Mutual information between successive reorientations

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Abstract

We show how mutual information can be used to describe the independence of successive reorientations

1 Reorientation sequences

sec:reoseq

As a worm navigates, it performs a sequence of turns. When turns occur sufficiently close to each other, they are grouped into a reorientation event. These reorientations have several characteristics, e.g. the types of turn of which it is composed, the difference in heading direction before and after, the duration of the run leading into it. We wish to know if the characteristics of one reorientation are independent of the characteristics of previous reorientations.

Consider a sequence of r successive reorientations. The values of a particular characteristic of these reorientations is an r-tuple of random variables: $(X_1, \ldots, X_r)$. We are asking whether or not $P(X_1, \ldots, X_r) = P(X_1) \ldots P(X_r)$.

2 Entropy and mutual information

sec:entropy

The **entropy** of a probability distribution is a measure of the lack of information we have about a random variable:

$$H(X) = \langle -\log P(X) \rangle . \tag{1}$$

eq:ent

It takes its minimum value of 0 when X can only take one value. It takes its maximum value of $\log n$ when X has a uniform distribution over n possibilities.

With several random variables, we can define a joint entropy from their joint probability distribution:

$$H(X_1, \ldots, X_r) = \langle -\log P(X1, \ldots, X_r) \rangle . \tag{2}$$

eq:jointent

It satisfies the bounds

$$\max_i H(X_i) \leq H(X_1, \ldots, X_r) \leq \sum_{i=1}^{r} H(X_i). \tag{3}$$

eq:entbounds

The lower bound is saturated when one of the variables is enough to determine the others. The upper bound is saturated when the X_i are independent:

$$P(X1, \ldots, X_r) = \prod_{i=1}^{r} P(X_i) \qquad \Longrightarrow \qquad H(X_1, \ldots, X_r) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} H(X_i). \tag{4}$$

eq:indent

We can define the following measure of (lack of) independence:

$$I(X_1, \ldots, X_r) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} H(X_i) - H(X_1, \ldots, X_r). \tag{5}$$

eq:mutinf

In the case $r = 2$, this is the **mutual information** between X_1 and X_2. For $r > 2$, there are many different generalisations of mutual information. This one is called the **total correlation** [1], or multiinformation. It has the properties:

- it vanishes if and only if the random variables are independent
- otherwise, it is positive.
- it is bounded from above by $\sum_{i=1}^{r} H(X_i) - \max_i H(X_i)$.

In our cases, the random variables, X_i, all have the same distribution, so the total correlation satisfies the bounds

$$0 \leq I_r(X_1, \ldots, X_r) \leq (r-1)H(X). \tag{6}$$

eq:mutinfbou

We can define a normalised total correlation:

$$C_r = \frac{I_r}{(r-1)H_1}, \qquad 0 \leq C_r \leq 1. \tag{7}$$

eq:normmutin

The lower bound corresponds to complete independence. The upper bound corresponds to complete redundancy.

References

258.1661265 [1] S. Watanabe, “Information theoretical analysis of multivariate correlation,” *IBM J. Res. Dev.* **4** (January, 1960) 66–82.