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Numpy python binary format

Welcome to the `plyfile` Python module, which provides easy access to read and write ASCII files and PLY binaries. The PLY format is documented elsewhere. Installing `python2 > 2.7` or `python3 numpy > 1.8` Note: `numpy 1.9` before version 1.9.2 has an error that breaks the byte exchange by manipulating the `byte_order` field of a `PlyData` instance. As a workaround, you can manually swap byte arrays using `.data.byteswap().newbyteorder()` in addition to changing the `byte_order`. Optional dependencies `setuptools` (for installation via `setup.py`) `tox` (for the test suite) `py.test` and `py` (for the test suite) Installing the `plyfile` Quick form: `pip install plyfile` OR clone the repository and run from the project root: `python setup.py install` or simply copy `plyfile.py` into your GPL-compatible project. Running the Preferred test suite (more complete; requires `tox` and `setuptools`): `tox -v Alternate` (requires `py.test` and `py`): `py.test test -v Usage` Both deserialization and serialization of PLY file data are performed through `PlyData` and `PlyElement` instances. `>>>` from `plyfile` import `PlyData`, `PlyElement` For the following code examples, suppose the `tet.ply` file contains the following text: `ascii bend format 1.0 comment only tetrahedron with colored faces vertex element 4 comment vertices of tetrahedron property float x float property and float z element float element face 4 property list uchar int vertex_indices property uchar red property uchar green property uchar blue end_header 0 0 1 1 0 1 1 1 1 0 3 0 1 2 255 255 255 3 0 2 3 255 0 0 3 0 1 3 0 255 0 3 1 2 3 0 0 255` (This file is available in the sample directory.) Reading a PLY file `>>>` `plydata = PlyData.read('tet.ply')` or `>>>` `plydata = PlyData.read('tet.ply', rb)` as `f = ... plydata = PlyData.read(f)` The static `PlyData.read` method returns an instance of `PlyData`, which is the `plyfile` representation of the data in a PLY file. An instance of `PlyData` has an `Attribute` elements, which is a list of `PlyElement` instances, each of which has a `data` attribute that is a `numpy` structured array that contains the numeric data. PLY file elements map to `numpy` structured arrays in a rather obvious way. For a list property on an item, the corresponding `numpy` field type is `object`, with members as `numpy` arrays (see example `vertex_indices` below). Specifically: `>>>` `plydata.elements[0].name` `'vertex'` `>>>` `plydata.elements[0].data[0]` `(0.0, 0.0, 0.0)` `>>>` `plydata.elements[0].data['x']` `array([0., 1., 1.], dtype=float32)` `>>>` `array(plydata[face].data['vertex_indices'][0:2], dtype=int32)` elements and properties can be searched by name: `>>>` `array(plydata['vertex']['x'][(0, 0, 1, 1), dtype='float32'])` and elements can be indexed directly without explicitly passing through the `data` attribute: `>>>` `plydata['vertex'][0]` `(0.0, 0.0, 0.0)` The above expression is equivalent to `plydata['vertex'].data[0]` `PlyElement` instances also metadata: `>>>` `plydata.elements[0].properties` `(PlyProperty('x', 'float'), PlyProperty('y', 'float'), PlyProperty('z', 'float'))` `>>>` `plydata.elements[0].count` `4` `PlyProperty` and `PlyListProperty` are used internally as a convenient intermediate representation of the properties of the PLY element that can be easily serialized into a PLY header (using `str`) or converted to `numpy`-compatible type descriptions (via the `dtype` method). It is not very common to manipulate them directly. But if necessary, you can access an item's property metadata as a tuple through the `properties` attribute (as illustrated above) or search by name: `>>>` `plydata.elements[0].ply_property('x')` `PlyProperty('x', 'float')` Many (but not necessarily all) types of incorrectly formatted input files will generate `PlyParseError` when `PlyData` is called. The string value of the `PlyParseError` instance (as well as the attribute `element`, `row`, and `prop`) provides additional context for the error if applicable. Creating a PLY File The first step is to get the data into `numpy` structured arrays. Note that there are some restrictions: Generally speaking, if you know the types of properties that a PLY file item can contain, you can easily infer constraints. For example, PLY files do not contain 64-bit integer or complex data, so they are not allowed. For convenience, non-scalar fields are allowed; will be serialized as list properties. For example, when constructing an expensive element, if all faces are triangles (a common occurrence), it is OK to have a `vertex_indices` field of type `'i4'` and shape `(3,)` instead of type `object` and shape `()`. However, if the serialized PLY file is reread using `plyfile`, the `vertex_indices` property will be represented as an object-typed field, each of whose values is an array of type `'i4'` and length 3. The reason is simply that the PLY format does not provide any way to find out that each `vertex_indices` field has length 3 without actually reading all the data, so `plyfile` has to assume that it is a variable-length property. However, see below (and examples/graphics.py) for an easy way to retrieve a two-dimensional array of a list property. For example, if we wanted to create the PLY vertex and face elements of the `tet.ply` data directly as `numpy` arrays for serialization purpose, we could do (as in `test/test.py`): `>>>` `vertex = numpy.array([(0, 0, 0), ... (0, 1, 1), ... (1, 0, 1), ... (1, 1, 0)], ... dtype=(('x', 'i4'), ('y', 'i4'), ... ('z', 'i4'))` `>>>` `face` of the letter files `[(0, 1, 2), 255, 255, 255], ... [(0, 2, 3), 255, 0, 0], ... [1, 3], 0, 255, 0], ... [(1, 2, 3), 0, 0, 255)], ... dtype[(('vertex_indices', 'i4'), (3,)), ... ('red', 'u1'), ('green', 'u1'), ... ('blue', 'u1'))` Once you have properly structured the array, the static `PlyElement.describe` method can be used to create the required `PlyElement` instances: `>>>` `the = PlyElement.describe(some_array, -PlyElement.describe(some_array, o >>>` `the = PlyElement.describe(some_array, 'some_name', ... comments ['comment1', ... 'comment2'])` Note that you do not need to instantiate `PlyProperty` explicitly. All of this is done behind the scenes `some_array.dtype.descr`. A small setback here is that variable-length fields in a `numpy` array (that is, our representation of the properties in the PLY list) must have an object type, so the types of the list length and values in the serialized PLY file cannot be obtained only from the `dtype` attribute of the array. To simplify and predict simplicity, the default length value is 8-bit unsigned integer, and the default is 32-bit signed integer, which covers most use cases. Exceptions must be explicitly indicated: `>>>` `the = PlyElement.describe(some_array, 'some_name', ... val_dtypes="some_property": 'i8', ... len_dtypes="some_property": 'u4')` You can now instantiate `PlyData` and serialize: `>>>` `PlyData([the]).write('some_binary.ply')` `>>>` `PlyData([el], text=True).write('some_ascii.ply')` - Force the byte order of the output to big-endian, regardless of the machine's native byte order `>>>` `PlyData([el], ... byte_order='>>>` `ply = PlyData([el], comments=['header comment'])` `>>>` `ply.comments` `['header comment']` Starting with version 0.3, `Comments` `obj_info` are also supported: `>>>` `ply = PlyData([el], obj_info=['obj_info1', 'obj_info2'])` `>>>` `ply.obj_info` `['obj_info1', 'obj_info2']` When typed, they will be placed after regular comments after the `Line` format. Comments can have leading white space, but trailing white space can be removed and should not be trusted. Comments cannot contain new embedded lines. Getting a two-dimensional array of a list property The PLY format provides no way to assert that all data in a given list property is of the same length, however, this is a relatively common occurrence. For example, all data that `vertex_indices` an expensive element will have a length three for a triangular mesh. In such cases, it is often much more convenient to have the data in a two-dimensional array, unlike a one-dimensional array of type `object`. This is a fairly easy way to get a two-dimensional matrix, we know the length of the row beforehand: `>>>` `plydata = PlyData.read('tet.ply')` `>>>` `tri_data = plydata[face].data['vertex_indices']` `>>>` `triangles = ? numpy.vstack((tri_data) Instance mutability A plausible code pattern is to read a PLY file on a PlyData instance, perform some operations on it, possibly modify the data and metadata instead, and write the result to a new file. This pattern is partially supported. Starting with version 0.4, the in-place mutations are supported: Modification of only matrix numeric data. Direct mapping to items in a PlyData instance. Code formatting by changing the text byte_order attributes of a PlyData instance. This will switch between ascii, binary_little_endian, and binary_big_endian PLY formats. Modify the comments and obj_info of a PlyData instance and modify the comments of a PlyElement instance. Mapping to an item's data. Note that this does not affect property metadata for properties, so for each property in the property list of the PlyElement instance, the data array must have a field with the same name (but possibly of a different type and possibly in a different order). The array can also have additional fields, but they will not be generated when you write the item to a PLY file. The output file properties appear as they are in the property list. If an array field has a different type than the corresponding PlyProperty instance, it will be converted when you type. Assign directly to an item's properties. Note that the data array is not touched and the previous note regarding the relationship between properties and data still applies: the field names of the data must be a subset of the property names in the properties, but they can be in a different order and specify different types. Change a val_dtype of the PlyProperty or PlyListProperty instance or the len_dtype of the PlyListProperty instance, which will perform the conversion on write. Modifying the name of an instance of PlyElement, PlyProperty, or PlyListProperty is not supported and an error will occur. To rename a property on a PlyElement instance, you can remove the property from the properties, Rename the data field and re-add the property to the properties with the new name by creating a new instance of PlyProperty or PlyListProperty: >>> ply = PlyData([el], comments=['header comment'], text=False, byte_order='>>> face.data.dtype.names ['idx', 'r', 'g', 'b'] >>> face.properties = (PlyListProperty('idx', 'uchar', 'int'), ... PlyProperty('r', 'uchar'), ... PlyProperty('g', 'uchar'), ... PlyProperty('b', 'uchar')) Note that it is always safe to create a new instance of PlyElement or PlyData instead of modifying one instead, and this is the recommended style: >>> Recommended: >>> plydata = PlyData([plydata[face], plydata['vertex']], text=False, byte_order='>>> plydata.text = ? False >>> plydata.comments = ? [] >>> plydata.obj_info = ? [] >>> plydata.obj_info <3> <7> [] Objects created by this library do not claim ownership of the other objects they reference, which has implications for both sys (create new instances and modify instead). For example, multiple instances of PlyData can contain a single instance of PlyElement, but modifying that instance will affect all containing instances of PlyData. Frequently Asked Questions >>> Here is a two-dimensional array containing vertex indexes. >>> face_data = numpy.array([(0, 1, 2), [3, 4, 5]], dtype='i4') >>> PlyElement.describe requires a one-dimensional structured array. >>> ply_faces = numpy.empty(len(faces), ... dtype=[('vertex_indices', 'i4'), (3,)]) >>> ply_faces['vertex_indices'] = face_data face >>> PlyElement.describe(ply_faces, 'face') In Python 3, you will probably run into problems because sys.stdout is a text mode sequence and plyfile generates binary data, even for ASCII format PLY files: >>> import sys >>> plydata.write(sys.stdout) Traceback (latest call): File <stdin>, line 1, in <module>; the ... python-file plyfile/plyfile.py, line 411, in write self.header.encode('ascii') argument TypeError: write() must be str, not bytes There are some ways to avoid this. Write to a named file instead. On Linux and some other Unix-like, you can access stdout through the file named /dev/stdout: >>> plydata.write('/dev/stdout') Use sys.stdout.buffer: >>> plydata.write(sys.stdout.buffer) (source: Design philosophy and reasoning The plyfile design philosophy can be summarized as follows. Be familiar with numpy users and reuse existing idioms and concepts when possible. Favor simplicity over power or ease of use. Supports all valid PLY files. Familiarity For the most part, PLY concepts map very well to Python and specifically numpy, and the leverage that has strongly influenced the design of this package. The elements attribute of a PlyData instance is simply a list of PlyElement instances, and the data attribute of a PlyElement instance is a numpy array, and a list property field of a PLY element datum is referenced in the data attribute by an object type with the value of another numpy array, and so on. Simplicity When applicable, we prefer simplicity over power or ease of use. Therefore, list property types in PlyElement.describe always have the same default value, rather than, for example, that is obtained by looking at an array element. (What element? What happens if the array has zero length? Whatever default value we could choose in that case could lead to subtle case errors if the user is not vigilant.) In addition, all input and output is done in a socket: all arrays must be created in advance instead of streaming. Generality and issues of interpretation Our goal is to give to all valid PLY files. However, exactly what constitutes a valid file is not obvious, as there does not appear to be a single complete and consistent description of the PLY format. Even Greg Turk's authoritarian .txt has some problems. Comment Location Where can comments appear in the header? It appears that in all official examples, all comments immediately follow the format line, but the document language <!</code> and </code> does not explicitly allow comments to be placed elsewhere. Therefore, it is unclear whether comments can appear anywhere in the header or should immediately follow the line format. At least one popular PLY file reader chokes on comments before the format line. plyfile accepts comments anywhere in the header in the input, but only places them in a few limited places in the output, that is, immediately after the format and element lines. Element names and properties Another ambiguity is names: which strings are allowed as element names and PLY properties? plyfile accepts as input any name that does not contain spaces, but this is certainly too generous. This may not be as important, however: although the names are theoretically arbitrary, in practice, most of PLY's element and property names probably come from a small finite set (face, x, nx, green, etc.). Property syntax A more serious problem is that the PLY format specification appears to be inconsistent with property definition syntax. In some examples, it uses the Syntax property type, and in others, the Name property supports only the first, which appears to be de facto standard. Header line terminations The specification explicitly indicates that header lines must end with carriage returns, but this rule does not appear to be followed by anyone, including the C-language PLY implementation of Greg Turk, the author of the format. Here, we follow the common practice and output Unix-style line endings (no carriage returns) but accept any line termination style in the input files. More examples Examples beyond the scope of this document and testing are in the examples directory. 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