

# Pacific Journal of Mathematics

**RANK  $k$  GRASSMANN PRODUCTS**

MARION-JOSEPHINE LIM

## RANK $k$ GRASSMANN PRODUCTS

M. J. S. LIM

The general question concerning the structure of subspaces of a symmetry class of tensors in which every nonzero element has an irreducible representation as a sum of decomposable (or pure) elements of a given length is as yet largely unanswered. This problem relates to the problem of characterizing the linear transformations on such a symmetry class which map the set of tensors of "irreducible length"  $k$  into itself; i.e., preserves the rank  $k$  of the tensors. Another related problem is: "Is it possible to obtain algebraic relations involving the components of a tensor which imply it has rank ("Irreducible length")  $k$ , for any positive integer  $k$ ?"

This paper is concerned mostly with the third question for the  $\binom{n}{r}$ -dimensional Grassmann Product Space  $\wedge^r U$ , where  $U$  is an  $n$ -dimensional vector space over a field  $F$ . It includes some discussion of the first question for  $F$  algebraically closed and  $r = 2$ .

A vector in  $\wedge^r U$  is said to have rank  $k$  if it can be expressed as the sum of  $k$ , and not less than  $k$ , nonzero pure  $r$ -vectors in  $\wedge^r U$ . We denote the set of such vectors by  $C_k^r(U)$ . The nonzero pure products in  $\wedge^r U$  have rank one.

The results obtained in this paper are as follows: (i) the rank of a vector in  $\wedge^r U$  is unchanged if we extend  $U$ , (ii) in the Grassmann Algebra  $\wedge^0 U + \wedge^1 U + \cdots + \wedge^r U + \cdots$ , multiplication of a Grassmann product by a nonzero vector in  $U$  either annihilates it or preserves its rank, (iii) we can associate with each vector  $z$  in  $C_k^r(U)$  a unique subspace  $U(z)$  in  $U$ , (iv) if  $z \in C_k^r(U)$  and  $\dim U(z)$  is  $rk$ , then  $z$  has rank  $k$ , (v)  $x_1 \wedge y_1 + \cdots + x_s \wedge y_s \in C_s^2(U)$  if and only if  $\{x_1, y_1, \cdots, x_s, y_s\}$  is independent. Finally, we discuss the rank two subspaces in  $\wedge^2 U$  when  $\dim U = 4$ . If  $F$  is algebraically closed, these subspaces are of dimension one. Otherwise, they can be different, as the examples show.

In this paper,  $Q(k, t, n)$  will denote the totality of strictly increasing sequences of  $k$  integers chosen from  $t, t+1, \cdots, n$ ;  $S(k, t, n)$  the totality of sequences of  $k$  integers chosen from  $t, t+1, \cdots, n$ .

Let  $x_1, \cdots, x_n$  be a basis of  $U$ . For  $\omega = (i_1, \cdots, i_r) \in Q(r, 1, n)$ , we denote the product  $x_{i_1} \wedge \cdots \wedge x_{i_r}$  by  $x_\omega$ .

Let  $p$  be an  $r$ -linear alternating function from  $\pi_{i=1}^r E \rightarrow F$ ,  $E = \{1, \cdots, n\}$ .

We will need the following known result.

**THEOREM 1.** (See [2], p. 289-312.) *Let*

$$z = \sum p(\omega)x_\omega, (\omega \in Q(r, 1, n)).$$

Then  $z$  is a pure vector if and only if

$$(1) \quad \sum_{\mu=0}^r (-1)^\mu p(\alpha, j_\mu) p(j_0, \dots, j_{\mu-1}, j_{\mu+1}, \dots, j_r) = 0$$

for all  $\alpha \in S(r-1, 1, n)$  and all  $(j_0, \dots, j_r) \in S(r+1, 1, n)$ .

Furthermore, there are  $(n-r)$  independent equations in the system of equations (1).

The following lemma will be useful.

LEMMA 2. Let  $z = \sum p(\omega)x_\omega$ , ( $\omega \in Q(r, 1, n)$ ;  $z \in C_k^r(U)$ ). Let  $s, m$  be integers,  $0 \leq s \leq r$ ,  $0 \leq m \leq n$ , and let

$$z' = \sum p(1, \dots, s, \alpha)x_1 \wedge \dots \wedge x_s \wedge x_\alpha, \quad (\alpha \in Q(m-s, s+1, m)).$$

Then  $z' \in C_l^r(U)$ , for some  $l$ ,  $0 \leq l \leq k$ .

*Proof.* We prove first the case  $k=1$ .

Let  $\omega = (i_1, \dots, i_r) \in Q(r, 1, n)$ . We set

$$p'(i_1, \dots, i_r) = p(i_1, \dots, i_r)$$

if  $i_1 = 1, \dots, i_s = s$ , and  $s+1 \leq i_{s+1} < \dots < i_r \leq m$ . Otherwise,  $p'(i_1, \dots, i_r) = 0$ . Then  $z' = \sum p'(\omega)x_\omega$ ; ( $\omega \in Q(r, 1, n)$ ). It is easy to show that the system of equations (1) holds for the  $p'$ 's; (there are 3 cases to check; viz.,  $i_t > m$  or  $j_t > m$  for some  $t$ ; not all of the integers  $1, \dots, s$  are present in  $i_1, \dots, i_{r-1}$  or not all of the integers  $1, \dots, s$  are present in  $j_0, \dots, j_r$ ; and, thirdly, all the integers  $1, \dots, s$  are present in  $i_1, \dots, i_{r-1}$  and in  $j_0, \dots, j_r$  with  $i_t \leq m$  ( $t = 1, \dots, r-1$ ) and  $j_l \leq m$  ( $l = 0, \dots, r$ )). Thus, by Theorem 1,  $z' \in C_l^r(U)$  or is zero.

For  $z = z_1 + \dots + z_k \in C_k^r(U)$ ,  $z_i \in C_l^r(U)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, k$ ), we apply the above result to each term  $z_i$ , noting that

$$z' = (z_1 + \dots + z_k)' = z'_1 + \dots + z'_k.$$

THEOREM 3. Let  $U' \subseteq U$  be a subspace.

Then  $C_k^r(U') \subseteq C_k^r(U)$ .

*Proof.* Let  $x_1, \dots, x_s$  be a basis of  $U'$ , and let  $x_1, \dots, x_n$  be an extension of this basis to a basis of  $U$ . Let

$$y_1 + \dots + y_k \in C_k^r(U'), y_i \in C_l^r(U').$$

Suppose  $y_1 + \dots + y_k = z_1 + \dots + z_l \in C_l^r(U)$ ,  $z_i \in C_l^r(U)$ . Clearly

$l \leq k$ .

To show  $l \geq k$ , let

$$z_j = \sum p^{(j)}(\omega) \mathbf{x}_\omega, \omega \in Q(r, 1, n), \quad 1 \leq j \leq l.$$

Since  $y_i \in C_1^r(U)$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq k$ , then

$$\sum_{j=1}^l p^{(j)}(\omega) = 0$$

whenever  $\omega = (i_1, \dots, i_r)$  and  $\{i_1, \dots, i_r\} \not\subseteq \{1, \dots, s\}$ . Hence

$$z'_j = \sum p^{(j)}(\omega) \mathbf{x}_\omega, \omega \in Q(r, 1, s),$$

is in  $C_1^r(U)$  by Lemma 2, and since  $z'_1 + \dots + z'_l = z_1 + \dots + z_l = y_1, \dots, y_k$ , the  $l \geq k$ .

**DEFINITION.** For  $z \in C_k^r(U)$ , we define  $R_r(z) = k$ ; i.e.,  $R_r: \wedge^r U \rightarrow J$  such that  $R_r(z) = k$  if and only if  $z \in C_k^r(U)$ .

We will drop the index  $r$  when no confusion arises.

If  $x \in U, z \in \wedge^r U$  such that  $z = \sum p(\omega) \mathbf{x}_\omega, \omega \in Q(r, 1, n)$ , where  $x_1, \dots, x_n$  is a basis of  $U$ , then we write  $x \wedge z$  for the vector

$$\sum p(\omega) x \wedge \mathbf{x}_\omega, \omega \in Q(r, 1, n).$$

If  $z = x_1 \wedge \dots \wedge x_r$  is a nonzero pure vector in  $\wedge^r U$ , then we shall denote the  $r$ -dimensional space  $\langle x_1, \dots, x_n \rangle$  by  $U(z)$ .

**THEOREM 4.** Let  $y = y_1 + \dots + y_k \in C_k^r(U), y_i \in C_1^r(U), 1 \leq i \leq k$ .

(i) Suppose  $x \wedge (y_1 + \dots + y_k) = 0, x \in U$ . Then  $x \in U(y_i), i = 1, \dots, k$ .

(ii) Suppose  $x \in U, x \notin U(y_1) + \dots + U(y_k)$ . Then  $x \wedge y \in C_k^{r+1}(U)$ .

*Proof.* (i) Suppose on the contrary that  $x \notin U(y_1)$ . Then

$$x \wedge y_1 = x \wedge \left( - \sum_{i=2}^k y_i \right) \neq 0.$$

Thus, we can choose a basis  $x_1, \dots, x_n$  of  $U$  such that

$$x = x_1, y_1 = x_2 \wedge \dots \wedge x_{r+1}.$$

Then

$$\left( - \sum_{i=2}^k y_i \right) = x_2 \wedge \dots \wedge x_{r+1} + \sum p(1, \alpha) x_1 \wedge \mathbf{x}_\alpha, (\alpha \in Q(r-1, 2, n)).$$

Hence  $(-\sum_{i=2}^k y_i) = y_1 + x \wedge v$ , where  $v = \sum p(1, \alpha) \mathbf{x}_\alpha \in \wedge^{r-1} U$ . Taking

$s = 1$ ,  $m = n$  in Lemma 2, it is easy to see that since  $R(-\sum_{i=2}^k) = k - 1$ , then  $R(x \wedge v) \leq k - 1$ . But  $x \wedge v = -(y_1 + \dots + y_k)$  which implies  $R(x \wedge v) = k$ . We have a contradiction. Therefore  $x \in U(y_1)$ . Similarly,  $x \in U(y_i)$ ,  $i = 2, \dots, k$ .

(ii) Suppose that

$$x \wedge y = z_1 \cdots + z_l \in C_l^{r+1}(U), z_i \in C_1^{r+1}(U), \quad 1 \leq i \leq l.$$

Clearly  $l \leq k$ .

To show  $l \geq k$ , we choose a basis  $x_1, \dots, x_n$  of  $U$  such that  $x = x_1$  and  $x_2, \dots, x_s$  is a basis of  $U(y_1) + \dots + U(y_k)$ . Then

$$y = \sum p(\omega)x_\omega, (\omega \in Q(r, 2, n)).$$

Using (i) and the fact that  $x \wedge (x \wedge y) = x_1 \wedge (z_1 + \dots + z_l) = 0$ , we can express each  $z_j = x_1 \wedge (\sum p^{(j)}(\omega)x_\omega)$ ;  $\omega \in Q(r, 2, n)$ ,  $1 \leq j \leq l$ .

Now  $\sum_{j=1}^l p^{(j)}(\omega) = 0$ , ( $\omega = (i_1, \dots, i_r)$ ), unless

$$\{i_1, \dots, i_r\} \subseteq \{2, \dots, s\}.$$

In the latter case,  $\sum_{j=1}^l p^{(j)}(\omega) = p(\omega)$ . Therefore,  $z_1 + \dots + z_l = z'_1 + \dots + z'_l = x \wedge y$  where

$$z'_j = \sum p^{(j)}(\omega)x_1 \wedge x_\omega, (\omega \in Q(r, 2, s)).$$

Hence  $y = z'_1 + \dots + z'_l$ , where  $z'_j = \sum p^{(j)}(\omega)x_\omega$ , ( $\omega \in Q(r, 2, s)$ ), which implies  $R(y) \leq l$ , i.e.,  $k \leq l$ .

**THEOREM 5.** Let  $y_i \in C_1^r(U)$ ,  $z_i \in C_1^r(U)$ , ( $i = 1, \dots, k$ ) such that  $y_1 + \dots + y_k = z_1 + \dots + z_k$ .

Then  $U(y_1) + \dots + U(y_k) = U(z_1) + \dots + U(z_k)$ .

*Proof.* Suppose on the contrary that there exists a vector  $x \in U(y_1)$  such that  $x \notin U(z_1) + \dots + U(z_k)$ . Since  $x \wedge (y_1 + \dots + y_k) = x \wedge (z_1 + \dots + z_k)$ , then

$$R(x \wedge (y_1 + \dots + y_k)) = R(x \wedge (z_1 + \dots + z_k)) \leq k - 1.$$

But, by Theorem 4 (ii),  $R(x \wedge (z_1 + \dots + z_k)) = k$ , which is a contradiction.

**DEFINITION.** Let

$$z = z_1 + \dots + z_k \in C_k^r(U), z_i \in C_1^r(U), \quad i = 1, \dots, k.$$

Then we define  $U(z)$  to be the subspace  $U(z_1) + \dots + U(z_k)$ .

**THEOREM 6.** Let  $z_i \in C_1^r(U)$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, k$ , and let

$$\dim [U(z_1) + \cdots + U(z_k)] = rk .$$

Then  $R(z_1 + \cdots + z_k) = k$ .

*Proof.* Suppose the Theorem is false. Let  $k$  be the smallest integer for which it fails. Clearly  $k \geq 2$ . Let

$$z_1 + \cdots + z_k = y_1 + \cdots + y_l \in C_l^r(U), y_i \in C_1^r(U) .$$

Let  $x \in U(z_1)$ . Then  $x \notin U(z_2) + \cdots + U(z_k)$ . By the choice of

$$k, z_2 + \cdots + z_k \in C_{k-1}^r(U) .$$

Hence, by Theorem 4 (ii),

$$x \wedge (z_2 + \cdots + z_k) = x \wedge (z_1 + \cdots + z_k) = x \wedge (y_1 + \cdots + y_l) ,$$

and  $l \geq k - 1$ . But we assumed  $l < k$ . Therefore  $l = k - 1$ .

By Theorem 5,

$$U(x \wedge z_2) + \cdots + U(x \wedge z_k) = U(x \wedge y_1) + \cdots + U(x \wedge y_{k-1}) .$$

Hence  $\langle x \rangle + U(z_2) + \cdots + U(z_k) = \langle x \rangle + U(y_1) + \cdots + U(y_{k-1})$ .

Now let  $x' \in U(z_1)$ , independent of  $x$ . Then again

$$\langle x' \rangle + U(z_2) + \cdots + U(z_k) = \langle x' \rangle + U(y_1) + \cdots + U(y_{k-1}) .$$

Taking intersections, we obtain

$$U(z_2) + \cdots + U(z_k) = U(y_1) + \cdots + U(y_{k-1}) .$$

By a similar argument,

$$\begin{aligned} V_i &= U(z_1) + \cdots + U(z_{i-1}) + U(z_{i+1}) + \cdots + U(z_k) \\ &= U(y_1) + \cdots + U(y_{k-1}) . \end{aligned}$$

Hence  $U(y_1) + \cdots + U(y_{k-1}) = \bigcap_{i=1}^k V_i = \{0\}$ , which is impossible. The result follows.

**THEOREM 7.**  $\sum_{i=1}^s x_i \wedge y_1 \in C_s^2(U)$  if and only if  $\{x_1, y_1, \cdots, x_s, y_s\}$  is independent.

*Proof.* If  $\{x_1, y_1, \cdots, x_s, y_s\}$  is dependent, it is easy to show that  $R(\sum_{i=1}^s x_i \wedge y_i) \leq s - 1$ . It follows that the condition is necessary.

The converse follows easily from Theorem 6.

**COROLLARY 8.** Let  $f = \sum_{i=1}^s x_i \wedge y_i$ , and  $\dim \langle x_1, y_1, \cdots, x_s, y_s \rangle < 2k, k \leq s$ . Then  $R(f) \leq k - 1$ .

We shall now direct our attention to the rank 2 subspaces of  $\wedge^2 U$ .

**DEFINITION.** A rank 2 subspace  $H$  in  $\wedge^2 U$  is a subspace whose nonzero members are in  $C_2^2(U)$ .

In this paper, we shall restrict our considerations to the case  $\dim U = 4$ . It is clear from Theorem 7 that  $C_2^2(U)$  is empty when  $\dim U < 4$ .

**LEMMA 9.** Let  $f \in C_2^2(U)$  and let  $\{y_1, \dots, y_4\}$  be any basis of  $U(f)$ . Then  $f$  has a representation  $f = y_1 \wedge u + v \wedge w$ , where  $\langle u, v, w \rangle = \langle y_2, y_3, y_4 \rangle$ .

*Proof.* Since  $f \in \wedge^2 \langle y_1, \dots, y_4 \rangle$ , then

$$\begin{aligned} f &= \sum p(\omega) \mathbf{y}_\omega, \quad (\omega \in Q(2, 1, 4)), \quad p(\omega) \in F, \\ &= y_1 \wedge (\sum_{j=2}^4 p(1, j) y_j) + \sum p(\alpha) \mathbf{y}_\alpha; \quad (\alpha \in Q(2, 2, 4)), \end{aligned}$$

which is of the form  $y_1 \wedge u + v \wedge w$ . It follows from Theorem 7 and its corollary, and the fact that  $R(f) = 2$  that

$$\langle u, v, w \rangle = \langle y_2, y_3, y_4 \rangle.$$

**THEOREM 10.** Let  $\dim U = 4$  and let  $H$  be a rank 2 subspace in  $\wedge^2 U$ . Then  $\dim H = 1$ , provided  $F$  is algebraically closed.

*Proof.* Let  $f$  be a nonzero member of  $H$ . Then  $f$  has a representation  $f = x_1 \wedge x_2 + x_3 \wedge x_4$  in  $C_2^2(U)$ . By Theorem 7,

$$U = U(f) = \langle x_1, \dots, x_4 \rangle.$$

If  $f'$  is any other nonzero member of  $H$ , then  $U(f') = \langle x_1, \dots, x_4 \rangle$ . By Lemma 9,  $f' = x_1 \wedge u + v \wedge w$ ,  $\langle u, v, w \rangle = \langle x_2, x_3, x_4 \rangle$ . Hence  $\dim \langle v, w \rangle \cap \langle x_3, x_4 \rangle \leq 1$ . Without loss of generality, we shall assume  $x_3 \in \langle v, w \rangle \cap \langle x_3, x_4 \rangle$ . Hence

$$f' = x_1 \wedge u + x_3 \wedge w', \quad \langle u, w' \rangle \subset \langle x_2, x_3, x_4 \rangle.$$

Let  $u = \sum_{i=2}^4 b_i x_i$ ;  $w' = \sum_{i=2,4} d_i x_i$ ;  $b_i, d_i \in F$ . Then for

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda \in F, z = \lambda f + f' &= x_1 \wedge (\lambda x_2 + b_2 x_2 + b_3 x_3 + b_4 x_4) \\ &\quad + x_3 \wedge (\lambda x_4 + d_2 x_2 + d_4 x_4). \end{aligned}$$

The condition that the vectors

$$x_1, (\lambda x_2 + b_2 x_2 + b_3 x_3 + b_4 x_4), x_3, (\lambda x_4 + d_2 x_2 + d_4 x_4)$$

be independent; i.e.,  $R(z) = 2$ , is equivalent to the condition that the determinant

$$\Gamma(\lambda, f_1, f_2) = \begin{vmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda + b_2 & b_3 & b_4 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & d_2 & 0 & \lambda + d_4 \end{vmatrix} be$$

nonzero. Now

$$\Gamma(\lambda, f_1, f_2) = \lambda^2 + \lambda(d_4 + b_2) + (b_2d_4 - d_2b_4) = g(\lambda) .$$

Since  $u, w'$  are independent,  $(b_2d_4 - d_2b_4) \neq 0$ . Hence  $g(\lambda)$  is a non-trivial polynomial in  $\lambda$ , and hence, for some nonzero  $\lambda$  in  $F$ ,  $g(\lambda) = 0$ ; i.e.,  $\Gamma(\lambda, f_1, f_2) = 0$ . For such a  $\lambda, R(z) \leq 1$ . It follows that  $\dim H = 1$ .

The above theorem is false when  $F$  is *nonalgebraically closed*. For example, the vectors

$$f_1 = x_1 \wedge x_2 + x_3 \wedge x_4$$

and

$$f_2 = x_1 \wedge (x_3 + x_4) + (x_3 - x_2) \wedge x_4$$

in  $C_2^2(U)$ , where  $U = \langle x_1, \dots, x_4 \rangle$ ,  $\dim U = 4$ ,  $F \equiv \text{Reals}$ , generate a 2-dimensional rank 2 subspace in  $\wedge^2 U$ .

It is interesting to note that if  $F$  (nonalgebraically closed) has an *irreducible quadratic* polynomial  $h(\lambda)$ , and  $\dim U = 4$ , then we can construct 2 independent vectors  $f_1, f_2$  in  $C_2^2(U)$ , which will generate a 2-dimensional rank 2 subspace in  $\wedge^2 U$ , and such that  $\Gamma(\lambda, f_1, f_2) = h(\lambda)$  (see Theorem 10). The construction is as follows:

Let  $\dim U = 4, U = \langle x_1, \dots, x_4 \rangle$ . Let  $h(\lambda) = \lambda^2 + a_1\lambda + a_0$  be irreducible in  $F$ . The companion matrix of  $h(\lambda)$  is

$$B = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -a_0 & -a_1 \end{bmatrix}; \quad \lambda I - B = \begin{bmatrix} \lambda & -1 \\ a_0 & \lambda + a_1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Now

$$\det(\lambda I - B) = \begin{vmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & a_0 & 0 & \lambda + a_1 \end{vmatrix} = h(\lambda) \neq 0 .$$

Taking this determinant to be  $\Gamma(\lambda, f_1, f_2)$  corresponding to  $z = \lambda f_1 + f_2$ , where  $f_1, f_2 \in C_2^2(U), \lambda \in F$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} f_1 &= x_1 \wedge x_2 + x_3 \wedge x_4 \\ f_2 &= x_1 \wedge (-x_4) + x_3 \wedge (a_0x_2 + a_1x_4) . \end{aligned}$$



The construction is complete. Thus, for example, if  $F \equiv \text{Rationals}$  and  $h(\lambda) = \lambda^2 - 2$ , then

$$f_1 = x_1 \wedge x_2 + x_3 \wedge x_4$$

and

$$f_2 = x_1 \wedge (-x_4) + (-2)x_3 \wedge x_2,$$

and  $f_1, f_2$  generate a 2-dimensional rank 2 subspace in  $\wedge^2 U$ .

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# Pacific Journal of Mathematics

Vol. 29, No. 2

June, 1969

Bruce Langworthy Chalmers, <i>On boundary behavior of the Bergman kernel function and related domain functionals</i> .....	243
William Eugene Coppage, <i>Peirce decomposition in simple Lie-admissible power-associative rings</i> .....	251
Edwin Duda, <i>Compactness of mappings</i> .....	259
Earl F. Ecklund Jr., <i>On prime divisors of the binomial coefficient</i> .....	267
Don E. Edmondson, <i>A modular topological lattice</i> .....	271
Phillip Alan Griffith, <i>A note on a theorem of Hill</i> .....	279
Marcel Herzog, <i>On finite groups with independent cyclic Sylow subgroups</i> .....	285
James A. Huckaba, <i>Extensions of pseudo-valuations</i> .....	295
S. A. Huq, <i>Semivarieties and subfunctors of the identity functor</i> .....	303
I. Martin (Irving) Isaacs and Donald Steven Passman, <i>Finite groups with small character degrees and large prime divisors. II</i> .....	311
Carl Kallina, <i>A Green's function approach to perturbations of periodic solutions</i> .....	325
Al (Allen Frederick) Kelley, Jr., <i>Analytic two-dimensional subcenter manifolds for systems with an integral</i> .....	335
Alistair H. Lachlan, <i>Initial segments of one-one degrees</i> .....	351
Marion-Josephine Lim, <i>Rank <math>k</math> Grassmann products</i> .....	367
Raymond J. McGivney and William Henry Ruckle, <i>Multiplier algebras of biorthogonal systems</i> .....	375
J. K. Oddson, <i>On the rate of decay of solutions of parabolic differential equations</i> .....	389
Helmut R. Salzmann, <i>Geometries on surfaces</i> .....	397
Annemarie Schlette, <i>Artinian, almost abelian groups and their groups of automorphisms</i> .....	403
Edgar Lee Stout, <i>Additional results on modules over polydisc algebras</i> .....	427
Lajos Tamássy, <i>A characteristic property of the sphere</i> .....	439
Mark Lawrence Teply, <i>Some aspects of Goldie's torsion theory</i> .....	447
Freddie Eugene Tidmore, <i>Extremal structure of star-shaped sets</i> .....	461
Leon Jarome Weill, <i>Unconditional and shrinking bases in locally convex spaces</i> .....	467