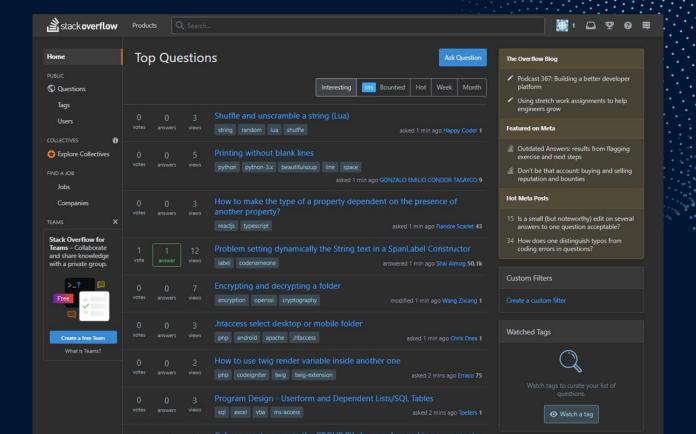
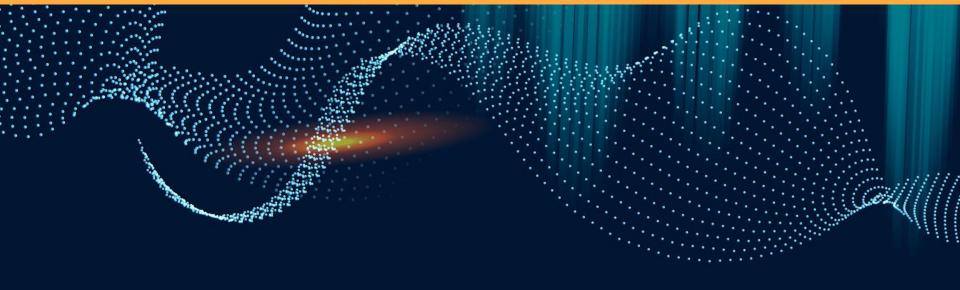
Analyzing Stack Overflow Community Posts to Automate Knowledge Organization

U of T UnERD 2021

Arjun Sridharkumar, **Hamza Dugmag**, Iftekhar Ahmed, Shurui Zhou

StackOverflow.com



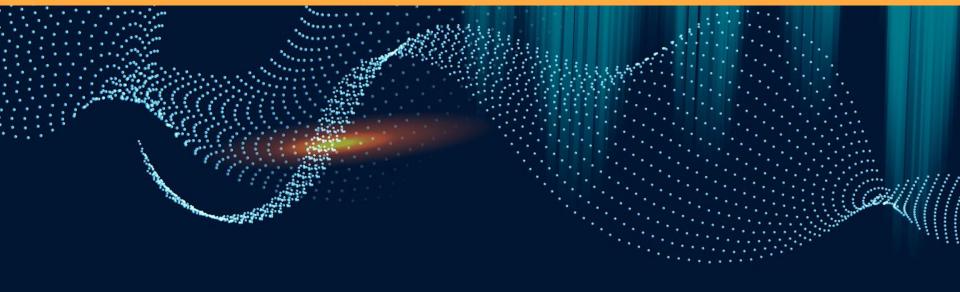


22M

Questions

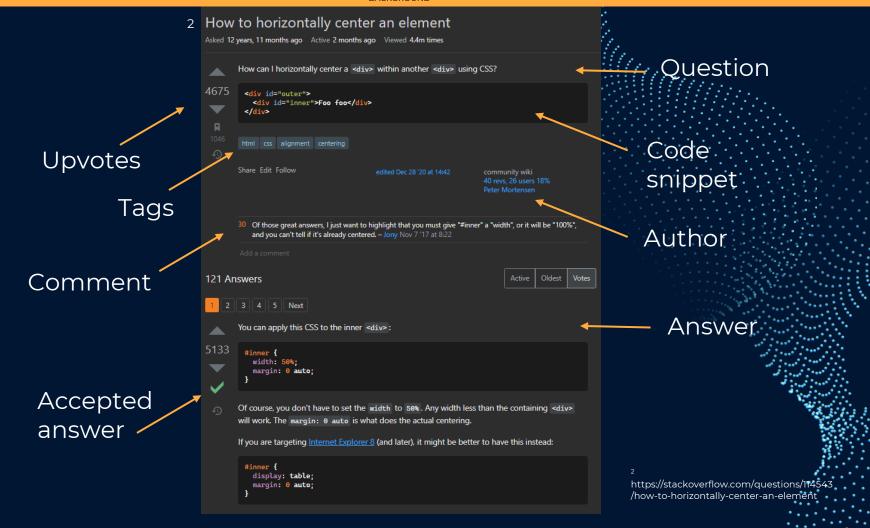
70% of which are answered as of July 2021 $^{\rm 1}$

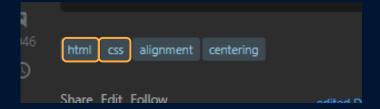
¹ https://stackexchange.com/sites?view=list#questions



15M Users As of July 2021

¹ https://stackexchange.com/sites?view=list#questions





Similar to official documentations of programming technologies

³ https://stackoverflow.com/tags/html/info

HTML elements form the building blocks of all web-pages. HTML allows images and objects to be embedded in a page. It references styles and scripts and carries meta-data. It can be used to create interactive forms. It provides a means to create structured documents by denoting structural semantics for text such as headings, paragraphs, lists, links, quotes and other items. It can embed scripts written in languages such as JavaScript, which affects the behavior of HTML web pages. Web pages written in different programming languages (PHP JSP, VF, ASP.NET etc.) get rendered as HTML in a browser.

HTML is a hierarchical (tree-structured) markup language. That is, an item might be a descendant of another item, which is its ancestor. However, if item2 is a descendant of item1, then they have an additional special relation: item2 is inside of item1, or item1 is wrapped around item2.

Syntax

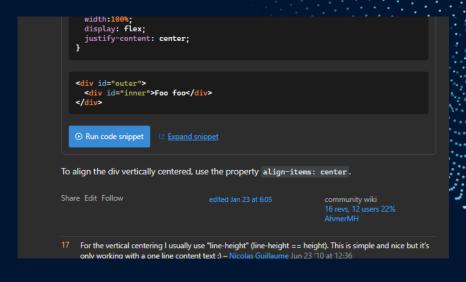
HTML is written in the form of elements consisting of tags (and their attributes) enclosed in angle brackets (e.g., <html>).

HTML tags most commonly come in pairs. The first is known as the opening tag and the second, which includes a forward clash, as the clasing tag (a.g., while and w/hile). Various types of content such as tout or

Community Wiki Posts

community wiki 16 revs, 12 users 22% AhmerMH

Multiple collaborators can contribute to a question, answer, or tag wiki



However...

the Q&A format makes it difficult to retrieve desired knowledge via unknownitem searches [1].

[1] A. Diriye, M. L. Wilson, A. Blandford and A. Tombros, "Revisiting Exploratory Search from the HCI Perspective," London, 2010.

4

Links to

posts

other STO



The Stack Overflow Regular Expressions FAQ

1058

See also a lot of general hints and useful links at the regex tag details page.



Online tutorials

RegexOne ↔

Headings

Regular Expressions Info ↔

Quantifiers

- Zero-or-more: *:greedy, *?:reluctant, *+:possessive
- One-or-more: + :greedy, +? :reluctant, ++ :possessive
- ?:optional (zero-or-one)
- Min/max ranges (all inclusive): {n,m} :between n & m, {n,} :n-or-more, {n} :xactly n
- Differences between greedy, reluctant (a.k.a. "lazy", "ungreedy") and possessive quantifier:
 - Greedy vs. Reluctant vs. Possessive Quantifiers
 - In-depth discussion on the differences between greedy versus non-greedy
 - What's the difference between {n} and {n}?
 - Can someone explain Possessive Quantifiers to me? php , perl , java , ruby
 - Emulating possessive quantifiers ne
 - Non-Stack Overflow references: From Oracle, regular-expressions.info

Character Classes

- What is the difference between square brackets and parentheses
- [...]: any one character, [^...]: negated/any character but
- [^] matches any one character including newlines javascript
- [\w-[\d]] / [a-z-[qz]]: set subtraction .net , xml-schema , xpath , JGSoft
- [\w&&[^\d]]: set intersection java , ruby 1.9+
- [[:alpha:]]:POSIX character classes
- Why do [^\\D2] , [^[^0-9]2] , [^2[^0-9]] get different results in Java? java
- Shorthand:

"Structured Posts"

Community posts which aim to <u>organize</u> the *Stack Overflow* website

⁴ https://stackoverflow.com/a/22944075/10757178



questions are linked in community posts, indicating that *Stack Overflow* is largely unorganized ⁵

⁵ https://data.stackexchange.com/stackoverflow/query/new

Research Project Goals

Analysis

What are the characteristics of community and structured posts?

Prototyping

How can we create a tooling method that automatically generates structured posts?

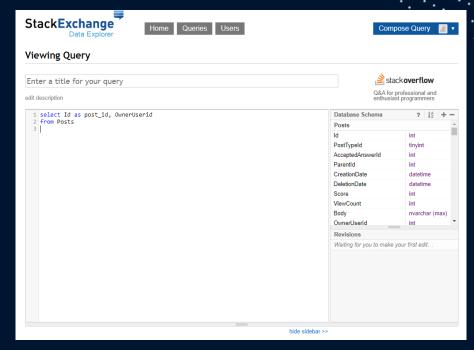
Hypothesis

It is expected that there are shared features among high-quality structured posts

Approach

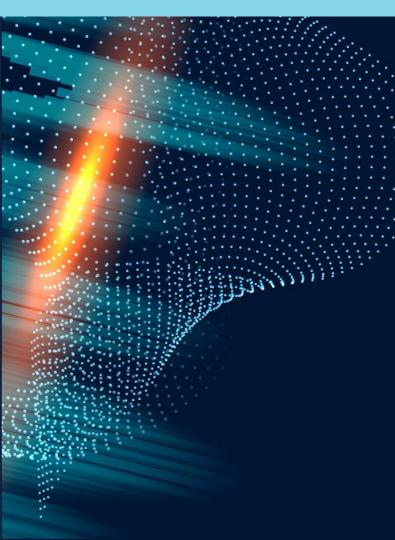
Unsupervised clustering groups similar posts together

Data Acquisition



Stack Overflow data dump since 2008 5

⁵ https://data.stackexchange.com/stackoverflow/query/new



126K

community posts created since 2008

Post Properties and Features



Length

Text Length No. of STO Links No. of External Links Total No. of Links Ratio of STO Links



Activity

No. of Edits Creation Date Last Update Date Inactivity Time No. of Contributers



Popularity

No. of Upvotes



Structure

No. of Headings Avg. No. of *STO* Links/Heading

Raw Data

	post_id	Text Length	No. of SO Links	No. of ALL Links	ALL - SO	SO / ALL	No. of Revisions	Creation Date	Last Update Time	No. of Contributers	Creation - Updated	No. of Upvotes	No. of Headings	Avg. No. of SO Links / Heading
0	1587.0	59.0	0.0	3.0	3.0	0.0	1.0	4760.0	4760.0	1.0	0.0	14.0	0.0	0.0
1	1660.0	7.0	0.0	8.0	8.0	0.0	5.0	4760.0	4728.0	2.0	31.0	91.0	3.0	0.0
2	1752.0	107.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	4756.0	4756.0	1.0	0.0	15.0	0.0	0.0
3	2376.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	4756.0	4756.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	2420.0	97.0	0.0	3.0	3.0	0.0	5.0	4756.0	4352.0	4.0	404.0	35.0	1.0	0.0

First five unscaled data points used after data analysis

	Text Length	No. of SO Links	No. of ALL Links	ALL - SO	SO / ALL	No. of Revisions	Creation Date	Last Update Time	No. of Contributers	Creation - Updated	No. of Upvotes	No. of Headings	Avg. No. of SO Links / Heading
0	0.010269	0.0	0.009583	0.013947	0.0	0.003731	1.000000	1.000000	0.008926	0.000212	0.002283	0.000000	0.0
1	0.001219	0.0	0.025558	0.037201	0.0	0.018646	1.000000	0.993652	0.017853	0.006779	0.005367	0.048401	0.0
2	0.018616	0.0	0.000000	0.000000	0.0	0.018646	0.999023	0.999023	0.008926	0.000212	0.002323	0.000000	0.0
3	0.006962	0.0	0.000000	0.000000	0.0	0.007462	0.999023	0.999023	0.017853	0.000212	0.001722	0.000000	0.0
4	0.016876	0.0	0.009583	0.013947	0.0	0.018646	0.999023	0.914062	0.035706	0.085754	0.003124	0.016129	0.0

First five normalized data points used in clustering

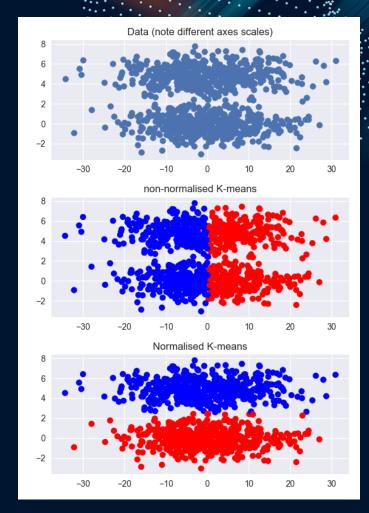
Note: the following data is from a random sample of 6K posts since the script is very slow and we have yet to migrate all the data to our server

Data Normalization

Normalizing data equally weighs all features [2].

Don't want distances to be a factor

[2] D. Singh and B. Singh, "Investigating the impact of data normalization on classification performance," *Applied Soft computing*, vol. 97, 2020.



⁶ https://stats.stackexchange.com/a/283941

Visualizing High-Dimensional Data with T-Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (TSNE)

TSNE represents high-dimensional data in 2D by creating a probability distribution of how close data points are to each other [3].

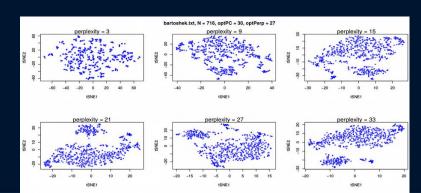
Hyperparameter: Perplexity

Attention between local and global aspects of the data

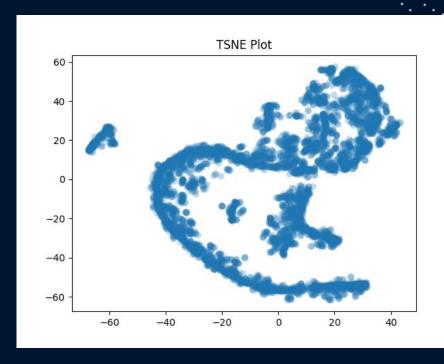
Perplexity ~ N^{0.5} [4].

[3] L. van der Maaten and G. Hinton, "Visualizing Data using t-SNE," *Journal of Machine Learning Research*, vol. 9, pp. 2579-2605, 2008.

[4] N. Oskolkov, "How to tune hyperparameters of tSNE," Towards Data Science, 18 July 2019. [Online]. Available: https://towardsdatascience.com/how-to-tune-hyperparameters-of-tsne-7c0596a18868.



TSNE Plot



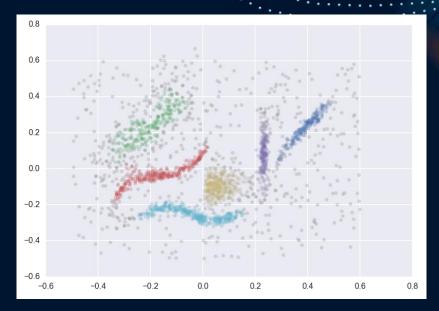
Unclustered, scaled, projected data

Hierarchical Density Based Spatial Clustering of Applications w/ Noise (HDBSCAN)

- 1. Generates sets of nested, related clusters
- 2. We don't know how many clusters we have
- 3. We don't know how big the clusters are
- 4. Indifferent to cluster shapes
- 5. Detects outliers
- 6. Easy and optimized parameter selection

[5]

[5] L. Yang et al., "Semi-Supervised Log-Based Anomaly Detection via Probabilistic Label Estimation," 2021 IEEE/ACM 43rd International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE), 2021, pp. 1448-1460. doi: 10.1109/ICSE43902.2021.00130.



⁷ https://hdbscan.readthedocs.io/en/latest/advanced_hdbscan.html

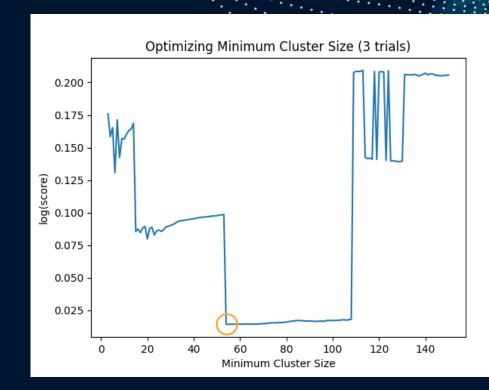
7

Optimizing Min_Cluster_Size

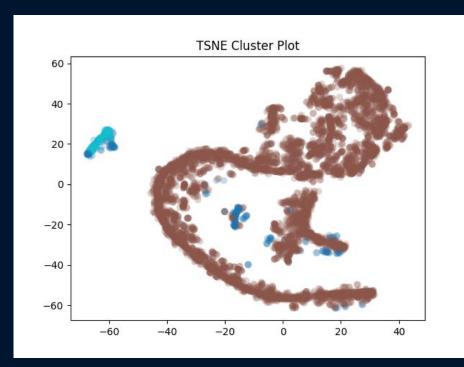
Want to maximize confidence that data points belong in their clusters

Find Min_Cluster_Size that minimizes number of points with <5% confidence [6]

[6] N. Oskolkov, "How to cluster in High Dimensions," Towards Data Science, 23 July 2019. [Online]. Available: https://towardsdatascience.com/how-to-cluster-in-high-dimensions-4ef693bacc6.



The Clusters



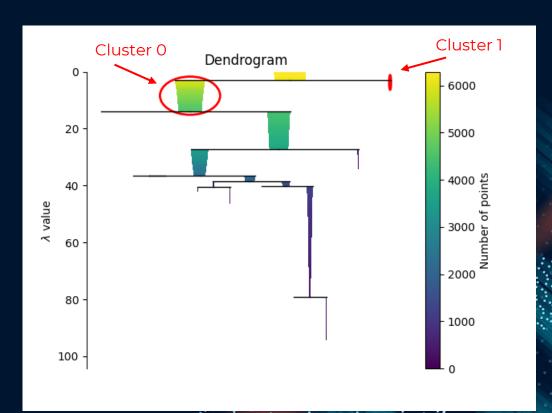
HDBSCAN TSNE plot with min_cluster_size = 55

- Cluster 0
- Cluster 1
- Noise

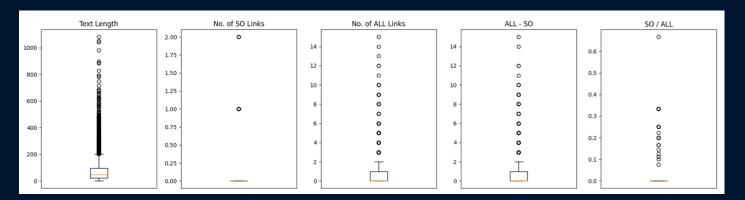
Dendrogram Analysis

HDBSCAN uses cluster hierarchy to maximize the clusters' lifespans without introducing too many artifacts [7].

[7] L. McInnes, J. Healy, S. Astels, hdbscan: Hierarchical density based clustering In: Journal of Open Source Software, The Open Journal, volume 2, number 11. 2017

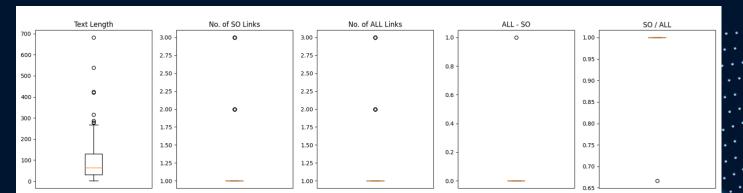


Length Comparison



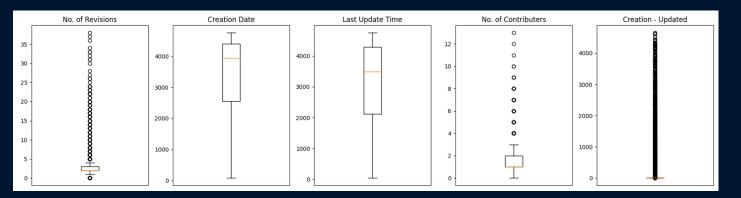
Cluster 0

Longer but fewer *STO* links



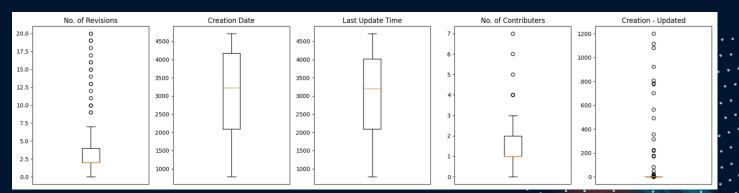
Cluster 1

Activity Comparison



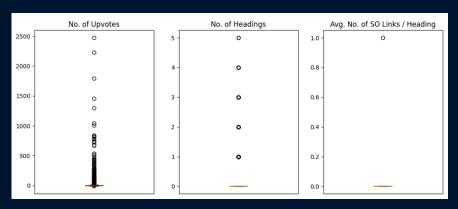
Cluster 0

More contributions but older



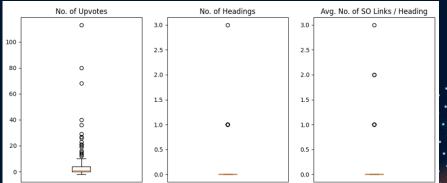
Cluster 1

Popularity and Structure Comparison



Cluster 0

Lower median upvotes and *STO* links per heading



Cluster 1

Stratified Sampling: Cluster 0

Pretty long, but is not a collaborative "structured post" that serves to organize *Stack Overflow*

Heres a complete function for adding and removing parameters based on this question and this qithub gist: https://qist.qithub.com/excalq/2961415

•

```
var updateQueryStringParam = function (key, value) {
    var baseUrl = [location.protocol, '//', location.host, location.pathname].join(''
        urlOueryString = document.location.search.
       newParam = key + '=' + value,
        params = '?' + newParam;
    // If the "search" string exists, then build params from it
   if (urlQueryString) {
       updateRegex = new RegExp('([\?&])' + key + '[^&]*');
removeRegex = new RegExp('([\?&])' + key + '=[^&;]+[&;]?');
       if( typeof value == 'undefined' || value == null || value == '' ) { // Remove
            params = urlQueryString.replace(removeRegex, "$1");
            params = params.replace( /[&;]$/, "" );
       } else if (urlQueryString.match(updateRegex) !== null) { // If param exists a
            params = urlQueryString.replace(updateRegex, "$1" + newParam);
       } else { // Otherwise, add it to end of query string
            params = urlQueryString + '&' + newParam;
   window.history.replaceState({}, "", baseUrl + params);
```

You can add parameters like this:

```
updateQueryStringParam( 'myparam', 'true' );
```

And remove it like this:

```
updateQueryStringParam( 'myparam', null );
```

In this thread many said that the regex is probably not the best/stable solution ... so im not 100% sure if this thing has some flaws but as far as i tested it it works pretty fine.

Share Edit Follow

answered Nov 17 '16 at 6:59

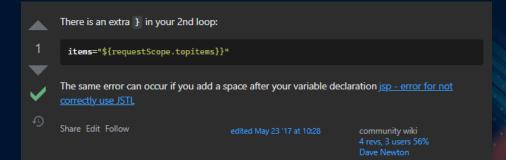
community wiki GDY



⁸ https://stackoverflow.com/questions/40648561

Stratified Sampling: Cluster 1

Too short to be considered "structured," but is a collaborative effort and facilitates finding other information on *Stack Overflow*



Stratified Sampling: Noise

One word answer: asynchronicity.



Forewords



This topic has been iterated at least a couple of thousands of times, here, in Stack Overflow. Hence, first off I'd like to point out some extremely useful resources:



- @Felix Kling's answer to "How do I return the response from an asynchronous call?". See his
 excellent answer explaining synchronous and asynchronous flows, as well as the "Restructure
 code" section.
 @Benjamin Gruenbaum has also put a lot of effort explaining asynchronicity in the same
- <u>@Matt Esch's answer to "Get data from fs.readFile"</u> also explains asynchronicity extremely well
 in a simple manner.

The answer to the question at hand

Let's trace the common behavior first. In all examples, the outerScopeVar is modified inside of a function. That function is clearly not executed immediately, it is being assigned or passed as an argument. That is what we call a callback.

Now the question is, when is that callback called?

It depends on the case. Let's try to trace some common behavior again:

- img.onload may be called sometime in the future, when (and if) the image has successfully leaded.
- setTimeout may be called sometime in the future, after the delay has expired and the timeout
 hasn't been canceled by clearTimeout. Note: even when using 0 as delay, all browsers have
 a minimum timeout delay cap (specified to be 4ms in the HTML5 spec).
- jQuery \$.post 's callback may be called sometime in the future, when (and if) the Ajax request
 has been completed successfully.
- Node.js's fs.readFile may be called sometime in the future, when the file has been read successfully or thrown an error.

In all cases, we have a callback which may run sometime in the future. This "sometime in the future" is what we refer to as asynchronous flow.

Asynchronous execution is pushed out of the synchronous flow. That is, the asynchronous code will never execute while the synchronous code stack is executing. This is the meaning of JavaScript

```
// call the callback passing the result as argument callback('Mya');
}, Math.random() * 2000);
}

© Run code snippet

② Expand snippet
```

Most often in real use cases, the DOM API and most libraries already provide the callback functionality (the hellocatasync implementation in this demonstrative example). You only need to pass the callback function and understand that it will execute out of the synchronous flow, and restructure your code to accommodate for that.

You will also notice that due to the asynchronous nature, it is impossible to return a value from an asynchronous flow back to the synchronous flow where the callback was defined, as the asynchronous callbacks are executed long after the synchronous code has already finished executing.

Instead of return ing a value from an asynchronous callback, you will have to make use of the callback pattern, or... Promises.

Promises

Although there are ways to keep the <u>callback hell</u> at bay with vanilla JS, promises are growing in popularity and are currently being standardized in ES6 (see Promise - MDN).

Promises (a.k.a. Futures) provide a more linear, and thus pleasant, reading of the asynchronous code, but explaining their entire functionality is out of the scope of this question. Instead, I'll leave these excellent resources for the interested:

- JavaScript Promises HTML5 Rocks
- · You're Missing the Point of Promises domenic.me

More reading material about JavaScript asynchronicity

The Art of Node - Callbacks explains asynchronous code and callbacks very well with vanilla JS
examples and Node is code as well.

A structured post!
However,
noise is inconsistent.

10

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/23667087

Inference

Structured posts are very rare:

- Time consuming to make
- Difficult to find (ironic!)

How can we better reveal structured posts?

- Cluster by property rather than all properties at the same time
- Introduce more features (e.g., no. of comments)
- Cluster latent variables

Future Work

Explore how structured posts are organized and managed

03

Use BERT to detect type-III code clones between structured posts and documentation [7]

02

Use NLP to develop an automated tool that generates structured posts

[7] Saini, Vaibhav, et al. "Oreo: Detection of clones in the Whight zone." Proceedings of the 2018 26th ACM Joint Meeting on European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (FSE), 2018.

Research Impact







Collaboration

Encourages innovation and idea-sharing among developers

Education

Increases
accessibility to
information for new
and experienced
developers

Efficiency

Saves developers' time to increase innovation

References

- ¹ https://stackexchange.com/sites?view=list#questions
- ² https://stackoverflow.com/questions/114543/how-to-horizontally-center-an-element
- ³ https://stackoverflow.com/tags/html/info
- ⁴ https://stackoverflow.com/a/22944075/10757178
- ⁵ https://data.stackexchange.com/stackoverflow/query/new
- ⁶ https://stats.stackexchange.com/a/283941
- $^{7}\ \underline{\text{https://hdbscan.readthedocs.io/en/latest/advanced_hdbscan.html}}$
- ⁸ https://stackoverflow.com/questions/40648561
- ⁹ https://stackoverflow.com/questions/24247862
- ¹⁰ https://stackoverflow.com/questions/23667087



References

- [1] A. Diriye, M. L. Wilson, A. Blandford and A. Tombros, "Revisiting Exploratory Search from the HCI Perspective," London, 2010.
- [2] D. Singh and B. Singh, "Investigating the impact of data normalization on classification performance," *Applied Soft computing*, vol. 97, 2020.
- [3] L. van der Maaten and G. Hinton, "Visualizing Data using t-SNE," *Journal of Machine Learning Research*, vol. 9, pp. 2579-2605, 2008.
- [4] N. Oskolkov, "How to tune hyperparameters of tSNE," Towards Data Science, 18 July 2019. [Online]. Available: https://towardsdatascience.com/how-to-tune-hyperparameters-of-tsne-7c0596a18868.
- [5] L. Yang et al., "Semi-Supervised Log-Based Anomaly Detection via Probabilistic Label Estimation," 2021 IEEE/ACM 43rd International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE), 2021, pp. 1448-1460, doi: 10.1109/ICSE43902.2021.00130.
- [6] N. Oskolkov, "How to cluster in High Dimensions," Towards Data Science, 23 July 2019. [Online]. Available: https://towardsdatascience.com/how-to-cluster-in-high-dimensions-4ef693bacc6.
- [7] Saini, Vaibhav, et al. "Oreo: Detection of clones in the twilight zone." Proceedings of the 2018 26th ACM Joint Meeting on European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (FSE). 2018.

Thanks for listening!

