Notes 23 for CS 170

Some NP-complete Numerical Problems

0.1 Subset Sum

The **Subset Sum** problem is defined as follows:

- Given a sequence of integers $a_1, \ldots, a_n$ and a parameter k,
- Decide whether there is a subset of the integers whose sum is exactly k. Formally, decide whether there is a subset $I \subseteq \{1, \ldots, n\}$ such that $\sum_{i \in I} a_i = k$.

Subset Sum is a true *decision problem*, not an optimization problem forced to become a decision problem. It is easy to see that Subset Sum is in NP.

We prove that Subset Sum is NP-complete by reduction from Vertex Cover. We have to proceed as follows:

- Start from a graph G and a parameter k.
- Create a sequence of integers and a parameter k'.
- Prove that the graph has vertex cover with k vertices iff there is a subset of the integers that sum to k'.

Let then $G = (V, E)$ be our input graph with n vertices, and let us assume for simplicity that $V = \{1, \ldots, n\}$, and let k be the parameter of the vertex cover problem.

We define integers $a_1, \ldots, a_n$, one for every vertex; and also integers $b_{(i,j)}$, one for every edge $(i, j) \in E$; and finally a parameter k'. We will define the integers a_i and $b_{(i,j)}$ so that if we have a subset of the a_i and the $b_{(i,j)}$ that sums to k', then: the subset of the a_i corresponds to a vertex cover C in the graph; and the subset of the $b_{(i,j)}$ corresponds to the edges in the graph such that exactly one of their endpoints is in C. Furthermore the construction will force C to be of size k.

How do we define the integers in the subset sum instance so that the above properties hold? We represent the integers in a matrix. Each integer is a row, and the row should be seen as the base-4 representation of the integer, with $|E| + 1$ digits.

The first column of the matrix (the "most significant digit" of each integer) is a special one. It contains 1 for the a_is and 0 for the $b_{(i,j)}$s.

Then there is a column (or digit) for every edge. The column (i, j) has a 1 in a_i, a_j and $b_{(i,j)}$, and all 0s elsewhere.

The parameter k' is defined as

$$k' := k \cdot 4^{|E|} + \sum_{j=0}^{|E|-1} 2 \cdot 4^i$$

This completes the description of the reduction. Let us now proceed to analyze it.

From Covers to Subsets Suppose there is a vertex cover C of size k in G. Then we choose all the integers a_i such that $i \in C$ and all the integers $b_{(i,j)}$ such that exactly one of i and j is in C. Then, when we sum these integers, doing the operation in base 4, we have a 2 in all digits except for the most significant one. In the most significant digit, we are summing one $|C| = k$ times. The sum of the integers is thus k'.

From Subsets to Covers Suppose we find a subset $C \subseteq V$ and $E' \subseteq E$ such that

$$\sum_{i \in C} a_i + \sum_{(i,j) \in E'} b_{(i,j)} = k'$$

First note that we never have a carry in the $|E|$ less significant digits: operations are in base 4 and there are at most 3 ones in every column. Since the $b_{(i,j)}$ can contribute at most one 1 in every column, and k' has a 2 in all the $|E|$ less significant digits, it means that for every edge (i,j) C must contain either i or j. So C is a cover. Every a_i is at least $4^{|E|}$, and k' gives a quotient of k when divided by $4^{|E|}$. So C cannot contain more than k elements.

0.2 Partition

The **Partition** problem is defined as follows:

- Given a sequence of integers $a_1, \ldots, a_n$.
- Determine whether there is a partition of the integers into two subsets such the sum of the elements in one subset is equal to the sum of the elements in the other.

  Formally, determine whether there exists $I \subseteq \{1, \ldots, n\}$ such that $\sum_{i \in I} a_i = (\sum_{i=1}^n a_i)/2$.

Clearly, Partition is a special case of Subset Sum. We will prove that Partition is is NP-hard by reduction from Subset Sum.[1]

Given an instance of Subset Sum we have to construct an instance of Partition. Let the instance of Subset Sum have items of size $a_1, \ldots, a_n$ and a parameter k, and let $A = \sum_{i=1}^n a_i$.

Consider the instance of Partition $a_1, \ldots, a_n, b, c$ where $b = 2A - k$ and $c = A + k$.

Then the total size of the items of the Partition instance is $4A$ and we are looking for the existence of a subset of $a_1, \ldots, a_n, b, c$ that sums to $2A$.

It is easy to prove that the partition exists if and only if there exists $I \subseteq \{1, \ldots, n\}$ such that $\sum_i a_i = k$.

0.3 Bin Packing

The **Bin Packing** problem is one of the most studied optimization problems in Computer Science and Operation Research, possibly the second most studied after TSP. It is defined as follows:

- Given items of size $a_1, \ldots, a_n$, and given unlimited supply of bins of size B, we want to pack the items into the bins so as to use the minimum possible number of bins.

[1]The reduction goes in the non-trivial direction!

You can think of bins/items as being CDs and MP3 files; breaks and commercials; bandwidth and packets, and so on.

The decision version of the problem is:

- Given items of size $a_1, \ldots, a_n$, given bin size B, and parameter k,
- Determine whether it is possible to pack all the items in k bins of size B.

Clearly the problem is in NP. We prove that it is NP-hard by reduction from Partition.

Given items of size $a_1, \ldots, a_n$, make an instance of Bin Packing with items of the same size and bins of size $(\sum_i a_i)/2$. Let $k = 2$.

There is a solution for Bin Packing that uses 2 bins if and only if there is a solution for the Partition problem.