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## PRACTICAL OPTIMAL REGULARIZATION OF LARGE LINEAR SYSTEMS (\*)

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Abstract — We seek an estimate of  $x^0 \in \mathbb{R}^n$ , given a noisy value ( $y \in \mathbb{R}^m$ ) of  $y^0 = Kx^0$  where  $K$  is a known  $m \times n$  matrix. The regularization method produces a set of estimates  $x_\rho$  obtained by minimizing  $J_\rho(x)$  in  $\mathbb{R}^n$

$$J_\rho(x) = \|Kx - y\|_m^2 + \rho \|Lx\|_{n-p}^2$$

where  $\|\cdot\|_m$  is the Euclidean norm in  $\mathbb{R}^m$ ,  $L$  is an a priori chosen  $(n-p) \times n$  matrix and  $\rho$  is the regularization parameter

Three methods which give an automatic choice ( $\rho^*$ ) of  $\rho$  are recalled. We study here the numerical implementation of these practical approximations and present, for each of the three methods, an algorithm which estimates  $\rho^*$  and computes  $x_{\rho^*}$  (the minimizer of  $J_{\rho^*}$ ) with a cost (number of operations and memory place) nearly identical to the minimum cost of the computation of one estimate  $x_\rho = (K^t K + \rho L^t L)^{-1} K^t y$  (the preliminary computations, independent of  $y$ , are not taken in account)

This algorithm is applied to a tomographical picture reconstruction problem where  $K$  is a large sparse matrix ( $m \gg n$ ) and  $K^t K$  and  $L$  are block-circulant. Simulations show that the cross-validation method is impressively efficient at choosing  $\rho^*$

Résumé — On recherche une approximation de  $x^0 \in \mathbb{R}^n$  à partir de la connaissance d'une valeur approchée  $y$  de  $y^0 = Kx^0$  où  $K$  est une matrice  $(m, n)$  connue. La méthode de régularisation étudiée consiste à choisir une matrice  $L(n-p, n)$  telle que la norme euclidienne  $\|Lx\|_{n-p}$  mesure l'irrégularité de  $x$ , et à minimiser dans  $\mathbb{R}^n$ ,

$$J_\rho(x) = \|Kx - y\|_m^2 + \rho \|Lx\|_{n-p}^2$$

où  $\rho$  est le paramètre de régularisation  $> 0$ . Trois critères de choix d'un paramètre  $\rho^*$  optimal sont rappelés. On étudie ici la mise en œuvre numérique d'une telle approximation quand  $m \gg n$ . Après s'être ramené à un problème équivalent à  $n$  équations, on propose une méthode de choix automatique de  $\rho^*$  pour chacun des 3 critères, et de calcul de  $x_{\rho^*}$  minimisant  $J_{\rho^*}(x)$ , pour un coût total (place en mémoire et temps de calcul) comparable au coût minimum de la résolution directe de l'équation normale  $(K^t K + \rho L^t L) x_\rho = K^t y$ , sans prendre en compte les pré-calculs indépendants de  $K^t y$ .

Cette méthode est appliquée à un problème de reconstruction d'image en tomographie où  $K$  est une grande matrice creuse,  $K^t K$  et  $L$  sont bloc-circulantes. On vérifie l'efficacité de la validation croisée comme critère de choix de  $\rho^*$

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Let  $K$  be a real  $m \times n$  matrix. We consider the system of linear equations :

$$Kx = y^0 = y + \varepsilon \quad (1.1)$$

where we know only a noisy value ( $y \in \mathbb{R}^m$ ) of the exact data vector  $y^0$  and  $\varepsilon$  is a random noise vector. If we assume a « white noise » :

$$\begin{aligned} \varepsilon &= (\varepsilon_1, \varepsilon_2, \dots, \varepsilon_m)^t \quad \text{with} \quad E(\varepsilon_i) = 0, \\ E(\varepsilon_i \varepsilon_j) &= \sigma^2 \delta_{ij} \quad i, j = 1, \dots, m \end{aligned} \quad (1.2)$$

then an intuitive idea is to say that given  $y$  and  $\sigma^2$ , there is only one constraint on  $x$  :

$$S(x) = \|Kx - y\|_m^2 \leq m \cdot \sigma^2 \quad (1.3)$$

where  $\|\cdot\|_m$  is the usual Euclidean norm in  $\mathbb{R}^m$ .

We are interested in the situations where either because  $\sigma$  is too large or because  $K$  is too ill-conditioned, a wide range of values of  $x$  may satisfy constraint (1.3), and therefore we need prior information concerning the solution. Defining the irregularity of  $x$  by  $\|Lx\|_{n-p}$  where  $L$  is a chosen  $(n-p) \times n$  matrix (when the origin of system (1.1) is the discretization of an integral equation,  $L$  is normally a discrete approximation of a derivative operator), we take as the solution the least irregular  $x$  satisfying (1.3). Except for some incoherent value of  $\sigma$ , such a solution minimizes  $J_\rho(x)$  in  $\mathbb{R}^n$  :

$$J_\rho(x) = \|Kx - y\|_m^2 + \rho \|Lx\|_{n-p}^2 \quad (1.4)$$

where  $\rho > 0$  is the regularization parameter that we must choose.

It is well known that when  $N(K) \cap N(L) = \{0\}$  (where  $N(K)$  is the null space of  $K$ ), for every  $\rho > 0$ , minimization of  $J_\rho$  has only one solution  $x_\rho$  given by :

$$(K^t K + \rho L^t L) x_\rho = K^t y. \quad (1.5)$$

The value of  $\rho$  is critical to the quality of  $x_\rho$  : if  $\rho$  is too small the data error induces a solution which is too irregular and if  $\rho$  is too large  $x_\rho$  is less sensitive to noise but  $Kx_\rho$  may be too far from the data.

In this paper we study methods of automatic choice of  $\rho$  and we show some important simplifications for the numerical implementation with  $m \gg n$ .

In § 2 we rapidly review three different methods. We shall see that the optimal  $\rho$  is the root of or minimizer of a real function of the variable  $\rho$ . As we have to approximate this optimal value by an iterative procedure, we need a fast algorithm for the evaluation of this function. For this evaluation, we have to compute  $S(x_\rho) = \| Kx_\rho - y \|_m^2$  and except for the first method, the trace of the  $(m, m)$  matrix  $A(\rho)$  satisfying  $Kx_\rho = A(\rho) y$ .

We will first transform our initial problem (1.4) into an equivalent problem (§ 3) with less than  $n$  equations :

$$\text{Min}_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} (\tilde{S}(x) + \rho \| Lx \|_{n-p}^2)$$

where :

$$\tilde{S}(x) = \| \tilde{K}x - \tilde{y} \|_l^2, \quad \tilde{K} = F^t K, \quad \tilde{y} = F^t y, \quad l = \text{rank}(K)$$

and  $F$  is any  $m \times l$  matrix with columns  $f_i, i = 1, \dots, l$ , forming an orthogonal basis of the range of  $K$ .

Then we will show in § 4 that one can choose  $F$  in order to obtain the following result : if  $L$  is invertible, we can compute a  $n \times l$  matrix  $B$ , and  $l$  real values  $d_i > 0, i = 1, \dots, l$ , using the singular value decomposition of  $L^{-1t} K^t K L^{-1}$ , such that :

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{A}(\rho) &= D^2(D^2 + \rho I)^{-1} \\ \tilde{y} &= D^{-1} B^t K^t y \\ x_\rho &= B(D^2 + \rho I)^{-1} D\tilde{y} \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{where } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} D \text{ is the diagonal matrix} \\ I \text{ is the identity in } \mathbb{R}^l \end{array} \right. \left[ \begin{array}{c} d_1 \\ d_2 \\ \cdot \\ \cdot \\ d_l \end{array} \right]$$

If  $L$  is not invertible, we obtain (§ 5) similar expressions, with or without boundary values on  $x_\rho$ .

In § 6 we numerically apply the above results to a tomographical picture reconstruction problem. Here  $m = 96 \times 128 \times 64$  and  $n = 96 \times 128$  but  $K$  is very sparse and as  $K^t K$  and  $L$  are block-circulant the preliminary computation of  $B$  and  $D$  is much simplified and their memorisation takes up only  $97 \ 64 \times 64$  matrices. Generalized cross-validation is implemented and simulations with generated noisy data show that it is very efficient.

## 2. METHODS FOR CHOOSING THE PARAMETER

These methods have been previously studied for the smoothing of data by Spline functions (see Reinsch [1], Wahba [4]) and they can be generalized [3] to any linear transformation of noisy data when this transformation is governed by a parameter which defines the degree of smoothing of these data. Here, noting  $y_p = Kx_p$ , the data vector predicted by  $x_p$ ,

$A(\rho) = K(K^t K + \rho L^t L)^{-1} K^t$  is the  $m \times m$  matrix satisfying  $y_p = A(\rho) y$ .

In the case of white noise with a known variance  $\sigma^2$  (1.2) the generalisation of Reinsch's suggestion is to choose  $\rho_s$  so that :

$$S(x_{\rho_s}) = \| A(\rho_s) y - y \|_m^2 = m\sigma^2. \quad (2.1)$$

If there is not such a  $\rho_s$ , the constraint  $S(x) \leq m\sigma^2$  either is never satisfied or is always satisfied with  $<$  instead of  $\leq$ . Generally one such  $\rho_s$  exists and it is then easy to show that  $x_{\rho_s}$  is the solution of the problem :

$$\text{Min}_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n / S(x) \leq m\sigma^2} \| Lx \|_{n-p}^2.$$

Using the exact data vector  $y^0$ , Wahba has defined in [2] the optimum  $\rho_0$  as the  $\rho$  which minimizes  $R(\rho)$ , the mean square error of prediction of this vector :

$$R(\rho) = \frac{1}{m} \| A(\rho) y - y^0 \|_m^2 \quad (2.2)$$

$R(\rho)$  cannot be known in practice, but we can easily demonstrate [4] that, with white noise,  $\hat{R}(\rho)$ , which is computable, is an unbiased estimate of  $E(R(\rho))$  :

$$\hat{R}(\rho) = \frac{1}{m} \| A(\rho) y - y \|_m^2 - \frac{\sigma^2}{m} \text{Trace} (A(\rho) - I)^2 + \frac{\sigma^2}{m} \text{Trace} A(\rho)^2. \quad (2.3)$$

The search of  $\rho$  which minimizes  $\hat{R}$  constitutes, then, a second method. The third one needs no statistical knowledge concerning the errors : it consists of choosing the  $\rho_v$  which minimizes  $V(\rho)$  :

$$V(\rho) = \frac{\frac{1}{m} \| A(\rho) y - y \|^2}{\left| \frac{1}{m} \text{Trace} (A(\rho) - I) \right|^2}. \quad (2.4)$$

This is Wahba's method of generalized cross-validation [3], [4]. It originates from a simple idea (Stone [5]) : one omits a datum and studies the validity of different  $\rho$  by measuring how the corresponding estimates  $x_\rho$ , computed without this datum, can predict it. We choose the  $\rho$  which gives the best prediction, on the average, for all the possible omissions. Wahba has also shown that when white noise is assumed,  $\rho_v$  is a good estimate of the minimizer of  $E(R(\rho))$ (and is even better when  $m$  is large).

**3. EQUIVALENT PROBLEM**

We remark that for every  $\rho$  the regularized solution  $x_\rho$  does not depend directly on  $y$  but on  $K^t y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ . In fact we can transform our problem into an equivalent problem made of  $l$  linear equations with  $l = \text{rank}(K)$ . Let  $P$  be the projection in  $\mathbb{R}^m$  on the range of  $K$ ,  $R(K)$ . Then,

$$\| Kx - y \|_m^2 = \| Kx - Py \|_m^2 + \| Py - y \|_m^2 .$$

And, as  $Kx - Py \in R(K)$ , if  $F$  is any  $m \times l$  matrix, with columns  $f_1, f_2, \dots, f_l \in \mathbb{R}^m$  forming an orthogonal basis of  $R(K)$ , then we have :

$$\| Kx - Py \|_m^2 = \| F^t(Kx - Py) \|_l^2 \quad \text{and} \quad F^t(Py - y) = 0 .$$

Then, letting  $\tilde{K} = F^t K, \tilde{y} = F^t y$ , the minimization (1.4) is equivalent to

$$\text{Min}_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} (\| \tilde{K}x - \tilde{y} \|_l^2 + \rho \| Lx \|_{n-p}^2) .$$

On the basis of this formulation we will now choose the parameter  $\rho$ .

When we assume white noise with variance  $\sigma^2$  then a white noise is still satisfied by  $\tilde{y}$  (because the covariance matrix of  $F^t \varepsilon$  is  $F^t(\sigma^2 I_m) F = \sigma^2 I_l$ ), and the methods 1 and 2 are applicable.

If we let  $\tilde{y}^0 = F^t y_0$  then  $\| Kx_\rho - y^0 \|_m^2$  is equal, if  $y^0 \in R(K)$ , to  $\| \tilde{K}x_\rho - \tilde{y}^0 \|_l^2$  or else differs by a constant which is independant of  $\rho$ , so the optimum  $\rho$  (following Wahba (2.2)) is the same in the two problems. The generalized cross-validation applied to  $\tilde{A}(\rho) = \tilde{K}(\tilde{K}^t \tilde{K} + \rho L^t L)^{-1} \tilde{K}^t$  and  $\tilde{y}$  can give an estimate of this optimum.

In the numerical implementation of these methods, we have to evaluate  $\tilde{S}(x_\rho) = \| \tilde{A}(\rho) \tilde{y} - \tilde{y} \|_l^2$  and Trace  $(\tilde{A}(\rho))$  for several values of  $\rho$ . We see below how to choose  $F$  in order to simplify these evaluations.

#### 4. AN ALGORITHM FOR OPTIMAL SOLUTIONS WHEN $L$ IS INVERTIBLE

When  $L$  is invertible, we can write :

$$\begin{aligned} x_p &= (\tilde{K}^t \tilde{K} + \rho L^t L)^{-1} \tilde{K}^t \tilde{y} \\ &= L^{-1} (L^{-1t} \tilde{K}^t \tilde{K} L^{-1} + \rho I_n)^{-1} L^{-1t} \tilde{K}^t \tilde{y}. \end{aligned} \quad (4.1)$$

Consider now the singular value decomposition of  $KL^{-1}$  (see Golub [6]) :

$$KL^{-1} = UDV^t$$

where  $U$  and  $V$  are  $m \times l$  and  $n \times l$  orthogonal matrices and  $D$  is the diagonal matrix  $\text{diag}(d_1, d_2, \dots, d_l)$ , with  $d_1 \geq d_2 \geq \dots \geq d_l > 0$ .

Then we can take  $F = U$ , so that :

$$\tilde{K}L^{-1} = DV^t = M \quad (4.2)$$

and

$$\tilde{y} = U^t y = D^{-1} V^t L^{-1t} K^t y. \quad (4.3)$$

Substituting (4.2) and (4.3) in (4.1) gives :

$$\begin{aligned} Lx_p &= (M^t M + \rho I_n)^{-1} M^t \tilde{y} = M^t (MM^t + \rho I_l)^{-1} \tilde{y} \\ &= VD(D^2 + \rho I_l)^{-1} D^{-1} V^t L^{-1t} K^t y. \end{aligned}$$

Now let  $B = L^{-1} V$ . Then one obtains :

$$x_p = B \text{diag} \left( \frac{1}{d_i^2 + \rho}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) B^t K^t y \quad (4.4)$$

$$\tilde{A}(\rho) = MM^t (MM^t + \rho I_l)^{-1} = \text{diag} \left( \frac{d_i^2}{d_i^2 + \rho}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) \quad (4.5)$$

$$\tilde{A}(\rho) \tilde{y} - \tilde{y} = \text{diag} \left( \frac{d_i}{d_i^2 + \rho} - \frac{1}{d_i}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) B^t K^t y. \quad (4.6)$$

Note that we don't need to compute  $U$ , and  $D^2$  and  $V$  are given by the singular value decomposition of  $L^{-1t} K^t KL^{-1}$ . We observe that this method is well adapted to the case where  $K$  is a large sparse matrix (so that we can easily compute  $K^t y$ ) and when we need to solve (1.1) a great number of times with different data vectors, since we can then precompute (the most expensive part) and store the  $n \times l$  matrix  $B$  and the  $l$  values  $d_i$ . Then the calculation of an optimal parameter and of the corresponding regularized solution is reduced to the four following steps :

- 1) compute  $K^t y$
- 2) compute  $z = B^t(K^t y)$  ( $0(n^2)$  operations)
- 3) search by an iterative procedure for  $\rho^*$ , the zero or the minimizer of a function (e.g.  $\tilde{V}(\rho)$ ), computable with  $0(n)$  operations
- 4) compute  $x_{\rho^*} = B \text{diag} \left( \frac{1}{d_i^2 + \rho^*}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) z$  ( $0(n^2)$  operations).

So the whole algorithm requires the same memory space and about twice the number of operations as the calculation of  $x_\rho$  (with a prior chosen  $\rho$  and memorisation of  $(K^t K + \rho L^t L)^{-1}$ ).

**5.1 SOLUTIONS WITH AUXILIARY CONSTRAINTS WHEN  $L$  IS NOT INVERTIBLE**

If  $L$  is not invertible, again we can easily obtain an expression of  $x_\rho$  similar to (4.1) as soon as we assume some auxiliary boundary value on the solution.

Since we choose  $L$ , we can assume its rank is  $n - p$ .

A frequently occurring example in the case of an integral equation of one variable is the discrete approximation of the derivative :

$$L = \begin{bmatrix} 1 - 1 & & & & (0) \\ & 1 - 1 & & & \\ & & \ddots & & \\ (0) & & & \ddots & \\ & & & & 1 - 1 \end{bmatrix}, p = 1.$$

Let  $N$  be a  $n \times p$  matrix with columns forming a basis of  $N(L)$ .

Every  $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$  has an unique expression  $x = L^\dagger w + Nz$  where  $L^\dagger$  is the pseudo-inverse of  $L$ ,  $w = Lx \in \mathbb{R}^{n-p}$ ,  $z \in \mathbb{R}^p$ .

In order to be able to express  $x$  as a function of  $Lx$ , we must add  $p$  boundary values :

$$Z^t x = c \quad \text{where} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} Z \text{ is a } n \times p \text{ matrix} \\ Z^t N \text{ invertible} \\ c \in \mathbb{R}^p. \end{array} \right. \quad (5.1)$$

With (5.1), we get :

$$\begin{aligned} w = Lx &\Leftrightarrow x = L^\dagger w + N(Z^t N)^{-1} (c - Z^t L^\dagger w) \\ x &= (I - N(Z^t N)^{-1} Z^t) L^\dagger w + N(Z^t N)^{-1} c. \end{aligned} \quad (5.2)$$

Let  $G = (I - N(Z^t N)^{-1} Z^t) L^t$ . Thus the problem

$$\text{Min}_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n / Z^t x = c} (S(x) + \rho \|Lx\|_{n-p}^2)$$

becomes :

$$\text{Min}_{w \in \mathbb{R}^{n-p}} (\|KGw - (y - KN(Z^t N)^{-1} c)\|_m^2 + \rho \|w\|_{n-p}^2).$$

We then use our procedure of § 3 and § 4 with  $KG$ ,  $I$  in place of  $K$ ,  $L$ . Without repeating this procedure, we note only that the singular value decomposition introduced here is :

$$KG = UDV^t.$$

Then (4.4) gives :

$$w_p = V \text{diag} \left( \frac{1}{d_i^2 + \rho}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) V^t G^t K^t (y - KN(Z^t N)^{-1} c).$$

Substituting this in (5.2) :

$$x_p = GV \text{diag} \left( \frac{1}{d_i^2 + \rho}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) V^t G^t K^t (y - KN(Z^t N)^{-1} c) + N(Z^t N)^{-1} c$$

and (4.5), (4.6) are now :

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{A}(\rho) &= \text{diag} \left( \frac{d_i^2}{d_i^2 + \rho}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) \\ \tilde{A}(\rho) \tilde{y} - \tilde{y} &= \text{diag} \left( \frac{d_i}{d_i^2 + \rho} - \frac{1}{d_i}, i = 1, \dots, l \right) \times \\ &\quad \times V^t G^t K^t (y - KN(Z^t N)^{-1} c). \end{aligned}$$

In comparison with § 4, we have to compute  $G$  in place of  $L^{-1}$  and subtract from the data vector a linear combination of the  $p$  columns of  $KN(Z^t N)^{-1}$ .

## 5.2 SOLUTIONS WITHOUT AUXILIARY CONSTRAINTS

Furthermore, if we don't want to add some auxiliary constraint (5.1), we can use the following relation which is always satisfied by  $x_p$  :

$$N^t K^t K x_p = N^t K^t y.$$

This relation is obtained by multiplying  $(K^t K + \rho L^t L) x_p = K^t y$  by  $N^t$ .

We verify that  $Z^t = N^t K^t K$  is such that  $Z^t N$  is invertible. Indeed,  $Z^t N = N^t K^t KN$  is symmetric and  $z^t Z^t Nz = \|KNz\|^2$  is  $> 0$ , except for  $Nz = 0$  hence  $z = 0$ , as long as  $N(K) \cap N(L) = \{0\}$ .

In the previous results, the constant term in (5.2) is :

$$N(Z^t N)^{-1} c = N(N^t K^t KN)^{-1} N^t K^t y .$$

Let  $x_\infty$  be this term, since it's the limit of  $x_\rho$  when  $\rho \rightarrow +\infty$ .

We note that  $x_\infty$  is the element of  $N(L)$  which minimizes  $\|Kx - y\|$  for  $x \in N(L)$  and  $G$  is now :

$$G = [I - N(N^t K^t KN)^{-1} N^t K^t K] L^t .$$

**6. A NUMERICAL APPLICATION : POSITRON EMISSION TOMOGRAPHY WITH TIME OF FLIGHT MEASUREMENTS**

This tomograph has detectors placed in a circle around a positron-emitting object and we want to estimate the activity of the emitter at every point in the plane of the circle. The emission of one positron produces, at the same point, two gamma rays in opposite directions. Hence, if two detectors detect gamma rays at about the same time then we know that a positron emission has occurred on the line between these detectors. The time-of-flight measurement gives an approximate localisation of this emission along this line. In the tomograph of Leti [7] the acquisition system groups all detections in 96 directions uniformly distributed throughout 180°. For each direction there are 128 parallel lines and, on each line, 64 time-of-flight groupings. Using the rotational invariance of this geometry and reorganizing with 192 directions covering 360°, these  $m = 96 \times 128 \times 64$  counts can be taken as approximations of :

$$y_{k,i,j}^0 = \int g_j(v) f_k(u_i, v) dv \quad \begin{matrix} k = 1, \dots, 192 \\ i = 1, \dots, 64 \\ j = 1, \dots, 64 \end{matrix} \quad (6.1)$$

where  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} f_k(u, v) \text{ is the expression of the search activity in the Cartesian frame} \\ \text{where the 64 lines in the direction } k \text{ satisfy :} \\ \quad u = u_i (= \text{distance from the center}) \quad i = 1, \dots, 64 \\ g_j \text{ is a known function given by : } g_j(v) = \int_{C_j} g(v - s) ds \text{ where } C_j \text{ is} \\ \text{the interval on } 0 v \text{ of the positions corresponding to the time-of-flight} \\ \text{class } j \text{ and } g \text{ is the probability density of localisation error (taken as a} \\ \text{given normal density).} \end{array} \right.$





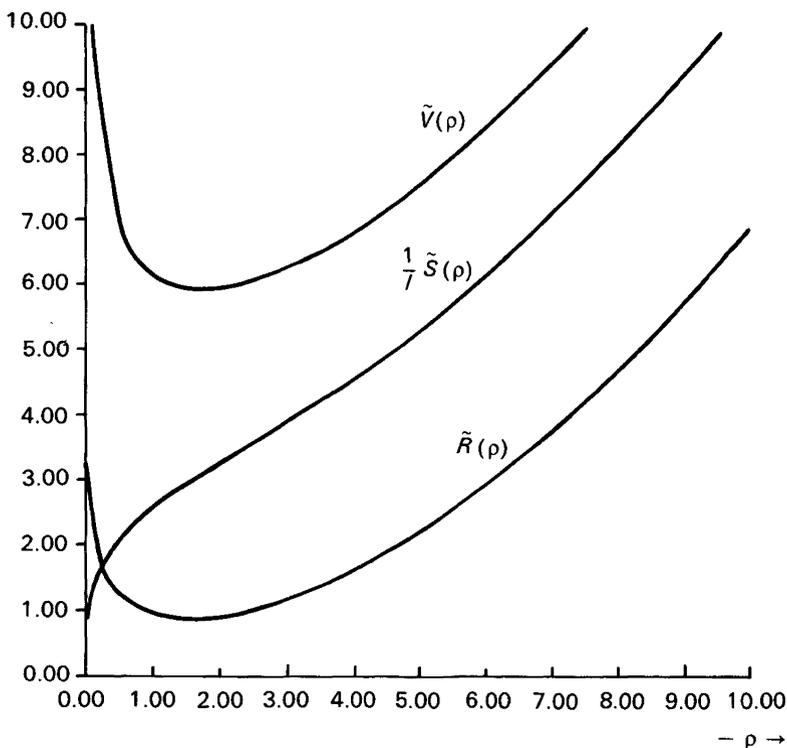


Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that the cross-validation method produces a very good estimate of the optimal regularization parameter.

We have performed this experiment using several different  $f$  of the same type that used in the simulation described above. Each simulation performed demonstrated a similar, high efficiency of the cross-validation method and we verified that the optimal parameter was dependent on the signal-to-noise ratio of the measurements and on the shape of  $f$ .

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