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# Algorithmic aspects of covering supermodular functions under matroid constraints

Kristóf Bérczi\*, Tamás Király\*\*, and Yusuke Kobayashi\*\*\*

## Abstract

A common generalization of earlier results on arborescence packing and the covering of intersecting bi-set families was presented by the authors in [2]. The present paper investigates the algorithmic aspects of that result and gives a polynomial-time algorithm for the corresponding optimization problem.

## 1 Introduction

In [2], we presented a result that joined two different directions of research on extensions of Edmonds' disjoint branchings theorem [5]. One direction, initiated by Frank [6] and pursued by Szegő [14] and by Bérczi and Frank [1], considered an abstract problem involving the covering of families of sets or bi-sets (see section 1.1 for definitions). The other direction of research, represented by the work of Katoh and Tanigawa [10], Durand de Gevigney, Nguyen, and Szigeti [4], and Cs. Király [11], involved a matroid given on the possible roots, with the requirement that roots of the branchings reaching a given node  $v$  should be a maximal independent set in the set of roots from which  $v$  is reachable. The common generalization in [2], described in detail in section 1.2, considers a digraph, bi-set families  $\mathcal{F}_i, \mathcal{G}_i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, t$ ), and a matroid on ground set  $[t] = \{1, \dots, t\}$ . A succinct description of the problem is that the digraph should be partitioned into arc sets  $A_1, \dots, A_t$  in such a way that for every  $X \subseteq V$  the index set  $\{i : A_i \text{ enters } X\} \cup \{j : X \in \mathcal{G}_j\}$  should span the index set  $\{i : X \in \mathcal{F}_i \cup \mathcal{G}_i\}$  in the matroid. The paper proved that for bi-set families with certain properties the natural cut condition is sufficient, but the question of algorithmic complexity was left open.

In this paper we show that if the bi-set families are given by digraph representations, then there is a polynomial-time algorithm for finding a valid decomposition of the arc

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set. Moreover, the problem of finding a minimum cost arc subset that has a valid decomposition is also in P. This result gives the first polynomial-time algorithm for the minimum-cost version of the problem in [11].

## 1.1 Notation

Let  $D = (V, A)$  be a directed graph (digraph, for short). The **tail** and **head** nodes of an arc  $a$  are denoted by  $t(a)$  and  $h(a)$ , respectively. A **bi-set** is a pair  $X = (X_I, X_O)$  such that  $X_I \subseteq X_O \subseteq V$  where  $X_I$  and  $X_O$  are called the **inner** and the **outer set** of  $X$ , respectively. The family of all bi-sets on ground-set  $V$  is denoted by  $\mathcal{P}_2(V) = \mathcal{P}_2$ . The **intersection** and **union** of bi-sets can be defined in a straightforward manner: for bi-sets  $X$  and  $Y$ , we define  $X \cap Y = (X_I \cap Y_I, X_O \cap Y_O)$  and  $X \cup Y = (X_I \cup Y_I, X_O \cup Y_O)$ . An edge  $a \in A$  **enters** or **covers** a bi-set  $X$  if  $h(a) \in X_I$  and  $t(a) \notin X_O$ , and it **leaves**  $X$  if  $h(a) \notin X_O$  and  $t(a) \in X_I$ . A subset of edges  $A' \subseteq A$  **covers** a bi-set family  $\mathcal{F}$  if each member of  $\mathcal{F}$  is covered by at least one arc in  $A'$ . The set of arcs entering (leaving) a bi-set  $X$  are denoted by  $\Delta^{in}(X)$  ( $\Delta^{out}(X)$ ), while the number of arcs entering (leaving) a bi-set  $X$  are denoted by  $\varrho(X)$  ( $\delta(X)$ ). An arc is **contained** in a bi-set  $X$  if  $t(a) \in X_O$  and  $h(a) \in X_I$ . We say that  $X \subseteq Y$  if  $X_I \subseteq Y_I$  and  $X_O \subseteq Y_O$ . Two bi-sets are **intersecting** if  $X_I \cap Y_I \neq \emptyset$ . A family  $\mathcal{F}$  of bi-sets is called **intersecting** if  $X, Y \in \mathcal{F}, X_I \cap Y_I \neq \emptyset$  implies  $X \cap Y, X \cup Y \in \mathcal{F}$ .

A **bi-set function** is a function  $p : \mathcal{P}_2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ . A bi-set function  $p$  is called **fully supermodular** (respectively, **intersecting supermodular**) if

$$p(X) + p(Y) \leq p(X \cap Y) + p(X \cup Y)$$

for every  $X, Y \in \mathcal{P}_2$  (respectively, for every intersecting  $X, Y \in \mathcal{P}_2$ ). If the reverse inequality holds, we call  $p$  **fully submodular**. A basic example for a submodular bi-set function is the in-degree function  $\varrho$ . We call  $p$  **positively intersecting supermodular** or **positively intersecting submodular** if the corresponding inequality holds whenever  $X$  and  $Y$  are intersecting and  $p(X), p(Y) > 0$ .

## 1.2 Problem definition

Motivated by results of de Geigney, Nguyen and Szigeti [4] and Cs. Király [11] on packing arborescences under matroid constraints, and by results of Frank [6], Szegő [14], and Bérczi and Frank [1] on covering intersecting set families, we considered the following problem in [2].

Let  $\mathcal{M} = ([t], r)$  be a matroid. The **closure** of  $I \subseteq [t]$  is denoted by  $\text{Span}(I)$ , that is,  $\text{Span}(I) = \{i : r(I + i) = r(I)\}$ . A set  $I \subseteq [t]$  is called **closed** if  $\text{Span}(I) = I$ . Let  $D = (V, A)$  be a digraph and  $\mathcal{F}_1, \dots, \mathcal{F}_t$  be intersecting,  $\mathcal{G}_1, \dots, \mathcal{G}_t$  be arbitrary bi-set families over  $\mathcal{P}_2$  with the property that  $\mathcal{F}_i \cap \mathcal{G}_i = \emptyset$  for each  $i \in [t]$ . We denote the family of bi-sets appearing in at least one of the families  $\mathcal{F}_i$  by  $\mathcal{F} = \bigcup \mathcal{F}_i$ .

For a bi-set  $X \in \mathcal{P}_2$ , let

$$\begin{aligned} I_X &= \{i : X \in \mathcal{F}_i\}, \\ J_X &= \{i : X \in \mathcal{G}_i\}. \end{aligned}$$

The disjointness of  $\mathcal{F}_i$  and  $\mathcal{G}_i$  means that  $I_X \cap J_X = \emptyset$  for each bi-set  $X \in \mathcal{P}_2$ . We introduce the following bi-set function defined on  $\mathcal{P}_2$ :

$$p(X) = \begin{cases} r(I_X \cup J_X) - r(J_X) & \text{if } X \in \mathcal{F}, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

A bi-set  $X$  is said to be **active** if  $p(X) > 0$ , or equivalently  $I_X \setminus \text{Span}(J_X) \neq \emptyset$ . We denote the set  $I_X \setminus \text{Span}(J_X)$  by  $I_X^{\text{act}}$  and say that  $X$  is **active for**  $i$  if  $i \in I_X^{\text{act}}$ . A bi-set  $X$  is called **tight** if  $\varrho(X) = p(X) > 0$  and  $I_X \neq [t]$ . A bi-set is **tight for**  $i$  if it is tight and  $i \notin I_X^{\text{act}}$ . Note that every active or tight bi-set is in  $\mathcal{F}$ .

We say that  $\mathcal{F}_1, \dots, \mathcal{F}_t, \mathcal{G}_1, \dots, \mathcal{G}_t$  satisfy the **active intersection property** if

$$\text{(AIP)} \quad X \in \mathcal{F}_i, Y \in \mathcal{F}_j, X_I \cap Y_I \neq \emptyset, i \in I_X^{\text{act}} \Rightarrow i \in I_{X \cap Y}^{\text{act}}.$$

The main result of [2] is the following.

**Theorem 1.** *Let  $\mathcal{M} = ([t], r)$  be a matroid and  $D = (V, A)$  a digraph. Let  $\mathcal{F}_1, \dots, \mathcal{F}_t$  be intersecting families,  $\mathcal{G}_1, \dots, \mathcal{G}_t$  arbitrary bi-set families over  $\mathcal{P}_2$  such that  $\mathcal{F}_i \cap \mathcal{G}_i = \emptyset$  for every  $i \in [t]$ . Assume that the active intersection property holds and*

- (a)  $I_{X'} \cup J_{X'} = I_X \cup J_X$  for all  $X, X' \in \mathcal{F}, X' \subseteq X$ ,
- (b)  $\varrho(X) \geq r(I_X \cup J_X) - r(J_X)$  for all  $X \in \mathcal{F}$ .

Then there are pairwise disjoint arc-sets  $A_1, \dots, A_t \subseteq A$  such that

$$r(J_X \cup \{i \in I_X : \varrho_{A_i}(X) \geq 1\}) = r(J_X \cup I_X) \quad (1)$$

for every  $X \in \mathcal{F}$ .

Let us call a family of pairwise disjoint arc-sets  $A_1, \dots, A_t$  of  $A$  that satisfies (1) a **valid arc-cover**. In this note, we consider the algorithmic aspects of finding a valid arc-cover.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, a polynomial-time algorithm is given for finding a valid arc-cover. In Section 3 we show that a minimum cost valid arc-cover can be found in polynomial time via the ellipsoid method; moreover, if  $\mathcal{F}$  is an intersecting family, then there is a strongly polynomial algorithm by reduction to submodular flow.

## 2 Finding a valid arc-cover

Let  $V'$  be a copy of  $V$ , and identify  $(X_I, X_O) \in \mathcal{P}_2(V)$  with  $X_I \cup X'_O \in 2^{V \cup V'}$ , where  $X'_O \subseteq V'$  is the counterpart of  $X_O \subseteq V$ . Note that the union and intersection operations are consistent with this correspondence. Therefore,  $\mathcal{F}_i \subseteq \mathcal{P}_2(V)$  can be regarded as an intersecting family of  $2^{V \cup V'}$ . In what follows in this section, we regard each bi-set in  $\mathcal{P}_2(V)$  as a subset of  $V \cup V'$ . The definitions of  $\mathcal{F}$ ,  $p$ , and active sets are the same as before.

To discuss polynomiality of the algorithm, we need a compact representation of each intersecting family  $\mathcal{F}_i \subseteq 2^{V \cup V'}$ . For  $v \in V$ , let  $\mathcal{F}_i^v := \{X \mid v \in X \in \mathcal{F}_i\}$ . Since  $\mathcal{F}_i^v$  is closed under the union and intersection operations, it is a ring family (or a distributed lattice), which can be represented by a digraph whose vertex set is a subset of  $V \cup V'$  by Birkhoff's Representation Theorem [3] (see also [12]). In what follows, we assume that we are given a digraph representation of  $\mathcal{F}_i^v \subseteq 2^{V \cup V'}$  for  $v \in V$ , and  $\mathcal{F}_i$  is given as  $\bigcup_{v \in V} \mathcal{F}_i^v$ . Note that the size of this representation is polynomial in  $|V|$ . We also assume the following:

1.  $\mathcal{G}_i$  is given as an oracle. That is, for  $X \subseteq V \cup V'$ , we can check whether  $X \in \mathcal{G}_i$  or not.
2. The rank function  $r$  of the matroid is given as an oracle. That is, for  $S \subseteq [t]$ , we can compute  $r(S)$ .

With these assumptions, we show the following.

**Proposition 2.** *In the statement of Theorem 1, suppose that  $\mathcal{F}_i$ ,  $\mathcal{G}_i$ , and  $r$  are given as above. Assume that Condition (a) holds. Then, we can check whether Condition (b) holds or not in polynomial time.*

*Proof.* Let  $\mathcal{F}_+ \subseteq \mathcal{F}$  be the set of all active sets, and for  $v \in V$ , let  $\mathcal{F}_+^v := \{\bigcup X_i \mid v \in X_i \in \mathcal{F}_+ \text{ for each } i\}$ .

**Claim 3.** *For each  $v \in V$ ,  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$  is a ring family, i.e., it is closed under the union and intersection operations. Furthermore, the digraph representation of  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$  can be computed in polynomial time.*

*Proof.* It is obvious that  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$  is closed under the union operation. For  $X, Y \in \mathcal{F}_+^v$ , suppose that  $X = \bigcup X_i$  and  $Y = \bigcup Y_j$ , where  $v \in X_i \in \mathcal{F}_+$  and  $v \in Y_j \in \mathcal{F}_+$ . By (AIP) (or [2, Proposition 2.2]),  $X_i \cap Y_j \in \mathcal{F}_+$  for each  $i, j$ . Therefore,

$$X \cap Y = \bigcup_{i,j} (X_i \cap Y_j) \in \mathcal{F}_+^v,$$

which shows that  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$  is closed under the intersection operation.

Since each irreducible element in  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$  is irreducible also in  $\mathcal{F}_i^v$  for some  $i$ , by checking whether each irreducible element in  $\mathcal{F}_i^v$  is in  $\mathcal{F}_+$  or not, we can enumerate all irreducible elements in  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$  in polynomial time. Then we can obtain the digraph representation of  $\mathcal{F}_+$ .  $\square$

**Claim 4.** *For each  $v \in V$ ,  $p$  is supermodular on the ring family  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $X, Y \in \mathcal{F}_+^v$ . We consider the following three cases.

1. If  $p(X) > 0$  and  $p(Y) > 0$ , then  $p(X) + p(Y) \leq p(X \cap Y) + p(X \cup Y)$  by [2, Proposition 2.3].
2. If  $p(X) = p(Y) = 0$ , then it is obvious that  $p(X) + p(Y) = 0 \leq p(X \cap Y) + p(X \cup Y)$ .

3. Suppose that  $p(X) > 0$  and  $p(Y) = 0$ . Since  $X \cap Y \in \mathcal{F}_+^v$  by Claim 3,  $X \cap Y$  can be represented as  $\bigcup Z_j$ , where  $v \in Z_j \in \mathcal{F}_+$ . By (AIP),  $Z_j$  is active for any  $i \in I_X^{act}$ , which implies that  $X \cap Y = \bigcup Z_j \in \mathcal{F}_i \subseteq \mathcal{F}$ . Then, by [2, Proposition 2.2] and Condition (a), we obtain  $p(X) \leq p(X \cap Y)$ . By combining this with  $p(Y) = 0 \leq p(X \cup Y)$ , we have  $p(X) + p(Y) \leq p(X \cap Y) + p(X \cup Y)$ .

This completes the proof.  $\square$

The digraph  $D$  can also be regarded as a bipartite digraph on node set  $V \cup V'$ , where every arc has its head in  $V$  and its tail in  $V'$ . It is easy to check that this is consistent with the notion of covering. Condition (b) holds if and only if the condition

$$\varrho(X) - p(X) \geq 0 \text{ for every } X \in \mathcal{F}_+^v$$

holds for every  $v \in V$ , and this is equivalent to  $\min_{X \in \mathcal{F}_+^v} \{\varrho(X) - p(X)\} \geq 0$  for every  $v \in V$ . Since  $\varrho - p$  is a submodular function on  $\mathcal{F}_+^v$ , we can compute this minimum value in polynomial time by submodular function minimization algorithms (see [12, 13]). Therefore, Condition (b) can be checked in polynomial time.  $\square$

**Corollary 5.** *In the statement of Theorem 1, suppose that  $\mathcal{F}_i$ ,  $\mathcal{G}_i$ , and  $r$  are given as above. Assume that Conditions (a) and (b) hold. Then, in polynomial time, we can find arc-sets  $A_1, \dots, A_t \subseteq A$  satisfying the conditions in Theorem 1.*

*Proof.* For any arc  $a = uv \in A$  and for any index  $i \in [t]$ , we can check using the digraph representation of  $\mathcal{F}_i^v$  whether the unique smallest bi-set in  $\mathcal{F}_i$  that contains  $a$  is active for  $i$ . If it is not, then we try the following procedure:

- adding  $a$  to  $A_i$  and removing it from  $A$ ;
- adding bi-sets in  $\mathcal{F}_i$  covered by  $a$  to  $\mathcal{G}_i$ ;
- deleting bi-sets covered by  $a$  from  $\mathcal{F}_i$ .

The new instance obtained by this procedure still satisfies the active intersection property because  $a$  is not contained in any bi-set active for  $i$ . The new digraph representations for  $\mathcal{F}_i$  and the oracle for  $\mathcal{G}_i$  are easy to construct using the original ones.

It is possible that the new instance does not satisfy Condition (b). However, by the results of [2], there exists a pair  $(a, i)$  such that Condition (b) still holds after this procedure, and by Proposition 2 we can check it in polynomial time. Thus we can check all pairs  $(a, i)$  and choose one where Condition (b) is satisfied in the new instance. By repeating this procedure,  $A$  becomes empty and the obtained arc sets  $A_1, \dots, A_t$  satisfy the conditions in Theorem 1.  $\square$

**Remark 6.** *Note that in the case of [2, Theorem 3.2], the arcs can be chosen in such an order that each  $A_i$  is an arborescence at any given point in the algorithm. This gives an algorithmic proof of the theorem of Cs. Király.*

### 3 Finding a minimum cost arc-cover

The main tool used in this section is the following theorem of Frank [7], see also [8, Theorem 17.1.11].

**Theorem 7** (Frank). *Let  $D = (V, A)$  be a digraph,  $q$  a positively intersecting supermodular bi-set function on  $V$ , and  $g \in \mathbb{Z}_+^A$  a nonnegative upper bound on the arcs. Then the system*

$$\{x \in \mathbb{R}^A : 0 \leq x_a \leq g_a \ \forall a \in A, \ \varrho_x(Z) \geq q(Z) \ \forall Z \in \mathcal{P}_2(V)\}$$

*is total dual integral. If  $q$  is the nonnegative part of an intersecting supermodular bi-set function, then the system defines a submodular flow polyhedron.*

We first describe a polynomial-time algorithm that uses the ellipsoid method.

**Theorem 8.** *Let  $\mathcal{M} = ([t], r)$  be a matroid,  $D = (V, A)$  a digraph and  $c : A \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  a cost function. Let  $\mathcal{F}_1, \dots, \mathcal{F}_t$  be intersecting families,  $\mathcal{G}_1, \dots, \mathcal{G}_t$  arbitrary bi-set families over  $\mathcal{P}_2$  such that  $\mathcal{F}_i \cap \mathcal{G}_i = \emptyset$  for every  $i \in [t]$ . Assume that the active intersection property holds and*

$$(a) \ I_{X'} \cup J_{X'} = I_X \cup J_X \text{ for all } X, X' \in \mathcal{F}, X' \subseteq X.$$

*We can find a minimum cost arc set  $A' \subseteq A$  that satisfies*

$$\varrho(X) \geq p(X) \text{ for every } X \in \mathcal{F} \tag{2}$$

*in polynomial time.*

*Proof.* Let

$$P = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^A : 0 \leq x_a \leq 1 \ \forall a \in A, \ \varrho_x(Z) \geq p(Z) \ \forall Z \in \mathcal{F}\}.$$

The set function  $p$  is positively intersecting supermodular by the results of [2], so by Theorem 7 the system of inequalities defining  $P$  is TDI. As a consequence, the polyhedron  $P$  is integer, so finding a minimum cost arc-cover amounts to optimization over  $P$ . By Proposition 2, there is a polynomial-time separation algorithm for the linear system defining  $P$ , thus we can optimize on  $P$  in polynomial time using the ellipsoid method by the results of Grötschel, Lovász and Schrijver [9].  $\square$

It is left as an open question whether there is a strongly polynomial combinatorial algorithm for finding the minimum cost arc-cover. However, in the special case when  $\mathcal{F}$  is an intersecting family, this is possible using submodular flows.

**Theorem 9.** *Let  $\mathcal{M} = ([t], r)$  be a matroid,  $D = (V, A)$  a digraph and  $c : A \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  a cost function. Let  $\mathcal{F}$  be an intersecting family over  $\mathcal{P}_2$ ,  $\mathcal{F}_1, \dots, \mathcal{F}_t$  be intersecting subfamilies of  $\mathcal{F}$ ,  $\mathcal{G}_1, \dots, \mathcal{G}_t$  arbitrary bi-set families over  $\mathcal{P}_2$  such that  $\mathcal{F}_i \cap \mathcal{G}_i = \emptyset$  for every  $i \in [t]$ . Assume that the active intersection property holds and*

$$(a) \ I_{X'} \cup J_{X'} = I_X \cup J_X \text{ for } X, X' \in \mathcal{F}, X' \subseteq X.$$

We can find a minimum cost arc set  $A' \subseteq A$  that satisfies

$$\varrho(X) \geq p(X) \text{ for every } X \in \mathcal{F} \quad (3)$$

in strongly polynomial time.

*Proof.* The following proposition was proved in [2] (Proposition 2.2).

**Proposition 10.** *If  $X, X' \in \mathcal{F}$  and  $X' \subseteq X$ , then  $J_{X'} \subseteq \text{Span}(J_X)$ .*

Let

$$p'(X) = \begin{cases} r(I_X \cup J_X) - r(J_X) & \text{if } X \in \mathcal{F}, \\ -\infty & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

The main advantage of  $\mathcal{F}$  being intersecting is that it implies the intersecting supermodularity of  $p'$ .

**Proposition 11.** *The bi-set function  $p'$  is intersecting supermodular on  $\mathcal{P}_2(V)$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $X$  and  $Y$  be intersecting bi-sets. If  $p'(X)$  or  $p'(Y)$  is  $-\infty$  then the supermodular inequality trivially holds.

If  $p'(X), p'(Y) \geq 0$  then  $X, Y \in \mathcal{F}$ . As  $\mathcal{F}$  is intersecting,  $X \cap Y$  and  $X \cup Y$  are also in  $\mathcal{F}$ . Note that Proposition 10 implies  $J_{X \cap Y} \subseteq \text{Span}(J_X) \cap \text{Span}(J_Y)$ . As the families  $\mathcal{F}_i$  are also intersecting, we have  $I_{X \cup Y} \supseteq I_X \cap I_Y$ . This, together with (a), implies  $J_{X \cup Y} \subseteq J_X \cup J_Y$ . Thus

$$\begin{aligned} r(J_X) + r(J_Y) &= r(\text{Span}(J_X)) + r(\text{Span}(J_Y)) \\ &\geq r(\text{Span}(J_X) \cap \text{Span}(J_Y)) + r(\text{Span}(J_X) \cup \text{Span}(J_Y)) \\ &\geq r(J_{X \cap Y}) + r(J_{X \cup Y}). \end{aligned}$$

Using this and (a) we get

$$\begin{aligned} p'(X) + p'(Y) &= r(I_X \cup J_X) - r(J_X) + r(I_Y \cup J_Y) - r(J_Y) \\ &\leq r(I_{X \cap Y} \cup J_{X \cap Y}) - r(J_{X \cap Y}) + r(I_{X \cup Y} \cup J_{X \cup Y}) - r(J_{X \cup Y}) \\ &= p'(X \cap Y) + p'(X \cup Y). \end{aligned}$$

□

As  $p$  is the nonnegative part of  $p'$ , Theorem 7 of Frank implies that the system

$$\{x \in \mathbb{R}^A : 0 \leq x_a \leq 1 \forall a \in A, \varrho_x(Z) \geq p(Z) \forall Z \in \mathcal{P}_2(V)\}$$

describes a submodular flow polyhedron. Moreover, the proof of Frank gives a construction of a corresponding submodular flow problem that in our case can be solved in strongly polynomial time, since the support of  $p'$  is given by the digraph representations. □



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