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Dissolve$^{\text{struct}}$– A Library for Distributed Structured Prediction

Tribhuvanesh Orekondy TOREKOND@STUDENT.ETHZ.CH
ETH Zurich

Martin Jaggi JAGGI@INF.ETHZ.CH
ETH Zurich

Aurelien Lucchi AURELIEN.LUCCHI@INF.ETHZ.CH
ETH Zurich

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Abstract

This paper describes DISSOLVE$^{\text{struct}}$, a modular and flexible open source software package for distributed training of structured prediction models, such as structured SVMs. Project website: github.com/dalab/dissolve.

We support a broad range of applications, and interfaces to scala, java and python. Our framework is empowered by the fault tolerant SPARK computing platform, and automatically adopts to the existing tradeoffs of computation vs communication cost on real world systems. The proposed distributed algorithm combines the recent communication efficient COCOA scheme (Jaggi et al., 2014) with the state of the art primal-dual structured prediction solvers (Lacoste-Julien et al., 2013), and improves further by adding some new ideas for caching oracle answers. The framework allows approximate inference, and provides a similar standard interface as SVM$^{\text{struct}}$ for the user.

Keywords: Structured Prediction, Structured SVM, Distributed Training

1. Introduction

Structured prediction has gained a lot of popularity over the past few years due to its ability to process structured objects such as images or text documents.

The structured support vector machine (SSVM) is a particularly successful variant of this approach that can be optimized in various ways, including a cutting-plane, stochastic gradient descent or a primal-dual scheme such as MARTIN's paper. The latter is especially appropriate for large-scale problems ...
Remainder omitted in this sample. See http://www.jmlr.org/papers/ for full paper.

2. Structured SVM formulation

A structured model predicts the labeling $\mathbf{y}$ for a given input $\mathbf{x}$ by maximizing some score function $S_{\mathbf{w}} : \mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{Y} \to \mathbb{R}$, i.e.,

$$\hat{\mathbf{y}} = \arg\max_{\mathbf{y} \in \mathcal{Y}} S_{\mathbf{w}}(Y) = \arg\max_{Y \in \mathcal{Y}} \mathbf{w}^T \Psi(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}), \tag{1}$$

where $\mathbf{w}$ are the model parameters and $\Psi(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$ is the *feature map* corresponding to the input $\mathbf{x}$ and the labeling $\mathbf{y}$.

Given a set of n training examples $\mathcal{D} = ((\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{y}_i), \ldots, (\mathbf{x}_n, \mathbf{y}_n))$ where $\mathbf{x}_i \in \mathcal{X}$ and $\mathbf{y}_i \in \mathcal{Y}$ is the associated labeling, the learning task consists in finding model parameters $\mathbf{w}$ that achieve low empirical loss subject to some regularization. In other words, we seek

$$\mathbf{w}^* = \underset{\mathbf{w}}{\operatorname{argmin}} \sum_{n=1}^{n} l(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{w}) + R(\mathbf{w}), \tag{2}$$

where l is the *surrogate loss* function, a quantity that is usually related to and often upper-bounds the training error, and $R(\mathbf{w})$ is the regularizer (such as the L2 norm of $\mathbf{w}$) that helps prevent overfitting. The most common choice of l is the hinge

loss, as used in Taskar et al. (2003); Tsochantaridis et al. (2005), which is defined as

$$l(\mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{y}^*_{\mathbf{w}}, \mathbf{w}) = [S_{\mathbf{w}}(\mathbf{y}^*_{\mathbf{w}}) + \Delta(\mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{y}^*_{\mathbf{w}}) - S_{\mathbf{w}}(\mathbf{y}_i)]_+ \tag{3}$$

The most popular method to solve problems of the form (2) is the stochastic subgradient method (SGD). Although this method has been quite successful it requires tuning parameters to achieve good performance (SAY SOMETHING about parallel SGD). We also implemented the COCOA framework Jaggi et al. (2014) which we briefly summarized here.

This approach exploits the associated conjugate *dual* problem of (**??**) defined over one dual variable per each example in the training set.

$$\max_{\boldsymbol{\alpha} \in \mathbb{R}^n} \quad \Big[\; D(\boldsymbol{\alpha}) := -\frac{\lambda}{2} \|A\boldsymbol{\alpha}\|^2 - \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \ell_i^*(-\alpha_i) \; \Big], \tag{4}$$

where ℓ_i^* is the conjugate (Fenchel dual) of the loss function ℓ_i, and the data matrix $A \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times n}$ collects the (normalized) data examples $A_i := \frac{1}{\lambda n} X^i$ in its columns. The duality comes with the convenient mapping from dual to primal variables $\mathbf{w}(\boldsymbol{\alpha}) := A\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ as given by the optimality conditions **?**. For any configuration of the dual variables $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$, we have the duality gap defined as $P(\mathbf{w}(\boldsymbol{\alpha})) - D(\boldsymbol{\alpha})$. This gap is a computable certificate of the approximation quality to the unknown true optimum $P(\mathbf{w}^*) = D(\boldsymbol{\alpha}^*)$, and therefore serves as a useful stopping criteria as well as a way to automatically set the stepsize. We refer the reader to Jaggi et al. (2014) for further details.

TODO: Explain main steps

3. Software package

The use of the DissolveStruct requires users to implement the following functions:

- The joint feature map $\Psi(X, Y)$ which encodes the input/output pairs.
- The structured loss function $\Delta(Y_i, Y)$.
- A maximization oracle which computes the most violating constraint by solving Eq. X.
- A prediction function that computes X. This operation is usually performed with the maximization oracle.

TODO: Can we show a simple example like the pystruct paper?

Table 1: Comparison of structured prediction software packages

Package	**Language**	**License**	**Algorithms**	**Models**
DISSOLVE $^{\text{struct}}$	Scala	?		
PyStruct	Python	BSD		
SVM struct	C++	non-free		
Dlib	C++	boost		
CRFsuite	C++	BSD		

4. Experiments

Run experiments on cov and other dataset. Compare to other frameworks...

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Appendix A.

In this appendix we prove the following theorem from Section 6.2:
Theorem *Let u, v, w be discrete variables such that v, w do not co-occur with u (i.e., $u \neq 0 \;\Rightarrow\; v = w = 0$ in a given dataset $\mathcal{D}$). Let N_{v0}, N_{w0} be the number of data points for which $v = 0, w = 0$ respectively, and let I_{uv}, I_{uw} be the respective empirical mutual information values based on the sample $\mathcal{D}$. Then*

$$N_{v0} \;>\; N_{w0} \;\;\Rightarrow\;\; I_{uv} \;\leq\; I_{uw}$$

with equality only if u is identically 0. ■
Proof. We use the notation:

$$P_v(i) \;=\; \frac{N_v^i}{N}, \quad i \neq 0; \quad P_{v0} \;\equiv\; P_v(0) \;=\; 1 - \sum_{i \neq 0} P_v(i).$$

These values represent the (empirical) probabilities of v taking value $i \neq 0$ and 0 respectively. Entropies will be denoted by H. We aim to show that $\frac{\partial I_{uv}}{\partial P_{v0}} < 0$....

Remainder omitted in this sample. See http://www.jmlr.org/papers/ for full paper.

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