

Bayesian Linear Models

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March 3, 2010

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- Ingredients of a linear model include an $n \times 1$ response vector $\mathbf{y} = (y_1, \dots, y_n)^T$ and an $n \times p$ design matrix (e.g. including regressors) $X = [\mathbf{x}_1, \dots, \mathbf{x}_p]$, assumed to have been observed without error. The linear model:

$$\mathbf{y} = X\beta + \epsilon; \epsilon \sim N(\mathbf{0}, \sigma^2 I)$$

- The linear model is the most fundamental of all serious statistical models encompassing:
 - ANOVA: \mathbf{y} is continuous, \mathbf{x}_i 's are categorical
 - REGRESSION: \mathbf{y} is continuous, \mathbf{x}_i 's are continuous
 - ANCOVA: \mathbf{y} is continuous, some \mathbf{x}_i 's are continuous, some categorical.
- Unknown parameters include the regression parameters β and the variance σ^2 . We assume X is observed without error and all inference is conditional on X .

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- The classical unbiased estimates of the regression parameter β and σ^2 are

$$\hat{\beta} = (X^T X)^{-1} X^T \mathbf{y};$$

$$\hat{\sigma}^2 = \frac{1}{n-p} (\mathbf{y} - X\hat{\beta})^T (\mathbf{y} - X\hat{\beta}).$$

- The above estimate of β is also a least-squares estimate. The *predicted* value of \mathbf{y} is given by

$$\hat{\mathbf{y}} = X\hat{\beta} = P_X \mathbf{y} \text{ where } P_X = X(X^T X)^{-1} X^T.$$

- P_X is called the *projector* of X . It projects any vector to the space spanned by the columns of X .
- The model residual is estimated as:

$$\hat{\mathbf{e}} = (\mathbf{y} - X\hat{\beta})^T (\mathbf{y} - X\hat{\beta}) = \mathbf{y}^T (I - P_X) \mathbf{y}.$$

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- For Bayesian analysis, we will need to specify priors for the unknown regression parameters β and the variance σ^2 .

- Consider independent flat priors on β and $\log \sigma^2$:

$$p(\beta) \propto 1; p(\log(\sigma^2)) \propto 1 \text{ or equivalently } p(\beta, \sigma^2) \propto \frac{1}{\sigma^2}.$$

- None of the above two "distributions" are valid probabilities (they do not integrate to any finite number). So why is it that we are even discussing them?
- It turns out that even if the priors are *improper* (that's what we call them), as long as the resulting posterior distributions are valid we can still conduct legitimate statistical inference on them.

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- With a flat prior on β we obtain, after some algebra, the *conditional posterior* distribution:

$$p(\beta | \sigma^2, \mathbf{y}) = N(\beta | (X^T X)^{-1} X^T \mathbf{y}, \sigma^2 (X^T X)^{-1}).$$

- The conditional posterior distribution of β would have been the desired posterior distribution had σ^2 been known.
- Since that is not the case, we need to obtain the *marginal posterior* distribution by integrating out σ^2 as:

$$p(\beta | \mathbf{y}) = \int p(\beta | \sigma^2, \mathbf{y}) p(\sigma^2 | \mathbf{y}) d\sigma^2$$

- Can we solve this integration using composition sampling? YES: if we can generate samples from $p(\sigma^2 | \mathbf{y})!$

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- So, we need to find the marginal posterior distribution of σ^2 . With the choice of the flat prior we obtain:

$$p(\sigma^2 | \mathbf{y}) \propto \frac{1}{(\sigma^2)^{(n-p)/2+1}} \exp\left(-\frac{(n-p)s^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$$

$$= IG\left(\sigma^2 \mid \frac{n-p}{2}, \frac{(n-p)s^2}{2}\right),$$

$$\text{where } s^2 = \hat{\sigma}^2 = \frac{1}{n-p} \mathbf{y}^T (I - P_X) \mathbf{y}.$$

- This is known as an *inverted Gamma* distribution (also called a *scaled chi-square* distribution) $IG(\sigma^2 | (n-p)/2, (n-p)s^2/2)$.
- In other words: $[(n-p)s^2/\sigma^2 | \mathbf{y}] \sim \chi_{n-p}^2$ (with $n-p$ degrees of freedom). A striking similarity with the classical result: The distribution of $\hat{\sigma}^2$ is also characterized as $(n-p)s^2/\sigma^2$ following a chi-square distribution.

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- Now we are ready to carry out composition sampling from $p(\beta, \sigma^2 | \mathbf{y})$ as follows:

- Draw M samples from $p(\sigma^2 | \mathbf{y})$:

$$\sigma^{2(j)} \sim IG\left(\frac{n-p}{2}, \frac{(n-p)s^2}{2}(n-p)\right), j = 1, \dots, M$$

- For $j = 1, \dots, M$, draw from $p(\beta | \sigma^{2(j)}, \mathbf{y})$:

$$\beta^{(j)} \sim N\left((X^T X)^{-1} X^T \mathbf{y}, \sigma^{2(j)} (X^T X)^{-1}\right)$$

- The resulting samples $\{\beta^{(j)}, \sigma^{2(j)}\}_{j=1}^M$ represent M samples from $p(\beta, \sigma^2 | \mathbf{y})$.

- $\{\beta^{(j)}\}_{j=1}^M$ are samples from the marginal posterior distribution $p(\beta | \mathbf{y})$. This is a *multivariate t* density:

$$p(\beta | \mathbf{y}) = \frac{\Gamma(n/2)}{(\pi(n-p))^{p/2} \Gamma((n-p)/2) |s^2(X^T X)^{-1}|} \left[1 + \frac{(\beta - \hat{\beta})^T (X^T X)(\beta - \hat{\beta})}{(n-p)s^2}\right]^{-n/2}$$

- The marginal distribution of each individual regression parameter β_j is a non-central univariate t_{n-p} distribution. In fact,

$$\frac{\beta_j - \hat{\beta}_j}{s \sqrt{(X^T X)^{-1}_{jj}}} \sim t_{n-p}$$

The 95% credible intervals for each β_j are constructed from the quantiles of the t -distribution. The credible intervals exactly coincide with the 95% classical confidence intervals, but the interpretation is direct: the probability of β_j falling in that interval, given the observed data, is 0.95.

- Note: an intercept only linear model reduces to the simple univariate $N(\bar{y} | \mu, \sigma^2/n)$ likelihood, for which the marginal posterior of μ is:

$$\frac{\mu - \bar{y}}{s/\sqrt{n}} \sim t_{n-1}$$

- Suppose we have observed the new predictors \tilde{X} , and we wish to predict the outcome $\tilde{\mathbf{y}}$. We specify $p(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}, \mathbf{y} | \theta)$ to be a normal distribution:

$$\begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{y} \\ \tilde{\mathbf{y}} \end{pmatrix} \sim N\left(\begin{bmatrix} X \\ \tilde{X} \end{bmatrix} \beta, \sigma^2 I\right)$$

- Note $p(\tilde{\mathbf{y}} | \mathbf{y}, \beta, \sigma^2) = p(\tilde{\mathbf{y}} | \beta, \sigma^2) = N(\tilde{\mathbf{y}} | \tilde{X}\beta, \sigma^2 I)$.

- The *posterior predictive* distribution:

$$\begin{aligned} p(\tilde{\mathbf{y}} | \mathbf{y}) &= \int p(\tilde{\mathbf{y}} | \mathbf{y}, \beta, \sigma^2) p(\beta, \sigma^2 | \mathbf{y}) d\beta d\sigma^2 \\ &= \int p(\tilde{\mathbf{y}} | \beta, \sigma^2) p(\beta, \sigma^2 | \mathbf{y}) d\beta d\sigma^2. \end{aligned}$$

- By now we are comfortable evaluating such integrals:

- First obtain: $(\beta^{(j)}, \sigma^{2(j)}) \sim p(\beta, \sigma^2 | \mathbf{y})$, $j = 1, \dots, M$
- Next draw: $\tilde{\mathbf{y}}^{(j)} \sim N(\tilde{X}\beta^{(j)}, \sigma^{2(j)} I)$.

- Suppose that $\theta = (\theta_1, \theta_2)$ and we seek the posterior distribution $p(\theta_1, \theta_2 | \mathbf{y})$.

- For many interesting hierarchical models, we have access to *full conditional distributions* $p(\theta_1 | \theta_2, \mathbf{y})$ and $p(\theta_2 | \theta_1, \mathbf{y})$.

- The *Gibbs sampler* proposes the following sampling scheme. Set starting values $\theta^{(0)} = (\theta_1^{(0)}, \theta_2^{(0)})$ For $j = 1, \dots, M$

- Draw $\theta_1^{(j)} \sim p(\theta_1 | \theta_2^{(j-1)}, \mathbf{y})$
- Draw $\theta_2^{(j)} \sim p(\theta_2 | \theta_1^{(j)}, \mathbf{y})$

- This constructs a *Markov Chain* and, after an initial "burn-in" period when the chains are trying to find their way, the above algorithm guarantees that $\{\theta_1^{(j)}, \theta_2^{(j)}\}_{j=M_0+1}^M$ will be samples from $p(\theta_1, \theta_2 | \mathbf{y})$, where M_0 is the burn-in period.

- More generally, if $\theta = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_p)$ are the parameters in our model, we provide a set of initial values $\theta^{(0)} = (\theta_1^{(0)}, \dots, \theta_p^{(0)})$ and then performs the j -th iteration, say for $j = 1, \dots, M$, by updating successively from the *full conditional* distributions:

$$\begin{aligned} \theta_1^{(j)} &\sim p(\theta_1^{(j)} | \theta_2^{(j-1)}, \dots, \theta_p^{(j-1)}, \mathbf{y}) \\ \theta_2^{(j)} &\sim p(\theta_2^{(j)} | \theta_1^{(j)}, \theta_3^{(j)}, \dots, \theta_p^{(j-1)}, \mathbf{y}) \\ &\dots \end{aligned}$$

(the generic k^{th} element)

$$\begin{aligned} \theta_k^{(j)} &\sim p(\theta_k^{(j)} | \theta_1^{(j)}, \dots, \theta_{k-1}^{(j)}, \theta_{k+1}^{(j)}, \dots, \theta_p^{(j-1)}, \mathbf{y}) \\ &\dots \\ \theta_p^{(j)} &\sim p(\theta_p^{(j)} | \theta_1^{(j)}, \dots, \theta_{p-1}^{(j)}, \mathbf{y}) \end{aligned}$$

- Example: Consider the linear model. Suppose we set $p(\sigma^2) = IG(\sigma^2 | a, b)$ and $p(\beta) \propto 1$.

- The full conditional distributions are:

$$\begin{aligned} p(\beta | \mathbf{y}, \sigma^2) &= N(\beta | (X^T X)^{-1} X^T \mathbf{y}, \sigma^2 (X^T X)^{-1}) \\ p(\sigma^2 | \mathbf{y}, \beta) &= IG\left(\sigma^2 | a + n/2, b + \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{y} - X\beta)^T (\mathbf{y} - X\beta)\right). \end{aligned}$$

- Thus, the Gibbs sampler will initialize $(\beta^{(0)}, \sigma^{2(0)})$ and draw, for $j = 1, \dots, M$:

- Draw $\beta^{(j)} \sim N((X^T X)^{-1} X^T \mathbf{y}, \sigma^{2(j-1)} (X^T X)^{-1})$
- Draw $\sigma^{2(j)} \sim IG\left(a + n/2, b + \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{y} - X\beta^{(j)})^T (\mathbf{y} - X\beta^{(j)})\right)$

- In principle, the Gibbs sampler will work for extremely complex hierarchical models. The only issue is sampling from the full conditionals. They may not be amenable to easy sampling – when these are not in closed form. A more general and extremely powerful - and often easier to code - algorithm is the Metropolis-Hastings (MH) algorithm.
- This algorithm also constructs a Markov Chain, but does not necessarily care about full conditionals.

- The Metropolis-Hastings algorithm: Start with an initial value for $\theta = \theta^{(0)}$. Select a *candidate* or *proposal* distribution from which to propose a value of θ at the j -th iteration: $\theta^{(j)} \sim q(\theta^{(j-1)}, \nu)$. For example, $q(\theta^{(j-1)}, \nu) = N(\theta^{(j-1)}, \nu)$ with ν fixed.

- Compute

$$r = \frac{p(\theta^* | \mathbf{y})q(\theta^{(j-1)} | \theta^*, \nu)}{p(\theta^{(j-1)} | \mathbf{y})q(\theta^* | \theta^{(j-1)}, \nu)}$$

- If $r \geq 1$ then set $\theta^{(j)} = \theta^*$. If $r \leq 1$ then draw $U \sim (0, 1)$. If $U \leq r$ then $\theta^{(j)} = \theta^*$. Otherwise, $\theta^{(j)} = \theta^{(j-1)}$.
- Repeat for $j = 1, \dots, M$. This yields $\theta^{(1)}, \dots, \theta^{(M)}$, which, after a burn-in period, will be samples from the true posterior distribution. It is important to monitor the acceptance ratio r of the sampler through the iterations. Rough recommendations: for vector updates $r \approx 20\%$, for scalar updates $r \approx 40\%$. This can be controlled by “tuning” ν .
- Popular approach: Embed Metropolis steps within Gibbs to draw from full conditionals that are not accessible to directly generate from.

- Example: For the linear model, our parameters are (β, σ^2) . We write $\theta = (\beta, \log(\sigma^2))$ and, at the j -th iteration, propose $\theta^* \sim N(\theta^{(j-1)}, \Sigma)$. The log transformation on σ^2 ensures that all components of θ have support on the entire real line and can have meaningful proposed values from the multivariate normal. But we need to transform our prior to $p(\beta, \log(\sigma^2))$.

- Let $z = \log(\sigma^2)$ and assume $p(\beta, z) = p(\beta)p(z)$. Let us derive $p(z)$. **REMEMBER:** we need to adjust for the jacobian. Then $p(z) = p(\sigma^2)|d\sigma^2/dz| = p(e^z)e^z$. The jacobian here is $e^z = \sigma^2$.

- Let $p(\beta) = 1$ and an $p(\sigma^2) = IG(\sigma^2 | a, b)$. Then log-posterior is:

$$-(a + n/2 + 1)z + z - \frac{1}{e^z} \left\{ b + \frac{1}{2}(Y - X\beta)^T(Y - X\beta) \right\}.$$

- A symmetric proposal distribution, say $q(\theta^* | \theta^{(j-1)}, \Sigma) = N(\theta^{(j-1)}, \Sigma)$, cancels out in r . In practice it is better to compute $\log(r)$: $\log(r) = \log(p(\theta^* | \mathbf{y}) - \log(p(\theta^{(j-1)} | \mathbf{y}))$. For the proposal, $N(\theta^{(j-1)}, \Sigma)$, Σ is a $d \times d$ variance-covariance matrix, and $d = \dim(\theta) = p + 1$.

- If $\log r \geq 0$ then set $\theta^{(j)} = \theta^*$. If $\log r \leq 0$ then draw $U \sim (0, 1)$. If $U \leq r$ (or $\log U \leq \log r$) then $\theta^{(j)} = \theta^*$. Otherwise, $\theta^{(j)} = \theta^{(j-1)}$.

- Repeat the above procedure for $j = 1, \dots, M$ to obtain samples $\theta^{(1)}, \dots, \theta^{(M)}$.