

# Pick Interpolation and Hilbert Function Spaces

**Jim Agler**

**John E. McCarthy**

**Graduate Studies  
in Mathematics**

**Volume 44**



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John E. McCarthy

Graduate Studies  
in Mathematics

Volume 44



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Providence, Rhode Island

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ABSTRACT. We develop an operator theoretic approach to interpolation problems of Pick type, wherein a function of smallest norm in some given algebra is to be found with certain prescribed values. The algebras we consider can all be realized as multiplier algebras for reproducing kernel Hilbert spaces. We pay particular attention to the bounded analytic functions on the disk and on the bidisk, and to a certain “universal Pick algebra” of analytic functions on the unit ball of a Hilbert space.

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# Contents

Preface	xv
Chapter 0. Prerequisites and Notation	1
§0.1. General notation	1
§0.2. Blaschke products	2
§0.3. Pseudo-hyperbolic metric	3
§0.4. Hilbert spaces	3
§0.5. The weak-star topology on $B(\mathcal{H})$	4
§0.6. Rank one operators	4
§0.7. Analytic functions of several variables	5
Chapter 1. Introduction	7
§1.1. The Pick problem	7
§1.2. $H^\infty$ as an operator algebra	9
§1.3. The operator theory approach to the Pick problem	10
§1.4. The Pick property	10
§1.5. Model theory	11
§1.6. Collections of kernels	12
Chapter 2. Kernels and Function Spaces	15
§2.1. Hilbert function spaces	15
§2.2. Kernels	17
§2.3. Multipliers	21
§2.4. Tensor products	22

§2.5. Vector-valued Hilbert function spaces	23
§2.6. Rescaling kernels	25
§2.7. Factoring kernels	28
§2.8. Operator-valued kernels	30
§2.9. Historical notes	33
Chapter 3. Hardy Spaces	35
§3.1. $H^p$ spaces	35
§3.2. Fatou's theorem	36
§3.3. $H^p$ spaces again	41
§3.4. $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ as a multiplier algebra	43
§3.5. Inner functions	45
§3.6. Historical notes	48
Chapter 4. $P^2(\mu)$	49
§4.1. Other spaces with $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ as the multiplier algebra	49
§4.2. Vector-valued $P^2(\mu)$ spaces	52
Chapter 5. Pick Redux	55
§5.1. Necessity of positivity of the Pick matrix	55
§5.2. The Szegő kernel has the Pick property	59
§5.3. The Carathéodory problem	65
§5.4. Uniqueness of the Szegő kernel	67
§5.5. Historical notes	69
Chapter 6. Qualitative Properties of the Solution of the Pick Problem in $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$	71
§6.1. A formula for the solution	71
§6.2. The realization formula for $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$	73
§6.3. Another formula for the solution	76
§6.4. The Nevanlinna problem	78
Chapter 7. Characterizing Kernels with the Complete Pick Property	79
§7.1. Characterization of the complete Pick property	79
§7.2. Another characterization of the complete Pick property	87
§7.3. Holomorphic spaces with the complete Pick property	88
§7.4. The Sobolev space	91
§7.5. The $M_{s \times t}$ Pick property	94
§7.6. Historical notes	95

---

Chapter 8. The Universal Pick Kernel	97
§8.1. The universal kernel	97
§8.2. The realization formula for the universal kernel	101
§8.3. Qualitative properties of solutions of the Pick problem for complete Pick kernels	105
§8.4. The Toeplitz-corona theorem	111
§8.5. Beurling theorems	114
§8.6. Holomorphic complete Pick spaces	117
§8.7. The Nevanlinna problem	118
§8.8. Uniqueness of kernels with the Pick property	123
§8.9. Historical notes	124
Chapter 9. Interpolating Sequences	125
§9.1. Interpolating sequences for $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$	125
§9.2. Grammians, Carleson measures and Riesz systems	126
§9.3. Interpolating sequences and the Pick property	133
§9.4. Zero sets	135
§9.5. Grammians bounded above and below	140
§9.6. Carleson's interpolation theorem	145
§9.7. Historical notes	148
Chapter 10. Model Theory I: Isometries	151
§10.1. Dilations and extensions	151
§10.2. The Sz.-Nagy dilation theorem	153
§10.3. The structure of isometries	156
§10.4. Von Neumann's inequality	158
§10.5. Andô's theorem	160
§10.6. The commutant lifting theorem	162
§10.7. Three or more contractions	163
§10.8. Historical notes	165
Chapter 11. The Bidisk	167
§11.1. The realization formula – scalar case	168
§11.2. The realization formula – matrix case	173
§11.3. The Pick theorem for the bidisk	180
§11.4. Toeplitz-corona for the bidisk	182
§11.5. The Nevanlinna problem for the bidisk	185

---

§11.6.	A two point example	187
§11.7.	Interpolating sequences	190
§11.8.	The polydisk	192
§11.9.	Open problems	192
§11.10.	Exercises	193
§11.11.	Historical notes	193
Chapter 12.	The Extremal Three Point Problem on $\mathbb{D}^2$	195
§12.1.	The two point problem	195
§12.2.	The non-degenerate extremal three point problem: the strictly 2-dimensional case	197
§12.3.	Finding $\Gamma$ and $\Delta$ in the strictly 2-dimensional case	204
§12.4.	The non-degenerate extremal three point problem: the not strictly 2-dimensional case	206
§12.5.	Problems	209
§12.6.	Historical notes	209
Chapter 13.	Collections of Kernels	211
§13.1.	An abstract theory	211
§13.2.	Uniform algebras: the Cole-Lewis-Wermer approach	214
§13.3.	Finitely connected domains	219
§13.4.	When does a collection of kernels have the Pick property?	222
§13.5.	Historical notes	235
Chapter 14.	Model Theory II: Function Spaces	237
§14.1.	Theorems of Stinespring and Arveson	237
§14.2.	Hereditary functional calculus	243
§14.3.	Co-analytic extensions	247
§14.4.	The Taylor spectrum	252
§14.5.	Co-analytic models for $m$ -tuples	255
§14.6.	Von Neumann inequalities	260
§14.7.	Historical notes	260
Chapter 15.	Localization	263
§15.1.	Localization of extensions	263
§15.2.	Kernels with the $M_{s \times s}$ Pick property	266
§15.3.	Localization of dilations	270
§15.4.	Historical notes	272

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Appendix A. Schur Products	273
Appendix B. Parrott's Lemma	277
Appendix C. Riesz Interpolation	281
Appendix D. The Spectral Theorem for Normal $m$ -Tuples	287
§D.1. Normal tuples	287
§D.2. Commuting isometries	290
Bibliography	293
Index	303

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# Preface

This book is about an operator theory approach to the Pick interpolation problem.

The original Pick problem is to determine, given  $N$  points  $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_N$  in the unit disk  $\mathbb{D}$  and  $N$  complex numbers  $w_1, \dots, w_N$ , whether there exists a holomorphic function  $\phi$  on  $\mathbb{D}$  that maps each node  $\lambda_i$  to the corresponding value  $w_i$  and such that

$$\|\phi\| := \sup_{z \in \mathbb{D}} |\phi(z)| \leq 1.$$

This problem was first solved by G. Pick in 1916.

The operator theory approach, pioneered by D. Sarason, is to view this as a question about the multiplier algebra of a particular Hilbert space, namely the Hardy space  $H^2$  of holomorphic functions on  $\mathbb{D}$  whose Taylor coefficients at 0 are square-summable. It can be shown that the multiplier algebra of  $H^2$  is the algebra  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$  of bounded analytic functions on  $\mathbb{D}$ .

Let  $\mathcal{N}$  be the subspace of  $H^2$  consisting of functions vanishing on  $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_N$ , let  $\mathcal{M}$  be the orthocomplement of  $\mathcal{N}$ , and let  $P$  be the orthogonal projection from  $H^2$  onto  $\mathcal{M}$ . It is easy to see that if  $M_\phi$  is the operator on  $H^2$  of multiplication by  $\phi$ , then  $PM_\phi|_{\mathcal{M}}$  is an operator on the *finite-dimensional* space  $\mathcal{M}$  that depends only on the values  $\phi(\lambda_1), \dots, \phi(\lambda_N)$ . Indeed, if  $\phi$  vanished on all  $N$  points, then  $M_\phi f$  would be in  $\mathcal{N} = \mathcal{M}^\perp$  for any  $f$ , so  $PM_\phi = 0$ .

So, if  $\phi$  is any function that interpolates the given data,  $\|PM_\phi P\|$  is a lower bound for the norm of  $\phi$ , and this lower bound can be calculated in terms of  $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_N$  and  $w_1, \dots, w_N$ . Pick's theorem can be interpreted as saying that this lower bound is always achieved. That this theorem holds is



a property of the Hardy space; it does not hold for example on the Bergman space. We say a space in which Pick's theorem holds has the *Pick property*.

The main themes of this book are

- (1) analyzing what spaces have the Pick property;
- (2) if a function algebra is not the multiplier algebra of a space with the Pick property, solving Pick's problem by considering a family of spaces simultaneously.

\*\*\*

This book is based on a course the second author gave at Washington University in the fall semester of 1999 to an audience of nine graduate students and five faculty members. We have attempted to make the book accessible to graduate students interested in operator theory or holomorphic spaces, by starting at the beginning of the subject. A reader familiar with holomorphic spaces will probably want to skip Chapters 0–4; Chapter 10 will be well known to any reader familiar with operator theory. Most of the material in Chapters 7, 8 and 11–15 appears here for the first time in book form.

Our goal is to expose the reader to a connected set of ideas and to bring him or her up to the current frontiers of research. We include many questions and problems that are, to the best of our knowledge, currently unsolved, and of interest at least to the authors. The ideal reader we have been fondly imagining as we wrote the book is a graduate student who has completed his or her qualifying exams and is looking for a dissertation problem. This intelligent and hard-working person will solve many of the problems raised in this book, transform the field, and become famous and happy. We will settle for the last.

The exercises come in two flavors. The unstarred exercises are routine. The starred ones are results that can be proved with the techniques developed in the book up to the point the exercise is presented, but are challenging. They often constitute published results that we chose not to treat in depth because of considerations of space.

The prerequisites for the book are a basic knowledge of functional analysis (Lebesgue integration, the closed graph theorem, Hahn-Banach theorem, Banach-Alaoglu theorem; some operator theory on Hilbert spaces, such as knowing what the strong operator and weak-star topologies are, knowing what a unitary operator is) and complex analysis (knowing Schwarz's lemma

and what the Poisson kernel is). Chapter 0 is a crib-sheet for the prerequisites. Any reader missing some of the prerequisites should not be deterred; one can pick them up as one goes along.

\*\*\*

Here is a chapter-by-chapter summary of what is included.

Chapter 0. This establishes notation and lists some basic facts that we shall use throughout the text.

Chapter 1. We describe the Pick problem and what our approach to it will be.

Chapter 2. Hilbert spaces of holomorphic functions constitute a very large and well-studied area of mathematics. The kernel function for these spaces is critical. We describe the bijection between Hilbert function spaces and kernels. We prove the elementary but very useful fact that every kernel can be represented as a Gramian.

Chapter 3. We prove all the results we shall need about the Hardy space, in particular describing the passage between holomorphic functions on the disk and  $L^2$  functions with vanishing negative Fourier coefficients on the circle. This material appears in many other books; we include it for completeness of our treatment, as the Hardy space is central to the whole subject of Pick interpolation.

Chapter 4. We show that  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$  can be represented, isometrically and weak-star homeomorphically, as the multiplier algebra of many different spaces. (However only the Hardy space has the Pick property.)

Chapter 5. We prove that the Hardy space has the Pick property. Our proof is long, but the method generalizes to other spaces.

Chapter 6. We prove the realization formula, a way of representing functions in the unit ball of  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$  as the transfer function associated with a unitary operator. This allows another proof of the Pick theorem.

Chapter 7. We characterize all those spaces that have the complete (*i.e.* matrix-valued) Pick property. We use this characterization to show that the Dirichlet space and the Sobolev space have the Pick property.

Chapter 8. We show that there is a universal kernel with the Pick property, in the sense that all kernels that have the complete Pick property are restrictions of this one kernel. We prove the Toeplitz-corona theorem for complete Pick kernels. We give Nevanlinna's parametrization of the set of all solutions to the Pick problem.

Chapter 9. We introduce the notion of an interpolating sequence. We prove Carleson's interpolation theorem and prove some partial generalizations to complete Pick kernels.

Chapter 10. We prove the standard results of model theory — the Sz.-Nagy dilation theorem, von Neumann's inequality, Andô's dilation theorem and the commutant lifting theorem.

Chapter 11. We consider the Pick problem for  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D}^2)$ . We give generalizations to  $\mathbb{D}^2$  of Pick's theorem, the realization formula, the Toeplitz-corona theorem and Nevanlinna's theorem. We give a partial description of interpolating sequences for  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D}^2)$ .

Chapter 12. We analyze in detail Pick's problem with three points on the bidisk.

Chapter 13. Many algebras do not have the Pick property when thought of as the multiplier algebra of a single space, but if treated as the multiplier algebra of many spaces simultaneously they do have an analogue of the Pick property. We consider this phenomenon. We include a treatment of the Cole-Lewis-Wermer approach to the Pick problem in uniform algebras. We give a necessary and sufficient condition for a kernel structure to have the Pick property.

Chapter 14. We prove Stinespring's theorem and the Arveson extension theorem. We develop the hereditary functional calculus. We use this to characterize which operators can be modeled by the adjoint of a given multiplication operator. We also extend these ideas to commuting  $m$ -tuples of operators.

Chapter 15. We prove that the complete Pick property is equivalent to a certain localization property for dilations.

Appendices. These contain results that are needed in the text but are somewhat tangential to our development of the theory. In Appendix A, we discuss Schur products of matrices. In Appendix B, we prove Parrott's lemma on completing a matrix. Appendix C discusses interpolation of Banach spaces, in the Riesz-Thorin sense. Appendix D proves the spectral theorem for a finite set of commuting normal operators.

\*\*\*

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The authors will maintain a web page with corrections to errors that are brought to their attention and with information on progress on the open problems in the book. It can be accessed at <http://www.math.wustl.edu/~mccarthy/Pick.html>.

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# Index

Page numbers appear in bold for pages where the term is defined.

- $\vee$ , **3**
- $\perp$ , **3**
- $\ominus$ , **3**
- $\odot$ , **22**
- $\diamond$ , **65**
- $\cong$ , **160**
- $\emptyset$ , **174**
  
- $a_m$ , **20**, 97
- $A(\mathbb{D}^2)$ , **172**, 206
- $\mathcal{A}_K$ , **225**
- $\mathcal{A} \otimes M_s$ , 23
- $\mathcal{A}(T)$ , **9**
- $B(\mathcal{H})$ , **3**
- $B_0(\mathcal{H})$ , **248**
- $B(\mathcal{H}_1, \mathcal{H}_2)$ , **3**
- $\mathbb{B}_m$ , **20**
- $\text{car}(k)$ , **222**
- $\text{cl}$ , **1**
- $C_0$ , **157**
- $C_0$ , **157**
- $C_{00}$ , **157**
- $C^*(M)$ , **264**
- $C(m, d, N)$ , **164**
- $C(X)$ , **288**
- $\mathbb{C}^s$ , **56**
- $d$ , **128**
- $\dim(k, w)$ , **228**
- $\mathbb{D}$ , **1**
- $\mathbb{D}^2$ , **167**
- $\mathbb{D}(a, r)$ , **1**
- $\mathcal{D}$ , **16**
- $\delta_{ij}$ , **2**
- $\delta_\lambda$ , **1**
- $\tilde{E}_{b(\lambda)}$ , **105**
- $E_{ii}$ , **140**
  
- $E_\lambda$ , **101**
- $\mathcal{E}_\lambda$ , **171**
- $\hat{f}(n)$ , **15**, 41
- $\hat{F}(n)$ , **41**
- $f_r$ , **36**
- $\mathcal{F}$ , **264**
- $\mathcal{F}_d$ , **192**
- $F_N$ , **81**
- $G \otimes K$ , **174**
- $H^2$ , **16**
- $H_m^2$ , **20**, **97**
- $H^p$ , **35**
- $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ , **7**
- $H_1^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ , **59**
- $\mathcal{H}_k$ , **20**
- $\mathcal{H}_K$ , **32**, 174
- $\mathcal{H}_s$ , **17**, 52, 90, 135, 285
- $J$ , **84**, **273**
- $\tilde{k}$ , **223**
- $k_i$ , **81**
- $k_{ij}$ , **81**
- $k_w^S(z)$ , **44**
- $k^S(z, w)$ , **44**
- $K_w$ , **228**
- $l^2$ , **16**
- $l_m^2$ , **23**
- $L_a^2(\mathbb{D})$ , **15**
- $\bar{\lambda}$ , **1**
- $\lambda^i$ , **1**
- $\Lambda_m$ , **253**
- $\frac{1}{\Lambda}$ , **199**
- $\bar{\Lambda}$ , **132**
- $m$ , **1**
- $M$ , **256**
- $M_s$ , **23**

- $M_s(\mathcal{A})$ , **23**  
 $M_{s \times t}$ , **57**  
 $M_\phi$ , **21**  
 $M_\Phi$ , **24**  
 $\mathcal{M}_{\Lambda_0}^k$ , **223**  
 $\text{Mult}(\mathcal{H}_k)$ , **21**  
 $\text{Mult}_1(\mathcal{H}_k)$ , **21**  
 $\text{Mult}(\mathcal{H} \otimes \mathcal{L}_1, \mathcal{H} \otimes \mathcal{L}_2)$ , **24**  
 $\mu_s$ , **52**  
 $N_\mu$ , **287**  
 $O(U)$ , **1**  
 $P^2(\mu)$ , **50, 182, 291**  
 $P^2(\mu_s)$ , **90**  
 $P_{\mathcal{H}_1 \rightarrow \mathcal{H}_2}$ , **121**  
 $\mathcal{P}$ , **243**  
 $\mathcal{P}_m$ , **255**  
 $\check{\phi}$ , **172**  
 $\Phi$ , **104**  
 $Q^k$ , **226**  
 $R^2(K, \mu)$ , **50**  
 $R^k$ , **226**  
 $R_w^k$ , **226**  
 $R[k; \lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_N; w_1, \dots, w_N]$ , **223**  
 $\rho(k, w)$ , **228**  
 $\rho_G$ , **190**  
 $\mathbf{S}$ , **259**  
 $S$ , **60**  
 $S_{\mathcal{H}}$ , **26**  
 $\mathbf{S}_\Lambda$ , **266**  
 $\sigma$ , **1**  
 $\sigma'(\mathbf{T})$ , **254**  
 $\sigma_e(\mathbf{M})$ , **258**  
 $\sigma_e(\mathbf{T})$ , **254**  
 $\sigma_{\text{Tay}}$ , **254**  
 $T^k$ , **227**  
 $(\mathbf{T})'$ , **254**  
 $\mathbb{T}$ , **1**  
 $\mathbb{T}^2$ , **167**  
 $[u \otimes v]$ , **4**  
 $V_\Lambda$ , **264**  
 $w^\sharp$ , **228**  
 $\bar{X}$ , **1**
- $\mathcal{A}$  functional calculus, **152**  
 Abrahamse, M., **220, 221, 235**  
 active kernel, **198**  
 admissible kernel, *see also* kernel, admissible  
 affiliated, **185**  
 Ahern, P., **220**  
 Aleman, A., **91**  
 algebraic tensor product, **22**  
 Amar, E., **235**  
 Ambrozie, C.-A., **124**  
 analytic bounded point evaluation, **50**  
 analytic model atom, **247**  
 Andô, T., **11, 160, 192**  
 dilation theorem, **161**  
 extension theorem, **160, 183**  
 inequality, **162, 172, 178, 213**  
 Arias, A., **20**  
 Aronszajn, N., **20, 33**  
 Arov, D., **118**  
 Arveson, W., **20, 58, 111, 124, 237, 238, 240,**  
     **259–261, 288**  
     extension theorem, **240, 244**  
 automorphism, **2**
- Böe, B., **144**  
 backward shift, **65, 157**  
 balanced disk, **195**  
 balanced points, **195**  
 Ball, J., **73, 78, 118, 124, 185, 187, 194, 220,**  
     **221**  
 BB, **140**  
 Bergman metric, **27**  
 Bergman space, **15, 134**  
 Bergman, S., **33**  
 Bernard, A., **191**  
 Berndtsson, B., **190, 194**  
 Beurling, A., **46, 48**  
     theorem, **46**  
 Beurling, P., **192**  
 BG, **127, 140**  
 bidisk algebra, **172**  
 Bishop, C., **144**  
 Blaschke condition, **2**  
 Blaschke factor, **2**  
 Blaschke product, **2, 47**  
 bounded point evaluation, **50**  
     analytic, **50**  
     for  $\mathcal{A}^2(\mu)$ , **215**
- $C^*$ -algebra, **288**  
 Calderón, A., **283**  
 Carathéodory problem, **65**  
 Carathéodory, C., **65**  
 Carleson constant, **127**  
 Carleson measure  
     for  $\mathcal{H}_k$ , **127**  
     for  $H^2$ , **126**  
 Carleson, L., **111, 126, 148**  
     corona theorem, **111**  
     interpolation theorem, **126, 140, 145, 190**  
 carrier, **222**  
 cellularly indecomposable, **117**  
 Chang, S.-Y., **190, 194**  
 Clancey, K., **221, 235**  
 Clary, W.S., **259**  
 CM, **127**  
 Cole, B., **165, 194, 235**  
 column contraction, **259**  
 commutant lifting theorem, **61, 162**  
 complete contraction, **238**

- complete Pick property, *see also* Pick property, complete
- complete spectral set, **158**
- completely bounded, **238**
- completely non-unitary contraction, **158**
- completely polynomially bounded, **159**
- completely positive map, **238**
- compression, **151**
- cone, **169**
- contraction, **11**, 56
- Conway, J., 3, 4, 9, 36, 44, 52, 153, 156, 287–289
- corona theorem, 111
- Cowen, M., 26, 33
- Cowen-Douglas class, **26**
- Crabb, M., 163, 192
- Curto, R., 33, 253, 255, 260
- $d$ -separated, **129**
- Davidson, K., 20, 165
- Davie, A., 163, 192
- de Branges-Rovnyak space, **20**
- degenerate, **197**
- dilation, **151**, 270  
weak, **151**
- dilation localizable, **270**
- Dirichlet integral, **138**
- Dirichlet space, **16**, 90  
multiplier algebra of, 21, 214  
weighted, 91
- distinguished boundary, **167**
- domain, **5**
- domain of analyticity, **51**
- dominating measure, **215**
- Donoghue, W., 283
- Douglas, R., 26, 33
- Douglas-Paulsen algebra, **213**
- Drury, S., 163, 260, 261
- dual system, **131**  
minimal, **131**
- dyad, 4, 64
- elementary tensor, **22**
- equivalence of Hilbert function spaces, **25**
- essentially normal  $m$ -tuple, **257**
- extension, **153**
- extremal function, **136**, 137
- extremal Pick problem, *see also* Pick problem, extremal
- Fatou, P., 38, 42, 48  
theorem, **38**, 181
- Fedorov, S., 221
- Fernström, C., 50
- Fisher, S., 219–222, 235
- Fock space, **17**, 21
- Foiaş, C., 8, 11, 61, 65, 111, 115, 158, 162, 165
- Folland, G., 9, 38, 42
- Frazho, A., 11, 61, 165
- functional calculus, 152
- Gamelin, T., 219, 220
- Garabedian, P., 221, 235
- Garnett, J., 8, 78, 191
- Gelfand-Naimark theorem, **288**
- geometric interpolation spaces, **283**
- Gleason distance, **190**
- Gohberg, I., 73, 78
- Grammian, 28
- Grammian, Szegő, **190**
- Greene, D., 115
- Greene, R., 3, 36
- Grossman, L., 118
- Grothendieck constant, **164**
- Grothendieck, A., 164
- $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$   
as multiplier algebra, 21  
weak-star topology on, 43–45, 51
- Hadamard product, **273**
- Halmos, P., 115, 124, 165, 285
- Hardy space, 9, 10, **16**, **35**, 90
- Hardy, G., 48
- harmonic measure, **219**
- Hedenmalm, H., 137
- Helson, H., 42, 46, 115
- Helton, J.W., 73
- hereditary polynomial, **243**  
on  $\mathbb{C}^m$ , **255**
- Hilbert function space, **15**
- Hilbert space tensor product, **23**
- holomorphic space, **15**
- Horn, R., 273
- Horowitz, C., 139
- Huang, L., 194
- hyper-invariant, **118**
- hypo-Dirichlet algebra, **219**
- inertia, **86**
- infinitely divisible kernel, **100**
- inner function, **46**
- inner function on  $\mathbb{D}^2$ , **181**
- \*-inner function on  $\mathbb{D}^2$ , **181**
- interpolating sequence  
complete, 135  
for  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ , **125**, 190  
for  $\mathcal{H}_k$ , **131**  
for  $\text{Mult}(\mathcal{H}_k)$ , **133**  
for  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D}^d)$ , 190
- invariant subspace, **3**
- involution, **288**
- irreducible kernel, **79**

- $IS(\mathcal{H}_k)$ , **133**  
 $IS(\text{Mult}(\mathcal{H}_k))$ , **133**
- Johnson, C., 273  
 Jolly, M., 8  
 Jury product, **65**, 66  
 Jury, M., 65, 95, 139
- Kaijser, S., 163  
 Kaldi's, xix  
 Kaluza, lemma of, **90**  
 kernel, 17, **18**, 19  
    $B(\mathcal{L})$ -valued, **31**  
     active, **198**  
     admissible, **168**, 198  
     Bergman, 18, 58  
     Dirichlet, 18  
     irreducible, **79**  
     normalized, **26**, 67  
     normalizing at a point, **26**  
     operator-valued, **31**  
     Poisson, **36**  
     rank of, **30**  
     rescaling, **26**  
     Szegő, 10, 18, **44**, 55, 56, 58–69, 89  
     weak, **18**  
     weak  $B(\mathcal{L})$ -valued, **31**  
 kernel function, 11, **17**  
 kernel structure, **223**  
 Khavinson, D., 222  
 Kislyakov, S., 165  
 Kolmogorov, A.N., 156  
 Krantz, S., 3, 5, 27, 36  
 Krein, M., 260  
 Krein-Smulian, theorem of, 44  
 Kronecker delta, **2**  
 Kronstadt, E., 194  
 Kurosh, theorem of, **30**, 82, 171, 177, 242
- Lax, P., 115, 124  
 Lax-Halmos theorem, **115**  
 Lewis, K., 235  
 Li, W.-S., 8  
 Lin, K.-C., 190, 194  
 Lions, J., 283  
 Littlewood, J., 38  
 localized at  $\Lambda$ , **264**  
 Lotto, B., 163
- $M$ -spectral set, **158**  
 $m$ -tuple of operators, **252**  
 McCullough, S., 11, 95, 114–116, 124, 221, 235  
 McCullough-Quiggin theorem, **81**  
 Marcinkiewicz, J., 282  
 Marshall, D., 95, 133, 144, 148  
 Mercer, J., 33
- minimal co-isometric extension, **154**  
 minimal unitary dilation, **156**  
 Möbius transformation, **2**  
 model, **264**  
 Moore, E., 20, 33  
 multi-index, **5**  
 multiplication operator, **21**  
 multiplier algebra, **21**  
 Murphy, G., 4
- Nakazi, T., 235  
 Nevanlinna problem, **7**  
   for disk, 78, 122  
   for universal kernel, 119  
   on bidisk, 187  
 Nevanlinna, R., 7, 78  
 Nevanlinna-Pick interpolation, **7**  
 Neville, C., 145, 148  
 Nikol'skii, N., 112, 148, 156, 165  
 nodes, **55**  
 non-degenerate, **197**
- operator, **3**  
 Oppenheim's inequality, 200, **274**
- Parrott, S., 163, 277  
   lemma, 62, 226, **277**  
 part, **153**  
 Paulsen, V., 159, 165, 260  
 Peetre, J., 283  
 permissible, **197**  
 Pick interpolation, **7**  
 Pick kernel, **80**  
 Pick matrix, **8**, 56, 57  
 Pick problem, **7**  
   extremal, **71**  
   infinite, 78  
   weak, **214**  
 Pick property, 10, 58, 80  
    $M_{s \times t}$ , **58**  
   complete, **58**, 81, 86–88  
   for collection of kernels, **222**  
   for kernel structure, **226**  
   row-vector, **85**  
   scalar, **58**
- Pick, G., xv, 7, 69  
   theorem, **7**, 59, 76  
 Pisier, G., 160, 165  
 Pitts, D., 20  
 Poisson integral, **37**  
 Poisson kernel, **36**  
 polynomially bounded, **159**  
 Popescu, G., 20, 261  
 porism, **85**  
 positive map, **238**  
 positive operator, **4**  
 positive semi-definite, **18**

- positive, element of  $C^*$ -algebra, **237**  
 power dilation, **151**  
 projective topology, **257**  
 pseudo-hyperbolic metric, **3**  
 Putinar, M., 260
- Quiggin, P., 11, 93–95
- realizable Banach algebra, **211**  
 realization formula, **73**, 76, 104  
   for  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ , 73  
   for  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D}^2)$ , 171  
     matrix-valued, 178  
   for  $\text{Mult}(H_m^2)$ , 101  
 reducing subspace, **3**  
 regular holomorphic space, **263**  
 representation of a  $C^*$ -algebra, **238**, **288**  
 reproducing kernel, **17**  
 Richter, S., 91, 115  
 Riesz basis, **130**  
 Riesz interpolation, **281**  
 Riesz system, **130**  
 Riesz, F., 48  
 Riesz, M., 282  
 Rodman, L., 73, 78  
 Rosenblum, M., 111  
 row contraction, **259**  
 Rudin, W., 115, 181, 288, 289
- s*-contractive, **238**  
*s*-contractive localization property, **267**  
 Salinas, N., 33  
 Sarason, D., xv, 3, 8, 11, 20, 36, 60, 65, 78,  
   152, 156, 165, 220, 235  
   lemma, **152**  
 scalar Pick property, *see also* Pick property,  
   scalar  
 Schubert, C., 111  
 Schur algorithm, **8**  
 Schur class, **7**  
 Schur complement, **86**  
 Schur product, **273**, 273–275  
 Schur, I., 8, 65, 273, 281  
   lemma, 147, **281**  
   product theorem, 64, 84, 85, **273**  
 Schuster, A., 145  
 Schwarz-Pick lemma, **3**, 59  
 Segal-Bargmann space, **17**  
 Seip, K., 134, 145  
 semi-invariant, **152**  
 Shapiro, H., 95, 133, 145, 146, 148  
 Shields, A., 95, 133, 145, 146, 148  
 Smirnov, V., 48  
 Sobolev space, **16**, 99  
 spectral measure, **288**  
 spectral set, **158**  
   complete, **158**
- Spectral theorem, 287  
 SS, **140**  
 star-cyclic, **287**  
 Stegenga, D., 21  
 Steger, T., 163  
 Stinespring, W., 238, 260  
   theorem, **239**, 244  
 Stolz region, **38**  
 strictly 2-dimensional, **198**  
 strongly separated, **125**, **129**  
 subnormal operator, **153**  
 Sundberg, C., 95, 115, 133, 144, 148  
 Sz.-Nagy, B., 11, 12, 61, 65, 111, 115, 153,  
   158, 162, 165  
   dilation theorem, **155**, 162  
   extension theorem, **153**  
 Szegő Grammian, *see also* Grammian, Szegő  
 Szegő kernel, *see also* kernel, Szegő
- Taylor spectrum, **254**, 252–255  
 Taylor, J., 253, 260  
 tensor product, 22  
 test functions, **211**  
 Thomson, J., 50  
 Thorin, G., 282  
 Timotin, D., 33, 124  
 Toeplitz matrix, 66  
 Toeplitz operator, **111**  
 Tomerlin, A., 124  
 topologically free, **131**  
 trace class, **4**  
 transfer function, **73**, 103  
 Trent, T., 114–116, 118, 124, 185, 187, 194  
 Treves, F., 257
- uniform algebra, **214**  
 unilateral shift, 9, **45**, 60  
 uniqueness set, **193**
- Varopoulos, N., 163, 191, 192  
 Vasyunin, V., 165  
 Verbitskiĭ, I., 144  
 Vinnikov, V., 118, 124, 221  
 von Neumann, J., 156, 158, 165, 192  
   inequality, **159**  
 von Neumann-Wold theorem, **156**, 247
- Walsh, J., 219  
 weak dilation, **151**  
 weak kernel, **18**  
 weak Pick problem, **214**  
 weak zero set, **135**  
 weak-star topology on  $H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ , 43  
 weak-star topology on  $B(\mathcal{H})$ , **4**  
 weakly separated, **125**, **129**  
 wedge, **169**  
 Wegge-Olsen, N., 22

Wermer, J., 165, 194, 235

Wold, H., 156, 165

WS, **140**

Zaremba, S., 33

zero set, **135**

  weak, **135**

Zygmund, A., 282

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