



**UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA**

Dipartimento di Informatica  
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# Fancy title

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## Introduction

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# Background

## Computer algebra.

Computers have fundamentally two ways to reason over a mathematical expression: **numerical computations**, which are performed using *only numbers* to represent values and **computer algebra** (or **symbolic computations**), which - by contrast - use *both numbers and symbols*.

First, we shall introduce the concept of **floating point number system** used to handle numerical computations.

**Definition 2.1** (Normalized-floating point number system). A normalized-floating point number system  $F$  is characterized by the 4-tuple of integers  $\beta, p, L, U$ :

- $\beta$  is called base or radix,
- $p$  precision,
- $[L, U]$  exponent range (with  $L, U$  denoting lower and upper bound respectively).

Given a number  $x \in \mathbb{R}$ ,  $x \neq 0$  its representation in a floating point number system shall be written out as  $fl(x)$  and has the form

$$x = sign(x)\beta^E \sum_{i=0}^{p-1} d_i \beta^{-i}$$

with  $L \leq E \leq U$  and the sequence  $\{d_i\}$  (which is called mantissa) made up of natural numbers such that  $d_0 \neq 0$ ,  $0 \leq d_i \leq \beta - 1$  and  $d_i$  eventually different from  $\beta - 1$ .

**Remark.** A floating point number system  $F$  is discrete and finite: it approximates real numbers with finite numbers.

A de facto standard for computers to work with floating point approximations is IEEE 754 [2], the details of which shall not be discussed.

**Definition 2.2** (Machine epsilon). Machine epsilon is the maximum possible absolute relative error in representing a nonzero real number  $x$  in a floating point number system

$$\epsilon_{mach} = \max_x \frac{|x - fl(x)|}{|x|}.$$

**Example 2.1.** Let us define the matrix (made up of both symbols and numbers)  $M$

$$\begin{bmatrix} \sqrt{2} & 1 \\ 2 & \sqrt{2} \end{bmatrix}.$$

Consider the matrix  $\tilde{M}$ , having as entries the floating point approximation of those of  $M$

$$\begin{bmatrix} fl(\sqrt{2}) & 1 \\ 2 & fl(\sqrt{2}) \end{bmatrix}.$$

Computing its determinant gives out  $2 + 2\epsilon\sqrt{2} + \epsilon^2 - 2 \doteq 2 + 2\epsilon\sqrt{2} - 2 \neq 0$ .

Introducing a small change (i.e. an “error”) in the input argument may either cause a large or a small change in the result. We shall now introduce the concept of condition numbers.

**Definition 2.3** (Condition number). A condition number of a problem measures the sensitivity of the solution to small perturbations in the input data. Given a function  $f$ , we define

$$cond(f, x) = \lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} \sup_{\|\Delta x\| \leq \epsilon \|x\|} \frac{\|f(x + \Delta x) - f(x)\|}{\epsilon \|f(x)\|}.$$

Given a problem, if its condition number is low it is said to be **well-conditioned** (typically  $cond(f, x) \sim 1$ ), while a problem with a high condition number is (said to be) **ill-conditioned** ( $cond(f, x) \gg 1$ ).

**Definition 2.4** (Condition number of a matrix). The condition number of a non-singular matrix  $A$  is defined as:

$$\kappa(A) = \|A^{-1}\| \times \|A\|.$$

Let us now investigate what would happen if symbols are allowed by introducing a framework that allows us to work both with numerical and symbolic computations.

**Definition 2.5** (Computer algebra system). A computer algebra system (CAS) is a mathematics software package that can perform *both symbolic and numerical mathematical computations*.

A CAS is usually a **REPL** expected to support a few functionalities [3]:

- **Arithmetic:** arithmetic over different fields with arbitrary precision.



- **Linear algebra:** matrix algebra and knowledge of different operations and properties of matrices (i.e. determinants, eigenvalues and eigenvectors).
- **Polynomial manipulation:** factorization over different fields, simplification and partial fraction decomposition of rational functions.
- **Transcendental functions:** support for transcendental functions and their properties.
- **Calculus:** limits, derivatives, integration and expansions of functions.
- **Solving equations:** solving systems of linear equations, computing with radicals solutions of polynomials of degree less than five.
- **Programming language:** users may implement their own algorithms using a programming language.

The CAS chosen for this work is **SageMath** [5], the features and functionalities of which shall not be discussed here.

SageMath is an open source CAS distributed under the terms of the GNU GPLv3 [1].

Hereafter, an example in which symbolic computations are put against numerical (computations) shall be made.

**Example 2.2.** Take matrix M from Example 2.1:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \sqrt{2} & 1 \\ 2 & \sqrt{2} \end{bmatrix}.$$

Compare the different results given out when computing its determinant by defining M over the *symbolic ring SR* and the *finite-precision ring CDF*:

---

```
sage: matrix(SR, [[sqrt(2), 1], [2, sqrt(2))]).det()
0
sage: matrix(CDF, [[sqrt(2), 1], [2, sqrt(2))]).det()
-3.14018491736755e-16
```

---

We can observe that in SR  $(\sqrt{2})^2 = 2$  since no approximations are made.

Now, take the polynomial  $p(x)$ :

$$p(x) = x^6 + 5x^5 - 3x^4 - 42x^3 + 12x^2 - x + 1.$$

If an attempt to calculate its roots over SR is made, an exception will be thrown; however, doing this over a finite-precision ring (such as CDF) will work:

---

```

sage: p = x^6 + 5*x^5 - 3*x^4 - 42*x^3 + 12*x^2 - x + 1
sage: p.roots(ring=SR)
      RuntimeError: no explicit roots found
sage: p.roots(ring=CDF)
[(-3.865705050148171 - 1.5654017866113432*I, 1),
 (-3.8657050501481702 + 1.5654017866113419*I, 1),
 (-0.04843174828928114 - 0.2430512799158686*I, 1),
 (-0.048431748289281144 + 0.24305127991586856*I, 1),
 (0.38275295887213723 + 7.286537374692244e-17*I, 1),
 (2.4455206380027437 - 1.995314986816126e-16*I, 1)]

```

---

For deeper reasoning about the limits of computer algebra systems, one may refer to Mitic [4].

## Eigenvalues, eigenvectors

In the following section, eigenvalues and eigenvectors shall be defined.

Lastly, a result on the condition number of the problem of computing eigenvalues of a matrix shall be given.

**Definition 2.6** (Eigenvalue, eigenvector). Given a linear transformation  $T$  in a finite-dimensional vector space  $V$  over a field  $F$  into itself and a nonzero vector  $\mathbf{v}$ ,  $\mathbf{v}$  is an eigenvector of  $T$  if and only if

$$A\mathbf{u} = \lambda\mathbf{u}$$

with  $A$  the matrix representation of  $T$ ,  $\mathbf{u}$  the coordinate vector of  $\mathbf{u}$  and  $\lambda$  a scalar in  $F$  known as eigenvalue associated with  $\mathbf{v}$ .

Similarly, we can define a row vector  $\mathbf{x}_L$ , and a scalar  $\lambda_L$  such that

$$\mathbf{x}_L A = \lambda_L A,$$

which are called left eigenvector and left eigenvalue respectively.

**Remark.** Note that writing  $A\mathbf{u} = \lambda\mathbf{u}$  is equivalent to  $(A - \lambda I)\mathbf{u} = 0$ .

It follows that the eigenvalues of  $A$  are the roots of

$$\det(A - \lambda I)$$

which is a polynomial in  $\lambda$  known as the **characteristic polynomial**  $ch(A)$ .

**Definition 2.7** (Eigenspace). Given a square matrix  $A$  and its eigenvalue  $\lambda$ , we define the eigenspace of  $A$  associated with  $\lambda$  the subspace  $E_A$  of all vectors satisfying the equation

$$E_A = \{\mathbf{u} : (A - \lambda I)\mathbf{u} = 0\} = \ker(A - \lambda I).$$

**Remark.** Suppose  $A$  is a real square matrix, then the following statements are true:

- the eigenvalues of the left and right eigenvectors of  $A$  are the same,
- the left eigenvectors simplify into the transpose of the right eigenvectors of  $A^T$ .

**Definition 2.8** (Algebraic, geometric multiplicities of eigenvalues). Given a square matrix  $A$  and a scalar  $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$ : we define the algebraic multiplicity of  $\lambda$  as

$$m_A(\lambda) = \max\{k : (\exists s(x) : s(x)(x - \lambda)^k = \text{ch}_A(x))\}.$$

The geometric multiplicity of  $\lambda$  is defined as

$$\nu_A(\lambda) = \dim(\ker(A - \lambda I)).$$

Let us now investigate how introducing perturbations in the representation of a matrix may influence the numerical stability of its eigenvalues (caveat: in the following paragraph, the notation  $\delta x$  shall be used to denote the difference between a symbol  $x$  and its floating point approximation  $fl(x)$ ).

Let us define a square matrix  $A$  and its eigenvalue  $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$ ,  $\mathbf{x}$ ,  $\mathbf{y}$  the right and left eigenvectors associated with  $\lambda$ .

Consider the perturbed problem

$$\tilde{A}\tilde{\mathbf{x}} = \tilde{\lambda}\tilde{\mathbf{x}}$$

with  $\epsilon$  the machine epsilon,  $\tilde{A} = A + \epsilon\delta A$ ,  $\tilde{\mathbf{x}} = \mathbf{x} + \epsilon\delta\mathbf{x}$ ,  $\tilde{\lambda} = \lambda + \epsilon\delta\lambda$ .

Differentiating w.r.t.  $\epsilon$  and multiplying by  $\mathbf{y}^T$  on the left side gives

$$\mathbf{y}^T\delta A\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}^T A fl(\mathbf{x}) = fl(\lambda)\mathbf{y}^T\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}^T\lambda fl(\mathbf{x})$$

and, since  $\mathbf{y}$  is the left eigenvector we can rewrite it as

$$\frac{\delta\lambda}{\delta\epsilon} = \frac{\mathbf{y}^T\delta A\mathbf{x}}{\mathbf{y}^T\mathbf{x}}.$$

Assuming the absolute error  $\|\delta A\| = 1$  and using the definition of cross product for  $\mathbf{y}^T \mathbf{x}$  we get

$$|\delta \lambda| \leq \frac{1}{|\cos(\theta_\lambda)|} |\delta \epsilon|.$$

**Definition 2.9** (Condition number of an eigenvalue). Given a square matrix  $A$ , the eigenvalue  $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$  and  $\theta_\lambda$  the angle between the left and right eigenvectors associated with  $\lambda$ , the quantity

$$k_A(\lambda) = \frac{1}{\cos(\theta_\lambda)}$$

is called the condition number of the eigenvalue  $\lambda$ .

## Jordan canonical form

**Definition 2.10** (Generalized eigenvector, generalized eigenspace). Given an  $n \times n$  square matrix  $A$  and its eigenvalue  $\lambda$ , the vector  $\mathbf{x}_m$  such that

$$(A - \lambda I)^m \mathbf{x}_m = 0 \quad \wedge \quad (A - \lambda I)^{m-1} \mathbf{x}_m \neq 0$$

is a generalized eigenvector of rank  $m$  associated with  $\lambda$ .

Furthermore, the subspace  $E_A^m$

$$E_A^m(\lambda) = \ker((A - \lambda I)^m)$$

is called generalized eigenspace; its dimension

$$\nu_A^m(\lambda) = \dim(E_A^m(\lambda)) = n - \text{rank}((A - \lambda I)^m)$$

is called the  $m$ -th geometric multiplicity of  $\lambda$  in  $A$ .

**Definition 2.11** (Defective matrix, defective eigenvalue). Given a square  $n \times n$  matrix  $A$ , if it has less than  $n$  distinct eigenvalues then it is called a defective matrix.

Furthermore, we define an eigenvalue  $\lambda$  of such a matrix as a defective eigenvalue if and only if

$$m_A(\lambda) > \nu_A(\lambda).$$

**Example 2.3.** Consider the matrix  $M$

$$\begin{bmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 \end{bmatrix},$$

there is only one eigenvalue  $\lambda$  associated with  $M$  and  $\lambda = 2$ ; the eigenvector associated with it is

$$\mathbf{x}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Furthermore, note that  $\lambda$  has algebraic multiplicity  $m_A(2) = 2$ : it follows that  $M$  is a defective matrix and  $\lambda$  is a defective eigenvalue.

Now, we shall compute its generalized eigenvectors.

Note that  $\dim(\ker(A - \lambda I)) = p = 1$ , which implies there exist  $m - p = 1$  generalized eigenvectors of rank greater than 1. To compute the generalized eigenvector  $\mathbf{x}_2$  we solve  $(A - \lambda I)\mathbf{x}_2 = \mathbf{x}_1$

$$M - \lambda \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{20} \\ x_{21} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Substituting with their values gives us

$$\begin{bmatrix} 2 - 2 * 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 - 2 * 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{20} \\ x_{21} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Solving this system we can conclude

$$\mathbf{x}_2 = \begin{bmatrix} t \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

with no restrictions over the value of the scalar  $t$ .

**Definition 2.12** (Jordan matrix). A diagonal block matrix  $M$  is called a Jordan matrix if and only if each block along the diagonal is of the form

$$\begin{bmatrix} \lambda & 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda & 1 & \cdots & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \lambda & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & \lambda \end{bmatrix},$$

and we indicate such a matrix with  $diag(J_{\lambda_1, n_1}, \dots, J_{\lambda_k, n_k})$  with  $k$  the number of diagonal blocks it is made up of.

Each block can be completely described by the tuple  $(\lambda, n)$  as it is an  $n \times n$  matrix of zeroes everywhere except for the diagonal, which is filled with  $\lambda$ , and the superdiagonal, with ones.

**Theorem 2.1** (Jordan canonical form).

**Theorem 2.2** (Stability of the JCF transformation). Given a matrix  $A$  and its JCF  $A = P^{-1}JP$ , the transforming matrix  $P$  is highly ill-conditioned whenever  $A$  has at least a defective or nearly defective eigenvalue.

*Proof.* Work in progress...

□

## Kronecker canonical form

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## Implementation

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## Conclusions

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