
Subject: Re: Histogram and bin sizes

Posted by [Conor](#) on Thu, 21 Feb 2008 14:05:00 GMT

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On Feb 20, 2:43 pm, pgri...@gmail.com wrote:

> jeffnetles4...@gmail.com wrote:

>> I've always wondered why you have to use a constant bin size with

>> HISTOGRAM().

>> To quote J.D.'s famous tutorial: "a histogram

>> represents nothing more than a fancy way to count." Doesn't an

>> imposed constant bin size imply that this is the only way it's ok to

>> count? I can think of several reasons i wouldn't want to do this - I

>> used logarithmic bin sizes in my dissertation, for example (now i'm

>> hoping someone isn't going to answer this post saying i screwed up in

>> my dissertation :-)).

>

> I use logarithmic bins myself quite often, and the fact that a

> logarithmic bin

> size is the same as a constant bin size in log space, makes it is easy

> to use histogram to get that. Less regulars binning don't work with

> histogram, but nobody stops you from writing your own version to work

> with them (it will not be as fast as histogram though).

>

> Ciao,

> Paolo

>

>> And besides, Excel lets you use arbitrary bin

>> sizes....and if Excel lets you do it, it has to be ok, right???? ;-)

>

>> Jeff

You can always do whatever binning you want, you just have to transform your data to the new space and then bin it constantly. Why doesn't histogram let you use arbitrary binsizes? Not being an IDL developer I don't know for sure, but I would guess it's a speed issue. The simpler a program is the faster it is. I use histogram all the time because it's one of the speedier programs in IDL. It would make me very sad if in order to make histogram more flexible, it also became much slower, especially since by transforming my data set I can use arbitrary bin sizes for histogram.
