Approximate Counting

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*Resumo* – Este relatório apresenta dois métodos não determinísticos de contagem de caracteres em texto e compara-os com um Contador deterministico. O primeiro método apresentado apenas efetua uma contagem com probabilidade, fixa, de 25%. O segundo é um Contador com probabilidade descrescente com um fator:

Sendo k o total de contagens já efetuadas.

*Abstract* – This report presents two non deterministic methods to count characters in text and compares them to a deterministic counter. The first method is a fixed probability counter that counts every character with the same probability of 25%. The second method is a decreasing probability counter with a lesser factor of:

k being the total amount of times it already counted.

# I. Introduction

Non deterministic counters are very useful when working with big data. They produce smaller data structures that still contain most of the information and that are very useful for statistic analysis. All the tables shown here are excerpts from excel files available in this reports folders that contain statistics from 1000 runs of each counter for each language.

# II. Fixed Probability Counter

This counter counts with a, fixed, probablity of 25%. After a formal analisys of the algorithm we will compare the number of comparations, effective counts and expected counts.

def count\_fixed\_prob(self, fp, prob=0.25):

index = {}

for line in fp.readlines():

for word in line.split(' '):

for char in word:

to\_count = random.random()

if to\_count <= prob:

if char in index.keys():

index[char] += 1

else:

index[char] = 1

return index

For a given file with n characters excluding spaces the algorithm does:

k being the number of times the counter counted. Since the probability is fixed at ¼:

So the expected number of comparisons is:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| char | exact\_val | expected |
| E | 14765 | 14762 |
| T | 9214 | 9211 |
| O | 9121 | 9122 |
| A | 7508 | 7507 |
| H | 6886 | 6889 |
| S | 6864 | 6862 |
| I | 6680 | 6670 |
| N | 6455 | 6456 |
| R | 6171 | 6173 |
| L | 4625 | 4624 |

Top 10 characters in the english version of the book from Shakespears book Winter Tales.

The expected count was calculated by multiplying the average count of each character, in 1000 tests, by 4. For all the characters with more than 1000 occurrences in the text the relative error was always bellow 0.15%!

French version:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| char | exact\_val | expected |
| E | 23186 | 23196 |
| S | 11874 | 11874 |
| I | 10429 | 10427 |
| N | 10390 | 10395 |
| U | 10053 | 10052 |
| A | 9958 | 9969 |
| R | 9904 | 9909 |
| O | 9465 | 9462 |
| T | 9438 | 9439 |
| L | 8093 | 8096 |

Although the order of the most frequent charactes is diferente they are mostly the same for english and french.

For the french text 185595 comparisons happened and the expected value was: 185823!

# III. Decreasing Probability Counter

This counter keeps a table with probabilities for each character. At first they all start with probability 1 and then keep being multiplied by the factor each time that character is counted.

def count\_decreasing\_prob(self, fp, prob\_decrease):

index = {}

probs = {}

for line in fp.readlines():

for word in line.split(' '):

for char in word:

if char not in probs:

probs[char] = 1

to\_count = random.random()

if to\_count <= probs[char]:

if char in index.keys():

index[char] += 1

else:

index[char] = 1

probs[char] \*= prob\_decrease

return index

For a given file with n characters excluding spaces the algorithm does:

k being the number of times the counter counted. Since the probability is fixed at ¼:

So the expected number of comparisons is:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| char | exact\_val | expected |
| E | 14765 | 13309.185509071787 |
| O | 9121 | 7768.5864713221035 |
| T | 9214 | 7312.333986458101 |
| A | 7508 | 6409.391194556587 |
| S | 6864 | 6167.604698086741 |
| H | 6886 | 6066.518818206693 |
| I | 6680 | 5999.583573421255 |
| N | 6455 | 5679.933628935697 |
| R | 6171 | 5115.765137172723 |
| L | 4625 | 3823.5051051926444 |

Top 10 characters in the english version of the book from Shakespears book Winter Tales.

The expected count was calculated by using the average count of each character, in 1000 tests, as k in the following formula:

The relative error averaged 13% as the example used was small in order to test more times.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| \_key | exact\_val | expected |
| E | 23186 | 18102.568650951383 |
| S | 11874 | 10394.087297395796 |
| A | 9958 | 10056.67902266104 |
| I | 10429 | 9364.104142942328 |
| T | 9438 | 8765.785016084745 |
| N | 10390 | 8575.907484958707 |
| R | 9904 | 8388.762004640239 |
| U | 10053 | 8297.238302586682 |
| O | 9465 | 7853.280046356739 |
| L | 8093 | 7474.891009508449 |

The same holds for this counter. The top 10 letters are mainly the same though the order is different.

Number of comparisons: 149098.

Expected comparisons: 148680!

# IV. Conclusion

The fixed probability counter works very well for small and medium sized examples but for large examples the decreasing probability counter behaves best! Resulting in less comparissons and reasonable error for large data sets,