Imaging Pipeline Software

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Math705 Research Project

Abstract

Aperture synthesis is the process of taking data from interferometry telescope arrays and producing an image of the sky. This research project covers the gathering of knowledge on the required topics, and then using this knowledge to create software capable of performing these processes. The software will be tested against ideal models and changed and improved upon based on those results.

Please not this was submitted for a mid-project review and so the report is not finished

Introduction

An imaging pipeline for Image Synthesis is designed to take data either gathered by radio interferometry telescopes, or generated to simulate those telescopes, and form an image of an area of the sky. This software will be similar to that which will be used for the Square Kilometer Array, a project that AUT is involved in, where the same processes will have to take place.

This project will follow a Design Science methodology where software will be the generated artefact used to experimentally investigate image synthesis. The project will start with the gathering of knowledge on the techniques used in an imaging pipeline. It will also involve gaining knowledge on solutions to complications such as concurrency control and the mapping of visibilities to a grid. Then the project will involve implementing the techniques in the form of a Java program and then will be tested using visibility input data available in the High Performance Computing Research Laboratory. The software will be testing against other pipelines and changes will be made to try to improve its performance.

The output from the developed software, using visibility data as input, will be an image of the sky. The images produced by the pipeline will be analyzed to compare it against the known sky images for the data sets to validate whether the techniques are implemented properly and potentially look at its performance.

It is expected that an imaging pipeline will be developed with the capability for image synthesis. Also expected to gain knowledge in the three main steps involved in the pipeline, namely gridding, (inverse) Fourier transform, and deconvolution, as well as some techniques for algorithm optimization.

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Literature Review

## Synthesis Imaging

The resolution of radio telescopes can be increased by using pairs of telescopes (baselines) and taking the product of the received signals. This resolution can be changed by increasing the separation of the baseline, rather then increasing the size of the individual telescopes. This method popularized by the work of (Ryle & Hewish, 1960) states that using these baselines the telescopes produces; “exactly the same result as that obtained by using the complete large aperture”. This technique allowed for cheaper production of much larger apertures and the eventual development of the techniques used now.

These techniques gather Fourier domain data in the form of a visibility, however, the way in which they are sampled is non-uniform, so it must be placed on a rectangular grid. This process is known as gridding and the methods used now are based on the work by (Brouw, 1975). These visibilities V(u, v) fall upon the plane in which the baselines are setup. For a wider coverage of this plane, more baselines can be added and could also be moved around.

With more modern telescopes being developed, moving them around became a substantial task and instead the rotation of the earth can be used to move these points around the plane. An image of these points on the V(u, v) plane can be seen on the left of Figure 1.

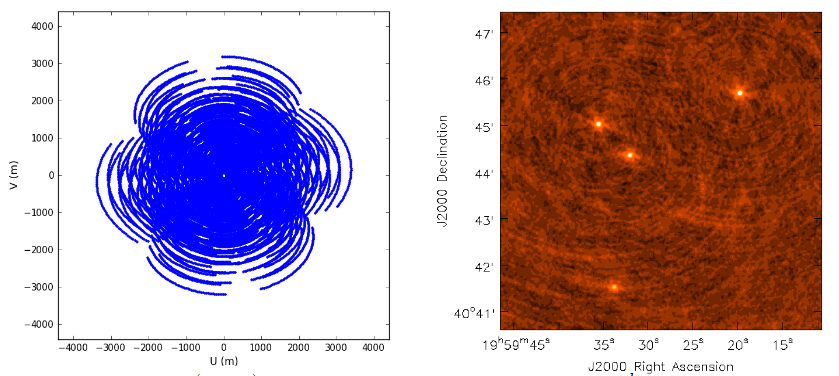
As there are gaps within the V(u, v) plane the image is a “dirty image”, this can be seen on the right of Figure 1.

Figure 1. V(u,v) plane showing data points and a dirty image. (Rau, 2012) Retrieved from Australian Telescope National Facility, from https://www.atnf.csiro.au/research/radio- school/2012/lectures/tue/RVU\_ImagingDeconvolution.pdf

## Fast Fourier Transform (FFT)

A Fourier Transform is a process for signal-processing and analysis. (Brigham, 1988) states that the extent of the use the process is as follows, “biomedical engineering, imaging, analysis of stock market data, spectroscopy, metallurgical analysis, nonlinear systems analysis, mechanical analysis, geophysical analysis, simulation, music synthesis”. It is widely regarded as one of the most important algorithms based on its impact in so many areas. Simply put a Fourier Transform is used to show different parts of a continuous signal. However, for Interferometry an Inverse Fourier Transform is used as we are taking the data from the Fourier Plane and creating an image from that. While it is possible to perform a basic Fourier Transform using computers, the method has a run time of O(N^2). Instead, we can perform a Fast Fourier Transform. Such a method is based upon the work of (Hogg, MacDonald, Conway, & Wade, 1969). The algorithm used was first discovered by Gauss and later rediscovered by (Cooley & Tukey, 1965) which notes that, “Wherever possible the use of N = r^m with r = 2 or 4 offers important advantages”. This algorithm works under the assumption that the data is in an organized array, hence the visibilities must be gridded.

## Gridding

Gridding is the process of mapping the data collected onto a rectangular grid so that it may be processed by the iFFT, and then displayed as an image. Early techniques for placing the visibility data on a grid involved, finding the closest grid point to visibility’s V(u, v) co-ordinate. Then, either adding them all together or averaging them out on that grid location. Early methods were used by (Hogg, MacDonald, Conway, & Wade, 1969). However, this led to artifacts forming and therefore, a limited application for the process. An alternative method was first used by (Brouw, 1975), and would take a weighted value based on the distance between local grid point and the point of the visibility. By designating a “support” area around the local grid point, the data can be added to these areas. An ideal gridding method was given by (O'Sullivan, 1985), with his gridding algorithm that used a sinc function was “computationally efficient” and resulted in “arbitrarily small artifact levels”. However, this function would give infinite extent to the support. This is not ideal computationally for the gridder so instead the use of convolution kernels with a set support.

A simplified approach to gridding follows these steps. For every visibility, find the closest grid point to the data on the V(u, v) plane. Then using the convolution kernel the data point is spread across the support region.

## Deconvolution

Once an image is formed from the Fourier Transform is it called a ‘dirty image’, as seen in Figure 1, this is due to the effects of having limited sampling of the V(u, v) plane. The process of Deconvolution can be used to ‘CLEAN’ the image. This method by (Högbom, 1974) uses the original V(u, v) data to form a “dirty beam”, then by taking away the dirty beam from the points of the dirty image with the greatest brightness you are left with a residual image. By iteratively doing this process the effects of the convolution are removed to the best extent possible.

This was expanded upon by (Clark, 1980) to make it more efficient. His method involves using more FFT’s in a major and minor cycle to subtract points away from the dirty image. The minor cycle works by performing a Högbom clean on smaller beam patches, then the major cycle applies an FFT on the points found by the minor cycle and is used to subtract from the dirty image. There is also a varient of this process wherein (Schwab, 1984) uses the major cycle to take away from un-gridded visibilities. This helps to remove noise from and potential errors from the gridding process.

Further examples of the ‘CLEAN’ algorithm and the Maximum Entropy technique by (Skilling & Bryan, 1984) are compared by (Cornwell & Bridle, 1996).

Methods

The goal of the project is to gather sufficient knowledge on the topics needed to produce software capable of taking data from interferometry telescopes and produce an image of the sky. Starting with a literature review, relevant knowledge regarding the topics of Image Synthesis, gridding, Fourier Transforms, and Deconvolution were gathered. Using this knowledge, an artefact will be produced that to perform the required processes. Once the pipeline is created, it will be tested using a known image of the sky to ensure that it is correctly carrying out the processes involved. The pipeline will then be adapted and improved upon to increase its performance.

## Design of pipeline

The pipeline will consist of three main sections, the Gridder, the inverse Fourier Transform, and the Deconvolution. For the language to be used I decided on Java, this is due to it being the language I am most familiar with. Java is the language primarily used in my computer science papers at AUT. It is also more then capable of handling the size of the data I will be using and supports parallelization.

The grid size to be used will be 1024x1024. This is due to wanting a high enough resolution to be able to properly test against, and the grid length and height must be a power of 2 due to the (Cooley & Tukey, 1965) radix 2 FFT we are using. This algorithm has a much better run time then a standard Fourier Transform under the condition that the data is ordered, hence why we grid the visibilities.

The data contains Visibilities.csv - a file that includes around 23000 data points. Each visibility consists of its locations along the V(u, v) plane, followed by its value as a complex number. The dataset also includes the Prolate Spheroidal which is used as the convolution kernel for the data with a support size of 7. However, for better precision it has been oversampled by a factor of 4. The last thing needed from the data is the configuration for achieving the best accuracy for the gridder.

A double is used as the primitive data type, as in the Java language (Oracle, 1993) a double can store values from 4.94065645841246544e-324 to 1.79769313486231570e+308 including values with high decimal accuracy needed.

## Implementing

The processes of creating the pipeline will undergo many stages, this is due to multiple iterations of the software being produced as improvements are made. When the pipeline is complete, a fully formed Java project with unit testing and multiple output images will be produced.

When implementing the pipeline, constant referring to the literature will be required to ensure the processes are carrying out their operations correctly. The nature of the mathematical operations mean that high precision is needed to enable a useful image to be produced.

## Testing

To test the pipeline, a dataset generated by the HPCRL at AUT will be used. By using this data, the three main processes of the pipeline can be checked to see how they are performing as it can be tested against a perfect image made from the real components of the sky. This perfect image is what the pipeline would generate if working under ideal circumstances, so any inconsistences would be evidence that improvements can be made.

As the pipeline is tested, improvements will be made with respect to its runtime, an example of this is using multiple threads to perform the gridding or the Fourier Transform. However, implementing multiple threads brings issues such as concurrent updates from the threads. A concurrency issue occurs when two threads attempt to update the same values simultaneously and only one update is saved. This would arise with overlapping visibilities in the gridder and requires a solution such as a loch on each value to prevent being accessed at the same time or each can thread contain their own grid and then combine the grids.

Software Implementation

The implementation will be broken into three classes. Gridder.java, responsible for reading the dataset and placing the points on a grid. iFFT.java, for carrying out a Inverse Fourier Transform on the data. Deconvolution.java, implementing a ‘CLEAN’ algorithm to turn the dirty image into a more representative form.

## Gridder

Implementing the gridder begins with initializes two 2d double arrays, these are used to store the real and imaginary values respectively, as the values are placed on the grid they will be stored in these. Following that the gridder loads the data from the .cvs file and storing it as a double array. The first two indexes are the u and v coordinates, after that is the real and then imaginary values. These double arrays are placed in linked list data type to ensure the size of the list is not an issue. Then going through the list, each array is transformed as per the formula mentioned before.

In order to correctly place the visibilities two thing must be used, a wavelength to meters ratio, and the UV scale. For the data generates a frequency of 300000000 was used. To calculate the scale, we use the product of the grid size and the cell size, our grid size is 1024 as discussed earlier, cell size is 4.848136811095360e-06 as given by the data.

Once the visibilities are modified correctly the process of placing the points on the grid begins. Firstly, we take the location modified by the UVScale and round it to the nearest integer to find the closest grid point. The using the support value of 7 we take a 7x7 grid around this center grid point as where we will place the data point. Using our convolution kernel, we form a 2d array 27x27, due to our x4 oversampling, and finding the distance of the grid point to the true visibility point.

Discussion of Results

Conclusion

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Appendix