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AN EFFECTIVE PROCEDURE FOR MINIMAL BASES OF IDEALS IN $\mathbb{Z}[x]$

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Abstract

We give an effective procedure to find minimal bases for ideals of the ring of polynomials over the integers.

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1. Introduction

As in [5], we say that the ideals of the ring R are *detachable* if one can decide effectively whether or not a given element of the ring is in a given finitely generated ideal of R. Using the fact that ideals of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ are detachable we give an effective procedure to find a minimal basis for an ideal A of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$, from a given finite set of generators for A. Moreover, given a minimal basis for the ideal A of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$, it is very easy to determine effectively and efficiently whether or not an arbitrary polynomial $f(x)$ of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ belongs to A. Indeed, all the computational difficulty of determining membership in A is completed upon finding its minimal basis.

This problem was solved by Hurd in [3]. In his Ph.D. dissertation he developed an algorithm for determining the minimal basis for an ideal in $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with a given set of generators, actually he worked with primitive ideals, but his results can be generalized to other ideals. However, as is pointed out by his adviser in [1], his method is complicated. We give a solution of the problem using basic properties of the minimal basis of an ideal and the fact that ideals in $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ are detachable. The fact that ideals of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ are detachable has been proved by several authors, in fact in [6] is given an easy description of an effective procedure which given a finite subset B of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ and $f(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ decides whether or not $f(x)$ belongs to the ideal generated by B. Detachability of ideals in $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ is also proved in [5] using the concept of Tennenbaum rings.

2. Minimal basis for ideals of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$

We define a *minimal basis* of an ideal A of the ring of polynomials $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ as in [7]. If A is a principal ideal $\langle f(x)\rangle$, then we call $\{f(x)\}$ the minimal basis for A if the leading coefficient of $f(x)$ is positive, otherwise we say that $\{-f(x)\}$ is the minimal basis for A. If $A = \langle f(x)\rangle B$, where the leading coefficient of $f(x)$ is positive and B has the minimal basis $\{h_1(x), h_2(x), \dots, h_n(x)\}$, then the minimal basis for A is defined by $\{f(x)h_1(x), f(x)h_2(x), \dots, f(x)h_n(x)\}$.

Let A be a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$. By Theorem 2.1.2 of [2], A contains a nonzero constant, hence it contains polynomials of an arbitrary degree k. As in [7] for each $k \geq 0$ we call the polynomials

$$g_k(x) = a_k x^k + \sum_{i=0}^{k-1} a_{ki} x^i$$

minimal, where a_k is the smallest positive number which is the leading coefficient of a polynomial of degree k in A. In [7] it is proved that given a primitive proper ideal A of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$, it possesses a minimal basis $\{g_m(x), \dots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\}$ with the following properties

$$\begin{aligned} g_0 &= q_1 q_2 \cdots q_m, \\ q_k g_k(x) &= x g_{k-1}(x) + \sum_{i=0}^{k-1} b_{ki} g_i(x), \end{aligned} \tag{2.1}$$

$$q_k > 0,\ 0 \leq b_{ki} < q_k,\ 0 < k \leq m,\ 0 \leq i < k. \tag{2.2}$$

In some cases it's useful to represent the system of invariants (2.2) with a matrix notation as follows

$$0 \leq \begin{bmatrix} b_{10} & & & \\ b_{20} & b_{21} & & \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \\ b_{m0} & b_{m1} & \cdots & b_{m(m-1)} \end{bmatrix} < \begin{bmatrix} q_1 \\ q_2 \\ \vdots \\ q_m \end{bmatrix}$$

The number m is called the *degree* of A. Moreover, in [7] the following theorem is proved.

Theorem 1. *There is a one to one correspondence between the primitive proper ideals of* $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ *and the system of invariants* (2.2).

Proposition 1. *Suppose A is a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with minimal basis given by $\{g_m(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\}$. Every element of A is of the form $f(x)g_m(x) + c_{m-1}g_{m-1}(x) + \ldots + c_0 g_0(x)$, for some unique $f(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ and some unique $c_{m-1}, \ldots, c_1, c_0 \in \mathbb{Z}$.*

Proof. Follows from the proof of Theorem 1, see [7]. ∎

The following result shows that if A is a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$, then the degree of A is less or equal than the degree of any primitive polynomial in A. It's easy to find examples to show that we can obtain either equality or strictly inequality.

Lemma 1. *Let A be a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with minimal basis given by $\{g_m(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\}$. If $f(x)$ is a primitive polynomial of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with $\deg f(x) = k$ and*

$$h_i(x) = \begin{cases} g_i(x), & \text{for} \quad i = 0, 1, \ldots, m, \\ x^{i-m} g_m(x), & \text{for} \quad i = m+1, \ldots\ , \end{cases}$$

then $f(x) \in A$ implies $h_k(x)$ is monic, i.e., the degree of the ideal A is less or equal than k.

Proof. Suppose A is a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with minimal basis

$$\{g_m(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\}.$$

Let $f(x)$ be a primitive polynomial of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with $\deg f(x) = k$. If $f(x) \in A$, then, by Proposition 1, there exist $b_0, b_1, \ldots, b_k \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $f(x) = b_k h_k(x) + \ldots + b_1 h_1(x) + b_0 h_0(x)$. Let a_k be the leading coefficient of $h_k(x)$, then $a_k \mid h_j(x)$ for $j = 0, 1, \ldots, k$, hence $a_k \mid f(x)$. Since $f(x)$ is primitive we obtain $a_k = 1$, so $h_k(x)$ is monic. ■

The following lemma shows how to obtain a bound in the degree of an ideal, knowing a set of generators.

Lemma 2. *If A is a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with minimal basis given by $\{g_m(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\}$ and $\{f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x)\}$ is a set of generators of A, then*

$$m \leq \max\{\deg f_i(x) : i = 1, 2, \ldots, n\}.$$

Proof. Suppose A is a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with minimal basis

$$\{g_m(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\} \tag{2.3}$$

and $\{f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x)\}$ is a set of generators of A. If

$$m > \max\{\deg f_i(x) : i = 1, 2, \ldots, n\},$$

then

$$A = \langle f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x)\rangle \subseteq \langle g_{m-1}(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\rangle \subseteq A.$$

Therefore $A = \langle g_{m-1}(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\rangle$. This contradicts the definition of minimal basis. ■

In [4] there is a generalization of minimal basis for ideals of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ in the sense that we have studied here, for ideals of a ring of polynomials over an arbitrary PID. In fact, in [4] is only considered primitive ideals but results can easily be generalized to other ideals.

Lemma 3. *Given a primitive ideal A in $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ generated by $f_1(x)$, $f_2(x), \ldots,$ $f_n(x)$, there exists an effective procedure to find a nonzero constant in A.*

Proof. We know the existence of such a constant by Theorem 2.1.2 of [2]. Polynomials $f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x)$ are elements of $\mathbb{Q}[x]$, the PID of polynomials with coefficients in the field of rational numbers. Therefore there is an effective procedure to find $u_1(x), u_2(x), \ldots, u_n(x) \in \mathbb{Q}[x]$ such that $1 = u_1(x)f_1(x) + u_2(x)f_2(x) + \ldots + u_n(x)f_n(x)$. Find common denominator in the right hand side and multiply by it both sides to obtain $c = u_1'(x)f_1(x) + u_2'(x)f_2(x) + \ldots + u_n'(x)f_n(x)$, where $u_i'(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$, and $c \in A - \{0\}$. ∎

Lemma 4. *Let A be a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with minimal basis given by $\{g_m(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\}$. If $f(x)$ is an arbitrary polynomial of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$, there is a feasible procedure to decide whether or not $f(x) \in A$.*

Proof. Suppose A is a primitive proper ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with minimal basis given by $\{g_m(x), \ldots, g_1(x), g_0(x)\}$. Let $f(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$.

If $\deg f(x) = n \leq m$, then using Proposition 1, $f(x) \in A$ if and only if there exist $a_0, a_1, \ldots, a_n$ such that $f(x) = a_n g_n(x) + \ldots + a_0 g_0(x)$.

If $\deg f(x) = n > m$, then, by Proposition 1, $f(x) \in A$ if and only if there exist $a_0, a_1, \ldots, a_m, \ldots, a_n$ such that $f(x) = a_n x^{n-m} g_m(x) + \ldots + a_m g_m(x) + \ldots + a_0 g_0(x)$.

In any case we can decide effectively whether or not a system of n equations with n variables has solution. ∎

Theorem 2. *Given a set of generators $f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x)$ of an ideal B in $\mathbb{Z}[x]$, there exists an effective procedure to find a minimal basis for B.*

Proof. Let B be an ideal of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ with $B = \langle f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x)\rangle$ and assume B is nonprincipal, otherwise the proof is trivial. Given $f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$, there exists an effective procedure to find $\gcd(f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x))$. To show this, given $f_1(x), f_2(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$, we give an effective procedure to find $\gcd(f_1(x), f_2(x))$. If $\deg f_1(x) = \deg f_2(x) = 0$, use the Euclidean Algorithm in $\mathbb{Z}$. If $\deg f_1(x) = 0$ and $\deg f_2(x) \geq 1$, then $f_2(x) = C(f_2(x))f_2'(x)$, with $f_2'(x)$ primitive. Then $\gcd(f_1(x), f_2(x)) = \gcd(f_1(x), C(f_2(x)))$ and we can use the Euclidean Algorithm in $\mathbb{Z}$. If $\deg f_1(x)$, $\deg f_2(x) \geq 1$, then $f_1(x) = C(f_1(x))f_1'(x)$ and $f_2(x) = C(f_2(x))f_2'(x)$, with $f_1'(x)$, $f_2'(x)$ primitive. Therefore

$$\gcd(f_1(x), f_2(x)) = \gcd(C(f_1(x)), C(f_2(x)))\gcd(f_1'(x), f_2'(x)).$$

To find $\gcd(C(f_1(x)), C(f_2(x)))$ we can use the Euclidean algorithm in $\mathbb{Z}$ and to find the $\gcd(f_1'(x), f_2'(x))$ we can use a modification of the Euclidean algorithm in $\mathbb{Q}[x]$. Since $\gcd(a,b,c) = \gcd(\gcd(a,b), c)$, then the claim is proved. Therefore we can write $B = \gcd(f_1(x), f_2(x), \ldots, f_n(x))A$, where A is a primitive proper ideal. Then we reduce the problem to find a minimal basis for the primitive proper ideal A. Suppose $A = \langle h_1(x), h_2(x), \ldots, h_n(x)\rangle$ with $\gcd(h_1(x), h_2(x), \ldots, h_n(x)) = 1$. By Lemma 3, there is an effective procedure to find $c \in A - \{0\}$. Therefore

$$A = \langle h_1(x), h_2(x), \ldots, h_n(x), c\rangle .$$

By Theorem 1, there are finitely many ideals $\langle C\rangle$ that contain c of a given finite degree and we can enumerate them. In fact, by Lemma 2 there is a bound in the degree of the ideals $\langle C\rangle$ that we have to consider. Suppose $\langle C\rangle$ is an ideal, with minimal basis C, that contains c. Using the fact that ideals of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ are detachable, or even better using Lemma 4, we can decide effectively whether or not $h_1(x), h_2(x), \ldots, h_n(x) \in \langle C\rangle$. Since A is detachable, we can decide effectively whether or not $\langle C\rangle \subseteq \langle h_1(x), h_2(x), \ldots, h_n(x)\rangle$. If we obtain positive answer in both containments, the proof is complete, otherwise pick a different minimal basis C such that $\langle C\rangle$ contains c and note that in finitely many steps we obtain the desired minimal basis. ■

Note that in order to verify $\langle C\rangle \subseteq \langle h_1(x), h_2(x), \ldots, h_n(x)\rangle$ in the previous theorem, it is not necessary to use an algorithm for detachability of ideals of $\mathbb{Z}[x]$. Since there are finitely many ideals $\langle C\rangle$ that we have to consider, it is enough to have a list of the elements of $\underbrace{\mathbb{Z}[x] \times \mathbb{Z}[x] \times \ldots \times \mathbb{Z}[x]}_{n \text{ times}}$.

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