Least Angle Regression, Forward Stagewise and the Lasso

Background

- The topic in this section is linear regression
- But the motivation comes from the area of flexible function fitting: "Boosting"— Freund & Schapire (1995)

Least Squares Boosting

Friedman, Hastie & Tibshirani — see *Elements of Statistical Learning (chapter 10)*

Supervised learning: Response y, predictors $x = (x_1, x_2 \ldots x_p)$.

1. Start with function $F(x) = 0$ and residual $r = y$
2. Fit a CART regression tree to r giving $f(x)$
3. Set $F(x) \leftarrow F(x) + \epsilon f(x)$, $r \leftarrow r - \epsilon f(x)$ and repeat step 2 many times

Least Squares Boosting

Linear Regression

Here is a version of least squares boosting for multiple linear regression: (assume predictors are standardized)

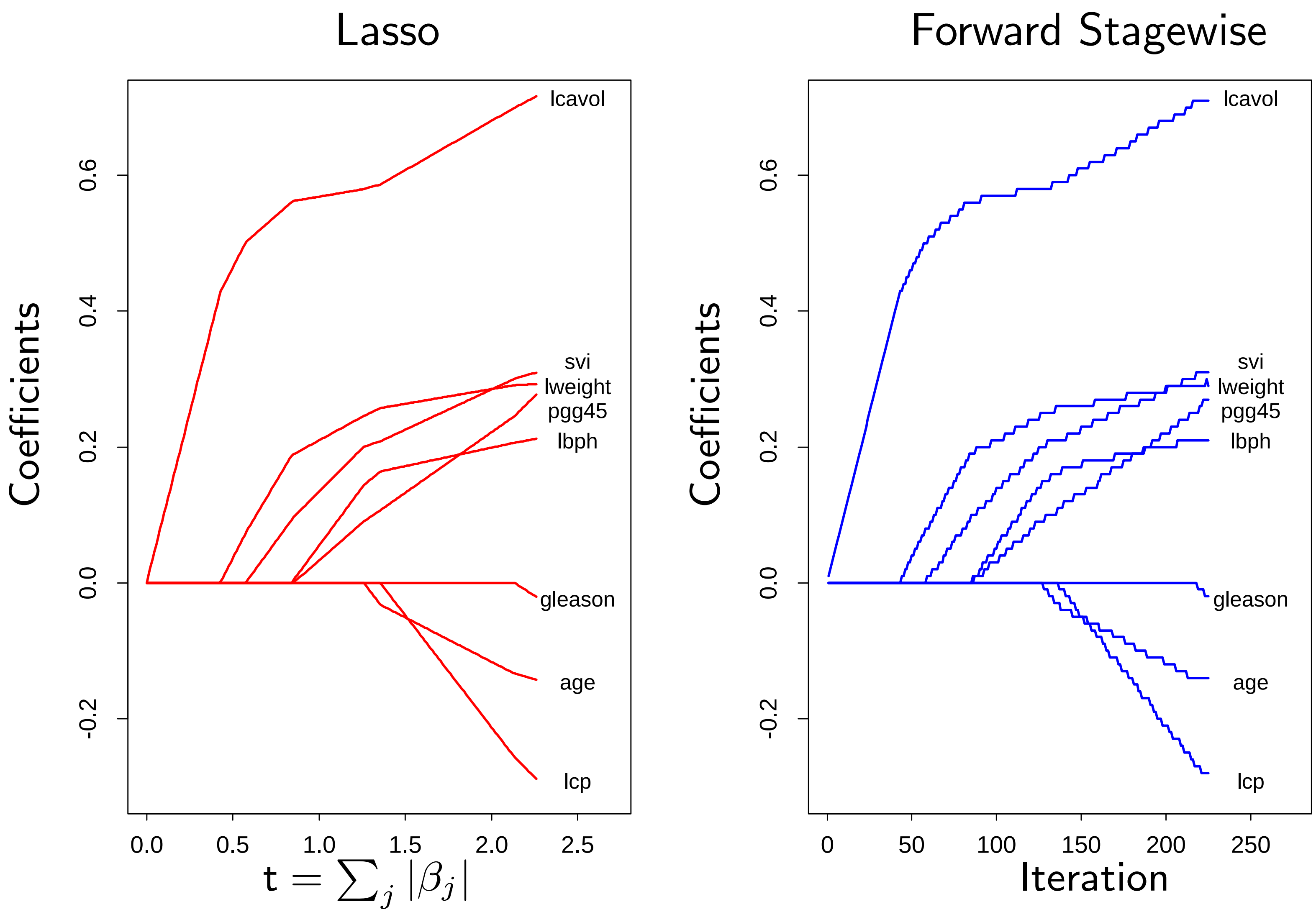
(Incremental) Forward Stagewise

1. Start with $r = y$, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \ldots \beta_p = 0$.
2. Find the predictor x_j most correlated with r
3. Update $\beta_j \leftarrow \beta_j + \delta_j$, where $\delta_j = \epsilon \cdot \text{sign}\langle r, x_j \rangle$
4. Set $r \leftarrow r - \delta_j \cdot x_j$ and repeat steps 2 and 3 many times

$\delta_j = \langle r, x_j \rangle$ gives usual forward stagewise; different from forward stepwise

Analogous to least squares boosting, with *trees=predictors*

Prostate Cancer Data



Linear regression via the Lasso (Tibshirani, 1995)

- Assume $\bar{y} = 0$, $\bar{x}_j = 0$, $\mathrm{Var}(x_j) = 1$ for all j.
- Minimize $\sum_i (y_i - \sum_j x_{ij}\beta_j)^2$ subject to $\sum_j |\beta_j| \leq s$
- With orthogonal predictors, solutions are soft thresholded version of least squares coefficients:

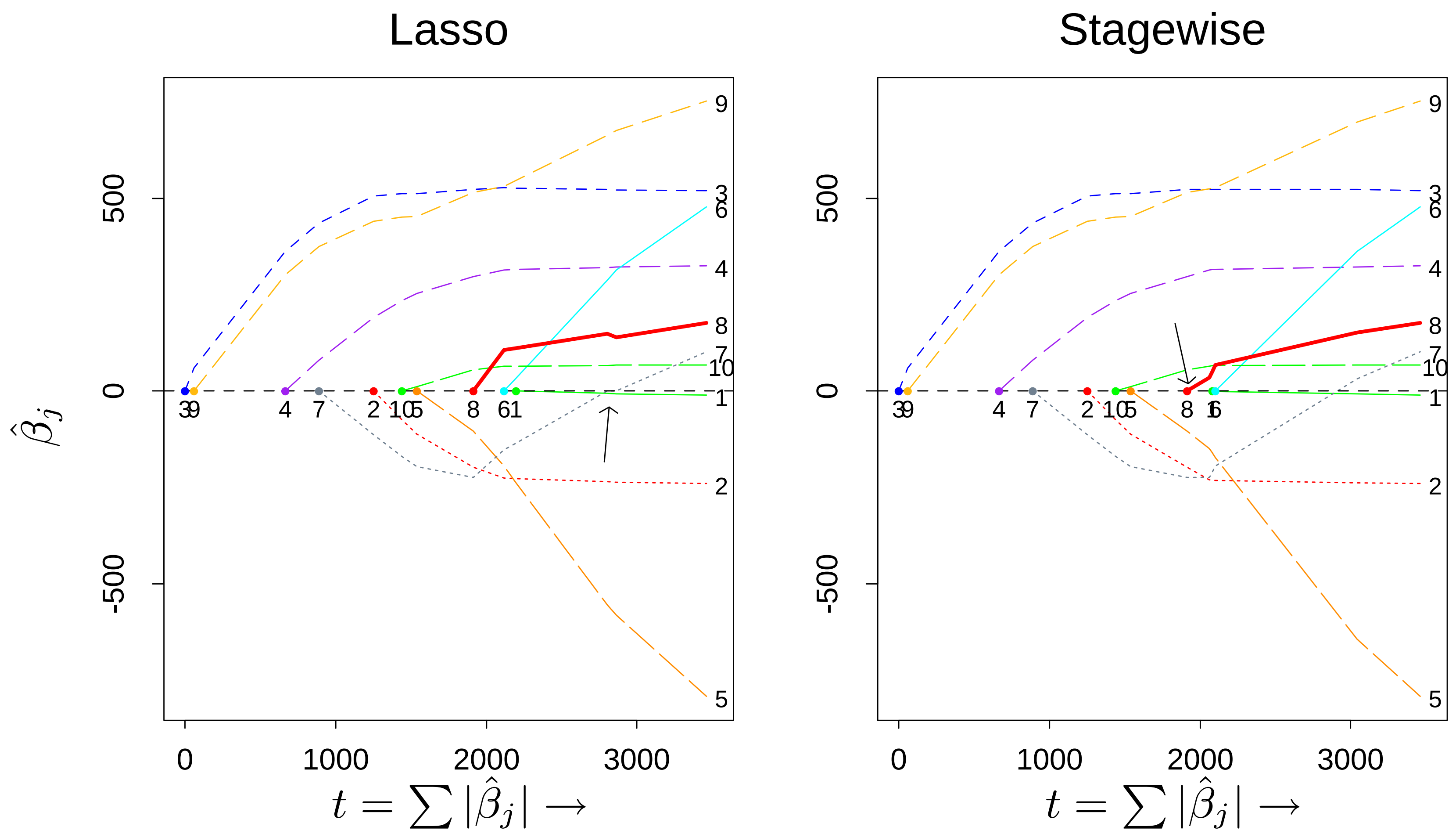
$$\mathrm{sign}(\hat{\beta}_j)(|\hat{\beta}_j| - \gamma)_+$$

  (γ is a function of s)
- For small values of the bound s, Lasso does variable selection. See pictures

More on Lasso

- Implementations use quadratic programming to compute solutions
- Can be applied when $p > n$. In that case, number of non-zero coefficients is at most $n - 1$ (by convex duality)
- interesting consequences for applications, eg microarray data

Diabetes Data



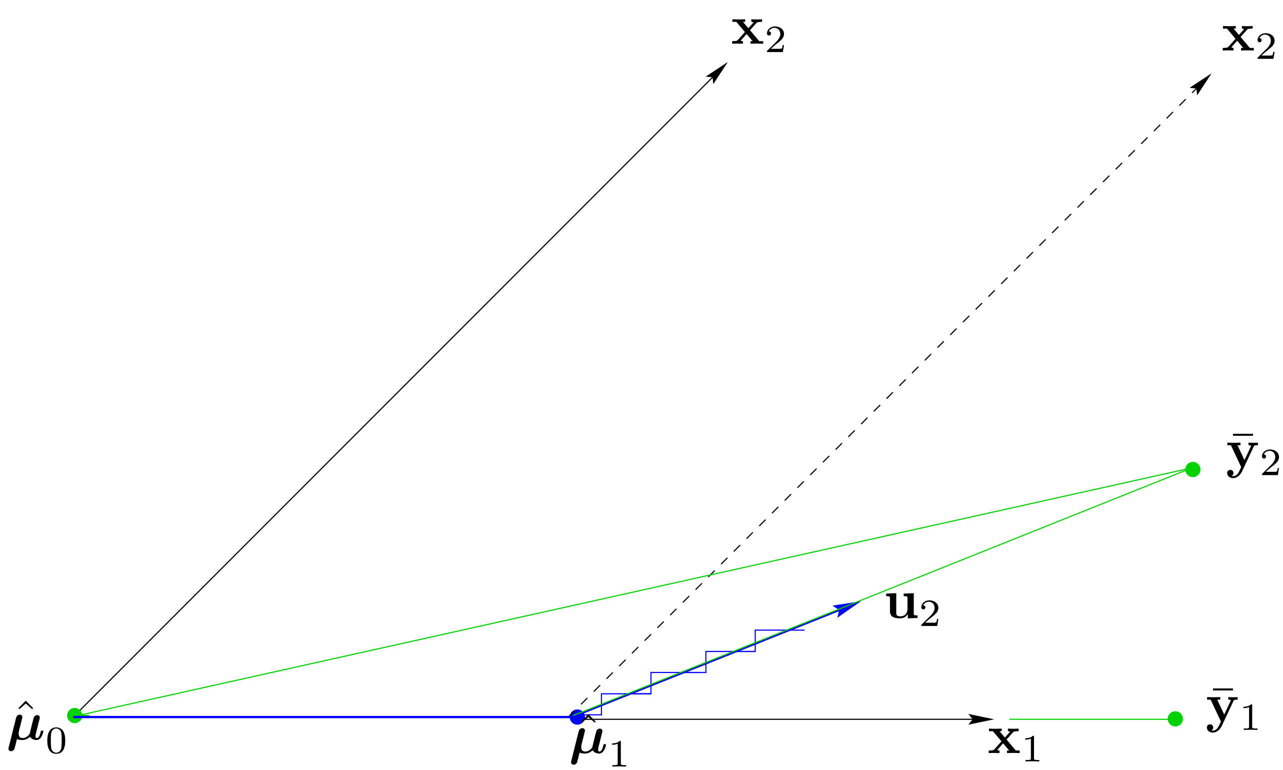
Why are Forward Stagewise and Lasso so similar?

- Are they identical?
- In orthogonal predictor case: *yes*
- In hard to verify case of *monotone* coefficient paths: *yes*
- In general, almost!
- Least angle regression (LAR) provides answers to these questions, and an efficient way to compute the complete Lasso sequence of solutions.

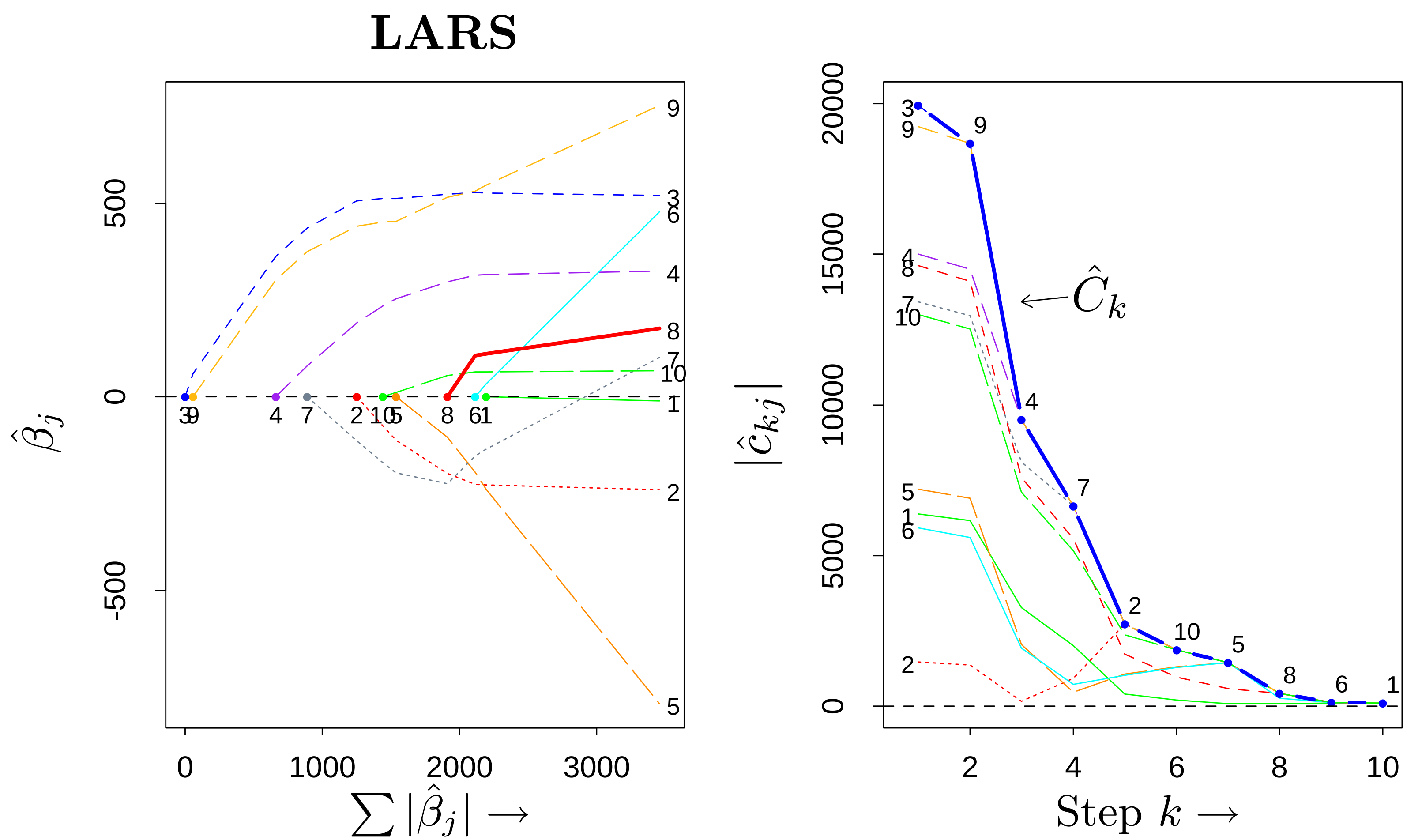
Least Angle Regression — LAR

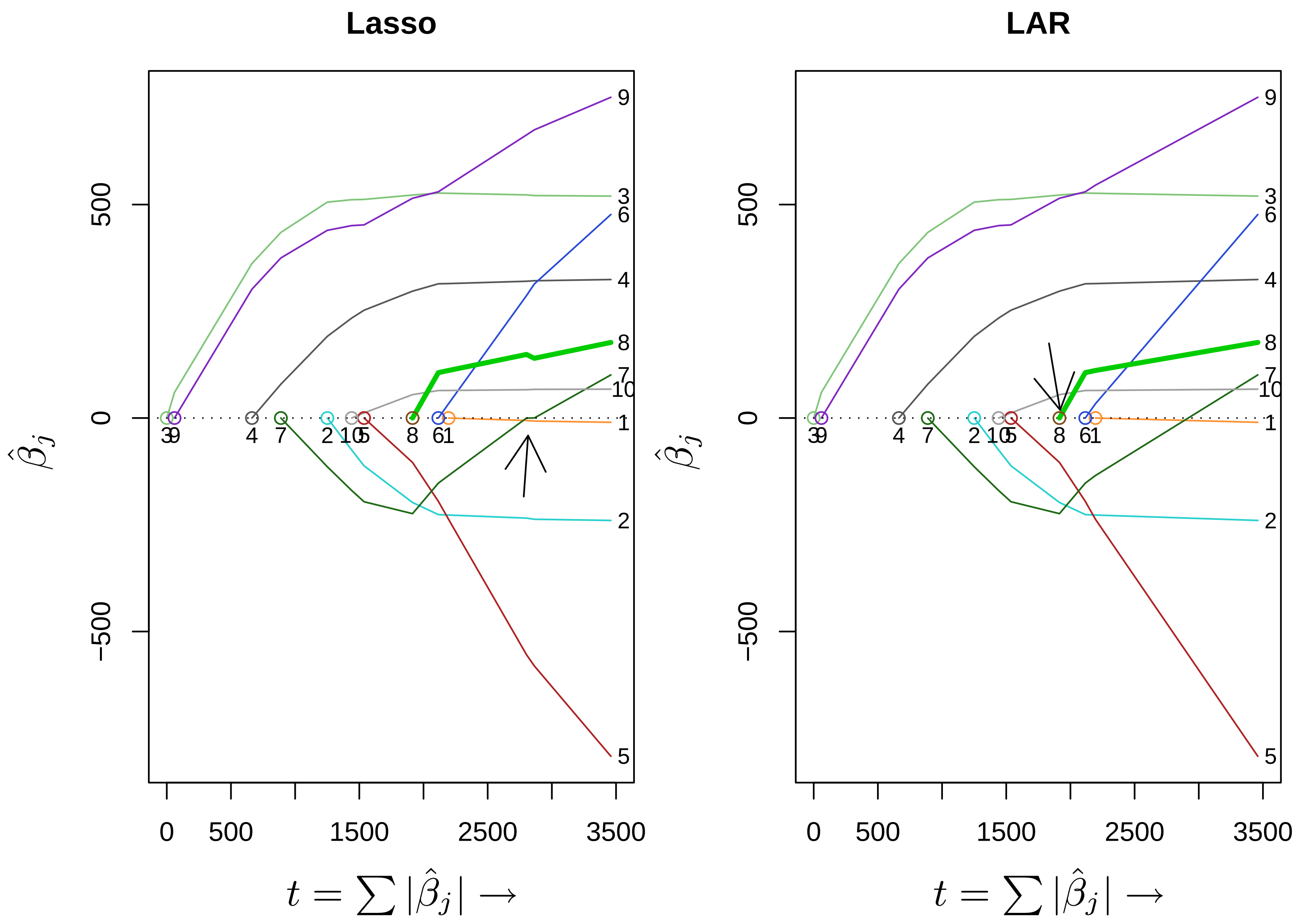
Like a "more democratic" version of forward stepwise regression.

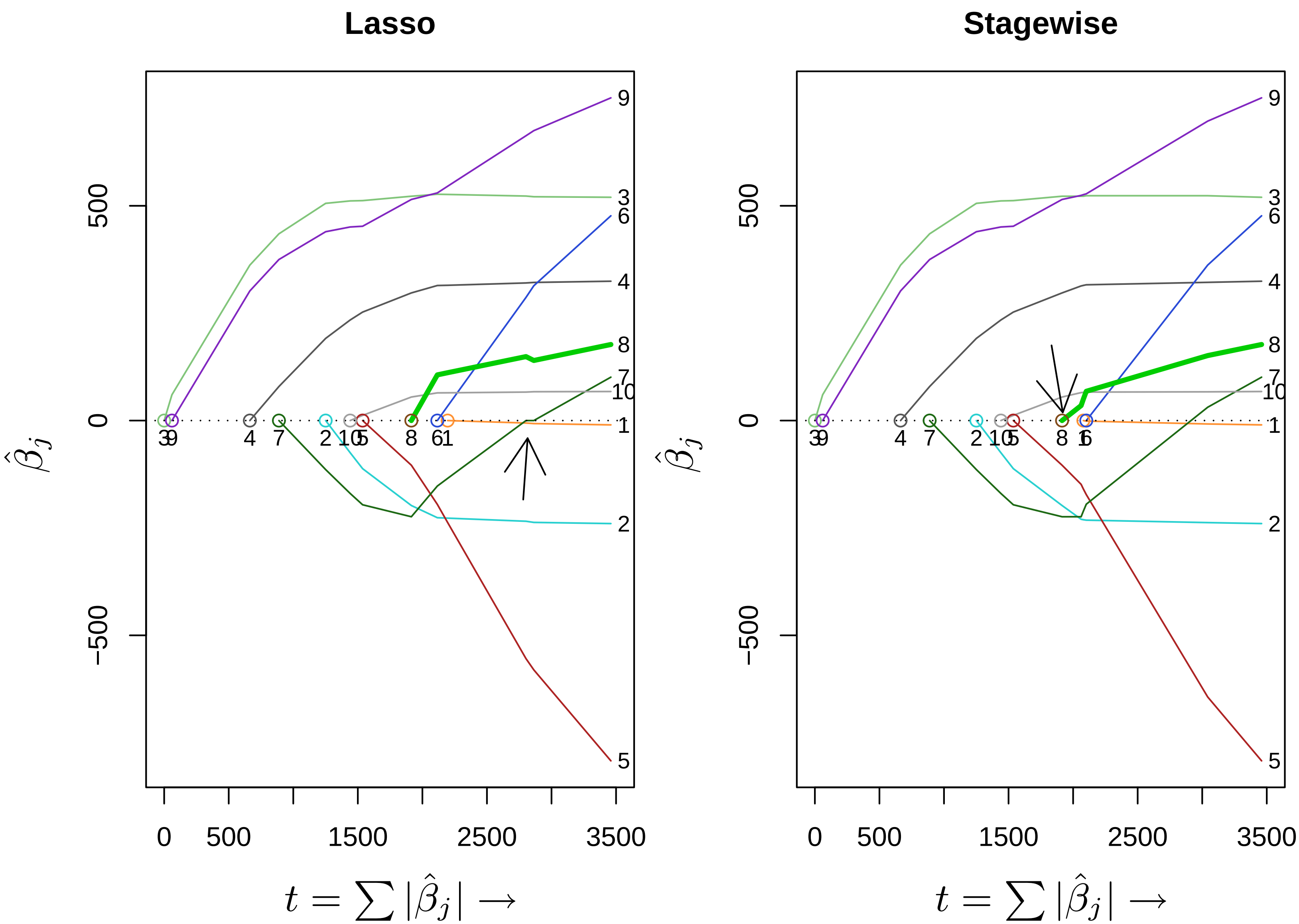
1. Start with $r = y$, $\hat{\beta}_1, \hat{\beta}_2, \ldots \hat{\beta}_p = 0$. Assume x_j standardized.
2. Find predictor x_j most correlated with r.
3. Increase β_j in the direction of $\text{sign}(\text{corr}(r, x_j))$ until some other competitor x_k has as much correlation with current residual as does x_j.
4. Move $(\hat{\beta}_j, \hat{\beta}_k)$ in the joint least squares direction for (x_j, x_k) until some other competitor x_ℓ has as much correlation with the current residual
5. Continue in this way until all predictors have been entered. Stop when $\text{corr}(r, x_j) = 0 \; \forall \; j$, i.e. OLS solution.



The LAR direction $\mathbf{u}_2$ at step 2 makes an equal angle with $\mathbf{x}_1$ and $\mathbf{x}_2$.


LARS
$\hat{\beta}_j$
500
0
-500
0
1000
2000
3000
$\sum |\hat{\beta}_j| \rightarrow$
9
3
6
4
8
7
10
1
2
5
$|\hat{c}_{kj}|$
20000
15000
10000
5000
0
2
4
6
8
10
Step $k \rightarrow$
$\hat{C}_k$


Lasso
LAR
500
0
−500
$\hat{\beta}_j$
0 500 1500 2500 3500
$t = \sum |\hat{\beta}_j| \rightarrow$
9
3
6
4
8
7
10
1
2
5


Lasso
Stagewise
$\hat{\beta}_j$
$t = \sum |\hat{\beta}_j| \rightarrow$
500
0
−500
0
500
1500
2500
3500
9
3
6
4
8
7
10
1
2
5
3
9
4
7
2
10
5
8
6
1

Relationship between the 3 algorithms

- Lasso and forward stagewise can be thought of as restricted versions of LAR
- *For Lasso*: Start with LAR. If a coefficient crosses zero, stop. Drop that predictor, recompute the best direction and continue. This gives the Lasso path

Proof (lengthy): use Karush-Kuhn-Tucker theory of convex optimization. Informally:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial}{\partial \beta_j}\{||\mathbf{y}-\mathbf{X}\beta||^2 &+ \lambda \sum_j |\beta_j|\} = 0 \\ &\Leftrightarrow \\ \langle \mathbf{x}_j, \mathbf{r}\rangle &= \frac{\lambda}{2}\text{sign}(\hat{\beta}_j) \quad \text{if } \hat{\beta}_j \neq 0 \text{ (active)} \end{aligned}$$

- *For forward stagewise:* Start with LAR. Compute best (equal angular) direction at each stage. If direction for any predictor j doesn't agree in sign with $\mathrm{corr}(r, x_j)$, project direction into the "positive cone" and use the projected direction instead.
- in other words, forward stagewise always moves each predictor in the direction of $\mathrm{corr}(r, x_j)$.
- The incremental forward stagewise procedure approximates these steps, one predictor at a time. As step size $\epsilon \to 0$, can show that it coincides with this modified version of LAR

Summary

- LARS—uses least squares directions in the active set of variables.
- Lasso—uses least square directions; if a variable crosses zero, it is removed from the active set.
- Forward stagewise—uses non-negative least squares directions in the active set.

Benefits

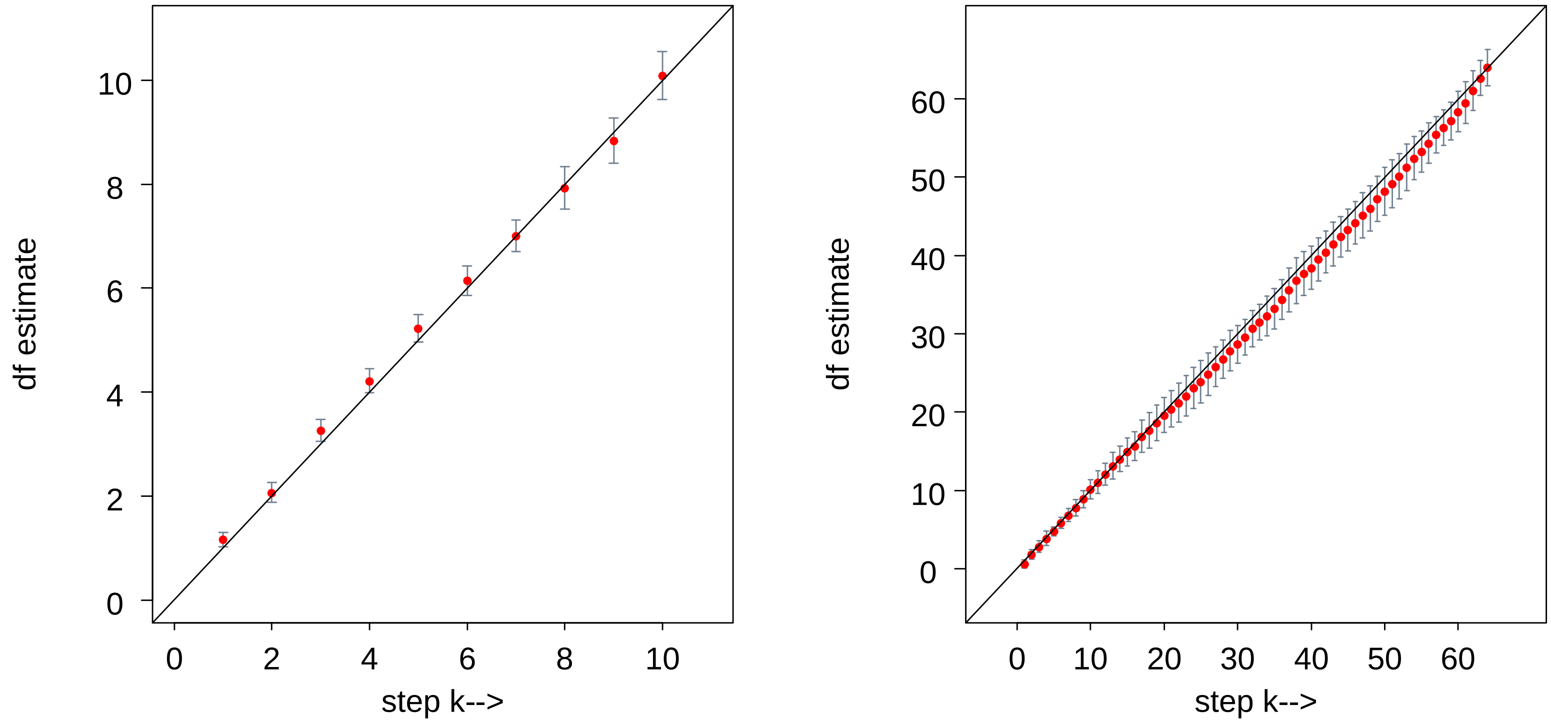
- Possible explanation of the benefit of "slow learning" in boosting: it is approximately fitting via an L_1 (lasso) penalty
- new algorithm computes entire Lasso path in same order of computation as one full least squares fit. Splus/R Software on Hastie's website:

  `www-stat.stanford.edu/~hastie/Papers#LARS`
- Degrees of freedom formula for LAR:

  After k steps, degrees of freedom of fit $= k$ (with some regularity conditions)
- For Lasso, the procedure often takes $> p$ steps, since predictors can drop out. Corresponding formula (conjecture):

  Degrees of freedom for last model in sequence with k predictors is equal to k.

Degrees of freedom



Degree of Freedom result

$$\mathrm{df}(\hat{\mu}) \equiv \sum_{i=1}^{n} \mathrm{cov}(\hat{\mu}_i, y_i)/\sigma^2 = k$$

Proof is based on is an application of Stein's unbiased risk estimate (SURE). Suppose that $g : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^n$ is almost differentiable and set $\nabla \cdot g = \sum_{i=1}^n \partial g_i/\partial x_i$. If $\mathbf{y} \sim N_n(\mu, \sigma^2 \mathbf{I})$, then Stein's formula states that

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} \mathrm{cov}(g_i, y_i)/\sigma^2 = E[\nabla \cdot g(\mathbf{y})].$$

LHS is degrees of freedom. Set $g(\cdot)$ equal to the LAR estimate. In orthogonal case, $\partial g_i/\partial x_i$ is 1 if predictor is in model, 0 otherwise. Hence RHS equals number of predictors in model ($= k$).

Non-orthogonal case is much harder.

Software for R and Splus

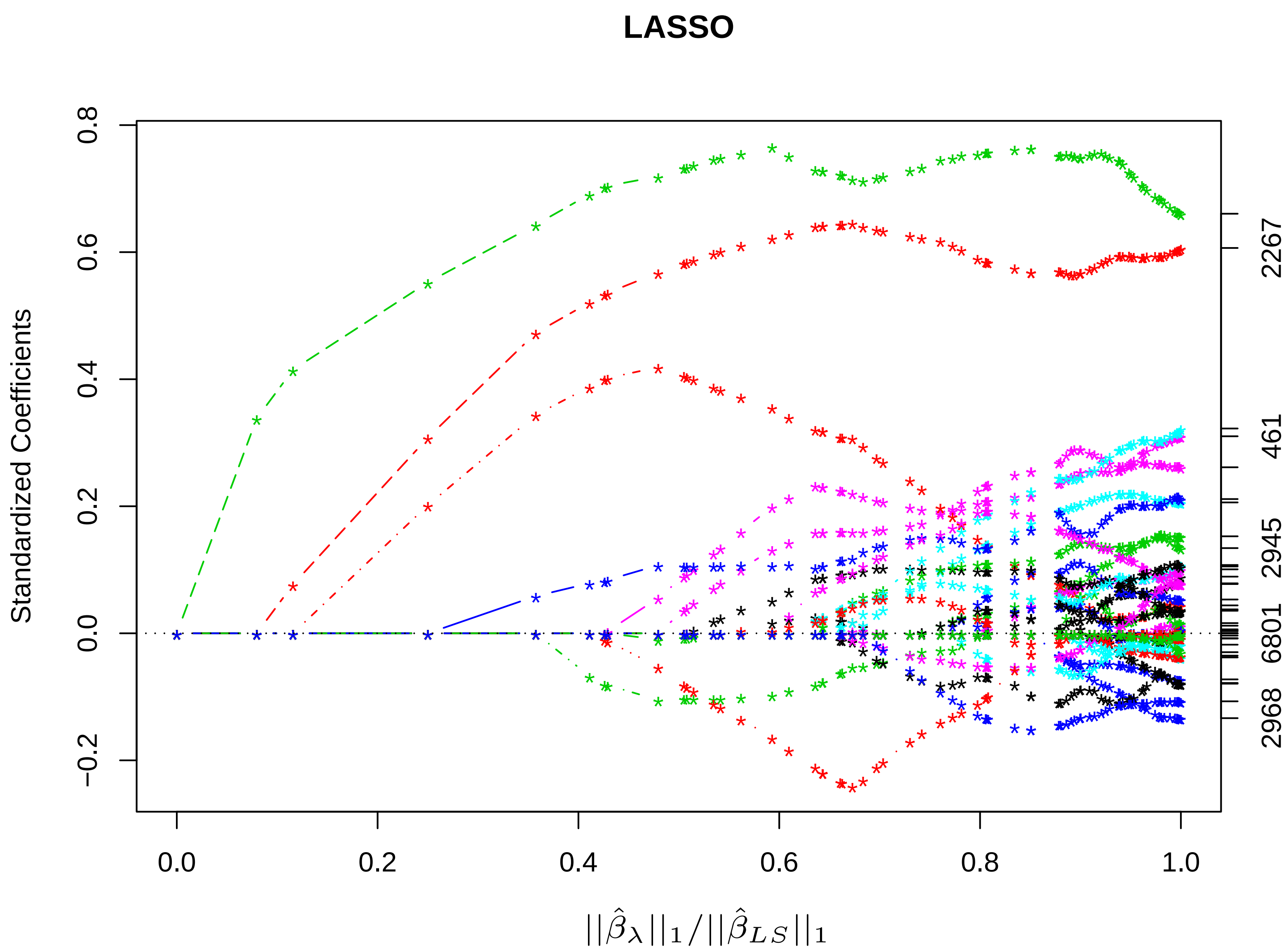
`lars()` function fits all three models: `lasso`, `lar` or `forward.stagewise`. Methods for prediction, plotting, and cross-validation. Detailed documentation provided. Visit `www-stat.stanford.edu/~hastie/Papers/#LARS`

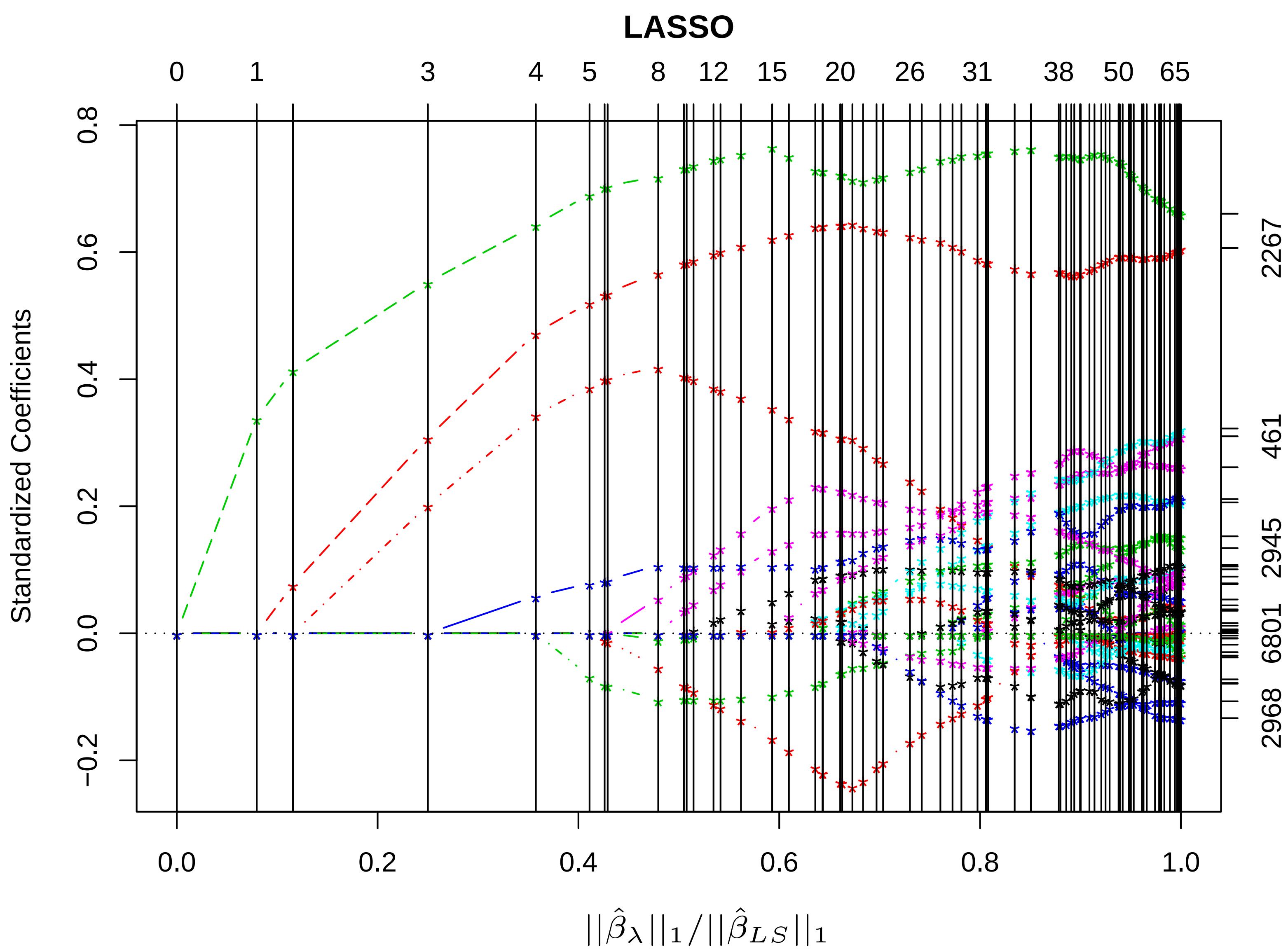
Main computations involve least squares fitting using the *active set* of variables. Computations managed by updating the Choleski R matrix (and frequent downdating for lasso and forward stagewise).

`glmpath` package (with Ph.D student MeeYoung Park) fits L_1-penalized GLM and Cox model paths.

MicroArray Example

- Expression data for 38 Leukemia patients ("Golub" data).
- X matrix with 38 samples and 7129 variables (genes)
- Response Y is dichotomous ALL (27) vs AML (11)
- LARS (lasso) took 4 seconds in R version 1.7 on a 1.8Ghz Dell workstation running Linux.
- In 70 steps, 52 variables ever non zero, at most 37 at a time.


LASSO
Standardized Coefficients
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
−0.2
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$
2267
461
2945
6801
2968


LASSO
0
1
3
4
5
8
12
15
20
26
31
38
50
65
Standardized Coefficients
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
−0.2
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
2267
461
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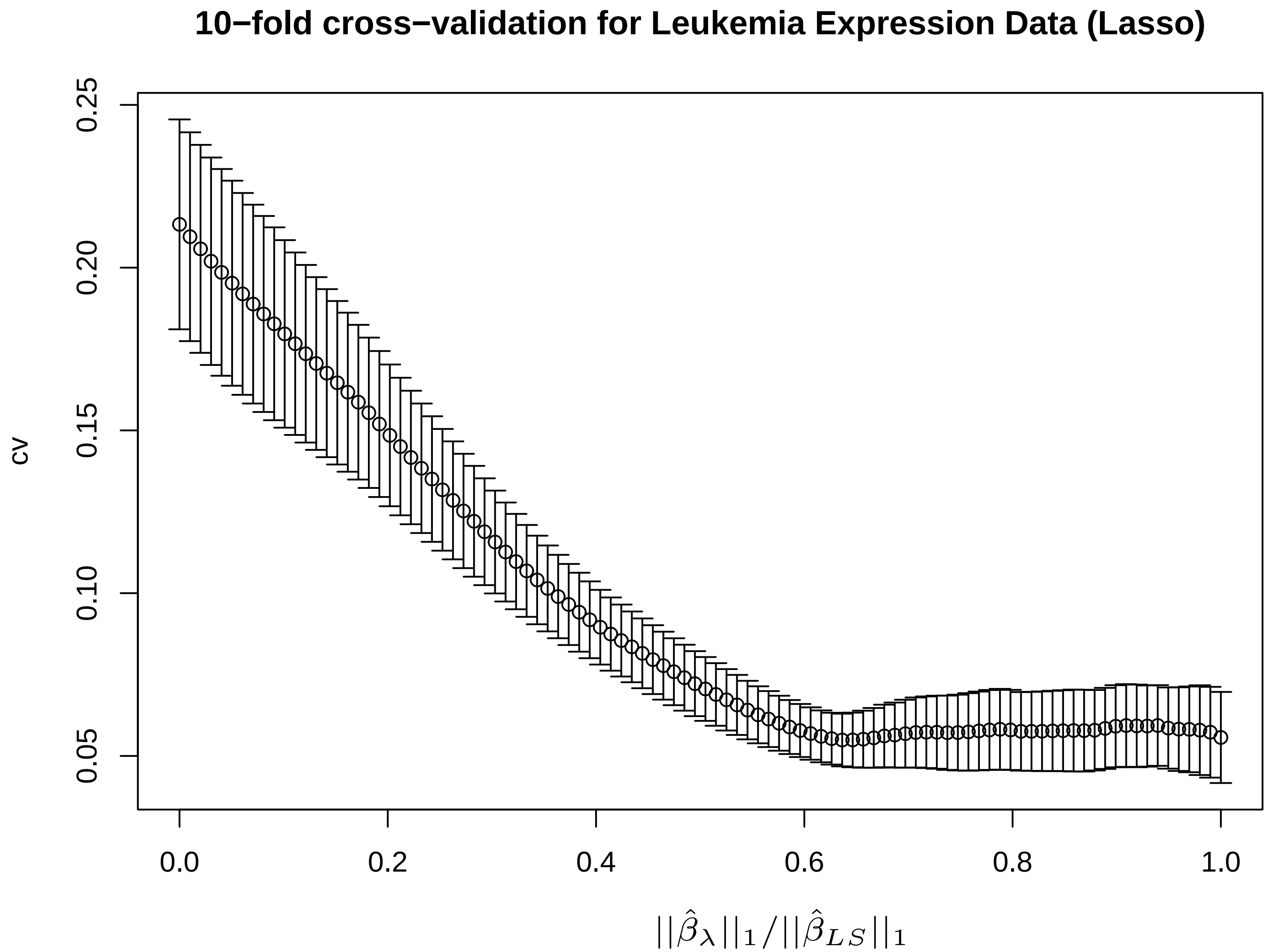
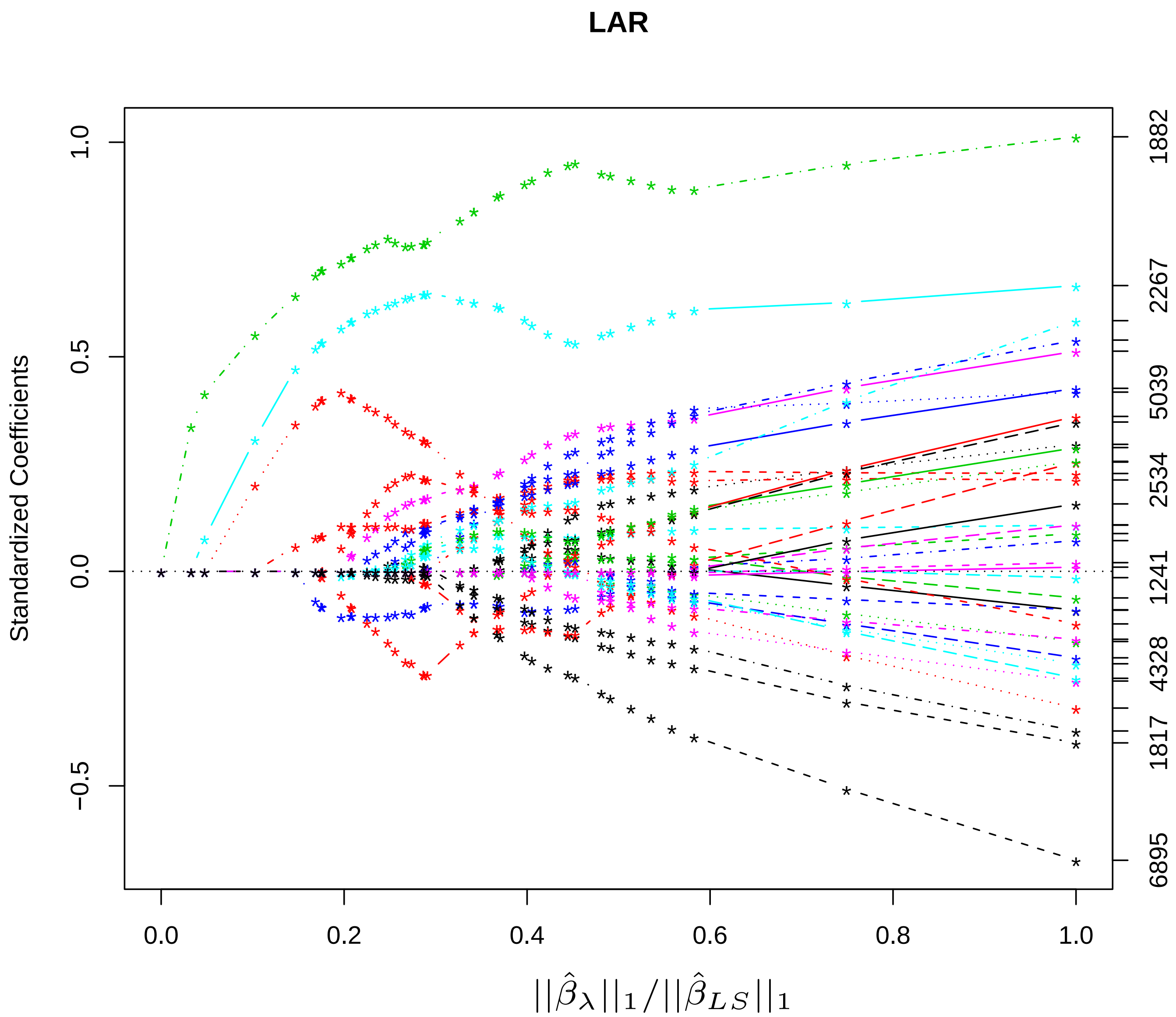
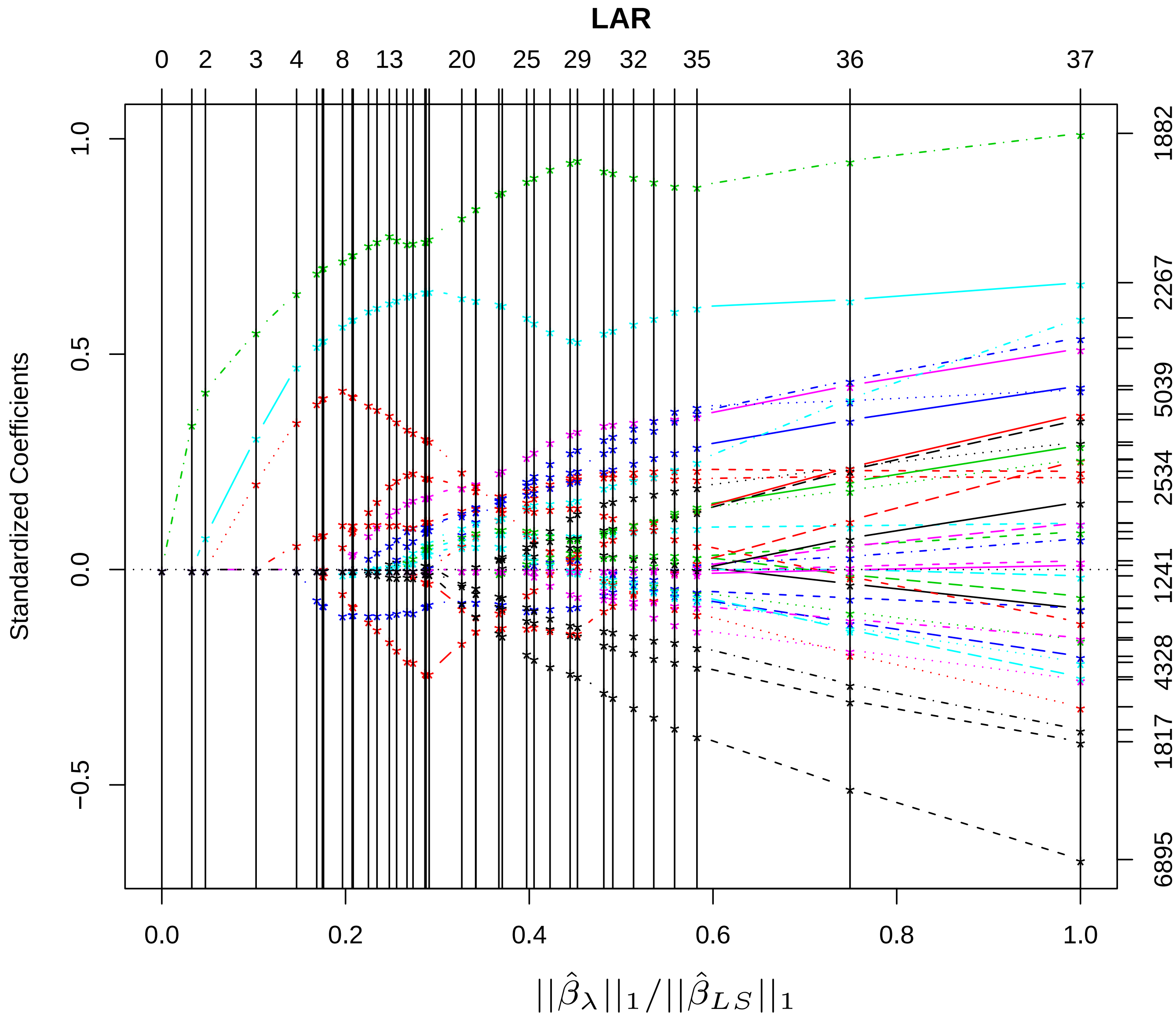
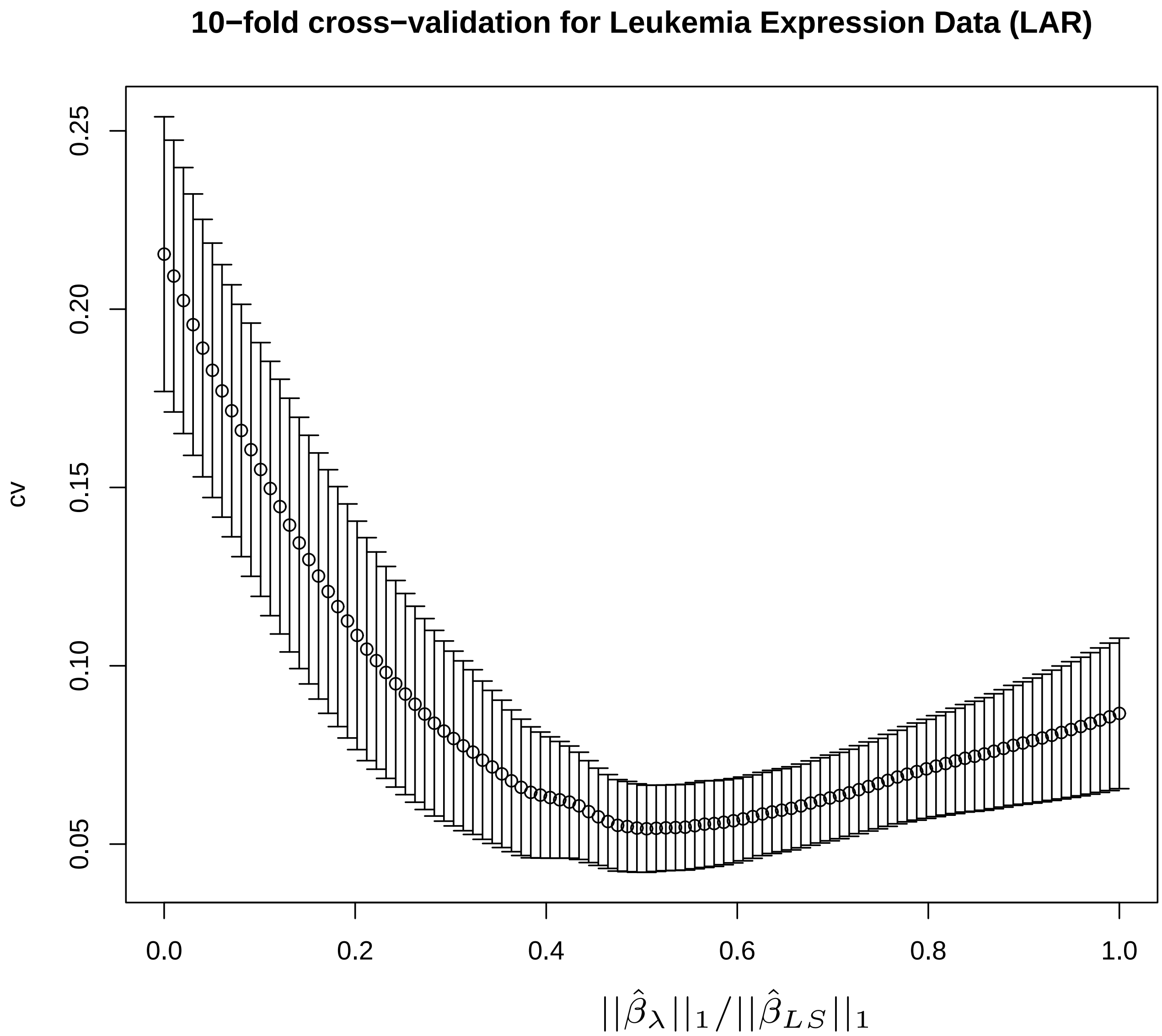
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$


10−fold cross−validation for Leukemia Expression Data (Lasso)
cv
0.05
0.10
0.15
0.20
0.25
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$


LAR
Standardized Coefficients
1.0
0.5
0.0
−0.5
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$
1882
2267
5039
2534
1241
4328
1817
6895


LAR
0
2
3
4
8
13
20
25
29
32
35
36
37
Standardized Coefficients
1.0
0.5
0.0
−0.5
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
1882
2267
5039
2534
1241
4328
1817
6895
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$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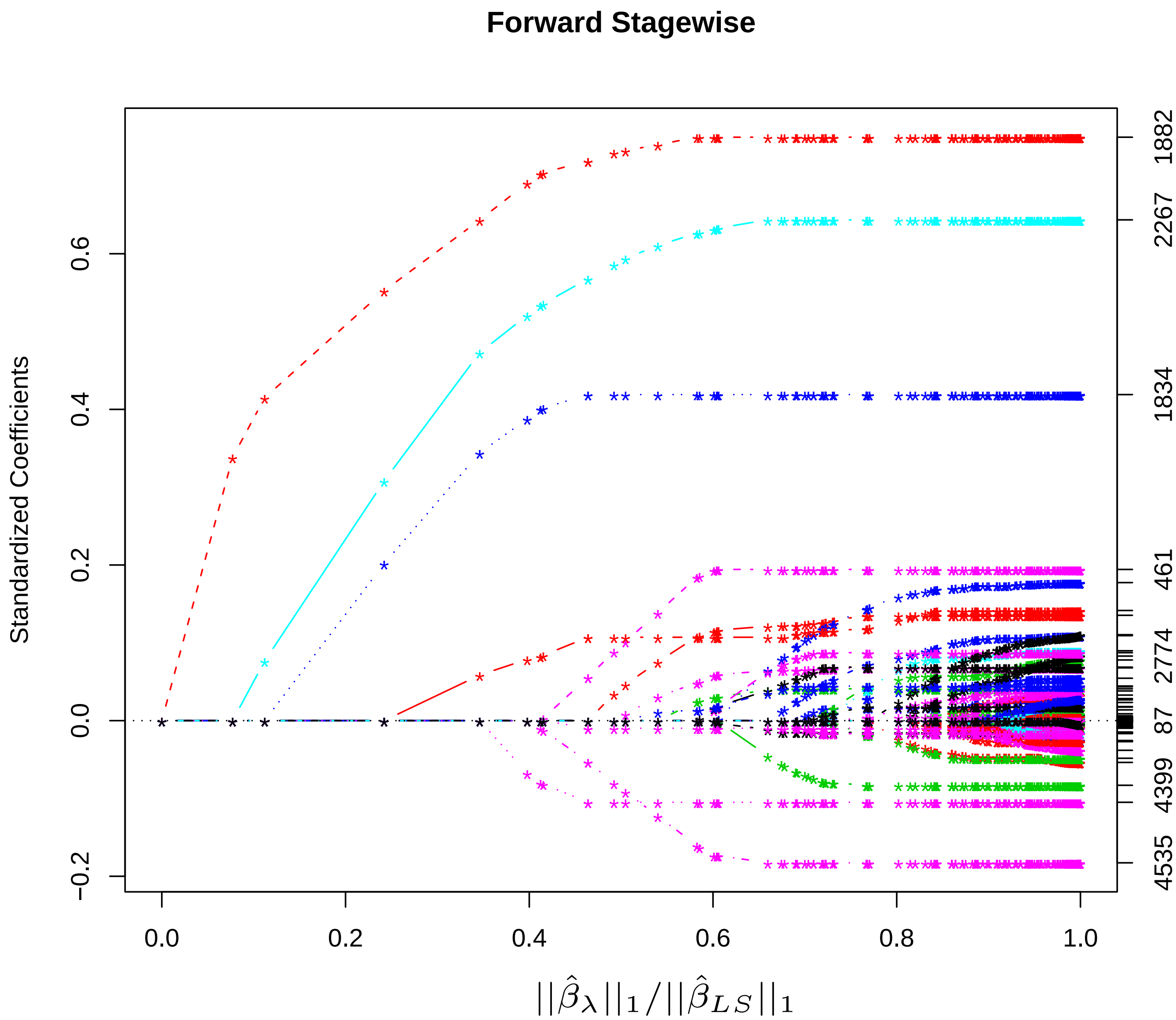
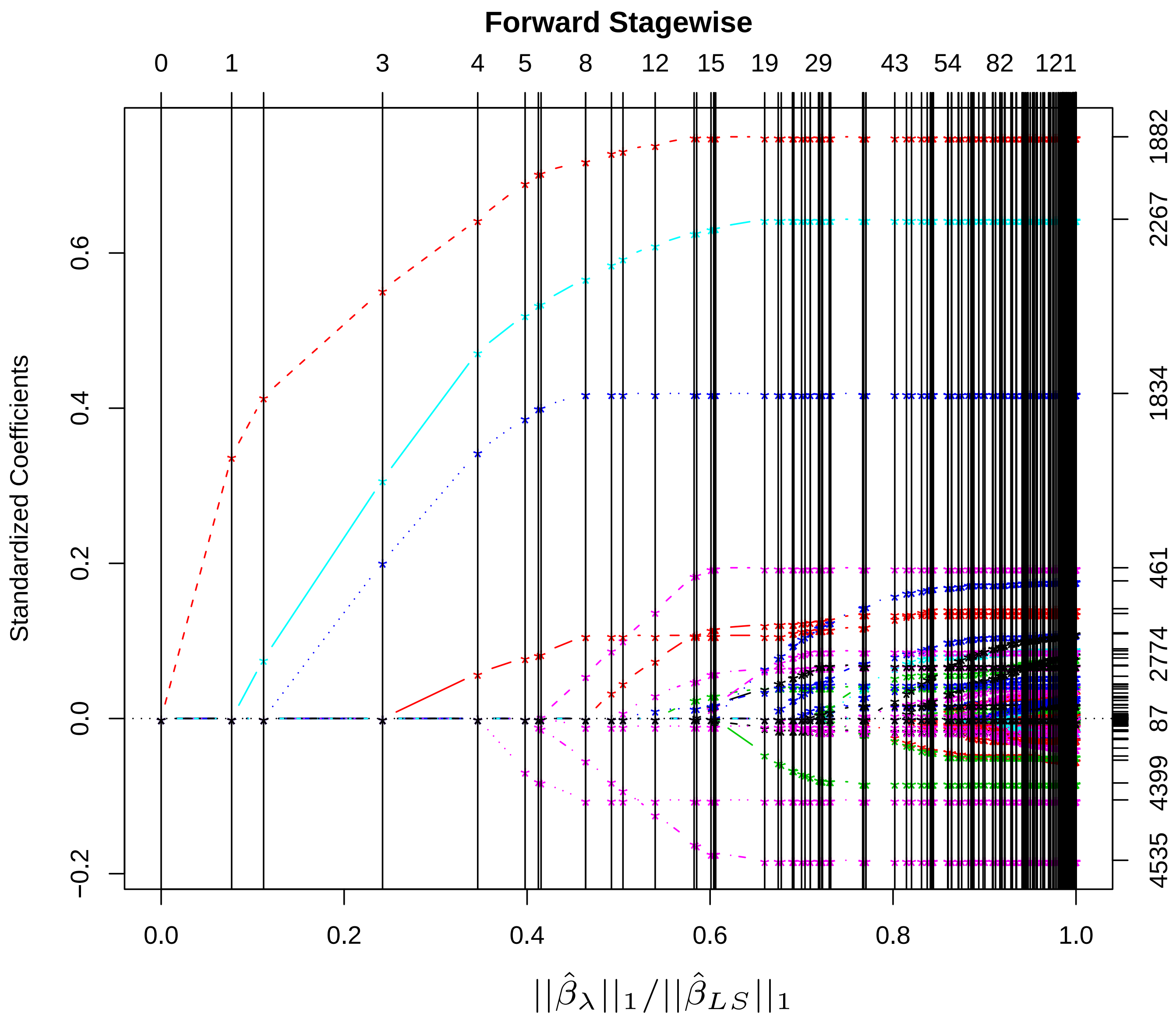
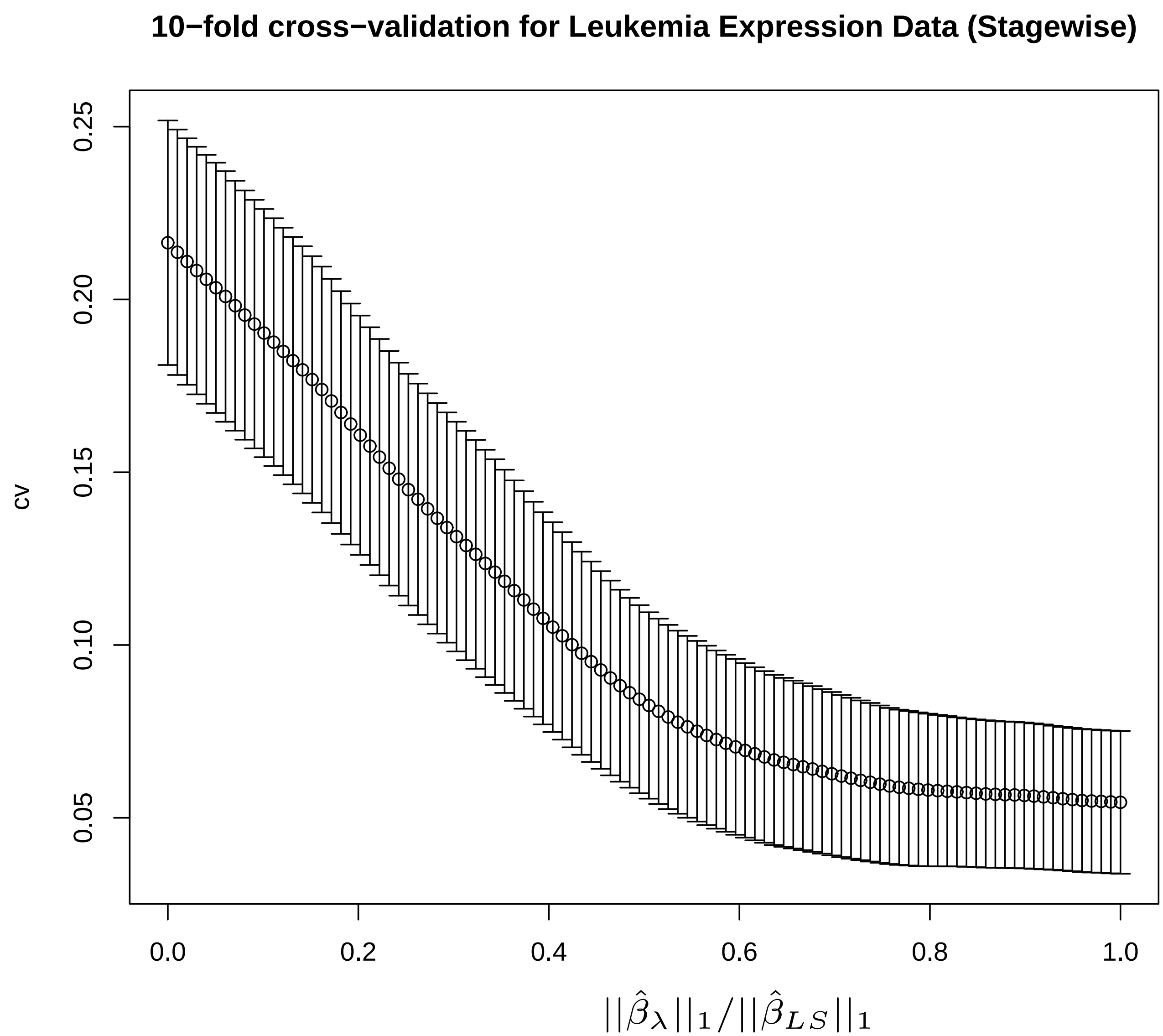
0.05
0.10
0.15
0.20
0.25
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$


Forward Stagewise
Standardized Coefficients
−0.2
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$
1882
2267
1834
461
2774
87
4399
4535


Forward Stagewise
0
1
3
4
5
8
12
15
19
29
43
54
82
121
Standardized Coefficients
−0.2
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
1882
2267
1834
461
2774
87
4399
4535
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$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0.05
0.10
0.15
0.20
0.25
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
$||\hat{\beta}_\lambda||_1/||\hat{\beta}_{LS}||_1$

Summary

- the lasso and associated methods are potentially useful for wide ($p > N$) data
- in a series of papers in 2004, Donoho (Stanford) shows that the lasso gives a good approximation to the L_0 solution (best subsets), if the true coefficient vector is sufficiently sparse.
- however- this begs the question: how good is either the L_0 or lasso when $p >> N$? Our experience is mixed.
- this is a current topic of interest

Software

- `lars` package available R and S-PLUS
- GLMSELECT in SAS