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WORKING OF NEURONS IN ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS

MAMTA SHARMA DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE RESEARCH SCHOLAR ARNI UNIVERSITY KANGRA

ABSTRACT

The biologically inspired methods of computing are thought to be the next major advancement in the computing industry. Even simple animal brains are capable of functions that are currently impossible for computers. Computers do rote things well, like keeping ledgers or performing complex math. But computers have trouble recognizing even simple patterns much less generalizing those patterns of the past into actions of the future. This paper includes brain modeling also promises a less technical way to develop machine solutions.

KEYWORDS

artificial neural networks, computing industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

rtificial Neural Networks are relatively crude electronic models based on the neural structure of the brain. The brain basically learns from experience. It is natural proof that some problems that are beyond the scope of current computers are indeed solvable by small energy efficient packages. This brain modeling also promises a less technical way to develop machine solutions. This new approach to computing also provides a more graceful degradation during system overload than its more traditional counterparts.

Now, advances in biological research promise an initial understanding of the natural thinking mechanism. This paper shows that brains store information as patterns. Some of these patterns are very complicated and allow us the ability to recognize individual faces from many different angles. This process of storing information as patterns, utilizing those patterns, and then solving problems encompasses a new field in computing. This field, as mentioned before, does not utilize traditional programming but involves the creation of massively parallel networks and the training of those networks to solve specific problems. This field also utilizes words very different from traditional computing, words like behave, react, self-organize, learn, generalize, and forget.

2. ANALOGY TO THE BRAIN

The exact workings of the human brain are still a mystery. Yet, some aspects of this amazing processor are known. In particular, the most basic element of the human brain is a specific type of cell, which, unlike the rest of the body, does not appear to regenerate. Because this type of cell is the only part of the body that isn't slowly replaced, it is assumed that these cells are what provide us with our abilities to remember, think, and apply previous experiences to our every action. These cells, all 100 billion of them, are known as neurons. Each of these neurons can connect with up to 200,000 other neurons, although 1,000 to 10,000 is typical. The power of the human mind comes from the sheer numbers of these basic components and the multiple connections between them. It also comes from genetic programming and learning.

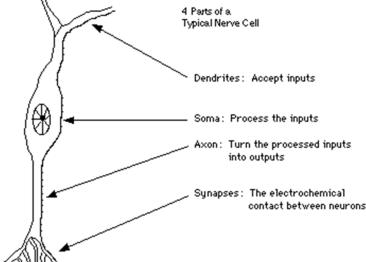
The individual neurons are complicated. They have a myriad of parts, sub-systems, and control mechanisms. They convey information via a host of electrochemical pathways. There are over one hundred different classes of neurons, depending on the classification method used. Together these neurons and their connections form a process, which is not binary, not stable, and not synchronous. In short, it is nothing like the currently available electronic computers, or even artificial neural networks.

3. ARTIFICIAL NEURONS AND HOW THEY WORK

The fundamental processing element of a neural network is a neuron. This building block of human awareness encompasses a few general capabilities. Basically, a biological neuron receives inputs from other sources, combines them in some way, performs a generally nonlinear operation on the result, and then outputs the final result. Figure below shows the relationship of these four parts.

FIGURE 1: A SIMPLE BIOLOGICAL NEURON

4 Parts of a Typical Nerve Cell

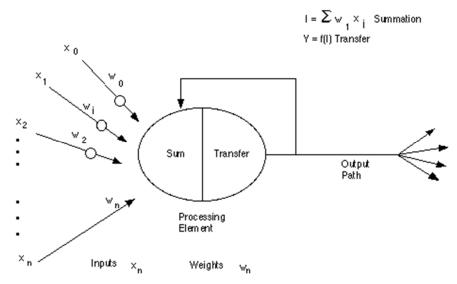


Within humans there are many variations on this basic type of neuron, further complicating man's attempts at electrically replicating the process of thinking. Yet, all natural neurons have the same four basic components. These components are known by their biological names - dendrites, soma, axon, and synapses. Dendrites are hair-like extensions of the soma, which act like input channels. These input channels receive their input through the synapses of other neurons. The soma then processes these incoming signals over time. The soma then turns that processed value into an output, which is sent out to other neurons through the axon and the synapses.

Recent experimental data has provided further evidence that biological neurons are structurally more complex than the simplistic explanation above. They are significantly more complex than the existing artificial neurons that are built into today's artificial neural networks. As biology provides a better understanding of neurons, and as technology advances, network designers can continue to improve their systems by building upon man's understanding of the biological brain. But currently, the goal of artificial neural networks is not the grandiose recreation of the brain. On the contrary, neural network researchers are seeking an understanding of nature's capabilities for which people can engineer solutions to problems that have not been solved by traditional computing.

To do this, the basic unit of neural networks, the artificial neurons, simulates the four basic functions of natural neurons. Figure below shows a fundamental representation of an artificial neuron.

FIGURE 2: A BASIC ARTIFICIAL NEURON



In above Figure, various inputs to the network are represented by the mathematical symbol, x(n). Each of these inputs are multiplied by a connection weight. These weights are represented by w(n). In the simplest case, these products are simply summed, fed through a transfer function to generate a result, and then output. This process lends itself to physical implementation on a large scale in a small package. This electronic implementation is still possible with other network structures, which utilize different summing functions as well as different transfer functions.

Some applications require "black and white," or binary, answers. These applications include the recognition of text, the identification of speech, and the image deciphering of scenes. These applications are required to turn real-world inputs into discrete values. These potential values are limited to some known set, like the ASCII characters or the most common 50,000 English words. Because of this limitation of output options, these applications don't always utilize networks composed of neurons that simply sum up, and thereby smooth, inputs. These networks may utilize the binary properties of ORing and ANDing of inputs. These functions, and many others, can be built into the summation and transfer functions of a network.

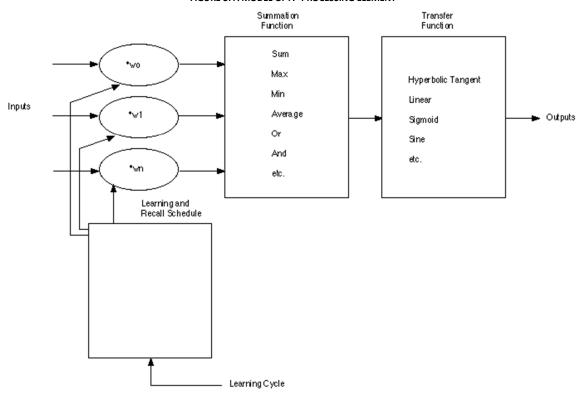
Other networks work on problems where the resolutions are not just one of several known values. These networks need to be capable of an infinite number of responses. Applications of this type include the "intelligence" behind robotic movements. This "intelligence" processes inputs and then creates outputs, which actually cause some device to move. That movement can span an infinite number of very precise motions. These networks do indeed want to smooth their inputs, which, due to limitations of sensors, come in non-continuous bursts, say thirty times a second. To do that, they might accept these inputs, sum that data, and then produce an output by, for example, applying a hyperbolic tangent as a transfer functions. In this manner, output values from the network are continuous and satisfy more real world interfaces.

Other applications might simply sum and compare to a threshold, thereby producing one of two possible outputs, a zero or a one. Other functions scale the outputs to match the application, such as the values minus one and one. Some functions even integrate the input data over time, creating time-dependent networks.

4. ELECTRONIC IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTIFICIAL NEURONS

In currently available software packages these artificial neurons are called "processing elements" and have many more capabilities than the simple artificial neuron described above. Those capabilities will be discussed later in this report. Figure 2.2.3 is a more detailed schematic of this still simplistic artificial neuron.

FIGURE 3: A MODEL OF A "PROCESSING ELEMENT"

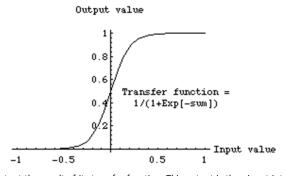


In Above Figure, inputs enter into the processing element from the upper left. The first step is for each of these inputs to be multiplied by their respective weighting factor (w(n)). Then these modified inputs are fed into the summing function, which usually just sums these products. Yet, many different types of operations can be selected. These operations could produce a number of different values, which are then propagated forward; values such as the average, the largest, the smallest, the ORed values, the ANDed values, etc. Furthermore, most commercial development products allow software engineers to create their own summing functions via routines coded in a higher-level language (C is commonly supported). Sometimes the summing function is further complicated by the addition of an activation function which enables the summing function to operate in a time sensitive way.

Either way, the output of the summing function is then sent into a transfer function. This function then turns this number into a real output via some algorithm. It is this algorithm that takes the input and turns it into a zero or a one, a minus one or a one, or some other number. The transfer functions that are commonly supported are sigmoid, sine, hyperbolic tangent, etc. This transfer function also can scale the output or control its value via thresholds. The result of the transfer function is usually the direct output of the processing element. An example of how a transfer function works is shown in Figure below.

This sigmoid transfer function takes the value from the summation function, called sum in the Figure below, and turns it into a value between zero and one.

FIGURE 4: SIGMOID TRANSFER FUNCTION



Finally, the processing element is ready to output the result of its transfer function. This output is then input into other processing elements, or to an outside connection, as dictated by the structure of the network.

All artificial neural networks are constructed from this basic building block - the processing element or the artificial neuron. It is variety and the fundamental differences in these building blocks, which partially cause the implementing of neural networks to be an "art."

5. CONCLUSION

The artificial neural networks try to replicate only the most basic elements of this complicated, versatile, and powerful organism. They do it in a primitive way. But for the software engineer who is trying to solve problems, neural computing was never about replicating human brains. It is about machines and a new way to solve problems.

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