
Learning to Infer Graphics Programs from Hand-Drawn Images

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Abstract

1 We introduce a model that learns to convert simple hand drawings into graphics
2 programs written in a subset of \LaTeX . The model combines techniques from
3 deep learning and program synthesis. We learn a convolutional neural network
4 that proposes plausible drawing primitives that explain an image. These drawing
5 primitives are a specification (spec) of what the graphics program needs to draw.
6 We learn a model that uses program synthesis techniques to recover a graphics
7 program from that spec. These programs have constructs like variable bindings,
8 iterative loops, or simple kinds of conditionals. With a graphics program in hand,
9 we can correct errors made by the deep network and extrapolate drawings.

1 Introduction

11 Human vision is rich – we infer 3D shape, objects, parts of objects, and relations between objects
12 – but vision is also abstract: we can perceive the radial symmetry of a spiral staircase, the iterated
13 repetition in the Ising model, see the forest for the trees, and also the recursion within the trees. How
14 could we build an agent with similar visual inference abilities? Here we cast this problem as program
15 learning, and take as our goal to learn high-level graphics programs from images. The graphics
16 programs we consider draw simple figures like those found in machine learning papers (Fig. 1), and
17 capture high-level features of a drawing like symmetry, repetition, and reuse of structure.

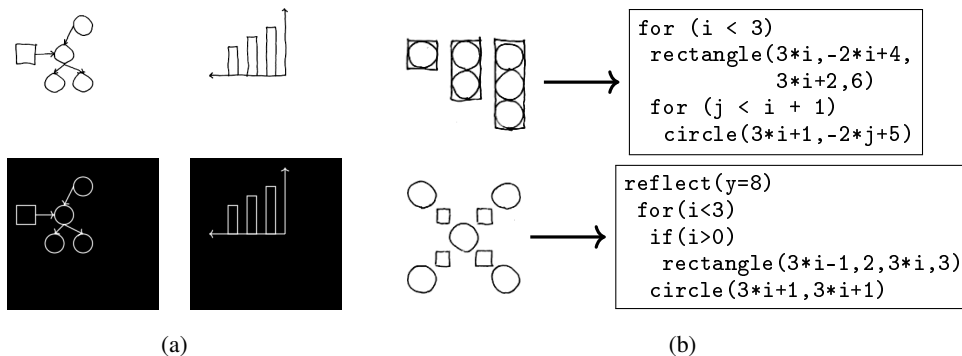


Figure 1: (a): Model learns to convert hand drawings (top) into \LaTeX (rendered below). (b) Learns to synthesize high-level graphics program from hand drawing.

18 The key observation behind our work is that inferring the program from an image involves two
19 distinct steps that require different technical approaches. The first step involves inferring what objects

make up an image – for diagrams, these are things like as rectangles, lines and arrows. The second step involves identifying the high-level structure in how the objects were drawn. In Fig. 1(b), it means identifying a pattern in how the circles and rectangles are being drawn that is best described with two nested loops, and which can easily be extrapolated to a bigger diagram.

Framed as probabilistic inference, our two-step factoring cashes out as a generative model where a latent program is executed to produce a set of drawing commands, which are then rendered to form an image (Fig. 2). We refer to this set of drawing commands as a **specification (spec)** because it specifies what the graphics program drew while lacking the high-level structure determining how the program decided to draw it. We infer the spec from an image using stochastic search (Sequential Monte Carlo) and infer a program from a spec using **constraint-based program synthesis** [1] – synthesizing structures like symmetries, loops, or conditionals. In practice, both stochastic search and program synthesis are prohibitively slow, and so we learn models that accelerate inference for both programs and specs, in the spirit of “amortized inference” [2], using a neural network to amortize the cost of inferring specs from images and using a variant of Adaptive Levin Search [3] to amortize the cost of synthesizing programs from specs.

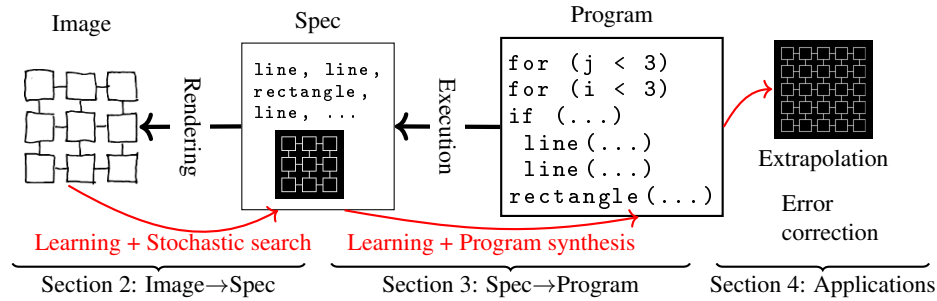


Figure 2: Black arrows: Top-down generative model; Program→Spec→Image. Red arrows: Bottom-up inference procedure.

34

35 2 Neural architecture for inferring specs

We developed a deep network architecture for efficiently inferring a spec, S , from a hand-drawn image, I . Our model combines ideas from Neurally-Guided Procedural Models [4] and Attend-Infer-Repeat [5], but we wish to emphasize that one could use many different approaches from the computer vision toolkit to parse an image into primitive drawing commands (in our terminology, a “spec”) [6]. Our network constructs the spec one drawing command at a time, conditioned on what it has drawn so far (Fig. 3). We first pass a 256×256 target image and a rendering of the drawing commands so far (encoded as a two-channel image) to a convolutional network. Given the features extracted by the convnet, a multilayer perceptron then predicts a distribution over the next drawing command to execute (see Tbl. 1). We also use a differentiable attention mechanism (Spatial Transformer Networks: [7]) to let the model attend to different regions of the image while predicting drawing commands. We currently constrain coordinates to lie on a discrete 16×16 grid, but the grid could be made arbitrarily fine.

47

Table 1: Primitive drawing commands currently supported by our model.

<code>circle(x, y)</code>	Circle at (x, y)
<code>rectangle(x_1, y_1, x_2, y_2)</code>	Rectangle with corners at (x_1, y_1) & (x_2, y_2)
<code>line(x_1, y_1, x_2, y_2,</code> <code>arrow $\in \{0, 1\}$, dashed $\in \{0, 1\}$)</code>	Line from (x_1, y_1) to (x_2, y_2) , optionally with an arrow and/or dashed
<code>STOP</code>	Finishes spec inference

We trained our network by sampling specs S and target images I for randomly generated scenes and maximizing the likelihood of S given I with respect to the model parameters, θ , by gradient ascent. We trained on 10^5 scenes, which takes a day on an Nvidia TitanX GPU.

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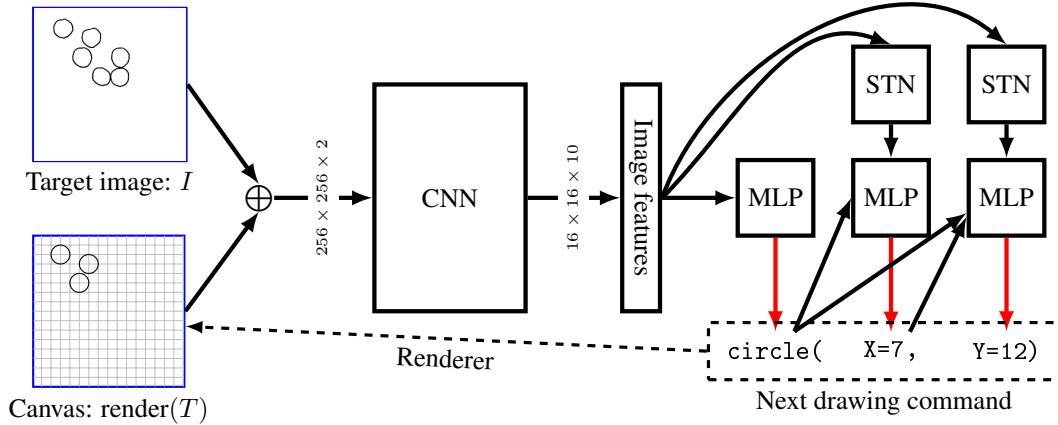


Figure 3: Our neural architecture for inferring the spec of a graphics program from its output. **Blue**: network inputs. **Black**: network operations. **Red**: samples from a multinomial. Typewriter font: network outputs. Renders snapped to a 16×16 grid, illustrated in gray. STN (spatial transformer network) is a differentiable attention mechanism [7].

Our network can “derender” random synthetic images by doing a beam search to recover specs maximizing $\mathbb{P}_\theta[S|I]$. But, if the network predicts an incorrect drawing command, it has no way of recovering from that error. For added robustness we treat the network outputs as proposals for a Sequential Monte Carlo (SMC) sampling scheme [8]. The SMC sampler is designed to sample from the distribution $\propto L(I|\text{render}(S))\mathbb{P}_\theta[S|I]$, where $L(\cdot|\cdot)$ uses the pixel-wise distance between two images as a proxy for a likelihood. Here, the network is learning a proposal distribution to amortize the cost of inverting a generative model (the renderer) [2].

Experiment 1: Figure 4. To evaluate which components of the model are necessary to parse complicated scenes, we compared the neural network with SMC against the neural network by itself or SMC by itself. Only the combination of the two passes a critical test of generalization: when trained on images with ≤ 12 objects, it successfully parses scenes with many more objects than the training data. We compare with a baseline that produces the trace set in one shot by using the CNN to extract features of the input which are passed to an LSTM which finally predicts the trace set token-by-token (LSTM in Fig. 4). This architecture is used in several successful neural models of image captioning (e.g., [9]), but, for this domain, cannot parse cluttered scenes with many objects.

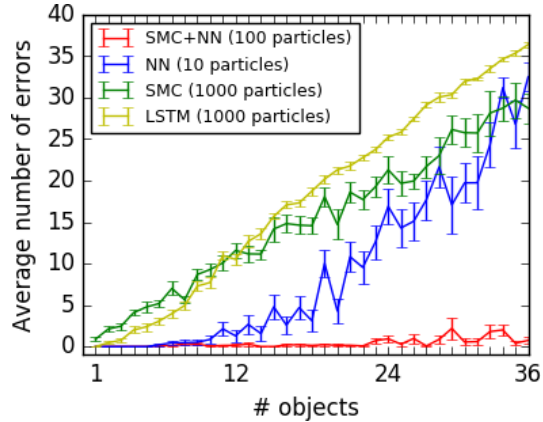


Figure 4: Parsing L^AT_EX output after training on diagrams with ≤ 12 objects. Model generalizes to scenes with many more objects. Neither SMC nor the neural network are sufficient on their own. # particles varies by model: we compare the models with equal runtime (≈ 1 sec/object).

2.1 Generalizing to real hand drawings

We trained the model to generalize to hand drawings by introducing noise into the renderings of the training target images. We designed this noise process to introduce the kinds of variations found in hand drawings (see supplement for details).

Our neurally-guided SMC procedure used pixel-wise distance as a surrogate for a likelihood function ($L(\cdot|\cdot)$ in section 2). But pixel-wise distance fares poorly on hand drawings, which never exactly match

the model’s renders. So, for hand drawings, we learn a surrogate likelihood function, $L_{\text{learned}}(\cdot|\cdot)$. The density $L_{\text{learned}}(\cdot|\cdot)$ is predicted by a convolutional network that we train to predict the distance between two specs conditioned upon their renderings. We $L_{\text{learned}}(\cdot|\cdot)$ to approximate the symmetric difference, which is the number of drawing commands by which two specs differ:

$$-\log L_{\text{learned}}(\text{render}(S_1)|\text{render}(S_2)) \approx |S_1 - S_2| + |S_2 - S_1| \quad (1)$$

Experiment 2: Figures 5–7. We evaluated, but did not train, our system on 100 real hand-drawn figures; see Fig. 5–6. These were drawn carefully but not perfectly with the aid of graph paper. For each drawing we annotated a ground truth trace set and had the neurally guided SMC sampler produce 10^3 samples. For 63% of the drawings, the Top-1 most likely sample exactly matches the ground truth; with more samples, the model finds trace sets that are closer to the ground truth annotation (Fig. 7). We will show that the program synthesizer corrects some of these small errors (Sec. 4.1).

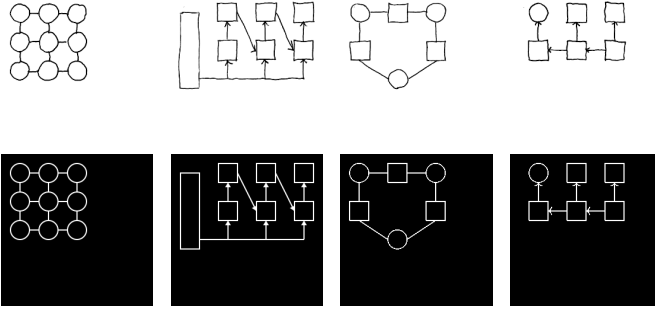


Figure 5: Left to right: Ising model, recurrent network architecture, figure from a deep learning textbook [10], graphical model

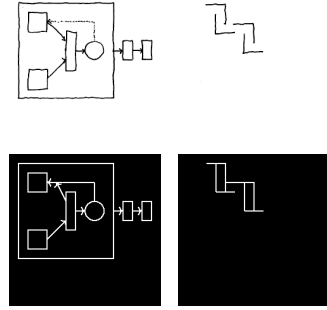


Figure 6: Near misses. Right-most: illusory contours (note: no SMC)

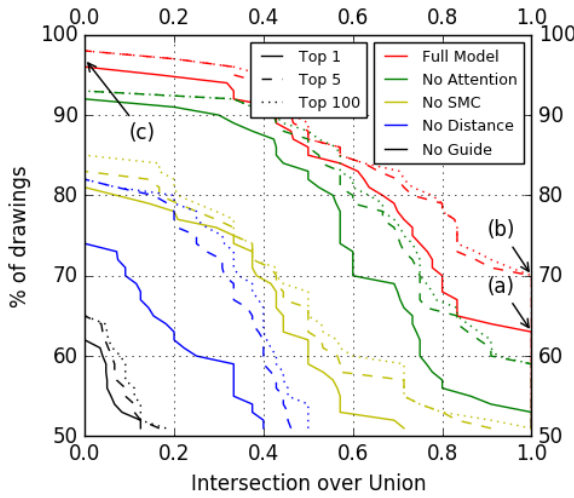


Figure 7: How close are the model’s outputs to the ground truth on hand drawings, as we consider larger sets of samples (1, 5, 100)? Distance to ground truth measured by the intersection over union (IoU) of predicted vs. ground truth: IoU of sets A and B is $|A \cap B|/|A \cup B|$. (a) for 63% of drawings the model’s top prediction is exactly correct; (b) for 70% of drawings the ground truth is in the top 5 model predictions; (c) for 4% of drawings all of the model outputs have no overlap with the ground truth. Red: the full model. Other colors: lesioned versions of our model.

3 Synthesizing graphics programs from specs

Although the spec describes the contents of a scene, it does not encode higher-level features of the image such as repeated motifs or symmetries, which are more naturally captured by a graphics program. We seek to synthesize graphics programs from their specs.

We constrain the space of programs by writing down a context free grammar over programs – what in the program languages community is called a Domain Specific Language (DSL) [11]. Our DSL (Tbl. 2) encodes prior knowledge of what graphics programs tend to look like.

Table 2: Grammar over graphics programs. We allow loops (`for`) with conditionals (`if`), vertical/horizontal reflections (`reflect`), variables (`Var`) and affine transformations ($\mathbb{Z} \times \text{Var} + \mathbb{Z}$).

Program	→	Statement; ... ; Statement
Statement	→	circle(Expression, Expression)
Statement	→	rectangle(Expression, Expression, Expression, Expression)
Statement	→	line(Expression, Expression, Expression, Expression, Boolean, Boolean)
Statement	→	for($0 \leq \text{Var} < \text{Expression}$) { if ($\text{Var} > 0$) { Program }; Program }
Statement	→	reflect(Axis) { Program }
Expression	→	$\mathbb{Z} \times \text{Var} + \mathbb{Z}$
Axis	→	$X = \mathbb{Z} \mid Y = \mathbb{Z}$
\mathbb{Z}	→	an integer

101 Given the DSL and a spec S , we want a program that both satisfies S and, at the same time, is
 102 the “best” explanation of S . For example, we might prefer more general programs or, in the spirit
 103 of Occam’s razor, prefer shorter programs. We wrap these intuitions up into a cost function over
 104 programs, and seek the minimum cost program consistent with S :

$$\text{program}(S) = \arg \min_{p \in \text{DSL}, \text{ s.t. } p \text{ consistent w/ } S} \text{cost}(p) \quad (2)$$

105 We define the cost of a program to be the number of Statement’s it contains (Tbl. 2). We also penalize
 106 using many different numerical constants; see supplement.

107 The constrained optimization problem in Eq. 2 is intractable in general, but there exist efficient-in-
 108 practice tools for finding exact solutions to such program synthesis problems. We use the state-of-
 109 the-art Sketch tool [1]. Sketch takes as input a space of programs, along with a specification of the
 110 program’s behavior and optionally a cost function. It translates the synthesis problem into a constraint
 111 satisfaction problem and then uses a SAT solver to find a minimum-cost program satisfying the
 112 specification. Sketch requires a *finite program space*, which here means that the depth of the program
 113 syntax tree is bounded (we set the bound to 3), but has the guarantee that it always eventually finds
 114 a globally optimal solution. In exchange for this optimality guarantee it comes with no guarantees
 115 on runtime. For our domain synthesis times vary from minutes to hours, with 27% of the drawings
 116 timing out the synthesizer after 1 hour. Tbl. 3 shows programs recovered by our system. A main
 117 impediment to our use of these general techniques is the prohibitively high cost of searching for
 118 programs. We next describe how to learn to synthesize programs much faster (Sec. 3.1), timing out
 119 on 2% of the drawings and solving 58% of problems within a minute.

120 3.1 Learning a search policy for synthesizing programs

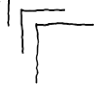
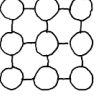

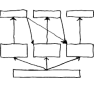
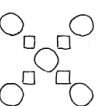
121 We want to leverage powerful, domain-general techniques from the program synthesis community,
 122 but make them much faster by learning a domain-specific **search policy**. A search policy poses
 123 search problems like those in Eq. 2, but also offers additional constraints on the structure of the
 124 program (Tbl. 4). For example, a policy might decide to first try searching over small programs
 125 before searching over large programs, or decide to prioritize searching over programs that have loops.

126 A search policy $\pi_\theta(\sigma|T)$ takes as input a spec S and predicts a distribution over synthesis problems,
 127 each of which is written σ and corresponds to a set of possible programs to search over (so $\sigma \subseteq \text{DSL}$).
 128 Good policies will prefer tractable program spaces, so that the search procedure will terminate early,
 129 but should also prefer program spaces likely to contain programs that concisely explain the data.
 130 These two desiderata are in tension: tractable synthesis problems involve searching over smaller
 131 spaces, but smaller spaces are less likely to contain good programs. Our goal now is to find the
 132 parameters of the policy, written θ , which best navigate this trade-off.

133 Given a search policy, what is the best way of using it to quickly find minimum cost programs? We
 134 use a *bias-optimal search algorithm* [12]:

135 **Definition: Bias-optimality.** A search algorithm is *n-bias optimal* with respect to a distribution
 136 $\mathbb{P}_{\text{bias}}[\cdot]$ if it is guaranteed to find a solution in σ after searching for at least time $n \times \frac{t(\sigma)}{\mathbb{P}_{\text{bias}}[\sigma]}$, where
 137 $t(\sigma)$ is the time it takes to verify that σ contains a solution to the search problem.

Table 3: Example drawings (left), their ground truth specs (middle left), and programs synthesized from these specs (middle right). Compared to the specs the programs are more compressive (right: programs have fewer lines than specs) and automatically group together related drawing commands. Note the nested loops and special case conditionals in the Ising model, combination of symmetry and iteration in the bottom figure, affine transformations in the top figure, and the complicated program in the second figure to bottom.

Drawing	Spec	Program	Compression factor
	<pre> Line(2,15, 4,15) Line(4,9, 4,13) Line(3,11, 3,14) Line(2,13, 2,15) Line(3,14, 6,14) Line(4,13, 8,13) </pre>	<pre> for(i<3) line(i, -1*i+6, 2*i+2, -1*i+6) line(i, -2*i+4, i, -1*i+6) </pre>	$\frac{6}{3} = 2x$
	<pre> Circle(5,8) Circle(2,8) Circle(8,11) Line(2,9, 2,10) Circle(8,8) Line(3,8, 4,8) Line(3,11, 4,11) ... etc. ...; 21 lines </pre>	<pre> for(i<3) for(j<3) if(j>0) line(-3*j+8, -3*i+7, -3*j+9, -3*i+7) line(-3*i+7, -3*j+8, -3*i+7, -3*j+9) circle(-3*j+7, -3*i+7) </pre>	$\frac{21}{6} = 3.5x$
	<pre> Rectangle(1,10,3,11) Rectangle(1,12,3,13) Rectangle(4,8,6,9) Rectangle(4,10,6,11) ... etc. ...; 16 lines </pre>	<pre> for(i<4) for(j<4) rectangle(-3*i+9, -2*j+6, -3*i+11, -2*j+7) </pre>	$\frac{16}{3} = 5.3x$
	<pre> Line(3,10,3,14,arrow) Rectangle(11,8,15,10) Rectangle(11,14,15,15) Line(13,10,13,14,arrow) ... etc. ...; 16 lines </pre>	<pre> for(i<3) line(7,1,5*i+2,3,arrow) for(j<i+1) if(j>0) line(5*j-1,9,5*i,5,arrow) line(5*j+2,5,5*j+2,9,arrow) rectangle(5*i,3,5*i+4,5) rectangle(5*i,9,5*i+4,10) rectangle(2,0,12,1) </pre>	$\frac{16}{9} = 1.8x$
	<pre> Circle(2,8) Rectangle(6,9, 7,10) Circle(8,8) Rectangle(6,12, 7,13) Rectangle(3,9, 4,10) ... etc. ...; 9 lines </pre>	<pre> reflect(y=8) for(i<3) if(i>0) rectangle(3*i-1,2,3*i,3) circle(3*i+1,3*i+1) </pre>	$\frac{9}{5} = 1.8x$

138 An example of a 1-bias optimal search algorithm is a time-sharing system that allocates $\mathbb{P}_{\text{bias}}[\sigma]$ of its
 139 time to trying σ . We construct a 1-bias optimal search algorithm by identifying $\mathbb{P}_{\text{bias}}[\sigma] = \pi_{\theta}(\sigma|S)$
 140 and $t(\sigma) = t(\sigma|S)$, where $t(\sigma|S)$ is how long the synthesizer takes to search σ for a program for S .
 141 This means that the search algorithm explores the entire program space, but spends most of its time
 142 in the regions of the space that the policy judges to be most promising.

143 Now in theory any $\pi_{\theta}(\cdot|\cdot)$ is a bias-optimal searcher. But the actual runtime of the algorithm depends
 144 strongly upon the bias $\mathbb{P}_{\text{bias}}[\cdot]$. Our new approach is to learn $\mathbb{P}_{\text{bias}}[\cdot]$ by picking the policy minimizing
 145 the expected bias-optimal time to solve a training corpus, \mathcal{D} , of graphics program synthesis problems:

$$\text{Loss}(\theta; \mathcal{D}) = \mathbb{E}_{S \sim \mathcal{D}} \left[\min_{\sigma \in \text{BEST}(S)} \frac{t(\sigma|S)}{\pi_{\theta}(\sigma|S)} \right] + \lambda \|\theta\|_2^2 \quad (3)$$

where $\sigma \in \text{BEST}(S)$ if a minimum cost program for S is in σ .

146 Practically, bias optimality has now bought us the following: (1) a guarantee that the policy will
 147 always find the minimum cost program; and (2) a differentiable loss function for the policy parameters
 148 that takes into account the cost of searching, in contrast to e.g. DeepCoder [13].

149 To generate a training corpus for learning a policy which minimizes this loss, we synthesized
 150 minimum cost programs for each of our hand drawings and for each σ . We locally minimize this loss
 151 using gradient descent. Because we want to learn a policy from only 100 hand-drawn diagrams, we
 152 chose a simple low-capacity, bilinear model for a policy:

$$\pi_{\theta}(\sigma|S) \propto \exp(\phi_{\text{params}}(\sigma)^{\top} \theta \phi_{\text{spec}}(S)) \quad (4)$$

153 where $\phi_{\text{params}}(\sigma)$ is a one-hot encoding of the parameter settings of σ (see Tbl. 4) and $\phi_{\text{spec}}(S)$
 154 extracts a few simple features of the trace set S ; see supplement for details.

155 **Experiment 3: Figure 8.** We compare synthesis times for our learned search policy with two
 156 alternatives: *Sketch*, which poses the entire problem wholesale to the Sketch program synthesizer;
 157 and an *Oracle*, a policy which always picks the quickest to search σ also containing a minimum cost
 158 program. Our approach improves upon Sketch by itself, and comes close to the Oracle’s performance.
 159 One could never construct this Oracle, because the agent does not know ahead of time which σ ’s
 160 contain minimum cost programs nor does it know how long each σ will take to search. With this
 161 learned policy in hand we can synthesize 58% of programs within a minute.

Table 4: Parameterization of different ways of posing the program synthesis problem. The policy learns to choose parameters likely to quickly yield a minimal cost program.

Parameter	Description	Range
Loops?	Is the program allowed to loop?	{True, False}
Reflects?	Is the program allowed to have reflections?	{True, False}
Incremental?	Solve the problem piece-by-piece or all at once?	{True, False}
Maximum depth	Bound on the depth of the program syntax tree	{1, 2, 3}

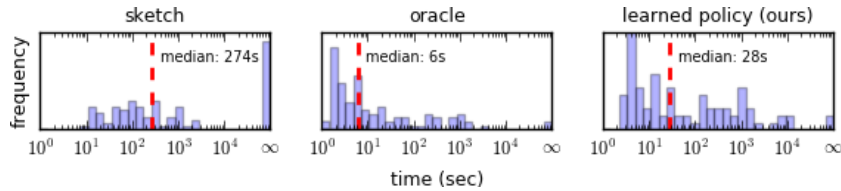


Figure 8: How long does it typically take to synthesize a minimum cost program? Sketch: out-of-the-box performance of the Sketch [1] program synthesizer. Oracle: upper bounds the performance of any search policy. Learned policy: a bias-optimal learned search policy running on an ideal timesharing machine. ∞ = timeout. Red dashed line is median time. Learned policy evaluated using 20-fold cross validation.

162 4 Applications of graphics program synthesis

163 Why synthesize a graphics program, if the spec already suffices to recover the objects in an image?
 164 Within our domain of hand-drawn figures, graphics program synthesis has several uses:

165 4.1 Correcting errors made by the neural network

166 The program synthesizer corrects errors made by the neural
 167 network by favoring specs which lead to more concise or gen-
 168 eral programs. For example, figures with perfectly aligned
 169 objects are preferable, and precise alignment lends itself to
 170 short programs. Concretely, we run the program synthesizer
 171 on the Top- k most likely specs output by the neurally guided
 172 sampler. Then, the system reranks the Top- k by the prior prob-
 173 ability of their programs. The prior probability of a program
 174 is learned by picking the prior maximizing the likelihood of
 175 the ground truth specs; see supplement for details. But, this
 176 procedure can only correct errors when a correct spec is in the
 177 Top- k . Our sampler could only do better on 7/100 drawings
 178 by looking at the Top-100 samples (see Fig. 7), precluding a
 179 statistically significant analysis of how much learning a prior
 180 over programs could help correct errors. But, learning this
 181 prior does sometimes help correct mistakes made by the neural
 182 network; see Fig. 9 for a representative example of the kinds
 183 of corrections that it makes. See supplement for details.

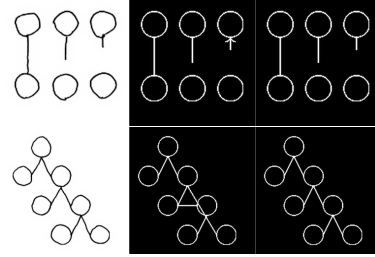


Figure 9: Left: hand drawings. Center: interpretations favored by the deep network. Right: interpretations favored after learning a prior over programs. The prior favors simpler programs, thus (top) continuing the pattern of not having an arrow is preferred, or (bottom) continuing the “binary search tree” is preferred.

184 4.2 Extrapolating figures

185 Having access to the source code of a graphics program facilitates coherent, high-level image editing.
 186 For example we can extrapolate figures by increasing the number of times that loops are executed.
 187 Extrapolating repetitive visual patterns comes naturally to humans, and is a practical application:
 188 imagine hand drawing a repetitive graphical model structure and having our system automatically
 189 induce and extend the pattern. Fig. 10 shows extrapolations produced by our system.

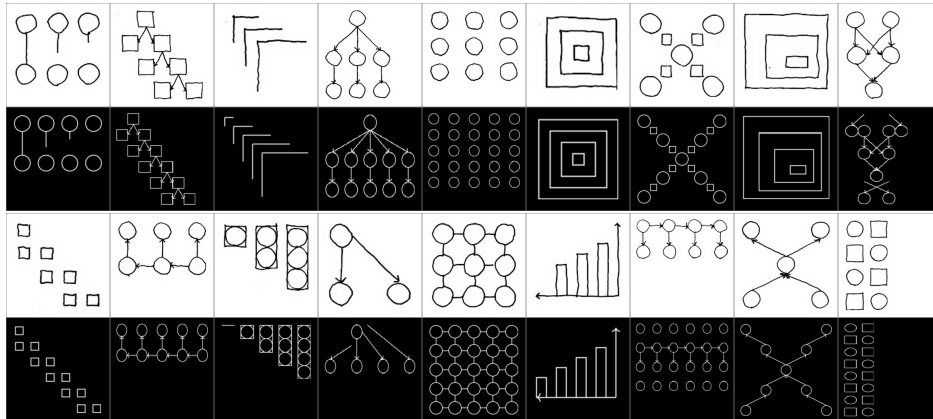


Figure 10: Top, white: hand drawings. Bottom, black: extrapolations produced by our system.

190 5 Related work

191 **Program Induction:** Our approach to learning to search for programs draws theoretical underpin-
 192 nings from Levin search [14, 15] and Schmidhuber’s OOPS model [12]. DeepCoder [13] is a recent
 193 model which, like ours, learns to predict likely program components. Our work differs because we
 194 treat the problem as *metareasoning*, identifying and modeling the trade-off between tractability and
 195 probability of success. TerpreT [16] systematically compares constraint-based program synthesis
 196 techniques against gradient-based search techniques, like those used to train Differentiable Neural
 197 Computers [17]. The TerpreT experiments motivate our use of constraint-based techniques.

198 **Deep Learning:** Our neural network bears resemblance to the Attend-Infer-Repeat (AIR) system,
 199 which learns to decompose an image into its constituent objects [5]. AIR learns an iterative inference
 200 scheme which infers objects one by one and also decides when to stop inference. Our network differs

in its architecture and training regime: AIR learns a recurrent auto-encoding model via variational inference, whereas our parsing stage learns an autoregressive-style model from randomly-generated (trace, image) pairs.

IM2LATEX [18] is a recent work that also converts images to \LaTeX . Their goal is to derender \LaTeX equations, which recovers a markup language representation. Our goal is to go from noisy input to a high-level program, which goes beyond markup languages by supporting programming constructs like loops and conditionals. Recovering a high-level program is more challenging than recovering markup because it is a highly under constrained symbolic reasoning problem.

Our image-to-trace parsing architecture builds on prior work on controlling procedural graphics programs [4]. We adapt this method to a different visual domain (figures composed of multiple objects), using a broad prior over possible scenes as the initial program and viewing the trace through the guide program as a symbolic parse of the target image. We then show how to efficiently synthesize higher-level programs from these traces.

In the computer graphics literature, there have been other systems which convert sketches into procedural representations. One uses a convolutional network to match a sketch to the output of a parametric 3D modeling system [19]. Another uses convolutional networks to support sketch-based instantiation of procedural primitives within an interactive architectural modeling system [20]. Both systems focus on inferring fixed-dimensional parameter vectors. In contrast, we seek to automatically infer a structured, programmatic representation of a sketch which captures higher-level visual patterns.

Hand-drawn sketches: Prior work has also applied sketch-based program synthesis to authoring graphics programs. Sketch-n-Sketch is a bi-directional editing system in which direct manipulations to a program’s output automatically propagate to the program source code [21]. We see this work as complementary to our own: programs produced by our method could be provided to a Sketch-n-Sketch-like system as a starting point for further editing.

The CogSketch system [22] also aims to have a high-level understanding of hand-drawn figures. Their primary goal is cognitive modeling (they apply their system to solving IQ-test style visual reasoning problems), whereas we are interested in building an automated AI application (e.g. in our system the user need not annotate which strokes correspond to which shapes; our neural network produces something equivalent to the annotations).

The Trace Hypothesis: The idea that an execution trace could assist in program learning goes back to the 1970’s [23] and has been applied in neural models of program induction, like Neural Program Interpreters [24], or DeepCoder, which predicts what functions occur in the execution trace [13]. Our contribution to this idea is the trace hypothesis: that trace sets can be inferred from perceptual data, and that the trace set is a useful bridge between perception and symbolic representation. Our work is the first to articulate and explore this hypothesis by demonstrating how a trace could be inferred and how it can be used to synthesize a high-level program.

6 Contributions

We have presented a system for inferring graphics programs which generate \LaTeX -style figures from hand-drawn images. The system uses a combination of deep neural networks and stochastic search to parse drawings into symbolic trace sets; it then feeds these traces to a general-purpose program synthesis engine to infer a structured graphics program. We evaluated our model’s performance at parsing novel images, and we demonstrated its ability to extrapolate from provided drawings.

In the near future, we believe it will be possible to produce professional-looking figures just by drawing them and then letting an artificially-intelligent agent write the code. More generally, we believe the trace hypothesis, as realized in our two-phase system—parsing into trace sets, then searching for a low-cost symbolic program which generates those traces—may be a useful paradigm for other domains in which agents must programmatically reason about noisy perceptual input.

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