Regular Expressions

Lecture 11b
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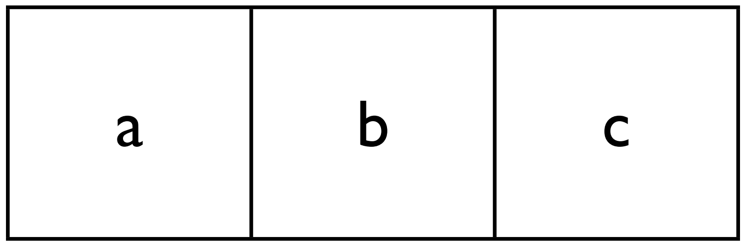
Outline

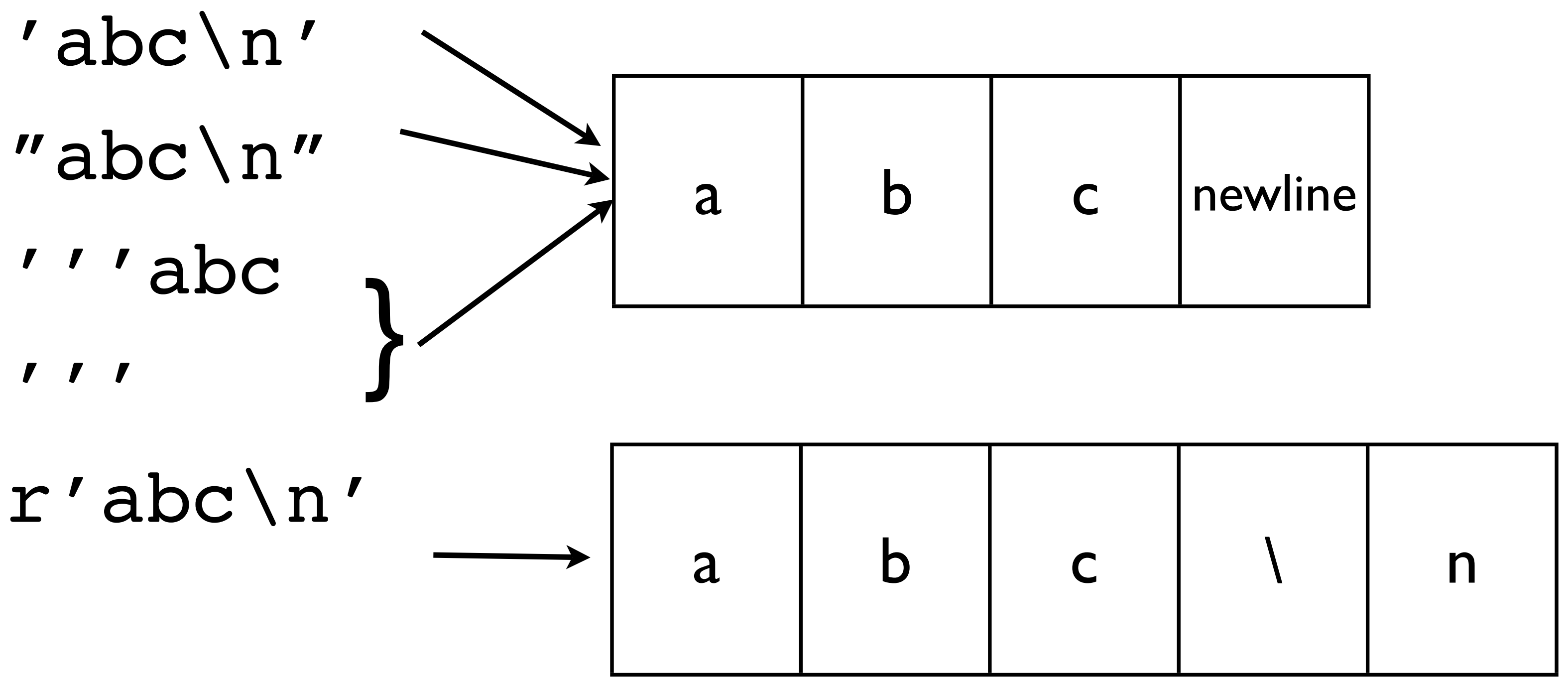
- Some string tidbits
- Regular expressions and pattern matching

Strings Again

```
'abc'
"abc"
'''abc'''
r'abc'
```



Strings Again



Why so many?

`'` vs `"` lets you put the other kind inside

`'''` lets you run across many lines

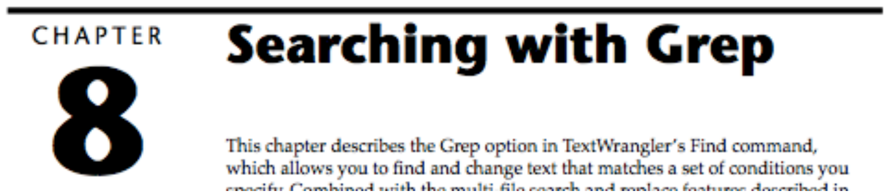
all 3 let you show “invisible” characters (via \n, \t, etc.)

`r'...'` (raw strings) can’t do invisible stuff, but avoid problems with backslash

```
open('C:\new\text.dat')    vs
open('C:\\new\\text.dat')    vs
open(r'C:\new\text.dat')
```

RegExprs are Widespread

- shell file name patterns (limited)
- unix utility "grep" and relatives
  - try "man grep" in terminal window
- perl
- TextWrangler →
- Python



CHAPTER 8

Searching with Grep

This chapter describes the Grep option in TextWrangler's Find command, which allows you to find and change text that matches a set of conditions you specify. Combined with the multi-file search and replace features described in

Patterns in Text

- Pattern-matching is frequently useful
- Identifier: A letter followed by >= 0 letters or digits.

    `count1 number2go`, not `4runner`

- TATA box: TATxyT where x or y is A

    TATAAT TATAgT TATcAT, not TATCCT

- Number: >=1 digit, optional decimal point, exponent.
    `3.14 6.02E+23`, not 127.0.0.1

Regular Expressions

- A language for simple patterns, based on 4 simple primitives
  - match single letters
  - this OR that
  - this FOLLOWED BY that
  - this REPEATED 0 or more times
- A specific syntax (fussy, and varies among pgms...)
- A library of utilities to deal with them
- Key features: Search, replace, dissect

Regular Expressions

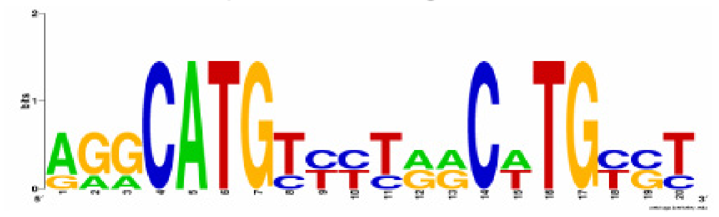
- Do you absolutely need them in Python?
- No, everthing they do, you could do yourself
- BUT pattern-matching is widely needed, tedious and error-prone. RegExprs give you a flexible, systematic, compact, automatic way to do it. A common language for specifications.
- In truth, it’s still somewhat error-prone, but in a different way.

Examples
(details later)

- Identifier: letter followed by ≥0 letters or digits.
  [a-z][a-z0-9]* `i count1 number2go`
- TATA box: TATxyT where x or y is A
  TAT(A.|.A)T TATAAT TATAgT TATcAT
- Number: one or more digits with optional decimal point, exponent.
  \d+\.?\d*(E[+-]?\d+)? `3.14 6.02E+23`

Another Example

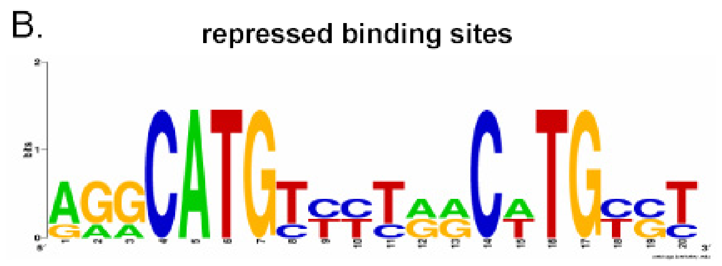
B.



Repressed binding sites in regular Python

```
# assume we have a genome sequence in string variable myDNA
for index in range(0,len(myDNA)-20) :
  if (myDNA[index] == "A" or myDNA[index] == "G") and
     (myDNA[index+1] == "A" or myDNA[index+1] == "G") and
     (myDNA[index+2] == "A" or myDNA[index+2] == "G") and
     (myDNA[index+3] == "C") and
     (myDNA[index+4] == "C") and
# and on and on!
     (myDNA[index+19] == "C" or myDNA[index+19] == "T") :
        print "Match found at ",index
        break
```

Example



```
re.findall(r"[AG]{3,3}CATG[TC]{4,4}[AG]{2,2}C[AT]TG[CT][CG][TC]", myDNA)
```

RegExprs in Python

http://docs.python.org/library/re.html

Simple RegExpr Testing

```
>>> import re
>>> str1 = 'what foot or hand fell fastest'
>>> re.findall(r'f[a-z]*', str1)
['foot', 'fell', 'fastest']

>>> str2 = "I lack e's successor"
>>> re.findall(r'f[a-z]*',str2)
[]
```

Definitely recommend trying this with examples to follow, & more

Returns list of all matching substrings.

Exercise: change it to find strings starting with f and ending with t

Exercise: In honor of the winter Olympics, “-ski-ing”

- download & save war_and_peace.txt
- write py program to read it line-by-line, use re.findall to see whether current line contains one or more proper names ending in “...ski”; print each.
    - mine begins:

```
['Bolkonski']
['Bolkonski']
['Bolkonski']
['Bolkonski']
['Bolkonski']
['Razumovski']
['Razumovski']
['Bolkonski']
['Spasski']
...
['Nesvitski', 'Nesvitski']
```

RegExpr Syntax

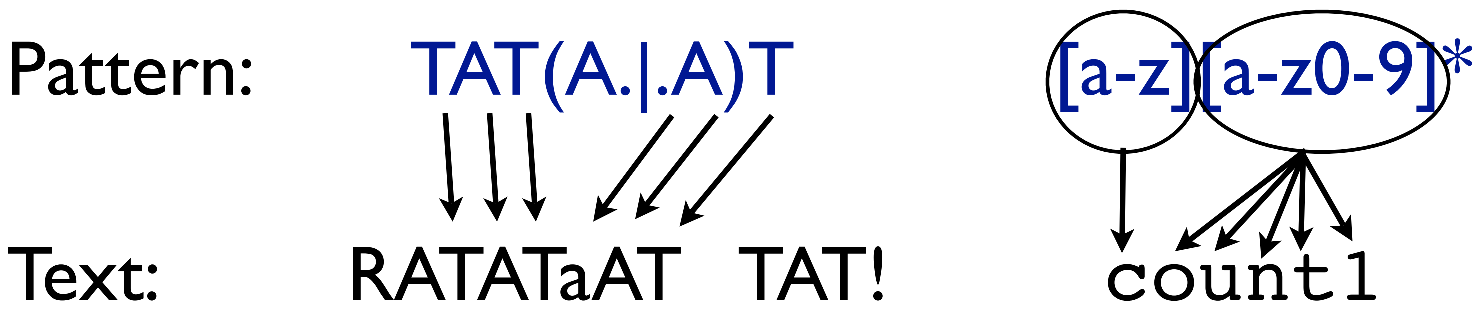
They’re strings

Most punctuation is special; needs to be escaped by backslash (e.g., “\.” instead of “.”) to get non-special behavior

So, “raw” string literals (r′C:\new\.txt′) are generally recommended for regexprs

- Unless you double your backslashes judiciously

Patterns “Match” Text



RegExpr Semantics, I
Characters

RexExprs are patterns; they “match” sequences of characters

Letters, digits (& escaped punctuation like ‘\.’) match only themselves, just once

```
 r'TATAAT'       'ACGTTATAATGGTATAAT'
```

RegExpr Semantics, 2
Character Groups

Character groups [abc], [a-zA-Z], [^0-9] also match single characters, any of the characters in the group.

Shortcuts (2 of many):

`.` – (just a dot) matches any letter (except newline)
`\s` ≡ `[ \n\t\r\f\v]` (“s” for “space”)

```
r’T[AG]T[^GC].T’‘ACGTTGTAATGGTATnCT’
```

Matching one of several alternatives

- Square brackets mean that any of the listed characters will do
- `[ab]` means either "a" or "b"
- You can also give a range:
- `[a-d]` means "a" "b" "c" or "d"
- Negation: caret means "not"

```
[^a-d]    # anything but a, b, c or d
```

RegExpr Semantics, 3: Concatenation, Or, Grouping

You can group subexpressions with parens

If R, S are RegExprs, then

- RS matches the *concatenation* of strings matched by R, S individually
- R | S matches the *union*–either R or S

$\texttt{r'TAT(A.|.A)T'}\ \texttt{'}\underline{\texttt{TATCAT}}\texttt{G}\underline{\texttt{TATACT}}\texttt{CC}\overbrace{\texttt{TATCCT}}^{?}\texttt{'}$

RegExpr Semantics, 4
Repetition

If R is a RegExpr, then

R*	matches 0 or more consecutive strings (independently) matching R
R+	1 or more
R{n}	exactly n
R{m,n}	any number between m and n, inclusive
R?	0 or 1

Beware precedence (* > concat > |)

$\texttt{r'TAT(A.|.A)*T'}\ \texttt{'}\underline{\texttt{TATCAT}}\texttt{G}\underline{\texttt{TATAC}}\overbrace{\underline{\texttt{TAT}}\texttt{CAC}\underline{\texttt{T}}}^{?}\underline{\texttt{ATT}}\texttt{'}$

RegExprs in Python

By default

- Case sensitive, line-oriented (\n treated specially)
- Matching is generally "greedy"
  - Finds longest version of earliest starting match
  - Next "findall()" match will *not* overlap

```
r".+\.py"   "Two files: hw3.py and upper.py."

r"\w+\.py"  "Two files: hw3.py and UPPER.py."
```

Exercise 3

Suppose "filenames" are upper or lower case letters or digits, starting with a letter, followed by a period (".") followed by a 3 character extension (again alphanumeric). Scan a list of lines or a file, and print all "filenames" in it, with*out* their extensions. Hint: use paren groups.

Solution 3

```
import sys
import re
filename = sys.argv[1]
filehandle = open(filename,"r")
filecontents = filehandle.read()
myrule = re.compile(
   r"([a-zA-Z][a-zA-Z0-9]*)\.[a-zA-Z0-9]{3}")
#Finds skidoo.bar amidst 23skidoo.barber; ok?
match = myrule.findall(filecontents)
print match
```

Basics of regexp construction

- Letters and numbers match themselves
- Normally case sensitive
- Watch out for punctuation–most of it has special meanings!

Wild cards

- "." means "any character"
- If you really mean "." you must use a backslash
- WARNING:
  - backslash is special in Python strings
  - It's special again in regexps
  - This means you need too many backslashes
  - We will use "raw strings" instead
  - Raw strings look like `r"ATCGGC"`

Using . and backslash

- To match file names like "hw3.pdf" and "hw5.txt":

```
hw.\....
```

Zero or more copies

- The asterisk repeats the previous character 0 or more times
- "ca*t" matches "ct", "cat", "caat", "caaat" etc.
- The plus sign repeats the previous character 1 or more times
- "ca+t" matches "cat", "caat" etc. but not "ct"

Repeats

- Braces are a more detailed way to indicate repeats
- A{1,3} means at least one and no more than three A's
- A{4,4} means exactly four A's

simple testing

```
>>> import re
>>> string = 'what foot or hand fell fastest'
>>> re.findall(r'f[a-z]*', string)
['foot', 'fell', 'fastest']
```

Practice problem 1

- Write a regexp that will match any string that starts with "hum" and ends with "001" with any number of characters, including none, in between
- (Hint: consider both "." and "*")

Practice problem 2

- Write a regexp that will match any Python (.py) file.
- There must be at least one character before the "."
- ".py" is not a legal Python file name
- (Imagine the problems if you imported it!)

Using the regexp

First, compile it:

```
import re
myrule = re.compile(r".+\.py")
print myrule
<_sre.SRE_Pattern object at 0xb7e3e5c0>
```

The result of `compile` is a Pattern object which represents your regexp

Using the regexp

Next, use it:

```
mymatch = myrule.search(myDNA)
print mymatch
None
mymatch = myrule.search(someotherDNA)
print mymatch
<_sre.SRE_Match object at 0xb7df9170>
```

The result of `match` is a Match object which represents the result.

All of these objects! What can they do?

Functions offered by a Pattern object:

- `match()`–does it match the beginning of my string? Returns None or a match object
- `search()`–does it match anywhere in my string? Returns None or a match object
- `findall()`–does it match anywhere in my string? Returns a list of strings (or an empty list)
- Note that `findall()` does NOT return a Match object!

All of these objects! What can they do?

Functions offered by a Match object:

- `group()`–return the string that matched
  `group()`–the whole string
  `group(1)`–the substring matching 1st parenthesized sub-pattern
  `group(1,3)`–tuple of substrings matching 1st and 3rd parenthesized sub-patterns

- `start()`–return the starting position of the match

- `end()`–return the ending position of the match

- `span()`–return (start,end) as a tuple

A practical example

Does this string contain a legal Python filename?

```
import re
myrule = re.compile(r".+\.py")
mystring = "This contains two files, hw3.py and uppercase.py."
mymatch = myrule.search(mystring)
print mymatch.group()
This contains two files, hw3.py and uppercase.py
# not what I expected!  Why?
```

Matching is greedy

- My regexp matches "hw3.py"
- Unfortunately it also matches "This contains two files, hw3.py"
- And it even matches "This contains two files, hw3.py and uppercase.py"
- Python will choose the longest match
- I could break my file into words first
- Or I could specify that no spaces are allowed in my match

A practical example

Does this string contain a legal Python filename?

```
import re
myrule = re.compile(r"[^ ]+\.py")
mystring = "This contains two files, hw3.py and uppercase.py."
mymatch = myrule.search(mystring)
print mymatch.group()
hw3.py
allmymatches = myrule.findall(mystring)
print allmymatches
['hw3.py','uppercase.py']
```

Practice problem 3

- Create a regexp which detects legal Microsoft Word file names
- The file name must end with ".doc" or ".DOC"
- There must be at least one character before the dot.
- We will assume there are no spaces in the names
- Print out a list of all the legal file names you find
- Test it on testre.txt (on the web site)

Practice problem 4

- Create a regexp which detects legal Microsoft Word file names that do not contain any numerals (0 through 9)
- Print out the start location of the first such filename you encounter
- Test it on testre.txt

Practice problem

- Create a regexp which detects legal Microsoft Word file names that do not contain any numerals (0 through 9)
- Print out the "base name", i.e., the file name after stripping of the .doc extension, of each such filename you encounter. Hint: use parenthesized sub patterns.
- Test it on testre.txt

Practice problem 1 solution

Write a regexp that will match any string that starts with "hum" and ends with "001" with any number of characters, including none, in between

```
myrule = re.compile(r"hum.*001")
```

Practice problem 2 solution

Write a regexp that will match any Python (.py) file.

```
myrule = re.compile(r".+\.py")

# if you want to find filenames embedded in a bigger
# string, better is:
myrule = re.compile(r"[^ ]+\.py")
# this version does not allow whitespace in file names
```

Practice problem 3 solution

Create a regexp which detects legal Microsoft Word file names, and use it to make a list of them

```
import sys
import re
filename = sys.argv[1]
filehandle = open(filename,"r")
filecontents = filehandle.read()
myrule = re.compile(r"[^ ]+\.[dD][oO][cC]")
matchlist = myrule.findall(filecontents)
print matchlist
```

Practice problem 4 solution

Create a regexp which detects legal Microsoft Word file names which do not contain any numerals, and print the location of the first such filename you encounter

```
import sys
import re
filename = sys.argv[1]
filehandle = open(filename,"r")
filecontents = filehandle.read()
myrule = re.compile(r"[^ 0-9]+\.[dD][oO][cC]")
match = myrule.search(filecontents)
print match.start()
```

Regular expressions summary

- The `re` module lets us use regular expressions
- These are fast ways to search for complicated strings
- They are not essential to using Python, but are very useful
- File format conversion uses them a lot
- Compiling a regexp produces a Pattern object which can then be used to search
- Searching produces a Match object which can then be asked for information about the match