

Information Theory

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This document contains lecture notes from Harker's Advanced Topics in Mathematics class in Information Theory, Parts I and II. These notes were taken using TeXShop and L^AT_EX2_ε and will be updated for each class. The reader is advised to note any errata at the source control repository <https://github.com/mananshah99/infotheory>.

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1 August 22, 2016

1.1 Class Overview



Information may be conveyed in multiple ways; for example, by a person talking, a video, or pictures. Our goal is to model this kind of information as a system with one output and no input. The information is therefore a box that emits output probabilistically, and we will therefore be spending 1-2 weeks on probability, specifically regarding distribution functions and expectation. This is illustrated in the “information source” box—the job of the information source is to **provide the signal**.

We will next define the compression problem; having obtained numbers as a stream, the problem is to remove the redundancy in a stream. In particular, we will discuss both lossless and lossy compression. One of the most critical ideas in this course is that of entropy, and we will define the concept (in general, a notion of how much information is originating from the source). We will also discuss the sensibility of such a definition and potentially expand upon it. An overarching concept here will be our definition of the performance of a compression algorithm via the source compression theorem and the boundedness of compression algorithms. This is illustrated in the “transmitter” box—the job of the transmitter is to **remove all redundancy**.

We will subsequently discuss the channel circle, which we will model with conditional probability distribution functions (PDFs). The output of this box, the receiver signal, is input to the receiver box, which has the job of **reconstruction of the signal and the noise**; this is known as the coding problem. Much like the compression problem of the source, the channel has the capacity problem (how much information can be transmitted?). And similar to the compression theorem, we will discuss the channel coding theorem, which will help us determine which parts of a code will require more redundancy for transmission.

We will finally discuss Shannon’s theorem, in which he states that a communication with no loss and arbitrary cost (due to a constraint on the amount of bandwidth, power, etc.) is possible if the entropy of the source H is less than the capacity of the channel C . In our course, we will first discuss the pipeline for lossless compression and then move to lossy compression.

2 August 24, 2016

Knowing what a random variable is and what it means is important for the source to transmitter relationship.

2.1 Random Variables

Definition 1. A random variable is a real-valued function of the outcome of an experiment. By definition, it is not deterministic.

Notation 2. We will represent random variables with capital letters (for example, X, Y, Z).

Example 3 (What are Random Variables?). (a) A coin is tossed ten times. Determine the number of heads obtained from the coin toss. The number of heads is the random variable in this case. (b) Given two rolls of die, identify their sum (a random variable) and the second roll raised to the fifth power (another random variable). (c) The time to transmit a message, the delay with which a message is received, and the number of errors in a message are both themselves random variables.

Two types of random variables exist; discrete variables and continuous variables.

Definition 4 (Discrete RV). A discrete random variable is one that has a finite set of outcomes (or is countably infinite), and has a probability associated with each outcome.

Definition 5 (Continuous RV). A continuous random variable is one that has a non-finite, uncountable set of outcomes.

Example 6. Define the function

$$\text{sgn}(a) = \begin{cases} 1 & a > 0 \\ 0 & a = 0 \\ -1 & a < 0 \end{cases}$$

The variable a is a continuous random variable, while $\text{sgn}(a)$ is a discrete function (with outputs $\in \{1, 0, -1\}$)

2.1.1 Probability Mass Function (pmf)

Probability mass functions are functions of a discrete random variable, describing all instances of a random variable occurring and its associated probabilities. Define X as a random variable, and write $P(X = x)$ as $p_X(x)$. Then $\sum_x p_X(x) = 1$. Consider two tosses of a coin, letting X equal the number of heads obtained. We therefore have

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} 1/4 & x = 0 \\ 1/2 & x = 1 \\ 1/4 & x = 2 \end{cases}$$

note that $p_X(x)$ is clearly a discrete function that takes on values $x \in \{0, 1, 2\}$ with respective output probabilities.

2.1.2 Probability Density Function (pdf)

Probability density functions are functions of a continuous random variable. Define X as a random variable. In this case, the expression $P(X = x)$ is meaningless (in fact, it is defined as 0). The probability of a range of values from $x = a$ to $x = b$ is more relevant; in particular, $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} p_X(x) = 1$.

Example 7. Edgar's driving time to school is between 15 and 20 minutes if it is sunny and between 20 and 25 minutes if it is a rainy day. Assume a day is sunny with $2/3$ probability and rainy with $1/3$ probability. Construct the respective PDF.

The PDF construction is quite simple; remember that $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} p_X(x) = 1$.

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} 2/15 & 15 \leq x \leq 20 \\ 1/15 & 20 \leq x \leq 25 \\ 0 & x \geq 25 \end{cases}$$

2.1.3 Types of Random Variables

We will define these distributions in terms of a coin toss.

Bernoulli (Discrete). Toss a coin, and it define the probability of heads as p . The respective PMF is

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} p & x = 1 \\ (1 - p) & x = 0 \end{cases}$$

Binomial (Discrete). Toss a coin N times, and define x as the number of heads obtained in N tosses. Let $N = 10$, and define the probability of heads as p . Then the respective PMF is

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} (1 - p)^{10} & x = 0 \\ \binom{10}{2} p^2 (1 - p)^8 & x = 2 \\ \dots & \text{other values of } x \in [0, 10] \cap \mathbb{N} \end{cases}$$

Geometric (Discrete). Repeatedly toss a coin until the first "success." This means that we may theoretically have countably infinite $P(X = 1), P(X = 2), P(X = 3), \dots$ output values. Define success to be a head, and the probability of heads as p . Then, we have

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} p & x = 1 \\ (1 - p)p & x = 2 \\ (1 - p)^2 p & x = 3 \\ \dots & \text{other values of } x \end{cases}$$

Poisson (Discrete, \sim Binomial). Instead of tossing a biased coin and counting the number of heads (a binomial distribution), count the number of times one must replace a biased lightbulb in a time t (with the lightbulb being on or off). This makes the poisson distribution a discrete one. Our distribution function is

$$p_X(x) = \frac{e^{-\lambda} \lambda^x}{x!}$$

where λ is an arbitrary constant. The number of decay events in some radioactive element, for example, may be modeled using a Poisson distribution. Anything that involves units of time and something happening within a period of time t may include a Poisson distribution.

Exponential (Continuous, \sim Geometric). Given a biased lightbulb, identify the amount of time until the bulb burns out. Examples of the use of this function include rates (as opposed to

numbers defined with the Poisson distribution). The PDF is defined as

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} \lambda e^{-\lambda x} & x \geq 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where λ is an arbitrary constant.

Gaussian (Continuous). If one does enough experiments of a binomial random variable, the distribution will end up looking like a Gaussian. The PDF is

$$p_X(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} e^{-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

where μ and σ are parameters that can be treated as constants.

3 August 26, 2016

3.1 Properties of Random Variables

We will be defining expectation and variance, and deriving equations regarding these properties of random variables.

3.1.1 Expectation (Mean) of a Random Variable

Discrete. The notation is $E[X]$, where X is the random variable. We have

$$E[X] = \mu = \sum_x x_i p(x_i)$$

For example, the expected value of rolling a die is 3.5.

Continuous. The notation is again $E[X]$, where X is the random variable. We have

$$E[X] = \mu = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} x p(x) dx$$

In fact, it is possible to find the expected value of any function of a random variable. For example,

$$E[X^2] = \sum_x x_i^2 p(x_i)$$

$E[X]$ is called the “first moment” of a variable, and $E[X^2]$ is called the “second moment.”

3.1.2 Variance of a Random Variable

We will denote the variance of a random variable as $V[X]$ (in class, this is denoted $Var[X]$). The variance depends on the expectation, and is written as

$$V[X] = E[(X - E[X])^2] = E[X^2] - E[X]^2$$

It is possible to expand this condensed form in both discrete and continuous forms.

Discrete. $V[X] = \sum_x (x_i - \mu)^2 p(x_i)$ **Continuous.** $V[X] = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (x_i - \mu)^2 p(x_i) dx$

The variance is always a positive quantity, and the standard deviation $\sigma = \sqrt{V[X]}$.

3.1.3 The Mean and Variance of a Bernoulli Distribution

Recall the definition of a Bernoulli random variable,

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} p & x = 1 \\ (1-p) & x = 0 \end{cases}$$

We can write

$$\begin{aligned} E[X] &= \sum_x x_i p(x_i) \\ &= 1(p) + 0(1-p) \\ &= p \end{aligned}$$

The variance is defined as $E[(x - \mu)^2]$, so we have

$$\begin{aligned} V[X] &= \sum_x (x_i - p)^2 p(x_i) \\ &= (1-p)^2 p + (0-p)^2 (1-p) \\ &= p(1-p) \end{aligned}$$

3.1.4 The Mean and Variance of a Geometric Distribution

Recall the definition of a geometric random variable,

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} p & x = 1 \\ (1-p)p & x = 2 \\ (1-p)^2 p & x = 3 \\ \dots & \text{other values of } x \end{cases}$$

We can write

$$\begin{aligned} E[X] &= p(1-p)^0 + 2p(1-p)^1 + \dots \\ &= p(1-p)^0 + p(1-p)^1 + p(1-p)^2 + \dots = 1 \\ &\quad + p(1-p)^1 + p(1-p)^2 + \dots = 1-p \\ &\quad + p(1-p)^2 + \dots = (1-p)^2 \end{aligned}$$

The critical insight here is that $2p(1-p)$ can be written as $p(1-p) + p(1-p)$, and $3p(1-p)^2$ can be written the same way, with each sub-series forming a geometric series. We then sum the resulting geometric series $1 + (1-p) + (1-p)^2 + \dots$, yielding $E[X] = \frac{1}{p}$.

The variance is defined as $V[X] = E[X^2] - E[X]^2$, which simplifies (after much algebra) to

$$V[X] = \frac{1-p}{p^2}$$

3.1.5 The Mean and Variance of a Binomial Distribution

Recall the definition of a binomial random variable,

$$p_X(x) = \begin{cases} (1-p)^{10} & x = 0 \\ \binom{10}{2} p^2 (1-p)^8 & x = 2 \\ \dots & \text{other values of } x \in [0, 10] \cap \mathbb{N} \end{cases}$$

We can write

$$\begin{aligned} E[X] &= \sum_x x_i p(x_i) \\ &= 0p(0) + 1p(1) + 2p(2) + \dots \\ &= 1 \left(p(1-p)^{n-1} \binom{n}{1} \right) + 2 \left(p^2(1-p)^{n-2} \binom{n}{2} \right) + \dots \\ &= np \left(\binom{n-1}{0} (1-p)^{n-1} + \binom{n-1}{1} p(1-p)^{n-2} + \binom{n-1}{n-1} p^{n-1} \right) \\ &= np((p+1) - p)^{n-1} \\ &= np \end{aligned}$$

Note that a binomial random variable is really just a bunch of independent binomial random variables added up. So we can sum the variances to obtain $V[X] = np(1-p)$. In retrospect, we could have done the same for $E[X]$.

4 August 30, 2016

4.1 Wrapping up Means and Variances

Recall the following facts from last time. Bernoulli: $E[X] = p$, $V[X] = p(1-p)$. Binomial: $E[X] = np$, $V[X] = np(1-p)$. Geometric: $E[X] = 1/p$, $V[X] = (1-p)/p^2$.

4.1.1 The Mean and Variance of a Poisson Distribution

We may go over this in the future. For now, note that $E[X] = V[X] = \lambda$.

4.1.2 The Mean and Variance of a Exponential Distribution

Here, we have $E[X] = 1/\lambda$ and $V[X] = 1/\lambda^2$. The derivation for $E[X]$ is as follows, noting that $p(x) = \lambda e^{-\lambda x}$. So,

$$\begin{aligned} E[X] &= \int_0^{+\infty} x \lambda e^{-\lambda x} dx \\ &= \lambda \left[\frac{-x}{\lambda} e^{-\lambda x} \Big|_0^{\infty} + \frac{1}{\lambda} \int_0^{+\infty} e^{-\lambda x} dx \right] \\ &= 0 + \left(\frac{-1}{\lambda} \right) e^{-\lambda x} \Big|_0^{\infty} \\ &= \frac{1}{\lambda} \end{aligned}$$

4.1.3 The Mean and Variance of a Gaussian Distribution

Remember that the PDF is

$$p_X(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} e^{-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

where μ and σ are parameters that can be treated as constants. The integration involves the error function, and yields $E[X] = \mu$ and $V[X] = \sigma^2$.

4.2 Linearity of Expectation

The central idea is that, if one has properties of random variables X and Y , it would be nice to also know properties about the sum $X + Y$.

Theorem 8 (Linearity of Expectation). $E[X + Y] = E[X] + E[Y]$.

Proof. This statement is the same as

$$\sum_x \sum_y (x + y)p(X = x, Y = y)$$

where the probability function is certainly not conditional, but may not be represented as the product of both individual probabilities as no assumptions are made of independence. This may be rewritten as

$$\sum_x \sum_y xp(X = x, Y = y) + \sum_x \sum_y yp(X = x, Y = y)$$

which is equivalent to

$$\sum_x x \sum_y p(X = x, Y = y) + \sum_y y \sum_x p(X = x, Y = y)$$

Note that, in the left sum indexed by y , the probabilities of y sum to 1 so the resulting value is simply $p(X = x)$. The same is true for the right sum, yielding

$$\sum_x xp(X = x) + \sum_y yp(Y = y)$$

which completes the proof. □

Note that this result is not true for the variances; i.e. $V[X + Y] = V[X] + V[Y]$. The linearity of variances is only true when X and Y are independent (really, uncorrelated).

Example 9. Let $Y = aX + b$. We have $E[Y] = aE[X] + b$. The linear shift does not affect variance, and so our resulting variance is $V[Y] = a^2V[X]$.

Example 10. You have an urn with three types of balls: 8 blue, 4 white, and 2 orange. Choose two balls at random. You win two dollars for every blue ball, lose one dollar for every white ball, and are not changed by an orange ball. Determine all values of X , your winnings, the probability of X , and $E[X]$.

A listing of possible winnings is as follows: 4, 2, 1, 0, -1, -2. $P(4) = \binom{8}{2}/\binom{14}{2}$. $P(2) = \binom{8}{1}\binom{2}{1}/\binom{14}{2}$. $P(1) = \binom{8}{1}\binom{4}{1}/\binom{14}{2}$. $P(0) = \binom{2}{2}/\binom{14}{2}$. $P(-1) = \binom{2}{1}\binom{4}{1}/\binom{14}{2}$. $P(-2) = \binom{4}{2}/\binom{14}{2}$. Multiply each value with its probability to obtain $E[X] = 12/7 \approx 1.71$.

Example 11. One of the numbers $(1 - 10)$ is randomly chosen. You are to try to guess the number by asking yes or no questions. Compute the expected number of questions if (a) your i th question is “is it i ?”, and (b) with each question, you try to eliminate $1/2$ of the remaining as nearly as possible.

(a) The expected value is

$$E[X] = \frac{1}{10} \cdot 1 + \frac{1}{10} \cdot 2 + \frac{1}{10} \cdot 3 + \cdots = 5.5$$

(b) Draw a decision tree (for example, first split has left branch 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and left branch has 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). Count the probability for each number of moves and obtain

$$E[X] = 4 \cdot \frac{4}{10} + 3 \cdot \frac{6}{10} = 3.4$$

Example 12. Suppose that the average numbers of cars abandoned in a week on a certain highway is 2.2. Approximate the probability that there will be (a) no abandoned cars this week and (b) at least two abandoned cars in the next week.

(a) Use a Poisson distribution. $E[X] = \lambda = e^{-2.2}$.

(b) This is expressed as $1 - p_X(x = 1) - p_X(x = 0)$ which equals $1 - 2.2e^{-2.2} - e^{-2.2}$.

5 September 1, 2016

This class was primarily reviewing Problemset 2.

Theorem 13 (Bayes). $P(A|B) \cdot P(B) = P(A \& B) = P(A \cap B) = P(B|A) \cdot P(A)$.

6 September 6, 2016

We will first go over some problems, and then talk more about information sources and whether it makes sense to model them as random variables.

6.1 Review Problems

Example 14. X is a random variable with probability with probability distribution function. Let

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} c(1 - x^2) & -1 < x < 1 \\ 0 & x = \text{anything else} \end{cases}$$

(a) What is c ? $\int f(x)dx = 1$, so we have $(cx - \frac{cx^3}{3})|_{-1}^1 = 1$, and $c = 3/4$.

(b) Recall the definition of $E[X] = \int xf(x)dx$. So, we have $E[X] = \int_{-1}^1 x(3/4)(1 - x^2)dx = 0$.

Example 15. The PDF of lifetime of a certain type of electronic device is

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} 10/x^2 & x > 10 \\ 0 & x \leq 10 \end{cases}$$

(a) What is $P(X > 20)$? Integrate from 20 to infinity and solve to obtain $1/2$.

(b) What is the probability that, of 6 such types of devices, at least three will function at least 15

hours? State assumptions. Assume that each case is independent. We have $P(X > 15) = 2/3$. So our expression for exactly 3 is

$$1 - P(0) - P(1) - P(2)$$

which equals

$$1 - \binom{6}{0}(1/3)^6 - \binom{6}{1}(1/3)^5(2/3) - \binom{6}{2}(1/3)^4(2/3)^2$$

Example 16. Find $E[X]$ of the following

(a)

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} 5/x^2 & x > 5 \\ 0 & x \leq 5 \end{cases}$$

(b)

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} (x/4)e^{-x/2} & x > 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

(a) is 0, (b) is 4 (integrate by parts twice)

6.2 Information Sources

Can these sources be modeled as a system with no input and one output and output emits symbols probabilistically?

Type	Source (Black Box)	Data	Characteristics of PDF	Can you send less?
e-mail	computer	text	frequency of letters, greetings, formatting	Possible
telephone	receiver	sound	decibel range, tone, background noise, pauses	Possible (similar to email)
images	camera	pixels	background, same pixel values for large areas	Possible
video	camera	series of images	stationary objects in video	Possible

7 September 8, 2016

Today, we will go through the same thought experiment that Claude Shannon performed. Looking at English text, Shannon first analyzed whether it could be modeled probabilistically.

Idea 1. A simplistic zeroth order approximation involves assuming uniform distribution across all letters. This may be conducted by rolling a 27 sided die.