ON CONTINUOUS CURVES IRREDUCIBLE ABOUT COMPACT SETS

GAIL S. YOUNG, JR.

Some years ago, Leo Zippin [4] raised the following question: Given a compact set $K$ in a locally connected complete metric space, $S$, it is known that $S$ contains a compact continuum $M$ irreducible about $K$. What conditions on $K$ are necessary and sufficient that $M$ may be chosen locally connected? He showed that a necessary condition is that $K$ be a curve set; that is, the nondegenerate components of $K$ are locally connected and form a null sequence. For $K$ 1-dimensional, he proved the condition is also sufficient, and it was conjectured that it is always sufficient. Later Martin Ettlinger [3] gave other results tending to support this. In this note I give a partial solution.

**Theorem.** If $K$ is a compact curve set in a convex metric space $S$, then $S$ contains a locally connected compact continuum irreducible about $K$.

The recent announcement by R. H. Bing [1] of a proof that every finite-dimensional Peano space has a convex metric makes this result appear less special than it might seem otherwise.

**Proof.** Zippin has shown in [4] that the proposition need be proved only for the case where $K$ is a special curve set, which is a curve set with only a countable number of components, all but one being points forming a sequence converging to that one. His argument is stated for $S$ compact, but, however, is valid under our hypothesis. Hence, we may suppose $K$ is the sum of a sequence $\{x_n\}$ of distinct points and a locally connected continuum $C$. The sequence $x_n$ can be chosen so that $d(x_n, C) = d(x_{n+1}, C)$. For each $n$, let $y_n$ denote a point of $C$ such that $d(x_n, y_n) = d(x_n, C)$. Let $T_1$ denote a straight-line interval from $x_1$ to $y_1$. Let $x_{n_1}$ be the first point of $x_n$ not in $T_1$, and let $T_2$ denote a straight-line interval joining $x_{n_1}$ and $y_{n_1}$. If $T_1 \cdot T_2$ is not empty, replace the interval of $T_2$ irreducible about $y_{n_1} + T_1 \cdot T_2$ by the arc of $T_1$ irreducible about $y_{n_1} + T_1 \cdot T_2$, and let $T_2$ now denote this new arc. It is easy to see from the triangle inequality and the convexity of $T_1$ and the original $T_2$ that this does not change the length of $T_2$. We now have that $T_1 \cdot T_2$ is either empty or is connected and contains $y_1$. Let $x_{n_2}$ be the first point of $x_n$ not in

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1 Numbers in brackets refer to the bibliography.
$T_1 + T_2$, and let $T_3$ denote a straight-line interval from $x_{n_2}$ to $y_{n_2}$. If $(T_1 + T_2) \cdot T_3$ is not empty, a modification of $T_3$ similar to that of $T_2$, without changing the length of $T_3$, permits us to assume that $(T_1 + T_2) \cdot T_3$ is connected and contains one of $y_1$ and $y_n$. Continue the process indefinitely. We obtain a sequence $T_n$ of straight-line intervals such that (1) each point $x_n$ is contained in one; (2) each has a point of $\{x_n\}$ for one end point, and a point of $\{y_n\}$ for the other, that being its only point in $C$; (3) each is a shortest path between its end point in $\{x_n\}$ and $C$; and (4) the intersection of each two is either empty or is connected and intersects $C$. Let $M$ denote $C+ \sum T_n$; then $M$ is obviously connected, and irreducibly connected about $C+ \sum x_n$. We need only verify local connectivity. If $x$ is a point of $M-C$, then only a finite number of sets $T_n$ have points more than $2^{-l} d(x, C)$ from $C$, so that $x$ is in an open subset of $M$ which is the sum of a finite number of locally connected sets. Hence $M$ is locally connected in $M-C$. If $U$ is an open subset of $M$ intersecting $C$, and $H$ is a component of $U$, then $H \cdot C$ is open in $U \cdot C$, being the sum of components of $U \cdot C$. Also $H \cdot (M-C)$ is open in $U$, being the sum of components of $U \cdot (M-C)$. If a point $y$ of $H \cdot C$ were a limit point of $(U-H) \cdot M$, it would be in the limiting set of a convergent sequence $T'_n$ of sets $T_n$. But then it is the sequential limiting point of $T'_n \cdot C$, which contradicts the fact that $H \cdot C$ is open in $C$. Hence every component of $U$ is open in $M$, which completes our proof.

**Corollary.** If the compact curve set $K$ is finite-dimensional and lies in a connected and locally arcwise connected metric space, $S$, then $S$ contains a compact locally connected continuum irreducible about $C$.

**Proof.** It is well known that under our hypothesis $S$ contains a compact locally connected continuum $M$ containing $K$ which is obtained by adding a countable number of arcs to $K$, and which is therefore also finite-dimensional. The corollary then follows from Bing’s result and the theorem.

The reader interested in metric geometry will notice that the hypotheses of the theorem could be weakened or altered by assumptions about length, quasi-convexity, and so on. Such changes would have required more space without altering the essential nature of the argument. For such concepts, the reader is referred to Blumenthal [2]. In this connection, it seems to me that a large part of the possible interest in this note is due to its exploitation of metric methods in topology, which has not yet been systematically studied.

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*See the references in [4], or the proof for Moore spaces in [3].*
Added in proof. Since this note was submitted, E. E. Moise and Bing have each announced solutions of the convexification problem, so that this note settles Zippin's question.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2. L. M. Blumenthal, *Distance geometries*, University of Missouri Studies, 1938.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN