

Queens College, CUNY,      Department of Computer Science  
**Software Engineering**  
**CSCI 370**  
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Instructor: Dr. Sateesh Mane

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## 5 Project 5c

- This document describes a mathematical calculation involving a lot of computation.
- To reduce the overall computation time, the application should perform parallel processing.
- You are responsible for configuring how your application implements parallel processing.
- You are responsible to design your program code to perform the computations in parallel.
- This project does not require a GUI or a database.
- The application will be tested by running it on the Mars server.

## 5.1 Random walks

- Let  $x$  be a variable which takes integer values.
- The variable  $x$  executes a random walk as follows.
  1. Define positive integers  $u$  and  $d$ , where  $d > u$ , e.g.  $u = 1$  and  $d = 2$ .
  2. At each time step, the value of  $x$  goes up by  $u$  or down by  $d$ .
  3. The probability is  $\frac{1}{2}$  for a step in either direction.
  4. The mathematical formula is as follows:

$$x = \begin{cases} x + u & (\text{prob} = \frac{1}{2}), \\ x - d & (\text{prob} = \frac{1}{2}). \end{cases} \quad (5.1.1)$$

5. This is an asymmetric random walk: the up/down steps have unequal size.
  6. This random walk has a net negative or downward drift because  $d > u$ .
  7. *The more usual model is to have equal steps  $\pm 1$  and unequal probabilities for the up and down steps. We are doing something different.*
- We run a random walk simulation as follows.
    1. Measure the “time” in integer steps  $n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$
    2. Initialize  $x = k$ , where  $k > 0$  is a positive integer, so  $x = k$  at  $n = 0$ .
    3. Then at  $n = 1$  the value of  $x$  is either  $k + u$  else  $k - d$ , with equal probability.
    4. Run a loop over  $n$  and increment the value of  $x$  at each time step.
    5. Because of the downward drift, the value of  $x$  will eventually become zero or negative.
    6. **Terminate the random walk as soon as  $x \leq 0$ .**
    7. **The value of  $n$  at which this happens is called the first stopping time.**
    8. It is also known as the *first hitting time* or *first passage time*.

## 5.2 Probability distribution of first stopping time

- We construct the probability distribution of the first stopping time as follows.

1. Run a total of  $M$  random walk simulations.
2. For each random walk, record the value of  $n$  as soon as  $x \leq 0$ .
3. Construct a histogram of the values the first stopping time.
4. Normalize the histogram so that the total area equals 1.
5. Let the heights in the bins be  $h_n$ ,  $n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$
6. Then we want the sum of all the heights to equal 1:

$$\sum_n h_n = 1. \tag{5.2.2}$$

7. Then the histogram will display the probability distribution of the first stopping time.
8. Clearly, if  $M$  is large, the results will be more accurate (more samples).

- Begin with  $M = 10^4$  or  $10^6$ , for example, for testing.
- **For the project, we want a sample size of  $M \geq 10^9$  (one billion) random walks.**
- This is a large sample, hence the computations should be run in parallel.
- It is your responsibility to write a simulation algorithm for each random walk.
- It is your responsibility to manage the parallel processing and compute the histogram.

### 5.3 Histogram

- **The histogram should be written to file.**
- **Use the file name “`histogram.txt`” for the histogram output file.**
  1. The data in the file should consist of two columns  $n$  and  $h_n$ .
  2. Let  $n_{\max}$  be the largest value of  $n$  of the program output.
  3. Then the output file should contain  $n_{\max}$  rows, from  $n = 1$  to  $n = n_{\max}$ .
  4. **If a bin is empty, then print  $h_n = 0$  for that bin.**
  5. Obviously the bins will be empty for  $1 \leq n < k/2$ .
  6. The output file will be uploaded to Excel (for example).
  7. The histogram will be charted using Excel, or some other graphing tool.
- An example output (a graph rather than a histogram) is displayed in Fig. 1, for  $k = 100$ ,  $u = 1$ ,  $d = 2$  and a sample size of  $M = 10^7$ .
- Despite appearances, it is actually one probability distribution, it contains two subsets.

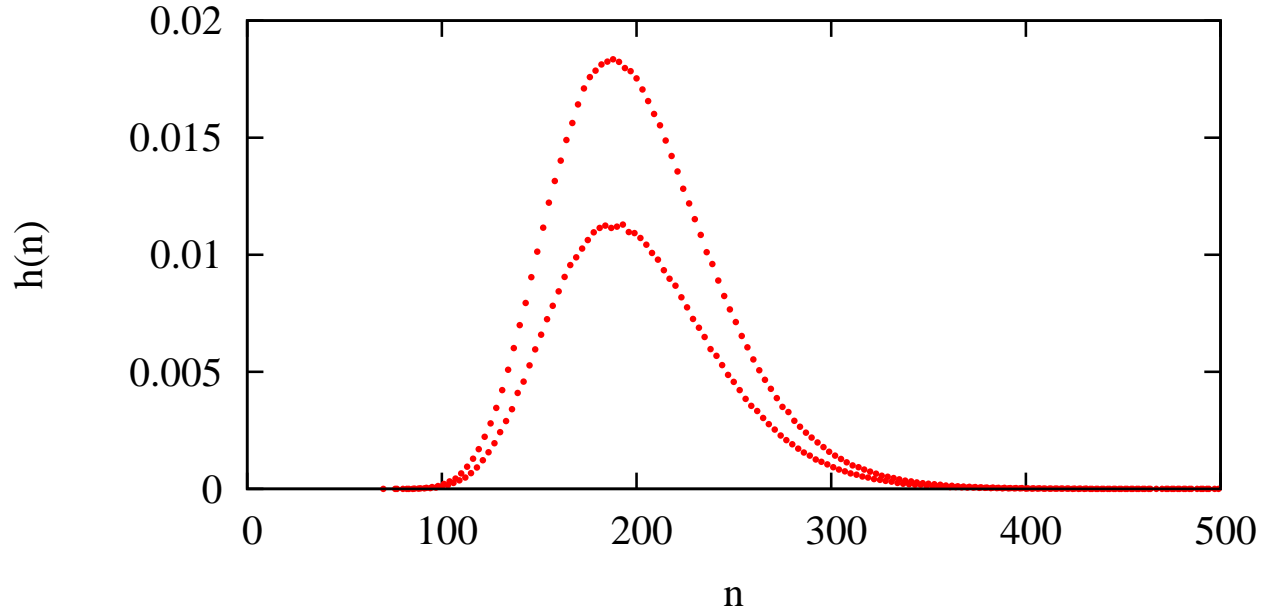


Figure 1: Graph of probability distribution of first stopping times for  $k = 100$ ,  $u = 1$ ,  $d = 2$  and  $M = 10^7$ .

## 5.4 Mean and variance

- *This should be easy.*
- Write a (different) program to read the histogram file.
- The program should compute the mean and variance as follows.
- The mean  $\mu$  is given by the following formula:

$$\mu = \sum_{n=1}^{n_{\max}} n h_n . \quad (5.4.3)$$

- The variance  $\sigma^2$  is given by the following formula:

$$\sigma^2 = \left( \sum_{n=1}^{n_{\max}} n^2 h_n \right) - \mu^2 . \quad (5.4.4)$$

- If you do your work correctly, you should find that for large  $k$  (and fixed values of  $u$  and  $d$ )

$$\mu = O(k) , \quad \sigma^2 = O(k) . \quad (5.4.5)$$

- In other words, the standard deviation  $\sigma$  is of order  $O(\sqrt{k})$ .
- Graphs of  $\mu$  and  $\sigma^2$  are plotted in Figs. 2 and 3, respectively. Straight line fits to the data are also plotted.
- To obtain the above results you will have to run multiple simulations and obtain histograms for several values of  $k$ .
- **It is therefore essential to optimize the running time of your simulation program.**

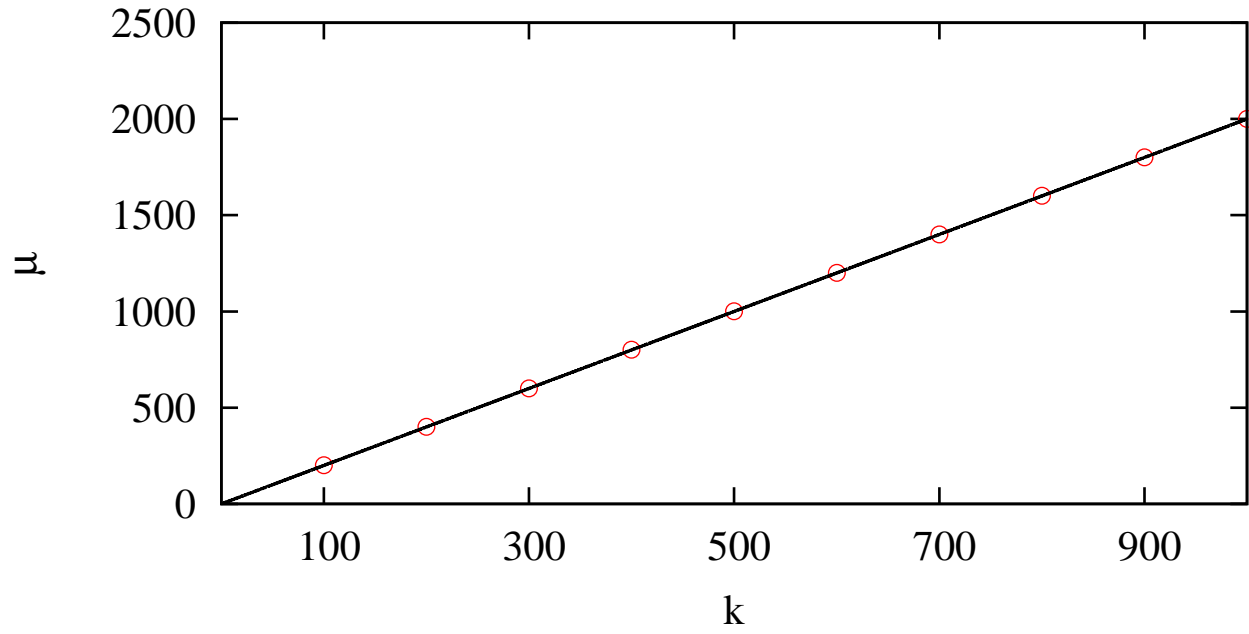


Figure 2: Graph of the mean  $\mu$  of the first stopping time vs.  $k$ , for  $u = 1$  and  $d = 2$ . The straight line is  $\mu = 2k$ .

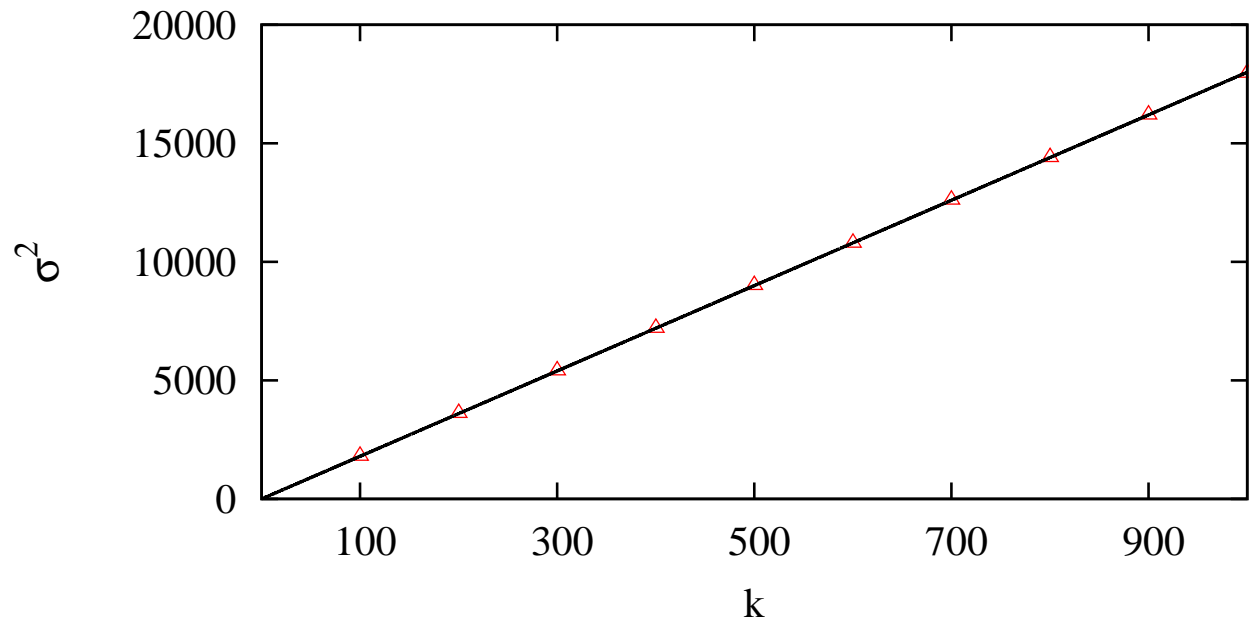


Figure 3: Graph of the variance  $\sigma^2$  of the first stopping time vs.  $k$ , for  $u = 1$  and  $d = 2$ . The straight line is  $\sigma^2 = 18k$ .

## 5.5 Project report

- Your project zip archive must contain all your program source code.
  1. Program for random walk simulations and parallel processing.
  2. Program to calculate the mean and variance.
- Your project report must contain a description of your program architecture.  
It is your responsibility to explain the architecture clearly.
- Your project report must contain screenshots of relevant output.  
It is your responsibility how to offer a clear and comprehensive set of graphs.