cluster programming subroutines — Add cluster-analysis routines

Description

This entry describes how to extend Stata’s `cluster` command; see [MV] cluster. Programmers can add subcommands to `cluster`, add functions to `cluster generate` (see [MV] cluster generate), add stopping rules to `cluster stop` (see [MV] cluster stop), and set up an alternative command to be executed when `cluster dendrogram` is called (see [MV] cluster dendrogram).

The `cluster` command also provides utilities for programmers; see [MV] cluster programming utilities to learn more.

Remarks and examples

Remarks are presented under the following headings:

- Adding a cluster subroutine
- Adding a cluster generate function
- Adding a cluster stopping rule
- Applying an alternate cluster dendrogram routine

Adding a cluster subroutine

You add a `cluster` subroutine by creating a Stata program with the name `cluster_subcmdname`. For example, to add the subcommand `xyz` to `cluster`, create `cluster_xyz.ado`. Users could then execute the `xyz` subcommand with

```
cluster xyz ...
```

Everything entered on the command line after `cluster xyz` is passed to the `cluster_xyz` command.

You can add new clustering methods, new cluster-management tools, and new postclustering programs. The `cluster` command has subcommands that can be helpful to cluster-analysis programmers; see [MV] cluster programming utilities.

Example 1

We will add a `cluster` subroutine by writing a simple postcluster-analysis routine that provides a cross-tabulation of two cluster-analysis grouping variables. The syntax of the new command will be

```
cluster mycrosstab clname1 clname2 [ , tabulate_options ]
```

Here is the program:

```stata
program cluster_mycrosstab
    version 16.1
    gettoken clname1 0 : 0 , parse(" ","")
    gettoken clname2 rest : 0 , parse(" ","")
    cluster query 'clname1'
    local groupvar1 'r(groupvar)'
    cluster query 'clname2'
    local groupvar2 'r(groupvar)'
    tabulate 'groupvar1' 'groupvar2' 'rest'
end
```
See [P] gettoken for information on the gettoken command, and see [R] tabulate twoway for information on the tabulate command. The cluster query command is one of the cluster programming utilities that is documented in [MV] cluster programming utilities.

We can demonstrate cluster mycrosstab in action. This example starts with two cluster analyses, cl1 and cl2. The dissimilarity measure and the variables included in the two cluster analyses differ. We want to see how closely the two cluster analyses match.

```
use https://www.stata-press.com/data/r16/auto
(1978 Automobile Data)
cluster kmeans gear head tr, L1 k(5) name(cl1) start(krandom(55234))
> gen(cl1gvar)
cluster kmeans tr tu mpg, L(1.5) k(5) name(cl2) start(krandom(22132))
> gen(gvar2)
cluster list, type method dissim var
cl2 (type: partition, method: kmeans, dissimilarity: L(1.5))
vars: gvar2 (group variable)
cl1 (type: partition, method: kmeans, dissimilarity: L1)
vars: cl1gvar (group variable)
cluster mycrosstab cl1 cl2, chi2
gvar2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cl1gvar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Pearson chi2(16) = 97.3723 Pr = 0.000

The chi2 option was included to demonstrate that we were able to exploit the existing options of tabulate with little programming effort. We just pass along to tabulate any of the extra arguments received by cluster_mycrosstab.

Adding a cluster generate function

Programmers can add functions to the cluster generate command (see [MV] cluster generate) by creating a command called clusgen_{name}. For example, to add a function called abc() to cluster generate, you could create clusgen_abcs.ado. Users could then execute

```
cluster generate newvar = abc( ... ) ...
```

Everything entered on the command line following cluster generate is passed to clusgen_abcs.

Example 2

Here is the beginning of a clusgen_abcs program that expects an integer argument and has one option called name(clname), which gives the name of the cluster. If name() is not specified, the name defaults to that of the most recently performed cluster analysis. We will assume, for illustration purposes, that the cluster analysis must be hierarchical and will check for this in the clusgen_abcs program.
cluster programming subroutines — Add cluster-analysis routines

program clusgen_abc
version 16.1
// we use gettoken to work our way through the parsing
gettoken newvar 0 : 0 , parse(" =")
gettoken temp 0 : 0 , parse(" =")
if "'temp'" != "="
    error 198
}
gettoken temp 0 : 0 , parse(" (")
if "'temp'" != "abc"
    error 198
}
gettoken funcarg 0 : 0 , parse(" (") match(temp)
if "'temp''" != "(" {
    error 198
}
// funcarg holds the integer argument to abc()
confirm integer number 'funcarg'
// we can now use syntax to parse the option
syntax [, Name(str) ]
// cluster query will give us the list of cluster names
if "'name'" == "" {
    cluster query
    local clnames 'r(names)'
    if "'clnames'" == "" {
        di as err "no cluster solutions defined"
        exit 198
    }
    // first name in the list is the latest clustering
    local name : word 1 of 'clnames'
}
// cluster query followed by name will tell us the type
cluster query 'name'
if "'r(type)'" != "hierarchical"
    di as err "only allowed with hierarchical clustering"
    exit 198
}
/*
 you would now pull more information from the call of
 cluster query 'name'
 and do your computations and generate 'newvar'
*/
...
end

See [MV] cluster programming utilities for details on the cluster query command.

Adding a cluster stopping rule

Programmers can add stopping rules to the rule() option of the cluster stop command (see [MV] cluster stop) by creating a Stata program with the name clstop_name. For example, to add a stopping rule named mystop so that cluster stop would now have a rule(mystop) option, you could create clstop_mystop.ado defining the clstop_mystop program. Users could then execute

    cluster stop [cname], rule(mystop) ...

The clstop_mystop program is passed the cluster name (clname) provided by the user (or the name of the current cluster result if no name is specified), followed by a comma and all the options entered by the user except for the rule(mystop) option.

Example 3

We will add a rule(steps) option to cluster stop. This option implements the simple step-size stopping rule (see Milligan and Cooper 1985), which computes the difference in fusion values between levels in a hierarchical cluster analysis. (A fusion value is the similarity or dissimilarity measure at which clusters are fused or split in the hierarchical cluster structure.) Large values of the step-size stopping rule indicate groupings with more distinct cluster structure.

Examining cluster dendrograms (see [MV] cluster dendrogram) to visually determine the number of clusters is equivalent to using a visual approximation to the step-size stopping rule.

Here is the clstop_stepsize program:

```stata
program clstop_stepsize, sortpreserve rclass
    version 16.1
    syntax anything(name=clname) [, Depth(integer -1) ]
    cluster query 'clname'
    if "r(type)" != "hierarchical" {
        di as error "rule(steps) only allowed with hierarchical clustering"
        exit 198
    }
    if "r(pseudo_heightvar)" != "" {
        di as error "dendrogram reversals encountered"
        exit 198
    }
    local hgtvar 'r(heightvar)'
    if "r(similarity)" != "" {
        sort 'hgtvar,'
        local negsign "-"
    }
    else if "r(dissimilarity)" != "" {
        gsort -'hgtvar'
    }
    else {
        di as error "dissimilarity or similarity not set"
        exit 198
    }
    quietly count if !missing('hgtvar')
    local depth = cond('depth'<=1, r(N), min('depth',r(N)))
    tempvar diff
    qui gen double 'diff'='negsign'('hgtvar'-'hgtvar'[_n+1]) if _n<'depth'
    di
    di as txt "Depth" _col(10) "Stepsize"
    di as txt "{hline 17}" 
    forvalues i = 1/'= 'depth'-1' {
        local j = 'i' + 1
        di as res 'j' _col(10) %8.0g 'diff'['i']
    }
    return scalar stepsize_'j' = 'diff'['i']
    return local rule "stepsize"
end
```
See [P] syntax for information about the syntax command, [P] forvalues for information about the forvalues looping command, and [P] macro for information about the ‘...’ macro function. The cluster query command is one of the cluster programming utilities that is documented in [MV] cluster programming utilities.

With this program, users can obtain the step-size stopping rule. We demonstrate this process by using an average-linkage hierarchical cluster analysis on the data found in the second example of [MV] cluster linkage. The dataset contains 30 observations on 60 binary variables. The simple matching coefficient is used as the similarity measure in the average-linkage clustering.

```
. use https://www.stata-press.com/data/r16/homework, clear
. cluster a a1-a60, measure(match) name(alink)
. cluster stop alink, rule(stepsize) depth(15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Stepsize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.065167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.187333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.00625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.007639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.002778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>.005952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.002381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>.008333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>.005556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>.002778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>.006667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

In the clstop_stepsize program, we included a depth() option. cluster stop, when called with the new rule(stepsize) option, can also have the depth() option. Here we specified that it stop at a depth of 15.

The largest step size, .187, happens at the three-group level of the hierarchy. This number, .187, represents the difference between the matching coefficient created when two groups are formed and that created when three groups are formed in this hierarchical cluster analysis.

The clstop_stepsize program could be enhanced by using a better output table format. An option could also be added that stores the results in a matrix.

---

**Applying an alternate cluster dendrogram routine**

Programmers can change the behavior of the cluster dendrogram command (alias cluster tree); see [MV] cluster dendrogram. This task is accomplished by using the other() option of the cluster set command (see [MV] cluster programming utilities) with a tag of treeprogram and with text giving the name of the command to be used in place of the standard Stata program for cluster dendrogram. For example, if you had created a new hierarchical cluster-analysis method for Stata that needed a different algorithm for producing dendograms, you would use the command

```
cluster set clname, other(treeprogram programe)
```

to set programe as the program to be executed when cluster dendrogram is called.
Example 4

If we were creating a new hierarchical cluster-analysis method called myclus, we could create a program called `cluster_myclus` (see *Adding a cluster subroutine*). If myclus needed a different dendrogram routine from the standard one used within Stata, we could include the following line in `cluster_myclus.ado` at the point where we set the cluster attributes.

```
cluster set `clname', other(treeprogram myclustree)
```

We could then create a program called `myclustree` in a file called `myclustree.ado` that implements the particular dendrogram program needed by myclus.

Reference


Also see

[MV] `cluster` — Introduction to cluster-analysis commands

[MV] `clustermat` — Introduction to clustermat commands

[MV] `cluster programming utilities` — Cluster-analysis programming utilities