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978-1-107-01051-2 - Modern Approaches to the Invariant-Subspace Problem

Isabelle Chalendar and Jonathan R. Partington

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City
 Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107010512

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First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Chalendar, Isabelle, 1970–

Modern approaches to the invariant subspace problem / Isabelle Chalendar,
 Jonathan R. Partington.

p. cm. – (Cambridge tracts in mathematics ; 188)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-01051-2 (hardback)

1. Invariant subspaces. 2. Hilbert space. I. Partington, Jonathan R.
 (Jonathan Richard), 1955– II. Title. III. Series.

QA322.4.C46 2011

515'.724–dc23

2011019460

ISBN 978-1-107-01051-2 Hardback

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 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 Background	1
1.1 Functional analysis	1
1.1.1 Weak topology	1
1.1.2 Hahn–Banach theorem	3
1.1.3 Stone–Weierstrass theorem	4
1.1.4 Banach–Steinhaus theorem	5
1.1.5 Complex measures	6
1.1.6 Riesz representation theorem	11
1.1.7 Geometry of Banach spaces	13
1.2 Operator theory	14
1.2.1 Basic definitions and spectral properties	14
1.2.2 Wold decomposition of an isometry	20
1.2.3 Riesz–Dunford functional calculus	21
1.3 The Poisson kernel	22
1.4 Hardy spaces	23
1.4.1 Inner and outer functions	25
1.4.2 Consequences of the inner–outer factorization	28
1.4.3 The theorems of Beurling and Wiener	30
1.4.4 The disc algebra	31
1.4.5 Reproducing kernels, Riesz bases and Carleson sequences	31
1.4.6 Functions of bounded mean oscillation	34
1.4.7 The Hilbert transform on the unit circle	35
1.5 Number Theory	36

2	The operator-valued Poisson kernel and its applications	37
2.1	The operator-valued Poisson kernel	37
2.2	The H^∞ functional calculus for absolutely continuous ρ -contractions	43
2.3	H^∞ functional calculus in a complex Banach space	46
2.4	Absolutely continuous elementary spectral measures	50
	Exercises	53
	Comments	54
3	Properties ($\mathbb{A}_{n,m}$) and factorization of integrable functions	57
3.1	The basis of the S. Brown method	57
3.1.1	The starting point	57
3.1.2	The class \mathbb{A}	62
3.1.3	Classes $\mathbb{A}_{n,m}$	63
3.2	Factorization of log-integrable functions	67
3.3	Applications in harmonic analysis	81
3.4	Subnormal operators	86
3.4.1	Borelian functional calculus for normal operators	86
3.4.2	Invariant subspaces for subnormal operators	87
3.5	Surjectivity of continuous bilinear mapping	92
3.5.1	A sufficient condition for property (\mathbb{A}_{\aleph_0})	92
3.5.2	A sufficient condition for property (\mathbb{A}_{1,\aleph_0})	96
	Exercises	99
	Comments	100
4	Polynomially bounded operators with rich spectrum	103
4.1	Apostol's theorem	103
4.2	$C^2(\mathbb{T})$ functional calculus and the Colojoară–Foiş theorem	107
4.2.1	Operators with a $C^2(\mathbb{T})$ functional calculus	107
4.2.2	The Colojoară–Foiş theorem	110
4.3	Zenger's theorem	111
4.3.1	Zenger's theorem and a factorization result	112
4.3.2	A stronger version of Zenger's theorem	114
4.4	Carleson's interpolation theorem	118
4.5	Approximation using Apostol sets	123
4.5.1	Approximation of integrable non-negative functions	123
4.5.2	Approximate eigenvalues	128
4.6	Invariant subspace results	129
	Exercises	137
	Comments	138

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01051-2 - Modern Approaches to the Invariant-Subspace Problem

Isabelle Chalendar and Jonathan R. Partington

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

vii

5	Beurling algebras	141
5.1	Properties of Beurling algebras	142
5.2	Theorems of Wermer and Atzmon	146
5.3	Bishop operators	152
5.3.1	Davie's functional calculus	152
5.3.2	The point spectrum	156
5.4	Rational Bishop operators	160
5.4.1	Cyclic vectors	161
5.4.2	The lattice of invariant subspaces	163
	Exercises	167
	Comments	167
6	Applications of a fixed-point theorem	169
6.1	Operators commuting with compact operators	169
6.2	Essentially self-adjoint operators	171
6.2.1	Preliminaries	171
6.2.2	Application to invariant subspaces	177
	Exercises	180
	Comments	181
7	Minimal vectors	183
7.1	The basic definitions	183
7.2	Minimal vectors in Hilbert space	185
7.3	A general extremal problem	186
7.3.1	Approximation in Hilbert spaces	187
7.3.2	Approximation in reflexive Banach spaces	189
7.4	Application to hyperinvariant subspaces	192
7.4.1	The main theorem	192
7.4.2	Compact operators	195
7.4.3	Weighted composition operators	196
7.4.4	Weighted shifts	205
7.4.5	Multiplication operators on L^p spaces	208
	Exercises	211
	Comments	211
8	Universal operators	213
8.1	Construction of universal models	213
8.2	Bilateral weighted shifts	217
8.3	Composition operators	220
8.3.1	Universality of composition operators	220
8.3.2	Minimal subspaces and eigenfunctions	224

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01051-2 - Modern Approaches to the Invariant-Subspace Problem

Isabelle Chalendar and Jonathan R. Partington

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

Contents

Exercises	228
Comments	230
9 Moment sequences and binomial sums	233
9.1 Moment sequences	233
9.2 Operators on sequence spaces	239
9.3 Binomial sums	241
9.3.1 Proof of Theorem 9.3.1	242
9.3.2 A technical refinement	244
9.3.3 Application to Banach algebras and invariant subspaces	248
Exercises	251
Comments	252
10 Positive and strictly-singular operators	255
10.1 Ordered spaces and positive operators	255
10.2 Invariant subspaces for positive operators	257
10.3 Strictly singular operators	263
Exercises	265
Comments	266
<i>References</i>	269
<i>Index</i>	281

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01051-2 - Modern Approaches to the Invariant-Subspace Problem

Isabelle Chalendar and Jonathan R. Partington

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

There is an outstanding problem in operator theory, the so-called ‘invariant-subspace problem’, which has been open for more than half a century. There have been significant achievements on occasion, sometimes after an interval of more than a decade, but its solution seems nowhere in sight. The invariant-subspace problem for a complex Banach space \mathcal{X} of dimension > 1 concerns whether every bounded linear operator $T : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{X}$ has a non-trivial closed T -invariant subspace (a closed linear subspace \mathcal{M} of \mathcal{X} which is different from both $\{0\}$ and \mathcal{X} such that $T(\mathcal{M}) \subset \mathcal{M}$). Throughout this book, when we talk about invariant subspaces, we always assume that they are closed and non-trivial.

For the most important case of Hilbert spaces \mathcal{H} the problem is still open, although Enflo [95, 96] and Read [168, 169] showed that the invariant-subspace problem is false for some Banach spaces.

The general case of the invariant-subspace problem is still open, but there are many positive results in this direction. For example, every finite-rank operator on a non-zero complex space has an eigenvector, and this generates a one-dimensional invariant subspace. Thus the conjecture is easily resolved in the case that the underlying Hilbert space is finite-dimensional. Moreover, every non-zero vector is contained in a smallest invariant subspace, the *cyclic subspace* it generates, which is separable. Thus the question is easily answered for non-separable Hilbert spaces.

Aronszajn and Smith [18] proved that every compact operator on a Banach space of dimension at least 2 has an invariant subspace; the result for Hilbert spaces had already been proved by von Neumann (unpublished work of 1950). It is also known that normal operators have invariant subspaces: this follows easily from the spectral theorem.

In 1966, Bernstein and Robinson [39] proved, using non-standard analysis, that if the operator T on a Hilbert space is polynomially compact (in other

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Isabelle Chalendar and Jonathan R. Partington

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

words, if $p(T)$ is compact for some non-zero polynomial p) then T has an invariant subspace. Almost immediately, Halmos [117] eliminated the non-standard analysis from their proof and thus obtained a classical proof of this result.

These results were generalized further when Lomonosov [145] gave a very short proof, using the Schauder fixed-point theorem, of a powerful result which implies that if the operator T on a Banach space commutes with a non-zero compact operator then it has a non-trivial invariant subspace (clearly, any operator T commutes with every polynomial in T).

On the other hand, there are now many negative results known in the case of an operator on a Banach space. An example of an operator on a Banach space with no invariant subspaces was found by Enflo [95, 96], and his example was simplified by Beauzamy [28]. Another counterexample was given by Read [168], who later gave the first example on a ‘classical’ Banach space, namely ℓ^1 [169]. In further work, Read [171] constructed an operator on ℓ^1 without even a non-trivial closed invariant subset. We mention also some work of Atzmon [19], who gave an example of an operator without invariant subspaces on a nuclear Fréchet space.

Another very recent example is due to Argyros and Haydon [17], who constructed an infinite-dimensional Banach space such that every bounded operator is the sum of a compact operator and a scalar operator (i.e. a multiple of the identity). Therefore, in particular, every operator on this space has an invariant subspace. Gowers and Maurey [114] had earlier found a space where every bounded operator is the sum of a strictly singular operator and a scalar operator, but since Read [172] had already given an example of a strictly singular operator without invariant subspaces, the Gowers–Maurey example had no direct consequences for the invariant-subspace problem.

Some classic texts which treat the invariant-subspace problem are the books of Radjavi and Rosenthal [167] and Beauzamy [29]. Many other significant results can be found in the books of Herrero [122, 16]. A recent book closely linked to the theme of this book is that of Bayart and Matheron [26].

This book is intended to be suitable for researchers in many areas of operator theory and function theory. It should be accessible to postgraduate students; indeed, we begin with a section establishing the basic background results on Hardy spaces, operator theory, geometry of Banach spaces etc. We omit the proofs, which can be found in many places, for example Rudin [180, 179], Conway [84] and Nikolski [154].

There have been many significant developments in this branch of operator theory. Therefore, it was necessary to be selective in our choice of material. Some themes to be discussed in the book, which are not, as far as we know, to be found elsewhere in books, include the following:

Cambridge University Press

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Isabelle Chalendar and Jonathan R. Partington

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

xi

- Use of the operator-valued Poisson kernel, factorizations, H^∞ functional calculus (initiated by S. Brown in a Hilbert space context, as the basis of dual-algebra theory). Very recent Banach space developments due to Ambrozie and Müller.
- Functional calculus for Beurling algebras, the Atzmon–Wermer results. A more transparent presentation of Davie’s work on Bishop operators (and his own functional calculus), and subsequent developments.
- The work of Lomonosov and Simonič, applying fixed-point theorems to the study of compact and essentially self-adjoint operators.
- The technique of minimal vectors pioneered by Ansari and Enflo in a Hilbert space context; further developments in the general context of Banach spaces, showing the existence of non-trivial hyperinvariant subspaces in various contexts.
- Universal operators. The study of composition operators and their invariant subspaces as key examples.
- Moment sequences, and the geometrical approach of Atzmon and Godefroy, with striking applications to tridiagonal matrices. Binomial sums and their applications in various areas of functional analysis.
- Particular results applying to special kinds of operators, such as positive (order-preserving) and strictly singular operators.

Chapter 1 contains the basic background material for the book. After this, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 follow a logical sequence and should be read in this order. The other chapters are largely independent and self-contained, with occasional references to one another. For example, compact operators appear in Chapters 6 and 7. Some supplementary results are contained in the Exercises at the end of each chapter.

We are grateful to many people for comments on the manuscript of this book. In particular we mention Nicolas Chevrot, Sam Elliott, Antoine Flatot, Emmanuel Fricain, Eva Gallardo-Gutiérrez, Pamela Gorkin, Nazar Miheisi and Elodie Pozzi. We also appreciate the help given to us by Cambridge University Press, especially Silvia Barbina.

Certainly, this work would not have been possible without the patient support of Patrick and Hélène.

Finally, this book is dedicated to our parents.