Distribution Of Primes From Primes To Riemann

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Experimental Mathematics

 Problems resistant to analysis → experimental exploration can provide hints

Number of Primes Up To n

• Number of primes up to $n \leftrightarrow$ average number of primes up to n

$$\pi(n)$$

• 'The number of primes up to, and including, n'

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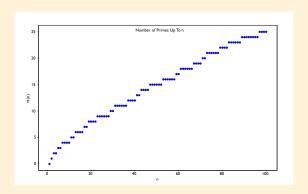
 $\pi(n)$

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
$\pi(n)$	0	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	6

• $\pi(6)$ is the same as $\pi(5)$ because 6 is not prime.



 $\pi(n)$



- Is this *In(n)* ?
- Smoothness suggests primes are governed by some constraint.

Gauss' Approximation

• Gauss was first to approximate $\pi(n)$ fairly well ... he was 15 years old!

$$\pi(n) \approx \frac{n}{\ln(n)}$$

- Suprisingly simple!
- What pattern is captured by that ln(n)?

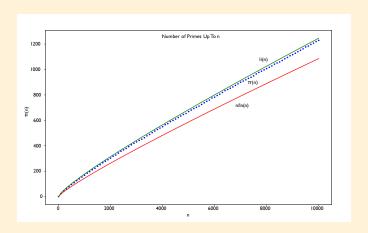
Gauss' Second Approximation

• A year later developed an even better approximation.

$$\pi(n) \approx \int_0^n \frac{1}{\ln(x)} dx$$

- Logarithmic integral is written as li(n)
- Appears to be a continuous form of the first approximation.

Comparison of Approximations



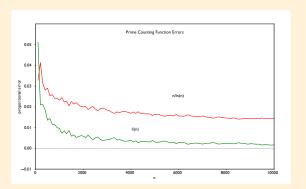
• The logarithmic integral is much closer to the real prime counts.

Error

- The charts (and the numbers) show the error gets larger.
- Does this mean the approximations become useless as *n* gets larger?

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Proportional Error



- Error as a proportion of $\pi(n)$ seems to get smaller as n grows.
- li(n) has a distinctly smaller proportional error than n/ln(n).

Proportional Error

- $\pi(10000) = 1229$, $\text{li}(1000) = 1246 \rightarrow \text{error is just } 17$
- As a proportion of 1229, this is an impressively small 0.0138
- If proportional error falls towards zero, perhaps these approximations are correct in the limit $n \to \infty$?
 - what does it mean for the error $\to \infty$, but the proportional error $\to 0$?

Prime Density

Can we interpret the form of Gauss' first approximation?

 $mass = density \times volume$

$$\pi(n) \approx \frac{1}{\ln(n)} \times n$$

- Suggests $1/\ln(n)$ is the average density of primes.
- If true, this would be a remarkable insight into the primes!



Prime Density

• What about Gauss' second approximation?

$$\mathsf{mass} = \int (\mathsf{density}) dv$$

$$\pi(n) \approx \int_0^n \frac{1}{\ln(x)} dx$$

• Again, $1/\ln(x)$ emerges as a more locally accurate density of primes around a number x.



Imperfect History of $\pi(n)$

- Gauss didn't always publish his work, leaving us to reconstruct history from notes and letters.
- 1797 Legendre published $n/(A \ln(n) + B)$, updated in 1808 to $n/(\ln(n) 1.08366)$.
- 1849 Gauss wrote to Encke saying that in '1792 or 1793', he developed $\int \frac{dn}{\log n}$.
- Collected works show that in 1791 Gauss had written about the simpler $\frac{a}{la}$.

Gauss' 1791 Some Asymptotic Laws Of Number Theory.



Legendre's 1797 Essai Sur La Theorie Des Nombres.

INTRODUCTION.

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qu'à 1000000 la proportion sera encore moindre et ânisi de suite. Ea effet, la probabilité qu'un mombre pris a ubaard sera premier, est d'autant moindre que ce nombre est plus grand; car plus le nombre est grand, plus il y a de divisions à essayer pour s'assurer si le nombre est premier ou s'il ne l'est pas.

XXX. Nous remarquerous encore, que si on considére les seixes suites dont les termes généraux sont 50e + 1, 60e - 1, 60e + 7, 60

de e pris dats les tables ordinaires ; este formule trèssimple peut être regardée comme suffisamment approchée , au moins lorsque a n'accede pas accocco. Sinsi si on demando combien il y a de nombres premiers depuis j_1uqu^2 áccocco, on trouvera que ce nombre en $\frac{4000000}{2505,000}$ on 35900 à-peu-près.

An rete, il est vraisombhilde que la formato rigoureuse qui donne la valeur de à borsque a est très-grand , est de la forme $b = \frac{1}{M\log_2 a + p}$, $A \in B$ étant des coefficiens constant, et $\log_2 a$ désignant un logarithme hyperbolique. La détermination exacte de cas coefficiens seroit un problème curieux et digne d'exercer la saçocié de Sadurytes.

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First page of Gauss' 1849 letter to Encke.

