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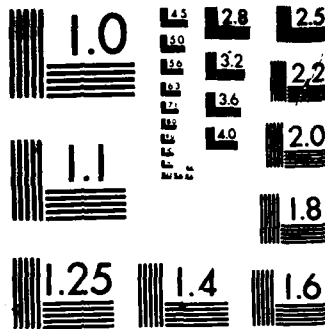
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On finding the vertex connectivity of graphs¹

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Milind Sohoni³

Abstract

An implementation of the fastest known algorithm to find the vertex connectivity of graphs with reduced space requirement is presented.

1. Introduction

Let $G(V,E)$ be a finite undirected graph with no self-loops and no parallel edges. A set of vertices, S , is called an (a,b) vertex separator if $(a,b) \subseteq V-S$ and every path connecting a and b passes through at least one vertex of S . Clearly if a and b are connected by an edge, no (a,b) vertex separator exists. We define $N^a(a,b)$ to be $|V|-1$ if $(a,b) \in E$, else it is the least cardinality of an (a,b) vertex separator. The vertex connectivity of G , k_G is defined to be $\min_{a,b \in V} N^a(a,b)$.

When k_G is small, there are well-known linear time algorithms to determine connectivity ($k_G > 0$), biconnectivity ($k_G > 1$) (see e.g., [4]) and triconnectivity ($k_G > 2$) [8,11]. There is an $O(|V|^4)$ algorithm [9] to check four-connectivity ($k_G > 3$); others [3,5,7] are of $O(|V||E|)$. For a fixed k , there are some randomized algorithms [1,10] for testing k -connectivity.

In this paper we consider the question of determining k_G , when k_G is large. For this problem, the only known deterministic methods to find it depend on solving maximum flow problems in unit networks [5,7]. (A unit network has the property that the capacity of each edge is one

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and every vertex other than the source or sink has either only one edge emanating from it or one edge entering it.) Of these, the most efficient one is Galil's [7] with a running time of $O(\max(k_G, |V|)k_G|E||V|)$ with a space requirement of $O((k_G^2 + |V|)|E|)$. We improve upon this result by presenting an algorithm that has the same running time as Galil's but with a space requirement of only $O(|V||E|)$.

2. Even's Algorithm

In [3] Even solves the simpler problem (denoted by $P_{G,k}$) of finding whether $k_G \geq k$, for a given G and k . Even's algorithm is as follows:

Let $V = \{v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n\}$ and let $L_j = \{v_1, v_2, \dots, v_{j-1}\}$. Define \tilde{G}_j to be the graph constructed in the following way. \tilde{G}_j contains all the vertices and edges of G ; in addition it includes a new vertex s connected by an edge to each vertex in L_j .

- (1) For every i and j such that $1 \leq i < j \leq k$, check whether $N^G(v_i, v_j) \geq k$. If for some i and j this test fails then halt; $k_G < k$.
- (2) For every j such that $k+1 \leq j \leq |V|$, form \tilde{G}_j and check whether $N^{\tilde{G}_j}(s, v_j) \geq k$. If for some j this test fails then halt; $k_G < k$.
- (3) Halt; $k_G \geq k$.

Whether $N(a, b) \geq k$ can be found out by checking that the value of the maximum flow in the corresponding network is at least k . This involves finding k flow augmenting paths (f.a.p.'s) in the network using the Ford and Fulkerson [6] algorithm. A f.a.p. can be found in $O(|E|)$ time and since k f.a.p.'s need to be found in at most $k^2 + |V|$ flow problems, the complexity of Even's algorithm is $O(k^2|E| + k|V||E|)$.

In [7] Galil observes that Even's algorithm can be used to find k_G by progressively solving $P_{G,1}, P_{G,2}, \dots$ until $P_{G,k+1}$ yields a negative answer; then $k_G = k$. By using Dinic's algorithm [2] to find augmenting paths and modifying Even's algorithm, Galil shows that this can be done in $O(\max(k_G, |V|)^k k_G |V|^k |E|)$ using $O((k_G^2 + |V|)|E|)$ memory. Using an approach similar to Galil's we get a reduced space bound.

3. The Algorithm

First we simplify Even's algorithm as follows:

In the first step instead of checking whether $N^G(v_i, v_j) \geq k$, we do some additional work and find $N^G(v_i, v_j)$ and then trivially check whether this is greater than or equal to k . It will turn out that the extra work will not change the time complexity of the algorithm.

The outline of the algorithm is as follows.

- (1) Initialize k to 1, MIN to $|V|-1$.
- (2) For every i such that $1 \leq i \leq k-1$, find $N^G(v_i, v_k)$.
- (3) Use the results of step 2 to update MIN to $\min(\min_{1 \leq i \leq k-1} N^G(v_i, v_k), MIN)$.
- (4) If $MIN < k$ then halt; $k_G = MIN$.
- (5) For every j such that $k+1 \leq j \leq |V|$, check whether $N^G(v_k, v_j) \geq k$. If this test fails for any j , then halt; $k_G = k-1$.
- (6) Increment k by one, go to step 2.

The correctness of the above algorithm follows from the results in Even [3]. We now analyze the time and space requirement of the algorithm. We store the graphs \tilde{G}_j , ($2 \leq j \leq |V|$) along with the current flow values in the corresponding networks. In each iteration the computationally intensive steps are clearly 2 and 5. In the k^{th} iteration, we solve $k-1$ maximum flow

problems in step 2 and using the flow values computed in the $k-1^{\text{th}}$ iteration for the networks corresponding to \tilde{G}_j , we check whether $N^{G_j}(s, v_j) \geq k$ in step 5 by finding at most one f.a.p. in each of the corresponding networks. Using Dinic's algorithm [2] step 2 can be done in $O(k|E||V|^k)$ time and step 5 in $O(|V||E|)$ time since an f.a.p. can be found in linear time. Thus the running time of the algorithm is $O(k_G^2|E||V|^k + k_G|V||E|) = O((k_G + |V|^k)k_G|E||V|^k) = O(\max(k_G, |V|^k)k_G|E||V|^k)$ which is the same as Galil's algorithm. However, the space requirement is only $O(|V||E|)$ because the flow values for at most $|V|$ maximum flow problems have to be stored and each requires $O(|E|)$ space.

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