The Matplotlib User’s Guide

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Chapter 1

Introduction

matplotlib is a library for making 2D plots of arrays in python. Although it has its origins in emulating the MATLAB graphics commands, it does not require MATLAB, and can be used in a pythonic, object oriented way. Although matplotlib is written primarily in pure python, it makes heavy use of NumPy and other extension code to provide good performance even for large arrays.

matplotlib is designed with the philosophy that you should be able to create simple plots with just a few commands, or just one! If you want to see a histogram of your data, you shouldn’t need to instantiate objects, call methods, set properties, and so forth; it should just work.

For years, I used to use MATLAB exclusively for data analysis and visualization. MATLAB excels at making it easy to create nice looking plots. When I began working with EEG data, I found that I needed to write applications to interact with my data, and developed an EEG analysis application in MATLAB. As the application grew in complexity, interacting with databases, http servers, manipulating complex data structures, I began to strain against the limitations of MATLAB as a programming language, and decided to start over in python. Python more than makes up for all of matlab’s deficiencies as a programming language, but I was having difficulty finding a 2D plotting package (for 3D VTK more than exceeds all of my needs).

When I went searching for a python plotting package, I had several requirements:

- Plots should look great - publication quality. One important requirement for me is that the text looks good (antialiased, etc)
- Postscript output for inclusion with \LaTeX documents
- Embeddable in a graphical user interface for application development
- Code should be easy enough that I can understand it and extend it.
- Making plots should be easy.

Finding no package that suited me just right, I did what any self-respecting python programmer would do: rolled up my sleeves and dived in. Not having any real experience with computer graphics, I decided to emulate MATLAB's plotting capabilities because that is something MATLAB does very well. This had an added advantage: many people have a lot of MATLAB experience, and thus they can quickly get up to steam plotting in python. From a developer’s perspective, having a fixed, MATLAB-inspired user interface (the pylab interface) has been very useful, because the guts of the code base can be redesigned without affecting user code.

The matplotlib code is conceptually divided into three parts: the pylab interface is the set of functions provided by matplotlib.pylab which allow the user to create plots with code quite similar to MATLAB figure generating code. The matplotlib frontend or matplotlib API is the set of classes that do the heavy lifting, creating and managing figures, text, lines, plots and so on. This is an abstract interface that knows nothing about output. The backends are device dependent drawing devices, aka renderers, that transform the frontend representation to hardcopy or a display device. Example backends: PS creates postscript hardcopy, SVG creates scalar vector graphics hardcopy, Agg
creates PNG output using the high quality antigrain library that ships with matplotlib at http://antigrain.com. GTK embeds matplotlib in a GTK application, GTKAgg uses the antigrain renderer to create a figure and embed it a GTK application, and so on for WX, Tkinter, Qt, FLTK.

Matplotlib is used by many people in many different contexts. Some people want to automatically generate PostScript files to send to a printer or publishers. Others deploy matplotlib on a web application server to generate PNG output for inclusion in dynamically generated web pages. Some use matplotlib interactively from the python shell in Tkinter on windows. My primary use is to embed matplotlib in a GTK EEG application that runs on windows, linux and OS X.

Because there are so many ways people want to use a plotting library, there is a certain amount of complexity inherent in configuring the library so that it will work naturally the way you want it to. Before diving into these details, let’s first explore matplotlib’s simplicity by comparing a typical matplotlib script with its analog in MATLAB.

— JDH

1.1 Migrating from MATLAB

Using matplotlib should come naturally if you have ever plotted with MATLAB and should be fairly straightforward if you haven’t. Like all interpreted languages used for serious number crunching, python has an extension module for processing numeric arrays. This python extension module is called Numpy. NumPy comes with many MATLAB-compatible analysis functions, which matplotlib extends. The example code below shows two complete scripts: on the left hand side is python with matplotlib, and on the right is MATLAB.

![Matplotlib and MATLAB](image)

Both scripts do the same thing: generate a white noise vector, convolve it with an exponential function, add it to a sine wave, plot the signal in one subplot and plot the power spectrum in another.

Listing 1.1: matplotlib and MATLAB

```
# python
from pylab import *

dt = 0.01

% matlab
% no import necessary

dt = 0.01;
```
\begin{verbatim}
t = arange(0,10,dt) t = [0:dt:10];
nse = randn(len(t)) nse = randn(size(t));
r = exp(-t/0.05) r = exp(-t/0.05);

cnse = conv(nse, r)*dt cnse = conv(nse, r)*dt;
cnse = cnse[:len(t)] cnse = cnse(1:length(t));
s = 0.1*sin(2*pi*t) + cnse s = 0.1*sin(2*pi*t) + cnse;

subplot(211) subplot(211)
plot(t, s) plot(t, s)
subplot(212) subplot(212)
psd(s, 512, 1/dt) psd(s, 512, 1/dt)
\end{verbatim}

The major differences are 1) NumPy has a function for creating arrays (\texttt{arange}) above whereas MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM} has the handy notation \texttt{[0:dt:10]}, 2) Python uses square brackets rather than parentheses for array indexing, and there are some small differences in how to do array lengths, sizes, and indexing. But the differences are minute compared to the similarities: 1) MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM} and NumPy both do array processing and have a variety of functions that efficiently operate on arrays and scalars, 2) moderately sophisticated signal processing (white noise, convolution, power spectra) is achieved in only a few lines of clear code and 3) plots are simple, intuitive and attractive (compare Figures 1.1 and Figures 1.2).

![Figure 1.1: Colored noise signal and power spectrum generated with python matplotlib as shown in Listing 1.1. Compare with MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM} in Figure 1.1. Note that the waveforms are not identical because they were generated from random signals!](image_url)

Figure 1.2: Colored noise signal and power spectrum generated with python matplotlib as shown in Listing 1.1. Compare with MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM} in Figure 1.1. Note that the waveforms are not identical because they were generated from random signals!

Hopefully, this example will have instilled some confidence in those who have previously worked with MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM} that migrating to Python is not too daunting a task. However, this guide will not attempt to serve as an introduction to Python itself, and therefore assumes you already have a rudimentary knowledge of the language. For users who are new to Python, we recommend getting accustomed to the language by experimenting with some of the tutorials at \url{http://wiki.python.org/moin/BeginnersGuide/Programmers}, or by reading one of the several books introducing Python (for example, Mark Lutz and David Ascher’s “Learning Python”).

Finally, matplotlib does not intend to meet the needs of MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM} users alone. Many matplotlib users previously worked with gnuplot, for example, and have influenced matplotlib’s features based on their previous experience. Our
goal is to provide a flexible, powerful library that is capable of easily producing beautiful plots for scientists and engineers who work with Python.
Chapter 2

Installation and Setup

2.1 Installing

Matplotlib is known to work on linux, unix, win32 and OS X platforms. This chapter will begin with basic installation instructions to help new users get going quickly. The suggested setup for matplotlib version 0.87.7 and later requires python 2.3 or later, NumPy 1.0 or later and freetype. (If you are using python-2.3, matplotlib also requires setup-tools, which can be installed by running http://peak.telecommunity.com/dist/ez_setup.py. setuptools is not required for python-2.4 and later.) For interactive use of matplotlib, we recommend installing IPython and at least one of the GUI toolkits. We suggest using the Tk GUI toolkit if you are just getting started.

2.1.1 Quickstart on windows

If you don’t already have python installed, you may want to consider using the Enthought edition of python, which includes everything you need to start plotting with matplotlib. Enthought’s Python distribution also includes a lot of other goodies, like the wxPython GUI toolkit and SciPy - see http://www.enthought.com/python.

For standard Python installations, you should install NumPy before running the matplotlib installer. The windows installer (*.exe) on the download page contains everything else you need to get up and running. We highly recommend installing PyReadline and IPython as well, (see http://ipython.scipy.org). The Tk GUI toolkit is generally included with standard python installations.

There are many examples that are not included in the matplotlib windows installer. They can be found at http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/matplotlib_examples_0.87.7.zip.

2.1.2 Package managers: (rpms, apt, fink)

RPMS

To build all the backends on a binary linux distro such as redhat, you need to install a number of the devel libs (and whatever dependencies they require). I suggest

- matplotlib core: zlib, zlib-devel, libpng, libpng-devel, freetype, freetype-devel, freetype-utils
- gtk backend: gtk2-devel, gtk+-devel, pygtk2, glib-devel, pygtk2-devel, gnome-libs-devel, pygtk2-libglade
- tk backend: tcl, tk, tkinter
- wx, wxagg backend. The wxpython rpms.
Debian and Ubuntu

Vittorio Palmisano <redclay@email.it> maintains the debian packages at http://mentors.debian.net. He provides the following instructions

- add these lines to your /etc/apt/sources.list:

  deb http://anakonda.altervista.org/debian packages/
  deb-src http://anakonda.altervista.org/debian sources/

- then run

  > apt-get update
  > apt-get install python-matplotlib python-matplotlib-doc

Alternatively, Andrew Straw maintains an Apt Repository of scientific Python packages:

- add these lines to your /etc/apt/sources.list:

  deb http://debs.astraw.com/ dapper/
  deb-src http://debs.astraw.com/ dapper/

**fink**


2.1.3 Compiling matplotlib

You will need to have recent versions of freetype (>= 2.1.7), libpng and zlib installed on your system. If you are using a package manager, make sure the devel versions of these packages are also installed (eg freetype-devel).

If you want to use a GUI backend, you will need either Tkinter, pygtk, PyQt, PyQt4 or wxpython installed on your system, either from source or a package manager, including the devel packages. You can choose which backends to enable by setting the flags in setup.py, but the ‘auto’ flags will work in most cases, as matplotlib checks the availability of each GUI toolkit and builds the backend accordingly.

If you have installed prerequisites to nonstandard places and need to inform matplotlib where they are, edit setupext.py an add the base dirs to the ‘basedir’ dictionary entry for your sys.platform. Eg, if the header to some required library is in /some/path/include/somheader.h, put /some/path in the basedir list for your platform.

Note that if you install matplotlib anywhere other than the default location, you will need to set the MATPLOTLIBDATA environment variable to point to the install base dir. Eg, if you install matplotlib with python setup.py build -prefix=/home/jdhunter then set MATPLOTLIBDATA to /home/jdhunter/share/matplotlib.

**OS X**

All of the backends run on OS X. fink users consult the fink discussion in section 2.1.2. Another option is http://www.stecf.org/macosxscisoft which packages many scientific packages for python on OS X, including matplotlib, although it is designed for astronomical analysis.

If you want to compile matplotlib yourself on OS X, make sure you read the compiling instructions in section 2.1.3. You will need to install freetype2, libpng and zlib via fink or from src. You will also need the base libraries for a given backend. Eg, if you want to run TkAgg, you will need a python with Tkinter; if you want to use WxAgg, install wxpython. See Section 2.2 for a more comprehensive discussion of the various backend requirements.

Note when running a GUI backend in OS X, you should launch your programs with pythonw rather than python, or you may get nonresponsive GUIs.
2.1.4 Trial Run

To test your matplotlib installation, run IPython in pylab mode, which includes special support for interactive use of matplotlib. Linux and Mac users, run the following in a shell:

$ ipython -pylab

Windows users can edit the ipython launch icon properties to include the -pylab flag.

IPython’s pylab mode automatically imports matplotlib, and prepares the session for interactive plotting. At the command prompt (In [1]:), run the following:

```
plot([1, 2, 3])
```

A window should appear, which looks like figure 2.1. (If you get errors instead of a plot window, you probably were missing one of the packages required by matplotlib during installation.) Now that we have (hopefully) demonstrated how easy it can be to get started, perhaps it is safe to explore the various options associated with installing and configuring matplotlib.

![Figure 2.1: A simple plot shown in the TkAgg graphical user interface. Navigation controls shown below the figure provide an easy way to pan and zoom around your figures, and a save dialog allows you to save your figure after you have set the pan and zoom.](image)

2.2 Backends

The matplotlib backends are responsible for taking the figure representation and transferring this to a display device, either a hardcopy image (*.jpg, *.png, *.ps, *.svg, etc) or a GUI window that you can interact with. There are many GUIs for python: pygtk, wxpython, Tkinter, PyQT, pyfltk, and more, and matplotlib supports most of them.

In choosing your backend, the following considerations are important:

- What kind of output do you require? Any matplotlib installation can generate PS and SVG. For other hardcopy formats, different backends have different capabilities. Agg can only generate png but produces the highest quality output (anti-aliased, alpha blending). The native GTK and WX backends support many more image formats (JPG, TIFF, …) but can only be used in GUI mode and produce lower quality images. The GUI hybrid backends (WXAgg, GTKAgg, Tkagg, FLTKAgg, QtAgg, Qt4Agg) have the same capabilities and limitations as Agg.
- Do you want to produce plots interactively from the python shell? Most GUIs have a mainloop and become unresponsive to outside input once they are launched. Thus you often need to use a custom shell to work interactively with a GUI application from the shell (pycrust for wx, PyShell for gtk). A notable exception is Tkinter, which can be controlled from a standard python shell or ipython. Fernando Perez, the author of ipython, has written a pylab mode for ipython that lets you use WX, GTK, Qt, Qt4 or Tk based backends interactively from the python shell. If you want to work interactively with matplotlib, the recommended approach is to use ipython.

- What platform do you use most frequently? Do you want to embed matplotlib in an application that you distribute across platforms? Do you need a GUI interface? Each of the python GUIs work on all major platforms, but some are easier than others to install. Each have different advantages: GTK is natural for linux and has excellent looking widgets but is a tough install on OS X. Tkinter is deployed with most python installations but has primitive looking widgets. wxpython has native widgets but can be difficult to install. Windows users note: the enthought edition of python from http://www.enthought.com/python comes with Tkinter and wxpython included. Now that Qt-4 has been released under the GPL for windows, the Qt backend is a new alternative with cross-platform compatibility.

- What features do you need? Some of the matplotlib features, including alpha blending, antialiasing, images and mathtext, are not ported to all backends. Agg and the *Agg hybrids support all matplotlib features (agg is a core matplotlib backend). Postscript, native GTK and native WX do not support alpha or antialiasing. SVG supports everything except mathtext (which will hopefully be supported soon).

- Do you need dynamic images such as animation? The GUI backends vary in their ability to support rapid updating of the image canvas. GTKAgg is currently the fastest backend for animation, with FLTKAgg a close second.

Once you have decided on which backends you want to use, make sure you have installed the required GUI toolkits (and devel versions if you are using a package manager). If you know you don’t want a particular backend or extension, you can set the appropriate flag to False in setup.py. Most users will want to keep the setup.py default BUILD_AGG = 1. Exceptions to this are if you know you don’t need a GUI or you only want to produce vector graphics like postscript, svg or pdf. If you want to produce png output, keep BUILD_AGG = 1. Then install matplotlib and, if you have multiple backends available to your matplotlib environment, edit your matplotlibrc files, as described in section 2.6, to select your default backend. Selecting your default backend may be important, especially if you intend to use matplotlib with an integrated development environment (IDE). This is described in the next section.

### 2.3 Integrated development environments

If you work primarily in an integrated development environment such as idle, pycrust, SciTE, or Pythonwin, you should set your default backend to be compatible with the GUI your IDE uses. See Table 2.1 for a summary of the various python IDEs and their matplotlib compatibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDE</th>
<th>GUI</th>
<th>Backends and Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>idle</td>
<td>Tkinter</td>
<td>Works best with TkAgg if idle is launched with the -n flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pycrust</td>
<td>WX</td>
<td>Works best with WX/WXAgg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pyshell</td>
<td>GTK</td>
<td>GTK/GTKAgg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scintilla and SciTE</td>
<td>GTK</td>
<td>Should work with GTK/GTKAgg backends but untested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric3, Eric4</td>
<td>Qt, Qt4</td>
<td>works with QtAgg, Qt4Agg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pythonwin</td>
<td>MFC</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: python IDEs and matplotlib compatibility.

---

1If you have experience with these or other IDEs and matplotlib backends to help me finish this table, please contact me or the matplotlib-devel mailing list.
2.4 Interactive

The recommended way to use matplotlib interactively from a shell is with IPython. IPython has a pylab mode (launched with `ipython -pylab`) that detects your matplotlibrc file and makes the right settings to run matplotlib with your GUI of choice in interactive mode using threading. IPython’s pylab mode is compatible with the Tk, GTK, WX and Qt GUI toolkits. GTK users will need to make sure that they have compiled GTK with threading for this to work. Using ipython in pylab mode is basically a nobrainer because it knows enough about matplotlib internals to make all the right settings for you.

```
peds−pc311:~ > ipython −pylab
Python 2.3.3 (#2, Apr 13 2004, 17:41:29)
Type "copyright", "credits" or "license" for more information.

IPython 0.6.5 — An enhanced Interactive Python.
? → Introduction to IPython’s features.
%magic → Information about IPython’s ‘magic’ % functions.
help → Python’s own help system.
object? → Details about ‘object’. ?object also works, ?? prints more.
```

Welcome to pylab, a matplotlib-based Python environment.
  help(matplotlib) → generic matplotlib information.
  help(matlab) → matlab-compatible commands from matplotlib.
  help(plotting) → plotting commands.

```
In[1]: plot( rand(20), rand(20), 'go')
```

Note that you did not need to import any matplotlib names because in pylab mode ipython will import them for you. `ipython` turns on interactive mode for you, and also provides a `run` command so you can run matplotlib scripts from the matplotlib shell and then interactively update your figure. `ipython` will turn off interactive mode during a `run` command for efficiency, and then restore the interactive state at the end of the run.

```
>>> cd python/projects/matplotlib/examples/
/home/jdhunter/python/projects/matplotlib/examples
>>> run simple_plot.py
>>> title(’a new title’, color=’r’) 
```

The pylab interface provides 4 commands that are useful for interactive control. Note again that the interactive setting primarily controls whether the figure is redrawn with each plotting command. `isinteractive` returns the interactive setting, `ion` turns interactive on, `ioff` turns it off, and `draw` forces a redraw of the entire figure. Thus when working with a big figure in which drawing is expensive, you may want to turn matplotlib’s interactive setting off temporarily to avoid the performance hit.

```
>>> run mybigfatfigure.py
>>> ioff() # turn updates off
>>> title(’now how much would you pay?’)
>>> xticklabels(fontsize=20, color=’green’) 
>>> draw() # force a draw
>>> savefig(’alldone’, dpi=300)
>>> close()
>>> ion() # turn updates back on
```

If you are not using `ipython -pylab`, then by default, matplotlib defers drawing until the end of the script because drawing can be an expensive operation. Often you don’t want to update the plot every time a single property is changed, only once after all the properties have changed. But in interactive mode, eg from the standard python shell, you usually do want to update the plot with every command, eg, after changing the xlabel or the marker style of a line. To do this, you need to set `interactive : True` in your configuration file; see Section 2.6.
There are many python shells out there: the standard python shell, ipython, PyShell, pssh, pycrust. Some of these are GUI dependent (PyShell/pycrust) and some are not (ipython, pysh). As discussed in backends Section 2.3, not all shells are compatible with all matplotlib backends because of GUI mainloop issues. With a non-GUI python shell such as the standard python shell or pysh, the TkAgg backend is the best choice for interactive use. Just set backend: TkAgg and interactive: True in your matplotlibrc file and fire up python. Then should work out of the box. Note, in batch mode, ie when making figures from scripts, interactive mode can be slow since it redraws the figure with each command. So you may want to think carefully before making this the default behavior.

2.5 Numerix

Numeric is the original python module for efficiently processing arrays of numeric data. While highly optimized for performance and very stable, some limitations in the design made it inefficient for very large arrays, and developers decided it was better to start with a new array package to solve some of these design problems. Thus numarray was born. In a sense, this caused the numerical python community to split into Numeric and numarray user groups. To resolve this split, Travis Oliphant, one of the maintainers of Numeric, began work on a third package, based on the Numeric code base, which incorporated the advances made in numarray. This project is now called NumPy. NumPy is the successor to both Numeric and numarray, and is intended to reunite the numerical python community. An array interface was developed in order to allow the three array packages to play well together and to easy migration to NumPy. Numeric is no longer undergoing active development, and the numarray release notes suggest users to switch to Numpy.

Matplotlib requires one of Numeric, numarray, or NumPy to operate. If you have no experience with any of these packages, you are strongly advised to install Numpy and read through some of the documentation before continuing. Since the array packages all play well together, we expect that in the near future, matplotlib will depend on NumPy alone. Until then, the matplotlib.numerix module, written by Todd Miller, allows you to choose between Numeric, numarray and NumPy at the prompt or in a config file. Thus when you do

```
# import matplotlib and all the numerix functions
from pylab import *
```

you’ll not only get all the matplotlib pylab interface commands, but most of the Numeric, numarray or NumPy package as well (depending on your numerix setting). All of the array creation and manipulation functions are imported, such as array, arange, take, where, etc. The other modules, such as mlab, fft and linear_algebra, are available under the numarray package structure. To make your matplotlib scripts as portable as possible with respect to your choice of array packages, it is advised not to explicitly import Numeric, numarray or NumPy. Rather, you should use matplotlib.numerix where possible, either by using the functions imported by pylab, or by explicitly importing the numerix module, as in

```
# create a numerix namespace
import matplotlib.numerix as n
x = n.arange(100)
y = n.take(x, range(10,20))
```

For the remainder of this manual, the term numerix is used to mean either the Numeric, numarray or NumPy package.

2.5.1 Choosing Numeric, numarray, or NumPy

To select Numeric, numarray, or NumPy from the prompt, run your matplotlib script with
Typically, however, users will choose one option and make this setting in their rc file using either numerix : Numeric, numerix : numarray, or numerix : numpy; see Section 2.6.

2.6 Customization using matplotlibrc

Almost all of the matplotlib settings and figure properties can be customized with a plain text file matplotlibrc. This file is installed with the rest of the matplotlib data (fonts, icons, etc) into a directory determined by python’s installation module. Before compiling matplotlib, matplotlibrc resides in the same dir as setup.py and will be copied into your install path. Typical locations for this file are

C:\Python24\Lib\site-packages\matplotlib\mpl-data\matplotlibrc  # windows
/usr/lib/python2.4/site-packages/matplotlib/mpl-data/matplotlibrc  # linux and friends

By default, the installer will overwrite the existing file in the install path, so if you want to preserve your changes, please move it to the .matplotlib directory in your HOME directory (and set the HOME environment variable if necessary).

In the rc file, you can set your backend (Section 2.2), your numerix setting (Section 2.5), whether you’ll be working interactively (Section 2.4) and default values for most of the figure properties.

2.6.1 RC file format

Blank lines, or lines starting with a comment symbol, are ignored, as are trailing comments. Other lines must have the format

```
key : val  # optional comment
```

where key is some property like backend, lines.linewidth, or figure.figsize and val is the value of that property. Example entries for these properties are

```
# this is a comment and is ignored
backend : GTKAgg  # the default backend
lines.linewidth : 0.5  # line width in points
figure.figsize : 8.6  # figure size in inches
```

A complete sample rc file is shown in Appendix A.

The matplotlib rc values are read into a dictionary rcParams which contains the key/value pairs. You can changes these values within a script by importing this dictionary. For example, to require that a given script uses numarray, you could do

```
from matplotlib import rcParams
rcParams['numerix'] = 'numarray'
from pylab import *
```

Additionally, the matplotlib.rcParams dictionary and matplotlib.rcdefaults can be used to dynamically customize the defaults during a script execution.

2.6.2 Which rc file is used?

matplotlib will search for an rc file in the following locations

- The current directory - this allows you to have a project specific configuration that differs from your default configuration
Your HOME dir. On linux and other UNIX operating systems, this environment variable is set by default. Windows users can set it in the My Computer properties.

PATH/matplotlibrc where PATH is the return value of matplotlib.get_data_path(). This function looks where distutils would have installed the file - if it doesn’t find it there, it checks for the environment variable MATPLOTLIBDATA and uses that if found. The latter should be set if you are installing matplotlib to a non-standard location. Eg, if you install matplotlib with python setup.py build -prefix=/home/jdhunter then set matplotlib data to /home/jdhunter/share/matplotlib.

After all that, if it cannot find your rc file, it will issue a warning and use defaults. This is not recommended!

2.6.3 In the event of a problem

matplotlib uses a verbose setting, defined in the matplotlibrc file to determine how much information to report.

```
verbose.level : error # one of silent, error, helpful, debug, debug-annoying
verbose.fileo : sys.stdout # a log filename, sys.stdout or sys.stderr
verbose.error : sys.stderr # a log filename, sys.stdout or sys.stderr
```

These settings control how much information matplotlib gives you at runtime and where it goes. The verbosity levels are: silent, error, helpful, debug, debug-annoying. At the error level, you will only get error messages. Any level is inclusive of all the levels below it. Ie, if your setting is helpful, you’ll also get all the error messages. If you setting is debug, you’ll get all the error and helpful messages. It is not recommended to make your setting silent because you will not even get error messages. You can access the verbose instance in your code from matplotlib import verbose.

The verbose.fileo setting gives the destination for any calls to the verbose report function. The verbose.error setting gives the destination for any calls to verbose error reporting function. These objects can a filename or a full path to a filename, sys.stderr, or sys.stdout. You can override the rc default verbosity from the command line by giving the flags -verbose-LEVEL where LEVEL is one of the legal levels, eg -verbose-error -verbose-helpful.

If you run into a problem and want to ask for help or report a bug to the mailing-list, please set verbose to helpful or debug and paste the output into your report. Also, please include the shortest possible example code that reproduces the problem. With the example code and verbose output, other readers of the mailing list have a much better chance of understanding the problem and offering a solution. The email address is matplotlib-users@lists.sourceforge.net. Finally, for those who are using the development sources from the sourceforge subversion repository, please report problems to matplotlib-devel@lists.sourceforge.net instead of matplotlib-users@lists.sourceforge.net. You can subscribe to either mailing list at http://sourceforge.net/mail/?group_id=80706.
Chapter 3

The pylab interface

Although matplotlib has a full object oriented API (see Chapter 8), the primary way people create plots is via the pylab interface, which can be imported with

```
from pylab import *
```

This import command brings in all of the matplotlib code needed to produce plots, the extra MATLAB™ compatible, non-plotting functions found in `matplotlib.mlab` and all of the `matplotlib.numerix` code needed to create and manipulate arrays. When you import `pylab`, you will get all of NumPy (or Numeric or numarray depending on your `numerix` setting).

matplotlib is organized around figures and axes. The figure contains an arbitrary number of axes, which can be placed anywhere in the figure you want, including over other axes. You can directly create and manage your own figures and axes, but if you don’t, matplotlib will try and do the right thing by automatically creating default figures and axes for you.

There are two ways of working in the pylab interface: interactively or in script mode. When working interactively, you want every plotting command to update the figure. Under the hood, this means that the canvas is redrawn after every command that affects the figure. When working in script mode, this is inefficient. In this case, you only want the figure to be drawn once, either to the GUI window or saved to a file. To handle these two cases, matplotlib has an interactive setting in `matplotlibrc`. When `interactive : True`, the figure will be redrawn with each command. When `interactive : False`, the figure will be drawn only when there is a call to `show` or `savefig`. In the examples that follow, I’ll assume you have set `interactive : True` in your `matplotlibrc` file and are working from an interactive python shell using a compatible backend. Please make sure you have read and understood Sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.6, before trying these examples.

3.1 Simple plots

Just about the simplest plot you can create is

```
>>> from pylab import *
>>> plot([1,2,3])
```

I have set my backend to `TkAgg`, which causes the plot in Figure 2.1 to appear, with navigation controls for interactive panning and zooming.

I can continue to decorate the plot with labels and titles

```
>>> xlabel('time (s)')
>>> ylabel('volts')
>>> title('A really simple plot')
>>> grid(True)
```
and the updated figure is shown in Figure 3.1.

At this point we’re getting a little bored plotting \([1, 2, 3]\). matplotlib is designed around plotting numerix arrays, and can handle large arrays efficiently. To create a regularly sampled 1 Hz sine wave use the arange and sin methods provided by numerix which produces the plot shown in Figure 3.2.

```
>>> t = arange(0.0, 3.0, 0.05) # in matlab t = [0.0: 0.05: 3.0];
>>> s = sin(2*pi*t)
>>> plot(t, s)
```

Figure 3.2: A sine wave added to the simple plot. This may not be what we wanted. Because the `hold` state was on, the two plots were superimposed.

Note that the two plots are superimposed. matplotlib (and MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM}) have a `hold` state. When hold is on, subsequent plotting commands are superimposed over previous commands. When hold is off, the plot is cleared with every plotting command. This is controlled by the `hold` command, which can be called like `hold(True)` or `hold(False)`. The default setting is in `matplotlibrc` as `axes.hold : True`, which you can change according to your preferences.
To clear the previous plot and reissue the plot command for just the sine wave, you can use `cla` to clear the current axes and `clf` to clear the current figure, or simply turn the hold state off.

```python
>>> hold(False)
```  

```python
>>> plot(t, s)
```  

## 3.2 More on plot

### 3.2.1 Multiple lines

`plot` is a versatile command, and will create an arbitrary number of lines with different line styles and markers. This example plots a sine wave and a damped exponential using the default line styles:

```python
>>> clf()  # clear the figure
>>> t = arange(0.0, 5.0, 0.05)
>>> s1 = sin(2*pi*t)
>>> s2 = s1 * exp(-t)
>>> plot(t, s1, t, s2)
```

If you plot multiple lines in a single plot command, the line color will cycle through a list of predefined colors. The default line color and line style are determined by the rc parameters `lines.style` and `lines.color`. You can include an optional third string argument to each line in the plot command, which specifies any of the line style, marker style and line color. To plot the above using a green dashed line with circle markers, and a red dotted line with circle markers, as shown in Figure 3.3,

```python
>>> clf()
>>> plot(t, s1, 'g--o', t, s2, 'r:s')
>>> legend(('sine wave', 'damped exponential'))
```

![Figure 3.3: All line plots take an optional third string argument, which is composed of (optionally) a line color (eg, 'r', 'g', 'k'), a line style (eg, '-', '–', ':') and a line marker ('o', 's', 'd'). The sine wave line (green dashed line with circle markers) is created with 'g–o'. The `legend` command will automatically create a legend for all the lines in the plot.](image)

The color part of the format string applies only to the facecolor of 2D plot markers like circles, triangles, and squares. The edgecolor of these markers will be determined by the default rc parameter `lines.markeredgecolor` and can be defined for individual lines using the methods discussed below.
3.2.2 Controlling line properties

In the last section, we showed how to choose the default line properties using plot format strings. For finer grained control, you can set any of the attributes of a `matplotlib.lines.Line2D` instance. There are three ways to do this: using keyword arguments, calling the line methods directly, or using the `set` command. The line properties are shown in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alpha</td>
<td>The alpha transparency on 0-1 scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antialiased</td>
<td>True or False - use antialiased rendering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>color</td>
<td>A matplotlib color arg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>data_clipping</td>
<td>Whether to use numeric to clip data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>label</td>
<td>A string optionally used for legend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linestyle</td>
<td>One of - : -. -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linewidth</td>
<td>A float, the line width in points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marker</td>
<td>One of +, o, s, v, x, &gt;, &lt;, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markeredgewidth</td>
<td>The line width around the marker symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markeredgecolor</td>
<td>The edge color if a marker is used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markerfacecolor</td>
<td>The face color if a marker is used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markersize</td>
<td>The size of the marker in points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Line properties; see `pylab.plot` for more marker styles

Using keyword arguments to control line properties

You can set any of the line properties listed in Table 3.1 using keyword arguments to the plot command. The following command plots large green diamonds with a red border

```python
>>> plot(t, s1, markersize=15, marker='d', 
...     markerfacecolor='g', markeredgcolor='r')
```

Using set to control line properties

You can set any of the line properties listed in Table 3.1 using the `set` command. Set operates on the return value of the plot command (a list of lines), so you need to save the lines. You can use an arbitrary number of key/value pairs

```python
>>> lines = plot(t, s1)  
>>> set(lines, markersize=15, marker='d', 
...     markerfacecolor='g', markeredgcolor='r')
```

`set` can either operate on a single instance or a sequence of instances (in the example code above, `lines` is a length one sequence of lines). Under the hood, if you pass a keyword arg named `something`, `set` looks for a method of the object called `set_something` and will call it with the value you pass. If `set_something` does not exist, then an exception will be raised.

Using `matplotlib.lines.Line2D` methods

You can also call Line2D methods directly. The return value of plot is a sequence of `matplotlib.lines.Line2D` instances. Note in the example below, I use tuple unpacking with the “,” to extract the first element of the sequence as `line: line, = plot(t, s1)`

```python
>>> line, = plot(t, s1)  
>>> line.set_markersize(15)  
>>> line.set_marker('d')
```
>>> line.set_markerfacecolor('g')
>>> line.set_markeredgecolor('r')

Note, however, that we haven’t issued any `pylab` commands after the initial `plot` command so the figure will not be redrawn even though interactive mode is set. To trigger a redraw, you can simply resize the figure window a little or call the `draw` method. The fruits of your labors are shown in Figure 3.4.

```python
>>> draw()
```

![Figure 3.4: Large green diamonds with red borders, created with three different recipes.](image)

Abbreviated method names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Fullname</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aa</td>
<td>antialiased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ls</td>
<td>linestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lw</td>
<td>linewidth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mec</td>
<td>markeredgecolor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mew</td>
<td>markeredgewidth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mfc</td>
<td>markerfacecolor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ms</td>
<td>markersize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Abbreviated names for line properties. You can use any of the line customization methods above with abbreviated names.

When working from an interactive python shell, typing ’markerfacecolor’ can be a pain – too many keystrokes. The `matplotlib.lines.Line2D` class provides a number of abbreviated method names, listed in Table 3.2. Thus you can, for example, call

```python
# no antialiasing, thick green markeredge lines
>>> plot(range(10), 'ro', aa=False, mew=2, mec='g')
```
3.3 Color arguments

matplotlib is fairly tolerant of a number of formats for passing color information. As discussed above, you can use any of the single character color strings listed in Table 3.3. Additionally, anywhere a color character string is accepted, you can also use a grayscale, hex, RGB color argument, or any legal *hml* color name, e.g. “red” or “darkslategray”.

![Image of a graph with a caption: Don’t try this at home, folks](image)

*Figure 3.5: Lots of different ways to specify colors generated from Listing 3.1 – not necessarily recommended for aesthetic quality!*

Listing 3.1: Wild and wonderful ways to specify colors; see Figure 3.5

```python
from pylab import *

# axis background in dark slate gray
subplot(111, axisbg=(0.1843, 0.3098, 0.3098))
t = arange(0.0, 1.0, 0.01)
s = sin(2*pi*t)

# yellow circles with red edge color
plot(t, s, 'yo', markeredgecolor='r')
xlabel('time (s)', color='b')  # xlabel is blue
ylabel('voltage (mV)', color='0.5')  # ylabel is light gray

title("Don’t try this at home, folks", color='#afeeee')
```

3.4 Loading and saving data

*pylab* provides support for loading and saving ASCII arrays or vectors with the *load* and *save* command. *matplotlib.numerix* provides support for loading and saving binary arrays with the *fromstring* and *tostring* methods.

3.4.1 Loading and saving ASCII data

Suppose you have an ASCII file of measured times and voltages like so

```
Table 3.3: Color format strings, which can be used to set the line or text properties, eg the line, the marker edgecolor or marker facecolor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RGB hex color string</th>
<th>RGB tuple</th>
<th>grayscale intensity (any float in [0,1])</th>
<th>an RGB hex color string, eg, this example is dark slate gray</th>
<th>an RGB tuple; this is also dark slate gray</th>
<th>any legal html color name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2F4F4F</td>
<td>(0.18, 0.31, 0.31)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can load that data into an array $X$ with the `load` command. The shape of $X$ is `numSamples` rows by 2 columns, with the first column containing the time points and the second column containing the measured voltages. You can use `numerix` array indexing to extract the two columns into the 1D arrays $t$ and $s$

$$X = \text{load}('..../data/ascii_data.dat')$$

```python
X = load('..../data/ascii_data.dat')
t = X[:,0]  # the first column
s = X[:,1]  # the second row
plot(t, s, 'o')
```

Likewise, you can save array or vector data in an ASCII file with the `save` command. The following script was used to create the sample data above

```python
from pylab import *
t = arange(0.0, 1.0, 0.05)
s = sin(2*pi*t) + 0.5*rand(len(t))
X = zeros((len(t), 2), Float)
X[:,0] = t
X[:,1] = s
save('..../data/ascii_data.dat', X)
```

### 3.4.2 Loading and saving binary data

ASCII is bloated and slow for working with large arrays, and so binary data should be used if performance is a consideration. To save the array $X$ in binary form, use the `numerix` `tostring` method

```python
# open the file for writing binary and write the binary string
file('..../data/binary_data.dat', 'wb').write(X.tobytes())
```

This data can later be loaded into a numerix array using `fromstring`. This method takes two arguments, a string and a data type (note that numarray users can use `fromfile` which is more efficient for importing data directly from a file).

```python
# load the data as a string
s = file('..../data/binary_data.dat', 'rb').read()
```
# convert to 1D numerix array of type Float
X = fromstring(s, Float)

# reshape to numSamples rows by 2 columns
X.shape = len(X)/2, 2

t = X[:,0]  # the first column
s = X[:,1]  # the second row
plot(t, s, 'o')

Note that although Numerix and numarray use different typecode arguments (Numeric uses strings whereas numarray uses type objects), the matplotlib.numerix compatibility layer provides symbols which will work with either numerix rc setting.

### 3.4.3 Processing several data files

Since python is a programming language *par excellence*, it is easy to process data in batch. When I started the gradual transition from a full time MATLAB™ user to a full time python user, I began processing my data in python and saving the results to data files for plotting in MATLAB™. When that became too cumbersome, I decided to write matplotlib so I could have all the functionality I needed in one environment. Here is a brief example showing how to iterate over several data files, named basename001.dat, basename002.dat, basename003.dat, ... basename100.dat and plot all of the traces to the same axes. I’ll assume for this example that each file is a 1D ASCII array, which I can load with the *load* command.

```python
hold(True)  # set the hold state to be on
for i in range(1,101):
    # start at 1, end at 100
    fname = 'basename%03d.dat' % i  # %03d pads the integers with zeros
    x = load(fname)
    plot(x)
```

### 3.5 axes and figures

All the examples thus far used implicit figure and axes creation. You can use the functions *figure*, *subplot*, and *axes* to explicitly control this process. Let’s take a look at what happens under the hood when you issue the commands

```python
>>> from pylab import *
>>> plot((1, 2, 3))
```

When plot is called, the pylab interface makes a call to *gca()* ("get current axes") to get a reference to the current axes. *gca* in turn, makes a call to *gcf* to get a reference to the current figure. *gcf*, finding that no figure has been created, creates the default figure *figure()* and returns it. *gca* will then return the current axes of that figure if it exists, or create the default axes *subplot(111)* if it does not. Thus the code above is equivalent to

```python
>>> from pylab import *
>>> figure()
>>> subplot(111)
>>> plot((1, 2, 3))
```

#### 3.5.1 figure

You can create and manage an arbitrary number of figures using the *figure* command. The standard way to create a figure is to number them from 1...N. A call to *figure(1)* creates figure 1 if it does not exist, makes figure 1 active (*gcf* will return a reference to it), and returns the *matplotlib.figure.Figure* instance. The syntax of the *figure* command is
def figure(num=1,
    figsize = None, # defaults to rc figure.figsize
dpi = None, # defaults to rc figure.dpi
    facecolor = None, # defaults to rc figure.facecolor
dpi = None, # defaults to rc figure.edgecolor
    frameon = True, # whether to draw the figure frame
    ):

dpi gives the dots per inch of your display device. Increasing this number effectively creates a higher resolution figure. *facecolor* and *edgecolor* determine the face and edge color of the figure rectangular background. This is what gives the figure a gray background in the GUI figures such as Figure 2.1. You can turn this background completely off by setting *frameon=False*. The default for saving figures is to have a white face and edge color, and all of these properties can be customized using the rc parameters *figure.* and *savefig.*.

In typical usage, you will only provide the figure number, and let your rc parameters govern the other figure attributes

```python
>>> figure(1)
>>> plot([1,2,3])
>>> figure(2)
>>> plot([4,5,6])
>>> title('big numbers')  # figure 2 title
>>> figure(1)
>>> title('small numbers')  # figure 1 title
```

You can close a figure simply by clicking on the close “x” in the GUI window, or by issuing the close command. close can be used to close the current figure, a figure referenced by number, a given figure instance, or all figures

- close() by itself closes the current figure
- close(num) closes figure number *num*
- close(fig) where *fig* is a figure instance closes that figure
- close(’all’) closes all the figure windows

If you close a figure directly, eg close(2) the previous current figure is restored to the current figure. clf is used to clear the current figure without closing it.

If you save the return value of the figure command, you can call any of the methods provided by matplotlib.figure.Figure, for example, you can set the figure facecolor

```python
>>> fig = figure(1)
>>> fig.set_facecolor(’g’)
```

or use set for the same purpose

```python
>>> set(fig, facecolor=’g’)
```

3.5.2 subplot

axes and subplot are both used to create axes in a figure. subplot is used more commonly, and creates axes assuming a regular grid of axes *numRows* by *numCols*. For example, to create two rows and one column of axes, you would use subplot(211) to create the upper axes and subplot(212) to create the lower axes. The last digit counts across the rows.
Figure 3.6: Multiple rows of axes created with the subplot command, as shown in Listing 3.2

Listing 3.2: Generating multiple axes with subplot; see Figure 3.6

```python
from pylab import *

def f(t):
    'a damped oscillation'
    return cos(2*pi*t) * exp(-t)

t1 = arange(0.0, 5.0, 0.1)
t2 = arange(0.0, 5.0, 0.02)

# the upper subplot; 2 rows, 1 column, subplot #1
subplot(211)
l = plot(t1, f(t1), 'bo', t2, f(t2), 'k')
grid(True)
title('A tale of 2 subplots')
ylabel('Damped oscillation')

# the lower subplot; 2 rows, 1 column, subplot #2
subplot(212)
plot(t2, cos(2*pi*t2), 'r>')
grid(True)
xlabel('time (s)')
ylabel('Undamped')
```

Likewise, to create two columns and one row of axes, you would use `subplot(211)` to create the left axes and `subplot(212)` to create the right axes. If the total number of axes exceeds single digits, use comma separated arguments to subplot. For example, the lower right panel of a 3 x 4 grid of axes is created with `subplot(3,4,12)`. `matplotlib` uses MATLAB™ style indexing in creating figures and axes, so `subplot(3,4,1)` is the first subplot, not `subplot(3,4,0)`. 

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The subplot command returns a `matplotlib.axes.Subplot` instance, which is derived from `matplotlib.axes.Axes`. Thus you can call and Axes or Subplot method on it. When creating multiple subplots with the same axes, for example the same time axes, sometimes it helps to turn off the x tick labeling for all but the lowest plot. Here is some example code:

```python
subplot(211)
plot([1,2,3], [1,2,3])
set(gca(), 'xticklabels', [])

subplot(212)
plot([1,2,3], [1,4,9])
```

Likewise, with multiple columns and shared y axes, you may want turn off the ytick labels for all but the first row. The subplot command returns a `matplotlib.axes.Subplot` instance, which is derived from `matplotlib.axes.Axes`. Thus you can call and Axes or Subplot method on it. Subplot defines some helper methods (`is_first_row`, `is_first_col`, `is_last_row`, `is_last_col`) to help you conditionally set subplot properties, e.g.

```python
cnt = 0
for i in range(numRows):
    for j in range(numCols):
        cnt += 1
        ax = subplot(numRows, numCols, cnt)
        plot(blah, blah)
        if ax.is_last_row(): xlabel('time (s)')
        if ax.is_first_col(): ylabel('volts')
```

Here is some example code to create multiple figures and axes, using the `figure` and `subplot` command to control the current figure and axes.

```python
from pylab import *

t = arange(0.0, 2.0, 0.01)
s1 = sin(2*pi*t)
s2 = sin(4*pi*t)

figure(1)
subplot(211)
plot(t, s1)
subplot(212)
plot(t, 2*s1)

figure(2)
plot(t, s2)

# now switch back to figure 1 and make some changes to the upper
# subplot
figure(1)
subplot(211)
plot(t, s2, 'gs')
set(gca(), 'xticklabels', [])
show()
```

3.5.3 axes

When you need a finer grained control over axes placement than afforded by `subplot`, use the `axes` command. The `axes` command in initialized with a rectangle `[left, bottom, width, height]` in relative figure coordinates.
left, bottom = (0, 0) is the bottom left of the figure canvas, and a width/height of 1 spans the figure width/height. This to create an axes that entirely fills the figure canvas, you would do axes([0, 1, 0, 1]). This may not be a good idea, because it leaves no room for text labels. axes([0.25, 0.25, 0.5, 0.5]) creates an axes offset by one quarter of the figure width and height on all sides.

There are several ways to use the axes command; in all cases, a matplotlib.axes.Axes instance is returned

- axes() by itself creates a default full subplot(111) window axis
- axes(rect, axisbg='w') where rect=[left, bottom, width, height] in normalized (0,1) units. axisbg is the background color for the axis, default white.
- axes(ax) where ax is an axes instance makes ax current.

gca returns the current axes instance and cla clears the current axes. You can use the axes command lay the axes exactly where you want them, including to overlaying one axes on top of another, as in this example

![Figure 3.7: Using the axes command to create inset axes over another axes; see Listing 3.3](image)

Listing 3.3: Custom axes; see Figure 3.7

```python
from pylab import *

# create some data to use for the plot
dt = 0.001
t = arange(0.0, 10.0, dt)  # impulse response
r = exp(-t[:1000]/0.05)
x = randn(len(t))
s = convolve(x, r, mode=2)[:len(x)]*dt  # colored noise

# the main axes is subplot(111) by default
plot(t, s)
axis([0, 1, 1.1*min(s), 2*max(s)])
xlabel('time (s)')
ylabel('current (nA)')
```

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```python
title('Gaussian colored noise')

# this is an inset axes over the main axes
a = axes([.65, .6, .2, .2], axisbg='y')
n, bins, patches = hist(s, 400, normed=1)
title('Probability')
setp(a, xticks=[], yticks=[])  

# this is another inset axes over the main axes
a = axes([0.2, 0.6, .2, .2], axisbg='y')
plot(t[:len(r)], r)
title('Impulse response')
setp(a, xlim=(0, .2), xticks=[], yticks=[])  
```

### 3.6 Text

Matplotlib has excellent text support, including newline separated text with arbitrary rotations and mathematical expressions. Freetype2 support produces very nice, anti-aliased fonts, that look good even at small raster sizes. It includes its own font_manager, thanks to Paul Barrett, which implements a cross-platform, W3C compliant font finding algorithm. You have total control over every text property (font size, font weight, text location and color, etc) with sensible defaults set in the rc file. And significantly for those interested in mathematical or scientific figures, Matplotlib implements a large number of \TeX\ math symbols and commands, to support mathematical expressions anywhere in your figure. To get the most out of text in Matplotlib, you should use a backend that supports Freetype2 and mathtext, notably all the *Agg backends (see Section 2.2), or the postscript backend, which embeds the Freetype fonts directly into the PS/EPS output file.

#### 3.6.1 Basic text commands

The following commands are used to create text in the pylab interface:

- `xlabel(s)` - add a label $s$ to the x axis
- `ylabel(s)` - add a label $s$ to the y axis
- `title(s)` - add a title $s$ to the axes
- `text(x, y, s)` - add text $s$ to the axes at $x, y$ in data coords
- `figtext(x, y, s)` - add text to the figure at $x, y$ in relative 0-1 figure coords

#### 3.6.2 Text properties

The text properties are listed in Table 3.4. As with lines, there are three ways to set text properties: using keyword arguments to a text command, calling `set` on a text instance or a sequence of text instances, or calling an instance method on a text instance. These three are illustrated below:

```python
# keyword args
>>> xlabel('time (s)', color='r', size=16)
>>> title('Fun with text', horizontalalignment='left')

# use set
>>> locs, labels = xticks()
>>> set(labels, color='g', rotation=45)
```
# instance methods

```python
>>> l = ylabel('volts')
>>> l.set_weight('bold')
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alpha</td>
<td>The alpha transparency on 0-1 scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>color</td>
<td>A matplotlib color arg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>set the font family, eg 'sans-serif', 'cursive', 'fantasy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fontangle</td>
<td>the font slant, one of 'normal', 'italic', 'oblique'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horizontalalignment</td>
<td>'left', 'right' or 'center'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multialignment</td>
<td>'left', 'right' or 'center' only for multiline strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name</td>
<td>the font name, eg, 'Sans', 'Courier', 'Helvetica'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position</td>
<td>the x,y location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>variant</td>
<td>the font variant, eg 'normal', 'small-caps'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rotation</td>
<td>the angle in degrees for rotated text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>size</td>
<td>the fontsize in points, eg, 8, 10, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>style</td>
<td>the font style, one of 'normal', 'italic', 'oblique'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text</td>
<td>set the text string itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verticalalignment</td>
<td>'top', 'bottom' or 'center'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight</td>
<td>the font weight, eg 'normal', 'bold', 'heavy', 'light'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Properties of `matplotlib.text.Text`

See the example [http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/examples/fonts_demo_kw.py](http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/examples/fonts_demo_kw.py) which makes extensive use of font properties for more information. See also Chapter 4 for more discussion of the font finder algorithm and the meaning of these properties.

### 3.6.3 Text layout

You can layout text with the alignment arguments `horizontalalignment`, `verticalalignment`, and `multialignment`. `horizontalalignment` controls whether the x positional argument for the text indicates the left, center or right side of the text bounding box. `verticalalignment` controls whether the y positional argument for the text indicates the bottom, center or top side of the text bounding box. `multialignment`, for newline separated strings only, controls whether the different lines are left, center or right justified. Here is an example which uses the `text` command to show the various alignment possibilities. The use of `transform=ax.transAxes` throughout the code indicates that the coordinates are given relative to the axes bounding box, with 0,0 being the lower left of the axes and 1,1 the upper right.

```
from pylab import *
from matplotlib.patches import Rectangle

# build a rectangle in axes coords
left, width = .25, .5
bottom, height = .25, .5
right = left + width
top = bottom + height
ax = gca()
p = Rectangle(((left, bottom), width, height,
               fill=False,
               )
# axes coordinates are 0,0 is bottom left and 1,1 is upper right
p.set_transform(ax.transAxes)
p.set_clip_on(False)
```

Listing 3.4: Aligning text; see Figure 3.8
Figure 3.8: Aligning text with horizontalalignment, verticalalignment, and multialignment options to the text command; see Listing 3.4

```python
ax.add_patch(p)

ax.text(left, bottom, 'left top',
       horizontalalignment='left',
       verticalalignment='top',
       transform=ax.transAxes)

ax.text(left, bottom, 'left bottom',
       horizontalalignment='left',
       verticalalignment='bottom',
       transform=ax.transAxes)

ax.text(right, top, 'right bottom',
       horizontalalignment='right',
       verticalalignment='bottom',
       transform=ax.transAxes)

ax.text(right, top, 'right top',
       horizontalalignment='right',
       verticalalignment='top',
       transform=ax.transAxes)
```
3.6.4 mathtext

matplotlib supports \textit{\LaTeX} mathematical expressions anywhere a text string can be used, as long as the string is delimited by "\"" on both sides, as in $\text{\LaTeX}$; embedded mathtext strings, such as in $r^'\text{\LaTeX}$ are not currently supported. A large set of the \LaTeX symbols from the computer modern fonts are provided. Subscripting and superscripting are supported, as well as the over/under style of subscripting with $\sum$, $\int$ etc.

Note that matplotlib does not use or require that \LaTeX be installed on your system, as it does not use it. Rather, it uses the parsing module \texttt{pyparsing} to parse the \LaTeX expression, and does the layout manually in the \texttt{matplotlib.mathtext} module using the font information provided by \texttt{matplotlib.ft2font}.

The spacing elements $\backslash$ and $\backslash\text{hspace}\{\text{num}\}$ are provided. $\backslash$ inserts a small space, and $\backslash\text{hspace}\{\text{num}\}$ inserts a fraction of the current fontsize. Eg, if $\text{num}=0.5$ and the fontsize is 12.0, $\backslash\text{hspace}\{0.5\}$ inserts 6 points of space.

The following accents are provided: $\backslash\text{hat}$, $\backslash\text{breve}$, $\backslash\text{grave}$, $\backslash\bar{}$, $\backslash\acute{}$, $\backslash\tilde{}$, $\backslash\vec{}$, $\backslash\ddot{}$. All of them have the same syntax, eg to make an $\bar{o}$ you do $\backslash\text{bar}\{o\}$ or to make an $\ddot{o}$ you do $\backslash\text{ddot}\{o\}$. The shortcuts are also provided, eg:

$\backslash^\circ \backslash^\ve \backslash^\epsilon \backslash^\\sim \backslash^\cdot \backslash^\times \backslash^\sim \backslash^\wedge \backslash^\gamma$
Licensing

The computer modern fonts this package uses are part of the BaKoMa fonts, which are (in my understanding) free for noncommercial use. For commercial use, please consult the licenses in fonts/ttf and the author Basil K. Malyashov - see also http://www.mozilla.org/projects/mathml/fonts/encoding/license-bakoma.txt and the file BaKoMa-CM.Fonts in the matplotlib fonts dir.

Note that all the code in this module is distributed under the matplotlib license, and a truly free implementation of mathtext for either freetype or ps would simply require deriving another concrete implementation from the Fonts class defined in this module which used free fonts.

Using mathtext

Any text element can use math text. You need to use raw strings (preceed the quotes with an `r`), and surround the string text with dollar signs, as in \TeX.

```python
# plain text
title('alpha > beta')

# math text
title(r'$\alpha > \beta$')
```

To make subscripts and superscripts use the underscore and caret symbols, as in

```python
title(r'$\alpha_i > \beta^i$')
```

You can also use a large number of the \TeX symbols, as in \infty, \leftarrow, \sum, \int; see Appendix B for a complete list. The over/under subscript/superscript style is also supported. To write the sum of $x_i$ from 0 to $\infty$ ($\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} x_i$), you could do

```python
text(1, -0.6, r'$\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} x_i$')
```

The default font is italics for mathematical symbols. To change fonts, eg, to write 'sin' in a roman font, enclose the text in a font command, as in

```python
text(1, 2, r's(t) = \cal{A}\rm{sin}(2 \omega t)')
```

Here 's' and 't' are variable in italics font (default), 'sin' is in roman font, and the amplitude 'A' is in calligraphy font. The fonts \cal, \rm, \it and \tt are allowed.

Fairly complex \TeX expressions render correctly; you can compare the expression

$s = r'\cal{R}\prod_{i=\alpha}^{\infty} a_i\sin(2 \pi f x_i)$’

rendered by \TeX below and by matplotlib in Figure 3.9.

```python
R \prod_{i=\alpha}^{m} a_i\sin(2\pi f x_i)
```

Listing 3.5: Using mathtext; see Figure 3.9
Figure 3.9: Incorporating \TeX expressions into your figure; see Listing 3.5

```
# this is just a made up equation that has nothing to do with the plot!
s = r'\cal{R}\prod_{i=\alpha}^{\infty} a_i \sin (2\pi f x_i)'
text(0.2, 1.2, s, fontsize=20)
axis([-0.2, 1.2, -0.2, 1.8])
```

# subscripts, superscripts and groups with {} are supported

use \text{\LaTeX}

If you have \LaTeX, ghostscript, and dvipng installed on your computer, matplotlib can use \LaTeX to perform all of the text layout in your figures. To enable this option, set `text.usetex : True` in your rc settings. For more information and examples, see http://www.scipy.org/Cookbook/Matplotlib/UsingTex.

3.7 Images

matplotlib provides support for working with raw image data in numerix arrays. Currently, there is no support for loading image data from image files such as PNG, TIFF or JPEG, though this is on the TODO list. If you need to load data from existing image files, one good solution is to use The Python Imaging Library to load the data and convert this to a numerix array - see Recipe 7.4.1. The following examples will assume you have your image data loaded into a numerix array, either luminance (MxN), RGB (MxNx3) or RGBA (MxNx4).

3.7.1 Axes images

An axes image is created with `im = imshow(X)` where `X` is a numerix array and `im` is a `matplotlib.image.AxesImage` instance. The image is rescaled to fit into the current axes box. Here is some example code to display an image

```
# create a random MxN numerix array and plot it as an axes image
```
from pylab import *
X = rand(20,20)
im = imshow(X)

`imshow` is a command in the `pylab` interface. This is a thin wrapper of the `matplotlib.Axes.imshow` method, which can be called from any `Axes` instance, e.g. `ax.imshow(X)`.

There are two parameters that determine how the image is resampled into the axes bounding box: `interpolation` and `aspect`. The following `interpolation` schemes are available: `bicubic`, `bilinear`, `blackman100`, `blackman256`, `blackman64`, `nearest`, `sinc144`, `sinc256`, `sinc64`, `spline16`, and `spline36`. The default interpolation method is given by the value of `image.interpolation` in your `matplotlibrc` file. `aspect` can be either `equal`, `auto`, or some number, which will constrain the aspect ratio of the image. The default aspect setting is given by the value of the rc parameter `image.aspect`.

The full syntax of the `imshow` command is

```python
imshow(X,
      cmap = None, # the numerix array
colormap = None, # the matplotlib.colors.Colormap instance
norm = None, # the normalization instance
aspect=None, # the aspect setting
interpolation=None, # the interpolation method
alpha=1.0, # the alpha transparency value
vmin = None, # the min for image scaling
vmax = None, # the max for image scaling
origin=None) # the image origin
```

When `None`, these parameters will assume a default value, in many cases determined by the rc setting. The meaning of `cmap`, `norm`, `vmin`, `vmax`, and `origin` will be explained in sections below.

The following shows a simple command which creates an image using bilinear interpolation, shown in Figure 3.10.

```python
from pylab import *
X = rand(20,20)
im = imshow(X)
```

![Figure 3.10: Simple axes image; code in Listing 3.6](image)

Listing 3.6: Axes images; see Figure 3.10

```python
from pylab import *
X = rand(20,20)
im = imshow(X)
```
\[ \delta = 0.025 \]

# generate a mesh of x and y vectors
\[ x = y = \text{arange}(-3.0, 3.0, \delta) \]
\[ X, Y = \text{meshgrid}(x, y) \]

# create 2D gaussian distributions
\[ Z1 = \text{bivariate_normal}(X, Y, 1.0, 1.0, 0.0, 0.0) \]
\[ Z2 = \text{bivariate_normal}(X, Y, 1.5, 0.5, 1, 1) \]

# plot the difference of Gaussians with bilinear interpolation
\[ \text{im} = \text{imshow}(Z2 - Z1, \text{interpolation='bilinear'}) \]
\[ \text{axis}('off') \]

You can create an arbitrary number of axes images inside a single axes, and these will be composed via alpha blending. However, if you want to blend several images, you must make sure that the hold state is True and that the alpha of the layered images is less than 1.0; if alpha=1.0 then the image on top will totally obscure the images below. Because the image blending is done using antigrain (regardless of your backend choice), you can blend images even on backends which don’t support alpha (eg, postscript). This is because the alpha blending is done in the frontend and the blended image is transferred directly to the backend as an RGB pixel array. See Recipe 7.4.2 for an example of how to layer images.

### 3.7.2 Figure images

Often times you want to be able to look at your raw image data directly, without interpolation. This is the function of figure images, which do a pixel-by-pixel transfer of your image data to the figure canvas. Figure images are drawn first, and thus can become the background of other matplotlib drawing commands.

In the pylab interface, figure images are created with the figimage command, which unlike imshow, does not accept an interpolation or aspect keyword argument because no image resampling is used. If the pixel extent of the figure image extends beyond the figure canvas, the image will simply be truncated. The basic syntax is figimage(X, xo=0, yo=0) where X is luminance (MxN), RGB (MxN3) or RGBA (MxN4) numerix array and xo, yo are pixel offsets from the origin (see Section 3.7.4). You can use figimage to create a figure image that fills the entire canvas with no x or y offsets, or you can make multiple calls to figimage with different x and y offsets to create a mosaic of images, as shown in Recipe 7.4.3.

The full syntax of the figimage command is

\[
\text{figimage} (X, \quad \# \text{the numerix array} \\
xo=0, \quad \# \text{the x offset} \\
yo=0, \quad \# \text{the y offset} \\
alpha=1.0, \quad \# \text{the alpha transparency} \\
norm=None, \quad \# \text{the \ matplotlib.colors.normalization instance} \\
cmap=None, \quad \# \text{the \ matplotlib.colors.Colormap instance} \\
vmin=None, \quad \# \text{the min for image scaling} \\
vmax=None, \quad \# \text{the max for image scaling} \\
origin=None) \quad \# \text{the image origin}
\]

The cmap, norm, vmin, vmax and origin arguments are explained in the sections below.

pylab.figimage is a thin wrapper of matplotlib.figure.figimage and you can generate figure images directly with the pythonic API using fig.figimage(X) where fig is a Figure instance.

### 3.7.3 Scaling and color mapping

In addition to supporting raw image RGB and RGBA formats, matplotlib will scale and map luminance data for MxN float (luminance) arrays. The conversion from luminance data to RGBA occurs in two steps: scaling and color mapping.

---

1. If you want a resampled image to occupy the full space of the figure canvas, you can achieve this by specifying a custom axes that fills the figure canvas \[ \text{axes}([0, 1, 0, 1]) \] and using imshow.
Scaling is the process of normalizing an MxN floating point array to the 0,1 interval, by mapping vmin to 0.0 and vmax to 1.0, where vmin and vmax are user defined parameters. If either are None, the min and max of the image data will be used, respectively. Scaling is handled by a matplotlib.colors.normalization instance, which defaults to normalization(vmin=None, vmax=None) - ie, the default is to scale the image so that the minimum of the luminance array is zero and the maximum of the luminance array is one.

Typically, you will not create a normalization instance yourself, but may set vmin or vmax in the keyword arguments of the image creation function. In this case, a normalization instance is created for you, and your vmin, vmax settings are applied. If you do supply a normalization instance for the norm argument, vmin and vmax will be ignored. See Table 3.5 for some examples of image normalization commands and their interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>command</th>
<th>interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>imshow(X)</td>
<td>X \leq \min(X) \rightarrow 0 and X \geq \max(X) \rightarrow 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imshow(X, vmax=10)</td>
<td>X \leq \min(X) \rightarrow 0 and X \geq 10 \rightarrow 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imshow(X, vmin=0, vmax=10)</td>
<td>X \leq 0 \rightarrow 0 and X \geq 10 \rightarrow 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anorm=normalize(2,8)</td>
<td>X \leq 2 \rightarrow 0 and X \geq 8 \rightarrow 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Example image normalization commands and their interpretation

Once the luminance data are normalized, they color mapper transforms the normalized data to RGBA using a matplotlib.colors.Colormap instance. Common colormaps are defined in matplotlib.cm, including cm.jet and cm.gray. If the cmap argument to an image command is None, the default is given by he rc parameter image.cmap.

The keyword arguments cmap, norm, vmin, vmax control color mapping and scaling in the image construction commands. Once the images have been created, several commands exist to interactively control the color map of the current image. Like the current figure (gcf) and the current axes (gca), matplotlib keeps track of the current image (gci) to determine which image to apply the commands which affect image properties. To interactively set the image normalization limits, use clim(vmin=None, vmax=None), where vmin and vmax have the same meaning as above. To interactively change the colormap, use jet or gray (More colormaps and colormap commands are planned). These latter commands not only change the colormap of the current image, they also set the default for future images.

For quantitative plotting of pseudocolor images, use the colorbar function to provide a colorbar associated with the image. Here is an example interactive session controlling image scaling and color mapping with a colorbar

```python
>>> imshow(X)  # plot the luminance image X
>>> clim(-1,2) # scale the image
>>> jet()     # use colormap jet
>>> colorbar() # add a colorbar to the current axes
>>> gray()    # use grayscale; image and colorbar are updated
```

The image scaling and color mapping are handled by the mixin base class matplotlib.colors.ScalarMappable.

### 3.7.4 Image origin

Depending on your data, it may be more natural to plot your data with the image origin up (X[0,0] is upper left) or down (X[0,0] is lower left). matplotlib supports these two modes with the origin parameter, which can be supplied as an optional keyword argument to the image commands imshow and figimage with the default set by the rc parameter image.origin. To plot an image with the origin in the upper left, pass origin='upper' and with the image in the lower left, pass origin='lower', as shown in Figure 3.11.

```python
from pylab import *

x = arange(100.0); x.shape = 10,10

subplot(211)
```
Figure 3.11: Controlling the image origin with the `origin` keyword argument to `imshow` and `figimage`; see Listing 3.7.

```python
title('blue should be up')
imshow(x, origin='upper', interpolation='nearest')

subplot(212)
title('blue should be down')
imshow(x, origin='lower', interpolation='nearest')
```

### 3.8 Bar charts, histograms and errorbar plots

Use the `bar` function to create simple bar plots. The simplest form of this function is simply `bar(x, y)` which creates bars with their left edge at `x` and height `y`. There are a number of options to support more sophisticated bar plots, including stacked bar plots and bar plots with errorbars. The signature of the `bar` method is

```python
def bar(left, height, width=0.8, bottom=0, color='b', yerr=None, xerr=None, ecolor='k', capsize=3):
```

### 3.9 Pseudocolor and scatter plots

### 3.10 Spectral analysis

`matplotlib` provides a number of MATLAB\textsuperscript{TM} compatible functions for computing and plotting spectral analysis results. All of them are based on Welch’s Averaged Periodogram Method [Bendat and Piersol, 1986] using the numerix `fft` method for the fast fourier transforms. The spectral plotting functions are `psd` for the power spectral density, `csd` for the cross spectral density, and `cohere` for the coherence (normalized cross spectral density).
In addition to the time series arguments x/y, these functions take a number of optional parameters. The averaged periodogram method chops the time series into NFFT length segments which overlap by noverlap samples. The default values are NFFT=256 and noverlap=0. Each of the functions will compute the spectral analysis and then generate a plot window with frequency on the x-axis - if you want the frequency axis to be properly scaled, you should provide the sampling frequency Fs.

Each of the segments will be detrended and windowed before the fft, according to the values of detrend and window. Unlike MATLAB™, in which these arguments are strings, in matplotlib they are functions. Several helper functions are provided in matplotlib.mlab for detrending and windowing:

- mlab.detrend_none - no detrending
- mlab.detrend_mean - remove the mean of each segment before fft
- mlab.detrend_linear - remove the best fit line of each segment before fft
- mlab.window_none - no windowing
- mlab.window_hanning - multiply each segment by a Hanning window

An example power spectra calculation is shown in Listing 1.1 and the output in Figure 1.2.

You can create a spectrogram with the specgram function. specgram splits the data into NFFT length segments and plots the instantaneous power in each segment along the y axis using a pseudocolor plot, unlike psd which averages the power across each segment.

Figure 3.12: A spectrogram generated by Listing 3.8

Listing 3.8: Instantaneous power spectra with specgram; see Figure 3.12

```python
from pylab import *
```
dt = 0.0005
t = arange(0.0, 20.0, dt)
# a 100 Hz signal
s1 = sin(2*pi*100*t)

# create a transient "chirp" at 400 Hz
s2 = 2*sin(2*pi*400*t)
mask = where(logical_and(t>10, t<12), 1.0, 0.0)
s2 = s2 * mask

# add some noise into the mix
nse = 0.01*randn(len(t))
x = s1 + s2 + nse # the signal
NFFT = 1024       # the length of the windowing segments
Fs = int(1.0/dt)     # the sampling frequency

# Pxx is the segments x freqs array of instantaneous power, freqs is # the frequency vector, bins are the centers of the time bins in which # the power is computed, and im is the matplotlib.image.AxesImage # instance
Pxx, freqs, bins, im = specgram(x, NFFT=NFFT, Fs=Fs, noverlap=900) colorbar()

3.11 Axes properties

3.12 Legends and tables

3.13 Navigation

matplotlib comes with two navigation toolbars for the graphical user interfaces: classic and toolbar2. You can use these to change the view limits of the axes in the figure. toolbar2 supercedes classic and was designed to overcome shortcomings of the classic toolbar. The default toolbar is determined by the toolbar parameter in matplotlibrc.

3.13.1 Classic toolbar

You can pan and zoom on the X and Y axis for any combination of the axes that are plotted. If you have a wheel mouse, you can move bidirectionally by scrolling the wheel over the controls. For examples, the wheel mouse can be used to pan left or right by scrolling over either of the left arrow or right arrow buttons, so you never have to move the mouse to pan the x-axis left and right. If you don’t have a wheel mouse, buy one!

The left widget that says ’All’ on the controls on the bottom of Figure 3.13 is a drop down menu used to select which axes the controls affect. You can select all, none, single, or combinations of axes. The first set of 4 controls are used to pan left, pan right, zoom in and zoom out on the x axes. The second set are used to pan up, pan down, zoom in and zoom out on the y axes. The remaining buttons are used to redraw the figure, save (PNG or JPEG) the figure, or to close the figure window.

3.13.2 toolbar2

The toolbar2 buttons (see Figure 3.14 behave very differently from the classic the classic matplotlib toolbar (else why introduce a new one!) despite the visual similarity of the forward and back buttons.
The Forward and Back buttons are akin to the web browser forward and back buttons. They are used to navigate back and forth between previously defined views. They have no meaning unless you have already navigated somewhere else using the pan and zoom buttons. This is analogous to trying to click ‘back’ on your web browser before visiting a new page. Nothing happens. Home always takes you to the first view. For Home, Forward and Back, think web browser where data views are web pages. Use the Pan/Zoom and Zoom to rectangle buttons, discussed below, to define new views.

The Pan/Zoom button has two modes: pan and zoom. Click this toolbar button to activate this mode. Then put your mouse somewhere over an axes.

- **Mode 1**: Press the left mouse button and hold it, dragging it to a new position. When you release it, the data under the point where you pressed will be moved to the point where you released. If you press 'x' or 'y' while panning, the motion will be constrained to the x or y axis, respectively.

- **Mode 2**: Press the right mouse button, dragging it to a new position. The x axis will be zoomed in proportionate to the rightward movement and zoomed out proportionate to the leftward movement. Ditto for the y axis and up/down motions. The point under your mouse when you begin the zoom should remain in place, allowing you to zoom to an arbitrary point in the figure. You can use the modifier keys 'x', 'y' or 'CONTROL' to constrain the zoom to the x axes, the y axes, or aspect ratio preserve, respectively.

The Zoom to rectangle button: Click this toolbar button to activate this mode. Put your mouse somewhere over and axes and press the left mouse button. Drag the mouse while holding the button to a new location and release. The axes view limits will be zoomed to the rectangle you have defined. There is also an experimental ‘zoom out to rectangle’ in this mode with the right button, which will place your entire axes in the region defined by the zoom out rectangle.

The Save button: click this button to launch a file save dialog. All the *Agg backends know how to save the following image types: PNG, PS, EPS, SVG. There is no support currently in Agg for writing to JPEG, TIFF (the regular wx and gtk backends handle these types). It is possible to use matplotlib/agg + PIL to convert agg images to one of these other formats if required. I can provide a recipe for you. I prefer PNG over JPG and TIFF, which is why I haven’t worked too hard to include these other image formats in agg.
3.14 Event handling

When visualizing data, it’s often helpful to get some interactive input from the user. All graphical user interfaces (GUIs) provide event handling to determine things like key presses, mouse position, and button clicks. matplotlib supports a number of GUIs, and provides an interface to the GUI event handling via the `mpl_connect` and `mpl_disconnect` methods of the `pylab` interface (API users will probably want to use their GUIs event handling directly, but do have the option of using their `FigureCanvas.mpl_connect` method).

matplotlib uses a callback event handling mechanism. The basic idea is that you register an event that you want to listen for, and the figure canvas, will call a user defined function when that event occurs. For example, if you want to know where the user clicks a mouse on your figure, you could define a function

```python
# this function will be called with every click
def click(event):
    print('you clicked', event.x, event.y)

# register this function with the event handler
cid = connect('button_press_event', click).
```

Then whenever the user clicks anywhere on the figure canvas, your function will be called and passed a `matplotlib.backend_bases.MplEvent` instance. The event instance will have the following attributes defined.

You can connect to the following events: 'button_press_event', 'button_release_event', 'motion_notify_event', 'key_press_event', and 'key_release_event'.

You can connect multiple event handlers, and later disconnect them if you want with the disconnect function

```python
# register this function with the event handler
def click1(event): pass
def click2(event): pass
cid1 = connect('key_press_event', click1).
cid2 = connect('key_press_event', click2).
```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x position - pixels from left of canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>y position - pixels from bottom of canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>button</td>
<td>button pressed None, 1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inaxes</td>
<td>the Axes instance if mouse is over axes (or None)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xdata</td>
<td>x coord of mouse in data coords (None if mouse isn’t over axes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ydata</td>
<td>y coord of mouse in data coords (None if mouse isn’t over axes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name</td>
<td>The string name of the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canvas</td>
<td>The FigureCanvas instance the event occurred in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>key</td>
<td>The key press if any, eg 'a', 'b', '1'. Also records 'control' and 'shift'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: The event attributes

...later on....
```
disconnect(cid1)  # now only click2 is connected
```

Here’s an example to get the mouse location in data coordinates as the mouse moves
```
# Connect to the mouse move event and print the location of the mouse
# in data coordinates if the mouse is over an axes
from pylab import *
plot(arange(10))

def on_move(event):
    # get the x and y pixel coords
    x, y = event.x, event.y

    if event.inaxes:
        print 'data coords', event.xdata, event.ydata

connect('motion_notify_event', on_move)
show()
```

3.15 Customizing plot defaults
Chapter 4

Font finding and properties

matplotlib.fonts.font_manager is module for finding, managing, and using fonts across-platforms. This module provides a single FontManager that can be shared across backends and platforms. The findfont() method returns the best TrueType (TTF) font file in the local or system font path that matches the specified FontProperties. The FontManager also handles Adobe Font Metrics (AFM) font files for use by the PostScript backend.

The design is based on the W3C Cascading Style Sheet, Level 1 (CSS1) font specification (http://www.w3.org/TR/1998/REC-CSS2-19980512). Future versions may implement the Level 2 or 2.1 specifications.

The font.family property has five values: 'serif' (e.g. Times), 'sans-serif' (e.g. Helvetica), 'cursive' (e.g. Zapf-Chancery), 'fantasy' (e.g. Western), and 'monospace' (e.g. Courier). Each of these font families has a default list of font names in decreasing order of priority associated with them. You describe which family you want by choosing, eg, family='serif', and the font manager will search the font.serif list looking for one of the named fonts on your system. The lists are user configurable, and reside in your matplotlibrc.

This allows you to choose your family in your matplotlib script and the font manager will try and find the best font no matter which platform you run on.

- The font.style property has three values: normal (or roman), italic or oblique. The oblique style will be used for italic, if it is not present.
- The font.variant property has two values: normal or small-caps. For TrueType fonts, which are scalable fonts, small-caps is equivalent to using a font size of 'smaller', or about 83.
- The font.weight property has effectively 13 values: normal, bold, bolder, lighter, 100, 200, 300, ..., 900. Normal is the same as 400, and bold is 700. bolder and lighter are relative values with respect to the current weight.
- The font.stretch property has 11 values: ultra-condensed, extra-condensed, condensed, semi-condensed, normal, semi-expanded, expanded, extra-expanded, ultra-expanded, wider, and narrower. This property is not currently implemented.
- The font.size property is the default font size for text, given in pts. 12pt is the standard value. Special text sizes for tick labels, axes, labels, title, etc. can be defined relative to font.size using the following values: xx-small, x-small, small, medium, large, x-large, xx-large, larger, or smaller. Special text sizes can also be an absolute size, given in pts.

Here is an example using the font properties to illustrate the different fonts

```python
from matplotlib import rcParams
rcParams['ps.useafm']=False
from pylab import *

subplot(111, axisbg='w')
```
alignment = {'horizontalalignment': 'center', 'verticalalignment': 'center'}

### Show family options

family = ['serif', 'sans-serif', 'cursive', 'fantasy', 'monospace']
t = text(-0.8, 0.9, 'family', size='large', **alignment)
yp = [0.7, 0.5, 0.3, 0.1, -0.1, -0.3, -0.5]
for k in range(5):
    if k == 2:
        t = text(-0.8, yp[k], family[k], family=family[k],
                name='Script MT', **alignment)
    else:
        t = text(-0.8, yp[k], family[k], family=family[k], **alignment)

### Show style options

style = ['normal', 'italic', 'oblique']
t = text(-0.4, 0.9, 'style', **alignment)
for k in range(3):
    t = text(-0.4, yp[k], style[k], family='sans-serif', style=style[k], **alignment)

### Show variant options

variant = ['normal', 'small-caps']
t = text(0.0, 0.9, 'variant', **alignment)
for k in range(1):
    t = text(0.0, yp[k], variant[k], family='serif', variant=variant[k],
             **alignment)

### Show weight options

weight = ['light', 'normal', 'medium', 'semibold', 'bold', 'heavy', 'black']
t = text(0.4, 0.9, 'weight', **alignment)
for k in range(7):
    t = text(0.4, yp[k], weight[k], weight=weight[k], **alignment)

### Show size options

size = ['xx-small', 'x-small', 'small', 'medium', 'large',
        'x-large', 'xx-large']
t = text(0.8, 0.9, 'size', **alignment)
for k in range(7):
    t = text(0.8, yp[k], size[k], size=size[k],
             **alignment)

x = 0

### Show bold italic

t = text(x, 0.1, 'bold italic', style='italic',
         weight='bold', size='x-small', **alignment)
t = text(x, 0.2, 'bold italic',
         style = 'italic', weight='bold', size='medium', **alignment)
t = text(x, 0.3, 'bold italic',
         style='italic', weight='bold', size='x-large', **alignment)

axis([-1, 1, 0, 1])
savefig('..../figures/fonts_demo_kw.png')
savefig('../figures/fonts_demo_kw.eps')
show()
Chapter 5

Collections
Chapter 6

Tick locators and formatters

The `matplotlib.ticker` module contains classes to support completely configurable tick locating and formatting. Although the locators know nothing about major or minor ticks, they are used by the `Axis` class to support major and minor tick locating and formatting. Generic tick locators and formatters are provided, as well as domain specific custom locators an formatters.

6.1 Tick locating

Choosing tick locations and formats is a difficult and essential part of making nice looking graphs. The `matplotlib.ticker` module divides the workload between two bases classes: the locators and the formatters. Each axis (eg the xaxis and yaxis) has a major and minor tick locator and a major and minor tick formatter. The default minor tick locators always return the empty list, ie, there are no minor ticks. Each of these can be set independently, and it is easy for the user to create and plug-in a custom tick locator or formatter.

The `matplotlib.ticker.Locator` class is the base class for all tick locators. The locators handle autoscaling of the view limits based on the data limits, and choosing the tick locations. The most generally useful tick locator is `MultipleLocator`. You initialize this with a base, eg 10, and it picks axis limits and ticks that are multiples of your base. The class `AutoLocator` contains a `MultipleLocator` instance, and dynamically updates it based upon the data and zoom limits. This should provide much more intelligent automatic tick locations both in figure creation and in navigation than in prior versions of matplotlib. See Tables 6.1 and 6.2 for a summary of the basic and date tick locators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NullLocator</td>
<td>No ticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IndexLocator</td>
<td>locator for index plots (eg where <code>x = range(len(y))</code>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinearLocator</td>
<td>evenly spaced ticks from min to max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LogLocator</td>
<td>logarithmically ticks from min to max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MultipleLocator</td>
<td>ticks and range are a multiple of base; either integer or float</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AutoLocator</td>
<td>choose a <code>MultipleLocator</code> and dynamically reassign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: The basic tick locators

You can define your own locator by deriving from Locator. You must override the `__call__` method, which returns a sequence of locations, and you will probably want to override the autoscale method to set the view limits from the data limits. If you want to override the default locator, use one of the above or a custom locator and pass it to the x or y axis instance. The relevant methods are

```python
ax.xaxis.set_major_locator( xmajorLocator )
ax.xaxis.set_minor_locator( xminorLocator )
```
6.1 Tick locators

Tick locators are responsible for converting numeric tick locations into a suitable string. The tick locators specialized for date plots are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MinuteLocator</td>
<td>locate minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HourLocator</td>
<td>locate hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DayLocator</td>
<td>locate specified days of the month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WeekdayLocator</td>
<td>Locate days of the week, eg MO, TU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MonthLocator</td>
<td>locate months, eg 7 for july</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YearLocator</td>
<td>locate years that are multiples of base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRuleLocator</td>
<td>locate using a matplotlib.dates.rrulewrapper. The rrulewrapper is a simple wrapper around a dateutils.rrule wrapper. See <a href="https://moin.conectiva.com.br/DateUtil">https://moin.conectiva.com.br/DateUtil</a>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: The tick locators specialized for date plots; these reside in the matplotlib.dates module

The default minor locator is the NullLocator, eg no minor ticks on by default.

6.2 Tick formatting

Tick formatting is the process of converting the numeric tick location into a suitable string, and is controlled by classes derived from matplotlib.ticker.Formatter. The formatter operates on a single tick value (and its tick position) and returns a string to the axis. The tick formatters are summarized in Table 6.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NullFormatter</td>
<td>no labels on the ticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FixedFormatter</td>
<td>set the strings manually for the labels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FuncFormatter</td>
<td>user defined function sets the labels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FormatStrFormatter</td>
<td>use a sprintf format string</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IndexFormatter</td>
<td>cycle through fixed strings by tick position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ScalarFormatter</td>
<td>default formatter for scalars; autopick the fmt string</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LogFormatter</td>
<td>formatter for log axes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DateFormatter</td>
<td>use an strftime string to format the date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: The tick formatting classes

You can derive your own formatter from the Formatter base class by simply overriding the __call__ method. The formatter class has access to the axis view and data limits.

To control the major and minor tick label formats, use one of the following methods:

```
ax.xaxis.set_major_locator( ymajorLocator )
ax.xaxis.set_minor_locator( yminorLocator )
```

6.3 Example 1: major and minor ticks

In this example, the xaxis has major ticks that are multiples of 20 and minor ticks that are multiples of 5. The ticks are formatted with an integer format string formatter '%d'. The minor ticks are unlabelled (NullFormatter).

The MultipleLocator ticker class is used to place ticks on multiples of some base. The FormatStrFormatter uses a string format string (eg '%d' or '%1.2f' or '%1.1f cm') to format the tick.
Note that the pylab interface grid command changes the grid settings of the major ticks of the y and y axis together. If you want to control the grid of the minor ticks for a given axis, use for example `ax.xaxis.grid(True, which='minor'). See Figure 6.1.

![Figure 6.1: Creating custom major and minor tick locators and formatters; see Listing 6.1](image)

Listing 6.1: Custom tickers and formatters; see Figure 6.1

```python
from pylab import *
# import the tick locator and formatter classes
from matplotlib.ticker import MultipleLocator, FormatStrFormatter

majorLocator = MultipleLocator(20) # multiples of 20
majorFormatter = FormatStrFormatter('%d') # integer format string
minorLocator = MultipleLocator(5) # multiples of 5

# my favorite plot!
t = arange(0.0, 100.0, 0.1)
s = sin(0.1*pi*t)*exp(-t*0.01)

ax = subplot(111)
plot(t, s)

# now just set the major and minor locators and formatters
ax.xaxis.set_major_locator(majorLocator)
ax.xaxis.set_major_formatter(majorFormatter)

# for the minor ticks, use no labels; default NullFormatter
ax.xaxis.set_minor_locator(minorLocator)
```

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## 6.4 Example 2: date ticking

Making nice date/time plots requires custom tick locating and formatting. matplotlib converts all datetimes to days since 0001-01-01, and uses a floating point number to represent fractions of days. The functions date2num and num2date are used to convert back and forth between python datetimes and these floating point numbers.

The example below uses the `matplotlib.finance` module to get some historical quotes from yahoo’s historical quotes server. The datetime start and end points are specified using a python’s datetime module. Major ticks are on the months (MonthLocator) and minor ticks are on Mondays (WeekdayLocator). Only the major ticks are labelled, using a strftime format string (DateFormatter). Finally since the y axis is a stock price, a string formatter (FormatStrFormatter) is used to place dollar signs on the y tick labels.

![Figure 6.2: Providing custom tick locators and formatters for financial/date plots; see Listing 6.2.](image)

### Listing 6.2: Custom date tick locators and formatters; see Figure 6.2

```python
import datetime
from matplotlib.dates import MONDAY, SATURDAY
from matplotlib.finance import quotes_historical_yahoo
from matplotlib.dates import MonthLocator, WeekdayLocator, DateFormatter
from matplotlib.ticker import FormatStrFormatter

# the start and end date range for the financial plots
date1 = datetime.date(2003, 1, 1)
date2 = datetime.date(2004, 4, 12)

# the tick locators and formatters
mondays = WeekdayLocator(MONDAY)         # every monday
months = MonthLocator()                   # every month
monthsFmt = DateFormatter('%b %d')        # looks like May 01
dollarFmt = FormatStrFormatter('$.%0.2f') # dollars!

# get some financial data from the finance module
```
quotes = quotes_historical_yahoo('INTC', date1, date2)
if not quotes: raise SystemExit  # failsafe

# extract the date and opening prices from the quote tuples
dates = [q[0] for q in quotes]
opens = [q[1] for q in quotes]

# plot_date will choose a default date ticker and formatter
ax = subplot(111)
plot_date(dates, opens, markeredgecolor='k')

# but we'll override the default with our custom locators and
# formatters
ax.xaxis.set_major_locator(months)
ax.xaxis.set_major_formatter(monthsFmt)
ax.xaxis.set_minor_locator(mondays)

# format the y axis in dollars
ax.yaxis.set_major_formatter(dollarFmt)

# call autoscale to pick intelligent view limits based on our major
# tick locator
ax.autoscale_view()

# rotate the x labels for nicer viewing
labels = ax.get_xticklabels()
setp(labels, 'rotation', 45, fontsize=10)

grid(True)
Chapter 7

Cookbook

7.1 Plot elements

7.1.1 Horizontal or vertical lines/spans

It is often useful to draw a line that stretches from the left to the right side of the axes at a given height, eg to represent a y-axis threshold. In this case, the left and right are plotted in axes coordinates (0 and 1 respectively), and the y coordinate is in data coordinates. Plotted this way, the horizontal extent of the line will not change if you interactively change the xlimits, eg by using the pan navigation tool. Although you can create these lines yourself using matplotlib.lines.Line2D instances and setting the appropriate transforms, several helper functions are provided to make this easier.

7.1.2 Fill the area between two curves

The fill command takes a list of vertices and draws a polygon. A filled area between two curves is simply a large polygon. All you need to do is get the vertices in the correct order, which basically means reversing the order of the x,y pairs in one of the lines, so that path across the vertices of the polygon is continuous. Here is a simple example

Listing 7.1: Fill the area between two curves; see Figure 7.1

```python
from pylab import *
x1 = arange(0, 2, 0.01)
y1 = sin(2*pi*x1)
y2 = sin(4*pi*x1) + 2
# reverse x and y2 so the polygon fills in order
x = concatenate((x1, x1[::-1]))
y = concatenate((y1, y2[::-1]))
p = fill(x, y, facecolor='g')
```

7.2 Text

7.2.1 Adding a ylabel on the right of the axes

To make a ylabel on the right, use the text command. You need to set the transform to use axes coordinates (ax.transAxes), rotate the text vertically, make the horizontal alignment left, the vertical alignment centered. Note that x, y = 1, 0.5 is the right, middle of the axes in axes coordinates. You also need to turn off clipping, so the text can appear outside the axes w/o being clipped by the axes bounding box, which is the default behavior.
7.3 Data analysis

7.3.1 Linear regression

One of the most common tasks in analyzing data is a linear regression of one variable on another. matplotlib provides polyfit in the matplotlib.mlab module for general polynomial regression.

Listing 7.2: Best fit line; see Figure 7.2

```python
from pylab import *

# Generate some test data; y is a linear function of x + nse
x = arange(0.0, 2.0, 0.05)
nse = 0.3*randn(len(x))
y = 2 + 3*x + nse

# the bestfit line from polyfit; you can do arbitrary order
# polynomials but here we take advantage of a line being a first order
# polynomial
m, b = polyfit(x, y, 1)

# plot the data with blue circles and the best fit with a thick
# solid black line
```

Figure 7.1: Fill the area between two curves; see Listing 7.1.
7.3.2 Polynomial regression

polyfit can also be used for general polynomial fitting. The signature of polyfit is `coeffs = polyfit(x, y, N)` where `N` is the order of the polynomial. The best fit can be obtained from the coefficients and the x data using `best = polyval(x, coeffs).coeffs are the coefficients of the polynomial

\[ \text{coeffs} = p_k, \ldots, p_1, p_0. \]

The algorithm for polyfit is taken from Mathworld’s Least Squares Fitting Polynomial and Vandermonde Matrix entries [Weisstein, 2002]. To do a best fit polynomial regression of order `N` of `y` onto `x`. We must solve an `N`-dimensional system of equations; eg, for `N = 2`

\[
\begin{align*}
p_2 * x_0^2 + p_1 * x_0 + p_0 &= y_1 \\
p_2 * x_1^2 + p_1 * x_1 + p_0 &= y_1 \\
p_2 * x_k^2 + p_1 * x_k + p_0 &= y_k \\
\end{align*}
\]

If `X` is a the Vandermonde Matrix computed from `x`, then the polynomial least squares solution is given by the `p` in `X * p = y` where `X` is a `x` by `N+1` matrix, `p` is a `N+1` length vector, and `y` is a `len(x)` by 1 vector. This equation can be solved as

\[
p = (\bar{X}X)^{-1} \bar{X} * y \tag{7.1}
\]

where `\bar{X}` is the transpose of `X` and the -1 superscript denotes the inverse. For more info, see Mathworld\footnote{http://mathworld.wolfram.com/LeastSquaresFittingPolynomial.html}, but note that the `k`’s and `n`’s in the superscripts and subscripts on that page are problematic. The linear algebra is correct, however.
Figure 7.3: Estimating a best fit cubic for some random data; see Listing 7.3

Listing 7.3: est fit polynomial; see Figure 7.3

```python
from pylab import *

# Generate some test data; y is a poly function of x + nse
x = arange(0.0, 2.0, 0.05)
nse = 0.6*randn(len(x))
y = 1.1 + 3.2*x + 0.1*x**2 + 2*x**3 + nse

# the bestfit line from polyfit
coeffs = polyfit(x, y, 3)

# plot the data with blue circles and the best fit with a thick solid black line
besty = polyval(coeffs, x)
plot(x, y, 'bo', x, besty, '-k', linewidth=2)
ylabel('polynomial regression')
grid(True)
```

7.4 Working with images

7.4.1 Loading existing images into matplotlib

Currently matplotlib only supports plotting images from numerix arrays, either luminance, RGB or RGBA. If you have some existing data in an image file format such as PNG, JPEG or TIFF, you can load this into matplotlib by first loading the file into PIL - [http://www.pythonware.com/products/pil](http://www.pythonware.com/products/pil) and then converting this to a numerix array using fromstring / tostring methods

```python
import Image
from pylab import *
```
im = Image.open('./data/leo_ratner.jpg')
s = im.tostring()  # convert PIL image -> string

# convert string -> numerix array of floats
rgb = fromstring(s, UInt8).astype(Float)/255.0

# resize to RGB array
rgb = resize(rgb, (im.size[1], im.size[0], 3))

imshow(rgb, interpolation='nearest')
axis('off')  # don’t display the image axis
show()

7.4.2 Blending several axes images using alpha

You can compose several axes images on top of one another using alpha blending, as described in Section 3.7.1. If your hold state is True, multiple calls to imshow will cause the image arrays to be resampled to the axes bounding box and blended. Of course, the uppermost images must have alpha less than one, or else they will be fully opaque and hence the lower images will be invisible. Note that you can blend images from arrays of different shapes as well as blending images with different colormaps and interpolation schemes. The example below creates a black and white checkboard using a grayscale colormap and then blends a color image over it, as shown in Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4: Layering axes images using alpha blending; see Listing 7.4.

Listing 7.4: Alpha-blending multiple images; see Figure 7.4

from pylab import *
def func3(x,y):
    return (1- x/2.0 + x**5 + y**3)*exp(-x**2-y**2)

# make these smaller to increase the resolution
dx, dy = 0.05, 0.05
x = arange(-3.0, 3.0, dx)
y = arange(-3.0, 3.0, dy)
X, Y = meshgrid(x, y)
extent = min(x), max(x), min(y), max(y)

# make an 8 by 8 chessboard
Z1 = array(([0,1]*4 + [1,0]*4)*4); Z1.shape = 8,8
im1 = imshow(Z1, cmap=cm.gray,
              interpolation='nearest', extent=extent)

# prevents the axes from clearing on next command
hold(True)

Z2 = func3(X, Y)
im2 = imshow(Z2, cmap=cm.jet, alpha=.9,
              interpolation='bilinear', extent=extent)
axis('off')

7.4.3 Creating a mosaic of images

You can compose several figure images into a mosaic using the figimage command, as discussed Section 3.7.2. If your hold state is True, multiple calls to figimage(X, xc, yo). xc and yo are the pixel offsets from the origin (the origin can be either upper left or lower left, as discussed in Section 3.7.4). The code below using color mapping to place two images on the diagonal. Note that you can use different kinds of arrays (luminance, RGB, RGBA) and different colormaps when creating figure mosaics. See Figure 7.5.

![Figure 7.5: Creating a mosaic using figimage; see Listing 7.5.](image)

Listing 7.5: Creating figure mosaics; see Figure 7.5

from pylab import *
rc('axes', hold=True)
Z = arange(40000.0); Z.shape = 200,200
Z[::50:] = 1
im1 = figimage(Z, xo=0, yo=0)
im2 = figimage(Z, xo=100, yo=100, alpha=.8)

7.4.4 Defining your own colormap

Perry Greenfield has provided a nice framework with matplotlib.colors.LinearSegmentedColormap to define new colormaps. You can create new colormaps fairly easily by following the example of jet in matplotlib.cm. Here are the steps

- define your rgb linear segments in matplotlib.cm, following the lead of the _jet_data dictionary in that module
- add an entry to the datad dictionary in that module which maps rc string names for your color map to the dictionary you just defined.
- instantiate a single instance of your colormap in cm, following the example
  
  jet = colors.LinearSegmentedColormap('jet', _jet_data, LUTSIZE)

- add a pylab function which has the same name as your colormap, following the example of pylab.jet.

Now anyone can use the colormap interactively from the shell, by setting it as the default image.cmap in rc, etc. Please submit your changes to the matplotlib-devel mailing list.

7.5 Output

7.5.1 Printing to standard output

In some instances, it is nice to be able to print to a file object, eg sys.stdout, for example in a web application server where the creation of a temporary file storing the images is a wasted step. The antigrain backend accepts a file object to the savefig command and will print a PNG to it. Thus to print to standard output, you could do

```python
import sys
import matplotlib
#
this is not supported across all backends, as of matplotlib-0.63
matplotlib.use('Agg')
from pylab import *
plot([1,2,3])
savefig(sys.stdout)
```
Chapter 8

Matplotlib API

The pylab interface does a lot of work for you under the hood, creating and managing multiple figure windows, directing your plotting commands to the current axes and figure, managing the interactive state, and so on. But that is all it does: all of the plotting is handled by a set of classes that the user can instantiate directly. If you are developing a GUI application, or simply don’t want any hidden magic in your plots, you can create any plots using pure OO code that you could create with the pylab interface.

From a developer standpoint, the pylab interface has been a blessing in disguise. Because the interface was fixed by the Mathworks before the start of matplotlib provided considerable freedom to redesign the guts of the plotting library – the object model can be totally revamped and the user interface remains fixed.

The matplotlib code is divided conceptually into 3 parts: the MATLAB™ interface, the matplotlib Artists, and the backend renderers. The *pylab interface* was covered in Chapter 3. This module *pylab* is comprised mainly of code to manage the multiple figure windows across backends, and provide a thin, procedural wrapper around the object oriented plotting code. The *matplotlib Artists* are a series of classes that derive from *matplotlib.artist.Artist*, so named because these are the objects that actually draw into the figure; see Figure 8.3. The *backend renderers* each implement a common drawing interface that actually puts the ink on the paper, e.g. creating a postscript document, filling an antigrain pixel buffer, or calling the gtk drawing code.

This chapter delves into matplotlib internals to give a clearer picture of how things work and how they are organized. Some of this material may be of interest only to developers, but most of it should shed light for anyone who wants to be able to exploit the full capabilities of matplotlib. The normal path of figure creation in matplotlib is pylab interface → creates artists → calls to the backend renderer. This section will invert that process, starting with the backend, which is where the drawing actually takes place. This is the natural order of presentation because the backend knows nothing about Artists, which in turn know nothing about the pylab interface. After the overview of the backend API, there is a discussion of the matplotlib artists; this is the section that is most useful to users, particularly those who want to embed matplotlib in an application. The final section shows how the pylab interface controls the backends and artists – this section is probably of interest to developers and the terminally curious.

8.1 The matplotlib backends

The backend consists of a number of related base classes that together define a drawing API. The original backend was GTK, and the drawing API is heavily based on the GTK drawing model, which is very simple. There are three essential classes defined in *matplotlib.backend_bases*: *RendererBase*, *GraphicsContextBase* and *FigureCanvasBase*. In addition, there are some classes for use with the GUI backends to define the interface to the toolbars and event handling. The *RendererBase*, aka *renderer* handles all the drawing primitives in display coordinates, typical renderer methods are *draw_text* and *draw_lines*. The *GraphicsContextBase*, aka *textit{graphics context}* stores information about the graphics properties, such as linewidth, cap or join style, color, alpha translucency. The *FigureCanvasBase*, aka *figure canvas*, is primarily a container class to hold the *Figure* instance; this facilitates separation of the Figure from the backend dependent code. For GUI backends, the figure canvas should be a GUI widget embeddable in a GUI
8.1.1 The renderer and graphics context

The renderer defines the low-level matplotlib drawing API; all of the drawing commands are done in display coordinates. The matplotlib Artist classes handle all of the layout and transformation issue, and pass the primitive drawing commands on to the renderer. The renderers know nothing about the matplotlib Artists, and nothing about the pylab interface. Their one and only job is to get ink onto the canvas. The graphics context stores information about the objects to be drawn, their color, linewidths, cap and join styles, alpha transparency, etc. Taken together, you can use the backend renderer and graphics context directly to make drawings. This may not be advisable, since the whole purpose of the matplotlib Artists and pylab interface is to simplify the process of getting ink onto the canvas, but it is possible. However, it is potentially useful to developers who may want to extend the capabilities of matplotlib, eg, to implement block diagram drawing.

Every backend in matplotlib/backends defines a Renderer that inherits from RendererBase; some also define a backend dependent GraphicsContext, while other simply use the GraphicsContextBase for storing the information and do all the work of translating these values in the Renderer. This is the approach the Agg backend uses, shown in the listing below.

Figure 8.1: Drawing directly with the backend renderer and graphics context; see Listing 8.1

Listing 8.1: Drawing with the agg renderer; see Figure 8.1

```python
# working directly with renderer and graphics contexts primitives
from matplotlib.font_manager import FontProperties
from matplotlib.backends.backend_agg import RendererAgg
from matplotlib.transforms import Value

# a 400x400 canvas at 72dpi canvas
dpi = Value(72.0)
o = RendererAgg(400, 400, dpi)

# the graphics context
```
gc = o.new_gc()

# draw the background white
gc.set_foreground('w')
face = (1,1,1)  # white
o.draw_rectangle(gc, face, 0, 0, 400, 400)

# the gc's know about color strings, and can handle any matplotlib
# color arguments (hex strings, rgb, format strings, etc)
gc.set_foreground('g')
gc.set_linewidth(4)
face = (1,0,0)  # must be rgb
o.draw_rectangle(gc, face, 10, 50, 100, 200)

# draw a translucent ellipse
rgb = (0,0,1)
o.draw_arc(gc, rgb, 100, 100, 100, 100, 360, 360, 0)

# draw a dashed line
gc.set_dashes([0, [5, 10]])
gc.set_joinstyle('miter')
gc.set_capstyle('butt')
gc.set_linewidth(3.0)
# broken with new API
# o.draw_lines( gc, (50, 100, 150, 200, 250), (400, 100, 300, 200, 250))

# draw some text using the matplotlib font manager
prop = FontProperties(size=40)
gc.set_foreground('b')
o.draw_text(gc, 100, 300, "That's all folks!", prop, -45, 0)

# there is no standard renderer interface to save the input to a file, # as this is the job of the figure canvas. Here I make the call that # the figure canvas would make for the antigrain render
o._renderer.write_png('../figures/renderer_agg.png')

8.1.2 The figure canvases

8.2 The matplotlib Artists

8.3 pylab interface internals

Let's look at the simplest matplotlib script and walk through what happens under the hood. This section will be of interest mainly to developers or those curious about matplotlib internals - it can be safely skipped by others. We'll assume you are using one of the GUI backends, eg GTKAgg and have are running this as a script (interactive : False)

from pylab import *
plot([1,2,3])
show()
Figure 8.2: The inheritance diagram for The FigureCanvas hierarchy. The FigureCanvas is a backend dependent class which contains a figure instance. For GUI backends, the canvas should be a GUI widget embeddable in a GUI window. Some of the GUIs have backends with both native drawing and antigrain drawing (GTK/GTKAgg, WX/WX-Agg), which is readily achieved with multiple inheritance.

**Line 1: from pylab import ***

When any matplotlib code is imported the first time, the matplotlib.__init__.py code is called. The primary thing the init code does is find and parse your rc file, or if it fails fall back on a set of default parameters. Once this is done, pylab proceeds to import all of the matplotlib.numerix and matplotlib.mlab symbols into the namespace, and loads the backend from matplotlib.backends, which use the rc information to load four functions from the backend module specified by the rc backend parameter. The pylab interface requires only four functions from the backend: new_figure_manager, error_msg, draw_if_interactive, and show

- **new_figure_manager** is responsible for creating a new instance from a backend dependent class derived from matplotlib.backend_bases.FigureManager; this class wraps GUI window creation and management.
- **error_msg** displays an error message; for image backends this message is printed to the file object determined by the rc parameter verbose.error and for GUI backends it is typically displayed in a GUI dialog box.
- **draw_if_interactive** is called after every pylab drawing command (plot, set, xlim, ...) and updates the figure window with the new information only if interactive is True.
- **show** raises all the GUI figure windows and triggers a command to draw the figure.

The pylab interface also imports a Gcf instance from the matplotlib._matlab_helpers module, which manages the current figure and current axes. The pylab interface defines gcf and gca to get a reference to the current figure and
Figure 8.3: The matplotlib Artist hierarchy. The primitive Artists are the Patches, Line2D, Text, AxesImage, FigureImage and Collection classes. All other artists are composites of these. For example a Tick is comprised of a Line2D instance and a Text instance, which make up the tick line and tick label; the Axis is comprised of a list of Ticks and a Text axis label; see Figure 8.4.

Figure 8.4: The Artist containment hierarchy. The top level Artist is the matplotlib.figure.Figure, which contains all of the other Artist instances. The attribute names are given in lower case, and the object type is listed below in upper case. If the attribute is a sequence, for example the figure contains a list of Axes, then the connecting edge is labeled 0...n and the object type is in square brackets to indicate a list, eg [Axes]. Some redundant information is omitted; for example, the yaxis contains the equivalent objects that the xaxis contains, the minorTicks have the same containment hierarchy as the majorTicks, and so on.

axes, which in turn are interfaces to the Gcf class that does the real lifting.

Line 2: `plot ([1, 2, 3])`

All of the pylab functions are defined similarly: they get the current axes and forward the call on to the corresponding matplotlib.axes.Axes method, which does the real work. The plot command in the example below calls gca to get the current axes. If no figure or axes has been defined at the time of this call, the are created one on the fly using default parameters from the rc file; ultimately the new_figure_manager backend method is called to provide new figures when needed, and the default subplot(111) is added to the figure if no other axes has been defined.

The new_figure_manager method deserves a bit more attention, because this creates the central object that contains all the other objects relevant to the creation of a single figure. matplotlib.backend_bases.FigureManagerBase is a container class for the figure window (a GUI window) and figure canvas (a GUI widget which can be drawn upon). The figure canvas derives from matplotlib.backend_bases.FigureCanvasBase, and contains the matplotlib.figure.Figure instance.

Once the current axes is obtained by gca, plot forwards the call to Axes.plot. If an exception is raised, the backend
Figure 8.5: The `pylab` interface function `new_figure_manager` returns a backend dependent concrete implementation of `matplotlib.backend_bases.FigureManagerBase`, which contains the figure canvas and figure window. The attribute names are shown in lower case, and the backend dependent classes are shown in upper case. The standard attribute naming system allows the MATLAB™ interface to make calls across backends to the figure canvas and figure.

The `matplotlib.axes.Axes.plot` method parses the `*args` and `**kwargs`, creates the requested line objects, and adds them to its list of `Line2D` instances. It will also extract the x and y data range and use these to update the data limits of the axes, which is turn will be used to autoscale the view limits. No drawing code is actually issued, but is deferred until later.
**Line 3:** `show()`

`show` is an interface to realize and show the GUI windows. For image backends, e.g., Agg, PS, or SVG, it is superfluous. The image backends will draw the figure on a call to `savefig`, and ignore a `show` call. Each GUI backend defines `show` to realize all of the GUI windows, and start the GUI mainloop. For this reason, the call to `show` is blocking, and should be the last line of the script. Here is a representative `show` method from `matplotlib.backends.backend_gtk`:

```python
def show(mainloop=True):
    """
    Show all the figures and enter the gtk main loop
    This should be the last line of your script
    """
    for manager in Gcf.get_all_fig_managers():
        manager.window.show()
    if gtk.main_level() == 0 and mainloop:
        if gtk.pygtk_version >= (2,4,0):
            gtk.main()
        else:
            gtk.mainloop()
```

Typically, the GUI backends binds the realize or expose event of the GUI window to ultimately trigger the `Figure.draw` method of the `Figure` instance contained by the `FigureCanvas`. In the `show` function above, `manager.window.show()` will trigger an expose event in pygtk. The gtk backend binds the expose event to the `FigureCanvasGTK.expose_event` method. If the canvas has not yet been drawn, the `expose_event` method will create a `RendererGTK` instance (which derives from the common drawing API in `matplotlib.backends.RendererBase`) and then call `Figure.draw(renderer)`, which in turn passes the draw command on to each `Artist` instance it contains; see Figure 8.4 for the Artist containment hierarchy. Each `Artist` instance defines the draw method, and contains a transform to transform itself to display coordinates. For example, the `Line2D` instance defines the draw method, and contains a transform to transform its x and y data to display coordinates, and then call the appropriate renderer method, e.g., `RendererGTK.draw_lines`, which expects x and y data in display coordinates. In this case, the GTK renderer `draw_lines` method makes the appropriate calls to the GTK drawing API, and the screen is updated; see Figure 8.6.

![Diagram](image_url)

**Figure 8.6:** The typical sequence of steps triggered in the backend code by the call to `show` that ultimately gets the ink on the canvas.
Appendix A

A sample matplotlibrc

### MATPLOTLIB RC FORMAT

# This is a sample matplotlib configuration file. It should be placed
# in HOME/.matplotlib/matplotlibrc (unix/linux like systems) and
# C:\Documents and Settings\yourname\.matplotlib (win32 systems)
#
# By default, the installer will overwrite the existing file in the
# install path, so if you want to preserve your's, please move it to
# your HOME dir and set the environment variable if necessary.
#
# This file is best viewed in an editor which supports python mode
# syntax highlighting
#
# Blank lines, or lines starting with a comment symbol, are ignored,
# as are trailing comments. Other lines must have the format
#
# key : val   # optional comment
#
# Colors: for the color values below, you can either use
# - a matplotlib color string, such as r, k, or b
# - an rgb tuple, such as (1.0, 0.5, 0.0)
# - a hex string, such as ff00ff (no '#' symbol)
# - a scalar grayscale intensity such as 0.75
# - a legal html color name, eg red, blue, darkslategray

#### CONFIGURATION BEGINS HERE
#
# the default backend; one of GTK GTKAgg GTKCairo FltkAgg QtAgg TkAgg
#     Agg Cairo GD GDK Paint PS PDF SVG Template
backend : Agg
numerix : numpy numpy Numeric or numarray
interactive : False   # see http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/interactive.html
# toolbar   : toolbar2  # None | classic | toolbar2
# timezone  : UTC        # a pytz timezone string, eg US/Central or Europe/Paris
#
# Where your matplotlib data lives if you installed to a non-default
# location. This is where the matplotlib fonts, bitmaps, etc reside
# datapath  : /home/jdhunter/mpldata

#### LINES

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# See http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/matplotlib.lines.html for more
# information on line properties.
# lines.linewidth : 1.0       # line width in points
# lines.linestyle : -         # solid line
# lines.color : blue          # the default marker
# lines.marker : None         # the line width around the marker symbol
# lines.markeredgewidth : 0.5 # markersize, in points
# lines.dash_capstyle : butt  # butt, round, bevel
# lines.dash_joinstyle : miter # miter, round, bevel
# lines.solid_capstyle : miter # miter, round, bevel
# lines.solid_joinstyle : projecting # miter, round, projecting
# lines.antialiased : True    # render lines in antialiased (no jaggies)

### PATCHES
# Patches are graphical objects that fill 2D space, like polygons or circles. See
# http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/matplotlib.patches.html for more
# information on patch properties
# patch.linewidth : 1.0       # edge width in points
# patch.facecolor : blue      # render patches in antialiased (no jaggies)
# patch.edgecolor : black     # render patches in antialiased (no jaggies)

### FONT
#
# font properties used by text.Text. See
# http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/matplotlib.font_manager.html for more
# information on font properties. The 6 font properties used for font
# matching are given below with their default values.
#
# The font.family property has five values: 'serif' (e.g. Times),
# 'sans-serif' (e.g. Helvetica), 'cursive' (e.g. Zapf-Chancery),
# 'fantasy' (e.g. Western), and 'monospace' (e.g. Courier). Each of
# these font families has a default list of font names in decreasing
# order of priority associated with them.
#
# The font.style property has three values: normal (or roman), italic
# or oblique. The oblique style will be used for italic, if it is not
# present.
#
# The font.variant property has two values: normal or small-caps. For
# TrueType fonts, which are scalable fonts, small-caps is equivalent
# to using a font size of 'smaller', or about 83% of the current font
# size.
#
# The font.weight property has effectively 13 values: normal, bold,
# bolder, lighter, 100, 200, 300, ..., 900. Normal is the same as
# 400, and bold is 700. bolder and lighter are relative values with
# respect to the current weight.
#
# The font.stretch property has 11 values: ultra-condensed,
# extra-condensed, condensed, semi-condensed, normal, semi-expanded,
# expanded, extra-expanded, ultra-expanded, wider, and narrower. This
# property is not currently implemented.
# The font.size property is the default font size for text, given in pts.
# 12pt is the standard value.

#
# font.family : sans-serif
# font.style : normal
# font.variant : normal
# font.weight : medium
# font.stretch : normal
# note that font.size controls default text sizes. To configure
# special text sizes tick labels, axes, labels, title, etc, see the rc
# settings for axes and ticks. Special text sizes can be defined
# relative to font.size, using the following values: xx–small, x–small,
# small, medium, large, x–large, xx–large, larger, or smaller
# font.size : 12.0
# font.serif : Bitstream Vera Serif, New Century Schoolbook, Century...
#   Schoolbook L, Utopia, ITC Bookman, Bookman, Nimbus Roman No9 L, Times New Roman,...
#   Times, Palatino, Charter, serif
# font.sans-serif : Bitstream Vera Sans, Lucida Grande, Verdana, Geneva, Lucid,...
#   Arial, Helvetica, Avant Garde, sans-serif
# font.cursive : Apple Chancery, Textile, Zapf Chancery, Sand, cursive
# font.fantasy : Comic Sans MS, Chicago, Charcoal, Impact, Western, fantasy
# font.monospace : Bitstream Vera Sans Mono, Andale Mono, Nimbus Mono L, Courier...
#   New, Courier, Fixed, Terminal, monospace

### TEXT
# text properties used by text.Text. See
# http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/matplotlib.text.html for more
# information on text properties

# text.color : black
# text.usetex : False # use latex for all text handling. For more
#   information, see # http://www.scipy.org/Wiki/Cookbook/Matplotlib/UsingTex
# text.dvipng: False # some versions of dvipng don't handle
#   alpha channel properly. Use True to correct and flush
#   ~/.matplotlib/tex.cache before testing

### AXES
# default face and edge color, default tick sizes,
# default fontsizes for ticklabels, and so on. See
# http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/matplotlib.axes.html#Axes
# axes.hold : True # whether to clear the axes by default on
# axes.facecolor : white # axes background color
# axes.edgecolor : black # axes edge color
# axes.linewidth : 1.0 # edge linewidth
# axes.grid : False # display grid or not
# axes.titlesize : 14 # fontsize of the axes title
# axes.labelsize : 12 # fontsize of the x any y labels
# axes.labelcolor : black
# axes.axisbelow : False # whether axis gridlines and ticks are below
#   the axes elements (lines, text, etc)
# axes.formatter.limits : -7, 7 # use scientific notation if log10
#   of the axis range is smaller than the
#   first or larger than the second
# polaraxes.grid : True # display grid on polar axes
### IMAGES
#image.aspect : equal          # equal | auto | a number
#image.interpolation : bilinear # see help(imshow) for options
#image.cmap : jet             # gray | jet etc...
#image.lut : 256              # the size of the colormap lookup table
#image.origin : upper         # lower | upper

### CONTOUR PLOTS
#contour.negative_linestyle : 6.0, 6.0 # negative contour dashstyle (size in points)

### SAVING FIGURES
# the default savefig params can be different for the GUI backends.
# Eg. you may want a higher resolution, or to make the figure
# background white
#savefig.dpi : 100              # figure dots per inch
#savefig.facecolor : white     # figure facecolor when saving
#savefig.edgecolor : white     # figure edgecolor when saving

# tk backend params
#tk.window_focus : False        # Maintain shell focus for TkAgg
#tk.pythoninspect : False       # tk sets PYTHONINSPECT

# ps backend params
#ps.papersize : letter         # auto, letter, legal, ledger, A0–A10, B0–B10
#ps.useafm : False              # use of afm fonts, results in small files
#ps.usedistiller : False       # can be: None, ghostscript or xpdf
    # Experimental: may produce smaller files.
    # xpdf intended for production of
    # ...publication quality files,
    # but requires ghostscript, xpdf and ps2eps
#ps.distiller.res : 6000        # dpi

# pdf backend params
#pdf.compression : 6            # integer from 0 to 9
    # 0 disables compression (good for debugging)

# svg backend params
#svg.image_inline : True        # write raster image data directly into the svg file
#svg.image_noscale : False      # suppress scaling of raster data embedded in SVG

# Set the verbose flags. This controls how much information
# matplotlib gives you at runtime and where it goes. Ther verbosity
# levels are: silent, helpful, debug, debug-annoying. Any level is
# inclusive of all the levels below it. If you setting is debug,
# you’ll get all the debug and helpful messages. When submitting
# problems to the mailing-list, please set verbose to helpful or debug
# and paste the output into your report.
#
# The fileo gives the destination for any calls to verbose.report.
# These objects can a filename, or a filehandle like sys.stdout.
#
# You can override the rc default verbosity from the command line by
# giving the flags —verbose—LEVEL where LEVEL is one of the legal
# levels, eg —verbose-helpful.
# You can access the verbose instance in your code
# from matplotlib import verbose.
verbose.level : silent  # one of silent, helpful, debug, debug~annoying
verbose.fileo : sys.stdout  # a log filename, sys.stdout or sys.stderr
Appendix B

mathtext symbols
Appendix C

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