

Research Notebook - Joshua Markle

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Time Sheet

Date	Title	Time Taken
3 October 2023	Research Significance	1h
5 October 2023	The Qwerty Layout	2h 30m
6 October 2023	The Dvorak Layout	1h
9 October 2023	The Colemak Layout	30m
14 October 2023	Bash Scripting Keyboard Switch	3h
15 October 2023	Physical Keyboard Features	1h 20m
22 October 2023	Generic Physical Keyboards	1h 30m
2 November 2023	Split Keyboards	45m
3 November 2023	Ortholinear Keyboards	30m
12 November 2023	Curved Keyboards	30m

Date	Title	Time Taken
17 November 2023	General Keyboard Layers	1h
21 November 2023	Symbol Layers	2h
30 November 2023	Misc Keyboard Layers	30m
7 December 2023	Genetic Algorithm Experimentation	30m
8 December 2023	Genetic & Evolutionary Algorithms	2h
9 December 2023	Setting Up Environment	2h 30m
11 December 2023	Parameterizing Training Data	1h 45m
2 January 2023	Quantifying A Keyboard	30m
4 January 2023	Finding Datasets	1h 30m
5 January 2023	Building A Minimum Working Product	3h
9 January 2023	Professionalizing The Project	6h 30m
10 January 2023	Adding Key Efforts Into The Calculation	30m
Total		34h 20m

Title: Research Significance

Date: 3 October 2023

Objective: To explore the significance of keyboard layout research in modern computing and ergonomics.

Keyboard layouts, a fundamental aspect of our daily interaction with technology, plays an important role in determining typing efficiency, comfort, and overall user experience. Historically, the Qwerty layout has dominated keyboards since its creation in the late 19th century, primarily designed to prevent typewriter jams rather than to optimize typing speed or comfort. But it is important to know, how do different keyboard layouts impact typing efficiency, and is there room for improvement?

This research has direct implications on user productivity and ergonomic health. Typing is an almost universal activity in professional and personal settings, and even small improvements in efficiency or reductions in discomfort can have substantial effects. Understanding the mechanics and ergonomics of keyboard layouts can lead to innovations in keyboard design, potentially revolutionizing how we interact with computers.

Recent studies have shown that alternative layouts like Dvorak, Colemak, and Workman offer various benefits over Qwerty, such as reduced finger travel distance and more balanced usage of both hands. However, these benefits are often

hidden by the widespread familiarity and standardization of the Qwerty layout.

The significance of researching keyboard layouts lies not only in enhancing typing efficiency and ergonomics but also in adapting to evolving technologies and user needs. Understanding the strengths and limitations of current layouts sets the foundation for developing more advanced and user-friendly input methods in the future. This research journey begins with dissecting the characteristics of a keyboard, which will be the focus of our next entry.

Keyboard Layouts and Alternatives

This section is dedicated toward looking at example keyboard layouts to get a better grasp on the type of optimizations that can be made with these layouts.

Title: The Qwerty Layout

Date: 5 October 2023

Objective: To explore the historical background of the Qwerty layout and understand the pros and cons.

Most computers today have been standardized with the Qwerty layout. The layout was designed in the 1870s and was invented by Christopher Latham Sholes. It was specifically designed for typewriters but has now been adopted onto many modern mechanical keyboards. The arrangement of keys was made to prevent jams by separating commonly used letter pairs, ensuring that the typewriter's mechanical arms wouldn't collide and stick together during fast typing.

As more people used Qwerty keyboards, the more necessary it became for others to learn and use the same layout to ensure compatibility in a professional environment. This effect is further amplified by the global nature of technology and communication, wherein a universally recognized standard becomes more convenient and practical.

Critics of Qwerty often point out its inefficiencies, such as increased finger travel and potential for strain, arguing that alternative layouts could offer ergonomic benefits and increased typing speed. However, despite these arguments, the switch to alternative layouts has been slow, primarily due to the ingrained nature of QWERTY in our society and the significant investment required to shift to a new system.

Advantages of QWERTY	Disadvantages of QWERTY
<p>Widespread Familiarity: Universally recognized and used, making it a standard in education and professional settings.</p> <p>Ease of Adoption: Due to its prevalence, most people are already accustomed to it, reducing the learning curve for new users.</p> <p>Universal Compatibility: Standard in most software and hardware, ensuring seamless interaction across various devices and platforms.</p> <p>High Availability: All keyboard manufacturers produce QWERTY keyboards, making them easily accessible.</p> <p>Network Effect: The more people use it, the more valuable it becomes as a shared method of typing, reinforcing its dominance.</p>	<p>Inefficient Key Placement: Frequent letters and letter combinations are not optimally placed, leading to increased finger movement and potential strain.</p> <p>Historical Design Limitations: Originally designed to prevent typewriter jams rather than for typing efficiency or ergonomics.</p> <p>Potential for Repetitive Strain: The layout can contribute to discomfort and repetitive strain injuries, especially in heavy users.</p> <p>Suboptimal for Non-English Languages: Not ideally suited for languages with different character frequencies compared to English.</p> <p>Resistance to Change: The entrenched nature of QWERTY makes transitioning to more efficient layouts challenging on a large scale.</p>

Title: The Dvorak Layout

Date: 6 October 2023

Objective: To evaluate the Dvorak keyboard layout by outlining its pros and cons.

The Dvorak layout, created by Dr. August Dvorak in the 1930s, was designed with the goal of increasing efficiency and reducing finger fatigue. While it offers several ergonomic and potential speed benefits, its adoption faces hurdles such as the learning curve and limited recognition.

Advantages of Dvorak Layout	Disadvantages of Dvorak Layout
<p>Reduced Finger Movement: Designed to minimize the distance fingers need to travel, potentially increasing typing speed.</p>	<p>Steep Learning Curve: Transitioning from QWERTY to Dvorak can be challenging and time-consuming, especially for proficient QWERTY typists.</p>

Advantages of Dvorak Layout	Disadvantages of Dvorak Layout
Ergonomic Efficiency: Places the most commonly used letters in the home row, reducing finger fatigue and strain.	Limited Availability: Not as readily available as QWERTY keyboards, which can be a hurdle in widespread adoption.
Balanced Hand Usage: More evenly distributes typing between both hands, reducing the load on the dominant hand.	Compatibility Issues: Some software and shortcuts are optimized for QWERTY, leading to potential inconvenience when using Dvorak.
Potential for Speed Increase: Users may experience an increase in typing speed after mastering the layout, due to its efficient design.	Initial Productivity Drop: Learning Dvorak often results in a temporary decrease in typing speed and productivity.
Reduced Risk of Repetitive Strain Injury: Ergonomic design may lower the risk of conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome.	Lack of Recognition: Not as universally recognized, which might be problematic in educational and professional environments.

Title: The Colemak Layout

Date: 9 October 2023

Objective: To analyze the Colemak keyboard layout by delineating its advantages and disadvantages in a comprehensive format.

The Colemak layout, emerging as a modern alternative to QWERTY, is engineered to enhance typing efficiency and ergonomics while retaining some familiarity with the QWERTY arrangement. Its design aims to address the inefficiencies of QWERTY while easing the transition process.

Advantages of Colemak Layout	Disadvantages of Colemak Layout
Reduced Finger Travel: Designed to minimize finger movement, enhancing typing efficiency and comfort.	Learning Curve: Switching from QWERTY to Colemak requires retraining, which can be challenging for many users.
Ergonomic Design: Places the most frequently used letters on the home row, reducing strain and the risk of repetitive stress injuries.	Limited Hardware Support: Not as widely supported as QWERTY in terms of physical keyboard availability.

Advantages of Colemak Layout	Disadvantages of Colemak Layout
Easy Transition from QWERTY: Shares several key placements with QWERTY, making the learning process somewhat easier than for other alternative layouts.	Adaptation Time for Typing Speed: Initial slowdown in typing speed as users adapt to the new layout.
Maintains Common Shortcuts: Preserves the positioning of common keyboard shortcuts (like Ctrl+C/V), easing the transition for users.	Software Compatibility Issues: Some software and operating systems may require additional configuration to support Colemak.
Potential for Increased Typing Speed: Users may experience a boost in typing speed once they become proficient with the layout.	Less Recognition: Not as well-known or accepted in professional and educational settings compared to QWERTY.

Title: Bash Scripting Keyboard Switch

Date: 14 October 2023

Objective: Create a small bash script that I can use to switch between keyboard layouts quickly.

The core idea is to check what the current layout of the computer is and then switch it based from there. The `setxkbmap` command switches the current keyboard layout for Arch linux and the `grep` and `awk` commands are used to quickly search for certain keywords (in this case, a keyboard layout).

In the end, this was the final bash script that is used in my Arch Linux environment:

```
#!/bin/bash

# Check the current keyboard variant
layout=$(setxkbmap -query | grep variant | awk '{print $2}')

# Switch to the other layout
if [ "$layout" != "dvorak" ]; then
    setxkbmap -layout us -variant dvorak
    notify-send -u normal "Keyboard" "Switched layout to dvorak"
else
    setxkbmap us
    notify-send -u normal "Keyboard" "Switched layout to qwerty"
fi
```

Physical Keyboard Features

This section will focus on the physical aspects of a keyboard and what are the pros and cons of these features.

Title: Generic Physical Keyboards

Date: 14 October 2023

Objective: To understand and analyze the features and functionalities of various popular generic keyboard layouts, focusing on their key distributions and specific design characteristics.

1. Full-Size Keyboard (100%):

- Features a dedicated numeric keypad, ideal for data entry and number crunching.
- Offers more space, reducing the likelihood of hitting wrong keys during touch typing.
- Usually comes with a wrist rest, aiding in comfort during extended typing sessions.

2. TenKeyLess Keyboard (TKL – 80%):

- Omits the numeric keypad, making it more compact and portable.
- Popular among gamers and users who rely on shortcuts, as it allows more space for mouse movement.
- Typically contains 104 to 108 keys, depending on the layout.

3. 1800 Layout Keyboard:

- A variation of the QWERTY layout, it incorporates a numeric pad but clusters keys closer than a full-size keyboard.
- Integrates arrow and navigation keys into the numeric pad area, offering a compact yet function-rich layout.

4. 75% Keyboard:

- Compact and includes most essential keys, making it suitable for everyday use, gaming, and navigation.
- Often programmable, allowing for macro customization and shortcut creation.
- Slightly more compact than tenkeyless keyboards, saving desk space.

5. 65% Compact Keyboard:

- Falls between full-size and 40% keyboards, typically featuring about 70 keys.
- Excludes numeric pad and function keys, focusing on the main alphanumeric characters.
- Compact size enhances portability and desk space utilization.

6. 60% Keyboard:

- Even more compact than 65% keyboards, removing keys such as arrows for further size reduction.
- Popular among gamers and keyboard enthusiasts for its portability and ergonomic design.
- Allows high customization, including third-party keycaps and switches.

7. 40% Keyboards:

- The smallest functional keyboard size, omitting number rows, arrow keys, and non-letter keys.
- Ideal for minimalistic setups and portable use, but requires adjustment to frequently changing layers for numbers and symbols.
- Rare and often requires custom assembly or participation in group buys.

Each of these keyboards have their pros and cons but ultimately, the keyboards that have more keys only make it harder to press all of those keys. A smaller keyboard will have keys that are always within a comfortable reach.

Title: Split Keyboards

Date: 2 November 2023

Objective: To explore the concept of split keyboards and understand their unique features and advantages in ergonomic design.

Split keyboards are designed to cater to the natural positioning of hands and wrists, offering a more comfortable typing experience. Unlike traditional keyboards, they are divided into two distinct sections, which can be positioned independently. This design allows for a more natural hand, wrist, and shoulder position, reducing strain and discomfort during prolonged typing sessions.

Advantages of Split Keyboards	Disadvantages of Split Keyboards
Ergonomic Design: Reduces strain on wrists and hands, aligning with natural hand positioning.	Adjustment Period: Takes time to get accustomed to the split layout and typing style.

Advantages of Split Keyboards	Disadvantages of Split Keyboards
Customizable Positioning: Allows for individual adjustment of each section for optimal comfort.	Space Requirement: Might require more desk space due to the separate sections.
Reduced Risk of RSI: Potentially lowers the risk of repetitive strain injuries due to improved ergonomics.	Cost: Often more expensive than traditional keyboards.
Increased Typing Efficiency: Can lead to faster and more comfortable typing once mastered.	Portability: Less portable compared to one-piece keyboards.

In summary, split keyboards represent a significant advancement in ergonomic typing. While they require an initial adjustment period and might be more costly, the long-term benefits for comfort and health make them a valuable choice for anyone spending extensive time typing.

Title: Ortholinear Keyboards

Date: 3 November 2023

Objective: To understand the design and utility of ortholinear keyboards and their impact on typing.

Ortholinear keyboards are characterized by their keys being aligned in straight rows and columns, as opposed to the staggered layout of traditional keyboards. This alignment is said to mirror the natural motion of fingers more closely, potentially reducing finger travel and increasing typing efficiency. The straight-forward grid layout also aims to simplify the learning curve for touch typing and may lead to fewer typing errors.

Advantages of Ortholinear Keyboards	Disadvantages of Ortholinear Keyboards
Natural Finger Movement: Aligns with the straight motion of fingers, reducing strain.	Learning Curve: Requires adjustment from traditional staggered layouts.
Potentially Increased Accuracy: Straight rows may lead to fewer typing mistakes.	Limited Availability: Fewer options in the market compared to traditional keyboards.
Compact Design: Often more compact, saving desk space.	Customization Requirement: May need customization for optimal use.

Advantages of Ortholinear Keyboards	Disadvantages of Ortholinear Keyboards
Aesthetic Appeal: Unique and minimalistic design.	Not Standardized: Lacks the universal familiarity of traditional layouts.

Ortholinear keyboards, with their distinct design and potential ergonomic benefits, present an interesting alternative to conventional keyboard layouts. While they may require a period of adjustment and are not as widely available, their potential for a more efficient and accurate typing experience makes them an intriguing choice for keyboard enthusiasts and professionals alike.

Title: Curved Keyboards

Date: 12 November 2023

Objective: To examine the design and benefits of curved keyboards, which are tailored to the varying lengths of fingers and natural hand posture.

Curved keyboards are designed with ergonomics at their core, featuring keys that are staggered both forward and backward to match the different lengths of a user's fingers. This design aims to provide a more natural hand positioning, reducing the strain on fingers, wrists, and arms. By aligning the keys with the natural reach of each finger, curved keyboards strive to create a more comfortable and efficient typing experience.

Advantages of Curved Keyboards	Disadvantages of Curved Keyboards
Ergonomic Finger Alignment: Matches the natural finger length and movement, reducing strain.	Adaptation Period: May require time to get used to the unique key placement.
Reduced Typing Effort: Eases the pressure on fingers, potentially increasing typing speed and comfort.	Availability: Less commonly found and often more expensive than standard keyboards.
Potential for Increased Accuracy: More intuitive key placement can lead to fewer typing errors.	Size and Portability: Generally bulkier, making them less portable than flat keyboards.
Aesthetically Pleasing: Often have a unique and modern design.	Compatibility: May not be compatible with all types of computer setups or user preferences.

In conclusion, curved keyboards offer a novel approach to ergonomic typing,

focusing on reducing physical strain and enhancing typing efficiency. While they present certain challenges in terms of adaptation and availability, their potential benefits in comfort and health make them a compelling option for users looking to optimize their typing experience.

Title: General Keyboard Layers

Date: 17 November 2023

Objective: To elucidate the concept of layers in keyboard design, focusing on the general or basic layer and its functionalities.

In keyboard technology, a “layer” refers to a level of key functionality that exists on top of the physical keys. Each layer offers a different set of functions or characters, accessible without physically changing the keys. The general layer is the most basic and commonly used layer, which includes the standard keyboard layout - the alphanumeric keys, space bar, enter key, and so on.

This primary layer is often accompanied by modifier keys like ‘Shift’ and ‘Control’, which temporarily switch the keyboard to different layers when held down. For instance, holding ‘Shift’ accesses uppercase letters and other secondary characters on keys, while ‘Control’ can be used in combination with other keys for shortcuts and special commands.

The whole essence of layers is to enhance the functionality of a keyboard without increasing its physical size, allowing for a compact yet versatile input device. Layers become really important as the size of the keyboard goes down. In this experiment, the keyboard to be optimized is only 30 keys, just enough for the alphabet. This mirrors the corne keyboard, a split, ortholinear, keyboard where every key is only one finger movement away.

One of the goals is to optimize every layer on the keyboard, mainly the general layers.

Title: Symbol Layers

Date: 21 November 2023

Objective: To explore the design and implementation of a symbol layer on keyboards.

A symbol layer on a keyboard is a dedicated layer that transforms the primary keys into symbols. This feature is especially valuable for software developers and those using smaller keyboards, as it allows for easy access to frequently used non-alphabetic characters like brackets, mathematical symbols, and punctuation. Typically, this layer is accessed by holding down a modifier key, such as AltGr

(Right Alt), enabling the user to type symbols from more accessible keys, like the home row.

Designing an effective symbol layer involves considering the frequency and ease of access to various symbols. For instance, on standard keyboards, many symbols are located in the top-right corner, making them hard to type efficiently. By reassigning these symbols to keys within closer reach, typing speed and comfort can be significantly improved. The design can be customized to include digits, accented characters, or other specialist symbols, depending on the user's specific needs.

In the context of smaller keyboards, where space is limited, a symbol layer becomes even more crucial. It follows the '1u principle,' ensuring that commonly typed keys are no more than one key-unit distance from the home position. This approach is not only necessary for 40% boards but also beneficial for larger keyboards.

When designing a symbol layer, it's essential to prioritize the layout for more frequent symbols based on the user's specific programming languages or typing requirements. For example, a layout optimized for C++ and Python might group keys related to comparisons, arithmetic, and bitwise operators. Similarly, considerations for easy inward and outward rolls can enhance typing efficiency for common bigrams and symbol combinations.

There are various existing designs and resources available for reference, such as Seniply, Miryoku, and others, which provide insights into effective symbol layer layouts. These examples can serve as inspiration or a starting point for customizing your own symbol layer, tailored to your specific typing habits and requirements.

Title: Misc Keyboard Layers

Date: 30 November 2023

Objective: To understand the purpose and functionality of miscellaneous keyboard layers, such as function layers, and their role in enhancing keyboard utility.

Miscellaneous keyboard layers, including a function layer or a layer with additional controls, are designed to extend the functionality of a keyboard beyond its standard capabilities. These layers typically include keys for media control (play, pause, volume), Bluetooth connectivity, arrow keys for navigation, and other specialized functions. These layers are particularly beneficial in compact keyboards, where space is at a premium, but are also useful in standard keyboards for streamlining workflows and enhancing convenience.

The function layer, for instance, might include keys for F1 to F12 functions, often used in software applications and operating systems for quick access to

specific features. Media control keys allow users to manage their audio and video playback without leaving the keyboard, offering a seamless multitasking experience. Similarly, Bluetooth control keys can enable quick switching between connected devices, enhancing the keyboard's versatility in multi-device setups.

AI Enhanced Keyboard Layouts

Title: Genetic Algorithm Experimentation

Date: 7 December 2023

Objective: To explore the current state of AI-enhanced keyboard layouts and outline an experimental approach for creating an optimal keyboard layout using a genetic algorithm.

Recent advancements in keyboard layout design have been significantly influenced by AI technologies. One notable example is the Halmak keyboard layout, an AI-designed layout constructed within the keyboard-genetics project. This layout was developed based on real-world hand movements analysis, aiming for maximal typing efficiency and minimal finger movement distances. The Halmak layout, in efficiency comparisons, has shown significant improvements over traditional layouts like QWERTY, Dvorak, and Colemak (GitHub - kaievns/halmak)[<https://github.com/kaievns/halmak>].

In designing an experiment to create an optimal keyboard layout using a genetic algorithm, several steps are crucial. The process begins with the selection of a set of commonly used words. For example, the Longman Communication 3000 list, which includes the most frequent words in English, can serve as a basis. The frequency of each letter and their pair combinations are then analyzed using tools like Text Analyzer. This analysis forms the foundation for the genetic algorithm, which aims to minimize finger travel on the virtual keyboard by optimizing key placements based on frequency and ergonomic considerations (PLOS ONE - Application of a genetic algorithm to the keyboard layout problem).

The genetic algorithm iteratively adjusts the layout, evaluating each iteration based on specific parameters like finger movement distance, common bigrams or trigrams, and ergonomic factors. The objective is to find a layout that minimizes finger movement and maximizes typing efficiency.

For my research, the focus will be on designing both a general layer and symbol layer that is particularly useful for typing normal english but also typing code. This involves considering the frequency of symbol usage in programming languages and placing these symbols in easily accessible positions on the keyboard.

Genetic & Evolutionary Algorithms

Date: 8 December 2023

Objective: Research and gain a better understanding of modern literature on genetic algorithms for the purpose of optimizing a keyboard layout using machine learning.

Machine learning is a good way to get an optimized result using statistics and math. Genetic and evolutionary algorithms are a subset of this that simulation an environment with natural selection where only the best get to reproduce. In the case of this research, only the best keyboard that is tested to be the best gets to reproduce and mutate into a better keyboard.

Implementing this involves two approaches:

1. Mutations: Mutating a keyboard is easy. Take the best keyboard and then make random switches between the keys a certain number of times and then test the new keyboard to see if it is better. This is simple but it doesn't work really well. It relies heavily on luck to get to the best keyboard and follows more of a logarithmic progression on advancement.
2. Crossover: This approach is about taking the best keyboard layouts and then merging them to make a (hopefully) better keyboard. This is probably the best approach but it not easy to implement. There will have to be more research on this topic in the future before an actual implementation can take place.

Setting Up Environment

Date: 9 December 2023

Objective: Map out and start work on creating an environment for development on the code that generates the optimized keyboard layouts based on a genetic algorithm.

For this project, C++ is going to be the preferred language because of how fast it is. This language is known as the benchmark to test how slow other languages are so in this case, it will handle the large amount of data processing that will take place. The specific programming environment is Neovim, a highly customizable text editor that is lightweight but powerful.

The folder structure will resemble something like this:

```
.  
  README.md  
  research.md
```

```
research.pdf
src
  Makefile
  main.cpp
  analysis.cpp
  utils.cpp
  data
    quotes.json
    cpp.json
    python.json
```

Features:

- Here, there is a folder that will contain all of the source code **src**.
 - In here, there is a **Makefile** that will be able to actually build the application. Essentially, a **Makefile** is a file that runs a bunch of **bash** programming to build the executable file that will run the genetic algorithm.
 - The **main.cpp**, **analysis.cpp**, and **utils.cpp** files are all source code files with their own uses.
 - The **data** directory holds the training data that is used to actually train these keyboard layouts. Each different set of data will result in different keyboard layouts. For example, a layout optimized for normal English will be different than a layout optimized for C++ programming.
-

Parameterizing Training Data

Date: 11 December 2023

Objective: Formulate a way to quantify how good a keyboard layout is.

Features To Track:

1. The most important factor to a good keyboard is the finger distance traveled. A keyboard that makes you move your fingers all around the keyboard when typing is objectively worse than one that allows you to type mostly on the home row.
2. The amount of effort it takes to hit the key. The index fingers and middle fingers are both much stronger than the pinky fingers. Therefore, more important letters should tend to hover around stronger fingers. There are also middle keys that are really inconvenient and two middle keys that are a pain to reach.
3. Bigrams and trigrams are also important. Not so much as the speed of typing but the overall typing experience. It feels much better to type inwards from the pink to the ring to the middle to the index finger and awkward when typing outwardly. Common bigrams such as “th” and “ch”

and trigrams such as “the” and “cha” should typically follow this pattern of inward typing.

Taking these aspects into account, an array can be constructed that represents the importance and effort for each key on the keyboard.

C++ Implementation:

```
const int KEY_COUNT = 30;
const int keyDistances[KEY_COUNT] = {
    11, 11, 11, 11, 13, 17, 11, 11, 11, 11, // Upper row
    0,  0,  0,  0, 10, 10,  0,  0,  0,  0, // Home row
    12, 12, 12, 12, 19, 12, 12, 12, 12, 12 // Lower row
};
const int keyEfforts[KEY_COUNT] = {
    6,  2,  1,  6, 11, 14,  9,  1,  1,  7, // Upper row
    1,  0,  0,  0,  7,  7,  0,  0,  0,  1, // Home row
    7,  8, 10,  6, 10,  4,  2,  5,  5,  3  // Lower row
};
```

In this senario, the keyboard has a total of 30 keys, 10 keys for each row. These are good approximate values for the distances the finger needs to travel and the effort that it would take to type that key.

Example Layout:

```
std::vector<char> qwertyLayout = {
    'q', 'w', 'e', 'r', 't', 'y', 'u', 'i', 'o', 'p',
    'a', 's', 'd', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'j', 'k', 'l', ';',
    'z', 'x', 'c', 'v', 'b', 'n', 'm', ',', '.', '?'
};
```

Quantifying A Keyboard

Date: 2 January 2023

Objective: Construct an equation that will be used to test how good a keyboard is by using the parameterization techniques.

In order to start the machine learning process, there needs to be a good way to test how good a keyboard is. The simplest way to do this is to take a letter from the dataset and find the finger distance needed to press it and then go to the next letter and on and on. This way, after going through all of the training data, all of the letters have been testing and the total distance traveled is tracked.

Finding Datasets

Date: 4 January 2023

Objective: Find a good dataset that can be used to train the machine learning algorithm.

The dataset for this project is going to be a dataset from huggingface, a online platform that has resources for training AI models. Credit goes to Abirate for making the dataset and sharing it publicly with free use. The dataset is composed of thousands of english quotes that is perfect for this machine learning project.

Abirate/english_quotes

In the C++ code, a simple integration of finding an english quote would look something like this:

```
// Find a random quote in the JSONL file
string getRandomQuote() {
    string filename = "data/quotes.jsonl";
    ifstream file(filename);
    if (!file.is_open()) {
        cerr << "Error: Unable to open file '" << filename << "'" << endl;
        return "";
    }

    vector<string> quotes;
    string line;
    while (getline(file, line)) {
        quotes.push_back(line);
    }

    // Seed the random number generator
    srand(static_cast<unsigned>(time(nullptr)));

    // Pick a random quote
    int randomIndex = rand() % quotes.size();
    string randomQuote = quotes[randomIndex];

    // Extract the "quote" part from the JSON object
    size_t quoteStart = randomQuote.find("\"quote\":");
    if (quoteStart != string::npos) {
        quoteStart += 9; // Move to the start of the actual quote
        size_t quoteEnd = randomQuote.find("\"", quoteStart);
        if (quoteEnd != string::npos) {
            string quoteText = randomQuote.substr(quoteStart, quoteEnd - quoteStart);
            return quoteText;
        }
    }
}
```

```

    }
}

return "";
}

```

Here, we grab a random quote from our dataset, clean it up with regex and then return it. This function can be used to create a large and random body of text that semi-accurately represents the english language. In the future, this function could be improved if it took in any text file. This would make it easier to train based on small little dataset and find the perfect keyboard for that task. For example, a text file with someone's english paper could train the AI to make the best keyboard layout for typing that particiular essay.

Building A Minimum Working Product

Date: 5 January 2023

Objective: Create a minimum working product for the algorithm and make it slowly optimize generations of keyboard layouts.

For this minimum working product, the features will be limited for the goal of making sure that they work in practice.

Features:

- Generations: each generation of keyboards are made up of the best keyboard layout in the past but mutated randomly.
- Mutations: Keyboard layouts in each generations have mutations in the hope that they randomly become a better keyboard layout.
- Data: A random set of english quotes are stringed together to make the training data for that keyboard.
- Logging: A short summary of the results are output every couple of generations to track the optimization progression.

Constants:

Some helpful constants for the generational runs. These can be optimized too but through trail and error.

```

const int KEY_COUNT = 30;
const int NUM_KEYBOARDS = 12;
const int MAX_MUTATIONS = 100;
const int NUM_GENERATIONS = 1000;
const int NUM_GEN_QUOTES = 100;

```

Genetic Algorithm Code:

```

// Genetic algorithm function
void optimizeKeyboardLayout() {
    srand(static_cast<unsigned>(time(nullptr)));

    vector<vector<char>> keyboards(NUM_KEYBOARDS, qwertyLayout);
    int bestDistance = std::numeric_limits<int>::max();
    vector<char> bestKeyboard = qwertyLayout;

    // Generate a quote for this generation
    string genQuotes = "";
    for (int q = 0; q < NUM_GEN_QUOTES; ++q) {
        genQuotes += getRandomQuote();
    }

    for (int generation = 1; generation <= NUM_GENERATIONS; ++generation) {
        // Generate keyboards for this generation
        for (int i = 0; i < NUM_KEYBOARDS; ++i) {
            if (i > 0) {
                keyboards[i] = bestKeyboard; // Make a copy of the best keyboard
                mutateLayout(keyboards[i]); // Mutate the copied layout
            }

            // Calculate distance for the current keyboard layout
            int distance = calculateDistance(keyboards[i], genQuotes);

            // Update the best keyboard if the distance is smaller
            if (distance < bestDistance) {
                bestDistance = distance;
                bestKeyboard = keyboards[i];
            }
        }

        // Output the best keyboard from every generation
        if (generation % 10 == true) {
            cout << "Generation " << generation << ", Best Keyboard (" << bestDistance << "
            for (char key : bestKeyboard) {
                cout << key;
            }
            cout << endl;
        }
    }
}

```

Keyboard layouts evolve through mutations. These mutations are simple and are a basic swap of two random keys on the keyboard a certain number of times.

Mutation Code:

```
// Mutate the keyboard layout (1 to MAX_MUTATIONS)
void mutateLayout(vector<char>& layout) {
    int numMutations = rand() % MAX_MUTATIONS + 1;
    for (int i = 0; i < numMutations; ++i) {
        // Randomly select two distinct keys to swap
        int index1 = rand() % layout.size();
        int index2 = rand() % layout.size();

        // Ensure distinct keys for swapping
        while (index1 == index2) {
            index2 = rand() % layout.size();
        }

        // Swap the keys at index1 and index2
        swap(layout[index1], layout[index2]);
    }
}
```

Professionalizing The Project

9 January 2023

Objective: Organize the project files in order to prepare for large scale changes.

Currently, the project is contained on one file (the `main.cpp`). This will only get harder to work with as the project gets bigger and there are more and more parameters to keep track of.

The first method used to rearrange the codebase is to split up the `main.cpp` file. This will make everything modular and easier to test later on as the project gets bigger. The problem with having a really large `main.cpp` file is that changing one small thing about the code will take exponentially longer to compile. By splitting up the code into many smaller scripts, it is much faster to compile and even makes the project easier to understand.

Updated File Structure:

```
.
├── README.md
├── Makefile
├── research.md
├── research.pdf
├── bin
├── ...
└── data
```

```

    quotes.txt
    ...
obj
    ...
src
    ...

```

The Makefile is how this project will now be compiled. It is essentially a small script that will run a bunch of **bash** code in order to correctly compile the large amount of source files in the project. The **Makefile** outputs an executable file into the **bin** directory that can then be executed to actually perform the genetic algorithm. It also is used to create **obj** files that make faster compile times.

Inside the **obj** directory, there are temporary files that are used for quicker compile times. This way, when I make a small change to the codebase, then I only have to update one **.o** file in order for compilation.

```

obj
    algorithm
        geneticAlgorithm.o
    main.o
    struct
        keyboardLayout.o
    utils

```

Final Makefile

```

# Compiler settings
CC = g++
CFLAGS = -I./algorithm -I./struct -I./utils -I./data

# Define the directories for the build components
SRCDIR = src
OBJDIR = obj
BINDIR = bin

# Define your source files here
SOURCES := $(wildcard $(SRCDIR)/*.cpp) \
            $(wildcard $(SRCDIR)/algorithm/*.cpp) \
            $(wildcard $(SRCDIR)/struct/*.cpp) \
            $(wildcard $(SRCDIR)/utils/*.cpp)

# Define your object files here
OBJECTS := $(SOURCES:$(SRCDIR)/%.cpp=$(OBJDIR)/%.o)

# Define your executable file name here
EXECUTABLE := $(BINDIR)/main

```

```
all: $(BINDIR) $(OBJDIR) $(EXECUTABLE)
    @$(EXECUTABLE)
```

```
$(BINDIR):
    mkdir -p $@
```

```
$(OBJDIR):
    mkdir -p $@
    mkdir -p $@/algorithm
    mkdir -p $@/struct
    mkdir -p $@/utils
```

```
$(EXECUTABLE): $(OBJECTS)
    $(CC) $(CFLAGS) -o $@ $(OBJECTS)
```

```
$(OBJDIR)/%.o: $(SRCDIR)/%.cpp
    $(CC) $(CFLAGS) -c $< -o $@
```

```
clean:
    rm -rf $(OBJDIR) $(EXECUTABLE)
```

Significant changes have also been made to the source code (**src**) directory. The **main.cpp** file has been split up into 6 different source code files. Each one specializes with their own part of the genetic algorithm.

```
.
src
    algorithm
        geneticAlgorithm.cpp
        geneticAlgorithm.h
    data
        createJson.cpp
    main.cpp
    struct
        keyboardLayout.cpp
        keyboardLayout.h
```

Improvements to the data processing have also speed of the data processing. A new approach to processing the data is used. A small script is used to run through around 2k english quotes and output statistics.

New English Character Statistics

```
18.235023
e 9.829422
t 7.313724
o 6.900338
...
```

```
/ 0.000562
_ 0.000281
~ 0.00028
```

Note: The most common character is the space, which makes sense

These percentages are then used to calculate the total distance traveled with a new formula.

```
// Calculate total distance
int totalDistance = 0;
for (char key : layout) {
    int keyIndex = find(layout.begin(), layout.end(), key) - layout.begin();
    if (keyIndex < layout.size()) { // Check if the key is found
        double keyDistance = keyDistances[keyIndex];
        totalDistance += keyDistance * frequencies[key]; // Distance of the key location * frequency
    }
}
```

This new way of calculating the distance traveled is much faster than constantly looping through thousands of quote words. This is the process:

1. Loop through the keys in the keyboard layout
2. For each key, calculate the distance: `key_frequency * key_position_distance`
3. Add to the running sum of `totalDistance`

Title: Adding Key Effort Into The Calculation

Date: 10 January 2023

Objective: Take into account the amount of effort it takes to hit keys as part of the keyboard evaluation.

Adding in the efforts is easy, just like the key distances, use the `keyIndex` to find the key location in the array of key efforts and then grab the effort it would take to hit the key and multiply that by the frequency of that key. This way, the effort to hit every key is added up, like the distances, and can be used to evaluate the objective worth of the keyboard layout.

```
// Calculate total distance & effort
int totalDistance = 0;
int totalEffort = 0;
for (char key : layout) {
    int keyIndex = find(layout.begin(), layout.end(), key) - layout.begin();
    if (keyIndex < layout.size()) { // Check if the key is found
        totalDistance += keyDistances[keyIndex] * frequencies[key]; // Distance of the key * frequency
        totalEffort += keyEfforts[keyIndex] * frequencies[key]; // Effort needed for the key * frequency
    }
}
```

```
}  
}
```

After keeping the running sum of the effort, there are now two things to take into account when evaluating a keyboard layout. The results of both the `totalDistance` and `totalEffort` are two arbitrary constants that have no relation. To evaluate the keyboard layout, a relationship must be formed. Both variables can be added together to form an overall `value` representing the worth of the keyboard layout. The hard part about forming the relationship between `totalDistance` and `totalEffort` is that it requires a guess and check approach. Each variable needs a weight assigned to it to know how much to contribute to the overall keyboard value.

Final Equation

```
// Evaluation weights  
const int WEIGHT_TOTAL_DISTANCE = 2;  
const int WEIGHT_TOTAL_EFFORT = 1;  
  
// Find keyboard layout objective worth  
int keyboardValue(int& totalDistance, int& totalEffort) {  
    return WEIGHT_TOTAL_DISTANCE * totalDistance + WEIGHT_TOTAL_EFFORT * totalEffort;  
}
```

Here, the `totalDistance` of the keyboard is weighted twice as much as the `totalEffort`. These values are temporary and are subject to change based on the final outputs and the desired output keyboard layout. Should the keyboard have minimal finger movement or overall easy to type?
