

On the Budgeted Hausdorff Distance Problem

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Abstract

Given a set P of n points in the plane, and a parameter k , we present an algorithm, whose running time is $O(n^{3/2}\sqrt{k}\log^{3/2}n + kn\log^2n)$, with high probability, that computes a subset $Q^* \subseteq P$ of k points, that minimizes the Hausdorff distance between the convex-hulls of Q^* and P . This is the first subquadratic algorithm for this problem if k is small.

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1 Introduction

Given a set of points P in $\mathbb{R}^d$, a natural goal is to find a small subset of it that represents the point set well. This problem has attracted a lot of interest over the last two decades, and this subset of P is usually referred to as a *coreset* [3, 1]. An alternative approximation is provided by the largest enclosed ellipsoid inside $\mathcal{C}(P)$ (here $\mathcal{C}(P)$ denotes the *convex-hull* of P) or the smallest area bounding box of P (not necessarily axis-aligned). This provides a constant approximation to the projection width of P in any direction v – that is, the projection of P into the line spanned by v is contained in the projection of the ellipsoid after appropriate constant scaling. One can show that in two dimensions, there is a subset $Q \subseteq P$ (i.e., a coreset) of size $O(1/\sqrt{\varepsilon})$ such that the projection width of P and Q is the same up to scaling by $1 + \varepsilon$. See Agarwal *et al.* [3, 1] for more details.

The concept of a coreset is attractive as it provides a notion of approximating that adapts to the shape of the point set. However, an older and arguably simpler approach is to require that $\mathcal{C}(Q)$ approximates $\mathcal{C}(P)$ within a certain absolute error threshold. A natural such measure is the *Hausdorff* distance between sets $X, Y \subseteq \mathbb{R}^2$, which is

$$d_H(X, Y) = \max(d(X \rightarrow Y), d(Y \rightarrow X)),$$

where

$$d(X \rightarrow Y) = \max_{x \in X} \min_{y \in Y} \|xy\|. \quad (1)$$

In our specific case, the two sets are $\mathcal{C}(P)$ and $\mathcal{C}(Q)$, and let $D_H(Q, P) = d_H(\mathcal{C}(Q), \mathcal{C}(P))$. The natural questions are

- (I) **MinCardin:** Compute the smallest subset $Q \subseteq P$, such that $D_H(Q, P) \leq \tau$, where τ is a prespecified error threshold. Formally, let

$$\mathcal{F}_{\leq \tau} = \{Q \subseteq P \mid D_H(Q, P) \leq \tau\},$$



and let $k^* = k^*(P, \tau) = \min_{Q \in \mathcal{F}_{\leq \tau}} |Q|$ denote the minimum cardinality of such a set Q .

- (II) **MinDist**: Compute the subset $Q \subseteq P$ of size k , such that $D_H(Q, P)$ is minimized, where k is a prespecified subset size threshold. Let $\tau^* = \tau^*(P, k) = \min_{Q \subseteq P: |Q|=k} D_H(Q, P)$ denote the optimal radius.

The two problems are “dual” to each other – solve one, and you get a way to solve the other in polynomial time via a search on the values of the other parameter. In particular, solving both problems directly (in two dimensions) can be done via dynamic programming, but even getting a subcubic running time is not immediate in this case. Indeed, the problem seems to have a surprisingly subtle and intricate structure that make this problem more challenging than it seems at first.

Klimenko and Raichel [7] provided an $O(n^{2.53})$ time algorithm for **MinCardin**. Very recently, Agarwal and Har-Peled [2] provided a near-linear time algorithm for **MinCardin** that runs in near linear time if $k^* = k^*(P, \tau)$ is small. Specifically, the running time of this algorithm is $O(k^* n \log n)$.

The purpose of this work is to come up with a subquadratic algorithm for the “dual” problem **MinDist**. An algorithm with running time $O(n^2 \log n)$ follows readily by computing all possible critical values, and performing a binary search over these values, using the procedure of [2] as a black box. The only subquadratic algorithm known previously was for the special case when P is in convex position, for which [7] gave an algorithm whose running time is $O(n \log^3 n)$ with high probability.¹

Our main result is an algorithm that, given P and k as input, solves **MinDist** in $O(n^{3/2} \sqrt{k} \log^{3/2} n + kn \log^2 n)$ time, with high probability, see Theorem 8 for details. We believe the algorithm itself is technically interesting – it uses random sampling to reduce the range of interest into an interval containing $O(\sqrt{n})$ critical values. It then use the decision procedure of [2] as a way to compute the critical values in this interval, by “peeling” them one by one in decreasing order. Using random sampling for parametric search is an old idea, see [6] and references there.

2 Preliminaries

Given a point set X in $\mathbb{R}^2$, let $\mathcal{C}(X)$ denote its **convex hull**. For two compact sets $X, Y \subset \mathbb{R}^2$, let $d(X, Y) = \min_{x \in X, y \in Y} \|xy\|$ denote their distance. For a single point x let $d(x, Y) = d(\{x\}, Y)$.

Consider two finite point sets $Q \subseteq P \subset \mathbb{R}^2$, and observe that

$$D_H(Q, P) = d_H(\mathcal{C}(Q), \mathcal{C}(P)) = \max_{p \in P} d(p, \mathcal{C}(Q)),$$

see Eq. (1). The first equality above is by definition, and the second is since $Q \subseteq P$ and so we have that $\mathcal{C}(Q) \subseteq \mathcal{C}(P)$, and moreover the furthest point in $\mathcal{C}(P)$ from $\mathcal{C}(Q)$ is always a point in P .

In this paper we consider the following two related problems, where for simplicity, we assume that P is in general position.

¹ The general problem cannot be reduced to the convex position case. To see this, suppose P consists of 4 points, 3 forming an equilateral triangle, with the fourth at the midpoint of an edge but infinitesimally pushed towards the interior of the triangle. Then the optimal 2 point approximation is this fourth point along with the vertex opposite its edge.

► **Problem 1** (MinCardin). *Given a set $P \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ of n points, and a value $\tau > 0$, find the smallest cardinality subset $Q \subseteq P$ such that $D_H(Q, P) \leq \tau$.*

► **Problem 2** (MinDist). *Given a set $P \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ of n points, and an integer k , find the subset $Q \subseteq P$ that minimizes $D_H(Q, P)$ subject to the constraint that $|Q| \leq k$.*

For either problem let Q^* denote an optimal solution. For MinCardin let $k^* = k^*(P, \tau) = |Q^*|$, and for MinDist let $\tau^* = \tau^*(P, k) = D_H(Q^*, P)$. The algorithms discussed in this paper will output the set Q^* , though when it eases the exposition, we occasionally refer to k^* as the solution to MinCardin and τ^* as the solution to MinDist.

We make use of the following result from [2]. The statement of this result in [2] only depends on k^* , though it can be easily adapted to the result below which allows for querying values of k in time dependent on k and not k^* , which is required for our search procedure to achieve the desired running time.

► **Theorem 3** ([2]). *Given as an input a point set P and parameters k and τ , let $k^* = k^*(P, \tau)$. There is a procedure **decider**(P, τ, k), that in $O(nk \log n)$ time, either returns that “ $k^* > k$ ”, or alternatively returns a set $Q^* \subseteq P$, such that $|Q^*| = k^* \leq k$, and $D_H(Q^*, P) \leq \tau$.*

The above theorem readily implies that the problem MinCardin can be solved in $O(nk^* \log n)$ time.

Given an input of size n , an algorithm runs in $O(f(n))$ time *with high probability*, if for any chosen constant $c > 0$, there is a constant α_c such that the running time exceeds $\alpha_c f(n)$ with probability $< 1/n^c$.

3 Algorithm

3.1 The canonical set

Given an instance P, k of MinDist, let Q^* denote an optimal solution. Recall that

$$\tau^* = D_H(Q^*, P) = \max_{p \in P} d(p, \mathcal{C}(Q^*)).$$

Assume that $\tau^* > 0$, which can easily be determined by checking if $|V(\mathcal{C}(P))| > k$, where $V(\mathcal{C}(P))$ denotes the set of vertices of $\mathcal{C}(P)$. Let

$$p = \arg \max_{p' \in P} d(p', \mathcal{C}(Q^*)),$$

and let q be its projection onto $\mathcal{C}(Q^*)$, i.e. $\tau^* = \|pq\|$. Observe that q either lies on a vertex of $\mathcal{C}(Q^*)$ or in the interior of a bounding edge. Since $Q^* \subseteq P$, we can conclude that τ^* is either (i) the distance between two points in P , or (ii) the distance from a point in P to the line passing through two other points from P . Note that, in case (ii), q must be the orthogonal projection of p on to the line ℓ supporting the edge, and that p must be the furthest point from ℓ out of the points that lie in one of its two defining halfplanes. In particular, for an ordered pair $a, b \in P$ define $\ell_{a,b}$ as the line through a and b , directed from a to b , and let $P_{a,b}$ be the subset of P lying in the halfspace bounded by and to the left of $\ell_{a,b}$. We thus define the following two sets.

$$\mathcal{V} = \{\|xy\| \mid x, y \in P\} \quad \text{and} \quad \mathcal{L} = \left\{ \max_{p \in P_{a,b}} d(p, \ell_{a,b}) \mid a, b \in P \right\}. \quad (2)$$

The set $\Xi = \mathcal{V} \cup \mathcal{L}$ is the *canonical set* of distance values (i.e., the set of all *critical* values). By the above discussion, we have $\tau^* \in \Xi$.

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Observe that $\mathcal{V}$ and $\mathcal{L}$ (and hence Ξ) have quadratic size. Thus we will not explicitly compute these sets. Instead we will search over $\mathcal{V}$ using the following “median” selection procedure.

► **Theorem 4** ([4]). *Given a set $P \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ of n points, and an integer $k > 0$, with high probability, in $O(n^{4/3})$ time, one can compute the value of rank k in $\mathcal{V}$.*

For values in $\mathcal{L}$, the algorithm samples values and searches over them, using a procedure loosely inspired by [6]. For that we have the following standard lemma, whose proof we include for completeness.

► **Lemma 5** ([5]). *Let $P \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ be a set of n points. Then in $O(n \log n)$ time one can build a data structure such that for any query vector $\vec{u}$, in $O(\log n)$ time, it returns the point of P extremal in the direction $\vec{u}$, i.e. the point maximizing the dot product with $\vec{u}$. Let $\text{extremal}(\vec{u})$ denote this query procedure.*

Proof. Let $V(\mathcal{C}(P)) = \{q_1, \dots, q_k\}$ be labelled in clockwise order. Let $U(q_i)$ be the set of unit vectors $\vec{u}$ such that when we translate P so that q_i lies at the origin, then $\vec{u}$ lies in the exterior angle between the normals of $q_{i-1}q_i$ and q_iq_{i+1} . Observe that $\text{extremal}(\vec{u}) = q_i$ precisely when $u \in U(q_i)$. Moreover, the $U(q_i)$ define a partition of the set of all unit vectors into k sets. Thus if we maintain these intervals in an array, sorted in clockwise order, then in $O(\log k) = O(\log n)$ time we can binary search to find which interval $\vec{u}$ falls in. It takes $O(n \log n)$ time to compute $\mathcal{C}(P)$ and thus the data structure. ◀

In the next section, given a directed line ℓ , we use the above lemma to make extremal queries for the normal of ℓ lying in its left defining halfplane. This lets us evaluate extreme points for lines supporting edges of the current hull, as well as allows us to sample values from $\mathcal{L}$, for which we have the following.

► **Corollary 6.** *Given a set $P \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ of n points, after $O(n \log n)$ preprocessing time, one can return, in $O(\log n)$ time, a value sampled uniformly at random from $\mathcal{L}$.*

Proof. Sample uniformly at random a pair of points from P , and then use Lemma 5 for the normal to the line passing through this pair of points. ◀

3.2 The algorithm in stages

The input is a set P of n points, and a parameter k . The task at hand is to compute the minimum distance τ^* , such that there is a subset $Q \subseteq P$ of size k , such that $D_H(Q, P) \leq \tau^*$.

Searching and testing for the optimal value.

The algorithm maintains an interval (r, R) , such that the following invariants are maintained:

- (I) $k^*(P, r) > k$,
- (II) $k^*(P, R) \leq k$, and
- (III) $\tau^*(P, k) \in (r, R)$.

(The first two conditions are actually implied by the last condition, though for clarity we list all three.) In the following, let $\delta > 0$ denote an infinitesimal, see Remark 7 below. Given a value $\tau \in (r, R)$, one can decide if $\tau = \tau^*(P, k)$, by running $\text{decider}(P, \tau, k)$ and $\text{decider}(P, \tau - \delta, k)$, see Theorem 3. If $\text{decider}(P, \tau - \delta, k)$ returns that $k^*(P, \tau - \delta) > k$ and $k^*(P, \tau) = k$ then clearly τ is the desired optimal value. In this case, the algorithm returns this value and stops.

► **Remark 7** (Running $\text{decider}(P, \tau - \delta, k)$). The above algorithm can be described without using infinitesimals, but this is somewhat cleaner. Over-simplifying, the algorithm of **decider** boils down to deciding if a circular interval graph has a cover of size k . Originally, the intervals are closed, but instead we can treat them as open when solving for r (i.e., this corresponds to the $r - \delta$ case). This essentially requires implementing two versions of decider for the closed/open cases, respectively. Both versions have the same asymptotic running time.

Updating the current interval.

After testing if $\tau = \tau^*(P, k)$ for a value $\tau \in (r, R)$ as described above, if $\tau \neq \tau^*(P, k)$ then the algorithm can update the current interval. Indeed, if **decider** (P, τ, k) returns that $k^*(P, \tau) > k$, then the algorithm sets the current interval to (τ, R) . Otherwise, **decider** $(P, \tau - \delta, k)$ returned that $k^*(P, \tau - \delta) \leq k$ and so the algorithm sets the current interval to (r, τ) .

Stage I: Handling pairwise distances.

The algorithm sets the initial interval to $(0, \infty)$. (Recall as discussed above that we can assume $\tau^* > 0$.) The algorithm then binary searches over all pairwise distance from $\mathcal{V} = \binom{P}{2}$ by using the distance selection procedure of Theorem 4, in the process repeatedly updating the current interval as described above. If $\tau^* \in \mathcal{V}$, then the algorithm will terminate when the search considers this value. Otherwise, this search reduces the current interval to two consecutive pairwise distances from $\mathcal{V}$, $r < R$, such that $\tau^* \in (r, R)$ and the current interval (r, R) contains no pairwise distance of P in its interior.

Stage II: Sampling edge-vertex distances.

The algorithm samples a set Π of $O(n^{3/2} \log n)$ values from $\mathcal{L}$, see Eq. (2), using Corollary 6. Let U be the subset of values of Π that lie inside the current interval. The algorithm binary searches over U , repeatedly updating the current interval as described above (by doing median selection so that U 's cardinality halves at each iteration). If $\tau^* \in U$ then the algorithm will terminate when the search considers this value. Otherwise, the search further reduces to the interval to $I' = (r', R')$. (Which as discussed below, with high probability, contains $O(\sqrt{n})$ values from $\mathcal{L}$.)

Stage III: Peeling the critical edge-vertex distances.

The algorithm now continues the search on the interval $I' = (r', R')$ and critical values in it, $I' \cap \Xi = I' \cap \mathcal{L}$. In particular, the solution computed by **decider** (P, R', k) is a set $Q \subseteq P$ of size $\leq k$ such that $D_H(Q, P) \leq R'$. For every edge on the boundary of $\mathcal{C}(Q)$ the algorithm now computes the point from P furthest away from the line supporting the edge (among the points in the halfplane not containing $\mathcal{C}(Q)$), using extremal queries from Lemma 5. Let α be the largest such computed value over all the edges, and observe that $\alpha = D_H(Q, P)$.² If $\alpha < R'$, then $\alpha \geq \tau^*(P, k)$. The algorithm tests if $\alpha = \tau^*(P, k)$, and if so it terminates. Otherwise, it must be that the optimal value lies in the interval (r', α) . As $\alpha \in (r', R')$

² $D_H(Q, P)$ must be realized at a value from $\mathcal{L}$ as Stage I eliminated $\mathcal{V}$ values, and thus it sufficed to consider furthest distances to the lines supporting edges rather than the edges themselves, since at the maximum such value they must align.

and $\alpha \in \mathcal{L}$, our new interval (r', α) has at least one less value from $\mathcal{L}$. The algorithm now continues to the next iteration of Stage III.

The case when $\alpha = R'$ (i.e., the higher end of the active interval) is somewhat more subtle. The algorithm calls **decider** $(P, k, \alpha - \delta)$ to compute a set Q' that realizes $k^*(P, \alpha - \delta)$, where δ is an infinitesimal. Observe that $k^*(P, \alpha - \delta) \leq k$, as otherwise $\alpha = R'$ was the desired optimal value. Let $\beta = D_H(Q', P)$, which can be computed in a similar fashion using Q' as α was computed using Q . The algorithm tests if $\beta = \tau^*(P, k)$, and if so it terminates. Otherwise, by the same reasoning used above for α , we can conclude our new interval (r', β) has at least one fewer value from $\mathcal{L}$, and thus the algorithm continues to the next iteration of Stage III on the interval (r', β) .

3.3 Analysis

Correctness.

The correctness of the algorithm is fairly immediate given the discussion above. Namely, the algorithm maintains an interval (r, R) with the invariant that $\tau^*(P, k) \in (r, R)$ (where initially this interval is $(0, \infty)$). In each step of each stage a value $\tau \in (r, R)$ that is either from $\mathcal{V}$ (in Stage I) or from $\mathcal{L}$ (in Stages II and III) is determined. For this value τ we then update the current interval as described above. Namely, we query **decider** (P, τ, k) and **decider** $(P, \tau - \delta, k)$. If these calls return that $k^*(P, \tau) \leq k$ and $k^*(P, \tau - \delta) > k$ then $\tau = \tau^*(P, k)$ and the algorithm terminates. Otherwise, if $k^*(P, \tau) > k$ the algorithm proceeds on (τ, R) , and if $k^*(P, \tau - \delta) \leq k$ then it proceeds on (r, τ) . In either case the interval contains at least one fewer value from Ξ , and thus eventually the algorithm must terminate with the value $\tau^*(P, k)$.

Running time analysis.

In Stage I the algorithm performs a binary search over $\mathcal{V} = \binom{P}{2}$. This is done using the distance selection procedure of Theorem 4, which with high probability takes $O(n^{4/3})$ time to determine each next query value. Each query is answered using the $O(nk \log n)$ time **decider** $(P, \cdot, k)$ from Theorem 3. Thus in total Stage I takes $O((n^{4/3} + nk \log n) \log n)$ time with high probability. Here, by the union bound, a polynomial number of high probability events (i.e. the events that each call to selection occurs in $O(n^{4/3})$ time), all occur simultaneously with high probability.

In Stage II the algorithm samples $O(n^{3/2} \log n)$ values from $\mathcal{L}$ using the $O(\log n)$ time sampling procedure of Corollary 6. Next, the algorithm binary searches over these values (this time directly), again using **decider** $(P, \cdot, k)$. Thus in total Stage II takes $O(n^{3/2} \log^2 n + nk \log^2 n)$ time.

Stage III begins with some interval (r', R') . Let $X = |\mathcal{L} \cap (r', R')|$. In each iteration of Stage III, for some subset $Q \subseteq P$ of size at most k , the algorithm computes $\alpha = D_H(Q, P)$. This is done using at most k calls to the $O(\log n)$ query time Lemma 5. (This same step is potentially done a second time for $\beta = D_H(Q', P)$). Each iteration of Stage III also performs a constant number of calls to **decider** $(P, \cdot, k)$, thus is total one iteration takes $O(k \log n + nk \log n) = O(nk \log n)$ time. As argued above each iteration of Stage III reduces the number of values from $\mathcal{L}$ in the active interval by at least 1, and thus runs for at most X iterations. Thus the total time of Stage III is $O(Xnk \log n)$.

Observe that since Stage II sampled a set Π of $O(n^{3/2} \log n)$ values from the $O(n^2)$ sized set $\mathcal{L}$, the interval between any two consecutive values of Π with high probability has $O(\sqrt{n})$ values from $\mathcal{L}$. As the interval $I' = (r', R')$ returned by Stage II is such an interval, with

high probability $X = O(\sqrt{n})$. As the running time of Stage II dominates the running time of Stage I (with high probability), we thus have that with high probability the total time of all stages is

$$\begin{aligned} O(n^{3/2} \log^2 n + (\log n + X)nk \log n) &= O(n^{3/2} \log^2 n + n^{3/2}k \log n + nk \log^2 n) \\ &= O(n^{3/2}(k + \log n) \log n). \end{aligned}$$

Slightly improving the running time.

Observe that if the algorithm samples $O(nt \log n)$ values in stage II, then with high probability the last two stages take

$$O\left(nt \log^2 n + \left(\frac{n^2}{nt} + \log n\right)kn \log n\right)$$

time. Solving for t , we have

$$nt \log^2 n = (n^2/t)k \log n \implies t^2 = nk / \log n.$$

Thus, setting $t = \sqrt{nk / \log n}$, and including the running time of stage I, we get the improved high probability running time bound

$$\begin{aligned} O\left(n^{4/3} \log n + nt \log^2 n + \left(\frac{n^2}{nt} + \log n\right)kn \log n\right) \\ = O(n^{3/2} \sqrt{k} \log^{3/2} n + kn \log^2 n). \end{aligned}$$

In summary, we get the following result.

► **Theorem 8.** *Given an instance of MinDist , consisting of a set $P \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ of n points and an integer k , the above algorithm computes a set $Q^* \subseteq P$, of size k , that realizes the minimum Hausdorff distance between the convex-hulls of P and Q^* among all such subsets – that is, $\tau^*(P, k) = D_H(P, Q^*)$. The running time of the algorithm is $O(n^{3/2} \sqrt{k} \log^{3/2} n + kn \log^2 n)$ with high probability.*

We remark that under the reasonable assumption that $k = O(n / \log n)$ the running time can be stated more simply as $O(n^{3/2} \sqrt{k} \log^{3/2} n)$.

4 Conclusions

The most interesting open problem left by our work is whether one can get a near-linear running time if k is small. Even beating $O(n^{4/3})$ seems challenging. On the other hand, if one is willing to use $2k$ points then a near linear running time is achievable [7]. However, using less than $2k$ points without increasing the Hausdorff distance in near linear time seems challenging.

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