1 Background

nimsticks is a package for \LaTeX{} that draws sticks for representing games of multi-pile Nim.

Nim objects could be anything, of course, but conventionally sticks or stones are used. There are various types of dot in \LaTeX{} that might look like stones, but somehow a line of dots didn’t seem satisfactory. There are various ways to draw a line (e.g. just typing \texttt{IIII}), including some tally markers (e.g. in \texttt{hhcount}). My problem with these (call me picky) is that they are all identical lines, and a ‘heap’ of them just looks very organised. Really, I want a set of lines that looks like someone just threw them into heaps (though probably without crossings for the avoidance of ambiguity).

The way this works is it draws a thick vertical line in TikZ with a little wobble added so each one doesn’t look extremely well-lined-up with its neighbour, achieved by adding or subtracting a small random number to the top and bottom coordinate.

It does this by providing two commands:

- \texttt{\drawnimstick}: draws a single Nim stick with a little random wobble;
- \texttt{\nimgame}: takes a comma-separated list of numbers and draws a line of Nim heaps holding those number of sticks.

2 Usage

N.B. The precise look of example output in this section is affected by random wobble in the sticks.

For example, the input \texttt{\nimgame{5,3,4}} will produce output like this:

```
    \n
\text\n```

This is designed to look like a 3-pile Nim game with 5 sticks in the first pile (or heap), 3 in the second and 4 in the third.

\texttt{\nimgame} will happily work with one heap, so for example the input \texttt{\nimgame{7}} will produce output like this:

```
\n
```

1
The command `\nimgame` presents the Nim game within `\centering`. An optional flag `\inline` can be used to produce the Nim game without the `\centering`. For example, the command `\nimgame[\inline](5,3,4)` will produce outline like this:

It is likely the user will want to use `\nimgame` and not `\drawnimstick` directly, but the input `\drawnimstick` will produce output like this:

3 Warnings

There is no limit in the code to the number of piles or the number in a pile, but this code doesn’t do anything to cope when line breaks start happening, and presumably there is a computational limit.

In principle, if you add lots of piles it will just wrap onto multiple lines, though it will start to look less clear. For example, the input `\nimgame{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1}` will produce the output:

Similarly, if you have a lot of sticks in the same heap, it will wrap and look confusing, for example the input `\nimgame{128}` will produce the output:

4 Changes to usage or output

(for full change log, see GitHub README.md)

- v1.1: added option to make inline Nim game.
- v1.2:
  - switched `\begin{center}` to `\centering` (because the former doesn’t work in standalone documents and the latter doesn’t add vertical space);
  - removed some whitespace that appeared to the right of the last heap.