

What is Sparse Matrix?

In computer programming, a matrix can be defined with a 2-dimensional array. Any array with 'm' columns and 'n' rows represents a mXn matrix. There may be a situation in which a matrix contains more number of ZERO values than NON-ZERO values. Such matrix is known as sparse matrix.

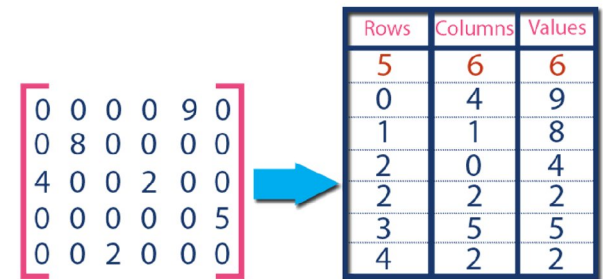
Sparse matrix is a matrix which contains very few non-zero elements. When a sparse matrix is represented with 2-dimensional array, we waste lot of space to represent that matrix.

Sparse Matrix Representations

1. Triplet Representation
2. Linked Representation

Triplet Representation

In this representation, we consider only non-zero values along with their row and column index values. In this representation, the 0th row stores total rows, total columns and total non-zero values in the matrix.



For example, consider a matrix of size 5 X 6 containing 6 number of non-zero values. This matrix can be represented as shown in the image...

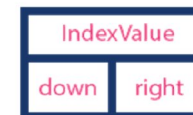
In above example matrix, there are only 6 non-zero elements (those are 9, 8, 4, 2, 5 & 2) and matrix size is 5 X 6. We represent this matrix as shown in the above image. Here the first row in the right side table is filled with values 5, 6 & 6 which indicates that it is a sparse matrix with 5 rows, 6 columns & 6 non-zero values. Second row is filled with 0, 4, & 9 which indicates the value in the matrix at 0th row, 4th column is 9. In the same way the remaining non-zero values also follows the similar pattern.

Linked Representation

In linked representation, we use linked list data structure to represent a sparse matrix. In this linked list, we use two different nodes namely **header node** and **element node**. Header node consists of three fields and element node consists of five fields as shown in the image...

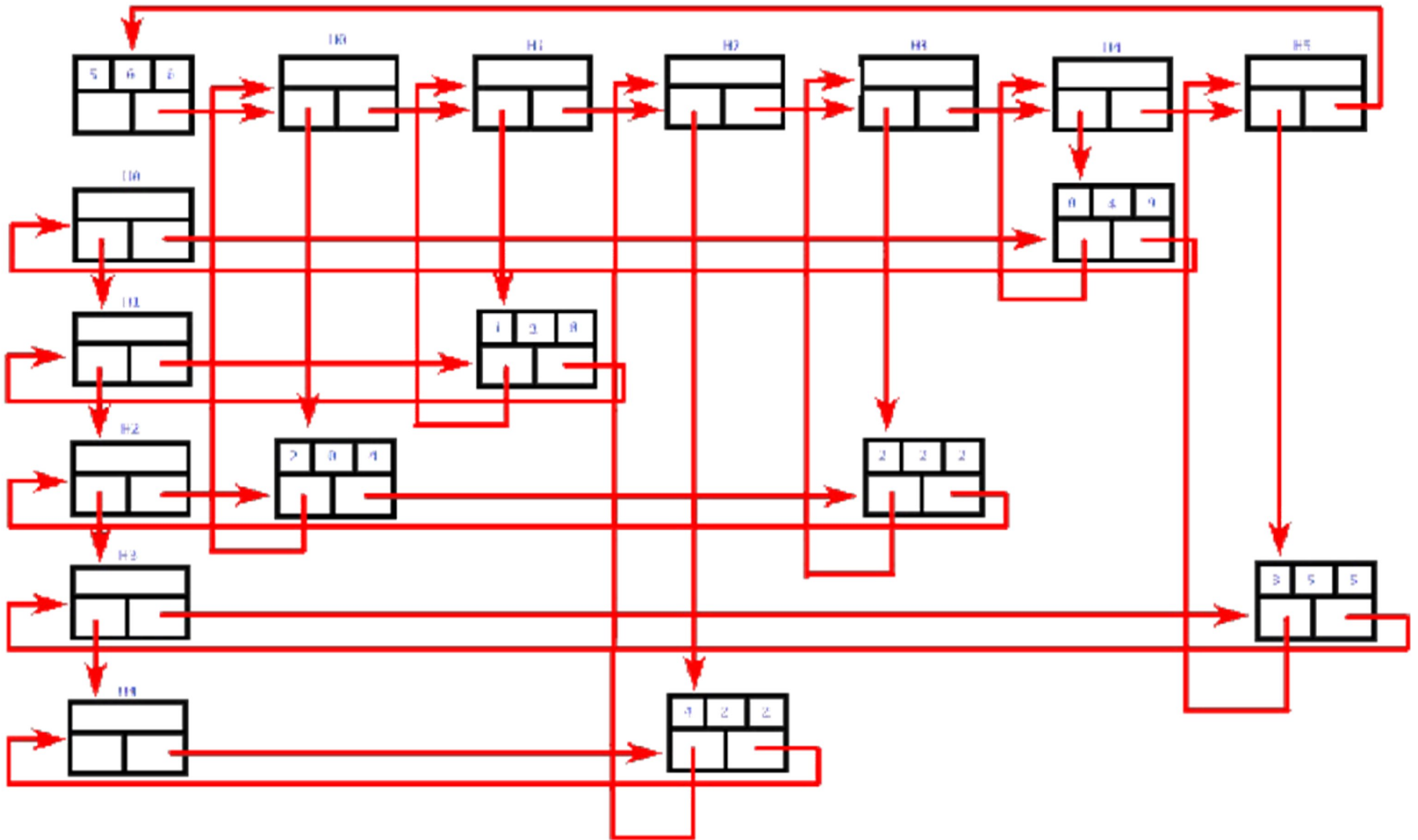
Consider the above same sparse matrix used in the Triplet representation. This sparse matrix can be represented using linked representation as shown in the below image...

Header Node



Element Node





In above representation, H0, H1,...,H5 indicates the header nodes which are used to represent indexes. Remaining nodes are used to represent non-zero elements in the matrix, except the very first node which is used to represent abstract information of the sparse matrix (i.e., It is a matrix of 5 X 6 with 6 non-zero elements).

In this representation, in each row and column, the last node right field points to it's respective header node.