OPTIMAL PREPROCESSING FOR ANSWERING ON-LINE PRODUCT QUERIES

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ABSTRACT

We examine the amount of preprocessing needed for answering certain on-line queries as fast as possible. We start with the following basic problem. Suppose we are given a semigroup $(S,\circ)$. Let $s_1, \ldots, s_n$ be elements of S. We want to answer on-line queries of the form, "What is the product $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$?" for any given $1 \le i \le j \le n$. We show that a preprocessing of $\Theta(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space is both necessary and sufficient to answer each such query in at most k steps, for any fixed k. The function $\lambda(k,.)$ is the inverse of a certain function at the $\lfloor k/2 \rfloor$−th level of the primitive recursive hierarchy. In case linear preprocessing is desired, we show that one can answer each such query in at most $O(\alpha(n))$ steps and that this is best possible. The function $\alpha(n)$ is the inverse Ackermann function.

We also consider the following extended problem. Let T be a tree with an element of S associated with each of its vertices. We want to answer on-line queries of the form, "What is the product of the elements associated with the vertices along the path from u to v?" for any pair of vertices u and v in T. We derive results, which are similar to the above, for the preprocessing needed for answering such queries.

All our sequential preprocessing algorithms can be parallelized efficiently to give optimal parallel algorithms which run in $O(\log n)$ time on a CREW PRAM. These parallel algorithms are optimal in both running time and total number of operations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We examine the amount of preprocessing needed for answering certain on-line queries as fast as possible. Suppose we are given a semigroup $(S,\circ)$. We consider the following queries.

The Linear Product Query. Let $s_1, \ldots, s_n$ be elements of S. We want to answer on-line queries of the form, "What is the product $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$?" for any given $1 \le i \le j \le n$.

The Tree Product Query. Let T be an unrooted tree with an element of S associated with each of its vertices. We want to answer on-line queries of the form, "What is the product of the elements associated with the vertices along the path from u to v?" for any pair of vertices u and v in T.

We present very efficient preprocessing algorithms for the above queries and show that under reasonable assumptions these algorithms are best possible. Our assumptions are as follows. (1) Given any two elements a and b in the semigroup S we can compute $a \circ b$ in constant time. (2) The only available operation on the semigroup elements is the semigroup operation.

We say that we answer a query in k *steps* if we have to multiply k available precomputed semigroup elements to get the answer.

We achieve the following results.

The Linear Product Query. We show that in order to answer each Linear Product query in at most k steps, for any fixed k, a preprocessing of $\Theta(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space is both necessary and sufficient. The function $\lambda(k,.)$ is the inverse of a certain function at the $\lfloor k/2 \rfloor$-th level of the primitive recursive hierarchy. We also present a linear preprocessing algorithm that enables us to answer each query in at most $O(\alpha(n))$ steps, where $\alpha(n)$ is the inverse Ackermann function (cf. [Ac-28]). It is further shown that no linear preprocessing algorithm can do better.

The Tree Product Query. We show that in order to answer each Tree Product query in at most $2k$ steps, for any fixed k, a preprocessing of $O(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space is sufficient, where n is the number of vertices. (From the previous result we have that a preprocessing of $\Omega(n\lambda(2k,n))$ time and space is necessary for answering Tree Product queries in certain trees.) Here also the best linear preprocessing algorithm enables us to answer each query in $\Theta(\alpha(n))$ steps.

All our sequential preprocessing algorithms can be parallelized efficiently. The models of parallel computation are the well-known concurrent-read exclusive-write (CREW) parallel random access machine

(PRAM) and concurrent-read concurrent-write (CREW) PRAM. (See, e.g., [Vi-83].) The resulting parallel preprocessing algorithms for answering Linear Product queries in at most k steps and for answering Tree Product queries in at most $2k$ steps run in $O(\log n)$ time using $n\lambda(k,n)/\log n$ processors on a CREW PRAM. These algorithms are the fastest algorithms achievable on a CREW PRAM. This is, since $\Omega(\log n)$ is a lower bound on the running time of any parallel preprocessing algorithm for answering product queries in $o(\log n)$ steps on a CREW PRAM. This lower bound is easily derived from the lower bound of [CD-82]. For the case where the semigroup operation is the maximum operation (or similar) we can achieve a parallel preprocessing algorithm for the Linear Product problem that runs in $O(\log\log n)$ time using $n\lambda(k,n)/\log\log n$ processors on a CRCW PRAM. This algorithm is the fastest algorithm achievable with a linear number of processors on a CRCW PRAM, as proved in [Va-75]. Notice that all these parallel algorithms are also optimal in their total number of operations (i.e., the product of their running time and number of processors). This is, since their total number of operations is equal to the time complexity of the corresponding sequential algorithms.

The parallel preprocessing algorithms use the same ideas as the sequential algorithms together with the parallel preprocessing algorithm for answering lowest common ancestor (LCA) queries of [ScV-87] and the parallel Accelerated Centroid Decomposition of [CV-86]. Since the parallelization is mostly of technical nature it is not described in the paper.

We establish a trade-off between the time needed to answer a query and the preprocessing time. This trade-off is very strict. For example, if we want each Linear Product query to be answered in at most two steps we have to preprocess the input $\Theta(n \log n)$ time, but if we allow four computation steps per each query we may preprocess the input only $O(n \log^* n)$ time. On the other hand, if we want the preprocessing to be in linear time, we must allow $\Theta(\alpha(n))$ computation steps for each query. Similar trade-off appears in [DDPW-83] as the trade-off between the the depth and the size of superconcentrators and in [CFL-83a], [CFL-83b] as the trade-off between the depth and the size of certain unbounded fanin circuits.

[Ta-79] considers an off-line version of the Tree Product problem. He gives an *off-line* sequential algorithm based on path compression for *commutative* semigroups which runs in time $O((m+n)\alpha^T(m+n,n))$, where m is the number of off-line queries, n is the number of vertices and $\alpha^T(.,.)$ is a function closely related to the inverse Ackermann function. Our algorithm, which is completely different, has several advantages relative to Tarjan's algorithm: (1) It is on-line. (2) It works for any associative semigroup. (3) We do not consider the amortized complexity. That is, the total complexity is determined by the preprocessing time and the number of queries multiplied by the maximum answering time of a query. (4) We give an algorithm scheme which enables us to design a preprocessing algorithm for any desired answering time. Note that we can design an algorithm which achieves the same time complexity as [Ta-79]. For this we preprocess the input $O(m+n)$ time and then answer each of the m queries in at most $O(\alpha^T(m+n,n))$ steps.

Our algorithms use the divide-and-conquer technique. Specifically, we decompose the size n problem into subproblems of smaller size and show that after investing linear time and space we may consider each subproblem independently. This framework gives us, in fact, running time which converges to $O(n\alpha(n))$.

To get some intuition of the queries we give an example. Let the semigroup S be the set of real numbers and let the semigroup operation be the minimum operation. In this interpretation the Linear Product problem gets the following meaning. Suppose we are given a vector of n real numbers $a_1, \ldots, a_n$. We want to find, as fast as possible, the minimum number in any sub-vector. That is, to find $MIN\{a_i, a_{i+1}, \ldots, a_{j-1}, a_j\}$, for any given $1 \le i \le j \le n$. Similarly, in the Tree Product problem, we are given a tree with a real number associated with each of its vertices. We want to find, as fast as possible, the minimum number along any path in the tree.

The defined queries have many applications. For example, consider a communication network, where the nodes are connected using a spanning tree. Assume that each link of the network has a specified capacity. Each time we want to communicate from one point to another we have to know the maximum message size we can send. This size equals the minimum capacity along the path connecting the two points and so it can be found by answering a suitable Tree Product query in the given tree.

[Ta-79] gives three applications for his off-line algorithm. (1) Finding maximum flow values in a multiterminal network. (2) Verifying minimum spanning trees. That is, given a graph and a spanning tree, verify whether the spanning tree is minimal. (3) Updating a minimum spanning tree after increasing the cost of one of its edges. Naturally, we can use our algorithm for these applications also.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we give upper and lower bounds for the Linear Product problem. In Section 3 we present preprocessing algorithms for the Tree Product problem. Section 4 contains some concluding remarks and open problems.

2. THE LINEAR PRODUCT QUERY

Suppose we are given a semigroup $(S, \circ)$. Let $s_1, \ldots, s_n$ be elements of S. In this section we examine the amount of sequential preprocessing needed for answering queries of the form, "What is the product $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$?" for any given $1 \le i \le j \le n$.

The upper bound

At first we describe preprocessing algorithms for answering Linear Product queries in at most one and two steps. Afterwards, we describe a preprocessing algorithm for any $k > 2$ steps. This algorithm uses the algorithm for $k-2$ steps as a subroutine.

The preprocessing algorithm for one step. Observe that the best preprocessing algorithm for one step is the naive algorithm which precomputes all the necessary products in advance. Clearly, this takes $O(n^2)$ time and space.

The preprocessing algorithm for two steps. Let l be $\lfloor n/2 \rfloor$. We precompute all the products $s_i \circ \cdots \circ s_l$, for $1 \le i < l$, and $s_{l+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_j$, for $l+1 < j \le n$. This can be done in linear time and space. Suppose we are given the query $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$. If $j = l$ or $i = l+1$ then we can answer the query in one step using the precomputed products. If $i \le l$ and $j > l$ then we can answer the query in two steps by computing the product of the precomputed $s_i \circ \cdots \circ s_l$ and $s_{l+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_j$. Thus, the rest of the preprocessing should be aimed for answering queries of the form $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$, where either $1 \le i \le j < l$, or $l+1 < i \le j \le n$. This is done recursively using the same method. The total preprocessing time and space is given by the recurrence: $T_2(n) \le 2T_2(n/2) + n$, whose solution is $n \log n$. Hence, the preprocessing takes $O(n \log n)$ time and space.

Notice that when we answer a query we have to be able to retrieve each of the precomputed products whose multiplication gives the result with no overhead. To simplify the retrieval we modify the preprocessing algorithm (without changing its complexity bounds). We start the algorithm with $l = 2^{\lfloor \log n \rfloor}$ instead of $l = \lfloor n/2 \rfloor$ and continue in the same manner when we recur. One can easily see that after this modification we can retrieve the precomputed products required for answering a query $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$ by performing $\log n$-bit operations on the indices i and j. (In case these operations are not part of our machine's repertoire, look-up tables for each missing operation are prepared in linear time and linear space as part of the preprocessing. These tables will be used to perform the missing operations in constant time.)

To describe our algorithm for $k > 2$ steps, we shall need to define some very rapidly growing and very slowly growing function. Following [Ta-75], we define:

$A(0,j) = 2j$, for $j \geq 1$
$A(i,0) = 1$, for $i \geq 1$
$A(i,j) = A(i-1, A(i,j-1))$, for $i,j \geq 1$.

Similarly, we define:

$B(0,j) = j^2$, for $j \geq 1$
$B(i,0) = 2$, for $i \geq 1$
$B(i,j) = B(i-1, B(i,j-1))$, for $i,j \geq 1$.

For $i \geq 0$, define $\lambda(2i,x) = MIN\ \{ j \mid A(i,j) \geq x \}$ and $\lambda(2i+1,x) = MIN\ \{ j \mid B(i,j) \geq x \}$.

We give the first five functions explicitly. $\lambda(0,x) = \lceil x/2 \rceil$, $\lambda(1,x) = \lceil \sqrt{x} \rceil$, $\lambda(2,x) = \log x$, $\lambda(3,x) = \log\log x$, $\lambda(4,x) = \log^* x$. Observe that $\lambda(i,x) = MIN\ \{ j \mid \lambda^{(j)}(i-2,x) \leq 1 \}$, for $i \geq 2$, where $\lambda^{(1)}(i,x) = \lambda(i,x)$ and $\lambda^{(j)}(i,x) = \lambda(i, \lambda^{(j-1)}(i,x))$.

Remark: The bound of $\Theta(n\lambda(k,n))$ on the time and space of the preprocessing algorithm for k steps is valid for $k > 1$. Notice that in order to answer Linear Product queries in *one* step we have to invest $\Theta(n^2)$ time and space and not $\Theta(n\lambda(1,n)) = \Theta(n^{1.5})$.

Finally, we define the inverse Ackermann function $\alpha(x) = MIN\ \{ j \mid A(j,j) \geq x \}$.

The preprocessing algorithm for $k > 2$ steps. The preprocessing algorithm for $k > 2$ steps runs in $O(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space. Let l be $\lambda(k-2,n)$ and let m be n/l. (To simplify the presentation we assume that m is an integer.) For each $x = 1,...,m$ we precompute all the products $s_i \circ \cdots \circ s_{lx}$, for $l(x-1) < i < lx$. For each $x = 1,...,m-1$ we precompute all the products $s_{lx+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_j$, for $lx+1 < j < l(x+1)$. This can be done in time and space which are proportional to $2n$. Let $\bar{s}_x$ be $s_{l(x-1)+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{lx}$, for $x = 1,...,m$. We preprocess the m elements $\bar{s}_1, \ldots, \bar{s}_m$, using the preprocessing algorithm for $k-2$ steps. This is done in time and space which are proportional to $(k-2)m\lambda(k-2,m)) \leq (k-2)n$. (Note that this holds also for k=3.) Suppose we are given the query $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$ (for $i < j$). Let x be $\lceil i/l \rceil$ and let y be $\lfloor j/l \rfloor$. If $x = y$ then we can compute the product in at most two steps as in the algorithm for two steps. If $x < y$ then we answer the query as follows:

(i) We compute $\bar{s}_{x+1} \circ \cdots \circ \bar{s}_y$ in $k-2$ steps. (ii) We multiply the products: $s_i \circ \cdots \circ s_{lx}$, $\bar{s}_{x+1} \circ \cdots \circ \bar{s}_y$ and $s_{ly+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_j$. Thus, the rest of the preprocessing should be aimed for answering queries of the form $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$, where $l(x-1) < i < j < lx$, for some $1 \leq x \leq m$. This is done recursively using the same

method. The total preprocessing time and space is given by the recurrence: $T_k(n) \le \frac{n}{\lambda(k-2,n)} T_k(\lambda(k-2,n)) + kn$. It is not difficult to verify that the solution of this recurrence is $kn\lambda(k,n)$. Since k is constant we have that the total preprocessing time and space is $O(n\lambda(k,n))$.
We show how to retrieve the precomputed products required for answering a query $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$. We start by retrieving the first and last required products. Again, let $l = \lambda(k-2,n)$ and $m = n/l$. We distinguish between two cases. (Case A) $x = \lceil i/l \rceil \le y = \lfloor j/l \rfloor$. In this case the first product is $s_i \circ \cdots \circ s_{lx}$ and the last is $s_{ly+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_j$. (Case B) Not Case A. That is, $l(x-1) < i < j < lx$, for some $1 \le x \le m$. Or, in words, i and j belong to the same block of size l. In this case we retrieve the required products using a look-up table. Observe that these products are defined (within their block) by $i_{\bmod l}$ and $j_{\bmod l}$. Hence, the needed look-up table is of size $l \mathrm{x} l$. This table can be computed in linear time and space during the preprocessing stage. The rest of the required products are retrieved recursively in the same method. Notice that we have $\lceil k/2 \rceil$ recursion levels. Hence, the retrieval is done with no time or space overhead.

We conclude the description of the upper bounds by presenting the best linear preprocessing algorithm. This linear time and space preprocessing algorithm enables us to answer Linear Product queries in at most $O(\alpha(n))$ steps.

We start by describing a simple linear preprocessing algorithm (which is not the best). We use a balanced binary tree whose leaves are $s_1, \ldots, s_n$. For each internal vertex we compute the product of its descendent leaves. Clearly, this can be done in linear time and space. It can be easily verified that using these precomputed products we can compute $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$ for any given $1 \le i \le j \le n$ in at most $2\lceil \log n \rceil$ steps. This is done, simply, by "climbing" from the leaf (which represents) s_i and the leaf (which represents) s_j to the lowest common ancestor (LCA) of these leaves.

We combine this simple preprocessing algorithm with the preprocessing algorithm described above to get the best linear preprocessing algorithm. Again, we use the divide-and-conquer technique. Let $l = 2\alpha^2(n)$. We partition $s_1, \ldots, s_n$ into $m = n/l$ blocks of size l each. We preprocess each block using the above simple algorithm. This takes linear time and space. It enables us to answer intra-block queries in at most $2\lceil \log l \rceil = O(\log \alpha(n))$ steps. We aim to preprocess the input so that we will be able to answer inter-block queries in $O(\alpha(n))$ steps. For this, we define $\bar{s}_1, \ldots, \bar{s}_m$ as before (that is, $\bar{s}_x = s_{l(x-1)+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{lx}$) and preprocess these m elements using the preprocessing algorithm for $2\alpha(n)$ steps described above. In addition we precompute for each $x = 1,...,m$ all the products $s_i \circ \cdots \circ s_{lx}$, for $l(x-1) < i < lx$, and for each $x = 1,...,m-1$ all the products $s_{lx+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_j$, for $lx+1 < j < l(x+1)$. This enables us to answer inter-block queries in at most $2\alpha(n)+2$ steps. Observe that the preprocessing takes $2\alpha(n) m \lambda(2\alpha(n),m) = 2\alpha(n)(n/2\alpha^2(n))\alpha(n) = n$ time and space. (*Remark:* The preprocessing algorithm for k steps requires $kn\lambda(k,n)$ time and space. Since in our case $k = 2\alpha(n)+2$ is not a constant we had to take it into consideration.) This implies that we can answer queries in at most $O(\alpha(n))$ steps after linear preprocessing. Note that this is best possible since, by our lower bound proven below, $\Omega(\alpha(n))$ steps is the best number of steps achievable even in case we allow a preprocessing of $n\alpha(n)$ time and space.

The lower bound

We show that a preprocessing of $\Omega(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space is needed for answering Linear Product queries in at most k steps. We have the following assumptions. (1) Given two elements a and b in the semigroup S we can compute $a \circ b$ in constant time. (2) The only available operation on the semigroup elements is the semigroup operation. (*Remark:* Assumption (2) is crucial for the lower bound. To see this, note that if the given semigroup is a group we can perform n prefix computations on the input in linear time and then answer Linear Product queries in constant time using the inverse operation of the group.)

For proving the lower bound we prove a stronger result, which is of independent interest. For two integers $i \le j$, we denote the set of integers $\{ i, i+1,...,j-1, j \}$ by $[i,j]$. (We shall refer to it as the *integer interval* $[i,j]$.) A set $\mathbb{P}$ of subsets of $[1,n]$ is said to be a $k-$*covering* set of $[1,n]$ if each integer interval contained in $[1,n]$ (i.e., each integer interval $[i,j]$, for $1 \le i \le j \le n$) is the union of at most k subsets in $\mathbb{P}$. We want to find a lower bound for the minimum possible cardinality of a $k-$covering set of $[1,n]$, denoted $P_k(n)$. We prove that $P_k(n) = \Omega(n\lambda(k,n))$, for $k \ge 2$. (Note that the size of any 1$-$covering set is $\Omega(n^2)$.) We claim that $P_k(n)$ is a lower bound on the preprocessing needed for answering Linear Product queries in at most k steps. To prove this claim associate each product precomputed in the preprocessing algorithm with the set of indices of the elements consisting it. Notice that this gives a k covering set as each integer interval $[i,j]$ must be the union of at most k of these sets (corresponding to the precomputed products whose product is $s_i \circ s_{i+1} \circ \cdots \circ s_{j-1} \circ s_j$). Moreover, our lower bound is stronger than the lower bound for the Linear Product problem in two aspects: (i) We consider coverings by *subsets*, while for the Linear Product problem we may consider only coverings by integer *intervals*. (ii) We consider any coverings, while for the Linear Product problem we may consider only *exact* coverings. That is, only coverings for which each integer subinterval is the union of at most k *pairwise disjoint* subsets. This stronger result, implies that we can not improve our algorithm even if the semigroup S is commutative and/or consists only of idempotent elements. (That is, $a \circ a = a$, for every element $a \in S$.) An example of a semigroup which is both commutative and consists only of idempotent elements is any set of numbers with the operation maximum or minimum.

The lower bound is proven inductively. We start by proving the lower bound for $k = 2$ and then prove it for any $k > 2$.

The lower bound for $k = 2$. We show that $P_2(n)$ satisfies the recurrence $P_2(n) \geq P_2(\lceil n/2 \rceil - 1) + P_2(\lfloor n/2 \rfloor) + \lfloor n/2 \rfloor$. The lower bound $\Omega(n \log n)$ follows. Let l be $\lfloor n/2 \rfloor + 1$. Partition $[1,n]$ into two subintervals $I_1 = [1, l-1]$ and $I_2 = [l+1, n]$. Clearly, a 2−covering set of $[1,n]$ must contain 2−covering sets of I_1 and I_2. Moreover, these 2−covering sets are disjoint as the 2−covering set of I_1 (resp. I_2) consists only of subsets of I_1 (resp. I_2). We show that any 2−covering set of $[1,n]$ must contain $\lfloor n/2 \rfloor$ additional subsets. Each one of these additional subsets contains either the element l or elements from I_1 and from I_2. Let $\mathbb{P}$ be a 2−covering set of $[1,n]$. We distinguish between two cases:

(Case A) Each element x in I_1 belongs to a subset $Q \in \mathbb{P}$ such that: (i) x is the minimal element in Q. (ii) Q contains elements which are $\geq l$. Clearly, in this case we have $\lfloor n/2 \rfloor$ different subsets containing elements both from I_1 and from $I_2 \cup \{l\}$.

(Case B) Not Case A. That is, there exists an element x in I_1 such that each subset $Q \in \mathbb{P}$ which contains x as its minimal element does not contain elements which are $\geq l$. Consider the intervals $[x,i]$, for $i \geq l$. Each such interval must be the union of at most two subsets in $\mathbb{P}$. Since no subset $Q \in \mathbb{P}$ satisfies conditions (i) and (ii) of Case A, each interval $[x,i]$ must be the union of exactly two subsets in $\mathbb{P}$. One subset, say Q_1, must contain x as its minimal element, and the other subset, say Q_2, must contain l. Also, note that the maximum element in Q_2 must be i. Hence, we have $\lceil n/2 \rceil$ different subsets containing l.

The lower bound for $k > 2$. We show that $P_k(n)$ satisfies the recurrence

$$P_k(n) \geq \frac{n}{\lambda(k-2,n)} P_k(\lambda(k-2,n)-1) + \Omega(n).$$

The lower bound $\Omega(n\,\lambda(k,n))$ follows. Let l be $\lambda(k-2,n)$ and let m be n/l. (Again, we assume that m is an integer.) Partition $[1,n]$ into m subintervals: $I_j = [l(j-1)+1, lj-1]$, for $j = 1,\ldots,m$. Clearly, a k−covering set of $[1,n]$ must contain k–covering sets of each I_j. Moreover, these k-covering sets are disjoint as the k–covering set of I_j consists only of subsets of I_j. We show that any k–covering set of $[1,n]$ must contain $\Omega(n)$ additional subsets.

Let $\mathbb{P}$ be a k–covering set of $[1,n]$. A subset $Q \in \mathbb{P}$ is *global* if it is not contained in any subinterval. An element $x \in I_j$ is *global* if it is an extremal (minimal or maximal) element in some global subset. Finally, a subinterval is *global* if all of its elements are global. We show that $\mathbb{P}$ contains $\Omega(n)$ global subsets. We distinguish between two cases:

(Case A) There are $\lfloor m/2 \rfloor$ global subintervals. Each global subinterval contains $l-1$ global elements. Note that each global element corresponds to at least one global subset, and that each global subset may correspond to at most two global elements. Hence, there must be at least $\frac{1}{4} m(l-1) = \Omega(n)$ global subsets.

(Case B) Not Case A. That is, there are $\lfloor m/2 \rfloor$ subintervals which are not global. Note that each nonglobal subinterval contains at least one nonglobal element. That is, an element which is not extremal in any global subset. Let $x \in I_{j_1}$ and $y \in I_{j_2}$ be nonglobal elements, where $j_1 < j_2$. Consider the interval $[x,y]$. It must be the union of at most k subsets of $\mathbb{P}$. Since no global subset contains x (resp. y) as its minimal (resp. maximal) element, at least one of these subsets must be contained in I_{j_1} (resp. I_{j_2}). Hence the union of the rest of the subsets contains the interval $[lj_1, l(j_2-1)]$. This implies that if we omit from the subsets in $\mathbb{P}$ all the elements which are not of the form lx, for some $x = 1,...,m-1$ such that I_x is nonglobal, we are left with a $(k-2)$–covering set for the set $\{ lx \mid I_x$ is nonglobal$\}$. By the inductive hypothesis this set must contain $\Omega((m/2)\lambda(k-2,m/2)) = \Omega(n)$ nonempty subsets. Note that each such subset corresponds to at least one global subset in $\mathbb{P}$. Hence, $\mathbb{P}$ contains $\Omega(n)$ global subsets.

3. THE TREE PRODUCT QUERY

Let T be an unrooted tree with an element of S associated with each of its vertices. We want to answer on-line queries of the form, "What is the product of the elements associated with the vertices along the path from u to v?" for any pair of vertices u and v in T. (We denote such a query $Tree\text{–}Product(u,v)$.) In this section we present an $O(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries in at most $2k$ steps, where n is the number of vertices and $k \geq 2$ is a fixed parameter. We also show a linear time and linear space preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries in $O(\alpha(n))$ steps.

We start by showing that it is sufficient to preprocess T only in order to answer queries of the form $Tree-Product(u,v)$, where either u is the ancestor of v or vice versa, for an arbitrarily chosen root r of T. Suppose we are given a query $Tree-Product(u,v)$ such that neither u is an ancestor of v nor v is an ancestor of u. We answer it in three stages. (1) We find the lowest common ancestor of u and v (denoted $LCA(u,v)$). (2) We compute $Tree-Product(u,LCA(u,v))$. (3) We compute $Tree-Product(LCA(u,v),v)$. Clearly, $Tree-Product(u,v) = Tree-Product(u,LCA(u,v)) \circ Tree-Product(LCA(u,v),v))$. For computing $LCA(u,v)$ we preprocess T using the linear time and space preprocessing algorithm of [HT-84] or the simplified preprocessing algorithm of [ScV-87]. These preprocessing algorithms enable us to answer queries of the form, "Which vertex is the lowest common ancestor (LCA) of u and v?" for any pair of u and v in T, in constant time. Below, we present a preprocessing algorithm for answering queries of the form $Tree-Product(u,v)$, where u is the ancestor of v in at most k steps. Our preprocessing algorithm takes $O(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space. The preprocessing algorithm for answering queries of the form $Tree-Product(u,v)$, where v is the ancestor of u is similar. (Note that when the semigroup is not commutative it is possible that $Tree-Product(u,v) \neq Tree-Product(v,u)$.) Combining both algorithms results in an $O(n\lambda(k,n))$ time and space preprocessing algorithm for answering a general Tree Product query in at most $2k$ steps.

High-level description of the preprocessing algorithm

Our preprocessing algorithm uses a divide-and-conquer technique as the preprocessing algorithm for answering Linear Product queries. That is, we partition the tree into $O(n/\lambda(k-2,n))$ connected components of size $O(\lambda(k-2,n))$ each and show that after investing linear time and space work we may consider each connected component independently. We decompose the size n problem into problems of size $\lambda(k-2,n)$ in four stages.

Stage 1. We binarize the tree T using a well-known transformation as follows. For each vertex v in T of outdegree $d > 2$, where $w_1, \ldots, w_d$ are the sons of v, we replace v with the new vertices $v_1, \ldots, v_{d-1}$. We make v_i the father of v_{i+1} and w_i, for $i = 1,...,d-2$ and v_{d-1} the father of w_{d-1} and w_d. Let B be the resulting rooted binary tree. Note that the number of vertices in B is at most twice the number of vertices in T. Finally, we associate the unit element of S with each new vertex. (Note that in case S lacks a unit element we can simply add such an element to S.) Clearly, this can be done in linear time and space.

Stage 2. We partition B into $O(n/\lambda(k-2,n))$ connected components of size $O(\lambda(k-2,n))$ each by removing $O(n/\lambda(k-2,n))$ edges. (For $k=2$ we partition B into exactly two components of size between $n/3$ and $2n/3$ each.) The existence of such a partitioning is guaranteed by the separator theorem of [LT-79] for the family of trees with a maximum degree three. The partitioning can be done in linear time and space using Depth First Search as shown in [Fr-85].

Let C be one of the resulting connected components of B. Note that C is also a rooted binary tree.

Stage 3.1. For each vertex x in C we compute $Tree-Product(r_C, x)$, where r_C is the root of C. This can be done in linear time and space using, e.g., Breadth First Search.

Stage 3.2. For each vertex x in C such that at least one son of x (in B) does not belong to C and for each ancestor y of x in C, we compute $Tree-Product(y, x)$. The products are computed in constant time per product by "climbing" from each such vertex x to the root of its component r_C. Note that the total number of such vertices x is $O(n/\lambda(k-2,n))$, also, the number of ancestors of each such vertex in its component is $O(\lambda(k-2,n))$. Hence, the total number of products computed in this stage is $O(n)$. Thus, this stage takes also linear time and space.

Let v be a vertex in T. Denote by $C(v)$ the connected component which contains v and by $F_B(v)$ the father of v in B. We define a new rooted tree $\bar{B}$ as follows. The vertices of $\bar{B}$ correspond to the connected components of B. The root of $\bar{B}$ is $C(r)$, where r is the root of B. For every edge $(v, F_B(v))$ in B such that $C(v) \neq C(F_B(v))$ we make $C(F_B(v))$ the father of $C(v)$. We associate an element from S with each vertex of $\bar{B}$ as follows. (i) The unit element of S is associated with the root of $\bar{B}$. (ii) To each other vertex C in $\bar{B}$ we associate $Tree-Product(r_D, F_B(r_C))$, where r_D is the root of the connected component $D = F_{\bar{B}}(C)$. (Notice that these products were computed in the previous stage.)

Stage 4. We perform the preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries in at most $k-2$ steps on $\bar{B}$. (This is done only if $k>2$.) This takes $O(\lambda(k-2,n)(n/\lambda(k-2,n))) = O(n)$ time and space.

The validity of the decomposition algorithm. We show how to answer a query $Tree-Product(u, v)$ in T, such that u and v belong to different components in at most k steps. Recall that u is an ancestor of v. If $C(u)$ is the father of $C(v)$ then $Tree-Product(u, v)$ is the product of the precomputed $Tree-Product(u, F_B(r_{C(v)}))$ and $Tree-Product(r_{C(v)}, v)$. Suppose $k>2$. Let x be the last vertex of $C(u)$ which appears along the path from u to v in B and let C be the *grandson* of $C(u)$ which appears along the path from $C(u)$ to $C(v)$ in $\bar{B}$. $Tree-Product(u, v)$ is the product of (i) $Tree-Product(u, x)$ in B, precomputed in Stage 3.2 (ii) $Tree-Product(C, C(v))$ in $\bar{B}$. Using the preprocessing of Stage 4, this product can be computed in at most $k-2$ steps. (iii) $Tree-Product(r_{C(v)}, v)$ in B, precomputed in Stage 3.1. In order to be able to retrieve these precomputed products within the stated complexity bounds we must be able to find x and C in constant time. Using the ideas of the algorithms of [HT-84] and [ScV-87] we can preprocess $\bar{B}$ in linear time and space such that we would be able to find the ancestor of w whose distance from the root is d in constant time, for any vertex w in $\bar{B}$ and any distance d. This enables us to find C whose distance from $C(v)$ is given in constant time. Given C, we can also find $x = F_B(r_D)$, where r_D is the root of the connected component $D = F_{\bar{B}}(C)$, in constant time.

All the above discussion applies to $k \geq 2$, i.e., to answering time of $2k \geq 4$ per query. It is worth noting that using similar ideas we can design an $O(n \log n)$ time and space preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries in at most two steps per query and an $O(n \log\log n)$ time and space preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries in at most three steps per query.

We conclude this section by describing a linear time and space preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries in $O(\alpha(n))$ steps.

As in the description of the best linear preprocessing algorithm for answering Linear Product queries, we start by describing a preliminary linear preprocessing algorithm which is not the best.

The preliminary linear preprocessing algorithm. Suppose we are given a tree T, rooted at r. We present a linear time and space preprocessing algorithm which enables us to answer queries of the form $Tree-Product(u, v)$, for any pair of vertices u and v, such that u is an ancestor of v, in $O(\log n)$ steps. Following [AHU-74], [Ta-75] and [HT-84], we partition T into a collection of disjoint paths, as follows. For each vertex v in T, let $SIZE(v)$ be the number of its descendants (including itself). Define an edge (v, u) (where u is the father of v) to be *heavy* if $2SIZE(v) \geq SIZE(u)$ and *light* otherwise. Since the size of a vertex is one greater than the sum of the sizes of its children, at most *one* heavy edge exits from each vertex. Thus, the heavy edges partition the vertices of T into a collection of *heavy paths*. (A vertex with no entering or exiting heavy edge is a single-vertex heavy path.) Define the *head* of a heavy path to be the vertex which is closest to r in this heavy path.

Let u and v be two vertices in T, such that u is an ancestor of v. One can easily verify the following two facts. (1) The vertices along the (unique) path in T between u and v are partitioned by the heavy edges into at most $\lceil \log n \rceil$ heavy sub-paths. (2) Each such heavy sub-path, except possibly the first, starts with the head of its corresponding heavy path.

We are ready now to describe the preliminary preprocessing algorithm. It has three stages each taking linear time and linear space. (1) We partition the input tree T into heavy paths as described above. (2) We preprocess each heavy path using the simple linear preprocessing algorithm for answering Linear Product queries described in Section 2. (3) For each head u of a heavy path and for each vertex v in its heavy path we compute $Tree-Product(u,v)$.

Suppose we are given a query $Tree-Product(u,v)$ we show how to answer it in $O(\log n)$ steps. We have two possibilities.

(Possibility A) u and v are in the same heavy path. In this case we can answer the query using the preprocessing of each heavy path done in Stage 2.

(Possibility B) u and v are not in the same heavy path. Recall that the path from u to v is partitioned into at most $\lceil \log n \rceil$ heavy sub-paths and that each such heavy sub-path, except possibly the first, starts with the head of its corresponding heavy path. Thus, to compute $Tree-Product(u,v)$ we multiply (i) the $O(\log n)$ precomputed products, computed in Stage 2, which give the product of the vertices along the first sub-path. (ii) the $O(\log n)$ precomputed products, computed in Stage 3, which give the product of the vertices along the rest of the sub-paths. (One precomputed product per each such sub-path.)

The linear preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries has five stages. (1) We binarize the input tree T. Let B be the resulting binary tree. (2) We decompose B into connected components of size $O(\alpha^2(n))$ each. As in the decomposition algorithm, described in the start of this section, we compute the following for each connected component C of B. (3.1) For each vertex x in C we compute $Tree-Product(r_C,x)$, where r_C is the root of C. (3.2) For each vertex x in C such that at least one son of x (in B) does not belong to C and for each ancestor y of x in C, we compute $Tree-Product(y,x)$. We define the tree $\bar{B}$ as in the decomposition algorithm above. Note that $\bar{B}$ has $O(n/\alpha^2(n))$ vertices. (4) We preprocess $\bar{B}$ in $O(n)$ time and space using our preprocessing algorithm for answering Tree Product queries in at most $O(\alpha(n))$ steps. As shown before, this preprocessing together with the computation done in Stage 3 enable us to answer inter-component queries in at most $O(\alpha(n))$ steps. (4) We preprocess each component in linear time and linear space using the preliminary linear preprocessing algorithm. This preprocessing enables us to answer intra-component queries in at most $O(\log\alpha(n))$ steps. Thus, we can answer any query in at most $O(\alpha(n))$ steps.

4. OPEN PROBLEMS

We presented efficient preprocessing algorithms for answering product queries. Under reasonable assumptions these algorithms are optimal. Note that they apply only to *static* input. The most important open problem is what can be done when the input is not static. In the Linear Product case, we see three kinds of dynamic operations: (i) changing the value of an element. (ii) adding a new element (iii) deleting an element. The simple linear preprocessing algorithm, described in Section 2, can be easily adapted to the dynamic case. It gives a linear preprocessing algorithm which enables us to perform each of the above three dynamic operations and also to answer Linear Product queries in $O(\log n)$ time. We do not know whether this is best possible and we are also unable to prove any nontrivial lower bound or trade off between preprocessing time and processing time. For the Tree Product case, the possible dynamic operations are: (i) changing the value of an element (ii) linking two trees by adding a new edge. (iii) cutting a tree by deleting an edge. Using the ideas of [HT-84] and [ST-83] we can design a linear preprocessing algorithm for this case which will also enable us to perform each dynamic operation and to answer Tree Product queries in $O(\log n)$ time. Again, we do not know whether this is best possible.

Another direction for future work is to find more applications where the described preprocessing algorithms for answering product queries can be used.

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