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Browsing large graphs with MSAGLJS, a graph draph drawing tool in JavaScript

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Msagljs github home page: https://github.com/microsoft/msagljs

Abstract. There has been progress in visualization of large graphs recently. Still, interacting with a large graph in the browser with the same ease as browsing an online map, inspecting the high level structure and zooming to the lower details, is still an unsolved problem, in our opinion. In this paper we describe MSAGLJS's approach to two aspects of this problem. Firstly, we give a novel algorithm for edge routing, where the edges do not overlap the nodes. The algorithm does not necesserely creates optimal paths but is efficient and creates visually appealing paths. Secondly, to facilitate graph vizualization with DeckGL, namely fast zoom, and pan operations, and keeping the number of entities on the screen below a specific bound all the time, we use tiling. Our tiling procedure is simple and efficient. It is the second contribution of the paper.

1 Introduction

2 Related work

Links to large graph visualization

[1]
[2]
[3]
[4]
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machine learing approach [7]
[8]
[9]

3 Edge routing

The edge routing starts, as in [10], by building a spanner graph, an approximation of the full visibility graph. The spanner, see Fig. 2, is built on a variation of a

Yao graph, which was introduced independently by Flinchbaugh and Jones [11] and Yao [12]. A Yao graph is defined by the set of cones with the apices at the vertices. The cones have the same angle, usually in the form of $\frac{2\pi}{n}$, where n is a natural number. This way the cones with the apex at a specific vertex partition the plane as illistrated in Fig. 1. For each cone at most one edge is created connecting the cone apex with a vertex inside of the cone.

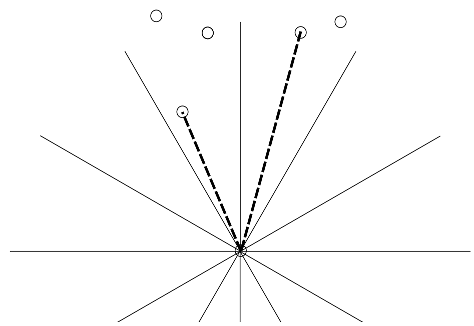

Fig. 1. Fragment of a Yao graph

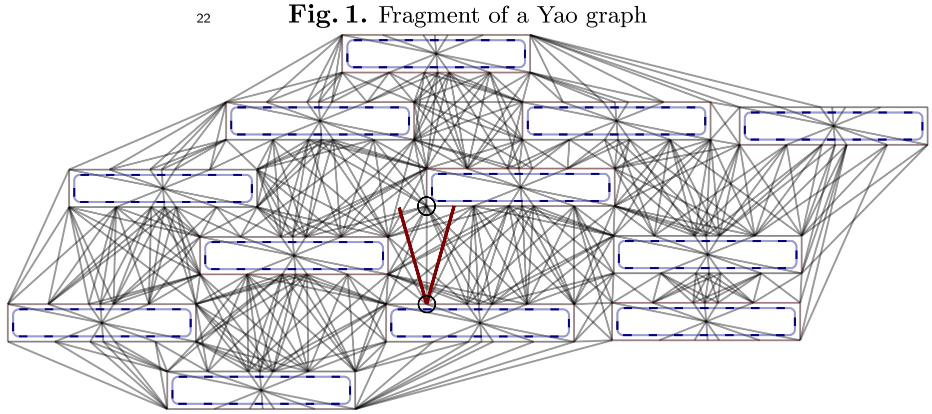

Fig. 2. Spanner graph is built using the idea of Yao graphs. The dashed curves are the original node boundaries. Each original curve is surrounded by a polygon with some offset to allow the polyline paths smoothing without intersecting the former.
The edge marked by the circles is created because the top vertex is inside of the cone and it is the closest among such vertices to the cone apex. The apex of the cone is the lower vertex of the edge.
MSAGLJS uses cone angle $\frac{\pi}{6}$, so the edges of the spanner can deviate from the optimal direction by this angle. Therefore the shortest paths on the spanner have length that is at most the optimal shortest length multiplied by $\frac{1}{\cos(\frac{\pi}{.}6)}) \simeq 1.155$.

The approach of [10] first builds a polyline path through the spanner, and then applies some local modifications to shorten and smoothen the path. For shortening it tries to shortcut a vertex, as illustrated in Fig 3. To smoothen it

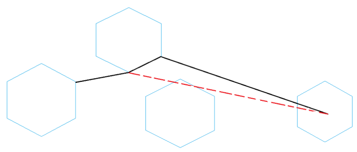

Fig. 3. Unsuccessful shortcut

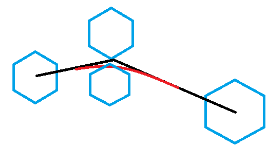

Fig. 4. Fitting a Bezier segment into a polyline corner

fits Bezier segment into the polyline corners, using the binary search to find the larger fitting segments,see Fig 4. While anylyzing performance of edge routing in MSAGLJS, we noticed that for a graph with more than 10000 edges these heuristics become the major bottleneck.

The reason for this was that we queured if a curve intersects any node of the whole graph. In spite of optimizing these operations with R-Trees [13], about %90 of the edge routing running time was spent on them. In addition, when the naive shortcutting of polyline corners fails the resulting path is not visually appealing, as shown in Fig. 3.

We replace global inefficent calculatitons with local procedures.

Local path optimization

The idea of using a local optimization for paths is not a new one. The authors of [14] used it for hierarchical layouts, where the polygon containing the path is available. In section 3.1 there they write: "If $\mathcal{P}$ does not contain holes ... we can apply a standard "funnel" algorithm [15, 16] for finding Euclidean shortest paths in a simple polygon".

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