

## Preface

Pattern recognition has its origins in engineering, whereas machine learning grew out of computer science. However, these activities can be viewed as two facets of the same field, and together they have undergone substantial development over the past ten years. In particular, Bayesian methods have grown from a specialist niche to become mainstream, while graphical models have emerged as a general framework for describing and applying probabilistic models. Also, the practical applicability of Bayesian methods has been greatly enhanced through the development of a range of approximate inference algorithms such as variational Bayes and expectation propagation. Similarly, new models based on kernels have had significant impact on both algorithms and applications.

This new textbook reflects these recent developments while providing a comprehensive introduction to the fields of pattern recognition and machine learning. It is aimed at advanced undergraduates or first year PhD students, as well as researchers and practitioners, and assumes no previous knowledge of pattern recognition or machine learning concepts. Knowledge of multivariate calculus and basic linear algebra is required, and some familiarity with probabilities would be helpful though not essential as the book includes a self-contained introduction to basic probability theory.

Because this book has broad scope, it is impossible to provide a complete list of references, and in particular no attempt has been made to provide accurate historical attribution of ideas. Instead, the aim has been to give references that offer greater detail than is possible here and that hopefully provide entry points into what, in some cases, is a very extensive literature. For this reason, the references are often to more recent textbooks and review articles rather than to original sources.

The book is supported by a great deal of additional material, including lecture slides as well as the complete set of figures used in the book, and the reader is encouraged to visit the book web site for the latest information:

<http://research.microsoft.com/~cmbishop/PRML>

## Exercises

The exercises that appear at the end of every chapter form an important component of the book. Each exercise has been carefully chosen to reinforce concepts explained in the text or to develop and generalize them in significant ways, and each is graded according to difficulty ranging from ( $\star$ ), which denotes a simple exercise taking a few minutes to complete, through to ( $\star \star \star$ ), which denotes a significantly more complex exercise.

It has been difficult to know to what extent these solutions should be made widely available. Those engaged in self study will find worked solutions very beneficial, whereas many course tutors request that solutions be available only via the publisher so that the exercises may be used in class. In order to try to meet these conflicting requirements, those exercises that help amplify key points in the text, or that fill in important details, have solutions that are available as a PDF file from the book web site. Such exercises are denoted by **www**. Solutions for the remaining exercises are available to course tutors by contacting the publisher (contact details are given on the book web site). Readers are strongly encouraged to work through the exercises unaided, and to turn to the solutions only as required.

Although this book focuses on concepts and principles, in a taught course the students should ideally have the opportunity to experiment with some of the key algorithms using appropriate data sets. A companion volume (Bishop and Nabney, 2008) will deal with practical aspects of pattern recognition and machine learning, and will be accompanied by Matlab software implementing most of the algorithms discussed in this book.

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