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Letters

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Letters, conference information, and news should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief. Papers for each issue are solicited by and should be sent to the Associate Editor responsible for the issue.

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

The Data Engineering Conference: Repeat from March, 2003

The Technical Committee on Data Engineering, in addition to publishing the Bulletin, also sponsors the Data Engineering Conference, referred to as ICDE (”International Conference on Data Engineering”). The most recent conference (for 2003) was held in Bangalore, India. The 2004 conference will be held in Boston, MA. A ”Call for Papers” for this conference appears on the back inside cover of this issue.

The Data Engineering Conference is one of three large and prestigous annual database conferences, the others being SIGMOD and VLDB. It is the IEEE Computer Society’s flagship conference in the database area. The program for the conference is excellent, the result of a very competitive paper selection process. Because of the quality of the conference, many of the leading researchers in our field regularly attend the conference. Further, any paper published in the conference is included in the SIGMOD Anthology’s CD or DVD collection of database papers. So ICDE papers have a very wide readership.

I hope that many Bulletin readers will submit papers to the Data Engineering Conference, not only in 2004, but in subsequent years as well. Perhaps I shall have the pleasure of meeting you at the conference, as I very frequently attend.

The Current Issue

One of the more curious facts about citations in the database literature is that there are more citations to the original R-tree paper than there are to the original B-tree paper (see the DBLP web cite). There may be a number of reasons for this, but one of them has to be that it is much harder to assess the strength of an access method when dealing with multi-dimensional data than it is when dealing with a single dimension. With B-trees, dealing with a single dimension, it is relatively easy to characterize both storage utilization and query costs. All regions have at most two neighbors, and all queries partially overlap only with the two neighbors of a contiguous set of regions. And all B-trees can guarantee minimum storage utilization and are well characterized with respect to average utilization.

With multi-dimensional data, things are much more difficult. It is harder to divide the data into regions and each region has more boundaries, hence bordering on more neighbors. Hence there are many more ways to partition the search space. As well, there are many more ways to query the search space. And, of course, there is a strong connection between the querying and the search space partitioning. Finally, there is enormous variation in how data may be distributed over the multiple dimensions. All this makes it much harder to assess how good or appropriate a multi-dimensional access method is.

The current issue does not introduce new access methods or new query processing techniques. Rather it seeks to tackle the task of providing an infrastructure in which good research can be done for multi-dimensional query processing. While it is perhaps too much to hope for that this infrastructure will bring closure to this area (this is a difficult topic), nonetheless, such infrastructure will make it possible, both for those creating new techniques and for potential users, to judge the appropriateness of any given method for a given task, and to start the process of seriously evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of proposed multi-dimensional approaches. This is essential to progress in our field! I want to thank Christian Jensen, the issue editor for the current issue, for proposing and following through on this important area. This issue is very important reading for the multi-dimensional database research community.

David Lomet
Microsoft Corporation

Letter from the Special Issue Editor

Aspects of key computing and communication hardware technologies continue to improve rapidly, some at sustained exponential rates. These developments, including advances in geo-positioning, contribute to making research in spatio-temporal data management more relevant than ever.

As the field of data management is maturing, emphasis will be increasingly on rigor. For example, it becomes increasingly important that new contributions be based on the growing body of existing contributions. As other examples, prototype implementation and rigorous experimental studies will become increasingly important.

The contributions in this issue further state of the art in spatio-temporal query processing, but do so indirectly. They do not propose new query processing techniques—instead, their focus is to contribute to the infrastructure for conducting research in spatio-temporal query processing. The term *infrastructure* is interpreted broadly, thus covering aspects such as publicly available query processing toolkits and implementations of query processing techniques; real data, synthetic-data generators, and benchmarks; standards; and surveys of research contributions.

This issue's first paper, by Kornacker et al., presents `amdb`, a graphical design tool for access methods that is built on top of the so-called Generalized Search Tree abstraction (see the coverage of the GiST indexing toolkit in the sixth paper). An analysis framework, complete with performance metrics and support for visualization and debugging, aids the designers of an access method in studying and thus improving their access method. In the second paper, Cammert et al. cover the eXtensible and fleXible Library (XXL) for efficient query processing that is being developed at University of Marburg. XXL offers infrastructure that makes it easier to implement advanced query processing functionality, it offers a framework for meaningful comparisons of access methods, and it aims to serve as a repository for query processing techniques and use-cases.

When experimentally evaluating query processing techniques, real as well as synthetic data sets are important. The former aid in ensuring that a technique under study is subjected to realistic conditions. However, real data sets may not be available; further, a single real data set is likely to capture only a specific type of use. In contrast, synthetic data generators allow the generation of data sets with specific properties, thus making it possible to subject a technique to a wide variety of conditions.

In the third paper, Brinkhoff considers the generation of data sets intended for the testing of query processing techniques to do with "moving objects." He covers his own Network-based Generator and Kaufman et al.'s City Simulator, both of which assume that the object movement, from which the generated data result, is constrained to a transportation network. The fourth paper, by Nascimento et al., covers three other data generators for moving objects, GSTD, G-TERD, and Oporto, which do not constrain movement to a network. GSTD generates moving-point and moving-rectangle data. G-TERD produces sequences of raster images. Being the most elaborate data generator of the three, it is covered in detail in the fifth paper, by Manolopoulos et al. Oporto generates data corresponding to fishing-at-sea scenarios. Nascimento et al. also cover several real data sets.

The sixth paper presents a survey of spatio-temporal access methods—methods that index the spatial aspect together with only the past, with only the current time, and with the current time and the future. In this paper, Mokbel et al. cover almost 30 methods. (Note also the survey by Agarwal and Procopiuc in last year's June issue of the Bulletin.) Mokbel et al. also cover two indexing toolkits: GiST, which concerns B-tree and R-tree like bounding-region trees, and SP-GiST, which concerns space-partitioning trees.

In the last paper, Schmidt and Jensen cover standards and standardization efforts of general relevance to spatio-temporal query processing, and of particular relevance to spatio-temporal data exchange.

It is my hope that this issue will be a useful reference to the spatio-temporal data management research community and will help move spatio-temporal query processing research in the right, rigorous, and experimental direction.

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Amdb: A Design Tool for Access Methods

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Abstract

Designing and tuning access methods (AMs) has always been more of a black art than a rigorous discipline, with performance assessments being mostly reduced to presenting aggregate runtime or I/O numbers. This paper presents `amdb`*, a comprehensive graphical design tool for AMs that are constructed on top of the Generalized Search Tree abstraction. At the core of* `amdb` *lies an an analysis framework for AMs that defines performance metrics that are more useful than traditional summary numbers and thereby allow the AM designer to detect and isolate deficiencies in an AM design.* `Amdb` *complements the analysis framework with visualization and debugging functionality, allowing the AM designer to investigate the source of those deficiencies that were brought to light with the help of the performance metrics. Several AM design projects undertaken at U.C.Berkeley have confirmed the usefulness of the analysis framework and its integration with visualization facilities in* `amdb`*. The analysis process that produces the performance metrics is fully automated and takes a workload—a tree and a set of queries—as input; the metrics characterize the performance of each query as well as that of the tree structure. Central to the framework is the use of the optimal behavior—which can be approximated relatively efficiently—as a point of reference against which the actual observed performance is compared. The framework applies to most balanced tree-structured AMs and is not restricted to particular types of data or queries.*

1 Introduction

Despite the large and growing number of access methods (AMs) that have been produced by the research community—and also despite their increasing importance, considering the explosion of data that users find worth querying—the design and tuning of AMs has always been more of a black art than a rigorous discipline. Traditionally, performance analyses focus on summaries of observed performance, such as aggregate runtime or page access numbers, or on performance metrics that express data-specific properties of index pages (e.g., spatial overlap between the pages of an R-tree [3]). The drawback of aggregate numbers is that they do not provide any insight into the causes of observed performance. As a result, it is hard to quantify the contribution of individual design ideas or explain performance differences between competing AM designs, if those deviate in more than one design aspect. Also, aggregate numbers do not allow AMs to be assessed on their own, because competing AM designs are needed to put the numbers into perspective. In contrast, data-specific performance metrics like bounding-box overlap offer some insight into the causes of observed performance, but they require the designer

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to understand their correlation with the true optimization objective, i.e., the minimization of aggregate runtime or page access numbers. Since such an understanding is a *goal* of the analysis process, any apriori assumptions about that correlation are often incorrect and misleading. If the correlation of the data-specific performance metric with the optimization objective is not perfectly clear, using such a performance metric to guide AM design is problematic.

In this paper we present `amdb`, a comprehensive support tool for the AM analysis process. At the core of `amdb` is an analysis framework that defines performance metrics that are superior both to aggregate numbers and data-specific performance metrics. The analysis process is integrated with a collection of modules in an interactive, easy-to-use graphical environment. Those modules are: a visualization component for the tree structure and its contents (the latter user-extensible, so it can be adapted to a specific application domain); a facility for interactive execution of tree searches and updates as well as breakpoints and single-stepping through those commands, similar to functionality found in programming language debuggers; browsers for viewing performance numbers derived from the analysis framework. The salient features of `amdb` and its analysis framework are:

Universal Applicability The analysis framework and most of the `amdb` visualization facilities are independent of the semantics of the data and queries of the application domain, which makes them universally applicable to any AM design that is based on the Generalized Search Tree (GiST) abstraction [4]. The analysis framework treats the workload—a tree and a set of queries—as an input parameter, allowing the designer to tune an AM for that particular workload.

Better Performance Metrics The analysis framework defines performance metrics that reflect *performance loss*, measured in I/Os and derived from a comparison of observed performance with the performance of a workload-optimal tree. This tree minimizes the total number of I/Os for the input workload and can be approximated relatively efficiently. The advantage of these performance metrics in comparison to aggregate I/O measurements is that they reflect the potential for performance improvement, allowing an AM design to be assessed on its own. The loss metrics are further broken down to reflect the performance-relevant characteristics of the tree, which gives the designer a clearer understanding of the effects of individual design ideas or the differences between two competing AM designs.

Fully Automated Analysis The fully automated analysis process executes the user-supplied set of queries, gathers tracing data, uses that to approximate an optimal tree and computes the performance metrics.

Visualization Integration The analysis framework is integrated into `amdb` to the extent that the metrics as well as tracing information gathered during workload execution are visualized using the data-independent tree structure visualization facilities. This integration is particularly helpful, because it lets the designer investigate poorly performing parts of the tree and queries. The analysis framework and the visualization tools are complementary: the performance metrics highlight the sources of poor performance, thereby focusing the designer's attention. The visualization tools are then used to investigate those parts of the tree or those queries which have been flagged by the performance metrics.

Designing AMs is a creative process. `Amdb` supports this process with an analysis framework that points out specific sources of performance degradation and visualization tools for investigating them. The experience we have gathered so far with `amdb` justifies our claims about its usefulness: in two AM design projects undertaken at U.C. Berkeley, `amdb` was instrumental in quickly locating performance problems in existing AM designs and verifying that the remedies to those problems worked as intended.

The rest of this extended abstract briefly introduces GiST, which lays the foundation for an understanding of the breakdown of the performance metrics, and presents an overview of `amdb` along with a description of the analysis framework and its intended usage. In addition, we present a hypothetical example to demonstrate how the performance metrics are calculated in a workload's analysis. Please see [6] for a full description of `amdb`.

2 Generalized Search Trees

A GiST is a balanced tree that provides "template" algorithms for navigating the tree structure and modifying the tree structure through node splits and deletes. Like all other (secondary) index trees, the GiST stores *(key, RID)* pairs in the leaves; the RIDs (record identifiers) point to the corresponding records on the data pages. Internal nodes contain *(predicate, child page pointer)* pairs; the predicate evaluates to true for any of the keys contained in or reachable from the associated child page. A B^+-tree [2] is a well known example with those properties: the entries in internal nodes represent ranges which bound values of keys in the leaves of the respective subtrees. The predicates in the internal nodes of a search tree will subsequently be referred to as *subtree predicates* (SPs).

Apart from these structural requirements, a GiST does not impose any restrictions on the key data stored within the tree or their organization within and across nodes. In particular, the key space need not be ordered, thereby allowing multidimensional data. Moreover, the nodes of a single level need not partition or even cover the entire key space, meaning that (a) overlapping SPs of entries at the same tree level are allowed and (b) the union of all SPs can have "holes" when compared to the entire key space. The leaves, however, partition the set of stored RIDs, so that exactly one leaf entry points to a given data record.

A GiST supports the standard index operations: SEARCH, which takes a predicate and returns all leaf entries satisfying that predicate; INSERT, which adds a *(key, RID)* pair to the tree; and DELETE, which removes such a pair from the tree. It implements these operations with the help of a set of extension methods supplied by the access method developer. The GiST can be specialized to one of a number of particular access methods by providing a set of extension methods specific to that access method. These extension methods encapsulate the exact behavior of the search operation as well as the organization of keys within the tree.

We now provide a sketch of the implementation of the SEARCH and INSERT operations and how they use the extension methods.

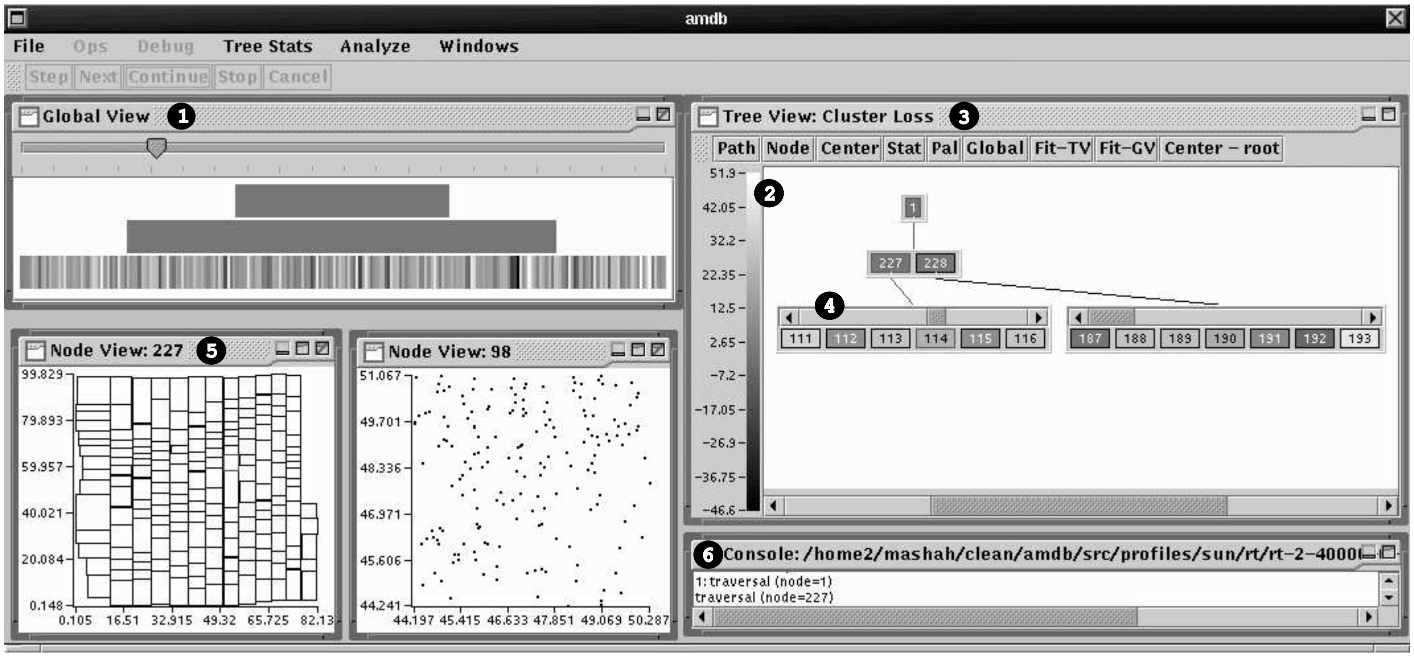
Search In order to find all leaf entries satisfying the search predicate, we recursively descend *all* subtrees for which the parent entry's predicate is consistent with the search predicate (employing the user-supplied extension method *consistent()*).

Insert Given a new *(key, RID)* pair, we must find a leaf to insert it on. Note that because GiSTs allow overlapping SPs, there may be more than one leaf where the key could be inserted. A user-supplied extension method *penalty()* compares a key and predicate and computes a domain-specific penalty for inserting the key within the subtree whose bounds are given by the predicate. Using this extension method, we traverse a single path from root to leaf, following branches with the lowest insertion penalty. If the leaf overflows and must be split, an extension method, *pickSplit()*, is invoked to determine how to distribute the keys between two leaves. If, as a result, the parent also overflows, the splitting is carried out bottom-up. If the leaf's ancestors' predicates do not include the new key, they must be expanded, so that the path from the root to the leaf reflects the new key. The expansion is done with an extension method *union()*, which takes two predicates, one of which is the new key, and returns their union. Like node splitting, expansion of predicates in parent entries is carried out bottom-up until we find an ancestor node whose predicate does not require expansion.

Although the GiST abstraction prescribes algorithms for searching and inserting, the AM designer still has full control over the performance-relevant structural characteristics of the AM. These structural characteristics are:

Clustering The clustering of the indexed data at the leaf level and of the SPs at the internal levels determines the amount of extra data that a query needs to access in order to retrieve its result set. An AM design controls the clustering through the *pickSplit()* and *penalty()* extension methods.

Page Utilization The page utilization determines the number of pages that the indexed data and the SPs occupy and therefore also influences the number of pages that a query needs to visit. Similar to the clustering, the page utilization is controlled by the *pickSplit()* and *penalty()* extension methods.



```
1:traversal (node=1)
traversal (node=227)
```

Figure 1: Amdb User Interface

Subtree Predicates While the size and shape of the indexed data is part of the input, the size and shape of the SPs are parameters of the design and considerably influence performance. A SP's task is to describe, or cover, that part of the data space which is present at the *leaf* level of its associated subtree (i.e., the perfect SP would simply enumerate all the data items contained in the leaves of its subtree; of course, this is problematic with regard to the size of the SPs). We speak of SP *excess coverage* if the SP covers more of the data space than is needed in order to represent the data contained in the subtree. If a SP exhibits excess coverage, it may cause queries to visit more than the minimum number of pages determined by the clustering and page utilization.

3 A Tour of Amdb

This section describes amdb's visualization and debugging features (which are presented in greater detail in [7]) and gives an overview of the analysis framework and its intended usage.

Amdb supports access methods developed using the public domain libgist package which implements the GiST abstraction. Amdb and libgist are written in Java and C++ and are portable across many versions of UNIX as well as Microsoft Windows NT. The software can be downloaded from `http://gist.cs.berkeley.edu/`.

3.1 Visualization Functionality

Understanding flaws in an AM design requires inspecting the corresponding tree; thus, amdb provides interactive graphical views of the entire tree, paths and subtrees within the tree, and contents of nodes within the tree. These are the global view, tree view, and node view, respectively (Fig 1). These views not only help visualize the tree structure and its contents, but also help visualize profiling data and performance metrics by associating them with nodes in the tree. Finally, they provide navigation features, which enables designers to drill down to the source of a deficiency.

The highest-level, *global view* provides a manageable aggregate view of the entire index (Fig 1: 1). This representation factors out much of the tree structure by mapping it onto a triangle with an adjustable baseline and height. The purpose of this view is to project a user-selected tree statistic or performance metric onto this abstract display and depict the variation of the statistics across the total tree. The user can choose both a color map (or palette, Fig 1: 2) and a statistic; the global view assigns colors to the statistical values and renders the nodes accordingly. Nodes are visually concatenated and merged if necessary with other nodes on the same level. Thus, the pixel density of nodes increases geometrically with the level. The user can also perform an approximate drill-down into an area of interest by clicking on it. Subsequently, a path from the root node to a node in the neighborhood of the specified point will be shown in the tree view, a lower-level view which shows more detail.

The *tree view* shows the structure of the search tree (Fig 1: 3). It offers an intuitive point-and-click interface for browsing the tree while improving on conventional tree navigation interfaces which become cumbersome for high fanout trees. In this view, the tree's nodes are represented by boxes and labeled with a unique number for reference. Each node is enclosed in a scrollable and stretchable container which displays its direct siblings. This container (Fig 1: 4) allows users to focus on nodes of interest while bounding the amount of detail displayed. Any node can be expanded or contracted by clicking on it. When a node is expanded, the container holding its children is displayed below it with a line linking the two; when contracted, the entire subtree below the node is removed. Like the global view, the tree view represents a user-selected tree statistic or performance metric by coloring the nodes. With these features, a user can simultaneously focus on several paths and subtrees of interest without being overwhelmed by the width of the search tree.

After drilling down from the global view and tree view, the user can investigate the contents of specific nodes using `amdb`'s node view (Fig 1: 5). Since tree nodes contain arbitrary user-defined predicates, the access method designer must provide a module that displays the node given its contents. Currently, `amdb` contains a suite of modules that visualize two-dimensional projections of spatial data. The node view also allows the user to simulate a split (by calling the *pickSplit()* extension function) and visualize the results by separating the items with contrasting colors. In addition to user-defined data visualization, `amdb` provides a textual description of the keys, their sizes, and associated pointers.

3.2 Debugging Functionality

The behavior of an AM can be difficult to understand without being able to observe its mechanics. Previously, only standard programming language debugging tools were available for examining `libgist` AMs. Because these tools are designed for analyzing low level actions, such as a single line of source code, they are cumbersome for gaining an understanding of how search and update operations behave and interact with the tree.

`Amdb` allows a designer to single-step through tree search and update commands. Those commands generate events for various node-oriented actions, such as node split, node traversal, *etc.*, which permits users to step from event to event. Since manual stepping can become tedious, `amdb` also supports breakpoints. Breakpoints can be defined on generic events, e. g., node update, or can be tied to a specific tree node, e.g., update of node 227. When a breakpoint event is encountered, execution is suspended, and the user has an option to single-step through events or continue until the next breakpoint. Additionally, `amdb` allows batch execution of commands via scripts so users can conveniently restore state.

3.3 Overview of the Analysis Framework

The goal of the analysis framework is to explain the observed performance of an AM running a user-supplied workload. The single ultimate performance number is the total execution time of the entire workload. This total depends on the number and nature of page accesses, the buffering policy and the CPU time spent examining pages. For brevity, we concentrate on explaining observed page accesses; please see [6] for a discussion of the remaining components of the performance equation.

In Section 1 we mentioned the deficiencies of the current practice of reporting performance with aggregate I/O numbers or data-specific metrics. To be effective and universally applicable, an analysis framework should have three properties: (1) the performance metrics should be data-independent and not be tailored to the semantics of a particular application domain, so that the analysis framework is applicable in the full generality of the GiST AM design framework; (2) the performance metrics must give an indication of the quality of measured AM performance in terms of the optimization objective, i.e., minimization of I/Os; (3) the metrics should give the designer an understanding of the causes of observed performance.

In order to ensure data-independence of the framework, the workload—a tree and a set of queries—is an input parameter of the analysis and the metrics characterize the performance of an AM specifically in the context of that workload. Also, the performance metrics directly characterize the observed performance of the workload execution, namely the page accesses. They are not stated in terms of data or query semantics, and are therefore data-independent.

Instead of simply reporting the number of observed page accesses, a more meaningful performance metric is the difference between the number of page accesses in the actual tree and the optimal tree; we call this difference the *performance loss*. The optimal tree is defined as minimizing the total number of page accesses over the entire workload. In general terms, it is a tree where (a) the data is clustered into leaf nodes to maximize the co-location of data that is co-retrieved, (b) the nodes in the tree are packed to the desired degree of utilization, and (c) the subtree predicates only guide the search algorithm to subtrees with query answers. While this hypothetical tree cannot be automatically synthesized for use, having knowledge of the execution profile of the workload, in particular the result sets of the queries, allows us to approximate the optimal tree relatively accurately. More specifically, property (a) can be efficiently approximated via hypergraph clustering [5], and properties (b) and (c) can be simulated while gathering idealized performance results. The details are presented in [6].

Knowing the magnitude of performance loss is a clear indication of the quality of an AM, expressed in the units of the optimization objective, I/Os. Moreover, the performance loss shows the potential for performance improvement, which cannot necessarily be discovered even when comparing two competing AM designs using traditional performance metrics. We can compute a *query performance loss*, which expresses the difference in the number of I/Os of a query executed against the actual tree and the workload-optimal tree. Similarly, we can compute a *node performance loss*, which expresses a node's contribution to query or aggregate workload performance loss. The analysis framework also defines a number of additional *implementation metrics* that characterize aspects of the AM implementation; we refer the reader to [6] for more details. Given a particular performance loss, we can further subdivide it to reflect the fundamental performance-relevant properties of GiST-based AMs, namely clustering, page utilization and excess coverage loss. *Clustering loss* specifies the part of performance loss that can be attributed to the difference between workload-optimal and achieved (leaf-level[1]) clustering in the index tree; *utilization loss* specifies the part that is attributable to node utilization deviating from a target utilization; *excess coverage loss* specifies the part that is due to accesses to leaf nodes that contain no relevant data to a query. All of these subdivisions of performance loss are also specified in I/Os—possibly fractions of I/Os; They are summarized in Figure 2. Such a breakdown of performance loss is more useful than aggregate numbers, because it helps the designer understand the nature of the loss and thereby provides more insight into the causes of observed performance. The breakdown of the node metrics in particular helps the designer identify anomalies in the tree structure.

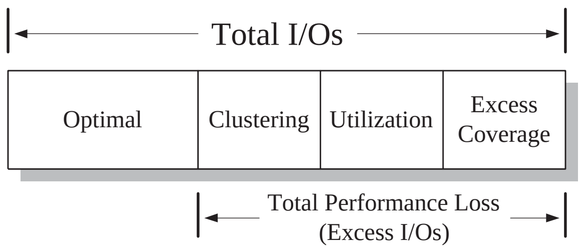


Figure 2: Decomposition of observed I/Os on a per-query and per-node basis

[1]The reason this is restricted to leaf-level clustering is explained in [6].

3.4 Using the `Amdb` Analysis Framework

To use `amdb` in order to analyze an AM design, the designer constructs an index tree and decides on a set of queries to run against that tree. Together, these two items constitute the *target workload*. Taking this workload as input, `amdb` then runs the analysis that produces the performance metrics described in the previous section. The analysis process consists of running the queries against the index tree, gathering tracing data such as traversal paths, and approximating an optimal tree based on the tracing data. Given this optimal tree approximation, `amdb` computes the performance metrics for each query and the aggregate workload. These are broken down further into per-node loss metrics, which are also computed for each query and the aggregate workload. A detailed description of the tracing data, the nature of the optimal tree and the computation of the performance metrics are given in [6].

The performance loss metrics express I/Os, not particular application-specific properties of the tree at hand or the AM design; the metrics can therefore only serve as an *indication* of, not an explanation for performance deficiencies. The explanation of performance deficiencies and a subsequent improvement of the AM design need to be done by the AM designer, based on an understanding of the semantics of the application domain. Gaining such an understanding is a creative process, which is helped by the `amdb` visualization facilities and their integration with the analysis framework: the performance metrics "flag" those parts of the tree and those queries that perform badly; the visualization facilities then let the designer navigate those index nodes and queries and investigate the reasons for their above-average performance loss. Aside from the user-extensible data visualizations, `amdb` also gives the designer access to a very comprehensive set of workload statistics, including per-query aggregate page access numbers, full traversal paths, the amount and specific location of data retrieved, *etc*. The performance metrics themselves are quite voluminous—there are three loss metrics for each query and each node of the tree–which makes it necessary to find good visualizations for them.

The node metrics are visualized by coloring nodes in the global and tree view, so that ill-behaved parts of the tree can be identified easily without having to browse through each node's metrics individually. The navigation and data visualization features of these views let the developer navigate those parts of the tree structure and examine the data contained therein. The global and tree views are also used to visualize the per-query loss metrics and trace data on a per-node basis (for example, traversal paths can be visualized very effectively through node coloring). This tracing data in combination with the visualizations give the developer a very detailed view of the behavior of each query and are instrumental in understanding poorly performing queries.

Before designing an AM for a particular workload, it is actually instructive to determine whether that workload is possibly unindexable, i.e., whether no index structure will be able to outperform a sequential scan on that workload. The `amdb` analysis process produces all the data necessary to perform such a test; the details are given in [6].

4 Analysis Framework Illustration

In this section, we illustrate `amdb`'s analysis framework. As a point of comparison, we define the optimal tree with respect to a search tree's structural characteristics. Then we show an example calculation of performance loss at the leaf-leaf level for a single query. The full details of our analysis framework can be found in [6].

4.1 Optimal Tree

The optimal tree is defined by the following characteristics:
No excess coverage, which eliminates page accesses due to overly general SPs – i.e., accesses that retrieve no items in the query result set.
Target page utilization, which would ideally be 100%, but this is unattainable in practice. Instead, the AM designer specifies a desired target page utilization, which can be estimated through external considerations,

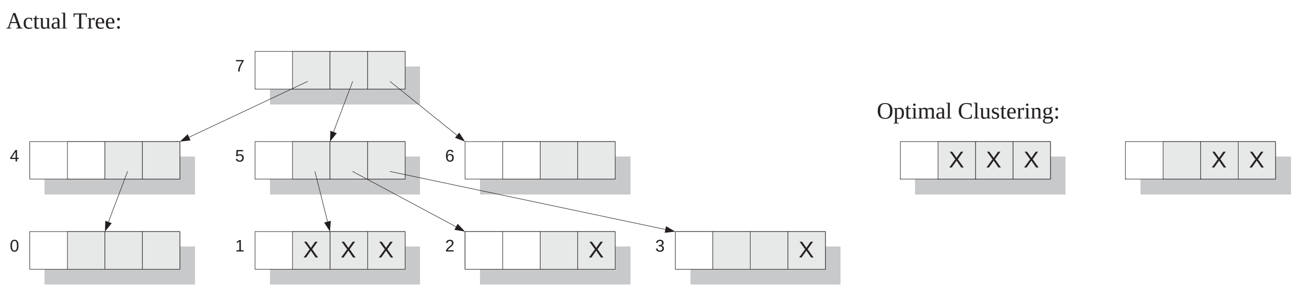


Figure 3: Traversal Paths and Optimal Clustering for Example Query

e.g., the existence of a competing AM with a well-known average utilization. This utilization also is used as a parameter to determine the optimal clustering.

Optimal clustering, which minimizes the total number of "relevant" page accesses. At the leaf-level, those are accesses to the pages that contain items in the query result set. To construct the optimal leaf level, we partition the indexed data items so that the total number of leaf accesses is minimized over the workload. This clustering problem is equivalent to a hypergraph partitioning problem which is provably NP-hard. Thus, to solve this optimization, `amdb` relies on HMETIS [5] a tool that implements existing approximation algorithms that work reasonably well.

A tree with these properties will execute the investigated workload with the minimal number of page accesses. This tree is only a theoretical construct, since it is generally impossible to construct a tree that achieves a combination of the optimum in each category. Still, it is possible to approximate this tree along each axis well enough to infer page access patterns of a workload.

4.2 Performance Loss Breakdown

In this section, we illustrate the breakdown of performance loss at the leaf-level of a hypothetical search tree for a single query. The aggregate workload, internal-level, and per-node metrics are extensions of these calculations [6].

Figure 3 serves as a running example throughout the rest of this section. It shows the *traversal tree* of a query (its traversal paths in the index, which form a subtree of the index) which retrieves five data items. This query accesses four leaves in the actual tree and only two leaves in the optimal tree. The page capacity is four items (to keep the example simple, data items and SPs are assumed to have the same size) and the target utilization is 75%. Occupied slots are shaded, and the pages in the traversal tree are numbered for reference.

4.2.1 Leaf-Level Performance Metrics

For each query, the performance loss at the leaf level—actual minus optimal leaf accesses—is divided up into excess coverage, utilization, and clustering loss. Ideally, leaf-level I/Os would visit the same number of nodes and return the same number of items as in the leaf-level of the optimal tree, and each visited leaf would be fully packed. Anything short of this is a performance loss. We begin by assigning leaf-level losses that are due entirely to bad SPs, and then consider the more complex interplay between utilization and clustering in partially useful leaf I/Os. In the example, the query experiences a performance loss of two leaf accesses when compared against the optimal tree. We show how to compute the losses in each category for this example.

Excess coverage loss. During query execution, if a leaf node is visited but contains no items in the result set, we consider the entire leaf I/O to be excess coverage loss, i.e., due to an overly general SP for the leaf. In the example in Figure 3, leaf 0 is accessed but contains no matching items, and therefore the access counts as excess coverage loss.

Utilization loss. A leaf-level I/O that returns some useful items may contribute to performance loss in two ways. One way is through underfull leaf nodes. Deviation from the target utilization in the remaining leaves is summed up as utilization loss. In the example, leaf 2 has a utilization of 50%, which is $2/3$ of the target utilization of 75%, resulting in a loss of $1 - 0.5/0.75 = 1/3$. The idea behind this accounting is that if the pages had been packed more densely, part of the accesses could have been avoided. Note that a page utilization in excess of the target utilization counts as a negative performance loss, i.e., a performance gain.
Clustering loss. Once we have factored away any utilization loss, the remaining I/Os reflect the performance of a ”tightly packed” leaf level. Clustering loss is the difference between the conceptually tightly packed leaves in the index and the corresponding leaves in the optimal tree. In the example, the result set is spread over three leaves, or $8/3$ tightly packed leaves. The difference between that and the two leaf accesses in the optimal tree is $2/3$, the clustering loss.

To summarize the leaf-level metrics established for the example query: excess coverage loss is one I/O, utilization loss is $1/3$ I/Os and clustering loss $2/3$ I/Os. The sum is two I/Os, which is the total performance loss that the example query experiences at the leaf level.

5 Conclusion

`Amdb`'s analysis facilities, in concert with its visualization features, are an invaluable tool for understanding the performance characteristics of an AM and pinpointing the causes of deficiences. The analysis framework provides a breakdown of an AM workload's performance along three axes relevant to tree-based AMs: clustering, utilization, and the quality of subtree predicates. For each of these categories, `amdb` reports a performance loss in I/Os using an approximation to a workload- optimal tree as the basis for comparison. Such a breakdown provides a better characterization of AM performance than aggregate numbers and is universally applicable to any AM design based on the GiST abstraction. In [6] we detail how these metrics are computed for an aggregate workload as well as on a per-node and per-query basis, and we illustrate the use of these metrics on traditional AMs. `Amdb` has been instrumental in several experimental design projects for improving the performance of traditional AMs for specific applications [8, 9]. In [6] we highlight experiences in optimizing bulk-loaded R-trees for content-based image retrieval tasks, and summarize a user study in which a graduate database class was asked to improve the performance of AMs on a synthetic dataset.

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A Status Report on XXL—a Software Infrastructure for Efficient Query Processing

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Abstract

XXL is a Java library that contains a rich infrastructure for implementing advanced query processing functionality. The library offers low-level components like access to raw disks as well as high-level ones like a query optimizer. On the intermediate levels, XXL provides a demand-driven cursor algebra, a framework for indexing and a powerful package for supporting aggregation. The library is publicly available under GNU LGPL and comes with a full documentation.

1 Introduction

This paper describes the most important components of XXL, the eXtensible and fleXible Library for efficient query processing [1, 2, 3]. Multiple reasons have driven the design and implementation of the library:

- Many of the algorithms developed for query processing have been implemented in an ad-hoc manner. The software design of these algorithms is poor and therefore, their application is quite complicated and limited to specific (operating) systems. Furthermore, the modification of existing code is more complicated since the documentation is often not complete or even not available.
- XXL should support experimental evaluations within a uniform testbed that is freely available. It is difficult to compare two access methods, for example, when the underlying platform is not the same. The usage of different programming languages and compilers already results in substantial differences in the runtime. Consequently, most of the comparisons are based on a simplistic computing model where the number of I/Os is the only criterion.
- A more ambitious goal has been that XXL could serve as a repository for algorithms and use-cases. We recognized that many algorithms are published in papers, but only a few implementations are freely available. Wouldn't it be great to have a collection of algorithms implemented under a uniform framework? At least in our research group, XXL has served as a repository where the code of our most important research results is transparently present.

The XXL project started four years ago. One of our first design decisions implied to use Java as the underlying programming language. With respect to our goals mentioned above, we were convinced that the advantages

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of Java will outweigh its disadvantages. In particular, XXL benefits from the rich functionality available in other Java libraries like the API of the SDK [4] and Colt [5]. We also agreed that the design of the library should be based on popular design patterns [6]. This improves the readability and reusability of the code, and leads to a comprehensive documentation. XXL uses design patterns like factory, iterator and decorator. In order to improve code reusability, functional concepts had a strong influence on the design of the library. Java's anonymous classes are an excellent mechanism to provide functional abstraction in Java with very little overhead.

Another important aspect of our library is that classes should be well documented and equipped with use-cases. These are important for inexperienced users to get familiar with the mechanisms and the handling of the library. A simple use-case is therefore attached to every class in its corresponding main method. For more complex application scenarios, we also provide use-cases in separate classes.

The rest of the paper gives a brief outline of the functionality of XXL, placing emphasis on the new concepts that have been developed recently. In Section 2, we first provide an introduction of the basics like our functional approach, containers and cursors. The principles for query processing like indexing and join processing are presented in Section 3. Another new important component is our native XML storage. In Section 4, advanced concepts are presented where metadata has to be taken into account. In particular, we introduce our object-relational package and show how to provide query optimization within our library.

2 Basic Components

2.1 Functions and Predicates

Functional abstraction is a powerful mechanism for writing compact code. Since functions are not first class citizens in Java, XXL provides the interface `Function` which has to be implemented by a functional class. A new functional object is declared at runtime using one of the following methods:

1. An anonymous class is implemented by extending `Function` and overriding a method `invoke` that should contain the executable code. An example for declaring a new function is given as follows:

```
Function maxComp = new Function() {
  public Object invoke (Object o1, Object o2) {
    return (((Comparable) o1).compareTo(o2) > 0) ? o1 : o2;
  }
}
```

2. The method `compose` of a functional object can be called to declare a new function by composition of functional objects.

The code of a functional object is executed by calling the method `invoke` with the expected number of parameters. Note that functional objects in XXL may have a status and therefore, are more powerful than pure mathematical functions.

Due to its importance in database systems, we decided to provide a separate interface (`Predicate`) for Boolean functions. This improves the readability of the code as well as its performance since expensive casts are avoided. Relevant to databases are particularly predicates like `exist` for specifying subqueries and the predicates for supporting a three-value logic.

2.2 Containers

A container is an implementation of a map that provides an abstraction from the underlying physical storage. If an object is inserted into a container, a new ID is created and returned. An object of a container can only be retrieved via the corresponding ID. Since a container is generally used for bridging the gap between levels of a storage hierarchy, mechanisms for buffer management are already included in a container.

There are many different implementations of containers in XXL. The class `MapContainer` refers to a container where the set of objects is kept in main memory. The purpose of this container is to run queries fast in memory and to support debugging. The class `BlockFileContainer` represents a file of blocks, where a block refers to an array of bytes with a fixed length. This is for instance useful when index-structures like R-trees are implemented.

Java does not support operations on binary data and therefore, a block has to be serialized into its object representation. Java's serialization mechanism is however not appropriate since it has to be defined at compile time. It is also too inflexible because there is only at most one serialization method for a class. XXL overcomes these deficiencies by introducing the class `ConverterContainer` that is a decorated container, i.e., an object of this class is a container and consists of a container. In addition, this class provides a converter that transforms an object into a different representation. A `BufferedContainer` is also a decorator. Its primary task is to support object buffering in XXL.

In order to run experiments on external storage without interfering with the underlying operating systems, XXL contains classes that support access to raw devices. There are two possibilities:

1. The class `NativeRawAccess` offers native methods on a raw device. By using `NativeRawAccess` the class `RawAccessRAF` extends the class `java.io.RandomAccessFile`, which is the storage interface of `BlockFileContainer`.

2. XXL offers an implementation of an entire file system that runs on a raw device. This is able to deliver files as objects of a class that extends `java.io.RandomAccessFile`. Therefore, an object of the class `BlockFileContainer` can store its blocks in files of XXL's file system.

2.3 Cursor

A cursor is an abstract mechanism to access objects within a stream. Cursors in XXL are independent from the specific type of the underlying objects. The interface of a cursor is given by:

```
interface Cursor extends java.util.Iterator {
  Object peek();
  void update(Object o);
  void reset();
  void close();
}
```

A cursor extends the functionality of the iterator provided in the package `java.util`. The `peek` method reports the next object of the iteration without changing the state of the iteration. A call of `reset` sets the cursor to the beginning of the iteration. The method `close` stops the iteration and releases resources like file handles. The method `update` modifies the current object of the iteration.

XXL offers an algebra for processing cursors, i. e., there are a set of operations that require cursors as input and return a cursor as output. We distinguish among three kinds of cursors:

- *Input cursors* are wrappers for transforming a data source into a cursor. For example, XXL provides an input cursor for transforming `java.sql.ResultSet` into a cursor.
- *Processing cursors* are the ones that modify the input cursor. Examples for such cursors are `Join`, `Grouper`, `Mapper` whose semantics are similar to the ones of the corresponding relational operators.
- *Flow cursors* do not change the objects within the input stream, but they are restricted to change the underlying data flow. For example, an instance of the class `TeeCursor` duplicates the input cursor.

3 Query Processing

3.1 Indexing

One of the most important packages of XXL is `indexStructures` that consists of a high-level framework for index-structures. The purpose of this package is twofold: First, it contains many different index-structures that are ready-to-use. Second, the implementation of new ones should be simplified.

Let us give an example for using an index-structure like an M-tree [7]:

```
MTree mTree = new MTree(MTree.HYPERPLANE_SPLIT);
mTree.initialize(getDescriptor, container, minCap, maxCap);
```

The first step is to call a constructor. In this example we used the one with a parameter where the split strategy is specified. The second step is an initialization of the M-tree. The first parameter `getDescriptor` refers to a functional object that computes a so-called *descriptor* for a given data item. In case of the M-tree, a descriptor corresponds to a bounding sphere. Our M-tree is able to manage any kind of objects as long as such a functional object is available. The next parameter is the container object which is responsible for managing the nodes of the tree. The other two parameters specify the minimum and maximum number of items within a node. Thereafter, the tree is ready for receiving operations like insertions and queries.

An implementation of a new index-structure requires a fundamental understanding of our framework that is a direct implementation of grow-and-post trees [8]. An index-structure is primarily determined by the inner class `Node`, which does not only describe the structure of the tree nodes, but also provides essential functionality for splitting and searching. The main task when implementing a new index-structure is to code a specialized class for the nodes. For example, a function is required to serialize a node of an index-structure. More details about the implementation can be found in our Java sources [3], where B-trees are probably the best starting point.

3.2 Join Processing

Joins are among the most important operators in a database system. While relational systems basically rely on equi-joins, new applications like spatial databases require new types of join predicates. The goal of our join processing framework was to provide a single implementation with the intention to support a bunch of different join predicates efficiently. Furthermore, our framework is sufficiently generic to cover both sort-merge joins and hash-based joins. It keeps a small subset, a so-called *sweep-area*, for each input source in main-memory where the join is processed on. Elements from the input are inserted into the associated sweep-area one by one. After the insertion of an element, the other sweep-area is checked for join partners. A sweep-area can periodically reorganized to remove the elements not producing join results anymore.

The interface `SweepArea` is the top class of all sweep-areas in XXL. The most important functionality looks as follows:

```
public interface SweepArea {
  public void insert(Object o);
  public void reorganize(Object curStatus, int id);
  public Iterator query(Object o);
  ...
}
```

The operations refer to the basic steps of join processing as described above. Note that every input has a unique identifier which has to be specified when calling `reorganize`. There is a large number of different classes that implement the interface `SweepArea`. We refer the interested reader to the documentation of XXL [3].

A join in XXL is called by the following statement:

```
Iterator it = new Join(input1, input2, HashBagSweepArea.FACTORY_METHOD,
                       Tuplify.DEFAULT_INSTANCE);
```

The first two parameters refer to the two input sources. The third parameter is a factory method for creating a sweep-area. In our example, the sweep-area is organized as a hash-table [15]. The last parameter is a functional object that specifies how to construct the output tuple of the join.

If a user of XXL is interested in implementing a new kind of join, she/he basically has to implement an appropriate class that satisfies the interface `SweepArea`. This is substantial easier than implementing a join from scratch.

3.3 Aggregation

Aggregate operations are important in large database systems to deliver a quick overview of the response set. In contrast to a relational DBMS, XXL supports functions as results of aggregate operations. This allows returning a histogram or other more advanced statistical data structures directly to the user (without producing an intermediate relation). In the following, we briefly describe the basic structures of our package `statistics`.

This package is based on a generic aggregator cursor that applies a user-defined functions to aggregate the objects of a given iterator. This cursor returns the intermediate value of the aggregate among the input that has been consumed so far. The final value can be reported by a call to *aggregator.last()*, which consumes the entire iterator. An example of such an aggregator is given below:

```
Aggregator aggregator = new Aggregator(
  new RandomIntegers(100, 50),
  new Function () { // the aggregation function
    public Object invoke (Object agg, Object next) {
      return (agg == null) ? next : maxComp.invoke(agg, next);
    }
  }
);
```

In our example, the source consists of 50 random integers in the range [0,100). The anonymous function computes the maximum of two elements where `agg` represents the aggregated value up to the previous element of the input and `next` is the current element of the input.

Our statistics package provides different implementations of selectivity estimators with histograms and kernels as well as estimators based on query feedback. We refer the interested reader to our documentation [3], in order to get more familiar with these concepts.

3.4 XML Storage

XXL contains functionality for processing queries on XML data. In addition to wrappers that transform XML input into Java objects, XXL also provides a class that implements native XML storage. A brief description of this class will be given in the following.

The native storage of XXL is an implementation of Natix [9] that performs quite similar to a B-tree. The basic idea is to keep adjacent nodes of an XML-object physically close to each other in one page of the tree, in order to support insertions and updates efficiently. An insertion of an XML node first determines the page where it has to be stored. This might result in an overflow of the page which then has to be split into two. This triggers a split of the XML document into smaller pieces which fit into pages.

4 Advanced Features

In this section, we present two packages of XXL that goes beyond the pure query processing techniques presented so far. Both of these packages rely on the availability and maintenance of metadata, whereas the functionality is inherited from the core packages. In order to deliver metadata, a class has to satisfy the interface

`MetaDataProvider` that only offers the method `getMetaData`. The class `MetaDataCursor` combines for example the two interfaces `MetaDataProvider` and `Cursor`.

Relational Connectivity XXL's package relational offers the functionality for processing on object-relational data sources. The functionality of the package is similar to the one of cursors, but the operators are enhanced by the corresponding metadata. In addition, the operators are processing tuples rather than Java objects. Consequently, there are operators for join processing, grouping, projection, ...

An important functionality of this package is the availability of wrappers for transforming an object of the class `java.sql.ResultSet` into an object of class `MetaDataCursor` and vice versa. This enables us to process data from relational sources directly without storing them in a local database. Database systems like Cloudscape have increased the functionality of SQL by accepting cursors in the from-clause. This yields an easy approach to extending the functionality of a database system. In [1], we presented an implementation of a similarity join in Cloudscape using XXL's join operator.

Query Optimization The recent version of XXL also includes a query optimizer for transforming relational operator trees into more efficient ones. In analogy to the optimizer of a DBMS, we first check for semantically correctness of the operator tree. Then, the optimizer starts transforming the operator tree by using a set of rules and a cost model. Eventually, the optimizer selects the specific algorithms for the implementation of the operators.

Since our query optimizer is part of a library, we require metadata being attached to data sources, operators, algorithms, functions and predicates. For operators, there are the interfaces `OperatorInputMetaData` and `OperatorOutputMetaData`, which extend the functionality of `java.sql.ResultSetMetaData`. These interfaces include methods that estimate the selectivity of an underlying operator and its costs. Our functional metadata (`FunctionMetaData`) offer methods that specify the attributes of the input stream. Metadata on predicates also return an estimation of the predicate's selectivity. Moreover, the algorithms considered in the physical optimization step have to deliver metadata like the associated logical operator.

Important to the design of the optimizer was its extensibility and flexibility. In our architecture, it is easy to add new predicates, operators and algorithms. Moreover, the underlying cost model is not fixed and might be replaced by a different one. As an extra feature, we support an XML format for queries, i. e. operator trees can be transformed into XML and vice versa.

5 Related Work

There has been only little work on the design and development of query processing libraries in the database literature up to date. Most of the work published in the database community presents a system-oriented architecture.

Our work has been largely inspired by the pioneering work of Graefe and his Volcano system [10]. Both, Volcano and XXL, use a tree-structured query evaluation strategy, represented by algebra expressions, that is used to execute queries by demand-driven dataflows. Volcano already used so-called *support functions* for manipulating individual data objects in the dataflow. XXL however goes beyond the functionality of Volcano. First, it offers a richer query processing infrastructure, many different index-structures and more support for statistics. Second, XXL also contains wrappers for diverse data sources. Third, the object-oriented design of XXL allows an easy extension of its functionality.

The work on GiST [11] is closely related to our indexing framework, but GiST is actually a system that is tightly coupled with its storage system. The focus of GIST is only on index-structures, whereas other functionality is missing. It is notable that the grid-file implementation [12] had already great abstraction mechanisms like iterators.

The design of libraries is more related to the area of algorithms and data structures, where libraries like LEDA [13] are well known. The focus of LEDA is more on data structures for main memory rather than on the management of very large data sets. Many of the abstraction mechanisms like functional classes are not available in LEDA. TPIE [14] is designed to assist programmers in writing high performance I/O-efficient programs. However, the operators of TPIE cannot pass data directly between each other, but have to use a temporary storage area. In addition, TPIE does not represent a pure library, because it relies on a special memory manager for organizing the physical memory. This also implies that TPIE is not platform independent.

6 Conclusions and Future Work

XXL is a query processing library implemented in Java that includes the most important ingredients for efficient query processing. The design of the library was determined by two goals: the functionality of XXL should be extended easily and XXL should be flexible enough for being customized fast to specific problems. Due to its powerful methods, XXL is also an excellent platform for experimental work. Coding of new algorithms and data structures requires substantial less time than beginning from scratch.

XXL is a live project! We are currently working on improving our indexing framework and strive for a realization of a processing algebra on data streams.

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Generating Traffic Data

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Abstract

Experimental investigations of spatiotemporal algorithms and data structures demand for generators that produce realistic data sets. Especially Location-Based Services (LBS) require the simulation of traffic. In this case, the data sets consist of objects that move within a given infrastructure. In this paper, two different approaches—the Network-based Generator and the City Simulator—are reviewed. Both generators for traffic data have a great deal in common, but are different in certain points. In addition, a short overview on projects using these generators is given.

1 Introduction

Comprehensible performance evaluations are one of the most important requirements in the field of spatiotemporal algorithms and data structures. This demand covers the preparation and use of well-defined test data and benchmarks enabling the systematic and comprehensible evaluation and comparison of data structures and algorithms.

In experimental investigations, *synthetic data* following statistical distributions as well as *real data* from real-world applications are used as test data or as query sets. The use of synthetic data allows testing the behavior of an algorithm or of a data structure under exactly specified conditions or in extreme situations. In addition, for testing the scalability, synthetic data sets are often suitable. However, it is difficult to assess the performance of real applications by employing synthetic data. The use of real data tries to solve this problem. In this case, the selection of data is crucial. For non-experts it is often difficult to decide whether a data set reflects a "realistic" situation or not.

For testing spatiotemporal algorithms and data structures, moving objects are required. Such objects should model moving persons or driving vehicles. Especially for Location-Based Services, data sets are useful that simulate traffic. One suitable approach for getting *traffic data* consists of (1) a definition of an infrastructure, which restricts the movement of the objects, and (2) the computation of the moving objects within this infrastructure. If the infrastructure models a real-world environment, such an approach can be understood as a simulation that generates synthetic data on top of real data.

In the last few years, several generators for producing spatiotemporal data have been developed [10, 8, 9, 11]. Section 2 of this paper presents two proposals that generate traffic data according to the approach

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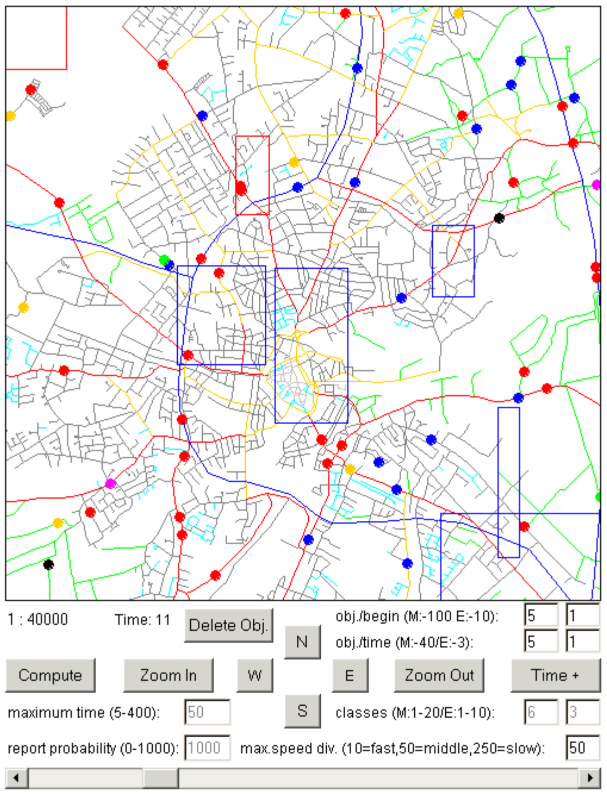
mentioned before: the Network-Based Generator by Thomas Brinkhoff and the City Simulator by J. Kaufman, J. Myllymaki, and J. Jackson from IBM. Section 3 gives a short overview on projects that make use of data generated by these generators. The paper concludes with a summary and some suggestions for future work.

2 Generators for Traffic Data

2.1 Network-based Generator by Brinkhoff

The *Network-based Generator* by Thomas Brinkhoff [1, 2] is based on the observation that objects often move according to a network. This observation holds, e.g., for road traffic as well as for railway traffic. Air traffic also follows a network of air corridors and shipping is strongly influenced by rivers, channels, and other waterways. Herds of animals often follow a (invisible) network during their migration. In consequence, (almost) no objects can be observed outside of the network. Figure 1 illustrates the graphical interface of the generator.

The generator uses a discrete time model: the whole period is divided by *n* time stamps. At each time stamp, new moving objects are generated and existing objects are moved or are deleted because they have reached their destination. Each moving object belongs to a class that specifies the behavior of the object. For example, the (maximum) speed is defined by such a class.


1 : 40000 Time: 11

obj./begin (M:-100 E:-10): 5 1

obj./time (M:-40/E:-3): 5 1

maximum time (5-400): 50

classes (M:1-20/E:1-10): 6 3

report probability (0-1000): 1000

max.speed div. (10=fast,50=middle,250=slow): 50

Figure 1: Visualization of the Network-based Generator. The points are the moving objects. The rectangles visualize the external objects. The colors indicate the classes of roads, of moving objects, and of external objects.

Each edge of the network belongs to an edge class, which defines the speed limit and the capacity of an edge. If the number of objects traversing an edge at a time stamp exceeds the specified capacity, the speed limit on this edge will be decreased.

Furthermore, so-called external objects can be generated in order to simulate the impact of weather conditions or similar influences. There are external objects, which exist over the whole period, and others, which are created in the course of the simulation and are deleted later. External objects may change their position and their (rectangular) shape over the time. If a moving object is in the catchment area of an external object, its speed is influenced according to the parameters of the class the external object belongs to.

The computations of the number of new objects per time stamp, of the start location, of the length of a new route and of the location of the destination are time-dependent. This feature allows modeling daily commuting and rush hours. In order to speed up the computation, the route of an object is computed once at the time of its creation. However, the fastest path may change over the time by the motion of other objects and of external objects. Therefore, a re-computation is triggered by events depending on the travel time (in order to simulate messages of radio traffic services) and on the deviation between the current speed and the expected speed on an edge (in order to simulate the reaction of drivers in a traffic jam).

The Network-based Generator is written in Java 1.1. Its behavior can by influenced by a parameter file as well as by extending or modifying a set of well-chosen Java classes that are provided as source code. A graphical user interface allows the setting of parameters and the visualization of the network and of the generated objects.

The network used by the generator is specified by simple text files or by spatial data stored in Oracle Spatial. The same holds for the output: the reported objects are written to a text file or into a database. The following example shows a selected part of such output file; each line consists of the type of event, the object ID, the class of the moving object, the index of the time stamp and the x,y coordinates:

```
newpoint    0   3   0   20435   19558
point   0   3   1   20455   19688
newpoint    5   0   1   13858   10979
point   0   3   2   20475   19818
point   5   0   2   13800   11627
newpoint    10  1   2   5079    18012
point   0   3   3   20496   19948
point   5   0   3   13504   12223
point   10  1   3   5334    17822
newpoint    15  0   3   13566   20167
disappearpoint  0   3   4   20493   20078
point   5   0   4   13258   12841
point   10  1   4   5981    17832
point   15  0   4   13612   19876
```

The Network-based Generator can be downloaded from following web site: *http://www.fh-oow.de/institute/iapg/personen/brinkhoff/generator.shtml*

2.2 City Simulator by IBM

The City Simulator by J. Kaufman, J. Myllymaki, and J. Jackson [4, 5] is a scalable, three-dimensional model city that enables the creation of dynamic spatial data simulating the motion of up to 1 million moving objects (persons). The data space of the city is divided into different types of places that influence the motion of the objects: roads, intersections, lawns and buildings are such places that define together a *city plan*. Each building consists of an individual number of floors for modeling the third dimension. Figure 2 illustrates a part of a city plan and the moving objects. The dark areas are buildings that are connected by a grid of roads. The small points are moving objects; their colors indicate the current floor.

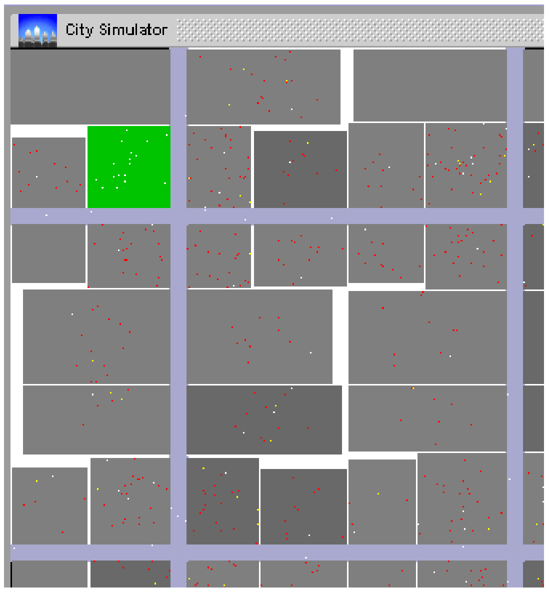


Figure 2: Visualization of a city plan.

Moving objects being on a road enter with a user-defined probability the first floor of a building. Objects on the first floor may leave the building if they are near a door. They perform random walks on a building floor or they may move up or move down from one floor to the next floor depending on user-defined probabilities if they are near to specific points (stairs). An object on a road moves with a linear combination of random walk and the drift velocity of the road; the influence of the drift velocity increases as a moving object gets closer to the center of a road.

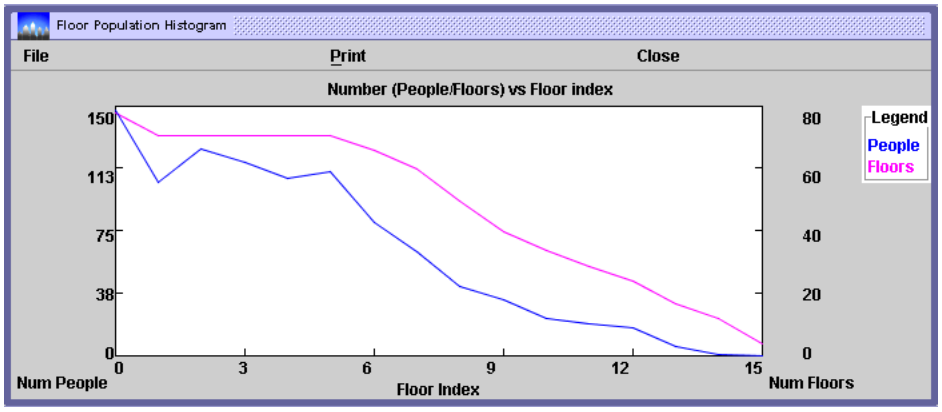


Figure 3: The floor population histogram visualizes the number of floors and the number of moving objects in respect to a floor index.

The City Simulator is written in Java 2.0 using the Xerces class library. Several parameters allow controlling the simulator. The number of objects and the number of time stamps are examples for such parameters. The parameters are defined by a parameter file and may be re-defined by the input from a graphical user interface. Other parameters are defined by the city plan. The user interface allows the visualization of the city plan, of the generated objects, and of the number of objects being on the different floors (see Figure 3).

The output is produced as a text file, which contains a unique object ID, a time stamp, and x,y,z coordinates. The next example shows some selected lines such a file:

```
# index, time,  x,y,z
1, 4840.658295, 819.6,251.4,4.6     # cycle = 320
1, 5266.601442, 817.2,247.8,0.0     # cycle = 350
1, 5879.725107, 807.2,245.6,0.0     # cycle = 390
1, 6176.540532, 804.2,249.0,4.6     # cycle = 410
1, 6327.931518, 805.6,249.6,9.3     # cycle = 420
```

The city plan is described by an XML file. It contains information about geometries and about the probabilities of movements:

```
<Road Angle="0.0" Length="470.0" Width="100.0">
    <EndPoint1 x="0" y="1050"/>
    <EndPoint2 x="470" y="1050"/>
    <MotionRules EnterProb="0.1" ExitProb="0.1" VelGradient="2.4"/>
</Road>
<GrassyField Angle="0.0" Length="518.0" Width="506.0">
    <EndPoint1 x="481" y="746"/>
    <EndPoint2 x="999" y="746"/>
    <MotionRules ExitProb="0.1"/>
</GrassyField>
<Building Angle="0.0" Length="518.0" Width="394.0">
    <EndPoint1 x="481" y="1298"/>
    <EndPoint2 x="999" y="1298"/>
    <MotionRules ExitProb="0.1" UpProb="0.03"/>
    <Floor Altitude="18" Angle="0" FloorNum="1" Length="518" Width="394">
        <EndPoint1 x="481" y="1298"/>
        <EndPoint2 x="999" y="1298"/>
```

```
            <MotionRules DownProb="0.03" UpProb="0.03"/>
        </Floor>
        <Floor Altitude="36" Angle="0" FloorNum="2" Length="518" Width="394">
            <EndPoint1 x="481" y="1298"/>
            <EndPoint2 x="999" y="1298"/>
            <MotionRules DownProb="0.03" UpProb="0.03"/>
        </Floor>
    </Building>
```

The Java class representing the city plan can be replaced by a user-specific class fulfilling a specified Java interface. The download address of the City Simulator is: *https://secure.alphaworks.ibm.com/aw.nsf/techs/citysimulator*.

2.3 Discussion

Comparing both generators for traffic data, we can observe several similarities:

- A discrete time model is used.
- The generators are implemented in Java. Compiled class files are provided plus some source code.
- The infrastructure is specified by user-defined files.
- The motion of the objects is computed by a simulation.
- The output is produced as simple text files.

There are some significant differences: While the Network-based Generator is limited to two-dimensional data sets, the City Simulator supports three-dimensional city plans and computes 3D points. Another difference concerns the map: The first approach limits the movements of the objects by edges of width 0 whereas the City Simulator defines areas. As a result, spatial clusters in the shape of lines can by expected by the Network-based generator, and polygonal clusters using the City Simulator. In the case of the City Simulator, the movement of the objects is influenced by the rules of the place they are in. In contrast, the Network-based Generator also considers the possible influence of other moving objects.

3 Applications

This section gives a short overview on projects that are using the presented generators for traffic data.

LOCUS LOCUS [5] is a testbed for dynamic spatial indexing. It supports the DynaMark benchmark specification [6]. The City Simulator is a component of the architecture of LOCUS for generating location trace files. Each record in a location trace file is used for updating the spatiotemporal index. After *n* updates, *m* queries like proximity queries, k-nearest neighbor queries, and sorted-distance queries are executed in respect to the location of a user. Figure 4 depicts the architecture of LOCUS.

MOX Applications tracking and presenting mobile objects require to be kept informed about new, relocated, or removed objects fulfilling a given query condition. Consequently, the spatiotemporal database system must trigger its clients by transmitting the necessary information about such update operations. The query, which causes this process, is called *continuous query*. MOX is an architecture for querying XML-represented moving objects [3]. It especially supports continuous queries. Figure 5 illustrates the architecture of MOX. For testing the system and for investigating continuous queries, the Network-based Generator has been integrated into MOX. The objects produced by the generator are inserted into the database, which triggers the affected continuous queries.

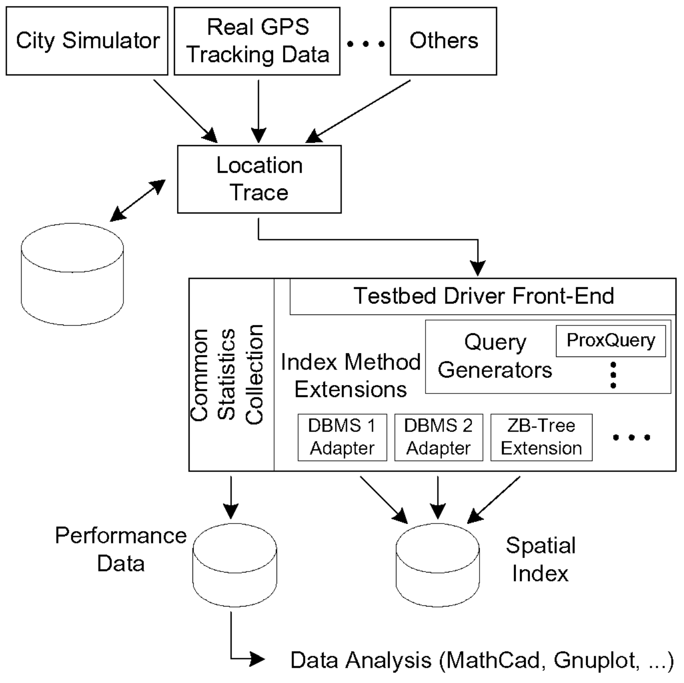


Figure 4: Architecture of LOCUS [5]. The City Simulator is one possible component for generating location trace files.

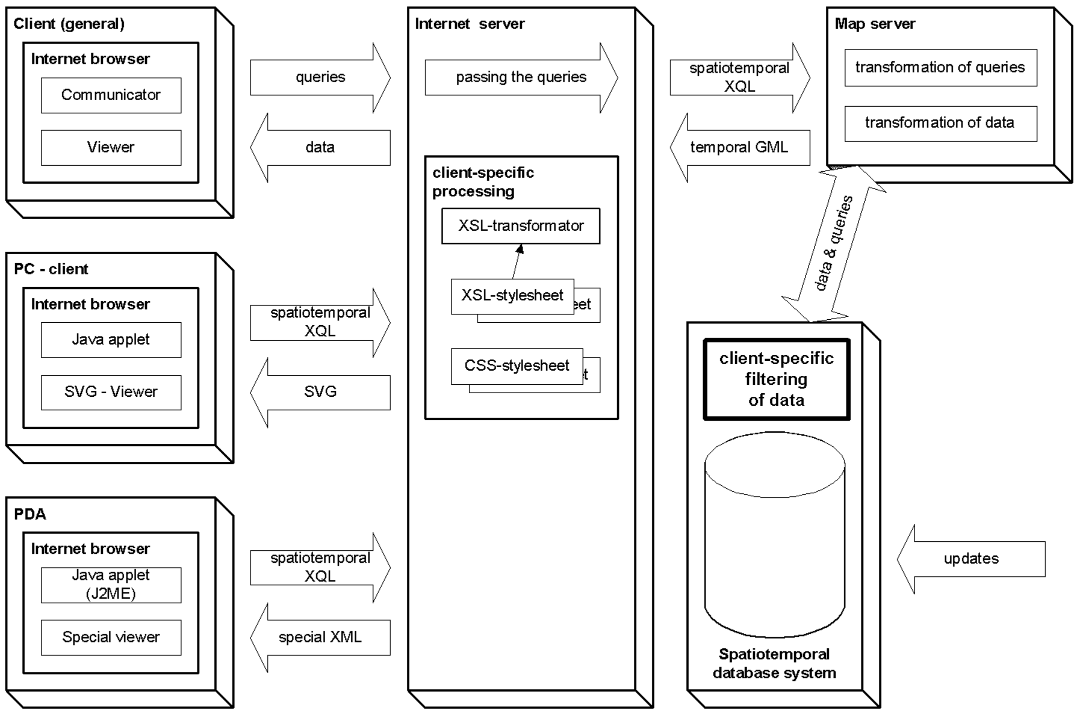


Figure 5: Architecture of MOX [3]. The Network-based Generator is used for performing the updates in the database system.

Performance Tests The use of the presented generators for experimental evaluations of spatiotemporal algorithms and data structures is just starting. A first example is the investigation of approximations for trajectory segments by Zhu, Su, and Ibarra [12].

4 Conclusions

Two approaches for generating traffic data – the Network-based Generator and the City Simulator – have been presented. Both generators allow the simulation of the motion of a huge number of moving objects. They have been integrated into more complex architectures for testing spatiotemporal queries. However, the number of investigations using these generators is still quite low. In the next years, the presented generators must prove their usefulness.

For improving the usability of generators for spatiotemporal data, a (more or less) standardized XML output format (e.g. defined by using GML 3 [7]) would be helpful. Furthermore, an open exchange forum for providing maps (i.e. network files and city plans), parameter settings, location trace files, and so on could help to boost the use of the generators.

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Synthetic and Real Spatiotemporal Datasets

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Abstract

In the context of a spatiotemporal research environment, it is very important to be able to systematically generate data with predictable characteristics. For instance, it allows one to use the same datasets, or others similarly characterized, for benchmarking access structures or mining techniques. This paper presents a survey of existing generators of synthetic spatiotemporal data. It also covers a few real datasets, which are (at the time of this writing) publicly available for research use.

1 Introduction

While spatial data management and temporal management have been researched since more than 20 years ago (e.g., [6, 13]), the combination of both as a research topic is younger although just as strong in terms of interest (e.g., [7]).

Among the many topics which have been explored recently, such as spatiotemporal data modeling and query languages (e.g., [5]), spatiotemporal data mining (e.g., [11]) and spatiotemporal indexing (e.g., [8]), many (notably the former two) require the use of datasets in order to be evaluated. Hence the need for an automatic means to generate datasets in a systematic way and with predictable characteristics. Interestingly, despite the same need exists for "purely" spatial and temporal data, little work on data generation can be found, e.g., the *a La Carte* environment for benchmarking spatial joins (http://www.infres.enst.fr/~bdtest/sigbench/) [4] and the *SpyTime* environment for temporal data (http://www.cs.nyu.edu/cs/faculty/shasha/spytime/spytime.html).

Although we also cover some real spatiotemporal datasets, this paper deals mainly with the issue of generating synthetic spatiotemporal data, with a focus on non-networked based data. (Network-based data generators are covered in [1] and elsewhere in this issue.) Towards this goal, the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 covers GSTD, to our knowledge, the first web-based, spatiotemporal data generator and its enhancements over time. Two other systems, G-TERD and Oporto are also reviewed, and all three are compared among themselves. Next, Section 3 presents some real datasets one could also use. Finally, we give directions for future work in Section 4.

Bulletin of the IEEE Computer Society Technical Committee on Data Engineering

2 Spatiotemporal Data Generators

2.1 GSTD

GSTD [16] was initially built upon a few basic yet general principles discussed in [14]. As a result GSTD currently supports the generation of both points and MBRs (Minimum Bounding Rectangles). The generated datasets are transaction-time oriented and memory-less (i.e., future events do not depend on past states). Further, the cardinality of the dataset is assumed to be constant throughout the data generation process.

The following three parameters control the data generation process and allow the generation of a wide variety of scenarios (we use the same terminology as in [16]):

- The *duration* of an object, i.e., how often (time-wise) a change of its position occurs.
- The *shift* of an object, i.e., how fast (or slow) it will move.
- The *resizing* of an object (applicable only to objects of type MBR), i.e., the shrinking/enlargement of objects.

For each of those parameters the user can chose a statistical distribution to be followed; the current implementation supports Uniform, Gaussian and Skewed (Zipfian) distributions. In addition the user can also specify upper and lower bounds for each of the three parameters.

Finally, GSTD also provides three different ways one can handle the case of points leaving the dataspace of interest (the unit square): (i) in the *radar* approach, objects may leave the dataspace of interest and while not displayed are still considered since they can eventually return (and be re-displayed); (ii) objects can also "bounce off" the space coordinates in the *adjustment* approach; and (iii) in the *toroid* approach, as the name suggests, the data space is assumed to be toroidal, hence objects never leave it.

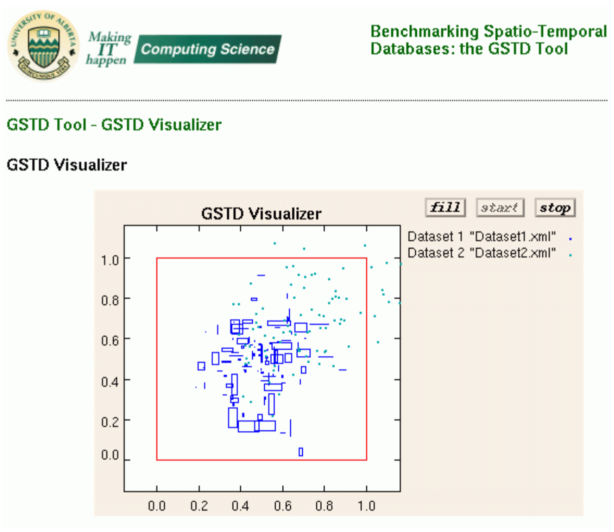


Figure 1: Snapshot of two (animated) datasets being displayed concurrently

Some enhancements over the original GSTD algorithm were introduced in [10]. First the idea of *nervousness* is introduced, i.e., varying the object's *shift*. In GSTD's initial design the changes in the objects' shift were to take effect during the whole simulation lifetime. The introduction of the new parameter allows it to change its behavior (again in a systematic way). A second change was the notion of an *infrastructure*, i.e., objects which obstruct movement. Infrastructure can be composed of real objects or synthetically generated MBRs. In the latter case, MBRs could change their shape/size and move as well.

Initially developed as a stand alone application, GSTD was improved and re-implemented as a web-based application (available via http://db.cs.ualberta.ca:8080/gstd; the site also provides source code for the data generator, so that it can be run locally.) [15]. Its current version allows one to generate and to store on the Web server several datasets in each run. One or more of those datasets can be visualized (in an animated manner) at the same time. The user can download the dataset (in XML format) for future use and/or distribution. Note that as long as the users publish the values of the GSTD parameters they used, anyone can reproduce (and use) exactly the same dataset – this is the chief goal of GSTD, namely, removing the *ad hoc* nature of evaluating and comparing different systems.

To illustrate some of the GSTD features from above, Figure 1 shows a single snapshot of two datasets (generated separately) being displayed concurrently. One of the datasets exhibits points moving freely (radar approach) from a central cluster (Gaussian) towards the upper left corner of the dataspace, whereas the other dataset is a set of moving MBRs, which change shape and size in time.

2.2 G-TERD

The Generator for Time-Evolving Regional Data, G-TERD, (http://delab.csd.auth.gr/stdbs/g-terd.html) differs somewhat from GSTD in that it generates sequences of raster images [17]. As a separate paper in this issue is devoted to G-TERD, we cover only its relation to GSTD.

Whereas GSTD is web based, G-TERD is an MS-Windows based application; its source code for the (stand-alone) data generator is publicly available through the web. The generated data can be visualized (although not animated as for GSTD) using an accompanying application.

G-TERD allows the user to set more parameters than does GSTD. It supports the statistical distributions supported by GSTD and a few additional ones. While GSTD generates moving points and MRRs, G-TERD is able to generate regions of more general shapes, which may, e.g., rotate, enlarge, or shrink. The coloring of regions is also supported. Like GSTD, G-TERD allows for the specification of obstacles to movement.

GSTD's *radar* approach allows objects to leave the dataspace; the viewable area in GSTD is fixed and cannot be changed. In G-TERD, the dataspace is typically larger than what the user sees, and a so-called *scene-observer* capability allows the user to change point of view, e.g., follow a particular object's path in time or "fly" over the dataspace.

2.3 Oporto

The Oporto generator (http://www-inf.enst.fr/∼saglio/etudes/oporto/) [12] was not designed to be as general as GSTD or G-TERD; instead, it mimics a very specific scenario: fishing at sea. In a nutshell, it models fishing ships, which leave harbors following shoals of fish while at the same time avoiding storm areas. The shoals of fish themselves are attracted by plankton areas.

Harbors are static objects, while ships, storms and plankton areas, so-called *bad and good spots*, are dynamic ones. Ships and harbors are modeled as moving and static points, respectively, while spots are MBRs, which can vary in shape and size, but do not move. In addition, they always grow and subsequently shrink (which may not be exactly a very realistic assumption). Shoals of fish, on the other hand, can change size, shape and position over time. The user can model a shore line along with the location of harbors on it.

Unlike GSTD and G-TERD, the underlying model of the Oporto generator is based on the notion of attraction and repulsion. That is, ships (fish) are attracted by fish (plankton), whereas storm areas repel the ships.

While the authors argue that Oporto is capable of generating datasets representing several scenarios, it seems to be quite limited when compared to GSTD and G-TERD. Nevertheless, one can argue for the value of being based on a well known real application. Another limitation when compared to the other generators is its limited capability of generating data according to different distributions – only the Uniform distribution is supported.

Oporto allows the user to generate and visualize animated datasets using the web (like GSTD) and is also available as a MS Windows stand alone application (actually two, one for the the generator and another for the visualizing the results). In Figure 2, the two consecutive snapshots illustrate the motions of two moving objects (ships), with the former (latter) being attracted by a gray (white, respectively) shoals of fish.

3 Real Spatiotemporal Datasets

Data generators can produce datasets of any size and kind. To empirically evaluate algorithms size is of foremost importance, but the kind of data eliminates final doubts about the suitability of a method.

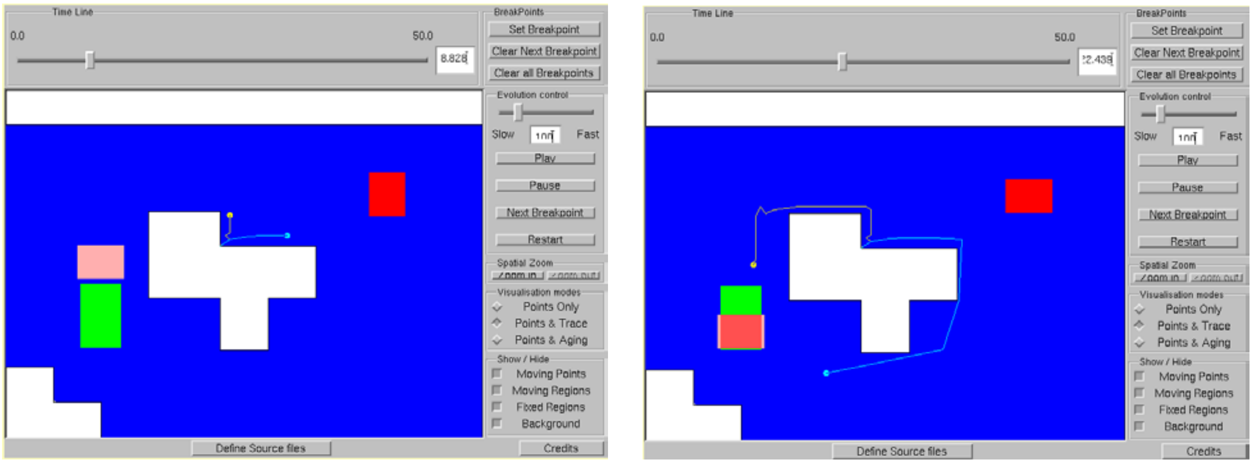


Figure 2: Snapshots of Oporto's interface

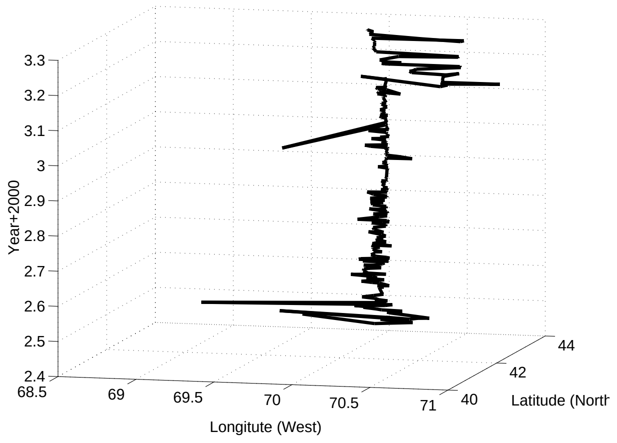
In the following, we survey a number of available datasets of varying size and kind. All datasets comprise position samples of moving point objects. They are characterized by the parameters (i) number of moving objects, (ii) number of position samples, (iii) spatial and (iv) temporal extent. Additional datasets can be found on the homepage of the author [3]. The visualization of the datasets uses a three-dimensional spatiotemporal representation [9].

Animal Tracking The tracking of animals is common for many scientific purposes. Two of the larger datasets that exist are the tracking of seals [19] and turtles [2]. The seal dataset (cf. Figure 3(a)) was obtained by tracking one animal ("Louise"). It consists of 261 position samples. The spatial extent of the data is 2 and 3.5 degrees of Longitude and Latitude, respectively. The temporal extent is from May 2002 to March 2003. The position samples in the dataset are of varying precision. Various degrees of goodness values in the dataset indicate the reliability of the positional fix. The same site features several other, although smaller datasets from seals, whales, pinnipeds, etc.

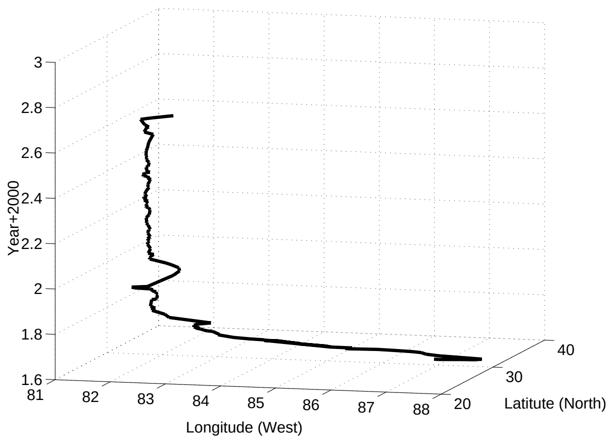
The tracking of a turtle resulted in the dataset visualized in Figure 3(b). It consists of 155 data points. The spatial extent of the data is 6 and 7 degrees of Longitude and Latitude, respectively. The temporal extent is from July 2001 to August 2003. No positional precision is indicted in the dataset. The same site contains a total of 11 turtle datasets of similar size.

Hurricanes A large meteorology database provides hurricane tracking data [18]. Figure 4(a) and (b) visualize the traces of 12 storms recorded in the year 2002. The dataset consists of 365 data points. The spatial extent of the data is 70 and 50 degrees of Longitude and Latitude, respectively. The temporal extent is from July to October 2002. The site contains overall storm tracking data from the years starting in 1996 up until the present.

Public Buses The largest dataset in this survey stems from the tracking of public transport buses in the urban area of the city of Patras, Greece. The dataset is a result of tracking 13 buses using GPS receivers. The dataset consists of 28619 entries which were obtained by sampling the position of the vehicle at a regular interval of 30 seconds. The spatial extent of the data is 16 and 20 kilometers of Longitude and Latitude, respectively. The temporal extent is a 24 hour interval. To obtain the dataset, please contact the second author.

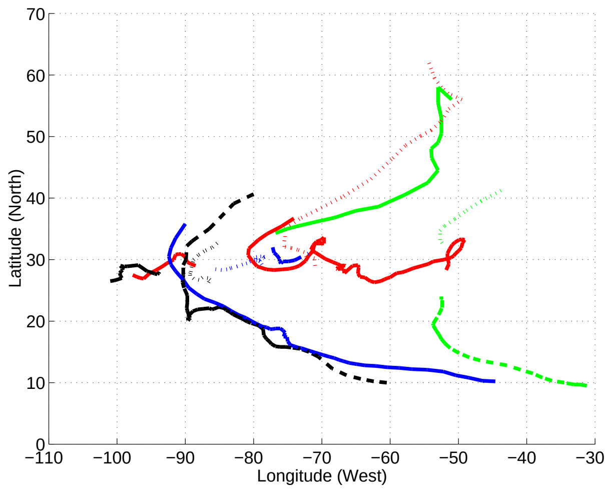


(a) seal

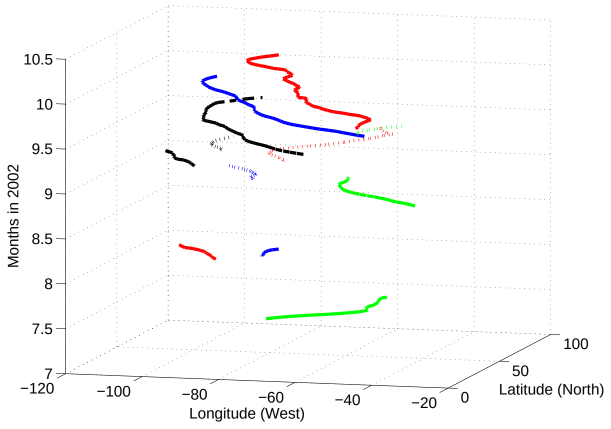


(b) turtle

Figure 3: Animal tracking datasets

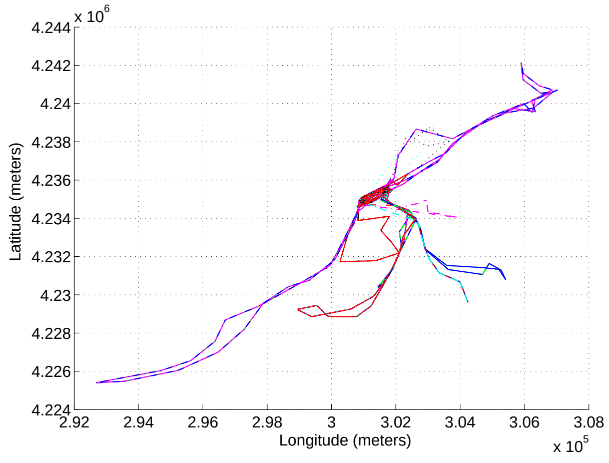


(a) spatial projection

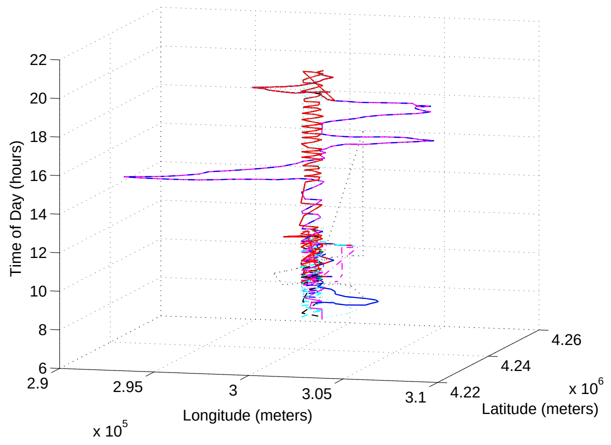


(b) spatiotemporal representation

Figure 4: Hurricane dataset



(a) spatial projection



(b) spatial projection

Figure 5: Bus dataset

4 Future Work

One clear shortcoming common to all of the above tools is that they can only generate 2D spatiotemporal data. Although one would not be able visualize the generated data, it would be useful (and not as intuitive) to be able to generate datasets in higher dimensional spaces.

Such tools could be further improved to allow maintaining a (likely moderated) database of datasets generated, specially those used in publications. Some published papers simply mention the use of those tools without specifying details, which makes it hard (if not impossible) for someone to duplicate their datasets, defeating the very purpose of such tools.

GSTD and Oporto could be extended to allow the user to import real datasets to serve as the data space's infrastructure (G-TERD does allow this) and/or allow the user to create those by sketching them in the interface itself. Another useful enhancement could be to have objects aware of each other, e.g., one cannot get closer (or farther) than a predetermined distance. (Oporto allows this in the special case of objects belonging to different classes only.) Note that this would require some kind of embedded spatiotemporal indexing, which could be a plug-in method provided by the user him/herself.

Indexing trajectories seems to be a topic of growing interest, as such, the above tools could also be extended to generate trajectories following some particular specification, e.g., be contained within a pre-defined corridor.

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Generating Dynamic Raster Data

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Abstract

Benchmarking of spatio-temporal databases is an issue of growing importance. In case large real data sets are not available, benchmarking requires the generation of artificial data sets following the real-world behavior of spatial objects that change their locations, shapes and sizes over time. In this report, a generator for changing raster data, called "Generator of Time-Evolving Regional Data" (G-TERD), is presented. The basic concepts that determine the function of G-TERD are the structure of complex two-dimensional raster objects, their color, maximum speed, zoom and rotation-angle per time slot, the influence of other moving or static objects on the speed and on the moving direction of an object, the position and movement of the scene-observer, the statistical distribution of each changing factor and finally, time. In the framework developed, the user can control the generator response by setting several parameters values.

1 Introduction

Spatio-temporal databases (STDBs) provide a framework for the efficient storage and retrieval of all states of a spatial database over time. This includes the current and past states and the support of spatial queries that refer to present and past time points, as well. During the last years many efforts have focused on spatio-temporal formalism, data models, query languages, visualization and access methods. However, little work has appeared on benchmarks for STDBs.

The goal of benchmarks in STDBs is to compare the performance of different implementation alternatives. An example of a benchmark is the comparison of space requirements and query execution time of spatio-temporal access methods (STAMs). In order to evaluate such STAMs, extensive experimentation using real and synthetic data is required. A good benchmark must correspond to a recognizable, comprehensible real-life situation. It is important that the results hold not only for a specific environment but in more general settings, as well. Thus, the user is able to repeat the experiments and come to similar conclusions. Very often, either real data sets are not available or they cannot be useful for testing extreme conditions. In both cases synthetic data sets can be generated by some artificial specifications rather than by obeying a real-world behavior.

Much work has been done towards data generation for benchmarks in prototype and commercial non-spatio-temporal databases (for example, [4, 5]). These generated data can be used to test different implementations under various operating conditions. In STDBs, the work on the generation of test data is limited and only a few innovative papers have appeared in the literature. In [9] the authors present a general approach for the generation of synthetic scenes of moving points, or rectangular objects. This approach is parameter-driven and does not support the interaction between objects. In [6], the previous work is extended by introducing new features to the generation process. In [7] a specialized spatio-temporal data generator, motivated by an application modeling fishing boats, is proposed, where there exist no, or very few restrictions for the motion: e.g., objects of one type may be attracted, or repulsed by objects of other classes. Recently, another approach for the generation of test data, which is motivated from applications in the context of traffic telematics, has been presented [1, 2].

None of these approaches is suitable for benchmarking STAMs for raster data (especially quadtree-based STAMs, for example, [11, 12]). In this report we review a novel approach for data generation, which is specifically designed for applications stemming from the field of dynamic (time-evolving) raster data [13]. The generator presented in [13] is called *"Generator of Time-Evolving Regional Data"* (G-TERD). This software tool is highly parameterized so that different parameter values may produce spatio-temporal data set distributions with different characteristics. In this framework, the user can control the behavior of the generator by defining parameters and statistical models. Such an approach considers the characteristics of a wide range of applications.

In order to make G-TERD available to the user for experimentation purposes, a Web site has been created, which allows downloading the MS-DOS executable file of the generator, the user documentation and the source code in C language. The Web site is at `http://delab.csd.auth.gr/stdbs/g-terd.html` and provides, also, a visualization tool (based on Gnuplot 3.7) that runs under MS-Windows. It is offered with sample data sets obeying different user-defined settings.

The remaining part of the report is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the basic concepts which were considered during the generator design for continuously changing synthetic raster data. Section 3 describes the operation of the new generator and some basic programming issues. Section 4 presents example setups and the sequences of scenes generated. Finally, the last section concludes the report and discusses future work issues.

2 Fundamental Concepts

We assume a two-dimensional workspace, where real coordinates are used (float numbers in C) and that the space extent on the x- and the y-axis is set by the user. In the sequel, in order to simplify presentation, the values of coordinates are counted in "units". With respect to the time domain, we assume that the changing scene lasts for a period of time $T = [0, t_{max})$. This period is divided in time slots. We further assume that the scene remains unchanged during a time slot. In other words, time is digitized.

2.1 Objects and sub-objects

The basic data structure of G-TERD is the *time-evolving two-dimensional regional object*. Each object consists of a group of sub-objects which are quadrangles of the same, or different colors. This group of sub-objects, in general, changes at each time slot. An object, or sub-object may have a static shape, or it can change its spatial extension with time. The spatial extension of an object is determined by the smallest possible two-dimensional rectangle, called *Minimum Bounding Rectangle* (MBR), that encloses all its sub-objects. The user sets the maximum size of the object MBR and the maximum size of the sub-object quadrangle.

In order to simulate real-world complex non-rectangular objects (e.g. cars, animals, airplanes, clouds, islands) by an object, some, or all of its sub-objects may be connected and remain connected, for the whole lifetime of the object.

The number of objects appearing in the scene and the number of sub-objects in an object are dynamic. The objects may be static, or moving towards any spatial direction. The square sub-objects may, also, expand, or shrink and rotate around their center. For the sake of simplicity, both elastic shocks and plastic crushes between objects, are not allowed. Instead, there is a possibility that the one object will pass over the other, as if there were moving in different heights, or there is a possibility that both objects will change moving directions in order to avoid the crush.

2.2 The Scene-Observer

The *scene-observer* plays a central role in a time-evolving scene. In real-life, the observer may be a satellite monitoring the earth surface, a telescope watching the space universe, the field of vision of a video or a photo camera, the eyes of an onlooker, etc. The scene-observer in G-TERD is a virtual two-dimensional rectangular window that shifts, zooms and rotates over the scene and films it, by printing one snapshot image per time slot, for the whole lifetime of the evolution.

The observer's window side length is user-controlled and it digitizes a workspace portion. The dimensions of a quadrangle of the workspace that is represented by a pixel of the observer's window, or in other words, the size of such a pixel varies according to the zoom-in, or zoom-out factor. The scene-observer may move towards any spatial direction, or he/she may be static for some periods of time or for the whole scene lifetime. The observer may shift ("travel") in a random way over the surface of the predefined workspace, or may follow the movement of a specific "live" object. Other functions supported are the zoom in-out and the rotation around the center point of the observer's window. Using the concept of the scene-observer's window, a sequence of multicolored images that can be saved in the disk are produced.

2.3 Change of Spatial Locations, Size, Shape and Color of the Objects

Data objects may change their spatial location, size and/or their shape at different time intervals, according to the values of their speed, zoom and rotation-angle fields. These fields are measured in units of the workspace coordinate system per time slot and their domains are bounded by minimum and maximum values set by the user. There are static, slow and fast moving objects. When an object is static (in slow movement) the speed, zoom and rotation of all its sub-objects is set at zero (at half the value of the speed, zoom and rotation of the object). In real-life examples, objects appear gradually in our field of vision. This also holds for objects and sub-objects in G-TERD. Moreover, sub-ojects may have the same, different, or slightly different colors (following changes of the intensity of light).

3 The operation of G-TERD

3.1 User-Defined Parameters and Distributions

In G-TERD several parameters may be user-defined in order to let the user control the behavior of the generator (Table 1). The appropriate definition of these parameters is the simplest technique to control the properties of the resulting data sets. For instance, by setting $speed\_min = speed\_max$ for both the x- and y- axes, then all the objects are forced to move in a parallel fashion at the same speed as if they were one object. This is similar to the movement of birds or military aircrafts flying together, or to the movement of a group of soldiers.

In order to have a generalized tool for benchmarking that simulates classes of real-life applications, several quantities that determine the operation of this tool must be random variables that obey a specified distribution among the ones mentioned above. For G-TERD, these random variables are presented in Table 2.

Through careful specification of different distributions for the variables of Table 2, the user can simulate several interesting scenarios. For instance, by using the exponential distribution with small mean for the speed

Parameter	Explanation
X_{max}	workspace length on the x-axis
Y_{max}	workspace length on the y-axis
$num\_timeslots$	time duration of the changing scene ($T = [0, num\_timeslots)$)
max_num_objs	maximum number of “live” objects per time slot
$max\_num\_subobjs$	maximum number of “live” sub-objects in an object per time slot
num_colors	number of colors of the color palette
$observer\_side$	length of the observer’s window side
obj_side_max	maximum side length of object MBR
$subobj\_side\_max$	maximum side length of the rectangular sub-object
$percent\_objs\_static$	percentage of static objects per time slot
$percent\_objs\_slow$	percentage of objects in slow movement, zoom and rotation per time slot
$percent\_objs\_fast$	percentage of objects in fast movement, zoom and rotation per time slot ($percent\_objs\_fast = 100 - percent\_objs\_static - percent\_objs\_slow$)
$speed\_min[]$	minimum object speed per time slot positive value on x- (y-) axis: movement to the East (North)
$speed\_max[]$	maximum object speed per time slot positive value on x- (y-) axis: movement to the East (North)
$zoom\_min$	minimum object in-out zoom per time slot ($-1 \leq zoom\_min \leq 1$)
$zoom\_max$	maximum object in-out zoom per time slot ($-1 \leq zoom\_max \leq 1$)
$rotation\_min$	minimum object rotation-angle per time slot
$rotation\_max$	maximum object rotation-angle per time slot
$t_{max\_duration}$	maximum number of time slots that have to elapse before the next computation of a field value of an object, a sub-object or of scene-observer
$live\_objects$ at $t = 0$	number of “live” objects at time slot $t = 0$

Table 1: The user-defined parameters of G-TERD.

and the period of time before the re-computation of the object speed, most of the objects would move slowly and “nervously” on the workspace, since their speed would change direction very frequently.

Evidently, by properly adjusting the domain value of each variable of Table 2, the user may limit the data generated from the chosen distribution. For instance, we can consider setting the domain of the zoom value equal to [-1,0]. This will lead to a scenario where every created object would expand for a while, during the initialization phase of its creation, and afterwards it will be deleted (“die”) in a very short time. G-TERD can generate benchmark data for many application domains, given that their data distributions are known. It currently supports the Uniform, Triangular, Normal, Exponential, Zipf and Poisson distributions.

3.2 Creation and Update of an Object

Initially, the new object location is selected so that its center point is randomly placed in the workspace, according to a predefined statistical distribution. The acceptable placement of an object is controlled by a function, which checks if the selected workspace area is occupied by another object and if the two objects are allowed to overlap. Afterwards, a decision is made about the number of sub-objects that each object will initially have, about their color (the same for all sub-objects, or not) and about their speed and rotation-angle per time slot. The speed and rotation-angle of each sub-object are set randomly, following their domain value and the properties of the related user-defined distributions. The instance of a sub-object for the next time slot is calculated, for each speed, zoom and rotation-angle candidate value.

The scenario is not very realistic at the beginning of the data generation. All the sub-objects of the newly created “live” objects cover a surface of zero size and expand by 1 square unit per time slot. Therefore, to obtain satisfactory results, the generated data should not be used during a *warm-up phase* [7]. More details on how G-TERD implements the warm-up phase and the creation of obejcts in general can be found in [13].

The update procedure of an object starts with the calculation of the new object location and MBR. If all the sub-objects have the same color and the period of time that this color remains unchanged has expired, a new

Variable	Distribution	Domain
number of “live” sub-objects $obj.live\_subobjs$ in an object obj at the time slot of its creation	user-defined	[1, $max\_num\_subobjs$]
initial distribution of the center point of a new object	user-defined	the workspace
number of new objects per time slot	user-defined	$[0, max\_num\_objs - live\_objects]$
number of new sub-objects in an object per time slot	user-defined	$[0, max\_num\_subobjs - obj.live\_subobjs]$
deletion time slot $obj.endtime$ of an object	user-defined	[birth time of the object + 1, $num\_timeslots$]
deletion time slot $subobj.endtime$ of a sub-object	user-defined	[birth time of the object in which it belongs + 1, $obj.endtime$]
color $.color$ of an object or a sub-object	user-defined	[1, num_colors]
speed $subobj.speed$ of a moving sub-object per time slot and spatial axis	user-defined	$[speed\_min, speed\_max]$
zoom $subobj.zoom$ of a moving sub-object per time slot	user-defined	$[zoom\_min, zoom\_max]$ with $-1 \leq zoom\_min \leq zoom\_max \leq 1$
rotation-angle $subobj.rotation$ of a moving sub-object per time slot	user-defined	$[rotation\_min, rotation\_max]$
number of time slots that must elapse before the next computation of an attribute such as the speed, zoom, color, etc.	user-defined	[1, $t_{max\_duration}$]

Table 2: Variables that are controlled by statistical distributions.

color for all its sub-objects is selected. Otherwise, each sub-object them may change its color, independently. If the period of time during which the speed, zoom and/or rotation-angle of each sub-object has expired, a new value is set to the corresponding field. The instance of the sub-object for the next time slot is calculated, for each speed, zoom and rotation-angle value and a procedure is followed to avoid an undesirable crush.

3.3 Positioning and Output of the Scene-Observer

The shift, zoom and rotation functions of the scene-observer are similar to the corresponding functions of an object. If the scene-observer follows the evolution of a specific object, then the observer’s speed is proportional to the distance of the center point of its window from the center point of the object followed. In this case, the zoom in-out function of the observer takes care of keeping the whole object inside the observer’s window.

The output of the scene-observer is a sequence of multicolored images that can be saved in the disk. For each pixel in the observer’s window, the algorithm checks if there is any sub-object covering the pixel. In this case, the sub-object color is recorded in the output. If sub-objects of different objects cover the same pixel of the observer’s window, then the color of the object, which can pass over any other of the involved objects, appears in the output image.

3.4 The Main Routine

The input of the algorithm consists of the values and statistical distributions of all the parameters and variables that appear in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively. During the scene initialization phase at time slot $t = 0$, a user-defined number of “live” objects is created and located in the workspace. The initialization of the observer’s window and the output of the first snapshot image of the time-evolving scene follow.

During the main loop phase new object instances are generated. If the deletion time slot of an object has already been reached and the surface of each of its sub-objects is less than 1 square unit, the object is deleted from the scene. A random number of new objects at each time slot is also created and placed in the workspace. The random number of new objects follows a predefined statistical distribution, such as the ones discussed in subsection 3.1. Finally, the observer’s window is located at another position over the workspace and the output function prints the snapshot image of the current state of the continuously changing scene.

4 A Sample Run

In the following, we give an example of the use of G-TERD. The side length of the scene-observer's window is set at 1024 units, the maximum number of live objects per time slot is 70 and the lifetime of the evolution is 101 time slots. The random number of new sub-objects per time slot and their deletion time slot are Uniform. The same holds for the speed, the color and the period of time that must elapse before the next computation of an attribute such as the speed, zoom, etc. Finally, the change of the size and shape of the objects/sub-objects are controlled by the zoom and rotation-angle values per time slot, which are generated by the Triangular distribution. The scenario in Figure 1 illustrates static objects that are uniformly distributed in a workspace of

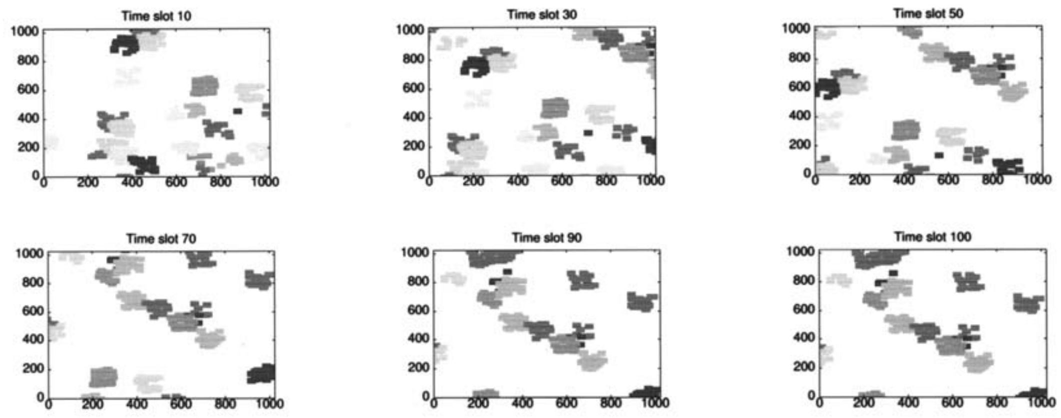

Figure 1: Static objects and a scene-observer moving from South-West to North-East.

$2000\times$ 2000 units (color versions of these greyscale figures can be obtained via the G-TERD site). The speed domain value is [10,10] for each axis. Therefore, the scene-observer shifts over the workspace surface at a constant speed and diagonal orientation, from South-West to North-East. The objects are all created at the initial time slot, whereas in the sequel the creation of a new object is not allowed, since the distribution of new objects per time slot was Normal with mean μ=0 and mean square deviation σ=0. No objects are deleted during the scene lifetime, since the distribution of their deletion time was also Normal with mean μ=100 and mean square deviation σ=0.

5 Conclusion and Future Work

In this report we reviewed the first approach, the G-TERD generator, for data generation specifically designed for applications stemming from the field of dynamic (time-evolving) raster data. The basic concepts involved in the development, operation and use of G-TERD were examined. G-TERD is highly parameterized and flexible, thus supporting the simulation of a variety of real-world scenarios. The Web site of G-TERD provides access to the generator, its source code and some illustrative examples. G-TERD offers a framework for creating user-defined synthetic time-evolving raster data sets that can be used for the experimental comparison of different STAMs.

In the future, we plan enhancing G-TERD to support a greater variety of distributions, such as skewed distributions or correlative two-dimensional distributions. Besides, the Web-based interface will be developed in order to both generate and make it possible to visualize time-evolving synthetic raster data.

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Spatio-Temporal Access Methods[*]

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Abstract

The rapid increase in spatio-temporal applications calls for new auxiliary indexing structures. A typical spatio-temporal application is one that tracks the behavior of moving objects through location-aware devices (e.g., GPS). Through the last decade, many spatio-temporal access methods are developed. Spatio-temporal access methods focus on two orthogonal directions: (1) Indexing the past, (2) Indexing the current and predicted future positions. In this short survey, we classify spatio-temporal access methods for each direction based on their underlying structure with a brief discussion of future research directions.

1 Introduction

Spatio-temporal databases deal with objects that change their location and/or shape over time. A typical example of spatio-temporal databases is moving objects in the D-dimensional space. Moving objects learn about their own location via location detection devices, e.g., GPS devices. Then, the objects report their locations to the server using the underlying communication network, e.g., via wireless networks. The server stores the updates from the moving objects and keeps a history of the spatio-temporal coordinates of each moving object. In addition, the server stores additional information to help predict the future positions of moving objects. Typical queries that are supported by such a server include time slice queries e.g., "*Find all objects that cross a certain area at time t*" and window queries "*Find all objects that cross a certain area in the time interval* $[t_1, t_2]$". Time slice queries and window queries may ask about the past, current, or future times. Some queries are concerned only with the past, e.g., trajectory queries "*What is the maximum speed of a certain object in the last hour?*" Other queries are concerned only with the future, e.g., moving window queries "*Find the objects that intersect a moving area in a certain time interval*".

Numerous research have been done in developing spatio-temporal access methods as an auxiliary structure to support spatio-temporal queries. Figure 1 gives the evolution of spatio-temporal access methods with the underlying spatial and temporal structures. Lines in the Figure indicate the relation between a new proposed spatio-temporal index structure and the original structure that is based upon.

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The rest of this paper is organized as follow: Section 2 surveys spatio-temporal indexing methods that index the past (i.e., index historical spatio-temporal data). In Section 3, we survey spatio-temporal indexing methods that keep track of the current status of spatio-temporal data. Section 4 surveys the spatio-temporal indexing methods that help answer queries related to the future. In Section 5, we give an overview of available indexing toolkits that can help in implementing spatio-temporal access methods. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper.

2 Indexing the Past

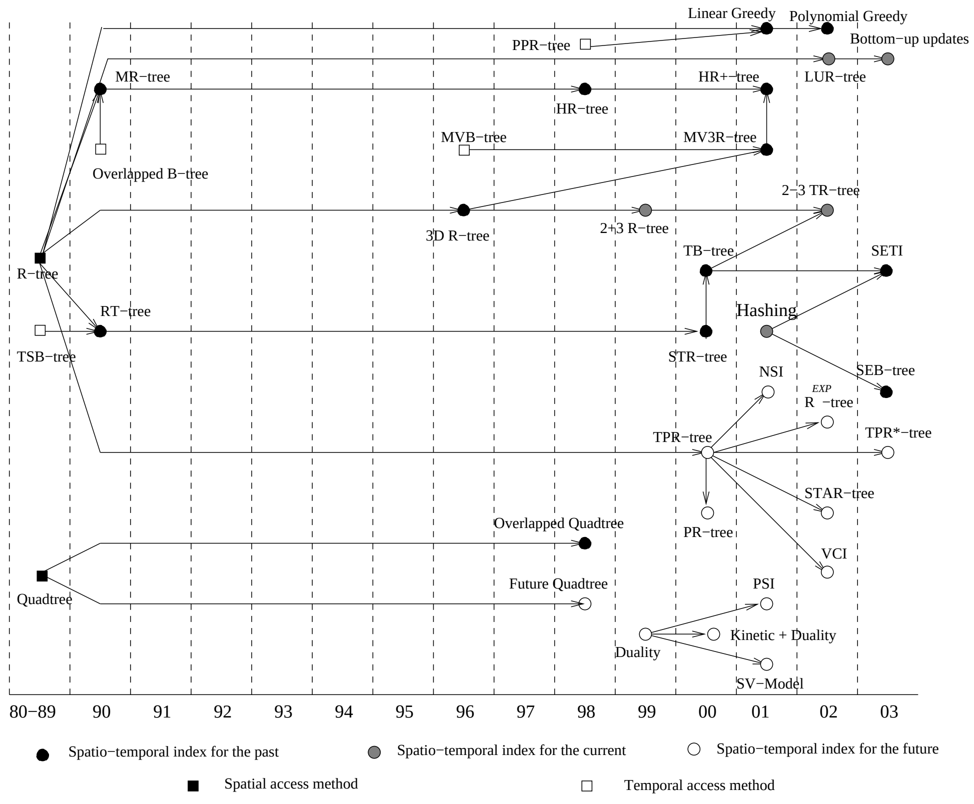

Figure 1: Survey of Spatio-temporal Access Methods

In this section, we are interested in indexing methods for historical spatio-temporal data. The size of the history is continuously increasing over time. Consider moving objects that continuously send their positions. Keeping track of all updates is almost infeasible. Two approaches are used to minimize the history size: (1) Sampling. The stream of data is sampled at certain time positions. Linear interpolation may be used between sample points to form trajectory lines. (2) Update on change only. Moving objects send information only when their data is changed (e.g., change in speed or direction). We categorize the spatio-temporal indexing schemes for historical data into three categories. The first category augments the temporal aspect into already existing spatial access methods. The second category manages both the spatial and temporal aspects into one structure. The third category takes a more radical step by indexing mainly the temporal dimension, while treating the spatial dimension as second priority. The following sections overview these three categories and their corresponding access methods.

2.1 Dealing with the Temporal Dimension

In this category of spatio-temporal indexing methods, the main concern is to handle the spatial domain. Dealing with temporal queries is considered as a secondary issue.

RT-tree [45]: The RT-tree combines the foundation of the R-tree [14] as a spatial access method and the TSB-tree [24] as a temporal access method. In the RT-tree, a new entry is added to the regular R-tree that indicates the start and end times of the current object. An RT-tree entry is of the form (id, MBR, t_s, t_e), where

id is the object identifier, MBR is the objects minimum bounding rectangle, and t_s and t_e give the time interval in which this object is valid. The RT-tree supports spatial queries as efficient as the regular R-tree. However time slice queries and interval queries may span the whole tree.

3D R-tree [41]: The 3D R-tree treats time as yet another dimension in addition to the spatial dimensions. The main idea is to avoid discrimination between spatial and temporal queries. The 3D R-Tree supports both the temporal and spatial queries, although with performance drawbacks. A main drawback is that timeslice queries are no longer dependent on the live entries at the query time, but on the total number of entries in the history.

STR-tree [28]: The STR-Tree is an extension of the R-Tree, with a different insert/split algorithm. Leaf nodes are in the form (id, t_{id}, MBR, o) where t_{id} is the trajectory identifier and o is the orientation of this trajectory in the MBR. The main idea of the STR-Tree is to keep spatial closeness and partial trajectory preservation by trying to keep line segments belonging to the same trajectory together while keeping spatial closeness as the R-Tree. A parameter p is introduced to balance between spatial properties and trajectory preservation. p indicates the number of levels reserved for trajectory preservation. When inserting a new line segment the goal is to insert it as close as possible to its predecessor in the trajectory within p levels. A smaller p decreases the trajectory preservation, while increasing the spatial closeness.

2.2 Overlapping and Multi-version Structures

In the second category of spatio-temporal indexes, the temporal dimension is discriminated from the spatial dimensions. The goal is to keep all spatial data that are alive at one time instance together in one index structure (e.g., the R-tree). The ultimate goal is to build a separate R-tree for each time instance. This approach requires excessive storage.

MR-tree [45]: The MR-tree employs the idea of overlapping B-trees [6] in the context of the R-tree. The main idea is to avoid the storage overhead of having separate R-trees for each timestamp. The saving in storage is achieved by not storing the common objects among consecutive R-trees. Instead, links from different roots point to the same nodes where all the node entries keep their values over the different timestamps. This idea is perfect in the case of a time slice query. The search is directed to the appropriate root, and then a spatial search is performed using the R-tree. However, the performance of time window queries is not efficient. Also, one major drawback is that many entries can be replicated. Consider the case that only one node entry is changed over two consecutive timestamps, then all other node entries need to be replicated in two consecutive R-trees.

HR-tree [25]: The Historical R-tree (HR-tree) is very similar to the MR-tree. The HR-tree has a concrete algorithm and implementation details of using the overlapping B-tree [6] in the context of the R-tree. The same idea of overlapping trees is applied in the context of quadtrees, where it results in *overlapping quadtrees* [43].

HR+-tree [37]: The HR+-tree is designed mainly to avoid the replication of some entries in the HR-tree. The main reason for having duplicate entries in the HR-tree is that the HR-tree has a condition that any node can contain only entries that belong to the same root, i.e., ones that have the same timestamp. The HR+-tree relaxes this condition by allowing entries from different timestamps to reside in the same node. However, the parent of this node in each R-tree has only access to the entries that belong to the parent's timestamp. In other words, a node may have multiple parents, where each parent has access only to a different part of the node.

MV3R-tree [38]: The MV3R-tree is based mainly on the multi-version B-tree (MVB-tree) [5]. The main idea is to build two trees, an MVR-tree to process timestamp queries, and a 3D R-tree to process long interval queries. Short interval queries are optimized to check which tree is to be used based on a threshold value.

Greedy algorithms in the PPR-tree [20]: The partially-persistent R-tree (PPR-tree) [21], designed mainly for bi-temporal databases, is extended to support spatio-temporal applications [20]. However, this would result in highly dead space. To overcome the dead space, artificial object updates are introduced. An optimal greedy algorithm [20] is used to find the optimal locations for the artificial updates in linearly moving objects. This work is extended in [15] to support objects moving using a combination of polynomial functions.

2.3 Trajectory-Oriented Access Methods

The third category of spatio-temporal access methods focus on trajectory-oriented queries. Dealing with spatial queries and gathering spatially closed objects together is of second concern.

TB-tree [28]: The Trajectory-bundle tree (TB-tree) is an R-tree-like structure that strictly preserves trajectories. A leaf node can only contain segments belonging to the same trajectory. As a drawback, line segments of different trajectories that lie spatially close will be stored in different nodes. The TB-tree grows from left to right. The left-most leaf node is the first inserted node and the right-most leaf node is the last inserted one. The TB-tree is an extension of the STR-tree to handle only trajectories.

SETI [8]: The Scalable and Efficient Trajectory Index (SETI) partitions the spatial dimension into static, non-overlapping partitions. The main observation is that the change of the spatial dimension is limited while the temporal dimension is continuously evolving. Thus, the spatial dimensions are partitioned statically. Within each partition the trajectory segments are indexed using an R-tree. Using a good partitioning function results in having line segments of the same trajectory stored in the same partition. Thus, trajectory preservation is achieved by minimizing the effect of the spatial dimensions in the R-tree. A segment that crosses the boundary of two spatial partitions is clipped and is stored twice in both partitions. This may lead to duplicates in the query result.

The SEB-tree [35]: The Start/End timestamp B-tree (SEB-tree) has an idea similar to SETI, where the space is partitioned into zones that may be overlapped. Each zone is indexed using the SEB-tree that considers only the start and end timestamps of the moving objects. Each moving object is hashed to its zone. A key difference over SETI is that there are no trajectories. Instead only two-dimensional points are indexed. By having the spatial zoning partitioning, two-dimensional points that belong to similar trajectories are kept together.

3 Indexing the Current Positions (NOW)

All previous spatio-temporal indexing techniques assume that all movements are known a priori. Thus, only closed trajectories are stored. Current positions of moving objects are neither stored nor queried. The issue of the current positions, or the NOW positions is challenging [10]. In the following, we give an overview of spatio-temporal index structures that help answer queries about NOW.

The 2+3 R-tree [26]: The 2+3 R-tree aims to index both the current and past information of moving objects. The main idea is to have two separate R-trees; one for the current two-dimensional points, and the second for the historical three-dimensional trajectories (two spatial dimensions and one temporal dimension). This idea is similar to the one proposed in the context of the bi-temporal indexes [21]. Once the current object is updated, the object trajectory is constructed with its three-dimensional MBR, and is inserted into the three-dimensional R-tree while being deleted from the two-dimensional R-tree. Depending on the query time, both trees may need to be searched.

The 2-3 TR-tree [1]: The 2-3 TR-tree has the same idea as the 2+3 R-tree where the 2-3 TR-trees also keeps two separate R-trees; a two-dimensional R-tree for the current objects, and a three-dimensional R-tree for the historical data. However, two differences can be distinguished: (1) In the 2-3 TR-tree, the three-dimensional R-tree keeps track of only the multi-dimensional points but not the trajectories; thus avoids the problem of high dead space. (2) The 2-3 TR-tree uses the underlying structure of the TB-tree to allow answers for trajectory-oriented queries.

The LUR-tree [22]: The Lazy Update R-tree (LUR-tree) is concerned only with the current positions of spatio-temporal objects. No historical data is stored into the LUR-tree. Once an object updates its location, the object's old entry is deleted and the new entry is inserted. The LUR-tree aims to handle the frequent updates of moving objects without degrading the performance of the R-tree index structure. The main idea is that as long as the new position of the moving object lies inside its MBR, there is no action taken other than updating the position. Once an object moves out from its MBR, two approaches are proposed: (1) The object is deleted and is reinserted causing the necessary merge and split operations. (2) If the object does not move very far from the MBR, the MBR can be extended to enclose the new location.

Bottom-up Updates [23]: The bottom-up approach for updating R-trees extends the idea of the LUR-tree. Several bottom-up approaches are investigated to accommodate the frequent updates of the moving objects. Examples of these approaches are extending the MBR to enclose the new value and moving the current object to one of the siblings. To avoid excessive I/O's while investigating the siblings and parents for updates, a compact main memory summary structure is introduced.

Hashing [34]: Another approach for keeping only the current information is proposed via hashing. The space is partitioned into zones that may be overlapped. An object does not update its entry to the database until it changes its zone. Thus the database always contains an approximated view of the moving object. To resolve this uncertainty, a filter layer is introduced between the database and the moving objects. The filter layer contains the exact positions of the moving objects. A range query is transformed into a set of zones. If one zone is completely enclosed in the range query, then all the zones entries are returned in the query result. However, if a zone intersects with the range queries, then the zone entries need to be sent to the filter layer to check whether they satisfy the range query or not.

4 Indexing the Current and Future Positions (NOW and the Future)

In this section, we are concerned about the current and future positions of moving objects. To predict the future positions of moving objects, we need to store extra information (e.g., the velocity and the destination). The motion of a moving object in the D-dimensional space is modeled by a reference location $\vec{x_{ref}} = (x_1, x_2, \cdots, x_d)$ at a reference time t_{ref} and a velocity vector $\vec{v} = (v_1, v_2, \cdots, v_d)$. The predicted location $\vec{x_t}$ of the moving object at any instance time $t > t_{ref}$ can be computed by $\vec{x_t} = \vec{x_{ref}} + \vec{v}(t - t_{ref})$. For simplicity, we will assume that objects move in the one-dimensional space. The object movement is modeled by the linear equation $x_t = at + b$, where a and b are constants. Notice that a indicates the constant velocity of the moving object and b is the starting location of the moving object. Also, we assume that the reference location is computed at time $t_{ref} = 0$.

4.1 The Original Space-Time Space

By plotting the equation $x_t = at + b$ in the two-dimensional space, where the horizontal space represents the time and the vertical space represents the location, we obtain a set of line segments in the time-space domain. Then, the problem of indexing future positions is transformed to indexing a set of two-dimensional lines where spatial access methods can be used [11].

PMR-quadtree for moving objects [40]: Tayeb et al. [40] use the PMR-quadtree [27] as their underlying spatial access methods for indexing the future trajectories. A key point is that when an update of moving objects occur, the whole index structure is destroyed and is rebuilt given the new information. To avoid excessive update operations, the index is rebuilt every ΔT time units. In the abstract level, the infinite time dimension is partitioned into equal size time slices, each with size ΔT. For each slice, a new PMR-quadtree is built based on the motion equation. However, due to the storage limit, only the current PMR-Quadtree is stored.

Generally, using spatial access methods to index the future trajectories has two main drawbacks: (1) Large amount of dead space due to representing the trajectory by its minimum bounding rectangle. (2) Data is skewed since all the trajectories have the same end time value.

4.2 Transformation Methods

To overcome the drawbacks of spatio-temporal indexing in the time-space domain, the time-space domain is transformed into another space. The main idea is that it is easier to represent and query the data in this new space representation.

Duality transformation [19]: Kollios et al. [19] use the duality transformation to transform a line segment (e.g., trajectory) from the time-space domain into a point in the two-dimensional space. The main idea is to represent the equation $x_t = at + b$ by the two-dimensional point (a, b) in a dual two-dimensional space where the velocity a is the horizontal dimension and the reference location b is the vertical dimension. Due to the highly skewed distribution in the $dual$ space, a kd-tree based spatial index (e.g., the LSD-tree [17]) is used instead of an R-tree. Since R-trees try to cluster data points into square regions, they will split using only the velocity dimension. However, a kd-tree-based index will use both dimensions in splitting. A range query that is a rectangle in the $primal$ space-time space is transformed into a polygon query in the $dual$ velocity-location space. Thus, the algorithm proposed by Goldstein et al. [13] is used to answer range queries.

Duality Transformation with the Kinetic Data Structure [2]: Agarwal et al. [2] use another form of the *duality* transformation. A moving object in the two-dimensional space (x, y) is plotted as a three-dimensional trajectory (x, y, t). The trajectory is projected into the (x, t) and (y, t) plans. The *duality* transformation is applied to both plans. The answer of the range query is the union of two range queries in the two plans. Instead of having a *kd*-tree-like structure (as in [19]), the so-called *kinetic data structure* [4] is used to index the dual space.

SV-Model [9]: Chon et al. [9] takes a more radical step, where they do not represent a moving object by its trajectory. Instead, a moving object is modeled by four parameters (s, e, t_s, v_0) for the starting location, the destination, the starting time, and the initial velocity, respectively. With the restriction that only two out of the four parameters can change their values, there are six different combinations to consider. Among these combinations, the best choice is to consider the starting location s and the velocity v_0 as constants. Thus the dual space will have the starting time t_s as the horizontal dimension and the destination e as the vertical dimension. This model is termed the SV-Model to indicate the constant starting location and velocity. Rectangular range queries are transformed to polygon queries in the *dual* space. The *dual* space is indexed by the SS-tree [44]. The assumption that all moving objects have the same starting location is handled by normalizing the motion of all moving objects to start from 0. For the constant velocity constraint, the assumption can be realistic in cases of highway traffic. In the case where there are velocity variations, the velocity is quantized to discrete values. For each value, a separate index structure is used.

PSI [29]: Porkaew et al. [29] propose the Parametric Space Indexing Technique (PSI). In the PSI approach, an R-tree is used to index a $(2d+1)$-dimensional space, where d dimensions correspond to the reference location $\vec{x_{ref}}$, and d dimensions correspond to the velocity $\vec{v}$, while one dimension corresponds to the time. Object movement is modeled by a $(2d+1)$-dimensional trajectory that is enclosed by its minimum bounding rectangle. The main idea is that the temporal range $[t_s, t_e]$ in which the motion is valid is stored in the index. Also, there is no notion of global time reference that objects refer to.

In summary, the transformation techniques suffer from three main drawbacks: (1) The *dual* space cannot capture all the information that is originally in the *primal* space. (2) There is no guarantee that objects that are near to each other in the *primal* space will still be near to each other in the *dual* space. (3) Rectangular range queries in the *primal* space are always transformed into polygon range queries in the *dual* space, which calls for complicated algorithms for evaluation.

4.3 Parametric Spatial Access Methods

A new trend of spatio-temporal access methods is to index the original time-space with parametric rectangles. The main idea is to make the bounding rectangles functions of time so that the enclosed moving objects will be in the same rectangles. In this case, for any time instance t, a snapshot of the index structure can be computed and evaluated for any query.

TPR-tree [33]: The Time Parameterized R-tree (TPR-tree) employs the idea of parametric bounding rectangles in the R-tree. At the construction time, the TPR-tree builds the so-called *conservative bounding rectangles* that enclose a set of moving objects. The lower bound of the conservative bounding rectangle is set to move with the minimum speed of the enclosed points, while the upper bound is set to move with the maximum speed of the enclosed points. In this case, the conservative bounding rectangle never shrinks, and is guaranteed to always contain the enclosed moving objects. To avoid the case where the bounding rectangles grow to be very large, whenever the position of an object o is updated, all the bounding rectangles on the nodes along the path to the leaf at which o is stored are recomputed.

PR-tree [7]: The PR-tree is similar to the TPR-tree. However, the PR-tree considers the problem of moving objects with spatial extents that are represented by parametric rectangles. Each parametric rectangle has a time interval that represents the start time and the end time of its movement. In contrast to the TPR-tree, where objects are considered moving forever, the PR-tree has the knowledge of the end time of moving objects. Thus a moving object is represented as a polygon on the space rather than a trajectory. Given the movement end times, the bounding rectangles of a set of moving objects (represented as polygons) can be computed as the convex hull of the moving objects.

NSI [29]: The NSI tree is similar to the TPR-tree in the sense that both define parametric bounding rectangles for moving objects. However, the difference is in the way the bounding rectangle is defined.

VCI R-tree [30]: The main idea of the Velocity Constrained Indexing (VCI) is to add an additional field v_{max} to each R-tree node. v_{max} stores the maximum allowed speed over all objects covered by this node. For any query at time t, all bounding rectangles are expanded using v_{max}. This approach is similar to that of the TPR-tree in the sense that both trees consider expanding the bounding rectangles over time to contain all the enclosed objects. However, the underlying model is different. In VCI indexing, there is no need to know the exact speed of each moving object. Instead, there is a restriction that all moving objects cannot exceed a certain maximum speed. In the TPR-tree, the exact velocity of moving objects is needed. On the other side, many false positives appear in the VCI indexing. The VCI indexing is designed specially to handle the issue of the shared execution of continuous queries.

STAR-tree [31]: The Spatio-temporal Self Adjusting R-tree (STAR-tree) is similar to the TPR-tree, with the introduction of the notion of *self-adjustment*. Whenever the query performance degrades, the STAR-tree adjusts itself without any input from the user.

R^{EXP}**-tree [32]:** The R^{EXP}-tree is an extension of the TPR-tree to handle moving objects with expiration times. The main idea is to avoid the drawback that may result for moving objects that do not update their movement for a long time. To benefit from the expiration time information, the R^{EXP}-tree employs a new type of bounding regions. In addition, the R^{EXP}-tree implements a lazy technique for removing expired entries from the index until the bounding rectangles are recomputed.

TPR*-tree [39]: The TPR*-tree uses exactly the same structure and assumptions as the TPR-tree [33]. Unlike the TPR-tree where it uses the same insert and delete functions of the R*-tree, the TPR*-tree provides a new set of insertion and deletion algorithms that aim at minimizing a certain cost function.

5 Available Indexing Toolkits

In this section, we give a brief overview of publicly available indexing toolkits that can be used to implement spatio-temporal access methods.

5.1 GiST: Generalized Search Trees for Database Systems

GiST [16] defines a framework of basic interfaces required to construct a hierarchical access method for database systems. GiST supports the class of balanced trees (e.g., the B-tree, the R-tree, and the SR-tree [18]). The main architecture of GiST contains two parts: *internal* methods and *type-specific* methods. Internal methods are the common methods to all balanced trees (e.g., search, insert, and delete). Such methods are hard-coded inside

GiST, and cannot be altered by the user. Type-specific methods are provided by the user based on the underlying index structure. Examples of type-specific methods are $Consistent, Union, Penalty$, and $PickSplit$. The reader is referred to [16] for more details.

GiST can be used to support spatio-temporal indexing methods that are based on R-tree-like structures. For example, the TPR-tree [33] is already implemented [42] using the publically available GiST code [12].

5.2 SP-GiST: A Framework for Supporting the Class of Space-Partitioning Trees

SP-GiST (Space-partitioning Generalized Search Tree) [3] is an extensible database index structure for the class of space-partitioning trees (e.g., the trie, the k-d tree, the quadtree, and their variants). SP-GiST allows fast realization of instances of space-partitioning index trees inside a commercial database system.

SP-GiST has *interface parameters* and *external methods* that allow SP-GiST to implement instance indexes of the class of space-partitioning trees and reflect the structural and behavioral differences among these trees. In addition, SP-GiST has *internal methods* that reflect the similarity among space-partitioning trees for insertion, deletion, and search that are already implemented inside the SP-GiST index engine. Table 3 gives the interface parameters and external methods of SP-GiST.

$NodePredicate$	The predicate to be used in the index nodes of a space-partitioning tree.
$KeyType$	Type of data in the leaf-level of the tree.
$NoOfSpacePartitions$	The number of disjoint partitions produced at each decomposition.
$Resolution$ $ShrinkPolicy$	Limit the number of space decompositions.
$BucketSize$	The maximum number of data items a data node can hold.
$Consistent()$	Boolean function used by the search method as a navigation guide through the space-partitioning tree.
$PickSplit()$	Boolean function that define a way of splitting the entries into a number of partitions and returns whether further partitioning should take place or not.
$Cluster()$	This method defines how tree nodes are clustered into disk pages.

Table 3: SP-GiST Interface Parameters and External Methods

The realization of any space-partitioning tree T inside SP-GiST is achieved by providing the interface parameters and external methods for T. For example, Table 4 gives the realization of the k-d tree inside SP-GiST. Examples for the realization of other space-partitioning trees inside SP-GiST can be found in [3]. SP-GiST can be used to implement spatio-temporal indexing that rely on space-partitioning trees (e.g., [40, 43]). The SP-GiST code is publically available [36].

Parameters	$NodePredicate$ = "left", "right", or blank; $KeyType$ = Point; $NoOfSpacePartitions$ = 2; $ShrinkPolicy$ = Leaf Shrink; $BucketSize$ = 1;
$Consistent(E, q, level)$	If ($level$ is odd AND $q.x$ satisfies $E.p.x$) OR ($level$ is even AND $q.y$ satisfies $E.p.y$) Return True, else Return False
$PickSplit(P, level)$	Put the old point in a child node with predicate "blank"; put the new point in a child node with predicate "left" or "right"; Return False

Table 4: Realization of k-d Tree Inside SP-GiST

6 Conclusion

In this short survey, we presented an overview of existing spatio-temporal index structures. Spatio-temporal indexing methods are classified based on the type and time of the queries they can support (e.g., the past, current, and future queries). With the variety of spatio-temporal access methods, it becomes essential to have a general and extensible framework to support the class of spatio-temporal indexing. One approach is to use the already existing extensible index structures (e.g., GiST and SP-GiST). Another approach is to develop a special framework for spatio-temporal indexing to capture the special needs of such class (e.g., the type of queries, the continuously evolving objects, and the frequent updates). There is still a lot of research work that needs to be investigated in spatio-temporal indexing. Most of the work so far supports selection operators and range queries. More research is needed to support other kinds of operators (e.g., spatio-temporal join) and queries (e.g., nearest-neighbor queries).

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Spatio-Temporal Data Exchange Standards

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Abstract

We believe that research that concerns aspects of spatio-temporal data management may benefit from taking into account the various standards for spatio-temporal data formats. For example, this may contribute to rendering prototype software "open" and more readily useful. This paper thus identifies and briefly surveys standardization in relation to primarily the exchange and integration of spatio-temporal data. An overview of several data exchange languages is offered, along with reviews their potential for facilitating the collection of test data and the leveraging of prototypes. The standards, most of which are XML-based, lend themselves to the integration of prototypes into middleware architectures, e.g., as Web services.

1 Introduction

It is often important to be able to test new spatial and temporal query processing techniques with real-world data. This contributes to understanding how the techniques will perform in specific production settings. Over the years, a number of data sets have become publicly available that, along with synthetic data, can serve as a basis for experimenting with software prototypes. However, since many of these data sets are only available in custom formats, a fair amount of domain knowledge is required to make use of them. Recent standardization efforts, which typically employ XML-based technologies and digital library data exchange formats, aim to facilitate the communication between applications by specifying data exchange standards. Especially, XML-based geo-enabled applications can be deployed and enriched with the plethora of query languages, constraint definition languages, and extensibility opportunities that are part of the standards infrastructure.

This paper surveys spatio-temporal data exchange standardization efforts. They all have different histories and stem from different sub-communities. They thus come with both advantages and disadvantages in the eyes of a potential user. The standards not only deliver exact specifications of data structures, but also address meta-data issues. For example, it is often useful to know the validity, accuracy, and reliability of a measurement or its origin. In this sense, data exchange standards do not only serve as an exchange mechanism for data structures, but are also helpful in more advance applications like, e.g., decision support systems.

In particular, we survey the Geography Markup Language [12], which is the foremost candidate for addressing the manifold needs of the geographical community. We also survey the Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) standard [8]. SVG is an XML-based language for the description and presentation of *two-dimensional* vector

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and raster data. Next, we cover the ISO Technical Committee 211, which is central to the standardization of geographic data [1]. The US Federal Geographic Data Committee [3], another active player, is also covered briefly. At least a handful of other (XML-based) standards exist that do not seem to be driven by large communities, but are still of interest. For reference and completeness, these are covered briefly.

Generally, we observe a trend towards XML-based standards. A recent book [11] provides a very readable introduction to data exchange in geographical applications. Many of the XML languages covered in this paper adhere to the fundamental principle of separating content from presentation: data are encoded according to semantic criteria without constraining how the data may be presented to a human or consumed by an application.

Sections 2 and 3 cover GML and SVG, respectively. Then the ISO Technical Committee 211 and the Federal Geographic Data Committee are covered in Sections 4 and 5, respectively. Section 6 presents the "minor" standards, and Section 7 summarizes the paper.

2 Geography Markup Language (GML)

The Geography Markup Language (GML) [12] is an XML language created under the auspices of the Open GIS Consortium, whose mission statement is to facilitate the "full integration of geospatial data and geoprocessing resources into mainstream computing and to foster the widespread use of inter operable geoprocessing software and geodata products throughout the information infrastructure" [4]. GML, which could be considered the flagship effort in geoprocesssing, is a multi-stage effort that has reached version 3.0. By designing the language in multiple stages, the standardization body wants to make sure that the language evolves naturally and incorporates more and more features over time. For example, the so-called *simple* features have been defined and been integrated in the releases leading up to version 2.0.

GML's definition is based on XML Schema and tries to take advantage of its full feature set. For example, it makes it possible for users to tailor the language to their needs by means of XML schema's extensibility. So it is possible to incorporate well-defined GML schema fragments into documents that follow a user's application schema.

Therefore GML is able to describe a wide variety of geographical objects by combining its built-in data types, which implement the OGC Simple Features model [4], with the extensibility features of XML. Being an application of XML, GML is designed to take advantage of the XML standards framework; documents can be readily transformed into a variety of presentation formats, most notably vector formats and raster graphics such as maps.

Future versions of GML are planned to include additional aspects. Version 3.0 has added features for temporal GIS, including time stamps, events, and histories, as well as units of measure and the possibility of grouping features into layers, to name but a few. But since GML is used in practice and competing standards converge with it, many users consider it mature at its current stage and take advantage of its features.

For researchers, the advantages of using GML include the availability of test data sets and the incentive to use the modeling knowledge of the geographic data management community in their prototypes, which can in turn be more flexibly leveraged by other researchers and industrial partners alike. Due to the strict semantics of GML, there is also the potential to benefit from the domain modeling that is part of the standard.

3 Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG)

SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics) is a standard developed under the auspices of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) [5]. It defines features and syntax for describing *two-dimensional* vector and raster graphics in XML. It is thus primarily oriented towards presentation.

SVG knows three kinds of graphical objects: composite vector elements, e.g., paths that consist of lines and curves, as well as images and text. The graphical objects can be grouped, styled, transformed, and composited with various operations like nested transformations, clipping paths, alpha masks, filter effects, templates as well as previously rendered objects. Furthermore, SVG objects can be interactive and dynamic. This is achieved through event-handlers and a well-defined interface: Care has been taken to ensure interoperability with scripting languages. To this end, SVG features event handlers for user interaction, e.g., using a mouse-related events like “onmouseover”, and the SVG Document Object Model for well-defined transformations and manipulations by means of scripting languages. Additionally, animations can be defined and triggered either declaratively, i.e., by embedding SVG animation elements into SVG content or by using the aforementioned scripting interface.

SVG comprises a comprehensive list of built-in graphical elements: path, text, rect, circle, ellipse, line, polyline, polygon, image, and use – a mechanism to reference SVG elements. A particularly important aspect of SVG drawings is *reusability*. Through symbol mechanisms, users may build libraries of graphical elements and re-use them without having to register at a centralized directory. To blend with the other elements of applications at client-side rendering of presentations, SVG also allows declarative definitions of filters for rasterization. Additionally, SVG provides sophisticated handling of fonts so that the original text is preserved with respect to indexing, search, and the graphical appearance intended by the authors. SVG content may be included via a stand-alone document, inline embedding, references like links, or style sheets.

The benefits researchers get from using SVG in their projects range from software engineering considerations to data re-use and integration opportunities. For example, the time it takes to prototype visual applications can be significantly reduced by using an SVG viewer instead of a custom-built user interface. Viewers are available for many different types of devices, including mobile phones, personal digital assistants, and navigators embeddable in conventional graphical user interfaces. Additionally, the tight integration and interoperability of the XML standards facilitates the development of robust applications by providing a language glue that is expressive enough to capture the semantics of the different domain models. For instance, SVG applications can directly benefit from the availability of meta-information encoded in GML documents. Furthermore, the ability of SVG to combine different source data, such as raster graphics, vector graphics, and fonts, in a single data models provides application programmers with a uniform interface and greatly reduces the need to learn and understand more than one API.

4 ISO/TC 211

ISO is the primary international standards organization for information technology. The ISO Technical Committee 211, on Geographic information/Geomatics, has as its objective to create standards for “[...] information concerning objects or phenomena that are directly or indirectly associated with a location relative to the Earth” [1]. Because the ISO/TC 211 adopts a service-oriented view of geoprocessing, its standards concern a wide variety of uses of geographic data, including methods, tools, and services that relate to data management, acquiring, processing, analyzing, accessing, presenting, and exchanging data. As a result, the ISO 19100 series standards produced by the ISO/TC 211 go well beyond plain data modeling. Further, GML, which is known as ISO 19136 in this context, is only one component of this larger series of standards developed under the auspices of the ISO/TC 211.

The interoperability of standards is of particular interest to the ISO/TC 211. For example, the committee has to ensure that the standards for position services (ISO 19116), location-based services (ISO 19132/3), and multimodal services (ISO 19134) integrate smoothly with GML.

The overall aim is to increase the availability, access, integration, and sharing of geographic information, and to enable interoperability of geospatially enabled computer systems [1] as well as to contribute to the creation of a community that supports the dissemination of geographic understanding and enables sustained development.

The focus of the ISO/TC 211 on providing an overarching standardization framework has several notable advantages. The adoption of such a framework is expected to result in lower training costs, better comparability of results, increased planning safety by relying on a mature foundation as well as the existence of a knowledge-able and experienced community for consulting and collaboration. So planning and implementation will be less error-prone, and interoperability is achieved more easily. In this sense, the standardized framework is the answer to many practical questions.

Also, the ISO/TC 211 can be seen as an umbrella intended to cover all areas native to geoprocessing. Consequently, basic familiarity with this effort provides an interesting overview of a multi-faceted research area.

5 Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC)

The Federal Geographic Data Committee [3] is a US governmental, inter-agency committee. The FGDC is central to the effort that develops the US National Spatial Data Infrastructure. New standards are developed by the FGDC only when there are no existing standards that are suitable for governmental use. A number of geographic data and metadata standards have been developed and are available online (see [3]).

As part of its objectives, the FGDC aims to enable the simultaneously reduction of data production costs and improvement of data quality by providing a foundation for sharing geographic data among government agencies. A complementary goal was to increase data availability, not only to the public sector, but also to academia and the private sector.

6 Standards for Specific Application Domains

We proceed to cover some efforts that are not part of the “big” standards. All of these standards are XML based. The three first are early examples of XML being deployed in the transportation industry. In addition to offering data models, these standards show how domain specialists model different application domains.

POIX (Point Of Interest eXchange Language) POIX [9] is an XML representation for places and routes. It was proposed by a Japanese consortium interested in motor vehicles, traffic, and road networks; car navigation systems is the application area of primary interest. The purpose of POIX is to provide markup for both the locations of an object and location-related information. Examples of location-related information include, e.g., opening hours and other descriptions for shopping locations. POIX also provides facilities for handling localized information such as geodetic or angle units, which may vary from country to country.

NVML (NaVigation Markup Language) NVML (NaVigation Markup Language) [13] is a markup language for describing navigation information in vehicle information systems. The main objective of NVML is the description of different types of routes. Examples include routes from a current position to a destination, the way to a shop from the nearest train station, transportation courses, sightseeing courses, and tour schedules. Special emphasis is on any-time/anywhere services for a variety of end-user devices.

RWML (Road Web Markup Language) RWML [6] has been being developed at the Civil Engineering Research Institute of Hokkaido. This language was developed as part of an effort to support smooth and safe driving under a variety of circumstances. Consequently, RWML includes standard representation syntax for weather and disaster information as well as for messages and announcements from public services.

G-XML The G-XML effort [2] is also Japanese; it has influenced developments in the context of ISO TC/211 and tries to maintain harmonization with GML as it itself evolves. The goals of the G-XML effort are similar in spirit to those of many XML applications: creating an encoding of spatial data, thus providing “a method for freely accessing and using geographic information over the Internet,” according to [2]. GML 3.0 is a G-XML converged version, which implies that the underlying data models have been aligned.

Sensor Modeling Language (SensorML) SensorML [7] aims to implement an XML data exchange language for geolocating data that stems from dynamic sensors. The objective is to cover most or all types of existing sensors, including those installed on satellites, aircrafts, ships, land vehicles, and stationary platforms. It covers means for describing sensor-specific information such as location, rotation, timing, target, sensor geometry, dynamics, and radiometry. It also addresses dependencies among variables. SensorML offers database researchers an overview of a field that so far has been outside the community, and it encourages proper application data models. Again, the standard enables data sharing and data exchange as well as increased system modularity and interoperability.

7 Summary

A rich variety of standards that enable the exchange of geographic data exists. Although standardization has been initiated by committees representing different organizations and communities, in order to serve different purposes, the broad acceptance of XML appears to have caused many standards committees to join forces, which has resulted in some consolidation of standards. However, because fundamentally different application domains exist, such as the description of two- or three-dimensional visualizations and the representation of geographic or sensor data, a diversity of standards remains.

We briefly surveyed some of the geoprocessing standards that are of special interest to researchers in spatio-temporal query processing. As part of this, we pointed out in which application domains the standards can be deployed and what advantages, be it technical, educational, or social, they bring about.

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