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1 Introduction

For the next few lectures, we will build tools to solve linear systems. Our main tool will be the factorization $PA = LU$, where P is a permutation, L is a unit lower triangular matrix, and U is an upper triangular matrix. As we will see, the Gaussian elimination algorithm learned in a first linear algebra class implicitly computes this decomposition; but by thinking about the decomposition explicitly, we find other ways to organize the computation.

2 Triangular solves

Suppose that we have computed a factorization $PA = LU$. How can we use this to solve a linear system of the form $Ax = b$? Permuting the rows of A and b, we have

$$PAx = LUx = Pb,$$

and therefore

$$x = U^{-1}L^{-1}Pb.$$

So we can reduce the problem of finding x to two simpler problems:

1. Solve $Ly = Pb$
2. Solve $Ux = y$

We assume the matrix L is unit lower triangular (diagonal of all ones + lower triangular), and U is upper triangular, so we can solve linear systems with L and U involving forward and backward substitution.

As a concrete example, suppose

$$L = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 1 & 0 \\ 3 & 2 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \quad d = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 3 \end{bmatrix}$$

To solve a linear system of the form $Ly = d$, we process each row in turn to find the value of the corresponding entry of y:

1. Row 1: $y_1 = d_1$

2. Row 2: $2y_1 + y_2 = d_2$, or $y_2 = d_2 - 2y_1$
3. Row 3: $3y_1 + 2y_2 + y_3 = d_3$, or $y_3 = d_3 - 3y_1 - 2y_2$

More generally, the *forward substitution* algorithm for solving unit lower triangular linear systems $Ly = d$ looks like

```
y = d;
for i=2:n
  y(i) = d(i)-L(i,1:i-1)*y(1:i-1)
end
```

Similarly, there is a *backward substitution* algorithm for solving upper triangular linear systems $Ux = d$

```
x(n) = d(n)/U(n,n);
for i=n-1:-1:1
  x(i) = ( d(i)-U(i,i+1:n)*x(i+1:n) )/U(i,i)
end
```

Each of these algorithms takes $O(n^2)$ time.

3 Gaussian elimination by example

Let's start our discussion of LU factorization by working through these ideas with a concrete example:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \\ 2 & 5 & 8 \\ 3 & 6 & 10 \end{bmatrix}.$$

To eliminate the subdiagonal entries a_{21} and a_{31}, we subtract twice the first row from the second row, and thrice the first row from the third row:

$$A^{(1)} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \\ 2 & 5 & 8 \\ 3 & 6 & 10 \end{bmatrix} - \begin{bmatrix} 0 \cdot 1 & 0 \cdot 4 & 0 \cdot 7 \\ 2 \cdot 1 & 2 \cdot 4 & 2 \cdot 7 \\ 3 \cdot 1 & 3 \cdot 4 & 3 \cdot 7 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \\ 0 & -3 & -6 \\ 0 & -6 & -11 \end{bmatrix}.$$

That is, the step comes from a rank-1 update to the matrix:

$$A^{(1)} = A - \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 2 \\ 3 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Another way to think of this step is as a linear transformation $A^{(1)} = M_1 A$, where the rows of M_1 describe the multiples of rows of the original matrix that go into rows of the updated matrix:

$$M_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ -2 & 1 & 0 \\ -3 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = I - \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 2 \\ 3 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = I - \tau_1 e_1^T.$$

Similarly, in the second step of the algorithm, we subtract twice the second row from the third row:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \\ 0 & -3 & -6 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & -2 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \\ 0 & -3 & -6 \\ 0 & -6 & -11 \end{bmatrix} = \left(I - \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \right) A^{(1)}.$$

More compactly: $U = (I - \tau_2 e_2^T) A^{(1)}$.

Putting everything together, we have computed

$$U = (I - \tau_2 e_2^T)(I - \tau_1 e_1^T) A.$$

Therefore,

$$A = (I - \tau_1 e_1^T)^{-1} (I - \tau_2 e_2^T)^{-1} U = LU.$$

Now, note that

$$(I - \tau_1 e_1^T)(I + \tau_1 e_1^T) = I - \tau_1 e_1^T + \tau_1 e_1^T - \tau_1 e_1^T \tau_1 e_1^T = I,$$

since $e_1^T \tau_1$ (the first entry of τ_1) is zero. Therefore,

$$(I - \tau_1 e_1^T)^{-1} = (I + \tau_1 e_1^T)$$

Similarly,

$$(I - \tau_2 e_2^T)^{-1} = (I + \tau_2 e_2^T)$$

Thus,

$$L = (I + \tau_1 e_1^T)(I + \tau_2 e_2^T).$$

Now, note that because τ_2 is only nonzero in the third element, $e_1^T \tau_2 = 0$; thus,

$$\begin{aligned} L &= (I + \tau_1 e_1^T)(I + \tau_2 e_2^T) \\ &= (I + \tau_1 e_1^T + \tau_2 e_2^T + \tau_1 (e_1^T \tau_2) e_2^T \\ &= I + \tau_1 e_1^T + \tau_2 e_2^T \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 0 & 0 \\ 3 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 2 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 1 & 0 \\ 3 & 2 & 1 \end{bmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

The final factorization is

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \\ 2 & 5 & 8 \\ 3 & 6 & 10 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 1 & 0 \\ 3 & 2 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 & 7 \\ 0 & -3 & -6 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = LU.$$

The subdiagonal elements of L are easy to read off: for $i > j$, l_{ij} is the multiple of row j that we subtract from row i during elimination. This means that it is easy to read off the subdiagonal entries of L during the elimination process.

4 Basic LU factorization

Let's generalize our previous algorithm and write a simple code for LU factorization. We will leave the issue of pivoting to a later discussion. We'll start with a purely loop-based implementation:

```
%
% Overwrites A with an upper triangular factor U, keeping track of
% multipliers in the matrix L.
%
function [L,A] = mylu(A)

  n = length(A);
  L = eye(n);
  for j=1:n-1
    for i=j+1:n

      % Figure out multiple of row j to subtract from row i
      L(i,j) = A(i,j)/A(j,j);

      % Subtract off the appropriate multiple
      A(i,j) = 0
      for k=j+1:n
        A(i,k) = A(i,k) - L(i,j)*A(j,k);
      end
    end
  end
```

We can write the two innermost loops more concisely in terms of a *Gauss transformation* $M_j = I - \tau_j e_j^T$, where τ_j is the vector of multipliers that appear when eliminating in column j:

```
%
% Overwrites A with an upper triangular factor U, keeping track of
% multipliers in the matrix L.
%
function [L,A] = mylu(A)

  n = length(A);
  L = eye(n);
  for j=1:n-1

    % Form vector of multipliers
    L(j+1:n,j) = A(j+1:n,j)/A(j,j);

    % Apply Gauss transformation
    A(j+1:n,j) = 0;
    A(j+1:n,j+1:n) = A(j+1:n,j+1:n)-L(j+1:n,j)*A(j,j+1:n);

  end
```

5 Problems to ponder

1. What is the complexity of the Gaussian elimination algorithm?

2. Describe how to find A^{-1} using Gaussian elimination. Compare the cost of solving a linear system by computing and multiplying by A^{-1} to the cost of doing Gaussian elimination and two triangular solves.

3. Consider a parallelipiped in $\mathbb{R}^3$ whose sides are given by the columns of a 3-by-3 matrix A. Interpret LU factorization geometrically, thinking of Gauss transformations as shearing operations. Using the fact that shear transformations preserve volume, give a simple expression for tne volume of the parallelipiped.