A Study of Digital Ink to Inform the Scaling of a Classroom Interaction System

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The Problem

Classroom Presenter allows exercises to be conducted and submitted in-class, electronically to the instructor.

Instructor has several goals for responses or "student submissions":
- Get a sense for the distribution of responses
- Pick out creative or otherwise outlying responses
- Locate a specific type of response – to illustrate an important point

Scaling is a problem as class size increases.

Clustering is one solution, but to work the following must be true:
- Data must include natural clusters
- Instructors' goals must be achievable with clustering
- Clusters must be easily computable
- Clusters should not require excessive domain knowledge

The Study and Results

Do Instructors View Grouping as Useful?

Surveyed instructors about what groups, if any, would have been useful for activities:
- In 33 of the 36 activities included: groups would have been useful
- For many activities the desired grouping was: "Correct", "Partially Correct", "Incorrect"
- For others, the desired grouping was based on a particular feature (i.e. shape)
- 3-5 groups usually desired

Answer: Yes, most of the time

Does the Data Form Groups?

Independently grouped the responses to several activities by hand.

Answer: Depends highly on the activity

Can Groups be Formed Automatically?

First looked for simple algorithms that correctly clustered our data.

Answer: Intractable, but simple algorithms can work well

What are some Challenges of this Approach?

Note how the symbols for nodes differ in the two graphs

Construction not useful for some activities

Mixtures of text and drawing require advanced understanding

Grouping not useful for some activities

Sometimes full understanding isn't necessary – just need to identify differences.

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Classroom Presenter is free for educational and non-commercial use. It is available from: www.cs.washington.edu/education/dl/presenter/

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