Named Tensor Notation

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1 Introduction

Most papers about neural networks use the notation of vectors and matrices from applied linear algebra. This notation is very well-suited to talking about vector spaces, but less well-suited to talking about neural networks. Consider the following equation (Vaswani et al., 2017):

$$\text{Att}(Q, K, V) = \text{softmax}\left(\frac{QK^\top}{\sqrt{|\mathsf{key}|}}\right)V.$$

where Q, K, and V are sequences of query, key, and value vectors packed into matrices. Does the product $QK^\top$ sum over the sequence, or over the query/key features? We would need to know the sizes of Q, K, and V to know that it's taken over the query/key features. Is the softmax taken over the query sequence or the key sequence? The usual notation doesn't even offer a way to answer this question. With multiple attention heads, the notation becomes more complicated and leaves more questions unanswered. With multiple sentences in a minibatch, the notation becomes more complicated still, and most papers wisely leave this detail out.

Libraries for programming with neural networks (Harris et al., 2020; Paszke et al., 2019) provide multidimensional arrays, called tensors (although usually without the theory associated with tensors in linear algebra and physics), and a rich array of operations on tensors. But they inherit from math the convention of identifying axes by *position*, making code bug-prone. Quite a few libraries have been developed to identify axes by *name* instead: Nexus (Chen, 2017), tsalib (Sinha, 2018), NamedTensor (Rush, 2019), named tensors in PyTorch (Torch Contributors, 2019), and Dex (Maclaurin et al., 2019).

Back in the realm of mathematical notation, then, we want two things: first, the flexibility of working with multidimensional arrays, and second, the perspicuity of identifying axes by name instead of by position. This document describes our proposal to do both.

As a preview, the above equation becomes

$$\mathrm{Att}(Q, K, V) = \operatorname*{softmax}_{\mathsf{seq}}\left(\frac{Q \underset{\mathsf{key}}{\cdot} K}{\sqrt{|\mathsf{key}|}}\right) \underset{\mathsf{seq}}{\cdot} V$$

making it unambiguous which axis each operation applies to. The same equation works with multiple heads and with minibatching.

More examples of the notation are given in §3.

The source code for this document can be found at `https://github.com/namedtensor/notation/`. We invite anyone to make comments on this proposal by submitting issues or pull requests on this repository.

2 Informal Overview

Let's think first about the usual notions of vectors, matrices, and tensors, without named axes.

Define $[n] = \{1, \ldots, n\}$. We can think of a size-n real vector v as a function from $[n]$ to $\mathbb{R}$. We get the ith element of v by applying v to i, but we normally write this as v_i (instead of $v(i)$).

Similarly, we can think of an $m \times n$ real matrix as a function from $[m] \times [n]$ to $\mathbb{R}$, and an $l \times m \times n$ real tensor as a function from $[l] \times [m] \times [n]$ to $\mathbb{R}$. In general, then, real tensors are functions from *tuples of natural numbers* to reals.

2.1 Named tensors

We want to make tensors into functions, no longer on tuples, but on *records*, which look like this:

$$\{\mathsf{foo}(1), \mathsf{bar}(3)\}$$

where foo and bar are *names* (written in sans-serif font), mapped to 1 and 3, respectively. The pairs $\mathsf{foo}(1)$ and $\mathsf{bar}(3)$ are called *named indices*. Their order doesn't matter: $\{\mathsf{foo}(1), \mathsf{bar}(3)\}$ and $\{\mathsf{bar}(3), \mathsf{foo}(1)\}$ are the same record.

The set of records that can be used to index a named tensor is defined by a *shape*, which looks like this:

$$\mathsf{foo}[2] \times \mathsf{bar}[3]$$

which stands for records where foo's index ranges from 1 to 2, and bar's index ranges from 1 to 3. Again, the order of the elements, called *axes*, doesn't matter: $\mathsf{foo}[2] \times \mathsf{bar}[3]$ and $\mathsf{bar}[3] \times \mathsf{foo}[2]$ are the same shape.

Then, a real *named tensor* is a function from (the set of records defined by) a shape to the real numbers. For example, here is a tensor with shape $\mathsf{foo}[2] \times \mathsf{bar}[3]$.

$$A = \begin{array}{c} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{array} \begin{array}{c} \begin{array}{ccc} \multicolumn{3}{c}{\mathsf{bar}} \end{array} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 1 & 4 \\ 1 & 5 & 9 \end{bmatrix} \end{array}.$$

We access elements of A using subscripts: $A_{\mathsf{foo}(1),\mathsf{bar}(3)} = 4$. We also allow partial indexing:

$$A_{\mathsf{foo}(1)} = \begin{array}{c} \begin{array}{ccc} \mathsf{bar} \end{array} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 1 & 4 \end{bmatrix} \end{array} \qquad\qquad A_{\mathsf{bar}(3)} = \begin{array}{c} \begin{array}{cc} \mathsf{foo} \end{array} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 4 & 9 \end{bmatrix} \end{array}.$$

We use uppercase italic letters for variables standing for named tensors. We don't mind if you use another convention, but urge you not to use different styles for tensors and their elements. For example, if $\mathbf{A}$ is a tensor, then an element of $\mathbf{A}$ is written as $\mathbf{A}_{\mathsf{foo}(2),\mathsf{bar}(3)}$ – not $A_{\mathsf{foo}(2),\mathsf{bar}(3)}$ or $a_{\mathsf{foo}(2),\mathsf{bar}(3)}$.

Just as the set of all size-n real vectors is written $\mathbb{R}^n$, and the set of all $m \times n$ real matrices is often written $\mathbb{R}^{m \times n}$ (which makes sense because one sometimes writes Y^X for the set of all functions from X to Y), we write $\mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{foo}[2] \times \mathsf{bar}[3]}$ for the set of all tensors with shape $\mathsf{foo}[2] \times \mathsf{bar}[3]$.

In many contexts, an axis name is used with only one size. In this case, you can simply write $\mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{foo} \times \mathsf{bar}}$ for the set of tensors that have axes foo and bar. It's common to leave the size of an axis unspecified at first, and specify its size later (like in a section or appendix on experimental details). To do this, write $|\mathsf{foo}| = 2$, $|\mathsf{bar}| = 3$.

What are good choices for axis names? We recommend meaningful *words* instead of single letters, and we recommend words that describe a *whole* rather than its parts. For example, a minibatch of sentences, each of which is a sequence of one-hot vectors, would be represented by a tensor with three axes, which we might name batch, seq, and vocab. Please see §3 for more examples.

2.2 Named tensor operations

2.2.1 Elementwise operations

Any function from scalars to scalars can be applied elementwise to a named tensor:

$$\exp A = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} \exp 3 & \exp 1 & \exp 4 \\ \exp 1 & \exp 5 & \exp 9 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}.$$

More elementwise unary operations:

kA	scalar multiplication by k
$-A$	negation
A^k	elementwise exponentiation
$\sqrt{A}$	elementwise square root
$\exp A$	elementwise exponential function
$\tanh A$	hyperbolic tangent
$\sigma(A)$	logistic sigmoid
$\mathrm{ReLU}(A)$	rectified linear unit

Any function or operator that takes two scalar arguments can be applied elementwise to two named tensors with the same shape. If A is as above and

$$B = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 7 & 1 \\ 8 & 2 & 8 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}$$

then

$$A + B = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3+2 & 1+7 & 4+1 \\ 1+8 & 5+2 & 9+8 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}.$$

But things get more complicated when A and B don't have the same shape. If A and B each have an axis with the same name (and size), the two axes are *aligned*, as above. But if A has an axis named i and B doesn't, then we do *broadcasting*, which means effectively that we replace B with a new tensor B' that contains a copy of B for every value of axis i.

$$A + 1 = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3+1 & 1+1 & 4+1 \\ 1+1 & 5+1 & 9+1 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}$$

$$A + B_{\mathsf{foo}(1)} = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3+2 & 1+7 & 4+1 \\ 1+2 & 5+7 & 9+1 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}$$

$$A + B_{\mathsf{bar}(3)} = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3+1 & 1+1 & 4+1 \\ 1+8 & 5+8 & 9+8 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}.$$

Similarly, if B has an axis named i and A doesn't, then we effectively replace A with a new tensor A' that contains a copy of A for every value of axis i. If you've programmed with NumPy or any of its derivatives, this should be unsurprising to you.

More elementwise binary operations:

$A + B$	addition
$A - B$	subtraction
$A \odot B$	elementwise (Hadamard) product
$\frac{A}{B}$	elementwise division
$\max\{A, B\}$	elementwise maximum
$\min\{A, B\}$	elementwise minimum

2.2.2 Reductions

The same rules for alignment and broadcasting apply to functions that take tensor as arguments or return tensors. The gory details are in §5.3, but we present the most important subcases here. The first is *reductions*, which are functions from vectors to scalars. Unlike with functions on scalars, we always have to specify which axis these functions apply to, using a subscript. (This is equivalent to the `axis` argument in NumPy and `dim` in PyTorch.)

For example, using the same example tensor A from above,

$$\sum_{\mathsf{foo}} A = \begin{bmatrix} 3+1 & 1+5 & 4+9 \end{bmatrix}_{\mathsf{bar}}$$

$$\sum_{\mathsf{bar}} A = \begin{bmatrix} 3+1+4 & 1+5+9 \end{bmatrix}_{\mathsf{foo}}.$$

More reductions: If A has shape $\mathsf{foo}[I] \times \ldots$, then

$$\sum_{\mathsf{foo}} A = \sum_{i \in I} A_{\mathsf{foo}(i)} = \overset{\mathsf{bar}}{\begin{bmatrix} 4 & 6 & 13 \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\operatorname*{norm}_{\mathsf{foo}} A = \sqrt{\sum_{\mathsf{foo}} A^2} = \overset{\mathsf{bar}}{\begin{bmatrix} \sqrt{10} & \sqrt{26} & \sqrt{97} \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\min_{\mathsf{foo}} A = \min_{i \in I} A_{\mathsf{foo}(i)} = \overset{\mathsf{bar}}{\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 & 4 \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\max_{\mathsf{foo}} A = \max_{i \in I} A_{\mathsf{foo}(i)} = \overset{\mathsf{bar}}{\begin{bmatrix} 3 & 5 & 9 \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\operatorname*{mean}_{\mathsf{foo}} A = \frac{1}{|I|} A = \overset{\mathsf{bar}}{\begin{bmatrix} 2 & 3 & 6.5 \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\operatorname*{var}_{\mathsf{foo}} A = \frac{1}{|I|} \sum_{\mathsf{i}} (A - \operatorname*{mean}_{\mathsf{foo}} A)^2 = \overset{\mathsf{bar}}{\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 6.25 \end{bmatrix}}$$

(Note that max and min are overloaded; with multiple arguments and no subscript, they are elementwise, and with a single argument and a subscript, they are reductions.)

You can also write multiple names to perform the reduction over multiple axes at once.

2.2.3 Contraction

The vector dot product (inner product) is a function from *two* vectors to a scalar, which generalizes to named tensors to give the ubiquitous *contraction* operator, which performs elementwise multiplication, then sums along an axis. It can be used, for example, for matrix multiplication:

$$C = \overset{\mathsf{baz}}{\mathsf{bar}\begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ 2 & -2 \\ 3 & -3 \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$A \underset{\mathsf{bar}}{\cdot} C = \overset{\mathsf{baz}}{\mathsf{foo}\begin{bmatrix} 17 & -17 \\ 53 & -53 \end{bmatrix}}$$

However, note that (like vector dot-product, but unlike matrix multiplication) this operator is commutative, but not associative! Specifically, if

$$A \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{foo}[m]}$$
$$B \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{foo}[m] \times \mathsf{bar}[n]}$$
$$C \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{foo}[m] \times \mathsf{bar}[n]}$$

then $(A \underset{\mathsf{foo}}{\cdot} B) \underset{\mathsf{bar}}{\cdot} C$ and $A \underset{\mathsf{foo}}{\cdot} (B \underset{\mathsf{bar}}{\cdot} C)$ don't even have the same shape.

2.2.4 Vectors to vectors

A very common example of a function from vectors to vectors is the softmax:

$$\underset{\mathsf{foo}}{\operatorname{softmax}} A = \frac{\exp A}{\sum\limits_{\mathsf{foo}} \exp A} \approx \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 0.731 & 0.002 & 0.953 \\ 0.269 & 0.998 & 0.047 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}.$$

And it's also very handy to have a function that renames an axis:

$$[A]_{\mathsf{bar} \to \mathsf{baz}} = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{baz} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 1 & 4 \\ 1 & 5 & 9 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}$$

Concatenation combines two vectors into one:

$$A \underset{\mathsf{foo}}{\oplus} B = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 1 & 4 \\ 1 & 5 & 9 \\ 2 & 7 & 1 \\ 8 & 2 & 8 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}$$

$$A \underset{\mathsf{bar}}{\oplus} B = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{foo} \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix} \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 1 & 4 & 2 & 7 & 1 \\ 1 & 5 & 9 & 8 & 2 & 8 \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}$$

2.2.5 Matrices

Finally, we briefly consider functions on matrices, for which you have to give *two* axis names (and the order in general matters). Let A be a named tensor

with shape $\{\mathsf{foo}[2] \times \mathsf{bar}[2] \times \mathsf{baz}[2]\}$:

$$A_{\mathsf{foo}(1)} = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \overset{\mathsf{baz}}{\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 3 & 4 \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$A_{\mathsf{foo}(2)} = \begin{matrix} \\ \mathsf{bar} \end{matrix} \overset{\mathsf{baz}}{\begin{bmatrix} 5 & 6 \\ 7 & 8 \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\det_{\mathsf{bar},\mathsf{baz}} A = \overset{\mathsf{foo}}{\begin{bmatrix} \det \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 3 & 4 \end{bmatrix} & \det \begin{bmatrix} 5 & 6 \\ 7 & 8 \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\det_{\mathsf{baz},\mathsf{bar}} A = \overset{\mathsf{foo}}{\begin{bmatrix} \det \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 3 \\ 2 & 4 \end{bmatrix} & \det \begin{bmatrix} 5 & 7 \\ 6 & 8 \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}}$$

$$\det_{\mathsf{foo},\mathsf{bar}} A = \overset{\mathsf{baz}}{\begin{bmatrix} \det \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 3 \\ 5 & 7 \end{bmatrix} & \det \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 4 \\ 6 & 8 \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}}$$

For matrix inverses, there's no easy way to put a subscript under $\cdot^{-1}$, so we recommend writing $\underset{\mathsf{foo},\mathsf{bar}}{\mathrm{inv}}$.

3 Examples

In this section we give a series of examples illustrating how to use named tensors in various situations, mostly related to machine learning.

As further proof of concept, in separate pages we have written out the full models for Transformer (`https://namedtensor.github.io/transformer.html`) and LeNet (`https://namedtensor.github.io/convnet.html`).

3.1 Attention

Define a function

$$\mathrm{Att} \colon \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{key} \times \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq}} \times \mathsf{key}} \times \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq} \times \mathsf{val}} \to \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{val}}$$

$$\mathrm{Att}(Q, K, V) = \underset{\mathsf{seq}}{\mathrm{softmax}} \left(\frac{Q \underset{\mathsf{key}}{\cdot} K}{\sqrt{|\mathsf{key}|}} \right) \underset{\mathsf{seq}}{\cdot} V$$

In self-attention, Q, K, and V are all computed from the same sequence. The

parameters are:

$$W^Q \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb} \times \mathsf{key}}$$
$$W^K \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb} \times \mathsf{key}}$$
$$W^V \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb} \times \mathsf{val}}$$
$$W^O \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{val} \times \mathsf{emb}}$$

Then define

$$\mathrm{SelfAtt} \colon \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq} \times \mathsf{emb}} \to \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq} \times \mathsf{emb}}$$
$$\mathrm{SelfAtt}(X; W^Q, W^K, W^V, W^O) = W^O \underset{\mathsf{val}}{\cdot} \Big[\mathrm{Att}([Q]_{\mathsf{seq} \to \mathsf{seq}'}, K, V)\Big]_{\mathsf{seq}' \to \mathsf{seq}}$$

where

$$Q = W^Q \underset{\mathsf{emb}}{\cdot} X$$
$$K = W^K \underset{\mathsf{emb}}{\cdot} X$$
$$V = W^V \underset{\mathsf{emb}}{\cdot} X.$$

To change this to multi-head self-attention with h attention heads, simply redefine

$$W^Q \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{head} \times \mathsf{emb} \times \mathsf{key}}$$
$$W^K \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{head} \times \mathsf{emb} \times \mathsf{key}}$$
$$W^V \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{head} \times \mathsf{emb} \times \mathsf{val}}$$
$$W^O \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{head} \times \mathsf{val} \times \mathsf{emb}}$$

and define

$$\mathrm{MultiSelfAtt} \colon \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq} \times \mathsf{emb}} \to \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq} \times \mathsf{emb}}$$
$$\mathrm{MultiSelfAtt}(X; W^Q, W^K, W^V, W^O) = \sum_{\mathsf{head}} \mathrm{SelfAtt}(X; W^Q, W^K, W^V, W^O).$$

Finally, when the Transformer is used for generation, it is necessary to have an additional mask to ensure the model does not look at future words. This can be included in the attention definition with clear names.

$$\mathrm{Att}(Q, K, V) = \underset{\mathsf{seq}}{\mathrm{softmax}}\left(\frac{Q \underset{\mathsf{key}}{\cdot} K}{\sqrt{|\mathsf{key}|}} + M\right) \underset{\mathsf{seq}}{\cdot} V$$
$$M \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq} \times \mathsf{seq}'} \qquad\qquad |\mathsf{seq}| = |\mathsf{seq}'|$$
$$M_{\mathsf{seq}(i), \mathsf{seq}'(j)} = \begin{cases} 0 & i \le j \\ -\infty & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

3.2 Recurrent neural networks

As a second example, let's define a simple (Elman) RNN. Let d be a positive integer.

$$
\begin{aligned}
x^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb}} && t = 1, \dots, n \\
h^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}} && t = 0, \dots, n \\
A &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state} \times \mathsf{state}'} && |\mathsf{state}| = |\mathsf{state}'| \\
B &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb} \times \mathsf{state}'} \\
c &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}'} \\
h^{(t+1)} &= \left[\tanh\left(A \underset{\mathsf{state}}{\cdot} h^{(t)} + B \underset{\mathsf{emb}}{\cdot} x^{(t)} + c \right) \right]_{\mathsf{state}' \to \mathsf{state}}
\end{aligned}
$$

The renaming is necessary because our notation doesn't provide a one-step way to apply a linear transformation (A) to one axis and put the result in the same axis. For possible solutions, see §6.2.

3.3 Fully-connected layers

Fully-connected layers are bit more verbose, but make more explicit which parameters connect which layers.

$$
\begin{aligned}
V &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{output} \times \mathsf{hidden}} & c &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{output}} \\
W &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{hidden} \times \mathsf{input}} & b &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{hidden}} \\
X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch} \times \mathsf{input}} \\
Y &= \sigma\left(W \underset{\mathsf{input}}{\cdot} X + b \right) \\
Z &= \sigma\left(V \underset{\mathsf{hidden}}{\cdot} Y + c \right)
\end{aligned}
$$

3.4 Normalization layers

These three functions are often informally described using the same equation, but they each correspond to very different functions. They differ by which axes are normalized.

Batch normalization

$$
\begin{aligned}
X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch} \times \mathsf{channels} \times \mathsf{hidden}} \\
\gamma, \beta &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch}} \\
\mathrm{batchnorm}(X; \gamma, \beta) &= \frac{X - \underset{\mathsf{batch}}{\mathrm{mean}}(X)}{\sqrt{\underset{\mathsf{batch}}{\mathrm{var}}\,(X) + \epsilon}} \odot \gamma + \beta
\end{aligned}
$$

Instance normalization

$$
\begin{aligned}
X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch} \times \mathsf{channels} \times \mathsf{hidden}} \\
\gamma, \beta &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{hidden}} \\
\mathrm{instancenorm}(X; \gamma, \beta) &= \frac{X - \underset{\mathsf{hidden}}{\mathrm{mean}}(X)}{\sqrt{\underset{\mathsf{hidden}}{\mathrm{var}}\,(X) + \epsilon}} \odot \gamma + \beta
\end{aligned}
$$

Layer normalization

$$
\begin{aligned}
X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch} \times \mathsf{channels} \times \mathsf{hidden}} \\
\gamma, \beta &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{channels} \times \mathsf{hidden}} \\
\mathrm{layernorm}(X; \gamma, \beta) &= \frac{X - \underset{\mathsf{hidden,channels}}{\mathrm{mean}}(X)}{\sqrt{\underset{\mathsf{hidden,channels}}{\mathrm{var}}\,(X) + \epsilon}} \odot \gamma + \beta
\end{aligned}
$$

3.5 Continuous bag of words

A continuous bag-of-words model classifies by summing up the embeddings of a sequence of words X and then projecting them to the space of classes.

$$
\begin{aligned}
X &\in \{0,1\}^{\mathsf{seq} \times \mathsf{vocab}} \qquad\qquad \sum_{\mathsf{vocab}} X = 1 \\
E &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{vocab} \times \mathsf{hidden}} \\
W &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{classes} \times \mathsf{hidden}} \\
\mathrm{cbow}(X; E, W) &= \underset{\mathsf{class}}{\mathrm{softmax}}(W \underset{\mathsf{hidden}}{\cdot} E \underset{\mathsf{vocab}}{\cdot} X)
\end{aligned}
$$

Here, the two contractions can be done in either order, so we leave the parentheses off.

3.6 Discrete random variables

Named axes are very helpful for working with discrete random variables, because each random variable can be represented by an axis with the same name. For instance, if A and B are random variables, we can treat $p(\mathsf{B} \mid \mathsf{A})$ and $p(\mathsf{A})$ as tensors:

$$p(\mathsf{B} \mid \mathsf{A}) \in [0,1]^{\mathsf{A} \times \mathsf{B}} \qquad \sum_{\mathsf{B}} p(\mathsf{B} \mid \mathsf{A}) = 1$$

$$p(\mathsf{A}) \in [0,1]^{\mathsf{A}} \qquad \sum_{\mathsf{A}} p(\mathsf{A}) = 1$$

Then Bayes' rule is just:

$$p(\mathsf{A} \mid \mathsf{B}) = \frac{p(\mathsf{B} \mid \mathsf{A}) \odot p(\mathsf{A})}{p(\mathsf{B} \mid \mathsf{A}) \underset{\mathsf{A}}{\cdot} p(\mathsf{A})}.$$

3.7 Sudoku ILP

Sudoku puzzles can be represented as binary tiled tensors. Given a grid we can check that it is valid by converting it to a grid of grids. Constraints then ensure that there is one digit per row, per column and per sub-box.

$$X \in \{0,1\}^{\mathsf{height}[9] \times \mathsf{width}[9] \times \mathsf{assign}[9]}$$

$$\mathrm{check}(X) = \left(\sum_{\mathsf{assign}} Y = \sum_{\mathsf{Height},\mathsf{height}} Y = \sum_{\mathsf{Width},\mathsf{width}} Y = \sum_{\mathsf{height},\mathsf{width}} Y = 1 \right)$$

$$Y \in \{0,1\}^{\mathsf{Height}[3] \times \mathsf{Width}[3] \times \mathsf{height}[3] \times \mathsf{width}[3] \times \mathsf{assign}[9]}$$

$$Y_{\mathsf{Height}(r),\mathsf{height}(r'),\mathsf{Width}(c),\mathsf{width}(c')} = X_{\mathsf{height}(r \times 3 + r' - 1),\mathsf{width}(c \times 3 + c' - 1)}$$

3.8 Max pooling

Max pooling used in image recognition takes a similar form as the Sudoku example.

$$X \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{height}[h] \times \mathsf{width}[w]}$$

$$\mathrm{maxpool2d}(X, kh, kw) = \max_{\mathsf{kh},\mathsf{kw}} U$$

$$U \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{height}[h/kh] \times \mathsf{width}[w/kw] \times \mathsf{kh}[kh] \times \mathsf{kw}[kw]}$$

$$U_{\mathsf{height}(i),\mathsf{width}(j),\mathsf{kh}(di),\mathsf{kw}(dj)} = X_{\mathsf{height}(i \times kh + di - 1),\mathsf{width}(j \times kw + dj - 1)}$$

3.9 1D convolution

1D convolution can be easily written by unrolling a tensor and then applying a standard dot product.

$$
\begin{aligned}
X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{channels} \times \mathsf{seq}[n]} \\
W &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{channels} \times \mathsf{kw}} \\
b &\in \mathbb{R} \\
\mathrm{conv1d}(X, W) &= W \underset{\mathsf{channels},\mathsf{kw}}{\cdot} U + b \\
U &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{channels} \times \mathsf{seq}[n - |\mathsf{kw}| + 1] \times \mathsf{kw}} \\
U_{\mathsf{seq}(i),\mathsf{kw}(j)} &= X_{\mathsf{seq}(i+j-1)}
\end{aligned}
$$

3.10 K-means clustering

The following equations define one step of k-means clustering. Given a set of points X and an initial set of cluster centers C,

$$
\begin{aligned}
X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch} \times \mathsf{space}} \\
C &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{clusters} \times \mathsf{space}}
\end{aligned}
$$

we compute cluster assignments

$$
\begin{aligned}
Q &= \underset{\mathsf{clusters}}{\operatorname{argmin}} \underset{\mathsf{space}}{\operatorname{norm}}(C - X) \\
&= \lim_{\alpha \to -\infty} \underset{\mathsf{clusters}}{\operatorname{softmax}} \left(\alpha \underset{\mathsf{space}}{\operatorname{norm}}(C - X) \right)
\end{aligned}
$$

then we recompute the cluster centers:

$$
C \leftarrow \sum_{\mathsf{batch}} \frac{Q \odot X}{Q}.
$$

3.11 Beam search

Beam search is a commonly used approach for approximate discrete search. Here H is the score of each element in the beam, S is the state of each element in the beam, and f is an update function that returns the score of each state transition. Beam step returns the new H tensor.

$$
\begin{aligned}
|\mathsf{state}| &= |\mathsf{state}'| \\
H &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch} \times \mathsf{beam}} \\
S &\in \{0,1\}^{\mathsf{batch} \times \mathsf{beam} \times \mathsf{state}} \qquad \sum_{\mathsf{state}} S = 1 \\
f &\colon \{0,1\}^{\mathsf{state}} \to \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}'} \\
\mathrm{beamstep}(H, S) &= \underset{\mathsf{beam},\mathsf{state}'}{\mathrm{maxk}} \left(\underset{\mathsf{state}'}{\mathrm{softmax}}(f(S)) \odot H \right)
\end{aligned}
$$

3.12 Multivariate normal distribution

In our notation, the application of a bilinear form is more verbose than the standard notation ($(X-\mu)^\top \Sigma^{-1}(X-\mu)$), but also makes it look more like a function of two arguments (and would generalize to three or more arguments).

$$
\begin{aligned}
|\mathsf{d}| &= |\mathsf{d1}| = |\mathsf{d2}| \\
X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d}} \\
\mu &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d}} \\
\Sigma &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d1} \times \mathsf{d2}} \\
\mathcal{N}(X; \mu, \Sigma) &= \frac{\exp\left(-\frac{1}{2} \left(\underset{\mathsf{d1},\mathsf{d2}}{\mathrm{inv}}(\Sigma) \underset{\mathsf{d1}}{\cdot} [X-\mu]_{\mathsf{d} \to \mathsf{d1}} \right) \underset{\mathsf{d2}}{\cdot} [X-\mu]_{\mathsf{d} \to \mathsf{d2}} \right)}{\sqrt{(2\pi)^{|\mathsf{d}|} \underset{\mathsf{d1},\mathsf{d2}}{\det}(\Sigma)}}
\end{aligned}
$$

4 LaTeX Macros

Many of the LaTeX macros used in this document are available in the style file `https://namedtensor.github.io/namedtensor.sty`. To use it, put

```
\usepackage{namedtensor}
```

in the preamble of your LaTeX source file (after `\documentclass{article}` but before `\begin{document}`).

The style file contains a small number of macros:

- Use `\name{foo}` to write an axis name: foo.
- Use `A \ndot{foo} B` for contraction: $A \underset{\mathsf{foo}}{\cdot} B$. Similarly, use `A \ncat{foo} B` for concatenation.
- Use `\nsum{foo} A` for summation: $\sum_{\mathsf{foo}} A$.

- Use `\nfun{foo}{qux} A` for a function named qux with a name under it: $\underset{\mathsf{foo}}{\mathrm{qux}}\, A$.
- Use `\nmov{foo}{bar}{A}` for renaming: $[A]_{\mathsf{foo}\to\mathsf{bar}}$.

5 Formal Definitions

5.1 Records and shapes

A *named index* is a pair, written $\mathsf{i}(x)$, where i is a *name* and x is usually a natural number. We write both names and variables ranging over names using sans-serif font.

A *record* is a set of named indices $\{\mathsf{i}_1(x_1), \ldots, \mathsf{i}_r(x_r)\}$, where $\mathsf{i}_1, \ldots \mathsf{i}_r$ are pairwise distinct names.

An *axis* is a pair, written $\mathsf{i}[X]$, where i is a name and X is a set of *indices*.

We deal with axes of the form $\mathsf{i}[[n]]$ (that is, $\mathsf{i}[\{1, \ldots, n\}]$) so frequently that we abbreviate this as $\mathsf{i}[n]$.

In many contexts, there is only one axis with name i, and so we refer to the axis simply as i. The context always makes it clear whether i is a name or an axis. If i is an axis, we write $\mathrm{ind}(\mathsf{i})$ for its index set, and we write $|\mathsf{i}|$ as shorthand for $|\operatorname{ind}(\mathsf{i})|$.

A *shape* is a set of axes, written $\mathsf{i}_1[X_1] \times \cdots \times \mathsf{i}_r[X_r]$, where $\mathsf{i}_1, \ldots \mathsf{i}_r$ are pairwise distinct names. A shape defines a set of records:

$$\mathrm{rec}(\mathsf{i}_1[X_1] \times \cdots \times \mathsf{i}_r[X_r]) = \{\{\mathsf{i}_1(x_1), \ldots, \mathsf{i}_r(x_r)\} \mid x_1 \in X_1, \ldots, x_r \in X_r\}\,.$$

We say two shapes $\mathcal{S}$ and $\mathcal{T}$ are *compatible* if whenever $\mathsf{i}(X) \in \mathcal{S}$ and $\mathsf{i}(Y) \in \mathcal{T}$, then $X = Y$. We say that $\mathcal{S}$ and $\mathcal{T}$ are *orthogonal* if there is no i such that $\mathsf{i}(X) \in \mathcal{S}$ and $\mathsf{i}(Y) \in \mathcal{T}$ for any X, Y.

If $t \in \operatorname{rec}\mathcal{T}$ and $\mathcal{S} \subseteq \mathcal{T}$, then we write $t|_{\mathcal{S}}$ for the unique record in $\operatorname{rec}\mathcal{S}$ such that $t|_{\mathcal{S}} \subseteq t$.

5.2 Named tensors

Let F be a field and let $\mathcal{T}$ be a shape. Then a *named tensor over F with shape $\mathcal{T}$* is a mapping from $\mathcal{T}$ to F. We write the set of all named tensors with shape $\mathcal{T}$ as $F^{\mathcal{T}}$.

We don't make any distinction between a scalar (an element of F) and a named tensor with empty shape (an element of $F^{\emptyset}$).

If $A \in F^{\mathcal{T}}$, then we access an element of A by applying it to a record $t \in \operatorname{rec}\mathcal{T}$; but we write this using the usual subscript notation: A_t rather than $A(t)$.

To avoid clutter, in place of $A_{\{\mathsf{i}_1(x_1),\ldots,\mathsf{i}_r(x_r)\}}$, we usually write $A_{\mathsf{i}_1(x_1),\ldots,\mathsf{i}_r(x_r)}$. When a named tensor is an expression like $(A+B)$, we surround it with square brackets like this: $[A+B]_{\mathsf{i}_1(x_1),\ldots,\mathsf{i}_r(x_r)}$.

We also allow partial indexing. If A is a tensor with shape $\mathcal{T}$ and $s \in \operatorname{rec}\mathcal{S}$ where $\mathcal{S} \subseteq \mathcal{T}$, then we define A_s to be the named tensor with shape $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{S}$ such that, for any $t \in \operatorname{rec}(\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{S})$,

$$[A_s]_t = A_{s \cup t}.$$

(For the edge case $\mathcal{S} = \mathcal{U}$ and $\mathcal{T} = \emptyset$, our definitions for indexing and partial indexing coincide: one gives a scalar and the other gives a tensor with empty shape, but we don't distinguish between the two.)

5.3 Extending functions to named tensors

In §2, we described several classes of functions that can be extended to named tensors. Here, we define how to do this for general functions.

Let $f\colon F^{\mathcal{S}} \to G^{\mathcal{T}}$ be a function from tensors to tensors. For any shape $\mathcal{U}$ orthogonal to both $\mathcal{S}$ and $\mathcal{T}$, we can extend f to:

$$\begin{aligned} f &: F^{\mathcal{S}\cup\mathcal{U}} \to G^{\mathcal{T}\cup\mathcal{U}} \\ [f(A)]_u &= f(A_u) \qquad \text{for all } u \in \operatorname{rec}\mathcal{U}. \end{aligned}$$

If f is a multary function, we can extend its arguments to larger shapes, and we don't have to extend all the arguments with the same names. We consider just the case of two arguments; three or more arguments are analogous. Let $f\colon F^{\mathcal{S}} \times G^{\mathcal{T}} \to H^{\mathcal{U}}$ be a binary function from tensors to tensors. For any shapes $\mathcal{S}'$ and $\mathcal{T}'$ that are compatible with each other and orthogonal to $\mathcal{S}$ and $\mathcal{T}$, respectively, and $\mathcal{U}' = \mathcal{S}' \cup \mathcal{T}'$ is orthogonal to $\mathcal{U}$, we can extend f to:

$$\begin{aligned} f &: F^{\mathcal{S}\cup\mathcal{S}'} \times G^{\mathcal{T}\cup\mathcal{T}'} \to H^{\mathcal{U}\cup\mathcal{U}'} \\ [f(A,B)]_u &= f\left(A_{u|_{\mathcal{S}'}}, B_{u|_{\mathcal{T}'}}\right) \qquad \text{for all } u \in \operatorname{rec}\mathcal{U}'. \end{aligned}$$

All of the tensor operations described in §2.2 can be defined in this way. For example, the contraction operator extends the following "named dot-product":

$$\begin{aligned} \underset{\mathsf{i}}{\bullet} &: F^{\mathsf{i}[n]} \times F^{\mathsf{i}[n]} \to F \\ A \underset{\mathsf{i}}{\bullet} B &= \sum_{i=1}^{n} A_{\mathsf{i}(i)} B_{\mathsf{i}(i)}. \end{aligned}$$

6 Extensions

6.1 Index types

We have defined a named index set as a pair $\mathsf{i}[X]$, where i is a name and X is a set, usually $[n]$ for some n. In this section, we consider some other possibilities

for X.

6.1.1 Non-integral types

The sets X don't have to contain integers. For example, if V is the vocabulary of a natural language ($V = \{\mathsf{cat}, \mathsf{dog}, \ldots\}$), we could define a matrix of word embeddings:

$$E \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{vocab}[V] \times \mathsf{emb}[d]}.$$

6.1.2 Integers with units

If u is a symbol and $n > 0$, define $[n]\mathsf{u} = \{1\mathsf{u}, 2\mathsf{u}, \ldots, n\mathsf{u}\}$. You could think of u as analogous to a physical unit, like kilograms. The elements of $[n]\mathsf{u}$ can be added and subtracted like integers ($a\mathsf{u} + b\mathsf{u} = (a+b)\mathsf{u}$) or multiplied by unitless integers ($c \cdot a\mathsf{u} = (c \cdot a)\mathsf{u}$), but numbers with different units are different ($a\mathsf{u} \neq a\mathsf{v}$).

Then the set $[n]\mathsf{u}$ could be used as an index set, which would prevent the index from being aligned with another index that uses different units. For example, if we want to define a tensor representing an image, we might write

$$A \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{height}[[h]\mathsf{pixels}] \times \mathsf{width}[[w]\mathsf{pixels}]}.$$

If we have another tensor representing a go board, we might write

$$B \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{height}[[n]\mathsf{points}] \times \mathsf{width}[[n]\mathsf{points}]},$$

and even if it happens that $h = w = n$, it would be incorrect to write $A + B$ because the units do not match.

6.1.3 Tuples of integers

An index set could also be $[m] \times [n]$, which would be a way of sneaking ordered indices into named tensors, useful for matrix operations. For example, instead of defining an inv operator that takes two subscripts, we could write

$$\begin{aligned} A &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d}[m \times n]} = \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d}[[m] \times [n]]} \\ B &= \operatorname*{inv}_{\mathsf{d}} A. \end{aligned}$$

We could also define an operator $\circ$ for matrix-matrix and matrix-vector multiplication:

$$\begin{aligned} c &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d}[n]} \\ D &= A \underset{\mathsf{d}}{\circ} B \underset{\mathsf{d}}{\circ} c. \end{aligned}$$

6.2 Duality

In applied linear algebra, we distinguish between column and row vectors; in pure linear algebra, vector spaces and dual vector spaces; in tensor algebra, contravariant and covariant indices; in quantum mechanics, bras and kets. Do we need something like this?

In §3.2 we saw that defining an RNN requires renaming of indices, because a linear transformation must map one index to another index; if we want to map an index to itself, we need to use renaming.

In this section, we describe three possible solutions to this problem, and welcome comments about which (if any) would be best.

6.2.1 Contracting two names

We define a version of the contraction operator that can contract two indices with different names (and the same size):

$$\underset{\mathsf{i}|\mathsf{j}}{\cdot} : F^{\mathsf{i}[n]} \times F^{\mathsf{j}[n]} \to F$$

$$A \underset{\mathsf{i}|\mathsf{j}}{\cdot} B = \sum_{k=1}^{n} A_{\mathsf{i}(k)} B_{\mathsf{j}(k)}.$$

For example, the RNN would look like this.

$$\begin{aligned} x^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb}[d]} \\ h^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]} \\ A &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d] \times \mathsf{state}'[d]} \\ B &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb}[d] \times \mathsf{state}[d]} \\ c &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]} \\ h^{(t+1)} &= \tanh\left(A \underset{\mathsf{state}'|\mathsf{state}}{\cdot} h^{(t)} + B \underset{\mathsf{emb}}{\cdot} x^{(t)} + c\right) \end{aligned}$$

6.2.2 Starred index names

If i is a name, we also allow a tensor to have an index $\mathsf{i}*$ (alternatively: superscript i). Multiplication contracts starred indices in the left operand with

non-starred indices in the right operand.

$$
\begin{aligned}
x^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb}[d]} \\
h^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]} \\
A &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}*[d] \times \mathsf{state}[d]} \\
B &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb}*[d] \times \mathsf{state}[d]} \\
c &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]} \\
h^{(t+1)} &= \tanh\left(A \underset{\mathsf{state}}{\cdot} h^{(t)} + B \underset{\mathsf{emb}}{\cdot} x^{(t)} + c\right)
\end{aligned}
$$

The contraction operator can be defined as:

$$
\begin{aligned}
\underset{\mathsf{i}}{\cdot} &: F^{\mathsf{i}*[n]} \times F^{\mathsf{i}[n]} \to F \\
A \underset{\mathsf{i}}{\cdot} B &= \sum_{i=1}^{n} A_{\mathsf{i}*(i)} B_{\mathsf{i}(i)}.
\end{aligned}
$$

There are a few variants of this idea that have been floated:

1. $\cdot$ (no subscript) contracts every starred index in its left operand with every corresponding unstarred index in its right operand. Rejected.
2. $\underset{\mathsf{i}}{\cdot}$ contracts i with i, and we need another notation like $\underset{\mathsf{i}(*)}{\cdot}$ or $\underset{\mathsf{i}}{\times}$ for contracting $\mathsf{i}*$ with i.
3. $\underset{\mathsf{i}}{\cdot}$ always contracts $\mathsf{i}*$ with i; there's no way to contract i with i.

6.2.3 Named and numbered indices

We allow indices to have names that are natural numbers $1, 2, \ldots$, and we define "numbering" and "naming" operators:

A_{i}	rename index i to 1
$A_{\mathsf{i},\mathsf{j}}$	rename index i to 1 and j to 2
$A_{\to\mathsf{i}}$	rename index 1 to i
$A_{\to\mathsf{i},\mathsf{j}}$	rename index 1 to i and 2 to j

The numbering operators are only defined on tensors that have no numbered indices.

Then we adopt the convention that standard vector/matrix operations operate on the numbered indices. For example, vector dot-product always uses index 1 of both its operands, so that we can write

$$C = A_{\mathsf{i}} \cdot B_{\mathsf{i}}$$

equivalent to $C = A \underset{\mathsf{i}}{\cdot} B$.

Previously, we had to define a new version of every operation; most of the time, it looked similar to the standard version (e.g., max vs $\max_{\mathsf{i}}$), but occasionally it looked quite different (e.g., matrix inversion). With numbered indices, we can use standard notation for everything. (This also suggests a clean way to integrate code that uses named tensors with code that uses ordinary tensors.)

We also get the renaming operation for free: $A_{\mathsf{i}\to\mathsf{j}} = [A_{\mathsf{i}}]_{\to\mathsf{j}}$ renames index i to j.

Finally, this notation alleviates the duality problem, as can be seen in the definition of a RNN:

$$\begin{aligned} x^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{emb}[d]} \\ h^{(t)} &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]} \\ A &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]\times\mathsf{state}'[d]} \\ B &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]\times\mathsf{emb}[d]} \\ c &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{state}[d]} \\ h^{(t+1)}_{\mathsf{state}} &= \tanh\left(A_{\mathsf{state},\mathsf{state}'}\, h^{(t)}_{\mathsf{state}} + B_{\mathsf{state},\mathsf{emb}}\, x^{(t)}_{\mathsf{emb}} + c_{\mathsf{state}}\right) \end{aligned}$$

or equivalently,

$$h^{(t+1)} = \tanh\left(A_{\mathsf{state}'} \cdot h^{(t)}_{\mathsf{state}} + B_{\mathsf{emb}} \cdot x^{(t)}_{\mathsf{emb}} + c\right)$$

Attention:

$$\mathrm{Att}\colon \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq}'[n']\times\mathsf{key}[d_k]} \times \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq}[n]\times\mathsf{key}[d_k]} \times \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq}[n]\times\mathsf{val}[d_v]} \to \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{seq}'[n']\times\mathsf{val}[d_v]}$$

$$\mathrm{Att}(Q,K,V) = \mathrm{softmax}\left[\frac{Q_{\mathsf{key}} \cdot K_{\mathsf{key}}}{\sqrt{d_k}}\right]_{\mathsf{seq}} \cdot V_{\mathsf{seq}}$$

Multivariate normal distribution:

$$\begin{aligned} X &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch}[b]\times\mathsf{d}[k]} \\ \mu &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d}[k]} \\ \Sigma &\in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{d}[k]\times\mathsf{d}'[k]} \\ \mathcal{N}(X;\mu,\Sigma) &= \frac{\exp\left(-\frac{1}{2}[X-\mu]^{\top}_{\mathsf{d}}\, \Sigma^{-1}_{\mathsf{d},\mathsf{d}'}\, [X-\mu]_{\mathsf{d}}\right)}{\sqrt{(2\pi)^k\, \det \Sigma_{\mathsf{d},\mathsf{d}'}}} \end{aligned}$$

Because this notation can be a little more verbose (often requiring you to write index names twice), we'd keep around the notation $A \underset{\mathsf{i}}{\cdot} B$ as a shorthand for $A_{\mathsf{i}} \cdot B_{\mathsf{i}}$. We'd also keep named reductions, or at least $\underset{\mathsf{i}}{\mathrm{softmax}}$.

6.3 Indexing with a tensor of indices

Contributors: Tongfei Chen and Chu-Cheng Lin

NumPy defines two kinds of *advanced* (also known as *fancy*) indexing: by integer arrays and by Boolean arrays. Here, we generalize indexing by integer arrays to named tensors. That is, if A is a named tensor with D indices and $I^1, \dots, I^D$ are named tensors, called "indexers," what is $A_{I^1,\dots,I^D}$?

We first consider the case where all the indexers have the same shape $\mathcal{S}$:

$$\begin{aligned} &A \in F^{\mathsf{i}_1[X_1],\dots,\mathsf{i}_D[X_D]} \\ &I^d \in X_D^{\mathcal{S}} && d = 1, \dots, D. \end{aligned}$$

Then $A_{I^1,\dots,I^D}$ is the named tensor with shape $\mathcal{S}$ such that for any $s \in \operatorname{rec} \mathcal{S}$,

$$[A_{I^1,\dots,I^D}]_s = A_{I^1_s,\dots,I^D_s}.$$

More generally, suppose the indexers have different but compatible shapes:

$$\begin{aligned} &A \in F^{\mathsf{i}_1[X_1],\dots,\mathsf{i}_D[X_D]} \\ &I^d \in X_D^{\mathcal{S}_d} && d = 1, \dots, D, \end{aligned}$$

where the $\mathcal{S}_d$ are pairwise compatible. Then $A_{I^1,\dots,I^D}$ is the named tensor with shape $\mathcal{S} = \bigcup_d \mathcal{S}_d$ such that for any $s \in \operatorname{rec} \mathcal{S}$,

$$[A_{I^1,\dots,I^D}]_s = A_{I^1_{s|\mathcal{S}_1},\dots,I^D_{s|\mathcal{S}_D}}.$$

Let's consider a concrete example in natural language processing. Consider a batch of sentences encoded as a sequence of word vectors, that is, a tensor $X \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch}[B],\mathsf{sent}[N],\mathsf{emb}[E]}$. For each sentence, we would like to take out the encodings of a particular span for each sentence $b \in [B]$ in the batch, resulting in a tensor $Y \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathsf{batch}[B],\mathsf{span}[M],\mathsf{emb}[E]}$.

We create a indexer for the sent axis: $I_{\mathsf{sent}} \in [N]^{\mathsf{batch}:B \times \mathsf{span}:M}$ that selects the desired tokens. Then we can write

$$Y = X_{\mathsf{batch}[I],\mathsf{sent}[I],\mathsf{emb}[I]}$$

where the other two indexers

$$\begin{aligned} I_{\mathsf{batch}} &\in [B]^{\mathsf{batch}[B]} \\ [I_{\mathsf{batch}}]_{\mathsf{batch}[b]} &= b \\ I_{\mathsf{emb}} &\in [E]^{\mathsf{emb}[E]} \\ [I_{\mathsf{sent}}]_{\mathsf{sent}[n]} &= n \end{aligned}$$

select all values of their respective indices.

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