

# **Improved Usage of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Models Abstracted through Software Components**

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*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Doctor of Philosophy*



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January 12, 2021



## ABSTRACT

Software components hide implementation complexity by exposing a designed interface that permits easy integration and use. The explosive demand and interest in artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning has led to creation of software components that offer various machine learning (ML) functions. The promise is that these AI components improve productivity and application developers can use them without a deep understanding of their underlying mechanics. Application developers currently have access to multiple AI components with a prominent focus on visual object recognition, natural language processing, audio analysis, anomaly detection and forecasting from numerical data. Simplified variations of these components are offered via cloud computing as intelligent web services; these services are often marketed as ‘developer friendly’ ML with the claim of being just another component accessible on the cloud through a web-based RESTful API.

A developer’s conceptual understanding of components they use impacts the internal and external quality of software they produce. Hence, vendors of intelligent web services must give sufficient level of conceptual detail to enable integration and effective use of their pre-packaged capabilities, ultimately to help developers who integrate with their services produce high-quality software.

This thesis investigates these emerging intelligent web services. Based on an analysis of the observable behaviour of intelligent web services, we show that their probabilistic results and evolution is not effectively communicated in the documentation. Our work shows that developers interpret and use these services using anchors built upon their understanding of traditional (i.e., deterministic and non-probabilistic) software components. We show how this mismatch results in a weak conceptual understanding of highly-abstracted forms of ML, impacting software quality. To mitigate documentation issues, we propose a taxonomy of the key requirements of good API documentation, which we derive from existing literature and triangulated through a survey with developers. We use this information to assess the value placed by developers on each API documentation artefact and identify gaps in the services’ documentation, which can be improved to assist conceptual understanding. Additionally, we propose an architectural tactic designed to reduce and guard against common issues identified when ML becomes highly-abstracted. The proposed tactic is intended to better integrate conventional software components with probabilistic and non-deterministic intelligent web services, ultimately to improve overall solution robustness and, thus, software quality.

This thesis makes a substantial contribution to the software engineering discipline by showing the non-trivial implications to software quality resulting from improper usage of such services and offers a pathway to safer use of the exciting new advances from the field of AI and deep learning.



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## Candidate Declaration

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Alex Cummaudo  
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*To my family, friends, and teachers.*



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## Acknowledgements

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A long journey of 20 years education has led me to this thesis, and there are so many people who've helped me get to this point that deserve thanking. To start, I must thank my family; you have always been there for me in times good and bad. I'm especially grateful to my mother, Rosa, my father, Paul, my siblings, Marc and Lisa, and my nonna, Michelina Bonacci, for your love and support. I also thank my nieces Nina and Lucy (though too young to read this now!) for bringing us all so much joy in these few years. I must thank all my teachers, particularly Natalie Heath from my time at Parade College, whose hard efforts certainly paid off in my tertiary education. And, of course, I thank all those who have helped shape this thesis. Firstly, to Professor Rajesh Vasa: thank you for your many revisions, patience, ideas, and efforts to shape this work. Your years of guidance—both as a supervisor and as a mentor—has reshaped my worldview I now approach thought and problem-solving in a remarkably new light. Secondly, I thank Professor John Grundy for being such an approachable and hard-working supervisor, always willing to provide structure, feedback, and guidance to help me get over the finish line. I also thank Dr Scott Barnett for the interest you have shown in my work and for the joint collaborations we achieved in the last two years. I thank Associate Professor Mohamed Abdelrazek for your many contributions within this thesis. Lastly, I thank Associate Professor Andrew Cain, who not only taught me the realm of programming back in undergraduate days, but who first suggested a PhD was within my reach which I'd never even fathomed. I must thank everyone at the Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute for creating such an enjoyable environment to work in, especially Jake Renzella, Reuben Wilson, Dean Biddau, Beth Bland, Mahdi Babaei, Rodney Pilgrim, and Simon Vajda and for their friendship over these years and for all the coffee runs, conversations, and ideas shared. And, lastly, to Tom Fellowes: thank you for being by my side throughout this journey as we have worked to complete our PhDs together.

This chapter is now over, the next chapter awaits...

— Alex Cummaudo  
January 12, 2021



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## Statistics about this PhD

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This PhD journey consisted of the following:

- 82,188 words;
- 38,281 lines of L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X;
- 7 accepted publications;
- 3 rejected publications;
- 4 conferences, 2 attended virtually;
- 827 days of candidature;
- 3.7 months of examination;
- 1 global pandemic; and,
- 21 years of since my first day of primary school.

“...Now what?”

— BLOAT, *FINDING NEMO* (2003)



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## List of Publications

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Below lists publications arising from work completed in this PhD.

1. A. Cummaudo, R. Vasa, J. Grundy, and M. Abdelrazek, “Requirements of API Documentation: A Case Study into Computer Vision Services,” *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, pp. 1–1, 2020, DOI 10.1109/TSE.2020.3047088
2. A. Cummaudo, S. Barnett, R. Vasa, J. Grundy, and M. Abdelrazek, “Beware the evolving ‘intelligent’ web service! An integration architecture tactic to guard AI-first components,” in *Proceedings of the 28th ACM Joint Meeting on European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering*. Virtual Event, USA: ACM, November 2020. DOI 10.1145/3368089.3409688, pp. 269–280
3. A. Cummaudo, S. Barnett, R. Vasa, and J. Grundy, “Threshy: Supporting Safe Usage of Intelligent Web Services,” in *Proceedings of the 28th ACM Joint Meeting on European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering*. Virtual Event, USA: ACM, November 2020. DOI 10.1145/3368089.3417919, pp. 1645–1649
4. A. Cummaudo, R. Vasa, S. Barnett, J. Grundy, and M. Abdelrazek, “Interpreting Cloud Computer Vision Pain-Points: A Mining Study of Stack Overflow,” in *Proceedings of the 42nd International Conference on Software Engineering*. Seoul, Republic of Korea: ACM, June 2020. DOI 10.1145/3377811.3380404, pp. 1584–1596
5. A. Cummaudo, R. Vasa, J. Grundy, M. Abdelrazek, and A. Cain, “Losing Confidence in Quality: Unspoken Evolution of Computer Vision Services,” in *Proceedings of the 35th IEEE International Conference on Software Maintenance and Evolution*. Cleveland, OH, USA: IEEE, December 2019. DOI 10.1109/ICSME.2019.00051. ISBN 978-1-72-813094-1 pp. 333–342
6. A. Cummaudo, R. Vasa, and J. Grundy, “What should I document? A preliminary systematic mapping study into API documentation knowledge,” in *Proceedings of the 13th International Symposium on Empirical Software Engineering and Measurement*. Porto de Galinhas, Recife, Brazil: IEEE, October 2019. DOI 10.1109/ESEM.2019.8870148. ISBN 978-1-72-812968-6. ISSN 1949-3789 pp. 1–6
7. T. Ohtake, A. Cummaudo, M. Abdelrazek, R. Vasa, and J. Grundy, “Merging intelligent API responses using a proportional representation approach,” in *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Web Engineering*. Daejeon, Republic of Korea: Springer, June 2019. DOI 10.1007/978-3-030-19274-7\_28. ISBN 978-3-03-019273-0. ISSN 1611-3349 pp. 391–406



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## List of Abbreviations

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**A<sup>2</sup>I<sup>2</sup>** Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute. 51, 53

**AI** artificial intelligence. iii, 3–7, 10, 14, 16, 36, 38, 39, 57, 58, 61, 62, 72, 75, 78, 80–82, 92, 93, 95, 96, 99, 101, 113–115, 120–123, 125, 126, 156, 157, 161, 162, 185, 186, 189, 202, 209, 216, 218, 220

**API** application programming interface. iii, 3–18, 20, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 33, 41–43, 46–48, 50, 53, 58, 59, 62, 64, 71–74, 77–84, 88–92, 94–99, 101, 102, 104–107, 109, 110, 113, 115, 121, 125–131, 133–157, 159–162, 164, 166, 167, 169, 170, 173, 176, 182, 185, 187, 189, 192–194, 200, 206, 209, 213, 215–217, 253, 256

**BYOML** Build Your Own Machine Learning. 7, 8

**CC** connected component. 164, 167–169, 173

**CDSS** clinical decision support system. 10, 12

**CNN** convolutional neural network. 12, 13, 36, 60

**CRUD** create, read, update, and delete. 256

**CVS** computer vision service. 4, 9–12, 14, 16–20, 22–27, 29, 31, 32, 35, 41–43, 46–48, 50, 51, 53, 57–63, 66, 71, 73, 74, 77, 79, 84, 85, 89, 93, 98, 101, 103, 104, 106, 110, 111, 114, 115, 120, 125–129, 131, 138, 139, 141, 142, 144, 148–151, 153–157, 159, 161, 162, 164, 167, 169, 173, 176, 186, 187, 190, 192, 193, 200, 202, 207, 209, 213–218, 257

**DCE** distributed computing environment. 253

**DSM** Distributional Semantic Model. 115

**HITL** human-in-the-loop. 13

- HTML** Hypertext Markup Language. 84
- HTTP** Hypertext Transfer Protocol. 8, 197, 198, 201, 206, 253, 255, 256
- IDE** integrated development environment. 34
- IDL** interface definition language. 253, 256
- ILS** In-Literature Score. 127, 139, 144–148, 153, 155, 156
- IPS** In-Practice Score. 127, 139, 143–149, 156
- IRR** inter-rater reliability. 97
- IWS** intelligent web service. 6, 7, 9, 11–14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 29–33, 35, 36, 41–43, 57–59, 61, 62, 70, 72, 74, 75, 77–85, 87–89, 91–99, 101, 102, 110, 113, 114, 123, 124, 157, 159–161, 173, 175, 176, 178, 179, 181, 182, 185, 186, 188, 189, 192–195, 206–209, 213, 218–220, 257
- JSON** JavaScript Object Notation. 9, 176, 190, 198, 200
- ML** machine learning. iii, 3–8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 20, 22, 25, 33, 38, 41, 43, 57, 58, 61, 62, 72, 74, 78–80, 82, 83, 95, 96, 101, 105, 110, 111, 119, 121, 159, 160, 173, 175, 176, 180, 182
- NN** neural network. 15, 36–38, 40
- PaaS** Platform as a Service. 7, 13, 61
- QoS** quality of service. 61, 62, 253
- RAML** RESTful API Modeling Language. 256
- REST** REpresentational State Transfer. iii, 7, 58, 77, 78, 98, 125, 160, 185, 209, 254, 256
- ROI** region of interest. 12, 13
- RPC** remote procedure call. 253
- SDK** software development kit. 59, 89, 133, 150
- SLA** service-level agreement. 61, 253
- SMS** systematic mapping study. 22, 23, 26, 127–131, 137, 146, 147, 152, 154, 156, 157
- SO** Stack Overflow. 7, 17, 20, 25, 26, 46, 47, 50, 53, 54, 62, 63, 77, 79–85, 87, 88, 91–98, 101–106, 108, 110, 111, 113–117, 119, 120, 122–124, 216

- SOA** service-oriented architecture. 253
- SOAP** Simple Object Access Protocol. 7, 253–256
- SOLO** Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome. 92–98
- SQA** service quality assurance. 59, 60
- SQuaRE** Systems and software Quality Requirements and Evaluation. 34
- SUS** System Usability Scale. 18, 127, 141, 143
- SVM** support vector machine. 36, 40, 115
- SWEBOK** Software Engineering Body of Knowledge. 133, 134, 137
- URI** uniform resource identifier. 256
- V&V** verification & validation. 29–33, 42
- WADL** Web Application Description Language. 256
- WSDL** Web Services Description Language. 253
- XML** eXtendable markup language. 9, 253



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**Part I**

**Preface**



# CHAPTER 1

3

4

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5

## Introduction

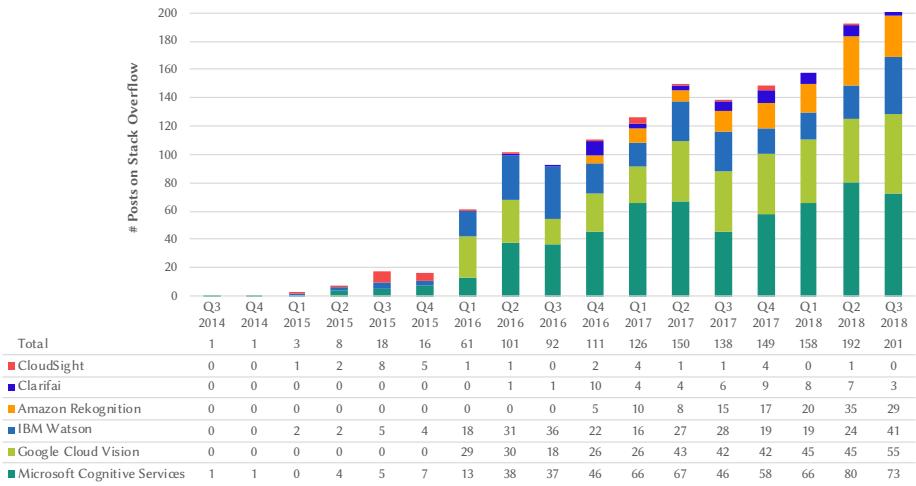
6

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7 Abstraction layers are the application developer’s productivity powerhouse as de-  
8 vellers need not continuously consider underlying mechanics. The ubiquitous ap-  
9 plication programming interface (API) enables separation of concerns and reusable  
10 component interaction. For example, complex graphics rendering and image ma-  
11 nipulation is all achievable via a half-dozen lines of code with appropriate libraries  
12 and frameworks, such as OpenCV’s API [54].

13 Machine learning (ML), too, is being abstracted and offered behind APIs. The  
14 2010s have shown an explosion of cloud-based services providing *web* APIs typically  
15 marketed under an artificial intelligence (AI) banner. The ML algorithms, data  
16 processing pipelines, and infrastructure bringing these techniques to life are also  
17 abstracted behind APIs calls, driven by the motivation to make it easier for developers  
18 to blend AI into their software. There is an explosion of interest from application  
19 developers (see Figure 1.1) that are investigating and exploring how best to infuse  
20 recent advances in AI into their software systems. Combined with an ever-increasing  
21 buffet of AI-based solutions, technologies and products (see Table 1.1) for developers  
22 to choose from, it is evident that we are at the cusp of a new generation of ‘AI-first’  
23 software.

24 Application developers build procedural and functional applications, where code  
25 typically evaluates deterministically to produce outcomes. Such software does not  
26 rely on probabilistic behaviour. This is unlike AI-first software where, often, ML  
27 techniques are employed. However, application developers, who are accustomed to  
28 such traditional software engineering paradigms, may not be aware of potential side-  
29 effects of those probabilistic techniques. Software that leverages recent advances  
30 in AI—and, more specifically, data-driven ML techniques—will often have a layer  
31 of rules that wrap the ML components. AI-first software is, however, not *solely*  
32 procedural-driven, and combines large datasets with rules to produce outcomes.  
33 Therefore, they are both *data-driven* and procedural-driven. The consequence is  
34 that large datasets (that train ML models) combined with the algorithmic techniques



**Figure 1.1:** Increasing interest within the developer community for computer vision services (CVSs) is shown via Stack Overflow posts. These trends of CVS usage were measured as discussion of posts tagged with the relevant product name.<sup>1</sup> This graph is based on data from Chapter 5.

35 behind these models result in probabilistic behaviour. Further, since these models  
 36 can continually learn from *new* data with time, existing probabilistic behaviour can  
 37 evolve and thus regression testing techniques need to be adjusted as well for new  
 38 data.

39 Developing AI-infused applications requires both code *and data*, and an applica-  
 40 tion developer can approach developing from three perspectives, further expanded  
 41 in Section 1.1:

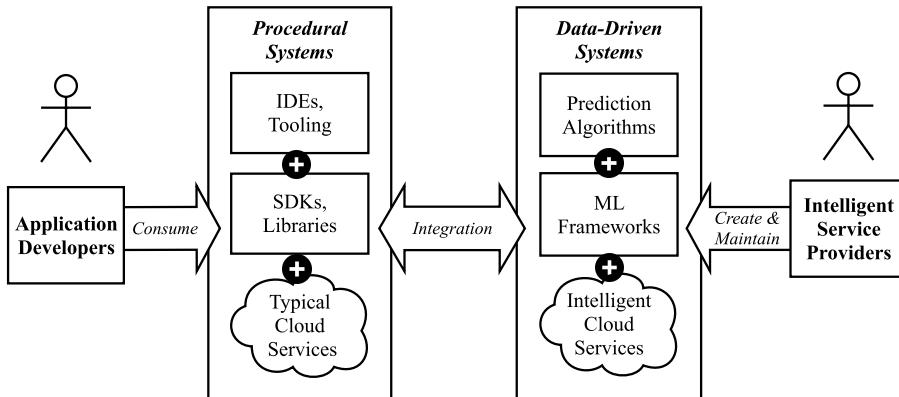
- 42 1. The application developer defines an ML model from scratch and trains it from  
 43 a curated dataset. This approach is laborious in time and demands experience  
 44 and knowledge of ML methods, but the tradeoff is that they have full autonomy  
 45 in the models they create.
- 46 2. The application developer downloads a pre-trained model (e.g., YOLO [298]  
 47 for computer vision, or GPT-2 [294] for natural language processing) and  
 48 ‘plugs’ it into an existing ML framework, such as Tensorflow [1] or PyTorch  
 49 [276]. This approach removes the time taken to collect data, design and train  
 50 the ML model; the developers, still need to know where to find these models,  
 51 evaluate them, and then learn the frameworks<sup>2</sup> within which they operate to  
 52 use them effectively.
- 53 3. The application developer uses a cloud-based service. It is fast to integrate  
 54 into their applications, and the APIs offered abstract the technical know-how  
 55 behind a web call.

56 While much research has investigated these first two perspectives (see Chapter 2),

<sup>2</sup>Thus introducing a verbose list of ML terminology to her developer vocabulary. See a list of 328 terms provided by Google here: <https://developers.google.com/machine-learning/glossary/>. Last accessed 7 December 2018.

**Table 1.1:** A broad range of AI-based vendors, products, and services is emerging in recent years. (Adapted from [223].)

Category	Sample Vendors & Products	Typical Use Cases
<b>Embedded AI:</b> Expert assistants leverage AI technology embedded in platforms and solutions.	Amazon: <i>Alexa</i> Apple: <i>Siri</i> Facebook: <i>Messenger</i> Google: <i>Google Assistant</i> Microsoft: <i>Cortana</i> Salesforce: <i>MetaMind</i>	Personal assistants for search, simple inquiry, and growing as expert assistance (composed problems, not just search). Available on mobile platforms, devices, the internet of things, and as bots or agents. Used in voice, image recognition, and various levels of natural language processing sophistication.
<b>AI point solutions:</b> Point solutions provide specialised capabilities for natural language processing, vision, speech, and reasoning.	24[7]: <i>24/7</i> Admantx: <i>Admantx</i> Affectiva: <i>Affdex</i> Assist: <i>AssistDigital</i> Automated Insights: <i>Wordsmith</i> Beyond Verbal: <i>Beyond Verbal</i> Expert System: <i>Cogito</i> HPE: <i>Haven OnDemand</i> IBM: <i>Watson Analytics</i> Narrative Science: <i>Quill</i> Nuance: <i>Dragon</i> Salesforce: <i>MetaMind</i> Wise.io: <i>Wise Support</i>	Semantic text, facial/visual recognition, voice intonation, intelligent narratives. Various levels of natural language processing, from brief text messaging, chat/conversational messaging, full complex text understanding. Machine learning, predictive analytics, text analytics/mining, knowledge management and search. Used as expert advisors, reasoning tools, or in customer service.
<b>AI platforms:</b> Platforms that offer various AI tech, including (deep) machine learning, as tools, APIs, or services to build solutions.	CognitiveScale: <i>Engage, Amplify</i> Digital Reasoning: <i>Synthesys</i> Google: <i>Google Cloud ML</i> IBM: <i>Watson Knowledge Studio</i> Intel: <i>Saffron Natural Intelligence</i> IPsoft: <i>Amelia, Apollo, IP Center</i> Microsoft: <i>Cortana Intelligence Suite</i> Nuance: <i>360 platform</i> Salesforce: <i>Einstein</i> Wipro: <i>Holmes</i>	APIs, cloud services, on-premises for developers to build AI solutions. Insights/advice building and rule-based reasoning. Vertical domain advisors (e.g., fraud detection in banking, financial advisors, healthcare). Cognitive services and bots.



**Figure 1.2:** The application developer's procedural-driven toolchain is distinct from data-driven toolchain. A developer must consume a typical, data-driven cloud service in a different way than an intelligent data-driven cloud service as they are not the same type of system.

the third is yet to be deeply explored, despite the fact that vendors are promoting new offerings encapsulated under this third perspective. As shown in Table 1.1, vendors are rapidly pushing out new ML-based offerings in the form of cloud-based APIs end-points (AI platforms), where the API abstraction masks away the underlying mechanics of the models. Developers that use these cloud-based services are presented with documentation providing a narrative (i.e., marketing and in the documentation) that implies integration of these services are just like other cloud services. But does this implication, coupled with abstractions that hide the assumptions made by the AI-service providers, lead to developer pain-points and miscomprehension? If so, how can the service providers improve their documentation to alleviate this? Do these data-driven services share similarities to the runtime behaviour of traditional cloud services? And if not, how best can the application developer integrate the data-driven service into their a procedural-driven application to produce AI-first software?

**Table 1.2:** Differing characteristics of intelligent and typical web services.

Intelligent web service	Typical web services
Probabilistic	Deterministic
Machine Learnt	Human Engineered
Data-Driven	Procedural-Driven
Black-Box	Black-Box

Figure 1.2 provides an illustrative overview between the context clashing of procedural-driven applications and data-driven cloud services, and we contrast characteristics of typical cloud systems and data-driven ones in Table 1.2.

 In this thesis, we show that (i) developers do not properly understand the probabilistic data-driven machine-learnt behaviour abstracted behind the end-points, (ii) the ‘intelligent behaviour’ is not fully contained and leaks into the applications that make use of these end-points, and finally (iii) we present how these concerns can be addressed via better documentation and software architecture.

## 1.1 Research Context

There are a range of integration techniques available to developers, as reflected by Google AI’s<sup>3</sup> *machine learning spectrum* [208, 235, 269]. This range is grouped into the three tiers aforementioned, encompassing skills, effort, users, and types of outputs of integration techniques. At one extreme, this approach involves the academic research of developing algorithms and self-sourcing data to achieve intelligence—coined as Build Your Own Machine Learning (BYOML) [181, 235, 269]. The other extreme involves off-the-shelf, ‘friendlier’ (abstracted) intelligence with easy-to-use APIs targeted towards applications developers. The middle-ground involves a mix of the two, with varying levels of automation to assist in development, that turns custom datasets into machine intelligence. We illustrate the slightly varied characteristics within this spectrum in Table 1.3 and Figure 1.3.

These cloud AI-services are gaining traction within developer circles: we show an increasing trend of Stack Overflow posts mentioning intelligent computer vision services in Figure 1.1.<sup>4</sup> Academia provides varied nomenclature for these services, such as *Cognitive Applications* and *Machine Learning Services* [368] or *Machine Learning as a Service* [301]. For the context of this thesis, we will refer to such services under broader term of **intelligent web services (IWSs)**,<sup>5</sup> and diagrammatically express their usage within Figure 1.4.

There are many types of IWSs available to software developers, offering a range of functions, such as optical character recognition, text-to-speech and speech-to-text transcription, object categorisation, facial analysis and recognition, and natural language processing. The general workflow of using an IWS is more-or-less the same: a developer accesses an IWS component via REST/SOAP API(s), which is (typically) available as a cloud-based Platform as a Service (PaaS).<sup>6,7</sup> Developers

<sup>3</sup>Google AI was recently rebranded from Google Research, further highlighting how the ‘AI-first’ philosophy is increasingly becoming embedded in companies’ product lines and research and development teams. Spearheaded through work achieved at Google, Microsoft and Facebook, the emphasis on an AI-first attitude we see through Google’s 2018 rebranding of *Google Research* to *Google AI* [165] is evident. A further example includes how Facebook leverage AI *at scale* within their infrastructure and platforms [273].

<sup>4</sup>Query run on 12 October 2018 using StackExchange Data Explorer. Refer to <https://data.stackexchange.com/stackoverflow/query/910188> for full query.

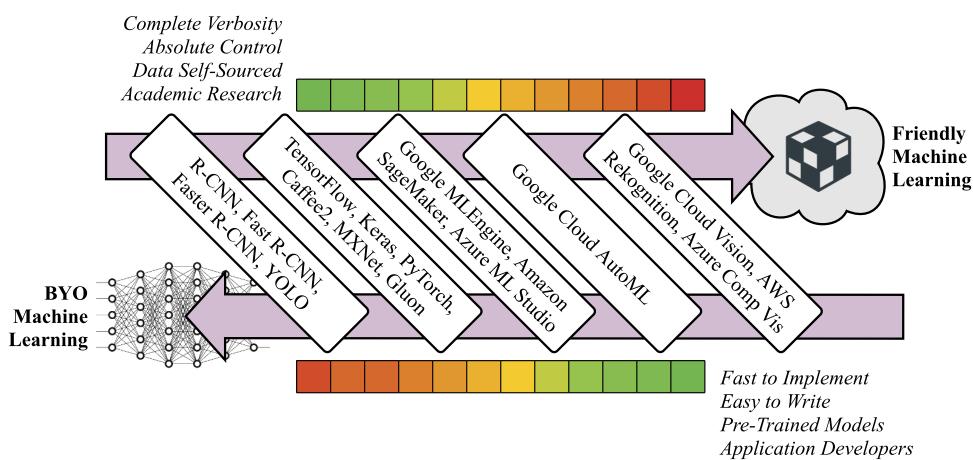
<sup>5</sup>This term is an extension inspired by the term ‘web service’, as defined by the World Wide Web Consortium. See <https://bit.ly/2CQWJ2Z>, last accessed 19 July 2020.

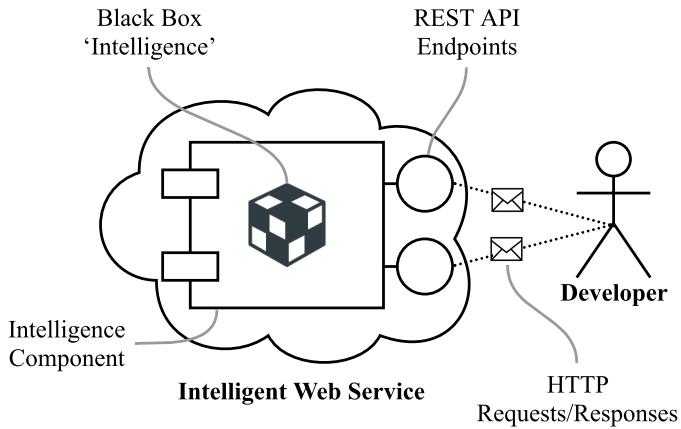
<sup>6</sup>We note, however, that a development team may use a similar approach *internally* within a product line or service that may not necessarily reflect a PaaS model.

<sup>7</sup>A number of services provide the platform infrastructure to rapidly begin training from custom

**Table 1.3:** Comparison of the machine learning spectrum.

Comparator	BYOML	ML F'work	Cloud ML	Auto-Cloud ML	Cloud API
<b>Hosting</b>					
Locally	✓	✓			
Cloud			✓	✓	✓
<b>Output</b>					
Custom Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HTTP Response					✓
<b>Autonomy</b>					
Low					✓
Medium				✓	
High		✓	✓		
Highest	✓				
<b>Time To Market</b>					
Medium	✓	✓			
High			✓	✓	
Highest					✓
<b>Data</b>					
Self-Sourced	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pre-Trained		✓			✓
<b>Intended User</b>					
Academics	✓	✓			
Data Scientist	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Developers				✓	✓

**Figure 1.3:** Examples within the ML spectrum of computer vision. Colour scales indicates the benefits (green) and drawbacks (red) of each end of the spectrum.



**Figure 1.4:** Overview of intelligent web services (IWSs).

- <sup>99</sup> send a given request to analyse a specific piece of data (e.g., an image, body of text, audio file etc.) and receive some intelligence on the data (e.g., object detection, text sentiment, transcription of audio) in addition to an associated *confidence* value that represents the likelihood of that result. This is typically serialised as a JSON/XML response object.

☞ Within this thesis, we scope our investigation to a mature subset of IWSs that provide computer vision intelligence [395, 398, 411, 412, 413, 419, 423, 432, 433, 435, 437, 485, 486]. For the context of this thesis, we will refer to such services as **computer vision services** or **CVSs**.

## 1.2 Motivating Scenarios

The market for computer vision services (CVSs) is expanding (Table 1.1) with a corresponding interest from developers (Figure 1.1). These services are inherently probabilistic in their behaviour, in that the end-points always return with a response with a probability. This is unlike a typical API that would return a response (*without* a probability) or an error. If developers do not fully understand the nature of these services when integrating with them, there is an impact on the quality of software they create.

To illustrate the context of use, we present the two scenarios of varying risk: (i) a fictional software developer, named Tom, who wishes to develop an inherently

datasets, such as Google's AutoML (<https://cloud.google.com/automl/>, last accessed 7 December 2018). Others provide pre-trained datasets 'ready-for-use' in production without the need to train data.

<sup>114</sup> low-risk photo labelling application for his friends and family; and (ii) a high-risk  
<sup>115</sup> cancer clinical decision support system (CDSS) that uses patient scans to recom-  
<sup>116</sup> mend if surgeons should send their patients to surgery. Both describe scenarios  
<sup>117</sup> where AI-infused components has an impact to end-users when the software engi-  
<sup>118</sup> neers developing with them misunderstand the nuances of ML, ultimately affecting  
<sup>119</sup> external quality. Moreover, when developers lack a comprehension, this hinders  
<sup>120</sup> their productivity and understanding/appreciation of AI-based components.

### <sup>121</sup> 1.2.1 Low Risk Motivating Scenario

<sup>122</sup> Tom wants to develop a social media photo-sharing app on iOS and Android, *Photo-*  
<sup>123</sup> *Sharer*, that analyses photos taken on smartphones. Tom wants the app to categorise  
<sup>124</sup> photos into scenes (e.g., day vs. night, landscape vs. indoors), generate brief de-  
<sup>125</sup> scriptions of each photo, and catalogue photos of his friends and common objects  
<sup>126</sup> (e.g., photos with his Border Collie dog, photos taken on a beach on a sunny day with  
<sup>127</sup> his partner). His app will shares this analysed photo intelligence with his friends on  
<sup>128</sup> a social-media platform, where his friends can search and view the photos.

<sup>129</sup> Instead of building a computer vision engine from scratch, which takes too much  
<sup>130</sup> time and effort, Tom thinks he can achieve this using one of the common CVSs. Tom  
<sup>131</sup> comes from a typical software engineering background and has insufficient knowl-  
<sup>132</sup> edge of key computer vision terminology and no understanding of its underlying  
<sup>133</sup> techniques. However, inspired by easily accessible cloud APIs that offer computer  
<sup>134</sup> vision analysis, he chooses to use these. Built upon his experience of using other  
<sup>135</sup> similar cloud services, he decides on one of the CVS APIs, and expects a static result  
<sup>136</sup> always and consistency between similar APIs. Analogously, when Tom invokes the  
<sup>137</sup> iOS Swift substring method "doggy".prefix(3), he expects it to be consistent  
<sup>138</sup> with the Android Java equivalent "doggy".substring(0, 2). Consistent, here,  
<sup>139</sup> means two things: (i) that calling `substring` or `prefix` on 'dog' will *always*  
<sup>140</sup> return in the same way every time he invokes the method; and (ii) that the result is  
<sup>141</sup> *always* 'dog' regardless of the programming language or string library used, given  
<sup>142</sup> the deterministic nature of the 'substring' construct (i.e., results for `substring` are  
<sup>143</sup> API-agnostic).

<sup>144</sup> More concretely, in Table 1.4, we illustrate how three (anonymised) CVS  
<sup>145</sup> providers fail to provide similar consistency to that of the substring example above.  
<sup>146</sup> If Tom uploads a photo of a border collie<sup>8</sup> to three different providers in August  
<sup>147</sup> 2018 and January 2019, he would find that each provider is different in both the vo-  
<sup>148</sup> cabulary used between. The confidence values and labels within the *same* provider  
<sup>149</sup> varies within a matter of five months. The evolution of the confidence changes is not  
<sup>150</sup> explicitly documented by the providers (i.e., when the models change) nor do they  
<sup>151</sup> document what confidence means. Service providers use a tautological nature when  
<sup>152</sup> defining what the confidence values are (as presented in the API documentation)  
<sup>153</sup> provides no insight for Tom to understand why there was a change in confidence,  
<sup>154</sup> which we show in Table 1.5, unless he *knows* that the underlying models change with  
<sup>155</sup> them. Furthermore, they do not provide detailed understanding on how to select a

---

<sup>8</sup>The image used for these results is <https://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/border-collie/>.

**Table 1.4:** First six responses of image analysis for a Border Collie sent to three CVS providers five months apart. The specificity (to 3 s.f.) and vocabulary of each label in the response varies between all services, and—except for Provider B—changes over time. Any confidence changes greater than 1 per cent are highlighted in red.

Label	Provider A		Provider B		Provider C	
	Aug 2018	Jan 2019	Aug 2018	Jan 2019	Aug 2018	Jan 2019
Dog	0.990	<b>0.986</b>	0.999	0.999	0.992	<b>0.970</b>
Dog Like Mammal	0.960	0.962	-	-	-	-
Dog Breed	0.940	0.943	-	-	-	-
Border Collie	0.850	0.852	-	-	-	-
Dog Breed Group	0.810	0.811	-	-	-	-
Carnivoran	0.810	<b>0.680</b>	-	-	-	-
Black	-	-	0.992	0.992	-	-
Indoor	-	-	0.965	0.965	-	-
Standing	-	-	0.792	0.792	-	-
Mammal	-	-	0.929	0.929	0.992	<b>0.970</b>
Animal	-	-	0.932	0.932	0.992	<b>0.970</b>
Canine	-	-	-	-	0.992	<b>0.970</b>
Collie	-	-	-	-	0.992	<b>0.970</b>
Pet	-	-	-	-	0.992	<b>0.970</b>

<sup>156</sup> threshold cut-off for a confidence value. Therefore, he's left with no understanding  
<sup>157</sup> on how best to tune for image classification in this instance. The deterministic prob-  
<sup>158</sup> lem of a substring compared to the nondeterministic nature of the IWS is, therefore,  
<sup>159</sup> non-trivial.

<sup>160</sup> To make an assessment of these APIs, he tries his best to read through the  
<sup>161</sup> documentation of different CVS APIs, but he has no guiding framework to help him  
<sup>162</sup> choose the right one. A number of questions come to mind:

- <sup>163</sup> • What does ‘confidence’ mean?
- <sup>164</sup> • Which confidence is acceptable in this scenario?
- <sup>165</sup> • Are these APIs consistent in how they respond?
- <sup>166</sup> • Are the responses in APIs static and deterministic?
- <sup>167</sup> • Would a combination of multiple CVS APIs improve the response?
- <sup>168</sup> • How does he know when there is a defect in the response? How can he report  
<sup>169</sup> it?
- <sup>170</sup> • How does he know what labels the API knows, and what labels it doesn't?
- <sup>171</sup> • How does it describe his photos and detect the faces?
- <sup>172</sup> • Does he understand that the API uses a machine learnt model? Does he know  
<sup>173</sup> what a ML model is?
- <sup>174</sup> • Does he know when models update? What is the release cycle?

<sup>175</sup> Although Tom generally anticipates these CVSs to not be perfect, he has no  
<sup>176</sup> prior benchmark to guide him on what to expect. The imperfections appear to be  
<sup>177</sup> low-risk, but may become socially awkward when in use; for instance, if Tom's  
<sup>178</sup> friends have low self-esteem and use the app, they may be sensitive to the app not

**Table 1.5:** Tautological definitions of ‘confidence’ found in the API documentation of three common CVS providers.

API Provider	Definition(s) of Confidence
Provider A	<p>“Score is the confidence score, which ranges from 0 (no confidence) to 1 (very high confidence).” [421]</p> <p>“Deprecated. Use score instead. The accuracy of the entity detection in an image. For example, for an image in which the ‘Eiffel Tower’ entity is detected, this field represents the confidence that there is a tower in the query image. Range [0, 1].” [422]</p> <p>“The overall score of the result. Range [0, 1]” [422]</p>
Provider B	<p>“Confidence score, between 0 and 1... if there insufficient confidence in the ability to produce a caption, the tags maybe [sic] the only information available to the caller.” [438]</p> <p>“The level of confidence the service has in the caption.” [436]</p>
Provider C	<p>“The response shows that the operation detected five labels (that is, beacon, building, lighthouse, rock, and sea). Each label has an associated level of confidence. For example, the detection algorithm is 98.4629% confident that the image contains a building.” [396]</p> <p>“[Provider C] also provide[s] a percentage score for how much confidence [Provider C] has in the accuracy of each detected label.” [397]</p>

<sup>179</sup> identifying them or mislabelling them. Privacy issues come into play especially  
<sup>180</sup> if certain friends have access to certain photos that they are (supposedly) in; e.g.,  
<sup>181</sup> photos from a holiday with Tom and his partner, however if the API identifies Tom’s  
<sup>182</sup> partner as a work colleague, Tom’s partner’s privacy is at risk.

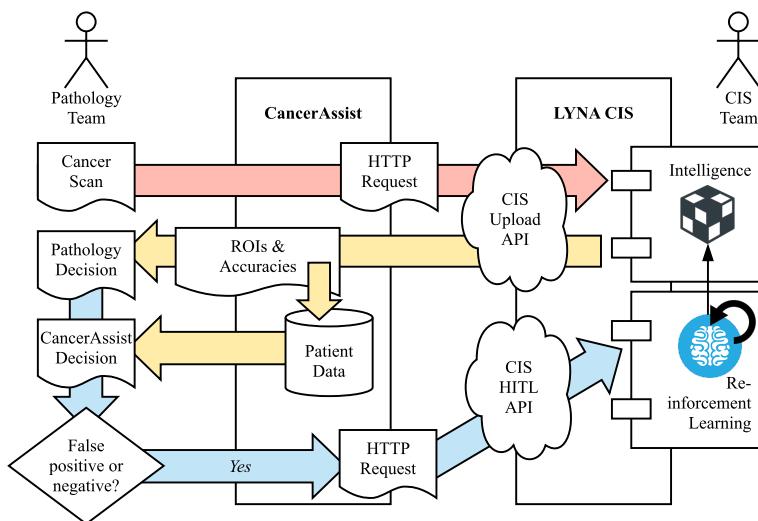
<sup>183</sup> Therefore, the level of risk and the determination of what constitutes an ‘error’ is  
<sup>184</sup> dependent on the situation. In the following example, an error caused by the service  
<sup>185</sup> may be more dangerous.

### <sup>186</sup> 1.2.2 High Risk Motivating Scenario

<sup>187</sup> Recent studies in the oncology domain have used deep-learning convolutional neural  
<sup>188</sup> networks (CNNs) to detect region of interests (ROIs) in image scans of tissue (e.g.,  
<sup>189</sup> [33, 149, 222]), flagging these regions for doctors to review. Trials of such algorithms  
<sup>190</sup> have been able to accurately detect cancer at higher rates than humans, and thus  
<sup>191</sup> incorporating such capabilities into a CDSS is closer within reach. Studies have  
<sup>192</sup> suggested these systems may erode a practitioner’s independent decision-making  
<sup>193</sup> [75, 177] due to over-reliance; therefore the risks in developing CDSSs powered by  
<sup>194</sup> IWSs become paramount.

<sup>195</sup> In Figure 1.5 we present a context diagram for a fictional CDSS named *CancerAssist*. A team of busy pathologists utilise CancerAssist to review patient lymph

197 node scans and discuss and recommend, on consensus, if the patient requires an  
 198 operation. When the team makes a consensus, the lead pathologist enters the ver-  
 199 dict into CancerAssist—running passively in the background—to ensure there is  
 200 no oversight in the team’s discussions. When a conflict exists between the team’s  
 201 verdict and CancerAssist’s verdict, the system produces the scan with ROIs it thinks  
 202 the team should review. Where the team overrides the output of CancerAssist, this  
 203 reinforces CancerAssist’s internal model as a human-in-the-loop (HITL) learning  
 204 process.



**Figure 1.5:** CancerAssist Context Diagram. *Key: Red Arrows = Scan Input; Yellow Arrows = Decision Output; Blue Arrows = HITL Feedback Input.*

205 Powering CancerAssist is Google AI’s Lymph Node Assistant (LYNA) [222],  
 206 a CNN based on the Inception-v3 model [205, 347]. To provide intelligence to  
 207 CancerAssist, the development team decide to host LYNA as an IWS using a cloud-  
 208 based PaaS solution. Thus, CancerAssist provides API endpoints integrated with  
 209 patient data and medical history, which produces the verdict. In the case of a positive  
 210 verdict, CancerAssist highlights the relevant ROIs found are with their respective  
 211 bounding boxes and their respective cancer detection accuracies.

212 The developer of CancerAssist has no interaction with the Data Science team  
 213 maintaining the LYNA IWS. As a result, they are unaware when updates to the  
 214 model occur, nor do they know what training data they provide to test their system.  
 215 The default assumptions are that the training data used to power the intelligence  
 216 is near-perfect for universal situations; i.e., the algorithm chosen is the correct one  
 217 for every assessable ontology tests in the given use case of CancerAssist. Thus,  
 218 unlike deterministic systems—where the developer can manually test and validate  
 219 the outcomes of the APIs—this is impossible for non-deterministic systems such  
 220 as CancerAssist and its underlying IWS. The ramifications of not being able to test  
 221 such a system and putting it out into production may prove fatal to patients.

222 Certain questions in the production of CancerAssist and its use of an IWS may  
 223 come into mind:

- When is the model updated and how do the IWS team communicate these updates?
- What benchmark test set of data ensures that the changed model doesn't affect other results?
- Are assumptions made by the IWS team who train the model correct?

Thus, to improve communication between developers and IWS providers, developers require enhanced documentation, additional metadata, and guidance tooling.

### 1.3 Research Motivation

Evermore applications are considering IWSs as demonstrated by ubiquitous examples: aiding the vision-impaired [95, 299], accounting [230], data analytics [175], and student education [101]. Our motivating examples illustrate impact on developers when CVSs encapsulate assumptions and are poorly documented. Such components are accessible through APIs consisting of ‘black box’ intelligence (Figure 1.4).<sup>9</sup> ML models are inherently probabilistic and stochastic, contributing to four critical issues for developers that motivate this research work: (i) communication of outputs (as probabilities), (ii) evolution of datasets, (iii) selecting appropriate decision boundaries, and (iv) the clarity of documentation that address items i–iii. We detail these four issues in the following subsections.

Ultimately, these four issues present major threats to software reliability if left unresolved. Given that such substantiative software engineering principles on reliability, versioning and quality are under-investigated within the context of IWSs, we aim to explore guidance from the software engineering literature to investigate what aspects in the development lifecycle could aide in mitigating these issues when developing using components that abstract ML, such as IWSs.

#### 1.3.1 Outputs are Probabilities

There is little room for certainty in these results as the insight is purely statistical and associational [281] against its training dataset. **The interface between AI-components and traditional software components is non-trivial when developers do not appreciate the nuances, or use the anchors of libraries and components that have a more traditional behaviour [188, 247, 358, 363].** However, CVSs return the *probability* that a particular object exists in an input images' pixels via confidence values. As an example, consider simple arithmetic representations (e.g.,  $2 + 2 = 4$ ). The deterministic mindset suggests that the result will *always* be 4. However, the non-deterministic (data-driven) mindset suggests that results are probable: target output (*exactly* 4) and the output inferred (*a likelihood of* 4) matches

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<sup>9</sup>The ‘black box’ refers to a system that transforms input (or stimulus) to outputs (or response) without any understanding of the internal architecture by which this transformation occurs. This arises from a theory in the electronic sciences and adapted to wider applications since the 1950s–60s [17, 65] to describe “systems whose internal mechanisms are not fully open to inspection” [17].

259 as a probable percentage (or as an error where it does not match).<sup>10</sup> Instead of an  
260 exact output, there is a *probabilistic* result:  $2 + 2$  *may* equal 4 to a confidence of  $n$ .  
261 Thus, for a more certain (though not fully certain) distribution of overall confidence  
262 returned from the service, a developer must treat the problem stochastically by  
263 testing this case hundreds if not thousands of times to find a richer interpretation of  
264 the inference made and ensure reliability in its outcome.

### 265 1.3.2 Evolution of Datasets

266 Traditional software engineering principles advocate for software systems to be ver-  
267 sioned upon substantial change. Unfortunately, endpoints are not versioned [89]. In  
268 the context of computer vision, new labels may be introduced or dropped, confidence  
269 values may differ, entire ontologies or specific training parameters may change, but  
270 we hypothesise that is not effectively communicated to developers. Broadly speak-  
271 ing, this can be attributed to a dichotomy of release cycles from the data science and  
272 software engineering communities: the data science iterations and work by which  
273 new models are trained and released runs at a faster cycle than the maintenance  
274 cycle of traditional software engineering. Thus we see cloud vendors integrating  
275 model changes without the *need* to update the API version unless substantial code or  
276 schema changes are also introduced—the nuance changes in the internal model does  
277 not warrant a shift in the API itself, and therefore the version shift in a new model  
278 does not always propagate to a version shift in the API endpoint. As demonstrated  
279 in Table 1.4, whatever input is uploaded at one time may not necessarily be the same  
280 when uploaded at a later time. This again contrasts the rule-driven mindset, where  
281  $2 + 2$  *always* equals 4. Therefore, in addition to the certainty of a result in a single  
282 instance, the certainty of a result in *multiple instances* may differ with time, which  
283 again impacts on the developers notion of reliable software. Currently, it is impos-  
284 sible to invoke requests specific to a particular model that was trained at a particular  
285 date in time, and therefore developers need to consider how evolutionary changes of  
286 the services may impact their solutions *in production*. Again, whether there is any  
287 noticeable behavioural changes from these changes is dependent on the context of  
288 the problem domain—unless developers benchmark these changes against their own  
289 domain-specific dataset and frequently check their selected service against such a  
290 dataset, there is no way of knowing if substantive errors have been introduced.

### 291 1.3.3 Selecting Appropriate Decision Boundaries

292 As the only response from these computer vision classifiers are a label and confidence  
293 value; **the decision boundaries needs to always be appropriately considered by**  
294 **client code for each use case and each model selected.** The external quality of  
295 such software needs to consider reliability in the case of thresholding confidence  
296 values—that is whether the inference has an appropriate level of confidence to justify  
297 a predicted (and reliable) result to end-users. Selecting this confidence threshold

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10Blake et al. [44] produces a multi-layer perceptron neural network performing arithmetic representation.

<sup>298</sup> is non-trivial; a ML course from Google suggests that “it is tempting to assume  
<sup>299</sup> that [a] classification threshold should always be 0.5, but thresholds are problem-  
<sup>300</sup> dependent, and are therefore values that you must tune.” [144]. Approaches to  
<sup>301</sup> turning these values are considered for data scientists, but are not yet well-understood  
<sup>302</sup> for application developers with little appreciation of the nuances of ML.

### <sup>303</sup> 1.3.4 Documentation of the Above Concerns

<sup>304</sup> Similarly, developers should consider the internal quality of building AI-first soft-  
<sup>305</sup> ware. Reliable API usability and documentation advocate for the accuracy, consis-  
<sup>306</sup> tency and completeness of APIs and their documentation [286, 305] and providers  
<sup>307</sup> should consider mismatches between a developer’s conceptual knowledge of the  
<sup>308</sup> API its implementation [199]. **Unreliable APIs ultimately hinder developer per-**  
<sup>309</sup> **formance and thus reduces productivity**, in addition to producing potentially  
<sup>310</sup> unreliable software where documentation is not well-understood (or clear to the  
<sup>311</sup> developer).

## <sup>312</sup> 1.4 Research Goals

<sup>313</sup> This thesis aims to investigate and better understand the nature of cloud-based  
<sup>314</sup> computer vision services (CVSs)<sup>11</sup> as a concrete exemplar of intelligent web services  
<sup>315</sup> (IWSs). We identify the maturity, viability and risks of CVSs through the anchoring  
<sup>316</sup> perspective of *reliability* that affects the internal and external quality of software.  
<sup>317</sup> We adopt the McCall [233] and Boehm [46] interpretations of reliability via the sub-  
<sup>318</sup> characteristics of a service’s *consistency* and *robustness* (or fault/error tolerance),  
<sup>319</sup> and the *completeness*<sup>12</sup> of its documentation. (A detailed discussion is further  
<sup>320</sup> provided in Section 2.1.) This thesis explores and contributes towards *four* key  
<sup>321</sup> facets regarding reliability in CVS usage and the completeness of its associated  
<sup>322</sup> documentation. We formulate four primary research questions (RQs), based on  
<sup>323</sup> both empirical and non-empirical software engineering methodology [243], further  
<sup>324</sup> discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>325</sup> Firstly, we investigate adverse implications that arise when using CVSs that  
<sup>326</sup> affects consistency and robustness (**Chapter 4**). We show how CVSs have a non-  
<sup>327</sup> deterministic runtime behaviour and evolve with unintended and non-trivial con-  
<sup>328</sup> sequences to developers. We demonstrate that these services have inconsistent  
<sup>329</sup> behaviour despite offering the same functionality and pose evolution risk that ef-  
<sup>330</sup> fects robustness of consuming applications when responses change given the same  
<sup>331</sup> (consistent) inputs.

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<sup>11</sup>As these services are proprietary, we are unable to conduct source code or model analysis, and hence are not used in the investigation of this thesis.

<sup>12</sup>We treat the API documentation of a CVS as a first-class citizen.

<sup>332</sup> Formally, we structure the following RQs:

### ?

#### RQ1. What is the nature of cloud-based CVSs?

*RQ1.1.* What is their runtime behaviour?

*RQ1.2.* What is their evolution profile?

<sup>333</sup> Secondly, we investigate the reliability of the documentation these services offer through the lenses of its completeness. We collate prior knowledge of good <sup>334</sup> API documentation and assess the efficacy of such knowledge against practitioners <sup>335</sup> (**Chapter 8**). We show that these service's behaviour and evolution is not <sup>336</sup> reliably documented adequately against this knowledge. Formally, we develop the <sup>337</sup> following RQs: <sup>338</sup>

### ?

#### RQ2. Are CVS APIs sufficiently documented?

*RQ2.1.* What API documentation artefacts compromise a ‘complete’ API document, according to both literature and practitioners?

*RQ2.2.* What additional information or attributes do application developers need in CVS API documentation to make it more complete?

<sup>339</sup> Thirdly, we investigate how software developers approach using these services <sup>340</sup> and directly assess developer pain-points resulting from the nature of CVSs and <sup>341</sup> their documentation (**Chapter 5**). We show that there is a statistically significant <sup>342</sup> difference in these complaints when contrasted against more established software <sup>343</sup> engineering domains (such as web or mobile development) as expressed as questions <sup>344</sup> asked on Stack Overflow. We provide a number of exploratory avenues for <sup>345</sup> researchers, educators, software engineers and IWS providers to alleviate these <sup>346</sup> complaints based on this analysis. Further, using a data set consisting of 1,245 Stack <sup>347</sup> Overflow questions, we explore the emotional state of developers to understand <sup>348</sup> which aspects (i.e., pain-points) developers are most frustrated with (**Chapter 6**) <sup>349</sup> and the types of traps developers can fall into when substantial documentation is not <sup>350</sup> provided for specific ML models (**Chapter 7**). We formulate the following RQs:

### ?

#### RQ3. Are CVSs more misunderstood than conventional software engineering domains?

*RQ3.1.* What types of issues do application developers face most when using CVSs, as expressed as questions on Stack Overflow?

*RQ3.2.* Which of these issues are application developers most frustrated with?

*RQ3.3.* Is the distribution CVS pain-points different to established software engineering domains, such as mobile or web development?

351 Lastly, we explore several strategies to help improve CVSs reliability. Firstly,  
352 we investigate whether merging the responses of *multiple* CVSs can improve their  
353 reliability and propose a novel algorithm—based on the proportional representation  
354 method used in electoral systems—to merge labels and associated confidence values  
355 from three providers (**Chapter 9**). Secondly, we develop an integration architec-  
356 ture style (or facade) to guard against CVS evolution, and synthesise an integration  
357 workflow that addresses the concerns raised by developers in addition to embed-  
358 ding ‘complete’ documentation artefacts into the workflow’s design (**Chapters 10**  
359 and **11**). Our final RQ is:

360 **RQ4. What strategies can developers employ to integrate their appli-  
cations with CVSs while preserving robustness and reliability?**

## 1.5 Research Methodology

361 This thesis employs a mixed-methods approach using the concurrent triangulation  
362 strategy [58, 232]. The research presented consists of both empirical and non-  
363 empirical research design. This section provides a high-level overview of the re-  
364 search methodology within this thesis. Further details are provided in Section 1.7  
365 and Chapter 3.

366 Firstly, RQ1–RQ3 are all empirical, knowledge-based questions [110, 239] that  
367 aim to provide the software engineering community with a greater understanding  
368 of the phenomena surrounding CVSs from three perspectives: the nature of the ser-  
369 vices themselves, how developers perceive these services and how service providers  
370 can improve these services. We answer RQ1 using a longitudinal experiment that  
371 assesses both the services’ responses and associated documentation (complement-  
372 ing RQ2.2). We adopt qualitative and quantitative data collection; specifically (i)  
373 structured observations to quantitatively analyse the results over time, and (ii) docu-  
374 mentary research methods to inspect service documentation. Secondly, we perform  
375 systematic mapping study following the guidelines of Kitchenham and Charters  
376 [195] and Petersen et al. [283] to better understand how API documentation of these  
377 services can be improved (i.e., more complete), which targets RQ2. Based on the  
378 findings from this study, we use a systematic taxonomy development methodol-  
379 ogy specifically targeted toward software engineering [361] that structures scattered  
380 API documentation knowledge into a taxonomy. We then validate this taxonomy  
381 against practitioners using survey research, using a survey instrument inspired by  
382 Brooke’s well-established System Usability Scale [62] and contextualising it within  
383 API documentation utility, which answers RQ3.3. To answer RQ2.2, we perform  
384 an empirical application of the taxonomy to three CVSs, and therefore assess where  
385 improvements can be made. Thirdly, we adopt field survey research using repository  
386 mining of developer discussion forums (i.e., Stack Overflow) to answer RQ3, and  
387 classify these using both manual and automated techniques.

388 The second aspect of our research design involves non-empirical research, which  
389 explores a design-based question [243] to answer RQ4. As the answers to our

390 first three RQs establish a greater understanding of the nature behind CVSs from  
391 various perspectives, the strategies we design in RQ4 aims at designing more reliable  
392 integration methods so that developers can better use these cloud-based services in  
393 their applications.

## 394 1.6 Thesis Organisation

395 We organise the thesis into four parts. **Part I (The Preface)** includes introductory,  
396 background and methodology chapters. This is a *PhD by Publication*, and  
397 **Part II (Publications)** comprises of eight publications resulting from this work over  
398 Chapters 4 to 11; publications are included verbatim except for terminology and for-  
399 matting changes to better fit the suitability of a coherent thesis. **Part III (The Post-**  
400 **face)** includes the conclusion and future works chapter, as well as a list of academic  
401 studies and online artefacts referenced within the thesis. **Part IV (Appendices)** in-  
402 cludes all supplementary material, including mandatory authorship statements and  
403 ethics approval. Details of each chapter following this introductory chapter are  
404 provided in the following section.

### 405 1.6.1 Part I: Preface

#### 406 1.6.1.1 Chapter 2: Background

407 This chapter provides an overview of prior studies broadly around three key pillars:  
408 the development of an IWS, the usage of an IWS, and the nature of an IWS. We use  
409 the three perspectives of software quality (particularly, reliability), probabilistic and  
410 non-deterministic systems, and explanation and communication theory to describe  
411 prior work.

#### 412 1.6.1.2 Chapter 3: Research Methodology

413 This chapter provides a summative review of research methods and philosophical  
414 stances relevant to software engineering. We illustrate that the methods used within  
415 our publications are sound via an analysis of the methodologies used in seminal  
416 works referenced in this thesis.

### 417 1.6.2 Part II: Publications

#### 418 1.6.2.1 Chapter 4: Exploring the nature of CVSs

419 This chapter was presented at the 2019 **International Conference on Software**  
420 **Maintenance and Evolution (ICSME)** [89]. We describe an 11-month longitudi-  
421 nal experiment assessing the behavioural (run-time) issues of three popular CVSs:  
422 Google Cloud Vision [423], Amazon Rekognition [398] and Azure Computer Vi-  
423 sion [437]. By using three different data sets—two of which we curate as additional  
424 contributions—we demonstrate how the services are inconsistent amongst each other

<sup>425</sup> and within themselves. This study answers RQ1: Despite presenting conceptually-  
<sup>426</sup> similar functionality, each service behaves and produces slightly varied (inconsistent)  
<sup>427</sup> results and demonstrates non-deterministic runtime behaviour. We discuss potential  
<sup>428</sup> evolution risks to consumers of such services as the services provide non-static  
<sup>429</sup> outputs for the same inputs, thereby having significant impact to the robustness of  
<sup>430</sup> consuming applications. Further details in the study include a brief assessment into  
<sup>431</sup> the lack of sufficient detail of these concerns in their documentation.

<sup>432</sup> 1.6.2.2 *Chapter 5: Understanding developer struggles when using CVSs*

<sup>433</sup> This chapter was presented at the **2020 International Conference on Software**  
<sup>434</sup> **Engineering (ICSE)** [92]. We conduct a mining study of 1,425 Stack Overflow  
<sup>435</sup> questions that provide indications of the types frustrations that developers face when  
<sup>436</sup> integrating CVSs into their applications. To gather what their pain-points are, we use  
<sup>437</sup> two classification taxonomies that also use Stack Overflow to understand generalised  
<sup>438</sup> and documentation-specific pain-points in mature software engineering domains.  
<sup>439</sup> This study answers RQ3 in detail and provides a validation to our motivation of  
<sup>440</sup> RQ2: we validate that the *completeness* of current CVS API documentation is a  
<sup>441</sup> main concern for developers and there is insufficient explanation into the errors  
<sup>442</sup> and limitations of the service. We find that the documentation does not adequately  
<sup>443</sup> cover all aspects of the technical domain. In terms of integrating with the service,  
<sup>444</sup> developers struggle most with simple errors and ways in which to use the APIs; this  
<sup>445</sup> is in stark contrast to mature software domains. Our interpretation is that developers  
<sup>446</sup> fail to understand the IWS lifecycle and the ‘whole’ system that wraps such services.  
<sup>447</sup> We also interpret that developers have a shallower understanding of the core issues  
<sup>448</sup> within CVSs (likely due to the nuances of ML as suggested in a discussion in the  
<sup>449</sup> paper), which warrants an avenue for future work in software engineering education.

<sup>450</sup> 1.6.2.3 *Chapter 6: Ranking CVS pain-points by frustration*

<sup>451</sup> This chapter has been published as a technical report pre-print on arXiv and an  
<sup>452</sup> extended version is **in review** for submission to the **2021 International Workshop**  
<sup>453</sup> **on Emotion Awareness in Software Engineering (SEmotion)** [87]. In this work,  
<sup>454</sup> we use our dataset consisting of the 1,425 Stack Overflow questions from [92] to  
<sup>455</sup> interpret the breakdown of emotions developers express per classification of pain-  
<sup>456</sup> points conducted in Chapter 5. We find that the distribution of various emotions  
<sup>457</sup> differ per question type, and developers are most frustrated when the expectations  
<sup>458</sup> of a CVS does not match the reality of what these services actually provide, which  
<sup>459</sup> shapes our answer for RQ3.2 and thus RQ3.

<sup>460</sup> 1.6.2.4 *Chapter 7: Lessons in applying pre-trained models to Stack Overflow*

<sup>461</sup> This chapter is **in review** for the **2021 International Conference on Advanced**  
<sup>462</sup> **Information Systems Engineering (CAiSE)** [145]. This work presents a deeper  
<sup>463</sup> investigation into the classification model used within Chapter 6 to better interpret the  
<sup>464</sup> automation effort we conducted, thereby highlighting valuable lessons we learnt from

**Table 1.6:** List of publications resulting from this thesis, separated by phenomena exploration (above) and solution design (below).

Ref.	Venue	Acronym	Rank <sup>13</sup>	Published <sup>14</sup>	Chapter	RQs
[89]	35 <sup>th</sup> International Conference on Software Maintenance and Evolution	ICSME	A	Sep 2019	Chapter 4	RQ1
[88]	13 <sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Empirical Software Engineering and Measurement	ESEM	A	Sep 2019	Excluded <sup>15</sup>	RQ2.1
[92]	42 <sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Software Engineering	ICSE	A*	Jun 2020	Chapter 5	RQ3
[87]	6 <sup>th</sup> International Workshop on Emotion Awareness in Software Engineering <sup>16</sup>	SEmotion	A*	<i>In Review</i>	Chapter 6	RQ3.2
[145]	33 <sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Advanced Information Systems Engineering	CAiSE	A	<i>In Review</i>	Chapter 7	RQ3.2
[93]	IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering	TSE	Q1	Dec 2020	Chapter 8	RQ2
[266]	13 <sup>th</sup> International Conference on Web Engineering	ICWE	B	Apr 2019	Chapter 9	RQ4
[90]	28 <sup>th</sup> Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering	FSE(d) <sup>17</sup>	A*	Nov 2020	Chapter 10	RQ4
[91]	28 <sup>th</sup> Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering	FSE	A*	Nov 2020	Chapter 11	RQ4

<sup>13</sup>Measured as at Jan 2020 using CORE Conference (<http://www.core.edu.au/conference-portal>) and Scimago Rankings (<https://scimagojr.com/>).<sup>14</sup>Date of publication, if applicable.<sup>15</sup>The extended version of this conference proceeding is provided in [93], Chapter 8.<sup>16</sup>An ICSE 2021 workshop.<sup>17</sup>We abbreviate this with an added ‘d’ (for the demonstrations track) to distinguish this paper from our full FSE 2020 paper.

<sup>465</sup> performing this exercise. Specifically, we find that the classification model we used  
<sup>466</sup> in this exercise presented substantial data imbalance, which presented unexpected  
<sup>467</sup> results (namely, a high level of posts that showed the emotion, ‘love’). We identify  
<sup>468</sup> how novel documentation tooling such as model cards [246] or datasheets [134]  
<sup>469</sup> could have identified risks to our study earlier, and make suggestions needed into  
<sup>470</sup> future documentation efforts. This work presents complementary results to RQ2 to  
<sup>471</sup> help propose which documentation elements ML models (and thus IWSs) should  
<sup>472</sup> provide before diving ‘straight in’.

<sup>473</sup> *1.6.2.5 Chapter 8: Investigating improvements to CVS API documentation*

<sup>474</sup> This chapter was accepted as a paper at the **2019 International Symposium on**  
<sup>475</sup> **Empirical Software Engineering and Measurement (ESEM)** [92]. The extended  
<sup>476</sup> version of this chapter was published in the **IEEE Transactions on Software En-**  
<sup>477</sup> **gineering (TSE)** [93]. To understand where to improve CVS documentation, we  
<sup>478</sup> first need to investigate *what* makes a good API document. This short paper initially  
<sup>479</sup> answered one aspect of RQ2.1: the extent by which *academic literature* has studied  
<sup>480</sup> various API documentation artefacts. By conducting an systematic mapping study  
<sup>481</sup> resulting in 21 primary studies, we systematically develop a taxonomy that combines  
<sup>482</sup> documentation artefacts studied in scattered work into a structured framework of 5  
<sup>483</sup> dimensions and 34 weighted categorisations. We then extend this work by trian-  
<sup>484</sup> gulating the taxonomy with opinions from developers using a survey to assess the  
<sup>485</sup> efficacy of these artefacts (thereby answering the second aspect of RQ2.1). From  
<sup>486</sup> this, we assess the how well CVS providers document their APIs via a heuristic  
<sup>487</sup> validation of the taxonomy, using the three services from the ICSME publication  
<sup>488</sup> to make recommendations where documentation should be more complete, thereby  
<sup>489</sup> answering RQ2.2 (and thus RQ2).

<sup>490</sup> *1.6.2.6 Chapter 9: Merging responses of multiple CVSs*

<sup>491</sup> This chapter was presented at the **2019 International Conference on Web Engi-**  
<sup>492</sup> **neering (ICWE)** [266]. Early exploration of CVSs showed that multiple services  
<sup>493</sup> use vastly different ontologies for the same input. As an initial strategy to improve  
<sup>494</sup> the reliability of these services, we explored if merging multiple responses using  
<sup>495</sup> WordNet [245] and a novel label merging algorithm based on the proportional rep-  
<sup>496</sup> resentation approach used in political voting could make any improvements. While  
<sup>497</sup> this approach resulted in a modest improvement to reliability, it did not consider to  
<sup>498</sup> the evolution issues or developer pain-points we later identified.

<sup>499</sup> *1.6.2.7 Chapter 10: Developing a confidence thresholding tool*

<sup>500</sup> This chapter was presented at the demonstrations track of the **2020 Joint European**  
<sup>501</sup> **Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Soft-**  
<sup>502</sup> **ware Engineering (ESEC/FSE)** [90]. When integrating with a CVS, developers  
<sup>503</sup> need to select an appropriate confidence threshold suited to their use case and deter-  
<sup>504</sup> mine whether a decision should be made. An issue, however, is that these CVSs are

505 not calibrated to the specific problem-domain datasets and it is difficult for software  
506 developers to determine an appropriate confidence threshold on their problem do-  
507 main. This tool presents a workflow and supporting tool for application developers  
508 to select decision thresholds suited to their domain that—unlike existing tooling—is  
509 designed to be used in pre-development, pre-release and production. This tooling  
510 forms part of a solution to RQ4 for developers to maintain robustness and reliability  
511 in their systems.

512 **1.6.2.8 Chapter 11: Developing a CVS integration architecture**

513 This chapter was presented at the **2020 Joint European Software Engineering**  
514 **Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (ES-**  
515 **EC/FSE)** [91]. Based on the findings, we propose a set of new service error codes  
516 for describing the empirically observed error conditions of IWS based on our find-  
517 ings in Chapter 4. To achieve this, we propose a proxy server intermediary that lies  
518 between a client application and a IWS; the proxy server tactic is designed to return  
519 these error codes when substantial evolution occurs against a benchmark dataset that  
520 represents the application domain context (similar to that proposed in Chapter 10).  
521 A technical evaluation of our implementation of this architecture identifies 1,054  
522 cases of substantial evolution in confidence values and 2,461 cases of evolution in  
523 the response label sets when 331 images were sent to a CVS.

524 **1.6.3 Part III: Postface**

525 In Chapter 12, we review the contributions made in this thesis and the relevance  
526 and significance to identifying and resolving key issues when application developers  
527 integrate with CVS. We evaluate these outcomes with reference to the research goals,  
528 and discuss threats to validity of the work. Lastly, we discuss the various avenues  
529 of research arising from this work. References from literature and a list of online  
530 artefacts are provided after this concluding chapter.

531 **1.6.4 Part IV: Appendices**

532 Chapter A thru Chapter E are appendices. Chapter A provides additional material  
533 referenced within this thesis but not provided in the body. The source code for the  
534 reference architecture described in Chapter 11 is reproduced in Chapter B. The sup-  
535 plimentary materials published with Chapter 8 are reproduced in Chapter C, which  
536 also describes the list of primary sources arising in the systematic mapping study  
537 we conducted. We provide mandatory coauthor declaration forms describing the  
538 contribution breakdown for each publication within Chapter D. Chapter E contains  
539 copies of the ethics clearance for various experiments within this thesis.

540 **1.7 Research Contributions**

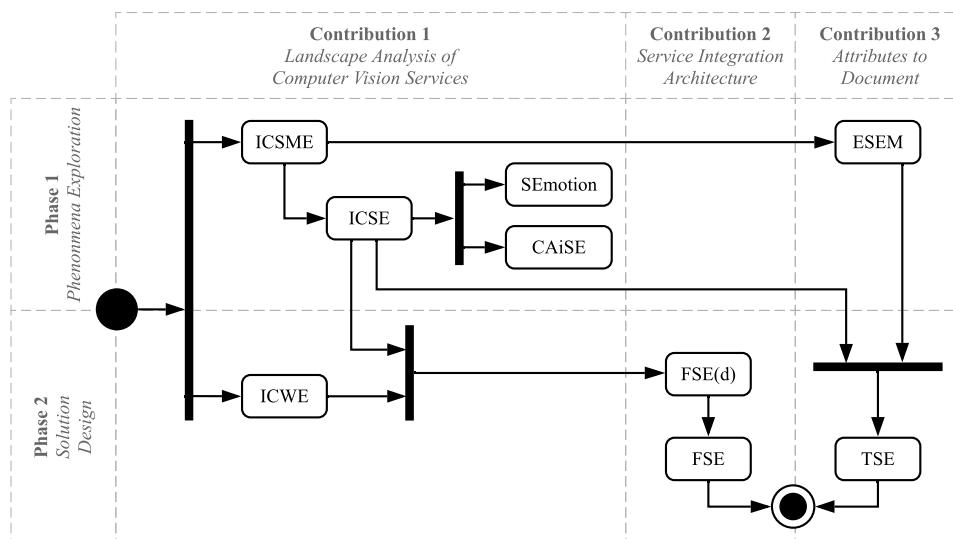
541 The outcomes of answering the four primary research questions elaborated in Sec-  
542 tion 1.4 shapes three primary contributions this thesis offers to software engineering

543 knowledge:

- 544 • An **improved understanding in the landscape of CVSs**, with respect to their  
545 runtime behaviour and evolutionary profiles.
- 546 • A novel **service integration architecture** that helps developers with integrating  
547 their applications with CVSs.
- 548 • A **key list of attributes that should be documented**, to assist CVS providers  
549 to better document their services.

550 In this section, we detail how each publication forms a coherent body of work  
551 and how each publication relates to the primary contributions made.

552 After our exploratory analysis on the nature of CVSs (Chapter 4), we proposed  
553 two sets of recommendations targeted towards two stakeholders: (i) the service  
554 *consumers* (i.e., application developers) and (ii) the service *providers*. Our sub-  
555 sequent publications arose as a two-fold investigation to develop two strategies in  
556 which developers and providers can, respectively, (i) better integrate these intelli-  
557 gent components into their applications, and (ii) how these services can be better  
558 documented. Table 1.6 provides a tabulated form of the publications and research  
559 questions addressed within this thesis; for ease of reference, we refer to the publica-  
560 tions in within this section in their abbreviated form as listed in Table 1.6. We also  
561 provide abbreviations for easier reference in this section. A high-level overview of  
562 the cohesiveness of our publications is provided in Figure 1.6.



**Figure 1.6:** Activity diagram of the coherency of our publications, how our research was conducted, and relevant connections between publications. Our two-phase structure initial phenomena exploration and a proposed solutions to issues identified from the exploration. We map the contributions within each publication to the three primary contributions of the thesis. Acronyms of each publication are provided in Table 1.6.

**563 1.7.1 Contribution 1: Landscape Analysis & Preliminary Solutions**

564 The first two bodies of work in this paper are the ICSME and ICWE papers. These  
565 two works investigated a landscape analysis CVSs from two perspectives: firstly, we  
566 conducted a longitudinal study to better understand the attributes associated with  
567 these services (ICSME)—particularly their evolution and behavioural profiles, and  
568 their potential impacts to software reliability—and tackled a preliminary solution  
569 facade to ‘merge’ responses of the services together (ICWE).

570 The ICSME paper confirmed our hypotheses that the services have a non-  
571 deterministic behavioural profile, and that the evolution occurring within the ML  
572 models powering these services are not sufficiently communicated to software en-  
573 gineers. This therefore led to follow up investigation into how developers perceive  
574 these services, and thereby determine if they are frustrated due to this lack of com-  
575 munication.

576 Our ICWE paper explored one aspect identified from the ICSME paper that  
577 we identified early on: that different services use different vocabularies to describe  
578 semantically similar objects but in different ways (e.g., ‘border collie’ vs. ‘collie’),  
579 despite offering functionally similar capabilities. We attempted to merge the re-  
580 sponse labels from these services using a proportional representation approach, and  
581 upon comparison with more naive merge approaches, we improved label-merge per-  
582 formance by an F-measure of 0.015. However, while this was an interesting outcome  
583 for a preliminary solution design, investigation from our following work suggested  
584 that standardising ontologies between service providers becomes challenging and  
585 normalising the entire ontological hierarchy of response labels would need to fall  
586 under the responsibility of a certain body (that does not exist). Further, we did  
587 not find sufficient evidence that developers would frequently switch between service  
588 providers. Therefore, we opted for a shielded relay architecture in our later design  
589 work.

**590 1.7.2 Contribution 2: Improving Documentation Attributes**

591 As mentioned, our ICSME paper found that evolutionary and non-deterministic  
592 behavioural profile of are not adequately documented in pre-trained ML model APIs  
593 documentation, and further developers find this frustrating (Chapter 6) and potential  
594 issues can arise as a result (Chapter 7). A recommendation concluding from this  
595 work was that service providers should improve their documentation, however there  
596 lacked a strategy by which they could do this, and our hypotheses that developers  
597 were actually frustrated by this lack of communication was yet to be tested. This led  
598 to two follow-up further investigations as presented in our ICSE and ESEM papers.

599 One aspect of our ICSE paper was to confirm whether developers are actually  
600 frustrated with the service’s limited API documentation. By mining Stack Overflow  
601 posts with reference to documentation issues, we adopted a 2019 documentation-  
602 related taxonomy by Aghajani et al. [3] to classify posts, and found that 47.87%  
603 of posts classified fell under the ‘completeness’ dimension of Aghajani et al.’s  
604 taxonomy. This interpretation, therefore, warranted the recommendation proposed  
605 in the ICSME paper to improve service documentation.

606 However, though improvements to more complete documentation was justified  
607 from the ICSE paper, we needed to explore exactly *what* makes a ‘complete’ API  
608 document. By conducting a systematic mapping study resulting in 4,501 results, we  
609 curated 21 primary studies that outline the facets of API documentation knowledge.  
610 From these studies, we distilled a documentation framework describing a priori-  
611 tised order of the documentation assets API’s should document that is described  
612 in our ESEM short paper. After receiving community feedback, we extended this  
613 short paper with a follow-up experiment submitted to TSE. By conducting a sur-  
614 vey with developers, we assessed our API documentation taxonomy’s efficacy with  
615 practitioner opinions, thereby producing a weighted taxonomy against *both* literature  
616 and developer sources. Lastly, we triangulated both weightings against a heuristic  
617 evaluation against common CVS providers’ documentation. This allowed us to de-  
618 duce which specific areas in existing CVS providers’ API documentation needed  
619 improvement, which was a primary contribution from our TSE article.

### 620 1.7.3 Contribution 3: Service Integration Architecture

621 Two recommendations from our ICSME study encouraged developers to test their  
622 applications with a representative ontology for their problem domain and to incorpo-  
623 rate a specialised testing and monitoring techniques into their workflow. Strategies  
624 on *how* to achieve this were explored in later studies. Following a similar approach  
625 to our solution of improved API documentation, we validated the substantiveness of  
626 our recommendations using our mining study of Stack Overflow (our ICSE paper)  
627 to help inform us of generalised issues developers face whilst integrating CVSs into  
628 their applications. To achieve this, we used a Stack Overflow post classification tax-  
629 onomy proposed by Beyer et al. [40] into seven categories, where 28.9% and 20.37%  
630 of posts asked issues regarding how to use the CVS API and conceptual issues be-  
631 hind CVSs, respectively. Developers presented an insufficient understanding of the  
632 non-deterministic runtime behaviour, functional capability, and limitations of these  
633 services and are not aware of key computer vision terminology. When contrasted  
634 to more conventional domains such as mobile-app development, the spread of these  
635 issues vary substantially.

636 We proposed two technical solutions in our two FSE papers to help alleviate  
637 this issue. Firstly, our FSE demonstrations paper—FSE(d) for short—provides a  
638 workflow for developers to better select an appropriate confidence threshold, and  
639 thus decision boundary, calibrated for their particular use case. In our ESEC/FSE  
640 paper, we provide a reference architecture for developers to guard against the non-  
641 deterministic issues that may ‘leak’ into their applications. This architecture tactic  
642 proposes a client-server intermediary proxy server, similar to the style proposed in  
643 our ICWE paper. However, unlike the ICWE paper that uses proportional repre-  
644 sentation approach to modify multiple sources, our FSE paper proposes a guarded  
645 relay, whereby a single service is used, and the proxy server maintains a lifecycle to  
646 monitor evolution issues identified in ICSME and should be benchmarked against  
647 the developer’s dataset (i.e., against the particular application domain) as suggested  
648 in FSE(d). For robust component composition, this architecture tactic handles four

649 key requirements: (i) it clearly defines erroneous conditions that occur when evo-  
650 lution occurs in CVSs; (ii) it notifies of behavioural changes in the service; (iii) it  
651 monitors the service for change and substantial impact this may have to the client  
652 application; and (iv) is flexible enough to be implemented and adaptable to any client  
653 application or specific intelligent service to facilitate reuse. Both FSE papers serve  
654 as two primary contributions to RQ4.



## CHAPTER 2

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### Background

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659 In Chapter 1, we defined a common set of (artificial) intelligence-based cloud ser-  
660 vices that we label intelligent web services (IWSs). Specifically, we scope the  
661 primary body of this study’s work on computer vision services (CVSs) (e.g., Google  
662 Cloud Vision [423], AWS Rekognition [398], Azure Computer Vision [437], Wat-  
663 son Visual Recognition [433] etc.). We claim developers have not yet internalised  
664 the nuances of working with components that have a probabilistic behaviour ( $2 + 2$   
665 *always equals 4*) whereas an IWS’s ‘intelligence’ component (a black box) returns  
666 probabilistic results ( $2 + 2$  *might equal 4 with a confidence of 95%*). Thus, there is a  
667 mindset mismatch between probabilistic results (from the API provider) and results  
668 interpreted with certainty (from the API consumer).

669 What affect does this anchor mismatch have on the developer’s approach towards  
670 building probabilistic software? What can we learn from common software engi-  
671 neering practices (e.g., [289, 336]) that apply to resolve this mismatch and thereby  
672 improve quality, such as verification & validation (V&V)? Chiefly, we consider this  
673 question around three lenses of software engineering: creating an IWS, using an  
674 IWS, and the nature of IWSs themselves.

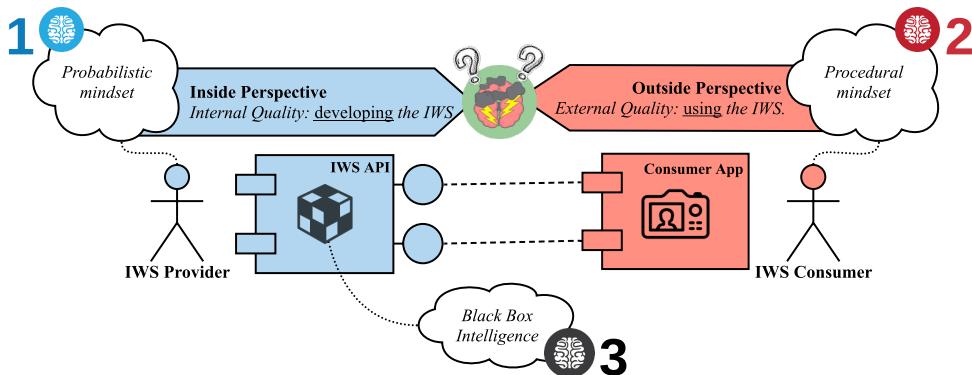
675 Our chief concern lies with interaction and integration between IWS providers  
676 and consumers, the nature of applications built using an IWS, and the impact this  
677 has on software quality. We triangulate this around three pillars, which we diagram-  
678 matically represent in Figure 2.1.

679 **(1) The development of the IWS.** We investigate the internal quality attributes  
680 of creating an IWS from the IWS *provider’s* perspective. That is, we ask if  
681 existing verification techniques are sufficient enough to ensure that the IWS  
682 being developed actually satisfies the IWS consumer’s needs and if the internal  
683 perspective of creating the system with a procedural mindset clashes with the  
684 outside perspective (i.e., pillar 2).

685 **(2) The usage of the IWS.** We investigate the external quality attributes of using  
686 an IWS from the IWS *consumer’s* perspective. That is, we ask if existing

687 validation techniques are sufficient enough to ensure that the end-users can  
 688 actually use an IWS to build their software in the ways they expect the IWS to  
 689 work.

690 **(3) The nature of an IWS.** We investigate what standard software engineering  
 691 practices apply when developing probabilistic systems. That is, we tackle what  
 692 best practices exist when developing systems that are inherently stochastic and  
 693 probabilistic, i.e., the ‘black box’ intelligence itself.



**Figure 2.1:** The three pillars by which we anchor the background: (1) developing an IWS with a probabilistic mindset by the IWS provider; (2) the use of a IWS with a procedural mindset by the IWS consumer; (3) the nature of a IWS itself.

694 Does a clash of procedural consumer mindsets who use a IWS and the proba-  
 695 bilistic provider mindsets who develop them exist? And what impact does this have  
 696 on the inside and outside perspective? Throughout this chapter, we will review these  
 697 three core pillars due to such mindset mismatch from the anchoring perspective of  
 698 software quality, particularly around verification & validation (V&V) and related  
 699 quality attributes, probabilistic and non-deterministic software and the nature of  
 700 APIs.

## 701 2.1 Software Quality

*Quality... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is.*

ROBERT PIRSIG, 1974 [287]

702 The philosophical viewpoint of ‘quality’ remains highly debated and there are mul-  
 703 tiple facets to perceive this complex concept [133]. Transcendentally, a viewpoint  
 704 like that of Pirsig’s above shows that quality is not tangible but still recognisable; it’s  
 705 hard to explicitly define but you know when it’s missing. The International Orga-  
 706 nization for Standardization provides a breakdown of seven universally-applicable  
 707 principles that defines quality for organisations, developers, customers and training  
 708 providers [172]. More pertinently, the 1986 ISO standard for quality was simply  
 709 “the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or

710 implied needs” [171].

711 Using this sentence, what characteristics exist for non-deterministic IWSs like  
712 that of a CVS? How do we know when the system has satisfied its ‘stated or implied  
713 needs’ when the system can only give us uncertain probabilities in its outputs? Such  
714 answers can be derived from related definitions—such as ‘conformance to specifica-  
715 tion or requirements’ [86, 139], ‘meeting or exceeding customer expectation’ [37],  
716 or ‘fitness for use’ [185]—but these then still depend on the solution description or  
717 requirements specification, and thus the same questions still apply.

718 *Software* quality is somewhat more concrete. Pressman [289] adapted the  
719 manufacturing-oriented view of quality from [38] and phrased software quality  
720 under three core pillars:

- 721 • **effective software processes**, where the infrastructure that supports the cre-  
722 ation of quality software needs is effective, i.e., poor checks and balances,  
723 poor change management and a lack of technical reviews (all that lie in the  
724 *process* of building software, rather than the software itself) will inevitably  
725 lead to a poor quality product and vice-versa;
- 726 • **building useful software**, where quality software has fully satisfied the end-  
727 goals and requirements of all stakeholders in the software (be it explicit or  
728 implicit requirements) *in addition to* delivering these requirements in reliable  
729 and error-free ways; and lastly
- 730 • **adding value to both the producer and user**, where quality software provides  
731 a tangible value to the community or organisation using it to expedite a  
732 business process (increasing profitability or availability of information) *and*  
733 provides value to the software producers creating it whereby customer support,  
734 maintenance effort, and bug fixes are all reduced in production.

735 In the context of a non-deterministic IWS, however, are any of the above actually  
736 guaranteed? Given that the core of a system built using an IWS is fully dependent  
737 on the *probability* that an outcome is true, what assurances must be put in place to  
738 provide developers with the checks and balances needed to ensure that their software  
739 is built with quality? For this answer, we re-explore the concept of verification &  
740 validation (V&V).

### 741 2.1.1 Validation and Verification

742 To explain V&V, we analogously recount a tale given by Pham [285] on his works  
743 on reliability. A high-school student sat a standardised test that was sent to 350,0000  
744 students [348]. A multiple-choice algebraic equation problem used a variable, *a*,  
745 and intended that students *assume* that the variable was non-negative. Without  
746 making this assumption explicit, there were two correct answers to the multiple  
747 choice answer. Up to 45,000 students had their scores retrospectively boosted by up  
748 to 30 points for those who ‘incorrectly’ answered, however, outcomes of a student’s  
749 higher education were, thereby, affected by this one oversight in quality assessment.  
750 The examiners wrote a poor question due to poor process standards to check if  
751 their ‘correct’ answers were actually correct. The examiners “didn’t build the right

<sup>752</sup> product” nor did they “build the product right” by writing a poor question and failing  
<sup>753</sup> to ensure quality standards, in the phrases Boehm [48] coined.

<sup>754</sup> This story describes the issues with the cost of quality [47] and the importance  
<sup>755</sup> of V&V: just as the poorly written exam question had such a high toll on the 45,000  
<sup>756</sup> unlucky students, so does poorly written software in production. As summarised by  
<sup>757</sup> Pressman [289], data sourced from Digital [80] in a large-scale application showed  
<sup>758</sup> that the difference in cost to fix a bug in development versus system testing is  
<sup>759</sup> \$6,159 per error. In safety-critical systems, such as self-driving cars or clinical  
<sup>760</sup> decision support systems, this cost skyrockets due to the extreme discipline needed  
<sup>761</sup> to minimise error [351].

<sup>762</sup> Formally, we refer to the IEEE Standard Glossary of Software Engineering  
<sup>763</sup> Terminology [168] for to define V&V:

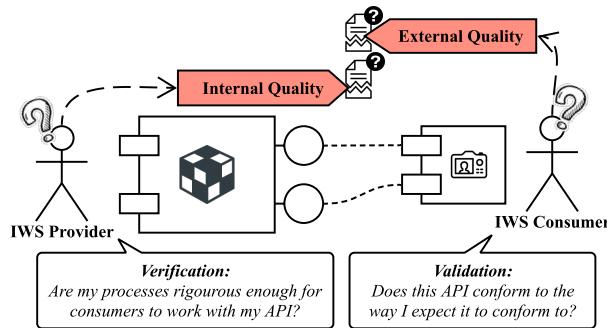
<sup>764</sup> **verification**      The process of evaluating a system or component to determine  
<sup>765</sup> whether the products of a given development phase satisfy the  
<sup>766</sup> conditions imposed at the start of that phase.

<sup>767</sup> **validation**      The process of evaluating a system or component during or at the  
<sup>768</sup> end of the development process to determine whether it satisfies  
<sup>769</sup> specified requirements.

<sup>770</sup> Thus, in the context of an IWS, we have two perspectives on V&V: that of the API  
<sup>771</sup> provider and consumer (Figure 2.2).

<sup>772</sup> The verification process of API providers ‘leak’ out to the context of the de-  
<sup>773</sup> veloper’s project dependent on the IWS. Poor verification in the *internal quality*  
<sup>774</sup> of the IWS will entail poor process standards, such as poor definitions and termi-  
<sup>775</sup> nology used, support tooling and description of documentations [336]. Though  
<sup>776</sup> it is commonplace for providers to have a ‘ship-first-fix-later’ mentality of ‘good-  
<sup>777</sup> enough’ software [364], the consequence of doing so leads to consumers absorbing  
<sup>778</sup> the cost. Thus API providers must ensure that their verification strategies  
<sup>779</sup> are rigorous enough for the consumers in the myriad contexts they wish to use  
<sup>780</sup> it in. Studies have considered V&V in the context of web services on the cloud  
<sup>781</sup> [21, 70, 71, 121, 157, 256, 258, 387], though little have recently considered how  
<sup>782</sup> adding ‘intelligence’ to these services affects existing proposed frameworks and  
<sup>783</sup> solutions. For a CVS, what might this entail? Which assurances are given to the  
<sup>784</sup> consumers, and how is that information communicated? To verify if the service is  
<sup>785</sup> working correctly, does that mean that we need to deploy the system first to get a  
<sup>786</sup> wider range of data, given the stochastic nature of the black box?

<sup>787</sup> Likewise, the validation perspective comes from that of the consumer. While the  
<sup>788</sup> former perspective is of creation, this perspective comes from end-user (developer)  
<sup>789</sup> expectation. As described in Chapter 1, a developer calls the IWS component using  
<sup>790</sup> an API endpoint. Again, the mindset problem arises; does the developer know what  
<sup>791</sup> to expect in the output? What are their expectations for their specific context? In  
<sup>792</sup> the area of non-deterministic systems of probabilistic output, can the developer be  
<sup>793</sup> assured that what they enter in a testing phase outcome the same result when in  
<sup>794</sup> production?



**Figure 2.2:** The ‘leakage’ of internal quality into the API consumer’s product and external quality imposing on the API provider.

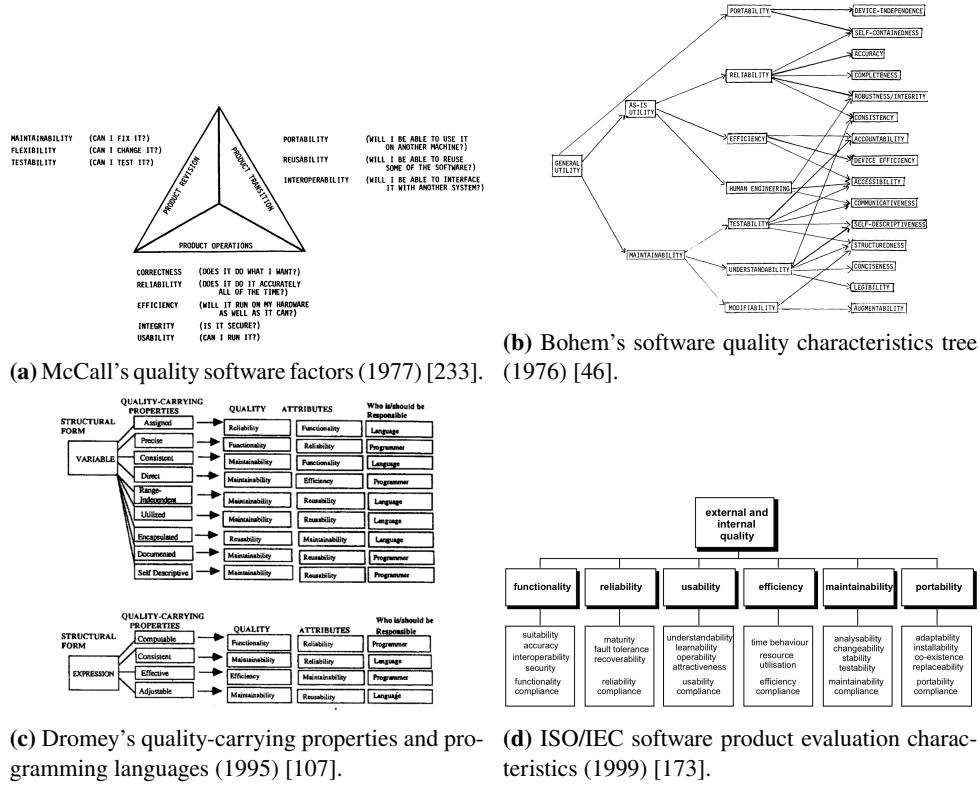
795 Therefore, just as the test answers were both correct and incorrect at the  
 796 same time, so is the same with IWSs returning a probabilistic result: no result is  
 797 certain. While V&V has been investigated in the area of mathematical and earth  
 798 sciences for numerical probabilistic models and natural systems [268, 314], from  
 799 the software engineering literature, little work has been achieved to look at the  
 800 surrounding area of probabilistic systems hidden behind API calls.

801 Now that a developer is using a probabilistic system behind a deterministic API  
 802 call, what does it mean in the context of V&V? Do current verification approaches  
 803 and tools suffice, and if not, how do we fix it? From a validation perspective of  
 804 ML and end-users, after a model is trained and an inference is given and if the  
 805 output data point is incorrect, how will end users report a defect in the system?  
 806 Compared to deterministic systems where such tooling as defect reporting forms are  
 807 filled out (i.e., given input data in a given situation and the output data was X), how  
 808 can we achieve similar outputs when the system is not non-deterministic? A key  
 809 problem with the probabilistic mindset is that once a model is ‘fixed’ by retraining  
 810 it, while one data-point may be fixed, others may now have been effected, thereby  
 811 not ensuring 100% validation. Thus, due to the unpredictable and blurry nature of  
 812 probabilistic systems, V&V must be re-thought out extensively.

### 813 2.1.2 Quality Attributes and Models

814 Similarly, quality models are used to capture internal and external quality attributes  
 815 via measurable metrics. Is a similar issue reflected from that of V&V due to  
 816 nondeterministic systems? As there is no ‘one’ definition of quality, there have been  
 817 differing perspectives with literature placing varying value on disparate attributes.

818 Quality attribute assessment models (like those shown in Figure 2.3) are an early  
 819 concept in software engineering, and systematically evaluating software quality ap-  
 820 pears as early as 1968 [313]. Rubey and Hartwick’s 1968 study introduced the phrase  
 821 ‘attributes’ as a “prose expression of the particular quality of desired software” (as  
 822 worded by Boehm et al. [46]) and ‘metrics’ as mathematical parameters on a scale of



**Figure 2.3:** A brief overview of the development of software quality models since 1977.

0 to 100. Early attempts to categorise wider factors under a framework was proposed by McCall, Richards, and Walters in the late 1970s [74, 233]. This model described quality from the three perspectives of product revision (*how can we keep the system operational?*), transition (*how can we migrate the system as needed?*) and operation (*how effective is the system at achieving its tasks?*) (Figure 2.3a). The model also introduced 11 attributes alongside numerous direct and indirect measures to help quantify quality. This model was further developed by Boehm et al. [46] who independently developed a similar model, starting with an initial set of 11 software characteristics. It further defined candidate measurements of Fortran code to such characteristics, taking shape in a tree-like structure as in Figure 2.3b. In the mid-1990s, Dromey's interpretation [107] defined a set of quality-carrying properties with structural forms associated to specific programming languages and conventions (Figure 2.3c). The model also supported quality defect identification and proposed an improved auditing method to automate defect detection for code editors in integrated development environments (IDEs). As the need for quality models became prevalent, the International Organization for Standardization standardised software quality under ISO/IEC-9126 [173] (the Software Product Evaluation Characteristics, Figure 2.3d), which has since recently been revised to ISO/IEC-25010 with the introduction of the Systems and software Quality Requirements and Evaluation (SQuaRE) model [170], separating quality into *Product Quality* (consisting of eight

<sup>843</sup> quality characteristics and 31 sub-characteristics) and *Quality In Use* (consisting of  
<sup>844</sup> five quality characteristics and 9 sub-characteristics). An extensive review on the  
<sup>845</sup> development of quality models in software engineering is given in [6].

<sup>846</sup> Of all the models described, there is one quality attribute that relates most  
<sup>847</sup> with our narrative of IWS quality: reliability. Reliability is the primary quality  
<sup>848</sup> factor investigated within this thesis (see Section 1.4). Both McCall and Boehm's  
<sup>849</sup> quality models have sub-characteristics of reliability relating to the primary research  
<sup>850</sup> questions that investigate the *robustness*, *consistency* and *completeness*<sup>1</sup> of CVSs  
<sup>851</sup> and its associated documentation. Moreover, the definition of reliability is similar  
<sup>852</sup> among all quality models:

<sup>853</sup> **McCall et al.** Extent to which a program can be expected to perform its in-  
<sup>854</sup> tended function with required precision [233].

<sup>855</sup> **Boehm et al.** Code possesses the characteristic *reliability* to the extent that  
<sup>856</sup> it can be expected to perform its intended functions satisfac-  
<sup>857</sup> torily [46].

<sup>858</sup> **Dromey** Functionality implies reliability. The reliability of software is  
<sup>859</sup> therefore dependent on the same properties as functionality, that  
<sup>860</sup> is, the correctness properties of a program [107].

<sup>861</sup> **ISO/IEC-9126** The capability of the software product to maintain a specified  
<sup>862</sup> level of performance when used under specified conditions [173].

<sup>863</sup> These definitions strongly relate to the system's solution description in that  
<sup>864</sup> reliability is the ability to maintain its *functionality* under given conditions. But what  
<sup>865</sup> defines reliability when the nature of an IWS in itself is inherently unpredictable  
<sup>866</sup> due to its probabilistic implementation? Can a non-deterministic system ever be  
<sup>867</sup> considered reliable when the output of the system is uncertain? How do developers  
<sup>868</sup> perceive these quality aspects of reliability in the context of such systems? A system  
<sup>869</sup> cannot be perceived as 'reliable' if the system cannot reproduce the same results due  
<sup>870</sup> to a probabilistic nature. Therefore, we believe the literature of quality models does  
<sup>871</sup> not suffice in the context of IWS reliability; a CVS can interpret an image of a dog  
<sup>872</sup> as a 'Dog' one day, but what if the next it interprets such image more specifically to  
<sup>873</sup> the breed, such as 'Border Collie'? Does this now mean the system is unreliable?

<sup>874</sup> Moreover, defining these systems in themselves is challenging when require-  
<sup>875</sup> ments specifications and solution descriptions are dependent on nondeterministic  
<sup>876</sup> and probabilistic algorithms. We discuss this further in Section 2.2.

### <sup>877</sup> 2.1.3 Reliability in Computer Vision

<sup>878</sup> Testing computer vision deep-learning reliability is an area explored typically  
<sup>879</sup> through the use of adversarial examples [346]. These input examples are where

---

<sup>1</sup>In McCall's model, completeness is a sub-characteristic of the 'correctness' quality factor; however in Boehm's model it is a sub-characteristic of reliability. For consistency in this thesis, *completeness* is referred in the Boehm interpretation.

880 images are slightly perturbed to maximise prediction error but are still interpretable  
881 to humans. Refer to Figure 2.4.

882 Google Cloud Vision, for instance, fails to correctly classify adversarial examples  
883 when noise is added to the original images [163]. Rosenfeld et al. [311] illustrated  
884 that inserting synthetic foreign objects to input images (e.g., a cartoon elephant)  
885 can alter classification output. Wang et al. [367] performed similar attacks on a  
886 transfer-learning approach of facial recognition by modifying pixels of a celebrity’s  
887 face to be recognised as a different celebrity, all while still retaining the same human-  
888 interpretable original celebrity. Su et al. [341] used the ImageNet database to show  
889 that 41.22% of images drop in confidence when just a *single pixel* is changed in the  
890 input image; and similarly, Eykholt et al. [114] recently showed similar results that  
891 made a CNN interpret a stop road-sign (with mimicked graffiti) as a 45mph speed  
892 limit sign.

893 Thus, the state-of-the-art computer vision techniques may not be reliable enough  
894 for safety critical applications (such as self-driving cars) as they do not handle inten-  
895 tional or unintentional adversarial attacks. Moreover, as such adversarial examples  
896 exist in the physical world [114, 207], “the real world may be adversarial enough”  
897 [284] to fool such software.

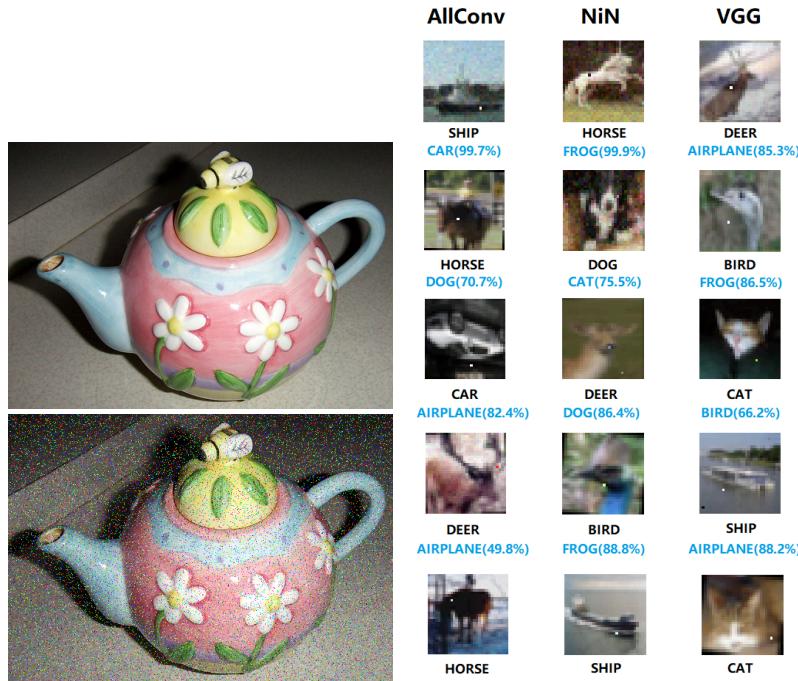
## 898 2.2 Probabilistic and Nondeterministic Systems

899 Probabilistic and nondeterministic systems are those by which, for the same given  
900 input, different outcomes may result. The underlying models that power an IWS  
901 are treated as though they are nondeterministic; Chapter 2 introduces IWSs as  
902 essentially black-box behaviour that can change over time. As such, we adopt the  
903 nondeterministic behaviour that they present.

### 904 2.2.1 Interpreting the Uninterpretable

905 As the rise of applied AI increases, the need for engineering interpretability around  
906 models becomes paramount, chiefly from an external quality perspective that the  
907 *reliability* of the system can be inspected by end-users. Model interpretability has  
908 been stressed since early machine learning research in the late 1980s and 1990s (such  
909 as Quinlan [291] and Michie [244]), and although there has since been a significant  
910 body of work in the area [19, 35, 53, 67, 98, 116, 127, 137, 183, 216, 220, 231, 279,  
911 300, 312, 333, 362, 365], it is evident that ‘accuracy’ or model ‘confidence’ is still  
912 used as a primary criterion for AI evaluation [166, 176, 335]. Much research into  
913 neural network (NN) or support vector machine (SVM) development stresses that  
914 ‘good’ models are those with high accuracy. However, is accuracy enough to justify  
915 a model’s quality?

916 To answer this, we revisit what it means for a model to be accurate. Accuracy  
917 is an indicator for estimating how well a model’s algorithm will work with future  
918 or unforeseen data. It is quantified in the AI testing stage, whereby the algorithm  
919 is tested against cases known by humans to have ground truth but such cases are  
920 unknown by the algorithm. In production, however, all cases are unknown by both



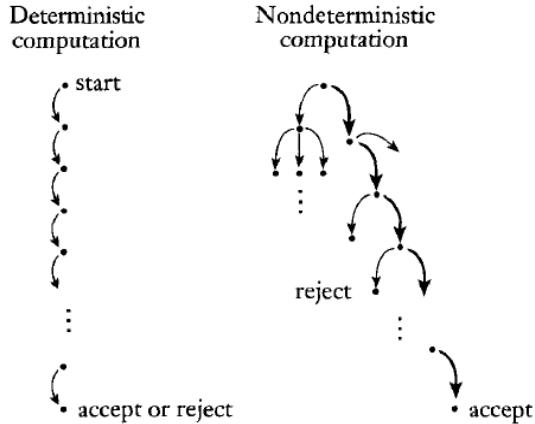
**(a)** Adding 10% impulse noise to an image of a teapot changes Google Cloud Vision's label from *teapot* (above) to *biology* (below) [163].

**(b)** One-pixel attacks applied to three neural network (NN): AllConv, NiN and VGG [341].



**(c)** Adversarial examples to trick face recognition from the source to target images [367].

**Figure 2.4:** Sample adversarial examples in state-of-the-art computer vision studies.



**Figure 2.5:** A deterministic system (left) always returns the same result in the same amount of steps. A nondeterministic system does not guarantee the same outcome, even with the same input data. Source: [118].

the algorithm *and* the humans behind it, and therefore a single value of quality is “not reliable if the future dataset has a probability distribution significantly different from past data” [123], a problem commonly referred to as the *datashift* problem [318]. Analogously, Freitas [123] provides the following description of the problem:

The military trained [a NN] to classify images of tanks into enemy and friendly tanks. However, when the [NN] was deployed in the field (corresponding to “future data”), it had a poor accuracy rate. Later, users noted that all photos of friendly (enemy) tanks were taken on a sunny (overcast) day. I.e., the [NN] learned to discriminate between the colors of the sky in sunny vs. overcast days! If the [NN] had output a comprehensible model (explaining that it was discriminating between colors at the top of the images), such a trivial mistake would immediately be noted. [123]

So, why must we interpret models? While the formal definition of what it means to be *interpretable* is still somewhat disparate (though some suggestions have been proposed [220]), what is known is (i) there exists a critical trade-off between accuracy and interpretability [103, 122, 146, 182, 190, 389], and (ii) a single quantifiable value cannot satisfy the subjective needs of end-users [123]. As ever-growing domains ML become widespread<sup>2</sup>, these applications engage end-users for real-world goals, unlike the aims in early ML research where the aim was to get AI working in the first place. In safety-critical systems where AI provide informativeness to humans to make the final call (see [72, 167, 193]), there is often a mismatch between the formal objectives of the model (e.g., to minimise error) and complex real-world goals, where other considerations (such as the human factors and cognitive science

<sup>2</sup>In areas such as medicine [34, 67, 112, 177, 183, 211, 280, 302, 362, 384, 393], bioinformatics [102, 124, 179, 189, 345], finance [19, 100, 167] and customer analytics [216, 365].

945 behind explanations<sup>3</sup>) are not realised: model optimisation is only worthwhile if they  
946 “actually solve the original [human-centred] task of providing explanation” [257]  
947 to end-users. **Therefore, when human-decision makers must be interpretable**  
948 **themselves [303], any AI they depend on must also be interpretable.**

949 Recently, discussion behind such a notion to provide legal implications of in-  
950 terpretability is topical. Doshi-Velez et al. [106] discuss when explanations are not  
951 provided from a legal stance—for instance, those affected by algorithmic-based de-  
952 cisions have a ‘right to explanation’ [228, 366] under the European Union’s GDPR<sup>4</sup>.  
953 But, explanations are not the only way to ensure AI accountability: theoretical guar-  
954 antees (mathematical proofs) or statistical evidence can also serve as guarantees  
955 [106], however, in terms of explanations, what form they take and how they are  
956 proven correct are still open questions [220].

### 957 2.2.2 Explanation and Communication

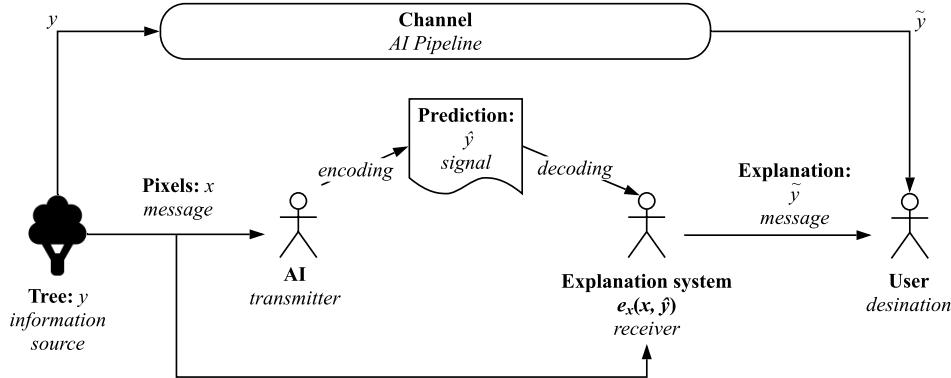
958 From a software engineering perspective, explanations and interpretability are, by  
959 definition, inherently communication issues: what lacks here is a consistent interface  
960 between the AI system and the person using it. The ability to encode ‘common  
961 sense reasoning’ [234] into programs today has been achieved, but *decoding* that  
962 information is what still remains problematic. At a high level, Shannon and Weaver’s  
963 theory of communication [326] applies, just as others have done with similar issues in  
964 the software engineering realm [248, 378] (albeit to the domain of visual notations).  
965 Humans map the world in higher-level concepts easily when compared to AI systems:  
966 while we think of a tree first (not the photons of light or atoms that make up the  
967 tree), an algorithm simply sees pixels, and not the concrete object [106] and the AI  
968 interprets the tree inversely to humans. Therefore, the interpretation or explanation  
969 is done inversely: humans do not explain the individual neurons fired to explain their  
970 predictions, and therefore the algorithmic transparent explanations of AI algorithms  
971 (“*which neurons were fired to make this AI think this tree is a tree?*”) do not work  
972 here.

973 Therefore, to the user (as mapped using Shannon and Weaver’s theory), an AI  
974 pipeline (the communication *channel*) begins with a real-world concept,  $y$ , that acts  
975 as an *information source*. This information source is fed in as a *message*,  $x$ , (as pixels)  
976 to an AI system (the *transmitter*). The transmitter encodes the pixels to a prediction,  
977  $\hat{y}$ , the *signal* of the message. This signal is decoded by the *receiver*, an explanation  
978 system,  $e_x(x, \hat{y})$ , that tailors the prediction with the given input data to the intended  
979 end user (the *destination*) as an explanation,  $\tilde{y}$ , another type of *message*. Therefore,  
980 the user only sees the channel as an input/output pipeline of real-world objects,  $y$ ,  
981 and explanations,  $\tilde{y}$ , tailored to *them*, without needing to see the inner-mechanics of  
982 a prediction  $\hat{y}$ . We present this diagrammatically in Figure 2.6.

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<sup>3</sup>Interpretations and explanations are often used interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.eugdpr.org> last accessed 13 August 2018.



**Figure 2.6:** Theory of AI communication from information source,  $y$ , to intended user as explanations,  $\hat{y}$ .

### 983 2.2.3 Mechanics of Model Interpretation

984 How do we interpret models? Methods for developing interpretation models include:  
 985 decision trees [60, 84, 154, 225, 292], decision tables [20, 216] and decision sets  
 986 [209, 257]; input gradients, gradient vectors or sensitivity analysis [19, 213, 300,  
 987 312, 323]; exemplars [125, 194]; generalised additive models [72]; classification  
 988 (*if-then*) rules [56, 81, 271, 355, 381] and falling rule lists [333]; nearest neighbours  
 989 [231, 295, 324, 376, 390] and Naïve Bayes analysis [34, 76, 115, 126, 158, 201, 211,  
 990 393].

991 Cross-domain studies have assessed the interpretability of these techniques  
 992 against end-users, measuring response time, accuracy in model response and user  
 993 confidence [7, 124, 155, 167, 231, 317, 342, 365], although it is generally agreed  
 994 that decision rules and decision tables provide the most interpretation in non-linear  
 995 models such as SVMs or NNs [124, 231, 365]. For an extensive survey of the benefits  
 996 and fallbacks of these techniques, we refer to Freitas [123], Doshi-Velez et al. [106]  
 997 and Doshi-Velez and Kim [105].

998 An important factor in model interpretation is to avoid over-reliance, and thus,  
 999 one mechanism of model interpretation is to reduce explanations altogether. For  
 1000 example, Bussone et al. [67] showed that, in clinical decision support systems,  
 1001 confidence values alone only results in a slight effect on trust and reliance of a  
 1002 system. However, having overly detailed explanations may also cause over-reliance  
 1003 on systems if explanations are detailed but not necessarily true [67]. Hence, a  
 1004 mechanism of model interpretation for the purpose of ensuring trust and reliance is  
 1005 to deliberately show *fewer* explanations or *incorrect* explanations, thereby avoiding  
 1006 over-reliance. A balance between under-explained and overly-explained models is  
 1007 required. This is to encourage intuition in users of a system; similarly, in Ribeiro et al.  
 1008 [300], it was shown that accuracy alone is not always the best way to ascertain trust.  
 1009 Thus, intuitive factors are also mechanisms that can be encoded into explainable  
 1010 models.

## 1011 2.3 Application Programming Interfaces

1012 Application programming interfaces (APIs) are the interface between a developer  
1013 needs and the software components at their disposal [14] by abstracting the underlying  
1014 component behind a subroutine, protocol or specific tool. Therefore, it is natural  
1015 to assess internal quality (and external quality if the software is in itself a service to  
1016 be used by other developers—in this case an IWS) is therefore directly related to the  
1017 quality the API offers [200].

1018 Good APIs are known to be intuitive and require less documentation browsing  
1019 [286], thereby increasing developer productivity. Conversely, poor APIs are those  
1020 that are hard to interpret, thereby reducing developer productivity and product quality.  
1021 The consequences of this have shown a higher demand of technical support (as  
1022 measured in [159]) that, ultimately, causes the maintenance to be far more expensive,  
1023 a phenomenon widely known in software engineering economics (see Section 2.1.1).

1024 While there are different types of APIs, such as software library/framework  
1025 APIs for building desktop software, operating system APIs for interacting with the  
1026 operating system, remote APIs for communication of varying technologies through  
1027 common protocols, we focus on web APIs for communication of resources over  
1028 the web (being the common architecture of cloud-based services). Further information  
1029 on the development, usage and documentation of web APIs is provided in  
1030 Section A.1.

### 1031 2.3.1 API Usability

1032 If a developer doesn't understand the overarching concepts of the context behind  
1033 the API they wish to use, then they cannot formulate what gaps in their knowledge  
1034 is missing. For example, a developer that knows nothing about ML techniques in  
1035 computer vision cannot effectively formulate queries to help bridge those gaps in  
1036 their understanding to figure out more about the CVS they wish to use.

1037 Balancing the understanding of the information need (both conscious and unconscious), how to phrase that need and how to query it in an information retrieval  
1038 system is concept long studied in the information sciences [353]. In API design,  
1039 the most common form to convey knowledge to developers is through annotated  
1040 code examples and overviews to a platform's architectural and design decisions  
1041 [57, 104, 254, 306] though these studies have not effectively communicated *why*  
1042 these artefacts are important. What makes the developer *conceptually understand*  
1043 these artefacts?

1045 Robillard and Deline [306] conducted a multi-phase, mixed-method approach to  
1046 create knowledge grounded in the professional experience of 440 software engineers  
1047 at Microsoft of varying experience to determine what makes APIs hard to learn,  
1048 the results of which previously published in an earlier report [305]. Their results  
1049 demonstrate that 'documentation-related obstacles' are the biggest hurdle in learning  
1050 new APIs. One of these implications are the *intent documentation* of an API (i.e.,  
1051 *what is the intent for using a particular API?*) and such documentation is required  
1052 only where correct API usage is not self-evident, where advanced uses of the API are

1053 documented (but not the intent), and where performance aspects of the API impact  
1054 the application developed using it. They conclude that professional developers do  
1055 not struggle with learning the *mechanics* of the API, but in the *understanding* of how  
1056 the API fits in upwards to its problem domain and downward to its implementation:

1057     *In the upwards direction, the study found that developers need help  
1058 mapping desired scenarios in the problem domain to the content of the  
1059 API, and in understanding what scenarios or usage patterns the API  
1060 provider intends and does not intend to support. In the downwards  
1061 direction, developers want to understand how the API's implementation  
1062 consumes resources, reports errors and has side effects.* [306]

1063 These results particularly corroborate to that of previous studies where devel-  
1064 opers quote that they feel that existing learning content currently focuses on “*how*  
1065 to do things, not necessarily *why*” [265]. This thereby reiterates the conceptual  
1066 understanding of an API as paramount.

1067 A later study by Ko and Riche [199] assessed the importance of a programmer’s  
1068 conceptual understanding of the background behind the task before implementing the  
1069 task itself, a notion that we find most relevant for users of IWS APIs. While the study  
1070 did not focus on developing web APIs (rather implementing a Bluetooth application  
1071 using platform-agnostic terminology), the study demonstrated how developers show  
1072 little confidence in their own metacognitive judgements to understand and assess the  
1073 feasibility of the intent of the API and understand the vocabulary and concepts within  
1074 the domain (i.e., wireless connectivity). This indecision over what search results  
1075 were relevant in their searches ultimately hindered their progress implementing the  
1076 functionality, again decreasing productivity. Ko and Riche suggest to improve API  
1077 usability by introducing the background of the API and its relevant concepts using  
1078 glossaries linked to tutorials to each of the major concepts, and then relate it back to  
1079 how to implement the particular functionality. Thus, an analysis of the conceptual  
1080 understanding of IWS APIs by a range of developers (from beginner to professional)  
1081 is critical to best understand any differences between existing studies and those that  
1082 are nondeterministic.

## 1083 2.4 Summary

1084 This background chapter explored nuances of interacting and integrating with proba-  
1085 bilistic components, namely IWSs, and the impacts this may have to software quality.  
1086 Firstly, we explored both internal and external quality attributes of IWSs and how  
1087 leakage of internal quality may affect the external quality of client applications.  
1088 We discussed how V&V approaches can assist in improving quality assurance of  
1089 probabilistic components, and reviewed how various software quality attributes and  
1090 models emphasise reliability of systems and their associated documentation (namely,  
1091 through the sub-characteristics of robustness, consistency and completeness). We  
1092 applied this context to CVSs, giving examples where these cloud services may not  
1093 be reliable. Lastly, we applied the narrative of reliability to the overarching nature

1094 of computer vision itself, exploring how the underlying ML models behind a CVS  
1095 can potentially fail, and discussed how any such ML model should be explainable  
1096 to ensure its reliability and trustworthiness. Lastly, we discussed the impact an API  
1097 can have when it is of poor quality, again impacting the internal quality of a system.  
1098 In the next chapter, we propose several research strategies in the search for further  
1099 insight into the developer's approach toward existing IWS APIs.



# CHAPTER 3

1100

1101

1102

## Research Methodology

1103

1104 Investigating software engineering practices is often a complex task as it is imper-  
1105 ative to understand the social and cognitive processes around software engineers  
1106 and not just the tools and processes used [110]. This chapter explores our research  
1107 methodology by exploring five key elements of empirical software engineering re-  
1108 search: firstly, (i) we provide an extended focus to the study by reviewing our research  
1109 questions (see Section 1.4) anchored under the context of an existing research ques-  
1110 tion classification taxonomy, (ii) characterise our research goals through an explicit  
1111 philosophical stance, (iii) explain how the stance selected impacts our selection of  
1112 research methods and data collection techniques (by dissecting our choice of meth-  
1113 ods used to reach these research goals), (iv) discuss a set of criteria for assessing the  
1114 validity of our study design and the findings of our research, and lastly (v) discuss  
1115 the practical considerations of our chosen methods.

1116 The foundations for developing this research methodology has been expanded  
1117 from that proposed by Easterbrook et al. [110], Wohlin and Aurum [382], Wohlin  
1118 et al. [383] and Shaw [328].

### 3.1 Research Questions Revisited

1119 To discuss our research strategy, we revisit our four primary and seven secondary  
1120 research questions (RQs) through the classification technique discussed by Easter-  
1121 brook et al. [110], a technique originally proposed in the field of psychology by  
1122 Meltzoff and Cooper [239] but adapted to software engineering. A summary of the  
1123 classifications made to our research questions are presented in Table 3.1.

1124 Our research study involves a mix of nine *empirical*<sup>1</sup> RQs, that focus on observ-  
1125 ing and analysing existing phenomena, and two *non-empirical* RQs, that focuses  
1126 on designing better approaches to solve software engineering tasks [243]. The use

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<sup>1</sup>Or ‘knowledge’ questions, that extend our *knowledge* on certain phenomena.

<sup>1128</sup> of empirical *and* non-empirical RQs are best combined in long-term software engineering research studies where the phenomena are under-explored, as is the case <sup>1129</sup> with CVSs. Further, these approaches help propose solutions to issues found in the <sup>1130</sup> phenomena studied [379]. We discuss both our empirical and non-empirical RQs in <sup>1131</sup> Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 below. <sup>1132</sup>

**Table 3.1:** A summary of our research questions classified using the strategies presented by Easterbrook et al. [110] and Meltzoff and Cooper [239].

#	RQ	Primary/ Secondary	RQ Classification
RQ1	What is the nature of cloud-based CVSs?	Primary	EMPIRICAL ↔ Exploratory ↔ Description/Classification
RQ1.1	What is their runtime behaviour?		EMPIRICAL ↔ Exploratory ↔ Description/Classification
RQ1.2	What is their evolution profile?		EMPIRICAL ↔ Exploratory ↔ Description/Classification
RQ2	Are CVS APIs sufficiently documented?	Primary	EMPIRICAL ↔ Exploratory ↔ Existence
RQ2.1	What API documentation artefacts compromise a ‘complete’ API document, according to both literature and practitioners?	Secondary	EMPIRICAL ↔ Exploratory ↔ Composition
RQ2.2	What additional information or attributes do application developers need in CVS API documentation to make it more complete?	Secondary	NON-EMPIRICAL ↔ Design
RQ3	Are CVSs more misunderstood than conventional software engineering domains?	Primary	EMPIRICAL ↔ Exploratory ↔ Descriptive-Comparative
RQ3.1	What types of issues do application developers face most when using CVSs, as expressed as questions on Stack Overflow?	Secondary	EMPIRICAL ↔ Base-Rate ↔ Frequency/Distribution
RQ3.2	Which of these issues are application developers most frustrated with?	Secondary	EMPIRICAL ↔ Exploratory ↔ Description/Classification
RQ3.3	Is the distribution CVS pain-points different to established software engineering domains, such as mobile or web development?	Secondary	EMPIRICAL ↔ Base-Rate ↔ Frequency/Distribution
RQ4	What strategies can developers employ to integrate their applications with CVSs while preserving robustness and reliability?	Primary	NON-EMPIRICAL ↔ Design

### <sup>1133</sup> 3.1.1 Empirical Research Questions

<sup>1134</sup> In total, we pose nine empirically-based RQs to help us understand the way developers <sup>1135</sup> currently interact and work with web services that provide computer vision. The <sup>1136</sup> majority of these questions are *exploratory* questions that contribute to a landscape <sup>1137</sup> analysis of these services (RQ1, RQ1.1 and RQ1.2), how well they are documented <sup>1138</sup> (RQ2), and the issues developers currently face when using them (RQ3). Our other

1139 exploratory questions complement the answers to these questions. For instance, to  
1140 understand if CVSs are sufficiently documented (an *existence* exploratory question  
1141 posed in RQ2), we need to understand the components of a ‘sufficient’ or ‘com-  
1142 plete’ API document via RQ2.1 as proposed in both the literature and by software  
1143 developers. While RQ2.1 does not directly relate to CVSs, answering it gives us  
1144 an understanding the components of complete API documentation, and therefore,  
1145 we can assess what aspects they are missing and where improvements can be made  
1146 (RQ2.2). These questions are *descriptive and classification* questions that help de-  
1147 scribe and classify what practices are in use for existing CVS API documentation  
1148 and the nature behind these services. Answering these exploratory questions assists  
1149 in refining preciser terms of the phenomena, ways in which we find evidence for  
1150 them, and ensuring the data found is valid.

1151 By answering these questions, we have a clearer understanding of the phenom-  
1152 ena; we then follow up by posing two additional *base-rate questions* that helps  
1153 provide a basis to confirm that the phenomena occurring is normal (or unusual)  
1154 behaviour by investigating the patterns of phenomena’s occurrence against other  
1155 phenomena. RQ3.1 is a *frequency and distribution* question to help us understand  
1156 what types of issues developers often encounter most, given a lack of formal extended  
1157 training in artificial intelligence. This achieves us an insight into the developer’s  
1158 mindset and regular thought patterns toward these APIs. We can then contrast  
1159 this distribution using our second base-rate question (RQ3.3), that assesses the  
1160 distributional differences between these intelligent components and non-intelligent  
1161 (conventional) software components. Combined, these two questions can help us  
1162 answer how the issues raised against CVSs are different to normal Stack Overflow  
1163 issues—our *descriptive-comparative* question posed in RQ3—and, similarly, we can  
1164 classify and rank which issues developers find most frustrating (RQ3.2).

### 1165 3.1.2 Non-Empirical Research Questions

1166 RQ2.2 and RQ4 are both non-empirically-based *design questions*; they are con-  
1167 cerned with ways in which we can improve a CVS by investigating what additional  
1168 attributes are needed in both the documentation of CVSs and in the integration  
1169 architectures developers can employ to improve reliability and robustness in their  
1170 applications. They are not classified as empirical questions as we investigate what  
1171 *will be* and not *what is*. By understanding the process by which developers desire  
1172 additional attributes of documentation and integration strategies, we can help shape  
1173 improvements to the existing designs of using CVSs.

## 1174 3.2 Philosophical Stances

1175 Philosophical stances guide the researcher’s action by fortifying what constitutes  
1176 ‘valid truth’ against a fundamental set of core beliefs [304]. In software engineer-  
1177 ing, four dominant philosophical stances are commonly characterised [85, 282]:  
1178 positivism (or post-positivism), constructivism (or interpretivism), pragmatism, and  
1179 critical theory (or advocacy/participatory). To construct such a ‘validity of truth’,

<sup>1180</sup> we will review these four philosophical stances in this section, and state the stance  
<sup>1181</sup> that we explicitly adopt and our reasoning for this.

<sup>1182</sup> *Positivism*

<sup>1183</sup> Positivists claim truth to be all observable facts, reduced piece-by-piece to smaller  
<sup>1184</sup> components which is incrementally verifiable to form truth. We do not base our  
<sup>1185</sup> work on the positivistic stance as the theories governing verifiable hypothesis must  
<sup>1186</sup> be precise from the start of the research. Moreover, due to its reductionist approach,  
<sup>1187</sup> it is difficult to isolate these hypotheses and study them in isolation from context.  
<sup>1188</sup> As our hypotheses are not context-agnostic, we steer clear from this stance.

<sup>1189</sup> *Constructivism*

<sup>1190</sup> Constructivists see knowledge embedded within the human context; truth is the  
<sup>1191</sup> *interpretive* observation by understanding the differences in human thought between  
<sup>1192</sup> meaning and action [198]. That is, the interpretation of the theory is just as important  
<sup>1193</sup> to the empirical observation itself. We partially adopt a constructivist stance as we  
<sup>1194</sup> attempt to model the developer's mindset, being an approach that is rich in qualitative  
<sup>1195</sup> data on human activity.

<sup>1196</sup> *Pragmatism*

<sup>1197</sup> Pragmatism is a less dogmatic approach that encourages the incomplete and approx-  
<sup>1198</sup> imate nature of knowledge and is dependent on the methods in which the knowledge  
<sup>1199</sup> was extracted. The utility of consensually agreed knowledge is the key outcome, and  
<sup>1200</sup> is therefore relative to those who seek utility in the knowledge—what is the useful  
<sup>1201</sup> for one person is not so for the other. While we value the utility of knowledge, it is  
<sup>1202</sup> difficult to obtain consensus especially on an ill-researched topic such as ours, and  
<sup>1203</sup> therefore we do not adopt this stance.

<sup>1204</sup> *Critical Theory*

<sup>1205</sup> This study chiefly adopts the philosophy of critical theory [11]. A key outcome of  
<sup>1206</sup> the study is to shift the developer's restrictive deterministic mindset and shed light  
<sup>1207</sup> on developing a new framework actively with the developer community that seeks  
<sup>1208</sup> to improve the process of using such APIs. In software engineering, critical theory  
<sup>1209</sup> is used to “actively [seek] to challenge existing perceptions about software practice”  
<sup>1210</sup> [110], and this study utilises such an approach to shift the mindset of CVS consumers  
<sup>1211</sup> and providers alike on how the documentation and metadata should not be written  
<sup>1212</sup> with the ‘traditional’ deterministic mindset at heart. Thus, our key philosophical  
<sup>1213</sup> approach is critical theory to seek out *what-can-be* using partial constructivism to  
<sup>1214</sup> model the current *what-is*.

**3.3 Research Methods**

1216 Research methods are “a set of organising principles around which empirical data is  
1217 collection and analysed” [110]. Creswell [85] suggests that strong research design  
1218 is reflected when the weaknesses of multiple methods complement each other. Us-  
1219 ing a mixed-methods approach is therefore commonplace in software engineering  
1220 research, typically due to the human-oriented nature investigating how software en-  
1221 gineers work both individually (where methods from psychology may be employed)  
1222 and together (where methods from sociology may be employed).

1223 Therefore, studies in software engineering are typically performed as field studies  
1224 where researchers and developers (or the artefacts they produce) are analysed either  
1225 directly or indirectly [332]. The mixed-methods approach combines five classes  
1226 of field study methods (or empirical strategies/studies) most relevant in empirical  
1227 software engineering research [110, 187, 383]: controlled experiments, case studies,  
1228 survey research, ethnographies, and action research. We chiefly adopt a mixed-  
1229 methods approach to our work using the *concurrent triangulation* mixed-methods  
1230 strategy [232] as it best compensates for weaknesses that exist in all research methods,  
1231 and employs the best strengths of others [85].

**3.3.1 Review of Relevant Research Methods**

1232 Below we review some of the research methods most relevant to our research ques-  
1233 tions as refined in Section 3.1 as presented by Easterbrook et al. [110].

**3.3.1.1 Controlled Experiments**

1234 A controlled experiment is an investigation of a clear, testable hypothesis that guides  
1235 the researcher to decide and precisely measure how at least one independent variable  
1236 can be manipulated and effect at least one other dependent variable. They determine  
1237 if the two variables are related and if a cause-effect relationship exists between  
1238 them. The combination of independent variable values is a *treatment*. It is common  
1239 to recruit human subjects to perform a task and measure the effect of a randomly  
1240 assigned treatment on the subjects, though it is not always possible to achieve  
1241 full randomisation in real-life software engineering contexts, in which case a *quasi-*  
1242 *experiment* may be employed where subjects are not randomly assigned to treatments.

1243 While we have well-defined RQs, refining them into precise, *measurable* vari-  
1244 ables is challenging due to the qualitative nature they present. A well-defined  
1245 population is also critical and must be easily accessible; the varied range of beginner  
1246 to expert software engineers with varied understanding of artificial intelligence  
1247 concepts is required to perform controlled experiments, and thus recruitment may  
1248 prove challenging. Lastly, the controlled experiment is essentially reductionist by  
1249 affecting a small amount of variables of interest and controlling all others. This  
1250 approach is too clinical for the practical outcomes by which our research goals aim  
1251 for, and is therefore closely tied to the positivist stance.

1254    3.3.1.2 *Case Studies*

1255    Case studies investigate phenomena in their real-life context and are well-suited  
1256    when the boundary between context and phenomena is unknown [388]. They offer  
1257    understanding of how and why certain phenomena occur, thereby investigating ways  
1258    cause-effect relationships can occur. They can be used to test existing theories  
1259    (*confirmatory case studies*) by refuting theories in real-world contexts instead of  
1260    under laboratory conditions or to generate new hypotheses and build theories during  
1261    the initial investigation of some phenomena (*exploratory case studies*).

1262    Case studies are well-suited where the context of a situation plays a role in  
1263    the phenomenon being studied. They also lend themselves to purposive sampling  
1264    rather than random sampling, and thus it is possible to selectively choose cases that  
1265    benefit our research goals and (using our critical theorist stance) select cases that  
1266    will actively benefit our participant software engineering audience most to draw  
1267    attention to situations regarded as problematic in CVS.

1268    3.3.1.3 *Survey Research*

1269    Survey research identifies characteristics of a broad population of individuals through  
1270    direct data collection techniques such as interviews and questionnaires or indepen-  
1271    dent techniques such as data logging. Defining that well-defined population is  
1272    critical, and selecting a representative sample from it to generalise the data gathered  
1273    usually assists in answering base-rate questions.

1274    By identifying representative sample of the population, from beginner to ex-  
1275    perienced developers with varying understanding of CVS APIs, we can use survey  
1276    research to assist in answering our exploratory and base-rate RQs (see Section 3.1.1)  
1277    in determining the qualitative aspects of how individual developers perceive and  
1278    work with the existing APIs, either by directly asking them, or by mining third-party  
1279    discussion websites such as Stack Overflow (SO). Similarly, we can use this strategy  
1280    to assess the developer’s understanding on what makes API documentation sufficient  
1281    by assessing whether specific factors suggested from literature are useful according  
1282    to developers. However, with direct survey research techniques, low response rates  
1283    may prove challenging, especially if no inducements can be offered for participation.

1284    3.3.1.4 *Ethnographies*

1285    Ethnographies investigates the understanding of social interaction within community  
1286    through field observation [308]. Resulting ethnographies help understand how soft-  
1287    ware engineering technical communities build practices, communication strategies  
1288    and perform technical work collaboratively.

1289    Ethnographies require the researcher to be highly trained in observational and  
1290    qualitative data analysis, especially if the form of ethnography is participant observa-  
1291    tion, whereby the researcher is embedded of the technical community for observation.  
1292    This may require the longevity of the study to be far greater than a couple of weeks,  
1293    and the researcher must remain part of the project for its duration to develop enough  
1294    local theories about how the community functions. While it assists in revealing

1295 subtle but important aspects of work practices within software teams, this study  
1296 does not focus on the study of teams, and is therefore not a research method relevant  
1297 to this project.

1298 **3.3.1.5 Action Research**

1299 Action researchers simultaneously solve real-world problems while studying the  
1300 experience of solving the problem [96] by actively seeking to intervene in the  
1301 situation for the purpose of improving it. A precondition is to engage with a  
1302 *problem owner* who is willing to collaborate in identifying and solving the problem  
1303 faced. The problem must be authentic (a problem worth solving) and must have  
1304 new knowledge outcomes for those involved. It is also characterised as an iterative  
1305 approach to problem solving, where the knowledge gained from solving the problem  
1306 has a desirable solution that empowers the problem owner and researcher.

1307 This research is most associated to our adopted philosophical stance of critical  
1308 theory. As this project is being conducted under the Applied Artificial Intelligence  
1309 Institute ( $A^2I^2$ ) collaboratively with engaged industry clients, we have identified a  
1310 need for solving an authentic problem that industry faces. The desired outcome  
1311 of this project is to facilitate wider change in the usage and development of CVSs;  
1312 thus, engaging action research as a potential method throughout the mixed-methods  
1313 approach is used in this research.

1314 **3.3.2 Review of Data Collection Techniques for Field Studies**

1315 Singer et al. developed a taxonomy [214, 332] showcasing data collection techniques  
1316 in field studies that are used in conjunction with a variety of methods based on the  
1317 level of interaction between researcher and software engineer, if any. This taxonomy  
1318 is reproduced in Table 3.2, where techniques used in this research study are starred.

1319 **3.4 Research Design**

1320 This section discusses an overview of the design of methods used within the experi-  
1321 ments conducted under this thesis. For each experiment, we describe an overview of  
1322 the experiment grounded known methods and techniques (Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2)  
1323 and our approach to analysing the data, as well as relating the selecting method back  
1324 to a specific RQ. Details of each experiment presented in this thesis, the coherency  
1325 between them, and where they can be found are given in Sections 1.6 and 1.7.

1326 **3.4.1 Landscape Analysis of Computer Vision Services**

1327 To understand the behavioural and evolutionary profiles of CVSs (i.e., RQ1), we em-  
1328 ployed a longitudinal study based around a dynamic system analysis [332]. Specif-  
1329 ically, we used structured observations of three services using the same dataset to  
1330 understand how the responses from these services change with time. Lastly, we

**Table 3.2:** Questions asked by software engineering researchers (column 2) that can be answered by field study techniques. (Adapted from [332].) Methods used within this research study are starred.

Technique	Used by researchers when their goal is to understand...	Volume of data	Also used by software engineers for...
<b>DIRECT TECHNIQUES</b>			
Brainstorming and focus groups	Ideas and general background about the process and product, general opinions (also useful to enhance participant rapport)	Small	Requirements gathering, project planning
Interviews and questionnaires	General information (including opinions) about process, product, personal knowledge etc.	Small to large	Requirements and evaluation
Conceptual modelling	Mental models of product or process.	Small	Requirements
Work diaries	Time spent or frequency of certain tasks (rough approximation, over days or weeks)	Medium	Time sheets
Think-aloud sessions	Mental models, goals, rationale and patterns of activities	Medium to large	UI evaluation
Shadowing and observation	Time spent or frequency of tasks (intermittent over relatively short periods), patterns of activities, some goals and rationale	Small	Advanced approaches to use case or task analysis
Participant observation (joining the team)	Deep understanding, goals and rationale for actions, time spent or frequency over a long period	Medium to large	–
<b>INDIRECT TECHNIQUES</b>			
Instrumenting systems	Software usage over a long period, for many participants	Large	Software usage analysis
Fly on the wall	Time spent intermittently in one location, patterns of activities (particularly collaboration)	Medium	–
<b>INDEPENDENT TECHNIQUES</b>			
Analysis of work databases	Long-term patterns relating to software evolution, faults etc.	Large	Metrics gathering
Analysis of tool use logs	Details of tool usage	Large	–
Documentation analysis	Design and documentation practices, general understanding	Medium	Reverse engineering
Static and dynamic analysis	Design and programming practices, general understanding	Large	Program comprehension, metrics, testing, etc.

1331 utilised documentation analysis to assess the overall ‘picture’ of how these services are documented. Further details on this experiment is given in **Chapter 4, Section 4.4.**

### 1334 3.4.2 Utility of API Documentation in Computer Vision Services

1335 To assess whether these services are sufficiently documented (i.e., RQ2), we conducted a systematic mapping study [195, 283] of the various academic sources 1336 detailing API documentation knowledge. We then consolidated this information 1337 into a structured taxonomy following a systematic taxonomy development method 1338 specific to software engineering studies [361].

1340 We then followed the triangulation approach proposed by Mayring [232] to validate 1341 the taxonomy by use of a personal opinion survey. Kitchenham and Pfleeger 1342 [196] provide an introduction on methods used to conduct personal opinion surveys 1343 which we adopted as an initial reference in (i) shaping our survey objectives around 1344 our research goals, (ii) designing a cross-sectional survey, (iii) developing and evaluating 1345 our survey instrument, (iv) evaluating our instruments, (v) obtaining the data 1346 and (vi) analysing the data. We adapted Brooke’s systematic usability scale [62] 1347 technique by basing our research questions against a known surveying instrument.

1348 As is good practice in developing questionnaire instruments to evaluate their reliability and validity [221], we evaluated our instrument design by asking colleagues 1349 to critique it via pilot studies within A<sup>2</sup>I<sup>2</sup>. This assisted in identifying any problems 1350 with the questionnaire itself and with any issues that may have occurred with the 1351 response rate and follow-up procedures.

1353 Findings from the pilot study helped inform us for a widely distributed questionnaire 1354 using snow-balling sampling. Ethics approval from the Faculty of Science, 1355 Engineering and Built Environment Human Ethics Advisory Group (SEBE HEAG) 1356 was approved to externally conduct this survey research (see Chapter E). Further 1357 details on these methods are detailed within **Chapter 8, Section 8.3.**

### 1358 3.4.3 Developer Issues concerning Computer Vision Services

1359 Developers typically congregate in search of discourses on issues they face in online 1360 forums, such as Stack Overflow (SO) and Quora, as well as writing their experiences 1361 in personal blogs such as Medium. The simplest of these platforms is SO (a sub- 1362 community of the Stack Exchange family of targeted communities) that specifically 1363 targets developer issues on using a simple Q&A interface, where developers can 1364 discuss technical aspects and general software development topics. Moreover, SO 1365 is often acknowledged as *the ‘go-to’ place* for developers to find high-quality code 1366 snippets that assist in their problems [343].

1367 Thus, to begin understanding the issues developers face when using CVSs and 1368 whether there is a substantial difference to conventional domains (i.e., RQ3), we 1369 used repository mining on SO to help answer RQ3. Specifically, we selected SO 1370 due to its targeted community of developers<sup>2</sup> and the availability of its publicly

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<sup>2</sup>We also acknowledge that there are other targeted software engineering Stack Exchange

<sup>1371</sup> available dataset released as ‘data dumps’ on the Stack Exchange Data Explorer<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1372</sup> and Google BigQuery<sup>4</sup>. Studies conducted have also used SO to mine developer  
<sup>1373</sup> discourse [8, 22, 28, 78, 219, 262, 272, 297, 309, 334, 349, 369]. Further details on  
<sup>1374</sup> how we approached the design for this study can be found in **Chapter 5, Section 5.4,**  
<sup>1375</sup> **Chapter 6, Section 6.3, and Chapter 7, Section 7.3**

### <sup>1376</sup> **3.4.4 Designing Improved Integration Strategies**

<sup>1377</sup> Our improved integration strategies (i.e., RQ4) evolved organically over the duration  
<sup>1378</sup> of this research through the use of industry case studies and action research. We  
<sup>1379</sup> developed several iterative prototypes to the integration strategies and used a mix  
<sup>1380</sup> of statistical and technical evaluations to analyse whether our improved integration  
<sup>1381</sup> strategies can prove useful. Further details about these approaches are detailed in  
<sup>1382</sup> **Chapter 9, Section 9.5.1 and Chapter 10, Section 10.3 and Chapter 11, Sec-**  
<sup>1383</sup> **tion 11.5.**

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communities such as Stack Exchange Software Engineering (<https://softwareengineering.stackexchange.com>), though (as of January 2019) this much smaller community consists of only 52,000 questions versus SO’s 17 million.

<sup>3</sup><https://data.stackexchange.com/stackoverflow> last accessed 17 January 2017.

<sup>4</sup><https://console.cloud.google.com/marketplace/details/stack-exchange/stack-overflow> last accessed 17 January 2017.

1384

## Part II

1385

# Publications



# CHAPTER 4

1386

1387

1388

## Identifying Evolution in Computer Vision Services<sup>†</sup>

1389

1390 **Abstract** Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), such  
1391 as computer vision, are now available as intelligent web services (IWSs) and their acces-  
1392 sibility and simplicity is compelling. Multiple vendors now offer this technology as cloud  
1393 services and developers want to leverage these advances to provide value to end-users. How-  
1394 ever, there is no firm investigation into the maintenance and evolution risks arising from use  
1395 of these IWSs; in particular, their behavioural consistency and transparency of their function-  
1396 ality. We evaluated the responses of three different IWSs (specifically computer vision) over  
1397 11 months using 3 different data sets, verifying responses against the respective documenta-  
1398 tion and assessing evolution risk. We found that there are: (1) inconsistencies in how these  
1399 services behave; (2) evolution risk in the responses; and (3) a lack of clear communication  
1400 that documents these risks and inconsistencies. We propose a set of recommendations to  
1401 both developers and IWS providers to inform risk and assist maintainability.

### 4.1 Introduction

1402 The availability of intelligent web services (IWSs) has made artificial intelligence  
1403 (AI) tooling accessible to software developers and promises a lower entry barrier for  
1404 their utilisation. Consider state-of-the-art computer vision analysers, which require  
1405 either manually training a deep-learning classifier, or selecting a pre-trained model  
1406 and deploying these into an appropriate infrastructure. Either are laborious in time,  
1407 and require non-trivial expertise along with a large data set when training or customi-  
1408 sation is needed. In contrast, IWSs providing computer vision (i.e., computer vision  
1409 services or CVSs such as [398, 410, 411, 412, 419, 423, 431, 432, 433, 437, 451,

<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on A. Cummaudo, R. Vasa, J. Grundy, M. Abdelrazek, and A. Cain, “Losing Confidence in Quality: Unspoken Evolution of Computer Vision Services,” in *Proceedings of the 35th IEEE International Conference on Software Maintenance and Evolution*. Cleveland, OH, USA: IEEE, December 2019. DOI 10.1109/ICSME.2019.00051. ISBN 978-1-72-813094-1 pp. 333–342. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

<sup>1411</sup> 452, 485, 486]) abstract these complexities behind a web application programming  
<sup>1412</sup> interface (API) call. This removes the need to understand the complexities required  
<sup>1413</sup> of machine learning (ML), and requires little more than the knowledge on how to  
<sup>1414</sup> use RESTful endpoints. The ubiquity of these services is exemplified through their  
<sup>1415</sup> rapid uptake in applications such as aiding the vision-impaired [95, 299].

<sup>1416</sup> While IWSs have seen quick adoption in industry, there has been little work  
<sup>1417</sup> that has considered the software quality perspective of the risks and impacts posed  
<sup>1418</sup> by using such services. In relation to this, there are three main challenges: (1)  
<sup>1419</sup> incorporating stochastic algorithms into software that has traditionally been deter-  
<sup>1420</sup> ministic; (2) the general lack of transparency associated with the ML models; and  
<sup>1421</sup> (3) communicating to application developers.

<sup>1422</sup> ML typically involves use of statistical techniques that yield components with  
<sup>1423</sup> a non-deterministic external behaviour; that is, for the same given input, different  
<sup>1424</sup> outcomes may result. However, developers, in general, are used to libraries and small  
<sup>1425</sup> components behaving predictably, while systems that rely on ML techniques work  
<sup>1426</sup> on confidence intervals<sup>1</sup> and probabilities. For example, the developer’s mindset  
<sup>1427</sup> suggests that an image of a border collie—if sent to three intelligent computer vision  
<sup>1428</sup> services (CVSs)—would return the label ‘dog’ consistently with time regardless  
<sup>1429</sup> of which service is used. However, one service may yield the specific dog breed,  
<sup>1430</sup> ‘border collie’, another service may yield a permutation of that breed, ‘collie’, and  
<sup>1431</sup> another may yield broader results, such as ‘animal’; each with results of varying  
<sup>1432</sup> confidence values.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the third service may evolve with time, and  
<sup>1433</sup> thus learn that the ‘animal’ is actually a ‘dog’ or even a ‘collie’. The outcomes  
<sup>1434</sup> are thus behaviourally inconsistent between services providing conceptually similar  
<sup>1435</sup> functionality. As a thought exercise, consider if the sub-string function were created  
<sup>1436</sup> using ML techniques—it would perform its operation with a confidence where the  
<sup>1437</sup> expected outcome and the AI inferred output match as a *probability*, rather than a  
<sup>1438</sup> deterministic (constant) outcome. How would this affect the developers’ approach  
<sup>1439</sup> to using such a function? Would they actively take into consideration the non-  
<sup>1440</sup> deterministic nature of the result?

<sup>1441</sup> Myriad software quality models and software engineering practices advocate  
<sup>1442</sup> maintainability and reliability as primary characteristics; stability, testability, fault  
<sup>1443</sup> tolerance, changeability and maturity are all concerns for quality in software com-  
<sup>1444</sup> ponents [162, 289, 336] and one must factor these in with consideration to soft-  
<sup>1445</sup> ware evolution challenges [142, 143, 241, 242, 354]. However, the effect this  
<sup>1446</sup> non-deterministic behaviour has on quality when masked behind an IWS is still  
<sup>1447</sup> under-explored to date in software engineering literature, to our knowledge. Where  
<sup>1448</sup> software depends on IWSs to achieve functionality, these quality characteristics may  
<sup>1449</sup> not be achieved, and developers need to be wary of the unintended side effects and  
<sup>1450</sup> inconsistency that exists when using non-deterministic components. A CVS may  
<sup>1451</sup> encapsulate deep-learning strategies or stochastic methods to perform image analy-

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<sup>1</sup>Varied terminology used here. Probability, confidence, accuracy and score may all be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup>Indeed, we have observed this phenomenon using a picture of a border collie sent to various CVSs.

1452 sis, but developers are more likely to approach IWSs with a mindset that anticipates  
1453 consistency. Although the documentation does hint at this non-deterministic be-  
1454 haviour (i.e., the descriptions of ‘confidence’ in various CVSs suggest they are  
1455 not always confident, and thus not deterministic [396, 421, 438]), the integration  
1456 mechanisms offered by popular vendors do not seem to fully expose the nuances,  
1457 and developers are not yet familiar with the trade-offs.

1458 Do popular CVSs, as they currently stand, offer consistent behaviour, and if not,  
1459 how is this conveyed to developers (if it is at all)? If CVSs are to be used in production  
1460 services, do they ensure quality under rigorous service quality assurance (SQA)  
1461 frameworks [162]? What evolution risk [142, 143, 241, 242] do they pose if these  
1462 services change? To our knowledge, few studies have been conducted to investigate  
1463 these claims. This paper assesses the consistency, evolution risk and consequent  
1464 maintenance issues that may arise when developers use IWSs. We introduce a  
1465 motivating example in Section 4.2, discussing related work and our methodology  
1466 in Sections 4.3 and 4.4. We present and interpret our findings in Section 4.5. We  
1467 argue with quantified evidence that these IWSs can only be considered with a mature  
1468 appreciation of risks, and we make a set of recommendations in Section 4.6.

## 1469 4.2 Motivating Example

1470 Consider Rosa, a software developer, who wants to develop a social media photo-  
1471 sharing mobile app that analyses her and her friends photos on Android and iOS.  
1472 Rosa wants the app to categorise photos into scenes (e.g., day vs. night, outdoors  
1473 vs. indoors), generate brief descriptions of each photo, and catalogue photos of her  
1474 friends as well as common objects (e.g., all photos with a dog, all photos on the  
1475 beach).

1476 Rather than building a computer vision engine from scratch, Rosa thinks she  
1477 can achieve this using one of the popular CVSs (e.g., [398, 410, 411, 412, 419, 423,  
1478 431, 432, 433, 437, 451, 452, 485, 486]). However, Rosa comes from a typical  
1479 software engineering background with limited knowledge of the underlying deep-  
1480 learning techniques and implementations as currently used in computer vision. Not  
1481 unexpectedly, she internalises a mindset of how such services work and behave based  
1482 on her experience of using software libraries offered by various SDKs. This mindset  
1483 assumes that different cloud vendor image processing APIs more-or-less provide  
1484 similar functionality, with only minor variations. For example, cloud object storage  
1485 for Amazon S3 is both conceptually and behaviourally very similar to that of Google  
1486 Cloud Storage or Azure Storage. Rosa assumes the CVSs of these platforms will,  
1487 therefore, likely be very similar. Similarly, consider the string libraries Rosa will  
1488 use for the app. The conceptual and behavioural similarities are consistent; a string  
1489 library in Java (Android) is conceptually very similar to the string library she will  
1490 use in Swift (iOS), and likewise both behave similarly by providing the same results  
1491 for their respective sub-string functionality. However, **unlike the cloud storage and**  
1492 **string libraries, different CVSs often present conceptually similar functionality**  
1493 **but are behaviourally very different.** IWS vendors also hide the depth of knowledge  
1494 needed to use these effectively—for instance, the training data set and ontologies

1495 used to create these services are hidden in the documentation. Thus, Rosa isn't even  
1496 exposed to this knowledge as she reads through the documentation of the providers  
1497 and, thus, Rosa makes the following assumptions:

- 1498 • **"I think the responses will be consistent amongst these CVSSs."** When Rosa  
1499 uploads a photo of a dog, she would expect them all to respond with 'dog'. If  
1500 Rosa decides to switch which service she is using, she expects the ontologies  
1501 to be compatible (all CVSSs *surely* return dog for the same image) and therefore  
1502 she can expect to plug-in a different service should she feel like it making only  
1503 minor code modifications such as which endpoints she is relying on.
- 1504 • **"I think the responses will be constant with time."** When Rosa uploads the  
1505 photo of a dog for testing, she expects the response to be the same in 10 weeks  
1506 time once her app is in production. Hence, in 10 weeks, the same photo of the  
1507 dog should return the same label.

### 1508 4.3 Related Work

1509 If we were to view CVSSs through the lenses of an SQA framework, robustness,  
1510 consistency, and maintainability often feature as quality attributes in myriad soft-  
1511 ware quality models (e.g., [173]). Software quality is determined from two key  
1512 dimensions: (1) in the evaluation of the end-product (external quality) and (2) the  
1513 assurances in the development processes (internal quality) [289]. We discuss both  
1514 perspectives of quality within the context of our work in this section.

#### 1515 4.3.1 External Quality

##### 1516 4.3.1.1 Robustness for safety-critical applications

1517 A typical focus of recent work has been to investigate the robustness of deep-  
1518 learning within computer vision technique implementation, thereby informing the  
1519 effectiveness in the context of the end-product. The common method for this has  
1520 been via the use of adversarial examples [346], where input images are slightly  
1521 perturbed to maximise prediction error but are still interpretable to humans.

1522 Google Cloud Vision, for instance, fails to correctly classify adversarial examples  
1523 when noise is added to the original images [163]. Rosenfeld et al. [311] illustrated  
1524 that inserting synthetic foreign objects to input images (e.g., a cartoon elephant)  
1525 can completely alter classification output. Wang et al. [367] performed similar  
1526 attacks on a transfer-learning approach of facial recognition by modifying pixels of  
1527 a celebrity's face to be recognised as a completely different celebrity, all while still  
1528 retaining the same human-interpretable original celebrity. Su et al. [341] used the  
1529 ImageNet database to show that 41.22% of images drop in confidence when just a  
1530 *single pixel* is changed in the input image; and similarly, Eykholt et al. [114] recently  
1531 showed similar results that made a convolutional neural network (CNN) interpret a  
1532 stop road-sign (with mimicked graffiti) as a 45mph speed limit sign.

1533 The results suggest that current state-of-the-art computer vision techniques may  
1534 not be robust enough for safety critical applications as they do not handle intentional

1535 or unintentional adversarial attacks. Moreover, as such adversarial examples exist in  
1536 the physical world [114, 207], “the natural world may be adversarial enough” [284]  
1537 to fool AI software. Though some limitations and guidelines have been explored  
1538 in this area, the perspective of *Intelligent Web Services* is yet to be considered and  
1539 specific guidelines do not yet exist when using CVSSs.

1540 **4.3.1.2 Testing strategies in ML applications**

1541 Although much work applies ML techniques to automate testing strategies, there is  
1542 only a growing emphasis that considers this in the opposite sense; that is, testing  
1543 to ensure the ML product works correctly. There are few reliable test oracles  
1544 that ensure if an ML has been implemented to serve its algorithm and use case  
1545 purposefully; indeed, “the non-deterministic nature of many training algorithms  
1546 makes testing of models even more challenging” [16]. Murphy et al. [251] proposed  
1547 a software engineering-based testing approach on ML ranking algorithms to evaluate  
1548 the ‘correctness’ of the implementation on a real-world data set and problem domain,  
1549 whereby discrepancies were found from the formal mathematical proofs of the ML  
1550 algorithm and the implementation.

1551 Recently, Braiek and Khomh [55] conducted a comprehensive review of testing  
1552 strategies in ML software, proposing several research directions and recommendations  
1553 in how best to apply software engineering testing practices in ML programs.  
1554 However, much of the area of this work specifically targets ML engineers, and not  
1555 application developers. Little has been investigated on how application developers  
1556 perceive and understand ML concepts, given a lack of formal training; we note that  
1557 other testing strategies and frameworks proposed (e.g., [59, 250, 261]) are targeted  
1558 chiefly to the ML engineer, and not the application developer.

1559 However, Arpteg et al. [16] recently demonstrated (using real-world ML projects)  
1560 the developmental challenges posed to developers, particularly those that arise when  
1561 there is a lack of transparency on the models used and how to troubleshoot ML  
1562 frameworks using traditional software engineering debugging tools. This said, there  
1563 is no further investigations into challenges when using the higher, ‘ML friendly’  
1564 layers (e.g., IWSs) of the ‘machine learning spectrum’ [269], rather than the ‘lower  
1565 layers’ consisting of existing ML frameworks and algorithms targeted toward the  
1566 ML community.

1567 **4.3.2 Internal Quality**

1568 **4.3.2.1 Quality metrics for cloud services**

1569 CVSSs are based on cloud computing fundamentals under a subset of the Platform as  
1570 a Service (PaaS) model. There has been work in the evaluation of PaaS in terms of  
1571 quality attributes [130]: these attributes are exposed using service-level agreements  
1572 (SLAs) between vendors and customers, and customers denote their demanded  
1573 quality of service (QoS) to ensure the cloud services adhere to measurable KPI  
1574 attributes.

1575 Although, popular services, such as cloud object storage, come with strong QoS  
1576 agreement, to date IWSs do not come with deep assurances around their performance  
1577 and responses, but do offer uptime guarantees. For example, how can Rosa demand  
1578 a QoS that ensures all photos of dogs uploaded to her app guarantee the specific dog  
1579 breeds are returned so that users can look up their other friend’s ‘border collie’s?  
1580 If dog breeds are returned, what ontologies exist for breeds? Are they consistent  
1581 with each other, or shortened? (‘Collie’ versus ‘border collie’; ‘staffy’ versus  
1582 ‘staffordshire bull terrier’?) For some applications, these unstated QoS metrics  
1583 specific to the ML service may have significant legal ramifications.

1584 *4.3.2.2 Web service documentation and documenting ML*

1585 From the *developer’s* perspective, little has been achieved to assess IWS quality  
1586 or assure quality of these CVSs. Web services and their APIs are the bridge be-  
1587 tween developers’ needs and the software components [14]; therefore, assessing  
1588 such CVSs from the quality of their APIs is thereby directly related to the develop-  
1589 ment quality [200]. Good APIs should be intuitive and require less documentation  
1590 browsing [286], thereby increasing productivity. Conversely, poor APIs that are  
1591 hard to understand and work with reduce developer productivity, thereby reducing  
1592 product quality. This typically leads to developers congregating on forums such as  
1593 Stack Overflow, leading to a repository of unstructured knowledge likely to concern  
1594 API design [371]. The consequences of addressing these concerns in development  
1595 leads to a higher demand in technical support (as measured in [159]) that, ultimately,  
1596 causes the maintenance to be far more expensive, a phenomenon widely known in  
1597 software engineering economics [48]. Rosa, for instance, isn’t aware of technical ML  
1598 concepts; if she cannot reason about what search results are relevant when brows-  
1599 ing the service and understanding functionality, her productivity is significantly  
1600 decreased. Conceptual understanding is critical for using APIs, as demonstrated by  
1601 Ko and Riche, and the effects of maintenance this may have in the future of her  
1602 application is unknown.

1603 Recent attempts to document attributes and characteristics on ML models have  
1604 been proposed. Model cards were introduced by Mitchell et al. [246] to describe how  
1605 particular models were trained and benchmarked, thereby assisting users to reason  
1606 if the model is right for their purposes and if it can achieve its stated outcomes.  
1607 Gebru et al. [134] also proposed datasheets, a standardised documentation format to  
1608 describe the need for a particular data set, the information contained within it and  
1609 what scenarios it should be used for, including legal or ethical concerns.

1610 However, while target audiences for these documents may be of a more technical  
1611 AI level (i.e., the ML engineer), there is still no standardised communication format  
1612 for application developers to reason about using particular IWSs, and the ramifica-  
1613 tions this may have on the applications they write is not fully conveyed. Hence, our  
1614 work is focused on the application developer perspective.

**4.4 Method**

1615 This study organically evolved by observing phenomena surrounding CVSs by as-  
1617 sessing both their documentation and responses. We adopted a mixed methods  
1618 approach, performing both qualitative and quantitative data collection on these two  
1619 key aspects by using documentary research methods for inspecting the documen-  
1620 tation and structured observations to quantitatively analyse the results over time.  
1621 This, ultimately, helped us shape the following research hypotheses which this paper  
1622 addresses:

1623 [RH1] CVSs do not respond with consistent outputs between services, given the  
1624 same input image.

1625 [RH2] The responses from CVSs are non-deterministic and evolving, and the same  
1626 service can change its top-most response over time given the same input  
1627 image.

1628 [RH3] CVSs do not effectively communicate this evolution and instability, intro-  
1629 ducing risk into engineering these systems.

1630 We conducted two experiments to address these hypotheses against three popular  
1631 CVSs: AWS Rekognition [398], Google Cloud Vision [423], Azure Computer  
1632 Vision [437]. Specifically, we targeted the AWS DetectLabels endpoint [396],  
1633 the Google Cloud Vision annotate:images endpoint [421] and Azure's analyze  
1634 endpoint [438]. For the remainder of this paper, we de-identify our selected CVSs  
1635 by labelling them as services A, B and C but do not reveal mapping to prevent  
1636 any implicit bias. Our selection criteria for using these particular three services  
1637 are based on the weight behind each service provider given their prominence in  
1638 the industry (Amazon, Google and Microsoft), the ubiquity of their hosting cloud  
1639 platforms as industry leaders of cloud computing (i.e., AWS, Google Cloud and  
1640 Azure), being in the top three most adopted cloud vendors in enterprise applications  
1641 in 2018 [120] and the consistent popularity of discussion amongst developers in  
1642 developer communities such as Stack Overflow. While we choose these particular  
1643 cloud CVSs, we acknowledge that similar services [411, 412, 419, 432, 433, 485, 486]  
1644 also exist, including other popular services used in Asia [410, 431, 451, 452] (some  
1645 offering 3D image analysis [409]). We reflect on the impacts this has to our study  
1646 design in Section 4.7.

1647 Our study involved an 11-month longitudinal study which consisted of two 13  
1648 week and 17 week experiments from April to August 2018 and November 2018 to  
1649 March 2019, respectively. Our investigation into documentation occurred on August  
1650 28 2018. In total, we assessed the services with three data sets; we first ran a pilot  
1651 study using a smaller pool of 30 images to confirm the end-points remain stable,  
1652 re-running the study with a larger pool of images of 1,650 and 5,000 images. Our  
1653 selection criteria for these three data sets were that the images had to have varying  
1654 objects, taken in various scenes and various times. Images also needed to contain  
1655 disparate objects. Our small data set was sourced by the first author by taking photos  
1656 of random scenes in an afternoon, whilst our second data set was sourced from  
1657 various members of our research group from their personal photo libraries. We also

**Table 4.1:** Characteristics of our datasets and responses.

Data set	Small	Large	COCOVal17
# Images/data set	30	1,650	5000
# Unique labels found	307	3506	4507
Number of snapshots	9	22	22
Avg. days b/n requests	12 Days	8 Days	8 Days

wanted to include a data set that was publicly available prior to running our study, so for this data set we chose the COCO 2017 validation data set [218]. We have made our other two data sets available online ([414]). We collected results and their responses from each service’s API endpoint using a python script [418] that sent requests to each service periodically via cron jobs. Table 4.1 summarises various characteristics about the data sets used in these experiments.

We then performed quantitative analyses on each response’s labels, ensuring all labels were lowercased as case changed for services A and C over the evaluation period. To derive at the consistency of responses for each image, we considered only the ‘top’ labels per image for each service and data set. That is, for the same image  $i$  over all images in data set  $D$  where  $i \in D$  and over the three services, the top labels per image ( $T_i$ ) of all labels per image  $L_i$  (i.e.,  $T_i \subseteq L_i$ ) is that where the respective label’s confidences are consistently the highest of all labels returned. Typically, the top labels returned is a set containing only one element—that is, only one unique label consistently returned with the highest label ( $|T_i| = 1$ )—however there are cases where the top labels contains multiple elements as their respective confidences are equal ( $|T_i| > 1$ ).

We measure response consistency under 6 aspects:

- (1) **Consistency of the top label between each service.** Where the same image of, for example, a dog is sent to the three services, the top label for service A may be ‘animal’, B ‘canine’ and C ‘animal’. Therefore, service B is inconsistent.
- (2) **Semantic consistency of the top labels.** Where a service has returned multiple top labels ( $|T_i| > 1$ ), there may lie semantic differences in what the service thinks the image best represents. Therefore, there is conceptual inconsistency in the top labels for a service even when the confidences are equal.
- (3) **Consistency of the top label’s confidence per service.** The top label for an image does not guarantee a high confidence. Therefore, there may be inconsistencies in how confident the top labels for all images in a service is.
- (4) **Consistency of confidence in the intersecting top label between each service.** The spread of a top intersecting label, e.g., ‘cat’, may not have the same confidences per service even when all three services agree that ‘cat’ is the top label. Therefore, there is inconsistency in the confidences of a top label even where all three services agree.
- (5) **Consistency of the top label over time.** Given an image, the top label in one week may differ from the top label the following week. Therefore, there is inconsistency in the top label itself due to model evolution.



**Figure 4.1:** The only consistent label for the above image is ‘people’ for services C and B. The top label for A is ‘conversation’ and this label is not registered amongst the other two services.

**Table 4.2:** Ratio of the top labels (to images) that intersect in each data set for each permutation of service.

Service	Small	Large	COCOVal17	$\mu$	$\sigma$
$A \cap B \cap C$	3.33%	2.73%	4.68%	2.75%	0.0100
$A \cap B$	6.67%	11.27%	12.26%	10.07%	0.0299
$A \cap C$	20.00%	13.94%	17.28%	17.07%	0.0304
$B \cap C$	6.67%	12.97%	20.90%	13.51%	0.0713

1694 **(6) Consistency of the top label’s confidence over time.** The top label of an  
1695 image may remain static from one week to the next for the same service, but  
1696 its confidence values may change with time. Therefore, there is inconsistency  
1697 in the top label’s confidence due to model evolution.

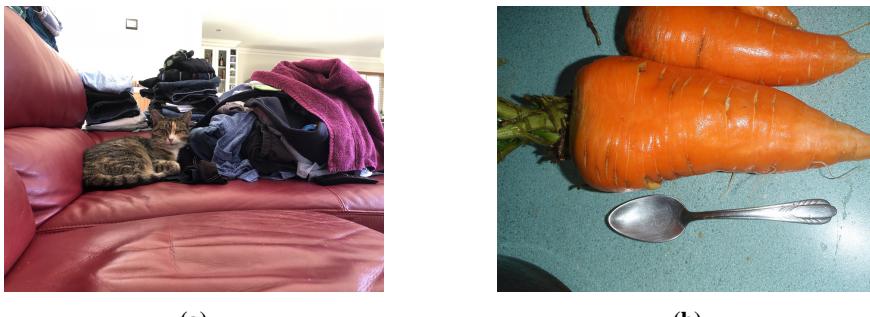
1698 For the above aspects of consistency, we calculated the spread of variation for the  
1699 top label’s confidences of each service for every 1 percent point; that is, the frequency  
1700 of top label confidences within 100–99%, 99–98% etc. The consistency of top label’s  
1701 and their confidences between each service was determined by intersecting the labels  
1702 of each service per image and grouping the intersecting label’s confidences together.  
1703 This allowed us to determine relevant probability distributions. For reproducibility,  
1704 all quantitative analysis is available online [415].

## 1705 4.5 Findings

### 1706 4.5.1 Consistency of top labels

#### 1707 4.5.1.1 Consistency across services

1708 Table 4.2 presents the consistency of the top labels between data sets, as measured  
1709 by the cardinality of the intersection of all three services’ set of top labels divided  
1710 by the number of images per data set. A combination of services present varied  
1711 overlaps in their top labels; services A and C provide the best overlap for all three



**Figure 4.2:** *Left:* The top labels for each service do not intersect, with each having a varied ontology:  $T_i = \{ A = \{ \text{'black'} \}, B = \{ \text{'indoor'} \}, C = \{ \text{'slide'}, \text{'toy'} \} \}$ . (Service C returns both ‘slide’ and ‘toy’ with equal confidence.) *Right:* The top labels for each service focus on disparate subjects in the image:  $T_i = \{ A = \{ \text{'carrot'} \}, B = \{ \text{'indoor'} \}, C = \{ \text{'spoon'} \} \}$ .

**1712** data sets, however the intersection of all three irrespective of data sets is low.

The implication here is that, without semantic comparison (see Section 4.7), service vendors are not ‘plug-and-play’. If Rosa uploaded the sample images in this paper to her application to all services, she would find that only Figure 4.1 responds with ‘person’ for services B and C in their respective set of top labels. However, if she decides to then adopt service A, then Figure 4.1’s top label becomes ‘conversation’; the ‘person’ label does not appear within the top 15 labels for service A and, conversely, the ‘conversation’ label does not appear in the other services top 15.

Should she decide if the performance of a particular service isn't to her needs, then the vocabulary used for these labels becomes inconsistent for all other images; that is, the top label sets per service for Figure 4.2a shows no intersection at all. Furthermore, the part of the image each service focuses on may not be consistent for their top labels; in Figure 4.2b, service A's top label focuses on the vegetable ('carrot'), service C focuses on the 'spoon', while service B's focus is that the image is 'indoor's. It is interesting to note that service B focuses on the scene matter (indoors) rather than the subject matter. (Furthermore, we do not actually know if the image in Figure 4.2b was taken indoors.)

Hence, developers should ensure that the vocabulary used by a particular service is right for them before implementation. As each service does not work to the same standardised model, trained with disparate training data, and tuned differently, results will differ despite the same input. This is unlike deterministic systems: for example, switching from AWS Object Storage to Google Cloud Object storage will conceptually provide the same output (storing files) for the same input (uploading files). However, CVSSs do not agree on the top label for images, and therefore developers are likely to be vendor locked, making changes between services non-trivial.



**Figure 4.3:** *Left:* Service C is 98.49% confident of the following labels: { ‘beverage’, ‘chocolate’, ‘cup’, ‘dessert’, ‘drink’, ‘food’, ‘hot chocolate’ }. However, it is up to the developer to decide which label to persist with as all are returned. *Right:* Service B persistently returns a top label set of { ‘book’, ‘several’ }. Both are semantically correct for the image, but disparate in what the label is to describe.

### **1739** 4.5.1.2 Semantic consistency where $|T_i| > 1$

1740 Service C returns two top labels for Figure 4.2a; ‘slide’ and ‘toy’. More than one  
1741 top label is typically returned in service C (80.00%, 56.97%, and 81.66% of all  
1742 images for all three data sets, respectively) though this also occurs in B in the large  
1743 (4.97% of all images) and COCOVal17 data sets (2.38%). Semantic inconsistencies  
1744 of what this label conceptually represents becomes a concern as these labels have  
1745 confidences of *equal highest* consistency. Thus, some services are inconsistent in  
1746 themselves and cannot give a guaranteed answer of what exists in an image; services  
1747 C and B have multiple top labels, but the respective services cannot ‘agree’ on  
1748 what the top label actually is. In Figure 4.3a, service C presents a reasonably high  
1749 confidence for the set of 7 top labels it returns, however there is too much diversity  
1750 ranging from a ‘hot chocolate’ to the hypernym ‘food’. Both are technically correct,  
1751 but it is up to the developer to decide the level of hypernymy to label the image as.  
1752 We also observe a similar effect in Figure 4.3b, where the image is labelled with  
1753 both the subject matter and the number of subjects per image.

1754 Thus, a taxonomy of ontologies is unknown; if a ‘border collie’ is detected in  
1755 an image, does this imply the hypernym ‘dog’ is detected, and then ‘mammal’, then  
1756 ‘animal’, then ‘object’? Only service B documents a taxonomy for capturing what  
1757 level of scope is desired, providing what it calls the ‘86-category’ concept as found  
1758 in its how-to guide:

**1759** “Identify and categorize an entire image, using a category taxonomy with parent/child hereditary hierarchies. Categories can be used alone, or with our new tagging models.” [439]

Thus, even if Rosa implemented conceptual similarity analysis for the image, the top label set may not provide sufficient information to derive at a conclusive answer, and if simply relying on only one label in this set, information such as the duplicity of objects (e.g., ‘several’ in Figure 4.3b) may be missed.

**Table 4.3:** Ratio of the top labels (to images) that remained the top label but changed confidence values between intervals.

Service	Small	Large	COCOVal17	$\mu(\delta_c)$	$\sigma(\delta_c)$	Median( $\delta_c$ )	Range( $\delta_c$ )
A	53.33%	59.19%	44.92%	9.62e-8	6.84e-8	5.96e-8	[5.96e-8, 6.56e-7]
B	0.00%	0.00%	0.02%	-	-	-	-
C	33.33%	41.36%	15.60%	5.35e-7	8.76e-7	3.05e-7	[1.27e-7, 1.13e-5]

## 4.5.2 Consistency of confidence

### 4.5.2.1 Consistency of top label's confidence

In Figure 4.4, we see that there is high probability that top labels have high confidences for all services. In summary, one in nine images uploaded to any service will return a top label confident to at least 97%. However, there is higher probability for service A returning a lower confidence, followed by B. The best performing service is C, with 90% of requests having a top label confident to  $\gtrapprox 95\%$ , when compared to  $\gtrapprox 87\%$  and  $\gtrapprox 93\%$  for services A and B, respectively.

Therefore, Rosa could generally expect that the top labels she receives in her images do have high confidence. That is, each service will return a top label that they are confident about. This result is expected, considering that the ‘top’ label is measured by the highest confidence, though it is interesting to note that some services are generally more confident than others in what they present back to users.

### 4.5.2.2 Consistency of intersecting top label's confidence

Even where all three services do agree on a set of top labels, the disparity of how much they agree by is still of importance. Just because three services agree that an image contains consistent top labels, they do not always have a small spread of confidence. In Figure 4.6, the three services agree with  $\sigma = 0.277$ , significantly larger than that of all images in general  $\sigma = 0.0831$ . Figure 4.5 displays the cumulative distribution of all intersecting top labels’ confidence values, presenting slightly similar results to that of Figure 4.4.

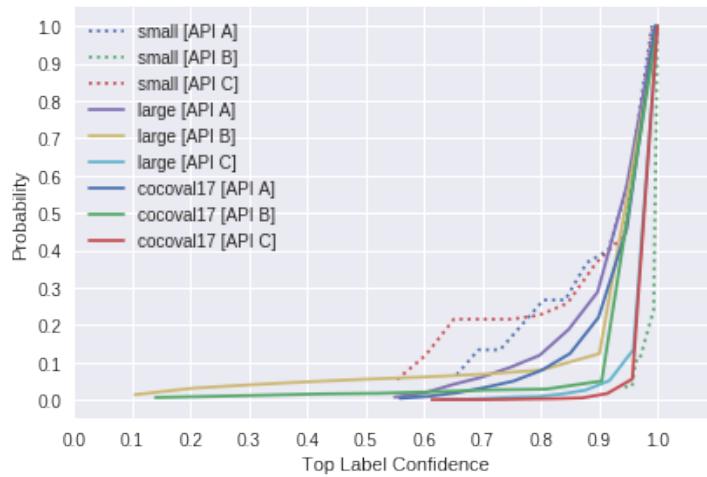
## 4.5.3 Evolution risk

### 4.5.3.1 Label Stability

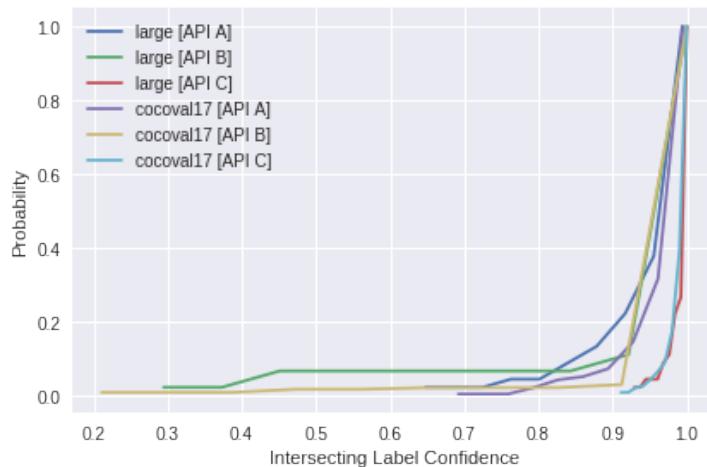
Generally, the top label(s) did not evolve in the evaluation period. 16.19% and 5.85% of images did change their top label(s) in the Large and COCOVal17 data sets in service A. Thus, top labels are stable but not guaranteed to be constant.

### 4.5.3.2 Confidence Stability

Similarly, where the top label(s) remained the same from one interval to the next, the confidence values were stable. Table 4.3 displays the proportion of images that changed their top label’s confidence values with various statistics on the confidence



**Figure 4.4:** Cumulative distribution of the top labels' confidences. One in nine images return a top label(s) confident to  $\gtrsim 97\%$ , though there is a wider distribution for service A.



**Figure 4.5:** Cumulative distribution of intersecting top labels' confidences. The small data set is intentionally removed due to low intersections of labels (see Table 4.2).



**Figure 4.6:** All three services agree the top label for the above image is ‘food’, but the confidences to which they agree by vary significantly. Service C is most confident to 94.93% (in addition with the label ‘bread’); service A is the second most confident to 84.32%; service B is the least confident with 41.39%.

<sup>1796</sup> deltas between snapshots ( $\delta_c$ ). However, this delta is so minuscule that we attribute  
<sup>1797</sup> such changes to statistical noise.

## <sup>1798</sup> 4.6 Recommendations

### <sup>1799</sup> 4.6.1 Recommendations for IWS users

#### <sup>1800</sup> 4.6.1.1 *Test with a representative ontology for the particular use case*

<sup>1801</sup> Rosa should ensure that in her testing strategies for the app she develops, there is an  
<sup>1802</sup> ontology focus for the types of vocabulary that are returned. Additionally, we noted  
<sup>1803</sup> that there was a sudden change in case for services A and C; for all comparative  
<sup>1804</sup> purposes of labels, each label should be lower-cased.

#### <sup>1805</sup> 4.6.1.2 *Incorporate a specialised IWS testing methodology into the development <sup>1806</sup> lifecycle*

<sup>1807</sup> Rosa can utilise the different aspects of consistency as outlined in this paper as  
<sup>1808</sup> part of her quality strategy. To ensure results are correct over time, we recommend  
<sup>1809</sup> developers create a representative data set of the intended application’s data set  
<sup>1810</sup> and evaluate these changes against their chosen service frequently. This will help  
<sup>1811</sup> identify when changes, if any, have occurred if vendors do not provide a line of  
<sup>1812</sup> communication when this occurs.

#### <sup>1813</sup> 4.6.1.3 *IWSs are not ‘plug-and-play’*

<sup>1814</sup> Rosa will be locked into whichever vendor she chooses as there is inherent incon-  
<sup>1815</sup> sistency between these services in both the vocabulary and ontologies that they use.  
<sup>1816</sup> We have demonstrated that very few services overlap in their vocabularies, chiefly  
<sup>1817</sup> because they are still in early development and there is yet to be an established,  
<sup>1818</sup> standardised vocabulary that can be shared amongst the different vendors. Issues  
<sup>1819</sup> such as those shown in Section 4.5.1 can therefore be avoided.

1820 Throughout this work, we observed that the terminologies used by the vari-  
1821 ous vendors are different. Documentation was studied, and we note that there is  
1822 inconsistency between the ways techniques are described to users. We note the  
1823 disparity between the terms ‘detection’, ‘recognition’, ‘localisation’ and ‘analysis’.  
1824 This applies chiefly to object- and facial-related techniques. Detection applies to  
1825 facial detection, which gives bounding box coordinates around all faces in an image.  
1826 Similarly, localisation applies the same methodology to disparate objects in an image  
1827 and labels them. In the context of facial ‘recognition’, this term implies that a face  
1828 is *recognised* against a known set of faces. Lastly, ‘analysis’ applies in the context  
1829 of facial analysis (gender, eye colour, expression etc.); there does not exist a similar  
1830 analysis technique on objects.

1831 We notice similar patterns with object ‘tagging’, ‘detection’ and ‘labelling’.  
1832 Service A uses ‘Entity Detection’ for object categorisation, service B uses ‘Image  
1833 Tagging’, and service C uses the term ‘Detect Labels’ : conceptually, these provide  
1834 the same functionality but the lack of consistency used between all three providers is  
1835 concerning and leaves room for confusion with developers during any comparative  
1836 analyses. Rosa may find that she wants to label her images into day/night scenes, but  
1837 this in turn means the ‘labelling’ of varying objects. There is therefore no consistent  
1838 standards to use the same terminology for the same concepts, as there are in other  
1839 developer areas (such as Web Development).

1840 **4.6.1.4 Avoid use in safety-critical systems**

1841 We have demonstrated in this paper that both labels and confidences are stable but not  
1842 constant; there is still an evolution risk posed to developers that may cause unknown  
1843 consequences in applications dependent on these CVSs. Developers should avoid  
1844 their use in safety critical systems due to the lack of visible changes.

1845 **4.6.2 Recommendations for IWS providers**

1846 **4.6.2.1 Improve the documentation**

1847 Rosa does not know that service A returns back ‘carrot’ for its top response, with  
1848 service C returning ‘spoon’ (Figure 4.2b). She is unable to tell the service’s API  
1849 where to focus on the image. Moreover, how can she toggle the level of specificity  
1850 in her results? She is frustrated that service C can detect ‘chocolate’, ‘food’ and also  
1851 ‘beverage’ all as the same top label in Figure 4.3a: what label is she to choose when  
1852 the service is meant to do so for her, and how does she get around this? Thus, we  
1853 recommend vendors to improve the documentation of services by making known  
1854 the boundary set of the training data used for the algorithms. By making such  
1855 information publicly available, developers would be able to review the service’s  
1856 specificity for their intended use case (e.g., maybe Rosa is satisfied her app can  
1857 catalogue ‘food’ together, and in fact does not want specific types of foods (‘hot  
1858 chocolate’) catalogued). We also recommend that vendors publish usage guidelines  
1859 should that include details of priors and how to evaluate the specific service results.

Furthermore, we did not observe that the vendors documented how some images may respond with multiple labels of the exact same confidence value. It is not clear from the documentation that response objects can have duplicate top values, and tutorials and examples provided by the vendors do not consider this possibility. It is therefore left to the developer to decide which label from this top set of labels best suits for their particular use case; the documentation should describe that a rule engine may need to be added in the developer's application to verify responses. The implications this would have on maintenance would be significant.

#### 4.6.2.2 Improve versioning

We recommend introducing a versioning system so that a model can be used from a specific date in production systems: when Rosa tests her app today, she would like the service to remain *static* the same for when her app is deployed in production tomorrow. Thus, in a request made to the vendor, Rosa could specify what date she ran her app's QA testing on so that she knows that henceforth these model changes will not affect her app.

#### 4.6.2.3 Improve Metadata in Response

Much of the information in these services is reduced to a single confidence value within the response object, and the details about training data and the internal AI architecture remains unknown; little metadata is provided back to developers that encompass such detail. Early work into model cards and datasheets [134, 246] suggests more can be done to document attributes about ML systems, however at a minimum from our work, we recommend including a reference point via the form of an additional identifier. This identifier must also permit the developers to submit the identifier to another API endpoint should the developer wish to find further characteristics about the AI empowering the IWS, reinforcing the need for those presented in model cards and datasheets. For example, if Rosa sends this identifier she receives in the response object to the IWS descriptor API, she could find out additional information such as the version number or date when the model was trained, thereby resolving potential evolution risk, and/or the ontology of labels.

#### 4.6.2.4 Apply constraints for predictions on all inputs

In this study, we used some images with intentionally disparate, and noisy objects. If services are not fully confident in the responses they give back, a form of customised error message should be returned. For example, if Rosa uploads an image of 10 various objects on a table, rather than returning a list of top labels with varying confidences, it may be best to return a 'too many objects' exception. Similarly, if Rosa uploads a photo that the model has had no priors on, it might be useful to return an 'unknown object' exception than to return a label it has no confidence of. We do however acknowledge that current state of the art computer vision techniques may have limits in what they can and cannot detect, but this limitation can be exposed in the documentation to the developers.

1900 A further example is sending a one pixel image to the service, analogous to  
1901 sending an empty file. When we uploaded a single pixel white image to service A,  
1902 we received responses such as ‘microwave oven’, ‘text’, ‘sky’, ‘white’ and ‘black’  
1903 with confidences ranging from 51–95%. Prior checks should be performed on all  
1904 input data, returning an ‘insufficient information’ error where any input data is below  
1905 the information of its training data.

## 1906 4.7 Threats to Validity

### 1907 4.7.1 Internal Validity

1908 Not all CVSs were assessed. As suggested in Section 4.4, we note that there are  
1909 other CVSs such as IBM Watson. Many services from Asia were also not considered  
1910 due to language barriers (of the authors) in assessing these services. We limited our  
1911 study to the most popular three providers (outside of Asia) to maintain focus in this  
1912 body of work.

1913 A custom confidence threshold was not set. All responses returned from each of  
1914 the services were included for analysis; where confidences were low, they were still  
1915 included for analysis. This is because we used the default thresholds of each API to  
1916 hint at what real-world applications may be like when testing and evaluating these  
1917 services.

1918 The label string returned from each service was only considered. It is common  
1919 for some labels to respond back that are conceptually similar (e.g., ‘car’ vs. ‘automobile’)  
1920 or grammatically different (e.g., ‘clothes’ vs. ‘clothing’). While we could have  
1921 employed more conceptual comparison or grammatical fixes in this study, we chose  
1922 only to compare lowercased labels and as returned. We leave semantic comparison  
1923 open to future work.

1924 Only introductory analysis has been applied in assessing the documentation of  
1925 these services. Further detailed analysis of documentation quality against a rigorous  
1926 documentation quality framework would be needed to fortify our analysis of the  
1927 evolution of these services’ documentation.

### 1928 4.7.2 External Validity

1929 The documentation and services do change over time and evolve, with many allowing  
1930 for contributions from the developer community via GitHub. We note that our  
1931 evaluation of the documentation was conducted on a single date (see Section 4.4)  
1932 and acknowledge that the documentation may have changed from the evaluation date  
1933 to the time of this publication. We also acknowledge that the responses and labelling  
1934 may have evolved too since the evaluation period described and the date of this  
1935 publication. Thus, this may have an impact on the results we have produced in this  
1936 paper compared to current, real-world results. To mitigate this, we have supplied the  
1937 raw responses available online [416].

1938 Moreover, in this paper we have investigated *computer vision* services. Thus,  
1939 the significance of our results to other domains such as natural language processing

1940 or audio transcription is, therefore, unknown. Future studies may wish to repeat our  
1941 methodology on other domains to validate if similar patterns occur; we remain this  
1942 open for future work.

#### 1943 4.7.3 Construct Validity

1944 It is not clear if all the recommendations proposed in Section 4.6 are feasible  
1945 or implementable in practice. Construct validity defines how well an experiment  
1946 measures up to its claims; the experiments proposed in this paper support our three  
1947 hypotheses but these have been conducted in a clinical condition. Real-world case  
1948 studies and feedback from developers and providers in industry would remove the  
1949 controlled nature of our work.

### 1950 4.8 Conclusions & Future Work

1951 This study explored three popular CVSs over an 11 month longitudinal experiment  
1952 to determine if these services pose any evolution risk or inconsistency. We find that  
1953 these services are generally stable but behave inconsistently; responses from these  
1954 services do change with time and this is not visible to the developers who use them.  
1955 Furthermore, the limitations of these systems are not properly conveyed by vendors.  
1956 From our analysis, we present a set of recommendations for both IWS vendors and  
1957 developers.

1958 Standardised software quality models (e.g., [173]) target maintainability and  
1959 reliability as primary characteristics. Quality software is stable, testable, fault  
1960 tolerant, easy to change and mature. These CVSs are, however, in a nascent stage,  
1961 difficult to evaluate, and currently are not easily interchangeable. Effectively, the  
1962 IWS response objects are shifting in material ways to developers, albeit slowly, and  
1963 vendors do not communicate this evolution or modify API endpoints; the endpoint  
1964 remains static but the content returned does not despite the same input.

1965 There are many potential directions stemming from this work. To start, we plan  
1966 to focus on preparing a more comprehensive datasheet specifically targeted at what  
1967 should be documented to application developers, and not data scientists. Reapplying  
1968 this work in real-world contexts, that is, to get real developer opinions and study  
1969 production grade systems, would also be beneficial to understand these phenomena  
1970 in-context. This will help us clarify if such changes are a real concern for developers  
1971 (i.e., if they really need to change between services, or the service evolution has real  
1972 impact on their applications). We also wish to refine and systematise the method  
1973 used in this study and develop change detectors that can be used to identify evolution  
1974 in these services that can be applied to specific ML domains (i.e., not just computer  
1975 vision), data sets, and API endpoints, thereby assisting application developers in their  
1976 testing strategies. Moreover, future studies may wish to expand the methodology  
1977 applied by refining how the responses are compared. As there does not yet exist a  
1978 standardised list of terms available between services, labels could be *semantically*  
1979 compared instead of using exact matches (e.g., by using stem words and synonyms  
1980 to compare similar meanings of these labels), similar to previous studies [266].

1981 This paper has highlighted only some high-level issues that may be involved  
1982 in using these evolving services. The laws of software evolution suggest that for  
1983 software to be useful, it must evolve [242, 354]. There is, therefore, a trade-off, as  
1984 we have shown, between consistency and evolution in this space. For a component  
1985 to be stable, any changes to dependencies it relies on must be communicated. We  
1986 are yet to see this maturity of communication from IWS providers. Thus, developers  
1987 must be cautious between integrating intelligent components into their applications  
1988 at the expense of stability; as the field of AI is moving quickly, we are more likely to  
1989 see further instability and evolution in IWSs as a consequence.



# CHAPTER 5

1990

1991

1992

## Interpreting Pain-Points in Computer Vision Services<sup>†</sup>

1993

1994 **Abstract** Intelligent web services (IWSs) are becoming increasingly more pervasive; application developers want to leverage the latest advances in areas such as computer vision to provide new services and products to users, and large technology firms enable this via RESTful APIs. While such APIs promise an easy-to-integrate on-demand machine intelligence, their current design, documentation and developer interface hides much of the underlying machine learning techniques that power them. Such APIs look and feel like conventional APIs but abstract away data-driven probabilistic behaviour—the implications 1995 of a developer treating these APIs in the same way as other, traditional cloud services, such 1996 as cloud storage, is of concern. The objective of this study is to determine the various 1997 pain-points developers face when implementing systems that rely on the most mature of 1998 these intelligent web services, specifically those that provide computer vision. We use Stack 1999 Overflow to mine indications of the frustrations that developers appear to face when using 2000 computer vision services, classifying their questions against two recent classification tax- 2001 onomies (documentation-related and general questions). We find that, unlike mature fields 2002 like mobile development, there is a contrast in the types of questions asked by developers. 2003 These indicate a shallow understanding of the underlying technology that empower such 2004 systems. We discuss several implications of these findings via the lens of learning tax- 2005 onomies to suggest how the software engineering community can improve these services 2006 and comment on the nature by which developers use them.

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<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on A. Cummaudo, R. Vasa, S. Barnett, J. Grundy, and M. Abdellrazek, “Interpreting Cloud Computer Vision Pain-Points: A Mining Study of Stack Overflow,” in *Proceedings of the 42nd International Conference on Software Engineering*. Seoul, Republic of Korea: ACM, June 2020. DOI 10.1145/3377811.3380404, pp. 1584–1596. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

## 2013 5.1 Introduction

2014 The availability of recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) over simple RESTful  
2015 end-points offers application developers new opportunities. These new intelligent  
2016 web services (IWSs) are AI components that abstract complex machine learning  
2017 (ML) and AI techniques behind simpler API calls. In particular, they hide (either  
2018 explicitly or implicitly) any data-driven and non-deterministic properties inherent  
2019 to the process of their construction. The promise is that software engineers can  
2020 incorporate complex machine learnt capabilities, such as computer vision, by simply  
2021 calling an API end-point.

2022 The expectation is that application developers can use these AI-powered services  
2023 like they use other conventional software components and cloud services (e.g., object  
2024 storage like AWS S3). Furthermore, the documentation of these AI components is  
2025 still anchored to the traditional approach of briefly explaining the end-points with  
2026 some information about the expected inputs and responses. The presupposition  
2027 is that developers can reason and work with this high level information. These  
2028 services are also marketed to suggest that application developers do not need to fully  
2029 understand how these components were created (i.e., assumptions in training data  
2030 and training algorithms), the ways in which the components can fail, and when such  
2031 components should and should not be used.

2032 The nuances of ML and AI powering IWSs have to be appreciated, as there are  
2033 real-world consequences to software quality for applications that depend on them if  
2034 they are ignored [89]. This is especially true when ML and AI are abstracted and  
2035 masked behind a conventional-looking API call, yet the mechanisms behind the API  
2036 are data-dependent, probabilistic and potentially non-deterministic [266]. We are  
2037 yet to discover what long-term impacts exist during development and production due  
2038 to poor documentation that do not capture these traits, nor do we know the depth of  
2039 understanding application developers have for these components. Given the way AI-  
2040 powered services are currently presented, developers are also likely to reason about  
2041 these new services much like a string library or a cloud data storage service. That  
2042 is, they may not fully consider the implications of the underlying statistical nature  
2043 of these new abstractions or the consequent impacts on productivity and quality.

2044 Typically, when developers are unable to correctly align to the mindset of the  
2045 API designer, they attempt to resolve issues by (re-)reading the API documentation.  
2046 If they are still unable to resolve these issues on their own after some internet  
2047 searching, they consider online discussion platforms (e.g., Stack Overflow, GitHub  
2048 Issues, Mailing Lists) where they seek technological advice from their peers [4].  
2049 Capturing what developers discuss on these platforms offers an insight into the  
2050 frustrations developers face when using different software components as shown  
2051 by recent works [39, 191, 309, 338, 370]. However, to our knowledge, no studies  
2052 have yet analysed what developers struggle with when using the new generation of  
2053 *intelligent* services. Given the re-emergent interest in AI and the anticipated value  
2054 from this technology [223], a better understanding of issues faced by developers  
2055 will help us improve the quality of services. Our hypothesis is that application  
2056 developers do not fully appreciate the probabilistic nature of these services, nor do

2057 they have sufficient appreciation of necessary background knowledge—however, we  
2058 do not know the specific areas of concern. The motivation for our study is to inform  
2059 API designers on which aspects to focus in their documentation, education, and  
2060 potentially refine the design of the end-points.

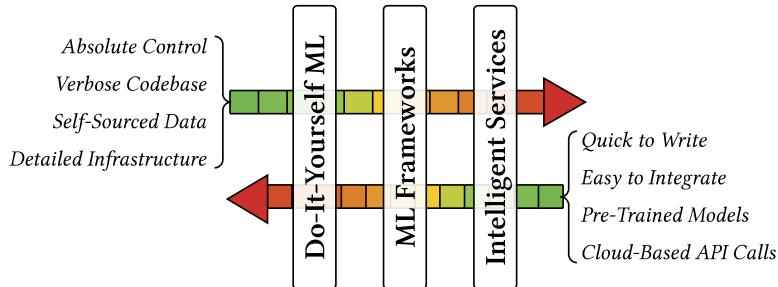
2061 This study involves an investigation of 1,825 Stack Overflow (SO) posts regarding  
2062 one of the most mature types of IWSs—computer vision services (CVSs)—dating  
2063 from November 2012 to June 2019. We adapt existing methodologies of prior SO  
2064 analyses [39, 349] to extract posts related to CVSs. We then apply two existing SO  
2065 question classification schemes presented at ICPC and ICSE in 2018 and 2019 [4, 40].  
2066 These previous studies focused on mobile apps and web applications. Although not  
2067 a direct motivation, our work also serves as a validation of the applicability of these  
2068 two issue classification taxonomies [4, 40] in the context of IWSs (hence potential  
2069 for generalisation). Additionally our work is the first—to our knowledge—to *test*  
2070 the applicability of these taxonomies in a new study.

2071 The taxonomies in previous works focus on the specific aspects from the domain  
2072 (e.g. API usage, specificity within the documentation etc.) and as such do not  
2073 deeply consider the learning gap of an application developer. To explore the API  
2074 learning implications raised by our SO analysis, we applied an additional lens of  
2075 two taxonomies from the field of pedagogy. This was motivated by the need to offer  
2076 an insight into the work needed to help developers learn how to use these relatively  
2077 new services.

2078 The key findings of our study are:

- 2079 • The primary areas that developers raise as issues reflect a relatively primitive  
2080 understanding of the underlying concepts of data-driven ML approaches used.  
2081 We note this via the issues raised due to conceptual misunderstanding and  
2082 confusion in interpreting errors,
- 2083 • Developers predominantly encounter a different distribution of issue types than  
2084 were reported in previous studies, indicating the complexity of the technical  
2085 domain has a non-trivial influence on intelligent API usage; and
- 2086 • Most of these issues can be resolved with better documentation, based on our  
2087 analysis.

2088 The paper also offers a data-set as an additional contribution to the research  
2089 community and to permit replication [417]. The paper structure is as follows:  
2090 Section 5.2 provides motivational examples to highlight the core focus of our study;  
2091 Section 5.3 provides a background on prior studies that have mined SO to gather  
2092 insight into the software engineering community; Section 5.4 describes our study  
2093 design in detail; Section 5.5 presents the findings from the SO extraction; Section 5.6  
2094 offers an interpretation of the results in addition to potential implications that arise  
2095 from our work; Section 5.7 outlines the limitations of our study; concluding remarks  
2096 are given in Section 5.8.



**Figure 5.1:** Some traits of Intelligent Services vs. ‘Do-It-Yourself’ ML. Green-to-red arrows indicate the presence of these traits. *Adapted from Ortiz [269].*

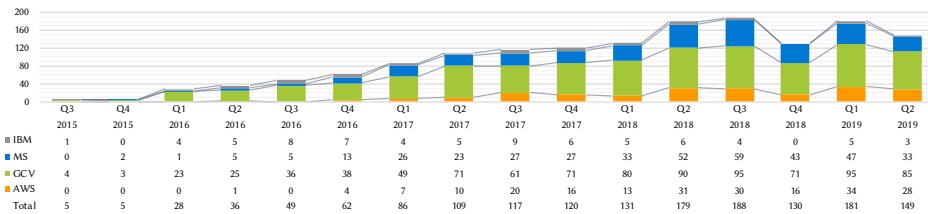
## 5.2 Motivation

“Intelligent” services are often available as a cloud end-point and provide developers a friendly approach to access recent AI/ML advances without being experts in the underlying processes. Figure 5.1 highlights how these services abstract away much of the technical know-how needed to create and operationalise these IWSs [269]. In particular, they hide information about the training algorithm and data-sets used in training, the evaluation procedures, the optimisations undertaken, and—surprisingly—they often do not offer a properly versioned end-point [89, 266]. That is, the cloud vendors may change the behaviour of the services without sufficient transparency.

The trade-off towards ease of use for application developers, coupled with the current state of documentation (and assumed developer background) has a cost as reflected in the increasing discussions on developer communities such as SO (see Figure 5.2). To illustrate the key concerns, we list below a few up-voted questions:

- **unsure of ML specific vocabulary:** “*Though it’s now not SO clear to me what ‘score’ actually means.*” [462]; “*I’m trying out the [IWS], and there’s a score field that returns that I’m not sure how to interpret [it].*” [476]
- **frustrated about non-deterministic results:** “*Often the API has troubles in recognizing single digits... At other times Vision confuses digits with letters.*” [475]; “*Is there a way to help the program recognize numbers better, for example limit the results to a specific format, or to numbers only?*” [472]
- **unaware of the limitations behind the services:** “*Is there any API available where we can recognize human other body parts (Chest, hand, legs and other parts of the body), because as per the Google vision API it’s only able to detect face of the human not other parts.*” [456]
- **seeking further documentation:** “*Does anybody know if Google has published their full list of labels ([‘produce’, ‘meal’, ...]) and where I could find that? Are those labels structured in any way? - e.g. is it known that ‘food’ is a superset of ‘produce’, for example.*” [459]

The objective of our study is to better understand the nature of the questions that developers raise when using IWSs, in order to inform the service designers



**Figure 5.2:** Trend of posts, where IBM = IBM Watson Visual Recognition, MS = Azure Computer Vision, AWS = AWS Rekognition and GCV = Google Cloud Vision. Three MS posts from Q4 2012, Q3 2013 and Q4 2013 have been removed for graph clarity.

and documenters. In particular, the knowledge we identify can be used to improve the documentation, educational material and (potentially) the information contained in the services’ response objects—these are the main avenues developers have to learn and reason about when using these services. There is previous work that has investigated issues raised by developers [4, 40, 349]. We build on top of this work by adapting the study methodology and apply the taxonomies offered to identify the nature of the issues and this results in the following research questions in this paper:

**RQ1. How do developers mis-comprehend IWSs as presented within SO pain-points?** While the AI community is well aware in the nuances that empower IWSs, such services are being released for application developers who may not be aware of their limitations or how they work. This is especially the case when machine intelligence is accessed via web-based APIs where such details are not fully exposed.

**RQ2. Are the distribution of issues similar to prior studies?** We compare how the distributions of previous studies’ of posts about conventional, deterministic API services differ from those of IWSs. By assessing the distribution of IWSs’ issues against similar studies that focus on mobile and web development, we identify whether a new taxonomy is needed specific to AI-based services, and if gaps specific to AI knowledge exist that need to be captured in these taxonomies.

### 5.3 Background

The primary goal of analysing issues is to better understand the root causes. Hence, a good issue classification taxonomy should ideally capture the underlying causal aspects (instead of pure functional groupings) [77]. Although this idea (of cause related classification) is not new (Chillarege advocated for it in this TSE paper in 1992), this is not a universally followed approach when studying online discussions and some recent works have largely classified issues into the “*what is*” and not “*how to fix it*” [28, 39, 359]. They typically (manually) classify discussion into either *functional areas* (e.g., Website Design/CSS, Mobile App Development, .NET Framework, Java [28]) or *descriptive areas* (e.g., Coding Style/Practice, Problem-/Solution, Design, QA [28, 359]). As a result, many of these studies do not give

us a prioritised means of targeted attack on how to *resolve* these issues with, for example, improved documentation. Interestingly, recent taxonomies that studied SO data (Aghajani et al. [4] and Beyer et al. [40]) were causal in nature and developed to understand discussions related to mobile and web applications. However, issues that arise when developers use IWSs have not been studied, nor do we know if existing issue classification taxonomies are sufficient in this domain.

Researchers studying APIs have also attempted to understand developer's opinions towards APIs [359], categorise the questions they ask about these APIs [28, 30, 40, 309], and understand API related documentation and usage issues [4, 5, 8, 28, 164, 349]. These studies often employ automation to assist in the data analysis stages of their research. Latent Dirichlet Allocation [8, 28, 309, 359] is applied for topic modelling and other ML techniques such as Random Forests [40], Conditional Random Fields [5] or Support Vector Machines [40, 164] are also used.

However, automatic techniques are tuned to classify into *descriptive* categories, that is, they help paint a landscape of *what is*, but generally do not address the causal factors to address the issues in great detail. For example, functional areas such as 'Website Design' [28], 'User Interface' [39] or 'Design' [360] result from such analyses. These automatic approaches are generally non-causal, making it hard to address reasons for *why* developers are asking such questions. However, not all studies in the space use automatic techniques; other studies employ manual thematic analysis [4, 30, 349] (e.g., card sorting) or a combination of both [39, 40, 309, 356]. Our work uses a manual approach for classification, and we use taxonomies that are more causally aligned allowing our findings to be directly useful in terms of addressing the issues.

Evidence-based software engineering [197] has helped shape the last 15 years worth of research, but the reliability of such evidence has been questioned [184, 186, 329]. Replication studies, especially in empirical works, can give us the confidence that existing results are adaptable to new domains; in this context, we extend (to IWSs) and work with study methods developed in previous works.

## 5.4 Method

### 5.4.1 Data Extraction

This study initially attempted to capture SO posts on a broad range of many IWSs by identifying issues related to four popular IWS cloud providers: Google Cloud [423], AWS [398], Azure [437] and IBM Cloud [433]. We based our selection criteria on the prominence of the providers in industry (Google, Amazon, Microsoft, IBM) and their ubiquity in cloud platform services. Additionally, in 2018, these services were considered the most adopted cloud vendors for enterprise applications [120].

However, during the filtering stage (see Section 5.4.2), we decided to focus on a subset of these services, computer vision, as these are one of the more mature and stable ML/AI-based services with widespread and increasing adoption in the developer community (see Figure 5.2). We acknowledge other services beyond the four analysed provide similar capabilities [411, 412, 419, 432, 485, 486] and only

2201 English-speaking services have been selected, excluding popular services from Asia  
2202 (e.g., [409, 410, 431, 451, 452])—see Section 5.7. For comprehensiveness, we  
2203 explain below our initial attempts to extract *all* IWSs.

2204 5.4.1.1 *Defining a list of IWSs*

2205 As there exists no global ‘list’ of IWSs to search on, we needed to derive a *corpus*  
2206 of *initial terms* to allow us to know *what* to search for on the Stack Exchange Data  
2207 Explorer<sup>1</sup> (SEDE). We began by looking at different brand names of cloud services  
2208 and their permutations (e.g., Google Cloud Services and GCS) as well as various  
2209 ML-related products (e.g., Google Cloud ML). To do this, we performed extensive  
2210 Google searches<sup>2</sup> in addition to manually reviewing six ‘overview’ pages of the  
2211 relevant cloud platforms. We identified 91 initial IWSs to incorporate into our  
2212 search terms<sup>3</sup>.

2213 5.4.1.2 *Manual search for relevant, related terms*

2214 We then ran a manual search<sup>2</sup> on each term to determine if these terms were relevant.  
2215 We did this by querying each term within SO’s search feature, reviewing the titles  
2216 and body post previews of the first three pages of results (we did not review the  
2217 answers, only the questions). We also noted down the user-defined *Tags* of each post  
2218 (up to five per question); by clicking into each tag, we could review similar tags (e.g.,  
2219 ‘project-oxford’ for ‘azure-cognitive-services’) and check if the tag had synonyms  
2220 (e.g., ‘aws-lex’ and ‘amazon-lex’). We then compiled a *corpus of tags* consisting of  
2221 31 terms.

2222 5.4.1.3 *Developing a search query*

2223 We recognise that searching SEDE via *Tags* exclusively can be ineffective (see [28,  
2224 349]). To mitigate this, we produced a *corpus of title and body terms*. Such terms  
2225 are those that exist within the title and body of the posts to reflect the ways in  
2226 which individual developers commonly use to refer to different IWSs. To derive  
2227 at such a list, we performed a search<sup>2,3</sup> of the 31 tags above in SEDE, filtering  
2228 out posts that were not answers (i.e., questions only) as we wanted to see how  
2229 developers *phrase* their questions. For each search, we extracted a random sample  
2230 of 100 questions (400 total for each service) and reviewed each question. We noted  
2231 many patterns in the permutations of how developers refer to these services, such  
2232 as: common misspellings ('bind' vs. 'bing'); brand misunderstanding ('Microsoft  
2233 computer vision' vs. 'Azure computer vision'); hyphenation ('Auto-ML' vs. 'Auto  
2234 ML'); UK and US English ('Watson Analyser' vs. 'Watson Analyzer'); and, the  
2235 use of apostrophes, plurals, and abbreviations ('Microsoft's Computer Vision API',  
‘Microsoft Computer Vision Services’, ‘GCV’ vs. ‘Google Cloud Vision’). We

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<sup>1</sup><http://data.stackexchange.com/stackoverflow>

<sup>2</sup>This search was conducted on 17 January 2019

<sup>3</sup>For reproducibility, this is available at <http://bit.ly/2ZcwNJO>.

<sup>2237</sup> arrived at a final list of 229 terms compromising all of the IWSs provided by  
<sup>2238</sup> Google, Amazon, Microsoft and IBM as of January 2019<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2239</sup> **5.4.1.4 Executing our search query**

<sup>2240</sup> Our next step was to perform a case-insensitive search of all 229 terms within the  
<sup>2241</sup> body or title of posts. We used Google BigQuery's public data-set of SO posts<sup>4</sup> to  
<sup>2242</sup> overcome SEDE's 50,000 row limit and to conduct a case-insensitive search. This  
<sup>2243</sup> search was conducted on 10 May 2019, where we extracted 21,226 results. We then  
<sup>2244</sup> performed several filtering steps to cleanse our extracted data, as explained below.

<sup>2245</sup> **5.4.2 Data Filtering**

<sup>2246</sup> **5.4.2.1 Refining our inclusion/exclusion criteria**

<sup>2247</sup> We performed an initial manual filtering of the 50 most recent posts (sorted by  
<sup>2248</sup> descending *CreationDate* values) of the 21,226 posts above, assessing the suitability  
<sup>2249</sup> of the results and to help further refine our inclusion and exclusion criteria. We  
<sup>2250</sup> did note that some abbreviations used in the search terms (e.g., 'GCV', 'WCS'<sup>5</sup>),  
<sup>2251</sup> resulting in irrelevant questions in our result set. We therefore removed abbreviations  
<sup>2252</sup> from our search query and consolidated all overlapping terms (e.g., 'Google Vision  
<sup>2253</sup> **API**' was collapsed into 'Google Vision').

<sup>2254</sup> We also recognised that 21,226 results would be non-trivial to analyse without  
<sup>2255</sup> automated techniques. As we wanted to do manual qualitative analysis, we reduced  
<sup>2256</sup> our search space to 27 search terms of just the *CVSs* within the original corpus of  
<sup>2257</sup> 229 terms. These were Google Cloud Vision [423], AWS Rekognition [398], Azure  
<sup>2258</sup> Computer Vision [437], and IBM Watson Visual Recognition [433]. This resulted  
<sup>2259</sup> in 1,425 results that were extracted on 21 June 2019. The query used and raw results  
<sup>2260</sup> are available online in our supplementary materials [417].

<sup>2261</sup> **5.4.2.2 Duplicates**

<sup>2262</sup> Within 1,425 results, no duplicate questions were noted, as determined by unique  
<sup>2263</sup> post ID, title or timestamp.

<sup>2264</sup> **5.4.2.3 Automated and manual filtering**

<sup>2265</sup> To assess the suitability and nature of the 1,425 questions extracted, the first author  
<sup>2266</sup> began with a manual check on a randomised sample of 50 questions. As the questions  
<sup>2267</sup> were exported in a raw CSV format (with HTML tags included in the post's body), we  
<sup>2268</sup> parsed the questions through an ERB templating engine script<sup>6</sup> in which the ID, title,  
<sup>2269</sup> body, tags, created date, and view, answer and comment counts were rendered for  
<sup>2270</sup> each post in an easily-readable format. Additionally, SQL matches in the extraction  
<sup>2271</sup> process were also highlighted in yellow (i.e., in the body of the post) and listed at

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<sup>4</sup><http://bit.ly/2LrN7OA>

<sup>5</sup>Watson Cognitive Services

<sup>6</sup>We make this available for future use at: <http://bit.ly/2NqBB70>

the top of each post. These visual cues helped to identify 3 false positive matches where library imports or stack traces included terms within our corpus of 26 CVS terms. For example, aws-java-sdk-rekognition:jar is falsely matched as a dependency within an unrelated question. As such exact matches would be hard to remove without the use of regular expressions, and due to the low likelihood (6%) of their appearance, we did not perform any followup automatic filtering.

5.4.2.4 Classification

Our 1,425 posts were then split into 4 additional random samples (in addition to the random sample of 50 above). 475 posts were classified by the first author and three other research assistants, software engineers with at least 2 years industry experience, assisted to classify the remaining 900. This left a total of 1,375 classifications made by four people plus an additional 450 classifications made from reliability analysis, in which the remaining 50 posts were classified nine times (as detailed in Section 5.4.3.1). Thus, a total of 1,825 classifications were made from the original 1,425 posts extracted.

Whilst we could have chosen to employ topic modelling, these are too descriptive in nature (as discussed in Section 5.3). Moreover, we wanted to see if prior taxonomies can be applied to IWSs (as opposed to creating a new one) and compare if their distributions are similar. Therefore, we applied the two existing taxonomies described in Section 5.3 to each post; (i) a documentation-specific taxonomy that addresses issues directly resulting from documentation, and (ii) a generalised taxonomy that covers a broad range of SO issues in a well-defined software engineering area (specifically mobile app development). Aghajani et al.’s documentation-specific taxonomy (Taxonomy A) is multi-layered consisting of four dimensions and 16 sub-categories [4]. Similarly, Beyer’s SO generalised post classification taxonomy (Taxonomy B) consists of seven dimensions [40]. We code each dimension with a number,  $X$ , and each sub-category with a letter  $y$ : ( $Xy$ ). We describe both taxonomies in detail within Table 5.1. Where a post was included in our results but not applicable to IWSs (see Section 5.4.2.3) or not applicable to a taxonomy dimension/category, then the post was flagged for removal in further analysis. Table 5.1 presents *our understanding* of the respective taxonomies; our intent is not to methodologically replicate Aghajani et al. or Beyer et al.’s studies in the IWS domain, rather to acknowledge related work in the area of SO classification and reduce the need to synthesise a new taxonomy. We baseline all coding against *our interpretation only*. Our classifications are therefore independent of the previous authors’ findings.

5.4.3 Data Analysis

5.4.3.1 Reliability of Classification

To measure consistency of the categories assigned by each rater to each post, we utilised both intra- and inter-rater reliability [236]. As verbatim descriptions from dimensions and sub-categories were considered quite lengthy from their original sources, all raters met to agree on a shared interpretation of the descriptions, which

**Table 5.1:** Descriptions of dimensions (■) and sub-categories (→) from both taxonomies used.

A   Documentation-specific classification (Aghajani et al. [4])		
A-1	■ <b>Information Content (What)</b> .....	Issues related to what is written in the documentation
A-1a	→ <i>Correctness</i> .....	What exists in the documentation actually matches what is implemented in code
A-1b	→ <i>Completeness</i> .....	The documentation fully covers all aspects of the API's components
A-1c	→ <i>Up-to-dateness</i> .....	What is documented is accurate to the current version of the API
A-2	■ <b>Information Content (How)</b> .....	Issues related to how the document is written and organised
A-2a	→ <i>Maintainability</i> .....	The upkeep effort to ensure the documentation remains up to date
A-2b	→ <i>Readability</i> .....	The extent to which the documentation is interpretable
A-2c	→ <i>Usability</i> .....	How useable the organisation, look and feel of the documentation is
A-2d	→ <i>Usefulness</i> .....	The usefulness of the documentation, avoiding misinformation.
A-3	■ <b>Process-Related</b> .....	Issues related to the documentation process
A-3a	→ <i>Internationalisation</i> .....	Translating the documentation into other languages
A-3b	→ <i>Contribution-Related</i> .....	Contribution issues encountered when people contribute to the documentation
A-3c	→ <i>Configuration-Related</i> .....	Configuration issues of the documentation tool
A-3d	→ <i>Implementation-Related</i> .....	Unwanted development issues caused by (poor) documentation
A-3e	→ <i>Traceability</i> .....	Tracing documentation changes (when, when, who and why)
A-4	■ <b>Tool-Related</b> .....	Issues related to documentation tools (e.g., Javadoc)
A-4a	→ <i>Tooling Bugs</i> .....	Bugs that exist within the documentation tooling
A-3b	→ <i>Tooling Discrepancy</i> .....	Support as expectations not being fulfilled by these documentation tools
A-3c	→ <i>Tooling Help Required</i> .....	Help required due to improper usage of the tools
A-3d	→ <i>Tooling Migration</i> .....	Issues migrating the tool to a new version or another tool
B   Generalised classification (Beyer et al. [40])		
B-1	■ <b>API usage</b> .....	Issue on how to implement something using a specific component provided by the API
B-2	■ <b>Discrepancy</b> .....	The questioner's <i>expected behaviour</i> of the API does not reflect the API's <i>actual behaviour</i>
B-3	■ <b>Errors</b> .....	Issue regarding some form of error when using the API, and provides an exception and/or stack trace to help understand why it is occurring
B-4	■ <b>Review</b> .....	The questioner is seeking insight from the developer community on what the best practices are using a specific API or decisions they should make given their specific situation
B-5	■ <b>Conceptual</b> .....	The questioner is trying to ascertain limitations of the API and its behaviour and rectify issues in their conceptual understanding on the background of the API's functionality
B-6	■ <b>API change</b> .....	Issue regarding changes in the API from a previous version
B-7	■ <b>Learning</b> .....	The questioner is seeking for learning resources to self-learn further functionality in the API, and unlike discrepancy, there is no specific problem they are seeking a solution for

2313 were then paraphrased as discussed in the previous subsection and tabulated in  
2314 Table 5.1. To perform statistical calculations of reliability, each category was as-  
2315 signed a nominal value and a random sample of 50 posts were extracted. Two-phase  
2316 reliability analysis followed.

2317 Firstly, intra-rater agreement by the first author was conducted twice on 28 June  
2318 2019 and 9 August 2019. Secondly, inter-rater agreement was conducted with the  
2319 remaining four co-authors in addition to three research assistants within our research  
2320 group in mid-August 2019. Thus, the 50 posts were classified an additional nine  
2321 times, resulting in 450 classifications for reliability analysis. We include these  
2322 classifications in our overall analysis.

2323 At first, we followed methods of reliability analysis similar to previous SO  
2324 studies (e.g., [349]) using the percentage agreement metric that divides the number  
2325 of agreed categories assigned per post by the total number of raters [236]. However,  
2326 percentage agreement is generally rejected as an inadequate measure of reliability  
2327 analysis [82, 150, 204] in statistical communities. As we used more than 2 coders  
2328 and our reliability analysis was conducted under the same random sample of 50  
2329 posts, we applied *Light's Kappa* [215] to our ratings, which indicates an overall  
2330 index of agreement. This was done using the `irr` computational R package [129]  
2331 as suggested in [150].

2332 **5.4.3.2 Distribution Analysis**

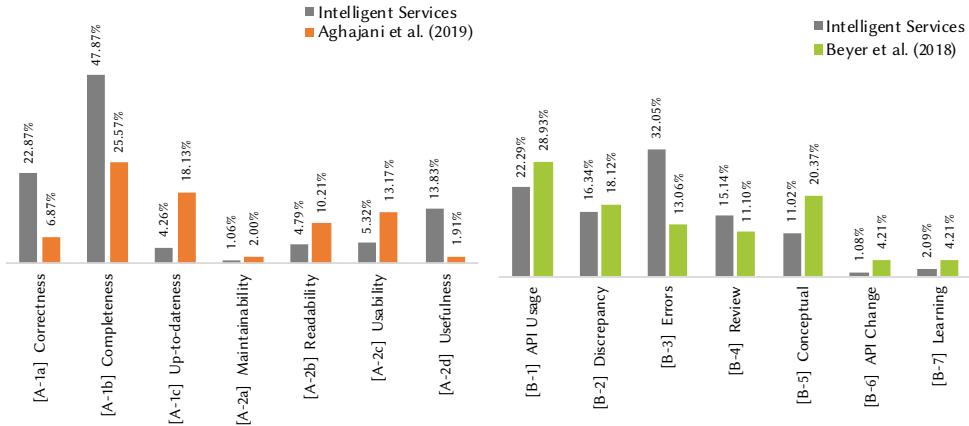
2333 In order to compare the distribution of categories from our study with previous studies  
2334 we carried out a  $\chi^2$  test. We selected a  $\chi^2$  test as the following assumptions [330]  
2335 are satisfied: (i) the data is categorical, (ii) all counts are greater than 5, and (iii)  
2336 we can assume simple random sampling. The null hypothesis describes the case  
2337 where each population has the same proportion of observations and the alternative  
2338 hypothesis is where at least one of the null hypothesis statements is false. We chose  
2339 a significance value,  $\alpha$ , of 0.05 following a standard rule of thumb. As to the best  
2340 of our knowledge this is the first statistical comparison using Taxonomy A and B on  
2341 SO posts. To report the effect size we selected Cramer's Phi,  $\phi_c$  which is well suited  
2342 for use on nominal data [330].

2343 **5.5 Findings**

2344 We present our findings from classifying a total of 1,825 SO posts aimed at answering  
2345 RQs 1 and 2. 450 posts were classified using Taxonomies A and B for reliability  
2346 analysis as described in Section 5.4.3.1 and the remaining 1,375 posts were classified  
2347 as per Section 5.4.2.4. A summary of our classification using Taxonomies A and B  
2348 is shown in Figure 5.3.

2349 **5.5.1 Post classification and reliability analysis**

2350 When undertaking the classification, we found that 238 issues (13.04%) did not  
2351 relate to IWSs directly. For example, library dependencies were still included in



**Figure 5.3:** Left: Documentation-specific classification taxonomy results highlights a mostly similar distribution to that of Aghajani et al.’s findings [4]. Right: Generalised classification taxonomy results highlight differences from more mature fields (i.e., Android APIs in Beyer et al. [40]) to less mature fields (i.e., IWSs).

a number of results (see Section 5.4.2.3), and we found there to be many posts discussing Android’s Mobile Vision API as Google (Cloud) Vision. These issues were flagged and ignored for further analysis (see Section 5.4.2.4).

For our reliability analysis, we classified a total of 450 posts of which 70 posts were flagged as irrelevant. Landis and Koch [210] provide guidelines to interpret kappa reliability statistics, where  $0.00 \leq \kappa \leq 0.20$  indicates *slight* agreement and  $0.21 \leq \kappa \leq 0.40$  indicates *fair* agreement. Despite all raters meeting to agree on a shared interpretation of the taxonomies (see Section 5.4.3.1) our inter-rater measures aligned *slightly* (0.148) for Taxonomy A and *fairly* (0.295) for Taxonomy B. We report further in Section 5.7.

## 5.5.2 Developer Frustrations

We found Beyer et al.’s high-level abstraction taxonomy (Taxonomy B) was able to classify 86.52% of posts. 10.30% posts were assigned exclusively under Aghajani et al.’s documentation-specific taxonomy (Taxonomy A). We found that developers do not generally ask questions exclusive to documentation, and typically either pair documentation-related issues to their own code or context. The following two subsections further explain results from both Taxonomy A and B’s perspective.

### 5.5.2.1 Results from Aghajani et al.’s taxonomy

Results for Aghajani et al.’s low-level documentation taxonomy (Taxonomy A), indicates that most discussion on SO does not directly relate to documentation about an IWS. We did not find any process-related (A-3) or tool-related (A-4) questions as, understandably, the developers who write the documentation of the IWSs would not be posting questions of such nature on SO. One can *infer* documentation-related issues from posts (i.e., parts of the documentation *lacking* that may cause the issue

2376 posted). However, there are few questions that *directly* relate to documentation of  
2377 IWSs.

2378 Few developers question or ask questions directly about the API documentation  
2379 but some (47.87%) posts ask for additional information to understand the  
2380 API (**completeness (A-1b)**), for example: “*Is there a full list of potential labels*  
2381 *that Google’s Vision API will return?*” [459]; “*There seems to be very little to no*  
2382 *documentation for AWS iOS text recognition inside an image?*” [457].

2383 22.87% of posts question the **accuracy (A-1a)** of certain parts of the cloud docu-  
2384 mentation, especially in relation to incorrect quotas and limitations: “*Are the Cloud*  
2385 *Vision API limits in documentation correct?*” [470], “*According to the Google Vision*  
2386 *documentation, the maximum number of image files per request is 16. Elsewhere,*  
2387 *however, I’m finding that the maximum number of requests per minute is as high as*  
2388 *1800.*” [455].

2389 There are also many references (23.94%) addressing the confusing nature of  
2390 some documentation, indicating that the **readability, usability and usefulness of**  
2391 **the documentation (A-2b, A-2c and A-2d)** could be improved. For example, “*Am*  
2392 *I encoding it correctly? The docs are quite vague.*” [453], “*The aws docs for this*  
2393 *are really confusing.*” [482].

#### 2394 5.5.2.2 Results from Beyer et al.’s taxonomy

2395 We found that a majority (32.05%) of posts are primarily **error-related questions**  
2396 (**B-3**), including a dump of the stack trace or exception message from the service’s  
2397 programming-language SDK (usually Java, Python or C#) that relates to a specific  
2398 error. For example: “*I can’t fix an error that’s causing us to fall behind.*” [479]; “*I’m*  
2399 *using the Java Google Vision API to run through a batch of images... I’m now getting*  
2400 *a channel closed and ClosedChannelException error on the request.*” [473].

2401 **API usage questions (B-1)** were the second highest category at 22.29% of  
2402 posts. Reading the questions revealed that many developers present an insufficient  
2403 understanding of the behaviour, functional capability and limitation of these services  
2404 and the need for further data processing. For example, while Azure provides an  
2405 image captioning service, this is not universal to all CVSSs: “*In Amazon Rekognition*  
2406 *for image processing how do I get the caption for an image?*” [464]. Similarly,  
2407 OCR-related and label-related questions often indicate interest in cross-language  
2408 translation, where a separate translation service would be required: “*Can Google*  
2409 *Cloud Vision generate labels in Spanish via its API?*” [478]; “[*How can I] specify*  
2410 *language for response in Google Cloud Vision API*” [465]; “*When I request a text*  
2411 *detection of an image, it gives only English Alphabet characters (characters without*  
2412 *accents) which is not enough for me. How can I get the UTF-32 characters?*” [460].

2413 It was commonplace to see questions that demonstrate a lack of depth in under-  
2414 standing and appreciating how these services work, instead posting simple debugging  
2415 questions. For instance, in the 11.02% of **conceptual-related questions (B-5)** that  
2416 we categorised, we noticed causal links to a misunderstanding (or lack of aware-  
2417 ness) of the vocabulary used within computer vision. For example: “*The problem*  
2418 *is that I need to know not only what is on the image but also the position of that*

<sup>2419</sup> object. Some of those APIs have such feature but only for face detection.” [471];  
<sup>2420</sup> “I want to know if the new image has a face similar to the original image.... [the  
<sup>2421</sup> service] can identify faces, but can I use it to get similar faces to the identified face  
<sup>2422</sup> in other images?” [463]. It is evident that some application developers are not aware  
<sup>2423</sup> of conceptual differences in computer vision such as object/face *detection* versus  
<sup>2424</sup> *localisation* versus *recognition*.

<sup>2425</sup> In the 16.34% of **discrepancy-related questions (B-2)**, we see further unaware-  
<sup>2426</sup> ness from developers in how the underlying systems work. In OCR-related questions,  
<sup>2427</sup> developers do not understand the pre-processing steps required before an OCR is  
<sup>2428</sup> performed. In instances where text is separated into multiple columns, for example,  
<sup>2429</sup> text is read top-down rather than left-to-right and segmentation would be required  
<sup>2430</sup> to achieve the expected results. For example, “*it appears that the API is using some*  
<sup>2431</sup> *kind of logic that makes it scan top to bottom on the left side and moving to right*  
<sup>2432</sup> *side and doing a top to bottom scan.*” [477]; “*this method returns scanned text in*  
<sup>2433</sup> *wrong sequence... please tell me how to get text in proper sequence.*” [483].

<sup>2434</sup> A number of **review-related questions (B-4)** (15.14%) seem to provide some  
<sup>2435</sup> further depth in understanding the context to which these systems work, where train-  
<sup>2436</sup> ing data (or training stages) are needed to understand how inferences are made: “*How*  
<sup>2437</sup> *can we find an exhaustive list (or graph) of all logos which are effectively recognized*  
<sup>2438</sup> *using Google Vision logo detection feature?*” [481]; “*when object banana is detected*  
<sup>2439</sup> *with accuracy greater than certain value, then next action will be dispatched... how*  
<sup>2440</sup> *can I confidently define and validate the threshold value for each item?*” [467].

<sup>2441</sup> **API change (B-6)** was shown in 1.08% of posts, with evolution of the services  
<sup>2442</sup> occurring (e.g., due to new training data) but not necessarily documented “*Recently*  
<sup>2443</sup> *something about the Google Vision API changed... Suddenly, the API started to*  
<sup>2444</sup> *respond differently to my requests. I sent the same picture to the API today, and I*  
<sup>2445</sup> *got a different response (from the past).*” [480].

### <sup>2446</sup> 5.5.3 Statistical Distribution Analysis

<sup>2447</sup> We obtained the following results  $\chi^2 = 131.86$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $p \text{ value} = 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$  and  
<sup>2448</sup>  $\phi_c = 0.362$  from our distribution analysis with Taxonomy A to compare our study  
<sup>2449</sup> with that of Aghajani et al. [4]. Comparing our study to Beyer et al. [40] produced the  
<sup>2450</sup> following results  $\chi^2 = 145.58$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $p \text{ value} = 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$  and  $\phi_c = 0.252$ .  
<sup>2451</sup> These results show that we are able to reject the null hypothesis that the distribution  
<sup>2452</sup> of posts using each taxonomy was the same as the comparison study. While there are  
<sup>2453</sup> limited guidelines for interpreting  $\phi_c$  when there is no prior information for effect  
<sup>2454</sup> size [344], Sun et al. suggests the following:  $0.07 \leq \phi_c \leq 0.20$  indicates a *small*  
<sup>2455</sup> effect,  $0.21 \leq \phi_c \leq 0.35$  indicates a *medium* effect, and  $0.35 > \phi_c$  indicates a *large*  
<sup>2456</sup> effect. Based on this criteria we obtained a *large* effect size for the documentation-  
<sup>2457</sup> specific classification (Taxonomy A) and a *medium* effect size for the generalised  
<sup>2458</sup> classification (Taxonomy B).

## 2459 5.6 Discussion

### 2460 5.6.1 Answers to Research Questions

#### 2461 5.6.1.1 How do developers mis-comprehend IWSs as presented within SO pain- 2462 points? (RQ1)

2463 Upon meeting to discuss the discrepancies between our categorisation of IWS usage  
2464 SO posts, we found that our interpretations of the *posts themselves* were largely sub-  
2465 jective. For example, many posts presented multi-faceted dimensions for Taxonomy  
2466 B; Beyer et al. [40] argue that a post can have more than one question category and  
2467 therefore multi-label classification is appropriate at times. We highlight this further  
2468 in the threats to validity (Section 5.7).

2469 We have to define the context of IWSs to address RQ1. We use the concept  
2470 of a “technical domain” [25] to define this context. A technical domain captures  
2471 the domain-specific concerns that influence the non-functional requirements of a  
2472 system [25]. In the context of IWSs, the technical domain includes exploration, data  
2473 engineering, distributed infrastructure, training data, and model characteristics as  
2474 first class citizens [25]. We would then expect to see posts on SO related to these  
2475 core concerns.

2476 In Figure 5.3, for the documentation-specific classification, the majority of posts  
2477 were classified as **Completeness (A1-b)** related (47.87%). An interpretation for this  
2478 is that the documentation does not adequately cover the technical domain concerns.  
2479 Comments by developers such as “*I'm searching for a list of all the possible image*  
2480 *labels that the Google Cloud Vision API can return?*” [458] indicates the documen-  
2481 tation does not adequately describe the training data for the API—developers do  
2482 not know the required usage assumptions. Another quote from a developer, “*Can*  
2483 *Google Cloud Vision generate labels in Spanish via its API? ... [Does the API]*  
2484 *allow to select which language to return the labels in?*” [478] points to a lack of  
2485 details relating to the characteristics of the models used by the API. It would seem  
2486 that developers are unaware of aspects of the technical domain concerns.

2487 The next most frequent category is **Correctness (A-1a)** with 22.87% of posts. In  
2488 the context of the technical domain there are many limits that developers need to be  
2489 aware of: range and increments of a model score [89]; required data pre-processing  
2490 steps for optimal performance; and features provided by the models (as explained in  
2491 Section 5.5.2.2). Considering the relation between technical concerns and software  
2492 quality, developers are right to question providers on correctness; “*Are the Cloud*  
2493 *Vision API limits in documentation correct?*” [470].

#### 2494 5.6.1.2 Are the distribution of issues similar to prior studies? (RQ2)

2495 Visual inspection of Figure 5.3 shows that the distributions for the documentation-  
2496 specific classification and the generalised classification are different (compared to  
2497 prior studies). As a sanity check we conducted a  $\chi^2$  test and calculated the effect  
2498 size  $\phi_c$ . We were able to reject the null hypothesis for both classification schemes,  
2499 that the distribution of issues were the same as the previous studies (see Section 5.5).

2500 We now discuss the most prominent differences between our study and the previous  
2501 studies.

2502 In the context of IWS SO posts, Taxonomy B suggests that Errors (B-3) are  
2503 discussed most amongst developers. These results are in contrast to similar studies  
2504 made in more *mature* API domains, such as Mobile Development [26, 27, 39, 40, 309]  
2505 and Web Development [356]. Here, API Usage (B-1) is much more frequently  
2506 discussed, followed by Conceptual (B-5), Discrepancy (B-2) and Errors (B-3). We  
2507 argue in the following section that an improved developer understanding can be  
2508 achieved by educating them about the IWS lifecycle and the ‘whole’ system that  
2509 wraps such services.

2510 In the Android study API usage questions (B-1) were the highest category  
2511 (28.93% compared to 22.29% in our study). As stated in the analysis of the Error  
2512 questions this discrepancy could be due to the maturity of the domain. However,  
2513 another explanation could be the scope of the two individual studies. Beyer et al. [40]  
2514 used a broad search strategy consisting of posts tagged Android. This search term  
2515 fetches issues related to the entire Android platform which is significantly larger  
2516 than searching for computer vision APIs using 229 search terms. As a consequence  
2517 of more posts and more APIs there would be use cases resulting in additional posts  
2518 related to API Usage (B-1).

2519 Applying existing SO taxonomies allowed us to better understand the distribution  
2520 of the issues across different domains. In particular, the issues raised around IWSs  
2521 appear to be primarily due to poor documentation, or insufficient explanation around  
2522 errors and limitations. Hence, many of the concerns could be addressed by adding  
2523 more details to the end-point descriptions, and by providing additional information  
2524 around how these services are designed to work.

## 2525 5.6.2 The Developer’s Learning Approach

2526 In this subsection, we offer an explanation as to why developers are complaining  
2527 about certain things when trying to use IWSs on SO (RQ1), as characterised through  
2528 the use of prior SO classification frameworks (RQ2). This is described through  
2529 the theoretical lenses of two learning taxonomies: Bloom’s context complexity and  
2530 intellectual ability taxonomy, and the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome  
2531 (SOLO) taxonomy (i.e., the nature by which developer’s learn). We argue that the  
2532 issues with using IWSs relating to the lower-levels of these learning taxonomies  
2533 are easily solvable by slight fixes and improvements to the documentation of these  
2534 services. However, the higher dimensions of these taxonomies demand far more  
2535 rigorous mitigation strategies than documentation alone (potentially more structured  
2536 education). Thus, many of the questions posted are from developers who are *learning*  
2537 to *understand* the domain of IWSs and AI, and (hence) both SOLO and Bloom’s  
2538 taxonomies are applicable for this discussion—as described below within the context  
2539 of our domain—as pedagogical aides.

2540 **5.6.2.1 Bloom's Taxonomy**

2541 The cognitive domain under Bloom's taxonomy [45] consists of six objectives.  
2542 Within the context of IWSs, developers are likely to ask questions due to causal links  
2543 that exist in the following layers of Bloom's taxonomy: (i) *knowledge*, where the  
2544 developer does not remember or know of the basic concepts of computer vision and  
2545 AI (in essence, they may think that AI is as smart as a human); (ii) *comprehension*,  
2546 where the developer does not understand how to interpret basic concepts, or they  
2547 are mis-understanding how they are used in context; (iii) *application*, where the  
2548 developer is struggling to apply existing concepts within the context of their own  
2549 situation; (iv) *analysis*, where the developer is unable to analyse the results from IWSs  
2550 (i.e., understand response objects); (v) *evaluation*, where the developer is unable to  
2551 evaluate issues and make use of best-practices when using IWSs; and (vi) *synthesise*,  
2552 where the developer is posing creative questions to ask if new concepts are possible  
2553 with CVSs.

2554 **5.6.2.2 SOLO Taxonomy**

2555 The SOLO taxonomy [41] consists of five levels of understanding. The causal  
2556 links behind the SO questions we have found relate to the following layers of the  
2557 SOLO taxonomy: (i) *pre-structural*, where the developer has a question indicating  
2558 incompetence or has little understanding of computer vision; (ii) *uni-structural*,  
2559 where the developer is struggling with one key aspect (i.e., a simple question about  
2560 computer vision); (iii) *multi-structural*, where the developer is questioning multiple  
2561 concepts (independently) to understand how to build their system (e.g., system  
2562 integration with the IWS); (iv) *relational*, where the developer is comparing and  
2563 contrasting the best ways to achieve something with IWSs; and (v) *extended abstract*,  
2564 where the developer poses a question theorising, formulating or postulating a new  
2565 concept within IWSs.

2566 **5.6.2.3 Aligning SO taxonomies to Bloom's and SOLO taxonomies**

2567 To understand our findings with the lenses of pedagogical aids, we aligned Tax-  
2568 onomies A and B to Bloom's and the SOLO taxonomies for a random sample of 50  
2569 issues described in Section 5.4.3.1. To do this, we reviewed all 50 of these SO posted  
2570 questions and applied both the Bloom and SOLO taxonomies. The primary author  
2571 assigned each of the 50 questions a level within the Bloom and SOLO taxonomies,  
2572 removed out noise (i.e., false positive posts of no relevance to IWSs) and unassigned  
2573 dimensions from reliability agreement, and then compared the relevant dimensions  
2574 of Taxonomy A and B dimensions (not sub-categories). The comparison of align-  
2575 ments of posts to the five SOLO dimensions and six Bloom dimensions are shown  
2576 in Figure 5.4. We acknowledge that this is only an approximation of the current  
2577 state of the developer's understanding of IWSs. This early model will require further  
2578 studies to perform a more thorough analysis, but we offer this interpretation for early  
2579 discussion.

2580 As shown in Figure 5.4, the bulk of the posts fall in the lower constructs of

**Table 5.2:** Example Alignments of SO posts to Bloom's and the SOLO taxonomy.

Issue Quote	Bloom	SOLO
“I’m using Microsoft Face API for a small project and I was trying to detect a face inside a jpg file in the local system (say, stored in a directory D:\Image\abc.jpg)... but it does not work.” [474]	Knowledge	Pre-Structural
“The problem is that the response JSON is rather big and confusing. It says a lot about the picture but doesn’t say what the whole picture is of (food or something like that).” [454]	Comprehension	Uni-Structural
“The bounding box around individual characters is sometimes accurate and sometimes not, often within the same image. Is this a normal side-effect of a probabilistic nature of the vision algorithm, a bug in the Vision API, or of course an issue with how I’m interpreting the response?” [461]	Comprehension	Multi-Structural
“I’m working on image processing. SO far Google Cloud Vision and Clarifai are the best API’s to detect objects from images and videos, but both API’s doesn’t support object detection from 360 degree images and videos. Is there any solution for this problem?” [468]	Application	Uni-Structural
“Before I train Watson, I can delete pictures that may throw things off. Should I delete pictures of: Multiple dogs, A dog with another animal, A dog with a person, A partially obscured dog, A dog wearing glasses, Also, would dogs on a white background make for better training samples? Watson also takes negative examples. Would cats and other small animals be good negative examples?” [466]	Analysis	Relational

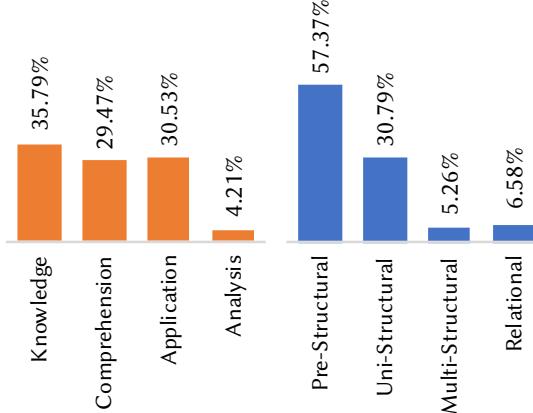
<sup>2581</sup> Bloom’s and the SOLO taxonomy. This indicates that modification to certain documentation aspects can address many of these issues. For example, many issues  
<sup>2582</sup> can be ratified with better descriptions of response data and error messages: “I was  
<sup>2583</sup> exploring google vision and in the specific function ‘detectCrops’, gives me the crop  
<sup>2584</sup> hints. what does this means exactly?” [469]; “I am a making a very simple API call  
<sup>2585</sup> to the Google Vision API, but all the time it’s giving me error that ‘google.oauth2’  
<sup>2586</sup> module not found.” [484]

<sup>2588</sup> However, and more importantly, the higher-construct questions ranging from  
<sup>2589</sup> the middle of the third dimensions on are not as easily solvable through improved  
<sup>2590</sup> documentation (i.e., apply and multi-structural) which leaves 34.74% (Bloom’s)  
<sup>2591</sup> and 11.84% (SOLO) unaccounted for, resolvable only through improved education  
<sup>2592</sup> practices.

### <sup>2593</sup> 5.6.3 Implications

#### <sup>2594</sup> 5.6.3.1 For Researchers

<sup>2595</sup> **Investigate the evolution of post classification** Analysing how the distribution of  
<sup>2596</sup> the reported issues changes over time would be an important study. This study could  
<sup>2597</sup> answer questions such as ‘Does the evolution of IWSs follow the same pattern as  
<sup>2598</sup> previous software engineering trends such as mobile app or web development?’ As  
<sup>2599</sup> with any new emerging field, it is key to analyse how developers perceive such issues  
<sup>2600</sup> over time. For instance, early issues with web or mobile app development matured



**Figure 5.4:** Alignment of Bloom (Orange) and SOLO (Blue) taxonomies against Taxonomy A and B dimensions against all 213 classifications made in the random sample of 50 posts.

as their respective domain matured, and we would expect similar results to occur in the IWSs space. Future researchers could plan for a longitudinal study, such as a long-term survey with developers to gather their insights in this evolving domain, reviewing case studies of projects that use intelligent web services from now into the future, or re-mining SO at a later date and comparing the results to this study. This will help assess evolving trends and characteristics, and determine how and if the nature of the developer's experience with IWSs (and AI in general) changes with time.

**Investigate the impact of technical challenges on API usage** As discussed above, IWSs have characteristics that may influence API usage patterns and should be investigated as a further avenue of research. Further mining of open source software repositories that make use of IWSs could be assessed, thereby investigating if API patterns evolve with the rise of AI-based applications.

#### 5.6.3.2 For Educators

**Education on high-level aspects of IWSs** As demonstrated in our analysis of their SO posts, many developers appear to be unaware of the higher-level concepts that exist within the AI and ML realm. This includes the need to pre- and post-process data, the data dependency and instability that exists in these services, and the specific algorithms that empower the underlying intelligence and hence their limitations and characteristics. However, most developers don't seem to complain about these factors due to the lack of documentation (i.e., via Taxonomy A). Rather, they are unaware that such information should be documentation and instead ask generalised and open questions (i.e., via Taxonomy B). Thus, documentation improvements alone may not be enough to solve these issues. This results in uncertainty during the preparation and operation (usage) of such services. Such high-level conceptual information is currently largely missing in developer documentation for IWSs. Furthermore, many

of the background ML and AI algorithm information needed to understand and use intelligent systems in context are built within data science (not software engineering) communities. A possible road-map to mitigate this issue would be the development of a software engineer’s ‘crash-course’ in ML and AI. The aim of such a course would encourage software engineers to develop an appreciation of the nuances and the inherent risks and implications that comes with using IWSs. This could be taught at an undergraduate level to prepare the next generation of developers of a ‘programming 2.0’ era. However, the key aspects and implications that are presented with AI would need to be well-understood before such a course is developed, and determining the best strategy to curate the content to developers would be best left to the software engineering education domain. Further investigation in applying educational taxonomies in the area (such as our attempts to interpret our findings using Bloom’s and the SOLO taxonomies) would need to be thoroughly explored beforehand.

5.6.3.3 *For Software Engineers*

**Better understanding of intelligent API contextual usage** Our results show that developers are still learning to use these APIs. We applied two learning perspectives to interpret our results. In applying the two pedagogical taxonomies to our findings, we see that most issues seem to fall into the pre-structural and knowledge-based categories; little is asked of higher level concepts and a majority of issues do not offer complex analysis from developers. This suggests that developers are struggling as they are unaware of the vocabulary needed to actually use such APIs, further reinforcing the need for API providers to write overview documentation (as noted in prior work [88]) and not just simple endpoint documentation. This said, improved documentation isn’t always enough—as suggested by our discussion in Section 5.6.2, software engineers should explore further education to attain a greater appreciation of the nuances of ML when attempting to use these services.

5.6.3.4 *For Intelligent Service Providers*

**Clarify use cases for IWSs** Inspecting SO posts revealed that there is a level of confusion around the capabilities of different IWSs. This needs to be clarified in associated API documentation. The complication with this comes with targeting the documentation such that software developers (who are untrained in the nuances of AI and ML as per Section 5.6.3.2) can to digest it and apply it in-context to application development.

**Technical domain matters** More needs to be provided than a simple endpoint description as conventional APIs offer by describing the whole framework by which the endpoint sits, giving further context. This said, compared to traditional APIs, we find that developers complain less about the documentation and more about shallower issues. All expected pre-processing and post-processing needs to be clearly explained. A possible mitigation to this could be an interactive tutorial that helps developers fully understand the technical domain using a hands-on approach.

2668 For example, websites offer interactive Git tutorials<sup>7</sup> to help developers understand  
2669 and explore the technical domain matters under version control in their own pace.

2670 **Clarify limitations** API developers need to add clear limitations of the existing  
2671 APIs. Limitations include list of objects that can be returned from an endpoint. We  
2672 found that the cognitive anchors of how existing, conventional API documentation  
2673 is written has become ‘ported’ to the computer vision realm, however a lot more  
2674 overview documentation than what is given at present (i.e., better descriptions of  
2675 errors, improved context of how these systems work in etc.) needs to be given. Such  
2676 documentation could be provided using interactive tutorials.

## 2677 5.7 Threats to Validity

### 2678 5.7.1 Internal Validity

2679 As detailed in Section 5.4.3.1, Taxonomies A and B present slight and fair agreement,  
2680 respectively, when inter-rater reliability was applied. The nature of our disagree-  
2681 ments largely fell due to the subjectivity in applying either taxonomies to posts.  
2682 Despite all coders agreeing to the shared interpretation of both taxonomies, both  
2683 taxonomies are subjective in their application, which was not reported by either  
2684 Aghajani et al. or Beyer et al.. In many cases, multi-label classification seemed ap-  
2685 propriate, however both taxonomies use single-label mapping which we find results  
2686 in too much subjectivity. This subjectivity, therefore, ultimately adversely affects  
2687 inter-rater reliability (IRR) analysis. Thus, a future mitigation strategy for similar  
2688 work should explore multi-label classification to avoid this issue; Beyer et al., for  
2689 example, plan for multi-label classification as future work. However, these studies  
2690 would need to consider the statistical challenges in calculating multi-rater, multi-  
2691 label IRR for thorough reliability analysis in addressing subjectivity. The selection  
2692 of SO posts used for our labelling, chiefly in the subjectivity of our classifications, is  
2693 of concern. We mitigate this by an extensive review process assessing the reliability  
2694 of our results as per Section 5.4.3.1. The classification of our posts into the SOLO  
2695 and Bloom’s taxonomies was performed by the primary author only, and therefore  
2696 no inter-rater reliability statistics were performed. However, we used these peda-  
2697 gogy related taxonomies as a lens to gain an additional perspective to interpret our  
2698 results. Future studies should attempt a more rigorous analysis of SO posts using  
2699 Bloom’s and SOLO taxonomies. We only aligned posts to one category for each  
2700 taxonomy and did not align these using multi-label classification. This brings more  
2701 complexity to the analysis, and our attempts to repeat prior studies’ methodologies  
2702 (see Section 5.3). Multi-label classification for IWSs SO posts is an avenue for future  
2703 research.

---

<sup>7</sup>For example, <https://learngitbranching.js.org>.

### 2704 **5.7.2 External Validity**

2705 While every effort was made to select posts from SO relevant to CVSSs, there are  
2706 some cases where we may have missed some posts. This is especially due to the  
2707 case where some developers mis-reference certain IWSs under different names (see  
2708 Section 5.4.2.1).

2709 Our SOLO and Bloom's taxonomy analysis has only been investigated through  
2710 the lenses of IWSs, and not in terms of conventional APIs (e.g., Andriod APIs).  
2711 Therefore, we are not fully certain how these results found would compare to other  
2712 types of APIs. Two *existing* SO classification taxonomies were used rather than  
2713 developing our own. We wanted to see if previous SO taxonomies could be applied  
2714 to IWSs before developing a new, specific taxonomy, and these taxonomies were  
2715 applied based on our interpretation (see Section 5.4.2.4) and may not necessarily  
2716 reflect the interpretation of the original authors. Moreover, automated techniques  
2717 such as topic modelling were not utilised as we found these produce descriptive  
2718 classifications only (see Section 5.3). Hence, manual analysis was performed by  
2719 humans to ensure categories could be aligned back to causal factors. Only English-  
2720 speaking IWSs were selected; the applicability of our analysis to other, non-English  
2721 speaking services may affect results. Use of computer vision in this study is an  
2722 illustrative example to focus on one area of the IWSs spectrum. While our narrow  
2723 scope helps us obtain more concrete findings, we suggest that wider issues exist in  
2724 other IWS domains may affect the generalisability of this study, and suggest future  
2725 work be explored in this space.

### 2726 **5.7.3 Construct Validity**

2727 Some questions extracted from SO produced false positives, as mentioned in Sec-  
2728 tions 5.4.2.1, 5.4.2.3 and 5.5. However, all non-relevant posts were marked as noise  
2729 for our study, and thus did not affect our findings. Moreover, SO is known to have  
2730 issues where developers simply ask basic questions without looking at the actual  
2731 documentation where the answer exists. Such questions, although down-voted, were  
2732 still included in our data-set analysis, but as these were SO few, it does not have a  
2733 substantial impact on categorised posts.

## 2734 **5.8 Conclusions**

2735 CVSSs offer powerful capabilities that can be added into the developer's toolkit via  
2736 simple RESTful APIs. However, certain technical nuances of computer vision  
2737 become abstracted away. We note that this abstraction comes at the expense of a full  
2738 appreciation of the technical domain, context and proper usage of these systems. We  
2739 applied two recent existing SO classification taxonomies (from 2018 and 2019) to see  
2740 if existing taxonomies are able to fully categorise the types of complaints developers  
2741 have. IWSs have a diverging distribution of the types of issues developers ask  
2742 when compared to more mature domains (i.e., mobile app development and web  
2743 development). Developers are more likely to complain about shallower, simple

2744 debugging issues without a distinct understanding of the AI algorithms that actually  
2745 empower the APIs they use. Moreover, developers are more likely to complain about  
2746 the completeness and correctness of existing IWS documentation, thereby suggesting  
2747 that the documentation approach for these services should be reconsidered. Greater  
2748 attention to education in the use of AI-powered APIs and their limitations is needed,  
2749 and our discussion offered in Section 5.6.2 motivates future work in resolving these  
2750 issues in the software engineering education space.



# CHAPTER 6

2751

2752

2753

## Ranking Computer Vision Service Issues using Emotion<sup>†</sup>

2754

2755 **Abstract** Software developers are increasingly using intelligent web services to implement  
2756 ‘intelligent’ features. However, studies show that incorporating machine learning into an  
2757 application increases technical debt, creates data dependencies, and introduces uncertainty  
2758 due to their non-deterministic behaviour. We know very little about the emotional state of  
2759 software developers who have to deal with such issues; a reduced developer experience when  
2760 using such services results in productivity loss. In this paper, we conduct a landscape analysis  
2761 of emotion found in 1,425 Stack Overflow questions about computer vision services. We  
2762 used an existing emotion classifier, EmoTxt, and manually verified its classification results.  
2763 We found that the emotion profile varies for different types of questions, and a discrepancy  
2764 exists between automatic and manual emotion analysis due to subjectivity.

### 2765 6.1 Introduction

2766 Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have provided software engineers  
2767 with new opportunities to incorporate complex machine learning (ML) capabilities,  
2768 such as computer vision, through cloud based intelligent web services (IWSs).  
2769 These new set of services, typically offered as API calls are marketed as a way  
2770 to reduce the complexity involved in integrating AI-components. However, recent  
2771 work shows that software engineers struggle to use these IWSs [92]. Furthermore,  
2772 the accompanying documentation fails to address common issues experienced by  
2773 software engineers and often, engineers resort to online communication channels,  
2774 such as Stack Overflow (SO), to seek advice from their peers [92].

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<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on A. Cummaudo, U. Graetsch, M. Curumsing, S. Barnett, R. Vasa, and J. Grundy, “Manual and Automatic Emotion Analysis of Computer Vision Service Pain-Points,” in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Workshop on Emotion Awareness in Software Engineering*. Virtual Event, USA: IEEE, 2021, In Review. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

2775 While seeking advice on the issues, software engineers tend to express their  
2776 emotions (such as frustration or confusion) within the questions. Emotions with  
2777 negative sentiment have been shown to have adverse effects to developer productivity,  
2778 as shown in [385], and thus—recognising the value of considering emotions—other  
2779 literature has investigated how emotions are expressed by software developers within  
2780 communication channels [270] including SO [69, 263]. The broad motivation  
2781 of these works is to generally understand the emotional landscape and improve  
2782 developer productivity [128, 249, 270]. However, previous works have not directly  
2783 focused on the nature of emotions expressed in questions related to IWSs. We  
2784 also do not know if certain types of questions express stronger emotions. Thus,  
2785 understanding the emotional state of developers facing issues with these services  
2786 can help shed light into prioritised choices of these services, avoid common issues  
2787 which are the most frustrating (and thus highest productivity loss), and ultimately  
2788 improve the developer experience (DevX) whilst using these services.

2789 The machine-learnt behaviour of these cloud IWSs is typically non-deterministic  
2790 and, given the dimensions of data used, their internal inference process is hard to  
2791 reason about [89]. Compounding the issue, documentation of these cloud systems  
2792 does not explain the limits, nor how they were created (esp. information about the  
2793 datasets used to train them). This lack of transparency makes it difficult for even  
2794 senior developers to properly reason about these systems, so their prior experience  
2795 and anchors do not offer sufficient support [92]. In addition, adding machine  
2796 learned behaviour to a system incurs ongoing maintenance concerns [321]. There is  
2797 a need to better understand emotions expressed by developers; as reduced negative  
2798 emotions whilst writing software can improve productivity [385] and DevX, we can  
2799 use such insight to help cloud vendors make improvement which would generate  
2800 the most value, e.g., overall service/API design, documentation of the services or  
2801 clarification in error messages.

2802 In our recent work [92], we explored the types of pain-points developers face  
2803 when using IWSs through a general analysis of 1,425 SO questions using an existing  
2804 SO question type classification taxonomy [40] (presented in Table 6.1). This study  
2805 extends this body of work by considering the *emotional state* expressed within  
2806 those same pain-points. We identify the emotion(s) in each SO question (if any),  
2807 and investigate if the distribution of these emotions is similar across the various  
2808 types of questions. To automate classification of these emotions, we used EmoTxt,  
2809 an emotion classifier included in the EMTk toolkit for emotion recognition from  
2810 text [68, 69, 263]. EmoTxt has been trained and built on SO posts using the emotion  
2811 classification model proposed by Shaver et al. [327]. Additionally, we manually  
2812 classified a sample of 300 posts using the same guidelines used to train EmoTxt,  
2813 provided in [263] (based on [327]). The key contributions of this study are:

- 2814 • Identifying that the distribution of emotions is different across the taxonomy  
2815 of issues.
- 2816 • A deeper analysis of the results obtained from the EmoTxt classifier suggests  
2817 that the classification model needs further refinement. *Love* and *joy*, the  
2818 least expected emotions when discussing API issues, are visible across all  
2819 categories.

- 2820     • In order to promote future research and permit replication, we make our dataset  
2821       publicly available.<sup>1</sup>

2822     The paper is structured as follows: Section 6.2 provides an overview on prior  
2823     work surrounding the classification of emotions from text; Section 6.3 describes our  
2824     research methodology; Section 6.4 presents the results from the EmoTxt classifier;  
2825     Section 6.5 provides a discussion of the results obtained; Section 6.6 outlines the  
2826     threats to validity; Section 6.7 presents the concluding remarks.

## 2827     6.2 Motivation

2828     Developing software raises various emotions in developers at different times, includ-  
2829       ing enjoyment, frustration, satisfaction, even fear and rage [68, 270, 385, 386]

2830     Studies on the role of emotions within the workplace, including the software  
2831     engineering domain, have established a correlation between emotion and productiv-  
2832       ity [385, 386]. Negative emotions impact productivity negatively, whilst positive  
2833     emotions impact positively. The exception is *anger*, which was found to generate a  
2834     motivating state to “try harder” in a subset of developers (i.e., 13% of respondents in  
2835     Wrobel’s study [385] responded that anger had a *positive* impact to make developers  
2836     more motivated. However, overall, *anger* was still found to have an negative impact  
2837       on productivity). In recent years, researchers have focused on identifying the emotions  
2838     expressed by software engineers within communication channels such as JIRA  
2839     to communicate with their peers [128, 249, 263, 270]. Most of these studies make  
2840     use of one of the well established emotion classification framework during their  
2841     emotion mining process. Murgia et al. [249] and Ortú et al. [270] investigated the  
2842     emotions expressed by developers within an issue tracking system, such as JIRA, by  
2843     labelling issue comments and sentences written by developers using Parrott’s emotion  
2844     framework. Gachechiladze et al. [128] applied the Shaver’s emotion framework  
2845     to detect anger expressed in comments written by developers in JIRA.

2846     The Collab team [68, 263] extended the work done by Ortú et al. [270] and  
2847     developed an emotion mining toolkit, EmoTxt [68] based on a gold standard dataset  
2848     collected from 4,800 SO posts (of type questions, question comments, answers and  
2849     answer comments). 12 graduate computer science students were recruited as raters  
2850     to manually annotate these 4,800 SO posts using the Shaver’s emotion model which  
2851     consists of a tree-structured, three level, hierarchical classification of emotions. The  
2852     top level consists of six basic emotions namely, love, joy, anger, sadness, fear and  
2853     surprise [327]. The work conducted by the Collab team is most relevant to our  
2854     study since their focus is on identifying emotion from SO posts and their classifier  
2855     is trained on a large dataset of SO posts. Unlike their study, we focus on a single  
2856     domain (computer vision services or CVSs) to analysing emotion, as opposed to  
2857     a wide spectrum of domains. Further, we validate our work with a smaller group  
2858     of people—diverse in age and cultural backgrounds—to gather a wider sense of  
2859     emotion classification (i.e., due to the subjective nature of emotions). Lastly, in this

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<sup>1</sup>See <https://bit.ly/2RIGQ2N>.

**Table 6.1:** Descriptions of dimensions from our interpretation of Beyer et al.’s SO question type taxonomy.

Dimension	Our Interpretation
<b>API usage .....</b>	Issue on how to implement something using a specific component provided by the API
<b>Discrepancy .....</b>	The questioner’s <i>expected behaviour</i> of the API does not reflect the API’s <i>actual behaviour</i>
<b>Errors.....</b>	Issue regarding an error when using the API, and provides an exception and/or stack trace to help understand why it is occurring
<b>Review .....</b>	The questioner is seeking insight from the developer community on what the best practices are using a specific API or decisions they should make given their specific situation
<b>Conceptual .....</b>	The questioner is trying to ascertain limitations of the API and its behaviour and rectify issues in their conceptual understanding on the background of the API’s functionality
<b>API change.....</b>	Issue regarding changes in the API from a previous version
<b>Learning .....</b>	The questioner is seeking for learning resources to self-learn further functionality in the API, and unlike discrepancy, there is no specific problem they are seeking a solution for

<sup>2860</sup> work, our intent is to analyse the questions only (not all types of posts) to understand  
<sup>2861</sup> the frustration faced at the time the developers face an issue with the service.

## 6.3 Methodology

### 6.3.1 Dataset

<sup>2864</sup> This paper extends our existing work by utilising our previously curated dataset  
<sup>2865</sup> of 1,425 SO questions on four popular computer vision service (CVS) providers:  
<sup>2866</sup> Google Cloud Vision, Amazon Rekognition, Azure Computer Vision, and IBM  
<sup>2867</sup> Watson. Each question is assigned a question type per the taxonomy prescribed in  
<sup>2868</sup> Beyer et al. [40] (for reference, we provide our interpretation of this taxonomy within  
<sup>2869</sup> Table 6.1). For further details on how this dataset was produced, we refer to the  
<sup>2870</sup> original paper [92].

<sup>2871</sup> After performing additional cleansing of this dataset (to remove noise), we  
<sup>2872</sup> performed *both* automatic and manual emotion classification based on Shaver et al.’s  
<sup>2873</sup> emotion taxonomy [327]. Automatic emotion detection was performed using  
<sup>2874</sup> the EmoTxt classifier, and manual classification was performed by three co-authors  
<sup>2875</sup> on a sample of 300 posts. We calculated the inter-rater reliability between EmoTxt  
<sup>2876</sup> and our manually classified questions in two ways: (i) to see the overall agreement  
<sup>2877</sup> between the three raters in applying the Shaver et al. emotions taxonomy, and  
<sup>2878</sup> (ii) to see the overall agreement with EmoTxt’s classifications. Additional dataset  
<sup>2879</sup> cleansing and results from manual and automatic emotion classification are available  
<sup>2880</sup> online at <https://bit.ly/2RIGQ2N>.

**2881 6.3.2 Additional Dataset Cleansing**

2882 As described in [92], the 1,425 questions extracted were split into 5 random samples.  
2883 The first author classified the first sample of 475 questions, with three other research  
2884 assistants<sup>2</sup> classifying the remaining 900 questions over samples of 300 posts. The  
2885 remaining 50 posts were used for reliability analysis, whereby these 50 posts were  
2886 classified nine times by various researchers in our group, resulting in a total of 450  
2887 classifications for the 50 posts.

2888 Each question was classified a question issue type (as described by Table 6.1) or,  
2889 where the question was a false-positive resulting from our original search query, we  
2890 flagged the post as ‘noise’ and removed them from further classification. 186 posts  
2891 were flagged as noise, with a total of 1,239 were successfully assigned a question  
2892 type.

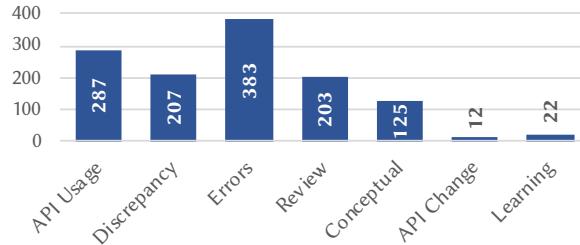
2893 To remove duplicity resulting from the reliability analysis, we applied a ‘majority  
2894 rules’ technique to each of these 50 posts, in which the issue type most consistent  
2895 amongst the nine raters per question would win. As an example, three raters classified  
2896 a post as *API Usage*, one rater classified the same post as a *Review* question and five  
2897 raters classified the post as *Conceptual*. Therefore, the question was assigned as a  
2898 *Conceptual* question. However, in four cases, there was a tie in the majority. To  
2899 resolve this, we used the issue type that was most assigned within the 50 posts. For  
2900 example, in another question, three raters each assigned the same post as *Discrepancy*  
2901 and *Errors*, while the remaining three three raters flagged the post as noise. In this  
2902 case, the tie was resolved down to *Errors* as this classification received 72 more  
2903 votes than *Discrepancy* and 88 more votes than noisy posts across all classifications  
2904 made in the sample of 50 posts.

**2905 6.3.3 Automatic Emotion Classification**

2906 After all questions had been classified an issue type, we then piped in the body  
2907 of each question into a script developed to remove all HTML tags, code snippets,  
2908 blockquotes and hyperlinks, as suggested by Novielli et al. [263]. We replicated and  
2909 extended the study conducted by Novielli et al. [263] on our dataset consisting of  
2910 questions only. We started with a file containing the 1,239 non-noise SO questions,  
2911 each with its associated question type given in Table 6.1. We pre-processed this file  
2912 by extracting the question ID and body text to meet the format requirements of the  
2913 EmoTxt classifier [68]. This classifier was used as it was trained on SO posts as  
2914 discussed in Section 6.2. We ran the classifier for each emotion as this was required  
2915 by EmoTxt model. This resulted in six output prediction files (one file for each  
2916 emotion: *Love*, *Joy*, *Surprise*, *Sadness*, *Fear*, *Anger*), which referenced a question  
2917 ID and a binary value indicating emotion presence. We then merged these emotion  
2918 prediction files into an aggregate file with question text and Beyer et al.’s question  
2919 type classifications that was performed in [92].

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<sup>2</sup>Software engineers in our research group with at least 2 years industry experience



**Figure 6.1:** Distribution of the types of questions raised.

### 2920 6.3.4 Manual Emotion Classification

2921 In order to evaluate and also better understand the process used by EmoTxt to classify  
 2922 emotions, we randomly sampled 300 SO posts of various emotion annotations resulting  
 2923 from EmoTxt. Each of these 300 posts were assigned to three raters (co-authors  
 2924 of this paper) who individually reviewed the question text against each of the six  
 2925 basic emotions [327] and flag an emotion if deemed present, otherwise flagging *No*  
 2926 *Emotion* instead. Each rater reviewed each question against the guidelines provided  
 2927 in [263]. We then conducted reliability analysis of all three rater's results to measure  
 2928 the similarity in which independent raters classified each emotions against each SO  
 2929 post. This was done by calculating Cohen's Kappa ( $C_k$ ) [82] to measure the average  
 2930 inter-rater agreement *between* pairs of raters, and then Light's Kappa ( $L_k$ ) [215]  
 2931 to measure the *overall* agreement amongst the three raters. Results are reported in  
 2932 Table 6.3.

### 2933 6.3.5 Comparing Manual and Automatic Classification Methods

2934 The next step involved comparing the ratings of the 300 SO posts that were manually  
 2935 annotated by the three raters against the results obtained for the same set of 300 SO  
 2936 posts from the EmoTxt classifier. We separated the classifications per emotion and  
 2937 calculated  $C_k$  for each rater against EmoTxt, and then  $L_k$  to measure the overall  
 2938 agreement. The three raters then met together to compare and discuss the ratings  
 2939 from the EmoTxt classifier against the manual ratings. Results are reported in  
 2940 Table 6.3.

## 2941 6.4 Findings

2942 Figure 6.1 displays the overall distribution of question types from the 1,239 posts  
 2943 after applying noise-filtering and majority ruling to our original 1,425 questions  
 2944 extracted. It is evident that developers ask issues predominantly related to API errors  
 2945 when using CVSSs and, additionally, how they can use the API to implement specific  
 2946 functionality. There are few questions related to version issues or self-learning. For  
 2947 further discussion into these results, we refer to [92].

2948 Table 6.2 displays the frequency of questions that were classified by EmoTxt  
 2949 when compared to our assignment of question types. Figure 6.2 presents the emotion

**Table 6.2:** Frequency of emotions per question type.

Question Type	Fear	Joy	Love	Sadness	Surprise	Anger	No Emotion	Total
API Usage	47	22	34	17	59	13	136	328
Discrepancy	35	12	17	7	46	20	105	242
Errors	73	34	23	21	47	23	207	428
Review	35	16	15	16	42	14	95	233
Conceptual	27	9	10	8	21	5	61	141
API Change	4	2	2	1	1	1	5	16
Learning	3	4	2	0	4	0	11	24
Total	224	99	103	70	220	76	620	1412

2950 data proportionally across each type of question. In total, 792 emotions were detected  
2951 within the 1,239 non-noisy posts, and 620 questions where EmoTxt predicted *No*  
2952 *Emotion* for all the emotion classification runs. Of the 792 questions with emotion  
2953 detected, 114 questions had two emotions predicted, 28 questions had three emotions  
2954 detected, and one question<sup>3</sup> had four emotions detected (*Surprise*, *Sadness*, *Joy* and  
2955 *Fear*).

2956 *No Emotion* was the most prevalent across all question types, which is consistent  
2957 with the findings of the Collab group during the training of the EmoTxt classifier.  
2958 Questions classified as *API Change* had the broadest distribution of emotions, with  
2959 EmoTxt reporting 31.25% of these types of questions as *No Emotion*, compared to  
2960 overall average of 42.10%. However, this is likely due to the low sample size of  
2961 *API Change* questions (with only 12 questions assigned this issue type). The next  
2962 highest set of emotive questions are found in the second and fourth largest samples  
2963 (*Review* at 203 posts, and *API Usage* at 287 posts); therefore, higher proportions of  
2964 emotion is not necessarily correlated to sample size.

2965 Unsurprisingly, *Discrepancy*-based questions—indicative of the frustrations de-  
2966 velopers face when the API does something unexpected—had the highest proportion  
2967 of *Anger* detected, at 8.26%, compared to *Anger*'s mean of 4.77%. To our surprise,  
2968 *Love* (which we expected least by software developers when encountering issues)  
2969 was present across all of the different question types. On average, this was reported at  
2970 8.15%. The two highest emotions, by average, were *Fear* ( $\mu = 16.77\%$ ) and *Surprise*  
2971 ( $\mu = 14.82\%$ ). In contrast, to our surprise, the two least-detected emotions reported  
2972 by EmoTxt were *Sadness* ( $\mu = 4.53\%$ ) and *Anger* ( $\mu = 4.77\%$ ). *Joy* and *Love* were  
2973 roughly the same, and fell in between the two proportion ends, with means of 8.85%  
2974 and 8.15%, respectively.

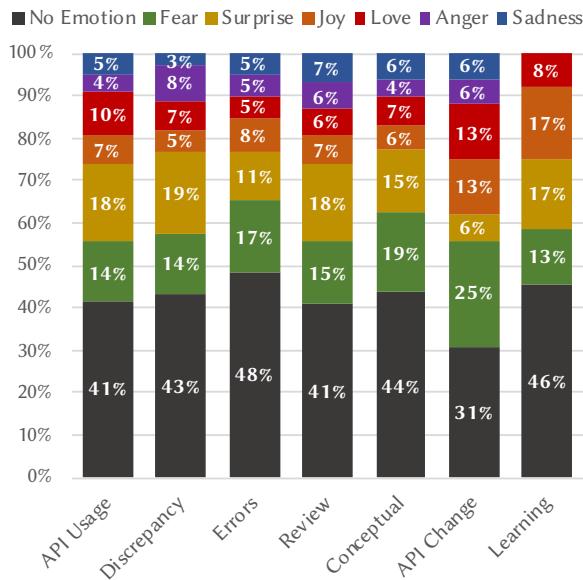
2975 As shown in Table 6.3, results from our reliability analysis between human raters  
2976 indicated subjectivity in emotion interpretation. Guidelines of indicative strengths  
2977 of agreement are provided by Landis and Koch [210], where  $\kappa \leq 0.00$  is *poor*  
2978 agreement,  $0.00 < \kappa \leq 0.20$  is *slight* agreement and  $0.20 < \kappa \leq 0.40$  is *fair*  
2979 agreement. Our assessments across the 300 questions indicate slight agreement for  
2980 *Love*, *Surprise*, *Sadness*, *Anger* and *No Emotion*, and fair agreement for *Joy* and  
2981 *Fear*. When combining human raters and EmoTxt, the inter-rater agreement was

3See <http://stackoverflow.com/q/55464541>.

**Table 6.3:** Inter-rater agreement between humans ( $R_{1..3}$ ) and EmoTxt ( $E$ ) and indicative guidelines of strength.

Emotion	$C_k(R_1, R_2)$	$C_k(R_1, R_3)$	$C_k(R_2, R_3)$	$L_k(R_{1..3})$	$C_k(R_1, E)$	$C_k(R_2, E)$	$C_k(R_3, E)$	$L_k(R_{1..3}, E)$
Love	0.30 Fair	0.17 Slight	0.04 Slight	<b>0.17 Slight</b>	0.37 Fair	0.27 Fair	0.05 Slight	<b>0.20 Slight</b>
Joy	0.21 Fair	0.16 Slight	0.57 Fair	<b>0.31 Fair</b>	0.1 Slight	0.07 Slight	-0.01 Poor	<b>0.18 Slight</b>
Surprise	0.21 Fair	0.13 Slight	0.15 Slight	<b>0.16 Slight</b>	0.17 Slight	0.04 Slight	0.06 Slight	<b>0.13 Slight</b>
Sadness	0.11 Slight	0.05 Slight	0.01 Slight	<b>0.05 Slight</b>	0.09 Slight	0.04 Slight	0.02 Slight	<b>0.05 Slight</b>
Fear	0.19 Slight	0.22 Fair	0.36 Fair	<b>0.26 Fair</b>	-0.02 Poor	-0.06 Poor	0.01 Slight	<b>0.12 Slight</b>
Anger	0.19 Slight	0.19 Slight	0.07 Slight	<b>0.15 Slight</b>	0.13 Slight	0.16 Slight	0.03 Slight	<b>0.13 Slight</b>
No Emotion	0.30 Fair	0.16 Slight	0.09 Slight	<b>0.18 Slight</b>	0.25 Fair	0.06 Slight	0.04 Slight	<b>0.15 Slight</b>

<sup>2982</sup> slight across all emotions.



**Figure 6.2:** Proportion of emotions per question type.

## 6.5 Discussion

<sup>2983</sup> Our findings from the comparison between the manually annotated SO posts and the automatic classification revealed substantial discrepancies. Table 6.4 provides some sample questions<sup>4</sup> from our dataset, with the Beyer et al. question classification type noted with  $[Q]$ , the emotion(s) identified by EmoTxt within the text noted with  $[E]$ , and the emotion(s) classified by the three raters indicated with  $[R_{1..3}]$ . The subset of questions analysed by our three raters do not indicate the automatic (EmoTxt) emotion, and upon manual inspection of the text after poor results from our reliability analysis, an introspection of the dataset sheds some light to the discrepancy.

<sup>2992</sup> For example, the first question in Table 6.4 shows no indication of *Joy*, but EmoTxt classifies it to this emotion. Phrases like “*I’m pretty sure...*” could be the

<sup>4</sup>Questions located at [https://stackoverflow.com/q/\[ID\]](https://stackoverflow.com/q/[ID]).

**Table 6.4:** Sample of various question types ( $[Q]$ ) against emotion(s) identified by EmoTxt ( $[E]$ ) and the three raters ( $[R_{1..3}]$ ).

Question ID and Quote	Classifications
<b>51444352:</b> “I’m pretty sure I set up my IAM role appropriately (I literally attached the ComprehendFullAccess policy to the role) and the Cognito Pool was also setup appropriately (I know this because I’m also using Rekognition and it works with the IAM Role and Cognito ID Pool I created) and yet every time I try to send a request to AWS Comprehend I get the error... Any idea of what I can do in this situation?”	$[Q]$ : Errors $[E]$ : Joy $[R_1]$ : Surprise $[R_2]$ : Surprise $[R_3]$ : Anger
<b>53117918:</b> “Ok so I have been stuck here for about more than a week now and I know its some dumb mistake. Just can’t figure it out. I am working on a project that is available of two platforms, Android & iOS. Its sort of a facial recognition app... Is there anything I need to change? Is there any additional setup I need to do to make it work?Please let me know. Thanks.”	$[Q]$ : Discrepancy $[E]$ : Love, Surprise, Anger $[R_1]$ : Sadness, Anger $[R_2]$ : Sadness, Anger $[R_3]$ : Anger
<b>52829583:</b> “I was trying to make the google vision OCR regex searchable... it fails when there is the text of other languages.It’s happening because I have only English characters in google vision word component as follows.As I can’t include characters from all the languages, I am thinking to include the inverse of above... So where can I find ALL THE SPECIAL CHARACTERS WHICH ARE IDENTIFIED AS A SEPARATE WORD BY GOOGLE VISION? Trial and error, keep adding the special characters I find is one option. But that would be my last option.”	$[Q]$ : Review $[E]$ : Anger $[R_1]$ : Joy, Anger $[R_2]$ : Anger $[R_3]$ : Surprise
<b>50190527:</b> “I am trying to perform OCR on pdf documents using google cloud vision API, i uploaded a pdf document into a cloud bucket and downloaded the oauth key file and added it in the script as below. But when i run the file, i get the permission denied: 403 error, can anyone please give me instructions on how to fix it, i did extensive google search and did not yield any results, i am surely missing something here... I have checked the older stack overflow questions and the links provided in answers are not active anymore.Thanks in advance for your help.”	$[Q]$ : API Usage $[E]$ : No Emotion $[R_1]$ : Sadness $[R_2]$ : No Emotion $[R_3]$ : Anger
<b>52126752:</b> “I am trying to call google cloud vision api from xamarin C# android application code.I have set environment variable but still I was not able to call api.So I decided to call it by passing credential json file but now I am getting error deserializing JSON credential datahere is my code”	$[Q]$ : Errors $[E]$ : Surprise $[R_1]$ : No Emotion $[R_2]$ : No Emotion $[R_3]$ : Anger
<b>48145425:</b> “I am Deploying Google cloud vision Ocr in My angular2 webapp. but i am getting many of the errors when i add this code in my webapp code. please help me to sort out this.”	$[Q]$ : Errors $[E]$ : Fear $[R_1]$ : Fear $[R_2]$ : No Emotion $[R_3]$ : Sadness

2994 reason why poor classification occurred, where words like “pretty” are associated  
 2995 with *Joy*, albeit in completely different context. It seems likely that the developer is  
 2996 experiencing a confusing situation when the API throws unexpected errors; thus [ $R_1$ ]  
 2997 and [ $R_2$ ] noting *Surprise*. Similarly, in the second question presented in Table 6.4,  
 2998 EmoTxt classifies *Love*, *Surprise*, and *Anger*. It is difficult to find an element of love  
 2999 or appreciation elsewhere in this context beyond the closing remarks: “***Please let me***  
 3000 ***know. Thanks.***”. Moreover, the disparity between EmoTxt and the agreed emotions  
 3001 between the first two reviewers shows that EmoTxt cannot detect the frustration  
 3002 (*Anger*) in the developer’s tone, which is evident in their opening sentence, “*I have*  
 3003 *been stuck here for about more than a week and I know it is some dumb mistake.*”.

3004 These results indicate that introspection into the behaviour and limitations of  
 3005 the EmoTxt model is necessary. Our results indicate further work is needed to  
 3006 refine the ML classifiers that mine emotions in the SO context. The question that  
 3007 arises is whether the classification model is truly reflective of real-world emotions  
 3008 expressed by software developers. As highlighted by Curumsing [94], the divergence  
 3009 of opinions with regards to the emotion classification model proposed by theorists  
 3010 raises doubts to the foundations of basic emotions. Most of the studies conducted in  
 3011 the area of emotion mining from text is based on an existing general purpose emotion  
 3012 framework from psychology [64, 263, 270]—none of which are finely tuned for the  
 3013 software engineering domain.

## 3014 6.6 Threats to Validity

### 3015 6.6.1 Internal validity

3016 The *API Change* and *Learning* question types were few in sample size (only 12 and  
 3017 22 questions, respectively). The emotion proportion distribution of these question  
 3018 types are quite different to the others. Given the low number of questions, the sample  
 3019 is too small to make confident assessments. Furthermore, our assignment of Beyer  
 3020 et al.’s question type taxonomy was single-label; a multi-labelled approach may work  
 3021 better, however analysis of results would become more complex. A multi-labelled  
 3022 approach would be indicative for future work.

### 3023 6.6.2 External validity

3024 EmoTxt was trained on questions, answers and comments, however our dataset  
 3025 contained questions only. It is likely that our results may differ if we included other  
 3026 discussion items, however we wished to understand the emotion within developers’  
 3027 *questions* and classify the question based on the question classification framework  
 3028 by Beyer et al. [40]. Moreover, this study has only assessed frustrations within  
 3029 the context of a concrete domain; intelligent CVSs. The generalisability of this  
 3030 study to other IWSs, such as natural language processing services, or conventional  
 3031 web services, may be different. Furthermore, we only assessed four popular CVSs;  
 3032 expanding the dataset to include more services, including non-English ones, would  
 3033 be insightful. We leave this to future work.

**3034 6.6.3 Construct validity**

3035 Some posts extracted from SO were false positives. Whilst flagged for removal, we  
3036 cannot guarantee that all false positives were removed. Furthermore, SO is known  
3037 to have questions that are either poorly worded or poorly detailed, and developers  
3038 sometimes ask questions without doing any preliminary investigation. This often  
3039 results in down-voted questions. We did not remove such questions from our dataset,  
3040 which may influence the measurement of our results.

**3041 6.7 Conclusion**

3042 We wanted to see how developers emotions are indicated in Stack Overflow (SO)  
3043 posts when using CVSs. We analysed 1,425 SO posts about CVSs for emotions  
3044 using an automated tool and then cross-checked our results manually. We found  
3045 that the distribution of emotion differs across the taxonomy of issues, and that the  
3046 current emotion model typically used in recent works is not appropriate for emotions  
3047 expressed within SO questions. Consistent with prior work [217], our results  
3048 demonstrate that ML classifiers for emotion are insufficient; human assessment is  
3049 required.



# CHAPTER 7

3050

3051

## 3052 Using Emotion Classification Models against Stack Overflow<sup>†</sup>

3053

3054 **Abstract** Pre-trained artificial intelligence (AI) models are increasingly available as APIs  
3055 and tool-kits to software developers, making complex AI-enabled functionality available  
3056 via standard and well-understood methods. However, reusing such models comes with  
3057 risks relating to the lack of transparency of the model and training data bias, making it  
3058 difficult to confidently employ the toolkit in a new situation. Vendors are responding and  
3059 proposing artefacts such as model cards and datasheets to make models and their training  
3060 more transparent. But is this enough? As part of an empirical investigation determining if  
3061 a cloud-based intelligent web services (IWSs) was ready for production use, we processed  
3062 developer questions on Stack Overflow using a published pre-trained classifier that was  
3063 specifically tuned for the software engineering domain. In this paper, we present lessons  
3064 learnt from this automation effort. We found unexpected results which led us to delve into  
3065 model and training data—an option available to us because the information was available  
3066 for research. We found that, had a model card and datasheet been prepared, we could  
3067 have identified risks to our study much earlier on. However, model cards and datasheet  
3068 specifications are not yet mature enough and additional tools and processes are still required  
3069 to confirm a decision whether a trained model can be reused with confidence.

### 3070 7.1 Introduction

3071 Pre-trained artificial intelligence (AI) models are increasingly available to software  
3072 developers either directly or wrapped into web-based components and toolkits; for  
3073 example, Google’s Cloud AI<sup>1</sup> or Microsoft Azure’s Cognitive Services.<sup>2</sup> The grand

<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on U. M. Graetsch, A. Cummaudo, M. K. Curumsing, R. Vasa, and J. Grundy, “Using Pre-Trained Emotion Classification Models against Stack Overflow Questions,” in *Proceedings of the 33rd International Conference on Advanced Information Systems Engineering*. Melbourne, VIC, Australia: Springer, 2021, In Review. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

<sup>1</sup><https://bit.ly/2VheoH2> last accessed 29 Nov 2020.

<sup>2</sup><https://bit.ly/37jiwvU> last accessed 29 Nov 2020.

promise is the rapid creation of AI-infused functionality into end-applications as developers can simply reuse models instead of training them from scratch, as training is laborious and resource-intensive [296]. Vendors do provide usage guidelines, component documentation, code examples and a compelling marketing narrative, although the limitations and risks are not as well-presented in official documentation [89, 92]. In practice, developers and technical architects study issue trackers and online forums such as Stack Overflow (SO) to assess and inform their decisions. Multiple studies highlight the value and insights to be gained from these online forums [2, 92, 339].

This work began as an investigation determining whether these services are production-ready for certain industry use cases (e.g., computer vision). Inspired by the possibility of finding insight from content in the online forums, we wanted to analyse the issues raised on SO by developers that relate to computer vision-based intelligent web services (IWSs), i.e., computer vision services (CVSs). Although manual analysis is feasible for this task, we decided to use a pre-trained natural language processing technique for a more automated approach to understand developers' frustration. This was motivated by (i) the gain from automation—specifically having an efficient, repeatable process and, more importantly, (ii) to learn about potential issues when using pre-trained models in a related, but new, contexts. Section 7.2 explains this in further detail.

In our analysis, beyond the direct summative aspects, we focused on emotions within the content posed on the online forums. This was motivated by work done by Wrobel [385], who suggested that some negative emotions can pose risk to developer productivity. However, while anger is a negative emotion, it can (in some people) generate a motivating response [385]. Our goal was to determine whether negative emotions (and specifically, *which* negative emotions) are the predominant theme within questions on these forums regarding IWSs. The natural expectation is that developers would not pose questions unless they needed support and help, and we expected to find a high prevalence of anger-based emotion in the questions (frustration that the service is not working as they think should), and perhaps surprise at any unexpected behaviour. Similarly, we would expect the tone of responses to questions to be neutral, and hopefully supportive. Our focus, however, remains on the questions posed.

Our findings, elaborated further in Section 7.4, were surprising. While the pre-trained model we selected was trained specifically on SO and tuned for emotions [68, 263], our results show that 14% issues were considered by the model with the positive emotions of *Love* or *Joy*, and only a surprisingly small amount (5%) fell into *Anger* (or frustration). A closer examination using multiple human reviewers showed an even more interesting insight: human reviewers did not agree with the automated machine classification, and worse, the reviewers did not agree with each other, suggesting that training machines with a consistent set of labels is a non-trivial exercise. Finally, we reflected whether the pre-trained classifier could be better documented. We found vendors are recognising these challenges and are offering solutions to better document their models [134, 246]. However, when we looked into the information captured by these solutions, we found their specification to be

3119 very broad and additional guidance for completion is required to help evaluate risks  
3120 faced in an industry context (discussed in Section 7.5).

## 3121 7.2 Motivation

3122 The initial context of our work was to explore reusable cloud-based CVSs,<sup>3</sup> arising  
3123 for use in an industry context on a client project. Our prior research has identified  
3124 growth in questions on SO relating to such services [92], thus enabling us to explore  
3125 a rich dataset about developers' concerns about these pre-packaged and cloud-based  
3126 AI-components.

3127 Aware that productivity of software developers can be adversely impacted by  
3128 negative emotion [385], we decided to explore the emotions within our dataset  
3129 expressed by developers through the questions they pose on SO. Our intent was  
3130 to identify whether developers are surprised, angry, frustrated, or overall positive  
3131 about using these CVSs (as expressed as emotions in their SO questions). This  
3132 was motivated by prior work, which shows that—despite their technical nature—SO  
3133 questions do exhibit emotion [68, 262]. Although we could have read these posts  
3134 manually, for consistency, repeatability, and efficiency, we chose to automate this  
3135 process by utilising an emotion-aware text classification system trained specifically  
3136 on SO data [263]. Our expectation was that we would gain some insight into  
3137 the questions through the emotions, and we hypothesised that we would see a high  
3138 proportion of surprise (i.e., the API does not work as expected) and anger (frustration  
3139 due to mismatched expectations).

3140 To permit replication, the raw results produced from this case study are made  
3141 available online at <https://bit.ly/3eSp7ku>.

## 3142 7.3 Method

3143 We selected a classifier included in the EMTk toolkit that was specifically trained  
3144 for emotional text classification in the software engineering domain [68]. The  
3145 EMTk toolkit is available with a fully labelled training dataset [263], permitting  
3146 reuse and analysis of internals. The classifier is based on Shaver et al.'s emotional  
3147 hierarchy model [327] and performs binary classifications against text data provided  
3148 in input files and an input parameter designating the emotion to be classified—one  
3149 of *Love, Joy, Surprise, Fear, Sadness* or *Anger*. The classifier utilises support vector  
3150 machine (SVM) classification and a Distributional Semantic Model (DSM) built  
3151 using Word2Vec. This model is trained on 20 million SO posts. The DSM approach  
3152 facilitates classification to take into consideration the surrounding context of the  
3153 word, in addition to the polarity of individual words [69].

3154 As input for the classifier, we used a dataset of 1,425 SO questions restricted to  
3155 intelligent CVSs, available from Cummaudo et al. [92]. We ran the classifier with  
3156 the same input dataset for each of the six emotions. To cross-check classified output,  
3157 we manually annotated a random sample of 300 questions with zero or more of the

---

3Such as Google Cloud Vision, Azure Computer Vision, or Amazon Rekognition

**Table 7.1:** Emotion classification frequencies.

Emotion	Frequency	Proportion
Love	103	7.2%
Joy	100	7.0%
Surprise	223	15.6%
Sadness	70	4.9%
Fear	224	15.7%
Anger	76	5.3%
No Emotion	622	43.6%

**Table 7.2:** Results from Inter-Rater Agreements.

Emotion	Three Raters	Three Raters + Classifier
Love	0.13 ( <i>slight</i> )	0.19 ( <i>slight</i> )
Joy	0.23 ( <i>fair</i> )	0.13 ( <i>slight</i> )
Surprise	0.15 ( <i>slight</i> )	0.11 ( <i>slight</i> )
Sadness	-0.01 ( <i>poor</i> )	0.00 ( <i>poor</i> )
Fear	0.25 ( <i>fair</i> )	0.07 ( <i>slight</i> )
Anger	0.05 ( <i>slight</i> )	0.04 ( <i>slight</i> )
No Emotion	0.09 ( <i>slight</i> )	0.10 ( <i>slight</i> )

3158 six emotions. Each of these 300 posts were assigned to three raters who individually  
3159 carried out the following three steps: (i) identify the presence of emotion(s); (ii) if  
3160 emotion(s) exists, classify the emotion(s) under one or more of the six basic emotions  
3161 as per the Shaver framework. The coding guidelines provided by Novielli et al. [263]  
3162 were adhered to to assist with emotion classification per post. After collating each  
3163 rater’s results, we calculated a Fleiss’ Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) [119] as a measure of inter-rater  
3164 agreement per emotion for each of the three human raters (manual rating), using  
3165 the `irr` computational R package [129] per suggestions provided in [150]. Once  
3166 completed, the three raters discussed discrepancies between posts classified with  
3167 different emotion where agreement for that emotion was low, however we did not  
3168 change any emotions that were initially assigned as this would impact reliability of  
3169 our interpretation of Novielli et al. [263]’s guidelines. We then used the results from  
3170 the classifier as a ‘fourth’ *automated* rater, comparing the results with the manual  
3171 rating by calculating the agreement for each emotion and Fleiss’ Kappa for further  
3172 inter-rater agreement analysis.

3173 Of the 1,425 SO questions, the classifier did not classify any emotion in 622 posts  
3174 (labelled *No Emotion*). The remaining posts were classified as: 224 posts as *Fear*,  
3175 223 as *Surprise*, 70 as *Sadness*, 103 as *Love*, 100 as *Joy*, and 76 as *Anger*. Some posts  
3176 were classified against two or more emotions, and as a result, the total proportions  
3177 do not add up to exactly 100%. See Table 7.1. Results from our inter-rater analysis  
3178 are reported in Table 7.2.

3179 Guidelines of indicative strengths of agreement are provided by Landis and Koch  
3180 [210], where:  $\kappa \leq 0$  indicates *poor* agreement;  $0 < \kappa \leq 0.2$  indicates *slight* agree-  
3181 ment;  $0.2 < \kappa \leq 0.4$  indicates *fair* agreement;  $0.4 < \kappa \leq 0.6$  indicates *moderate*

3182 agreement;  $0.6 < \kappa \leq 0.8$  indicates *substantial* agreement. These interpretations  
3183 suggest that, when using the classifier’s output as a fourth ‘rater’, there was slight  
3184 agreement on all emotions except *Sadness*, where agreement was poor. Agreement  
3185 amongst the three human raters was slight for *Love*, *Surprise*, *Anger* and *No Emotion*,  
3186 fair for both *Joy* and *Fear*, and poor for *Sadness*.

## 3187 7.4 Results

3188 In this section, we present our findings with respect to limitations in the classifier  
3189 and our investigation of the dataset that was used to train the classifier. Given the  
3190 weak results, we then discuss whether model cards [246] and/or datasheets [134]  
3191 could have provided a more effective approach to informing the viability and limits  
3192 of the pre-trained model.

### 3193 7.4.1 Limitations of the Text Classifier

3194 The classifier did not assign any emotion to more than 43% of the SO posts. This  
3195 result corroborates the findings by Murgia et al., who identified via a manual process  
3196 *No Emotion* as the most prevalent classification [249]. For illustration, we provide  
3197 a set of examples in Table 7.3. (The ratings column indicates the emotion labels  
3198 assigned by each of the three human raters  $R_{1..3}$  and the label assigned by the  
3199 classifier  $C$ .) The first example given in Table 7.3 illustrates a neutral example,  
3200 where none of the raters, including the classifier identified any emotion. In the  
3201 second example, the classifier did not detect any emotion, however all three human  
3202 raters agreed that the question indicated *Sadness*. In the third example, each rater  
3203 identified different emotions, thereby indicating complete disagreement. In the  
3204 fourth example, the classifier interpreted the question as *Joy*, whereas the human  
3205 raters identified *Surprise* and *Anger*. Whilst that question had a word typically  
3206 associated with *Joy* (i.e., “I’m pretty sure...”), the realistic context here is that the  
3207 phrase ‘pretty’ indicates no emotion and the wider context of the question shows  
3208 how the human raters identified a sense of frustration (anger) and surprise at the  
3209 results the developer is finding. Lastly, two, additional examples are presented in  
3210 the last and second-last rows of Table 7.3 to highlight different inconsistencies both  
3211 between human raters and the classifier.

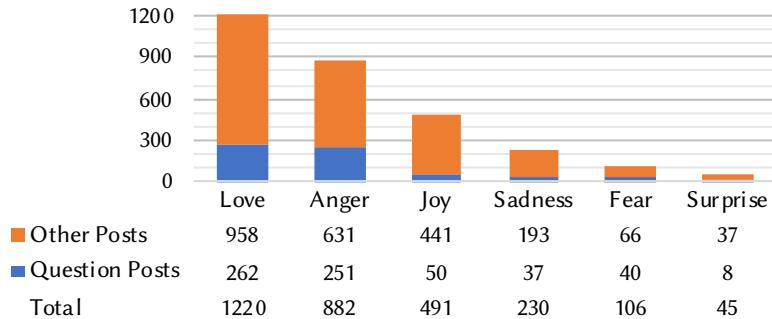
3212 We investigated our training dataset and related research documentation to see  
3213 if that would give us further insights. We found two areas warranting further  
3214 exploration—training data balance and training data annotation.

### 3215 7.4.2 Data imbalance

3216 We found that the purpose of the training dataset was actually to train two classifiers—  
3217 a sentiment classifier and an emotional classifier. Each post in the training dataset  
3218 was labelled with zero, one or more emotions. In addition, emotions were grouped,  
3219 i.e., the positive emotions of *Joy* and *Love* were grouped into positive sentiment  
3220 while *Sadness*, *Anger* and *Fear* were grouped into negative sentiment. *Surprise*

**Table 7.3:** Human Raters ( $R_1$ ,  $R_2$ ,  $R_3$ ) versus automated classifier ( $C$ ). Questions located at: [https://stackoverflow.com/q/\[ID\]](https://stackoverflow.com/q/[ID]).

Question ID and Quote	Ratings
[42375271] “Can we use Microsoft Emotion API in our Android Apps, considering the fact that it’s still in its ‘Preview’ mode...can we create our own customized app using the code of EMOTION API to recognize the moods of users in our own app?”	[C]: No Emotion [ $R_1$ ]: No Emotion [ $R_2$ ]: No Emotion [ $R_3$ ]: No Emotion
[55599305] “I have consumed the google cloud vision api to recognize a document with a table, but sometimes the image will be a little rotated, im trying to get the value using theoef the key i want, but how do i get it if it’s not on the same.I was thinking of making a ‘line’ above and below the and finding if the point is between that, but i dont know how to do it.”	[C]: No Emotion [ $R_1$ ]: Sadness [ $R_2$ ]: Sadness [ $R_3$ ]: Sadness
[43534783] “Can someone try Google VisionAPI FaceTracker and see if it works? ...All I get when I try running it is a black screen (after fixing). I don’t get any errors in the logs either.”	[C]: Fear [ $R_1$ ]: Surprise [ $R_2$ ]: No Emotion [ $R_3$ ]: Anger
[51444352] “I’m pretty sure I set up my IAM role appropriately (I literally attached the ComprehendFullAccess policy to the role) and the Cognito Pool was also setup appropriately (I know this because I’m also using Rekognition and it works with the IAM Role and Cognito ID Pool I created) and yet every time I try to send a request to AWS Comprehend I get the error... Any idea of what I can do in this situation?”	[C]: Joy [ $R_1$ ]: Surprise [ $R_2$ ]: Surprise [ $R_3$ ]: Anger
[50190527] “I am trying to perform OCR on pdf documents using google cloud vision API, i uploaded a pdf document into a cloud bucket and downloaded the oauth key file and added it in the script as below. But when i run the file, i get the permission denined: 403 error, can anyone please give me instructions on how to fix it, i did extensive google search and did not yield any results, i am surely missing something here... I have checked the older stack overflow questions and the links provided in answers are not active anymore.Thanks in advance for your help.”	[C]: No Emotion [ $R_1$ ]: Sadness [ $R_2$ ]: No Emotion [ $R_3$ ]: Anger
[48145425] “I am Deploying Google cloud vision Ocr in My angular2 webapp. but i am getting many of the errors when i add this code in my webapp code. please help me to sort out this.”	[C]: Fear [ $R_1$ ]: Fear [ $R_2$ ]: No Emotion [ $R_3$ ]: Sadness



**Figure 7.1:** The emotion classifier training dataset distribution is largely skewed toward *Love*, resulting in data imbalance. (*No Emotion* labels were removed from this graph.)

3221 was assigned either positive or negative sentiment, depending on context [69, 263].  
 3222 Figure 7.1 shows the distribution of emotion labels across 4,800 posts in the training  
 3223 dataset; *No Emotion* ( $n = 1959$ ) is removed to emphasise emotion-only results.  
 3224 Note: some posts in the training data set were classified as more than 1 emotion,  
 3225 hence the total counts add up to greater than 4800.

3226 Class imbalance and its impact on classifier models is a known problem in ma-  
 3227 chine learning (ML) [224, 375], where one class (known as the majority, positive  
 3228 class) significantly outnumbers the other class (known as the minority, negative  
 3229 class). The impact of class imbalance on classification models results in minority  
 3230 classes with lower precision and lower recall than the majority class, since the clas-  
 3231 sifier does not generate rules for the minority class. One set of relevant techniques  
 3232 for addressing class imbalance is data sampling; including undersampling or sub-  
 3233 sampling, oversampling and hybrid approaches [224]. Whilst the training dataset  
 3234 seems balanced for the purpose of sentiment analysis, there is a lack of balance  
 3235 across individual emotions. The predominant emotion in the training dataset was  
 3236 *No Emotion* at 40.8% of total posts. The most dominant emotions were *Love* and  
 3237 *Anger* at 25% and 18% respectively. Less than 1% of posts were labelled with  
 3238 *Surprise*. This means that the number of posts falling into some of the categories,  
 3239 for example, *Surprise* and *Fear* (i.e., 45 and 106 posts, respectively) is very low for  
 3240 training purposes.

3241 Further, the training dataset was spread across different types of SO posts (i.e.,  
 3242 questions posts, answer posts, question comments, answer comments) to capture  
 3243 the different emotional language, however our study was interested in classifying  
 3244 SO question posts only. Of the training dataset's 4,800 posts, only 1,044 could  
 3245 be identified as question posts and within that subset of posts, the distribution of  
 3246 emotions was more polarised than in the overall 4,800 posts. *Love* and *Anger* are  
 3247 the most predominant emotions in the training dataset, however *Anger* has a higher  
 3248 proportion (24%) in question posts, as opposed to only 18.4% in the overall dataset.

3249 In summary, the training dataset was not balanced within each emotion category  
 3250 and some emotions had very low sample numbers, as emphasised in the skew in  
 3251 Figure 7.1. Proportions of training data examples per question per emotion was very  
 3252 low for *Joy*, *Surprise*, *Sadness* and *Fear*. To address this imbalance and achieve

3253 better performance, training data could be enhanced to include additional samples  
3254 or to use an oversampling approach. A recent study into class-balancing approaches  
3255 in the context of defect prediction models found that class rebalancing does lead to  
3256 a shift in the learned concepts [357].

### 3257 7.4.3 Emotion Labeling Bias

3258 In software engineering, hierarchical categorical emotional frameworks—including  
3259 those featured in Parrott [275], Ekman et al. [111] and Shaver et al. [327]—have  
3260 been assessed by researchers and pragmatically selected as the basis for training  
3261 emotional classifiers. The chosen emotion framework is then used as the taxonomy  
3262 of truth labels for classifier training datasets. Data for labeling is sourced from  
3263 systems such as SO and JIRA [128, 249, 263, 270]. In the software engineering  
3264 domain, truth labeling of emotions has, to date, been done manually [128, 249, 263].  
3265 Emotion annotation involves at least a pair of annotators [12, 138]. For the EMTK  
3266 training dataset, annotation was performed manually by a team of 12 coders, divided  
3267 into four groups of three with a computer science background [68, 263]. Manual  
3268 annotation challenges when coding emotions can be encountered due to different  
3269 levels of semantic ambiguity within emotions and how humans express emotions in  
3270 text [152].

3271 In the absence of an objective emotional truth, researchers' consistency is taken  
3272 as a measure of correctness—i.e., multiple annotators that agree [249]. A measure  
3273 of inter-rater agreement is Cohen's Kappa [82] (for two raters) or Fleiss' Kappa [119]  
3274 for more raters. For the training dataset, inter-rater agreement ranged from  $\kappa = 0.30$   
3275 (fair) for *Joy* to  $\kappa = 0.66$  (substantial) for *Love*. The researchers specifically trained  
3276 dataset coders for consistency. The challenge of this approach with a subject such as  
3277 emotions is the opportunity for bias. In contrast, in other studies that used annotation,  
3278 researchers specifically attempted to reduce the opportunity for biases by including  
3279 raters with different nationalities, skills, cultural backgrounds, by increasing the  
3280 number of raters [270] and opting against consistency training [9]. As such, the  
3281 approach taken to achieve consistency and makeup of label coders is important  
3282 information for downstream consumers of an AI model.

### 3283 7.4.4 Emotion Labelling and Classification Granularity

3284 Training data annotation was performed on SO posts—which included questions,  
3285 answers, and comments to questions and answers. Emotion annotation can be  
3286 performed at different levels of granularity—word level [340], spans of words in a  
3287 sentence [12], sentence level or larger. While a word level or keyword approach is  
3288 considered too granular (as it does not capture the emotional context sufficiently),  
3289 there is a risk of emotion progression during narratives and also within sentences [12,  
3290 249]. Our CVS dataset consisted of questions only as we were seeking to assess  
3291 developer emotion expressed at the time of raising the question. Question posts are  
3292 typically longer than comments and may contain multiple emotions expressed at  
3293 different levels of intensity that are interpreted differently by different readers.

3294 For example, see the fifth question in Table 7.3. We see that the first sentence  
3295 does not carry any emotion, as the author is stating the steps to reproduce their  
3296 issue. However, in the second sentence—where the API generates a “403 error”—  
3297 the author expresses a mix of both *Sadness* and *Anger* (i.e., frustration) since their  
3298 “extensive google search” yielded no results, for which they begin to self-doubt  
3299 (“i am surely missing something here”). Lastly, *Love* is demonstrated in the last  
3300 sentence, via appreciation in advance for potential responses to their question.

## 3301 7.5 Discussion

3302 There is a growing trend emerging from key industry vendors to better document pre-  
3303 trained models using various means. For example, Google has proposed model cards  
3304 to communicate performance characteristics of pre-trained models [246]. Google  
3305 has also published sample model cards relating to their Cloud Vision API for face  
3306 and object detection<sup>4</sup> and, more recently, released a model card toolkit<sup>5</sup> to encourage  
3307 other ML practitioners to produce their own. Furthermore, this toolkit is now  
3308 integrated into the Python library *scikit-learn* to help developers automatically  
3309 generate model cards.<sup>6</sup> Microsoft has focused on a standardised process of dataset  
3310 documentation through datasheets to encourage transparency and accountability by  
3311 documenting the motivation, composition, collection process and intended uses of  
3312 data [134]. This is a key building block of the ‘Responsible ML’ initiative led by the  
3313 partnership on AI,<sup>7</sup> which aims to increase the transparency of AI and accountability  
3314 of ML system documentation.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, IBM too has proposed a ‘FactSheet’ concept  
3315 combining model and data information [15].

3316 These tools are being adopted by organisations and researchers; for example,  
3317 Open AI has published a basic model card of their generative language model<sup>9</sup> and  
3318 Google provided a sample model card for its toxicity analyser in its model card  
3319 proposal paper [246]. Model cards are also being considered for high stakes envi-  
3320 ronments such as clinical decision making [325], where they facilitate overarching  
3321 governance regimes on how and when models can be used.

3322 In our case study, the combination of a model card for the classifier as well as a  
3323 datasheet for training data would have provided valuable, easy to digest, and initial  
3324 support to help evaluate whether the classifier is right for our context. However, the  
3325 current specification of datasheet contents is very broad and lacks detailed directions  
3326 for those completing required information. The model cards proposed by Google  
3327 are focused on performance characteristics and do not sufficiently focus on the  
3328 underlying data that was used to train and, hence, define the context of the classifier.

3329 Had all the required information been provided to sufficient detail, including  
3330 a highlight of the importance of rater consistency training, we could have better

<sup>4</sup><https://bit.ly/2IXDLe1> last accessed 28 November 2020.

<sup>5</sup><https://bit.ly/3k7rLnk> last accessed 28 November 2020.

<sup>6</sup><https://bit.ly/36bXnEK> last accessed 28 November 2020.

<sup>7</sup><https://bit.ly/33kebYc> last accessed 28 November 2020.

<sup>8</sup><https://bit.ly/31f8WPD> last accessed 28 November 2020.

<sup>9</sup><https://bit.ly/3o6ECsj> last accessed 30 November 2020.

assessed risks and clarified at the outset whether an automated emotion assessment was an appropriate exercise. Further, with this information, we would be able perform our study with an more extensive rater consistency training, as well as a better appreciation of the limits of the classifier.

Hence, model cards and datasheets present rich opportunities for improving confidence and understanding in pre-trained AI technology. Now that toolkits are becoming increasingly available to make it easier for developers to generate toolkits, we suggest further research to evaluate model cards and datasheets (and combinations of the two) before pre-trained models are selected for specific tasks. This would make a valuable case study which we leave open for future work. Further, development of guidelines for model cards and datasheet creation, use and maintenance based on empirical evidence is also largely missing in literature; another avenue for potential research especially for use in industry contexts. A key challenge identified by this case study was the difficulty of validating results of an emotional classifier. An additional research study could aim to capture developer emotion directly as they log questions and facilitate learning of developer emotion classification through this direct method (e.g., a think-aloud study). This proposed approach to capturing data may shed further light into the emotional state an individual developer is experiencing *as they write* their questions. However, it would be of interest to assess if it is possible to draw conclusions about emotions that developers feel *in general*, due to the subjective nature of emotion. That is, it is possible that different developers would report a range of emotions even when they write similar posts.

Once validation of the results can be improved, additional improvement could be considered for the EMTk classifier including training it on questions only and using some of the identified data balancing techniques to re-balance the dataset. Another area of potential research is whether providing feedback to developers about the emotional content in their posts would change what they communicate. For instance, would it assist developer productivity if they were made aware of the emotional content of their contributions/posts?

## 7.6 Threats to Validity

This case study represents only one detailed example of a classifier trained on the emotional model proposed by Shaver et al. [327], documented in academic articles aimed to support research [68, 69, 262, 263]. This impacts the external validity of our study as the results cannot be generalised to other domains or emotion classifiers. To mitigate this, it would be very useful and informative to compare and validate our findings across a number of classifiers, however this is challenging since there is generally a lack of detailed information (i.e., model cards and datasheets) for available classifiers to support the analysis. This said, even a simple comparative analysis of emotion classification outputs is difficult because emotional classifiers are typically trained on a specific emotional model. A mapping between emotional models would therefore be needed, which demands expertise beyond software engineering research.

Another key limitation is that our analysis focused on SO questions on a particular

topic, whereas the EMTk had been trained on a mixture of different posts and topics.  
3374 This again impacts the external validity of our results. It is not appropriate to draw  
3375 a general conclusion from this analysis that emotions cannot be reliably classified  
3376 by analysing text. In fact, there were higher inter rater scores achieved for EMTk's  
3377 training dataset. Possibly additional rounds of clarification and moderation would  
3378 yield a higher score and higher confidence.  
3379

3380 It is common for questions on SO to be duplicates or downvoted, typically due  
3381 to poor wording or a lack of detail in the body of the question. Duplicate and  
3382 downvoted questions were not removed from our dataset used in the experiment,  
3383 and, furthermore, any poorly worded questions may have impacted the automatic  
3384 classifier's emotion labelling. This is likely to have impacted the measurement of  
3385 our results.

## 3386 7.7 Related Work

3387 Emotion detection from text has been explored by researchers in depth. A recent  
3388 survey of approaches, including the different emotion models and computational  
3389 approaches, can be found in Sailunaz et al. [315] and Alswaidan and Menai [10].  
3390 Recently, researchers have also explored deep learning, specifically bidirectional  
3391 BLSTM models, to improve emotion detection from text [32]. Most approaches are  
3392 supervised learning based, and hence rely on a labelled dataset for training.

3393 Some related work of special interest has been done in the area of sentiment  
3394 analysis, where discussions touched on emotion recognition. Novielli et al. [262]  
3395 investigated the suitability of using sentiment analysis tools to measure affect in SO  
3396 questions and comments. In their analysis, they discussed that developers expressed  
3397 negative emotions associated with their technical issues and that developers mainly  
3398 express their frustrations for not being able to solve a problem. For questions with  
3399 positive sentiment, they found that the positive lexicon did not express emotions, but  
3400 rather positive opinions and use of positive speech acts associated with politeness  
3401 and gratitude in advance of receiving a response. Also, of interest is the evaluation  
3402 of sentiment analysis tools evaluated on SO, JIRA and App Review datasets by Lin  
3403 et al. [217]. This study found that the prediction accuracy of the tools that were  
3404 evaluated were biased against the majority class (neutral emotion).

3405 The use of biometric sensors is also an area of active research for software de-  
3406 veloper emotion recognition. This includes conducting experiments with correlated  
3407 sensor data analysing the emotions software developers present whilst working [140].  
3408 Further work could include using the biometric-based data as a data source for truth  
3409 labels for emotion analysis as developers write their questions on SO, supporting the  
3410 proposed studies mentioned in Section 7.5.

## 3411 7.8 Conclusion

3412 We started this work with an idea to use existing AI techniques to *automatically* in-  
3413 vestigate what other developers think of cloud IWSs. This translated into our attempt

<sup>3414</sup> to use a pre-trained model that learnt from posts provided by software engineers on  
<sup>3415</sup> SO. Developers learn, improve and deepen their skills from documentation, formal  
<sup>3416</sup> or self-paced education, experience, and sharing their knowledge. Good documen-  
<sup>3417</sup> tation often forms the foundation that enables learning and also to create educational  
<sup>3418</sup> aids.

<sup>3419</sup> In this paper, we presented an observation case study that highlights a set of  
<sup>3420</sup> gaps in how a peer-reviewed model, published in the field of software engineering,  
<sup>3421</sup> lacks information about the limitations both within the documentation, as well as the  
<sup>3422</sup> articles published. To resolve these gaps, we investigated if new solutions that are  
<sup>3423</sup> being proposed (such as model cards) would have been of use to us before conducting  
<sup>3424</sup> our experiment. Model cards and datasheets will be a necessary and helpful first step,  
<sup>3425</sup> but as such we found their specification to be insufficient and additional guidance  
<sup>3426</sup> is required for those documenting the models cards and datasheets. Although we  
<sup>3427</sup> study only one pre-trained model in depth, our analysis shows that there are gaps  
<sup>3428</sup> in proposed solutions that can be addressed, and our future work will focus on  
<sup>3429</sup> investigating other models and IWSs to develop a more detailed documentation  
<sup>3430</sup> approach, specifically those that are being aimed for software engineering.

# CHAPTER 8

3431

3432

3433

## Better Documenting Computer Vision Services<sup>†</sup>

3434

3435 **Abstract** Using cloud-based computer vision services (CVSs) is gaining traction, where  
3436 developers access AI-powered components through familiar RESTful APIs, not needing  
3437 to orchestrate large training and inference infrastructures or curate/label training datasets.  
3438 However, while these APIs *seem* familiar to use, their non-deterministic run-time behaviour  
3439 and evolution is not adequately communicated to developers. Therefore, improving these  
3440 services' API documentation is paramount—more extensive documentation facilitates the  
3441 development process of intelligent software. In a prior study, we extracted 34 API docu-  
3442 mentation artefacts from 21 seminal works, devising a taxonomy of five key requirements to  
3443 produce quality API documentation. We extend this study in two ways. Firstly, by surveying  
3444 104 developers of varying experience to understand what API documentation artefacts are  
3445 of *most value* to practitioners. Secondly, identifying which of these highly-valued artefacts  
3446 are or are not well-documented through a case study in the emerging CVS domain. We  
3447 identify: (i) several gaps in the software engineering literature, where aspects of API docu-  
3448 mentation understanding is/is not extensively investigated; and (ii) where industry vendors  
3449 (in contrast) document artefacts to better serve their end-developers. We provide a set of  
3450 recommendations to enhance intelligent software documentation for both vendors and the  
3451 wider research community.

### 3452 8.1 Introduction

3453 Improving API documentation quality is a valuable task for any API. Succinct  
3454 API documentation of good quality facilitates productivity [214, 252, 253], and  
3455 therefore improved quality is better engineered into a system [238]. Where ap-  
3456 plication developers integrate new services into their systems via APIs, their pro-

<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on A. Cummaudo, R. Vasa, J. Grundy, and M. Abdelrazek, “Requirements of API Documentation: A Case Study into Computer Vision Services,” *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, pp. 1–1, 2020, DOI 10.1109/TSE.2020.3047088. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

ductivity is affected either by inadequate skills (“*I’ve never used an API like this, so must learn from scratch*”) or, where their skills are adequate, an imbalanced cognitive load that causes excessive context switching (“*I have the skills for this, but am confused or misunderstand*”). As a real-world use case, consider intelligent computer vision services (CVSs), in which an AI-based component produces a non-deterministic result based on a machine-learnt data-driven algorithm, rather than a predictable, rule-driven one [89]. These services use machine intelligence to make predictions on images such as object labelling or facial recognition [398, 409, 410, 411, 412, 419, 423, 431, 432, 433, 437, 451, 452, 485, 486]. The impacts of poor and incomplete documentation results in developer complaints on online discussion forums such as Stack Overflow [92]. Many comments show that developers do not think in the non-deterministic mental model of the designers who created the CVSs. They ask many varied questions from their peers to try and clarify their understanding.

It is therefore important to ensure developers have access to high-quality API documentation artefacts when consuming these services. Vendors should cover all documentation artefacts that the wider developer community find valuable, and the research community should aide in this process by investigating with types of information that comprise these artefacts, or the aspects of information design to best present this information. What causes a developer to be confused when using an API, and how to mitigate it via improved documentation, has been largely explored by researchers for *conventional APIs* (an overview is provided in Section 8.2). Various studies provide a myriad of recommendations into the value of API documentation artefacts based on both qualitative and quantitative analyses, involving developer opinions (from surveys), observation of developers, event logging or content analysis (see Figure 8.3). Such guidelines propose ways for developers, managers, and solution architects can construct systems better with improved documentation.

However, there does not yet exist a consolidated *systematic* review of this literature. Further, few studies offer a taxonomy to consolidate these guidelines together, and there still lacks a consolidated effort to capture guidelines on the requirements of good quality API documentation. Studies that produce these guidelines from literature are largely scattered across multiple sources. Investigating the ways by which these guidelines are produced can provide software engineering researchers with better insight into the research methods and data collection techniques used to produce these guidelines. Some studies, for example, use case studies, others use focus groups and brainstorming, or interviews and surveys. The extent to which researchers rely on developer opinion for API documentation guidelines is evident, and gaps in the methodological approaches that researchers use should be emphasised to shine light into new ways of conducting research in this important area. Furthermore, systematically capturing the information distilled from these guidelines into a readily accessible, consolidated taxonomy (designed to assist writing API documentation) must be validated in real-world circumstances to assess its efficacy with practitioners.

In our prior work, we proposed an API documentation taxonomy that was comprised of 21 key primary sources [88]. This paper significantly extends our previous

3502 work by addressing limitations in the existing taxonomy, thus refining it. Previously,  
3503 we developed a metric for each dimension (topmost-layers) and category (leaf nodes)  
3504 within the taxonomy [88]. This metric is an indication of the specific areas of API  
3505 documentation software engineering researchers have focused their efforts, as mea-  
3506 sured by the ratio of papers that investigated or reported various issues concerning  
3507 the documentation artefacts defined within our taxonomy. For the context of this  
3508 paper, we refer to this metric as an ‘in-literature’ score, or ILS. Within this paper,  
3509 we build upon this facet but *in-practice* by assessing the efficacy of our taxonomy  
3510 against developers using a survey instrument inspired by the System Usability Scale  
3511 (SUS) [62]. Each artefact within the taxonomy is measured against this instrument  
3512 for its utility, and a metric is produced to indicate how well developers *value* each  
3513 of these artefacts. We refer to this metric as an ‘in-practice’ score, or IPS. (Details  
3514 for how the IPS is calculated are given in Section 8.5.1.4.) We then identify the  
3515 artefacts that are highly researched, the ones that developers demand the most, and  
3516 where gaps in these artefacts remain for future research exploration.

3517 Lastly, while our prior work focused on *generalised* API documentation, in this  
3518 extension, we apply our taxonomy to a case study of interest: i.e., better documenting  
3519 CVSs. We empirically assess the taxonomy against three popular CVSs, namely  
3520 Google Cloud Vision [423], Amazon Rekognition [398] and Azure Computer Vision  
3521 [437]. For each category in our taxonomy, we assess whether the respective service’s  
3522 documentation contains, partially-contains or does not contain the documentation  
3523 artefact from our taxonomy, thus determining the extent to which the requirements  
3524 of good API documentation are met within the vendors’ own documentation. From  
3525 this, we triangulate each ILS and IPS value against the service’s level of inclusion  
3526 of its respective documentation artefact, thereby making a judgement as to where  
3527 the services can improve their documentation to make them more complete. Lastly,  
3528 we present a ranking of each artefact for where research or vendors should be focus  
3529 their documentation efforts that is of high value to both developers *and* to industry  
3530 vendors.

3531 Thus, through this triangulation of the taxonomy with existing literature, utility  
3532 to practitioners, and application via a case study (CVSs), we summarise three aspects  
3533 of API documentation by identifying:

- 3534 (i) the documentation artefacts that been extensively studied by researchers, and  
3535 those that warrant further attention by the software engineering research com-  
3536 munity (via high/low ILS values);
- 3537 (ii) the documentation artefacts that are considered to be the most- and least-  
3538 important from a practitioner’s point of view (via high/low IPS values);
- 3539 (iii) the documentation artefacts that have been well-established by vendors (via  
3540 our case study on three prominent CVSs).

3541 To demonstrate how our taxonomy was developed, we include an extended  
3542 revision of the systematic mapping study (SMS) from our existing work. The  
3543 taxonomy we proposed consists of five key requirements: (1) Descriptions of API  
3544 Usage; (2) Descriptions of Design Rationale; (3) Descriptions of Domain Concepts;  
3545 (4) Existence of Support Artefacts; and (5) Overall Presentation of Documentation.

Following this, we developed a survey instrument to assess the overall utility of each of the artefacts that contribute towards these five requirements, which consisted of 43 questions of alternating positive and negative sentiment. We then narrow our focus down to our case study by applying the prioritised documentation artefacts (as identified by the survey) to three CVSs. Once our surveys were complete, we provide some general guidelines as to where cloud CVSs can make improvements to their API documentation. Lastly, we compare and contrast the results from our SMS to the results of the survey and of our case study, thereby identifying where future research efforts into API documentation should focus to give the biggest value back to practitioners.

Our key contributions in this work are:

- a score metric for each category that indicates where the highest research priorities have been in the existing literature;
- a score metric assessing the efficacy of the 34 categories that empirically reflects what artefacts are of the highest value from a *practitioner* point of view;
- a heuristic validation of each artefact against CVSs, assessing where existing CVS API documentation needs improvement;
- a number of practical recommendations for CVS vendors to better improve the quality of their API documentation; and
- an identification of the gaps for future research into API documentation based on the highest need by developers but, so far, has captured the least attention by researchers.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 8.2 presents related work; Section 8.3 is divided into two subsections, the first describing how primary sources were selected in the SMS with the second describing the development of our taxonomy from these sources; Section 8.4 presents the taxonomy; Section 8.5 describes how we developed a survey instrument of 43 questions to validate the taxonomy against developers, and assess its efficacy against the three popular CVSs selected; Section 8.6 presents the findings from our validation analysis; Section 8.7 describes the threats to validity of this work; and Section 8.8 provides concluding remarks and the future directions of this study. Additional materials are provided in Chapter C.

## 8.2 Related Work

### 8.2.1 Systematic Reviews in Software Documentation

Systematic reviews into how developers produce and use software documentation gives researchers consolidated insights into the efforts of multiple, disparate API documentation studies. For example, a recent 2018 study explored 36 API documentation generation tools and approaches, and analysed the tools developed and their inputs and documentation outputs [264]. The findings from this study emphasise that the largest effort in API documentation tooling is to assist developers

3586 to generate either example code snippets and/or templates or natural language de-  
3587 scriptions of the API directly from the program’s source code. These snippets or  
3588 descriptions can then be placed in the API documentation, thereby increasing the  
3589 efficiency at which API documentation can be written. Additionally, tools from 12  
3590 studies target the maintainability of existing APIs of existing APIs, while tools from  
3591 11 studies target the correctness and accuracy of the documentation by validating  
3592 that what is written in the documentation is accurate to the technical structure of  
3593 the API. From the end-developer’s perspective, some tools (17 studies) help target  
3594 improvements to the developer’s understandability and learnability of new APIs by  
3595 linking in examples directly with questions such as on Stack Overflow. However,  
3596 the results from this study regards the *tooling* used to either assist in producing,  
3597 validating or learning from API documentation. While this is a systematic study  
3598 with key insights into the types of tooling produced, there is still a gap for an SMS in  
3599 what *guidelines* have been produced by the literature in developing natural language  
3600 documentation itself—and how well developers *agree* to those guidelines—which  
3601 our work has addressed.

3602 An extensive SMS into studies presented in the *overall* software documentation  
3603 domain was given in Zhi et al. [392]. This study reviewed a set of 69 papers from  
3604 1971 to 2011 to develop a systematic map on the various research aspects relating  
3605 to documentation cost, benefit and quality, finding that 38% of papers propose novel  
3606 techniques while 29% contribute empirical evidence (i.e., validation and evaluation  
3607 papers—see Section 8.3.1.4). The authors find that a majority of papers discuss qual-  
3608 ity aspects of software documentation, namely the quality attributes of completeness,  
3609 consistency and accessibility, and that the main usage of software documentation re-  
3610 gards maintenance aid and program comprehension. Another key insight—relevant  
3611 to our study—found that, on average, survey-based studies into documentation in-  
3612 volved 106 participants and generally these participants were from the same (or only  
3613 two) organisations. However, unlike our study, this study formalises the documenta-  
3614 tion efforts of *any* software document, and not exclusively into API documentation  
3615 artefacts required to help developers produce software. Further, our study differs in  
3616 that the results from our study are consolidated into a structured taxonomy, instead  
3617 of a meta-model which Zhi et al. perform, which is then triangulated against a  
3618 real-world use case (i.e., intelligent CVSs) and software developers via a survey.

### 3619 **8.2.2 API Usability and Documentation Knowledge**

3620 API usability and its impact on documentation knowledge is an imperative area of  
3621 study, since it provides useful links between API documentation and more technical  
3622 issues related to API design or tools. Extensive discussions from Myers and Stylos  
3623 [253] and Myers et al. [252] encapsulate a 30-year effort to evaluate and improve  
3624 API usability through lenses adapted human-computer interaction research. Es-  
3625 sentially, by treating a developer as the ‘end-user’ of an API (i.e., interacting and  
3626 programming with the API in their own systems), the authors discuss various case  
3627 studies by which API usability was improved by various human-centred approaches,  
3628 resulting in improved learnability of the API in addition to improved productivity

3629 and effectiveness in using the API. While the methods are primarily used for end-user  
3630 usability testing, their observations highlight the importance of good aesthetic and  
3631 interaction design of developer’s tooling and the need for new tooling to augment  
3632 what developers already do to reduce learning overhead. An extensive review of the  
3633 usability methods used, and their benefits to API usability, demonstrates how various  
3634 techniques—grounded through established usability guidelines and frameworks—  
3635 can be used to assess how an API’s usability impacts its key stakeholders (i.e., API  
3636 designers, developers, and end-users). The role of API *documentation* in context to  
3637 an API’s overall usability is imperative; for instance, limited documentation on a par-  
3638 ticular API (and limited code snippets) is often a key complaint to poor API usability  
3639 [253]. Exploring aspects on information design elements within API documentation  
3640 is therefore critical to mitigate such complaints.

3641 In Watson [372], the authors performed a heuristic assessment from 35 popular  
3642 APIs against 11 high-level universal design elements of API documentation. Of  
3643 these 35 APIs, 28 were open-source software repositories and seven came from  
3644 commercial independent software vendors. Two coders manually inspected each  
3645 API’s respective documentation sets, starting from the documentation’s entry page  
3646 and using the navigation features of the documentation to further explore the doc-  
3647 umentation. Both coders evaluated each of the 11 heuristics, noting whether they  
3648 could be found. This study highlighted how many APIs, even popular ones, fail  
3649 to grasp these basic design elements. For example, 25% of the documentation sets  
3650 did not provide any basic overview documentation to the API. Therefore, from a  
3651 practitioner’s perspective, the study describes a high-level overview of how certain  
3652 documentation artefacts address their needs and whether they are typically found in  
3653 documentation. However, while the methodological approach used in this study to  
3654 assess the heuristics is similar to our approach, the heuristics themselves used within  
3655 Watson’s study is based on only three seminal works and only contains 11 design  
3656 elements. Our study extends these heuristics and structures them into a consolidated,  
3657 hierarchical taxonomy which we then validate against practitioners.

3658 A taxonomy of distinct knowledge patterns within reference documentation by  
3659 Maalej and Robillard [227] classified 12 distinct knowledge types. Unlike our work,  
3660 which uses an SMS of existing studies as the source of our taxonomy development,  
3661 this study uses a grounded method via theoretical sampling of the API documentation  
3662 of two mature (extensively documented) open source systems. This was performed  
3663 by each author to elicit a list of knowledge types over an iterative six month process.  
3664 The taxonomy was then evaluated against the JDK 6 and .NET 4.0 frameworks  
3665 using a sample of 5574 documentation units and 17 trained coders to assign each  
3666 knowledge type to the documentation unit. Results showed that the functionality  
3667 and structure of these APIs are well-communicated, although core concepts and  
3668 rationale about the API are quite rarer to see. The authors also identified low-  
3669 value ‘non-information’—described as documentation that provides uninformative  
3670 boilerplate text with no insight into the API at all—which was substantially present in  
3671 the documentation of methods and fields in the two frameworks. They recommend  
3672 that developers factor their 12 distinct knowledge types into the process of code  
3673 documentation, thereby preventing low-value non-information, and thus developers

3674 can use the patterns of knowledge to evaluate the content, organisation, and utility  
3675 of their own documentation. The development of their taxonomy consisted of  
3676 questions to model knowledge and information, thereby capturing the reason about  
3677 disparate information units independent to context; a key difference to this paper  
3678 is the *systematic* taxonomy approach utilised and the source of information of our  
3679 taxonomy (i.e., existing literature).

### 3680 8.2.3 Computer Vision Services

3681 Recent studies into cloud-based CVSs have demonstrated that poor reliability and  
3682 robustness in computer vision can ‘leak’ into end-applications if such aspects are  
3683 not sufficiently appreciated by developers. A study by Hosseini et al. [163] showed  
3684 that Google Cloud Vision’s labelling fails when as little as 10% noise is added to the  
3685 image. Facial recognition classifiers are easily confused by modifying pixels of a face  
3686 and using transfer learning to adapt one person’s face into another [367]. Our own  
3687 prior work found that the non-deterministic evolution of these types of services is not  
3688 adequately communicated to developers [89], resulting in lost developer productivity  
3689 whereby developers ask fundamental questions about the concepts behind these  
3690 services, how they work, and where better documentation can be found [92]. This  
3691 paper continues this line of research by providing a means for service providers to  
3692 better document their services using a taxonomy and suggested improvements.

## 3693 8.3 Taxonomy Development

3694 We developed our taxonomy under two primary phases. First, we conducted an  
3695 SMS identifying API documentation studies, following guidelines by Kitchenham  
3696 and Charters [195] and Petersen et al. [283] (Section 8.3.1). A high level overview  
3697 of this first phase is given in Figure 8.2. Second, we followed a software engineering  
3698 taxonomy development method by Usman et al. [361] (Section 8.3.2) based on the  
3699 findings of our SMS, which involved an extensive validation involving real-world  
3700 developers and contextualised with computer vision APIs (Section 8.5).

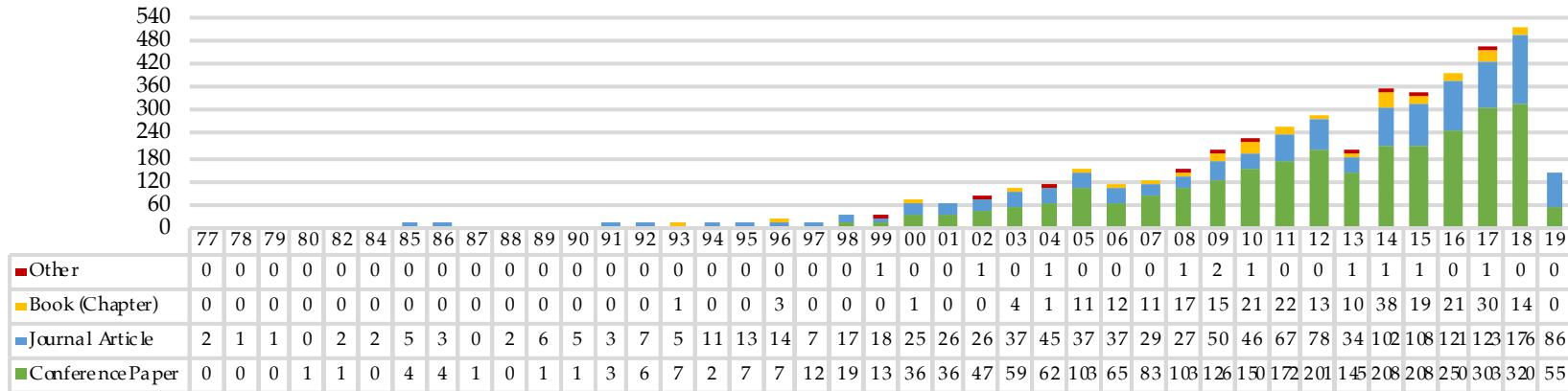
### 3701 8.3.1 Systematic Mapping Study

#### 3702 8.3.1.1 Research Questions (RQs)

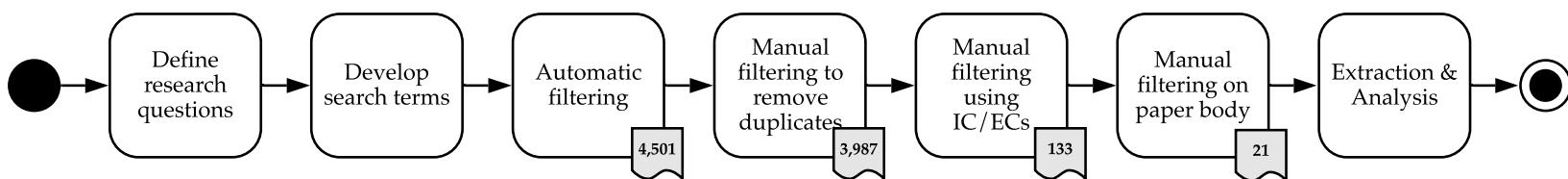
3703 The first step in producing our SMS was to pose two RQs:

- 3704 • **RQ1:** What documentation ‘knowledge’ do API documentation studies con-  
3705 tribute?
- 3706 • **RQ2:** How is API documentation studied?

3707 Our intent behind RQ1 was to collect as many studies provided by literature on  
3708 how API documentation should be written using natural language, i.e., not using  
3709 assistive tooling. In this regard, documentation ‘knowledge’ encompasses any nat-  
3710 ural language API documentation artefact associated with the implementation of  
3711 an application using a third-party API. As the goals of this study are to arrive at a



**Figure 8.1:** Search results by year and venue type.



**Figure 8.2:** A high level overview of the filtering steps from defining and executing our search query to the data extraction of our primary studies. Number of accepted papers resulting from each filtering step is shown.

3712 taxonomy encapsulating the requirements of good API documentation (Section 8.4),  
3713 we sought to arrive at studies that provide useful information to developers that  
3714 informs the relevance and value of which aspects of API documentation are more  
3715 useful than others. This captures the knowledge that developers need to know about  
3716 what aspects of their APIs should be documented and the artefacts by which they do  
3717 this. This helped us shape and form the taxonomy provided in Section 8.4. Secondly,  
3718 RQ2's intent was to understand how the studies derive at their conclusions, thereby  
3719 helping us identify gaps in literature where future studies can potentially focus.

3720 *8.3.1.2 Automatic Filtering*

3721 As done in similar software engineering studies [132, 141, 361], we explored auto-  
3722 matic filtering of online databases. We defined which SWEBOK knowledge areas  
3723 [168] were relevant to devise a search query. Our search query was built using re-  
3724 lated knowledge areas, relevant synonyms, and the term 'software engineering' (for  
3725 comprehensiveness) all joined with the OR operator. Due to the lack of a standard  
3726 definition of an API, we include the terms: 'API' and its expanded term; software  
3727 library, component and framework; and lastly SDK and its expanded term. These  
3728 too were joined with the OR operator, appended with an AND. Lastly, the term  
3729 'documentation' was appended with an AND. Our final search string was:

( "software design" **OR** "software architecture" **OR** "software construction" **OR** "software development"  
**OR** "software maintenance" **OR** "software engineering process" **OR** "software process" **OR** "software  
lifecycle" **OR** "software methods" **OR** "software quality" **OR** "software engineering professional practice"  
**OR** "software engineering" ) **AND** ( API **OR** "application programming interface" **OR** "software library"  
**OR** "software component" **OR** "software framework" **OR** sdk **OR** "software development kit" ) **AND**  
( documentation )

3730 We executed the query on all available metadata (title, abstract and keywords) in  
3731 May 2019 against Web of Science<sup>1</sup> (WoS), Compendex/Inspec<sup>2</sup> (C/I) and Scopus<sup>3</sup>.  
3732 We selected three particular primary sources given their relevance in software en-  
3733 gineering literature (containing the IEEE, ACM, Springer and Elsevier databases)  
3734 and their ability to support advanced queries [61, 195]. A total 4,501 results<sup>4</sup> were  
3735 found, with 549 being duplicates. Table 8.1 displays our results in further detail (du-  
3736 plicates not omitted); Figure 8.1 shows an exponential trend of API documentation  
3737 publications produced within the last two decades. (As this search was conducted  
3738 in May 2019, results taper in 2019.)

3739 *8.3.1.3 Manual Filtering*

3740 A follow-up manual filtering stage followed the 4,501 results obtained by automatic  
3741 filtering. As described below, we applied the following inclusion criteria (IC) and  
3742 exclusion criteria (EC) to each result:

<sup>1</sup><http://apps.webofknowledge.com> last accessed 23 May 2019.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.engineeringvillage.com> last accessed 23 May 2019.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.scopus.com> last accessed 23 May 2019.

<sup>4</sup>Raw results can be located at <http://bit.ly/2KxBLs4>.

**Table 8.1:** Search results and publication types

Publication type	WoS	C/I	Scopus	Total
Conference Paper	27	442	2353	2822
Journal Article	41	127	1236	1404
Book	23	17	224	264
Other	0	5	6	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>3819</b>	<b>4501</b>

- <sup>3743</sup> **IC1** Studies must be relevant to API documentation: specifically, we exclude  
<sup>3744</sup> studies that deal with improving the technical API usability (e.g., improved  
<sup>3745</sup> usage patterns);  
<sup>3746</sup> **IC2** Studies must discuss artefacts that document APIs;  
<sup>3747</sup> **IC3** Studies must be relevant to software engineering as defined in SWEBOK;  
<sup>3748</sup> **EC1** Studies where full-text is not accessible through standard institutional databases;  
<sup>3749</sup> **EC2** Studies that do not propose or extend how to improve the official, natural  
<sup>3750</sup> language documentation of an API;  
<sup>3751</sup> **EC3** Studies proposing a third-party tool to enhance existing documentation or  
<sup>3752</sup> generate new documentation using data mining (i.e., not proposing strategies  
<sup>3753</sup> to improve official documentation);  
<sup>3754</sup> **EC4** Studies not written in English;  
<sup>3755</sup> **EC5** Studies not peer-reviewed.

<sup>3756</sup> Each of these ICs and ECs were applied to every paper after exporting all  
<sup>3757</sup> metadata of our results to a spreadsheet. The first author then curated the publications  
<sup>3758</sup> using the following revision process.

<sup>3759</sup> Firstly, we read the publication source—to rapidly omit non-software engineering  
<sup>3760</sup> papers—as well as the author keywords, title, and abstract of all 4,501 studies.  
<sup>3761</sup> As some studies were duplicated between our three primary sources, we needed to  
<sup>3762</sup> remove any repetitions. We sorted and reviewed any duplicate DOIs and fuzzy-  
<sup>3763</sup> matched all very similar titles (i.e., changes due to punctuation between primary  
<sup>3764</sup> sources), thereby retaining only one copy of the paper from a single database. Sim-  
<sup>3765</sup>ilarly, as there was no limit to our date ranges, some studies were republished in  
<sup>3766</sup> various venues (i.e., same title but different DOIs). These were also removed using  
<sup>3767</sup> fuzzy-matching on the title, and the first instance of the paper’s publication was  
<sup>3768</sup> retained. This second phase resulted in 3,987 papers.

<sup>3769</sup> Secondly, we applied our inclusion and exclusion criteria to each of the 3,987  
<sup>3770</sup> papers by reading the abstract. Where there was any doubt in applying the criteria  
<sup>3771</sup> to the abstract alone, we automatically shortlisted the study. We rejected 427 studies  
<sup>3772</sup> that were unrelated to software engineering, 3,235 were not directly related to docu-  
<sup>3773</sup>menting APIs (e.g., to enhance coding techniques that improve the overall developer  
<sup>3774</sup> usability of the API), 182 proposed new tools to enhance API documentation or  
<sup>3775</sup> used machine learning to mine developer’s discussion of APIs, and 10 were not in  
<sup>3776</sup> English. This resulted in 133 studies being shortlisted to the final phase.

3777 Thirdly, we re-evaluated each shortlisted paper by re-reading the abstract, the  
3778 introduction and conclusion. We removed a further 64 studies that were on API  
3779 usability or non API-related documentation (i.e., code commenting). At this stage,  
3780 we decided to refine our exclusion criteria to better match the research goals of  
3781 this study by including the word ‘natural language’ documentation in EC2. This  
3782 removed studies where the focus was to improve technical documentation of APIs  
3783 such as data types and communication schemas. Additionally, we removed 26  
3784 studies as they were related to introducing new tools (EC3), 3 were focused on tools  
3785 to mine API documentation, 7 studies where no guidelines were provided, 2 further  
3786 duplicate studies, and a further 10 studies where the full text was not available,  
3787 not peer reviewed or in English. Books are commonly not peer-reviewed (EC5),  
3788 however no books were shortlisted within these results. This final stage resulted in  
3789 21 primary studies for further analysis, and the mapping of primary study identifiers  
3790 to references S1–21 can be found in Appendix C.3.

3791 As a final phase, we conducted reliability analysis of our shortlisting method.  
3792 We conducted intra-rater reliability of our 133 shortlisted papers using the test-  
3793 retest approach suggested by Kitchenham and Charters [195]. We re-evaluated a  
3794 random sample of 10% of the 133 shortlisted papers a week after initial studies were  
3795 shortlisted. This resulted in *substantial agreement* [210], measured using Cohen’s  
3796 kappa ( $\kappa = 0.7547$ ).

#### 3797 8.3.1.4 Data Extraction & Systematic Mapping

3798 Of the 21 primary studies, we conducted abstract key-wording adhering to Petersen  
3799 et al.’s guidelines [283] to develop a classification scheme. An initial set of key-  
3800 words were applied for each paper in terms of their methodologies and research  
3801 approaches (RQ2), based on an existing classification schema used in the require-  
3802 ments engineering field by Wieringa and Heerkens [379]. These are: *evaluation*  
3803 *papers*, which evaluates existing techniques currently used in-practice; *validation*  
3804 *papers*, which investigates proposed techniques not yet implemented in-practice;  
3805 *experience* *papers*, which are written by practitioners in the field and provide insight  
3806 into their experiences of adopting existing techniques; and *philosophical* *papers*,  
3807 which presents new conceptual frameworks that describes a language by which we  
3808 can describes our observations of existing or new techniques, thereby implying a  
3809 new viewpoint for understanding phenomena. For example, documenting APIs using  
3810 code snippets is a commonly used practice by developers (see the primary sources  
3811 listed in Appendix C.1), and conducting an experiment exploring how quickly prac-  
3812 tioners achieve this would be an evaluation paper. In contrast, a validation paper  
3813 explores novel techniques that are proposed but not yet implemented in practice;  
3814 for example, a paper proposing that APIs should document success stories so that  
3815 developers know where, why, and how the API was successfully implemented may  
3816 test this novel technique via field study experiments (e.g., interviewing developers  
3817 on the new technique) without reference to real-world examples. A paper written  
3818 by a group of developers sharing their insights into the improvements of their doc-  
3819 umentation before and after providing extensive tutorials would be an experience

**Table 8.2:** Data extraction form

Data item(s)	Description
Citation metadata	Title, author(s), years, publication venue, publication type
Artefact(s) discussed	As per IC2, the study must identify at least one API documentation artefact
Evaluation method	Did the authors evaluate their proposed artefacts? If so, how?
Primary technique	The primary technique used to devise the artefact(s)
Secondary technique	As above, if a second study was conducted
Tertiary technique	As above, if a third study was conducted
Research type	The research type employed in the study as defined by Wieringa and Heerkens's taxonomy

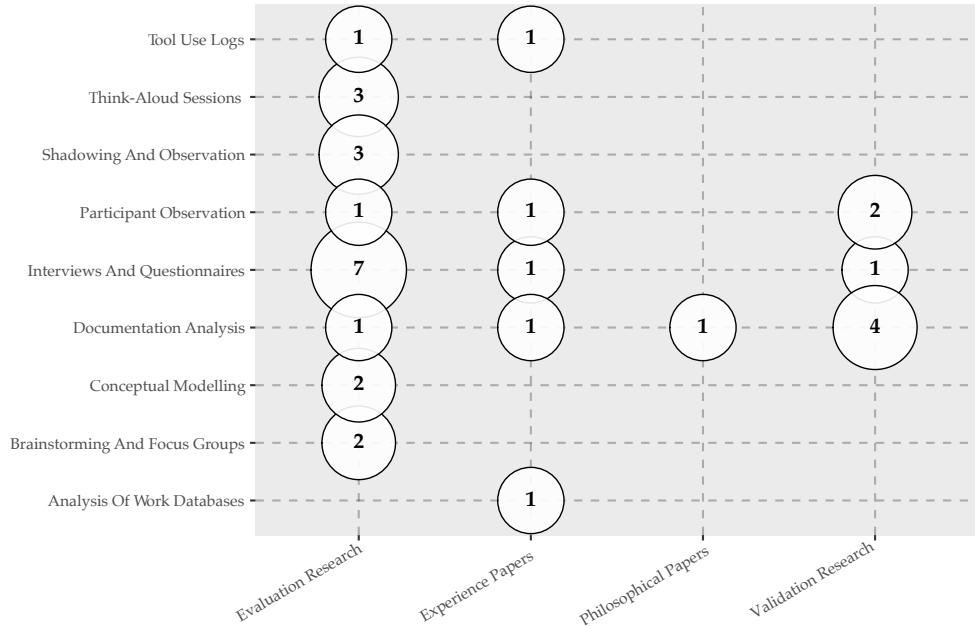
<sup>3820</sup> paper. Philosophical papers may propose entirely new vocabulary to explore API  
<sup>3821</sup> documentation, devising new frameworks from which other researchers can explore  
<sup>3822</sup> the field from a new viewpoint.

<sup>3823</sup> After all primary studies had been assigned keywords, we noticed that all papers  
<sup>3824</sup> used field study techniques, and thus we consolidated these keywords using Singer  
<sup>3825</sup> et al.'s framework of software engineering field study techniques [332]. Singer et al.  
<sup>3826</sup> captures both study techniques *and* methods to collect data within the one framework,  
<sup>3827</sup> namely: *direct techniques*, including brainstorming and focus groups, interviews and  
<sup>3828</sup> questionnaires, conceptual modelling, work diaries, think-aloud sessions, shadowing  
<sup>3829</sup> and observation, participant observation; *indirect techniques*, including instrumenting  
<sup>3830</sup> systems, fly-on-the-wall; and *independent techniques*, including analysis of work  
<sup>3831</sup> databases, tool use logs, documentation analysis, and static and dynamic analysis.

<sup>3832</sup> Table 8.2 describes our data extraction form, which was used to collect relevant  
<sup>3833</sup> data from each paper. Figure 8.3 presents our systematic mapping, where each  
<sup>3834</sup> study is mapped to one (or more, if applicable) of methodologies plotted against  
<sup>3835</sup> Wieringa and Heerkens's research approaches. We find that a majority of these  
<sup>3836</sup> studies survey developers using direct techniques (i.e., interviews and questionnaires)  
<sup>3837</sup> and some performing structured documentation analysis. Few studies report recent  
<sup>3838</sup> experiences; literature reports the artefacts that document APIs from evaluation  
<sup>3839</sup> research, in addition to some validation studies. There are few experience papers  
<sup>3840</sup> describing anecdotal evidence, and almost no philosophical papers that describe new  
<sup>3841</sup> conceptual ways at approaching API documentation as a large majority of existing  
<sup>3842</sup> work either evaluates existing (in-practice) strategies or validates the effectiveness  
<sup>3843</sup> of new strategies.

### <sup>3844</sup> 8.3.2 Development of the Taxonomy

<sup>3845</sup> A majority of taxonomies produced in software engineering studies are often made  
<sup>3846</sup> extemporaneously [361]. For this reason, we decided to proceed with a systematic  
<sup>3847</sup> approach to develop our taxonomy using the guidelines provided by Usman et al.  
<sup>3848</sup> [361], which are extended from lessons learned in more mature domains. In this  
<sup>3849</sup> subsection, we outline the 4 phases and 13 steps taken to develop our taxonomy  
<sup>3850</sup> based on Usman et al.'s technique. Usman et al.'s final *validation* phase is largely  
<sup>3851</sup> detailed within Section 8.5 after we present our taxonomy in Section 8.4.



**Figure 8.3:** Systematic map: field study technique vs research type

3852 Formally, Usman et al. provides guidelines to define these units under the first  
 3853 six stages under the planning phase. In our study, our preliminary phase involves  
 3854 answering the following:

- 3855 (1) *define the software engineering knowledge area*: The software engineering  
 3856 knowledge area, as defined by the SWEBOK, is software construction;
- 3857 (2) *define the objective*: The main objective of the proposed taxonomy is to define a  
 3858 set of categories that enables to classify different facets of natural language API  
 3859 documentation artefacts (not API *usability*) as reported in existing literature;
- 3860 (3) *define the subject matter*: The subject matter of our proposed taxonomy is  
 3861 documentation artefacts of APIs;
- 3862 (4) *define the classification structure*: The classification structure of our proposed  
 3863 taxonomy is *hierarchical*;
- 3864 (5) *define the classification procedure*: The procedure used to classify the docu-  
 3865 mentation artefacts is qualitative;
- 3866 (6) *define the data sources*: The basis of the taxonomy is derived from field study  
 3867 techniques (see Section 8.3.1.4).

#### 3868 8.3.2.1 Identification and extraction phase

3869 The second phase of the taxonomy development involves (7) *extracting all terms*  
 3870 *and concepts* from relevant literature, which we have achieved from our SMS. These  
 3871 terms are then consolidated by (8) *performing terminology control*, as some terms  
 3872 may refer to different concepts and vice-versa. For example, Watson defines one of  
 3873 the heuristics used in the study's experiment as “sample apps to understand how to

use the elements of an API in context and as another source from which to copy program code... a sample app is a complete application that includes examples of the API as well as the other functions that comprise a complete program” [372]. In this case, the term ‘sample app’, ‘program code’, and ‘complete application’ were extracted as a term of interest and noted. Similarly, in Robillard [305], the phrase ‘applications’ is used to define a category of example code snippets which “consists of code segments from complete applications” and is generally some form of “demonstration samples sometimes distributed with an API... that developers can download from various source code repositories” [305]. Again, the phrase ‘complete applications’, ‘demonstration samples’, ‘download’, and ‘source code’ was identified as a terms of interest and noted. Once all papers were read, we consolidated a list of all of these noted highlights to help consolidate the terms and perform terminology control. In this example, the phrase ‘Downloadable source code demonstrating complete sample applications’ was consolidated from both Watson and Robillard’s studies, which—in addition to the other primary studies that iteratively changed wording slightly due to steps (9–10)—formed the basis of the taxonomy dimension [A7].

### 8.3.2.2 Design phase

The design phase identified the core dimensions and categories within the extracted data items. The first step is to (9) *identify and define taxonomy dimensions*; for this study we utilised a bottom-up approach to identify each dimension, i.e., extracting the categories first and then nominating which dimensions these categories fit into using an iterative approach. As we used a bottom-up approach, step (9) also encompassed the second stage of the design phase, which is to (10) *identify and describe the categories* of each dimension. Thirdly, we (11) *identify and describe relationships* between dimensions and categories, which can be skipped if the relationships are too close together, as is the case of our grouping technique which allows for new dimensions and categories to be added. The last step in this phase is to (12) *define guidelines for using and updating the taxonomy*. The taxonomy is as simple as a checklist that can be heuristically applied to API documentation, and each dimension is malleable and covers a broad spectrum of artefacts; while we do not anticipate any further dimensions to be added, new categories can easily be fitted into one of the dimensions (see Section 8.8). We provide guidelines for use in our application of the taxonomy against CVSSs within Sections 8.4 and 8.6.

### 8.3.2.3 Validation phase

In the final phase of taxonomy development, taxonomy designers must (13) *validate the taxonomy* to assess its usefulness. Usman et al. [361] describe three approaches to validate taxonomies: (i) orthogonal demonstration, in which the taxonomy’s orthogonality is demonstrated against the dimensions and categories, (ii) benchmarking the taxonomy against similar classification schemes, or (iii) utility demonstration by applying the taxonomy heuristically against subject-matter examples. In our study, we adopt utility demonstration by use of a survey and heuristic application of the

3916 taxonomy against real-world case-studies (i.e., within the domain of CVSSs). This is  
3917 is discussed in greater detail within Section 8.5.

## 3918 8.4 A Taxonomy for API Documentation

3919 Our taxonomy consists of five dimensions (labelled A–E). These five dimensions  
3920 are made of 34 categories, which represent API documentation artefacts that con-  
3921 tribute towards these dimensions. In the context of our taxonomy, a category can  
3922 represent (i) discrete and self-contained documentation artefacts (e.g., quick start  
3923 guides [A1]), (ii) additional information used to describe the API (e.g., licensing  
3924 information about the API [D6]), or (iii) aspects regarding the information design of  
3925 this documentation (e.g., consistent look and feel [E6]). Collectively, the categories  
3926 form the *requirements* of good quality API documentation, as expressed through the  
3927 five dimensions. When worded as questions, each dimension respectively covers the  
3928 following:

- 3929 • **[A] Descriptions of API Usage:** *how* does the developer use this API for their  
3930 intended use case?
- 3931 • **[B] Descriptions of Design Rationale:** *when* should the developer choose  
3932 this particular API for their intended use case?
- 3933 • **[C] Descriptions of Domain Concepts:** *why* does the developer select this  
3934 particular API for their application’s domain and does the API’s domain align  
3935 with the application’s domain?
- 3936 • **[D] Existence of Support Artefacts:** *what* additional API documentation can  
3937 the developer find to aid their productivity?
- 3938 • **[E] Overall Presentation of Documentation:** is the *visualisation* of the above  
3939 information well organised and easy for the developer to digest?

3940 Further descriptions of the categories encompassing each dimension are given within  
3941 Figure 8.4 and Appendix C.1, coded as  $[Xi]$ , where  $i$  is the category identifier within  
3942 a dimension,  $X \in \{A, B, C, D, E\}$ .

3943 Appendix C.1 shows which of the primary sources (S1–21) reports aspects of  
3944 the artefacts described as an ‘in-literature score’ (ILS). This score is calculated as  
3945 a percentage of the number of primary studies that investigated or reported various  
3946 issues regarding the specific artefact divided by the total of primary studies (see  
3947 Section 8.6.1.2). This score is contrasted to the ‘in-practice score’ (IPS) which  
3948 indicates the overall level of agreement that *practitioners* think such documentation  
3949 artefacts are needed (see Section 8.6.1.1). For comparative purposes, we illustrate a  
3950 colour scale (from red to green) to indicate the relevancy weight between ILS and IPS  
3951 values in Appendix C.1 as per their assigned, discretised intervals (see Table 8.3). We  
3952 also show illustrative interpretations of these generalised artefacts through italicised  
3953 examples within Appendix C.1. We then provide three columns that assesses the  
3954 presence of these documentation artefacts against three popular CVSSs: Google Cloud  
3955 Vision, AWS’s Rekognition, and Azure Cloud Vision (abbreviated to GCV, AWS  
3956 and ACV). A fully shaded circle (●) indicates that the documentation artefact was

- [A] Descriptions of API Usage**
  - [A1] Quick-start guides
  - [A2] Low-level reference manual ✓
  - [A3] Explanation of high level architecture ✓
  - [A4] Introspection source code comments ✗
  - [A5] Code snippets of basic component function ✓
  - [A6] Step-by-step tutorials with multiple components
  - [A7] Downloadable production-ready source code
  - [A8] Best-practices of implementation
  - [A9] An exhaustive list of all components
  - [A10] Minimum system requirements to use the API
  - [A11] Instructions to install/update the API and its release cycle
  - [A12] Error definitions describing how to address problems
  
- [B] Descriptions of the API's Design Rationale**
  - [B1] Entry-point purpose of the API ✓
  - [B2] What the API can develop
  - [B3] Who should use the API
  - [B4] Who will use the applications built using the API ✗
  - [B5] Success stories on the API
  - [B6] Documentation comparing similar APIs to this API
  - [B7] Limitations on what the API can/cannot provide
  
- [C] Descriptions of Domain Concepts behind the API**
  - [C1] Relationship between API components and domain concepts
  - [C2] Definitions of domain terminology
  - [C3] Documentation for nontechnical audiences ✓
  
- [D] Existence of Support Artefacts**
  - [D1] FAQs ✓
  - [D2] Troubleshooting hints ✗
  - [D3] API diagrams
  - [D4] Contact for technical support ✓
  - [D5] Printed guide
  - [D6] Licensing information
  
- [E] Overall Presentation of Documentation**
  - [E1] Searchable knowledge base ✓
  - [E2] Context-specific discussion forums
  - [E3] Quick-links to other relevant components ✗
  - [E4] Structured navigation style ✓
  - [E5] Visualised map of navigational paths ✗
  - [E6] Consistent look and feel ✓

**Figure 8.4:** Our proposed taxonomy: The requirements of good-quality API documentation (dimensions) represented through individual documentation artefacts (categories).

3957 clearly found in the service, while a half-shaded circle (●) indicates that the artefact  
3958 was only partially present. An outlined circle (○) indicates that the service lacks the  
3959 indicated documentation artefact within our taxonomy. This empirical assessment  
3960 is further detailed in Section 8.6.3, which outlines concrete areas in the respective  
3961 services' documentation where improvements could be made, as well as hyperlinks  
3962 to the documentation where relevant.

3963 Figure 8.4 illustrates a condensed version of taxonomy. We provide iconography  
3964 for the presence (●) or non-presence (○) of these artefacts in *all three* CVSSs assessed,  
3965 per Section 8.6.1.1.

## 3966 8.5 Validating the Taxonomy

### 3967 8.5.1 Survey Study

#### 3968 8.5.1.1 Designing the Survey

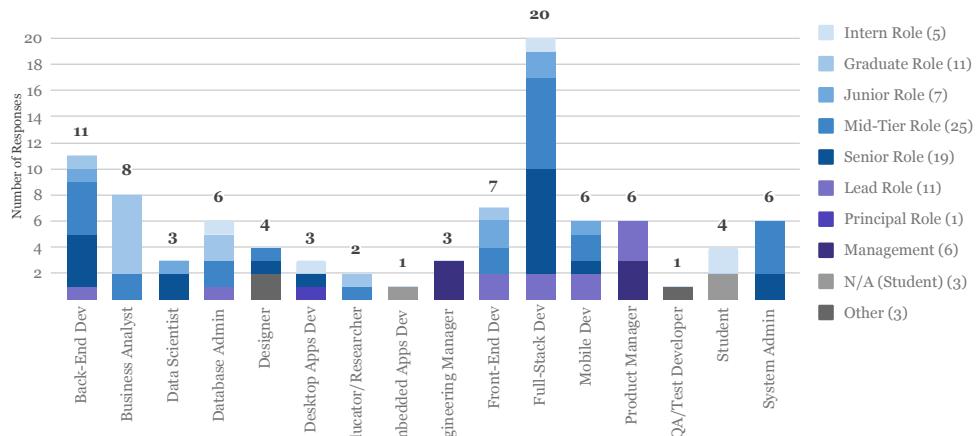
3969 We followed the guidelines by Kitchenham and Pfleeger [196] on conducting per-  
3970 sonal opinion surveys in software engineering to validate our survey. In developing  
3971 our survey instrument, we shaped questions around each of our 5 dimensions and 34  
3972 categories. To achieve this, we used Brooke's SUS [62] as a loose inspiration and  
3973 re-shaped the 34 categories around a question that imitates the style of wording of  
3974 questions used in the SUS. Each dimension was marked a numeric question (Q#3–7),  
3975 and alphabetic sub-questions were marked for each sub-dimension or category.

3976 We used closed questioning where respondents could choose an answer on a  
3977 5-point Likert-scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=somewhat disagree, 3=neither agree  
3978 nor disagree, 4=slightly agree and 5=strongly agree). Like Brooke's study, each  
3979 question alternated in positive and negative sentiment. Half of our questions were  
3980 written where a likely common response would be in strong agreement and vice-  
3981 versa for the other half, such that participants would have to “read each statement  
3982 and make an effort to think whether they would agree or disagree with it” [62]. For  
3983 example, the question regarding [B7] on API limitations was framed as: “*I believe it*  
3984 *is important to know about what the limitations are on what the API can and cannot*  
3985 *provide*” (Q4g), whereas the question regarding [C1] on domain concepts of the API  
3986 was framed as: “*I wouldn't read through theory about the API's domain that relates*  
3987 *theoretical concepts to API components and how both work together*” (Q5a).

3988 In addition, the remaining eight questions asked demographical information. An  
3989 extra open question asked for further comments. The full survey is provided in Ap-  
3990 pendix C.5 and anonymised survey data is available at <https://bit.ly/33siql1>.

#### 3991 8.5.1.2 Evaluating the Survey

3992 After the first pass at designing questions was completed, we evaluated our survey  
3993 on three researchers within our research group for general feedback. This resulted  
3994 in minor changes, such as slight re-wording of questions and providing specific  
3995 questions with examples (some with images). For example, the question regarding  
3996 [A9] on an exhaustive list of all major components in the API was framed as “*I believe*



**Figure 8.5:** A wide variety of roles and seniority were observed in our respondents.

3997 an exhaustive list of all major components in the API without excessive detail would  
 3998 be useful when learning an API” (Q3i) with the example “e.g., a computer vision  
 3999 web API might list object detection, object localisation, facial recognition, and facial  
 4000 comparison as its 4 components”.

4001 After this, we conducted reliability analysis using a test-retest approach on three  
 4002 developers within our group seven weeks apart. Using the R statistical computation  
 4003 environment [293], we conducted our analysis using the `IRR` package [129] (as  
 4004 suggested in [150]) and resulted in an average intra-class correlation (ICC) of 0.63  
 4005 which indicates a good overall index of agreement [79].

#### 4006 8.5.1.3 Recruiting Participants

4007 Our target population for the study was application software developers with varying  
 4008 degrees of experience (including those who and who have not used CVSs or related  
 4009 tools before) and varying understanding of fundamental machine learning concepts.  
 4010 We began by recruiting software developers within our research group using a group-  
 4011 wide message sent on our internal messaging system. Of the 44 developers in our  
 4012 group’s engineering cohort,<sup>5</sup> 22 responses were returned, indicating an internal  
 4013 response rate of 50.00%. Based on the 22 results from this internal trial, we  
 4014 calculated the median time to our complete survey was just over 20 minutes.

4015 For external participant recruiting, we shared the survey on social media plat-  
 4016 forms and online-discussion forums relevant to software development. We adopted  
 4017 a non-probabilistic snowballing sampling where the participants, at the end of the  
 4018 survey, were encouraged to share the survey link to others using *AddThis*.<sup>6</sup> Ad-  
 4019 ditionally, snowballing sampling was encouraged within members of our research  
 4020 group who were asked to share the survey. This sampling approach resulted in 38  
 4021 external responses. A further 44 participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical

<sup>5</sup>Our research group’s engineering cohort consists of fully-qualified software engineers, with on average 5+ years industry experience.

<sup>6</sup><https://www.addthis.com/> last accessed 7 January 2020.

4022 Turk<sup>7</sup>—often referred to as MTurk—which has been a successful approach adopted  
4023 in previous software engineering surveys (e.g., [180]). To ensure our target demo-  
4024 graphic was selected, we applied the participant filter option ‘Employment Industry  
4025 - Software & IT Services’. An additional 13 responses were partially filled (on  
4026 average at a completion rate of 43.23%). These partially completed responses were  
4027 included in our analysis since they did yield some insight (see Section 8.7.2). As  
4028 participants recruited via MTurk have a financial incentive to complete surveys,<sup>8</sup> we  
4029 ensured strict quality control was applied to each survey response we received. For  
4030 example, 37 participants opened the survey but did not answer any questions; for  
4031 this reason, all survey responses by these participants were discarded. We identified  
4032 that 12 MTurk responses were filled out too quickly (where the median response  
4033 time was under five minutes; well below the internal average of 20 minutes), and  
4034 further analysis of these 12 responses indicated poor reading of the question, and  
4035 thus poor responses; this was identified via our use of alternating positively- and  
4036 negatively-worded questions. Thus, 12 MTurk responses were removed from the  
4037 final analysis. Therefore, our final response rate yielded 104 responses of the total  
4038 153 participants reached; an overall response rate of 67.97%.

4039 *8.5.1.4 Analysing Response Data*

4040 To analyse our response data, we produced a single score for each question’s 5-point  
4041 response. In line with with Brooke’s SUS methodology [62], we subtracted one  
4042 from the raw value of positive items, and subtracted the raw value from five for the  
4043 negative items. This resulted in values on an ordinal scale of 0–4. We then averaged  
4044 each response for every question and divide by four (i.e, now a 4-point scale) to  
4045 obtain scores for each category. For example, two responses of *strongly agree*=5  
4046 and one of *neither agree nor disagree*=3 were given to [A1] (positively worded);  
4047 these values are mapped to 4 and 2, respectively, and are averaged (to 3.33) which is  
4048 then divided by a maximum possible score of four, giving 0.84. We then discretise  
4049 these calculated values into five intervals (as per Table 8.3, see Section 8.6.1.1) to  
4050 interpret the findings; this is presented in Appendix C.1 under the ‘in-practice score’  
4051 (IPS) for each category.

4052 Demographics for our survey were consistent in terms of the experience levels  
4053 of developers who responded. 78% of respondents indicated they were professional  
4054 programmers. Years of programming experience were: <1 year (3.30%); 1–5 years  
4055 (41.76%); 6–10 years (35.16%); 11–15 years (9.89%); 16–20 years (5.49%); 21–  
4056 30 years (3.30%); 31–40 years (1.10%); 41+ years (0.00%). A wide range of  
4057 roles and seniority were listed by developers as presented in Figure 8.5, thereby  
4058 indicating that our results include the different expectations of API documentation  
4059 from a variety of sources. The highest role was a full-stack developer at either  
4060 a mid-tier or senior role, followed by mid-tier or senior back-end developers and  
4061 graduate and junior business analysts. Various managerial roles were also listed.

<sup>7</sup><https://www.mturk.com/> last accessed 9 July 2020.

<sup>8</sup>A total budget of AUD\$600 was allocated for recruitment via MTurk, with each participant receiving between AUD\$3.50–\$10.00.

4062 Only five students (5.00%) responded in our study, two listing themselves as interns  
4063 with one as an embedded applications developer. Most respondents were Australian  
4064 (40.00%), Indian (26.70%) or from the United States (20.00%). Besides information  
4065 technology services (30.77%), consulting and other software development (both at  
4066 9.89%) were the most predominant industries listed by participants.

### 4067 **8.5.2 Empirical Application on Computer Vision Services**

4068 Once our taxonomy had been developed and assessed with developers, we performed  
4069 an empirical application against three CVSSs: Google Cloud Vision [423], Amazon  
4070 Rekognition [398] and Azure Computer Vision [437]. Our selection criteria in  
4071 choosing these particular services to analyse is based on the prominence of the  
4072 service providers in industry and the ubiquity of their cloud platforms (Google Cloud,  
4073 Amazon Web Services, and Microsoft Azure) in addition to being the top three  
4074 adopted vendors used for cloud-based enterprise applications [120]. In addition, we  
4075 had conducted extensive investigation into the services' non-deterministic runtime  
4076 behaviour and evolution profile in prior work [89] and have also identified developers'  
4077 complaints about their incomplete documentation in a prior mining study on Stack  
4078 Overflow [92].

4079 We began with an exploratory analysis of the presence of each dimension and  
4080 its categories. Appendix C.2 displays all sources of documentation used; although  
4081 we initially started on the respective services homepages [398, 423, 437], this search  
4082 was expanded to other webpages hyperlinked. For each category, we listed the  
4083 documentation's presence as either fully present, partially present or not present  
4084 at all. This is shown in Appendix C.1 with the indication of (half-)filled circles or  
4085 circle outlines for Google Cloud Vision (abbreviated to GCV), Amazon Rekognition  
4086 (abbreviated to AWS), and Azure Computer Vision (abbreviated to ACV). Notes were  
4087 taken for each webpage justifying the presence, and exact sources of documentation  
4088 were listed when (partially) present. PDFs of each webpage were downloaded  
4089 between 14–18 March 2019 for analysis. Analysis was performed manually by  
4090 the lead author by manual inspection of the downloaded web pages (as PDFs) and  
4091 presence of each item was noted by the lead author using an approach similar to  
4092 Watson [372].

## 4093 **8.6 Taxonomy Analysis**

4094 In this section, we analyse investigating the taxonomy from two perspectives. Firstly,  
4095 we contrast the ILS values, being an interpretation of the relevancy researchers have  
4096 emphasised, against the IPS values found from the results of our survey (being  
4097 an interpretation of what documentation artefacts developers value more). We are  
4098 therefore able to identify the API documentation artefacts that are of high value  
4099 to practitioners, but are yet to be deeply explored by researchers. Secondly, we  
4100 contrast the IPS values against our assessment of CVSSs, and whether important API  
4101 documentation artefacts have been included in popular services. We are therefore  
4102 able to identify whether vendors have or have not already included these highly-

**Table 8.3:** Intervals of ILS (top) and IPS (bottom) values and frequencies.

Research Attention	Range	Frequency	Categories
Very Low	$0.00 \leq \text{ILS}([X_i]) < 0.14$	7	B4, B5, D6, B3, C1, D1, D2
Low	$0.14 \leq \text{ILS}([X_i]) < 0.29$	13	A1, A9, C3, D3, D4, E2, E3, E4, E5, B6, A7, A10, D5
Medium	$0.29 \leq \text{ILS}([X_i]) < 0.43$	9	B2, B7, A4, A12, E1, A3, A8, A11, C2
High	$0.43 \leq \text{ILS}([X_i]) < 0.57$	3	E6, B1, A2
Very High	$0.57 \leq \text{ILS}([X_i]) \leq 0.71$	2	A6, A5

Value to Developers	Range	Frequency	Categories
Very Low	$0.00 \leq \text{IPS}([X_i]) < 0.18$	0	-
Low	$0.18 \leq \text{IPS}([X_i]) < 0.36$	0	-
Medium	$0.36 \leq \text{IPS}([X_i]) < 0.53$	6	D4, B4, C3, C1, E4, B3
High	$0.53 \leq \text{IPS}([X_i]) < 0.71$	16	A4, B6, A2, D2, A6, E2, B5, D6, A8, B2, E6, A10, E5, D5, A9, D3
Very High	$0.71 \leq \text{IPS}([X_i]) \leq 0.89$	12	E3, A7, A3, C2, A12, B1, D1, A11, A1, E1, A5, B7

<sup>4103</sup> valued documentation artefacts within their own APIs, and where existing areas of improvement lie.

### <sup>4105</sup> 8.6.1 Exploring IPS and ILS Values

#### <sup>4106</sup> 8.6.1.1 IPS Results

<sup>4107</sup> IPS values indicate the extent to which developers agree with the statements made in <sup>4108</sup> our survey, as calculated by the method described in Section 8.5.1.4. The interpretation <sup>4109</sup> of these values are the documentation artefacts (categories) that developers *value* <sup>4110</sup> the most. Thus collectively, these artefacts indicate the overall level of importance <sup>4111</sup> towards specific API documentation requirements (dimensions).

<sup>4112</sup> To interpret these values, we group the data from each of our survey’s 34 <sup>4113</sup> statements (for each category) into an ordinal scale of five intervals. These intervals <sup>4114</sup> indicate relative value to developers; a documentation artefact has *very low* value <sup>4115</sup> to developers, *low* value, *medium* value, *high* value, or *very high* value. Table 8.3 <sup>4116</sup> presents these intervals and frequencies of each, with the order of the categories <sup>4117</sup> shown in the last column indicating raw IPS values (least useful to most useful) <sup>4118</sup> before discretisation in ascending order.

<sup>4119</sup> Practitioners tend to agree that each documentation artefact is important to have, <sup>4120</sup> and thus IPS values likely fall into the *High* or *Very High* intervals. Only six categories <sup>4121</sup> fall into the *Medium* interval and none fall into lower intervals. Developers <sup>4122</sup> find technical support contact information [D4] to be of the lowest value (see Table <sup>4123</sup> 8.3), likely since developers tend to rely on crowd-sourced peer support through <sup>4124</sup> mediums such as Stack Overflow. They also see little value in: descriptions of the <sup>4125</sup> types of end-users the API is intended for [B4]; documentation for non-technical <sup>4126</sup> audiences [C3]; conceptual information relating the API back to its application do-

4127 main [C1]; structured navigation of the presented API documentation [E4]; and  
4128 descriptions of the intended developers who should be using the API [B3].

4129 8.6.1.2 *ILS Results*

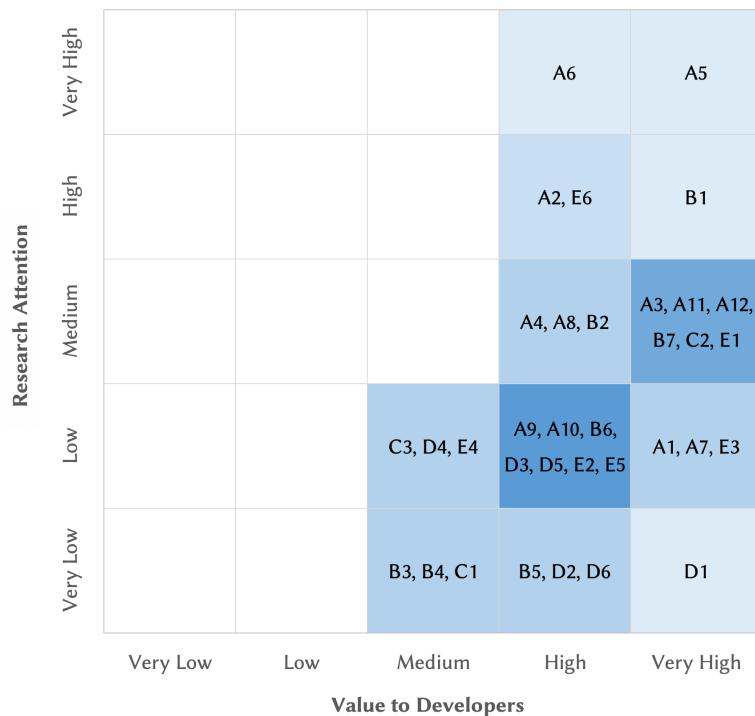
4130 ILS values indicate overall research attention of categories of our taxonomy through  
4131 the proportion of papers in our SMS that investigated or reported various issues  
4132 regarding a specific API documentation artefact. Collectively, each of these cat-  
4133 egories combined form a dimension (labelled A–E) in a bottom-up approach (see  
4134 Section 8.3.2.2). Each dimension (top-node) describes the requirements of good  
4135 quality API documentation, while the category (leaf-node) is the specific API doc-  
4136 umentation artefact that, collectively, form the requirement. A category with a  
4137 high ILS value indicates that existing studies that there is substantial attention by  
4138 researchers on this specific documentation artefact (or, collectively, requirement of  
4139 good quality API documentation). Conversely, a lower ILS value indicates less  
4140 attention reported on these categories (artefact) or dimensions (requirement) by the  
4141 software engineering research community.

4142 To demonstrate the attention of these documentation artefacts within literature,  
4143 we interpret the ILS values in a similar fashion to the IPS values. It is represented  
4144 as a discretised value of intervals within a five-dimensional ordinal scale, where  
4145 the attention on these artefacts in literature are one of: *very low* attention, *low*  
4146 attention, *medium* attention, *high* attention, *very high* attention. Table 8.3 indicates  
4147 the boundaries for each interval (as calculated by the highest ILS value of 0.71 divided  
4148 by the five intervals) in addition to the frequency of categories appearing in each  
4149 interval. The order of the categories shown in the last column indicate the ascending  
4150 order (least research attention to most) of raw ILS values before discretisation. As  
4151 shown, most of the artefacts (20) found in the taxonomy are discussed in literature  
4152 disproportionately more than others (i.e., those that fall into the ‘low’ (13) or ‘very  
4153 low’ (7) intervals), though the underlying reasons behind this should be considered  
4154 on a case-by-case basis (see Section 8.7.3).

4155 There are only five categories that fall into the ‘high’ or ‘very high’ intervals,  
4156 three of which fall under dimension [A], Descriptions of API Usage. Research atten-  
4157 tion on a particular documentation artefact that is considered *Very High* gravitates  
4158 towards code snippets [A5] and tutorials [A6]. Code snippets are the readiest form  
4159 of API documentation for developers, representing exemplary nuggets of informa-  
4160 tion for developers to rapidly digest singular components of the API’s functionality.  
4161 While code snippets generally only reflect small portions of API functionality (gen-  
4162 erally limited to 15–30 LoC), this is complimented by step-by-step tutorials. These  
4163 may tie in multiple (disparate) components of API functionality to demonstrate de-  
4164 velopment of more non-trivial applications. Therefore, unsurprisingly, research has  
4165 substantially explored how best API developers can extract code snippets or write  
4166 tutorials for these purposes in mind. This is followed by low-level reference doc-  
4167 umentation [A2]—under the ‘high’ interval—whereby developers should document  
4168 all client-facing implementation or usage aspects of their API (e.g., class, method,  
4169 parameter descriptions etc.). Lastly, the entry-level purpose/overview of an API

4170 [B1] and consistency in the look and feel of the documentation throughout all of the  
4171 API's official documentation [E6] are fall under the 'high' interval. API vendors  
4172 must give motivation as to why a developer should choose a particular API over  
4173 another, articulating the *need* of their API, presenting this and other documentation  
4174 aspects in the easiest way for developers to consume.

4175 8.6.1.3 *Research Opportunities for High-Value Artefacts*



**Figure 8.6:** Value of API documentation artefacts to developers (IPS) vs their research attention (ILS). Colour intensity represents greater number of categories in each intersection

4176 In this section, we explore the ILS and IPS values as two distinct indicators of  
4177 research exploration that would provide the most value to practitioners. We then  
4178 provide a qualitative discussion by inspecting the intersection of categories at each  
4179 respective interval identified by our SMS and survey study. Thus, we are able to  
4180 determine documentation artefacts (categories) and requirements (dimensions) that  
4181 provide the *greatest value* to developers but have not gained proportional attention  
4182 in the software engineering literature when compared to other artefacts, and vice-  
4183 versa. Graphically, we represent these intersections within a five-by-five matrix with  
4184 intervals of the IPS (x axis) plotted against intervals of the ILS (y axis). Intersections  
4185 between the two are listed for each category within the taxonomy. This is presented  
4186 in Figure 8.6.

4187 There is a distinction between (very)-highly valued documentation artefacts  
4188 whose research attention is (very)-low, as presented in the bottom-right of Figure 8.6.  
4189 Most notably, we find that developers find Existence of Support Artefacts [D] a highly

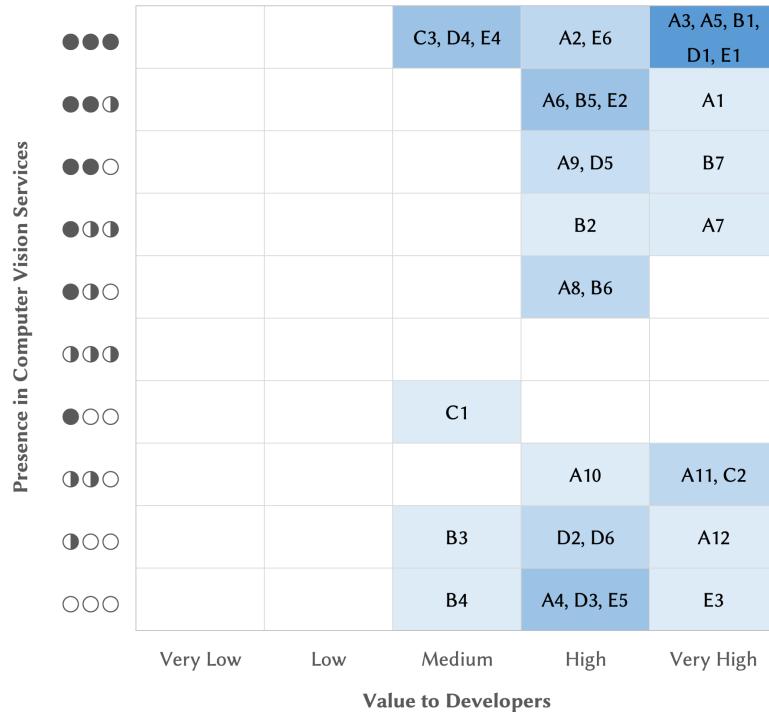
4190 valued API documentation requirement, but there still exists a substantial gap in  
 4191 existing literature into this requirement. For example, besides category [D4] (which  
 4192 is of only *Medium* value to developers), less research has explored all other dimension  
 4193 [D] categories (though there may be understandable reasons as to why, as detailed in  
 4194 Section 8.7.3). Furthermore, developers highly value detailed Descriptions of API  
 4195 Usage [A] through many documentation artefacts, notably quick-start guides [A1],  
 4196 downloadable sample applications [A7], exhaustive list of major components [A9],  
 4197 and system requirements to use the API [A10]. Such artefacts emphasise the need  
 4198 for developers to rapidly pick-up a new API; however, the best ways to provide such  
 4199 information is still open to further investigation in literature.

4200 Conversely, the top-right of Figure 8.6 emphasises (very)-highly researched  
 4201 artefacts that are of (very)-high value to developers. Here we see that Descriptions  
 4202 of API Usage [A] is the most-researched requirement, with code snippets [A5] being  
 4203 an API usage artefact that is both most-researched and of highest value. Hence,  
 4204 this demonstrates how many existing studies have an empirical basis on software  
 4205 developers (e.g., via surveys or interviews; see Figure 8.3)—code snippets is a well-  
 4206 researched artefact since most developers agree to its need in the documentation of  
 4207 APIs. Therefore, it is clear to see how the correlation between the respective ILS  
 4208 and IPS values for [A5] are high. However, if we look at other areas of our taxonomy,  
 4209 such as [A12], [B7], [D3], [E3] or [E5], we find that developers do indeed desire these  
 4210 aspects of API documentation, and, consequently, demand usage descriptions, design  
 4211 rationale descriptions, support artefacts, or good presentation of the documentation  
 4212 to be a necessary requirement of good quality API documentation. Thus, these  
 4213 aspects have not gained proportional attention in literature, thereby highlighting  
 4214 future research potential.

### 4215 8.6.2 Triangulating IPS, ILS and Computer Vision

4216 To interpret our comparison of IPS values with CVSSs, we introduce a calculated  
 4217 ‘presence score’ for each category. As discussed in Section 8.5.2, we empirically  
 4218 evaluate each category of our taxonomy with three CVSSs: Azure Computer Vision  
 4219 (ACV), Amazon Rekognition (AWS) and Google Cloud Vision (GCV). We indicate  
 4220 whether the respective API documentation artefact is present, partially present, or  
 4221 nor present (as listed in Appendix C.1). To interpret this data, we assign a full circle  
 4222 ( $\bullet$ ) for present, half-circle ( $\circ$ ) for partially present and an empty circle ( $\circ$ ) for not  
 4223 present. Combinations of presence for each category per service are indicated with  
 4224 the three circles of varying shade. For example, [A1] has a presence score of  $\bullet\bullet\circ$   
 4225 because it was found to be present in both GCV and ACV but only partially present  
 4226 in AWS; [B3] has a presence score of  $\bullet\circ\circ$  because it was only found to be partially  
 4227 present in GCV, etc. For a list of full presence values, see Appendix C.1.

4228 We illustrate which artefacts industry vendors provide developers with and the  
 4229 artefact’s respective developer value using this combination of three circles. Using  
 4230 a similar approach to the previous section, these results are presented in a ten-by-  
 4231 five matrix as illustrated in Figure 8.7. If only one service fully implements a  
 4232 documentation artefact of (very)-high value to developers ( $\bullet\circ\circ$ ), if one or two



**Figure 8.7:** Value of API documentation artefacts to developers (IPS) vs their presence in CVSs. Colour intensity represents greater number of categories in each intersection.

<sup>4233</sup> services partially implement the artefact (**●○○** and **●●○**) or if none do (**○○○**),  
<sup>4234</sup> then we believe there is room for improvement for service vendors to improve their  
<sup>4235</sup> documentation and include these artefacts.

<sup>4236</sup> In this instance, we can see 10 categories listed in Figure 8.7 that developers  
<sup>4237</sup> feel are important but are not fully implemented across all three CVS vendors.  
<sup>4238</sup> This is especially the case for dimensions [A] (Descriptions of API Usage) and [D]  
<sup>4239</sup> (Existence of Support Artefacts), corroborating our findings with existing gaps in  
<sup>4240</sup> literature under Section 8.6.1.3. In other words, while both the goals of existing  
<sup>4241</sup> studies and CVS vendors have emphasised the need for artefacts such as code-  
<sup>4242</sup> snippets [A5], tutorials [A6], and entry-points to the API [B1], less attention is  
<sup>4243</sup> given to by *both* literature and vendors on the same, (very-)highly valued aspects to  
<sup>4244</sup> developers (e.g., troubleshooting hints [D2], licensing information [D6] or links to  
<sup>4245</sup> related components [E3]).

<sup>4246</sup> Furthermore, from our analysis, we can see areas with which the research com-  
<sup>4247</sup> munity has and has *not* paid extensive attention to. We still see that vendors have  
<sup>4248</sup> paid attention to artefacts even where there has been less research attention, namely  
<sup>4249</sup> [D1] (FAQs), [B5] (success stories), [A7] (downloadable sample applications), [A1]  
<sup>4250</sup> (quick-start guides), [E2] (forums), [D5] (printable guides), and [A9] (API compo-  
<sup>4251</sup> nent lists). These seven categories are of (very) high value to developers but research  
<sup>4252</sup> attention on these topics are (very) low; however, their presence score within CVSs  
<sup>4253</sup> are **●●○** or greater. Hence, we can see that vendors address developer's concerns

4254 despite the lack of attention by software engineering researchers in these areas,  
4255 and thus future research potential to better serve developers and ensure vendors'  
4256 implementation of these documentation artefacts is evident.

4257 From the above, we can therefore conclude that the vendors' documentation  
4258 largely covers a majority of API documentation requirements. However, there still  
4259 remains opportunity for improvement to API documentation by either vendors and/or  
4260 the research community: that is, low research attention on documentation artefacts  
4261 that present high value to developers which are *also* generally missing from vendor  
4262 documentation. To explore this aspect, we triangulate the documentation artefacts  
4263 (categories) that have a low or very low research attention and that are only present  
4264 in one service, partially present in one or two, or not present at all. This results  
4265 in three documentation requirements that warrant further exploration by industry  
4266 vendors or the research community (see Table 8.4).

### 4267 8.6.3 Recommendations Resulting from Analysis

4268 In this section, we triangulate the taxonomy developed from literary sources, the  
4269 developer survey on this taxonomy to understand its efficacy in-practice, and the  
4270 application of the taxonomy to CVSs to provide several recommendations for both  
4271 service providers and researchers. Our recommendations are based both on extrap-  
4272 olations of our findings, our prior work, and existing experience with such work.

#### 4273 8.6.3.1 Recommendations for vendors

4274 Table 8.4 emphasises how service vendors still lack key documentation requirements  
4275 of critical importance to developers that are still widely under-researched in software  
4276 engineering literature. The largest of these requirements are the need for vendors  
4277 to provide additional support artefacts [D] and the need for vendors to present this  
4278 in a way that's most digestible for developers to understand [E]. A list of detailed  
4279 suggestions for vendors are provided in Appendix C.4; here we discuss generalised  
4280 findings on a sample of key artefacts.

4281 For example, no services assessed had any form of diagrammatic overview of  
4282 their APIs at a high-level [D3], thereby indicating how various components of their  
4283 APIs work together, such as how specific endpoints work or an overview of the  
4284 lifecycle of the technical domain behind these endpoints (i.e., label/train/infer/re-  
4285 train), thereby incorporating conceptual relationships behind the API [C1]. For  
4286 instance, an interactive overview of the developer's need to pre-process their data,  
4287 send it to the service, and post-process the response data would help developers  
4288 understand how the service better fits into the 'flow' of their application. Moreover,  
4289 we failed to find lower-level diagrammatic overviews of the client SDKs—such as  
4290 a UML diagram—that developers find very useful. We strongly advise vendors  
4291 to provide diagrams illustrating the service within context to help support existing  
4292 written documentation.

4293 Troubleshooting hints [D2] are also a valuable support artefact, but were only  
4294 found for AWS's video processing endpoints. As our prior work shows, developers  
4295 are likely to question what aspects of the service can and cannot do, such as the types

**Table 8.4:** Documentation artefacts of high value to developers that have less attention in software engineering literature and are under-documented in CVSSs. Documentation requirements (i.e., dimensions) separated by rules.

Artefact	Value	Research Attention	Presence in Computer Vision Services
[A10] Documenting API's minimum system requirements and/or dependencies	High	<b>Low:</b> 5 studies (23%)	<b>Score=1.0:</b> No dedicated web pages found for this artefact in any service. Dependencies for client libraries embedded within GCV and ACV quick-start guides [426, 440]. Other system requirements not listed.
[D2] Troubleshooting hints	High	<b>Very Low:</b> 2 studies (10%)	<b>Score=0.5:</b> Only found in AWS's video recognition service [408], but no troubleshooting tips found for non-video image recognition.
[D3] Diagrammatic representation of API [D6] Licensing Information	Very High Very High	<b>Low:</b> 3 studies (14%) <b>Very Low:</b> 1 study (5%)	<b>Score=0.0:</b> Not found for any service. <b>Score=0.5:</b> Partially present only in ACV [444]; information is non-specific to the licensing terms of ACV exclusively.
[E3] Quick-links to other relevant components [E5] Visualised map of navigational paths	Very High Very High	<b>Low:</b> 3 studies (14%) <b>Low:</b> 3 studies (14%)	<b>Score=0:</b> Not found for any service. <b>Score=0:</b> Not found for any service.

of labels it can find, or how to make it focus on specific ontologies when an input image is provided; e.g., time of day (day vs night) location (indoors vs outdoors) or the subject of the image (dog vs cat) [92]. Troubleshooting in identifying service evolution [92] would also be important, since developers are likely to overlook subtle (but application-breaking) changes to response data, such as labels introduced/removed or confidence changes. Therefore, vendors must document detailed troubleshooting suggestions on their websites on how best to resolve discrepancies in the results found from these services. This could easily be tied in with [A12] to incorporate usage description requirements when errors are presented to users and how to deal with them; also largely missing from existing documentation.

Another important aspect is the need to make documentation of one component more easily relatable to other parts of the documentation [E3]. Again, no service provided quick-links to related documentation; an example here could be links to definitions of domain-specific terminology [C2] to help developers with the learning process of adopting these new generation of APIs (e.g., the ‘score’ field could be linked back to a video explaining the concept of probability within the services’ guesses).

#### 8.6.3.2 Recommendations for researchers

As shown in Table 8.4, we see that there are cases of (very) high-value documentation artefacts (to practitioners) in which literature has not paid great attention to. For example, for the requirement of API usage description [A], practitioners agree that both code snippets [A5] and documenting system requirements to use the API [A10] are of, at least, high value. However, while code snippets has had *consistent* attention within the software engineering research community (i.e., 15 papers spanning 1998–2019), we see that system requirements documentation only gained fluctuating interest by researchers (i.e., predominantly in the 2000s, with two further papers in the last three years). Thus, five papers investigating *some* aspects on this artefact may not cover *all* its aspects; for example, we may have identified a *need* to document these requirements and dependencies, but does this mean we know *all* aspects on how to produce them, the best way to *communicate* them, and the most efficient means for developers to *consume* that information? Contrasting this artefact against the 15 papers on code snippets, we see two documentation artefacts of at least high value to practitioners, yet, evidently, researchers have paid attention to one over the other.

As Figure 8.6 shows, the need for additional support [D] within documentation is the largest requirement that *may* be an indicator for further research in this domain (see Section 8.7.3). Notably, RQ2 of our SMS identified the methodologies and data collection techniques by which our existing understanding of API documentation requirements were gathered; as demonstrated through Figure 8.3, a majority of our understanding is grounded through the opinions of developers, namely evaluation research using direct techniques. Too many studies are shown to rely on a handful of data collection techniques (interviews and questionnaires, shadowing and observation, think-aloud sessions) and a stronger emphasis for indirect and independent

4339 techniques is needed moving forward; there is therefore a gap in literature on *other*  
4340 types of data collection techniques that may provide different insights into satisfying  
4341 the documentation requirements within our taxonomy.

4342 For example, we see [A9] (exhaustive list of major API components) as a high-  
4343 value documentation artefact that satisfies the requirement of the API usage descrip-  
4344 tion [A]. However research attention is lower. A validation research paper could  
4345 propose a method to generate a baseline list of these components through an inde-  
4346 pendent technique, such mining the API codebase for its major components through  
4347 class usage (static analysis) or analysing an existing work database or tool use logs  
4348 to see which components developers have accessed the most. This would satisfy  
4349 the need for the documentation artefact, bolstering the API usage requirement and  
4350 exploring new techniques to do so.

4351 Few philosophical papers result in a lack of insight into completely new ways of  
4352 exploring API documentation. Further exploration into this type of research may help  
4353 us devise a whole new framework of producing API documentation. For example,  
4354 as shown by developers and vendors, quick-start guides [A1] are highly valued,  
4355 and well-documented in CVSs. But literature does not provide any vocabulary  
4356 or frameworks into how best to develop such guides. Involving both software  
4357 engineering researchers and developers through a brainstorming or focus group to  
4358 conceptualise, devise, and refine such a framework may be a worthwhile study to  
4359 better improve our understanding of quick-start guides whilst also exploring new  
4360 approaches to research new guidelines.

4361 Beyond requirement [A], another insight identified is the need for developers to  
4362 have visualised maps of navigational paths [E5] which is not yet provided by any of  
4363 the CVS providers investigated. With the low ILS value in this category (14% or  
4364 3 studies), we see a potential research topic for future exploration. For example, if  
4365 research can demonstrate that such visualised maps are not just something developers  
4366 desire, but can make them *more effective* in their day-to-day work, then this could be  
4367 a strong case made to vendors to improve the presentation of their documentation.

4368 Thus, as we have shown in these sample recommendations, many potential  
4369 studies and research directions can stem by exploring the discrepancies of API  
4370 documentation in literature, in practice, and their presence in CVSs (i.e., as a sample  
4371 case study) when assessed on a case-by-case basis. The method researchers decide  
4372 upon depends the research questions they wish to address; thus, observations we  
4373 present in Figure 8.3 may trigger fruitful reasoning about approaches future research  
4374 could take, however inferring methodological gaps will need to be compatible with  
4375 research goals. Thus, mapping these discrepancies to gaps in the techniques used in  
4376 studies to devise of novel ways to improve API documentation whilst also exploring  
4377 new methodologies should be balanced carefully by researchers.

## 4378 8.7 Threats to Validity

### 4379 8.7.1 Internal Validity

4380 Threats to *internal validity* represent internal factors of our study which affect  
4381 concluded results. Kitchenham and Charters' guidelines on producing systematic  
4382 reviews [195] suggest that researchers conducting reviews should discuss the review  
4383 protocol, inclusion decisions, data extraction with a third party. Within this study,  
4384 we discussed our protocols with other researchers within our research group and  
4385 utilised test-retest reliability. Further assessments into reliability would involve an  
4386 assessment of the review and extraction processes, which can be investigated using  
4387 inter-rater reliability measures. Guidelines suggested by Garousi and Felderer [131]  
4388 describe methods for independent analysis and conflict resolution could help resolve  
4389 this.

4390 As stated in Section 8.3.2, we utilised a systematic software engineering tax-  
4391 onomy development method by Usman et al. [361]. Two additional taxonomy  
4392 validation approaches proposed by Usman et al. were not considered in our work:  
4393 benchmarking and orthogonality demonstration. To our knowledge, there are no  
4394 other studies that classify existing API documentation studies into a structured tax-  
4395 onomy, and therefore we are unable to benchmark our taxonomy against others. We  
4396 would encourage the research community to conduct a replication of our work and  
4397 investigate whether our taxonomy classification approaches are replicable to ensure  
4398 that categories are reliable and the dimensions fit the objectives of the taxonomy.  
4399 Moreover, we did not investigate orthogonality demonstration as our primary goals  
4400 for this work were to investigate the efficacy of the taxonomy by practitioners and  
4401 in-practice, with reference to our wider research area of intelligent CVSSs. Therefore,  
4402 we solely adopted the utility demonstration approach in two detailed experiments  
4403 (Sections 8.5 and 8.6) to analyse the efficacy of our taxonomy and identify potential  
4404 improvements for these services' API documentation.

### 4405 8.7.2 External Validity

4406 Threats to *external validity* concern the generalisation of our observations. Our  
4407 SMS has used a broad range of sources however not all papers contributing to API  
4408 documentation may have been found or captured within the taxonomy. While we  
4409 attempted to include as many papers as we could find in our study, some papers may  
4410 have been filtered out due to our exclusion criteria. For example, there are studies  
4411 we found that were excluded as they were not written in English, and these excluding  
4412 factors may alter our conclusions, introducing conflicting recommendations. How-  
4413 ever, given the consistency of these trends within the studies that were sourced, we  
4414 consider this a low likelihood.

4415 Online documentation of APIs are non-static, and may evolve using contribu-  
4416 tions from both official sources and the developer community (e.g., via GitHub).  
4417 We downloaded the three service's API documentation in March of 2019—it is  
4418 highly likely that new documentation may have been added since or modified since  
4419 publication. A recommendation to mitigate this would be to re-evaluate this study

4420 once intelligent CVSs have matured and become even more mainstream in developer  
4421 communities.

4422 Unless significant inducements are offered, Singer et al. [332] report that a  
4423 consistent response rate of 5% has been found in software engineering questionnaires  
4424 distributed and in information systems the median response rates for surveys are 60%  
4425 [29]. We observe that low response rates may adversely effect the findings of our  
4426 survey, typically as software engineers find little time to do them [332]. When  
4427 compared to typical software engineering studies, our response rate of 67.97% was  
4428 likely successful due to designing and carefully testing succinct, unambiguous and  
4429 well-worded questions with researchers within our research group. All adjustments  
4430 made from the pilot study due to unexpected poor quality of the questionnaire have  
4431 been reported and explained in Section 8.5.1.2. However, further improvements  
4432 could be made to increase this response rate.

4433 The survey reached 82 external and 22 internal participants. This yielded a total  
4434 of 104 participants. However, only 91 participants fully completed the survey and,  
4435 on average, those who only partially completed the survey completed 43.23% of  
4436 all questions. Therefore, demographic data for these participants is largely missing.  
4437 To verify the reliability of partially submitted responses, we calculated the average  
4438 response of each item in our survey (i.e., question) for all fully completed results and  
4439 all partially completed results. All partially completed questions, except [B7], were  
4440 within 1 standard deviation from the mean, and therefore we believe the 13 partial  
4441 results to be valid when excluding B7. Even if these partial results are excluded, our  
4442 full-response participant count of 91 is still comparable to existing studies, such as  
4443 Nykaza et al. [265] (57 participants), Robillard and Deline [306] (80 participants),  
4444 or [305] (83 participants). Therefore, given these comparable numbers, we believe  
4445 this does not compromise validity of our results.

4446 We also adopt research conducted in the field of questionnaire design, such as  
4447 ensuring all scales are worded with labels [206] and have used a summatting rating  
4448 scale [337] to address a specific topic of interest if people are to make mistakes in  
4449 their response or answer in different ways at different times. This approach was  
4450 also extended using alternating positive and negative sentiment for each question—  
4451 as multiple studies have shown [63, 316], this approach helps reduce poor-quality  
4452 responses by minimising extreme responses and acquiescence biases.

### 4453 8.7.3 Construct Validity

4454 Threats to *construct validity* relates to the degree by which the data extrapolated  
4455 in this study sufficiently measures its intended goals. Our interpretation of the  
4456 ILS (as given in Sections 8.4 and 8.6.1.2) is reported as the proportion of papers  
4457 whose research investigates or explores issues regarding the aspects of specific API  
4458 documentation artefacts (i.e., categories in the taxonomy) that, collectively, comprise  
4459 the requirements of good API documentation (i.e., dimensions in the taxonomy).  
4460 Every effort has been made in this work to provide a constructive analysis on the API  
4461 documentation landscape, however, the studies that comprise the ILS may differ in  
4462 their intent toward a specific documentation artefact. For example, some studies may

4463 have distinct goals to extensively study *how* code snippets [A5] specifically improve  
4464 developer productivity (e.g., through interviews or by observational studies), while  
4465 others may just reflect that code snippets are a commonly-used artefact self-reported  
4466 by developers (e.g., through a survey). Thus, the interpretation of the ILS may range  
4467 between deep exploration of an artefact or whether a study mentions the artefact  
4468 without any attempts to thoroughly investigate it. For this reason, we suggest that a  
4469 high ILS value for a category within the taxonomy suggests that the documentation  
4470 artefact is within the attention of the research community, and that subsequent  
4471 attention **may** be required for those artefacts with low ILS values as a *potential*  
4472 *indicator* for future research (i.e., it also may *not*). However, each artefact with a  
4473 low ILS (but high IPS) would need to be carefully examined in isolation to evaluate  
4474 whether future research is indeed warranted, and how that research can be conducted  
4475 with the ultimate goal to assist practitioners.

4476 Automatic searching was conducted in the SMS by choice of three popular  
4477 databases (see Section 8.3.1). As a consequence of selecting multiple databases,  
4478 duplicates were returned. This was mitigated by manually curating out all duplicate  
4479 results from the set of studies returned. Additionally, we acknowledge that the lack  
4480 manual searching of papers within particular venues may be an additional threat due  
4481 to the misalignment of search query keywords to intended papers of inclusion. Thus,  
4482 our conclusions are only applicable to the information we were able to extract and  
4483 summarise, given the primary sources selected.

4484 While we have investigated the application of this taxonomy using a user study  
4485 (Section 8.5.1), we would like to explore a controlled study of developers to assess  
4486 how improved and non-improved API documentation impacts developer productiv-  
4487 ity. The outcome of this work can help design a follow-up experiment, consisting of a  
4488 comparative controlled study [322] that capture firsthand behaviours and interactions  
4489 toward how software engineers approach using a CVS with and without our taxon-  
4490 omy applied. This can be achieved by providing ‘mock’ improved documentation  
4491 with the suggested improvements included in this work. Such an experiment could  
4492 recruit a sample of developers of varying experience (from beginner programmer  
4493 to principal engineer) to complete a certain number of tasks under a comparative  
4494 controlled study, half of which will (a) develop using the improved ‘mock’ docu-  
4495 mentation, and the other half will (b) develop with the *as-is/existing* documentation.  
4496 From this, we can compare if the taxonomy makes improvements by capturing met-  
4497 rics and recording the sessions for qualitative analysis. Visual modelling can be  
4498 adopted to analyse the qualitative data using matrices [99], maps and networks [319]  
4499 as these help illustrate any causal, temporal or contextual relationships that may exist  
4500 to map out the developer’s mindset and difference in approaching the two sets of  
4501 designs of the same tasks.

## 4502 8.8 Conclusions & Future Work

4503 The emergence of AI-based intelligent components present significant challenges to  
4504 our existing understanding of traditional API documentation. The inherent prob-  
4505 abilistic and non-deterministic nature of these components means that developers

4506 must shift their mindset of conventional APIs, and vendors of these services must  
4507 similarly shift the mindset of documenting their APIs using traditional means. With-  
4508 out adapting to the new mental model (of the vendors designing these services) and  
4509 by vendors presenting poor or incomplete (traditional) documentation that is not  
4510 compatible with these next-generation components, developers face many struggles.  
4511 They fail to grasp how to properly understand how these services work, seeking fur-  
4512 ther documentation or support from their peers on forums on such as Stack Overflow  
4513 [92]. This ultimately hinders developers' productivity and thus adversely affects the  
4514 internal quality of the applications that they build.

4515 This study has explored the artefacts and means by which traditional API doc-  
4516 umentation is studied through the use of an SMS of 4,501 studies, identifying 21  
4517 key works. From this, we synthesised a taxonomy of the various documentation  
4518 artefacts that improves API documentation quality, and thus collectively synthesis-  
4519 ing the requirements of good API documentation. Furthermore, we also capture the  
4520 most commonly used analysis techniques used in the academic literature to under-  
4521 stand the means by which the goals of these studies resulted in their findings. We  
4522 then validate our taxonomy against developers to assess its efficacy with practition-  
4523 ers, and conduct a heuristic evaluation against three popular CVSs. We determine  
4524 that developers demand certain documentation artefacts more than others, since not  
4525 all documentation artefacts are equally valued. We map the value (to developers)  
4526 of these artefacts against their exposure within the software engineering literature,  
4527 thereby highlighting the gaps by which future research could expand upon. Fur-  
4528 thermore, we present a similar mapping against how well the coverage CVSs have  
4529 incorporated such artefacts into their own API documentation, thus highlighting  
4530 that while industry vendors cover most documentation artefacts that may not be in  
4531 the interest to researchers, some artefacts with low research interest are still largely  
4532 missing (see Table 8.4). We therefore provide several generalised recommendations  
4533 to vendors and the wider research community to explore how best these artefacts  
4534 can be better addressed and incorporated into further research, thus improving our  
4535 understanding of the requirements of good API documentation.

4536 Future extensions of our work may involve a restricted systematic literature  
4537 review in API documentation artefacts, and many suggestions are further detailed  
4538 in Section 8.7. Further, a review into the techniques of these primary studies may  
4539 extend the mapping we conducted in this work, by evaluating the the effectiveness of  
4540 the various approaches used in each study and assessing these against the proposed  
4541 conclusions of each study.

4542 The findings of our work provides a solid baseline for improving the documen-  
4543 tation of non-deterministic software, such as CVSs. While our aim is to eventually  
4544 improve the quality of API documentation, the ultimate goal is to improve the  
4545 software engineer's experience of non-deterministic and abstracted AI-based com-  
4546 ponents, such as intelligent web services (IWSs). We hope the guidelines from this  
4547 extensive study help both software developers and API providers alike by using our  
4548 taxonomy as a go-to checklist for what should be considered in documenting any  
4549 API.



# CHAPTER 9

4550

4551

## 4552 Using a Facade Pattern to combine Computer Vision Services<sup>†</sup>

4553

4554 **Abstract** Intelligent computer vision services, such as Google Cloud Vision or Amazon  
4555 Rekognition, are becoming evermore pervasive and easily accessible to developers to build  
4556 applications. Because of the stochastic nature that ML entails and disparate datasets used in  
4557 their training, the outputs from different computer vision services varies with time, resulting  
4558 in low reliability—for some cases—when compared against each other. Merging multiple  
4559 unreliable API responses from multiple vendors may increase the reliability of the overall  
4560 response, and thus the reliability of the intelligent end-product. We introduce a novel  
4561 methodology—inspired by the proportional representation used in electoral systems—to  
4562 merge outputs of different intelligent computer vision API provided by multiple vendors.  
4563 Experiments show that our method outperforms both naive merge methods and traditional  
4564 proportional representation methods by 0.015 F-measure.

### 4565 9.1 Introduction

4566 With the introduction of intelligent web services (IWSs) that make machine learning  
4567 (ML) more accessible to developers [301, 368], we have seen a large growth of  
4568 intelligent applications dependent on such services [66, 136]. For example, consider  
4569 the advances made in computer vision, where objects are localised within an image  
4570 and labelled with associated categories. Cloud-based computer vision services  
4571 (CVSs)—e.g., [398, 411, 419, 423, 432, 433, 437, 486]—are a subset of IWSs.  
4572 They utilise ML techniques to achieve image recognition via a remote black-box  
4573 approach, thereby reducing the overhead for application developers to understand  
4574 how to implement intelligent systems from scratch. Furthermore, as the processing

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<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on T. Ohtake, A. Cummaudo, M. Abdelrazek, R. Vasa, and J. Grundy, “Merging intelligent API responses using a proportional representation approach,” in *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Web Engineering*. Daejeon, Republic of Korea: Springer, June 2019. DOI 10.1007/978-3-030-19274-7\_28. ISBN 978-3-03-019273-0. ISSN 1611-3349 pp. 391–406. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

4575 and training of the machine-learnt algorithms is offloaded to the cloud, developers  
4576 simply send RESTful API requests to do the recognition. There are, however, inherit  
4577 differences and drawbacks between traditional web services and IWSs, which we  
4578 describe with the motivating scenario below.

### 4579 **9.1.1 Motivating Scenario: Intelligent vs Traditional Web Services**

4580 An application developer, Tom, wishes to develop a social media Android and iOS  
4581 app that catalogues photos of him and his friends, common objects in the photo,  
4582 and generates brief descriptions in the photo (e.g., all photos with his husky dog,  
4583 all photos on a sunny day etc.). Tom comes from a typical software engineering  
4584 background with little knowledge of computer vision and its underlying concepts.  
4585 He knows that intelligent computer vision web APIs are far more accessible than  
4586 building a computer vision engine from scratch, and opts for building his app using  
4587 these cloud services instead.

4588 Based on his experiences using similar cloud services, Tom would expect consistency  
4589 of the results from the same API and different APIs that provide the same (or  
4590 similar) functionality. As an analogy, when Tom writes the Java substring method  
4591 "doggy".substring(0, 2), he expects it to be the same result as the Swift equivalent  
4592 "doggy".prefix(3). Each and every time he interacts with the substring  
4593 method using either API, he gets "dog" as the response. This is because Tom is  
4594 used to deterministic, rule-driven APIs that drive the implementation behind the  
4595 substring method.

4596 Tom's deterministic mindset results in three key differentials between a traditional  
4597 web services and an IWS:

4598 **(1) Given similar input, results differ between similar IWSs.** When Tom  
4599 interacts with the API of an IWS, he is not aware that each API provider trains  
4600 their own, unique ML model, both with disparate methods and datasets. These  
4601 IWSs are, therefore, nondeterministic and data-driven; input images—even  
4602 if they contain the same conceptual objects—often output different results.  
4603 Contrast this to the substring method of traditional APIs; regardless of what  
4604 programming language or string library is used, the same response is expected  
4605 by developers.

4606 **(2) Intelligent responses are not certain.** When Tom interprets the response  
4607 object of an IWS, he finds that there is a ‘confidence’ value or ‘score’. This  
4608 is because the ML models that power IWSs are inherently probabilistic and  
4609 stochastic; any insight they produce is purely statistical and associational [281].  
4610 Unlike the substring example, where the rule-driven implementation provides  
4611 certainty to the results, this is not guaranteed for IWSs. For example, a picture  
4612 of a husky breed of dog is misclassified as a wolf. This could be due to  
4613 adversarial examples [346] that ‘trick’ the model into misclassifying images  
4614 when they are fully decipherable to humans. It is well-studied that such  
4615 adversarial examples exist in the real world unintentionally [114, 207, 284].

4616 **(3) Intelligent APIs evolve over time.** Tom may find that responses to processing  
4617 an image may change over time; the labels he processes in testing may evolve

4618 and therefore differ to when in production. In traditional web services, evo-  
4619 lution in responses is slower, generally well-communicated, and usually rare  
4620 (Tom would always expect "dog" to be returned in the substring example).  
4621 This has many implications on software systems that depend on these APIs,  
4622 such as confidence in the output and portability of the solution. Currently, if  
4623 Tom switches from one API provider to another, or if he doesn't regularly test  
4624 his app in production, he may begin to see a very different set of labels and  
4625 confidence levels.

### 4626 9.1.2 Research Motivation

4627 These drawbacks bring difficulties to the intended API users like Tom. We identify a  
4628 gap in the software engineering literature regarding such drawbacks, including: lack  
4629 of best practices in using IWSs; assessing and improving the reliability of APIs for  
4630 their use in end-products; evaluating which API is suitable for different developer  
4631 and application needs; and how to mitigate risk associated with these APIs. We  
4632 focus on improving reliability of CVSs for use in end-products. The key research  
4633 questions in this paper are:

4634 **RQ1:** Is it possible to improve reliability by merging multiple CVS results?

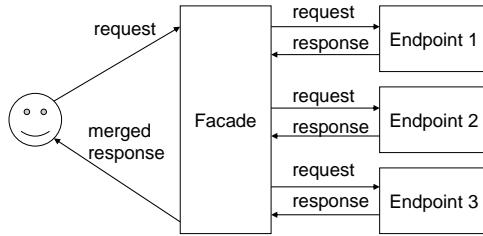
4635 **RQ2:** Are there better algorithms for merging these results than currently in  
4636 use?

4637 Previous attempts at overcoming low reliability include triple-modular redundancy  
4638 [226]. This method uses three modules and decides output using majority  
4639 rule. However, in CVSs, it is difficult to apply majority rule: these APIs respond with  
4640 a list of labels and corresponding scores. Moreover, disparate APIs ordinarily output  
4641 different results. These differences make it hard to apply majority rule because the  
4642 type of outputs are complex and disparate APIs output different results for the same  
4643 input. Merging search results is another technique to improve reliability [331]. It  
4644 normalises scores of different databases using a centralised sample database. Nor-  
4645 malising scores makes it possible to merge search results into a single ranked list.  
4646 However, search responses are disjoint, whereas they are not in the context of most  
4647 CVSs.

4648 In this paper, we introduce a novel method to merge responses of CVSs, using  
4649 image recognition APIs endpoints as our motivating example. Section 9.2 describes  
4650 naive merging methods and requirements. Section 9.3 gives insights into the struc-  
4651 ture of labels. Section 9.4 introduces our method of merging computer vision labels.  
4652 Section 9.5 compares precision and recall for each method. Section 9.6 presents  
4653 conclusions and future work.

## 4654 9.2 Merging API Responses

4655 Image recognition APIs have similar interfaces: they receive a single input (image)  
4656 and respond with a list of labels and associated confidence scores. Similarly, other  
4657 supervised-AI-based APIs do the same (e.g., detecting emotions from text and



**Figure 9.1:** The user sends a request to the facade; this request is propagated to the relevant APIs. Responses are merged by the facade and returned back to the user.

4658 natural language processing [434, 487]). It is difficult to apply majority rule on such  
 4659 disparate, complex outputs. While the outputs by *multiple* AI-based API endpoints  
 4660 is different and complex, the general format of the output is the same: a list of labels  
 4661 and associated scores.

### 4662 9.2.1 API Facade Pattern

4663 To merge responses from multiple APIs, we introduce the notion of an API facade.  
 4664 It is similar to a metasearch engine, but differs in their external endpoints. The  
 4665 facade accepts the input from one API endpoint (the facade endpoint), propagates  
 4666 that input to all user-registered concrete (external) API endpoints simultaneously,  
 4667 then ‘merges’ outputs from these concrete endpoints before sending this merged  
 4668 response to the API user. We demonstrate this process in Figure 9.1.

4669 Although the model introduces more time and cost overhead, both can be miti-  
 4670 gated by caching results. On the other hand, the facade pattern provides the following  
 4671 benefits:

- 4672 • **Easy to modify:** It requires only small modifications to applications, e.g.,  
 4673 changing each concrete endpoint URL.
- 4674 • **Easy to customise:** It merges results from disparate and concrete APIs ac-  
 4675 cording to the user’s preference.
- 4676 • **Improves reliability:** It enhances reliability of the overall returned result by  
 4677 merging results from different endpoints.

### 4678 9.2.2 Merge Operations

4679 The API facade is applicable to many use cases. However, this paper focuses on  
 4680 APIs that output a list of labels and scores, as is the case for CVSs. Merge operations  
 4681 involve the mapping of multiple lists and associated scores, produced by multiple  
 4682 APIs, to just one list. For instance, a CVS receives a bowl of fruit as the input image  
 4683 and outputs the following:

4684 `[[‘apple’, 0.9], [‘banana’, 0.8]]`

4685 where the first item is the label and the second item is the score. Similarly, another  
 4686 computer vision API outputs the following for the same image:

4687 `[[‘apple’, 0.7], [‘cherry’, 0.8]].`

4688 Merge operations can, therefore, merge these two responses into just one response.  
4689 Naive ways of merging results could make use of *max*, *min*, and *average* operations  
4690 on the confidence scores. For example, *max* merges results to:

4691 `[[‘apple’, 0.9], [‘banana’, 0.8], [‘cherry’, 0.8]];`

4692 *min* merges results to:

4693 `[[‘apple’, 0.7]];`

4694 and *average* merges results to:

4695 `[[‘apple’, 0.8], [‘banana’, 0.4], [‘cherry’, 0.4]].`

4696 However, as the object’s labels in each result are natural language, the operations  
4697 do not exploit the label’s semantics when conducting label merging. To improve  
4698 the quality of the merged results, we consider the ontologies of these labels, as we  
4699 describe below.

### 4700 9.2.3 Merging Operators for Labels

4701 Merge operations on labels are *n*-ary operations that map  $R^n$  to  $R$ , where  $R_i =$   
4702  $\{(l_{ij}, s_{ij})\}$  is a response from endpoint  $i$  and contains pairs of labels ( $l_{ij}$ ) and scores  
4703 ( $s_{ij}$ ). Merge operations on labels have the following properties:

- 4704 • *identity* defines that merging a single response should output same response  
4705 (i.e.,  $R = \text{merge}(R)$  is always true);
- 4706 • *commutativity* defines that the order of operands should not change the result  
4707 (i.e.,  $\text{merge}(R_1, R_2) = \text{merge}(R_2, R_1)$  is always true);
- 4708 • *reflexivity* defines that merging multiple same responses should output same  
4709 response (i.e.,  $R = \text{merge}(R, R)$  is always true); and,
- 4710 • *additivity* defines that, for a specific label, the merged response should have  
4711 higher or equal score for the label if a concrete endpoint has a higher score.  
4712 Let  $R = \text{merge}(R_1, R_2)$  and  $R' = \text{merge}(R'_1, R_2)$  be merged responses.  $R_1$  and  
4713  $R'_1$  are same, except  $R'_1$  has a higher score for label  $l_x$  than  $R_1$ . The additive  
4714 score property requires that  $R'$  score for  $l_x$  should be greater than or equal to  
4715  $R$  score for  $l_x$ .

4716 The *max*, *min*, and *average* operations in Section 9.2.2 follow each of these rules  
4717 as all operations calculate the score by applying these operations on each score.

**Table 9.1:** Statistics for the number of labels, on average, per service identified.

Endpoint	Average number of labels	Has synset	No synset
Amazon Rekognition	$11.42 \pm 7.52$	$10.74 \pm 7.10$ (94.0%)	$0.66 \pm 0.87$
Google Cloud Vision	$8.77 \pm 2.15$	$6.36 \pm 2.22$ (72.5%)	$2.41 \pm 1.93$
Azure Computer Vision	$5.39 \pm 3.29$	$5.26 \pm 3.32$ (97.6%)	$0.14 \pm 0.37$

## 4718 9.3 Graph of Labels

4719 CVSs typically return lists of labels and their associated scores. In most cases, the  
 4720 label can be a singular word (e.g., ‘husky’) or multiple words (e.g., ‘dog breed’).  
 4721 Lexical databases, such as WordNet [245], can therefore be used to describe the  
 4722 ontology behind these labels’ meanings. Figure 9.2 is an example of a graph of  
 4723 labels and synsets. A synset is a grouped set of synonyms for a word. In this image,  
 4724 we consider two fictional endpoints, endpoints 1–2. We label red nodes as labels  
 4725 from endpoint 1, yellow nodes as labels from endpoint 2, and blue nodes as synsets  
 4726 for the associated labels from both endpoints. As actual graphs are usually more  
 4727 complex, Figure 9.2 is a simplified graph to illustrate the usage of associating labels  
 4728 from two concrete sources to synsets.

### 4729 9.3.1 Labels and synsets

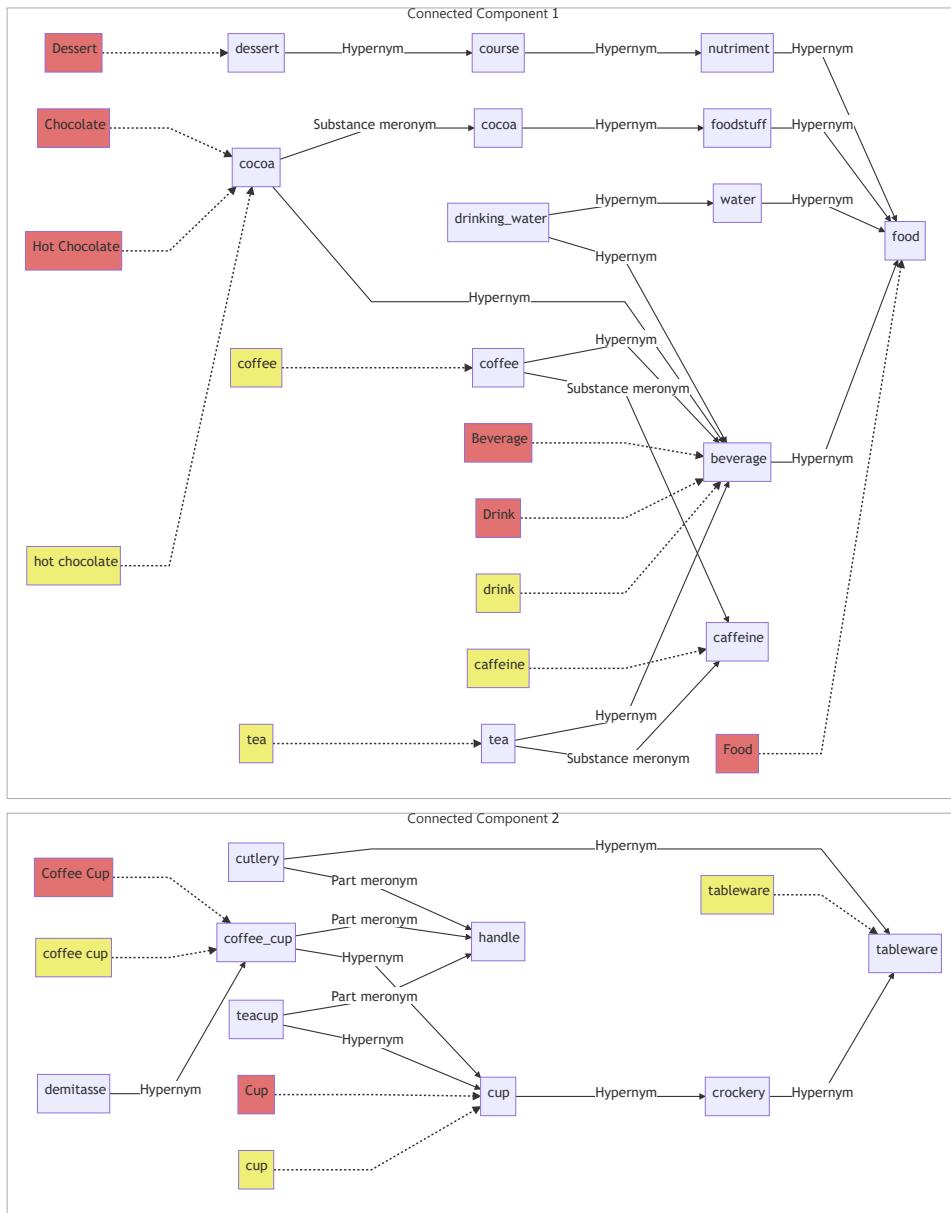
4730 The number of labels depends on input images and concrete API endpoints used.  
 4731 Table 9.1 and Figure 9.3 show how many labels are returned, on average per image,  
 4732 from Google Cloud Vision [423], Amazon Rekognition [398] and Azure Computer  
 4733 Vision [437] image recognition APIs. These statistics were calculated using 1,000  
 4734 images from Open Images Dataset V4 [425] Image-Level Labels set.

4735 Labels from Amazon and Microsoft tend to have corresponding synsets, and  
 4736 therefore these endpoints return common words that are found in WordNet. On the  
 4737 other hand, Google’s labels have less corresponding synsets: for example, labels  
 4738 without corresponding synsets are car models and dog breeds.<sup>1</sup>

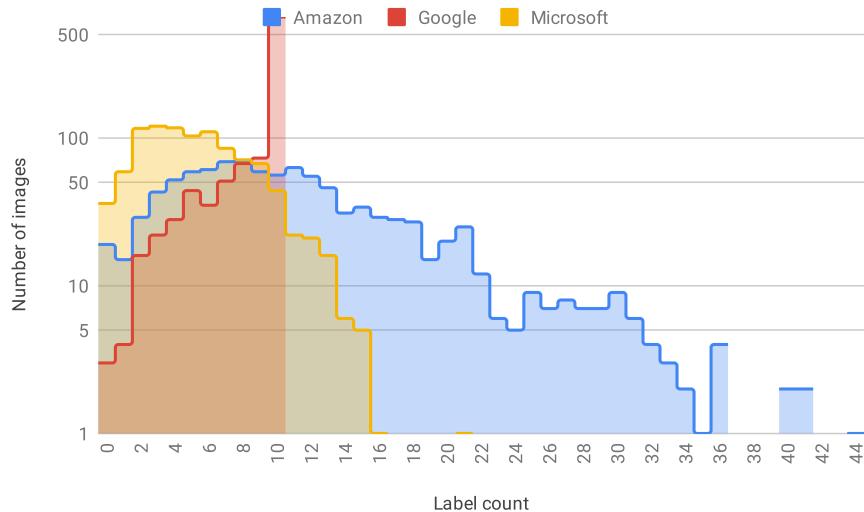
### 4739 9.3.2 Connected Components

4740 A connected component (CC) is a subgraph in which there are paths between any  
 4741 two nodes. In graphs of labels and synsets, CCs are clusters of labels and synsets  
 4742 with similar semantic meaning. For instance, there are two CCs in Figure 9.2. CC 1  
 4743 in Figure 9.2 has ‘beverage’, ‘dessert’, ‘chocolate’, ‘hot chocolate’,  
 4744 ‘drink’, and ‘food’ labels from the red first endpoint and ‘coffee’, ‘hot  
 4745 chocolate’, ‘drink’, ‘caffeine’, and ‘tea’ labels from the yellow second  
 4746 endpoint. Therefore, these labels are related to ‘drink’. On the other hand, CC 2  
 4747 in Figure 9.2 has ‘cup’ and ‘coffee cup’ labels from the first red endpoint and  
 4748 ‘cup’, ‘coffee cup’, and ‘tableware’ labels from the yellow second endpoint.  
 4749 These labels are, therefore, related to ‘cup’.

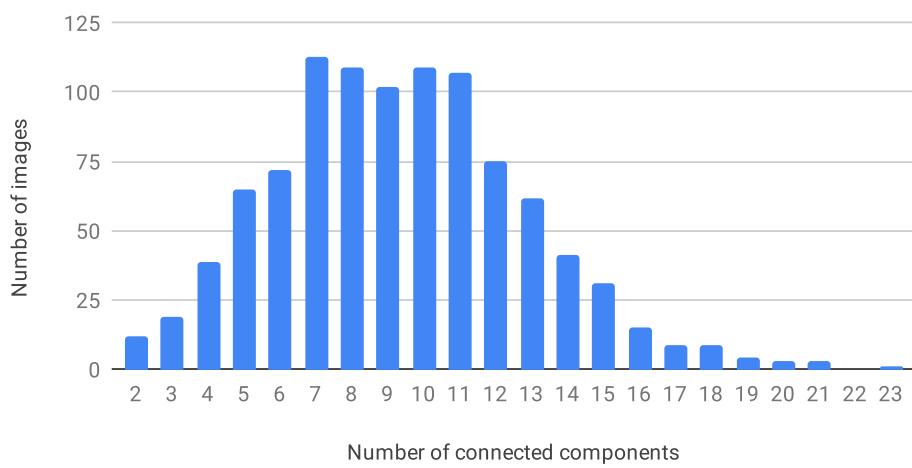
<sup>1</sup>We noticed from our upload of 1,000 images that Google tries to identify objects in greater detail.



**Figure 9.2:** Graph of labels from two concrete endpoints (red and yellow) and their associated synsets related to both words (blue).



**Figure 9.3:** Number of labels responded from our input dataset to three concrete APIs assessed.



**Figure 9.4:** Number of connected components compared to the number of images.

4750 Figure 9.4 shows a distribution of number of CCs for the 1,000-image label  
4751 detections on Amazon Rekognition, Google Cloud Vision, and Azure Computer  
4752 Vision APIs. The average number of CCs is  $9.36 \pm 3.49$ . The smaller number of  
4753 CCs means that most of labels have similar meanings, while a larger value means  
4754 that the labels are more disparate.

## 4755 9.4 API Results Merging Algorithm

4756 Our proposed algorithm to merge labels consists of four parts: (1) mapping labels to  
4757 synsets, (2) deciding the total number of labels, (3) allocating the number of labels  
4758 to CCs, and (4) selecting labels from CCs.

### 4759 9.4.1 Mapping Labels to Synsets

4760 Labels returned in CVS responses are words (in natural language) that do not always  
4761 identify their intended meanings. For instance, a label *orange* may represent the  
4762 fruit, the colour, or the name of the longest river in South Africa. To identify the  
4763 actual meanings behind a label, our facade enumerates all synsets corresponding to  
4764 labels. It then finds the most likely synsets for labels by traversing WordNet links.  
4765 For instance, if an API endpoint outputs the ‘orange’ and ‘lemon’ labels, the  
4766 facade regards ‘orange’ as a related synset word of ‘fruit’. If an API endpoint  
4767 outputs ‘orange’ and ‘water’ labels, the facade regards ‘orange’ as a ‘river’.

### 4768 9.4.2 Deciding Total Number of Labels

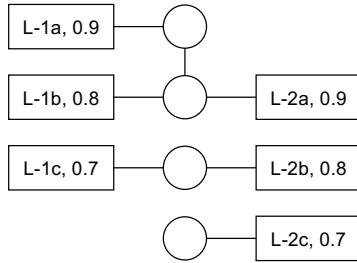
4769 The number of labels in responses from endpoints vary as described in Section 9.3.1.  
4770 The facade decides the number of merged labels using the numbers of labels from  
4771 each endpoint. We formulate the following equation to calculate the number of  
4772 labels:

$$\min_i(|R_i|) \leq \frac{\sum_i|R_i|}{n} \leq \max_i(|R_i|) \leq \sum_i|R_i|$$

4773 where  $|R|$  is number of labels and scores in response, and  $n$  is number of endpoints.  
4774 In case of naive operations in Section 9.2.2, the following is true:

$$\begin{aligned} |\text{merge}_{\max}(R_1, \dots, R_n)| &\leq \min_i(|R_i|) \\ \max_i(|R_i|) &\leq |\text{merge}_{\min}(R_1, \dots, R_n)| \leq \sum_i|R_i| \\ \max_i(|R_i|) &\leq |\text{merge}_{\text{average}}(R_1, \dots, R_n)| \leq \sum_i|R_i|. \end{aligned}$$

4775 The proposal uses  $\lfloor \sum_i|R_i|/n \rfloor$  to conform to the necessary condition described in  
4776 Section 9.4.3.



**Figure 9.5:** Allocation to connected components.

#### 9.4.3 Allocating Number of Labels to Connected Components

The graph of labels and synsets is then divided into several CCs. The facade decides how many labels are allocated for each CC. For example, in Figure 9.5, there are three CCs, where square-shaped nodes are labels in responses from endpoints. Text within these label nodes describe which endpoint outputs the label and score, for instance, “L-1a, 0.9” is label *a* from endpoint 1 with a score 0.9. Circle-shaped nodes represent synsets, where the edges between the label and synset nodes indicate the relationships between them. Edges between synsets are links in WordNet.

Allegorically, allocating the number of labels to CCs is similar to proportional representation in a political voting system, where CCs are the political parties and labels are the votes to a party. Several allocation algorithms are introduced in proportional representation, for instance, the D’Hondt and Hare-Niemeyer methods [260]. However, there are differences from proportional representation in the political context. For label merging, labels have scores and origin endpoints and such information may improve the allocation algorithm. For instance, CCs supported with more endpoints should have a higher allocation than CCs with fewer endpoints, and CCs with higher scores should have a higher allocation than CCs with lower scores. We introduce an algorithm to allocate the number of labels to CCs. This allocates more to a CC with more supporting endpoints and higher scores. The steps of the algorithm are:

- Step I.** Sort scores separately for each endpoint.
- Step II.** If all CCs have an empty score array or more, remove one, and go to Step II.
- Step III.** Select the highest score for each endpoint and calculate product of highest scores.
- Step IV.** A CC with the highest product score receives an allocation. This CC removes every first element from the score array.
- Step V.** If the requested number of allocations is complete, then stop allocation. Otherwise, go to Step II.

Tables 9.2 to 9.5 are examples of allocation iterations. In Table 9.2, the facade sorts scores separately for each endpoint. For instance, the first CC in Figure 9.5 has scores of 0.9 and 0.8 from endpoint 1 and 0.9 from endpoint 2. All CCs have a

**Table 9.2:** Allocation iteration 1.

Scores	Highest	Product	Allocated
[0.9, 0.8], [0.9]	[0.9, 0.9]	0.81	0+1
[0.7], [0.8]	[0.7, 0.8]	0.56	0
[], [0.7]	[N/A, 0.7]	N/A	0

**Table 9.4:** Allocation iteration 3.

Scores	Highest	Product	Allocated
[0.8], []	—	—	1
[], []	—	—	1
[], [0.7]	—	—	0

**Table 9.3:** Allocation iteration 2.

Scores	Highest	Product	Allocated
[0.8], []	[0.8, N/A]	N/A	1
[0.7], [0.8]	[0.7, 0.8]	0.56	0+1
[], [0.7]	[N/A, 0.7]	N/A	0

**Table 9.5:** Allocation iteration 4.

Scores	Highest	Product	Allocated
[0.8]	[0.8]	0.8	1+1
[]	[N/A]	N/A	1
[0.7]	[0.7]	0.7	0

4809 non-empty score array or more, so the facade skips Step II. The facade then picks  
 4810 the highest scores for each endpoint and CC. CC 1 has the largest product of highest  
 4811 scores and receives an allocation. In Table 9.3, the first CC removes every first score  
 4812 in its array as it received an allocation in Table 9.2. In this iteration, the second CC  
 4813 has largest product of scores and receives an allocation. In Table 9.4, the second CC  
 4814 removes every first score in its array. At Step II, all the three CCs have an empty  
 4815 array. The facade removes one empty array from each CC. In Table 9.5, the first CC  
 4816 receives an allocation. The algorithm is applicable if total number of allocation is  
 4817 less than or equal to  $\max_i(|R_i|)$  as scores are removed in Step II. The condition is a  
 4818 necessary condition.

#### 4819 **9.4.4 Selecting Labels from Connected Components**

4820 For each CC, the facade applies the *average* operator from Section 9.2.2 and takes  
 4821 labels with  $n$ -highest scores up to allocation, as per Section 9.4.3.

#### 4822 **9.4.5 Conformance to properties**

4823 Section 9.2.3 defines four properties: identity, commutativity, reflexivity, and addi-  
 4824 tivity. Our proposed method conforms to these properties:

- 4825 • *identity*: the method outputs same result if there is one response;
- 4826 • *commutativity*: the method does not care about ordering of operands;
- 4827 • *reflexivity*: the allocations to CCs are same to number of labels in CCs; and
- 4828 • *additivity*: increases in score increases or does not change the allocation to  
 4829 the corresponding CC.

## 4830 **9.5 Evaluation**

### 4831 **9.5.1 Evaluation Method**

4832 To evaluate the merge methods, we merged CVS results from three representative  
 4833 image analysis API endpoints and compared these merged results against human-

4834 verified labels. Images and human-verified labels are sourced from 1,000 randomly-  
 4835 sampled images from the Open Images Dataset V4 [425] Image-Level Labels test  
 4836 set.

4837 The first three rows in Table 9.7 are the evaluation of original responses from  
 4838 each API endpoint. Precision, recall, and F-measure in Table 9.7 do not reflect  
 4839 actual values: for instance, it appears that Google performs best at first glance, but  
 4840 this is mainly because Google’s labels are similar to that of the Open Images label  
 4841 set.

4842 The Open Images Dataset uses 19,995 classes for labelling. The human-verified  
 4843 labels for the 1,000 images contain 8,878 of these classes. Table 9.6 shows the  
 4844 correspondence between each service’s labels and the Open Images Dataset classes.  
 4845 For instance, Amazon Rekognition outputs 11,416 labels in total for 1,000 images.  
 4846 There are 1,409 unique labels in 11,416 labels. 1,111 labels out of 1,409 can be  
 4847 found in Open Images Dataset classes. Rekognition’s labels matches to Open Images  
 4848 Dataset classes at 78.9% ratio, while Google has an outstanding matched percentage  
 4849 of 94.1%. This high match is likely due to Google providing both Google Cloud  
 4850 Vision and the Open Images Dataset—it is likely that they are trained on the same  
 4851 data and labels. An endpoint with higher matched percentage has a more similar  
 4852 label set to the Open Images Dataset classes. However, a higher matched percentage  
 4853 does not mean imply *better quality* of an API endpoint; it will increase apparent  
 4854 precision, recall, and F-measure only.

4855 The true and false positive (TP/FP) label averages and the TP/FP ratio is shown  
 4856 in Table 9.7. Where the TP/FP ratio is larger, the scores are more reliable, however  
 4857 it is possible to increase the TP/FP ratio by adding more false labels with low scores.  
 4858 On the other hand, it is impossible to increase F-measure intentionally, because  
 4859 increasing precision will decrease recall, and vice versa. Hence, the importance of  
 4860 the F-measure statistic is critical for our analysis.

4861 Let  $R_A$ ,  $R_G$ , and  $R_M$  be responses from Amazon Rekognition, Google Cloud  
 4862 Vision, and Microsoft’s Azure Computer Vision, respectively. There are four sets  
 4863 of operands, i.e.,  $(R_A, R_G)$ ,  $(R_G, R_M)$ ,  $(R_M, R_A)$ , and  $(R_A, R_G, R_M)$ . Table 9.7  
 4864 shows the evaluation of each operands set, Table 9.8 shows the averages of the four  
 4865 operands sets, and Figure 9.6 shows the comparison of F-measure for each methods.

### 4866 9.5.2 Naive Operators

4867 Results of *min*, *max*, and *average* operators are shown in Tables 9.7 and 9.8 and Fig-  
 4868 ure 9.6. The *min* operator is similar to *union* operator of set operation, and outputs  
 4869 all labels of operands. The precision of the *min* operator is always greater than any  
 4870 precision of operands, and the recall is always lesser than any precision of operands.  
 4871 *Max* and *average* operators are similar to *intersection* operator of set operations.  
 4872 Both operators output intersection of labels of operands and there is no clear relation  
 4873 to the precision and recall of operands. Since both operators have the same preci-  
 4874 sion, recall, and F-measure, Figure 9.6 groups them into one. The *average* operator  
 4875 performs well on the TP/FP ratio, where most of the same labels from multiple  
 4876 endpoints are TPs. In many cases of the four operand sets, all naive operators’

**Table 9.6:** Matching to human-verified labels.

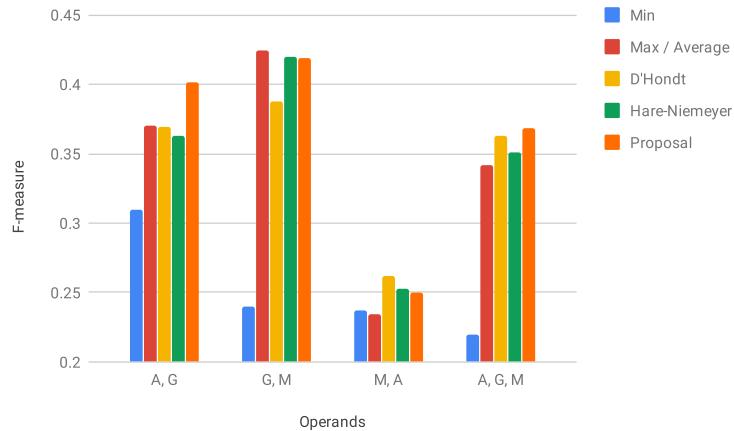
Endpoint	Total	Unique	Matched	Matched %
Amazon Rekognition	11,416	1,409	1,111	78.9
Google Cloud Vision	8,766	2,644	2,487	94.1
Azure Computer Vision	5,392	746	470	63.0

**Table 9.7:** Evaluation results. A = Amazon Rekognition, G = Google Cloud Vision, M = Microsoft's Azure Computer Vision.

Operands	Operator	Precision	Recall	F-measure	TP average	FP average	TP/FP ratio
A		0.217	0.282	0.246	$0.848 \pm 0.165$	$0.695 \pm 0.185$	1.220
G		0.474	0.465	0.469	$0.834 \pm 0.121$	$0.741 \pm 0.132$	1.126
M		0.263	0.164	0.202	$0.858 \pm 0.217$	$0.716 \pm 0.306$	1.198
A, G	Min	0.771	0.194	0.310	$0.805 \pm 0.142$	$0.673 \pm 0.141$	1.197
A, G	Max	0.280	0.572	0.376	$0.850 \pm 0.136$	$0.712 \pm 0.171$	1.193
A, G	Average	0.280	0.572	0.376	$0.546 \pm 0.225$	$0.368 \pm 0.114$	1.485
A, G	D'Hondt	0.350	0.389	0.369	$0.713 \pm 0.249$	$0.518 \pm 0.202$	1.377
A, G	Hare-Niemeyer	0.344	0.384	0.363	$0.723 \pm 0.242$	$0.527 \pm 0.199$	1.371
A, G	Proposal	0.380	0.423	0.401	$0.706 \pm 0.239$	$0.559 \pm 0.190$	1.262
G, M	Min	0.789	0.142	0.240	$0.794 \pm 0.209$	$0.726 \pm 0.210$	1.093
G, M	Max	0.357	0.521	0.424	$0.749 \pm 0.135$	$0.729 \pm 0.231$	1.165
G, M	Average	0.357	0.521	0.424	$0.504 \pm 0.201$	$0.375 \pm 0.141$	1.342
G, M	D'Hondt	0.444	0.344	0.388	$0.696 \pm 0.250$	$0.551 \pm 0.254$	1.262
G, M	Hare-Niemeyer	0.477	0.375	0.420	$0.696 \pm 0.242$	$0.591 \pm 0.226$	1.179
G, M	Proposal	0.414	0.424	0.419	$0.682 \pm 0.238$	$0.597 \pm 0.209$	1.143
M, A	Min	0.693	0.143	0.237	$0.822 \pm 0.201$	$0.664 \pm 0.242$	1.239
M, A	Max	0.185	0.318	0.234	$0.863 \pm 0.178$	$0.703 \pm 0.229$	1.228
M, A	Average	0.185	0.318	0.234	$0.589 \pm 0.262$	$0.364 \pm 0.144$	1.616
M, A	D'Hondt	0.271	0.254	0.262	$0.737 \pm 0.261$	$0.527 \pm 0.223$	1.397
M, A	Hare-Niemeyer	0.260	0.245	0.253	$0.755 \pm 0.251$	$0.538 \pm 0.218$	1.402
M, A	Proposal	0.257	0.242	0.250	$0.769 \pm 0.244$	$0.571 \pm 0.205$	1.337
A, G, M	Min	0.866	0.126	0.220	$0.774 \pm 0.196$	$0.644 \pm 0.219$	1.202
A, G, M	Max	0.241	0.587	0.342	$0.857 \pm 0.142$	$0.714 \pm 0.210$	1.201
A, G, M	Average	0.241	0.587	0.342	$0.432 \pm 0.233$	$0.253 \pm 0.106$	1.712
A, G, M	D'Hondt	0.375	0.352	0.363	$0.678 \pm 0.266$	$0.455 \pm 0.208$	1.492
A, G, M	Hare-Niemeyer	0.362	0.340	0.351	$0.693 \pm 0.260$	$0.444 \pm 0.216$	1.559
A, G, M	Proposal	0.380	0.357	0.368	$0.684 \pm 0.259$	$0.484 \pm 0.200$	1.414

**Table 9.8:** Average of the evaluation result.

Operator	Precision	Recall	F-measure	TP/FP ratio
Min	0.780	0.151	0.252	1.183
Max	0.266	0.500	0.344	1.197
Average	0.266	0.500	0.344	1.539
D'Hondt	0.361	0.335	0.346	1.382
Hare-Niemeyer	0.361	0.336	0.347	1.378
Proposal	0.358	0.362	0.360	1.289



**Figure 9.6:** F-measure comparison.

4877 F-measures are between F-measures of operands. None of naive operators therefore  
 4878 improve results by merging responses from multiple endpoints.

### 4879 **9.5.3 Traditional Proportional Representation Operators**

4880 There are many existing allocation algorithms in proportional representation, e.g.,  
 4881 the Niemeyer and Niemeyer method [260]. These methods may be replacements of  
 4882 those in Section 9.4.3. Other steps, i.e., Sections 9.4.1, 9.4.2 and 9.4.4, are the same  
 4883 as for our proposed technique. Tables 9.7 and 9.8 and Figure 9.6 show the result of  
 4884 these traditional proportional representation algorithms. Averages of F-measures by  
 4885 traditional proportional representation operators are almost equal to that of the *max*  
 4886 and *average* operators. It is worth noting that merging *M* and *A* responses results in  
 4887 a better F-measure than each F-measure of *M* and *A* individually. As these are not  
 4888 biased to human-verified labels, situations in the real-world usage should, therefore,  
 4889 be similar to the case of *M* and *A*. Hence, RQ1 is true.

### 4890 **9.5.4 New Proposed Label Merge Technique**

4891 As shown in Table 9.8, our proposed new method performs best in F-measure.  
 4892 Instead, the TP/FP ratio is less than *average*, the D'Hondt method, and Hare-  
 4893 Niemeyer method. As described in Section 9.5.1, we argue that F-measure is a  
 4894 more important measure than the TP/FP ratio (in this case). Therefore, RQ2 is  
 4895 true. Shown in Table 9.7, our proposed new method improves the results when  
 4896 merging *M* and *A* in non-biased endpoints. It is similar to traditional proportional  
 4897 representation operators, but does not perform as well. However, it performs better  
 4898 on other operand sets, and performs best overall as shown in Figure 9.6.

### 4899 **9.5.5 Performance**

4900 We used AWS EC2 m5.large instance (2 vCPUs, 2.5 GHz Intel Xeon, 8 GiB RAM);  
 4901 Amazon Linux 2 AMI (HVM), SSD Volume Type; Node.js 8.12.0. It takes 0.370

4902 seconds to merge responses from three endpoints. Computational complexity of the  
4903 algorithm in Section 9.4.3 is  $O(n^2)$ , where  $n$  is total number of labels in responses.  
4904 (The estimation assumes that the number of endpoints is a constant.) Complexity of  
4905 Step I in Section 9.4.3 is  $O(n \log n)$ , as the worst case is that all  $n$  labels are from  
4906 one single endpoint and all  $n$  labels are in one CC. Complexity of Step II to Step V  
4907 is  $O(n^2)$ , as the number of CCs is less than or equal to  $n$  and number of iterations  
4908 are less than or equal to  $n$ . As Table 9.1 shows, the averaged total number of three  
4909 endpoints is 25.58. Most of time for merging is consumed by looking up WordNet  
4910 synsets (Section 9.4.1). The API facade calls each APIs on actual endpoints in  
4911 parallel. It takes about 5 seconds, which is much longer than 0.370 seconds taken  
4912 for the merging of responses.

## 4913 9.6 Conclusions and Future Work

4914 In this paper, we propose a method to merge responses from CVSs. Our method  
4915 merges API responses better than naive operators and other proportional represen-  
4916 tation methods (i.e., D'Hondt and Hare-Niemeyer). The average of F-measure of  
4917 our method marks 0.360; the next best method, Hare-Niemeyer, marks 0.347. Our  
4918 method and other proportional representation methods are able to improve the F-  
4919 measure from original responses in some cases. Merging non-biased responses  
4920 results in an F-measure of 0.250, while original responses have an F-measure be-  
4921 tween 0.246 and 0.242. Therefore, users can improve their applications' precision  
4922 with small modification, i.e., by switching from a singular URL endpoint to a facade-  
4923 based architecture. The performance impact by applying facades is small, because  
4924 overhead in facades is much smaller than API invocation. Our proposal method  
4925 conforms identity, commutativity, reflexivity, and additivity properties and these  
4926 properties are advisable for integrating multiple responses.

4927 Our idea of a proportional representation approach can be applied to other IWSs.  
4928 If the response of such a service is list consisting of an entity and score, and if there is a  
4929 way to group entities, a proposal algorithm can be applied. The opposite approach is  
4930 to improve results by inferring labels. Our current approach picks some of the labels  
4931 returned by endpoints. IWSs are not only based on supervised ML—thus to cover a  
4932 wide range of IWSs, it is necessary to classify and analyse each APIs and establish  
4933 a method to improve results by merging. Currently graph structures of labels and  
4934 synsets (Figure 9.2) are not considered when merging results. Propagating scores  
4935 from labels could be used, losing the additivity property but improving results for  
4936 users. There are many ways to propagate scores. For instance, setting propagation  
4937 factors for each link type would improve merging and could be customised for users'  
4938 preferences. It would be possible to generate an API facade automatically. APIs  
4939 with the same functionality have same or similar signatures. Machine-readable API  
4940 documentation, for instance, OpenAPI Specification, could help a generator to build  
4941 an API facade.



# CHAPTER 10

4942

4943

4944

## Threshy: Supporting Safe Usage of Intelligent Web Services<sup>†</sup>

4945

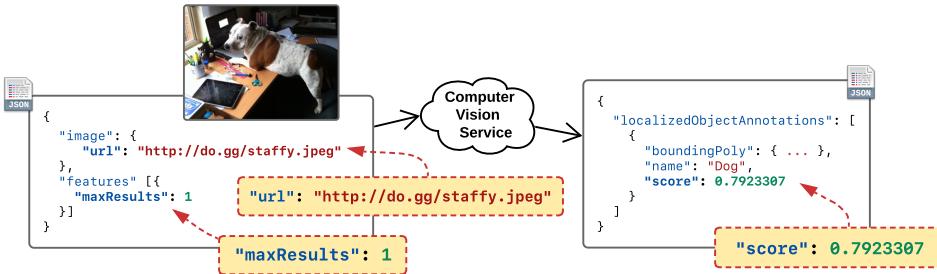
4946 **Abstract** Increased popularity of ‘intelligent’ web services provides end-users with machine-  
4947 learnt functionality at little effort to developers. However, these services require a decision  
4948 threshold to be set which is dependent on problem-specific data. Developers lack a systematic  
4949 approach for evaluating intelligent services and existing evaluation tools are predominantly  
4950 targeted at data scientists for pre-development evaluation. This paper presents a workflow  
4951 and supporting tool, Threshy, to help *software developers* select a decision threshold suited to  
4952 their problem domain. Unlike existing tools, Threshy is designed to operate in multiple work-  
4953 flows including pre-development, pre-release, and support. Threshy is designed for tuning  
4954 the confidence scores returned by intelligent web services and does not deal with hyper-  
4955 parameter optimisation used in ML models. Additionally, it considers the financial impacts  
4956 of false positives. Threshold configuration files exported by Threshy can be integrated into  
4957 client applications and monitoring infrastructure. Demo: <https://bit.ly/2YKeYhE>.

### 4958 10.1 Introduction

4959 Machine learning algorithm adoption is increasing in modern software. End users  
4960 routinely benefit from machine-learnt functionality through personalised recom-  
4961 mendations [83], voice-user interfaces [255], and intelligent digital assistants [52]. The  
4962 easy accessibility and availability of intelligent web services (IWSs)<sup>1</sup> is contributing  
4963 to their adoption. These IWSs simplify the development of machine learning (ML)

<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on A. Cummaudo, S. Barnett, R. Vasa, and J. Grundy, “Threshy: Supporting Safe Usage of Intelligent Web Services,” in *Proceedings of the 28th ACM Joint Meeting on European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering*. Virtual Event, USA: ACM, November 2020. DOI 10.1145/3368089.3417919, pp. 1645–1649. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

<sup>1</sup>Such as Azure Computer Vision (<https://azure.microsoft.com/en-au/services/cognitive-services/computer-vision/>), Google Cloud Vision (<https://cloud.google.com/vision/>), or Amazon Rekognition (<https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/>).



**Figure 10.1:** Request and response for an intelligent computer vision web service with only three configuration parameters: the image’s url, maxResults and score.

4964 solutions as they (i) do not require specialised ML expertise to build and maintain,  
 4965 (ii) abstract away infrastructure related issues associated with ML [16, 321], and  
 4966 (iii) provide web application programming interfaces (APIs) for ease of integration.

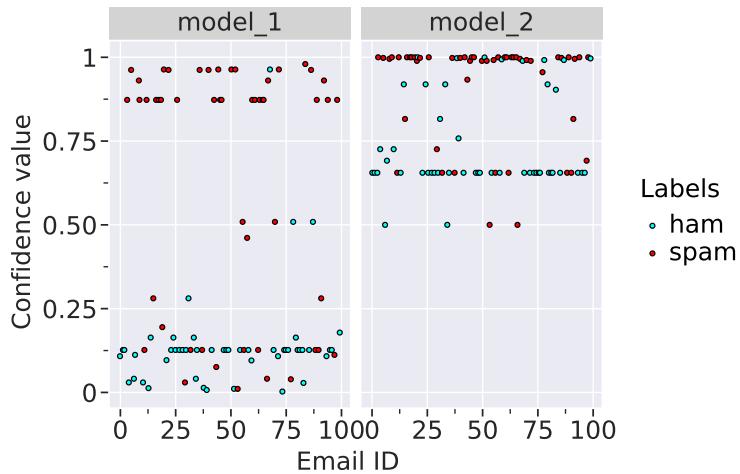
4967 However, unlike traditional web services, the functionality of these IWSs is  
 4968 dependent on a set of assumptions unique to ML [89]. These assumptions are based  
 4969 on the data used to train ML algorithms, the choice of algorithm, and the choice of  
 4970 data processing steps—most of which are not documented. For developers, these  
 4971 assumptions mean that the performance characteristics of an IWS in any particular  
 4972 application problem domain is not fully knowable. IWSs represent this uncertainty  
 4973 through a confidence value associated with their predictions.

4974 As an example, consider Figure 10.1, which illustrates an image of a dog up-  
 4975 loaded to a real computer vision service (CVS). Developers have very few configura-  
 4976 tion parameters in the upload payload (`url` of the image to analyse and `maxResults`  
 4977 the number of objects to detect). The JSON output payload returns the confidence  
 4978 value via a `score` field (0.792), the bounding box and a “dog” label. Developers  
 4979 can only work with these parameters; unlike hyper-parameter optimisation available  
 4980 to ML creators, who can configure the internal parameters of the algorithm while  
 4981 training a model. Given the structure of the abstractions, developers have no insight  
 4982 into which hyper-parameters are used or the algorithm selected and cannot tune the  
 4983 underlying trained model when using an IWS. Thus an evaluation procedure must  
 4984 be followed as a part of using an IWS for an application to work with and tune the  
 4985 output confidence values for a given input set.

4986 A typical evaluation process would involve a test data set (curated by the devel-  
 4987 opers using the IWS) that is used to determine an appropriate threshold. Choice of  
 4988 a decision threshold is a critical element of the evaluation procedure [151]. This is  
 4989 especially true for classification problems such as detecting if an image contains can-  
 4990 cer. Simple approaches to selecting a threshold are often insufficient, as highlighted  
 4991 in Google’s ML course: *“It is tempting to assume that [a] classification threshold  
 4992 should always be 0.5, but thresholds are problem-dependent, and are therefore  
 4993 values that you must tune.”*<sup>2</sup>

4994 As an example consider the predictions from two email spam classifiers shown

<sup>2</sup>See <https://bit.ly/36oMgWb>.



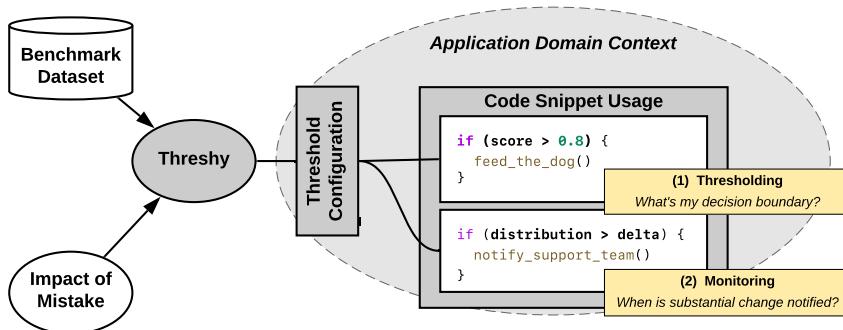
**Figure 10.2:** Predictions for 100 emails from two spam classifiers. Decision thresholds are classifier-dependent: a single threshold for both classifiers is *not* appropriate as ham emails are clustered at 0.12 (model\_1) and at 0.65 (model\_2). Developers must evaluate performance for *both* thresholds.

in Figure 10.2. The predicted safe emails, ‘ham’, are in two separate clusters (a simple threshold set to approx. 0.2 for model 1 and 0.65 for model 2, indicating that different decision thresholds may be required depending on the classifier. Also note that some emails have been misclassified; how many depends on the choice of decision threshold. An appropriate threshold considers factors outside algorithmic performance, such as financial cost and impact of wrong decisions. To select an appropriate decision threshold, developers using intelligent services need approaches to reason about and consider trade-offs between competing *cost factors*. These include impact, financial costs, and maintenance implications. Without considering these trade-offs, sub-optimal decision thresholds will be selected.

The standard approach for tuning thresholds in classification problems involve making trade-offs between the number of false positives and false negatives using the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve. However, developers (i) need to realise that this trade-off between false positives and false negatives is a data dependent optimisation process [320], (ii) often need to develop custom scripts and follow a trial-and-error based approach to determine a threshold, (iii) must have appropriate statistical training and expertise, and (iv) be aware that multi-label classification require more complex optimisation methods when setting label specific costs. However, current intelligent services do not sufficiently guide or support software engineers through the evaluation process, nor do they make this need clear in the documentation.

In this paper we present **Threshy**<sup>3</sup>, a tool to assist developers in selecting decision thresholds when using intelligent services. The motivation for developing Threshy arose from our work across a set of industry projects. Unlike existing tooling (see Section 10.4), **Threshy serves as a means to up-skill and educate**

<sup>3</sup>Threshy is available for use at <http://bit.ly/a2i2-threshy>



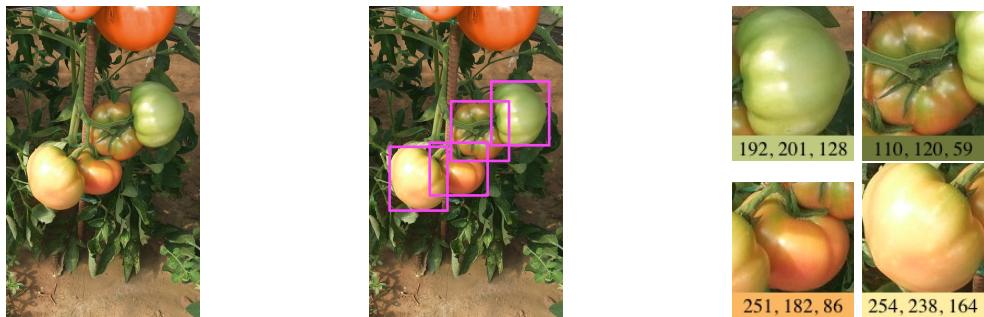
**Figure 10.3:** Threshy supports two key aspects for intelligent web services: threshold selection and monitoring.

5020 **software engineers in selecting machine-learnt decision thresholds**, for example,  
 5021 on aspects such as confusion matrices. We re-iterate that the end-users of Threshy  
 5022 are software engineers and not data scientists—Threshy is not designed for hyper-  
 5023 parameter tuning of models, but for threshold tuning to use intelligent web services  
 5024 more robustly where internal models are not exposed. Threshy provides a visually  
 5025 interactive interface for developers to fine-tune thresholds and explore trade-offs of  
 5026 prediction hits/misses. This exposes the need for optimisation of thresholds, which  
 5027 is dependent on particular use cases.

5028 Threshy improves developer productivity through automation of the threshold  
 5029 selection process by leveraging an optimisation algorithm to propose thresholds.  
 5030 Figure 10.3 illustrates the two key aspects by which Threshy supports developer’s  
 5031 application domain context. Developers input a representative dataset of their applica-  
 5032 tion data (a benchmark dataset) in addition to cost factors to Threshy. Threshy’s  
 5033 output helps developers select appropriate thresholds and can be used to monitor  
 5034 the evolution of an IWS. This algorithm considers different cost factors providing  
 5035 developers with summary information so they can make more informed trade-offs.  
 5036 Developers also benefit from the workflow implemented in Threshy by providing a  
 5037 reproducible procedure for testing and tuning thresholds for any category of clas-  
 5038 sification problem (binary, multi-class, and multi-label). Threshy has also been  
 5039 designed to work for different input data types including images, text and categor-  
 5040 ical values. The output, is a configuration file that can be integrated into client  
 5041 applications ensuring that the thresholds can be updated without code changes, and  
 5042 continuously monitored in a production setting.

## 5043 10.2 Motivating Example

5044 As a motivating example consider Nina, a fictitious developer, who has been em-  
 5045 ployed by Lucy’s Tomato Farm to automate the picking of tomatoes from their vines  
 5046 (when ripe) using computer vision and a harvesting robot. Lucy’s Farm grow five  
 5047 types of tomatoes (roma, cherry, plum, green, and yellow tomatoes). Nina’s robot—  
 5048 using an attached camera—will crawl and take a photo of each vine to assess it for



**Figure 10.4:** Pipeline of Nina’s harvesting robot. *Left:* Photo from harvesting robot’s webcam. *Centre:* Classification detecting different types of tomatoes. *Right:* Binary classification for ripeness (ripe/unripe) based on (R, G, B values).

5049 harvesting. Nina’s automated harvester needs to sort picked tomatoes into a respec-  
 5050 tive container, and thus several business rules need to be encoded into the prediction  
 5051 logic to sort each tomato detected based on its *ripeness* (ripe or not ripe) and *type of*  
 5052 *tomato* (as above). Nina uses a two-stage pipeline consisting of a multi-class and a  
 5053 binary classification model. She has decided to evaluate the viability of cloud based  
 5054 intelligent services and use them if operationally effective.

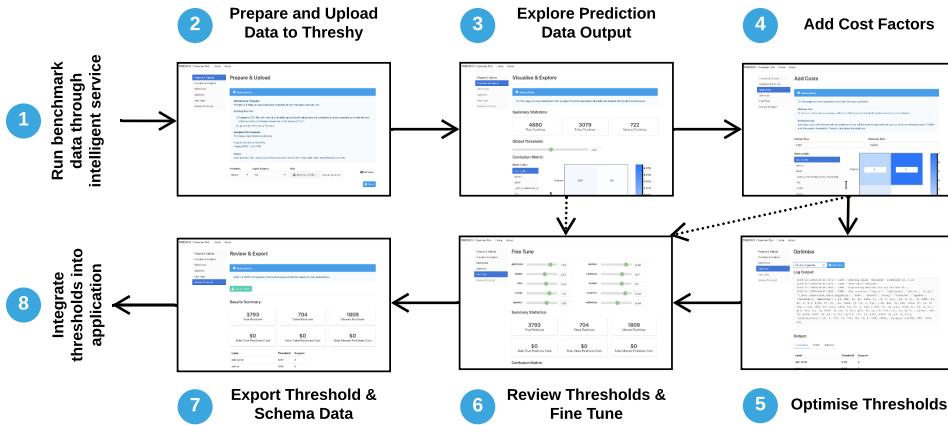
5055 Figure 10.4 illustrates an example of the pipeline as listed below:

- 5056 1. **Classify tomato ‘type’.** This stage uses an object localisation service to detect  
 5057 all tomato-like objects in the frame and classifies each tomato into one of the  
 5058 following labels: [‘roma’, ‘cherry’, ‘plum’, ‘green’, ‘yellow’, ‘unknown’].
- 5059 2. **Assess tomato ‘ripeness’.** This stage uses a crop of the localised tomatoes  
 5060 from the original frame to assess the crop’s colour properties (i.e., average  
 5061 colour must have  $R > 200$  and  $G < 240$ ). This produces a binary classification  
 5062 to deduce whether the tomato is ripe or not.

5063 Nina only has a minimal appreciation of the evaluation method to use for off-  
 5064 the-shelf computer vision (classification) services. She also needs to consider the  
 5065 financial costs of misclassifying either the tomato type or the ripeness. Missing a  
 5066 few ripe tomatoes isn’t a significant concern as the robot travels the field twice a  
 5067 week during harvest season. However, picking an unripe tomato is expensive as  
 5068 Lucy cannot sell them. Therefore, Nina needs a better (automated) way to assess  
 5069 the performance of the service and set optimal thresholds for her picking robot, to  
 5070 maximise profit.

5071 To assist in developing Nina’s pipeline, Lucy sampled a section of 1000 tomatoes  
 5072 by taking a photo of each tomato, manually labelling its type, and assessing whether  
 5073 the vine was ‘ripe’ or ‘not\_ripe’. Nina ran the labelled images through an IWS,  
 5074 with each image having a predicted type (multi-class) and ripeness (binary), with  
 5075 respective confidence values.

5076 Nina combined the predictions, their respective confidence values, and Lucy’s  
 5077 labelled ground truths into a CSV file which was then uploaded to Threshy. Nina  
 5078 asked Lucy the farmer to assist in setting relevant costs (from a business perspective)  
 5079 for correct predictions and false predictions. Threshy then recommended a choice



**Figure 10.5:** UI workflow for interacting with Threshy to optimise the thresholds for classification problem.

of decision threshold which Nina then fine tuned while considering the performance and cost implications.

### 10.3 Threshy

Threshy is a tool to assist software engineers with setting decision thresholds when integrating machine-learnt components in a system in collaboration with subject matter experts. Our tool also serves as a method to inform and educate engineers about the nuances to consider when using prepackaged ML services. Key novel features are:

- Automating threshold selection using an optimisation algorithm (NSGA-II [97]), optimising the results for each label.
- Support for user defined, domain-specific weights when optimising thresholds, such as financial costs and impact to society. This allows decision thresholds to be set within a business context as they differ between applications [108].
- Handles nuances of classification problems such as dealing with multi-objective optimisation, and metric selection—reducing errors of omission.
- Support key classification problems including binary (e.g. email is spam or ham), multi-class (e.g. predict the colour of a car), and multi-label (e.g. assign multiple topics to a document). Existing tools ignore multi-label classification.

Setting thresholds in Threshy is an eight step process as outlined in Figure 10.5. Software engineers ① run a benchmark dataset through the machine-learnt component to create a data file (CSV format) with true labels and predicted labels along with the predicted confidence values. The data file is then ② uploaded for initial exploration where engineers can ③ experiment with modifying a single global threshold for the dataset. Developers may choose to exit at this point (as indicated by dotted arrows in Figure 10.5). Optionally, the engineer ④ defines costs for missed predictions followed by selecting optimisation settings. The optional optimisation

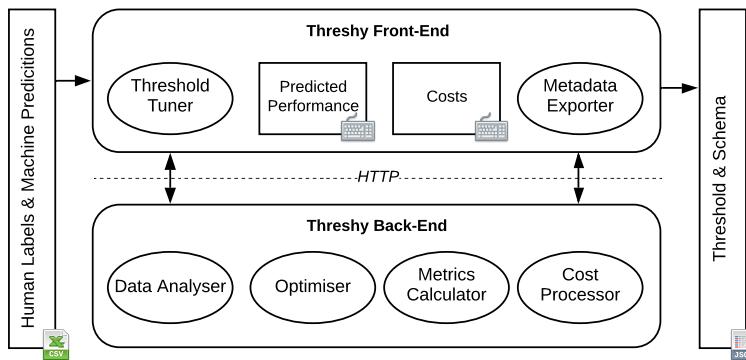
5106 step of Threshy ⑤ considers the performance and costs when deriving the thresh-  
5107 olds. Finally, the engineer can ⑥ review and fine tune the calculated thresholds,  
5108 associated costs, and ⑦ download generated threshold meta-data to be ⑧ integrated  
5109 into their application.

5110 Threshy runs a client/server architecture with a thin-client (see Figure 10.6).  
5111 The web-based application consists of an interactive front-end where developers  
5112 upload benchmark results—consisting of both human annotated labels and machine  
5113 predictions from the IWS—and use threshold tuners (via sliders) to present a data  
5114 summary of the uploaded information. Predicted model performances and costs are  
5115 entered manually into the web interface by the developer. The Threshy back-end  
5116 runs a data analyser, cost processor and metrics calculator when relevant changes  
5117 are made to the front-end’s tuning sliders. Separating the two concerns allows for  
5118 high intensity processing to be done on the server and not the front end.

5119 The data analyser provides a comprehensive overview of confusion matrices  
5120 compatible for multi-label multi-class classification problems. When representing  
5121 the confusion matrix, it is trivial to represent instances where multi-label multi-  
5122 classification is not considered. For example, in the simplest case, a single row in  
5123 the matrix represents a single label out of two classes, or each row has one label but it  
5124 has multiple classes. However, a more challenging case to visualise arises when you  
5125 have  $n$  labels and  $n$  classes; the true/false matches become too excessive to visualise  
5126 as it is disproportionate to the true results. To deal with this issue, we condense the  
5127 summary statistics down to three constructs: (i) number of true positives, (ii) false  
5128 positives, (iii) missed positives. This allows us to optimise against the true positives  
5129 and minimise the other two constructs. Threshy is a fully self-contained repository  
5130 of the tool implementation, scripting and exploratory notebooks, which is available  
5131 at <https://github.com/a2i2/threshy>.

## 5132 10.4 Related work

5133 Optimal machine-learnt decision boundaries depend on identifying the operating  
5134 conditions of the problem domain. A systematic study by Drummond and Holte  
5135 [108] classifies four operating conditions to determine a decision threshold: (i) the  
5136 operating condition is known and the model trained matches perfectly; (ii) where  
5137 the operating conditions are known but change with time, and thus the model must  
5138 be adaptable to such changes; (iii) where there is uncertainty in the knowledge of  
5139 the operating conditions certain changes in the operating condition are more likely  
5140 than others; (iv) where there is no knowledge of the operating conditions and the  
5141 conditions may change from the model in any possible way. Various approaches  
5142 to determine appropriate thresholds exist for all four of these cases, such as cost-  
5143 sensitive learning, ROC analysis, and Brier scores. However, an *automated* attempt  
5144 to calibrate decision threshold boundaries is not considered, and is largely pitched  
5145 at a non-software engineering audience. A recent study touches on this in model  
5146 management for large-scale adversarial instances in Google’s advertising system  
5147 [320], however this is only a single component within the entire architecture, and is  
5148 not a tool that is useful for developer’s in varying contexts. Our Threshy provides a



**Figure 10.6:** Architecture of Threshy.

‘plug-and-play’ style calibration method where any context/domain can have thresholds automatically calibrated *and* optimised for engineers. Threshy’s architecture supports a headless mode for use in monitoring workflows.

Support tools for ML frameworks generally fall into two categories. The first attempts to illuminate the ‘black box’ by offering ways in which developers can better understand the internals of the model to improve its performance. For extensive analyses and surveys into this area, see [161, 277]. However, a recent emphasis to probe only inputs and outputs of a model has been explored, exploring off-the-shelf models without knowledge of its unknowns (see Figure 10.2) to reflect the nature of real-world development. Google’s *What-If Tool* [377] for Tensorflow provides a means for data scientists to visualise, measure and assess model performance and fairness with various hypothetical scenarios and data features; similarly, Microsoft’s *Gamut* tool [160] provides an interface to test hypotheticals on Generalized Additive Models, and a *ModelTracker* tool [13] collates summary statistics on sample data to enable visualisation of model behaviour and access to key performance metrics.

However, these tools are focused toward pre-development model evaluation and not designed for software engineering workflows. Nor are they context-aware to the overall software system they are meant to target. They are also aimed at data scientists and model builders and do not consider consistent tooling that works across development, test, and production environments. Further, certain tools are tied to specific ML frameworks (e.g., What-If and Tensorflow). Our work, instead, attempts to bridge these gaps through a context-aware, structured workflow with an automated tool targeted to software developers; our tool is designed for software engineers to calibrate their thresholds and is used for IWS APIs in particular.

## 10.5 Conclusions & Future Work

Primary contributions of this work include Threshy, a tool for automating threshold selection, and the overall meta-workflow proposed in Threshy that developers can use as a point of reference for calibrating thresholds. In future work, we plan to evaluate Threshy with software engineers to identify additional insights required to

- 5178 make decision thresholds in practice and add code synthesis for monitoring concept drift and for implementing decision thresholds.
- 5179



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**5182 An Integration Architecture Tactic to guard AI-first Components<sup>†</sup>**

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5183

5184 **Abstract** Intelligent web services provide the power of AI to developers via simple REST-  
5185 ful API endpoints, abstracting away many complexities of machine learning. However,  
5186 most of these intelligent web services (IWSs)—such as computer vision—continually learn  
5187 with time. When the internals within the abstracted ‘black box’ become hidden and evolve,  
5188 pitfalls emerge in the robustness of applications that depend on these evolving services.  
5189 Without adapting the way developers plan and construct projects reliant on IWSs, signifi-  
5190 cant gaps and risks result in both project planning and development. Therefore, how can  
5191 software engineers best mitigate software evolution risk moving forward, thereby ensuring  
5192 that their own applications maintain quality? Our proposal is an architectural tactic designed  
5193 to improve intelligent service-dependent software robustness. The tactic involves creating  
5194 an application-specific benchmark dataset baselined against an intelligent service, enabling  
5195 evolutionary behaviour changes to be mitigated. A technical evaluation of our implemen-  
5196 tation of this architecture demonstrates how the tactic can identify 1,054 cases of substantial  
5197 confidence evolution and 2,461 cases of substantial changes to response label sets using a  
5198 dataset consisting of 331 images that evolve when sent to a service.

**5199 11.1 Introduction**

5200 The introduction of intelligent web services (IWSs) into the software engineering  
5201 ecosystem allows developers to leverage the power of artificial intelligence (AI)  
5202 without implementing complex AI algorithms, source and label training data, or  
5203 orchestrate powerful and large-scale hardware infrastructure. This is extremely

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<sup>†</sup>This chapter is originally based on A. Cummaudo, S. Barnett, R. Vasa, J. Grundy, and M. Abd-elrazek, “Beware the evolving ‘intelligent’ web service! An integration architecture tactic to guard AI-first components,” in *Proceedings of the 28th ACM Joint Meeting on European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering*. Virtual Event, USA: ACM, November 2020. DOI 10.1145/3368089.3409688, pp. 269–280. Terminology has been updated to fit this thesis.

5204 enticing for developers to embrace due to the effort, cost and non-trivial expertise  
5205 required to implement AI in practice [288, 321].

5206 However, the vendors that offer these services also periodically update their  
5207 behaviour (responses). The ideal practice for communicating the evolution of a  
5208 web service involves updating the version number and writing release notes. The  
5209 release notes typically describe new capabilities, known problems, and requirements  
5210 for proper operation [50]. Developers anticipate changes in behaviour between ver-  
5211 sioned releases although they expect the behaviour of a specific version to remain  
5212 stable over time [363]. However, emerging evidence indicates that ‘intelligent’ ser-  
5213 vices *do not* communicate changes explicitly [88]. Intelligent services evolve in  
5214 unpredictable ways, provide no notification to developers and changes are undocu-  
5215 mented [92]. To illustrate this, consider Figure 11.1, which shows the evolution of a  
5216 popular computer vision service (CVS) with examples of labels and associated confi-  
5217 dence scores changing are shown. This behaviour change severely negatively affects  
5218 reliability. Applications may no longer function correctly if labels are removed or  
5219 confidence scores change beyond predefined thresholds.

5220 Unlike traditional web services, the functionality of these IWSs is dependent  
5221 on a set of assumptions unique to their machine learning principles and algorithms.  
5222 These assumptions are based on the data used to train machine learning algorithms,  
5223 the choice of algorithm, and the choice of data processing steps—most of which  
5224 are not documented to service end users. The behaviour of these services evolve  
5225 over time [89]—typically this implies the underlying model has been updated or  
5226 re-trained.

5227 Vendors do not provide any guidance on how best to deal with this evolution in  
5228 client applications. For developers to discover the impact on their applications they  
5229 need to know the behavioural deviation and the associated impact on the robustness  
5230 and reliability of their system. Currently, there is no guidance on how to deal with  
5231 this evolution, nor do developers have an explicit checklist of the likely errors and  
5232 changes that they must test for [92].

5233 In this paper, we present a reference architecture to detect the evolution of such  
5234 IWSs, using a mature subset of these services that provide computer vision as an  
5235 exemplar. This tactic can be used both by intelligent service consumers, to defend  
5236 their applications against the evolutionary issues present in IWSs, and by service  
5237 vendors to make their services more robust. We also present a set of error conditions  
5238 that occur in existing CVSs.

5239 The key contributions of this paper are:

- 5240 • A set of new service error codes for describing the empirically observed error  
5241 conditions in IWSs.
- 5242 • A new reference architecture for using IWSs with a Proxy Server that returns  
5243 error codes based on an application specific benchmark dataset.
- 5244 • A labelled data set of evolutionary patterns in CVSs.
- 5245 • An evaluation of the new architecture and tactic showing its efficacy for  
5246 supporting IWS evolution from both provider and consumer perspectives.

5247 The rest of this paper is organised thus: Section 11.2 presents a motivating



'natural foods' (.956) → 'granny smith' (.986)



'skiing' (.937) → 'snow' (.982)



'girl' (.660) → 'photography' (.738)



'water' (.972) → 'wave' (.932)



'tennis' (.982) → 'sports' (.989)



'neighbourhood' (.925) → 'blue' (.927)

**Figure 11.1:** Prominent CVSSs evolve with time which is not effectively communicated to developers. Each image was uploaded in November 2018 and March 2019 and the topmost label was captured. Specialisation in labels (*Left*), generalisation in labels (*Centre*) and emphasis change in labels (*Right*) are all demonstrated from the same service with no API change and limited release note documentation. Confidence values indicated in parentheses.

example that anchors our work; Section 11.3 presents a landscape analysis on IWSs; Section 11.4 presents an overview of our architecture; Section 11.5 describes the technical evaluation; Section 11.6 presents a discussion into the implications of our architecture, its limitations and potential future work; Section 11.7 discusses related work; Section 11.8 provides concluding remarks.

## 11.2 Motivating Example

We identify the key requirements for managing evolution of IWSs using a motivating example. Consider Michelina, a software engineer tasked with developing a fall detector system for helping aged care facilities respond to falls promptly. Michelina decides to build the fall detector with an intelligent service for detecting people as she has no prior experience with machine learning. The initial system built by Michelina consists of a person detector and custom logic to identify a fall based on rapid shape deformation (i.e., a vertical ‘person’ changing to a horizontal ‘person’ greater than specified probability threshold value). Due to the inherent uncertainty present in an intelligent service and the importance of correctly identifying falls, Michelina informs the aged care facility that they should manually verify falls before dispatching a nurse to the location. The aged care facility is happy with this approach but inform Michelina that only a certain percentage of falls can be manually verified based on the availability of staff. In order to reduce the manual work Michelina sets thresholds for a range of confidence scores where the system is uncertain. Michelina completes the fall detector using a well-known cloud-based intelligent image classification web service and her client deploys this new fall detection application.

Three months go by and then the aged care facility contact Michelina saying the percentage of manual inspections is far too high and could she fix it. Michelina is mystified why this is occurring as she thoroughly tested the application with a large dataset provided by the aged care facility. On further inspection Michelina notices that the problem is caused by some images classifying the person with a ‘child’ label rather than a ‘person’ label. Michelina is frustrated and annoyed at this behaviour as (i) the cloud vendor did not document or notify her of the change of the intelligent service behaviour, (ii) she does not know the best practice for dealing with such a service evolution, and (iii) she cannot predict how the service will change in the future. This experience also makes Michelina wonder what other types of evolution can occur and how can she minimise these behavioural changes on her critical care application. Michelina then begins building an ad-hoc solution hoping that what she designs will be sufficient.

For Michelina to build a robust solution she needs to support the following requirements:

- R1. Define a set of error conditions that specify the types of evolution that occur for an intelligent service.
- R2. Provide a notification mechanism for informing client applications of behavioural changes to ensure the robustness and reliability of the application.

- 5289     **R3.** Monitor the evolution of IWSs for changes that affect the application's be-  
5290         haviour.
- 5291     **R4.** Implement a flexible architecture that is adaptable to different IWSs and ap-  
5292         plication contexts to facilitate reuse.

## 5293     **11.3 Intelligent Services**

5294     We present background information on IWSs describing how they differ from tra-  
5295         ditional web services, the dimensions of their evolution and the currently limited  
5296         configuration options available to users.

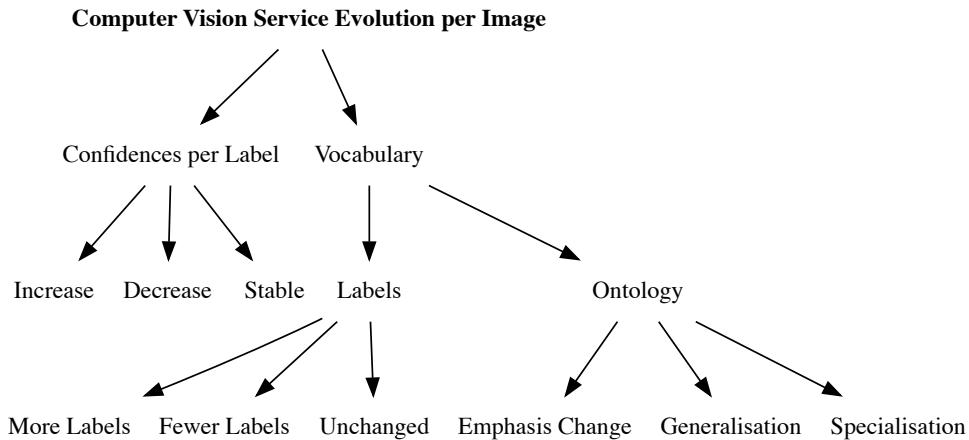
### 5297     **11.3.1 ‘Intelligent’ vs ‘Traditional’ Web Services**

5298     Unlike conventional web services, IWSs are built using AI-based components. These  
5299         components are unlike traditional software engineering paradigms as they are data-  
5300         dependent and do not result in deterministic outcomes. These services make future  
5301         predictions on new data based solely against its training dataset; outcomes are  
5302         expressed as probabilities that the inference made matches a label(s) within its  
5303         training data. Further, these services are often marketed as forever evolving and  
5304         ‘improving’. This means that their large training datasets may continuously update  
5305         the prediction classifiers making the inferences, resulting both in probabilistic and  
5306         non-deterministic outcomes [89, 163]. Critically for software engineers using the  
5307         services, these non-deterministic aspects have not been sufficiently documented in  
5308         the service’s API documented, which has been shown to confuse developers [92].

5309     A strategy to combat such service changes, which we often observe in traditional  
5310         software engineering practices, are for such services to be versioned upon substantial  
5311         change. Unfortunately emerging evidence indicates that prominent cloud vendors  
5312         providing these IWSs do not release new versioned endpoints of the APIs when the  
5313         *internal model* changes [89]. For IWSs, it is impossible to invoke requests specific  
5314         to a particular version model that was trained at a particular date in time. This means  
5315         that developers need to consider how evolutionary changes to the IWSs they make  
5316         use of may impact their solutions *in production*.

### 5317     **11.3.2 Dimensions of Evolution**

5318     The various key dimensions of the evolution of IWSs is illustrated in Figure 11.2.  
5319     There are two primary dimensions of evolution: *changes to the label sets* returned  
5320         per image submitted and *changes to the confidences* per label in the set of labels  
5321         returned per image. In the former, we identify two key aspects: cardinality changes  
5322         and ontology changes. Cardinality changes occur when the service either introduces  
5323         or drops a label for the same image at two different generations. Alternatively, the  
5324         cardinality may remain stagnant, although this is not guaranteed. This results in  
5325         an expectation mismatch by developers as to what labels can or will be returned by  
5326         the service. For instance, the terms ‘black’ and ‘black and white’ may be found to  
5327         be categorised as two separate labels. Secondly, the ontologies of these labels are



**Figure 11.2:** The dimensions of evolution identified within CVSSs.



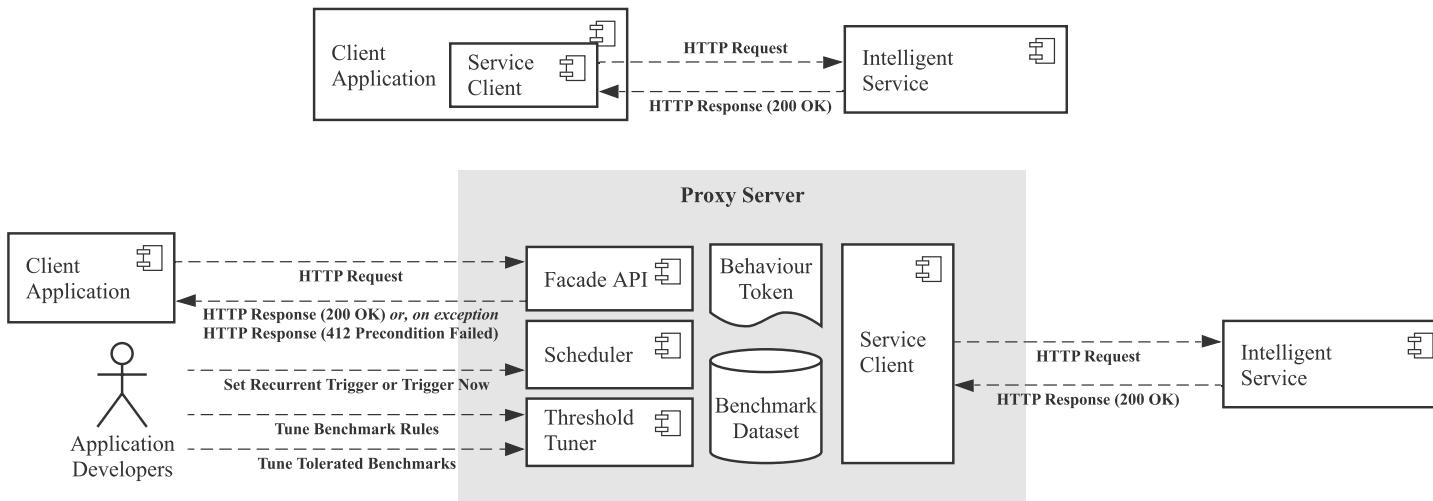
**Figure 11.3:** A significant confidence increase ( $\delta = +0.425$ ) from ‘window’ (0.559) to ‘water transportation’ (0.984) goes beyond simple decision boundaries.

5328 non-static, and a label may become more generalised into a hypernym, specialised  
 5329 into a hyponym, or the emphasis of the label may change either to a co-hyponym or  
 5330 another aspect in the image, such as the colour or scene, rather than the subject of  
 5331 the image [89].

5332 Secondly, we have identified that the confidence values returned per label are also  
 5333 non-static. While some services may present minor changes to labels’ confidences  
 5334 resulting from statistical noise, other labels had significant changes that were beyond  
 5335 basic decision boundaries. An example is shown in Figure 11.3. Developer code  
 5336 written to assume certain ranges/confidence intervals will fail if the service evolves  
 5337 in this way.

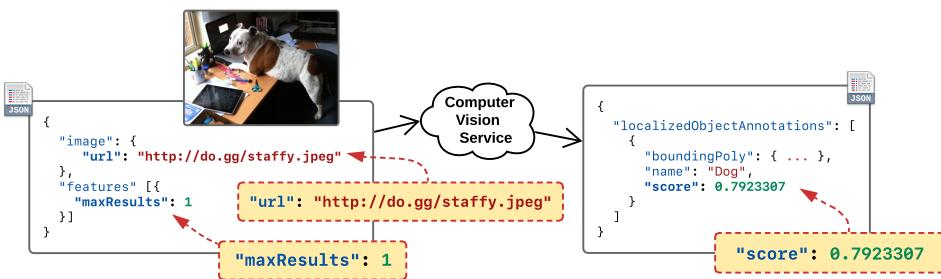
### 5338 11.3.3 Limited Configurability

5339 As an example, consider Figure 11.5, which illustrates an image of a dog uploaded to  
 5340 a well-known cloud-based CVS. Developers have very few configuration parameters  
 5341 in the upload payload (`url` for the image to analyse and `maxResults` for the number  
 5342 of objects to detect). The JSON output payload provides the confidence value of its  
 5343 estimated bounding box and label of the dog object via its `score` field (0.792). This  
 5344 value indicates the level of confidence in the label returned, and is dependent on the  
 5345 input to the underlying ML model used by that service. Developers set thresholds



**Figure 11.4:** Top: Accessing an intelligent service directly. Bottom: Primary components of the Proxy Server approach.

as a decision boundary in this case, a threshold of “greater than 0.7” could indicate that the image contains a dog where as any other value the system is uncertain. These decision boundaries determine if the service’s output is accepted or rejected. However, these confidence scores change whenever a model is re-trained and these changes are not communicated or propagated to developers [89]. Developers can only modify these parameters to influence the score to improve the performance of the IWS. This is unlike many machine learning toolkit hyper-parameter optimisation facilities, which can be used to configure the internal parameters of the algorithm for training a model. In this case, developers using the IWS have no insight into which hyperparameters were used when training the model or the algorithm selected, and cannot tune the trained model. Thus an evaluation procedure must be followed as a part of using an intelligent service for an application to tune their output confidence values. and select appropriate threshold boundaries. While some service providers provide some guidance to thresholding,<sup>1</sup> they do not provide domain-specific tooling. This is because choice of appropriate thresholds is dependent on the data and must consider factors, such as algorithmic performance, financial cost, and impact of false-positives/negatives.



**Figure 11.5:** Request and response for an intelligent computer vision web service with only three configuration parameters: the image’s url, maxResults and score.

However, decision boundaries in service client code using simple If conditions around confidence scores is not a sufficient enough strategy, as evidence shows intelligent, non-deterministic web services change sporadically and unknowingly. Most traditional, deterministic code bases handle unexpected behaviour of called APIs via *error codes* and exception handling. Thus the non-deterministic components of the client code, such as those using CVSs, will also tend to conflict with their traditional deterministic components as the latter do not deal in terms of probabilities but in using error codes. This makes achieving robust component integration in client code bases hard. More sophisticated monitoring of IWSs in client code is therefore required to map the non-deterministic service behaviour changes to errors such that the surrounding infrastructure can support it and reduce interface boundary problems. While data science literature acknowledges the need for such an architecture [113] they do not offer any technical software engineering solutions to mitigate the issues such that software engineers have a pattern to work against it. To date, there do not

<sup>1</sup><https://bit.ly/36oMgWb> last accessed 20 May 2020.

**Table 11.1:** Potential reasons for a 412 Precondition Failed response.

Error Code	Error Description
No Key Yet	This indicates that the Proxy Server is still initialising its first behaviour token, i.e., $k_0$ does not yet exist.
Service Mismatch	The service encoded within the behaviour token provided to the Proxy Server does not match the service the Proxy Server is benchmarked against. This makes it possible for one Proxy Server to face multiple CVSs.
Dataset Mismatch	The benchmark dataset $B$ encoded within the behaviour token does not match the benchmark dataset encoded within the Proxy Server.
Success Mismatch	The success of each response within the benchmark dataset must be true for a behaviour token to be used within a request. This error indicates that $k_r$ is, therefore, not successful.
Min Confidence Mismatch	The minimum confidence delta threshold set in $k_t$ does not match that of $k_r$ .
Max Labels Mismatch	The maximum label delta threshold set in $k_t$ does not match that of $k_r$ .
Response Length Mismatch	The number of responses within $k_t$ does not match that within $k_r$ .
Label Delta Mismatch	An image within $B$ has either dropped or gained a number of labels that exceeds the maximum label delta. Thus, $k_r$ exceeds the threshold encoded within $k_t$ .
Confidence Delta Mismatch	One of the labels within an image encoded in $k_r$ exceeds the confidence threshold encoded within $k_t$ .
Expected Labels Mismatch	One of the expected labels for an image within $k_t$ is now missing.

<sup>5377</sup> yet exist IWS client code architectures, tactics or patterns that achieve this goal.

## <sup>5378</sup> 11.4 Our Approach

<sup>5379</sup> To address the requirements from Section 11.2 we have developed a new Proxy  
<sup>5380</sup> Service<sup>2</sup> that includes: (i) evaluation of an intelligent service using an application  
<sup>5381</sup> specific benchmark dataset, (ii) a Proxy Server to provide client applications with  
<sup>5382</sup> evolution aware errors, and (iii) a scheduled evolution detection mechanism. The  
<sup>5383</sup> current approach of using an intelligent API via direct access is shown in Figure 11.4  
<sup>5384</sup> (top). In contrast, an overview of our approach is shown in Figure 11.4 (bottom).  
<sup>5385</sup> The following sections describe our approach in detail.

### <sup>5386</sup> 11.4.1 Core Components

<sup>5387</sup> For the purposes of this paper we assume that the intelligent service of interest  
<sup>5388</sup> is an image recognition service, but our approach generalises to other intelligent,

<sup>2</sup>A reference architecture is provided at <http://bit.ly/2TlMmDh>.

trained model-based services e.g., natural language processing, document recognition, voice, etc. Each image, when uploaded to the intelligent service returns a response ( $R$ ) which is a set describing a label ( $l$ ) of what is in the image ( $i$ ) along with its associated confidence ( $c$ )—thus  $R_i = \{(l_1, c_1), (l_2, c_2), \dots (l_n, c_n)\}$ . Most documentation of these services imply that these confidence values are all that is needed to handle evolution in their systems. This means that if a label changes beyond a certain threshold, then the developer can deal with the issue then (or ignore it). While this approach may work in some simple application contexts, in many it may not. Our Proxy Server offers a way to monitor if these changes go beyond a threshold of tolerance, checking against a domain-specific dataset over time.

#### 5399 11.4.1.1 Benchmark Dataset

5400 Monitoring an intelligent service for behaviour change requires a Benchmark Dataset,  
 5401 a set of  $n$  images. For each image ( $i$ ) in the Benchmark Dataset ( $B$ ) there is an associ-  
 5402 ated label ( $l$ ) that represents the true value for that item;  $B_i = \{(i_1, l_1), (i_2, l_2), \dots (i_n, l_n)\}$ .  
 5403 This dataset is used to check for evolution in IWSs by periodically sending each im-  
 5404 age within the dataset to the service’s API, as per the rules encoded within the  
 5405 Scheduler (see Section 11.4.1.6). By using a dataset specific to the application  
 5406 domain, developers can detect when evolution affects their application rather than  
 5407 triggering all non-impactful changes. This helps achieve our requirement *R3. Monitor*  
*5408 the evolution of IWSs for changes that affect the application’s behaviour.* Using  
 5409 application-specific datasets also ensures that the architectural style can be used for  
 5410 different IWSs as only the data used needs to change. This design choice encourages  
 5411 reuse satisfying requirement *R4. Implement a flexible architecture that is adapt-*  
*5412 able to different IWSs and application contexts to facilitate reuse.* We propose an  
 5413 initial set of guidelines on how to create and update the benchmark dataset within  
 5414 Section 11.6.3.1.

#### 5415 11.4.1.2 Facade API

5416 An architectural ‘facade’ is the central component to our mitigation strategy for  
 5417 monitoring and detecting for changes in called IWSs. The facade acts as a guarded  
 5418 gateway to the intelligent service that defends against two key issues: (i) potential  
 5419 shifts in model variations that power the cloud vendor services, and (ii) ensures that  
 5420 a context-specific dataset specific to the application being developed is validated  
 5421 *over time.* By using a facade we can return evolution-aware error codes to the client  
 5422 application satisfying requirement *R1. Define a set of error conditions that specify*  
*5423 the types of evolution that occur for an intelligent service* and enabling requirement  
*5424 R3. Monitor the evolution of IWSs for changes that affect the application’s behaviour.*  
 5425 This works by ensuring every request made by the client application contains a valid  
 5426 Behaviour Token (see Section 11.4.1.4) and will reject the request when evolution  
 5427 has been identified by the Scheduler with an associated error code. The Facade API  
 5428 essentially ‘blocks’ the client application out from accessing the intelligent service  
 5429 when an invalid state has occurred.

**Table 11.2:** Rules encoded within a Behaviour Token.

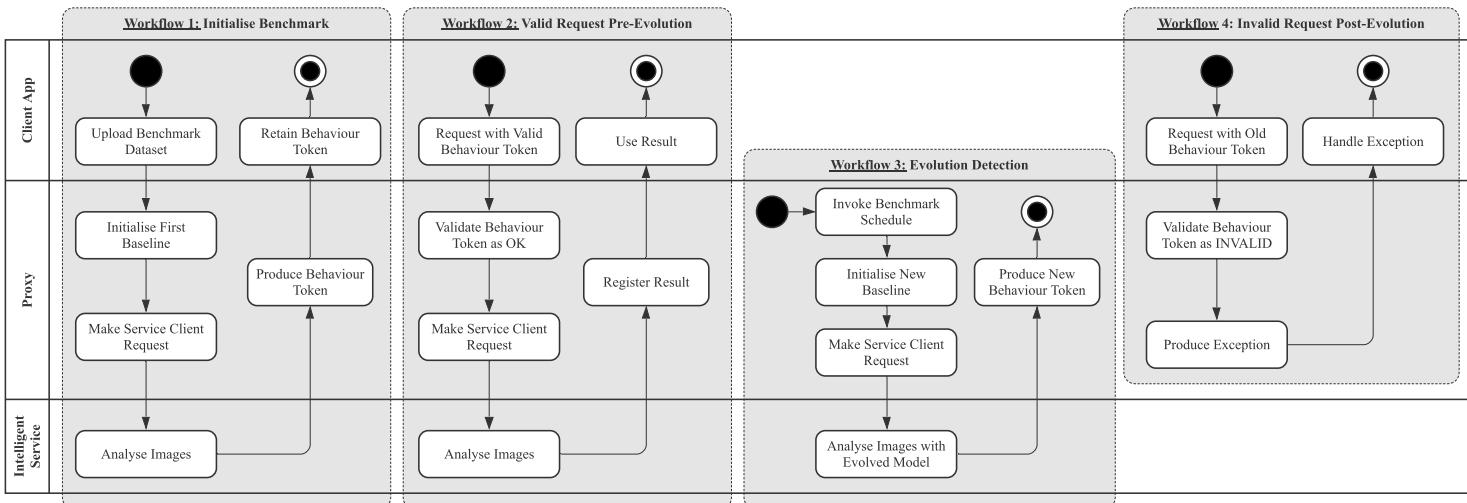
Rule	Description
Max Labels	The value of $n$ .
Min Confidence	The smallest acceptable value of $c$ .
Max $\delta$ Labels	The minimum number of labels dropped or introduced from the current $k_t$ and provided $k_r$ to be considered a violation (i.e $ l(k_t) \Delta l(k_r) $ ).
Max $\delta$ Confidence	The minimum confidence change of <i>any</i> label from the current $k_t$ and provided $k_r$ to be considered a violation.
Expected Labels	A set of labels that every response must include.

#### 5430 11.4.1.3 Threshold Tuner

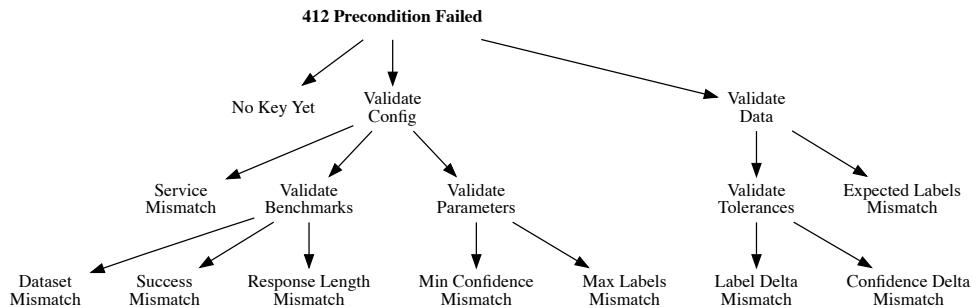
5431 Selecting an appropriate threshold for detecting behavioural change depends on the  
 5432 application context. Setting the threshold too low increases the likelihood of incor-  
 5433 rect results, while setting the threshold too high means undesired changes are being  
 5434 detected. Our approach enables developers to configure these parameters through a  
 5435 Threshold Tuner, and consider competing factors such as algorithmic performance,  
 5436 financial cost, and impact of false-positives/negatives. This component improves  
 5437 robustness as now there is a systematic approach for monitoring and responding to  
 5438 incorrect thresholds. Configurable thresholds meet our key requirements *R2* and *R3*.  
 5439 An example of the component is detailed within our complement paper published in  
 5440 the ESEC/FSE 2020 demonstrations track [90].

#### 5441 11.4.1.4 Behaviour Token

5442 The Behaviour Token stores the current state of the Proxy Server by encoding specific  
 5443 rules regarding the evolution of the intelligent service. The current token (at time  $t$ )  
 5444 held by the Proxy Server is denoted by  $k_t$ . These rules are specified by the developer  
 5445 upon initialisation of this Proxy Server, and are presented in Table 11.2. When the  
 5446 Proxy Server is first initialised (i.e., at  $t = 0$ ), the first Behaviour Token is created  
 5447 based on the Benchmark Dataset and its configuration parameters (Table 11.2) and  
 5448 is stored locally (thus  $k_0$  is created). The Behaviour Token is passed to the client  
 5449 application to be used in subsequent requests to the proxy server, where  $k_r$  represents  
 5450 the Behaviour Token passed from the client application to the proxy server. Each  
 5451 time the proxy server receives the Behaviour Token from the client the validity of the  
 5452 token is validated with a comparison to the Proxy Server's current behaviour token  
 5453 (i.e.,  $k_r \equiv k_t$ ). An invalid token (i.e., when  $k_r \not\equiv k_t$ ) indicates that an error caused by  
 5454 evolution has occurred and the application developer needs to appropriately handle  
 5455 the exception. Behaviour Tokens are essential for meeting requirement *R3*. *Monitor*  
 5456 *the evolution of IWSs for changes that affect the application's behaviour*.



**Figure 11.6:** State diagram for the four workflows presented.



**Figure 11.7:** Precondition failure taxonomy; leaf nodes indicate error types returned to users.

#### 5457 11.4.1.5 Service Client

5458 If any of the rules above are violated, then the response of the facade request varies  
 5459 depending on the behaviour encoded within the behaviour token. This can be one  
 5460 of:

- 5461 • **Error:** Where a HTTP non-200 code is returned by the facade to the client  
 5462 application, indicating that the client application must deal with the issue  
 5463 immediately;
- 5464 • **Warning:** Where a warning ‘callback’ endpoint is called with the violated  
 5465 response to be dealt with, but the response is still returned to the client  
 5466 application;
- 5467 • **Info:** Where the violated response is logged in the facade’s logger for the  
 5468 developer to periodically read and inspect, and the response is returned to the  
 5469 client application.

5470 We implement this Proxy Server pattern using HTTP conditional requests. As  
 5471 we treat the Label as a first class citizen, we return the labels for a specific image  
 5472 ( $r_i$ ) only where the *Entity Tag* (ETag) or *Last Modified* validators pass. The  $k_r$   
 5473 is encoded within either the ETag (i.e., a unique identifier representing  $t$ ) or as  
 5474 the date labels (and thus models) were last modified (i.e., using the *If-Match*  
 5475 or *If-Unmodified-Since* conditional headers). We note that the use of *weak*  
 5476 ETags should be used, as byte-for-byte equivalence is not checked but only semantic  
 5477 equivalence within the tolerances specified. Should  $t$  evolve to an invalid state (i.e.,  
 5478  $k_r$  is no longer valid against  $k_t$ ) then the behaviour as described above will be  
 5479 enacted.

5480 These HTTP header fields are used as the ‘backbone’ to help enforce robustness  
 5481 of the services against evolutionary changes and context within the problem domain  
 5482 dataset. Responses from the service are forwarded to the clients when such rules  
 5483 are met, otherwise alternative behaviour occurs. For example, the most severe of  
 5484 violated erroneous behaviour is the ‘Error’ behaviour. To enforce this rule, we  
 5485 advocate for use of the 412 Precondition Failed HTTP error if a violation  
 5486 occurs, as a *If-\** conditional header was violated. An example of this architectural  
 5487 pattern with the ‘Error’ behaviour is illustrated in Figure 11.6.

5488 We suggest the 412 Precondition Failed HTTP error be returned in the  
5489 event that a behaviour token is violated against a new benchmark. Further details  
5490 outlining the reasons why a precondition has failed are encoded within a JSON  
5491 response sent back to the consuming application. The following describes the  
5492 two broad categories of possible errors returned: *robustness precondition failure*  
5493 or *benchmark precondition failure*. These are illustrated in a high level within  
5494 Figure 11.7 where leaf nodes are the potential error types that can be returned. A  
5495 list of the different error codes are given in Table 11.1, where errors above the rule  
5496 are robustness expectations (which check for basic requirements such as whether the  
5497 key provided encodes the same data as the dataset in the facade) while those below  
5498 are benchmark expectations (which identifies evolution cases).

5499 **11.4.1.6 Scheduler**

5500 The Scheduler is responsible for triggering the Evolution Detection Workflow (de-  
5501 scribed in detail below in Section 11.4.2). Developers set the schedule to run in  
5502 the background at regular intervals or to trigger if violations occur  $z$  times. The  
5503 Scheduler is the component that enables our architectural style to identify called  
5504 intelligent service software evolution and to notify the client applications that such  
5505 evolution has occurred. Client applications can then respond to this evolution in a  
5506 timely manner rather than wait for the system to fail, as in our motivating example.  
5507 The Scheduler is necessary to satisfy our requirements  $R2$  and  $R3$ .

5508 **11.4.2 Usage Example**

5509 We explain how developer Michelina, from our motivating example, would use  
5510 our proposed solution to satisfy the requirements described in Section 11.2. Each  
5511 workflow is presented in Figure 11.6. Only *Workflow 1 - Initialise Benchmark* is  
5512 executed once, while the rest are cycled. The description below assumes Michelina  
5513 has implemented the Proxy.

5514 **11.4.2.1 Workflow 1. Initialise Benchmark**

5515 The first task that Michelina has to do is to prepare and initialise the benchmark  
5516 dataset within the Proxy Server. To prepare a representative dataset, Michelina needs  
5517 to follow well established guidelines such as those proposed by Pyle. Michelina also  
5518 needs to manually assign labels to each image before uploading the dataset to the  
5519 Proxy along with the thresholds to use for detecting behavioural change. The full set  
5520 of parameters that Michelina has to set are based on the rules shown in Table 11.2.  
5521 Michelina cannot use the Proxy to notify her of evolution until a Benchmark Dataset  
5522 has been provided. The Proxy then sends each image in the Benchmark Dataset to  
5523 the intelligent service and stores the results. From these results, a Behaviour Token  
5524 is generated which is passed back to the Client Application. Michelina uses this  
5525 token in all future requests to the Proxy as the token captures the current state of the  
5526 intelligent service.

5527 *11.4.2.2 Workflow 2. Valid Request Pre-Evolution*

5528 Workflow 2 represents the steps followed when the intelligent service is behaving as  
5529 expected. Michelina makes a request to label an image to the Proxy using the token  
5530 that she received when registering the Benchmark Dataset. The token is validated  
5531 with the Proxy’s current state token and then a request to label the image is made to  
5532 the intelligent service if no errors have occurred. Results returned by the intelligent  
5533 service are registered with the Proxy Server. Michelina can be confident that the  
5534 result returned by our service is in line with her expectations.

5535 *11.4.2.3 Workflow 3. Evolution Detection*

5536 Workflow 3 describes how the Proxy functions when behavioural change is present  
5537 in the called intelligent service. Michelina sets a schedule for once a day so that the  
5538 Proxy’s Scheduler triggers Workflow 3. First, each image in the Benchmark Dataset  
5539 is sent to the intelligent service. Unlike, Workflow 1, we already have a Behaviour  
5540 Token that represents the previous state of the intelligent service. In this case, the  
5541 model behind the intelligent service has been updated and provides different results  
5542 for the Benchmark Dataset. Second, the Proxy updates the internal Behaviour Token  
5543 ready for the next request. At this stage Michelina will be notified that the behaviour  
5544 of the intelligent service has changed.

5545 *11.4.2.4 Workflow 4. Invalid Request Post-Evolution*

5546 Workflow 4 provides Michelina with an error message when evolution has been  
5547 detected. Michelina’s client application makes a request to the Proxy Server with  
5548 an old Behaviour Token. The Proxy Server then validates the client token which is  
5549 invalid as the Behaviour Token has been updated. In this case, an exception is raised  
5550 and an appropriate error message as discussed above is included in the response  
5551 back to Michelina’s client application. Michelina can code her application to handle  
5552 each error class in appropriate ways for her domain.

5553 **11.5 Evaluation**

5554 Our evaluation of our novel intelligent service Proxy Server approach uses a technical  
5555 evaluation based on the results of an observational study. We used existing datasets  
5556 from observational studies [89, 218] to identify problematic evolution in computer  
5557 vision labelling services. This technical evaluation is designed to show: (i) what  
5558 the responses are with and without our architecture present (highlighting errors); (ii)  
5559 the overall increased robustness using enhanced responses; and (iii) the technical  
5560 soundness of the approach. Thus, we propose the following research question which  
5561 we answer in Section 11.5.2: “*Can the architecture identify evolutionary issues of*  
5562 *computer vision services via error codes?*” Based on our findings we proposed and  
5563 implemented the Proxy Server using a Ruby development framework which we have

<sup>5564</sup> made available online for experimentation.<sup>3</sup> Additional data was collected from the  
<sup>5565</sup> CVS and sent to the Proxy Server to evaluate how the service handles behavioural  
<sup>5566</sup> change.

### <sup>5567</sup> 11.5.1 Data Collection and Preparation

<sup>5568</sup> To minimise reviewer bias, we do not identify the name of the service used, however  
<sup>5569</sup> this service was one of the most adopted cloud vendors used in enterprise applications  
<sup>5570</sup> in 2018 [120]. The two existing datasets used [89, 218] consisted of 6,680 images.

<sup>5571</sup> We initialised the benchmark (workflow 1) in November 2018, and sent each  
<sup>5572</sup> image to the service every eight days and captured the JSON responses through the  
<sup>5573</sup> facade API (workflow 2) until March 2019. This resulted in 146,960 JSON responses  
<sup>5574</sup> from the target CVS. We then selected the first and last set of JSON responses (i.e.,  
<sup>5575</sup> 13,360 responses) and independently identified 331 cases of evolution of the original  
<sup>5576</sup> 6,680 images. This was achieved by analysing the JSON responses for each image  
<sup>5577</sup> taken in using an evaluation script.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>5578</sup> For each JSON response, evolution (as classified by Figure 11.2) was determined  
<sup>5579</sup> either by a vocabulary or confidence per label change in the first and last responses  
<sup>5580</sup> sent. For the 331 evolving responses, we calculated the delta of the label’s confidence  
<sup>5581</sup> between the two timestamps and the delta in the number of labels recorded in the  
<sup>5582</sup> entire response. Further, for the highest-ranking label (by confidence), we manually  
<sup>5583</sup> classified whether its ontology became more specific, more generalised or whether  
<sup>5584</sup> there was substantial emphasis change. The distribution of confidence differences per  
<sup>5585</sup> these three groups are shown in Figure 11.8, with the mean confidence delta indicated  
<sup>5586</sup> with a vertical dotted line. This highlights that, on average, labels that change  
<sup>5587</sup> emphasis generally have a greater variation, such as the example in Figure 11.3.  
<sup>5588</sup> Further, we grouped each image into one of four broad categories—*food*, *animals*,  
<sup>5589</sup> *vehicles*, *humans*—and assessed the breakdown of ontology variance as provided  
<sup>5590</sup> in Table 11.3. We provide this dataset as an additional contribution and to permit  
<sup>5591</sup> replication.<sup>5</sup> The parameters set for our initial benchmark were a delta label value of  
<sup>5592</sup> 3 and delta confidence value of 0.01. Expected labels for relevant groups were also  
<sup>5593</sup> assigned as mandatory label sets (e.g., *animal* images used ‘animal’, ‘fauna’ and  
<sup>5594</sup> ‘organism’; *human* images used ‘human’ etc.).

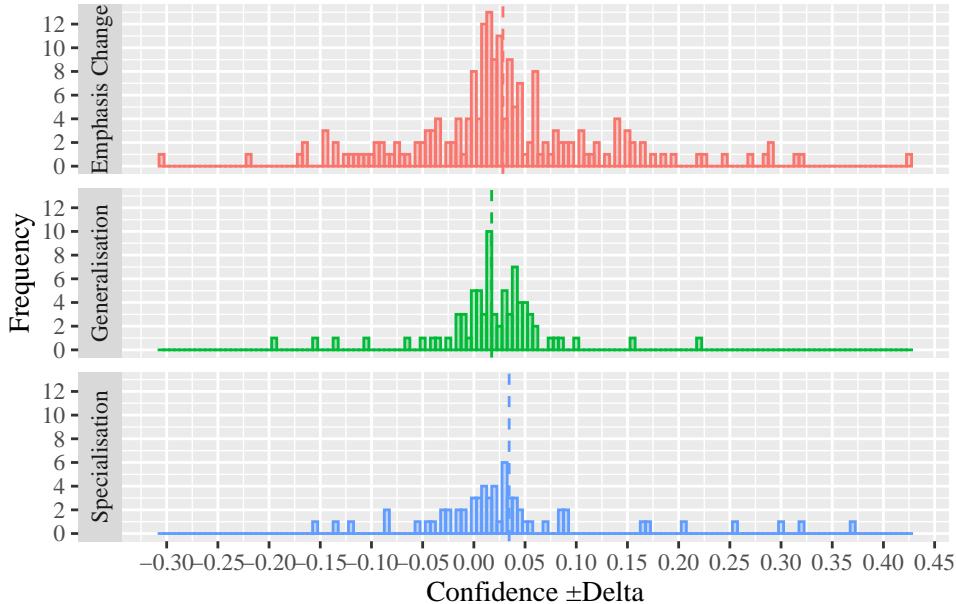
### <sup>5595</sup> 11.5.2 Results

<sup>5596</sup> Examples of the March 2019 responses contrasting the proxy and direct service  
<sup>5597</sup> responses in our evaluation are shown in Figures 11.9 to 11.11. (Due to space limita-  
<sup>5598</sup> tions, the entire JSON response is partially redacted using ellipses.) These examples  
<sup>5599</sup> identify the label identified with the highest level of confidence in three examples  
<sup>5600</sup> against the ground truth label in the benchmark dataset. In total, the Proxy Server  
<sup>5601</sup> identified 1,334 labels added to the responses and 1,127 labels dropped, with, on  
<sup>5602</sup> average, a delta of 8 labels added. The topmost labels added were ‘architecture’

<sup>3</sup><http://bit.ly/2TIMmDh> last accessed 5 March 2020.

<sup>4</sup><http://bit.ly/2G7saFJ> last accessed 2 March 2020.

<sup>5</sup><http://bit.ly/2VQrAUU> last accessed 5 March 2020.



**Figure 11.8:** Histogram of confidence variation.

5603 at 32 cases, ‘building’ at 20 cases and ‘ingredient’ at 20 cases; the topmost  
 5604 labels dropped were ‘tree’ at 21 cases, ‘sky’ at 19 cases and ‘fun’ at 17 cases.  
 5605 1054 confidence changes were also observed by the Proxy Server, on average a delta  
 5606 increase of 0.0977.

5607 In Figure 11.9, we highlight an image of a sheep that was identified as a ‘sheep’  
 5608 (at 0.9622) in November 2018 and then a ‘mammal’ in March 2019. This evolution  
 5609 was classified by the Proxy Server as a confidence change error as the delta in  
 5610 the confidences between the two timestamps exceeds the parameter set of 0.01—in  
 5611 this case, ‘sheep’ was downgraded to the third-ranked label at 0.9816, thereby  
 5612 increasing by a value of 0.0194. As shown in the example, four other labels evolved  
 5613 for this image between the two time stamps (‘herd’, ‘livestock’, ‘terrestrial  
 5614 animal’ and ‘snout’) with an average increase of 0.1174 found. Such information  
 5615 is encoded as a 412 HTTP error returned back to the user by the Proxy Server,  
 5616 rejecting the request as substantial evolution has occurred, however the response  
 5617 directly from the service indicates no error at all (indicating by a 200 HTTP response).

5618 Similarly, Figure 11.10 shows a violation of the number of acceptable changes in  
 5619 the number of labels a response should have between two timestamps. In November  
 5620 2018, the response includes the labels ‘car’, ‘motor vehicle’, ‘city’ and  
 5621 ‘road’, however these labels are not present in the 2019 response. The response  
 5622 in 2019 introduces ‘transport’, ‘building’, ‘architecture’, and ‘house’.  
 5623 Therefore, the combined delta is 4 dropped and 4 introduced labels, exceeding our  
 5624 threshold set of 3.

5625 Lastly, Figure 11.11 indicates an expected label failure. In this example, the  
 5626 label ‘fauna’ was dropped in the 2018 label set, which was an expected label  
 5627 of all animals we labelled in our dataset. Additionally, this particular response

**Table 11.3:** Variance in ontologies for the five broad categories.

Ontology Change	Food	Animal	Vehicles	Humans	Other	Total
Generalisation	8	13	11	8	38	78
Specialisation	5	12	1	1	43	62
Emphasis Change	18	4	10	21	138	191
Total	31	29	22	30	219	331

5628 introduced ‘green iguana’, ‘iguanidae’, and ‘marine iguana’ to its label  
5629 set. Therefore, not only was this response in violation of the label delta mismatch, it  
5630 was also in violation of the expected labels mismatch error, and thus is caught twice  
5631 by the Proxy Server.

### 5632 11.5.3 Threats to Validity

#### 5633 11.5.3.1 Internal Validity

5634 As mentioned, we selected a popular CVS provider to test our proxy server against.  
5635 However, there exist many other CVSs, and due to language barriers of the authors,  
5636 no non-English speaking service were selected despite a large number available from  
5637 Asia. Further, no user evaluation has been performed on the architectural tactic so  
5638 far, and therefore developers may suggest improvements to the approach we have  
5639 taken in designing our tactic. We intend to follow this up with a future study.

#### 5640 11.5.3.2 External Validity

5641 This paper only evaluates the object detection endpoint of a computer vision-based  
5642 intelligent service. While this type of intelligent service is one of the more mature  
5643 AI-based services available on the market—and is largely popular with develop-  
5644 ers [92]—further evaluations of the our tactic may need to be explored against other  
5645 endpoints (i.e., object localisation) or, indeed, other types of services, such as natural  
5646 language processing, audio transcription, or on time-series data. Future studies may  
5647 need to explore this avenue of research.

#### 5648 11.5.3.3 Construct Validity

5649 The evaluation of our experiment was largely conducted under clinical conditions,  
5650 and a real-world case study of the design and implementation of our proposed tactic  
5651 would be beneficial to learn about possible side-effects from implementing such a  
5652 design (e.g., implications to cost etc.). Therefore, our evaluation does not consider  
5653 more practical considerations that a real-world, production-grade system may need  
5654 to consider.



**Label:** Animal  
**Nov 2018:** 'sheep' (0.9622)  
**Mar 2019:** 'mammal' (0.9890)  
**Category:** Confidence Change

---

*Intelligent Service Response in March 2019*

```

1 { "responses": [ { "label_annotations": [
2   { "mid": "/m/04rky",
3     "description": "mammal",
4     "score": 0.9890478253364563,
5     "topicality": 0.9890478253364563 },
6   { "mid": "/m/09686",
7     "description": "vertebrate",
8     "score": 0.9851104021072388,
9     "topicality": 0.9851104021072388 },
10  { "mid": "/m/07bgp",
11    "description": "sheep",
12    "score": 0.9815810322761536,
13    "topicality": 0.9815810322761536 },
14    ... ] } ]

```

---

*Proxy Server Response in March 2019*

```

1 { "error_code": 8,
2   "error_type": "CONFIDENCE_DELTA_MISMATCH",
3   "error_data": {
4     "source_key": { ... },
5     "source_response": { ... },
6     "violating_key": { ... },
7     "violating_response": { ... },
8     "delta_confidence_threshold": 0.01,
9     "delta_confidences_detected": {
10       "sheep": 0.01936030388219212,
11       "herd": 0.15035879611968994,
12       "livestock": 0.13112884759902954,
13       "terrestrial_animal": 0.1791478991508484,
14       "snout": 0.10682523250579834
15     },
16     "uri": "http://localhost:4567/demo/data/000000005992.jpeg"
17     ↵ ,
      "reason": "Exceeded confidence delta threshold ±0.01 in 5
      ↵ labels (delta mean=+0.1174)." } }

```

**Figure 11.9:** Example of substantial confidence change due to evolution.



**Label:** Vehicle  
**Nov 2018:** 'vehicle' (0.9045)  
**Mar 2019:** 'motorcycle' (0.9534)  
**Category:** Label Set Change

---

*Intelligent Service Response in March 2019*

```

1 { "responses": [ { "label_annotations": [
2   { "mid": "/m/07yv9",
3     "description": "vehicle",
4     "score": 0.9045347571372986,
5     "topicality": 0.9045347571372986 },
6   { "mid": "/m/07bsy",
7     "description": "transport",
8     "score": 0.9012271165847778,
9     "topicality": 0.9012271165847778 },
10  { "mid": "/m/0dx1j",
11    "description": "town",
12    "score": 0.8946694135665894,
13    "topicality": 0.8946694135665894 },
14    ... ] } ] }
```

---

*Proxy Server Response in March 2019*

```

1 { "error_code": 7,
2   "error_type": "LABEL_DELTA_MISMATCH",
3   "error_data": {
4     "source_key": { ... },
5     "source_response": { ... },
6     "violating_key": { ... },
7     "violating_response": { ... },
8     "delta_labels_threshold": 5,
9     "delta_labels_detected": 8,
10    "uri": "http://localhost:4567/demo/data/000000019109",
11    "new_labels": [ "transport", "building", "architecture", "
12      ↪ house" ],
12    "dropped_labels": [ "car", "motor vehicle", "city", "road"
13      ↪ ],
13    "reason": "Exceeded label count delta threshold ±5 (4 new
13      ↪ labels + 4 dropped labels = 8)." } }
```

**Figure 11.10:** Example of substantial changes of a response's label set due to evolution.



**Label:** Fauna  
**Nov 2018:** 'reptile' (0.9505)  
**Mar 2019:** 'iguania' (0.9836)  
**Category:** Ontology Specialisation

---

*Intelligent Service Response in March 2019*

```

1 | { "responses": [ { "label_annotations": [
2 |   { "mid": "/m/08_jw6",
3 |     "description": "iguania",
4 |     "score": 0.9835183024406433,
5 |     "topicality": 0.9835183024406433 },
6 |   { "mid": "/m/06bt6",
7 |     "description": "reptile",
8 |     "score": 0.9833670854568481,
9 |     "topicality": 0.9833670854568481 },
10 |   { "mid": "/m/01vq7_",
11 |     "description": "iguana",
12 |     "score": 0.9796721339225769,
13 |     "topicality": 0.9796721339225769 },
14 |   ... ] } ]

```

---

*Proxy Server Response in March 2019*

```

1 | { "error_code": 9,
2 |   "error_type": "EXPECTED_LABELS_MISMATCH",
3 |   "error_data": {
4 |     "source_key": { ... },
5 |     "violating_response": { ... },
6 |     "uri": "http://localhost:4567/demo/data/0052",
7 |     "expected_labels": [ "fauna" ],
8 |     "labels_detected": [ "iguana", "green iguana", "iguaniidae"
9 |       ↪ , "lizard", "scaled reptile", "marine iguana", "
10 |       ↪ terrestrial animal", "organism" ],
      "labels_missing": [ "fauna" ],
      "reason": "The expected label(s) `fauna` are missing in
        ↪ the response." } }

```

**Figure 11.11:** Example of an expected label missing due to evolution.

## 5655 11.6 Discussion

### 5656 11.6.1 Implications

#### 5657 11.6.1.1 For cloud vendors

5658 Cloud vendors that provide IWSs may wish to adopt the architectural tactic presented  
5659 in this paper by providing a proxy, auxiliary service (or similar) to their existing ser-  
5660 vices, thereby improving the current robustness of these services. Further, they  
5661 should consider enabling developers of this technical domain knowledge by pre-  
5662 venting client applications from using the service without providing a benchmark  
5663 dataset, such that the service will return HTTP error codes. These procedures should  
5664 be well-documented within the service’s API documentation, thereby indicating to  
5665 developers how they can build more robust applications with their IWSs. Lastly,  
5666 cloud vendors should consider updating the internal machine learning models less  
5667 frequently unless substantial improvements are being made. Many different appli-  
5668 cations from many different domains are using these IWSs so it is unlikely that  
5669 the model changes are improving all applications. Versioned endpoints would help  
5670 with this issue, although—as we have discussed—context using benchmark datasets  
5671 should be provided.

#### 5672 11.6.1.2 For application developers

5673 Developers need to monitor all IWSs for evolution using a benchmark dataset and  
5674 application specific thresholds before diving straight into using them. It is clear that  
5675 the evolutionary issues have significant impact in their client applications [89], and  
5676 therefore they need to check the extent this evolution has between versions of an  
5677 intelligent service (should versioned APIs be available). Lastly, application devel-  
5678 opers should leverage the concept of a proxy server (or other form of intermediary)  
5679 when using IWSs to make their applications more robust.

#### 5680 11.6.1.3 For project managers

5681 Project managers need to consider the cost of evolution changes on their application  
5682 when using IWSs, and therefore should schedule tasks for building maintenance  
5683 infrastructure to detect evolution. Consider scheduling tasks that evaluates and  
5684 identifies the frequency of evolution for the specific intelligent service being used.  
5685 Our research we have found some IWSs that are not versioned but rarely show  
5686 behavioural changes due to evolution.

### 5687 11.6.2 Limitations

5688 In the situation where a solo developer implements the Proxy Service the main  
5689 limitation is the cost vs response time trade-off. Developers may want to be notified  
5690 as soon as possible when a behavioural change occurs which requires frequent  
5691 validation of the Benchmark Dataset. Each time the Benchmark Dataset is validated  
5692 each item is sent as a request to the intelligent service. As cloud vendors charge

5693 per request to an intelligent service there are financial implications for operating  
5694 the Proxy Service. If the developer optimises for cost then the application will take  
5695 longer to respond to the behavioural change potentially impact end users. Developers  
5696 need to consider the impact of cost vs response time when using the Proxy Service.

5697 Another limitation of our approach is the development effort required to imple-  
5698 ment the Proxy Service. Developers need to build a scheduling component, batch  
5699 processing pipeline for the Benchmark Dataset, and a web service. These com-  
5700 ponents require developing and testing which impact project schedules and have  
5701 maintenance implications. Thus, we advise developers to consider the overhead of  
5702 a Proxy Service and way up the benefits with have incorrect behaviour caused by  
5703 evolution of IWSs.

### 5704 **11.6.3 Future Work**

#### 5705 *11.6.3.1 Guidelines to construct and update the Benchmark Dataset*

5706 Our approach assumes that each category of evolution is present in the Benchmark  
5707 Dataset prepared by the developer. Further guidelines are required to ensure that the  
5708 developer knows how to validate the data before using the Proxy Service. While the  
5709 focus of this paper was to present and validate our architectural tactic, guidelines  
5710 on how to construct and update benchmark datasets for this tactic will need to be  
5711 considered in future work. Data science literature extensively covers dataset prepa-  
5712 ration (e.g., [203, 290]), and many example benchmark datasets are readily available  
5713 [24, 147, 380]. An initial set of guidelines are proposed as follows: data must be  
5714 contextualised and appropriately sampled to be representative of the client applica-  
5715 tion in particular the patterns present in the data, contain both positive and negative  
5716 examples (this is/is not a cat); where to source data from (existing datasets, Google  
5717 Images/Flickr, crowdsourced etc.); whether the dataset is synthetically generated to  
5718 increase sample size; and how large a benchmark dataset size should be (i.e., larger  
5719 the better but takes more effort and costs more). Benchmark datasets can also be  
5720 used by software engineers provided the domain and context is appropriate for their  
5721 specific application’s context. Software engineers also benefit from our approach  
5722 even if these guidelines are not strictly adhered to provided they use an application-  
5723 specific dataset (i.e., data collected from the input source for their application). The  
5724 main reason for this is that without our proposed tactic there are limited ways to  
5725 build robust software with intelligent services. Future testing and evaluation of these  
5726 guidelines should be considered.

#### 5727 *11.6.3.2 Extend the evolution categories to support other IWSs*

5728 This paper has used computer vision services to assess our proposed tactic, and  
5729 therefore further investigation is needed into the evolution characteristics of other  
5730 IWSs. The evolution challenges with services that provide optimisation algorithms  
5731 such as route planning are likely to differ from CVSs. These characteristics of an  
5732 application domain have shown to greatly influence software architecture [25] and  
5733 further development of the Proxy Service will need to account for these differences.

5734 As an example, we have identified many similar issues that exist for natural language  
5735 processing, where topic modelling produces labels on large bodies of text with  
5736 associated confidences. Therefore, the *broader* concepts of our contribution (e.g.,  
5737 behaviour token parameters, error codes etc.) can be used to handle issues in natural  
5738 language processing to demonstrate the generalisability of the architecture to other  
5739 intelligent services. We plan to apply our tactic to natural language processing and  
5740 other intelligent services in our future work.

5741 *11.6.3.3 Provide tool support for optimising parameters for an application context*

5742 Appropriately using the Proxy Service requires careful selection of thresholds,  
5743 benchmark rules and schedule. Further work is required to support the developer in  
5744 making these decisions so an optimal application specific outcome is achieved. One  
5745 approach is to present the trade-offs to the developer and let them visualise the  
5746 impact of their decisions. We have developed an early prototype for such purpose  
5747 in [90].

5748 *11.6.3.4 Improvements for a more rigorous approach*

5749 Conducting a more formal evaluation of our proposed architecture would benefit  
5750 the robustness of the solution presented. This could be done in various ways,  
5751 for example, using a formal architecture evaluation method such as ATAM [192]  
5752 or a similar variant [51]; conducting user evaluation via brainstorming sessions or  
5753 interviews with practitioners who may provide suggestions to improve our approach;  
5754 determining better strategies to fully-automate the approach and reduce manual steps;  
5755 and using real-world industry case studies to identify other factors such as cost and  
5756 maintenance issues. All these are various avenues of research that would ultimately  
5757 benefit in a more well-rounded approach to the architectural tactic we have proposed.

5758 **11.7 Related Work**

5759 *11.7.0.1 Robustness of Intelligent Services*

5760 While usage of IWSs have been proven to have widespread benefits to the commu-  
5761 nity [95, 299], they are still largely understudied in software engineering literature,  
5762 particularly around their robustness in production-grade systems. As an example,  
5763 advancements in computer vision (largely due to the resurgence of convolutional  
5764 neural networks in the late 1990s [212]) have been made available through IWSs and  
5765 are given marketed promises from prominent cloud vendors, e.g., “with Amazon  
5766 Rekognition, you don’t have to build, maintain or upgrade deep learning pipelines”.<sup>6</sup>  
5767 However, while vendors claim this, the state of the art of *computer vision itself*  
5768 is still susceptible to many robustness flaws, as highlighted by many recent stud-  
5769 ies [114, 311, 367]. Further, each service has vastly different (and incompatible)  
5770 ontologies which are non-static and evolve [89, 266], certain services can mislabel

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<sup>6</sup><https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/faqs/>, accessed 21 November 2019.

5771 images when as little as 10% noise is introduced [163], and developers have a shallow  
5772 understanding of the fundamental AI concepts behind these issues, which presents a  
5773 dichotomy of their understanding of the technical domain when contrasted to more  
5774 conventional domains such as mobile application development [92].

5775 *11.7.0.2 Proxy Servers as Fault Detectors*

5776 Fault detection is an availability tactic that encompasses robustness of software [31].  
5777 Our architecture implements the sanity check and condition monitoring techniques  
5778 to detect faults [31, 169], by validating the reasonableness of the response from the  
5779 intelligent service against the conditions set out in the rules encoded in the benchmark  
5780 dataset and behaviour token. As we do in this study, the proxy server pattern can be  
5781 used to both detect and action faults in another service as an intermediary between a  
5782 client and a server. For example, addressing accessibility issues using proxy servers  
5783 has been widely addressed [42, 43, 350, 391] and, more recently, they have been  
5784 used to address in-browser JavaScript errors [109].

5785 **11.8 Conclusions**

5786 IWSs are gaining traction in the developer community, and this is shown with  
5787 an evermore growing adoption of CVSs in applications. These services make  
5788 integration of AI-based components far more accessible to developers via simple  
5789 RESTful APIs that developers are familiar with, and offer forever-‘improving’ object  
5790 localisation and detection models at little cost or effort to developers. However, these  
5791 services are dependent on their training datasets and do not return consistent and  
5792 deterministic results. To enable robust composition, developers must deal with the  
5793 evolving training datasets behind these components and consider how these non-  
5794 deterministic components impact their deterministic systems.

5795 This paper proposes an integration architectural tactic to deal with these issues  
5796 by mapping the evolving and probabilistic nature of these services to deterministic  
5797 error codes. We propose a new set of error codes that deal directly with the erroneous  
5798 conditions that has been observed in IWSs, such as computer vision. We provide  
5799 a reference architecture via a proxy server that returns these errors when they are  
5800 identified, and evaluate our architecture, demonstrating its efficacy for supporting  
5801 IWS evolution. Further, we provide a labelled dataset of the evolutionary patterns  
5802 identified, which was used to evaluate our architecture.



5803

## **Part III**

5804

## **Postface**



# CHAPTER 12

5805

5806

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5807

## Conclusions & Future Work

5808

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5809 In this chapter, we provide a summary of the contributions within the body of  
5810 this work. We evaluate the significance of the research outcomes to the software  
5811 engineering research community and identify potential criticisms of these outcomes.  
5812 Lastly, we indicate future avenues of research resulting from this thesis and provide  
5813 concluding remarks.

### 5814 12.1 Contributions of this Work

5815 This thesis has presented three primary contributions to the body of software engi-  
5816 neering knowledge. Namely, we have presented an improved understanding in the  
5817 landscape of IWSs—concretely, those that provide computer vision—by examining  
5818 their runtime behaviour and evolution profile over a longitudinal study (Chapter 4).  
5819 The implications of this work emphasise the caution developers need to take be-  
5820 fore diving deep into using these services, and highlight the substantial impacts to  
5821 software quality if these considerations are ignored. We showed that developers  
5822 find working with this software more frustrating when contrasted to conventional  
5823 software engineering domains (Chapter 6), and that the distribution of the types of  
5824 issues they face differs from that of the types of issues developers face in established  
5825 areas such as mobile and web development (Chapter 5). Furthermore, developers  
5826 find the completeness of the existing CVS API documentation poor (Chapter 5),  
5827 and therefore an investigation into the attributes of what *constitutes* a complete ap-  
5828 plication programming interface (API) document according to literature and how  
5829 developers respond to the efficacy of these attributes produced a taxonomy that,  
5830 when applied to three CVS service providers, found 12 areas of improvement of  
5831 the services’ documentation (Chapter 8). This taxonomy further serves as a go-to  
5832 ‘checklist’ for any software engineer to review a prioritised list of documentation  
5833 elements worth implementing into their own API documentation. Lastly our inves-  
5834 tigations into improved intelligent service integration architectures proposes several

strategies by which developers can guard against the non-deterministic evolutionary issues found in Chapter 4. Preliminary solutions such as that presented in Chapter 9 helped informed further investigations into how developers can use a novel workflow to better select appropriate confidence thresholds calibrated for their application’s domain (Chapter 10) and prevent evolution evident in CVSs via a client-server intermediary proxy server strategy (Chapter 11). A more extensive discussion into the contributions of this thesis is presented in Section 1.7.

### 12.1.1 Answers to Research Questions

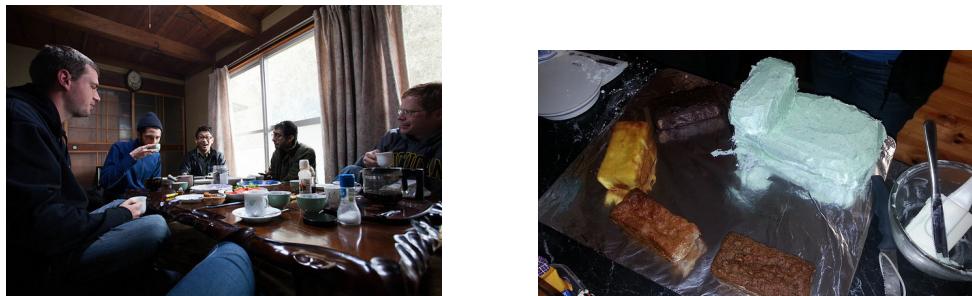
In this subsection, we directly answer the four primary research questions that were posed in Section 1.4.

#### 12.1.1.1 RQ1: “What is the nature of cloud-based CVSs?”

 These services are in nascent stage, are difficult to evaluate, and are not easily interchangeable. They present themselves as conceptually similar, but we find they functionally differ between vendors. Their labels are semantically disparate and work needs to be done on consolidating a standardised vocabulary for labels. Evolution within these services occurs and is not sufficiently versioned or documented to developers as results from services are non-static.

Irrespective of which service is used, the vocabulary used to label an image is disparate. We find that **there exists no common standard vocabulary** (e.g., ‘border collie’ vs. ‘collie’) and **semantic consistency for the same image between services is disparate**, for example as that shown in Figure 12.1 (left). The runtime behaviour of these services when contrasted against *each other* is, therefore, inconsistent, and thus (without semantic comparison of images, such as that suggested in Chapter 9) the vendors are not ‘plug-and-play’. In contrast to deterministic web services, the same result is functionally guaranteed despite which service is used. For instance, conceptually, a cloud storage service will provide the same output for the same input; that is, regardless of whether a developer uses AWS or Google Cloud object storage, when they upload a file, that file is (more or less) guaranteed to be stored. A deterministic input/output is, thereby, conceptually and functionally guaranteed. However, we find that the nature of intelligent services are conceptually similar but functionally different between services, and therefore developers are likely to become vendor locked. For instance, as we show in Section 4.5.1, one service may return the duplicity of objects in an image (e.g., ‘several’), while another service may return the subject of the image (e.g., ‘carrot’) or a hypernym of that subject (e.g., ‘food’), and another service may focus on the environment of the image (e.g., ‘indoors’). Further, even when a label is consistent between services, we find the consistency of how well they agree to that result—as measured by their confidence score in the label—does not always strictly match in their level of agreement. As

5867 we show in Figure 12.1 (right), **distributions of agreement can be disparate even**  
5868 **where services agree on a label for the same image.** Lastly, while intelligent  
5869 services that provide computer vision are somewhat stable in the responses they  
5870 return, **their responses are non-static.** There is no guarantee that a request with  
5871 the same image sent in testing will return the same response, and we find that this  
5872 potential evolution risk is not sufficiently communicated to developers.



**Figure 12.1:** *Left:* Semantic consistency between services is not always guaranteed. Two services identified this image as ‘people’, while another identified ‘conversation’, which is not registered at all as a possible label from the other two services. *Right:* Even when services agree on a label, the distribution of their level of agreement is (at times) inconsistent—in the above image, ‘food’ is detected at confidence levels of three services ranging from 94.93% to 41.39%.

5873 12.1.1.2 *RQ2: “Are CVS APIs sufficiently documented?”*

☞ *These services are largely well-documented, but areas of improvement can be identified. By applying the five-dimensional taxonomy we propose in Chapter 8 to three services, we found there to be twelve ways vendors can better improve their services’ documentation. We found the ways in which developers can use these services for their purposes could be improved—such as improved tutorials that integrate multiple components of the service—and by providing better descriptions to improve developers’ conceptual understanding of computer vision.*

5874 To understand if these services are sufficiently documented, we first investigated  
5875 what documentation artefacts constitute a complete API document, investigating  
5876 literature and validating this against developers using a survey. These consist of five  
5877 dimensions: usage description (or *how* developers can use the API); design rationale  
5878 (or *when* the developers should use it); domain concepts (or *why* developers should  
5879 use it in their application domain); support artefacts (or *what* additional documen-  
5880 tation could be provided to support developers); and, documentation presentation  
5881 (or *visualisation* of the prior four dimensions). This taxonomy is presented with  
5882 further detail in Chapter C. **Developers argue that code snippets are the most**  
5883 **important documentation artefact, followed closely by tutorials and low-level**

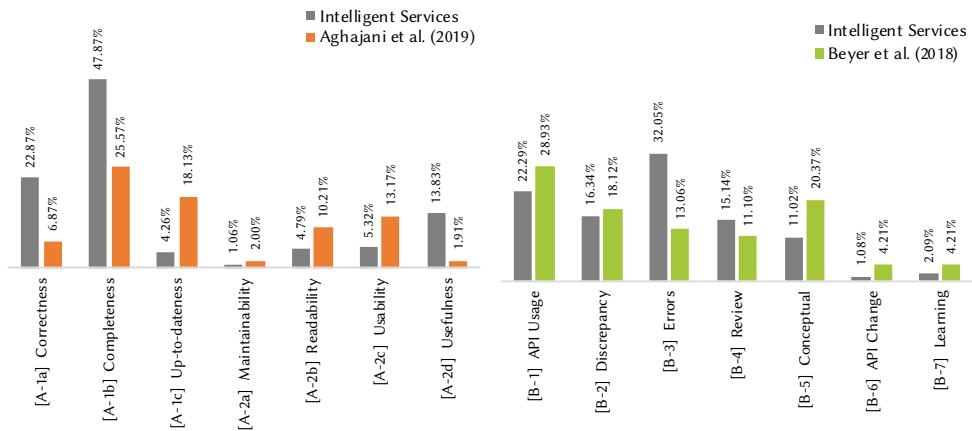
**reference documentation. This is largely covered by existing research.** When we apply this taxonomy to intelligent services such as CVSSs, we find that there can be improvements made to all dimensions except documentation presentation, which is sufficient. **The largest suggested improvements fall into the usage description dimension**, in which quick-start guides, step-by-step tutorials, reference applications, best-practices, listings of all API components, minimum system dependencies, and installation instructions require further detail. The second largest dimension falls into the domain concepts behind computer vision, where vendors should provide a greater emphasis behind computer vision concepts and definitions of relevant computer vision terminology (especially since many vendors refer to the same concept under different terms, such as ‘image tagging’ and ‘label detection’ for what is essentially object recognition). The lack of complete documentation in domain concepts was further reflected in developer discussions on Stack Overflow, as found in Chapter 5. Section 8.6.3 details these suggested improvements in greater detail.

**12.1.1.3 RQ3: “Are CVSSs more misunderstood than conventional software engineering domains?”**

 In conventional software engineering domains, where the technical domain is well-established and well-understood by developers, questions asked by developers are of greater depth. In contrast, their shallow understanding of the technical domain of computer vision is reflected by questions that highlight a poor understanding of the behaviour of these services and the contexts by which they work. Thus, simpler questions are asked, such as help with trying to understand basic error codes, or clarification of basic concepts and terminologies in computer vision. Therefore, we argue that they are more misunderstood seeing as the domain of intelligent services is still immature.

As expressed on Stack Overflow, we find developers struggle most with simple debugging issues, which reflects a shallow understanding of the AI concepts that empower these services. **The technical nuances become so abstracted away that developers begin to lack a full appreciation of the context and proper usage of these systems.** These questions reveal how developers do not have a strong grasp of the behaviour of these services and how further functional capability needs to be overcome by secondary phases of work, such as pre- and post-processing. **Their conceptual understanding of these services are poor**, with our findings suggesting that developers present a misunderstanding of the vocabulary used within computer vision, such as the differences between object and facial detection, localisation and recognition. The lack of strong conceptual understanding also reflects in discrepancy-based issues where developers cannot appreciate why services result in specific outcomes contrary to what they believe should happen. **We find these discrepancy-based issues to be the most frustrating for developers**, and argue that

5915 this is rooted in a need for developers to have some basic understanding of computer  
 5916 vision before diving into services such as these. In terms of the documentation of  
 5917 these services, **developers express frustration towards the completeness of the**  
 5918 **documentation**, whereby they seek additional information from the official docu-  
 5919 mentation sources but are unable to find anything to help resolve this gap. Further,  
 5920 **they question the accuracy of the cloud documentation since it is in contrast**  
 5921 **with the behaviour they observe**, as related to the discrepancy-based issues they  
 5922 find. In contrast to more established domains, such as mobile and web-development,  
 5923 the distribution of issues are different (see Figure 12.2). Rather than trying to in-  
 5924 terpret simple errors (as is the case for CVSs), developers question API usage and  
 5925 high-level conceptual questions. Developers have a greater appreciation for the  
 5926 technical domain in these mature areas, resulting in fewer shallower questions asked.



**Figure 12.2:** The distribution of documentation-specific questions (*left*) and generalised questions (*right*) differs between prior studies. Descriptions of each category for both question types are found in Table 5.1.

5927 **12.1.1.4 RQ4: “What strategies can developers employ to integrate their applica-**  
 5928 **tions with CVSs while preserving robustness and reliability?”**

☞ Developers can employ the use of a facade-based architecture to merge the responses of multiple vendors using a novel, proportional-representation based approach using lexical databases to resolve ontological issues of labels. An integration strategy consisting of four workflows was presented in Chapter 11 to assist developers monitor and handle substantial evolution change in these services. Developers can deal with the probabilistic nature of these services by using a representative data set of their application’s data to fine-tune a confidence threshold and monitor threshold changes in a production setting.

5929 This thesis offers three strategies targeted at improved integration of developer  
 5930 applications with CVSs. Chapter 9 successfully demonstrated that multiple services

can be combined using lexical databases to better improve the reliability of relying on a single service's label. Further, this strategy outperformed naive merge methods using a novel proportional representation method by 0.015 F-measure. This strategy uses the idea of a client-server intermediary facade to handle these operations and produce a consistent result regardless of which service is being used. This inspired further work presented in Chapter 11. To handle the evolutionary issues found in the services, we developed a novel integration architecture based on the proxy server strategy, integrating four key proposed workflows which can be used to guard against evolution and non-determinism in these services: (i) initialising a representative benchmark of domain-specific data used in the client application; (ii) validating that the service is behaving as expected against that benchmark; (iii) periodically detecting for evolution if behavioural change occurs, thereby notifying change; and lastly (iv) invalidating future requests if substantial evolution is detected in step (iii). This, in turn, resolves a non-deterministic response into a deterministic error when evolution is raised. Lastly, to deal with the uncertainty arising from probabilistic confidence values, we proposed Threshy (see Chapter 10), a tool to help developers select appropriate threshold boundaries resulting from their benchmark data sets and cost factors (due to missed predictions). Ultimately these strategies aim at improving the robustness of applications that are dependent on CVSs.

### 12.1.2 Limitations to Research Answers & Future Research

Throughout this thesis, we have used computer vision as a primary exemplar of intelligent AI components provided via the web. Limiting this research to such a narrow scope is an illustrative example that enables more concrete findings and potential solutions to a specific subset of intelligent web services (IWSs). As discussed in Section 1.2, these particular type of IWSs were selected due to both their increasing enthusiasm and uptake in developer communities (see Figure 1.1) and their maturity in the area. However, we acknowledge that there are myriad domains in the IWS space, such as audio and sentiment analysis, text-to-speech and speech-to-text, natural language processing, or time-series data analysis. Our analyses of CVSs chiefly targets content analysis (or object detection) endpoints of these services; other endpoints such as image description or object localisation exist, and were not considered as the main unit of analysis in this work. Further, this thesis selects only three prominent vendors of CVSs: Google, Microsoft and Amazon. While these vendors are considered to be the ubiquitous 'go-to' providers for cloud-based services (given their AWS, Google Cloud and Azure platforms) and were the most adopted for enterprise solutions [120], many other providers of computer vision intelligence exist [395, 411, 412, 413, 419, 432, 433, 435, 485, 486], including those from Asian market [409, 410, 431, 451, 452] where language barriers prevented analysis of these services.

Thus, the generalisability of our findings are a substantial threat to the external validity of our research answers and future research needs to investigate both other areas of IWSs to assess whether our findings and solutions are applicable to other intelligent domains and other types of services in the CVS market. Further, this

5974 thesis strongly emphasises investigations into identifying issues within web-based  
5975 intelligent services. We establish a better understanding on their nature and run-  
5976 time behaviour (RQ1), how they are documented (RQ2), and how well they are  
5977 understood by developers (RQ3), but only offer limited solutions to these issues  
5978 (e.g., RQ4). We encourage the software engineering community to use the issues  
5979 identified in this work as a stepping-stone into future solutions, identifying other  
5980 ways (beyond improved integration techniques) in which developers can handle  
5981 these issues. For example, the broader concepts of our contributed architecture (e.g.,  
5982 use of a behaviour token, its parameters, and the error codes proposed) can be shifted  
5983 to handle issues in natural language processing to demonstrate the generalisability of  
5984 the architecture to other intelligent services, since topic modelling produces labels  
5985 with confidences and the approach can be largely transferred to this area.

5986 Other future work stemming from this thesis would be to explore the nature of  
5987 other IWSs and understanding if similar evolution and behavioural runtime patterns  
5988 exist with their computer vision equivalents (as identified in this thesis). Chiefly,  
5989 future work on how to better support developers using different types of intelligent  
5990 components would be an interesting area to explore, especially in applying our  
5991 design strategies to combat the robustness issues we have identified to these other  
5992 types of services and identify any potential pitfalls of our design. As our proposed  
5993 architectural usage framework is a preliminary design, rigorous testing in real-  
5994 world scenarios, such as a long-term industry case study implementing our design  
5995 or conducting formal architecture evaluations such as ATAM [192], would be a  
5996 possible avenue of research to verify the design. Further, our proposal makes use  
5997 of the benchmark data set approach, but we are yet to explore and test potential  
5998 guidelines in developing a benchmark data set. While we provide some potential  
5999 guidelines in Section 11.6.3.1, these will need to be evaluated for practical use.

6000 Another key aspect would revolve around the documentation contributions of  
6001 this study and investigating whether our suggested documentation improvements  
6002 are applicable to these different services. Developing improved documentation and  
6003 tooling that better support developers when using these IWSs (and how our proposed  
6004 architecture fits in) should be explored.

6005 Moreover, since we find these services to be not yet as matured as traditional  
6006 software development domains and—like similar emerging software engineering  
6007 domains such as web development in the mid-1990s and early-2000s or mobile  
6008 development from the mid-2000s to early-2010s—we suspect there to be substantial  
6009 growth in the understanding of how we will use these services and maturity in the  
6010 developer’s appreciation of its surrounding technical domain. Therefore, it would be  
6011 beneficial to repeat some of the studies within this thesis and assess whether there is  
6012 an improved understanding of the phenomena occurring within IWSs and whether  
6013 developers have a developed mindset of these services and how they can be used.  
6014 Thus, different tools, designs or suggestions may result from repetitional studies 5-10  
6015 years in the future. This, therefore, identifies evolution in the *maturity* of intelligent  
6016 services, and to highlight whether developers are showing a stronger understanding  
6017 of the surrounding technical domain behind these services. We strongly encourage  
6018 the software engineering community to explore these in such time to identify maturity

6019 in this emerging domain.

## 6020 **12.2 Concluding Remarks**

6021 To our knowledge, little prior investigation has been conducted to understand IWSs  
6022 via the lenses of software quality—primarily the robustness, reliability of the services  
6023 and completeness of its documentation. In this thesis, we have shown that the non-  
6024 deterministic and probabilistic properties of computer vision IWSs present non-  
6025 trivial impacts to the quality of software that they are integrated with, and it is  
6026 pivotal that developers have a greater appreciation of the technical domain behind  
6027 the AI techniques that empower such services.

6028 In identifying evolutionary and run-time issues of these services, the ways in  
6029 which they are (currently) documented and these issues communicated (or not!), and  
6030 analysing how developers perceive these services with a deterministic mindset, we  
6031 have shown just how fragile the use of such services (as they stand) are. We strongly  
6032 encourage vendors to use suggestions made within this research to improve both  
6033 their documentation and their integration strategies so that developers can ensure  
6034 more robust applications when using these services. Ultimately, intelligent AI  
6035 components are still in a nascent stage, and therefore strongly suggest one message  
6036 to eager developers: use with caution and be aware of the consequences!

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## List of Online Artefacts

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7272 The online artefacts listed below have been downloaded and stored on the Deakin  
7273 Research Data Store (RDS) for archival purposes at the following location:

7274 RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/datasets/webrefs

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## **Part IV**

# **Appendices**



## APPENDIX A

---

### Additional Materials

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## A.1 Development, Documentation and Usage of Web APIs

The development of web APIs (commonly referred to as a *web service*) traces its roots back to the early 1990s, where the Open Software Foundation’s distributed computing environment (DCE) introduced a collection of services and tools for developing and maintaining distributed systems using a client/server architecture [310]. This framework used the synchronous communication paradigm remote procedure calls (RPCs) first introduced by Nelson [259] that allows procedures to be called in a remote address space as if it were local. Its communication paradigm, DCE/RPC [267], enables developers to write distributed software with underlying network code abstracted away. To bridge remote DCE/RPCs over components of different operating systems and languages, an interface definition language (IDL) document served as the common service contract or *service interface* for software components.

This important leap toward language-agnostic distributed programming paved way for XML-RPC, enabling RPCs over HTTP (and thus the Web) encoded using XML (instead of octet streams [267]). As new functionality was introduced, this lead to the natural development of the Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP), the backbone messaging connector for web service applications, a realisation of the service-oriented architecture (SOA) [73] pattern. The SOA pattern prescribes that services are offered by service providers and consumed by service consumers in a platform- and language-agnostic manner and are used in large-scale enterprise systems (e.g., banking, health). Key to the SOA pattern is that a service’s quality attributes (see Section 2.1) can be specified and guaranteed using a service-level agreement (SLA) whereby the consumer and provider agree upon a set level of service, which in some cases are legally binding [31]. This agreement can be measured using quality of service (QoS) parameters met by the service provider during the transportation layer (e.g., response time, cost of leasing resources, reliability guarantees, system availability and trust/security assurance [368, 374]). These attributes are included within SOAP headers; thus, QoS aspects are independent from the transport layer and instead exist at the application layer [278]. The IDL of SOAP is Web Services Description Language (WSDL), providing a description of how the web service is invoked, what parameters to expect, and what data structures are returned.

While it is rich in metadata and verbosity, discussions on whether this was a benefit or drawback came about the mid-2000s [278, 394] whether the amount of data transfer paid off (especially for mobile clients where data usage was scarce). Developer usability for debugging the SOAP ‘envelopes’ (messages POSTed over HTTP to the service provider component) was difficult, both due to the nature of XML’s wordiness and difficulty to test (by sending POST requests) in-browser. As a simple example, 25 lines (794 bytes) of HTTP communication is transferred to request a customer’s name from a record using SOAP (Listings A.1 and A.2).



**Figure A.1:** Worldwide search interest for SOAP (blue) and REST (red) since 2004. Source: Google Trends.

**Listing A.1:** A SOAP HTTP POST consumer request to retrieve customer record #43456 from a web service provider. Source: [23].

```
1 | POST /customers HTTP/1.1
2 | Host: www.example.org
3 | Content-Type: application/soap+xml; charset=utf-8
4 |
5 | <?xml version="1.0"?>
6 | <soap:Envelope
7 |   xmlns:soap="http://www.w3.org/2003/05/soap-envelope">
8 |   <soap:Body>
9 |     <m:GetCustomer
10 |       xmlns:m="http://www.example.org/customers">
11 |         <m:CustomerId>43456</m:CustomerId>
12 |       </m:GetCustomer>
13 |     </soap:Body>
14 |   </soap:Envelope>
```

**Listing A.2:** The SOAP HTTP service provider response for Listing A.1. Source: [23].

```
1 | HTTP/1.1 200 OK
2 | Content-Type: application/soap+xml; charset=utf-8
3 |
4 | <?xml version='1.0' ?>
5 | <env:Envelope
6 |   xmlns:env="http://www.w3.org/2003/05/soap-envelope" >
7 |   <env:Body>
8 |     <m:GetCustomerResponse
9 |       xmlns:m="http://www.example.org/customers">
10 |         <m:Customer>Foobar Quux, inc</m:Customer>
11 |       </m:GetCustomerResponse>
12 |     </env:Body>
13 |   </env:Envelope>
```

SOAP uses the architectural principle that web services (or the applications they provide) should remain *outside* the web, using HTTP only as a tunnelling protocol to enable remote communication [278]. That is, the HTTP is considered as a transport protocol solely. In 2000, Fielding [117] introduced REpresentational State Transfer (REST), which instead approaches the web as a medium to publish data (i.e., HTTP is part of the *application* layer instead). Hence, applications become amalgamated into of the Web. Fielding bases REST on four key principles:

- **URIs identify resources.** Resources and services have a consistent global address space that aides in their discovery via URIs [36].
- **HTTP verbs manipulate those resources.** Resources are manipulated using the four consistent CRUD verbs provided by HTTP: POST, GET, PUT, DELETE.
- **Self-descriptive messages.** Each request provides enough description and context for the server to process that message.
- **Resources are stateless.** Every interaction with a resource is stateless.

Consider the equivalent example of Listings A.1 and A.2 but in a RESTful architecture (Listings A.3 and A.4) and it is clear why this style has grown more popular with developers (as we highlight in Figure A.1). Developers have since embraced RESTful API development, though the major drawback of RESTful services is its lack of a uniform IDL to facilitate development (though it is possible to achieve this using Web Application Description Language (WADL) [229]). Therefore, no RESTful service uses a standardised response document or invocation syntax. While there are proposals, such as WADL [148], RAML<sup>1</sup>, API Blueprint<sup>2</sup>, and the OpenAPI<sup>3</sup> specification (initially based on Swagger<sup>4</sup>), there is still no consensus as there was for SOAP and convergence of these IDLs is still underway.

**Listing A.3:** An equivalent HTTP consumer request to that of Listing A.1, but using REST.  
Source: [23].

```
1 | GET /customers/43456 HTTP/1.1
2 | Host: www.example.org
```

**Listing A.4:** The REST HTTP service provider response for Listing A.3.

```
1 | HTTP/1.1 200 OK
2 | Content-Type: application/json; charset=utf-8
3 |
4 | {"Customer": "Foobar Quux, inc"}
```

---

<sup>1</sup><https://raml.org> last accessed 25 January 2019.

<sup>2</sup><https://apiblueprint.org> last accessed 25 January 2019.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.openapis.org> last accessed 25 January 2019.

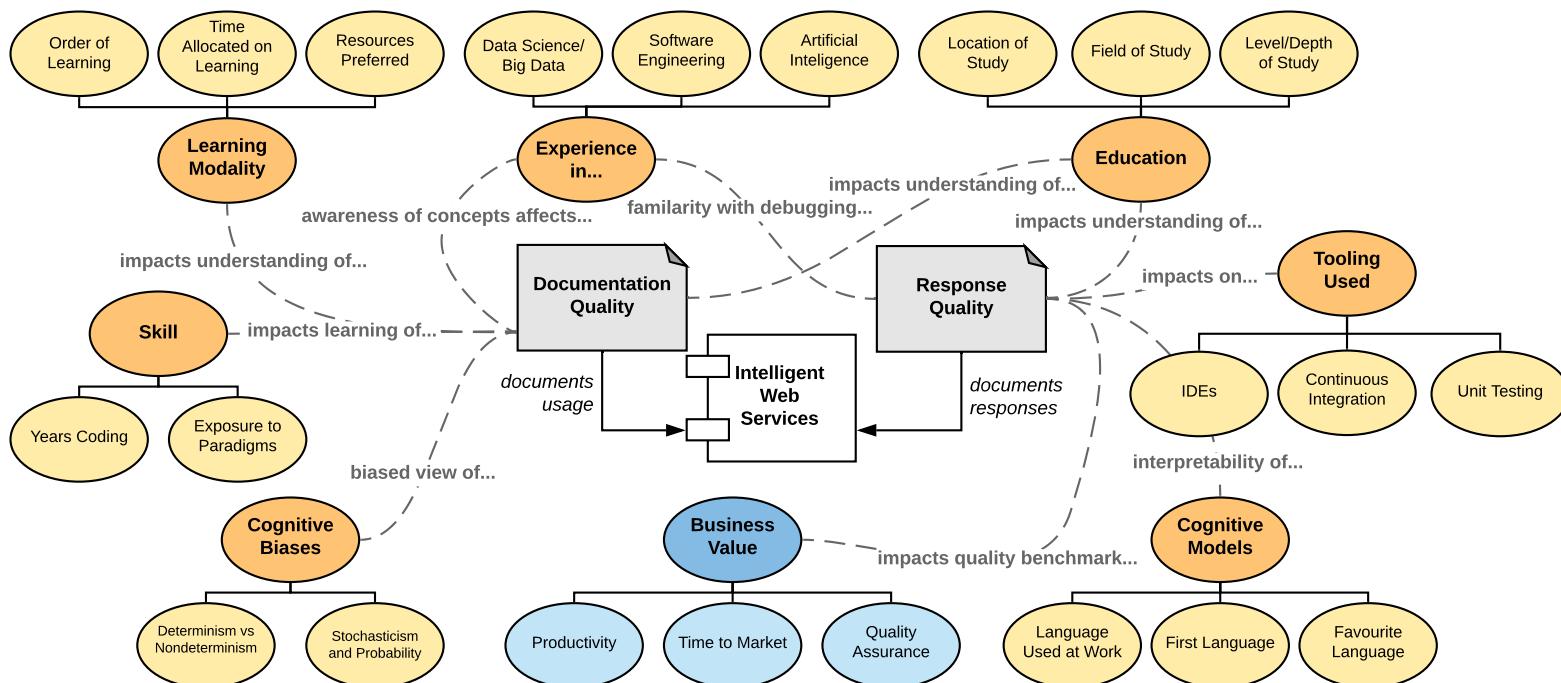
<sup>4</sup><https://swagger.io> last accessed 25 January 2019.

## A.2 Additional Figures

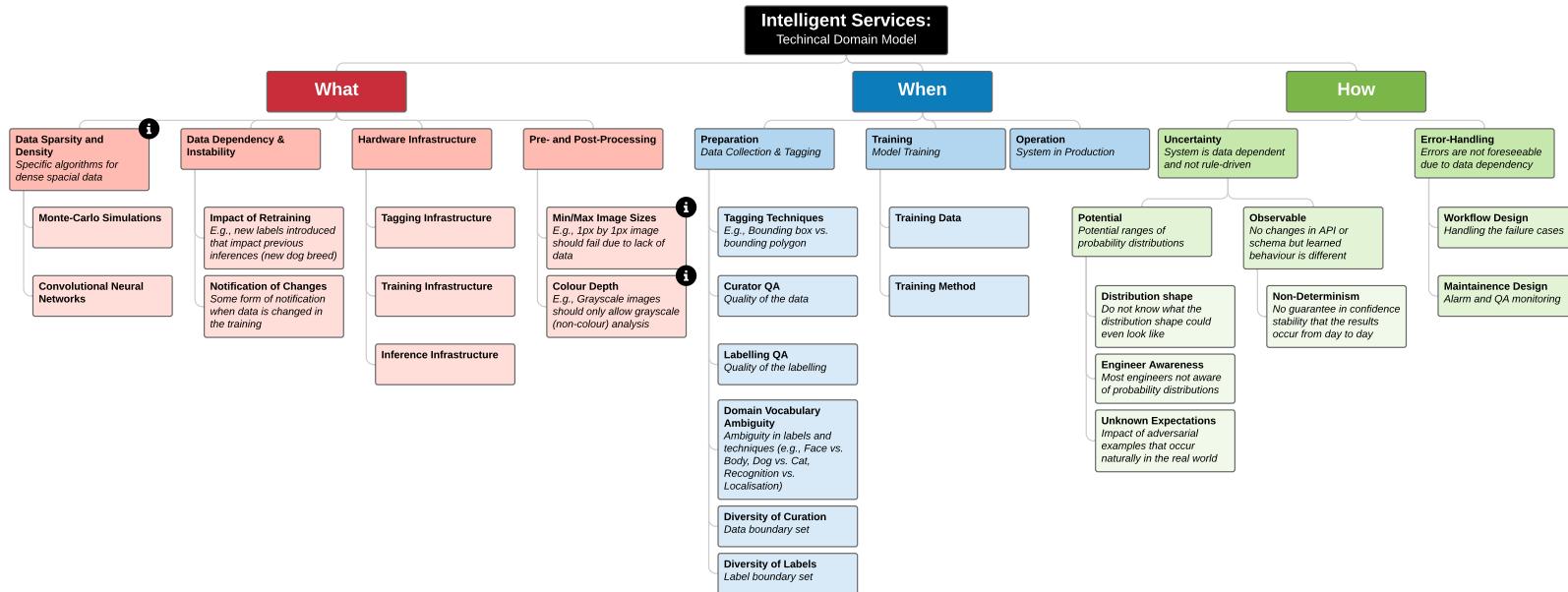
The following figures are listed in this section:

- **Figure A.2 (p259)** highlights potential causal factors that may influence a developer’s understanding of the documentation and response of IWSs. It was intended to be used as the basis of a survey study in Chapter 8, and can be used for future avenues of research.
- **Figure A.3 (p260)** was intended for the discussion in Chapter 5, where we propose that developers have a misaligned of the technical domain models within IWSs and more specifically CVSs. We designed a draft technical domain model to describe the various aspects developers must consider when using these services, based on the work by Barnett [25].
- **Figure A.4 (p261)** describes potential questions that may arise to analyse and test the causal factors of the technical domain model proposed in Figure A.3. This lies an open avenue of future research.
- **Figure A.5 (p261)** emphasises dichotomy between an application using an IWS and the IWS’ training data (which is sourced from an unknown context) and the context of an application, which is known. This is to emphasise how the model produced from these services need to be calibrated to the application domain being used in order for the decision boundary of a single inference to be properly assessed by the developer. This image was originally included within the Threshy publication (Chapter 10) but was removed due to space limitations.
- **Figure A.6 (p262)** illustrates the domain model of Threshy (Chapter 10).
- **Figure A.7 (p262)** illustrates the dynamic model of using Threshy and its interactions between the application, front-end of Threshy and back-end of Threshy (Chapter 10).
- **Figure A.8 (p263)** was originally included within the publication Chapter 5 but was removed due to space limitations. It provides a high-level overview of the main steps we performed within this study.
- **Figure A.9 (p264)** is a class diagram of the reference architecture of the proposed architecture in Chapter 11. The implementation is provided in Chapter B. See Chapter 11 for more.
- **Figure A.10 (p265)** is a sequence diagram illustrating how the reference architecture can be used to create a new benchmark as per the implementation provided in Chapter B. See Chapter 11 for more.
- **Figure A.11 (p266)** is a sequence diagram illustrating how applications can make requests to the proxy server ‘facade’ as per the implementation provided in Chapter B. See Chapter 11 for more.
- **Figure A.12 (p267)** is a state diagram that illustrates the overall states that exist within the architecture tactic’s workflows. See Chapter 11 for more.
- **Figure A.13 (p268)** is a sequence diagram illustrating how the reference architecture handles evolution in an external service per the implementation provided in Chapter B. See Chapter 11 for more.

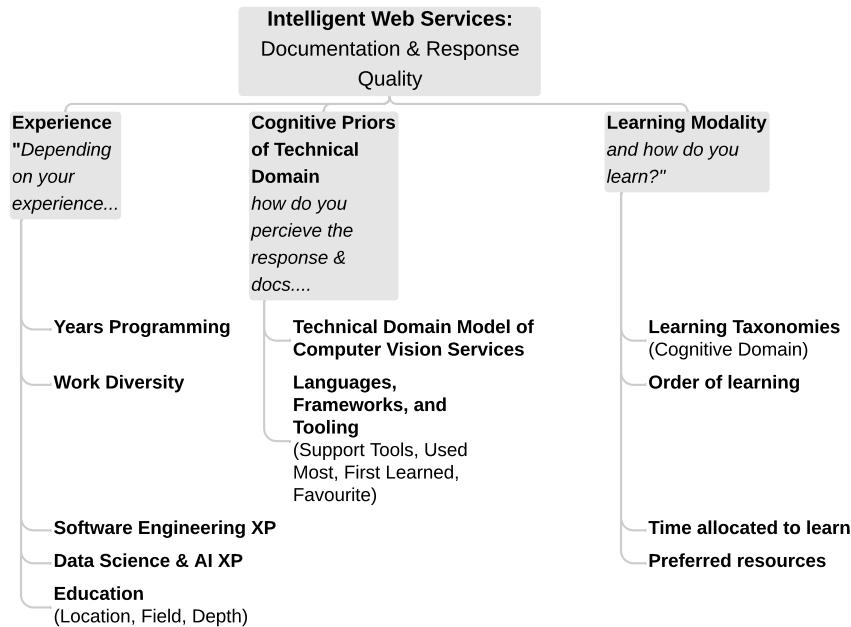
- **Figure A.14 (p269)** illustrates how the reference architecture is able to capture and handle three requests (two valid, one invalid) when sent to the proxy server. See Chapter 11 for more.

**Figure A.2:** Causal factors that may influence understanding of intelligent web services.

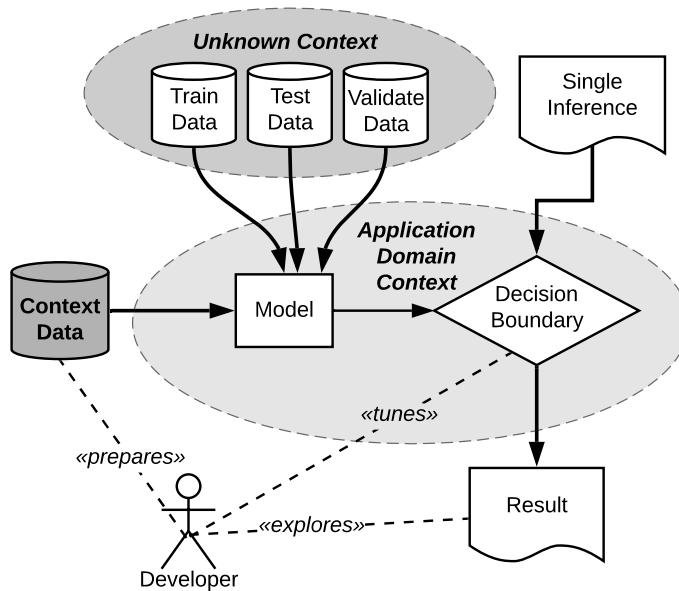
**Figure A.3:** A proposal technical domain model for intelligent services. (The ⓘ symbol indicates computer vision related services only.)

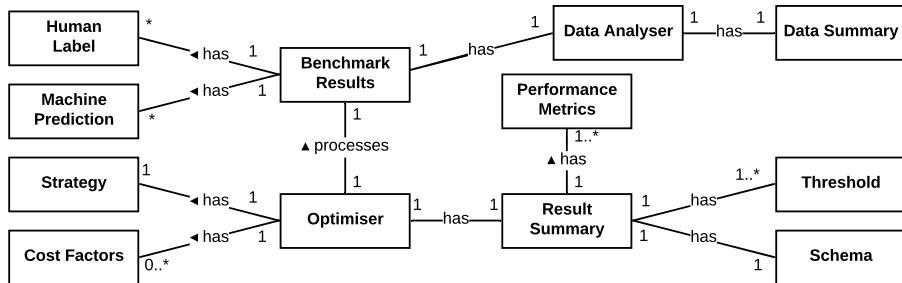
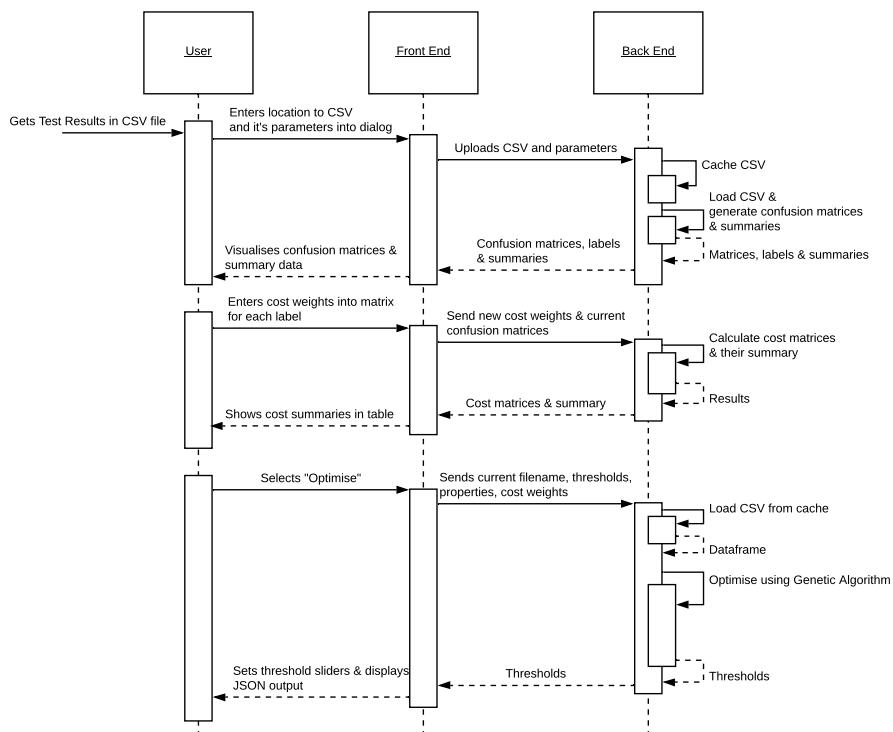


**Figure A.4:** Potential questions that can be asked around causal factors of a developer's understanding of an intelligent service.

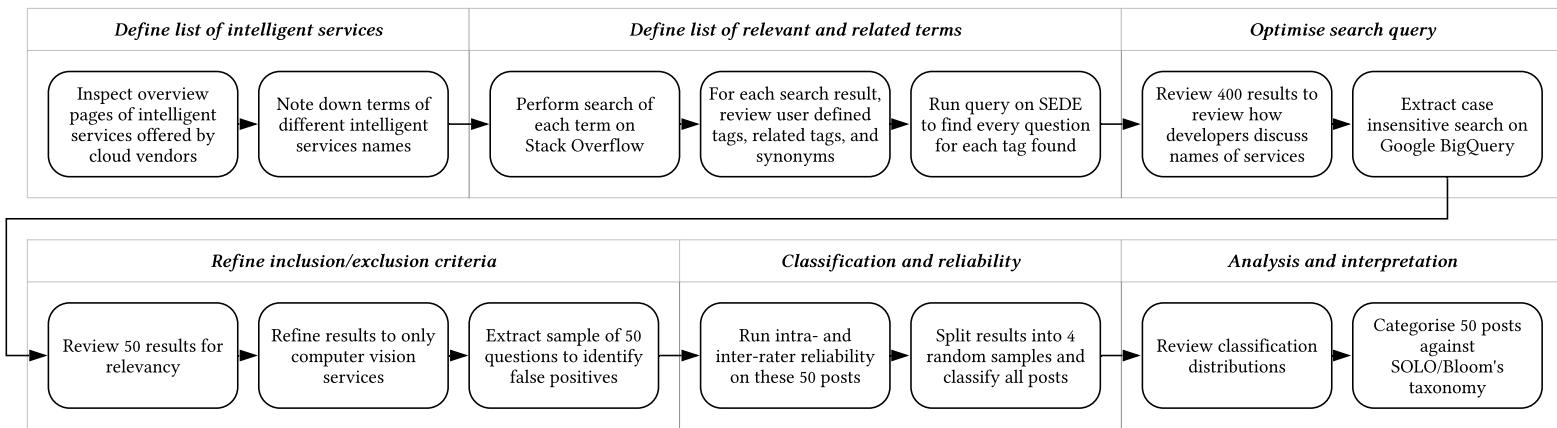


**Figure A.5:** Threshy assists with making appropriate decision boundaries in the application context by calibrating model (train on an unknown context) to your domain.

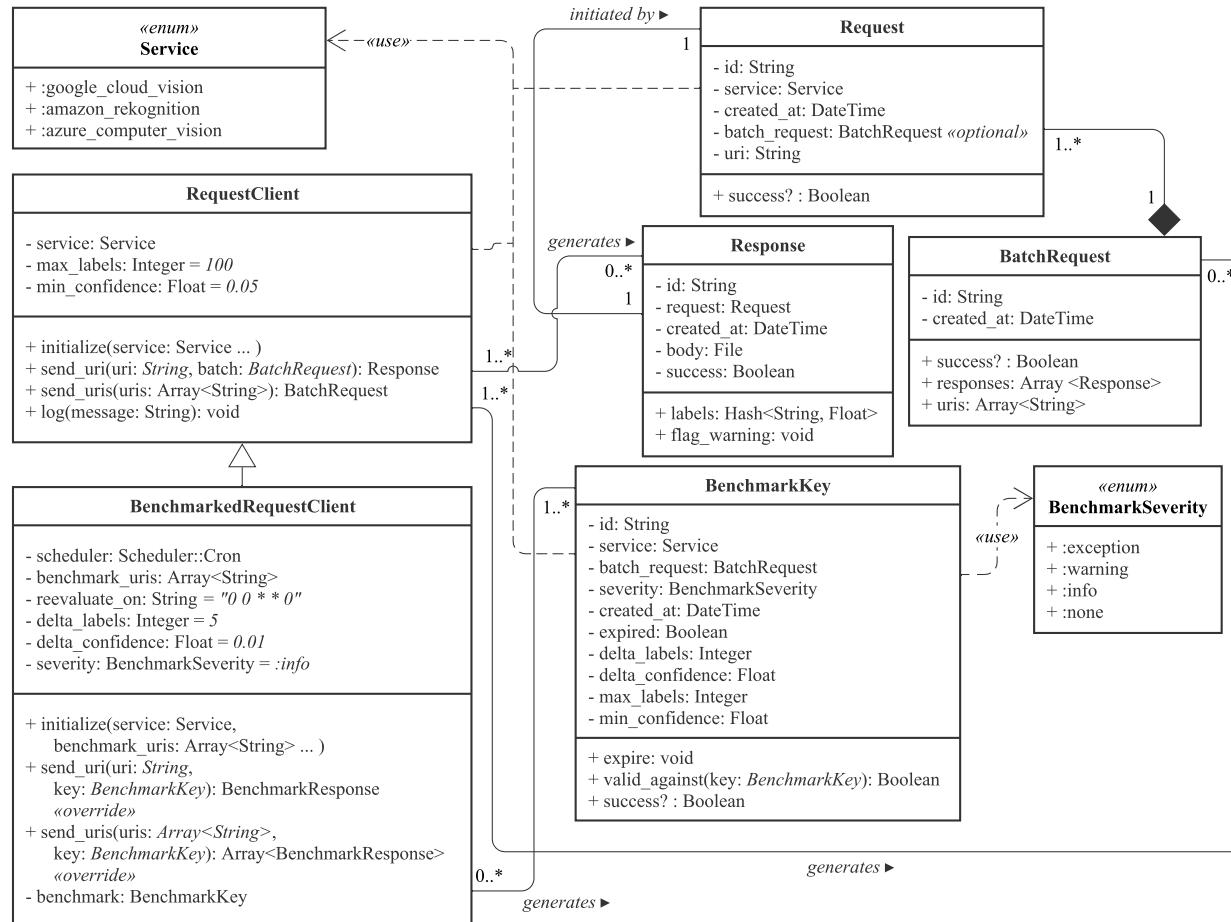


**Figure A.6:** Threshy domain model.**Figure A.7:** High level overview of Threshy's interaction between the front- and back-end.

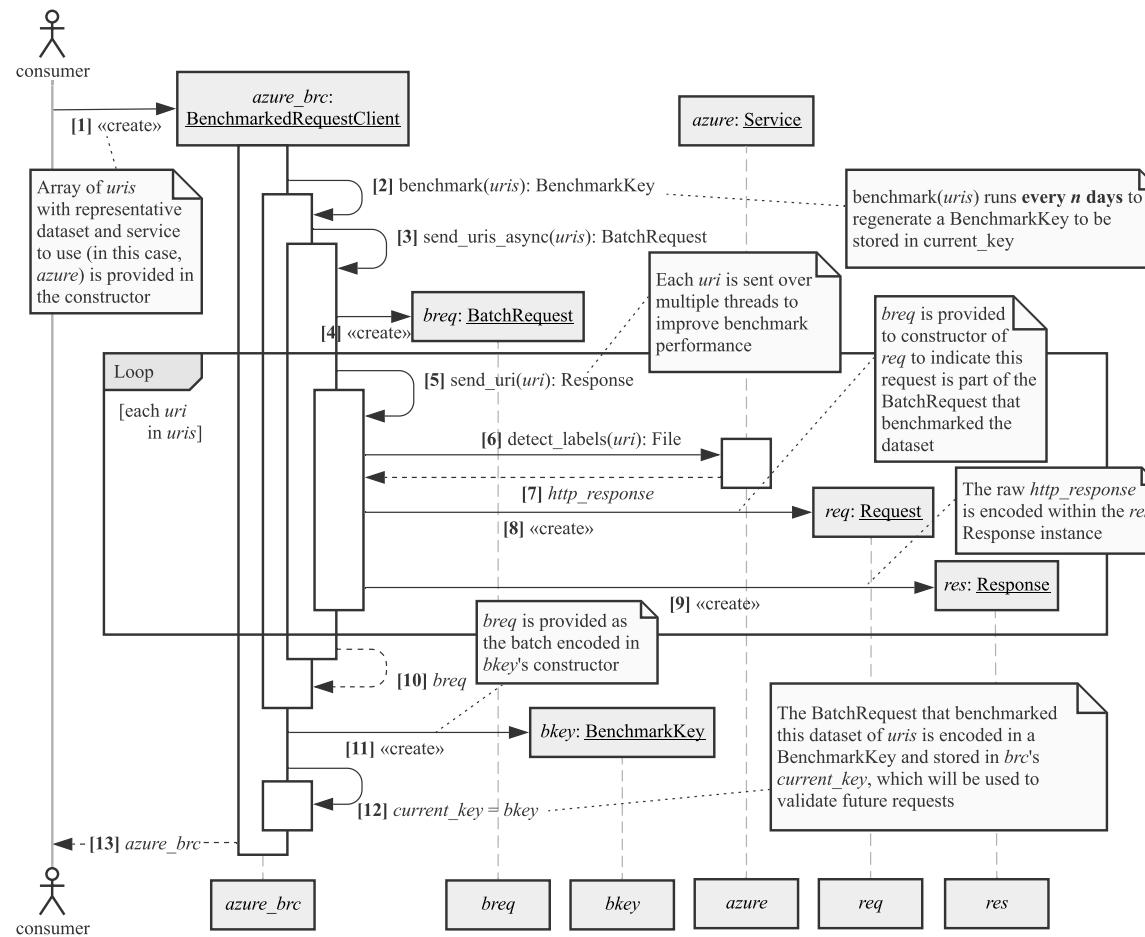
**Figure A.8:** High-level overview of the methodology within Chapter 5.



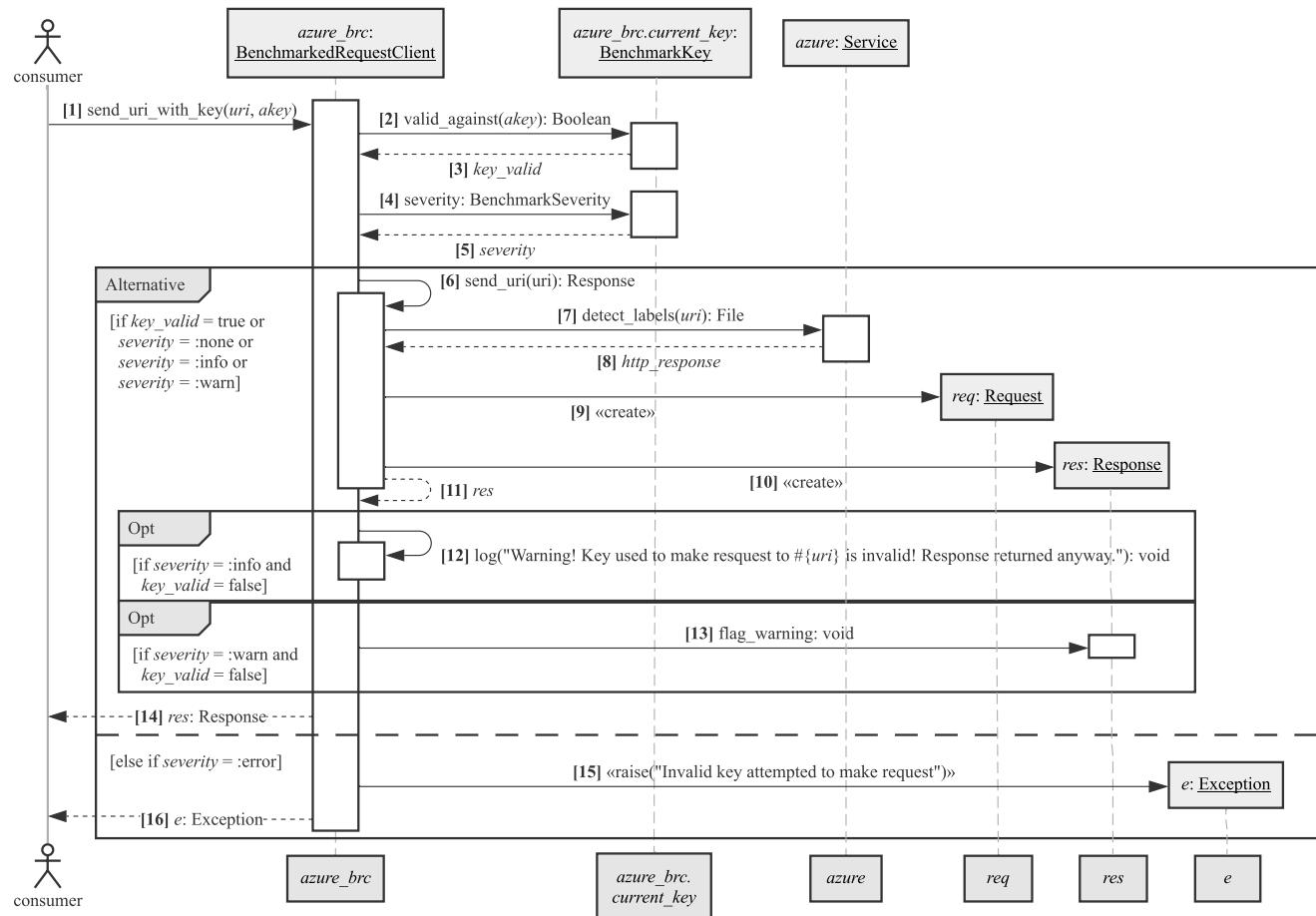
**Figure A.9:** Class diagram of the implementation of our architecture.



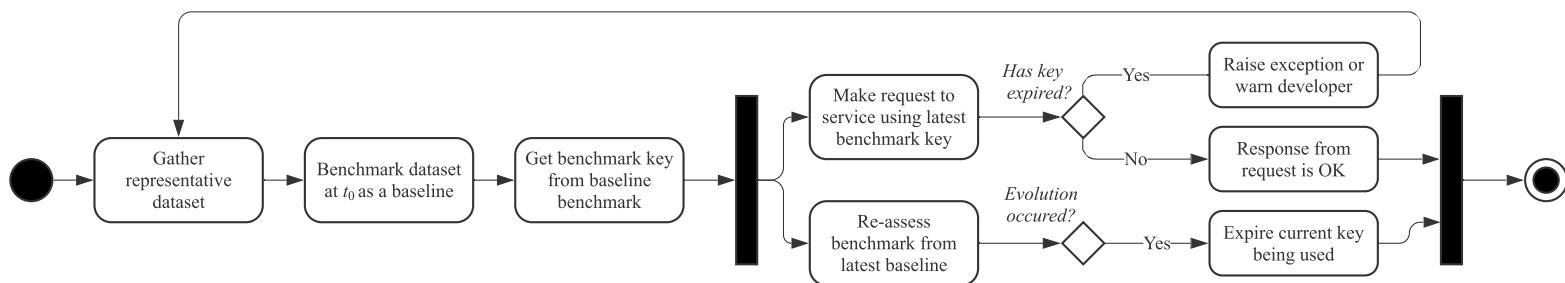
**Figure A.10:** Creation of a new benchmark proxy server using the architecture tactic.



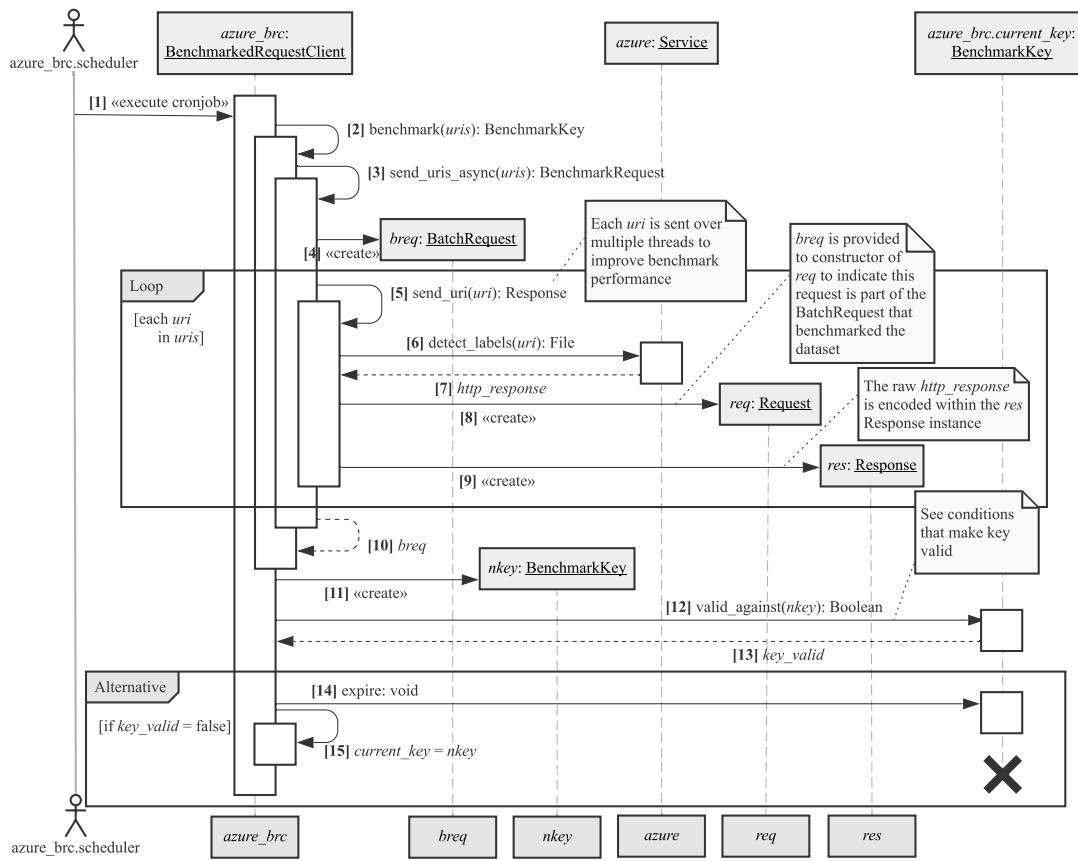
**Figure A.11:** Making a request through the proxy server ‘facade’.



**Figure A.12:** State diagram of high-level workflows in the architectural tactic.



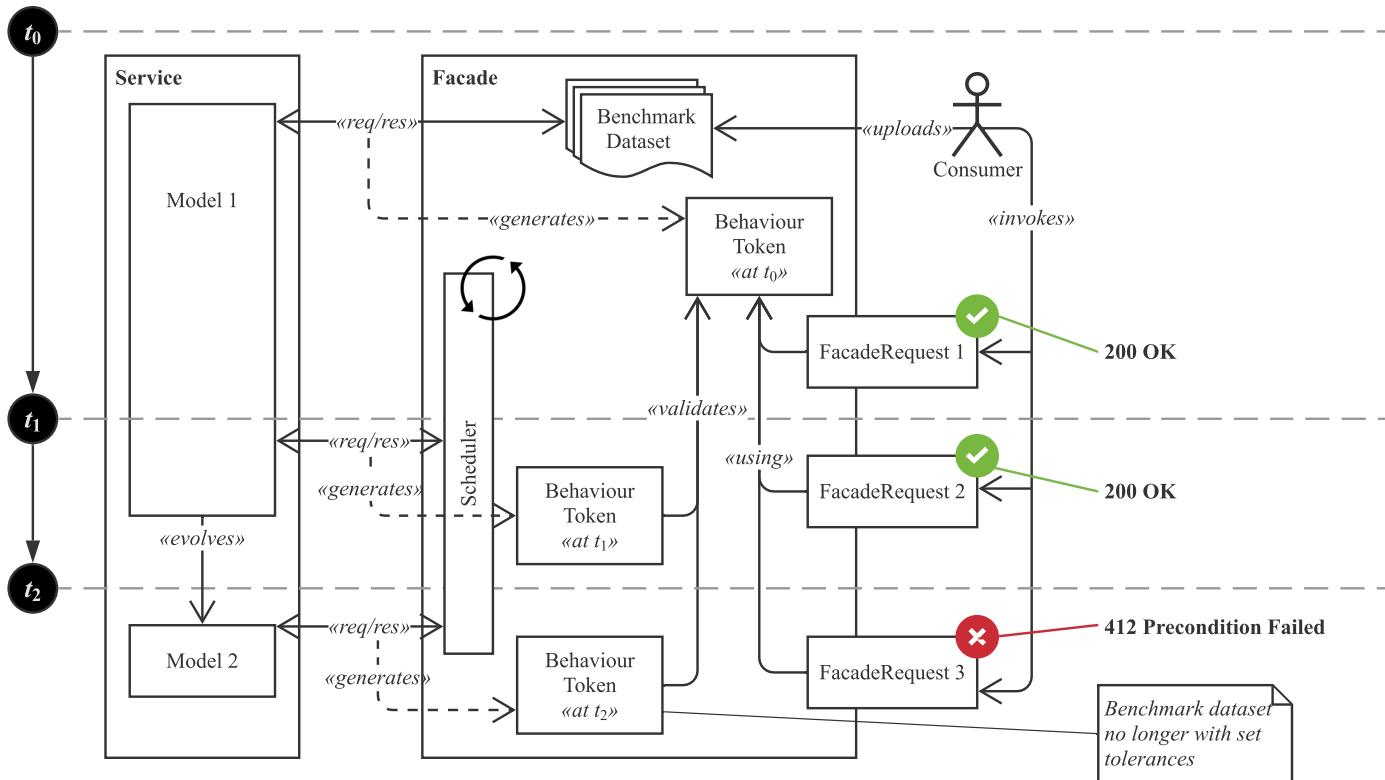
**Figure A.13:** Evolution occurring in the benchmark and how the architectural tactic notifies the consumer.



#### Conditions for a key to be valid

- both keys use the same services
- both keys encode the same URIs
- both keys have successful BatchRequests
- both keys must have BatchRequests with the same number of Response objects
- both keys must have the same cardinality of labels, within a margin of error of  $x$
- for every label, each label must have a confidence value between both within a margin of error of  $y$ , i.e.:
$$\text{abs}(\text{conf}(\text{label}_i, \text{azure\_brc.current\_key}) - \text{conf}(\text{label}_i, \text{nkey})) \leq y$$

**Figure A.14:** Evolution occurring in an intelligent service and how the architectural tactic handles it.





# APPENDIX B

---

## Reference Architecture Source Code

---

**Listing B.1:** Implementation of architecture module components.

```
1 # frozen_string_literal: true
2
3 # Author:: Alex Cummaudo (mailto:ca@deakin.edu.au)
4 # Copyright:: Copyright (c) 2019 Alex Cummaudo
5 # License:: MIT License
6
7 require 'sequel'
8 require 'logger'
9 require 'stringio'
10 require 'binding_of_caller'
11 require 'dotenv/load'
12 require 'google/cloud/vision'
13 require 'aws-sdk-rekognition'
14 require 'net/http/post/multipart'
15 require 'down'
16 require 'uri'
17 require 'json'
18 require 'tempfile'
19 require 'rufus-scheduler'
20
21 # Intelligent Computer Vision Service Benchmarker (ICVSB) module. This module
22 # implements an architectural pattern that helps overcome evolution issues
23 # within intelligent computer vision services.
24 module ICVSB
25   Thread.abort_on_exception = true
26   # The valid services this version of the ICVSB module supports. At present the
27   # only services supported are Google Cloud Vision, Amazon Rekognition, and
28   # Azure Computer Vision and their respective labelling/tagging endpoints. You
29   # can also request the demo.
30   # @see https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/labels
31   # Google Cloud Vision labelling endpoint.
32   # @see https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/API_DetectLabels.html
33   # Amazon Rekognition's labelling endpoint.
34   # @see https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/rest/api/cognitiveservices/
35   # computervision/tagimage/tagimage
```

```

35  # Azure Computer Vision's tagging endpoint.
36  VALID_SERVICES = %i[google_cloud_vision amazon_rekognition
37      ↪ azure_computer_vision demo].freeze
38
39  # A list of the valid severities that the ICVSB module supports. Exception
40  # prevents the response from being accessed; warning will still produce a
41  # response but the +error+ field will be filled in; info will only log
42  # errors to the ICVSB log file and keep +error+ empty and none ignores the
43  # errors entirely.
44  VALID_SEVERITIES = %i[exception warning info none].freeze
45
46  # Logs a message to the global ICVSB logger. If called from within the
47  # stack trace of a RequestClient, it will also add the message provided
48  # the RequestClient's log associated with the RequestClient's object id.
49  # @param [Logger::Severity] severity The type of severity to log.
50  # @param [String] message The message to log.
51  def self.lmessage(severity, message)
52      unless [Logger::DEBUG, Logger::INFO, Logger::WARN, Logger::ERROR, Logger::
53          ↪ FATAL, Logger::UNKNOWN].include?(severity)
54          raise ArgumentError, 'Severity must be a Logger::Severity type'
55      end
56      raise ArgumentError, 'Message must be a string' unless message.is_a?(String)
57
58      @log ||= Logger.new(ENV['ICVSB_LOGGER_FILE'] || STDOUT)
59
60      # Add message to global ICVSB logger
61      @log.add(severity, message)
62
63      # Find object_id within request_clients... when found add this message w/
64      # severity to that RC's log too
65      binding.frame_count.times do |n|
66          caller_obj_id = binding.of_caller(n).eval('object_id')
67          if @request_clients.keys.include?(caller_obj_id)
68              @request_clients[caller_obj_id].log(severity, "[RequestClient=#{
69                  ↪ caller_obj_id}] #{message}")
70          end
71      end
72
73      # Logs an error to the global ICVSB logger.
74      # @param [String] message The message to log.
75      def self.lerror(message)
76          lmessage(Logger::ERROR, message)
77
78      # Logs a warning to the global ICVSB logger.
79      # @param [String] message The message to log.
80      def self.lwarn(message)
81          lmessage(Logger::WARN, message)
82
83      # Logs an info message to the global ICVSB logger.
84      # @param [String] message The message to log.
85      def self.linfo(message)
86          lmessage(Logger::INFO, message)
87
88      # Logs a debug message to the global ICVSB logger.
89      # @param [String] message The message to log.
90      def self.ldebug(message)
91          lmessage(Logger::DEBUG, message)
92
93      # Register's a request client to the ICVSB's register of request clients.

```

```

96  # @param [RequestClient] request_client The request client to register.
97  def self.register_request_client(request_client)
98      raise ArgumentError, 'request_client must be a RequestClient' unless
99          ↪ request_client.is_a?(RequestClient)
100
101     @request_clients ||= {}
102     @request_clients[request_client.object_id] = request_client
103 end
104 #####
105 # Database schema creation seed #
106 #####
107 url = ENV['ICVSB_DATABASE_CONNECTION_URL'] || 'sqlite://icvsb.db'
108 log = ENV['ICVSB_DATABASE_LOG_FILE'] || 'icvsb.db.log'
109 dbc = Sequel.connect(url, logger: Logger.new(log))
110 # Create Services and Severity enums...
111 dbc.create_table?(:services) do
112     primary_key :id
113     column :name, String, null: false, unique: true
114 end
115 dbc.create_table?(:benchmark_severities) do
116     primary_key :id
117     column :name, String, null: false, unique: true
118 end
119 if dbc[:services].first.nil?
120     VALID_SERVICES.each { |s| dbc[:services].insert(name: s.to_s) }
121     VALID_SEVERITIES.each { |s| dbc[:benchmark_severities].insert(name: s.to_s) }
122 end
123 # Create Objects...
124 dbc.create_table?(:batch_requests) do
125     primary_key :id
126     column :created_at, DateTime, null: false
127 end
128 dbc.create_table?(:requests) do
129     primary_key :id
130     foreign_key :service_id, :services, null: false
131     foreign_key :batch_request_id, :batch_requests, null: true
132     foreign_key :benchmark_key_id, :benchmark_keys, null: true
133
134     column :created_at, DateTime, null: false
135     column :uri, String, null: false
136
137     index %i[service_id batch_request_id]
138 end
139 dbc.create_table?(:responses) do
140     primary_key :id
141     foreign_key :request_id, :requests, null: false
142
143     column :created_at, DateTime, null: false
144     column :body, File, null: true
145     column :success, TrueClass, null: false
146
147     index :request_id
148 end
149 dbc.create_table?(:benchmark_keys) do
150     primary_key :id
151     foreign_key :service_id, :services, null: false
152     foreign_key :batch_request_id, :batch_requests, null: false
153     foreign_key :benchmark_severity_id, :benchmark_severities, null: false
154
155     column :created_at, DateTime, null: false
156     column :expired, TrueClass, null: false
157     column :delta_labels, Integer, null: false
158     column :delta_confidence, Float, null: false

```

```

159   column :max_labels, Integer, null: false
160   column :min_confidence, Float, null: false
161   column :expected_labels, String, null: true
162
163   index %i[service_id batch_request_id]
164 end
165
166 # Service representing the list of VALID_SERVICES the ICVSB module supports.
167 class Service < Sequel::Model(dbc)
168   # The Service representing Google Cloud Vision's labelling endpoint.
169   # @see https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/labels
170   # Google Cloud Vision labelling endpoint.
171   GOOGLE = Service[name: VALID_SERVICES[0].to_s]
172
173   # The Service representing Amazon Rekognition's labelling endpoint.
174   # @see https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/API_DetectLabels.html
175   # Amazon Rekognition's labelling endpoint.
176   AMAZON = Service[name: VALID_SERVICES[1].to_s]
177
178   # The Service representing Azure Computer Vision's tagging endpoint.
179   # @see https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/rest/api/cognitiveservices/
180       → computervision/tagimage/tagimage
181   # Azure Computer Vision's tagging endpoint.
182   AZURE = Service[name: VALID_SERVICES[2].to_s]
183
184   # The Service representing a demonstration of the facade.
185   DEMO = Service[name: VALID_SERVICES[3].to_s]
186 end
187
188 # Severity representing the list of VALID_SEVERITIES the ICVSB module
189 # supports. The severity is encoded within a BenchmarkKey.
190 class BenchmarkSeverity < Sequel::Model(dbc[:benchmark_severities])
191   # Exception severities will prevent responses from being accessed. This
192   # disallows access to the Response object encoded within a
193   # BenchmarkedRequestClient#send_uri_with_key or
194   # BenchmarkedRequestClient#send_uris_with_key result.
195   EXCEPTION = BenchmarkSeverity[name: VALID_SEVERITIES[0].to_s]
196
197   # Warning severities will allow the Response from being accessed but will
198   # additionally populate the +error+ value encoded within a
199   # BenchmarkedRequestClient#send_uri_with_key or
200   # BenchmarkedRequestClient#send_uris_with_key result.
201   WARNING = BenchmarkSeverity[name: VALID_SEVERITIES[1].to_s]
202
203   # Info severities will allow the Response from being accessed encoded within
204   # the result of a BenchmarkedRequestClient#send_uri_with_key or
205   # BenchmarkedRequestClient#send_uris_with_key call, however, information
206   # pertaining to issues with the request will be logged to the ICVSB log
207   # file.
208   INFO = BenchmarkSeverity[name: VALID_SEVERITIES[2].to_s]
209
210   # None severities will essentially ignore all benchmarking capabilities and
211   # 'switches off' the benchmarking.
212   NONE = BenchmarkSeverity[name: VALID_SEVERITIES[3].to_s]
213
214   # Overrides the to_s method to return the name.
215   # @return [String] The name of the severity type.
216   def to_s
217     name
218   end
219 end
220
221   # This class represents a single request made to a Service. It encodes the
222   # service, batch of requests (if applicable) and respective response.

```

```

222  class Request < Sequel::Modeldbc)
223    many_to_one :service
224    many_to_one :batch
225    many_to_one :benchmark_key
226    one_to_one :response
227
228    # @see Response#success.
229    def success?
230      response.success?
231    end
232  end
233
234  # This class represents a single response returned back from a Service. It
235  # encodes the request that was made to invoke the response.
236  class Response < Sequel::Modeldbc)
237    many_to_one :request
238
239    # Indicates if the response from the request was successful.
240    # @return [Boolean] True if the response was successful or false if the
241    # response contained some issue.
242    def success?
243      success
244    end
245
246    # Returns a hash of the entire response object, decoded from its
247    # Service-specific response Ruby type and into a simple hash object.
248    # @return [Hash] A hash representing the entire Service response object
249    # within a Hash type.
250    def hash
251      return nil if body.nil?
252
253      JSON.parse(body.lit.downcase.to_s, symbolize_names: true).to_h
254    end
255
256    # Returns hash of labels paired with their respective confidence values.
257    # Decodes each Service's individual response syntax into a simple
258    # key-value-pair that can be used for generalised use, regardless of which
259    # Service actually generated the response.
260    # @return [Hash] A hash with key-value-pairs representing the label (key)
261    # and value (confidence) of the response.
262    def labels
263      if success?
264        case request.service
265        when Service::GOOGLE
266          _google_cloud_vision_labels
267        when Service::AMAZON
268          _amazon_rekognition_labels
269        when Service::AZURE
270          _azure_computer_vision_labels
271        when Service::DEMO
272          _demo_service_labels
273        end
274      else
275        {}
276      end
277    end
278
279    # Returns the benchmark key ID of the request.
280    # @return [Integer] The benchmark key id of this response's request.
281    def benchmark_key_id
282      request.benchmark_key.id
283    end
284
285    # Returns the benchmark key of the request.

```

```

286  # @return [BenchmarkKey] The benchmark key of this response's request.
287  def benchmark_key
288    request.benchmark_key
289  end
290
291  # Sets the benchmark key of the request.
292  # @param [BenchmarkKey] value The new benchmark key to set.
293  # @return [void]
294  def benchmark_key=(value)
295    request.benchmark_key = value
296    request.save
297  end
298
299  # Sets the benchmark key id of the request.
300  # @param [Integer] value The new benchmark key id to set.
301  # @return [void]
302  def benchmark_key_id=(value)
303    request.benchmark_key_id = value
304    request.save
305  end
306
307  private
308
309  # Decodes a Google Cloud Vision label endpoint response into a simple hash.
310  # @return [Hash] A key-value-pair representing label => confidence.
311  def _google_cloud_vision_labels
312    hash[:responses][0][:label_annotations].map do |label|
313      [label[:description].downcase, label[:score]]
314    end.to_h
315  end
316
317  # Decodes an Amazon Rekognition label endpoint response into a simple hash.
318  # @return [Hash] See #{#_google_cloud_vision_labels}.
319  def _amazon_rekognition_labels
320    hash[:labels].map do |label|
321      [label[:name].downcase, label[:confidence] * 0.01]
322    end.to_h
323  end
324
325  # Decodes an Azure Computer Vision tagging endpoint into a simple hash.
326  # @return [Hash] See #{#_google_cloud_vision_labels}.
327  def _azure_computer_vision_labels
328    hash[:tags].map do |label|
329      [label[:name].downcase, label[:confidence]]
330    end.to_h
331  end
332
333  # Decodes the mock demo service response into a simple hash. This is simply
334  # a relay of Google's as the data is from Google Cloud Vision.
335  # @return [Hash] A key-value-pair representing label => confidence.
336  def _demo_service_labels
337    _google_cloud_vision_labels
338  end
339  end
340
341  # The batch request class collates multiple requests (URIs) invoked to a
342  # single Service's endpoint in a single request. It encodes all requests
343  # made to the service and can produce all responses back.
344  class BatchRequest < Sequel::Model(:dbc)
345    one_to_many :requests
346
347    # Indicates if every request in the batch of requests made were successful.
348    # @return [Boolean] True if every response was successful, false
349    # otherwise.

```

```

350
351     def success?
352         requests.map(&:success?).reduce(:&)
353     end
354
355     # Maps all Response objects that were returned back from this batch to an
356     # array.
357     # @return [Array<Response>] An array of Response objects from every Request
358     # made in this batch.
359     def responses
360         requests.map(&:response)
361     end
362
363     # Maps all URIs that were requested back within this batch.
364     # @return [Array<String>] An array of URI strings from every Request
365     # made in this batch.
366     def uris
367         requests.map(&:uri)
368     end
369 end
370
371 # The Benchmark Key encodes all information pertaining to the evolution of a
372 # specific service and is used to validate if a benchmark dataset has evolved
373 # with time. This key must be used in conjunction with the
374 # BenchmarkedRequestClient to ensure that responses made are still reasonable
375     ↪ to
376 # use or if the service should be re-benchmarked against a new dataset.
377 class BenchmarkKey < Sequel::Model(dbc)
378     many_to_one :service
379     many_to_one :benchmark_severity
380     many_to_one :batch_request
381
382     # Class that encapsulates reasons why a benchmark key can be invalidated.
383     class InvalidKeyError
384         module InvalidKeyErrorType
385             NO_KEY_YET = 'No key yet exists. It is likely key is still benchmarking
386             ↪ its first results.'
387             SERVICE_MISMATCH = 'Keys use different services'
388             DATASET_MISMATCH = 'Keys have different benchmark datasets'
389             SUCCESS_MISMATCH = 'One or both keys do not have successful service
390             ↪ responses'
391             MIN_CONFIDENCE_MISMATCH = 'Keys have different min confidence values'
392             MAX_LABELS_MISMATCH = 'Keys have different max label values'
393             RESPONSE_LENGTH_MISMATCH = 'Keys have different number of responses'
394             LABEL_DELTA_MISMATCH = 'Number of labels in one key exceeds the label
395             ↪ delta threshold'
396             CONFIDENCE_DELTA_MISMATCH = 'Confidence value for a label in one key
397             ↪ exceeds the confidence delta threshold'
398             EXPECTED_LABELS_MISMATCH = 'Expected labels missing from response'
399         end
400
401         include InvalidKeyErrorType
402         attr_reader :errorname, :errorcode, :data
403
404         def initialize(errorrtype, data = '')
405             @errorname = InvalidKeyErrorType.constants.find { |c| InvalidKeyErrorType.
406                 ↪ const_get(c) == errorrtype }
407             @errorcode = InvalidKeyErrorType.constants.index(@errorname)
408             @data = data
409         end
410
411         def to_s
412             "[#{@errorcode}::#{@errorname}] #{@data}"
413         end
414     end
415 end

```

```

408     def to_h
409     {
410       error_code: @errorcode,
411       error_type: @errorname,
412       error_data: @data
413     }
414   end
415 end
416
417 # @see BatchRequest#success?
418 def success?
419   batch_request.success?
420 end
421
422 # An alias for the +expired+ field on the key, adding a question mark at the
423 # end to make the field more 'Ruby-esque'.
424 # @return [Boolean] True if the key has expired and thus should not be used
425 # for future requests as it is no longer valid.
426 def expired?
427   expired
428 end
429
430 # Expires this key by writing over its +expired+ field and marking it
431 # true.
432 # @return [void]
433 def expire
434   self.expired = true
435   save
436 end
437
438 # Un-expires this key by writing over its +expired+ field and marking it
439 # true.
440 # @return [void]
441 def unexpire
442   self.expired = false
443   save
444 end
445
446 # Returns the comma-separated mandatory labels list as an set of values
447 # @return [Set<String>] The set of mandatory labels required by this key.
448 def expected_labels_set
449   Set[*expected_labels.split(',').map(&:downcase)]
450 end
451
452 # Validates another key against this key to ensure if the two keys are
453 # compatible or if evolution has occurred iff BenchmarkKey is provided to
454 # +key_or_response+. If a Response is provided instead, then validates that
455 # the response is okay against this key's encoded parameters.
456 # @param [BenchmarkKey,Response] key_or_response A key or response to
457 # validate against.
458 # @return [Array<Boolean,Array<BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError>>] Returns +true+
459 # ↪ if
460 # this key is valid against the other key OR a tuple with +false+ and
461 # BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError to explain why the key is invalid.
462 def valid_against?(key_or_response)
463   if key_or_response.is_a?(BenchmarkKey)
464     _validate_against_key(key_or_response)
465   elsif key_or_response.is_a?(Response)
466     _validate_against_response(key_or_response)
467   else
468     raise ArgumentError, 'key_or_response must be a BenchmarkKey or Response
469     ↪ type'
470   end
471 end

```

```

470
471     private
472
473     # Validates a key against this key as per rules encoded within this key.
474     # @param [BenchmarkKey] key The key to validate.
475     # @return See #valid_against?
476     def _validate_against_key(key)
477       ICSVSB.linfo("Validating key id=#{id} with other key id=#{key.id}")
478
479       # True if same key id...
480       return true if key == self
481
482       invalid_key_errors = []
483
484       # 1. Ensure same services!
485       if key.service == service
486         ICSVSB.ldebug('Services both match')
487       else
488         ICSVSB.lwarn("Service mismatch in validation: #{key.service.name} != #{service.name}")
489       invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
490         BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::SERVICE_MISMATCH, {
491           source_key: {
492             id: id,
493             created_at: created_at,
494             service_name: service.name
495           },
496           violating_key: {
497             id: key.id,
498             created_at: key.created_at,
499             service_name: key.service.name
500           },
501           message: "Source key (id=#{id}) service=#{service.name} but \"\
502             \"validation key (id=#{key.id}) service=#{key.service.name}."
503         }
504       )
505     end
506
507     # 2. Ensure same benchmark dataset
508     symm_diff_uris = Set[*batch_request.uris] ^ Set[*key.batch_request.uris]
509     if symm_diff_uris.empty?
510       ICSVSB.ldebug('Same benchmark dataset has been used')
511     else
512       ICSVSB.lwarn('Benchmark dataset mismatch in key validation: ' \
513         "Symm difference contains #{symm_diff_uris.count} different URIs")
514       invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
515         BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::DATASET_MISMATCH, {
516           source_key: {
517             id: id,
518             created_at: created_at,
519             dataset: batch_request.uris
520           },
521           violating_key: {
522             id: key.id,
523             created_at: key.created_at,
524             dataset: key.batch_request.uris
525           },
526           dataset_symmetric_difference: symm_diff_uris.to_a,
527           message: "Source key (id=#{id}) and validation key (id=#{key.id}) have \
528             \"different \"\
529             \"benchmark dataset URIS. The symmetric difference is: #{symm_diff_uris.\
530               to_a}.\"
531         }
532       )

```

```

531     end
532
533     # 3. Ensure successful request made in BOTH instances
534     our_key_success = success?
535     their_key_success = key.success?
536     if our_key_success && their_key_success
537         ICSVSB.ldebug('Both keys were successful')
538     else
539         ICSVSB.lwarn('Sucesss mismatch in key validation')
540         invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
541             BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::SUCCESS_MISMATCH, {
542                 source_key: {
543                     id: id,
544                     created_at: created_at,
545                     successful_response: our_key_success
546                 },
547                 violating_key: {
548                     id: key.id,
549                     created_at: key.created_at,
550                     successful_response: their_key_success
551                 },
552                 message: "Source key (id=#{id}) success=#{our_key_success} but \"\
553                 \"validation key (id=#{key.id}) success=#{their_key_success}."
554             }
555         )
556     end
557
558     # 4. Ensure the same max labels
559     if key.max_labels == max_labels
560         ICSVSB.ldebug('Both keys have same max labels')
561     else
562         ICSVSB.lwarn('Max labels mismatch in key validation')
563         invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
564             BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::MAX_LABELS_MISMATCH, {
565                 source_key: {
566                     id: id,
567                     created_at: created_at,
568                     max_labels: max_labels
569                 },
570                 violating_key: {
571                     id: key.id,
572                     created_at: key.created_at,
573                     max_labels: key.max_labels
574                 },
575                 message: "Source key (id=#{id}) max_labels=#{max_labels} but \"\
576                 \"validation key (id=#{key.id}) max_labels=#{key.max_labels}."
577             }
578         )
579     end
580
581     # 5. Ensure the same min confs
582     if key.min_confidence == min_confidence
583         ICSVSB.ldebug('Both keys have same min confidence')
584     else
585         ICSVSB.lwarn('Minimum confidence or max labels mismatch in key validation')
586         invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
587             BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::MIN_CONFIDENCE_MISMATCH, {
588                 source_key: {
589                     id: id,
590                     created_at: created_at,
591                     min_confidence: min_confidence
592                 },
593                 violating_key: {
594                     id: key.id,

```

```

595         created_at: key.created_at,
596         min_confidence: key.min_confidence
597     },
598     message: "Source key (id=#{id}) min_confidence=#{min_confidence} but \"\
599     validation key (id=#{key.id}) min_confidence=#{key.min_confidence}."\
600   }
601 )
602 end
603
604 # 6. Ensure same number of results... (responses... not labels!)
605 our_response_length = batch_request.responses.length
606 their_response_length = key.batch_request.responses.length
607 if our_response_length == their_response_length
608   ICVSB.ldebug('Both keys have same number of encoded responses')
609 else
610   ICVSB.lwarn('Number of responses mismatch in key validation')
611   invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
612     BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::RESPONSE_LENGTH_MISMATCH, {
613       source_key: {
614         id: id,
615         created_at: created_at,
616         num_responses: our_response_length
617       },
618       violating_key: {
619         id: key.id,
620         created_at: key.created_at,
621         num_responses: their_response_length
622       },
623       message: "Source key (id=#{id}) responses=#{our_response_length} but "\
624         ↪ \
625       "validation key (id=#{key.id}) responses=#{their_response_length}."\
626     }
627   )
628 end
629
630 # 7. Validate every label delta and confidence delta
631 our_requests = batch_request.requests
632 their_requests = key.batch_request.requests
633 our_requests.each do |our_request|
634   this_uri = our_request.uri
635   their_request = their_requests.find { |r| r.uri == this_uri }
636
637   our_labels = Set[*our_request.response.labels.keys]
638   their_labels = Set[*their_request.response.labels.keys]
639
640   # 7a. Label delta
641   symmm_diff_labels = our_labels ^ their_labels
642
643   msg_suffix = "URI = #{this_uri} from #{their_request.created_at} (req_id "\
644     ↪ =#{their_request.id})"\
645   " to #{our_request.created_at} (req_id=#{our_request.id})"
646
647   ICVSB.ldebug("Request id=#{our_request.id} #{our_labels.to_a} against "\
648     "id=#{their_request.id} #{their_labels.to_a} - symmm diff "\
649     "= #{symmm_diff_labels.to_a}")
650   if symmm_diff_labels.length > delta_labels
651     ICVSB.lwarn("Number of labels mismatch in key validation (margin of error "\
652       ↪ =#{delta_labels}): "\
653       "New/dropped labels = '#{(our_labels - their_labels).to_a.map { |l| "+#\
654         ↪ {l}" }.join(',')}'"\"
655       "#{(their_labels - our_labels).to_a.map { |l| "-#{l}" }.join(',')}'")
656   end
657   invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
658     BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::LABEL_DELTA_MISMATCH, {
659       source_key: {

```

```

655         id: id,
656         created_at: created_at
657     },
658     source_response: {
659         id: our_request.id,
660         created_at: our_request.created_at,
661         body: our_request.response.hash
662     },
663     violating_key: {
664         id: key.id,
665         created_at: key.created_at
666     },
667     violating_response: {
668         id: their_request.id,
669         created_at: their_request.created_at,
670         body: their_request.response.hash
671     },
672     uri: this_uri,
673     delta_labels_threshold: delta_labels,
674     delta_labels_detected: symm_diff_labels.length,
675     new_labels: (our_labels - their_labels).to_a,
676     dropped_labels: (their_labels - our_labels).to_a,
677     message: "Source key (id=#{id}) and validation key (id=#{key.id})\n"
678     ↪ have #{symm_diff_labels.length} "\n"
679     "differing labels, which exceeds the delta label value of #{
680     ↪ delta_labels}. "\n"
681     "New/dropped labels = '#{(our_labels - their_labels).to_a.map { |l| "
682     ↪ "#[l]" }.join(',')}"\n"
683     "#{(their_labels - our_labels).to_a.map { |l| "-#[l]" }.join(',')}"\n"
684     ". #{msg_suffix}.\n"
685   }
686   )
687 else
688   ICSVB.ldebug("Number of labels match both keys (within margin of error #{
689   ↪ delta_labels})")
690 end
691
692 # 7b. Confidence delta
693 delta_confs_exceeded = {}
694 our_request.response.labels.each do |label, conf|
695   our_conf = conf
696   their_conf = their_request.response.labels[label]
697
698   if their_conf.nil?
699     ICSVB.ldebug("The label #{label} does not exist in the response id=#{
700     ↪ their_request.response.id}. "\n"
701     "Skipping confidence comparison...")
702   next
703 end
704
705 delta = our_conf - their_conf
706 ICSVB.ldebug("Request id=#{our_request.id} against id=#{their_request.id}\n"
707   ↪ "\n"
708   "for label '#{label}' confidence: #{our_conf}, #{their_conf} (delta=#{
709     ↪ delta})")
710 if delta > delta_confidence
711   ICSVB.lwarn(
712     "Maximum confidence delta breached in key validation (margin of error\n"
713     ↪ =#{delta_confidence}). "\n"
714     "#{msg_suffix}.\n"
715   )
716   delta_confs_exceeded[label] = delta
717 end
718
719 end
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```

711     if delta_confs_exceeded.empty?
712       ICSVB.ldebug("Both keys have confidence within margin of error #{
713         ↪ delta_confidence}")
714     else
715       invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
716         BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::CONFIDENCE_DELTA_MISMATCH, {
717           source_key: {
718             id: id,
719             created_at: created_at
720           },
721           source_response: {
722             id: our_request.id,
723             created_at: our_request.created_at,
724             body: our_request.response.hash
725           },
726           violating_key: {
727             id: key.id,
728             created_at: key.created_at
729           },
730           violating_response: {
731             id: their_request.id,
732             created_at: their_request.created_at,
733             body: their_request.response.hash
734           },
735           uri: this_uri,
736           delta_confidence_threshold: delta_confidence,
737           delta_confidences_detected: delta_confs_exceeded,
738           message: "Source key (id=#{id}) has exceeded confidence delta of \"\n
739             validation key (id=#{key.id}): #{delta_confs_exceeded}. #{
740               ↪ msg_suffix}.\n
741           "
742         }
743       )
744     end
745   end
746
747   # Check if the responses are valid against this key
748   valid_response, invalid_reasons = valid_against?(our_request.response)
749   if valid_response
750     ICSVB.ldebug('Our response is valid against this key')
751   else
752     invalid_key_errors += invalid_reasons
753   end
754 end
755
756 # Validates a response against this key as per rules encoded within this key.
757 # @param [Response] key The response to validate.
758 # @return See #valid_against?
759 def _validate_against_response(response)
760   invalid_key_errors = []
761
762   missing_expected_labels = expected_labels_set - Set[*response.labels.keys]
763   unless missing_expected_labels.empty?
764     invalid_key_errors << BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(
765       BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::EXPECTED_LABELS_MISMATCH, {
766         source_key: {
767           id: id,
768           created_at: created_at
769         },
770         violating_response: {
771           id: response.id,
772           created_at: response.created_at,
773           body: response.hash
774         }
775       }
776     )
777   end
778 end

```

```

773     },
774     uri: response.request.uri,
775     expected_labels: expected_labels.split(','),
776     labels_detected: response.labels.keys,
777     labels_missing: missing_expected_labels.to_a,
778     message: "Expected key (id=#{id}) expects the following mandatory
779       ↪ labels: '#{expected_labels}'. \"\n
780     \"However, response (id=#{response.id}) has the following labels: '#{\n
781       ↪ response.labels.keys.join(',')}'. \"\n
782     \"The following labels are missing: '#{missing_expected_labels.to_a.join
783       ↪ (',')}'.\"\n
784   }
785   [invalid_key_errors.empty?, invalid_key_errors]
786 end
787 end
788
789 # The Request Client class is used to make non-benchmarked requests to the
790 # provided service's labelling endpoints. It handles creating respective
791 # +Request+ and +Response+ records to be committed to the benchmarker database.
792 # Requests made with the +RequestClient+ do *not* ensure that evolution risk
793 # has occurred (see BenchmarkedRequestClient).
794 class RequestClient
795   # Initialises a new instance of the requester to label endpoints.
796   # @param [Service] service The service to request from.
797   # @param [Fixnum] max_labels The maximum labels that the requester returns.
798   # Only supported if the service supports this parameter. Default is 100
799   # labels.
800   # @param [Float] min_confidence The confidence threshold by which labels
801   # are returned. Only supported if the service supports this parameter.
802   # Default is 0.50.
803   def initialize(service, max_labels: 100, min_confidence: 0.50)
804     unless service.is_a?(Service) && [Service::GOOGLE, Service::AMAZON, Service
805       ↪ ::AZURE, Service::DEMO].include?(service)
806       raise ArgumentError, "Service with name #{service.name} not supported."
807     end
808
809   # Registers logging for this client
810   ICVSB.register_request_client(self)
811   @logstrio = StringIO.new
812   @log = Logger.new(@logstrio)
813
814   @service = service
815   @service_client =
816     case @service
817     when Service::GOOGLE
818       Google::Cloud::Vision::ImageAnnotator.new
819     when Service::AMAZON
820       Aws::Rekognition::Client.new
821     when Service::AZURE
822       URI('https://australiaeast.api.cognitive.microsoft.com/vision/v2.0/tag')
823     when Service::DEMO
824       nil # Not client needed for mock...
825     end
826   @config = {
827     max_labels: max_labels,
828     min_confidence: min_confidence
829   }
830   @max_labels = max_labels
831   @min_confidence = min_confidence
832 end

```

```

833     attr_reader :max_labels, :min_confidence
834
835     # Sends a request to the client's respective service endpoint. Does *not*
836     # validate a response against a key (see BenchmarkedRequestClient).
837     # Params:
838     # @param [String] uri A URI to an image to detect labels.
839     # @param [BatchRequest] batch The batch that the request is being made
840     # under. Defaults to nil.
841     # @return [Response] The response record committed to the benchmark
842     # database.
843   def send_uri(uri, batch: nil)
844     raise ArgumentError, 'URI must be a string.' unless uri.is_a?(String)
845     raise ArgumentError, 'Batch must be a BatchRequest.' if !batch.nil? && !
846       ↪ batch.is_a?(BatchRequest)
847
848     batch_id = batch.nil? ? nil : batch.id
849     ICVSB.ldebug("Sending URI #{uri} to #{@service.name} - batch_id: #{batch_id}
850       ↪ ")
851
852     begin
853       request_start = DateTime.now
854       exception = nil
855       case @service
856       when Service::GOOGLE
857         response = _request_google_cloud_vision(uri)
858       when Service::AMAZON
859         response = _request_amazon_rekognition(uri)
860       when Service::AZURE
861         response = _request_azure_computer_vision(uri)
862       when Service::DEMO
863         response = _request_demo_service(uri)
864       end
865       ICVSB.ldebug("Successful response for URI #{uri} to #{@service.name} (
866         ↪ batch_id=#{batch_id})")
867     rescue StandardError => e
868       ICVSB.lwarn("Exception caught in send_uri: #{e.class} - #{e.message}")
869       exception = e
870     end
871     request = Request.create(
872       service_id: @service.id,
873       created_at: request_start,
874       uri: uri,
875       batch_request_id: batch_id
876     )
877     response = Response.create(
878       created_at: DateTime.now,
879       body: response[:body],
880       success: exception.nil? && response[:success],
881       request_id: request.id
882     )
883     ICVSB.ldebug("Request saved (id=#{request.id}) with response (id=#{response.
884       ↪ id})")
885   end
886
887   # Sends a batch request with multiple images to client's respective service
888   # endpoint. Does *not* validate a response against a key (see
889   # ICVSB::BenchmarkedRequestClient).
890   # @param [Array<String>] uris An array of URIs to an image to detect labels.
891   # @return [BatchRequest] The batch request that was created.
892   def send_uris(uris)
893     raise ArgumentError, 'URIs must be an array of strings.' unless uris.is_a?(
894       ↪ Array)
895

```

```

892     batch_request = BatchRequest.create(created_at: DateTime.now)
893     ICVSB.linfo("Initiated a batch request for #{uris.count} URIs")
894     uris.each do |uri|
895       send_uri(uri, batch: batch_request)
896     end
897     ICVSB.linfo("Batch is complete (id=#{batch_request.id})")
898     batch_request
899   end
900
901   # Performs the same operation as send_uris but performs sends each URI
902   # asynchronously. Saves a lot of time if you have lots of URIs. This method
903   # should not be used with an SQLite database.
904   # @see #send_uris
905   # @param [Array<String>] uri See #send_uris
906   # @return [Array<BatchRequest, Array<Thread>]] Returns both the array and an
907   # array of threads representing each request. Call +threads.join(&:each)+  

908   # to ensure all requests have finished.
909   def send_uris_async(uris)
910     raise ArgumentError, 'URIs must be an array of strings.' unless uris.is_a?(
911       → Array)
912     if ICVSB::Request.superclass.db.url.start_with?('sqlite')
913       raise StandardError, 'You are using SQLite and thus async operations are
914       → not supported.'
915     end
916
917     threads = []
918     batch_request = BatchRequest.create(created_at: DateTime.now)
919     ICVSB.linfo("Initiated an async batch request for #{uris.count} URIs")
920     uris.each do |uri|
921       threads << Thread.new do
922         send_uri(uri, batch: batch_request)
923       end
924     end
925     ICVSB.linfo("Async batch submitted (id=#{batch_request.id}). Wait for this
926       → batch to be complete!")
927     [batch_request, threads]
928   end
929
930   # Adds a message of a specific severity to this client's logger.
931   # @param [Logger::Severity] severity The type of severity to log.
932   # @param [String] message The message to log.
933   def log(severity, message)
934     unless [Logger::DEBUG, Logger::INFO, Logger::WARN, Logger::ERROR, Logger::
935       → FATAL, Logger::UNKNOWN].include?(severity)
936       raise ArgumentError, 'Severity must be a Logger::Severity type'
937     end
938     raise ArgumentError, 'Message must be a string' unless message.is_a?(String)
939
940     @log.add(severity, message)
941   end
942
943   # Gets the log of this client as a string.
944   # @return [String] The entire log.
945   def read_log
946     @logstrio.string
947   end
948
949   # Makes a request to Google Cloud Vision's +LABEL_DETECTION+ feature.
950   # @see https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/labels
951   # @param [String] uri A URI to an image to detect labels. Google Cloud
952   # Vision supports JPEGs, PNGs, GIFs, BMPs, WEBPs, RAWs, ICOs, PDFs and

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```

952      # TIFFs only.
953      # @return [Hash] A hash containing the response +body+ and whether the
954      # request was +successful+.
955      def _request_google_cloud_vision(uri)
956        begin
957          image = _download_image(
958            uri,
959            %w[
960              image/jpeg
961              image/png
962              image/gif
963              image/webp
964              image/x-dcraw
965              image/vnd.microsoft.icon
966              application/pdf
967              image/tiff
968            ]
969          )
970          exception = nil
971          res = @service_client.label_detection(
972            image: image.open,
973            max_results: @max_labels
974          ).to_h
975          rescue StandardError => e
976            exception = e
977            res = { service_error: "#{exception.class} - #{exception.message}" }
978          end
979        {
980          body: res.to_json,
981          success: exception.nil? && res.key?(:responses)
982        }
983      end
984
985      # Makes a request to Amazon Rekognition's +DetectLabels+ endpoint.
986      # @see https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/API_DetectLabels.html
987      # @param [String] uri A URI to an image to detect labels. Amazon Rekognition
988      # only supports JPEGs and PNGs.
989      # @return (see #_request_google_cloud_vision)
990      def _request_amazon_rekognition(uri)
991        begin
992          image = _download_image(uri, %w[image/jpeg image/png])
993          exception = nil
994          res = @service_client.detect_labels(
995            image: {
996              bytes: image.read
997            },
998            max_labels: @max_labels,
999            min_confidence: @min_confidence
1000          ).to_h
1001          rescue StandardError => e
1002            exception = e
1003            res = { service_error: "#{e.class} - #{e.message}" }
1004          end
1005        {
1006          body: res.to_json,
1007          success: exception.nil? && res.key?(:labels)
1008        }
1009      end
1010
1011      # Makes a request to Azure's +analyze+ endpoint with +visualFeatures+ of
1012      # +Tags+.
1013      # @see https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/rest/api/cognitiveservices/
1014      #      computervision/tagimage/tagimage
1015      # @param [String] uri A URI to an image to detect labels. Azure Computer

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```

1015  # Vision only supports JPEGs, PNGs, GIFs, and BMPs.
1016  # @return (see #_request_google_cloud_vision)
1017  def _request_azure_computer_vision(uri)
1018      image = _download_image(uri, %w[image/jpeg image/png image/gif image/bmp])
1019
1020      http_req = Net::HTTP::Post::Multipart.new(
1021          @service_client,
1022          file: UploadIO.new(image.open, image.content_type, image.original_filename
1023                           ↩ )
1024          )
1025          http_req['Ocp-Apim-Subscription-Key'] = ENV['AZURE_SUBSCRIPTION_KEY']
1026
1027      http_res = Net::HTTP.start(@service_client.host, @service_client.port,
1028                                  ↩ use_ssl: true) do |h|
1029          h.request(http_req)
1030      end
1031
1032      tags_present = JSON.parse(http_res.body).key?('tags')
1033      {
1034          body: tags_present ? http_res.body : { service_error: http_res.body },
1035          success: tags_present
1036      }
1037
1038      # Makes a request to the mock demo server, returning JSON data at time 1
1039      # (t1) or time 2 (t2), depending on the timestamp flip (which can be
1040      # triggered by the PATCH /benchmark/:key endpoint).
1041      # @param [String] uri A URI to an image to detect labels.
1042      # @return (see #_request_google_cloud_vision)
1043  def _request_demo_service(uri)
1044      # Get the image id from the URI...
1045      regexp = %r{http://localhost:4567/demo/data/(\d{4,12}).jpe?g}
1046
1047      all_image_ids = JSON.parse(
1048          File.read(File.join('demo', 'categories.json'))
1049          )['all']
1050
1051      invalid_uri = (uri =~ regexp).nil?
1052      image_id = uri.match(regexp)[1] unless invalid_uri
1053      invalid_image_id = !all_image_ids.include?(image_id)
1054
1055      # Mock service can be switched to t1 or t2 at demo endpoint...
1056      body =
1057          if invalid_uri || invalid_image_id
1058              { service_error: 'The URI is not a valid demo URI.' }
1059          else
1060              body = JSON.parse(File.read(File.join('demo', "#{$image_id}.#{demotimestamp}.json")))
1061              { responses: [body] }#[{ label_annotations: body }]
1062          end
1063
1064          {
1065              body: body.to_json,
1066              success: !(invalid_uri || invalid_image_id)
1067          }
1068
1069      # Downloads the image at the specified URI.
1070      # @param [String] uri The URI to download.
1071      # @param [Array<String>] mimes Accepted mime types.
1072      # @return [File] if download was successful.
1073  def _download_image(uri, mimes)
1074      raise ArgumentError, 'URI must be a string.' unless uri.is_a?(String)
1075      raise ArgumentError, 'Mimes must be an array of strings.' unless mimes.is_a

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1076      ↢ ?(Array)
1077      raise ArgumentError, "Invalid URI specified: #{uri}." unless uri =~ URI::
1078      ↢ DEFAULT_PARSER.make_regexp
1079
1080      ICSVB.ldebug("Downloading image at URI: #{uri}")
1081      file = Down.download(uri)
1082      mime = file.content_type
1083
1084      unless mimes.include?(mime)
1085        raise ArgumentError, "Content type of URI #{uri} not accepted. Received #{
1086          ↢ mime}. Valid are: #{mimes}."
1087      end
1088
1089      file
1090    rescue Down::Error => e
1091      raise ArgumentError, "Could not access the URI #{uri} - #{e.class}"
1092    end
1093
1094    # The Benchmarked Request Client class is used to make requests to a service's
1095    # labelling endpoints, ensuring that the response from the endpoint has not
1096    # altered significantly as indicated by the expiration flags. It handles
1097    # creating respective +Request+ and +Response+ records to be committed to the
1098    # benchmarker database. Unlike the +RequestClient+, the
1099    # +BenchmarkedRequestClient+ ensures that, respective to a benchmark dataset,
1100    # evolution has not occurred and thus is safe to use the endpoint without
1101    # re-evaluation. Requires a BenchmarkKey to make any requests.
1102    class BenchmarkedRequestClient < RequestClient
1103      alias send_uri_no_key send_uri
1104      alias send_uris_no_key send_uris
1105      alias send_uris_no_key_async send_uris_async
1106
1107      # Initialises a new instance of the benchmarked requester to label
1108      # endpoints.
1109      # @param [Service] service (see RequestClient#initialize)
1110      # @param [Array<String>] dataset An array of URIs to benchmark
1111      # against.
1112      # @param [Fixnum] max_labels (see RequestClient#initialize)
1113      # @param [Float] min_confidence (see RequestClient#initialize)
1114      # @param [Hash] opts Additional benchmark-related parameters.
1115      # @option opts [String] :trigger_on_schedule A cron-tab string (see
1116      # +man 5 crontab+) that is used for the benchmarker to re-evaluate if the
1117      # current key should be expired. Default is every Sunday at midnight,
1118      # i.e., +0 0 * * 0+.
1119      # @option opts [String] :trigger_on_failcount Number of times the benchmark
1120      # request fails making requests for the benchmark to re-evaluate. Must
1121      # be a positive, non-zero number for the benchmark to trigger on failure,
1122      # else this field is ignored. Default is 0.
1123      # @option opts [BenchmarkSeverity] :severity The severity of warning for
1124      # the #BenchmarkKey to fail. Default is +BenchmarkSeverity::INFO+.
1125      # @option opts [String] :benchmark_callback_uri The URI to call with results
1126      # of a completed benchmark. Optional. If an invalid URI is specified this
1127      # will default to nil.
1128      # @option opts [String] :warning_callback_uri Required when the +:severity:+
1129      # is +BenchmarkSeverity::WARN+. If left blank, the effect of the benchmark
1130      # client is essentially a severity of +BenchmarkSeverity::NONE+, as no
1131      # warning endpoint can be called to notify of issues. If an invalid URI is
1132      # provided, this will default to nil.
1133      # @option opts [Boolean] :autobenchmark Automatically benchmark the client
1134      # as soon as it is initialised. If +false+, then you will need to call
1135      # the #benchmark method immediately (i.e., on your own thread). Defaults
1136      # to true, so will block the current thread before benchmarking is
1137      # complete.
1138      # @option opts [Fixnum] :delta_labels Number of labels that change for a

```

```

1137 # #BenchmarkKey to expire. Default is 5.
1138 # @option opts [Float] :delta_confidences Minimum amount of difference for
1139 # the same label to have changed between the last benchmark for the
1140 # #BenchmarkKey to expire. Default is 0.01.
1141 # @option opts [Array<String>] :expected_labels Array of strings for the
1142 # various expected labels that should be expected in every result. Fails
1143 # otherwise. Encoded within the key.
1144 def initialize(service, dataset, max_labels: 100, min_confidence: 0.50, opts:
1145   ↪ {})
1146   super(service, max_labels: max_labels, min_confidence: min_confidence)
1147   @dataset = dataset
1148   @key_config = {
1149     delta_labels: opts[:delta_labels] || 5,
1150     delta_confidence: opts[:delta_confidence] || 0.01,
1151     severity: opts[:severity] || BenchmarkSeverity::INFO,
1152     expected_labels: opts[:expected_labels] || []
1153   }
1154   @benchmark_config = {
1155     trigger_on_schedule: opts[:trigger_on_schedule] || '0 0 * * 0',
1156     trigger_on_failcount: opts[:trigger_on_failcount] || 0,
1157     autobenchmark: opts[:autobenchmark].nil? ? true : opts[:autobenchmark]
1158   }
1159   # Validate URIs
1160   if !opts[:benchmark_callback_uri].nil? &&
1161     !(opts[:benchmark_callback_uri] =~ URI::DEFAULT_PARSER.make_regexp).nil?
1162     @benchmark_config[:benchmark_callback_uri] = URI(opts[:benchmark_callback_uri])
1163   end
1164   if !opts[:warning_callback_uri].nil? &&
1165     !(opts[:warning_callback_uri] =~ URI::DEFAULT_PARSER.make_regexp).nil?
1166     @benchmark_config[:warning_callback_uri] = URI(opts[:warning_callback_uri])
1167   end
1168   if !opts[:warning_callback_uri].nil? && opts[:severity] != BenchmarkSeverity
1169     ICVSB.lwarn("A warning callback URI #{opts[:warning_callback_uri]} was set
1170     ↪ but \"\n      'the severity is not WARNING. This callback will be ignored...'")
1171   end
1172
1173   @created_at = DateTime.now
1174   @demo_timestamp = 't1' if @service == Service::DEMO
1175   @is_benchmarking = false
1176   @last_benchmark_time = nil
1177   @benchmark_count = 0
1178   @invalid_state_count = 0
1179   trigger_benchmark if @benchmark_config[:autobenchmark]
1180   @scheduler = Rufus::Scheduler.new.schedule(@benchmark_config[:trigger_on_schedule]) do |cronjob|
1181     ICVSB.linfo("Cronjob starting for BenchmarkedRequestClient #{self} - \"\
1182       Scheduled at: #{cronjob.scheduled_at}; Last ran at: #{cronjob.last_time
1183       ↪ }.\")"
1184   trigger_benchmark
1185 end
1186
1187 # Exposes whether or not the client is currently benchmarking.
1188 # @return [Boolean] True if the client is benchmarking, false otherwise.
1189 def benchmarking?
1190   @is_benchmarking
1191 end
1192
1193 # Returns the next time a schedule to trigger a benchmark will run.

```

```

1194      # @return [DateTime] The time the next trigger to benchmark will be run.
1195      def next_scheduled_benchmark_time
1196        DateTime.parse(@scheduler.next_time.to_t.to_s)
1197      end
1198
1199      # Returns the last time a schedule to trigger a benchmark was run.
1200      # @return [DateTime,nil] Time next DateTime the benchmark ran or nil if
1201      # the scheduler has never yet run.
1202      def last_scheduled_benchmark_time
1203        @scheduler.last_time.nil? ? nil : DateTime.parse(@scheduler.last_time.to_t.
1204          ↪ to_s)
1205      end
1206
1207      # Returns the average time taken to complete the last benchmark.
1208      # @return [Float] The time taken.
1209      def mean_scheduled_benchmark_duration
1210        @scheduler.mean_work_time
1211      end
1212
1213      # Returns the time taken to complete the last benchmark.
1214      # @return [Float] The time taken.
1215      def last_scheduled_benchmark_duration
1216        @scheduler.last_work_time
1217      end
1218
1219      attr_reader *%i[
1220        invalid_state_count
1221        current_key
1222        created_at
1223        dataset
1224        benchmark_count
1225        last_benchmark_time
1226        benchmark_config
1227        key_config
1228        service
1229      ]
1230
1231      attr_accessor :demo_timestamp
1232
1233      # Sends an image to this client's respective labelling endpoint, verifying
1234      # the key provided has not expired (and thus substantial evolution in the
1235      # labelling endpoint has not occurred for significant impact to the results).
1236      # Depending on the key's varied severity level, a response will be returned
1237      # with varied fields populated.
1238      # @param [URI] uri (see RequestClient#send_uri)
1239      # @param [BenchmarkKey] key The benchmark key required to make a request
1240      # to the service using this client. This key is verified against this
1241      # client's most recent benchmark, thereby ensuring no evolution has occurred
1242      # in the back-end service.
1243      # @return [Hash] A hash with the following keys: +:response+, the raw
1244      # #Response object returned from the #RequestClient.send_uri method (i.e.,
1245      # a non-benchmarked response) or +nil+ if the #key has expired or invalid
1246      # and the key's severity level is #BenchmarkSeverity::EXCEPTION;
1247      # +:labels+, a shortcut to the #Response.label method of the response or
1248      # +nil+ if the key has expired or was invalid and the key's severity level
1249      # is #BenchmarkSeverity::EXCEPTION; +:key_errors:+ a(n) error(s) response
1250      # indicating if the key has expired (a string value) which is only
1251      # populated if the key has a severity level of
1252      # #BenchmarkSeverity::EXCEPTION or #BenchmarkSeverity::WARNING;
1253      # +:response_errors:+ similar to :key_errors: but for the response;
1254      # +:cached:+ an optional DateTime indicating that there was no need to make
1255      # a request to the service as the benchmarker holds a cached response that
1256      # is still valid; this indicates the time at which the cached response was
1257      # generated.

```

```

1257     def send_uri_with_key(uri, key)
1258       raise ArgumentError, 'URI must be a string.' unless uri.is_a?(String)
1259       raise ArgumentError, 'Key must be a BenchmarkKey.' unless key.is_a?(
1260         BenchmarkKey)
1261 
1262       if @current_key.nil?
1263         return {
1264           key_errors: [
1265             BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError.new(BenchmarkKey::InvalidKeyError::
1266               NO_KEY_YET)
1267           ]
1268         }
1269 
1270       result = {
1271         labels: nil,
1272         response: nil,
1273         key_errors: nil,
1274         response_errors: nil,
1275         service_error: nil,
1276         cached: nil
1277       }
1278 
1279       # Check for a cached result w/ this service given provided key...
1280       ICVSB.ldebug("Attempting to use a cached response for #{uri} + #{@service.
1281         name}...")
1282       Request.where(uri: uri, service_id: @service.id, benchmark_key_id: key.id)
1283         .order(Sequel.desc(:created_at)).each do |request|
1284         response = request.response
1285 
1286         # Ignore unsuccessful responses
1287         next if response.nil? || !response.success?
1288 
1289         # Check if the response's benchmark is still valid -- if so, just
1290         # reuse that result... (no need to actually ping service)
1291         key_is_valid, = @current_key.valid_against?(response.benchmark_key)
1292         ICVSB.ldebug("Cached key (id=#{response.benchmark_key.id}) is valid
1293           ↪ against current key \"\n
1294             "(id=#{@current_key.id})? #{key_is_valid}\")")
1295         if !response.benchmark_key.nil? && key_is_valid
1296           return { labels: response.labels, response: response.hash, cached:
1297             DateTime.parse(response.created_at.to_s) }
1298         end
1299       end
1300       ICVSB.ldebug("Cached response failed! Will try to invoke a request to #{@
1301         service.name}")
1302 
1303       # Check for key validity
1304       ICVSB.ldebug("Checking if current key (id=#{@current_key.id}) is valid
1305           ↪ against key provided (id=#{key.id})...")
1306       key_valid, key_invalid_reasons = @current_key.valid_against?(key)
1307       # Invalid state count increment if key error exists...
1308       unless key_valid
1309         ICVSB.ldebug("Validation of current key (id=#{@current_key.id}) failed
1310           ↪ against key provided (id=#{key.id}). "
1311             "Reasons: #[key_invalid_reasons.join('; ')]")
1312         result[:key_errors] = key_invalid_reasons
1313         @invalid_state_count += 1
1314         ICVSB.linfo("Error has occurred in key validation. Invalid state count
1315           ↪ count is now #{@invalid_state_count}.")
1316       end
1317 
1318       # If key is valid, raise request and check if response is valid
1319       ICVSB.ldebug("Key provided #[key.id] is valid against current key #{
1320         key.id}")

```

```

1312     ↪ @current_key.id}!")
1313   if key_valid
1314     ICVSB.ldebug("Invoking a request '#{uri}' to #{@service.name}...")
1315     response = send_uri_no_key(uri)
1316     ICVSB.ldebug("Response returned (id=#{response.id})! Labels: #{response.
1317       ↪ labels}")
1318     # Update the benchmark key id
1319     response.benchmark_key_id = @current_key.id
1320     ICVSB.ldebug("Updated response (id=#{response.id}) with benchmark key = #{
1321       ↪ response.benchmark_key_id}...")
1322     # Now check to see if it was valid given that the response was successful
1323     if response.success?
1324       ICVSB.ldebug("Checking if this response (id=#{response.id}) is valid
1325         ↪ against current key (id=#{key.id})")
1326       response_valid, response_invalid_reasons = @current_key.valid_against?(
1327         ↪ response)
1328     end
1329     result[:labels] = response.labels
1330     result[:response] = response.hash
1331     result[:service_error] = result[:response][:service_error].to_s unless
1332       ↪ result[:response][:service_error].nil?
1333     response_valid ||= !result[:response][:service_error].nil?
1334     # Increment invalid state count if response error ONLY (i.e., not service
1335       ↪ error)
1336     unless response_valid
1337       ICVSB.ldebug("Validation of current key (id=#{@current_key.id}) failed
1338         ↪ against response \"\
1339           "(id=#{response.id}). Reasons: #{response_invalid_reasons.join('; ')}")
1340       result[:response_errors] = response_invalid_reasons
1341       @invalid_state_count += 1
1342       ICVSB.linfo('Error has occurred in response validation. \
1343           "Invalid state count count is now #{@invalid_state_count}.')
1344     end
1345   end
1346
1347   # If benchmark trigger on num failures is set
1348   if @benchmark_config[:trigger_on_failcount].positive? &&
1349     @invalid_state_count > @benchmark_config[:trigger_on_failcount]
1350     ICVSB.linfo("Benchmark has failed #{@benchmark_config[:.
1351       ↪ trigger_on_failcount]} \"\
1352         'times... retriggering benchmark...'")
1353     @invalid_state_count = 0
1354     trigger_benchmark
1355   end
1356
1357   # Response behaviour is dependent on the severity encoded within the key
1358   case @current_key.benchmark_severity
1359   when BenchmarkSeverity::EXCEPTION
1360     # Only expose errors if they exist
1361     if (result[:key_errors].nil? || result[:key_errors].empty?) &&
1362       result[:response_errors].nil? &&
1363       result[:service_error].nil?
1364       result
1365     else
1366       {
1367         key_errors: result[:key_errors],
1368         response_errors: result[:response_errors],
1369         service_error: result[:service_error]
1370       }
1371     end
1372   when BenchmarkSeverity::WARNING
1373     # Flag a warning to the warning endpoint about this result if sev is WARN
1374     _flag_warning(result)
1375   end
1376 end

```

```

1367   when BenchmarkSeverity::INFO
1368     # Log to info...
1369     unless key_valid
1370       ICVSB.lwarn("Benchmarked request made for #{uri} with invalid key \"\
1371         "(id=#{@current_key.id}) -- error reasons: #{key_invalid_reasons.join\
1372           ('; ')}"')
1373     end
1374     unless response_valid
1375       ICVSB.lwarn("Benchmarked request made for #{uri} and response violated \
1376         ↪ current key \"\
1377           "(id=#{@current_key.id}) -- error reasons: #{response_invalid_reasons.\
1378             join('; ')}"')
1379     end
1380   result
1381 when BenchmarkSeverity::NONE
1382   # Passthrough...
1383   result
1384 end
1385
1386 # Makes a request to benchmark's the client's current key against the
1387 # client's URIs to benchmark against. Expires the existing current key
1388 # if a new benchmark key is no longer valid against the old benchmark key.
1389 # @return [void]
1390 def trigger_benchmark
1391   @is_benchmarking = true
1392   new_key = _benchmark
1393   old_key = @current_key
1394   expiry_occurred = false
1395   if @current_key.nil?
1396     @current_key = new_key
1397   else
1398     # Check if the key is valid
1399     valid_key, invalid_reasons = @current_key.valid_against?(new_key)
1400     unless valid_key
1401       ICVSB.lerror('BenchmarkedRequestClient no longer has a valid key! '\
1402         "Reason(s) = '#{invalid_reasons.join('; ')}'"\
1403         "Expiring old key (id=#{@current_key.id}) with new key (id=#{new_key.id\
1404           ↪ })")
1405       @current_key.expire
1406       @current_key = new_key
1407       expiry_occurred = true
1408     end
1409   end
1410   # # Check if the responses are valid against the current key
1411   # new_key.batch_request.responses.each do |res|
1412   #   valid_response, invalid_reasons = @current_key.valid_against?(res)
1413   #   unless valid_response
1414   #     ICVSB.lerror('BenchmarkedRequestClient has a violated response! '\
1415   #       "Reason(s) = '#{invalid_reasons.join('; ')}'. Falling back to old key (id\
1416   #         ↪ =#{old_key.nil? ? '<NONE>' : old_key.id})...")
1417   #     @current_key.expire
1418   #     @current_key = old_key
1419   #     @current_key.&.unexpire
1420   #     expiry_occurred = true
1421   #     break
1422   #   end
1423   # end
1424   # end
1425   @is_benchmarking = false
1426   _flag_benchmarking_complete(new_key, old_key, expiry_occurred)
1427 end
1428
1429 # Locates the last behaviour token key from the given date
1430 # @param [DateTime] Date at which the key should be searched from
1431

```

```

1426      # @param [BenchmarkKey] The benchmark key found, or nil.
1427      def find_key_since(date)
1428        candidate_bks = BenchmarkKey.where(
1429          service_id: @service.id,
1430          benchmark_severity_id: @key_config[:severity].id,
1431          max_labels: @max_labels,
1432          min_confidence: @min_confidence,
1433          delta_labels: @key_config[:delta_labels],
1434          delta_confidence: @key_config[:delta_confidence],
1435          expected_labels: @key_config[:expected_labels].map(&:downcase).join(','),
1436        ).where(Sequel[:created_at] > date).reverse_order(:created_at)
1437        return nil if candidate_bks.nil?
1438
1439        candidate_bks.find do |bk|
1440          (Set[*bk.batch_request.uris] ^ Set[@dataset]).empty?
1441        end
1442      end
1443
1444    private
1445
1446    # Forwards a full result to the benchmarked request client's warning endpoint
1447    # @param [Hash] result See #send_uri_with_key
1448    # @return [void]
1449    def _flag_warning(result)
1450      return if @benchmark_config[:warning_callback_uri].nil? || @key_config[:  

1451        ↪ severity] != BenchmarkSeverity::WARNING
1452
1453      uri = @benchmark_config[:warning_callback_uri]
1454      data = result
1455      Thread.new do
1456        ICSVSB.linfo("POSTing to warning endpoint '#{uri}' data=#{data}")
1457        req = Net::HTTP::Post.new(uri)
1458        req.body = data.to_json
1459        req.content_type = 'application/json; charset=utf8'
1460        res = Net::HTTP.start(uri.hostname, uri.port) do |http|
1461          http.request(req)
1462        end
1463        ICSVSB.linfo("Response from warning endpoint: #{res.code} #{res.message}")
1464        ICSVSB.ldebug("Response body is: #{res.body}") if res.is_a?(Net::  

1465          ↪ HTTPSuccess)
1466      end
1467
1468    # Forwards a new key that has been generated due to benchmark trigger and
1469    # sends the current or old key (depending on expiry_occurred flag.)
1470    # @param [BenchmarkKey] new_key The new key that was generated from the
1471    # benchmark that was triggered.
1472    # @param [BenchmarkKey] old_or_current_key The current key, if expiry did
1473    # not occur, or the old key if expiry did occur.
1474    # @param [Boolean] expiry_occurred Indicates if the current_key was expired
1475    # and replaced with the new_key.
1476    # @return [void]
1477    def _flag_benchmarking_complete(new_key, old_or_current_key, expiry_occurred)
1478      return if @benchmark_config[:benchmark_callback_uri].nil?
1479
1480      uri = @benchmark_config[:benchmark_callback_uri]
1481      old_or_current_key_id = old_or_current_key.nil? ? nil : old_or_current_key.  

1482        ↪ id
1483      data = { new_key: new_key.id, old_key: old_or_current_key_id, expiry_occurred  

1484        ↪ : expiry_occurred }
1485      Thread.new do
1486        ICSVSB.linfo("POSTing to benchmark complete endpoint '#{uri}' data=#{data}"  

1487          ↪ )
1488        req = Net::HTTP::Post.new(uri)

```

```
1485     req.body = data.to_json
1486     req.content_type = 'application/json; charset=utf8'
1487     res = Net::HTTP.start(uri.hostname, uri.port) do |http|
1488       http.request(req)
1489     end
1490     ICVSB.linfo("Response from benchmark complete endpoint: #{res.code} #{res.
1491                   ↪ message}")
1491     ICVSB.ldebug("Response body is: #{res.body}") if res.is_a?(Net::
1492                   ↪ HTTPSuccess)
1493   end
1494
1495 # Benchmarks this client against a set of URIs, returning this client's
1496 # configured key configuration. Internal method...
1497 # @return [BenchmarkKey] A key representing the result of this benchmark.
1498 def _benchmark
1499   @last_benchmark_time = DateTime.now
1500   @benchmark_count += 1
1501   ICVSB.linfo("Benchmarking dataset against dataset of #{@dataset.count} URIs.
1502               ↪ ")
1502   "Times benchmarked=#{benchmark_count}")
1503   br, thr = send_uris_no_key_async(@dataset)
1504   ICVSB.linfo("Benchmarking this dataset using batch request with id=#{br.id}.
1504               ↪ ")
1505   # Wait for all threads to finish...
1506   thr.each(&:join)
1507   ICVSB.linfo("Batch request with id=#{br.id} is now complete!")
1508   bk = BenchmarkKey.create(
1509     service_id: @service.id,
1510     benchmark_severity_id: @key_config[:severity].id,
1511     batch_request_id: br.id,
1512     created_at: DateTime.now,
1513     expired: false,
1514     delta_labels: @key_config[:delta_labels],
1515     delta_confidence: @key_config[:delta_confidence],
1516     expected_labels: @key_config[:expected_labels].map(&:downcase).join(','),
1517     max_labels: @max_labels,
1518     min_confidence: @min_confidence
1519   )
1520   # Ensure every response is updated with this key
1521   br.responses.each do |res|
1522     ICVSB.ldebug("Updating response id=#{res.id} to benchmark key id=#{bk.id}.
1522               ↪ ")
1523     res.benchmark_key_id = bk.id
1524   end
1525   ICVSB.linfo("Benchmarking dataset is complete (benchmark key id=#{bk.id}).")
1526   bk
1527 end
1528 end
1529 end
```

**Listing B.2:** Implementation of the architecture facade API.

```

1 # frozen_string_literal: true
2
3 # Author:: Alex Cummaudo (mailto:ca@deakin.edu.au)
4 # Copyright:: Copyright (c) 2019 Alex Cummaudo
5 # License:: MIT License
6
7 require 'sinatra'
8 require 'time'
9 require 'json'
10 require 'cgi'
11 require 'require_all'
12 require_all 'lib'
13
14
15 set :root, File.dirname(__FILE__)
16 set :public_folder, File.join(File.dirname(__FILE__), 'static')
17 set :show_exceptions, false
18 set :demo_folder, File.join(File.dirname(__FILE__), 'demo')
19
20 store = {}
21
22 before do
23   if request.body.size.positive?
24     request.body.rewind
25     @params = JSON.parse(request.body.read, symbolize_names: true)
26   end
27 end
28
29 def halt!(code, message)
30   content_type 'text/plain'
31   halt code, message
32 end
33
34 def check_brc_id(id, store)
35   halt! 400, 'Benchmark id must be a positive integer' unless id.integer? && id.
36   ↪ to_i.positive?
37   halt! 400, "No such benchmark request client exists with id=#{id}" unless store
38   ↪ .key?(id)
39 end
40
41 get '/' do
42   File.read(File.expand_path('index.html', settings.public_folder))
43 end
44
45 # Creates a new benchmark request client with given parameters
46 post '/benchmark' do
47   # Extract params
48   service = params[:service] || ''
49   benchmark_dataset = params[:benchmark_dataset] || ''
50   max_labels = params[:max_labels] || ''
51   min_confidence = params[:min_confidence] || ''
52   trigger_on_schedule = params[:trigger_on_schedule] || ''
53   trigger_on_failcount = params[:trigger_on_failcount] || ''
54   benchmark_callback_uri = params[:benchmark_callback_uri] || ''
55   warning_callback_uri = params[:warning_callback_uri] || ''
56   expected_labels = params[:expected_labels] || ''
57   delta_labels = params[:delta_labels] || ''
58   delta_confidence = params[:delta_confidence] || ''
59   severity = params[:severity] || ''
60
61   # Check param types
62   unless max_labels.integer? && max_labels.to_i.positive?

```

```

61     halt! 400, 'max_labels must be a positive integer'
62   end
63   unless min_confidence.float? && min_confidence.to_f.positive?
64     halt! 400, 'min_confidence must be a positive float'
65   end
66   unless delta_labels.integer? && delta_labels.to_i.positive?
67     halt! 400, 'delta_labels must be a positive integer'
68   end
69   unless delta_confidence.float? && delta_confidence.to_f.positive?
70     halt! 400, 'delta_confidence must be a positive float'
71   end
72   unless ICVSB::VALID_SERVICES.include?(service.to_sym)
73     halt! 400, "service must be one of #{ICVSB::VALID_SERVICES.join(', ', '')}"
74   end
75   unless trigger_on_schedule.cronline?
76     halt! 400, 'trigger_on_schedule must be a cron string in * * * * * (see man 5
77     ↪ crontab)'
78   end
79   unless trigger_on_failcount.integer? && trigger_on_failcount.to_i >= -1
80     halt! 400, 'trigger_on_failcount must be zero or positive integer'
81   end
82   if !benchmark_callback_uri.empty? && !benchmark_callback_uri.uri?
83     halt! 400, 'benchmark_callback_uri is not a valid URI'
84   end
85   unless ICVSB::VALID_SEVERITIES.include?(severity.to_sym)
86     halt! 400, "severity must be one of #{ICVSB::VALID_SEVERITIES.join(', ', '')}"
87   end
88   if ICVSB::BenchmarkSeverity[name: severity.to_s] == ICVSB::BenchmarkSeverity::
89     ↪ WARNING && !warning_callback_uri.uri?
90     halt! 400, 'Must provide a valid warning_callback_uri when severity is WARNING
91     ↪ '
92   end
93   halt! 400, 'benchmark_dataset has not been specified' if benchmark_dataset.
94     ↪ empty?
95   benchmark_dataset = benchmark_dataset.lines.map(&:strip)
96   expected_labels = expected_labels.empty? ? [] : expected_labels.split(',').map
97     ↪ (&:strip)
98   benchmark_dataset.each do |uri|
99     unless uri.uri?
100       halt! 400, "benchmark_dataset must be a list of uris separated by a newline
101         ↪ character; #{uri} is not a valid URI"
102     end
103   end
104
105   # Convert params
106   brc = ICVSB::BenchmarkedRequestClient.new(
107     ICVSB::Service[name: service.to_s],
108     benchmark_dataset,
109     max_labels: max_labels.to_i,
110     min_confidence: min_confidence.to_f,
111     opts: {
112       trigger_on_schedule: trigger_on_schedule,
113       trigger_on_failcount: trigger_on_failcount.to_i,
114       benchmark_callback_uri: benchmark_callback_uri,
115       warning_callback_uri: warning_callback_uri,
116       expected_labels: expected_labels,
117       delta_labels: delta_labels.to_i,
118       delta_confidence: delta_confidence.to_f,
119       severity: ICVSB::BenchmarkSeverity[name: severity.to_s],
120       autobenchmark: false
121     }
122   )

```

```

119  # Benchmark on new thread
120  Thread.new do
121    brc.trigger_benchmark
122    store[brc.object_id] = brc
123  end
124
125  store[brc.object_id] = brc
126
127  status 201
128  content_type 'application/json; charset=utf-8'
129  { id: brc.object_id }.to_json
130 end
131
132 # Gets all auxillary information about the benchmark
133 get '/benchmark/:id' do
134   id = params[:id].to_i
135   check_brc_id(id, store)
136   brc = store[id]
137
138   content_type 'application/json; charset=utf-8'
139   {
140     id: id,
141     service: brc.service.name,
142     created_at: brc.created_at,
143     current_key_id: brc.current_key ? brc.current_key.id : nil,
144     is_benchmarking: brc.benchmarking?,
145     last_scheduled_benchmark_time: brc.last_scheduled_benchmark_time,
146     next_scheduled_benchmark_time: brc.next_scheduled_benchmark_time,
147     mean_scheduled_benchmark_duration: brc.mean_scheduled_benchmark_duration,
148     last_scheduled_benchmark_duration: brc.last_scheduled_benchmark_duration,
149     invalid_state_count: brc.invalid_state_count,
150     last_benchmark_time: brc.last_benchmark_time,
151     benchmark_count: brc.benchmark_count,
152     config: {
153       max_labels: brc.max_labels,
154       min_confidence: brc.min_confidence,
155       key: brc.key_config,
156       benchmarking: brc.benchmark_config
157     },
158     benchmark_dataset: brc.dataset
159   }.to_json
160 end
161
162 patch '/benchmark/:id' do
163   # Set is_benchmarking to true to force the benchmark to reevaluate...
164   # Else, endpoint is ignored
165   id = params['id'].to_i
166   check_brc_id(id, store)
167   brc = store[id]
168
169   status 202
170   response = {
171     id: id,
172     service: brc.service.name,
173     current_key_id: brc.current_key ? brc.current_key.id : nil,
174     is_benchmarking: brc.benchmarking?
175   }
176   if brc.service == ICVSB::Service::DEMO && params[:demo_timestamp]
177     brc.demo_timestamp = params[:demo_timestamp] if ['t1', 't2'].include?(params[:  
      ↪ demo_timestamp])
178     response[:timestamp] = brc.demo_timestamp
179   end
180
181   brc.trigger_benchmark if params[:is_benchmarking] && !brc.benchmarking?

```

```
182
183   response.to_json
184 end
185
186 # Gets all auxillary information about this key's benchmark
187 get '/benchmark/:id/key' do
188   id = params[:id].to_i
189   check_brc_id(id, store)
190   brc = store[id]
191
192   halt! 422, 'The requested benchmark client is still benchmarking its first key'
193   ↪ if brc.current_key.nil?
194
195   current_key_id = brc.current_key.id
196   redirect "/key/#{current_key_id}"
197 end
198
199 get '/key/:id' do
200   id = params[:id].to_i
201   bk = BenchmarkKey[id: params[:id]]
202
203   halt! 400, 'id must be an integer' unless id.integer?
204   halt! 400, "No such benchmark key request client exists with id=#{id}" if bk.
205   ↪ nil?
206
207   content_type 'application/json; charset=utf-8'
208   {
209     id: bk.id,
210     service: bk.service.name,
211     created_at: bk.created_at,
212     benchmark_dataset: bk.batch_request.uris,
213     success: bk.success?,
214     expired: bk.expired?,
215     severity: bk.severity.name,
216     responses: bk.batch_request.responses.map(&:hash),
217     config: {
218       expected_labels: bk.expected_labels_set.to_a,
219       delta_labels: bk.delta_labels,
220       delta_confidence: bk.delta_confidence,
221       max_labels: bk.max_labels,
222       min_confidence: bk.min_confidence
223     }
224   }.to_json
225 end
226
227 # Gets the log of the benchmark with the given id
228 get '/benchmark/:id/log' do
229   id = params[:id].to_i
230
231   check_brc_id(id, store)
232
233   content_type 'text/plain'
234   store[id].read_log
235 end
236
237 post '/callbacks/benchmark' do
238   "Acknowledged benchmark completion with params: '#{params}'..."
239 end
240
241 post '/callbacks/warning' do
242   "Acknowledged benchmark warning params: '#{params}'..."
243 end
244
245 # Labels resources against the provided uri. This is a conditional HTTP request.
```

```

244 # Must provide "If-Match" request header field with at least one ETag. Note that
245 # the ETag must ALWAYS been provided in the following format:
246 #
247 # W/"<benchmark-id>[;<behaviour-token>]"
248 #
249 # Note that the ETag is a weak ETag; ``weak ETag values of two representations
250 # of the same resources might be semantically equivalent, but not byte-for-byte
251 # identical.'' (https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/HTTP/Headers/ETag).
252 # That is, as the developer is not directly accessing the service, they are
253 # only getting a semantically equivalent representation of the labels, but not
254 # a byte-for-byte equivalent (the model may have changed slightly, given the
255 # latest benchmark used.)
256 #
257 # The first id, the benchmark-id, is mandatory as the request must know what
258 # benchmark dataset (and service) the requested URI is being made against.
259 #
260 # The following behaviour-token is optional, indicating the tolerances to which
261 # the response will be made, and the behaviour by which the response will change
262 # given if evolution has occurred since the last benchmark was made. (Not that
263 # internally to this project, we refer to the behaviour token as a BenchmarkKey
264 # -- see ICSVSB::BenchmarkKey.)
265 #
266 # One may provide multiple ETags (separated by commas) in the format:
267 #
268 # W/"<benchmark-id1>[;<behaviour-token1>]",W/"<benchmark-id2>[;<behaviour-token2
269 # <-- >]" ...
270 #
271 # Where this is the case, the label requested will attempt to match ANY of the
272 # tags provided. If failure occurs for the first, it will default to the next
273 # ETag, and so on.
274 #
275 # If NO behaviour-token is specified, then then (additionally) one must provide
276 # an "If-Unmodified-Since" request header field, indicating that the resource
277 # (labels) must have been unmodified since the given date. This will attempt to
278 # automatically locate the nearest behaviour token that was generated after the
279 # given date and request the labels against that date.
280 #
281 # The endpoint will return one of the following HTTP responses:
282 #
283 # - 200 OK if this is the first request made to this URI;
284 # - 400 Bad Request if invalid parameters were provided by the client;
285 # - 412 Precondition Failed if the key/unmodified time provided is no longer
286 # valid, and thus the key provided (or time provided) is violating the
287 # valid tolerances embedded within the key (responding further details
288 # reasoning what tolerances were violated as metadata in the response body);
289 # - 428 Precondition Required if no If-Match field is provided in request;
290 # - 422 Unprocessable Entity if a service error has occurred, indicating the
291 # service cannot process the entity or a bad request was made.
292 # - 500 Internal Server Error if a facade error has occurred.
293 #
294 # The endpoint will return the following HTTP response headers:
295 #
296 # - ETag: The ETag that was used to successfully generate a response
297 # - Last-Modified: The last time the benchmark-id was benchmarked against
298 # its dataset
299 # - Expires: The next time the benchmark with the provided id will be
300 # benchmarked against its dataset
301 # - Age: Indicates that the response provided is cached (i.e., no changes
302 # to the service the last time it was benchmarked against the dataset
303 # to not be considered a violation); returns the time elapsed in seconds
304 # since then
305 get '/labels' do
306   image_uri = CGI.unescape(params[:image])

```

```

307 |   if_match = request.env['HTTP_IF_MATCH'] || ''
308 |   if_unmodified_since = request.env['HTTP_IF_UNMODIFIED_SINCE'] || ''
309 |
310 |   halt! 400, 'URI provided to analyse is not a valid URI' unless image_uri.uri?
311 |   halt! 428, 'Missing If-Match in request header' if if_match.nil?
312 |   if !if_unmodified_since.empty? && !if_unmodified_since.httpdate?
313 |     halt! 400, 'If Unmodified Since must be compliant with the RFC 2616 HTTP date
314 |     ↪ format'
315 |   end
316 |
317 |   if_unmodified_since_date = if_unmodified_since.empty? ? nil : Time.httpdate(
318 |     ↪ if_unmodified_since)
319 |
320 |   relay_body = nil
321 |   relay_etag = nil
322 |   relay_last_modified = nil
323 |   relay_expires = nil
324 |
325 |   # Scan through each comma-separated ETag
326 |   etags = if_match.scan(%r{W/"(\d+;?\d+)",?})
327 |   if etags.empty?
328 |     halt! 428, 'Malformed ETags provided. Ensure you are using the correct format.
329 |     ↪ '
330 |   end
331 |   etags.each do |etag|
332 |     etag = etag[0]
333 |     benchmark_id, benchmark_key_id = etag.split(';').map(&:to_i)
334 |
335 |     # Check if we have a valid benchmark id
336 |     check_brc_id(benchmark_id, store)
337 |     brc = store[benchmark_id]
338 |     bk = nil
339 |
340 |     # Check if we have a key; if no key we must have a If-Unmodified-Since.
341 |     if benchmark_key_id.nil? && if_unmodified_since.empty?
342 |       halt! 400, "You have provided a benchmark id (id=#{benchmark_id}) \"\
343 |                   'without a behaviour token. Please provide a behaviour token '\
344 |                   'or include the If-Unmodified-Since request header with a RFC '\
345 |                   '2616-compliant HTTP date string.'"
346 |     elsif !benchmark_key_id.nil?
347 |       # Check if valid key
348 |       if ICSVB::BenchmarkKey.where(id: benchmark_key_id).empty?
349 |         halt! 400, "No such key with id #{benchmark_key_id} exists!"
350 |       end
351 |       unless benchmark_key_id.integer? && benchmark_key_id.positive?
352 |         halt! 400, 'Behaviour token must be a positive integer.'
353 |       end
354 |
355 |       bk = ICSVB::BenchmarkKey[id: benchmark_key_id]
356 |     elsif !if_unmodified_since_date.nil?
357 |       bk = brc.find_key_since(if_unmodified_since_date)
358 |       halt! 412, "No compatible behaviour token found unmodified since #{
359 |                     ↪ if_unmodified_since_date}." if bk.nil?
360 |
361 |     # Process...
362 |     result = brc.send_uri_with_key(image_uri, bk)
363 |
364 |     # Set HTTP status+body as appropriate if there is no more ETags or if
365 |     # this was a successful response (i.e., no errors so don't keep trying other
366 |     # ETags...)
367 |     error = result.key?(:key_errors) || result.key?(:response_errors) || result.
368 |           ↪ key?(:service_error)

```

```

366  if [etag] == etags.last || !error
367  if result[:key_errors] || result[:response_errors]
368    status 412
369    content_type 'application/json; charset=utf-8'
370
371    key_error_len = result[:key_errors].nil? ? 0 : result[:key_errors].length
372    res_error_len = result[:response_errors].nil? ? 0 : result[::
373      ↪ response_errors].length
374
375    key_error_data = result[:key_errors].nil? ? [] : result[:key_errors].map
376      ↪ (&:to_h)
377    res_error_data = result[:response_errors].nil? ? [] : result[::
378      ↪ response_errors].map(&:to_h)
379
380    relay_body = {
381      num_key_errors: key_error_len,
382      num_response_errors: res_error_len,
383      key_errors: key_error_data,
384      response_errors: res_error_data
385    }.to_json
386
387  elsif result[:service_error]
388    status 422
389    content_type 'text/plain'
390    relay_body = result[:service_error]
391
392  else
393    content_type 'application/json; charset=utf-8'
394    unless result[:cached].nil?
395      age_sec = ((DateTime.now - result[:cached]) * 24 * 60 * 60).to_i.to_s
396      headers 'Age' => age_sec
397    end
398    status 200
399    relay_body = result[:response].to_json
400  end
401
402  relay_etag = etag
403  relay_last_modified = brc.current_key.nil? ? brc.created_at.httpdate : brc.
404    ↪ current_key.created_at.httpdate
405  relay_expires = brc.next_scheduled_benchmark_time.httpdate
406
407  end
408  headers \
409    'ETag' => "W/\"#{relay_etag}\\"", \
410    'Expires' => relay_expires, \
411    'Last-Modified' => relay_last_modified
412
413  body relay_body
414
415  error do |e|
416    halt! 500, e.message
417  end
418
419  #####
420  # DEMONSTRATION RELATED API
421  #####
422  get '/demo/categories.json' do
423    content_type 'application/json; charset=utf-8'
424    send_file(File.join(settings.demo_folder, 'categories.json'))
425
426  get '/demo/random/:type.jpg' do
427    category_data = JSON.parse(
428      File.read(File.join(settings.demo_folder, 'categories.json'))
429    )
430    ok_categories = category_data.keys
431
432  end

```

```
426 |   category = params[:type]
427 |
428 |   halt! 400, 'No category provided' if category.empty?
429 |   unless ok_categories.include?(category)
430 |     halt! 400, "Unknown category '#{category}'. Accepted category types are: '#{
431 |       ↪ ok_categories.join("", "")}'."
432 |
433 |   id = category_data[category].sample
434 |
435 |   redirect "/demo/data/#{id}.jpg"
436 |
437 |
438 | get '/demo/data/:id.*' do |_|
439 |   image_id = params[:id].split('.').first
440 |   time_id = params[:id].split('.').last
441 |
442 |   unless File.exist?(File.join(settings.demo_folder, image_id + '.jpg'))
443 |     halt! 400, "No such image with id '#{image_id}' exists in the demo database."
444 |   end
445 |   unless %w[jpg jpeg json].include?(ext)
446 |     halt! 400, 'Invalid file extension. Suffix with .jp[e]g or .t1.json or .t2.
447 |       ↪ json.'
448 |   end
449 |   ext = 'jpg' if ext == 'jpeg'
450 |
451 |   if ext == 'jpg'
452 |     content_type 'image/jpeg'
453 |   else
454 |     content_type 'application/json; charset=utf-8'
455 |     halt! 400, 'Missing time id (.t1 or .t2).' if time_id.empty? || !%w[t1 t2].
456 |       ↪ include?(time_id)
457 |     image_id += '.' + time_id
458 |   end
459 |   send_file(File.join(settings.demo_folder, image_id + '.' + ext))
```

## APPENDIX C

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Supplementary Materials to Chapter 8

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## C.1 Detailed Overview of Our Proposed Taxonomy

The following pages detail our proposed taxonomy. Detailed descriptions of the five requirements of good API documentation (dimensions) and 34 generalised API documentation artefacts (categories/sub-dimensions) that help satisfy these requirements within our proposed taxonomy. Descriptions of examples of these documentation artefacts are italicised and provided for illustrative purposes. ILS = In-Literature Score, calculated as a ratio of papers that investigated or reported various issues concerning each artefact. IPS = In-Practice Score, calculated as the average response from our survey instrument. Colour scales indicate relevancy weight within ILS or IPS values for comparative purposes, where red = *lowest* and green = *highest*. GCV, AWS, ACV = Presence of category in Google Cloud Vision, Amazon Rekognition, and Azure Cloud Vision documentation. Presence indicated as *fully present* (●), *partially present* (◐), and *not present* (○).

Key	Description	Primary Sources	ILS	IPS	GCV	AWS	ACV
<b>A Requirement 1: API Documentation should include Descriptions of API Usage</b>							
A1	Quick-start guides; <i>i.e., a guide to rapidly get started using the API in a specific programming language.</i>	S4, S9, S10	Low	V High	●	○	●
A2	Low-level reference manual; <i>i.e., a manual documenting all API components to review fine-grade detail.</i>	S1, S3, S4, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S15, S16, S17	High	High	●	●	●
A3	Explanation of high level architecture; <i>i.e., explanations of the API's high-level architecture to better understand intent and context.</i>	S1, S2, S4, S11, S14, S16, S19, S20	Med	V High	●	●	●
A4	Introspection source code comments; <i>i.e., code implementation and code comments (where applicable) to understand the API author's mindset.</i>	S1, S4, S7, S12, S13, S17, S20	Med	High	○	○	○
A5	Code snippets of basic component function; <i>i.e., code snippets (with comments) of no more than 30 LoC to understand a basic component functionality within the API.</i>	S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S9, S10, S11, S14, S15, S16, S18, S20, S21	V High	V High	●	●	●
A6	Step-by-step tutorials with multiple components; <i>i.e., step-by-step tutorials, with screenshots to understand how to build a non-trivial piece of functionality with multiple components of the API.</i>	S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, S9, S10, S15, S16, S18, S20, S21	V High	V High	○	●	●
A7	Downloadable production-ready source code; <i>i.e., downloadable source code of production-ready applications that use the API to understand implementation in a large-scale solution.</i>	S1, S2, S5, S9, S15	Low	V High	○	○	●
A8	Best-practices of implementation; <i>i.e., best-practices of implementation to assist with debugging and efficient use of the API.</i>	S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S14	Med	V High	○	●	○
A9	An exhaustive list of all components; <i>i.e., a list of all the major components that exist within the API.</i>	S4, S16, S19	Low	V High	○	●	●
A10	Minimum system requirements to use the API; <i>i.e., requirements and the dependencies to use the API on a particular system.</i>	S4, S7, S13, S17, S19	Low	V High	●	○	○
A11	Instructions to install/update the API and its release cycle; <i>i.e., instructions to install or begin using the API and details on its release cycle and how to update it.</i>	S4, S7, S8, S9, S11, S13, S16, S19	Med	V High	●	●	○
A12	Error definitions describing how to address problems	S1, S2, S4, S5, S9, S11, S13	Med	V High	○	○	○

Continued on next page...

Key	Description	Primary Sources	ILS	IPS	GCV	AWS	ACV
<b>B Requirement 2: API Documentation should include Descriptions of the API's Design Rationale</b>							
B1	Entry-point purpose of the API; <i>i.e., a brief description of the purpose or overview of the API as a low barrier to entry.</i>	S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S8, S10, S11, S15, S16	High	V High	●	●	●
B2	What the API can develop; <i>i.e., descriptions of concrete types of applications the API can develop.</i>	S2, S4, S9, S11, S15, S18	Med	V High	●	●	●
B3	Who should use the API; <i>i.e., descriptions of the types of users who should use the API.</i>	S4, S9	V Low	High	●	○	○
B4	Who will use the applications built using the API; <i>i.e., descriptions of the types of users who will use the product the API creates.</i>	S4	V Low	Med	○	○	○
B5	Success stories on the API; <i>i.e., example success stories of major users that describe how well the API was used in production.</i>	S4	V Low	V High	●	●	●
B6	Documentation comparing similar APIs to this API	S2, S6, S13, S18	Low	High	●	○	●
B7	Limitations on what the API can/cannot provide	S4, S5, S8, S9, S14, S16	Med	V High	○	●	●
<b>C Requirement 3: API Documentation should include Descriptions of the Domain Concepts behind the API</b>							
C1	Relationship between API components and domain concepts	S3, S10	V Low	High	○	○	●
C2	Definitions of domain terminology; <i>i.e., definitions of the domain-terminology and concepts, with synonyms if applicable.</i>	S2, S3, S4, S6, S7, S10, S14, S16	Med	V High	●	○	●
C3	Documentation for nontechnical audiences; <i>i.e., generalised documentation for non-technical audiences regarding the API and its domain.</i>	S4, S8, S16	Low	High	●	●	●
<b>D Requirement 4: API Documentation should include Additional Support Artefacts to aide Developer Productivity</b>							
D1	FAQs	S4, S7	V Low	V High	●	●	●
D2	Troubleshooting hints	S4, S8	V Low	High	○	●	○○
D3	API diagrams; <i>i.e., diagrammatically representing API components using visual architectural representations.</i>	S6, S13, S20	Low	V High	○	○	○○
D4	Contact for technical support	S4, S8, S19	Low	Med	●	●	●
D5	Printed guide	S4, S6, S7, S9, S16	Low	V High	○	●	●

Continued on next page...

Key	Description	Primary Sources	ILS	IPS	GCV	AWS	ACV
D6	Licensing information	S7	V Low	V High	○	○	●
<b>E Requirement 5: API Documentation should be Presented in an Easily Digestible Format</b>							
E1	Searchable knowledge base	S3, S4, S6, S10, S14, S17, S18	Med	V High	●	●	●
E2	Context-specific discussion forums	S4, S10, S11	Low	V High	●	●	●
E3	Quick-links to other relevant components	S6, S16, S20	Low	V High	○	○	○
E4	Structured navigation style; <i>i.e.</i> , <i>breadcrumbs</i>	S6, S10, S20	Low	High	●	●	●
E5	Visualised map of navigational paths; <i>i.e.</i> , <i>to certain API components in the website</i> .	S6, S14, S20	Low	V High	○	○	○
E6	Consistent look and feel	S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S8, S10, S15, S20	High	V High	●	●	●

## C.2 Sources of Documentation

Sources of documentation used for the validation of the taxonomy. For clarity, exact webpages are not referenced for each category, but can be found in supplementary materials which can be downloaded from the URL listed in the paper.

Service	Document Sources
Google Cloud Vision	<a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/quickstart-client-libraries">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/quickstart-client-libraries</a> <a href="https://googleapis.github.io/google-cloud-java/google-cloud-clients/apidocs/index.html">https://googleapis.github.io/google-cloud-java/google-cloud-clients/apidocs/index.html</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/#cloud-vision-use-cases">https://cloud.google.com/vision/#cloud-vision-use-cases</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/quickstart-client-libraries#using_the_client_library">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/quickstart-client-libraries#using_the_client_library</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/tutorials">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/tutorials</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/community/tutorials?q=vision">https://cloud.google.com/community/tutorials?q=vision</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/samples#mobile_platform_examples">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/samples#mobile_platform_examples</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/docs/enterprise/best-practices-for-enterprise-organizations">https://cloud.google.com/docs/enterprise/best-practices-for-enterprise-organizations</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/functions/docs/bestpractices/tips">https://cloud.google.com/functions/docs/bestpractices/tips</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/#derive-insight-from-images-with-our-powerful-cloud-vision-api">https://cloud.google.com/vision/#derive-insight-from-images-with-our-powerful-cloud-vision-api</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/quickstart-client-libraries">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/quickstart-client-libraries</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/release-notes">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/release-notes</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/reference/rpc/google.rpc#google.rpc.Code">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/reference/rpc/google.rpc#google.rpc.Code</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/#insight-from-your-images">https://cloud.google.com/vision/#insight-from-your-images</a> <a href="https://developers.google.com/machine-learning/glossary/">https://developers.google.com/machine-learning/glossary/</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/resources">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/resources</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/sla">https://cloud.google.com/vision/sla</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/data-usage">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/data-usage</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/support#searchbox">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/support#searchbox</a> <a href="https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/support">https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/support</a>

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Service	Document Sources
Amazon Rekognition	<p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/getting-started.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/getting-started.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AWSJavaSDK/latest/javadoc/index.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AWSJavaSDK/latest/javadoc/index.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/machine-learning/using-amazon-rekognition-to-identify-persons-of-interest-for-law-enforcement/">https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/machine-learning/using-amazon-rekognition-to-identify-persons-of-interest-for-law-enforcement/</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/#Rekognition_Image_Use_Cases">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/#Rekognition_Image_Use_Cases</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/labels-detect-labels-image.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/labels-detect-labels-image.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/getting-started/#Tutorials">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/getting-started/#Tutorials</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/machine-learning/category/artificial-intelligence/amazon-rekognition/">https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/machine-learning/category/artificial-intelligence/amazon-rekognition/</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/code-samples/latest/catalog/code-catalog-javascript-example_code-rekognition.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/code-samples/latest/catalog/code-catalog-javascript-example_code-rekognition.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/best-practices.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/best-practices.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/API_Operations.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/API_Operations.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/image-features/">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/image-features/</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/releasenotes/?tag=releasenotes%23keywords%23amazon-rekognition">https://aws.amazon.com/releasenotes/?tag=releasenotes%23keywords%23amazon-rekognition</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/setting-up.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/setting-up.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/limits.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/limits.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/pricing/">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/pricing/</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/sla/">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/sla/</a></p> <p><a href="https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/faqs/">https://aws.amazon.com/rekognition/faqs/</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/video-troubleshooting.html">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/video-troubleshooting.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/rekognition-dg.pdf">https://docs.aws.amazon.com/rekognition/latest/dg/rekognition-dg.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://github.com/awsdocs/amazon-rekognition-developer-guide/issues">https://github.com/awsdocs/amazon-rekognition-developer-guide/issues</a></p> <p><a href="https://forums.aws.amazon.com/thread.jspa?threadID=285910">https://forums.aws.amazon.com/thread.jspa?threadID=285910</a></p>

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Service	Document Sources
Azure Computer Vision	<a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/quickstarts-sdk/csharp-analyze-sdk">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/quickstarts-sdk/csharp-analyze-sdk</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/java/api/overview/azure/cognitiveservices/client/computervision?view=azure-java-stable">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/java/api/overview/azure/cognitiveservices/client/computervision?view=azure-java-stable</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/architecture/example-scenario/ai/intelligent-apps-image-processing">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/architecture/example-scenario/ai/intelligent-apps-image-processing</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/tutorials/java-tutorial">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/tutorials/java-tutorial</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/custom-vision-service/logo-detector-mobile">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/custom-vision-service/logo-detector-mobile</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/tutorials/storage-lab-tutorial">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/tutorials/storage-lab-tutorial</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/tutorials/csharptutorial">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/tutorials/csharptutorial</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/custom-vision-service/getting-started-improving-your-classifier">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/custom-vision-service/getting-started-improving-your-classifier</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/home#analyze-images-for-insight">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/home#analyze-images-for-insight</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/vision-api-how-to-topics/howtocallvisionapi">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/vision-api-how-to-topics/howtocallvisionapi</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/custom-vision-service/release-notes">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/cognitive-services/custom-vision-service/release-notes</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/</a> <a href="https://azure.microsoft.com/en-au/services/cognitive-services/computer-vision/">https://azure.microsoft.com/en-au/services/cognitive-services/computer-vision/</a> <a href="https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/pricing/details/cognitive-services/computer-vision/">https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/pricing/details/cognitive-services/computer-vision/</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/concept-tagging-images">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/concept-tagging-images</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/home">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/home</a> <a href="https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/support/legal/sla/cognitive-services/v1_1/">https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/support/legal/sla/cognitive-services/v1_1/</a> <a href="https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/faq">https://docs.microsoft.com/en-au/azure/cognitive-services/computer-vision/faq</a> <a href="https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/support/legal/">https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/support/legal/</a>

### C.3 List of Primary Sources

The following pages list of the primary sources found from our systematic mapping study. Each citation is referenced by a prefixed ‘S’. We also list the respective citation count, as measured by the number of citations the publication has from Google Scholar as at July 2020. We also list the venue ranking (as at 2020), as measured by Scimago Rankings or Qualis Ranking for Journals and CORE Rankings for conference publications. If no rank can be found, a dash is used.

Ref	Citation	Cite#	Rank
[S1]	M. P. Robillard, "What makes APIs hard to learn? Answers from developers," <i>IEEE Software</i> , vol. 26, no. 6, pp. 27–34, 2009, DOI 10.1109/MS.2009.193. ISSN 0740-7459	305	Q1
[S2]	M. P. Robillard and R. Deline, "A field study of API learning obstacles," <i>Empirical Software Engineering</i> , vol. 16, no. 6, pp. 703–732, 2011, DOI 10.1007/s10664-010-9150-8. ISSN 1382-3256	254	Q1
[S3]	A. J. Ko and Y. Riche, "The role of conceptual knowledge in API usability," in <i>Proceedings of the 2011 IEEE Symposium on Visual Languages and Human Centric Computing</i> . Pittsburgh, PA, USA: IEEE, September 2011. DOI 10.1109/VL-HCC.2011.6070395. ISBN 978-1-45-771245-6 pp. 173–176	33	A
[S4]	J. Nykaza, R. Messinger, F. Boehme, C. L. Norman, M. Mace, and M. Gordon, "What programmers really want: Results of a needs assessment for SDK documentation," in <i>Proceedings of the 20th Annual International Conference on Computer Documentation</i> . Toronto, ON, Canada: ACM, October 2002. DOI 10.1145/584955.584976, pp. 133–141	56	–
[S5]	R. Watson, M. Mark Stammes, J. Jeannot-Schroeder, and J. H. Spyridakis, "API documentation and software community values: A survey of open-source API documentation," in <i>Proceedings of the 31st ACM International Conference on Design of Communication</i> . Greenville, SC, USA: ACM, September 2013. DOI 10.1145/2507065.2507076, pp. 165–174	14	B1
[S6]	S. Y. Jeong, Y. Xie, J. Beaton, B. A. Myers, J. Stylos, R. Ehret, J. Karstens, A. Efeoglu, and D. K. Busse, "Improving documentation for eSOA APIs through user studies," in <i>Proceedings of the First International Symposium on End User Development</i> , vol. 5435 LNCS. Siegen, Germany: Springer, March 2009. DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-00427-8_6. ISSN 0302-9743 pp. 86–105	34	–
[S7]	E. Aghajani, C. Nagy, O. L. Vega-Marquez, M. Linares-Vasquez, L. Moreno, G. Bavota, and M. Lanza, "Software Documentation Issues Unveiled," in <i>Proceedings of the 41st International Conference on Software Engineering</i> . Montreal, QC, Canada: IEEE, May 2019. DOI 10.1109/ICSE.2019.00122. ISBN 978-1-72-810869-8. ISSN 0270-5257 pp. 1199–1210	6	A*
[S8]	S. Haselbock, R. Weinreich, G. Buchgeher, and T. Kriechbaum, "Microservice Design Space Analysis and Decision Documentation: A Case Study on API Management," in <i>Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Service-Oriented Computing and Applications</i> , Paris, France, November 2019, DOI 10.1109/SOCA.2018.00008, pp. 1–8	2	C
[S9]	S. Inzunza, R. Juárez-Ramírez, and S. Jiménez, "API Documentation," in <i>Proceedings of the 6th World Conference on Information Systems and Technologies</i> . Naples, Italy: Springer, March 2018. DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-77712-2_22, pp. 229–239	3	C

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Ref	Citation	Cite#	Rank
[S10]	M. Meng, S. Steinhardt, and A. Schubert, "Application programming interface documentation: What do software developers want?" <i>Journal of Technical Writing and Communication</i> , vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 295–330, August 2018, DOI 10.1177/0047281617721853. ISSN 1541-3780	12	Q1
[S11]	R. S. Geiger, N. Varoquaux, C. Mazel-Cabasse, and C. Holdgraf, "The Types, Roles, and Practices of Documentation in Data Analytics Open Source Software Libraries: A Collaborative Ethnography of Documentation Work," <i>Computer Supported Cooperative Work: CSCW: An International Journal</i> , vol. 27, no. 3-6, pp. 767–802, May 2018, DOI 10.1007/s10606-018-9333-1. ISSN 1573-7551	4	Q1
[S12]	A. Head, C. Sadowski, E. Murphy-Hill, and A. Knight, "When not to comment: Questions and tradeoffs with API documentation for C++ projects," in <i>Proceedings of the 40th International Conference on Software Engineering</i> , ser. questions and tradeoffs with API documentation for C++ projects. Gothenburg, Sweden: ACM, May 2018. DOI 10.1145/3180155.3180176. ISSN 0270-5257 pp. 643–653	4	A*
[S13]	L. Aversano, D. Guardabascio, and M. Tortorella, "Analysis of the Documentation of ERP Software Projects," <i>Procedia Computer Science</i> , vol. 121, pp. 423–430, January 2017, DOI 10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.057. ISSN 1877-0509	4	–
[S14]	M. P. Robillard, A. Marcus, C. Treude, G. Bavota, O. Chaparro, N. Ernst, M. A. Gerosall, M. Godfrey, M. Lanza, M. Linares-Vásquez, G. C. Murphy, L. Moreno, D. Shepherd, and E. Wong, "On-demand developer documentation," in <i>Proceedings of the 33rd IEEE International Conference on Software Maintenance and Evolution</i> . Shanghai, China: IEEE, September 2017. DOI 10.1109/ICSME.2017.17, pp. 479–483	55	A*
[S15]	R. Watson, "Development and application of a heuristic to assess trends in API documentation," in <i>Proceedings of the 30th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication</i> . Seattle, WA, USA: ACM, October 2012. DOI 10.1145/2379057.2379112. ISBN 978-1-45-031497-8 pp. 295–302	10	B1
[S16]	W. Maalej and M. P. Robillard, "Patterns of knowledge in API reference documentation," <i>IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering</i> , 2013, DOI 10.1109/TSE.2013.12. ISSN 0098-5589	110	Q1
[S17]	D. L. Parnas and S. A. Vilkomir, "Precise documentation of critical software," in <i>Proceedings of 10th IEEE International Symposium on High Assurance Systems Engineering</i> . Plano, TX, USA: IEEE, November 2007. DOI 10.1109/HASE.2007.63. ISSN 1530-2059 pp. 237–244	2	B
[S18]	C. Bottomley, "What part writer? What part programmer? A survey of practices and knowledge used in programmer writing," in <i>Proceedings of the 2005 IEEE International Professional Communication Conference</i> . Limerick, Ireland: IEEE, July 2005. DOI 10.1109/IPCC.2005.1494255, pp. 802–812	0	–

Continued on next page...

Ref	Citation	Cite#	Rank
[S19]	A. Taulavuori, E. Niemelä, and P. Kallio, “Component documentation - A key issue in software product lines,” <i>Information and Software Technology</i> , vol. 46, no. 8, pp. 535–546, June 2004, DOI 10.1016/j.infsof.2003.10.004. ISSN 0950-5849	40	Q1
[S20]	J. Kotula, “Using patterns to create component documentation,” <i>IEEE Software</i> , vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 84–92, 1998, DOI 10.1109/52.663791. ISSN 0740-7459	27	Q1
[S21]	S. G. McLellan, A. W. Roesler, J. T. Tempest, and C. I. Spinuzzi, “Building more usable APIs,” <i>IEEE Software</i> , vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 78–86, 1998, DOI 10.1109/52.676963. ISSN 0740-7459	105	Q1

## C.4 Detailed Suggested Improvements

For this assessment, we select the ILS or IPS values for categories that are considered either somewhat or very helpful (i.e., a score greater than 0.50). We then match these against categories that are found to be partially or not present within each service. In total, we found 12 categories where improvements can be made across all dimensions except Overall Presentation of Documentation, detailed below .

### C.4.1 Issues regarding Descriptions of API Usage

**Quick-start guides [A1]:** Quick-start guides should provide a short tutorial that allows programmers to pick up the basics of an API in a programming language of their choice. For the services assessed, each offer various client SDKs (e.g., as Java or Python client libraries). Google Cloud Vision and Azure Computer Vision offer quick-start guides [426, 445] in which sets of articles target various SDKs or are client-agnostic with code snippets that can be changed to the client language/SDK of the developer's choice. Amazon Rekognition offers exercises in setting up the AWS SDK and using the command-line interface to interact with image analysis components [404], however this is client-agnostic nor does it provide details in how to get started with using the client SDKs.

 **Suggested improvement:** Ensure tutorials detail *all* client-libraries and how developers can produce a minimum working example using the service on their own computer using that client library. For each SDK offered, there should be details on how to install, authenticate and use a component using local data. For example, this may be as simple as using the service to determine if an image of a dog contains the label 'dog'.

**Step-by-step tutorials [A6]:** Google Cloud Vision offers tutorials limited to one component. These do not sufficiently demonstrate how to combine *multiple components* of the API together and how developers should integrate it with a different platform, which a good step-by-step tutorial should detail. The official AWS Machine Learning blog [401] provides extensive tutorials (in some cases, with a suggested tutorial completion time of over an hour) that integrate multiple Amazon Rekognition components with other AWS components. Microsoft provide tutorials [442, 448, 449] integrating multiple components within their service to mobile applications and the Azure platform.

 **Suggested improvement:** Ensure tutorials combine *multiple* components of the service together, are extensive, and require developers to spend a non-trivial amount of time to produce a basic application. For example, the tutorial may detail how to integrate the API into a smartphone application to achieve the following: (i) take a photo with the camera, (ii) detect if a person is within the image, (iii) analyse the visual features of the person.

**Downloadable production-ready applications [A7]:** Microsoft provide a downloadable application [447] that explores many components of the Azure Computer Vision API. The application is thoroughly documented with and also provides guidance on how to structure the architecture design of the program. While Rekognition

and Google Cloud Vision also provide downloadable source code, they are largely under-documented, do not combine multiple components of the API together, and only use god-classes to handle all requests to the API [405, 428].

 **Suggested improvement:** Downloadable source code should be thoroughly documented, and should avoid the use of god-classes that demonstrate a single piece of the service's functionality. Ideally, the architecture of a production-ready application should be demonstrated to developers.

**Understanding best-practices [A8]:** Google Cloud provides best-practices for its platform in both general and enterprise contexts [420, 429], but there is little advice provided to guide developers on how best to use Google Cloud Vision. Microsoft provides guidance on improving results of custom vision classifiers [443], but no further details on non-custom vision classifiers are found. We found the most detailed best-practices to be provided by Amazon Rekognition [403], which outlines more detailed strategies such as reducing data transfer by storing and referencing images on S3 Buckets or the attributes images should have in various scenarios (e.g., the angles of a person's face in facial recognition).

 **Suggested improvement:** Document best-practices for all major components of the computer vision service. Guide developers on the types of input data that produce the best results, advisable minimum image sizes and recommended file types, and suggest ways to overcome limitations that improve usage and cost efficiency. Provide guidance in more than one use case; give a range of scenarios that demonstrate different best practices for different domains.

**Exhaustive lists of all major API components [A9]:** Amazon provides a two-fold feature list that describes both the key features of Rekognition at a high-level [402] as well as a detailed, technical breakdown of each API operation provided within the service [400]. Microsoft also provide a list of high-level features that Azure Computer Vision can analyse [450] which provides hyperlinks to detailed descriptions of each feature. Google's Cloud Vision API provides a partial breakdown of the types of services provided, however this list is not fully complete, nor are there hyperlinks to more detailed descriptions of each of the features [430].

 **Suggested improvement:** Document key features that the computer vision classifier can perform at a high level. This should be easy to find from the service's landing page. Each feature should be described with reference to more detailed descriptions of the feature's exact API endpoint and required inputs, outputs and possible errors.

**Minimum system requirements and dependencies [A10]:** Although there is no dedicated webpage for this on any of the services investigated, there are listed dependencies for the client libraries in Google's and Azure's quick-start guides [426, 440]. These may be embedded within the quick-start guide as developers are likely to encounter dependency issues when they first start using the API. We found it a challenge to discover similar documentation this in Amazon's documentation.

☞ **Suggested improvement:** Any system requirements and dependency issues should be well-highlighted within the documentation's quick-start guide; developers are likely to encounter these issues within the early stages of using an API, and it is highly relevant to provide solutions to these issues within the quick-starts.

**Installation and release cycle notes [A11]:** It is imperative that developers know what has changed between releases and how frequently the releases are exported. We found release notes for Amazon Computer Vision, although they are only major releases and have not been updated since 2017 [399] which does not account for evolution in the service's responses [89]. Google's and Microsoft's release notes are generally more frequently updated, therefore developers can get a sense of its release frequency [427, 446]. However, there are evolution issues that are not addressed. Installation instructions are detailed within Rekognition's developer guide, outlining how to sign up for an account, and install the AWS command-line interface [407].

☞ **Suggested improvement:** Ensure release notes detail label evolution, including any new additional labels that may have been introduced within the service. Transparency around the changes made to the service should go beyond new features: document potential changes that may influence maintenance of a system using the computer vision service so that developers are aware of potential side-effects of upgrading to a newer release.

#### C.4.2 Issues regarding Descriptions of Design Rationale

**Limitations of the API [B7]:** The most detailed limitations documented were found on Rekognition's dedicated limitations page [406] that outlines functional limitations such as the maximum number of faces or words that can be detected in an image, the size requirements of images, and file type information. For the other services, functional limitations are generally found within each endpoint's API documentation, instead of within a dedicated page.

☞ **Suggested improvement:** Document all functional limitations in a dedicated page that outline the maximum and minimum input requirements the classifier can handle. Documentation of the types of labels the service can provide is also desired.

#### C.4.3 Issues regarding Descriptions of Domain Concepts

**Conceptual understanding of the API [C1]:** Azure Computer Vision provides 'concept' pages describing the high-level concepts behind computer vision and where these functions are implemented within the APIs (e.g., [441]). We were unable to find similar conceptual documentation for the other services assessed.

☞ **Suggested improvement:** Document the concepts behind computer vision; differentiate between foundational concepts such as object localisation, object recognition, facial localisation and facial analysis such that developers are able to make the distinction between them. Relate these concepts back to the API and provide references to where the APIs implement these concepts.

**Definitions of domain-specific terminology [C2]:** Terminologies relevant to machine learning concepts powering these computer vision services are well detailed within Google’s machine learning glossary [424], however few examples matching computer vision are immediately relevant. While this page is linked from the original Google Cloud Vision documentation, it may be too technical for application developers to grasp. A slightly better example of this is [450], where developers can understand computer vision terms in lay terms.

**↳ Suggested improvement:** *Current computer vision services use a myriad of terminologies to refer to the same conceptual feature; for example, while Microsoft refers to object recognition as ‘image tagging’, Google refers to this as ‘label detection’. If a consolidation of terms is not possible, then computer vision services should provide a glossary that provides synonyms for these terminologies so that developers can easily move between service providers without needing to relink terms back to concepts.*

#### C.4.4 Issues regarding Existence of Support Artefacts

**Troubleshooting suggestions [D2]:** The only troubleshooting tips found in our analysis were in Rekognition’s video service [408]. Further detailed instances of these troubleshooting tips could be expanded to non-video issues. For instance, if developers upload ‘noisy’ images, how can they inform the system of a specific ontology to use or to focus on parts of the foreground or background of the image? These are suggestions which we have proposed in prior work [89] that do not seem to be documented.

**↳ Suggested improvement:** *Ensure troubleshooting tips provide advice for testing against different types of valid input images.*

**Diagrammatic overview of the API [D3]:** None of the computer vision services provide any overview of the API in terms of the features and processing steps on how they should be used. For instance, pre-processing and post-processing of input and response data should be considered and an understanding of how this fits into the ‘flow’ of an application highlighted. Moreover, no UML diagrams could be found.

**↳ Suggested improvement:** *Provide diagrams illustrating the service within context of use, such as how it can be integrated with other service features or how a specific API endpoint may be used within a client application. Consider integrating interactive UML diagrams so that developers can easily explore various aspects of the documentation in a visual perspective.*

## C.5 Survey Questions

This section contains the exact text of the survey described in Section 8.5.1. Our instrument also included questions where answers were not included in the research reported in this article, e.g. questions 1 and 2 regarding consent and ensuring participants have had development experience. Images used within the survey have been removed.

---

### **Developer opinions towards the importance of web API documentation recommendations**

In this study, we are finding out how important recommendations of web API documentation are to developers. From this, we will improve AI-powered APIs. While there are screenshots of example APIs in the questions, think of an API that you have used based on **your own prior experience** when answering these questions. Thanks for taking the time to answer these questions; it should only take you about **10–20 minutes** to complete.

#### *Attribution Notice*

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#### *Implementation-specific documentation of web APIs*

When answering these questions please answer with respect to **your own experience** in learning web APIs (if applicable). Any examples provided exist solely to help illustrate the statement. For each question, please nominate how much you agree with the following statements: *[Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree]*

- Q3a. I think quick-start guides with code that help me get started with an API's client library are important. e.g., quick-start guides that show how to get started and interact with the API and its responses.
- Q3b. I don't find low-level documentation of all classes and methods particularly helpful. e.g., a generated online reference manual from Javadoc comments.
- Q3c. I would imagine that explanations of the API's high-level architecture, context and rationale would be important to better understand how to consume the API. e.g., a graphic showing how the API could fit into the wider context of an application.
- Q3d. If I want to understand why an API did something that I didn't expect, the source code comments generally don't help me. e.g., an example from the Lodash API that describes why `set.add` isn't directly returned.
- Q3e. I find small code snippets with comments to demonstrate a single component's basic functionality within the API a useful way to learn. e.g., 10-30 lines of code to demonstrating various how-tos of a computer vision API.
- Q3f. I think it's cumbersome to read through step-by-step tutorials that show how to build something non-trivial with multiple components using the API. e.g., a ten-step tutorial documenting how to combine face recognition, face analysis, scene description, and landmark detection API components to generate descriptions of photos.

- Q3g. I think it's useful to download source code of production-ready applications that demonstrate the use of multiple facets of the API. e.g., a downloadable iOS app that demonstrates how to perform image analysis on an iPhone/iPad.
- Q3h. I think official documentation describing the 'best-practices' of how to use the API to assist with debugging and efficiency is not helpful. e.g., an article describing the correct ways of doing things, the best tools to use, and how to write well-performing code.
- Q3i. I believe an exhaustive list of all major components in the API without excessive detail would be useful when learning an API. e.g., a computer vision web API might list object detection, object localisation, facial recognition, and facial comparison as its 4 components.
- Q3j. I believe minimum system requirements and/or dependencies to use the API do not always need to be part of official documentation. e.g., I can find descriptions of how to get started with a Python environment for a cloud platform on community forums instead of the API's website.
- Q3k. I think instructions on how to install or access the API, update it, and the frequency of its release cycle is all useful information to know about. e.g., a list showing the latest releases, what was added and how to update your application to make use of it.
- Q3l. Error codes describing specific problems with an API are not helpful. e.g., a list of canonical HTTP error codes and how to interpret them.

---

#### *Rationale-specific documentation of web APIs*

When answering these questions please answer with respect to **your own experience** in learning web APIs (if applicable). Any examples provided exist solely to help illustrate the statement. For each question, please nominate how much you agree with the following statements: [*Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree*]

- Q4a. I think that, as a starting point when beginning to learn about an API, I would like to read about descriptions of the API's purpose and overview.
- Q4b. I don't find descriptions of the types of applications the API can develop helpful.
- Q4c. I believe that descriptions of the types of developers who should and shouldn't use the API is important to know.
- Q4d. I don't think that descriptions of the types of end-users who will use the product built using the API is important to know in advance.
- Q4e. I think that if I read success stories about when the API was previously used in production, I would have a better indicator of how I could use that API.
- Q4f. I think that documentation that compares an API to other, similar APIs confusing and not important.
- Q4g. I believe it is important to know about what the limitations are on what the API can and cannot provide.

#### *Conceptual-specific documentation of web APIs*

When answering these questions please answer with respect to **your own experience** in learning web APIs (if applicable). Any examples provided exist solely to help illustrate the

statement. For each question, please nominate how much you agree with the following statements: [*Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree*]

- Q5a. I wouldn't read through theory about the API's domain that relates theoretical concepts to API components and how both work together.
  - Q5b. I think it is important to know the definitions of the API's domain-specific terminology and concepts (with synonyms where needed). e.g., a computer vision API that uses machine learning should list machine learning concepts.
  - Q5c. It's not really important to document information about the API to non-technical audiences, such as managers and other stakeholders. e.g., pricing information, uptime information, QoS metrics/SLAs etc.
- 

#### *General-support documentation of web APIs*

When answering these questions please answer with respect to **your own experience** in learning web APIs (if applicable). Any examples provided exist solely to help illustrate the statement. For each question, please nominate how much you agree with the following statements: [*Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree*]

- Q6a. I find lists of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) helpful.
  - Q6b. When something goes wrong, I don't read through troubleshooting suggestions for specific problems straight away as I like to solve it myself.
  - Q6c. I like to see diagrammatic representations of an API's components using visual architectural visualisations. e.g., UML class diagram, sequence diagram.
  - Q6d. I wouldn't look for email addresses and/or phone number for technical support in an API's documentation.
  - Q6e. I generally refer to a programmer's reference guide or textbook about the API when I need to.
  - Q6f. I don't think it's important to read about the licensing information about the API.
- 

#### *The effect of structure and tooling on web API documentation*

When answering these questions please answer with respect to **your own experience** in learning web APIs (if applicable). Any examples provided exist solely to help illustrate the statement. For each question, please nominate how much you agree with the following statements: [*Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree*]

- Q7a. I would like to use a searchable knowledge base to find information.
- Q7b. I think a context-specific discussion forum between developers isn't very helpful as it just introduces noise. e.g., issue trackers, Slack group.
- Q7c. I think links to other similar documentation frequently viewed by other developers would be useful. e.g., 'people who viewed this also viewed...'
- Q7d. If I get lost within the API's documentation, a 'breadcrumbs'-style of navigation isn't very useful to me.

- Q7e. A visualised map of navigational paths to common API components in the website would be useful to have. e.g., a large and complex API for Enterprise Service-Oriented Architecture where I could click into various boxes to read about components and arrows to read about how they are related.
- Q7f. I believe ensuring consistent look and feel of all documentation isn't necessary to a good API documentation.
- 

### *Demographics*

- Q8a. Are you, or do you aspire to be, a professional programmer? Or would you consider programming a hobby?  
*[Professional, Hobbyist]*
- Q8b. How many years have you been programming?  
*[1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16–20 years, 21–30 years, 31–40 years, 41+ years]*
- Q8c. In what type of role would you say your current job falls into?  
*[Back-end developer, Data or business analyst, Data scientist or machine learning specialist, Database administrator, Designer, Desktop or enterprise applications developer, DevOps specialist, Educator or academic researcher, Embedded applications or devices developer, Engineering manager, Front-end developer, Full-stack developer, Game or graphics developer, Marketing or sales professional, Mobile developer, Product manager, QA or test developer, Student, System administration]*
- Q8d. What level of seniority would you say this role falls into?  
*[Intern Role, Graduate Role, Junior Role, Mid-Tier Role, Senior Role, Lead Role, Principal Role, Management, N/A (e.g., I am a student), Other]*
- Q8e. What industry would you say you work in?  
*[Cloud-based solutions or services, Consulting, Data and analytics, Financial technology or services, Healthcare technology or services, Information technology, Media, advertising, publishing, or entertainment, Other software development, Retail or eCommerce, Software as a service (SaaS) development, Web development or design, N/A (e.g., I am a student), Other industry not listed here]*
- 

*\*\* End of Survey \*\**



## APPENDIX D

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### Authorship Statements

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## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Losing Confidence in Quality: Unspoken Evolution of Computer Vision Services
<b>Publication details</b>	Presented at the 35th IEEE International Conference on Software Maintenance and Evolution, Cleveland, USA, 2019
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b> Organisation and address if non-Deakin	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Email or phone</b>	ca@deakin.edu.au

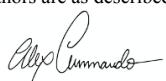
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?**  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
 If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> <i>(If the same, write "as above")</i>	As above
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed: 

Dated: 22 July 2019

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

<b>Name and affiliation of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo initiated the conception of the project. Additionally, he designed a detailed methodology, conducted all data collection via a data-collection instrument he designed and implemented and performed a majority of data analysis. He drafted the full manuscript and made further revisions, modifications and prepared the camera ready version for publication in the conference proceedings.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 2</b>	Rajesh Vasa Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 2</b>	Rajesh Vasa contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts, and assisted in advising Alex Cummaudo on improved analytical insight into the collected results. Rajesh Vasa also assisted in shaping the paper to specifically target the conference audience. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 3</b>	John Grundy Faculty of Information Technology Monash University
<b>Contribution of author 3</b>	John Grundy provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript. John Grundy is the external supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 4</b>	Mohamed Abdelrazek School of Information Technology Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 4</b>	Mohamed Abdelrazek made final edits and suggestions to the final draft of the manuscript before submitting for peer review. Mohamed Abdelrazek is an associate supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 5</b>	Andrew Cain School of Information Technology Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 5</b>	Andrew Cain made edits and suggestions to the abstract and introduction paragraphs of the manuscript. Andrew Cain is an associate supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

## 5. Author declarations

I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

- i. that I have met the authorship criteria set out in the Deakin University Research Conduct Policy,
- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
- iv. that the data on which these findings are based are stored as set out in Section 7 below.

If this work is to form part of an HDR thesis as described in Sections 2 and 3, I further

- v. consent to the incorporation of the publication into the candidate's HDR thesis submitted to Deakin University and, if the higher degree is awarded, the subsequent publication of the thesis by the university (subject to relevant Copyright provisions).

### Author 1

Alex Cummaudo

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

### Author 2

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

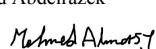
### Author 3

John Grundy

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

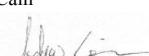
### Author 4

Mohamed Abdelrazek

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

### Author 5

Andrew Cain

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV), iPython Notebook
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/icsme19

## 8. Additional notices

This form must be retained by the executive author, within the school or institute in which they are based.

If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	What should I document? A preliminary systematic mapping study into API documentation knowledge
<b>Publication details</b>	Presented at the 13th ACM/IEEE International Symposium on Empirical Software Engineering and Measurement (ESEM), Porto de Galinhas, Brazil, 2019
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
Organisation and address if non-Deakin	
<b>Email or phone</b>	ca@deakin.edu.au

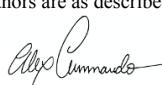
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?** Yes  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> <i>(If the same, write "as above")</i>	As above
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed:   
 Date:

Dated: 22 July 2019

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

<b>Name and affiliation of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo devised the conception of this project and the intended objectives and hypotheses. Additionally, he designed a detailed methodology, conducted data collection with a custom tool he wrote himself and performed analysis. He drafted the manuscript and made further revisions, modifications and prepared the camera ready version for publication in the conference proceedings.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 2</b>	Rajesh Vasa Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 2</b>	Rajesh Vasa contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts, and assisted in advising Alex Cummaudo on improved analytical insight into the collected results. Rajesh Vasa also assisted in shaping the paper to specifically target the conference audience. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 3</b>	John Grundy Faculty of Information Technology Monash University
<b>Contribution of author 3</b>	John Grundy provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript. John Grundy is the external supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

## 5. Author declarations

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- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
- iv. that the data on which these findings are based are stored as set out in Section 7 below.

If this work is to form part of an HDR thesis as described in Sections 2 and 3, I further

- v. consent to the incorporation of the publication into the candidate's HDR thesis submitted to Deakin University and, if the higher degree is awarded, the subsequent publication of the thesis by the university (subject to relevant Copyright provisions).

**Author 1**

Alex Cummaudo

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

**Author 2**

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

**Author 3**

John Grundy

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 22 July 2019

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV), Portable Document Format (PDF)
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/esem19

## 8. Additional notices

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If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Interpreting Cloud Computer Vision Pain-Points: A Mining Study of Stack Overflow
<b>Publication details</b>	Presented at the 42nd International Conference on Software Engineering, Seoul, South Korea, 2020
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b> Organisation and address if non-Deakin	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Email or phone</b>	ca@deakin.edu.au

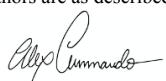
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?**  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
 If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above. (If the same, write "as above")</b>	As above
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed: 

Dated: 27 August 2019

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

**Name and affiliation of author 1**

Alex Cummaudo  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 1**

Alex Cummaudo initiated the conception of the project. Additionally, he designed a detailed methodology, conducted the experiment and mined data against the methodology devised, performed a majority of data analysis and categorised 525 Stack Overflow posts. He drafted the full manuscript and made further revisions, modifications and prepared the camera ready version for publication in the conference proceedings.

**Name and affiliation of author 2**

Rajesh Vasa  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 2**

Rajesh Vasa contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts, and assisted in advising Alex Cummaudo on improved analytical insight into the collected results. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

**Name and affiliation of author 3**

Scott Barnett  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 3**

Scott Barnett conducted a statistical distribution analysis for this experiment. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript. He also contributed a major section of the work regarding Technical Domain Models.

**Name and affiliation of author 4**

John Grundy  
Faculty of Information Technology  
Monash University

**Contribution of author 4**

John Grundy provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript. John Grundy is the external supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

**Name and affiliation of author 5**

Mohamed Abdelrazek  
School of Information Technology  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 5**

Mohamed Abdelrazek made final edits and suggestions to the final draft of the manuscript before submitting for peer review. Mohamed Abdelrazek is an associate supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

## 5. Author declarations

I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

- i. that I have met the authorship criteria set out in the Deakin University Research Conduct Policy,
- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
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- v. consent to the incorporation of the publication into the candidate's HDR thesis submitted to Deakin University and, if the higher degree is awarded, the subsequent publication of the thesis by the university (subject to relevant Copyright provisions).

### Author 1

Alex Cummaudo

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 27 August 2019

### Author 2

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 27 August 2019

### Author 3

Scott Barnett

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 27 August 2019

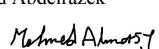
### Author 4

John Grundy

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 27 August 2019

### Author 5

Mohamed Abdelrazek

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 27 August 2019

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV), Excel Spreadsheet
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/icse20

## 8. Additional notices

This form must be retained by the executive author, within the school or institute in which they are based.

If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Beware the evolving ‘intelligent’ web service! An integration architecture tactic to guard AI-first components
<b>Publication details</b>	Presented at the 28th Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
Organisation and address if non-Deakin	
<b>Email or phone</b>	ca@deakin.edu.au

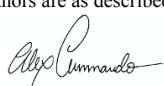
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?** Yes  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
 If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author’s declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> <i>(If the same, write “as above”)</i>	As above
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author’s contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed:   
 Alex Cummaudo

Dated: 10 March 2020

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

**Name and affiliation of author 1**

Alex Cummaudo  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 1**

Alex Cummaudo initiated the conception of the project, designed the architecture that is described in this paper and implemented its codebase. He designed the architectural designs appearing in the paper and many drafts of this design. Additionally, he designed a detailed methodology, conducted the experiment, performed data collection, and performed a majority of data analysis. He drafted the full manuscript and made further revisions, modifications and (will) prepare the camera ready version for publication in the conference proceedings.

**Name and affiliation of author 2**

Scott Barnett  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 2**

Scott Barnett contributed to the initial concept of this project by providing feedback of the architecture designed. Scott also provided feedback to the architectural designs and figures/graphs appearing in this paper. Scott provided detailed reviews and edits of the introduction, approach and evaluation sections of the manuscript, and contributed to the limitations section.

**Name and affiliation of author 3**

Rajesh Vasa  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 3**

Rajesh Vasa contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts, and assisted in advising Alex Cummaudo on improved analytical insight into the collected results. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

**Name and affiliation of author 4**

John Grundy  
Faculty of Information Technology  
Monash University

**Contribution of author 4**

John Grundy provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript. John Grundy is the external supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

**Name and affiliation of author 5**

Mohamed Abdelrazek  
School of Information Technology  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 5**

Mohamed Abdelrazek made final edits and suggestions to the final draft of the manuscript before submitting for peer review. Mohamed Abdelrazek is an associate supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

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I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

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- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
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### Author 1

Alex Cummaudo

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 10 March 2020

### Author 2

Scott Barnett

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 10 March 2020

### Author 3

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 10 March 2020

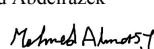
### Author 4

John Grundy

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 10 March 2020

### Author 5

Mohamed Abdelrazek

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 10 March 2020

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV), Excel Spreadsheet, Ruby Code
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/fse2020

## 8. Additional notices

This form must be retained by the executive author, within the school or institute in which they are based.

If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Threshy: Supporting Safe Usage of Intelligent Web Services
<b>Publication details</b>	Presented at the 28th Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (Demonstrations Track)
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
Organisation and address if non-Deakin	
<b>Email or phone</b>	ca@deakin.edu.au

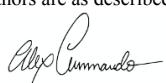
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?** Yes  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> <i>(If the same, write "as above")</i>	As above
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed: 

Dated: 14 January 2020

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

<b>Name and affiliation of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo drafted the manuscript for this work, prepared visualisations within the paper, made further revisions and changes per reviewer feedback and (will) prepare the camera ready version for publication in the conference proceedings. Alex also created the required demonstration video required for this publication ( <a href="https://bit.ly/2YKeYhE">https://bit.ly/2YKeYhE</a> ), drafting the voiceover script, recording the voiceover itself, producing animations within the video, and recording a video of the tool in use.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 2</b>	Scott Barnett Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 2</b>	Scott Barnett contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance on the conceptual workflow and associated tooling. He also assisted in implementing the tool. Scott contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript and provided feedback for the required video demonstration. Scott also provided a detailed revision of the manuscript and provided contribution to specific portions of the paper.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 3</b>	Rajesh Vasa Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 3</b>	Rajesh Vasa contributed guidance to the conceptual workflow and associated tooling presented in this paper. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts and provided feedback on the tool and its associated demonstration video. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 4</b>	John Grundy Faculty of Information Technology Monash University
<b>Contribution of author 4</b>	John Grundy provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the manuscript and associated demonstration video. John Grundy is the external supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

## 5. Author declarations

I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

- i. that I have met the authorship criteria set out in the Deakin University Research Conduct Policy,
- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
- iv. that the data on which these findings are based are stored as set out in Section 7 below.

If this work is to form part of an HDR thesis as described in Sections 2 and 3, I further

- v. consent to the incorporation of the publication into the candidate's HDR thesis submitted to Deakin University and, if the higher degree is awarded, the subsequent publication of the thesis by the university (subject to relevant Copyright provisions).

### Author 1

Alex Cummaudo

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 14 January 2020

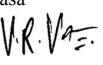
### Author 2

Scott Barnett

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 14 January 2020

### Author 3

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 14 January 2020

### Author 4

John Grundy

  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 14 January 2020

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	JavaScript, Python, HTML, Keynote File, iMovie File
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/icse(d)20

## 8. Additional notices

This form must be retained by the executive author, within the school or institute in which they are based.

If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Requirements of API Documentation: A Case Study into Computer Vision Services
<b>Publication details</b>	Submitted to the IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
Organisation and address if non-Deakin	
<b>Email or phone</b>	ca@deakin.edu.au

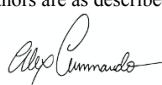
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?** Yes  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> <i>(If the same, write "as above")</i>	As above
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed:   
 Alex Cummaudo

Dated: 10 March 2020

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

<b>Name and affiliation of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo devised the conception of this project and the intended objectives and hypotheses. Additionally, he designed a detailed methodology, conducted data collection with a custom tool he wrote himself and performed analysis. He also designed and conducted the survey instrument listed within this publication. He drafted the full manuscript and made further revisions, modifications. He made detailed revisions to all graphs and figures within this paper.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 2</b>	Rajesh Vasa Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 2</b>	Rajesh Vasa contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscript, and assisted in advising Alex Cummaudo on improved analytical insight into the collected results. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 3</b>	John Grundy Faculty of Information Technology Monash University
<b>Contribution of author 3</b>	John Grundy provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript. John Grundy is the external supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 4</b>	Mohamed Abdelrazek School of Information Technology Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 4</b>	Mohamed Abdelrazek made final edits and suggestions to the final draft of the manuscript before submitting for peer review. Mohamed Abdelrazek is an associate supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

## 5. Author declarations

I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

- i. that I have met the authorship criteria set out in the Deakin University Research Conduct Policy,
- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
- iv. that the data on which these findings are based are stored as set out in Section 7 below.

If this work is to form part of an HDR thesis as described in Sections 2 and 3, I further

- v. consent to the incorporation of the publication into the candidate's HDR thesis submitted to Deakin University and, if the higher degree is awarded, the subsequent publication of the thesis by the university (subject to relevant Copyright provisions).

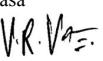
### Author 1

Alex Cummaudo

  
Signed:  
Dated: 10 March 2020

### Author 2

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed:  
Dated: 10 March 2020

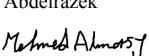
### Author 3

John Grundy

  
Signed:  
Dated: 10 March 2020

### Author 4

Mohamed Abdelrazek

  
Signed:  
Dated: 10 March 2020

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV), Portable Document Format (PDF)
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/tse2020

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If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Manual and Automatic Emotion Analysis of Computer Vision Service Pain-Points
<b>Publication details</b>	Submitted to the 6th International Workshop on Emotion Awareness in Software Engineering
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b> Organisation and address if non-Deakin	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Email or phone</b>	ca@deakin.edu.au

#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

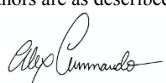
**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?**

If Yes, please complete Section 3  
 If No, go straight to Section 4.

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> (If the same, write "as above")	As Above
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed: 

Dated: 18 September 2020

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

<b>Name and affiliation of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 1</b>	Alex Cummaudo produced the data set of Stack Overflow posts used for analysis within this paper and contributed to the initial conception of this project. He drafted the methodology section that details how this data set was produced. Additionally, he drafted the threats to validity section, results and discussion sections. He reviewed the entire paper and made contributions to the findings and discussion sections. He assisted in conducting inter-rater reliability with two additional raters (Rajesh and Ulrike Maria). He prepared the graphs and tables, prepared the paper for submission, and ensured the paper was formatted to the guidelines and page limit. Alex made most of the contribution to the paper (in terms of content).
<b>Name and affiliation of author 2</b>	Ulrike Maria Graetsch Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 2</b>	Ulrike Maria's contributed to the initial conception of the project and performed the automatic EmoTxt classifier classifications on our Stack Overflow data set, which involved downloading and installing EmoTxt and adapting our data set to be compatible with EmoTxt. She drafted the findings and discussion sections based on the output from the EmoTxt classifier, including constructing the graphs and tables in the paper. Ulrike Maria also conducted a literature review into automatic emotion classifiers into Stack Overflow posts. She extracted the quotes from posts as presented in Table 3.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 3</b>	Maheswaree K Curumsing Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 3</b>	Maheswaree Curumsing contributed to the fleshing out of the project concept and coordinating the work. Maheswaree's expertise in emotion classification was leveraged in the paper, particularly around the background sections and in deciding the correct frameworks to classify posts. She conducted extensive literature reviews for this paper. Maheswaree drafted the introduction, background, part of the methodology and discussion. She was involved in classifying emotions within Stack Overflow posts for inter-rater reliability. She made further revisions to the manuscript and provided modifications where needed.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 4</b>	Scott Barnett Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 4</b>	Scott Barnett's contribution involved drafting the abstract,

conclusion and reviewing the entire manuscript for proofreading. Scott also contributed in the initial conception of the project by outlining techniques used to run the experiment.

**Name and affiliation of author 5**

Rajesh Vasa  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 5**

Rajesh Vasa contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts, and assisted in advising Alex Cummaudo on improved analytical insight into the collected results. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

**Name and affiliation of author 6**

John Grundy  
Faculty of Information Technology  
Monash University

**Contribution of author 6**

John Grundy contributed to revisions of the manuscript and guidance for the publication venue. John Grundy is the external supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

## 5. Author declarations

I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

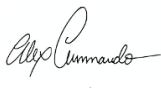
- i. that I have met the authorship criteria set out in the Deakin University Research Conduct Policy,
- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
- iv. that the data on which these findings are based are stored as set out in Section 7 below.

If this work is to form part of an HDR thesis as described in Sections 2 and 3, I further

- v. consent to the incorporation of the publication into the candidate's HDR thesis submitted to Deakin University and, if the higher degree is awarded, the subsequent publication of the thesis by the university (subject to relevant Copyright provisions).

**Author 1**

Alex Cummaudo



Signed:   
Dated: 18 September 2020

**Author 2**

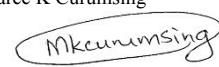
Ulrike Maria Graetsch

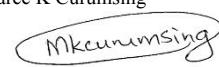


Signed:   
Dated: 18 September 2020

**Author 3**

Maheswaree K Curumsing



Signed:   
Dated: 18 September 2020

**Author 4**

Scott Barnett



Signed:   
Dated: 18 September 2020

**Author 5**

Rajesh Vasa



Signed:   
Dated: 18 September 2020

**Author 6**

John Grundy



Signed:   
Dated: 18 September 2020

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV), Excel Spreadsheet
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/semotion21

## 8. Additional notices

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If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Merging Intelligent API Responses Using a Proportional Representation Approach
<b>Publication details</b>	Presented at the 19th International Conference on Web Engineering (ICWE), Daejeon, South Korea, 2019
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Tomohiro Otake
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b> Organisation and address if non-Deakin	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment
<b>Email or phone</b>	tomohiro.otake@deakin.edu.au

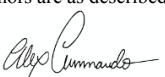
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?** Yes  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> <i>(If the same, write "as above")</i>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed:  Dated: 2 August 2019

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

<b>Name and affiliation of author 1</b>	Tomohiro Ohtake Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 1</b>	Tomohiro Ohtake designed a detailed methodology for data collection in the primary experiment of this work. He conducted all data collection via a data-collection instrument he designed and implemented and performed a majority of data analysis. He drafted the full manuscript and made further revisions, modifications and prepared the camera ready version for publication in the conference proceedings.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 2</b>	Alex Cummaudo Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 2</b>	Alex Cummaudo's primary contribution to this work was the conception and writing up of the motivating sections in the manuscript. He additionally contributed to detailed editing of the manuscripting to make further revisions and modifications and implemented reviewer feedback.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 3</b>	Mohamed Abdelrazek Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 3</b>	Mohamed Abdelrazek contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Mohamed also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts, and assisted in advising Tomohiro Ohtake on improved analytical insight into the collected results, and implementing reviewer feedback.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 4</b>	Rajesh Vasa Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment Deakin University
<b>Contribution of author 4</b>	Rajesh Vasa provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript.
<b>Name and affiliation of author 5</b>	John Grundy Faculty of Information Technology Monash University
<b>Contribution of author 5</b>	John Grundy provided high-level oversight of the project. He contributed to detailed reviews of the methodology and manuscript.

## 5. Author declarations

I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

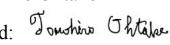
- i. that I have met the authorship criteria set out in the Deakin University Research Conduct Policy,
- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
- iv. that the data on which these findings are based are stored as set out in Section 7 below.

If this work is to form part of an HDR thesis as described in Sections 2 and 3, I further

- v. consent to the incorporation of the publication into the candidate's HDR thesis submitted to Deakin University and, if the higher degree is awarded, the subsequent publication of the thesis by the university (subject to relevant Copyright provisions).

**Author 1**

Tomohiro Otake

Signed:   
Dated: 2 August 2019

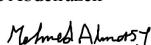
**Author 2**

Alex Cummaudo

  
Signed:   
Dated: 2 August 2019

**Author 3**

Mohamed Abdelrazek

  
Signed:   
Dated: 2 August 2019

**Author 4**

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed:   
Dated: 2 August 2019

**Author 5**

John Grundy

  
Signed:   
Dated: 2 August 2019

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV)
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/icwe19

## 8. Additional notices

This form must be retained by the executive author, within the school or institute in which they are based.

If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.

## Deakin University Authorship Procedure

### Schedule A: Authorship Statement

#### **1. Details of the publication and executive author**

<b>Title of publication</b>	Using Pre-Trained Emotion Classification Models on Stack Overflow Questions: Lessons Learned
<b>Publication details</b>	Submitted for the 33rd International Conference on Advanced Information Systems Engineering
<b>Name of executive author</b>	Ulrike Maria Graetsch
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b> Organisation and address if non-Deakin	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Email or phone</b>	maria.graetsch@deakin.edu.au

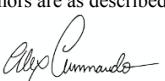
#### **2. Inclusion of publication in a thesis**

**Is it intended to include this publication in a higher degree by research (HDR) thesis?** Yes  
*If Yes, please complete Section 3  
If No, go straight to Section 4.*

#### **3. HDR thesis author's declaration**

<b>Name of HDR thesis author if different from above.</b> <i>(If the same, write "as above")</i>	Alex Cummaudo
<b>School/Institute/Division if at Deakin</b>	Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute
<b>Thesis title</b>	Taming the Evolving Black Box: Improving Integration and Documentation of Pre-Trained Machine Learning Components
<b>If there are multiple authors, give a full description of HDR thesis author's contribution to the publication.</b>	See page 2

I declare that the above is an accurate description of my contribution to this paper, and the contributions of other authors are as described below.

Signed:  Dated: 2 June 2020

#### 4. Description of all author contributions

**Name and affiliation of author 1**

Ulrike Maria Graestch  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 1**

Ulrike Maria's contributed to the initial conception of the project and performed the automatic classifier classifications (EmoTxt) on our Stack Overflow data set, which involved downloading and installing EmoTxt and adapting our data set to be compatible with EmoTxt. Ulrike Maria drafted the initial manuscript, conducted the literature review presented in the work, and performed calculations on the inter-rater agreement statistics. She explored the training dataset of EmoTxt and investigated the data imbalance and emotion labelling bias discussed within the work, and proposal for future tooling to alleviate issues identified.

**Name and affiliation of author 2**

Alex Cummaudo  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 2**

Alex Cummaudo produced the data set of Stack Overflow posts used for analysis within this paper. He performed a detailed review of the manuscript and made substantial changes to the paper's content, producing figures and tables within the paper. He revised the Fleiss' Kappa statistic and proposed changes to observed percentage agreement. He set up and conducted inter-rater reliability with two additional raters (Maheswaree and Ulrike Maria). He reviewed the entire paper and made contributions to the findings and discussion sections. He validated inter-rater reliability statistics against the three raters and against the automatic classifications made from EmoTxt. He prepared the paper for submission, and ensured the paper was formatted to the guidelines and page limit by reducing whitespace.

**Name and affiliation of author 3**

Rajesh Vasa  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 3**

Rajesh Vasa contributed to the initial conception of this project by providing high-level guidance over overview of what the project and its experiments should comprise of. Rajesh also contributed to detailed revisions of the initial manuscripts, and assisted in advising Alex Cummaudo on improved analytical insight into the collected results. Rajesh Vasa is the primary supervisor of Alex Cummaudo.

**Name and affiliation of author 4**

Maheswaree K Curumsing  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute  
Deakin University

**Contribution of author 4**

Maheswaree K Curumsing's contribution involved structuring the approach used around the EmoTxt classifier to label emotions within Stack Overflow posts. Further, she contributed to the manual classification for inter-rater reliability. She made further revisions and proofreading to the manuscript and provided modifications

where needed. Maheswaree also contributed in the initial conception of the project by outlining techniques used to run the experiment and her expertise in emotion classification was leveraged in the paper.

## 5. Author declarations

I agree to be named as one of the authors of this work, and confirm:

- i. that I have met the authorship criteria set out in the Deakin University Research Conduct Policy,
- ii. that there are no other authors according to these criteria,
- iii. that the description in Section 4 of my contribution(s) to this publication is accurate,
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**Author 1**

Ulrike Maria Graetsch



Signed:  
Dated: 2 June 2020

**Author 2**

Alex Cummaudo



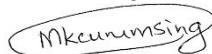
Signed:  
Dated: 2 June 2020

**Author 3**

Rajesh Vasa

  
Signed:  
Dated: 2 June 2020**Author 4**

Maheswaree K Curumsing

  
Signed:  
Dated: 2 June 2020

## 6. Other contributor declarations

There are no other contributors for this publication to declare.

## 7. Data storage

The original data for this project are stored in the following locations. (The locations must be within an appropriate institutional setting. If the executive author is a Deakin staff member and data are stored outside Deakin University, permission for this must be given by the Head of Academic Unit within which the executive author is based.)

<b>Data format</b>	Comma separated values (CSV), Excel Spreadsheet
<b>Storage location</b>	Deakin University Research Data Store (RDS) Location: RDS29448-Alex-Cummaudo-PhD/results/caise21

## 8. Additional notices

This form must be retained by the executive author, within the school or institute in which they are based.

If the publication is to be included as part of an HDR thesis, a copy of this form must be included in the thesis with the publication.



## APPENDIX E

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### Ethics Clearance

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Rajesh Vasa and Alex Cummaudo  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute (A<sup>2</sup>I<sup>2</sup>)  
C.c Mohamed Abdelrazek, Andrew Cain

2 May 2019

Dear Rajesh and Alex

**STEC-11-2019-CUMMAUDO** titled "*Developer opinions towards the importance of web API documentation recommendations*"

Thank you for submitting the above project for consideration by the Faculty Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG). The HEAG recognised that the project complies with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and has approved it. You may commence the project upon receipt of this communication.

The approval period is for three years until **02/05/22**. It is your responsibility to contact the Faculty HEAG immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time
- Any changes to the research team or changes to contact details
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You will be required to submit an annual report giving details of the progress of your research. Please forward your first annual report on **02/05/20**. Failure to do so may result in the termination of the project. Once the project is completed, you will be required to submit a final report informing the HEAG of its completion.

Please ensure that the Deakin logo is on the Plain Language Statement and Consent Forms. You should also ensure that the project ID is inserted in the complaints clause on the Plain Language Statement, and be reminded that the project number must always be quoted in any communication with the HEAG to avoid delays. All communication should be directed to [sciethic@deakin.edu.au](mailto:sciethic@deakin.edu.au)

The Faculty HEAG and/or Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

If you have any queries in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We wish you well with your research.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Teresa Treffry".

Teresa Treffry  
Secretary, Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG)  
Faculty of Science Engineering & Built Environment



Rajesh Vasa, Mohamed Abdelrazeq, Andrew Cain, Scott Barnett, Alex Cummaudo  
Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute (A<sup>2</sup>I<sup>2</sup>) (G)

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019

Dear Rajesh and research team

**STEC-39-2019-CUMMAUDO** titled "*Factors that impact the learnability, interpretability and adoption of intelligent services*".

Thank you for submitting the above project for consideration by the Faculty Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG). The HEAG recognised that the project complies with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and has approved it. You may commence the project upon receipt of this communication.

The approval period is for three years until 23/07/22. It is your responsibility to contact the Faculty HEAG immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time
- Any changes to the research team or changes to contact details
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You will be required to submit an annual report giving details of the progress of your research. Please forward your first annual report on 23/07/20. Failure to do so may result in the termination of the project. Once the project is completed, you will be required to submit a final report informing the HEAG of its completion.

Please ensure that the project number must always be quoted in any communication with the HEAG to avoid delays. All communication should be directed to [sciethic@deakin.edu.au](mailto:sciethic@deakin.edu.au).

The Faculty HEAG and/or Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

If you have any queries in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We wish you well with your research.

Kind regards

*Rickie Morey*

Rickie Morey  
Senior Research Administration Officer  
Representing the Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG)  
Faculty of Science Engineering & Built Environment