18 - Spanning Tree Algorithms

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A Networking Problem

**Problem** The vertices represent 8 regional data centers which need to be connected with high-speed data lines. Feasibility studies show that the links illustrated above are possible, and the cost in millions of dollars is shown next to the link. Which links should be constructed to enable full communication (with relays allowed) and keep the total cost minimal?
Links Will Form a Spanning Tree

\[
\text{Cost (T)} = 47 + 23 + 75 + 74 + 55 + 74 + 79
\]

\[
= 427
\]
Minimum Weight Spanning Trees

**Problem** Given a connected graph with non-negative weights on the edges, find a spanning tree $T$ for which the sum of the weights on the edges in $T$ is as small as possible.
1. Suppose the graph has \( n \) vertices. Then the number of possible spanning trees can be as large as \( n^{n-2} \).

2. When \( n = 75 \), this means that the number of spanning trees can be as large as

7576562804644601479086318651590413464814067833088403392470432810180242799713568047081935219466686248779296875
1. Sort the edges by weight.
2. Build a spanning forest (that eventually becomes a tree) by proceeding in a “greedy” manner, adding the edge of minimum weight which when added to those already chosen does not form a cycle.
Remark  Start with an edge having minimum weight.
Remark Among the remaining edges, choose one of minimum weight.
Remark Among the remaining edges, choose one of minimum weight which avoids cycles.
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**Remark**  Among the remaining edges, choose one of minimum weight which avoids cycles.
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Why Avoiding Cycles Matters

**Remark** Up to this point, we have simply taken the edges in order of their weight. But now we will have to reject an edge since it forms a cycle when added to those already chosen.
Forms a Cycle

Note We cannot take the blue edge having weight 55, as this would form a cycle.
Kruskal - Step 7  DONE!!

Weight (T) = 23 + 29 + 31 + 32 + 47 + 54 + 66 = 282
Prim’s Algorithm (Build Tree)

1. Build a tree one vertex at a time.
2. Start with a trivial one point tree $T$.
3. Then add the edge of minimum weight among those with one endpoint in $T$ and the other not in $T$. 
Remark  In this example, we take vertex 1 as the “root” and start with the trivial tree consisting of just the root. We illustrate the first step after the initialization step.
Remark Choose the minimum weight edge which expands $T$ by a single vertex.
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**Remark**  Choose the minimum weight edge which expands $T$ by a single vertex.
Prim - Step 5

Remark Choose the minimum weight edge which expands $T$ by a single vertex.
Remark Choose the minimum weight edge which expands \( T \) by a single vertex.
Prim - Step 7   Done!!

Weight (T) = 23 + 29 + 31 + 32 + 47 + 54 + 66 = 282
**Remark** With the next several slides, we will explain why Kruskal (avoid cycles) and Prim (build tree) work as intended. Students may find it interesting that the underlying principles are drawn from linear algebra, but now with a finite field rather than with the more familiar fields of real numbers and complex numbers. In fact, these principles apply to a wide range of discrete optimization problems.
Remark We start by considering a spanning tree $T$ in a graph $G$. 
Observation Consider any edge $e$ not in the tree $T$. Then there is a unique path $P$ in $T$ from one endpoint of $e$ to the other.
Remark Consider any edge $f$ from $T$ which belongs to the path $P$. 
Important Fact  Then \( T' = T - f + e \) is again a tree.
A New Kind of Vector Space

Mathematical Framework  Let $G$ be a connected graph, and let $E$ be the edge set of $G$. We consider subsets of $E$ and call a subset $S$ independent if it contains no cycles. Note that the maximal independent sets are the spanning trees of $G$.

Note  In combinatorial mathematics, a family of independent sets satisfying an exchange property is called a matroid, and these structures are studied extensively, just like graphs and posets.
Constrained Spanning Trees

Modified Problem  Find the minimum weight spanning tree with some choices made by management. These choices may or may not be good ones??!!
Constrained Spanning Trees

Remark Neither of our two algorithms has a provision for “starting with a handicap.”
Lemma  Let $G$ be a graph with non-negative weights on the edges, let $F$ be a spanning forest of $G$ and let $C$ be a component of $F$. Also, among all edges with one endpoint in $C$ and the other not in $C$, let edge $e$ be one of minimum weight. Then among all the spanning trees of $G$ that contain $F$, there is one of minimum weight that contains the edge $e$. 
Applying the Exchange Principle

**Proof** Suppose the lemma is false and let \( T \) be a spanning tree of minimum weight among all that contain the spanning forest \( F \). Then we know that \( e \) is not an edge in \( T \). Let \( e = xy \) with \( x \) a vertex in the component \( C \). there are none of minimum weight containing the edge \( e \). Then consider the unique path \( x = x_0, x_1, \ldots, x_t = y \) in \( T \).
Proof (continued)  Let \( i \) be the least integer so that \( x_i \) is in the component \( C \) (together with \( x \)) while \( x_{i+1} \) is not in \( C \). Then let \( f = x_i x_{i+1} \). Since \( S \) is optimal, and \( S - f + e \) is a spanning tree, we know that \( w(f) \leq w(e) \). But by the rule used in the selection of \( e \), we know \( w(e) \leq w(f) \). So \( w(e) = w(f) \). Thus \( T - f + e \) has the same weight as \( T \) and contains \( e \). The contradiction completes the proof.
The Correctness of Kruskal’s algorithm

**Proof**  We proceed by induction on the number of edges specified by management, except now we consider management as both benevolent and enlightened. At step \( i \) when \( i \) edges have already been selected, management considers the set of admissible edges (those avoiding cycles) and takes one of minimum weight. In turn, manager declares the component \( C \) to contain one of the end points of \( C \).

**Note**  Additional details provided in class.
The Correctness of Prim’s algorithm

Proof We proceed by induction on the number of edges specified by management, except now we consider management as both benevolent and enlightened. Now we simply take the component $C$ as the set of edges determined by all preceding choices, with the initial case being $C$ as just the root vertex of the graph.

Note Additional details provided in class.
1. Implementing Kruskal’s Algorithm seems to require sorting the edges by weight as a preliminary step. Are there alternatives?

2. Implementing Prim’s algorithm seems to require keeping track of the edge of minimum weight with one endpoint in a component, but the components are changing. How does one do this?