Subject: Re: Histogram
Posted by Michael Wallace on Tue, 28 Jun 2005 18:45:49 GMT
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> I have a question regarding histograms in general. Is there a "right"
> criteria (e.g. strict matmematical rule, etc..) of chosing the bin size ?
> I'm playing with some data and obviously the histogram looks differently
> with different bin sizes. Any help and references would be extremely
> helpful !

Well, it all depends on what you want to figure out about your data.
There is no "right" or "wrong" mathematical rule when it comes to this.
Choosing the right bin size is an art, but I link to think of it as
the larger the bin size, the more generalized your results will be and
the finer the bin size, the more specific your results will be. Whether
you want more general or more specific is totally dependent on what
you're trying to see in your data. For example, let's say you have some
data with noise in it. If you wanted to create a histogram such that
the noise had less effect (so you could concentrate on the actual data),
you'd use a larger bin size. If you wanted to study the noise itself
and trying to figure out where it is coming from, you'd want a smaller
bin size. That's what I mean by "it all depends."

Some data sets will come with natural boundaries already in place and
those may make good bin sizes. For example, say you are acquiring data
through an instrument and every minute the position of the instrument
changes. In this case, it would be logical to bin the data on minute
intervals so that you can easily drawn correlations between angle and
the data.

Don't know if that helps your thinking or not...

Mike