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Handbook of Geometric Analysis, No. 1

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Preface

The marriage of geometry and analysis, in particular non-linear differential equations, has been very fruitful. An early deep application of geometric analysis is the celebrated solution by Shing-Tung Yau of the Calabi conjecture in 1976. In fact, Yau together with many of his collaborators developed important techniques in geometric analysis in order to solve the Calabi conjecture. Besides solving many open problems in algebraic geometry such as the Severi conjecture, the characterization of complex projective varieties, and characterization of certain Shimura varieties, the Calabi-Yau manifolds also provide the basic building blocks in the superstring theory model of the universe. Geometric analysis has also been crucial in solving many outstanding problems in low dimensional topology, for example, the Smith conjecture, and the positive mass conjecture in general relativity.

Geometric analysis has been intensively studied and highly developed since 1970s, and it is becoming an indispensable tool for understanding many parts of mathematics. Its success also brings with it the difficulty for the uninitiated to appreciate its breadth and depth. In order to introduce both beginners and non-experts to this fascinating subject, we have decided to edit this handbook of geometric analysis. Each article is written by a leading expert in the field and will serve as both an introduction to and a survey of the topics under discussion. The handbook of geometric analysis is divided into several parts, and this volume is the first part.

Shing-Tung Yau has been crucial to many stages of the development of geometric analysis. Indeed, his work has played an important role in bringing the well-deserved global recognition by the whole mathematical sciences community to the field of geometric analysis. In view of this, we would like to dedicate this handbook of geometric analysis to Shing-Tung Yau on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday.

Summarizing the main mathematical contributions of Yau will take many pages and is probably beyond the capability of the editors. Instead, we quote several award citations on the work of Yau.

The citation of the Veblen Prize for Yau in 1981 says: “*We have rarely had the opportunity to witness the spectacle of the work of one mathematician affecting, in a short span of years, the direction of whole areas of research.... Few mathematicians can match Yau’s achievements in depth, in impact, and in the diversity of methods and applications.*”

In 1983, when Yau was awarded a Fields medal, L. Nirenberg described Yau’s work up to that point:

“*Yau has done extremely deep work in global geometry and elliptic partial*

differential equations, including applications in three-dimensional topology and in general relativity theory. He is an analyst's geometer (or geometer's analyst) with remarkable technical power and insight. He has succeeded in solving problems on which progress had been stopped for years."

More than ten years later, Yau was awarded the Carfoord prize in 1994, and the citation of the award says:

"The Prize is awarded to ... Shing-Tung Yau, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA, for his development of non-linear techniques in differential geometry leading to the solution of several outstanding problems.

Thanks to Shing-Tung Yau's work over the past twenty years, the role and understanding of the basic partial differential equations in geometry has changed and expanded enormously within the field of mathematics. His work has had an impact on areas of mathematics and physics as diverse as topology, algebraic geometry, representation theory, and general relativity as well as differential geometry and partial differential equations. Yau is a student of legendary Chinese mathematician Shiing-Shen Chern, for whom he studied at Berkeley. As a teacher he is very generous with his ideas and he has had many students and also collaborated with many mathematicians."

We wish Yau a happy sixtieth birthday and continuing success in many years to come!

Lizhen Ji
Peter Li
Richard Schoen
Leon Simon

Contents

Numerical Approximations to Extremal Metrics on Toric Surfaces

<i>R. S. Bunch, Simon K. Donaldson</i>	1
1 Introduction.....	1
2 The set-up.....	2
2.1 Algebraic metrics.....	2
2.2 Decomposition of the curvature tensor.....	5
2.3 Integration.....	7
3 Numerical algorithms: balanced metrics and refined approximations .	9
4 Numerical results.....	13
4.1 The hexagon.....	14
4.2 The pentagon.....	17
4.3 The octagon.....	20
4.4 The heptagon.....	24
5 Conclusions.....	26
References.....	28

Kähler Geometry on Toric Manifolds, and some other Manifolds with Large Symmetry

<i>Simon K. Donaldson</i>	29
Introduction.....	29
1 Background.....	30
1.1 Gauge theory and holomorphic bundles.....	30
1.2 Symplectic and complex structures.....	31
1.3 The equations.....	31
2 Toric manifolds.....	32
2.1 Local differential geometry.....	32
2.2 The global structure.....	36
2.3 Algebraic metrics and asymptotics.....	41
2.4 Extremal metrics on toric varieties.....	44
3 Toric Fano manifolds.....	46
3.1 The Kähler-Ricci soliton equation.....	46
3.2 Continuity method, convexity and a fundamental inequality...	48
3.3 A priori estimate.....	50
3.4 The method of Wang and Zhu.....	53
4 Variants of toric differential geometry.....	56
4.1 Multiplicity-free manifolds.....	56
4.2 Manifolds with a dense orbit.....	59
5 The Mukai-Umemura manifold and its deformations.....	61

5.1	Mukai's construction	61
5.2	Topological and symplectic picture	66
5.3	Deformations	68
5.4	The α -invariant	71
	References	74
Gluing Constructions of Special Lagrangian Cones		
	<i>Mark Haskins, Nikolaos Kapouleas</i>	77
1	Introduction	77
2	Special Lagrangian cones and special Legendrian submanifolds of \mathbb{S}^{2n-1}	80
3	Cohomogeneity one special Legendrian submanifolds of \mathbb{S}^{2n-1}	83
4	Construction of the initial almost special Legendrian submanifolds	111
5	The symmetry group and the general framework for correcting the initial surfaces	119
6	The linearized equation	126
7	Using the Geometric Principle to prescribe the extended substitute kernel	132
8	The main results	135
A	Symmetries and quadratics	137
	References	143
Harmonic Mappings		
	<i>Jürgen Jost</i>	147
1	Introduction	147
2	Harmonic mappings from the perspective of Riemannian geometry	148
2.1	Harmonic mappings between Riemannian manifolds: definitions and properties	148
2.2	The heat flow and harmonic mappings into nonpositively curved manifolds	154
2.3	Harmonic mappings into convex regions and applications to the Bernstein problem	157
3	Harmonic mappings from the perspective of abstract analysis and convexity theory	160
3.1	Existence	160
3.2	Regularity	163
3.3	Uniqueness and some applications	164
4	Harmonic mappings in Kähler and algebraic geometry	165
4.1	Rigidity and superrigidity	165
4.2	Harmonic maps and group representations	170
4.3	Kähler groups	175
4.4	Quasiprojective varieties and harmonic mappings of infinite energy	177
5	Harmonic mappings and Riemann surfaces	179
5.1	Families of Riemann surfaces	179

5.2	Harmonic mappings from Riemann surfaces	181
	References	187
Harmonic Functions on Complete Riemannian Manifolds		
	<i>Peter Li</i>	195
	Introduction	195
1	Gradient estimates	195
2	Green's function and parabolicity	199
3	Heat kernel estimates and mean value inequality	205
4	Harmonic functions and ends	209
5	Stability of minimal	210
6	Polynomial growth harmonic functions	213
7	Massive sets and the structure of harmonic maps	217
8	L^q Harmonic functions	222
	References	224
Complexity of Solutions of Partial Differential Equations		
	<i>Fang Hua Lin</i>	229
1	Introduction	229
2	Level and critical point sets	232
3	Solutions of nonlinear equations	239
4	A partition problem for eigenvalues	243
4.1	Heat flow for eigenfunctions	243
4.2	Gradient flow approach to (P)	247
	Acknowledgement	251
	References	251
Variational Principles on Triangulated Surfaces		
	<i>Feng Luo</i>	259
1	Introduction	259
2	The Schlaefli formula and its counterparts in dimension 2	261
2.1	Regge calculus and Casson's approach in dimension 3	261
2.2	The work of Colin de Verdiere, Rivin, Cohen-Kenyon-Propp and Leibon	262
2.3	The Cosine Law and 2-dimensional Schlaefli formulas	264
2.4	The geometric meaning of some action functionals	267
3	Variational principles on surfaces	268
3.1	Colin de Verdiere's proof of Thurston-Andreev's rigidity theorem	268
3.2	The work of Rivin and Leibon	269
3.3	New curvatures for polyhedral metrics and some rigidity theorems	269
3.4	Application to Teichmüller theory of surfaces with boundary ..	271
4	The moduli spaces of polyhedral metrics	272
4.1	Thurston-Andreev's theorem and Marden-Rodin's proof	272
4.2	Some other results on the space of curvatures	273
4.3	A sketch of the proof theorems 3.6 and 3.7	274

5	Several open problems.....	275
	References.....	275
Asymptotic Structures in the Geometry of Stability and		
Extremal Metrics		
	<i>Toshiki Mabuchi</i>	277
1	Extremal metrics in Kähler geometry.....	277
2	Stability for polarized algebraic manifolds.....	278
3	The asymptotic Bergman kernel.....	279
4	Test configurations.....	281
5	Affine sphere equations.....	286
6	“Affine spheres” for toric Einstein surfaces.....	288
7	Asymptotic expansion for toric Einstein surfaces.....	294
	References.....	298
Stable Constant Mean Curvature Surfaces		
	<i>William H. Meeks III, Joaquín Pérez, Antonio Ros</i>	301
1	Introduction.....	301
2	Stability of minimal and constant mean curvature surfaces.....	303
	2.1 The operator $\Delta + q$	303
	2.2 Stable H -surfaces.....	313
	2.3 Global theorems for stable H -surfaces.....	314
3	Weak H -laminations.....	317
4	The Stable Limit Leaf Theorem.....	323
5	Foliations by constant mean curvature surfaces.....	329
	5.1 Curvature estimates and sharp mean curvature bounds for CMC foliations.....	332
	5.2 Codimension one CMC foliations of \mathbb{R}^4 and \mathbb{R}^5	338
6	Removable singularities and local pictures.....	349
	6.1 Structure theorems for singular CMC foliations.....	351
	6.2 The Local Picture Theorem on the scale of topology.....	354
	6.3 The statement of the theorem.....	355
7	Compactness of finite total curvature surfaces.....	357
	7.1 The moduli space \mathcal{M}_C and the proof of Theorem 7.2.....	358
8	Singular minimal laminations.....	362
9	The moduli space of embedded minimal surfaces of fixed genus....	363
	9.1 Conjectures on stable CMC surfaces in homogeneous three-manifolds.....	374
10	Appendix.....	376
	References.....	377
A General Asymptotic Decay Lemma for Elliptic Problems		
	<i>Leon Simon</i>	381
	Introduction.....	381
1	Scale invariant compact classes of submanifolds.....	383
2	Some preliminaries concerning the class \mathcal{P}	388
3	Stability inequality.....	391

4	Compact classes of cones	392
5	A partial Harnack theory	397
6	Proof of Theorem 1	402
7	Application to growth estimates for exterior solutions	405
	References	409
Uniformization of Open Nonnegatively Curved Kähler Manifolds in Higher Dimensions		
	<i>Luen-Fai Tam</i>	413
1	Introduction	413
2	Function theory on Kähler manifolds	415
	2.1 Preliminary	415
	2.2 A Liouville theorem for pluri-subharmonic functions	418
	2.3 Polynomial growth holomorphic functions	421
3	Busemann function and the structure of nonnegatively curved Kähler manifolds	424
	3.1 Curvature decay and volume growth	424
	3.2 Manifolds with nonnegative sectional curvature	426
4	Kähler-Ricci flow	429
5	Uniformization results	433
	5.1 Uniformization of gradient Kähler-Ricci solitons	433
	5.2 Quadratic curvature decay	435
	5.3 Linear curvature decay	439
	References	442
Geometry of Measures: Harmonic Analysis Meets Geometric Measure Theory		
	<i>Tatiana. Toro</i>	449
1	Introduction	449
2	Density - an indicator of regularity	450
3	Harmonic measure: boundary structure and size	452
4	Geometric measure theory tools	455
5	Open questions	463
	References	464
The Monge-Ampère Equation and its Geometric Applications		
	<i>Neil S. Trudinger, Xu-Jia Wang</i>	467
1	Introduction	467
2	The Monge-Ampère measure	473
	2.1 Locally convex hypersurfaces	473
	2.2 The Monge-Ampère measure	475
	2.3 Generalized solutions	478
3	A priori estimates	479
	3.1 Minimum ellipsoid	479
	3.2 Uniform and Hölder estimates	480
	3.3 Strict convexity and $C^{1,\alpha}$ regularity	481
	3.4 Second derivative estimate	484

3.5	$C^{2,\alpha}$ estimate	487
3.6	$W^{2,p}$ estimate	489
3.7	Hölder estimate for the linearized Monge-Ampère equation	490
3.8	Monge-Ampère equations of general form	492
4	Existence and uniqueness of solutions	494
4.1	The Dirichlet problem	494
4.2	Other boundary value problems	495
4.3	Entire solutions	497
4.4	Hypersurfaces of prescribed Gauss curvature	499
4.5	Variational problems for the Monge-Ampère equation	502
4.6	Application to the isoperimetric inequality	503
5	The affine metric	504
5.1	Affine completeness	504
5.2	Affine spheres	506
6	Affine maximal surfaces	507
6.1	The affine maximal surface equation	507
6.2	A priori estimates	508
6.3	The affine Bernstein problem	509
6.4	The first boundary value problem	511
6.5	The second boundary value problem	514
6.6	The affine Plateau problem	515
	References	516

Lectures on Mean Curvature Flows in Higher Codimensions

	<i>Mu-Tao Wang</i>	525
1	Basic materials	525
1.1	Connections, curvature, and the Laplacian	525
1.2	Immersed submanifolds and the second fundamental forms	527
1.3	First variation formula	528
2	Mean curvature flow	529
2.1	The equation	529
2.2	Finite time singularity	530
3	Blow-up analysis	531
3.1	Backward heat kernel and monotonicity formula	531
3.2	Synopsis of singularities	532
4	Applications to deformations of symplectomorphisms of Riemann surfaces	534
4.1	Introduction	534
4.2	Derivation of evolution equations	535
4.3	Long time existence	537
4.4	Smooth convergence as $t \rightarrow \infty$	540
4.5	$c > 0$ case	541
4.6	$c = 0$ case	541
4.7	$c < 0$ case	541
5	Acknowledgement	542

References	542
Local and Global Analysis of Eigenfunctions on Riemannian Manifolds	
<i>Steve Zelditch</i>	545
Introduction	545
1 Basic definitions and notations	548
1.1 Planck's constant and eigenvalue asymptotics	548
1.2 Spectral kernels	549
1.3 Geodesic flow	549
1.4 Closed geodesics	550
1.5 Jacobi fields and linear Poincaré map along a closed geodesic	550
1.6 Geodesic flow as a unitary operator	551
1.7 Spectrum and geodesic flow	551
1.8 Ergodic, weak mixing and Anosov geodesic flows	552
1.9 Completely integrable geodesic flow	552
1.10 Quantum mechanics: wave group and pseudo-differential operators	555
1.11 Modes and quasi-modes	557
1.12 Heuristics and intuitions	558
1.13 Notational Index	558
2 Explicitly solvable eigenfunctions	559
2.1 \mathbb{R}^n	559
2.2 Flat tori	561
2.3 Standard Sphere	562
2.4 Surface of revolution	563
2.5 \mathbf{H}^n	563
2.6 The Euclidean unit disc D	565
2.7 An ellipse	565
3 Local behavior of eigenfunctions	567
3.1 Eigenfunctions and harmonic functions on a cone	567
3.2 Frequency function	567
3.3 Doubling estimate, vanishing order estimate and lower bound estimate	570
3.4 Semi-classical Lacunas	572
3.5 Three ball inequalities and propagation of smallness	573
3.6 Bernstein inequalities	573
3.7 Carleman inequalities	574
3.8 Geometric comparison inequalities	576
3.9 Symmetry of positive and negative sets	577
3.10 Alexandroff-Bakelman-Pucci-Cabré inequality	577
3.11 Bers scaling near zeros	578
3.12 Heuristic scaling at non-zero points	578
4 Nodal sets on C^∞ Riemannian manifolds	579
4.1 Courant and Pleijel bounds on nodal domains	581
4.2 Critical and singular sets of eigenfunctions on C^∞ Riemannian manifolds	581

5	The wave kernel of a compact Riemannian manifold	583
5.1	Manifolds without conjugate points	585
6	Methods for global analysis	586
6.1	Egorov's theorem	586
6.2	Sharp Garding inequality	586
6.3	Operator norm and symbol norm	587
6.4	Quantum Limits (Microlocal defect measures)	587
7	Singularities pre-trace formulae	590
7.1	Duistermaat-Guillemin short time pre-trace formula	590
7.2	Long time pre-trace formulae	591
7.3	Safarov trace formula	592
8	Weyl law and local Weyl law	593
9	Local and global L^p estimates of eigenfunctions	595
9.1	Sketch of proof of the Sogge L^p estimate	596
9.2	Generic non-sharpness of Sogge estimates	598
10	Gaussian beams and quasi-modes associated to stable closed geodesics	599
10.1	Local model	600
10.2	WKB ansatz for a Gaussian beam	601
10.3	Quantum Birkhoff normal form: intertwining to the model	603
11	Birkhoff normal forms around closed geodesics	603
11.1	Local quantum Birkhoff normal forms	605
11.2	Model eigenfunctions around closed geodesics	605
12	Quantum integrable Laplacians	606
12.1	Quantum integrability and ladders of eigenfunctions	607
12.2	Geometric examples	607
12.3	Localization of integrable eigenfunctions	609
12.4	Conjugation to normal form around torus orbits	611
13	Concentration and non-concentration for general (M, g)	612
13.1	L^p norms for restrictions to submanifolds	613
13.2	Non-concentration in tubes around hyperbolic closed geodesics	613
13.3	Non-concentration around closed geodesics on compact hyperbolic surfaces	614
14	L^p norms and concentration in the Quantum integrable case	615
14.1	Mass concentration on small length scales	617
15	Delocalization in quantum ergodic systems, I	619
15.1	Quantum ergodicity in terms of operator time and space averages	621
15.2	Quantum unique ergodicity and converse quantum ergodicity	622
15.3	Quantum weak mixing	623
15.4	Spectral measures and matrix elements	623
15.5	Rate of quantum ergodicity and mixing	624
15.6	Quantum chaos conjectures	625
15.7	Rigorous results	626

15.8	Quantum limits on a hyperbolic surface and Patterson-Sullivan distributions	626
16	Delocalization of eigenfunctions: II: Entropy of quantum limits on manifolds with Anosov geodesic flow	628
17	Real analytic manifolds and their complexifications	631
17.1	Analytic continuation of eigenfunctions	632
17.2	Maximal plurisubharmonic functions and growth of $\varphi_\lambda^{\mathbb{C}}$	634
17.3	Analytic continuation and nodal hypersurfaces	636
17.4	Nodal hypersurfaces in the case of ergodic geodesic flow	637
17.5	Analytic domains with boundary	639
18	Riemannian random waves	640
18.1	Levy concentration of measure	641
18.2	Concentration of measure and L^p norms	641
18.3	\mathcal{L}^∞ norms: Proof of Theorem 18.3	642
18.4	Sup norms on small balls	644
18.5	Relation to Levy concentration	645
18.6	Nazarov-Sodin Theorem on the mean number of nodal domains of random spherical harmonics	646
19	Appendix on Tauberian Theorems	648
	References	649

**Yau’s Form of Schwarz Lemma and Arakelov Inequality On
Moduli Spaces of Projective Manifolds**

<i>Kang Zuo</i>	659
Introduction	659
1 Polarized complex variation of hodge structure and Higgs bundle ..	662
2 Viehweg’s positivity theorem for direct image sheaves	664
3 Coverings, constructing Higgs bundles and the positivity on moduli spaces	666
3.1 Iterated Higgs	666
3.2 Constructing of VHS	667
4 Algebraic hyperbolicity and effective boundedness	670
References	674