

AILP (2016) Report

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1 Introduction

The following report describes work done in the AILP course over the course of three months. It gives the aims and hypothesis that guided the work; describes the algorithms that were implemented; reports the results of experiments that were run; and analyses these results.

2 Aim

This assignment was designed as a gentle introduction to the concept of argumentation systems, and the different features that must be considered when implementing a full argumentation system.

3 What is an argumentation system?

As all who have once been a child whinging and shouting at their parents would know, arguing has a varied audience and an immeasurable history. We argue daily with others concerning clothing prices and opinions and we argue internally with our emotions and whether we should ask that girl out. The concept of argumentation merely attempts to formalise and make sensible this constantly bickering world we live in.

An argument is composed of three major pieces: its premises, its conclusion, and an inference from the premises to conclusion [4]. Each of these pieces is represented by propositions, an atomic statement that is either true or false. A system of arguments composes related arguments into an organised manner. Generally, we represent this as an argument tree. Arguments form chains where the conclusion of one argument is the premise for another argument, and vice versa. Arguing is akin to the 80s Tron Sinclair game: each party rides a bike that generates a longer and longer tail - the challenge is to keep your bike (argument) alive by craftily

averting your oponent's tail, yet simultaneously aiming to fatally catch your opponent off guard with your tail.

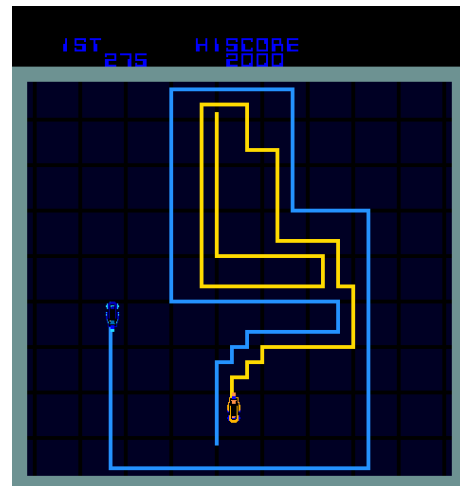


Figure 1: Old videogames still have their use when it comes to analogies. source

The light tail of our bike in an argumentation context is driven by sequentially declaring more arguments in favour of your position. The opposing party drives their tail through invoking new arguments, or disproving your previous arguments. If a party has no more arguments to support their case, game over - they have smashed into their opponent's light tail.

In an argumentation system, we are hoping to automate the oscillating behaviour of arguing. The system has many complex decisions and weighing of options it has to perform, such as whether to raise a critical question to undermine an opponent's earlier argument, or affirm their current position by bringing to light an argument with grounded assumptions/evidence.

4 What is Carneades?

Inventing the AI that would solve all arguments in all domains would be a feat. Sadly, this is fanciful talk, but a particular area has seen much advancement concerning AI and argumentation: law. Carneades is an argumentation framework designed for dialogue arguments between two parties and is designed specifically with the use of law cases in mind. Unlike the traditional definition of an argument, Carneades represents an argument with different types of premises that pose critical questions about the argument. The three types are exceptions, wherein if any exception is proven true, the argument cannot stand, assumptions, which are assumed true by the audience (as in evidence), and premises, which all must be true or assumed, in order for the argument to hold [1].

Carneades implements a burden of proof model. The burden of proof is on whichever party, based on all current arguments and assumptions thus far, has to present the next argument to avoid losing. Arguments are continuously presented by the party with the burden of proof until the proposition that both parties are arguing has been accepted or rejected in favour of one party. Propositions are accepted in a recursive manner depending on the defensibility of the pro and con arguments for that proposition. An argument is defensible if its premises hold and its exceptions do not hold. To determine the truth of the argument's premises we must begin the cycle again at choosing arguments [1]. Hence, the argument proof descends down the argumentation tree.

5 Algorithms and implementation

For this purpose the following extensions were carried out

1. reading of input from text files
2. making the system capable of dynamically constructing arguments and determining the burden of proof between two parties

5.1 extending the system to read from text files

Extending the system to read from text files was not only to allow the less program-orientated users to implement an argumentation scheme, but also to simplify

the system so that arguments could quickly be analysed. The Carneades python framework required the user to pre-define propositions, create an argument set, and create an audience before the arguments could be analysed. The goal of the text file reading is to remove those trivialities.

The *Carneades Markup Language* is a basic markup language that is used to simplify the compiling of Carneades Python programs. It imitates a simplified version of basic markup:

```
<MarkupObject>
  <attributeOfObject>
    big
  </attributeOfObject>
  <anotherAttributeOfObject>
    200
  </anotherAttributeOfObject>
</MarkupObject>

<!-- This is a one line comment -->
```

The simplified markup implementation uses only two layers of markup to describe different Carneades classes. The highest order line,

```
<CMLObject>...</CMLObject>
```

represents the definition of a Carneades class. The only available Carneades classes in CML are:

```
<Proposition>...</Proposition>
<Argument>...</Argument>
<CAES>...</CAES>
```

(NOTE: classes not implemented, such as *ProofStandard*, *Audience*, *ArgumentSet*, are all created at compile-time; this design decision will be discussed later)

Each Carneades class has a series of CML *attributes* that are used to define unique details about a specific object. Without these *attributes* implemented, the generic classes will fail. It is important to note that the order in which *attributes* are written does not matter, but only some *attributes* can be excluded (similar to the concept of a constructor). An *attribute* is defined as a markup object that is one mark up layer inside a markup *class* object (which is always at layer zero) and has a *value item* one layer inside it:

```
<CMLObject>
  <CMLAttribute>
```

```
value\_of\_attribute
</CMLAttribute>
</CMLObject>
```

The inclusion of the *value item* (value.of.attribute_) is required for the object to be an *attribute*. The name of the value, class objects and attribute objects follow the general naming scheme of python variables. *Attributes* are written in series:

```
<CMLObject>
  <CMLAttribute1>
    value\_of\_attribute1
  </CMLAttribute1>
  <CMLAttribute2>
    value\_of\_attribute2
  </CMLAttribute2>
</CMLObject>
```

Order (as well as spacing) is irrelevant:

```
<CMLObject>

  <CMLAttribute2> value\_of\_attribute2
    </CMLAttribute2>

  <CMLAttribute3> <!-- comment about this
    attribute, etc... -->
    value\_of\_attribute3
  </CMLAttribute3>

  <CMLAttribute1>value\_of\_attribute1
  </CMLAttribute1> </CMLObject>
```

The *class/attribute* combinations (constructors) for each class are displayed below. Optional *attributes* are indicated by a comment:

```
<!--PROPOSITIONS-->
<Proposition>
  <name>...name ID of
    proposition...</name>
  <truth>...truth value of the
    proposition. Default value is
    'True' ...</truth> <!--optional-->
  <proof>...standard of proof for the
    proposition. Default value is
    'scintilla' ...</proof>
    <!--optional-->
</Proposition>

<Proposition>
  <name>...name ID of
```

```
    proposition...</name>
  <negate>...name-tag of the proposition
    to copy and negate...</negate>
  <proof>...standard of proof for the
    proposition. Default value is
    'scintilla' ...</proof>
    <!--optional-->
</Proposition>

<!--ARGUMENTS-->
<Argument>
  <name>...name ID of argument...</name>
  <conclusion>...conclusion of the
    proposition of the
    argument...</conclusion>
  <premises>...[list, of, premises, of,
    the, argument]...</premises>
  <exceptions>...[list, of, exceptions,
    of, the, argument]...</exceptions>
    <!--optional-->
  <weight>...float value of the weight
    of this argument...</weight>
</Argument>

<!--CAES-->
<CAES>
  <name>...name ID of CAES...</name>
  <assumptions>[list, of, propositions,
    that, are, audience,
    assumptions]</assumptions>
</CAES>
```

Some syntactical notes:

- There are 6 types of attributes of which 4 are used when writing CML in a text file:
 1. *String*: any attribute that has written text (make sure to exclude '...', unlike other languages)
 2. *Number*: any attribute that has only a float value (i.e. 0.6)
 3. *Bool*: any attribute that contains the word true/false with any capitalisation. This overrides a string type
 4. *StringList*: any attribute that starts and ends with '['...' and contains comma-separated strings
- (IMPORTANT) Defining each proposition before the arguments is not strictly necessary. Arguments will intuitively add propositions that are missing

from implementation (this will not happen with the *CAES assumptions attribute*, these propositions must be predefined in an argument/proposition. It is important to note that this implementation can be dangerous; miss-spelt proposition names will be treated as *new* propositions. Be careful!). There are a few special cases:

1. If the *proof* value of a proposition needs to be set to a value other than the default value, 'scintilla', then a proposition must be predefined before the argument(s).
2. If a *negated* proposition needs to be implemented, this can be done by adding the exact string 'neg_' to the start of the proposition's name, like so:

```
\dot
<premises>\dot [prop2,
    neg\_prop3]\dot</premises>
\dot
```

(NOTE: neg_prop3 will make 2 propositions if prop3 has not been defined earlier: prop3 and -prop3)

5.2 extending the system to argue

The system now has the capability to take a set of arguments along with an audience and determine whether a proposition is applicable using the generated argument tree. A useful feature to this system would be the ability to observe how the various arguments are used by both the prosecution and the defense to form the final conclusion.

We start by thinking about how the simplest argument system would function. This involves discussing where the burden of proof (as defined earlier) lies within an argumentation system. The goal of each party in an argument is to shift the burden of proof away from themselves and onto their opponent and, further, make it harder for the opponent to shift the burden of proof back onto the original party. To shift the burden of proof the party therefore has two goals: find some argument(s) sequence that will shift the burden of proof, and find the argument(s) sequence that is the strongest (this prevents the burden of proof from shifting back to the original party).

In a simple scenario, where we assume a single argument shifts the burden of proof, an argument can either prove the conclusion the parties are fighting for in

favour of the burdened party, undermine an argument that the opposing party has made, or build from a previous weak argument that the current party has made. As an argument system progresses and each argument is posed by a party, we need to keep track of the weak propositions within each argument. Weak propositions are those that are not in the audience assumptions and do not have any arguments for/against them. As shown below:

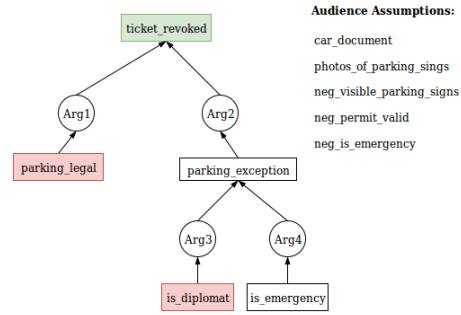


Figure 2: (green=target argument proposition, red=current weak propositions)

If an argument is posed and its premises contain a weak proposition, that argument is not applicable. Alternately, weak propositions are routes of attack for a party. When the burden of proof alternates, so do the polarities of the weak propositions; the new party can therefore attack the weak propositions and undermine the opposing party's argument(s). When the party with the burden is arguing, its goal is to pose arguments until the proposition both parties are arguing over is acceptable given the current assumptions and already posed arguments. A good heuristic for determining which arguments to choose is to select arguments which prove any of the weak propositions.

At the beginning of an argument between two parties, the only weak proposition is the proposition the two parties are arguing for (e.g. was it murder, getting a fine/ticket, etc.) and therefore the first party's most sensible move is to pose an argument for that proposition. Because the list of possible arguments could be vast, a heuristic graph-search algorithm is introduced. The weak propositions are added to a list and the current party's choice for a weak proposition to target with an argument is the best choice best on some heuristic measure. Different heuristic choices and graph algorithms were experimented with in Table 1 1.

Once a path has been chosen that results in the propo-

sition the two parties are arguing for being acceptable (in the case of the defense) or not acceptable (in the case of the prosecution), the full argument sequence is composed by traversing the assembled graph via the chosen arguments back to the start. The Burden of Proof then changes hands. We can see this process in the argument simulation in the figure 5.2:

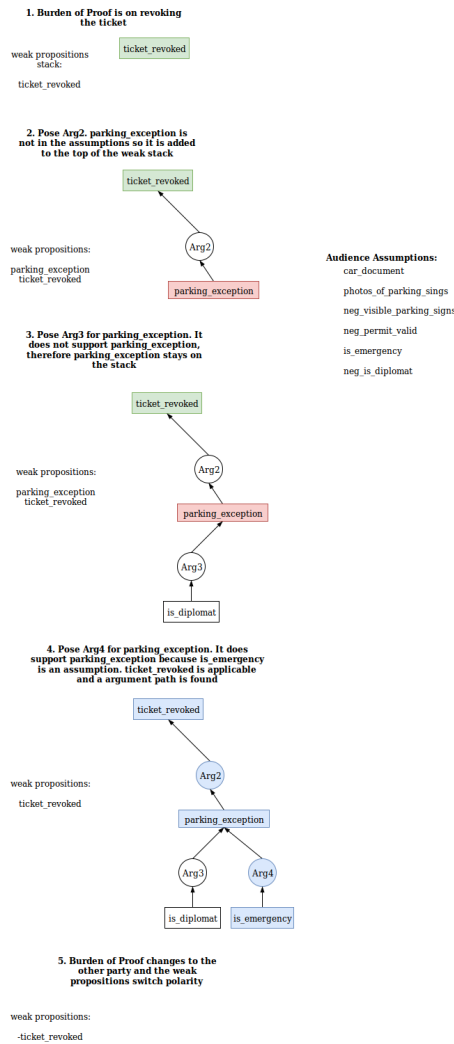


Figure 3: simulation of depth-first searching the argument graph

A brief statement on how the burden of proof system is displayed when running the program. When the test case is selected and run, the argument system will go through a sequence of steps. Each step either describes how the party with the burden of proof is searching for

an effective argument sequence (and describes the most recent argument that has been searched):

```
Current Argument set is in favour of: TICKET
Burden of Proof is on: NO TICKET
Current weak propositions: ticket_revoked,
...searching for an argument...
Argues that: ticket_revoked because [parking_legal] and not []
...argument incomplete. Must continue searching...

Burden of Proof is still on: NO TICKET
Searched argument graph:
parking_legal -> (1) -> ticket_revoked,
ticket_revoked ->
.....(continue?).....
```

Figure 4: Current party is searching for an argument.

Or describes how the current party has succeeded in finding an effective argument sequence (additionally it will display the sequence of propositions in the graph that derive the argument chain).

```
Current Argument set is in favour of: TICKET
Burden of Proof is on: NO TICKET
Current weak propositions: ticket_revoked, parking_legal, -own_car, parking_exception, permit_valid, car
ticket_out, car_stolen, is_diplomat, is_emergency,
...searching for an argument...
Argues that: parking_legal because [visible_parking_signs] and not [photo_of_parking_signs]
Argument complete! Burden of proof changed!
Final Argument Derivation is:
path -> (6) -> visible_parking_signs->(2) -> parking_legal ->(1) -> ticket_revoked

Burden of Proof is now on: TICKET
Searched argument graph:
own_car -> (1) -> ticket_revoked,
car_stolen -> (1) -> -own_car,
is_diplomat -> (1) -> -own_car,
ticket_revoked ->
permit_valid -> (1) -> parking_legal,
is_emergency -> (1) -> parking_exception,
parking_legal -> (1) -> ticket_revoked,
car_titled_out -> (1) -> -own_car,
parking_exception -> (1) -> ticket_revoked,
visible_parking_signs -> (2) -> parking_legal,
```

Figure 5: Current party has found an argument.

If all arguments have been exhausted and the current party is unable to change the burden of proof, then the current party has lost the argument. The opposing party is deemed the 'winner'. Note that 'Prosecution' and 'Defense' are renamed to names more relevant to each test case so that the system can be understood. The end of each step outlines the current situation of the argument graph using an inverted-index format.

A good demonstration of the burden of proof changing hands multiple times is in test case '2' (when running 'main.py')

6 Experiments and results

6.1 experimenting with the argumentation heuristics

How different heuristic algorithms applied to the argumentation search affected the speed of determining the next argument sequence, and also whether the argument sequence determined was the most optimal.

Table 1: Experimenting with different graph searching algorithms.

algorithm	branch order	iteration	best solution?
depth-first search	B1,B2,B3,B4	6	no
depth-first search	B4,B3,B2,B1	3	yes
depth-first search	B1,B4,B3,B2	2	yes
depth-first search	B2,B4,B1,B3	4	no
depth-first search	B2,B3,B1,B4	7	no
breadth-first search	B2,B3,B1,B4	5	yes
breadth-first search	B4,B3,B2,B1	7	yes
breadth-first search	B1,B4,B3,B2	7	yes
breadth-first search	B2,B4,B1,B3	5	yes
breadth-first search	B2,B3,B1,B4	5	yes
min-weight-first search	B2,B3,B1,B4	5	no
min-weight-first search	B4,B3,B2,B1	5	no
min-weight-first search	B1,B4,B3,B2	5	no
min-weight-first search	B2,B4,B1,B3	5	no
min-weight-first search	B2,B3,B1,B4	5	no
dijkstra search	B2,B3,B1,B4	6	yes
dijkstra search	B4,B3,B2,B1	6	yes
dijkstra search	B1,B4,B3,B2	6	yes
dijkstra search	B2,B4,B1,B3	6	yes
dijkstra search	B2,B3,B1,B4	6	yes

Table 2: Averaged results of different graph searching algorithms.

algorithm	avg iterations	accuracy
depth-first search	4.4	2/5
breadth-first search	5.8	5/5
min-weight-first search	5	0/5
dijkstra search	6	5/5

7 Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 analysis of experiments

Experimenting with different heuristic graph searches posed some interesting results. This data was collected via the following simulated test case:

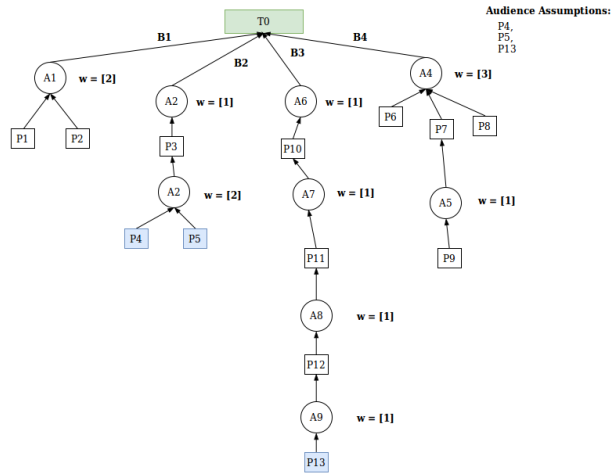


Figure 6: Test case used to measure heuristics algorithms. Weight of each argument given by 'w'. 'B#' is the name of each branch. These are shuffled in different orders at testing time. Only branch 'B2' and 'B3' produce an argument sequence that makes 'T0' applicable.

This can be run by selecting option '4' at the start of the 'main.py' program and then selecting which heuristic you would like to run for selecting arguments. The weights between two arguments are determined by how weak that argument is. A higher weight corresponds to a higher weakness. Weakness of an argument is the sum of its premises and exceptions. This is a sensible choice because arguments that are more 'complex', i.e. have more propositions to prove/disprove it, are more likely to be defeated by the opposition. The current holder of the burden of proof therefore favours simpler arguments that are easier to prove and harder to be defeated.

From the final data, the best performing heuristics were breadth-first search and djikstra (as hypothesised, considering djikstra is one of the most commonly used heuristics). Both algorithms found the best solution each time. Although the breadth-first search had the lowest average number of iterations, the test graph was an exclusive case where the best solution was al-

ways at a higher depth than other solutions, therefore breadth-first search would always select the best solution. Breadth-first search also had a much higher variance when it came to number of iterations. Djikstra is therefore left as the best option for traversing the argument graph due to its consistency and ability to always find the strongest argument.

7.2 how this system could be extended further

One topic that would have been beneficial to explore further would be how the weights are assigned to different arguments for the graph search. The current method of using the total number of premises and exceptions was an arbitrary choice based on a general concept of how arguments can be deemed strong or weak. Weights based on the depth of the argument in the tree, weights based on the probability of a chosen proposition leading to an assumption, and also larger trees to search would have allowed for an interesting analysis of the argumentation system and the extents to which it can perform in more realistic scenarios. Overall, it is quite impressive how a relatively simple system can perform such a convincing display of argumentation. Given the hardest piece to the argumentation system is the construction of an affective argumentation graph, there is definite room for further complexity and interesting evolutions of how to traverse this graph.

References

- [1] Prakken H. Gordon, T. F. and D. Walton. The carneades model of argument and burden of proof. Technical report.
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