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*Original*
Least common multiple of polynomial sequences / Bazzanella, D., Sanna, C.. - In: RENDICONTI DEL SEMINARIO MATEMATICO. - ISSN 0373-1243. - STAMPA. - 78:1(2020), pp. 21-25.

*Availability:*
This version is available at: 11583/2790092 since: 2020-11-17T15:14:07Z

*Publisher:*
Politecnico di Torino - Università di Torino

*Published*
DOI:

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26 November 2026

Rendiconti Sem. Mat. Univ. Pol. Torino
Vol. 78, 1 (2020), 21 – 25

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# LEAST COMMON MULTIPLE OF POLYNOMIAL SEQUENCES

**Abstract.** We collect some results and problems about the quantity

$$L_f(n) := \mathrm{lcm}(f(1), f(2), \ldots, f(n)),$$

where $f$ is a polynomial with integer coefficients and lcm denotes the least common multiple.

## 1. Introduction

For each positive integer $n$, let us define

$$L(n) := \mathrm{lcm}(1,2,\ldots,n),$$

that is, the lowest common multiple of the first $n$ positive integers. It is not difficult to show that

$$\log L(n) = \psi(n) := \sum_{p \le n} \log p,$$

where $\psi$ denotes the first Chebyshev function, and $p$ runs over all primes numbers not exceeding $n$. Hence, bounds for $L(n)$ are directly related to bounds for $\psi(n)$ and, consequently, to estimates for the prime counting function $\pi(n)$. In particular, since the Prime Number Theorem is equivalent to $\psi(n) \sim n$ as $n \to +\infty$, we have

$$\log L(n) \sim n.$$

In 1936 Gelfond and Shnirelman, proposed a new elementary and clever method for deriving a lower bound for the prime counting function $\pi(x)$ (see Gelfond's editorial remarks in the 1944 edition of Chebyshev's Collected Works [15, pag. 287–288]). In 1982 the Gelfond-Shnirelman method was rediscovered and developed by Nair [16, 17]. Their method was actually based on estimating $L(n)$, and in its simplest form [16] it gives

$$n \log 2 \le \log L(n) \le n \log 4,$$

for every $n \ge 9$, which in turn implies

$$(\log 2 + o(1)) \frac{n}{\log n} \le \pi(n) \le (\log 4 + o(1)) \frac{n}{\log n},$$

after some manipulations. Later, it was proved [18] that the Gelfond-Shnirelman-Nair method can give lower bound in the form

$$\pi(n) \ge C \, \frac{n}{\log n},$$

only for constants $C$ less than 0.87, which is quite far from what is expected by the Prime Number Theorem. (A possible way around this problem has been considered in [13, 14, 19].)

Moving from this initial connection with estimates for $\pi(n)$ and the Prime Number Theorem, several authors have considered bounds and asymptotic for the following generalization of $L(n)$ to polynomials. For every polynomial $f \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$, let us define

$$L_f(n) := \operatorname{lcm}(f(1), f(2), \ldots, f(n)).$$

In the next section we collect some results on $L_f(n)$.

## 2. Products of linear polynomials

Stenger [12] used the Prime Number Theorem for arithmetic progressions to show the following asymptotic estimate for linear polynomials:

THEOREM 1. *For any linear polynomial $f(x) = ax + b \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$, we have*

$$\log L_f(n) \sim n \frac{q}{\varphi(q)} \sum_{\substack{1 \le r \le q \\ (q,r)=1}} \frac{1}{r},$$

*as $n \to +\infty$, where $q = a/(a,b)$ and $\varphi$ denotes the Euler's totient function.*

Hong, Qian, and Tan [6] extended this result to polynomials $f$ which are the product of linear polynomials, showing that an asymptotic of the form $\log L_f(n) \sim A_f n$ holds as $n \to +\infty$, where $A_f > 0$ is a constant depending only on $f$.

Moreover, effective lower bounds for $L_f(n)$ when $f$ is a linear polynomial have been proved by Hong and Feng [3], Hong and Kominers [4], Hong, Tan and Wu [7], Hong and Yang [8], and Oon [9],

## 3. Quadratic polynomials

Cilleruelo [2, Theorem 1] considered irreducible quadratic polynomials and proved the following result:

THEOREM 2. *For any irreducible quadratic polynomial with integer coefficients $f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c$, we have*

$$\log L_f(n) = n \log n + B_f n + o(n),$$

*where*

$$B_f := \gamma - 1 - 2\log 2 - \sum_p \frac{(d/p)\log p}{p-1} + \frac{1}{\varphi(q)} \sum_{\substack{1\le r\le q\\(r,q)=1}} \log\left(1+\frac{r}{q}\right)$$
$$+ \log a + \sum_{p\mid 2aD} \log p \left( \frac{1+(d/p)}{p-1} - \sum_{k\ge 1} \frac{s(f,p^k)}{p^k} \right),$$

*and $\gamma$ is the Euler–Mascheroni constant, $D = b^2 - 4ac = d\ell^2$, where $d$ is a fundamental discriminant, $(d/p)$ is the Kronecker symbol, $q = a/(a,b)$ and $s(f,p^k)$ is the number of solutions of $f(x) \equiv 0 \pmod{p^k}$.*

Rué, Šarka, and Zumalacárregui [11, Theorem 1.1] provided a more precise error term for the particular polynomial $f(x) = x^2 + 1$,

THEOREM 3. *Let $f(x) = x^2 + 1$. For any $\theta < 4/9$ we have*

$$\log L_f(n) = n\log n + B_f n + O_\theta\left(\frac{n}{(\log n)^\theta}\right).$$

## 4. Higher degree polynomials

Regarding general irreducible polynomials, Cilleruelo [2] formulated the following conjecture.

CONJECTURE 1. If $f(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ is an irreducible polynomial of degree $d \ge 2$, then

$$\log L_f(n) \sim (d-1) n \log n,$$

as $n \to +\infty$.

Except for the result of Theorem 2, no other case of Conjecture 1 is known to date. It can be proved (see [10, p. 2]) that for any irreducible $f$ of degree $d \ge 3$, we have

$$n\log n \ll \log L_f(n) \le (1+o(1))(d-1)\, n \log n.$$

Also, Rudnick and Zehavi [10, Theorem 1.2] proved the following result, which established Conjecture 1 for almost all shifts of a fixed polynomial, in a range of $n$ depending on the range of shifts.

THEOREM 4. *Let $f(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ be a monic polynomial of degree $d \ge 3$. Then, as $T \to +\infty$, we have that for all $a \in \mathbb{Z}$ with $|a| \le T$, but a set of cardinality $o(T)$, it holds*

$$\log L_{f(x)-a}(n) \sim (d-1)\, n \log n$$

*uniformly for $T^{1/(d-1)} < n < T/\log T$.*

Regarding lower bounds for $L_f(n)$, Hong and Qian [5, Lemma 3.1] proved the following:

THEOREM 5. *Let $f(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ be a polynomial of degree $d \geq 1$ and with leading coefficient $a_d$. Then for all integers $1 \leq m \leq n$, we have*

$$\operatorname{lcm}(f(m), f(m+1), \ldots, f(n)) \geq \frac{1}{(n-m)!} \prod_{k=m}^{n} \left| \frac{f(k)}{a_d} \right|^{1/d}.$$

Shparlinski [1] suggested to study a bivariate version of $L_f(n)$, posing the following problem:

PROBLEM 1. *Given a polynomial $f \in \mathbb{Z}[x,y]$, obtain an asymptotic formula for*

$$\log \operatorname{lcm}\{f(m,n) : 1 \leq m,n \leq N\}$$

*with a power saving in the error term.*

## 5. Acknowledgements

C. Sanna is supported by a postdoctoral fellowship of INdAM and is a member of the INdAM group GNSAGA.

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**AMS Subject Classification: 11N32, 11N37**

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*Lavoro pervenuto in redazione il 30.10.2019.*