

GENERAL TOPOLOGY

ÁKOS CSÁSZÁR

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MRS Á. CSÁSZÁR

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The literature of general topology is enriched each year by several hundreds of papers containing new scientific results and besides these, by some new books or new editions of older books. Some of them deal with a specific domain of this discipline and therefore need certain preliminaries of topology, but the majority treat the subject starting from basic principles.

This phenomenon is explained by the fact that one of the characteristic features of modern mathematics is the penetration of topological methods into many chapters of mathematics, first of all into analysis and geometry. Hence it is desirable that students interested in general topology can embark on this subject in a rather early phase of their studies. From a purely logical point of view it would be possible to present general topology in a form disregarding any previous knowledge in mathematics, by beginning, after the enumeration of the background from set theory, with the basic definitions and axioms. However, I am convinced that a treatment of this kind is an abuse of the possibilities of the axiomatic method which can produce a formal understanding but cannot furnish a real insight into the importance of the concepts. Indeed, there is no doubt that the abstract theories characterizing modern mathematics are important only because their general concepts include a series of interesting special cases; their general statements, applied to concrete examples, imply interesting conclusions, and I am firmly convinced that the presentation of such a theory is useful only if it includes the necessary preparation for the procedure of abstraction leading to the definitions, the explanation of the special cases contained in them, and the applications resulting from the theorems. However, in order to reach the concepts of general topology in a natural way, starting from concrete notions, and to illustrate the definitions by non-trivial examples, one needs some background in analysis; the larger this background, the richer is the illustrative material available in presenting the theory, but of course then the possibility of getting acquainted with topology is transferred to a later phase of studies in mathematics.

After considering all this, I decided to postulate for the reader a knowledge corresponding to the material of a first year undergraduate course in analysis. Instead of presuming "nothing else than ability in abstract thinking", I assume, to the extent indicated above, acquaintance with elementary analysis. On the other hand, background from analysis, algebra, or set theory, not familiar to a student having finished the first year at university, is not used without a detailed explanation at the corresponding place in the text.

This limitation of mathematical background implies that I do not use the concept of the cardinality of a set — except the distinction of finite, countable, and uncountable sets — as well as the theory of infinite cardinal and ordinal numbers. The Kuratowski–Zorn lemma and the Zermelo theorem, stated without proof, give however the possibility of presenting every essential concept and result of general topology, except, of course, the concepts based on the notion of cardinality (e.g. the weight of a topological space) and some more intricate counter-examples. An expert reader can judge whether this avoidance of deeper methods of set theory essentially truncates the material or not.

According to the introductory character of the book the purpose of the exercises at the end of each section is to give the reader the possibility of controlling the understanding of the material by enlightening the content of a definition or a theorem by means of special cases and counter-examples. I do not have the illusion (in contrast to the authors of many similar books) that the reader will be able to discover alone each further result of general topology; accordingly every exercise (except those which are straightforward) is divided into smaller units and often the essential thoughts necessary to the solution are given in brackets.

Another aid to the beginner is the clear presentation of the logical structure of longer proofs. This is done by means of the symbols $\Rightarrow$ and $\Leftrightarrow$; the latter is expressed in the text by the usual abbreviation “iff”. The symbol ■ shows the end of a proof; if it is put at the end of a statement, then the latter is obvious in view of the corresponding definitions or the preceding statements.

According to the character of the book, references to the literature are omitted. Instead there is a list of textbooks and monographs on general topology, rather large without being complete. It does not contain works in languages other than English, French, or German; new editions are mentioned only if their language differs from that of the first one, or if they were essentially enlarged. The works contained in this list give a rich possibility of getting deeper knowledge in general topology; a part of them contains a large list of papers on the subject.

The introductory character of the book was emphasized above several times. In apparent contradiction to this, I should like to point out that I tried to present to the reader the up-to-date features of general topology and to give a survey on some fairly recent theories. In particular, I present some types of topological structures other than topologies in some extent and I point out their role in the study of various questions of general topology.

The first Hungarian edition of this book (Bevezetés az általános topológiába) appeared in 1970. The English edition was enlarged by the treatment of some new subjects, especially in Chapters 4, 8 and 9, and many new exercises were added.

It is my duty to express my sincerest gratitude to my colleagues M. Bognár, S. Gacsályi, J. Gerlits, P. Hamburger, I. Juhász, for their aid in preparing the manuscript. Some proofs and a series of exercises are based on their ideas.

A. Császár

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	15
1.1. Sets	15
1.1.a. Membership	15
1.1.b. Subsets	16
1.1.c. Operations	16
1.1.d. Equivalence relations	17
1.1.e. Sets of real numbers	17
1.1.f. Numerical sequences	21
1.1.g. Countable sets	21
1.1.h. Well-ordering	24
1.1.i. Kuratowski-Zorn lemma	24
1.1.j. Exercises	25
1.2. Euclidean spaces	26
1.2.a. Distance	26
1.2.b. Convergence of a sequence of points	29
1.2.c. Open and closed sets	33
1.2.d. Dense sets	36
1.2.e. Theorems of Cantor, Lindelöf and Borel	37
1.2.f. Exercises	39
1.3. Metric spaces	40
1.3.a. Metric	40
1.3.b. Convergence, Open and closed sets	43
1.3.c. Complete metric spaces	44
1.3.d. Separable metric spaces	45
1.3.e. Distance between sets	46
1.3.f. Pseudo-metrics	49
1.3.g. Pseudo-metric spaces	50
1.3.h. Exercises	50
2. Topological spaces	53
2.1. The notion of topological space	53
2.1.a. Convergence	53
2.1.b. Centred systems, filter bases, filters	55
2.1.c. Neighbourhood structures	59
2.1.d. Convergence, open and closed sets in a neighbourhood space	61
2.1.e. Topological spaces	62
2.1.f. Exercises	64
2.2. Determination of topologies	66
2.2.a. Neighbourhood bases	66
2.2.b. Bases	67

2.2.c. Prescription of open or closed sets	69
2.2.d. Interior and closure of a set	70
2.2.e. The boundary of a set	72
2.2.f. Axiomatic remarks	73
2.2.g. Exercises	73
2.3. Comparison and restriction of topologies	75
2.3.a. Comparison of topologies	75
2.3.b. Restriction of topologies. Subspaces	77
2.3.c. Exercises	80
2.4. Convergence of filter bases	82
2.4.a. Insufficiency of the convergence of sequences	82
2.4.b. Convergence of filter bases	83
2.4.c. Axioms of countability	85
2.4.d. Examples. Metrizable spaces	87
2.4.e. Exercises	89
2.5. Separation axioms	91
2.5.a. Basic notions	91
2.5.b. T_0 -spaces	92
2.5.c. T_1 -spaces	93
2.5.d. T_2 -spaces	94
2.5.e. Regular spaces	96
2.5.f. Normal spaces	97
2.5.g. Completely normal spaces	98
2.5.h. Exercises	101
2.6. Continuous mappings	102
2.6.a. Mappings	102
2.6.b. Image and inverse image of a system of sets	105
2.6.c. Continuous mappings	107
2.6.d. Homeomorphy	111
2.6.e. Continuous functions	112
2.6.f. Inverse image of topologies	115
2.6.g. Exercises	118
3. Proximity and uniform spaces	121
3.1. Proximity spaces	121
3.1.a. Proximity of a pseudo-metric space	121
3.1.b. Proximity spaces	122
3.1.c. Topology of a proximity space	124
3.1.d. Comparison of proximity relations	125
3.1.e. Restriction of proximities	129
3.1.f. Inverse image of proximities	130
3.1.g. Proximally continuous maps	131
3.1.h. Exercises	134
3.2. Uniform spaces	136
3.2.a. ε -Surroundings in a pseudo-metric space	136
3.2.b. Cartesian product of two sets	137
3.2.c. Uniform spaces	139
3.2.d. Uniformity induced by a family of pseudo-metrics	140
3.2.e. Proximity and topology of a uniform space	141
3.2.f. Comparison of uniformities	142
3.2.g. Restriction of uniformities	144
3.2.h. Inverse image of uniformities	146
3.2.i. Uniformly continuous maps	147

3.2.j. Totally bounded uniform spaces	152
3.2.k. Exercises	157
4. Completely regular spaces	160
4.1. Urysohn's lemma	160
4.1.a. Ordering in proximity and uniform spaces	160
4.1.b. Urysohn's lemma	161
4.1.c. Exercises	165
4.2. Completely regular spaces	166
4.2.a. The notion of a completely regular space	166
4.2.b. Families of functions	168
4.2.c. Inducing of topologies and proximities by function families	170
4.2.d. Inducing of uniformities by families of pseudo-metrics	171
4.2.e. Characterization by means of subbases	174
4.2.f. Exercises	177
5. Complete and compact spaces	182
5.1. Complete uniform spaces	182
5.1.a. Cauchy filter bases	182
5.1.b. Complete uniform spaces	184
5.1.c. Exercises	185
5.2. Compact proximity spaces	186
5.2.a. Compressed filter bases	186
5.2.b. Ultrafilters	187
5.2.c. Compact proximity spaces	189
5.2.d. Cluster points of filter bases	190
5.2.e. Exercises	192
5.3. Compact topological spaces	193
5.3.a. Various characterizations	193
5.3.b. Properties of compact spaces and sets	195
5.3.c. Countably compact spaces	199
5.3.d. Sequentially compact spaces	202
5.3.e. Locally compact spaces	203
5.3.f. Rim-compact spaces	204
5.3.g. Exercises	208
6. Extensions of spaces	213
6.1. Extensions of topological spaces	213
6.1.a. The notion of extension	213
6.1.b. Strict extensions	215
6.1.c. The Alexandroff compactification	219
6.1.d. $\mathfrak{P}$ -filters	221
6.1.e. Wallman-type compactifications	225
6.1.f. Wallman compactification	235
6.1.g. Freudenthal compactification	237
6.1.h. H -closed extensions	238
6.1.i. Exercises	241
6.2. Extension of mappings	245
6.2.a. Extension of continuous mappings	245
6.2.b. Extension of uniformly continuous mappings	246
6.2.c. Extension of proximally continuous mappings	248

6.2.d. Exercises	248
6.3. Extensions of uniform spaces	249
6.3.a. Round filters	249
6.3.b. Extensions of a uniform space	252
6.3.c. Completion of a uniform space	255
6.3.d. Exercises	257
6.4. Extensions of proximity spaces	258
6.4.a. Extensions of a proximity space	258
6.4.b. Compactification of a proximity space	259
6.4.c. Compactifications of a completely regular space	261
6.4.d. Čech-Stone compactification	264
6.4.e. Real-compact spaces	266
6.4.f. Hewitt real-compactification	273
6.4.g. Exercises	275
7. Product and quotient spaces	280
7.1. The product of topological spaces	280
7.1.a. Projective generation	280
7.1.b. Cartesian product of sets	282
7.1.c. The product of topological spaces	283
7.1.d. The product of compact spaces	287
7.1.e. Embedding theorems	290
7.1.f. Exercises	297
7.2. The product of proximity spaces	301
7.2.a. Projective generation of proximities	301
7.2.b. The product of proximity spaces	302
7.2.c. Embedding theorems	304
7.2.d. Exercises	304
7.3. The product of uniform spaces	306
7.3.a. Projective generation of uniformities	306
7.3.b. The product of uniform spaces	308
7.3.c. Embedding theorems	311
7.3.d. Square of uniformities	312
7.3.e. Exercises	315
7.4. Quotient spaces	317
7.4.a. Inductive generation of topologies	317
7.4.b. Quotient topologies	318
7.4.c. Quotient spaces	320
7.4.d. Quotient spaces of proximity spaces	322
7.4.e. Quotient spaces of uniform spaces	325
7.4.f. Exercises	327
8. Paracompact spaces	334
8.1. Divisible spaces	334
8.1.a. Neighbourhoods of the diagonal	334
8.1.b. Multinormal spaces	335
8.1.c. Equicontinuous functions	336
8.1.d. Further characterizations	337
8.1.e. Exercises	338
8.2. Fully normal spaces	339
8.2.a. Refinements and star-refinements of a system of sets	339
8.2.b. Fully normal spaces	340

8.2.c. Ultracomplete spaces	341
8.2.d. Exercises	343
8.3. Paracompact spaces	344
8.3.a. Locally finite systems of sets	344
8.3.b. Paracompact spaces	346
8.3.c. Partitions of unity	347
8.3.d. Equivalent characterizations	348
8.3.e. Examples of paracompact spaces	349
8.3.f. Product theorems	351
8.3.g. Metacompact spaces	354
8.3.h. Continuous closed images of paracompact spaces	357
8.3.i. Countably paracompact spaces	360
8.3.j. Strongly paracompact spaces	365
8.3.k. Exercises	367
8.4. Metrization theorems	371
8.4.a. Regular and point-regular bases	371
8.4.b. Perfectly normal spaces	372
8.4.c. Metrization conditions	372
8.4.d. Applications	376
8.4.e. Metrization of proximity spaces	377
8.4.f. Continuous closed images of metrizable spaces	378
8.4.g. Embedding into product spaces	380
8.4.h. Exercises	381
9. Baire spaces	384
9.1. Rare and meagre sets	384
9.1.a. Rare sets	384
9.1.b. Meagre sets	385
9.1.c. Exercises	386
9.2. Baire spaces	387
9.2.a. Baire spaces	387
9.2.b. Base-compact and hypocompact spaces	388
9.2.c. Product theorems	392
9.2.d. Applications	393
9.2.e. Čech-complete spaces	397
9.2.f. Completely metrizable spaces	399
9.2.g. Exercises	402
10. Connected spaces	407
10.1. Connected sets	407
10.1.a. Separated partitions	407
10.1.b. Connected sets	408
10.1.c. Operations	409
10.1.d. Components	411
10.1.e. Continua	411
10.1.f. Exercises	412
10.2. Locally connected spaces	414
10.2.a. Local connectedness	414
10.2.b. Operations	415
10.2.c. Arcs	416
10.2.d. Exercises	420

10.3. Arcwise connected spaces	423
10.3.a. Arcwise joined points	423
10.3.b. Arcwise connected sets	424
10.3.c. Locally arcwise connected sets	424
10.3.d. Chains	425
10.3.e. Locally connected complete metric spaces	426
10.3.f. Exercises	428
10.4. Locally connected continua	430
10.4.a. Covering with continua	430
10.4.b. Continuous images	431
10.4.c. Exercises	435
11. Topological groups	437
11.1. Groups	437
11.1.a. The notion of group	437
11.1.b. Examples	438
11.1.c. Multiplication of sets	439
11.1.d. Translations	440
11.1.e. Subgroups	440
11.1.f. Homomorphisms	441
11.1.g. Exercises	443
11.2. Topological groups	445
11.2.a. The notion of topological group	445
11.2.b. Neighbourhood bases of e	446
11.2.c. Consequences	449
11.2.d. Subgroups	451
11.2.e. Homomorphisms	453
11.2.f. Exercises	453
11.3. Complete groups	456
11.3.a. Admissible uniformities	456
11.3.b. The admissibility of left and right uniformities	457
11.3.c. Bilateral uniformity	461
11.3.d. The completion of a topological group	463
11.3.e. Locally compact groups	466
11.3.f. Exercises	467
Literature	471
Subject index	475
Notations	482

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