Connectivity

Section 10.4

Paths

Informal Definition: A *path* is a sequence of edges that begins at a vertex of a graph and travels from vertex to vertex along edges of the graph. As the path travels along its edges, it visits the vertices along this path, that is, the endpoints of these.

Applications: Numerous problems can be modeled with paths formed by traveling along edges of graphs such as:

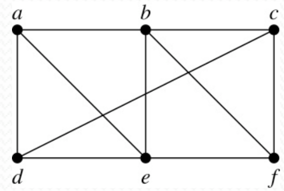
- determining whether a message can be sent between two computers.
- efficiently planning routes for mail delivery.

Paths

Definition: Let n be a nonnegative integer and G an undirected graph. A *path* of *length* n from u to v in G is a sequence of n edges $e_1, \ldots, e_n$ of G for which there exists a sequence $x_0 = u, x_1, \ldots, x_{n-1}, x_n = v$ of vertices such that e_i has, for $i = 1, \ldots, n$, the endpoints x_{i-1} and x_i.

- When the graph is simple, we denote this path by its vertex sequence $x_0, x_1, \ldots, x_n$(since listing the vertices uniquely determines the path).
- The path is a *circuit* if it begins and ends at the same vertex ($u = v$) and has length greater than zero.
- The path or circuit is said to *pass through* the vertices $x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_{n-1}$ and *traverse* the edges $e_1, \ldots, e_n$.
- A path or circuit is *simple* if it does not contain the same edge more than once.

Paths (*continued*)



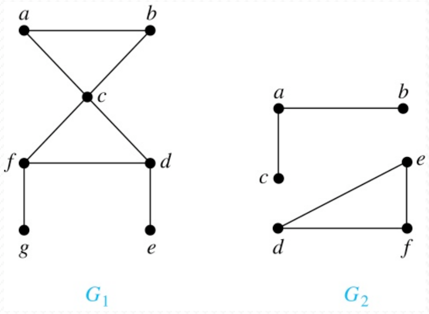
Example: In the simple graph here:

- *a*, *d*, *c*, *f*, *e* is a simple path of length 4.
- *d*, *e*, *c*, *a* is not a path because *e* is not connected to *c*.
- *b*, *c*, *f*, *e*, *b* is a circuit of length 4.
- *a*, *b*, *e*, *d*, *a*, *b* is a path of length 5, but it is not a simple path.

Connectedness in Undirected Graphs

Definition: An undirected graph is called *connected* if there is a path between every pair of vertices. An undirected graph that is not *connected* is called *disconnected*. We say that we *disconnect* a graph when we remove vertices or edges, or both, to produce a disconnected subgraph.

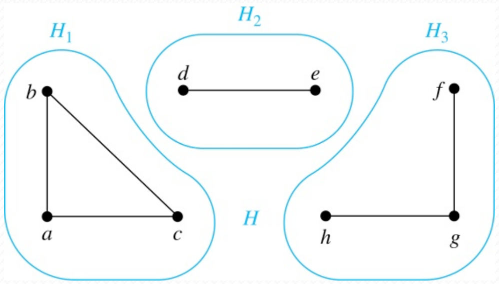
Example: G_1 is connected because there is a path between any pair of its vertices, as can be easily seen. However G_2 is not connected because there is no path between vertices a and f, for example.



Connected Components

Definition: A *connected component* of a graph *G* is a connected subgraph of *G* that is not a proper subgraph of another connected subgraph of *G*. A graph *G* that is not connected has two or more connected components that are disjoint and have *G* as their union.

Example: The graph *H* is the union of three disjoint subgraphs H_1, H_2, and H_3, none of which are proper subgraphs of a larger connected subgraph of *G*.These three subgraphs are the connected components of *H*.

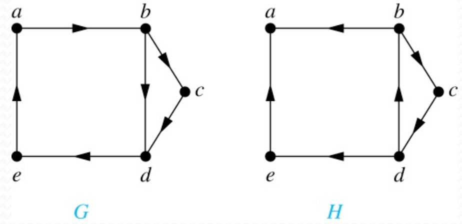


Connectedness in Directed Graphs

Definition: A directed graph is *strongly connected* if there is a path from *a* to *b* and a path from *b* to *a* whenever *a* and *b* are vertices in the graph.

Definition: A directed graph is *weakly connected* if there is a path between every two vertices in the underlying undirected graph, which is the undirected graph obtained by ignoring the directions of the edges of the directed graph.

Connectedness in Directed Graphs (*continued*)



Example: *G* is strongly connected because there is a path between any two vertices in the directed graph. Hence, *G* is also weakly connected. The graph *H* is not strongly connected, since there is no directed path from *a* to *b*, but it is weakly connected.

Definition: The subgraphs of a directed graph *G* that are strongly connected but not contained in larger strongly connected subgraphs, that is, the maximal strongly connected subgraphs, are called the *strongly connected components* or *strong components* of *G*.

Example (*continued*): The graph *H* has three strongly connected components, consisting of the vertex *a*; the vertex *e;* and the subgraph consisting of the vertices *b*, *c*, *d* and edges (*b*,*c*), (*c*,*d*), and (*d*,*b*).