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Mathematical Biology

An Introduction with

Maple and Matlab

Second Edition



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Preface

Biology is a source of fascination for most scientists, whether their training is in the life sciences or not. In particular, there is a special satisfaction in discovering an understanding of biology in the context of another science like mathematics. Fortunately there are plenty of interesting problems (and fun) in biology, and virtually all scientific disciplines have become the richer for it. For example, two major journals, *Mathematical Biosciences* and *Journal of Mathematical Biology*, have tripled in size since their inceptions 20–25 years ago.

More recently, the advent of genomics has spawned whole new fields of study in the biosciences, fields such as proteomics, comparative genomics, genomic medicine, pharmacogenomics, and structural genomics among them. These new disciplines are as much mathematical as biological.

The various sciences have a great deal to give to one another, but there are still too many fences separating them. In writing this book we have adopted the philosophy that mathematical biology is not merely the intrusion of one science into another, but that it has a unity of its own, in which both biology and mathematics should be equal, complete, and flow smoothly into and out of one another. There is a timeliness in calculating a protocol for administering a drug. Likewise, the significance of bones being “sinks” for lead accumulation while bonemeal is being sold as a dietary calcium supplement adds new meaning to mathematics as a *life science*. The dynamics of a compartmentalized system are classical; applications to biology can be novel. Exponential and logistic population growths are standard studies; the delay in the increase of AIDS cases behind the increase in the HIV-positive population is provocative.

With these ideas in mind we decided that our book would have to possess several important features. For example, it would have to be *understandable to students of either biology or mathematics*, the latter referring to any science students who normally take more than two years of calculus, i.e., majors in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and engineering.

A prime objective of this text is to introduce students of mathematics to the interesting mathematical problems and future challenges in biology.

No prior study of biology would be necessary.

Mathematics students rarely take biology as part of their degree programs, but our experience has been that very rapid progress is possible once a foundation has been laid. Thus the *coverage of biology would be extensive*, considerably more than actually needed to put the mathematics of the book into context. This would permit mathematics students to have much greater latitude in subsequent studies, especially in the “what-if” applications of a computer algebra system. It would also help to satisfy the intense intellectual interest that mathematics students have in the life sciences, as has been manifested in our classes.

Genomics is proving that mathematics is as much a part of biology as it is of physics. We urge biology students to equip themselves with two years’ study of mathematics that includes calculus with linear algebra, differential equations, and some discrete mathematics. For the student with one year’s study of calculus with linear algebra, we can say that our exposition of mathematics beyond that level is complete and self-contained. Thus we offer a focused expansion of your mathematical knowledge. Our biology students have had no problems with this approach.

We have divided the book into three parts:

Part I: Cells, Signals, Growth, and Populations;

Part II: Systems and Diseases;

Part III: Genomics.

One reason for this is that the mathematics of genomics is more abstract and advanced. *Moreover, an objective of this text is to introduce both biology and mathematics students to the new field of algebraic statistics.*

To help ease the burden of coping with the mathematics of the book we offer a chapter, Mathtools, dedicated as a refresher or an introduction to the mathematics needed for Parts I and II. At the same time, this chapter serves as a tutorial for the two computer systems, MAPLE and MATLAB that we use to accompany the mathematical derivations. All the computer syntax for the remainder of the text is illustrated here. In order to make this more useful, we construct a “code index,” preceding the usual term index, that shows on which page of the text various code techniques are used.

Every chapter should have “mathematical laboratory biology experiments.”

This is another important goal of the text. It is the computer algebra system that makes the mathematics accessible to nonmathematicians. More than that, powerful mathematical software essentially allows for interactive experimentation with biological models. These systems incorporate hundreds of mathematical techniques and algorithms and perform all the laborious and time-consuming calculations in seconds.

Once a biological system has been modeled, one can then perform “biology” experiments on the model using the computer algebra system. Often these are

experiments that could not be done easily on the real system, such as ascertaining the long-term effects of lead ingestion or the effect of reduced sodium conductance to an action potential. Of course one should always be aware that the real biology is the final arbiter of any such experiment. This hands-on approach provides a rich source of information through the use of “what-if” input and thus allows students to grasp important biological and mathematical concepts in a way that is not possible otherwise.

A note about these exercises/experiments. We start out at the beginning in Chapter 2 with very simple and basic computer algebra commands and progress to more elaborate ones later in the book. By means of line-by-line comments we encourage the student to learn how to master the software and use it as a powerful tool. In this spirit, we also provide a “code index” as mentioned above. Even so, this book is not about programming. At the end of each modeling section, we may ask that the student perform computational experiments on the mathematical models developed in the section. The computer syntax provided there can be downloaded and used for this purpose. The websites are

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[www.math.gatech.edu/~shenk.](http://www.math.gatech.edu/~shenk)

At other times, we ask the student to construct, investigate, and report on a model similar to or an extension of one in the section. Generally, we provide the necessary computer code. It might seem that it is only necessary to download the code from our webpage and press the return key a few times. But in fact, the science is in observing and interpreting the computed results, and in going beyond that by posing questions about the phenomenon that may or may not be answerable by the model.

Most importantly, the biology and mathematics would be integrated.

Each chapter deals with a major topic, such as lead poisoning, and we begin by presenting a thorough foundation of fundamental biology. This leads into a discussion of a related mathematical concept and its elucidation with the computer algebra system. Thus for each major topic, the biology and the mathematics are combined into an integrated whole.

To summarize, we hope that mathematics students will look at this book as a way to learn enough biology to make good models and that biology students will see it as an opportunity to understand the dynamics of a biological system. For both these students and their engineering classmates, perhaps this book can present a new perspective for a life’s work.

In teaching the material ourselves, we usually spend a week (three class periods) per chapter. On the first day we discuss the biology of the chapter, and on the second we talk about the mathematics and derivations. The third day is “lab” day, in which the students attempt the assigned exercises/experiments. This may be performed in an actual computer laboratory where help with MAPLE or MATLAB is available. Also, students can break up into small groups and work together; preferably the group

memberships should change every week. Some of the derivations in the text are involved. We include them for completeness and for the interested student. The one day we spend in class on the derivations is tailored to the level of mathematical depth we think is appropriate.

Acknowledgments

We are deeply indebted to Professor Edward Yeargers for allowing us to use the biology material he wrote for our earlier book, *An Introduction to the Mathematics of Biology*. Now in retirement but still the consummate teacher, Professor Yeargers wished us well in this new endeavor and expressed satisfaction that his pedagogical influence might reach a new generation of students.

We also wish to thank Ann Kostant, who communicated to us the greatest enthusiasm and encouragement for a major expansion of our earlier work to incorporate topics in the new and burgeoning field of genomics. And we would like to thank John Spiegelman for his monumental effort and high-quality results at preparing the tables and figures and reformatting the computer codes. Of course, since we reviewed the syntax carefully before going to press, any errors therein are ours alone.

Finally, we give a special thanks to our students, who show an abiding interest in the material and ask insightful and thought-provoking questions. Some of them keep in touch after having entered and established themselves in a career in this or some related field. Ultimately, it is for them that our effort is sustained.

*Ronald W. Shonkwiler
James V. Herod*

Contents

Preface	v
1 Biology, Mathematics, and a Mathematical Biology Laboratory	1
1.1 The Natural Linkage Between Mathematics and Biology	1
1.2 The Use of Models in Biology	2
1.3 What Can Be Derived from a Model and How Is It Analyzed?	5
References	8
2 Some Mathematical Tools	9
2.1 Linear Dependence	10
Exercises	15
2.2 Linear Regression, the Method of Least Squares	17
Exercises	25
2.3 Multiple Regression	28
Exercises	34
2.4 Modeling with Differential Equations	36
Exercises	45
2.5 Modeling with Difference Equations	48
2.6 Matrix Analysis	52
Exercises	56
2.7 Statistical Data	58
Exercises	66
2.8 Probability	70
Exercises	78
References and Suggested Further Reading	81

Part I: Cells, Signals, Growth, and Populations

3 Reproduction and the Drive for Survival	85
3.1 The Darwinian Model of Evolution	86
3.2 Cells	89

3.3	Replication of Living Systems	90
3.4	Population Growth and Its Limitations	93
3.5	The Exponential Model for Growth and Decay	95
	Exercises/Experiments	104
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	105
	References and Suggested Further Reading	105
4	Interactions Between Organisms and Their Environment	107
4.1	How Population Growth Is Controlled	107
4.2	Community Ecology	117
4.3	Environmentally Limited Population Growth	118
	Exercises/Experiments	125
4.4	A Brief Look at Multiple Species Systems	128
	Exercises/Experiments	135
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	139
	References and Suggested Further Reading	139
5	Age-Dependent Population Structures	141
5.1	Aging and Death	141
5.2	The Age Structure of Populations	146
5.3	Predicting the Age Structure of a Population	150
	Exercises/Experiments	159
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	160
	References and Suggested Further Reading	161
6	Random Movements in Space and Time	163
6.1	Biological Membranes	164
6.2	The Mathematics of Diffusion	168
	Exercises/Experiments	185
6.3	Transplacental Transfer of Oxygen: Biological and Biochemical Considerations	187
6.4	Oxygen Diffusion Across the Placenta: Physical Considerations	189
	Exercises/Experiments	197
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	197
	References and Suggested Further Reading	198
7	Neurophysiology	201
7.1	Communication Between Parts of an Organism	201
7.2	The Neuron	203
7.3	The Action Potential	206
7.4	Synapses: Interneuronal Connections	210
7.5	A Model for the Conduction of Action Potentials	214
7.6	Fitzhugh–Nagumo Two-Variable Action Potential System	223
	Exercises/Experiments	226
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	227
	References and Suggested Further Reading	227

8 The Biochemistry of Cells	229
8.1 Atoms and Bonds in Biochemistry	229
8.2 Biopolymers	237
8.3 Molecular Information Transfer	252
8.4 Enzymes and Their Function	259
8.5 Rates of Chemical Reactions	266
Exercises/Experiments	270
8.6 Enzyme Kinetics	271
Exercises/Experiments	276
Questions for Thought and Discussion	279
References and Suggested Further Reading	280

Part II: Systems and Diseases

9 The Biological Disposition of Drugs and Inorganic Toxins	283
9.1 The Biological Importance of Lead	283
9.2 Early Embryogenesis and Organ Formation	284
9.3 Gas Exchange	290
9.4 The Digestive System	292
9.5 The Skin	294
9.6 The Circulatory System	295
9.7 Bones	304
9.8 The Kidneys	305
9.9 Clinical Effects of Lead	307
9.10 A Mathematical Model for Lead in Mammals	308
Exercises/Experiments	312
9.11 Pharmacokinetics	313
Exercises/Experiments	320
Questions for Thought and Discussion	320
References and Suggested Further Reading	320
10 A Biomathematical Approach to HIV and AIDS	323
10.1 Viruses	323
10.2 The Immune System	328
10.3 HIV and AIDS	337
10.4 An HIV Infection Model	343
Exercises/Experiments	350
10.5 A Model for a Mutating Virus	351
10.6 Predicting the Onset of AIDS	358
Exercises/Experiments	366
Questions for Thought and Discussion	368
References and Suggested Further Reading	369

11	Parasites and Their Diseases	371
11.1	Protozoan Parasites Cause Important Human Diseases	371
11.2	The Life Cycle of the Malaria Parasite	376
11.3	Host–Parasite Interactions	378
11.4	Mathematical Models for Parasitic Diseases	382
	Exercises/Experiments	394
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	397
	References and Suggested Further Reading	397
12	Cancer: A Disease of the DNA	399
12.1	Cell Growth and Division Is an Involved and Complicated Process	399
12.2	Types and Stages of Cancer	402
12.3	The Role of Proto-Oncogenes and Tumor Suppressor Genes	402
12.4	A Model for Retinoblastoma	405
12.5	Application to the Retinoblastoma Data	412
12.6	Persistence of Germinal Cases	414
	Exercises/Experiments	415
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	416
	References and Suggested Further Reading	416

Part III: Genomics

13	Genetics	419
13.1	Asexual Cell Reproduction: Mitosis	419
13.2	Sexual Reproduction: Meiosis and Fertilization	425
13.3	Classical Genetics	429
13.4	Genetic Drift	438
13.5	A Final Look at Darwinian Evolution	440
13.6	The Hardy–Weinberg Principle	442
13.7	The Fixation of a Beneficial Mutation	448
	Exercises/Experiments	453
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	459
	References and Suggested Further Reading	459
14	Genomics	461
14.1	The Promise of Genomics	461
14.2	Structural Genomics	463
14.3	Comparative Genomics	465
14.4	Genomics in Medicine	467
14.5	Protein Substitution Matrices	471
14.6	BLAST for Protein and DNA Search	475
14.7	The Mathematical Underpinnings of BLAST	484
	Exercises/Experiments	494
	Questions for Thought and Discussion	495
	References and Suggested Further Reading	495

15 Phylogenetics	497
15.1 Phylogeny	498
15.2 Branch Lengths Estimate the Separation of Species	508
15.3 Introduction to Algebraic Statistics	514
15.4 Algebraic Analysis of Maximum Likelihood	520
15.5 Characterizing Trees by Their Variety, Phylogenetic Invariants	527
15.6 Constructing the Phylogenetic Tree	530
Exercises/Experiments	535
Questions for Thought and Discussion	537
References and Suggested Further Reading	537
Code Index	539
Index	541