

The Number of flats Spanned by a Set of Points

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2/8/2017 at 01:00 pm
CoRE A 301

Abstract

A k -flat (or k -dimensional affine subspace) G is spanned by a set P of points in d -dimensional real space if G contains $k+1$ affinely independent points of P . The study of the extremal combinatorics of the flats spanned by sets of points in real space is a classical area of study in discrete geometry, with numerous applications to computational geometry. In the late 1980s, Purdy asked for a characterization of those sets of points that span fewer hyperplanes than $(d-2)$ -flats. In this talk, I will give a nearly complete answer to this question, based on a new measure of the degeneracy of a point set. This work also leads to a generalization of a point-hyperplane incidence bound, proved by Elekes and Toth in 2005.

Defense Committee: Shubhangi Saraf (chair), Swastik Kopparty, Mario Szegedy, Zeev Dvir (Princeton)