TAC 2008
Update Summary Task

Task Scenario

In the scenario for the update summarization task, you will be writing summaries to meet the information needs of various users. Assume that each user is an educated, adult US native who is aware of current events as they appear in the news. The user is interested in a particular news story and wants to track it as it develops over time, so he subscribes to a news feed that sends him relevant articles as they are submitted from various news services. However, either there's so much news that he can't keep up with it, or he has to leave for a while and then wants to catch up. Whenever he checks up on the news, it bothers him that most articles keep repeating the same information; he would like to read summaries that only talk about what's new or different.

You will be writing summaries to meet the particular information need of each user. In the scenario, a user initially gives you a topic statement (title and narrative) expressing his information need. News articles about the story then arrive in batches over time, and you are asked to write a summary for each batch of articles, that addresses the information need of the user.

Summary-Writing Task

Each topic has a topic statement (title and narrative) and 20 relevant documents which have been divided into 2 sets: Document Set A and Document Set B. Each document set has 10 documents, where all the documents in Set A arrive from the news services before the documents in Set B.

For each topic, you will write 2 summaries (one for Set A and one for Set B) that address the information need expressed in the corresponding topic statement. The summary for Document Set A should be a straightforward topic-focused summary; the summary for Document Set B is also topic-focused but should be written under the assumption that the user of the summary has already read the documents in Set A. Each topic should be treated independently of the others (i.e., don't use information from one topic when writing summaries for another topic).

Each summary should be well-organized, in English, using complete sentences. You may use a blank line to separate paragraphs, but do not use any other formatting (such as bulleted points, tables, bold-face type, etc.) to organize your summary. The summary should be no more than 100 words long (it may be shorter). The summary should include all new information that contributes to satisfying the information need expressed in the topic statement. This means that you might have to generalize some of the information in order to fit everything in 100 words. However, please DO NOT use specialized knowledge to draw conclusions or make inferences that are not obvious in the documents.

Summary A Read the first set of documents (Set A), and write a 100-word summary of the documents that addresses the information need expressed in the topic statement. (If the topic statement asks for information that isn't available in Set A, just include whatever information is available.) Do not let articles in Set B influence how you write a summary for Set A; you should not even look at documents in Set B when writing Summary A.

Summary B Read the second set of documents (Set B) and write a 100-word summary of these documents that addresses the information need expressed in the topic statement, assuming the user has already read all the **documents** in Set A in their entirety (not just the summary that you wrote for Set A). Summary B should highlight new information, including any corrections or modifications of what had been reported in Set A.