second term in $\mathbf{x}(t)$:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1+2i \\ 4i \\ 2 \end{bmatrix} e^{-2t}(\cos .3t + i \sin .3t)$$

The general real solution has the following form, with *real* scalars c_1, c_2, c_3:

$$c_1 \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ -2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} e^{-5t} + c_2 \begin{bmatrix} \cos .3t - 2\sin .3t \\ -4\sin .3t \\ 2\cos .3t \end{bmatrix} e^{2t} + c_3 \begin{bmatrix} \sin .3t + 2\cos .3t \\ 4\cos .3t \\ 2\sin .3t \end{bmatrix} e^{2t}$$

3. Any solution with $c_2 = c_3 = 0$ is attracted to the origin because of the negative exponential factor. Other solutions have components that grow without bound, and the trajectories spiral outward.

Be careful not to mistake this problem for one in Section 5.6. There the condition for attraction toward $\mathbf{0}$ was that an eigenvalue be less than 1 in magnitude, to make $|\lambda|^k \to 0$. Here the real part of the eigenvalue must be negative, to make $e^{\lambda t} \to 0$.

5.8 ITERATIVE ESTIMATES FOR EIGENVALUES

In scientific applications of linear algebra, eigenvalues are seldom known precisely. Fortunately, a close numerical approximation is usually quite satisfactory. In fact, some applications require only a rough approximation to the largest eigenvalue. The first algorithm described below can work well for this case. Also, it provides a foundation for a more powerful method that can give fast estimates for other eigenvalues as well.

The Power Method

The power method applies to an $n \times n$ matrix A with a **strictly dominant eigenvalue** λ_1, which means that λ_1 must be larger in absolute value than all the other eigenvalues. In this case, the power method produces a scalar sequence that approaches λ_1 and a vector sequence that approaches a corresponding eigenvector. The background for the method rests on the eigenvector decomposition used at the beginning of Section 5.6.

Assume for simplicity that A is diagonalizable and $\mathbb{R}^n$ has a basis of eigenvectors $\mathbf{v}_1, \ldots, \mathbf{v}_n$, arranged so their corresponding eigenvalues $\lambda_1, \ldots, \lambda_n$ decrease in size, with the strictly dominant eigenvalue first. That is,

$$|\lambda_1| > |\lambda_2| \geq |\lambda_3| \geq \cdots \geq |\lambda_n| \qquad (1)$$

(Strictly larger)

As we saw in equation (2) of Section 5.6, if $\mathbf{x}$ in $\mathbb{R}^n$ is written as $\mathbf{x} = c_1\mathbf{v}_1 + \cdots + c_n\mathbf{v}_n$, then

$$A^k\mathbf{x} = c_1(\lambda_1)^k\mathbf{v}_1 + c_2(\lambda_2)^k\mathbf{v}_2 + \cdots + c_n(\lambda_n)^k\mathbf{v}_n \quad (k = 1, 2, \ldots)$$

Assume $c_1 \neq 0$. Then, dividing by $(\lambda_1)^k$,

$$\frac{1}{(\lambda_1)^k}A^k\mathbf{x} = c_1\mathbf{v}_1 + c_2\left(\frac{\lambda_2}{\lambda_1}\right)^k\mathbf{v}_2 + \cdots + c_n\left(\frac{\lambda_n}{\lambda_1}\right)^k\mathbf{v}_n \quad (k = 1, 2, \ldots) \qquad (2)$$

From inequality (1), the fractions $\lambda_2/\lambda_1, \ldots, \lambda_n/\lambda_1$ are all less than 1 in magnitude and so their powers go to zero. Hence

$$(\lambda_1)^{-k}A^k\mathbf{x} \to c_1\mathbf{v}_1 \quad \text{as } k \to \infty \qquad (3)$$

Thus, for large k, a scalar multiple of $A^k\mathbf{x}$ determines almost the same *direction* as the eigenvector $c_1\mathbf{v}_1$. Since positive scalar multiples do not change the direction of a vector, $A^k\mathbf{x}$ itself points almost in the same direction as $\mathbf{v}_1$ or $-\mathbf{v}_1$, provided $c_1 \neq 0$.

EXAMPLE 1 Let $A = \begin{bmatrix} 1.8 & .8 \\ .2 & 1.2 \end{bmatrix}$, $\mathbf{v}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 4 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$, and $\mathbf{x} = \begin{bmatrix} -.5 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$. Then A has eigenvalues 2 and 1, and the eigenspace for $\lambda_1 = 2$ is the line through $\mathbf{0}$ and $\mathbf{v}_1$. For $k = 0, \ldots, 8$, compute $A^k\mathbf{x}$ and construct the line through $\mathbf{0}$ and $A^k\mathbf{x}$. What happens as k increases?

SOLUTION The first three calculations are

$$A\mathbf{x} = \begin{bmatrix} 1.8 & .8 \\ .2 & 1.2 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} -.5 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} -.1 \\ 1.1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$A^2\mathbf{x} = A(A\mathbf{x}) = \begin{bmatrix} 1.8 & .8 \\ .2 & 1.2 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} -.1 \\ 1.1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} .7 \\ 1.3 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$A^3\mathbf{x} = A(A^2\mathbf{x}) = \begin{bmatrix} 1.8 & .8 \\ .2 & 1.2 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} .7 \\ 1.3 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 2.3 \\ 1.7 \end{bmatrix}$$

Analogous calculations complete Table 1.

TABLE 1 Iterates of a Vector

k	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
$A^k\mathbf{x}$	$\begin{bmatrix} -.5 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} -.1 \\ 1.1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} .7 \\ 1.3 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 2.3 \\ 1.7 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 5.5 \\ 2.5 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 11.9 \\ 4.1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 24.7 \\ 7.3 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 50.3 \\ 13.7 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 101.5 \\ 26.5 \end{bmatrix}$

The vectors $\mathbf{x}$, $A\mathbf{x}, \ldots, A^4\mathbf{x}$ are shown in Fig. 1. The other vectors are growing too long to display. However, line segments are drawn showing the directions of those vectors. In fact, the directions of the vectors are what we really want to see, not the vectors themselves. The lines seem to be approaching the line representing the eigenspace spanned by $\mathbf{v}_1$. More precisely, the angle between the line (subspace) determined by $A^k\mathbf{x}$ and the line (eigenspace) determined by $\mathbf{v}_1$ goes to zero as $k \to \infty$. ■

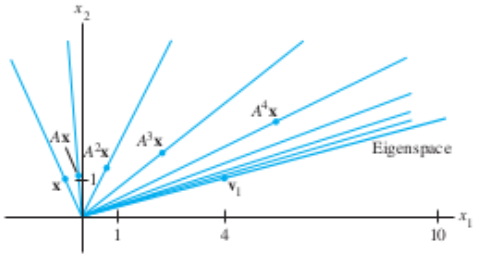

FIGURE 1 Directions determined by $\mathbf{x}$, $A\mathbf{x}$, $A^2\mathbf{x}, \ldots, A^7\mathbf{x}$.

The vectors $(\lambda_1)^{-k}A^k\mathbf{x}$ in (3) are scaled to make them converge to $c_1\mathbf{v}_1$, provided $c_1 \neq 0$. We cannot scale $A^k\mathbf{x}$ in this way because we do not know λ_1. But we can scale each $A^k\mathbf{x}$ to make its largest entry a 1. It turns out that the resulting sequence $\{\mathbf{x}_k\}$ will converge to a multiple of $\mathbf{v}_1$ whose largest entry is 1. Figure 2 shows the scaled sequence

for Example 1. The eigenvalue λ_1 can be estimated from the sequence $\{\mathbf{x}_k\}$, too. When $\mathbf{x}_k$ is close to an eigenvector for λ_1, the vector $A\mathbf{x}_k$ is close to $\lambda_1\mathbf{x}_k$, with each entry in $A\mathbf{x}_k$ approximately λ_1 times the corresponding entry in $\mathbf{x}_k$. Because the largest entry in $\mathbf{x}_k$ is 1, the largest entry in $A\mathbf{x}_k$ is close to λ_1. (Careful proofs of these statements are omitted.)

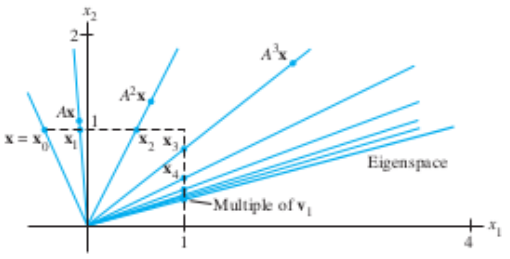

FIGURE 2 Scaled multiples of $\mathbf{x}$, $A\mathbf{x}$, $A^2\mathbf{x}$, . . . , $A^7\mathbf{x}$.

THE POWER METHOD FOR ESTIMATING A STRICTLY DOMINANT EIGENVALUE

1. Select an initial vector $\mathbf{x}_0$ whose largest entry is 1.
2. For $k = 0, 1, \ldots,$
   a. Compute $A\mathbf{x}_k$.
   b. Let μ_k be an entry in $A\mathbf{x}_k$ whose absolute value is as large as possible.
   c. Compute $\mathbf{x}_{k+1} = (1/\mu_k)A\mathbf{x}_k$.
3. For almost all choices of $\mathbf{x}_0$, the sequence $\{\mu_k\}$ approaches the dominant eigenvalue, and the sequence $\{\mathbf{x}_k\}$ approaches a corresponding eigenvector.

EXAMPLE 2 Apply the power method to $A = \begin{bmatrix} 6 & 5 \\ 1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}$ with $\mathbf{x}_0 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$. Stop when $k = 5$, and estimate the dominant eigenvalue and a corresponding eigenvector of A.

SOLUTION Calculations in this example and the next were made with MATLAB, which computes with 16-digit accuracy, although we show only a few significant figures here. To begin, compute $A\mathbf{x}_0$ and identify the largest entry μ_0 in $A\mathbf{x}_0$:

$$A\mathbf{x}_0 = \begin{bmatrix} 6 & 5 \\ 1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 5 \\ 2 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mu_0 = 5$$

Scale $A\mathbf{x}_0$ by $1/\mu_0$ to get $\mathbf{x}_1$, compute $A\mathbf{x}_1$, and identify the largest entry in $A\mathbf{x}_1$:

$$\mathbf{x}_1 = \frac{1}{\mu_0}A\mathbf{x}_0 = \frac{1}{5}\begin{bmatrix} 5 \\ 2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ .4 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$A\mathbf{x}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 6 & 5 \\ 1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ .4 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 8 \\ 1.8 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mu_1 = 8$$

Scale $A\mathbf{x}_1$ by $1/\mu_1$ to get $\mathbf{x}_2$, compute $A\mathbf{x}_2$, and identify the largest entry in $A\mathbf{x}_2$:

$$\mathbf{x}_2 = \frac{1}{\mu_1}A\mathbf{x}_1 = \frac{1}{8}\begin{bmatrix} 8 \\ 1.8 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ .225 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$A\mathbf{x}_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 6 & 5 \\ 1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ .225 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 7.125 \\ 1.450 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mu_2 = 7.125$$

Scale $A\mathbf{x}_2$ by $1/\mu_2$ to get $\mathbf{x}_3$, and so on. The results of MATLAB calculations for the first five iterations are arranged in Table 2.

TABLE 2 The Power Method for Example 2

k	0	1	2	3	4	5
$\mathbf{x}_k$	$\begin{bmatrix}0\\1\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}1\\.4\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}1\\.225\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}1\\.2035\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}1\\.2005\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}1\\.20007\end{bmatrix}$
$A\mathbf{x}_k$	$\begin{bmatrix}5\\2\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}8\\1.8\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}7.125\\1.450\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}7.0175\\1.4070\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}7.0025\\1.4010\end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix}7.00036\\1.40014\end{bmatrix}$
μ_k	5	8	7.125	7.0175	7.0025	7.00036

The evidence from Table 2 strongly suggests that $\{\mathbf{x}_k\}$ approaches $(1, .2)$ and $\{\mu_k\}$ approaches 7. If so, then $(1, .2)$ is an eigenvector and 7 is the dominant eigenvalue. This is easily verified by computing

$$A\begin{bmatrix}1\\.2\end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix}6 & 5\\1 & 2\end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix}1\\.2\end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix}7\\1.4\end{bmatrix} = 7\begin{bmatrix}1\\.2\end{bmatrix}$$ ■

The sequence $\{\mu_k\}$ in Example 2 converged quickly to $\lambda_1 = 7$ because the second eigenvalue of A was much smaller. (In fact, $\lambda_2 = 1$.) In general, the rate of convergence depends on the ratio $|\lambda_2/\lambda_1|$, because the vector $c_2(\lambda_2/\lambda_1)^k\mathbf{v}_2$ in equation (2) is the main source of error when using a scaled version of $A^k\mathbf{x}$ as an estimate of $c_1\mathbf{v}_1$. (The other fractions λ_j/λ_1 are likely to be smaller.) If $|\lambda_2/\lambda_1|$ is close to 1, then $\{\mu_k\}$ and $\{\mathbf{x}_k\}$ can converge very slowly, and other approximation methods may be preferred.

With the power method, there is a slight chance that the chosen initial vector $\mathbf{x}$ will have no component in the $\mathbf{v}_1$ direction (when $c_1 = 0$). But computer rounding errors during the calculations of the $\mathbf{x}_k$ are likely to create a vector with at least a small component in the direction of $\mathbf{v}_1$. If that occurs, the $\mathbf{x}_k$ will start to converge to a multiple of $\mathbf{v}_1$.

The Inverse Power Method

This method provides an approximation for *any* eigenvalue, provided a good initial estimate α of the eigenvalue λ is known. In this case, we let $B = (A - \alpha I)^{-1}$ and apply the power method to B. It can be shown that if the eigenvalues of A are $\lambda_1, \ldots, \lambda_n$, then the eigenvalues of B are

$$\frac{1}{\lambda_1 - \alpha}, \quad \frac{1}{\lambda_2 - \alpha}, \quad \ldots, \quad \frac{1}{\lambda_n - \alpha}$$

and the corresponding eigenvectors are the same as those for A. (See Exercises 15 and 16.)

Suppose, for example, that α is closer to λ_2 than to the other eigenvalues of A. Then $1/(\lambda_2 - \alpha)$ will be a strictly dominant eigenvalue of B. If α is really close to λ_2, then $1/(\lambda_2 - \alpha)$ is *much* larger than the other eigenvalues of B, and the inverse power method produces a very rapid approximation to λ_2 for almost all choices of $\mathbf{x}_0$. The following algorithm gives the details.

THE INVERSE POWER METHOD FOR ESTIMATING AN EIGENVALUE λ OF A

1. Select an initial estimate α sufficiently close to λ.
2. Select an initial vector $\mathbf{x}_0$ whose largest entry is 1.
3. For $k = 0, 1, \ldots,$
   a. Solve $(A - \alpha I)\mathbf{y}_k = \mathbf{x}_k$ for $\mathbf{y}_k$.
   b. Let μ_k be an entry in $\mathbf{y}_k$ whose absolute value is as large as possible.
   c. Compute $\nu_k = \alpha + (1/\mu_k)$.
   d. Compute $\mathbf{x}_{k+1} = (1/\mu_k)\mathbf{y}_k$.
4. For almost all choices of $\mathbf{x}_0$, the sequence $\{\nu_k\}$ approaches the eigenvalue λ of A, and the sequence $\{\mathbf{x}_k\}$ approaches a corresponding eigenvector.

Notice that B, or rather $(A - \alpha I)^{-1}$, does not appear in the algorithm. Instead of computing $(A - \alpha I)^{-1}\mathbf{x}_k$ to get the next vector in the sequence, it is better to *solve* the equation $(A - \alpha I)\mathbf{y}_k = \mathbf{x}_k$ for $\mathbf{y}_k$ (and then scale $\mathbf{y}_k$ to produce $\mathbf{x}_{k+1}$). Since this equation for $\mathbf{y}_k$ must be solved for each k, an LU factorization of $A - \alpha I$ will speed up the process.

EXAMPLE 3 It is not uncommon in some applications to need to know the smallest eigenvalue of a matrix A and to have at hand rough estimates of the eigenvalues. Suppose 21, 3.3, and 1.9 are estimates for the eigenvalues of the matrix A below. Find the smallest eigenvalue, accurate to six decimal places.

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 10 & -8 & -4 \\ -8 & 13 & 4 \\ -4 & 5 & 4 \end{bmatrix}$$

SOLUTION The two smallest eigenvalues seem close together, so we use the inverse power method for $A - 1.9I$. Results of a MATLAB calculation are shown in Table 3. Here $\mathbf{x}_0$ was chosen arbitrarily, $\mathbf{y}_k = (A - 1.9I)^{-1}\mathbf{x}_k$, μ_k is the largest entry in $\mathbf{y}_k$, $\nu_k = 1.9 + 1/\mu_k$, and $\mathbf{x}_{k+1} = (1/\mu_k)\mathbf{y}_k$. As it turns out, the initial eigenvalue estimate was fairly good, and the inverse power sequence converged quickly. The smallest eigenvalue is exactly 2. ■

TABLE 3 The Inverse Power Method

k	0	1	2	3	4
$\mathbf{x}_k$	$\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} .5736 \\ .0646 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} .5054 \\ .0045 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} .5004 \\ .0003 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} .50003 \\ .00002 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$
$\mathbf{y}_k$	$\begin{bmatrix} 4.45 \\ .50 \\ 7.76 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 5.0131 \\ .0442 \\ 9.9197 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 5.0012 \\ .0031 \\ 9.9949 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 5.0001 \\ .0002 \\ 9.9996 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 5.000006 \\ .000015 \\ 9.999975 \end{bmatrix}$
μ_k	7.76	9.9197	9.9949	9.9996	9.999975
ν_k	2.03	2.0008	2.00005	2.000004	2.0000002

If an estimate for the smallest eigenvalue of a matrix is not available, one can simply take $\alpha = 0$ in the inverse power method. This choice of α works reasonably well if the smallest eigenvalue is much closer to zero than to the other eigenvalues.