COMPSCI 514: Algorithms for Data Science

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University of Massachusetts Amherst. Spring 2026.

Lecture 14

Logistics

- Problem Set 3 due next Friday 4/10 at 11:59pm.
- Quiz due Monday at 8pm.

Summary

Last Class:

- 'Dual view' of low-rank approximation – rows and columns both approximately lie in a low-dimensional subspace.
- Finding an optimal orthogonal basis $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times k}$ to minimize $\|\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}\mathbf{V}^T\|_F^2$ when the data does not exactly lie in a low-dimensional subspace.
- Solution by taking the top k eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$ (this is PCA/optimal low-rank approximation)

This Class:

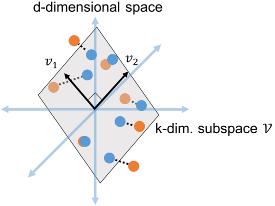
- Wrap up optimal low-rank approximation.
- Singular value decomposition (SVD) and its connection to low-rank approximation.

Best Fit Subspace

If $\vec{x}_1, \ldots, \vec{x}_n$ are close to a k-dimensional subspace $\mathcal{V}$ with orthonormal basis $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times k}$, the data matrix can be approximated as $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}\mathbf{V}^T$. $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}$ gives optimal embedding of $\mathbf{X}$ in $\mathcal{V}$.

We can find $\mathbf{V}$ by solving the optimization problem:

$$\underset{\text{orthonormal } \mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times k}}{\arg\min} \|\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}\mathbf{V}^T\|_F^2 = \underset{\text{orthonormal } \mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times k}}{\arg\max} \|\mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}\|_F^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{k} \|\mathbf{X}\vec{v}_i\|_2^2$$



$\vec{x}_1, \ldots, \vec{x}_n \in \mathbb{R}^d$: data points, $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$: data matrix, $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k \in \mathbb{R}^d$: orthogonal basis for subspace $\mathcal{V}$. $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times k}$: matrix with columns $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k$.

Solution via Eigendecomposition

We can find the columns of $\mathbf{V}$, $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k$ greedily.

$$\vec{v}_1 = \underset{\vec{v} \text{ with } \|v\|_2=1}{\arg\max} \|\mathbf{X}\vec{v}\|_2^2$$

$$\vec{v}_2 = \underset{\vec{v} \text{ with } \|v\|_2=1,\ \langle \vec{v}, \vec{v}_1 \rangle = 0}{\arg\max} \|\mathbf{X}\vec{v}\|_2^2$$

$$\cdots$$

$$\vec{v}_k = \underset{\vec{v} \text{ with } \|v\|_2=1,\ \langle \vec{v}, \vec{v}_j \rangle = 0\ \forall j<k}{\arg\max} \|\mathbf{X}\vec{v}\|_2^2.$$

$\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k$ are the top k eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$ by the *Courant-Fischer Principle.*

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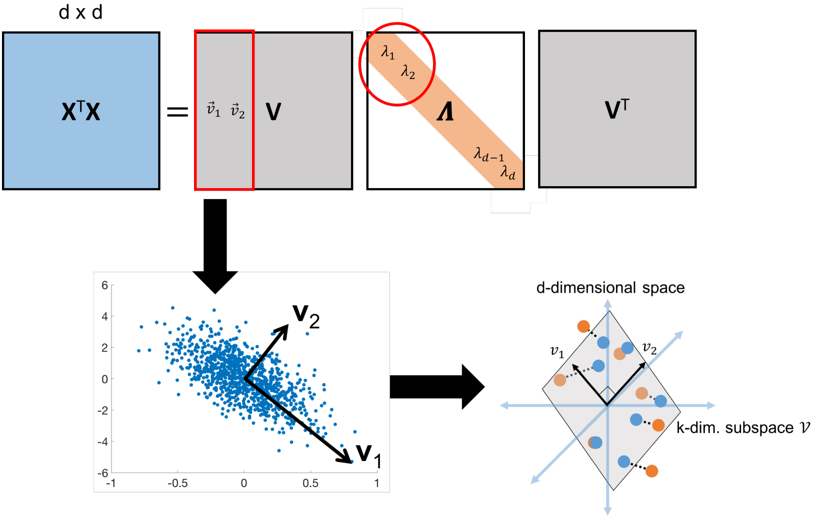
Low-Rank Approximation via Eigendecomposition



Low-Rank Approximation via Eigendecomposition

Letting $\mathbf{V}_k$ have columns $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k$ corresponding to the top k eigenvectors of the covariance matrix $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$, $\mathbf{V}_k$ is the orthogonal basis minimizing

$$\|\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}_k\mathbf{V}_k^T\|_F^2.$$

Error of Optimal Low-Rank Approximation:

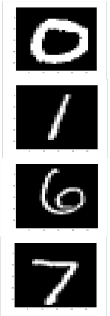
$$\|\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}_k\mathbf{V}_k^T\|_F^2 = \sum_{i=k+1}^{d} \lambda_i(\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}).$$

So plotting the eigenvalue spectrum of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$ shows how compressible $\mathbf{X}$ is using low-rank approximation.

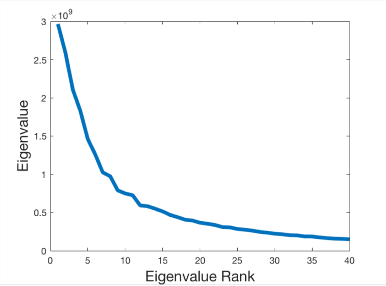
$\vec{x}_1, \ldots, \vec{x}_n \in \mathbb{R}^d$: data points, $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$: data matrix, $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k \in \mathbb{R}^d$: top eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$, $\mathbf{V}_k \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times k}$: matrix with columns $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k$.

Spectrum Analysis

784 dimensional vectors



eigendecomposition



784 d

Summary

- Many (most) datasets can be approximated via projection onto a low-dimensional subspace.
- Find this subspace via a maximization problem:

$$\max_{\text{orthonormal } \mathbf{V}} \|\mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}\|_F^2.$$

- Greedy solution via eigendecomposition of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$.
- Columns of $\mathbf{V}$ are the top eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$.
- Error of best low-rank approximation (compressibility of data) is determined by the tail of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$'s eigenvalue spectrum.

Linear Algebra Proofs/Practice

Some Linear Algebra Practice

Prove that $\|\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}\mathbf{V}^T\|_F^2 = \|\mathbf{X}\|_F^2 - \|\mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}\|_F^2$.

Use that for any matrix $\mathbf{A}$, $\|\mathbf{A}\|_F^2 = \mathrm{tr}(\mathbf{A}^T\mathbf{A}) = \mathrm{tr}(\mathbf{A}\mathbf{A}^T)$.

Some Linear Algebra Practice

Show that for symmetric A, the trace is the sum of eigenvalues: $\mathrm{tr}(\mathsf{A}) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \lambda_i(\mathsf{A})$.

Use the cyclic property of trace, that for any MN, $\mathrm{tr}(\mathsf{MN}) = \mathrm{tr}(\mathsf{NM})$.

Some Linear Algebra Practice

Show that for any X, the eigenvalues of X^TX are non-negative.

Some Linear Algebra Practice

Prove the first step of Courant Fischer: the top eigenvector $\vec{v}_1$ of a matrix $\mathbf{A}$ is given by

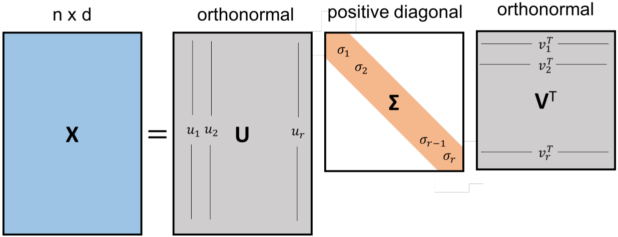
$$\vec{v}_1 = \underset{\vec{v} \text{ with } \|v\|_2 = 1}{\arg\max} \; \vec{v}^T \mathbf{A} \vec{v}$$

Singular Value Decomposition

Singular Value Decomposition

The Singular Value Decomposition (SVD) generalizes the eigendecomposition to asymmetric (even rectangular) matrices. Any matrix $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$ with $\text{rank}(\mathbf{X}) = r$ can be written as $\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{U}\mathbf{\Sigma}\mathbf{V}^T$.

- $\mathbf{U}$ has orthonormal columns $\vec{u}_1, \ldots, \vec{u}_r \in \mathbb{R}^n$ (left singular vectors).
- $\mathbf{V}$ has orthonormal columns $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_r \in \mathbb{R}^d$ (right singular vectors).
- $\mathbf{\Sigma}$ is diagonal with elements $\sigma_1 \geq \sigma_2 \geq \ldots \geq \sigma_r > 0$ (singular values).



Connection of the SVD to Eigendecomposition

Writing $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$ in its singular value decomposition $\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{U}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}\mathbf{V}^T$:

$$\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{V}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}\mathbf{U}^T\mathbf{U}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}\mathbf{V}^T = \mathbf{V}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}^2\mathbf{V}^T \text{ (the eigendecomposition)}$$

Similarly: $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}^T = \mathbf{U}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}\mathbf{V}^T\mathbf{V}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}\mathbf{U}^T = \mathbf{U}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}^2\mathbf{U}^T$.

The left and right singular vectors are the eigenvectors of the covariance matrix $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$ and the gram matrix $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}^T$ respectively.

So, letting $\mathbf{V}_k \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times k}$ have columns equal to $\vec{v}_1, \ldots, \vec{v}_k$, we know that $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}_k\mathbf{V}_k^T$ is the best rank-k approximation to $\mathbf{X}$ (given by PCA).

What about $\mathbf{U}_k\mathbf{U}_k^T\mathbf{X}$ where $\mathbf{U}_k \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times k}$ has columns equal to $\vec{u}_1, \ldots, \vec{u}_k$? Gives exactly the same approximation!

$\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$: data matrix, $\mathbf{U} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times \text{rank}(\mathbf{X})}$: matrix with orthonormal columns $\vec{u}_1, \vec{u}_2, \ldots$ (left singular vectors), $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times \text{rank}(\mathbf{X})}$: matrix with orthonormal columns $\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots$ (right singular vectors), $\boldsymbol{\Sigma} \in \mathbb{R}^{\text{rank}(\mathbf{X}) \times \text{rank}(\mathbf{X})}$: positive diagonal matrix containing singular values of $\mathbf{X}$.

The SVD and Optimal Low-Rank Approximation

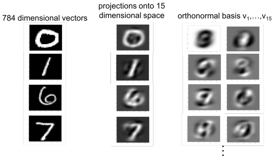
The best low-rank approximation to $\mathbf{X}$:

$\mathbf{X}_k = \arg\min_{\text{rank}-k\ \mathbf{B} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}} \|\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{B}\|_F$ is given by:

$$\mathbf{X}_k = \mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}_k\mathbf{V}_k^T = \mathbf{U}_k\mathbf{U}_k^T\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{U}_k\boldsymbol{\Sigma}_k\mathbf{V}_k^T$$

Correspond to projecting the rows (data points) onto the span of $\mathbf{V}_k$ or the columns (features) onto the span of $\mathbf{U}_k$

Row (data point) compression



Column (feature) compression

10000* bathrooms+ 10* (sq. ft.) ≈ list price

	bedrooms	bathrooms	sq.ft.	floors	list price	sale price
home 1	2	2	1800	2	200,000	195,000
home 2	4	2.5	2700	1	300,000	310,000
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
home n	5	3.5	3600	3	450,000	450,000

n x d orthonormal positive diagonal orthonormal n x d (rank k) orthonorma

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$\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$: data matrix, $\mathbf{U} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times \text{rank}(\mathbf{X})}$: matrix with orthonormal columns $\vec{u}_1, \vec{u}_2, \ldots$ (left singular vectors), $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times \text{rank}(\mathbf{X})}$: matrix with orthonormal columns $\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots$ (right singular vectors), $\boldsymbol{\Sigma} \in \mathbb{R}^{\text{rank}(\mathbf{X}) \times \text{rank}(\mathbf{X})}$: positive diagonal matrix containing singular values of $\mathbf{X}$.

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SVD Review

- Every $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$ can be written in its SVD as $\mathbf{U}\boldsymbol{\Sigma}\mathbf{V}^T$.
- $\mathbf{U} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times r}$ (orthonormal) contains the eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}^T$.
  $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times r}$ (orthonormal) contains the eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}^\mathsf{T}\mathbf{X}$.
  $\boldsymbol{\Sigma} \in \mathbb{R}^{r \times r}$ (diagonal) contains their eigenvalues.
- $\mathbf{U}_k\mathbf{U}_k^T\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}_k\mathbf{V}_k^T = \mathbf{U}_k\boldsymbol{\Sigma}_k\mathbf{V}_k^T = \underset{\mathbf{B} \text{ s.t. } \text{rank}(\mathbf{B}) \leq k}{\arg\min} \|\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{B}\|_F$.