Monte Carlo Methods

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Pseudorandom Numbers

We first generate an i.i.d. sequence $U_i \sim \text{Uniform}[0,1]$.

Method (Linear Congruential Generator/LCG)**.**

- Choose large positive integers m, a, and b.
- Start with a seed value x_0, e.g., the current time in milliseconds.
- Recursively, $x_n = (ax_{n-1} + b) \mod m$, i.e., x_n is the remainder when $ax_{n-1} + b$ is divided by m. Hence $0 \leqslant x_n \leqslant m - 1$.
- Let $U_n = \dfrac{x_n}{m}$, $\{U_n\}$ will seem to be approximately i.i.d. Uniform$[0,1]$.

Note. We need m large so many possible values; a large enough that no obvious pattern between U_{n-1} and U_n; b to avoid short cycles of numbers. We want large period, i.e., number of iterations before repeat. One common choice: $m = 2^{32}, a = 69069, b = 23606797$.

Theorem. The LCG has full period (m) iff both $\gcd(b, m) = 1$, and every "prime or 4" divisor of m also divides $a - 1$.

Once we have $U_i \sim \text{Uniform}[0,1]$, we can generate other distributions with transformations, using change of variable theorem.

Example. To make $X \sim \text{Uniform}[L, R]$, set $X = (R - L)U_1 + L$.

Example. To make $X \sim \text{Bernoulli}(p)$, set

$$X = \begin{cases} 1, & U_1 \leqslant p \\ 0, & U_1 > p \end{cases}$$

Example. To make $Y \sim \text{Binomial}(n, p)$, either set $Y = X_1 + \cdots + X_n$ where

$$X_i = \begin{cases} 1, & U_i \leqslant p \\ 0, & U_i > p \end{cases}$$

or set

$$Y = \max\left\{ j : \sum_{k=0}^{j-1} \binom{n}{k} p^k (1-p)^{n-k} \leqslant U_1 \right\}$$

Generally, to make $P(Y = x_i) = p_i$ for some $x_1 < x_2 < \cdots$, where $p_i \geqslant 0$ and $\sum_i p_i = 1$, set

$$Y = \max\left\{ x_j : \sum_{k=1}^{j-1} p_k \leqslant U_1 \right\}$$

Example. To make $Z \sim \text{Exponential}(1)$, set $Z = -\ln(U_1)$. Generally, to make $W \sim \text{Exponential}(\lambda)$, set $W = \dfrac{Z}{\lambda} = \dfrac{-\ln(U_1)}{\lambda}$ so that W has density $\lambda e^{-\lambda x}$ for $x > 0$.

Example. If

$$X = \sqrt{2\ln\left(\frac{1}{U_1}\right)}\cos(2\pi U_2)$$

$$Y = \sqrt{2\ln\left(\frac{1}{U_1}\right)}\sin(2\pi U_2)$$

then $X, Y \sim \mathcal{N}(0,1)$ and $X \perp Y$.

Method (Inverse CDF Method)**.**

- We want CDF $P(X \leqslant x) = F(x)$.
- For $0 < t < 1$, set $F^{-1}(t) = \min\{x; F(x) \geqslant t\}$ and $X = F^{-1}(U_1)$.
- $X \leqslant x$ iff $U_1 \leqslant F(x)$ and thus $P(X \leqslant x) = P(U_1 \leqslant F(x)) = F(x)$.

Monte Carlo Integration

We can rewrite an integral as an expectation and compute it with Monte Carlo.

Example. Estimate $I = \displaystyle\int_0^5\int_0^4 g(x,y)\mathrm{d}y\mathrm{d}x$, where $g(x,y) = \cos(\sqrt{xy})$.

Solution. We have

$$\int_0^5\int_0^4 g(x,y)\mathrm{d}y\mathrm{d}x = \int_0^5\int_0^4 5\cdot 4\cdot g(x,y)\cdot\frac{1}{4}\mathrm{d}y\frac{1}{5}\mathrm{d}x = \mathbb{E}[20g(X,Y)]$$

where $X \sim \text{Uniform}[0,5]$ and $Y \sim \text{Uniform}[0,4]$. Hence, we let $X_i \sim \text{Uniform}[0,5]$ and $Y_i \sim \text{Uniform}[0,4]$ (all independent) and estimate I by

$$\frac{1}{M}\sum_{i=1}^{M} 20g(X_i, Y_i)$$

with standard error

$$\text{SE} = M^{-1/2}\text{SE}(20g(X_1,Y_1),\cdots,20g(X_M,Y_M))$$

Example. Estimate $I = \displaystyle\int_0^1\int_0^\infty h(x,y)\mathrm{d}y\mathrm{d}x$, where $h(x,y) = e^{-y^2}\cos(\sqrt{xy})$.

Solution. We have

$$\int_0^1\int_0^\infty (e^y h(x,y))e^{-y}\mathrm{d}y\mathrm{d}x = \mathbb{E}[e^Y h(X,Y)]$$

where $X \sim \text{Uniform}[0,1]$ and $Y \sim \text{Exponential}(1)$ are independent.

Hence we estimate I by

$$\frac{1}{M}\sum_{i=1}^{M} e^{Y_i}h(X_i,Y_i)$$

where $X_i \sim \text{Uniform}[0,1]$ and $Y_i \sim \text{Exponential}(1)$ (all independent).

Alternatively, we could write

$$\int_0^1 \int_0^\infty \frac{1}{5} e^{5y} h(x,y) \cdot 5e^{-5y} \mathrm{d}y \mathrm{d}x = \mathbb{E}\left[\frac{1}{5} e^{5Y} h(X,Y)\right]$$

where $X \sim \text{Uniform}[0,1]$ and $Y \sim \text{Exponential}(5)$ are independent.

Note. We can choose different λ to estimate I and the one minimizes the standard error is the best choice.

Method (Importance Sampling)**.** Suppose we want to evaluate $I = \displaystyle\int s(y)\mathrm{d}y$.

- We rewrite $I = \displaystyle\int \frac{s(x)}{f(x)} f(x)\mathrm{d}x$, where f is easily sampled from, with $f(x) > 0$ whenever $s(x) > 0$.
- Hence, $I = \mathbb{E}\left[\dfrac{s(X)}{f(X)}\right]$ where X has density f. Thus, we estimate $I \approx \dfrac{1}{M}\displaystyle\sum_{i=1}^M \frac{s(x_i)}{f(x_i)}$ where $x_i \sim f$.

Unnormalized Densities

Suppose $\pi(y) = cg(y)$ where we know g but do not know c or π. Hence,

$$c = \frac{1}{\displaystyle\int g(y)\mathrm{d}y}$$

which might be hard to compute.

Let

$$I = \int h(x)\pi(x)\mathrm{d}x = \int h(x)cg(x)\mathrm{d}x = \frac{\displaystyle\int h(x)g(x)\mathrm{d}x}{\displaystyle\int g(x)\mathrm{d}x}$$

where

$$\int h(x)g(x)\mathrm{d}x = \int \frac{h(x)g(x)}{f(x)} f(x)\mathrm{d}x = \mathbb{E}\left[\frac{h(X)g(X)}{f(X)}\right]$$

with $X \sim f$.

Hence,

$$\int h(x)g(x)\mathrm{d}x \approx \frac{1}{M}\sum_{i=1}^M \frac{h(x_i)g(x_i)}{f(x_i)}$$

if $\{x_i\} \overset{\text{i.i.d.}}{\sim} f$.

Similarly,

$$\int g(x)\mathrm{d}x \approx \frac{1}{M}\sum_{i=1}^M \frac{g(x_i)}{f(x_i)}$$

if $\{x_i\} \overset{\text{i.i.d.}}{\sim} f$.

Therefore,

$$I \approx \frac{\displaystyle\sum_{i=1}^{M} \frac{h(x_i)g(x_i)}{f(x_i)}}{\displaystyle\sum_{i=1}^{M} \frac{g(x_i)}{f(x_i)}}$$

Note. Since we take ratios of unbiased estimates, the resulting estimate is not unbiased, and its standard errors are less clear. But it is still consistent as $M \to \infty$.