries consist on a person or institution name (Costa, 2014), and showed good results on our empirical evaluations.

The final document score is as follows:

$$finalScore = originalScore + pf1 + pf2 + pf3 \tag{5}$$

For each query, image indexes are ranked, and the image indexes with higher scores are shown to the user.

### 3.4 Arquivo.pt Image search API for researchers



**Fig. 12** Image Search API data flow

Arquivo.pt developed an open image search API, so that third-party software developers can integrate the Arquivo.pt image search results in their applications, Figure 12.

The API is documented on GitHub<sup>20</sup>, and the endpoint is located at `arquivo.pt/imagesearch`.

The response is given in the JSON file format, and is composed by a response header, which contains basic information such as the links to the next and the previous page of results, the total number of images found for the query, and by a list of response items (`responseItems`) containing the highest scored image indexes.

The main search parameter of this API is the *q* parameter (query). For example, one can search for images from the past preserved by `arquivo.pt` and related with the keyword *european* by entering the url `arquivo.pt/imagesearch?q=european`. As with the Web UI, the API also allows filtering by time, domain, collection and type of image (gif, jpg, png, ...). Filtering by collection is specially important, as it allows to find documents captured under special requests (e.g. images from a defunct blogging platform or Portuguese research institution pages). An example of a response from the Image search API is shown below.

#### Arquivo.pt Image search API JSON response

```
{
  "serviceName": "Arquivo.pt - image search service.",
  "linkToService": "https://arquivo.pt/images.jsp",
  "linkToDocumentation": "https://github.com/arquivo/
pwa-technologies/wiki/ImageSearch-API-v1-(beta)",
  "linkToMoreFields": "https://arquivo.pt/imagesearch?
q=european&prettyPrint=true&more=imgThumbnailBase64,
imgSrcURLDigest,imgDigest,pageProtocol,pageHost,pageImages,
safe",
  "nextPage": "https://arquivo.pt/imagesearch?q=european
&prettyPrint=true&offset=50",
  "previousPage": "https://arquivo.pt/imagesearch?
q=european&prettyPrint=true&offset=0",
  "totalItems": 87642,
  "numberOfResponseItems": 50,
  "offset": 0,
  "responseItems": [
    ...
    {
      "imgAlt": "|-eu-flag.gif 170x113px",
      "imgTstamp": 20160314101513,
      "imgWidth": 170,
      "imgTitle": "European Union - European Community",
      "pageTstamp": 20160314114224,
      "pageTitle": "LSIWC",
    }
  ]
}
```

<sup>20</sup> [https://github.com/arquivo/pwa-technologies/wiki/ImageSearch-API-v1-\(beta\)](https://github.com/arquivo/pwa-technologies/wiki/ImageSearch-API-v1-(beta))



```

        "pageURL": "http://www.kki.lv/index.php?lang=en&id=88
&izmers=3",
        "collection": "EAWP10",
        "imgMimeType": "image/gif",
        "imgSrc": "http://www.kki.lv/galerija/lielas
/eu-flag.gif",
        "imgHeight": 113,
        "imgLinkToArchive": "https://arquivo.pt/wayback
/20160314101513/http://www.kki.lv/galerija/lielas
/eu-flag.gif",
        "pageLinkToArchive": "https://arquivo.pt/wayback
/20160314114224/http://www.kki.lv/index.php?lang=en&id=88
&izmers=3"
    }
    ...
}

```

---

Each response item contains information such as the image width (*imgWidth*) and height (*imgHeight*), the timestamp when the image was crawled from the Web (*imgTstamp*), how to obtain the image (*imgLinkToArchive*), and how to obtain the page that contains the image (*pageLinkToArchive*).

For more information consult our APIs page<sup>21</sup>.

## 4 The Future of Image Search on Web Archiving

Despite the recent advancements on image search systems for Web archiving described throughout this report, there are still many opportunities for further enhancements.

With the current evolution of hardware such as Graphic Processing Units (GPUs), and image classification techniques, one can build better image search models for Web archiving in a near future.

Research possibilities to improve Web archive image search systems include but are not limited to: extracting categories from images using scene recognition classifiers (Zhou et al., 2018), or even generating image captions (Vinyals et al., 2015); retrieving similar images (Wang et al., 2014); and retrieving images by dominant color(s) (Wang and Hua, 2011), shapes and textures.

Another research possibility for image search systems is the development of mobile user interfaces, justified by a growing percentage of users that access Web archives using tablets and mobile phones.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://arquivo.pt/apis>

Finally, the development of standards and APIs is fundamental to increase interoperability, facilitating the emergence of new applications and research based on images from the past.

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