
CSE 391

Lecture 7

Regular expressions,
egrep, and sed

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<http://www.cs.washington.edu/391/>

Lecture summary

- regular expression syntax
- commands that use regular expressions
 - `egrep` (extended grep) - search
 - `sed` (stream editor) - replace
- links
 - <http://www.panix.com/~elflord/unix/grep.html>
 - <http://www.robelle.com/smugbook/regexpr.html>
 - <http://www.grymoire.com/Unix/Sed.html> or
 - <http://www.gnu.org/software/sed/manual/sed.html>

What is a regular expression?

`"[a-zA-Z_\\-]+@(([a-zA-Z_\\-])+\\.)+[a-zA-Z]{2,4}"`

- **regular expression** ("regex"): a description of a pattern of text
 - can test whether a string matches the expression's pattern
 - can use a regex to search/replace characters in a string
 - regular expressions are extremely powerful but tough to read
 - (the above regular expression matches basic email addresses)
- regular expressions occur in many places:
 - shell commands (grep)
 - many text editors (TextPad) allow regexes in search/replace
 - Java Scanner, String split (CSE 143 grammar solver)

egrep and regexes

command	description
egrep	<u>e</u> xtended grep; uses regexes in its search patterns; equivalent to grep -E

```
egrep "[0-9]{3}-[0-9]{3}-[0-9]{4}" contact.html
```

- grep uses “basic” regular expressions instead of “extended”
 - extended has some minor differences and additional metacharacters
 - we’ll just use extended syntax. See online if you’re interested in the details.
- -i option before regex signifies a case-insensitive match
 - egrep -i "mart" matches "Marty S", "smartie", "WALMART", ...

Basic regexes

"abc"

- the simplest regexes simply match a particular substring
- this is really a pattern, not a string!
- the above regular expression matches any line containing "abc"
 - *YES* : "abc", "abcdef", "defabc", ".=.abc.=.", ...
 - *NO* : "fedcba", "ab c", "AbC", "Bash", ...

Wildcards and anchors

- . (a dot) matches any character except `\n`
 - `".oo.y"` matches `"Doocy"`, `"goofy"`, `"LooPy"`, ...
 - use `\.` to literally match a dot `.` character
- ^ matches the beginning of a line; \$ the end
 - `"^fi$"` matches lines that consist entirely of `fi`
- \< demands that pattern is the beginning of a *word*;
\> demands that pattern is the end of a word
 - `"\<for\>"` matches lines that contain the word `"for"`
 - Words are made up of letters, digits and `_` (underscore)
- *Exercise* : Find lines in `ideas.txt` that refer to the C language.
- *Exercise* : Find act/scene numbers in `hamlet.txt`.

Special characters

| means OR

- "abc|def|g" matches lines with "abc", "def", or "g"
- precedence of ^(Subject|Date) vs. ^Subject|Date:
- There's no AND symbol.

() are for grouping

- "(Homer|Marge) Simpson" matches lines containing "Homer Simpson" or "Marge Simpson"

\ starts an escape sequence

- many characters must be escaped to match them: / \ \$. [] () ^ * + ?
- "\.\\n" matches lines containing ".\n"

Quantifiers: * + ?

* means 0 or more occurrences

- "abc*" matches "ab", "abc", "abcc", "abccc", ...
- "a(bc)*" matches "a", "abc", "abcbc", "abcbcbc", ...
- "a.*a" matches "aa", "aba", "a8qa", "a!?!_a", ...

+ means 1 or more occurrences

- "a(bc)+" matches "abc", "abcbc", "abcbcbc", ...
- "Goo+gle" matches "Google", "Goooogle", "Goooooogle", ...

? means 0 or 1 occurrences

- "Martina?" matches lines with "Martin" or "Martina"
- "Dan(iel)?" matches lines with "Dan" or "Daniel"

- *Exercise* : Find all ^^ or ^_^ type smileys in chat.txt .

More quantifiers

$\{min, max\}$ means between *min* and *max* occurrences

- "a(bc){2,4}" matches "abcbc", "abcbcbc", or "abcbcbcbc"
- *min* or *max* may be omitted to specify any number
 - "{2,}" means 2 or more
 - "{,6}" means up to 6
 - "{3}" means exactly 3

Character sets

[] group characters into a character set;
will match any single character from the set

- "[bcd]art" matches strings containing "bart", "cart", and "dart"
- equivalent to "(b|c|d)art" but shorter
- inside [], most modifier keys act as normal characters
 - "what[.*?]*" matches "what", "what.", "what!", "what?*!*", ...
- *Exercise* : Match letter grades in 143.txt such as A, B+, or D- .

Character ranges

- inside a character set, specify a range of characters with -
 - "[a-z]" matches any lowercase letter
 - "[a-zA-Z0-9]" matches any lower- or uppercase letter or digit
- an initial ^ inside a character set **negates** it
 - "[^abcd]" matches any character other than a, b, c, or d
- inside a character set, - can sometimes be tricky to match
 - Try escaping it (use \) or place it last in the brackets
 - "[+\-]?[0-9]+" matches optional + or -, followed by \geq one digit
- *Exercise* : Match phone #s in `contact.html`, e.g. (206) 685-2181 .

sed

command	description
sed	<u>s</u> tream <u>e</u> ditor; performs regex-based replacements and alterations on input

- Usage:
 - `sed -r "s/REGEX/TEXT/g" filename`
 - substitutes (replaces) occurrence(s) of regex with the given text
 - if *filename* is omitted, reads from standard input (console)
 - sed has other uses, but most can be emulated with substitutions
- Example (replaces all occurrences of 143 with 391):
 - `sed -r "s/143/391/g" lecturenotes.txt`

more about sed

- sed is line-oriented; processes input a line at a time
 - -r option makes *regexes* work better
 - recognizes (), [], *, + the right way, etc.
 - s for *substitute*
 - g flag after last / asks for a *global match* (replace all)
- special characters must be escaped to match them literally
 - sed -r "s/http://\//https://\//g" urls.txt
- sed can use delimiters besides / to make more readable (e.g. #) :
 - sed -r "s#http://#https://#g" urls.txt

sed exercises

- In movies.txt:
 - Replace “The” with “The Super Awesome”
 - Now do it only when The occurs at the beginning of the line.
 - (Need the next slide for this)
 - Move the year from the end of the line to the beginning of the line.
 - Do this and also sort the movies by year
 - Now do the two items above and then put the year back at the end of the line.

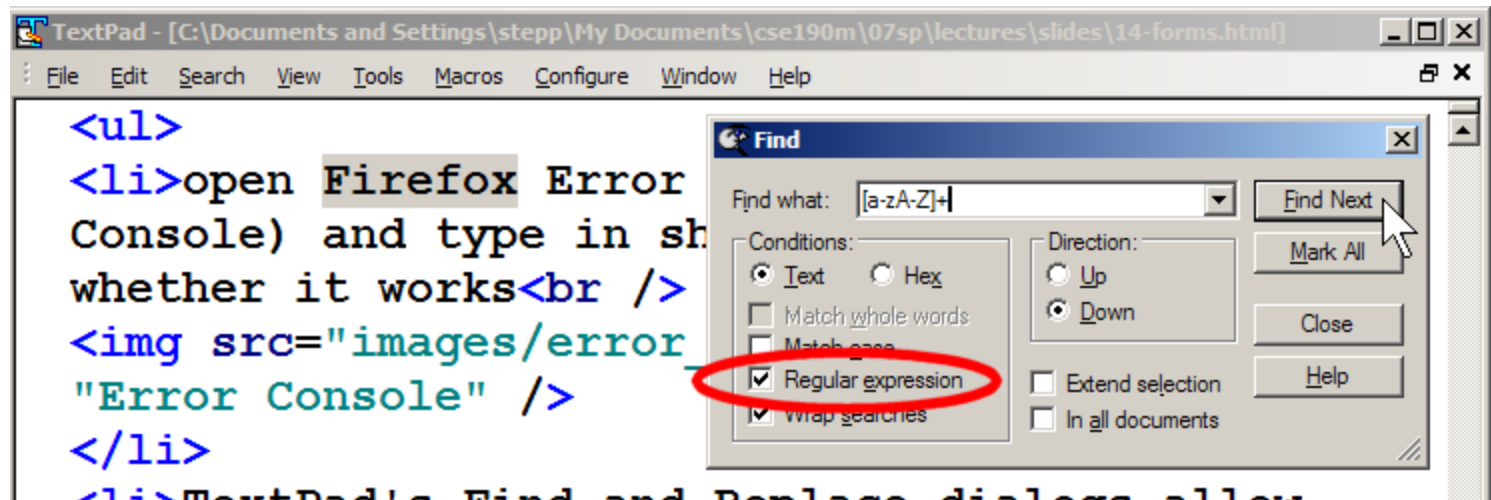
Back-references

- every span of text captured by () is given an internal number
 - you can use **\number** to use the captured text in the replacement
 - \0 is the overall pattern
 - \1 is the first parenthetical capture
 - ...
- Back-references can also be used in egrep pattern matching
 - Match “A” surrounded by the same character: “(.)A\1”
- Example: swap last names with first names
 - `sed -r "s/([A-Za-z]+), ([A-Za-z]+)/\2 \1/g" names.txt`
- *Exercise* : Reformat phone numbers with 685-2181 format to (206) 685.2181 format.

Other tools

- find supports regexes through its -regex argument

```
find . -regex ".*CSE 14[23].*"
```
- Many editors understand regexes in their Find/Replace feature



Exercise

- Write a shell script that reads a list of file names from `files.txt` and finds any occurrences of MM/DD dates and converts them into MM/DD/YYYY dates.
 - Example:
04/17
 - would be changed to:
04/17/2016

Yay Regular Expressions!



Courtesy
XKCD