Visualization of Data Flow Graphs for In Situ Data Analysis

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Abstract

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Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

DAG   directed acyclic graph
KPI   key performance indicator

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation

I N-SITU data processing is currently extremely popular. In this approach, in order to achieve the minimum possible time in which results are returned, very little preprocessing of any kind is performed. This means that users do not have a very comprehensive understanding of the nuances and problems which may exist in the data beforehand. Any potential pitfalls are likely to only be discovered at a later time, after much time and effort will already have been invested.

Standard statistics such as minimum, maximum, average, or median may help for simple numeric data. However, text data or (semi-) structured data call for different approaches. Aside from knowing what your raw data looks like at the input stage it is also crucial to understand intermediate data sets, i.e. how the different operations affect the data within the data flow.

Intermediate data sets

It is typical for large scale analysis systems such as Flink [BEHK10], Pig [ADD$^+$11], or IBMs System S [**?**] to represent analysis jobs as a series of individual tasks. These tasks are connected into a data flow which generally takes the form of an directed acyclic graph (DAG), which provides a useful visual metaphor for the ordering and dependencies of each task within a job. While this is adequate for describing the process by which data is analyzed, it leaves much to be desired in terms of describing the data itself. In particular, in cases where execution times are particularly long. Thus far, few systems making use of data flow graphs have invested significantly in the area of visual feedback within these graphs. System S provides basic feedback indicating the status of dataset processing without real feedback regarding data features [PLGA10], and Lipstick has

Directed Acyclic Graphs

evolved from a method of providing provenance models for pig latin queries [ADD$^+$11] to providing rudimentary DAG visualization capabilities for Apache Pig in its current development state [ADD$^+$11].

1.2   Structure of this Thesis

Chapter 2   contains a survey of related work
Chapter 3   provides an overview of data types and models
Chapter 4   details the implementation
Chapter 5   results and conclusions

CHAPTER 2

Related Work

T HE FIELD OF DATA VISUALIZATION has existed in some form for as long as data analysis has taken place. The primary purpose of data visualization is of course the effective communication of information through the use of graphics. Across varying fields and time periods, different approaches have been applied to varying degrees of success. Most are familiar with basic forms of information graphics, such as tables or basic charts, but as more data is generated and the economy becomes increasingly information-driven we have seen data visualization expand as a field of study in and of itself.

2.1 Visualization of Data

G ENERAL PURPOSE VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES have evolved over the past several decades, but often simple techniques still provide the most effective solution. One of the most seminal works in information display is Edward Tufte's "The Visual Display of Quantitative Information"[Tuf83]. This work provided a summary of several different types of visualizations applied in many fields, but more importantly it set guidelines as to what makes an effective visualization.

Many of the key concepts of Tufte's work revolve around the idea of limiting what he called *chart junk*. Chart junk refers to "useless, non-informative, or information-obscuring elements of information displays"[Tuf83]. While Tufte acknowledges that using non-data graphics can help to editorialize or provide context for the information being displayed, it is more important to ensure that data is not distorted in order to fit an aesthetic.

Chart Junk

Data-rich
Visualizations

In addition to limiting non-data information in visualizations, Tufte makes a strong case for the value of data-rich visualizations. Data-rich visualizations are those which include all available information, providing a comprehensive view from which macro trends may emerge. In essence, perhaps at the expense of being able to read individual data points, viewing a complete data set visually may provide insight without need for mathematical analysis. One of many examples of this given in the work is the famous map of central London used by Dr. John Snow to determine the root cause of a cholera outbreak, shown in Figure 2.1. By marking the location of cholera deaths with dots and water pumps with crosses it became immediately clear that deaths were clustered around a central pump on Broad Street. Dismantling this pump quickly stopped the deaths. This provides a clear case where a simple graphical analysis proved far more efficient than mathematical computation would have been in determining a causal link.

Dashboards

A more contemporary area of work which is directly connected to digital display is the concept of a *dashboard*. As defined by Stephen Few, a pre-eminent expert in this area, a dashboard is a single-screen visual display of the information required to achieve a specific set of goals. In a business context, this generally refers to key performance Indicators (KPIs). Such a dashboard is typically generated dynamically, allowing for real-time display of data trends as they occur.

Dashboard
constraints

In Stephen Few's "Information Dashboard Design" [Few06] a comprehensive guide to the development of dashboards is given. In particular, specific charts and graphics are matched to appropriate use cases and perhaps more importantly, areas in which some visualizations are inappropriate are defined. Beyond being a discussion simply on visual design, interactivity is discussed. The author notes that although the capability to explore data and perform analysis is available, for monitoring purposes it is more appropriate to not allow such features. Though these analyses are often important, it is more crucial to the purpose of a dashboard to display the data in the form that the dashboard was originally designed for. To do otherwise would risk undermining the purpose, which is a focus on optimal display of key metrics.

Evaluation of
Visualizations

2.2   In-Situ Processing

Processing large quantities of data has become a common task within many organizations. Data sources such as sensor networks or click streams necessitate handling both massive quantities of information and rapid rates of change. The size of
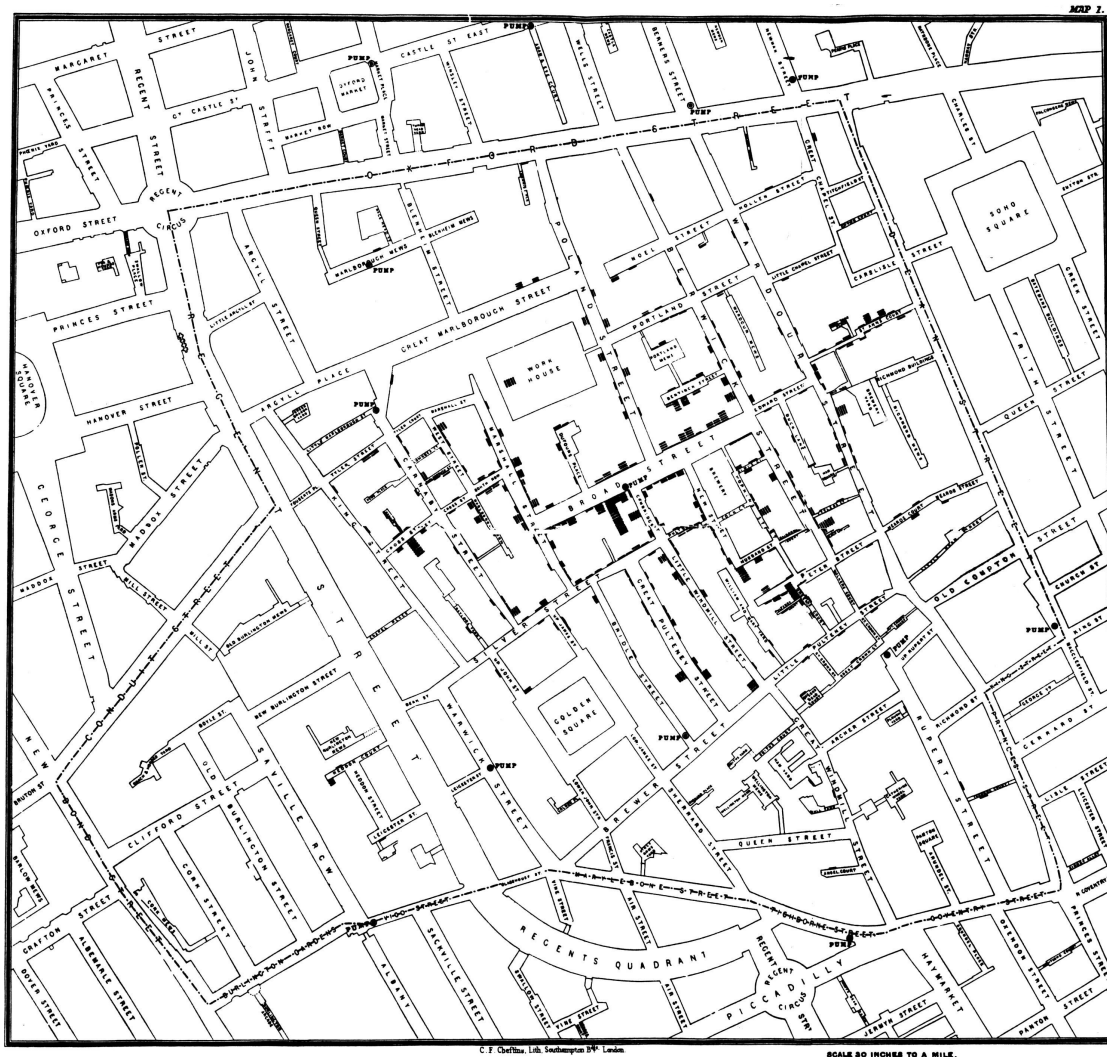
4

Figure 2.1: The map used by John Snow to determine the source of a cholera outbreak [Tuf83]
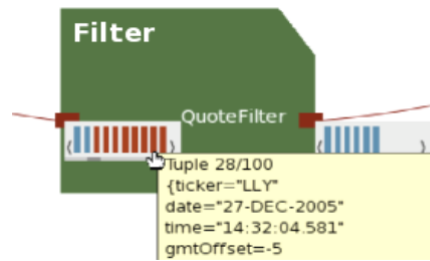
Figure 2.2: An executing operator as visualized in IBM's System S [PLGA10]

this data presents issues in the efficiency of storage solutions and there are many options for handling such problems [KAL$^+$11]. Beyond storage, when analysis occurs on large data stores it is often necessary to apply in-situ processing rather than a more thoroughly controlled approach. In-situ analysis allows for results to be obtained quickly by ignoring much, or all, of the preprocessing that may be involved in an analysis performed on a more controlled data source. Removing preprocessing steps of course increases speed while introducing a number of potential unknown factors.

Pig

Flink

2.3   Visualization of Data Flow Graphs

D ATA FLOW GRAPH VISUALIZATIONS have existed in some form for as long as data flow graphs have been used in analysis systems. However, their use is almost exclusively applied to examining meta-information such as optimization plans. Relatively little work has been done in generating visualizations which help in the understanding of data, as a supplement to the analyses themselves.

IBM System S   IBM research has developed a stream processing system known as *System S*, which builds processing graphs using predefined operators [**?**] and has included basic visualization of these graphs [PLGA10]. The visualizations show the DAG of analysis operators and indicate whether the operations have completed through colour coding. Additionally, each operator has a small widget which identifies the tuples which have been passed to or from the operator, as seen in Figure 2.3. These tuples can be highlighted in order to show specific data values, and to highlight data dependencies which exist downstream.

This type of visualization exists primarily to support debugging after some failure has been detected post-analysis. It can be seen in Figure 2.3 that there are only ten tuples visible at a single time. Though this number can be expanded, this limitation is here because the envisioned use-case consists of a user scrolling through tuples to identify a single suspected problem tuple. While this is very useful for repairing a problem which is found post-analysis, in cases where this computation is very expensive or the problem is particularly unclear after a failure it may not be efficient.

Retrospective Debugging

Lipstick [ADD⁺11], a workflow provenance model framework built for use with Pig takes a similar approach to that of IBM. Lipstick examines the internals of modules within a data flow in order to determine dependencies between parts of a flow. This approach is used for very much the same debugging cases which are expected within System S, with the addition of an added feature allowing developers to query a dependency graph. These queries allow developers to change parameters of the tuples in the graph in order to undertake "what-if" style analyses. Beyond the analysis options introduced through the querying capabilities of Lipstick however, the added visualization features are relatively simple. Like in System S, single operations change colour to indicate status and the tuples being passed to and from operations are identified. In this case the key difference is that the widget for selecting single tuples from System S is replaced with a simple integer iindicating the quantity of tuples moving through a flow. The exploratory capabilities here are left for queries made against the graphs generated in Lipstick.

Lipstick

CHAPTER 3

Visualizations

THIS SECTION AIMS to provide an examination of the methods used to visualize each of the most common types of data in this work. Rather than comprehensively examining all available visualizations, focus will be placed on those data types and structures which are expected to be regularly encountered. These are the data types which are not only most regularly encountered in general, but are particularly applicable to the types of computation scenarios well-suited to analyses in a map-reduce context.

3.1 Numerical Data

NUMERICAL DATA IS UBIQUITOUS when it comes to analysis. Almost all tasks which involve any type of computation will have some sort of summary or statistics to display as a result. This ubiquity has led to a myriad of visualizations being developed for similar tasks, some of which have more merit than others. The key point to consider when visualizing numerical data is to determine the purpose of the visualization.

Bar chart
Anti pie chart

Category Comparison

Line chart
Scatterplot

Trend Examination

There are cases where a visualization more complex than a simple table is unnecessary and perhaps even ill-suited. When

Summary Statistics

3.2 Text Data

OFTEN TEXT DATA IS PAIRED with some form of numerical summary, and in many cases there is no need for a specific type of visualization for this scenario. This could be true for a data set with products and sales numbers for example, where the product names could easily be switched with an integer key and no analysis value would be lost. However, when there is semantic value which can be extracted from the text we can apply more specific techniques. Particularly, this is true if if we can present the text data itself in such a way that a viewer can assess the basic features of the data more quickly by reading the text than by using a numerical approach.

Word Clouds The most commonly encountered form of text visualization is a word cloud. Word clouds are a specific form of weighted list which were largely propagated through early blogs and websites as a common feature for exploring tags on posts. There are some examples of these visualizations appearing earlier in printed form [**?**], but these are generally not for practical analysis purposes. Word clouds can be used to either summarize the frequency with which items occur, or as a categorization method. In a frequency analysis, words within the cloud have their sizes or colours scaled to reflect their associated frequency. Categorization is applied mainly for navigational purposes, with word sizes scaling to the number of subcategories they encompass. Word clouds are often considered sub-optimal for many use cases because they remove context from the analysis and leave too much extraneous information. They still however prove quite practical for identifying flaws or unexpected features of data sets, if not for analysis.

Word Trees [**?**]

Phrase Nets Phrase nets [**?**] represent data to some extent in the same fashion as a word cloud, with the size and colour of a word representing it's frequency in the text overall. The added benefit of a phrase net is that it also shows the relationship between words, providing greater context in later stage analyses. Rather than words floating on their own, they are connected by arrows in a directed graph. The arrows are formed based on a predefined relationship between the two and weighted in the same fashion as the words themselves, based on the frequency with which the relationship occurs. Figure 3.2 shows a phrase net built using the old testament, which connects two words X and Y based on occurences of the phrase "X of Y" in the text.

3.3 Graph Data

Figure 3.1: A word cloud as presented in "Tausend Plateaus: Kapitalismus und Schizophrenie" [**?**]

Figure 3.2: A phrase net visualizeing "X of Y" in the old testament [**?**]

CHAPTER 4

Implementation

T HE PROPOSED METHOD for implementing an in-situ visualization system is comprised of several vital parts. Although the output visualization is key from a user perspective, there are important factors to be considered in the way that data is collected and how this method fits into the overarching analysis system.

4.1 Overview

T HE CORE DEVELOPMENT PORTION OF THIS WORK is based on the classes which generate visualizations using a Flink execution plan. Firstly, there is an In-Situ Collector class which has the sole purpose of collecting data sets and/or summaries of data sets as they are run through the Flink analysis task. After data has been collected, the Visualizer can perform various visualization tasks based on the datasets which it has been provided. Figure 4.1 shows the basic structural parts of this development.

While the aforementioned two classes perform the bulk of the mechanical work, the visualizations themselves each require their own specialized classes which can be invoked generically from the Visualizer. For standard visualizations such as a histogram these classes largely handle the translation of data sets into a more easily digestible format which can be passed to pre-existing robust visualization libraries. In more complex and specific scenarios such as generating phrase nets, 'sketches' have been written in the Processing visualization language. These sketches can, with some minor modifications, be used within java projects and then drawn using the java swing toolkit.
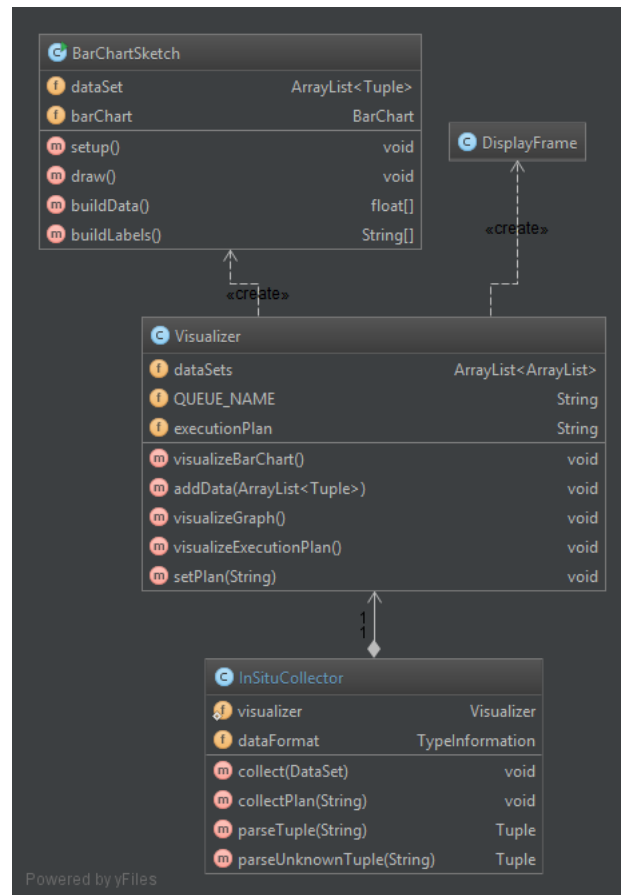
Visualization Classes

Figure 4.1: A UML diagram of the core classes

TODO-> Replace figure with updated/formatted version <-TODO

4.2   Data Collection

DATA TYPES IN FLINK are analyzed by the optimizer to determine the most efficient execution strategies. In order to make this process simpler, Flink places limits on the types of data which can be used. There are four categories of types: General objects and POJOs, Tuples, Values, and Hadoop writeables. The handling of each of these types must of course be considered when data is being collected from an analysis graph.

Tuples are used to represent composite data sets, and are composed of a set length list of fields of various types. Tuples can include any valid Flink type as an element, including further tuples. One of the major benefits of using tuple types is the ability to use built-in functions to navigate through the tuple values. Specifically, these functions allow the selection of specific fields as the key for operations and more generally allow the navigation of tuple fields using string expressions. *Tuples*

Values are types which have their serialization and de-serialization specified manually. *Values*

Objects which implement the Hadoop writeable interface. *Hadoop Writeables*

The data collector class acts as a simple addition to a pre-existing analysis program in Flink which collects data as it passes through operations. A single collector object exists for a given analysis flow, and collects data at a specific point with a single added line of code calling the collect method. *Data Collector*

Each time the collect method is called, it sends a new dataset to the central visualizer class. This method accepts a dataset as its sole argument and writes this dataset to memory in a format which can be read by the data collector. The data collector then reads this data into a new dataset outside of the original analysis flow's execution environment. *Collect Method*

A custom data set class exists for the use of the collector and visualizer. This class is very similar to the data set class which is native to Flink, but allows for the tracking of additional metadata which may be useful for debugging. This information could include timestamps, tags referring to specific operations in the analysis flow, or other semantically relevant information. These datasets are always initialized to contain tuple type objects. As a tuple can of course include any item of a basic type, this implementation will create a tuple of any general object in order to simplify data set operations. For example, if a single integer field is passed through the initial analysis flow, the data set generated in the visualizer will consider this as a tuple of size one which contains an integer. *Data Sets*

Type Erasure   When analysis jobs are executed, the java compiler will erase types and operate exclusively with generics. This means that when this data is extracted, some additional work is needed in order to determine a sufficient approximation of the original type for storage in a custom data set. To handle this, as each record is read into a data collector they are parsed through a set of pattern matching checks which determine the number of fields and the fields' types. Firstly, a simple line split determines the size of the tuples which should exist in the data set based on the input record. Next, each field is checked individually using the java string utilities library to determine whether they are numeric or non-numeric. Fields in each of these categories are then passed through a cascading set of conditional checks which determine their specific basic type, from least to most complex. For example, this method will attempt to parse a numeric field as an integer, and upon failure attempt to parse the field as a long. This process continues until a match is found; in the case that one is not an exception is thrown.

4.3   Distribution

DISTRIBUTION IN ANALYSIS SYSTEMS following the general mapreduce model all operate very similarly in concept. This means that generally speaking, we can expect the dataset to be mapped into a set of key-value pairs which are then partitioned across a cluster in a uniformly distributed way. Because we may want to examine the intermediate dataset at a point prior to a reduce operation which would centralize the dataset, we must collect it piecemeal from each node in the cluster. This is achieved by sending the datasets from each node in the cluster to the visualizer for summary.

Message Passing   Message passing allows us to invoke a send message call from each in-situ data collector operating on a shard of the complete data set, and then receiving it in the visualizer. The visualizer can perform whichever operations are needed in order to merge the datasets considering the original locations and timing in order to generate useful output.

Patterns?   I'm not sure yet if a specific pattern will apply.

RabbitMQ   So far arbitrary.

Specifics   Implementation details such as server locale etc.

4.4   Visualization

DEVELOPING VISUALIZATIONS in software is a matter of both design and engineering. Finding an effective way to build visuals is often as important as selecting and

conceptualizing the most appropriate way to convey the information at hand. In building the visualizations in this work, several languages and libraries have been applied in order to complete the work in the most effective way possible.

Processing is a language which was initially developed as a teaching tool for computer programming fundamentals which utilized visual arts as a context. It was first released in 2001 as a project of the MIT aesthetics and computation group and has since evolved into a professional level tool for visual programming. The primary advantages of using Processing as a tool for the more complex portions of this work are it's ease of use, and compatibility with the rest of the development environment. As it was initially intended as a learning tool, the structure of a processing program is often very simple when compared with something similar generated using only java for example. A single program in Processing is referred to as a "sketch", referring to both the artistic nature of the language and the typical simplicity of it's application. In addition, processing code is compiled into java which simplifies the integration of the two.

Processing

The City University of London's Graphical Information Center provides several useful libraries for performing visualization work. In particular, to aid in the development of work which utilizes processing sketches. The visualizations in this work have been built using classes from these utility libraries in the simplest of cases (such as the bar chart). In addition to providing basic visualizations in a pre-packaged format, there are some other tools such as navigational and formatting features which have been utilized in this work.

Libraries

Outside of the visualizations themselves, the work of creating frames and navigation is largely handled through directly using java's swing visualization toolkit.

Swing

More comprehensive packaging, eventually.

Presentation of Visualizations

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CHAPTER 5

Testing

THERE ARE MANY SCENARIOS in which MapReduce can be applied. Because this work is meant to applicable to any MapReduce job, tests have been selected in order to cover a varied range of analysis and data types. In this case, the analyses chosen attempt to cover the major MapReduce pattern categories as presented in the text "MapReduce Design Patterns" [**?**]. In addition to this, the unique features of Flink are applied in order to establish that non-generic cases are also covered. Of course, in addition to the analysis itself the type of data being visualized is key. As such, these design patterns and features are applied to a varied array of data sources which necessitate the use of all of the most vital data visualization approaches.

5.1 Summarization Patterns

NUMERICAL AGGREGATION TASKS across groupings in a data set are the most common tasks which are encountered in MapReduce analysis programs. This base grouping of data is of course one of the most core functions of the MapReduce paradigm, and thus is often the most straightforward and commonly encountered type of analysis. Because of the simplicity of summarization tasks, they are frequently the first form of analysis performed in the exploration of a new data set. This makes summarization patterns a crucial, albeit straightforward, point of focus for any work concerning the evaluation of unknown factors in data.

Numerical summarization is a general pattern for calculation aggregate statistical values across groupings in a data set. Most data sets will be too large for a human to be able to extract meaningful patterns from viewing individual records. Hence, when we are dealing with data that can be grouped by fields in a semantically meaningful way and

Numerical Summary

can be sensibly aggregated or counted we can summarize in hopes of revealing insight. This pattern is analagous to performing an aggregation after a group by expression in a SQL-like context.

Inverted Index Inverted indexes are often constructed in scenarios when it is useful to associate some key term with a set of related results within a dataset. This serves to improve search speed by eliminating the need to examine each possible result in a large data set. It does this by pre-restricting the potential results to those which are known to be associated with the search term provided. This differs structurally from the numerical summarization pattern in that the result will be a set of record identifiers mapped onto some search keyword, rather than the relatively simpler group identifier-statistic pairs provided by numerical summarization. Though the actual implementation of the analysis differs, the information which would be useful for basic analysis remains very similar. Namely, the most crucial information here would be the number and nature of results associated with each keyword. This is generally identical to the previous visualization scenario, if we consider the dataset to be visualized as a set of keywords and associated statistical result set metadata (Number of results, average result size, etc.).

Counting Semantically, counting problems could be considered a subset of numerical summarization. In scenarios where we require only a simple count or summary of a specific field, we could output the key of a record with a count of one and then reduce to generate a final count. The counting pattern instead utilizes the internal counting mechanism of our mapreduce framework to render the use of a reduce or summation stage unnecessary. One can simply create a counter with the ID of the field to be counted and increment by one until logging the result before the end of the execution. An example of a case where this is more efficient than a normal numerical summarization is the classic word count example. As the differences between this pattern differ in implementation rather than goal, the visualization scenarios are likewise identical to those found with numerical summarization.

5.2   Filtering Patterns

FILTERING PATTERNS are primarily concerned with understanding a specific part of an overall data set. As such, all filtering patterns are defined by the fact that they do not alter records in the data set, and that they each return a subset of the original data set. This can be considered analogous to search tasks, in that a set of relevant records is returned based on some provided criteria. All filtering tasks require that data be organized into discrete records.

In the context of map-reduce problems in particular, filtering is very useful for sampling. *Sampling*
In situations where the data set to be analyzed is too large for processing in full, sampling
methods can provide representative subsets. In some cases there are analysis based
reasons to perform sampling; such as separating data into training and testing sets for
machine learning algorithms. While this alone makes filtering an interesting use case,
sampling is of specific interest for this work due to it's frequent application in exploratory
analyses. When testing of an analysis job is performed on a large unknown data set,
it is intuitive to simply select an arbitrary subset of records to analyze for debugging
purposes. This likely provides a skewed view of the data, and an appropriately sampled
data set will provide a more representative view of the task at hand.

Filtering itself serves as an abstract pattern for the many different types of filtering that *Filtering*
can occur in an analysis job. This is of course the most basic filtering function, wherein a
subset of the records in a data set are removed based on whether they are of interest or
not. In processing systems such as Flink, the purpose is very typically to collect a large
sum of data in one place. Simple filtering can serve to either pare some unnecessary
data from this sum, or focus on a small set of records or attributes which are particularly
important.

Bloom filtering performs much the same task as basic filtering, but with added control in *Bloom Filtering*
the method through which records are selected for filtering. When applying a bloom
filter we extract a feature from each record, and compare that value to a set of values
represented by the filter. The primary difference between this and standard filtering are
that the decision to filter a given record is determined by the result of a set operation
against our filter values. For this approach to be relevant, we must have extractable
features which can be compared to the set of filter values, and these filter values must
be predefined. It is possible when applying a bloom filter that some records will not
be filtered out when they should have been, so they should only be used in scenarios
where false positives are acceptable. Such a scenario could occur when prefiltering before
performing a more thorough, and much more expensive, robust filtering.

Performing a top N filter on a data set is of course distinct in that the size of the output *Top N*
data set is known before filtering occurs. Functionally, this is of course very similar to the
previous two filtering methods. The application however differs in that there is a clear
semantic application of this filter, the collection of outliers. In map-reduce settings this
can be a particularly interesting problem as the typical method for accomplishing such a
task in another context generally involves sorting the items in a data set, an extremely
involved task using MapReduce. This provides additional information about our output,

as we can infer that the output of a top N filter will be significantly smaller than the original data set; otherwise a total ordering is often a more suitable approach.

Distinct Filtering for distinct records is of course self-explanatory in meaning. There are several applications for such a filter, the most common of which is most likely removing duplicate records. In collecting data sets, duplication of records is a frequent data quality issue which can both add unnecessary processing time and skew analysis results.

5.3   Data Organization Patterns

D ATA ORGANIZATION problems can present themselves in many ways, and have a wide variety of motivations behind them. With respect to big data problems in particular, the way that data is partitioned, sharded, or sorted can have serious implications for performance. If we consider in-situ processing in particular, there are many cases where data will need to be restructured for further analysis beyond that which is performed in the map-reduce context.

Structured to Hierarchical The structured to hierarchical pattern takes a row based data set and transforms it into a hierarchical format such as JSON or XML. Because MapReduce systems don't care about data format, hierarchical data structures can be immensely helpful in avoiding joins.

Partitioning Partitioning of course separates data into categories. This can be considered semantically similar to a summarization task without any form of aggregation, although the implementation may differ significantly. The major requirement of a partitioning job is to know in advance how many partitions should be created. This can be user provided, or derived from a prior analysis job, in which case the number of partitions may remain unknown to the user. Partitioning becomes very interesting for performance reasons when the partitions are actually sharded across different physical machines in a cluster.

Binning

Total Order Sorting Shuffling

5.4   Join Patterns

Reduce Side Join

5.5   Meta Patterns

Probably not particularly useful.

CHAPTER 6

Evaluation

6.1 Accuracy

6.2 Performance

6.3 Usefulness

APPENDIX A

Implementation

A.1 My Algorithm

THE FOLLOWING FUNCTION computes something

```
1  #include <cv.h>
2  using namespace cv;
3  // your code goes here
```

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Declaration of Authorship

I declare that the work presented here is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and the result of my own investigations, except as acknowledged, and has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for a degree at this or any other university.

Formulations and ideas taken from other sources are cited as such. This work has not been published.

Berlin, 31 July 2015

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