CONTINUITY AND CONVEXITY OF PROJECTIONS AND BARYCENTRIC COORDINATES IN CONVEX POLYHEDRA

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If \( s_0, \ldots, s_n \) are linearly independent points of real \( n \)-dimensional Euclidean space \( \mathbb{R}^n \) then each point \( x \) of their convex hull \( S \) has a (unique) representation \( x = \sum_{i=0}^{n} \lambda_i(x)s_i \) with \( \lambda_i(x) \geq 0 \) (i = 0, \ldots, n) and \( \sum_{i=0}^{n} \lambda_i(x) = 1 \), and the barycentric coordinates \( \lambda_0, \ldots, \lambda_n \) are continuous convex functions on \( S \) (cf. [3, p. 288]). We shall show in this paper that given any finite set \( s_0, \ldots, s_m \) of points of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) we can assign barycentric coordinates \( \lambda_0, \ldots, \lambda_m \) to their convex hull \( S \) in such a way that each coordinate is continuous on \( S \) and that one prescribed coordinate (\( \lambda_0 \) say) is convex on \( S \) (Theorem 2); the author does not know whether it is always possible to make all the coordinates convex simultaneously (cf. Example 3). In proving Theorem 2 we shall use certain "projections" which we now define; these projections are in general distinct from those of [1, p. 614] and [2, p. 12]. Given two distinct points \( s_0 \) and \( s \) of \( \mathbb{R}^n \), let \( s_0 s \) be the open half-line consisting of all points \( s_0 + \lambda(s - s_0) \) with \( \lambda > 0 \); given a point \( s_0 \) of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) and a closed subset \( S \) of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) such that \( s_0 \in S \), let \( C(s_0, S) \) be the "cone" formed by the union of all open half-lines \( s_0 s \) with \( s \) in \( S \); and given a point \( x \) in such a cone \( C(s_0, S) \), let \( \pi(x) \) be the (unique) point of \( s_0 x \cap S \) which is closest to \( s_0 \). Then we shall call the function \( \pi \) the "projection of \( C(s_0, S) \) on \( S \)." Our proof of Theorem 2 depends on the fact that if \( S \) is a convex polyhedron then \( \pi \) is continuous (Theorem 1). This result may appear to be obvious, but it is not immediately obvious how a formal proof should be given; moreover, as we shall show (Examples 1 and 2), the conclusion need not remain true for polyhedra \( S \) which are not convex or for convex sets \( S \) which are not polyhedra. The author is indebted to the referee for improvements to Lemma 3, Example 1, and Example 2, and for the remark at the end of § 1.

1. Projections. For any subset \( A \) of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) we shall denote by \( H(A) \) the convex hull of \( A \) and by \( L(A) \) the affine subspace of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) spanned by \( A \) (cf. [2, pp. 21, 15]). If \( A = \{s_1, \ldots, s_p\} \) we shall write \( H(A) = H(s_1, \ldots, s_p) \) and \( L(A) = L(s_1, \ldots, s_p) \). Given two points \( x \) and \( y \) of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) we shall denote by \( (x, y) \) the inner product of \( x \) and \( y \) and by \( |x - y| \) the Euclidean distance \( \sqrt{(x - y, x - y)} \) between \( x \) and \( y \).

**Lemma 1.** Let \( s_0 \) be a point of \( \mathbb{R}^n \), let \( S \) be a closed convex subset of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) such that \( s_0 \notin S \), and let \( \pi \) be the projection of \( C(s_0, S) \) on \( S \). Suppose that points \( x, s_1, \ldots, s_p \) of \( S \) and real numbers \( \lambda_1, \ldots, \lambda_p \) are...
such that \( x = \sum_{i=1}^{p} \lambda_i s_i, \lambda_i > 0 \) (\( i = 1, \cdots, p \)), \( \sum_{i=1}^{p} \lambda_i = 1 \), and \( \pi(x) = x \).

Then

(i) \( \pi(y) = y \) for all \( y \) in \( H(s_1, \cdots, s_p) \); and

(ii) \( s_0 \notin L(s_1, \cdots, s_p) \).

Proof. (i) Given \( y \) in \( H(s_1, \cdots, s_p) \) we can find nonnegative real numbers \( \mu_1, \cdots, \mu_p \) such that \( y = \sum_{i=1}^{p} \mu_i s_i \) and \( \sum_{i=1}^{p} \mu_i = 1 \). Since each \( \lambda_i > 0 \), there exists \( \alpha \) with \( 0 < \alpha < 1 \) such that \( \lambda_i - \alpha \mu_i > 0 \) for each \( i = 1, \cdots, p \). Let

\[
\lambda = \frac{x}{1 - \alpha} - \frac{\alpha y}{1 - \alpha} = \sum_{i=1}^{p} \left( \frac{\lambda_i - \alpha \mu_i}{1 - \alpha} \right) s_i,
\]

then \( z \in H(s_1, \cdots, s_p) \subseteq S \) and \( x = \alpha y + (1 - \alpha)z \). We now use an indirect argument. Suppose that \( \pi(y) \neq y \); then for some \( \beta \) with \( 0 < \beta < 1 \) we have \( \pi(y) = (1 - \beta)s_0 + \beta y \) and

\[
\pi(x) = \alpha(1 - \beta)s_0 + \beta x = \frac{\alpha \pi(y) + \beta (1 - \alpha)z}{\alpha + \beta(1 - \alpha)} = x'
\]
say. It follows from (1) that \( x' \in s_0 x \cap S \) and that \( |s_0 - x'| < |s_0 - x| \), contradicting the hypothesis that \( \pi(x) = x \). This completes the proof of (i).

(ii) Suppose that \( s_0 \in L(s_1, \cdots, s_p) \). Then we can find real numbers \( \nu_1, \cdots, \nu_p \) such that \( s_0 = \sum_{i=1}^{p} \nu_i s_i \) and \( \sum_{i=1}^{p} \nu_i = 1 \). Since each \( \lambda_i > 0 \), there exists \( \gamma \) with \( 0 < \gamma < 1 \) such that \( \lambda_i - \gamma (\lambda_i - \nu) > 0 \) for each \( i = 1, \cdots, p \). But then

\[
w = \gamma s_0 + (1 - \gamma)x = \sum_{i=1}^{p} \left[ \lambda_i - \gamma (\lambda_i - \nu_i) \right] s_i
\]

we have \( w \in s_0 x \cap S \) and \( |s_0 - w| < |s_0 - x| \), contradicting the hypothesis that \( \pi(x) = x \). This completes the proof of (ii).

Let \( s_0, S, \) and \( \pi \) be as in Lemma 1. Then we shall call a subset \( A \) of \( S \) "\( \pi \)-admissible" if \( \pi(x) = x \) for all \( x \) in \( H(A) \).

**Lemma 2.** Let \( s_0, S, \) and \( \pi \) be as in Lemma 1, let \( A \) be a finite \( \pi \)-admissible subset of \( S \), and let \( \pi' \) be the projection of \( C(s_0, H(A)) \) on \( H(A) \). Then

(i) \( \pi(x) = \pi'(x) \) for all \( x \) in \( C(s_0, H(A)) \); and

(ii) \( \pi' \) is a continuous mapping of \( C(s_0, H(A)) \) into \( H(A) \).

Proof. (i) Let \( x \) be any point of \( C(s_0, H(A)) \). Then \( \pi(\pi'(x)) = \pi'(x) \) since \( A \) is \( \pi \)-admissible, hence \( \pi'(x) \) is the point of \( s_0 \pi'(x) \cap S = s_0 x \cap S \) which is closest to \( s_0 \), and hence \( \pi(x) = \pi'(x) \).

(ii) Let \( A = \{s_1, \cdots, s_p\} \) and let \( x_0 = \sum_{i=1}^{p} (1/p) s_i \); then \( \pi(x_0) = x_0 \).
CONTINUITY AND CONVEXITY OF PROJECTIONS 1019

since \( A \) is \( \pi \)-admissible, and hence \( s_0 \notin L(A) \) by Lemma 1. It follows that if \( s_a \) is the point of \( L(A) \) which is closest to \( s_0 \), and \( x \) is any point of \( C(s_b, H(A)) \), then

\[
\pi'(x) = \frac{x - \lambda(x)s_a}{1 - \lambda(x)} \quad \text{where} \quad \lambda(x) = \frac{\langle x - s_a, s_b - s_a \rangle}{|s_b - s_a|^2}.
\]

Hence \( \pi' \) is continuous.

**Lemma 3.** Let \( s_0 \) be a point of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) and let \( T \) be a closed bounded subset of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) such that \( s_0 \not\in T \). Then \( \{s_0\} \cup C(s_0, T) \) is a closed subset of \( \mathbb{R}^n \).

With the help of the Bolzano-Weierstrass theorem it is not difficult to prove Lemma 3.

**Theorem 1.** Let \( s_0, s_1, \ldots, s_m \) be points of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) such that \( s_i \notin H(s_{i-1}, \ldots, s_m) = S \) say, and let \( \pi \) be the projection of \( C(s_0, S) \) on \( S \). Then \( \pi \) is a continuous mapping of \( C(s_0, S) \) into \( S \).

**Proof.** Let \( A_1, \ldots, A_q \) be the subsets of \( \{s_1, \ldots, s_m\} \) which are \( \pi \)-admissible subsets of \( S \). Then each \( x \) in \( C(s_0, S) \) belongs to at least one \( C(s_0, H(A_j)) \) \( (1 \leq j \leq q) \); indeed, given \( x \) in \( C(s_0, S) \), there exist positive integers \( j(1), \ldots, j(p) \) and positive real numbers \( \lambda_1, \ldots, \lambda_p \) such that \( \pi(x) = \sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i x(i) \) and \( \sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i = 1 \), and then \( A = \{s_{x(1)}, \ldots, s_{x(p)}\} \) is \( \pi \)-admissible by Lemma 1(i), and \( x \in C(s_0, H(A)) \). For each \( j = 1, \ldots, q \) let \( \pi_j \) be the projection of \( C(s_0, H(A)) \) on \( H(A_j) \).

To prove the theorem it will be enough to show that, if \( x, x_1, x_2, \ldots \) in \( C(s_0, S) \) are such that \( x = \lim_{n} x_n \), then it follows that \( \pi(x) = \lim_{n} \pi(x_n) \). Let \( J \) be the set of all \( j \) \( (1 \leq j \leq q) \) such that \( x_k \in C(s_0, H(A_j)) \) for infinitely many values of \( k \), and for each \( j \) in \( J \) let \( j(1) < j(2) < \cdots \) be the values of \( k \) such that \( x_k \in C(s_0, H(A_j)) \). Now, for each \( j \) in \( J \), \( x \in C(s_0, H(A_j)) \) by Lemma 3, and hence, by Lemma 2, \( \pi(x) = \pi_j(x) = \lim_{n} \pi_j(x_{j(n)}) = \lim_{n} \pi(x_{j(n)}) \). Since all but a finite number of the positive integers are of the form \( j(l) \) for some \( j \) in \( J \) and some \( l = 1, 2, \ldots \), it follows that \( \pi(x) = \lim_{n} \pi(x_n) \), as we wished to prove.

The following example shows that if \( S \) is a non-convex polyhedron in \( \mathbb{R}^2 \), and \( s_0 \notin S \), then the projection of \( C(s_0, S) \) on \( S \) need not be continuous.

**Example 1.** Let \( s_0 = (0, 2), s_1 = (0, 0), s_2 = (0, 1), \) and \( s_3 = (1, 0) \); and let \( S = H(s_1, s_2) \cup H(s_2, s_3) \). Then the projection of \( C(s_0, S) \) on \( S \) is not continuous at \( s_i \). The following example shows that if \( S \) is a closed convex set in \( \mathbb{R}^3 \), and \( s_0 \notin S \), then the projection of \( C(s_0, S) \) on \( S \) need not be continuous.
EXAMPLE 2. Let $s_0 = (0, 0, 2)$, let $s_\lambda = (0, 0,1)$, let $K$ be the circle consisting of all points $(\xi, \eta, \zeta)$ in $\mathbb{R}^3$ such that $(\xi - 1)^2 + \eta^2 = 1$ and $\zeta = 0$, let $S = H([s_\lambda] \cup K)$, and let $\pi$ be the projection of $C(s_0, S)$ on $S$. Then if we set $x_k = (1 - \cos k^{-1}, \sin k^{-1}, 0)$ ($k = 1, 2, \cdots$) we have $x_k \in C(s_0, S)$ and $\pi(x_k) = x_k$ ($k = 1, 2, \cdots$). When $k \to \infty$, $x_k \to (0, 0, 0) = s_2$ say, and $\pi(x_k) \to s_2$; since $\pi(s_2) = s_1$, this shows that $\pi$ is not continuous at $s_2$.

REMARK. Theorem 1 is valid for each closed convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^2$, and for each strictly convex closed set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$.

2. Barycentric coordinates. Let $s_0$ be a point of $\mathbb{R}^n$, let $S$ be a closed convex subset of $\mathbb{R}^n$ such that $s_0 \not\in S$, and let $\lambda_0$ be the barycentric function of $D(s_0, S)$. Define a real-valued function $\lambda_0$ on $D(s_0, S)$ as follows: let $\lambda_0(s_0) = 1$, let $\lambda_0(x) = 0$ if $x \in S$, and if $x \not= s_0$ and $x \not\in S$ let $\lambda_0(x)$ be defined by the equation $x = \lambda_0(x)s_0 + [1 - \lambda_0(x)]s$, where $\pi$ is the projection of $C(s_0, S)$ on $S$; then each $x$ in $D(s_0, S)$ has a representation of the form

$$x = \lambda_0(x)s_0 + [1 - \lambda_0(x)]s,$$

with $s$ in $S$. We shall call $\lambda_0$ the "barycentric function of $D(s_0, S)$." 

LEMMA 4. Let $s_0$ be a point of $\mathbb{R}^n$, let $S$ be a closed convex subset of $\mathbb{R}^n$ such that $s_0 \not\in S$, and let $\lambda_0$ be the barycentric function of $D(s_0, S)$. Then $0 \leq \lambda_0(x) \leq 1$ for all $x$ in $D(s_0, S)$ and $\lambda_0$ is a convex function on $D(s_0, S)$. If $S$ is a polyhedron then $\lambda_0$ is continuous on $D(s_0, S)$.

Proof. It is clear that $\lambda_0(x) \leq 1$ for all $x$ in $D(s_0, S)$; the proof that $\lambda_0(x) \geq 0$ for all $x$ in $D(s_0, S)$ depends on the convexity of $S$, and will be left to the reader. To prove that $\lambda_0$ is convex on $D(s_0, S)$ we show that if $x, x' \in D(s_0, S)$ and $0 < \alpha < 1$ then

$$\lambda_0(\alpha x + (1 - \alpha)x') \leq \alpha \lambda_0(x) + (1 - \alpha)\lambda_0(x').$$

Let $x' = \alpha x + (1 - \alpha)x'$ and let $\beta = \alpha \lambda_0(x) + (1 - \alpha)\lambda_0(x')$; we may assume that $\beta < 1$ since otherwise (3) is trivial. Then if $\gamma = \alpha [1 - \lambda_0(x)](1 - \beta)^{-1}$, and $s, s'$ in $S$ are such that

$$x = \lambda_0(x)s_0 + [1 - \lambda_0(x)]s, \quad x' = \lambda_0(x')s_0 + [1 - \lambda_0(x')][s'],$$

(cf. (2)), we have

$$\gamma s + (1 - \gamma)s' = -\beta(1 - \beta)^{-1}s_0 + (1 - \beta)^{-1}x',$$

and $\gamma s + (1 - \gamma)s' \in S$ since $S$ is convex. It follows from (4) that $x' \not= s_0$. 


If \( x^* \notin S \) and \( \pi \) is the projection of \( C(s_0, S) \) on \( S \) then
\[
\pi(x^*) = -\lambda_0(x^*)[1 - \lambda_0(x^*)]^{-1}s_0 + [1 - \lambda_0(x^*)]^{-1}x^* ,
\]
and hence by (4) and the definition of \( \pi \), \( \lambda_0(x^*) \leq \beta \), as asserted by (3). If \( x^* \in S \) then (3) is trivial. This completes the proof that \( \lambda_0 \) is convex on \( D(s_0, S) \).

We next show that \( \lambda_0 \) is continuous at \( s_0 \). Given \( \varepsilon \) with \( 0 < \varepsilon < 1 \), let \( \delta = M\varepsilon \), where \( M > 0 \) is the shortest distance from \( s_0 \) to \( S \). Then if \( x \in D(s_0, S) \) and \( 0 < |x - s_0| < \delta \) we have \( x \neq s_0 \), \( x \notin S \), and
\[
M \leq |\pi(x) - s_0| = [1 - \lambda_0(x)]^{-1} |x - s_0| < [1 - \lambda_0(x)]^{-1}M\varepsilon ,
\]
and hence \( 0 < 1 - \lambda_0(x) < \varepsilon \). This proves that \( \lambda_0 \) is continuous at \( s_0 \).

It remains to prove that \( \lambda_0 \) is continuous on \( D(s_0, S) - \{s_0\} \) if \( S \) is a polyhedron. For each \( x \) in \( C(s_0, S) \) define \( \mu_i(x) \) by the equation \( x = \mu_i(x)s_i + [1 - \mu_i(x)]\pi(x) \); then
\[
(5) \quad \mu_i(x) = 1 - |x - s_i|/|\pi(x) - s_i| .
\]
It follows that \( \mu_i(x) \leq 0 \) if \( x \in S \), and that \( \mu_i(x) = \lambda_0(x) > 0 \) if \( x \in D(s_0, S) \), \( x \neq s_{0} \), and \( x \notin S \); thus
\[
(6) \quad \lambda_0(x) = \max [\mu_i(x), 0] \quad (x \in D(s_0, S), \ x \neq s_0) .
\]
If \( S \) is a polyhedron then \( \mu_0 \) is continuous on \( C(s_0, S) \) by Theorem 1 and (5), and hence \( \lambda_0 \) is continuous on \( D(s_0, S) - \{s_0\} \) by (6). This completes the proof of the lemma.

**THEOREM 2.** Let \( s_1, \ldots, s_m \) be points of \( R^n \), and let \( S = H(s_1, \ldots, s_m) \). Then there exist nonnegative real-valued continuous functions \( \lambda_0, \ldots, \lambda_m \) on \( S \), with \( \lambda_0 \) a convex function, such that, for each \( x \) in \( S \),
\[
x = \sum_{i=0}^{m} \lambda_i(x)s_i , \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{i=0}^{m} \lambda_i(x) = 1 .
\]

**Proof.** We use induction on \( m \). The case \( m = 0 \) is trivial. We assume the theorem to have been proved for \( m = M - 1 \) and deduce it for \( m = M \). Let \( T = H(s_1, \ldots, s_m) \). If \( s_0 \in T \) we may set \( \lambda_0(x) = 0 \) for all \( x \) in \( S \), and deduce the existence of \( \lambda_1, \ldots, \lambda_m \) directly from the induction hypothesis; we therefore assume that \( s_0 \notin T \). By the induction hypothesis there exist nonnegative real-valued continuous functions \( \mu_1, \ldots, \mu_M \) on \( T \) such that, for each \( y \) in \( T \), \( y = \sum_{i=1}^{M} \mu_i(y)s_i \), and \( \sum_{i=1}^{M} \mu_i(y) = 1 \). Let \( \lambda_0 \) be the barycentric function of \( D(s_0, T) \). Then each \( x \) in \( S = D(s_0, T) \) has a representation of the form \( x = \lambda_0(x)s_0 + [1 - \lambda_0(x)]s_z \) with \( s_z \) in \( T \) (cf. (2)), and if we now set \( \lambda_i(x) = \mu_i(s_z)[1 - \lambda_0(x)] \) (\( x \in S; \ i = 1, \ldots, M \)) then it follows that the \( \lambda_i \) (\( i = 1, \ldots, M \)) are well-defined.
functions on $S$, and, by Lemma 4, that the functions $\lambda_0, \ldots, \lambda_m$ satisfy all the conditions in the statement of the theorem.

To show that the functions $\lambda_i$ defined in the proof of Theorem 2 need not all be convex we can let $s_0, s_1, s_2, s_3$ be the points $(0, 2), (1, 0), (-1, 0)$, and $(0, 1)$ respectively of $R^2$ and let $S = H(s_0, s_1, s_2, s_3)$; however in this example we obtain convex barycentric coordinates if we interchange the roles of $s_0$ and $s_3$. In the following example some of the barycentric coordinates determined as in the proof of Theorem 2 fail to be convex no matter how $s_0$ is chosen.

**Example 3.** Define $t_0, \ldots, t_4$ in $R^3$ as follows: $t_0 = (0, 0, 1), t_1 = (0, 1, 0), t_2 = (0, -1, 0), t_3 = (1, 0, -1)$, and $t_4 = (-1, 0, -1)$; let $S = H(t_0, \ldots, t_4)$; and let barycentric coordinates be defined for $S$ as in the proof of Theorem 2, with

(i) $t_0$, 
(ii) $t_i$ or $t_2$, and 
(iii) $t_3$ or $t_4$ playing the role of $s_0$. Then if we write $\theta_{\pm}$ for $\max\{\pm\theta, 0\}$ ($\theta$ real) we obtain

(i) $(\xi, 0, 0) = |\xi| t_0 + (\frac{1}{2} - |\xi|)(t_1 + t_2) + \xi t_2 + \xi t_4$ \quad ($|\xi| \leq \frac{1}{2}$),

(ii) $(0, \eta, 0) = \frac{1}{2}(1 - |\eta|) t_0 + \eta t_1 + \eta t_2 + \frac{1}{2}(1 - |\eta|)(t_3 + t_4)$ \quad ($|\eta| \leq 1$), and

(iii) $(0, 0, \zeta) = \zeta t_0 + \frac{1}{2}(1 - |\zeta|)(t_1 + t_2) + \frac{1}{2} \zeta (t_3 + t_4)$ \quad ($|\zeta| \leq 1$),

respectively, and hence in no case are the barycentric coordinates all convex.

The argument in the proof of Theorem 2 amounts to determining barycentric coordinates $\lambda_0, \ldots, \lambda_m$ for $H(s_0, \ldots, s_m)$ by first choosing $\lambda_0$ as small as possible, then choosing $\lambda_1$ as small as possible with this choice of $\lambda_0$, etc. We remark in conclusion that if we first choose $\lambda_0$ as large as possible, then choose $\lambda_1$ as large as possible with this choice of $\lambda_0$, etc., we do not in general obtain convex barycentric coordinates; this may be seen by considering the case of a square in $R^2$.

**References**

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Errett Albert Bishop, *A generalization of the Stone-Weierstrass theorem* 777
Hugh D. Brunk, *Best fit to a random variable by a random variable measurable with respect to a \( \sigma \)-lattice* 785
D. S. Carter, *Existence of a class of steady plane gravity flows* 803
Frank Sydney Cater, *On the theory of spatial invariants* 821
S. Chowla, Marguerite Elizabeth Dunton and Donald John Lewis, *Linear recurrences of order two* 833
Paul Civin and Bertram Yood, *The second conjugate space of a Banach algebra as an algebra* 847
William J. Coles, *Wirtinger-type integral inequalities* 871
Shaun Foguel, *Strongly continuous Markov processes* 879
David James Foulis, *Conditions for the modularity of an orthomodular lattice* 889
Jerzy Görski, *The Sochocki-Plemelj formula for the functions of two complex variables* 897
John Walker Gray, *Extensions of sheaves of associative algebras by non-trivial kernels* 909
Maurice Hanan, *Oscillation criteria for third-order linear differential equations* 919
Haim Hanani and Marian Reichaw-Reichbach, *Some characterizations of a class of unavoidable compact sets in the game of Banach and Mazur* 945
John Grover Harvey, III, *Complete holomorphs* 961
Joseph Hersch, *Physical interpretation and strengthening of M. Protter’s method for vibrating nonhomogeneous membranes; its analogue for Schrödinger’s equation* 971
James Grady Horne, Jr., *Real commutative semigroups on the plane* 981
Nai-Chao Hsu, *The group of automorphisms of the holomorph of a group* 999
F. Burton Jones, *The cyclic connectivity of plane continua* 1013
John Arnold Kalman, *Continuity and convexity of projections and barycentric coordinates in convex polyhedra* 1017
Samuel Karlin, Frank Proschan and Richard Eugene Barlow, *Moment inequalities of Pólya frequency functions* 1023
Tilla Weinstein, *Imbedding compact Riemann surfaces in 3-space* 1035
Azriel Lévy and Robert Lawson Vaught, *Principles of partial reflection in the set theories of Zermelo and Ackermann* 1045
Donald John Lewis, *Two classes of Diophantine equations* 1063
Daniel C. Lewis, *Reversible transformations* 1077
Gerald Otis Losey and Hans Schneider, *Group membership in rings and semigroups* 1089
M. N. Mikhail and M. Nassif, *On the difference and sum of basic sets of polynomials* 1099
Alex I. Rosenberg and Daniel Zelinsky, *Automorphisms of separable algebras* 1109
Robert Steinberg, *Automorphisms of classical Lie algebras* 1119
Ju-Kwei Wang, *Multipliers of commutative Banach algebras* 1131
Neal Zierler, *Axioms for non-relativistic quantum mechanics* 1151