[[1]](#footnote-1)

Comparison of Heuristic Search Performance Using a Maze Solver Agent

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# INTRODUCTION

T

HE use of heuristic enabled searches has been a fundamental tenet of artificial intelligence (AI) for some time. As is the case with these heuristic searches, the efficacy can vary tremendously over the configuration of the search space, and the admissibility of the heuristic itself. This is especially true for a subset of heuristic searches called online searches. Online searches only have access to local information regarding the current state space and are largely unaware of the state space beyond the location of the agent at a particular state. In this paper, four different types of online searches are tested using Monte Carlo methods to find statistically significant differences between them. The four heuristics include a depth-first search, a random-walk search, a Euclidean distance heuristic, and a Euclidean distance with look ahead heuristic. Each of these is measured according to the competitive ratio upon solving the maze. The pseudocode, and experimentation details are given later in the paper, however each has been implemented as an element in a JavaFX Application. Screenshots have been included alongside descriptions of the algorithms. The results are tabulated, and important findings are highlighted. Finally, implications for future work are discussed.

# Background Information

Within the field of artificial intelligence exists a collection of search algorithms that excel in dynamic environments. Unlike offline searches, where a complete solution is computed before action is taken, online searches interleave computation and action. Online search agents are required for this to work correctly. An agent knows its current state within the state space and is able to make comparisons between the current state and adjacent states. This ability to make comparisons is where heuristics play a role.

There is a fair amount of literature available on the subject of heuristic searches, especially with respect to pathfinding, and other exploratory search algorithms. One of the most notable algorithms, A\*, is often used because of its completeness and its ability to find efficient paths within a static state space. However, there are different limitations when a dynamic state space is involved.

The dynamic state space for this online search agent will be a randomly generated maze. The maze itself is a finite state space and is safely explorable. Provided that agent actions are reversible, a path between any two points can be found. (The maze itself is a spanning tree, created from a randomized Prim’s algorithm). Brief discussions of the four approaches used in the maze solver agent are given below.

## Depth First Search (DFS)

A depth first search is complete within a finite state space and is only capable of finding a solution if the agent actions are reversible. In the context of mazes, DFS can be compared to a “right hand rule.” Where, when faced with a choice of next steps, the step to the right is taken until a dead-end is reached. At which point, the agent turns around, and makes the first possible right turn. This approach is excellent if the goal is exploration. If we want the agent to learn the entirety of a state space, this is optimal. However, for finding a solution between two points within a maze, this method can often be led astray, and will spend considerable time exploring sections of the maze that are entirely unnecessary. DFS is considered a baseline for our comparisons in this paper.

## Random-Walk Search

The random-walk search starts with the agent at a particular state and an adjacent state is chosen at random and the agent moves that particular state. This behavior is akin to hill-climbing search, in that it is only privy to local state information, but it differs in that the agent cannot perform a random restart when local maxima are encountered (in the context of a maze, this would be a dead-end path). To make a “random restart” effect possible, the agent moves to adjacent states randomly. This type of search has the possibility of being more efficient than a simple depth-first search, and it will certainly find a goal eventually, but it can be very slow in achieving its goal of finding a solution path, since it can encounter specific states more than twice, and backtracking consumes exponentially more steps depending on the size of the state space. It is expected that Random-Walk search will only be marginally better than depth-first search in terms of the competitive ratio.

## Euclidean Distance Heuristic

Up until this point, the search methods discussed did not really act in an intelligent manner but rather either followed an overly simple process, or just randomly moves through the state space until it hits the goal. Neither of which is really ideal since they only run across the goal state by happenstance and are not purposefully seeking out the goal state. With the addition of some additional information (some of it intrinsic to the state space itself) it becomes possible to make a more intelligent online search agent.

The maze itself is defined using an X-Y Grid with each cell representing a particular element in the state space, and each cell also being defined with unique pairs of X-Y coordinates.

Using the Euclidean Distance Heuristic can help provide the online search agent with a focus. In the context of a maze, the heuristic calculates the straight-line distance between the current state and the goal state according to the following equation:

(1)

Where is the location of the search agent in the state space, and is the location of the goal state within the state space.

When the online search agent determines which adjacent state to move to, it calculates the Euclidean distance using (1) and chooses the adjacent state with the smallest value (e.g.: it chooses the adjacent state that is closest to the goal). This inherently greedy approach can lead the agent astray, and it is possible still that large portions of the state space may be explored before the goal state is found. Additionally, when the agent reaches a dead end, it must have some means of keeping track of where it has been, such that when it back tracks, it will not repeat the same path twice.

The state space itself keeps track of how many times the agent has visited. This process could compare to leaving a bread-crumb trail through a forest. This permits the agent to keep track of where it has been, without keeping that information internally. Even still, the agent will often reach local minima (dead-ends) and will still backtrack to explore the most recently encountered unexplored branch. Because of this limitation, it may be prudent to have some additional knowledge of the immediate area surrounding the agent, not just the adjacent states, when determining which way to go. Thus, we explore:

## Euclidean Distance with Look Ahead

This heuristic uses the same location-based functions as the Euclidean Distance Heuristic but adds a look-ahead element such that the agent can make “less greedy” decisions.

The way in which the look-ahead element works would permit the search agent to determine (within the look ahead limit) if a particular path leads astray, or if it continues closer to the goal state.

Instead of using the immediately adjacent states, the search agent sends “mini agents” in each possible direction to report back what they find, given a certain look-ahead limit. At the look-ahead limit, the “mini agents” send back the Euclidean distance between the end states and the goal state. The search agent then makes the determination on which adjacent state to move based on the results given by the “mini agents.” This method will provide the search agent with a bit more insight into the local state area, and thus be able to make more appropriate decisions in order to find the solution path with fewer stray paths.

Naturally, the spawning of “mini agents” will increase the computational and memory footprints of the search agent, but it’s a finite increase that is a function of the look-ahead distance. One would only expect a scaling factor of 4n for computational time and memory footprint, with ‘n’ being the look-ahead distance.

# Algorithms and Applications

If you are using *Word,* use either the Microsoft Equation Editor or the *MathType* add-on (http://www.mathtype.com) for equations in your paper (Insert | Object | Create New | Microsoft Equation *or* MathType Equation). “Float over text” should *not* be selected.

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Number equations consecutively with equation numbers in parentheses flush with the right margin, as in (1). First use the equation editor to create the equation. Then select the “Equation” markup style. Press the tab key and write the equation number in parentheses. To make your equations more compact, you may use the solidus ( / ), the exp function, or appropriate exponents. Use parentheses to avoid ambiguities in denominators. Punctuate equations when they are part of a sentence, as in

(1)

Be sure that the symbols in your equation have been defined before the equation appears or immediately following. Italicize symbols (*T* might refer to temperature, but T is the unit tesla). Refer to “(1),” not “Eq. (1)” or “equation (1),” except at the beginning of a sentence: “Equation (1) is ... .”

# Implementation and Experimental Results

Use either SI (MKS) or CGS as primary units. (SI units are strongly encouraged.) English units may be used as secondary units (in parentheses). This applies to papers in data storage**.** For example, write “15 Gb/cm2 (100 Gb/in2).” An exception is when English units are used as identifiers in trade, such as “3½-in disk drive.” Avoid combining SI and CGS units, such as current in amperes and magnetic field in oersteds. This often leads to confusion because equations do not balance dimensionally. If you must use mixed units, clearly state the units for each quantity in an equation.

The SI unit for magnetic field strength *H* is A/m. However, if you wish to use units of T, either refer to magnetic flux density *B* or magnetic field strength symbolized as µ0*H*. Use the center dot to separate compound units, e.g., “A·m2.”

# Advantages and Drawbacks

The word “data” is plural, not singular. The subscript for the permeability of vacuum µ0 is zero, not a lowercase letter “o.” The term for residual magnetization is “remanence”; the adjective is “remanent”; do not write “remnance” or “remnant.” Use the word “micrometer” instead of “micron.” A graph within a graph is an “inset,” not an “insert.” The word “alternatively” is preferred to the word “alternately” (unless you really mean something that alternates). Use the word “whereas” instead of “while” (unless you are referring to simultaneous events). Do not use the word “essentially” to mean “approximately” or “effectively.” Do not use the word “issue” as a euphemism for “problem.” When compositions are not specified, separate chemical symbols by en-dashes; for example, “NiMn” indicates the intermetallic compound Ni0.5Mn0.5 whereas “Ni–Mn” indicates an alloy of some composition NixMn1-x.

Be aware of the different meanings of the homophones “affect” (usually a verb) and “effect” (usually a noun), “complement” and “compliment,” “discreet” and “discrete,” “principal” (e.g., “principal investigator”) and “principle” (e.g., “principle of measurement”). Do not confuse “imply” and “infer.”

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Fig. 1. Magnetization as a function of applied field. Note that “Fig.” is abbreviated. There is a period after the figure number, followed by two spaces. It is good practice to explain the significance of the figure in the caption.

TABLE I

Units for Magnetic Properties

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Symbol | Quantity | Conversion from Gaussian and  CGS EMU to SI a |
| Φ | magnetic flux | 1 Mx → 10−8 Wb = 10−8 V·s |
| *B* | magnetic flux density,  magnetic induction | 1 G → 10−4 T = 10−4 Wb/m2 |
| *H* | magnetic field strength | 1 Oe → 103/(4π) A/m |
| *m* | magnetic moment | 1 erg/G = 1 emu  → 10−3 A·m2 = 10−3 J/T |
| *M* | magnetization | 1 erg/(G·cm3) = 1 emu/cm3  → 103 A/m |
| 4π*M* | magnetization | 1 G → 103/(4π) A/m |
| σ | specific magnetization | 1 erg/(G·g) = 1 emu/g → 1 A·m2/kg |
| *j* | magnetic dipole  moment | 1 erg/G = 1 emu  → 4π × 10−10 Wb·m |
| *J* | magnetic polarization | 1 erg/(G·cm3) = 1 emu/cm3  → 4π × 10−4 T |
| χ*,* κ | susceptibility | 1 → 4π |
| χρ | mass susceptibility | 1 cm3/g → 4π × 10−3 m3/kg |
| μ | permeability | 1 → 4π × 10−7 H/m  = 4π × 10−7 Wb/(A·m) |
| μr | relative permeability | μ → μr |
| *w, W* | energy density | 1 erg/cm3 → 10−1 J/m3 |
| *N, D* | demagnetizing factor | 1 → 1/(4π) |

Vertical lines are optional in tables. Statements that serve as captions for the entire table do not need footnote letters.

aGaussian units are the same as cg emu for magnetostatics; Mx = maxwell, G = gauss, Oe = oersted; Wb = weber, V = volt, s = second, T = tesla, m = meter, A = ampere, J = joule, kg = kilogram, H = henry.

# Summary and Conclusions

## Types of Graphics

The following list outlines the different types of graphics published in IEEE journals. They are categorized based on their construction, and use of color / shades of gray:

### *Color/Grayscale figures*

### Figures that are meant to appear in color, or shades of black/gray. Such figures may include photographs, illustrations, multicolor graphs, and flowcharts.

### *Line Art figures*

### Figures that are composed of only black lines and shapes. These figures should have no shades or half-tones of gray, only black and white.

### *Author photos*

### Head and shoulders shots of authors that appear at the end of our papers.

### *Tables* Data charts which are typically black and white, but sometimes include color.

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Most charts, graphs, and tables are one column wide (3.5 inches / 88 millimeters / 21 picas) or page wide (7.16 inches / 181 millimeters / 43 picas). The maximum depth a graphic can be is 8.5 inches (216 millimeters / 54 picas). When choosing the depth of a graphic, please allow space for a caption. Figures can be sized between column and page widths if the author chooses, however it is recommended that figures are not sized less than column width unless when necessary.

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Multipliers can be especially confusing. Write “Magnetization (kA/m)” or “Magnetization (103 A/m).” Do not write “Magnetization (A/m) × 1000” because the reader would not know whether the top axis label in Fig. 1 meant 16000 A/m or 0.016 A/m. Figure labels should be legible, approximately 8 to 10 point type.

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# Conclusion

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Appendixes, if needed, appear before the acknowledgment.

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References

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*Examples:*

1. G. O. Young, “Synthetic structure of industrial plastics,” in *Plastics,* 2nd ed., vol. 3, J. Peters, Ed. New York, NY, USA: McGraw-Hill, 1964, pp. 15–64.
2. W.-K. Chen, *Linear Networks and Systems.* Belmont, CA, USA: Wadsworth, 1993, pp. 123–135.

*Basic format for periodicals:*

J. K. Author, “Name of paper,” *Abbrev. Title of Periodical*, vol. *x, no*. *x,* pp*. xxx-xxx,* Abbrev. Month, year, DOI. 10.1109.*XXX*.123456.

*Examples:*

1. J. U. Duncombe, “Infrared navigation—Part I: An assessment of feasibility,” *IEEE Trans. Electron Devices*, vol. ED-11, no. 1, pp. 34–39, Jan. 1959, 10.1109/TED.2016.2628402.
2. E. P. Wigner, “Theory of traveling-wave optical laser,”   
   *Phys. Rev*.,   
   vol. 134, pp. A635–A646, Dec. 1965.
3. E. H. Miller, “A note on reflector arrays,” *IEEE Trans. Antennas Propagat*., to be published.

*Basic format for reports:*

J. K. Author, “Title of report,” Abbrev. Name of Co., City of Co., Abbrev. State, Country, Rep. *xxx*, year.

*Examples:*

1. E. E. Reber, R. L. Michell, and C. J. Carter, “Oxygen absorption in the earth’s atmosphere,” Aerospace Corp., Los Angeles, CA, USA, Tech. Rep. TR-0200 (4230-46)-3, Nov. 1988.
2. J. H. Davis and J. R. Cogdell, “Calibration program for the 16-foot antenna,” Elect. Eng. Res. Lab., Univ. Texas, Austin, TX, USA, Tech. Memo. NGL-006-69-3, Nov. 15, 1987.

*Basic format for handbooks:*

*Name of Manual/Handbook, x* ed., Abbrev. Name of Co., City of Co., Abbrev. State, Country, year, pp. *xxx-xxx.*

*Examples:*

1. *Transmission Systems for Communications*, 3rd ed., Western Electric Co., Winston-Salem, NC, USA, 1985, pp. 44–60.
2. *Motorola Semiconductor Data Manual*, Motorola Semiconductor Products Inc., Phoenix, AZ, USA, 1989.

*Basic format for books (when available online):*

J. K. Author, “Title of chapter in the book,” in *Title of Published Book*, *x*th ed. City of Publisher, State, Country: Abbrev. of Publisher, year, ch. *x*, sec. *x*, pp. *xxx–xxx*. [Online]. Available: http://www.web.com

*Examples:*

1. G. O. Young, “Synthetic structure of industrial plastics,” in Plastics, vol. 3, Polymers of Hexadromicon, J. Peters, Ed., 2nd ed. New York, NY, USA: McGraw-Hill, 1964, pp. 15-64. [Online]. Available: http://www.bookref.com.
2. *The Founders’ Constitution*, Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, eds., Chicago, IL, USA: Univ. Chicago Press, 1987. [Online]. Available: http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/
3. The Terahertz Wave eBook. ZOmega Terahertz Corp., 2014. [Online]. Available: http://dl.z-thz.com/eBook/zomega\_ebook\_pdf\_1206\_sr.pdf. Accessed on: May 19, 2014.
4. Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, eds., *The Founders’ Constitution.* Chicago, IL, USA: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987, Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2010, [Online] Available: http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/

*Basic format for journals (when available online):*

J. K. Author, “Name of paper,” *Abbrev. Title of Periodical*, vol. *x*, no. *x*, pp. *xxx-xxx*, Abbrev. Month, year. Accessed on: Month, Day, year, DOI: 10.1109.*XXX*.123456, [Online].

*Examples:*

1. J. S. Turner, “New directions in communications,” *IEEE J. Sel. Areas Commun*., vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 11-23, Jan. 1995.
2. W. P. Risk, G. S. Kino, and H. J. Shaw, “Fiber-optic frequency shifter using a surface acoustic wave incident at an oblique angle,” *Opt. Lett.*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 115–117, Feb. 1986.
3. P. Kopyt *et al., “*Electric properties of graphene-based conductive layers from DC up to terahertz range,” *IEEE THz Sci. Technol.,* to be published. DOI: 10.1109/TTHZ.2016.2544142.

*Basic format for papers presented at conferences (when available online):*

J.K. Author. (year, month). Title. presented at abbrev. conference title. [Type of Medium]. Available: site/path/file

*Example:*

1. PROCESS Corporation, Boston, MA, USA. Intranets: Internet technologies deployed behind the firewall for corporate productivity. Presented at INET96 Annual Meeting. [Online]. Available: http://home.process.com/Intranets/wp2.htp

*Basic format for reports and handbooks (when available online):*

J. K. Author. “Title of report,” Company. City, State, Country. Rep. no., (optional: vol./issue), Date. [Online] Available: site/path/file

*Examples:*

1. R. J. Hijmans and J. van Etten, “Raster: Geographic analysis and modeling with raster data,” R Package Version 2.0-12, Jan. 12, 2012. [Online]. Available: http://CRAN.R-project.org/package=raster
2. Teralyzer. Lytera UG, Kirchhain, Germany [Online]. Available: http://www.lytera.de/Terahertz\_THz\_Spectroscopy.php?id=home, Accessed on: Jun. 5, 2014

*Basic format for computer programs and electronic documents (when available online):*

Legislative body. Number of Congress, Session. (year, month day). *Number of bill or resolution*, *Title*. [Type of medium]. Available: site/path/file

***NOTE:*** ISO recommends that capitalization follow the accepted practice for the language or script in which the information is given.

*Example:*

1. U.S. House. 102nd Congress, 1st Session. (1991, Jan. 11). *H. Con. Res. 1, Sense of the Congress on Approval of Military Action*. [Online]. Available: LEXIS Library: GENFED File: BILLS

*Basic format for patents (when available online):*

Name of the invention, by inventor’s name. (year, month day). Patent Number[Type of medium]. Available: site/path/file

*Example:*

1. Musical toothbrush with mirror, by L.M.R. Brooks. (1992, May 19). Patent D 326 189

[Online]. Available: NEXIS Library: LEXPAT File: DES

*Basic format for conference proceedings (published):*

J. K. Author, “Title of paper,” in *Abbreviated Name of Conf.*, City of Conf., Abbrev. State (if given), Country, year, pp. *xxxxxx.*

*Example:*

1. D. B. Payne and J. R. Stern, “Wavelength-switched pas- sively coupled single-mode optical network,” in *Proc. IOOC-ECOC,* Boston, MA, USA,1985,   
   pp. 585–590.

*Example for papers presented at conferences (unpublished):*

1. D. Ebehard and E. Voges, “Digital single sideband detection for interferometric sensors,” presented at the *2nd Int. Conf. Optical Fiber Sensors,* Stuttgart, Germany, Jan. 2-5, 1984.

*Basic format for patents:*

J. K. Author, “Title of patent,” U.S. Patent *x xxx xxx*, Abbrev. Month, day, year.

*Example:*

1. G. Brandli and M. Dick, “Alternating current fed power supply,” U.S. Patent 4 084 217, Nov. 4, 1978.

*Basic format**for theses (M.S.) and dissertations (Ph.D.):*

a) J. K. Author, “Title of thesis,” M.S. thesis, Abbrev. Dept., Abbrev. Univ., City of Univ., Abbrev. State, year.

b) J. K. Author, “Title of dissertation,” Ph.D. dissertation, Abbrev. Dept., Abbrev. Univ., City of Univ., Abbrev. State, year.

*Examples:*

1. J. O. Williams, “Narrow-band analyzer,” Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. Elect. Eng., Harvard Univ., Cambridge, MA, USA, 1993.
2. N. Kawasaki, “Parametric study of thermal and chemical nonequilibrium nozzle flow,” M.S. thesis, Dept. Electron. Eng., Osaka Univ., Osaka, Japan, 1993.

*Basic format for the most common types of unpublished references:*

a) J. K. Author, private communication, Abbrev. Month, year.

b) J. K. Author, “Title of paper,” unpublished.

c) J. K. Author, “Title of paper,” to be published.

*Examples:*

1. A. Harrison, private communication, May 1995.
2. B. Smith, “An approach to graphs of linear forms,” unpublished.
3. A. Brahms, “Representation error for real numbers in binary computer arithmetic,” IEEE Computer Group Repository, Paper R-67-85.

*Basic formats for standards:*

a) *Title of Standard*, Standard number, date.

b) *Title of Standard*, Standard number, Corporate author, location, date.

*Examples:*

1. IEEE Criteria for Class IE Electric Systems, IEEE Standard 308, 1969.
2. Letter Symbols for Quantities, ANSI Standard Y10.5-1968.

*Article number in reference examples:*

1. R. Fardel, M. Nagel, F. Nuesch, T. Lippert, and A. Wokaun, “Fabrication of organic light emitting diode pixels by laser-assisted forward transfer,” *Appl. Phys. Lett.*, vol. 91, no. 6, Aug. 2007, Art. no. 061103.
2. J. Zhang and N. Tansu, “Optical gain and laser characteristics of InGaN quantum wells on ternary InGaN substrates,” *IEEE Photon. J.*, vol. 5, no. 2, Apr. 2013, Art. no. 2600111

*Example when using et al.:*

1. S. Azodolmolky *et al.*, Experimental demonstration of an impairment aware network planning and operation tool for transparent/translucent optical networks,” *J. Lightw. Technol.*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 439–448, Sep. 2011.

**First A. Author** (M’76–SM’81–F’87) and all authors may include biographies. Biographies are often not included in conference-related papers. This author became a Member (M) of IEEE in 1976, a Senior Member (SM) in 1981, and a Fellow (F) in 1987. The first paragraph may contain a place and/or date of birth (list place, then date). Next, the author’s educational background is listed. The degrees should be listed with type of degree in what field, which institution, city, state, and country, and year the degree was earned. The author’s major field of study should be lower-cased.

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