

Ray Tracing

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Reading

Required:

- ♦ Watt, sections 1.3-1.4, 12.1-12.5.1 (handout)
- ♦ Triangle intersection handout

Further reading:

- ♦ Watt errata on syllabus page, needed if you work from his book instead of the handout.
- ♦ T. Whitted. An improved illumination model for shaded display. Communications of the ACM 23(6), 343-349, 1980.
- ♦ A. Glassner. An Introduction to Ray Tracing. Academic Press, 1989.
- ♦ K. Turkowski, "Properties of Surface Normal Transformations," Graphics Gems, 1990, pp. 539-547.

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Geometric optics

Modern theories of light treat it as both a wave and a particle.

We will take a combined and somewhat simpler view of light – the view of **geometric optics**.

Here are the rules of geometric optics:

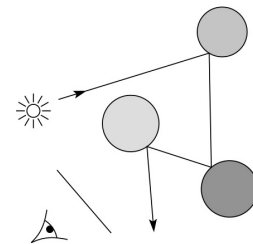
- ♦ Light is a flow of photons with wavelengths. We'll call these flows "light rays."
- ♦ Light rays travel in straight lines in free space.
- ♦ Light rays do not interfere with each other as they cross.
- ♦ Light rays obey the laws of reflection and refraction.
- ♦ Light rays travel from the light sources to the eye, but the physics is invariant under path reversal (reciprocity).

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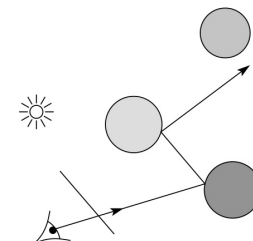
Eye vs. light ray tracing

Where does light begin?

At the light: light ray tracing (a.k.a., forward ray tracing or photon tracing)



At the eye: eye ray tracing (a.k.a., backward ray tracing)



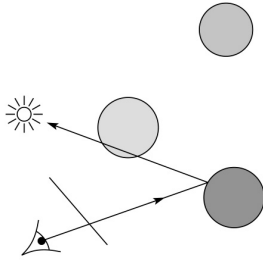
We will generally follow rays from the eye into the scene.

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Precursors to ray tracing

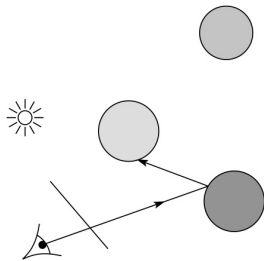
Local illumination

- ◆ Cast one eye ray, then shade according to light



Appel (1968)

- ◆ Cast one eye ray + one ray to light

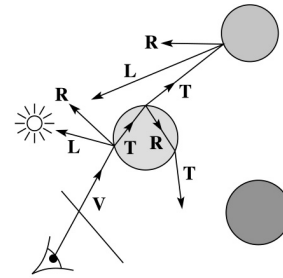


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Whitted ray-tracing algorithm

In 1980, Turner Whitted introduced ray tracing to the graphics community.

- ◆ Combines eye ray tracing + rays to light
- ◆ Recursively traces rays



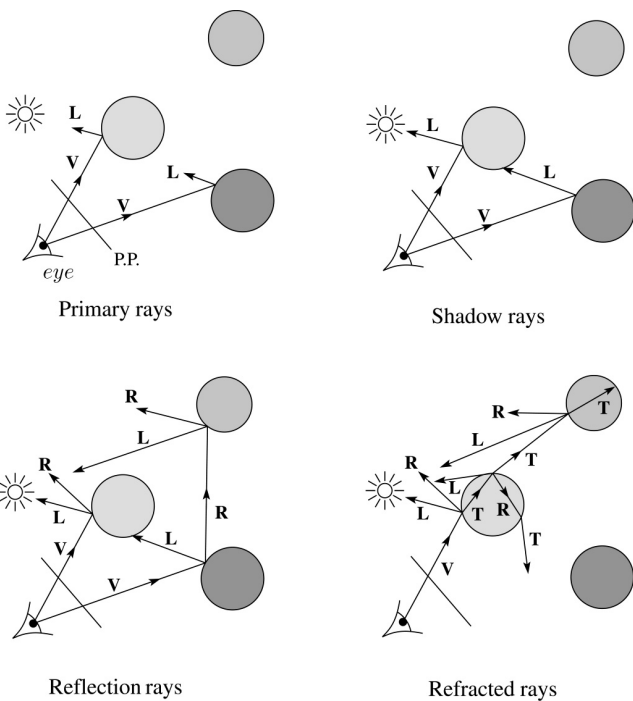
Algorithm:

1. For each pixel, trace a **primary ray** in direction V to the first visible surface.
2. For each intersection, trace **secondary rays**:
 - ◆ **Shadow rays** in directions L_1 to light sources
 - ◆ **Reflected ray** in direction R .
 - ◆ **Refracted ray or transmitted ray** in direction T .

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Whitted algorithm (cont'd)

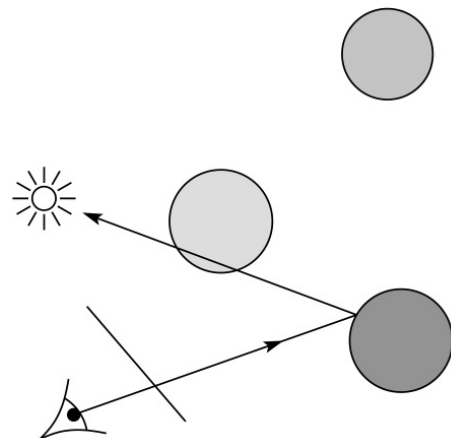
Let's look at this in stages:



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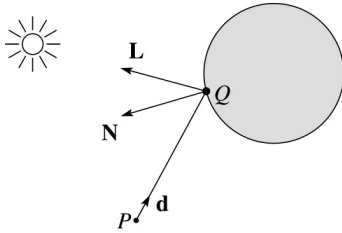
Ray casting and local illumination

Now let's actually build the ray tracer in stages. We'll start with ray casting and local illumination:



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Direct illumination



A ray is defined by an origin \mathbf{P} and a unit direction \mathbf{d} and is parameterized by t :

$$\mathbf{P} + t\mathbf{d}$$

Let $I(\mathbf{P}, \mathbf{d})$ be the intensity seen along a ray. Then:

$$I(\mathbf{P}, \mathbf{d}) = I_{\text{direct}}$$

where

- I_{direct} is computed from the Phong model

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Ray-tracing pseudocode

We build a ray traced image by casting rays through each of the pixels.

```

function tracelImage (scene):
  for each pixel (i,j) in image
     $A = \text{pixelToWorld}(i,j)$ 
     $P = \text{COP}$ 
     $\mathbf{d} = (A - P) / \|A - P\|$ 
     $I(i,j) = \text{traceRay}(\text{scene}, P, \mathbf{d})$ 
  end for
end function
  
```

```

function traceRay(scene,  $P, \mathbf{d}$ ):
   $(t, \mathbf{N}, \text{mtrl}) \leftarrow \text{scene.intersect}(P, \mathbf{d})$ 
   $Q \leftarrow \text{ray}(P, \mathbf{d})$  evaluated at  $t$ 
   $I = \text{shade}( \quad \quad \quad )$ 
  return  $I$ 
end function
  
```

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Shading pseudocode

Next, we need to calculate the color returned by the *shade* function.

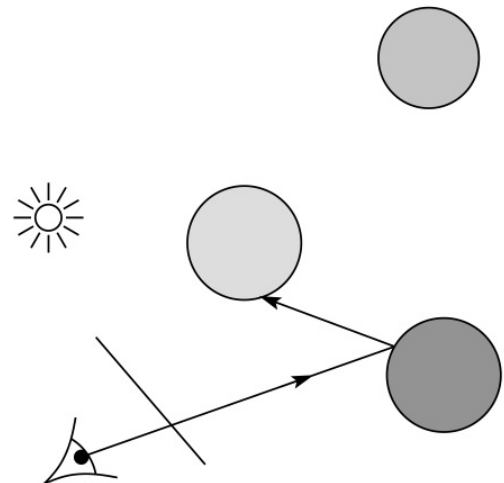
```

function shade(mtrl, scene,  $Q, \mathbf{N}, \mathbf{d}$ ):
   $I \leftarrow \text{mtrl}.k_e + \text{mtrl}.k_a * I_a$ 
  for each light source  $L$  do:
     $\text{atten} = L \rightarrow \text{distanceAttenuation}( \quad \quad )$ 
     $I \leftarrow I + \text{atten} * (\text{diffuse term} + \text{specular term})$ 
  end for
  return  $I$ 
end function
  
```

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Ray casting with shadows

Now we'll add shadows by casting shadow rays:



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Shading with shadows

To include shadows, we need to modify the shade function:

```
function shade(mtrl, scene, Q, N, d):  
    I ← mtrl.ke + mtrl.ka * Ia  
    for each light source L do:  
        atten = L -> distanceAttenuation(Q) *  
            L -> shadowAttenuation( )  
        I ← I + atten*(diffuse term + specular term)  
    end for  
    return I  
end function
```

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Shadow attenuation

Computing a shadow can be as simple as checking to see if a ray makes it to the light source.

For a point light source:

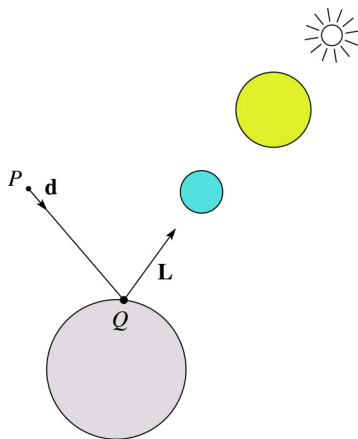
```
function PointLight::shadowAttenuation(scene, P)  
    d = (this.position - P).normalize()  
    (t, N, mtrl) ← scene.intersect(P, d)  
    Compute tlight  
    if (t < tlight) then:  
        atten = 0  
    else  
        atten = 1  
    end if  
    return atten  
end function
```

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Shadow attenuation (cont'd)

Q: What if there are transparent objects along a path to the light source?

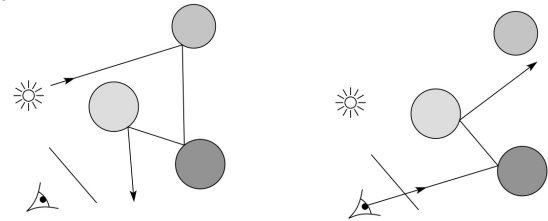
[Suppose for simplicity that each object has a multiplicative transparency constant, k_t .]



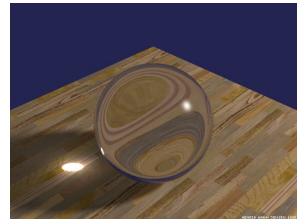
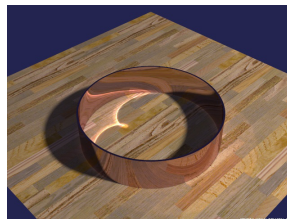
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Photon mapping

Combine light ray tracing (photon tracing) and eye ray tracing:



...to get **photon mapping**.



Renderings by Henrik Wann Jensen:
<http://graphics.ucsd.edu/~henrik/images/caustics.html>

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Shading in "Trace"

The Trace project uses a version of the Phong shading equation we derived in class, with two modifications:

- Shadow attenuation is clamped to be at least 1:

$$A_j^{dist} = \min \left\{ 1, \frac{1}{a_j + b_j d_j + c_j d_j^2} \right\}$$

- Shadow attenuation A^{shadow} is included.

Here's what it should look like:

$$I = k_e + k_a L_a + \sum_j A_j^{shadow} A_j^{dist} L_j \left[k_d (\mathbf{N} \cdot \mathbf{L}_j)_+ + k_s (\mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{R}_j)_+^{n_s} \right]$$

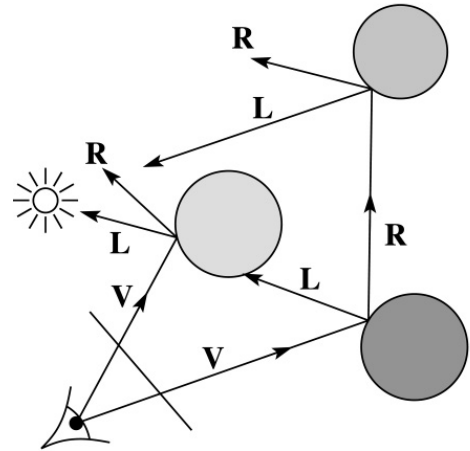
I.e., we are not using the OpenGL shading equation, which is somewhat different.

Note: the "R" here is the reflection of the *light* about the surface normal.

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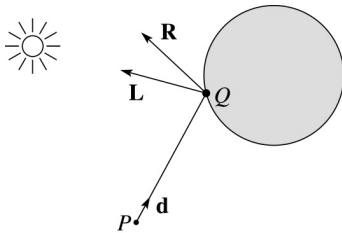
Recursive ray tracing with reflection

Now we'll add reflection:



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Shading with reflection



Let $I(P, \mathbf{d})$ be the intensity seen along a ray. Then:

$$I(P, \mathbf{d}) = I_{\text{direct}} + I_{\text{reflected}}$$

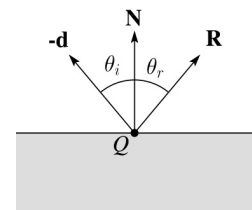
where

- I_{direct} is computed from the Phong model
- $I_{\text{reflected}} = k_r I(Q, \mathbf{R})$

Typically, we set $k_r = k_s$.

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Reflection



Law of reflection:

$$\theta_i = \theta_r$$

\mathbf{R} is co-planar with \mathbf{d} and \mathbf{N} .

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Ray-tracing pseudocode, revisited

```

function traceRay(scene, P, d):
    (t, N, mtrl) ← scene.intersect(P, d)
    Q ← ray(P, d) evaluated at t
    I = shade(scene, mtrl, P, N, -d)
    R = reflectDirection(      )
    I ← I + mtrl.kr * traceRay(scene, Q, R)
    return I
end function

```

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Terminating recursion

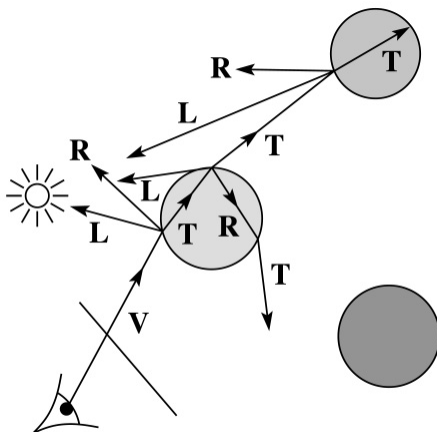
Q: How do you bottom out of recursive ray tracing?

Possibilities:

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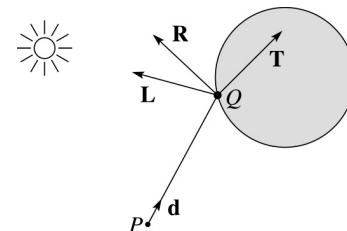
Whitted ray tracing

Finally, we'll add refraction, giving us the Whitted ray tracing model:



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Shading with reflection and refraction



Let $I(P, \mathbf{d})$ be the intensity seen along a ray. Then:

$$I(P, \mathbf{d}) = I_{\text{direct}} + I_{\text{reflected}} + I_{\text{transmitted}}$$

where

- I_{direct} is computed from the Phong model
- $I_{\text{reflected}} = k_r I(Q, \mathbf{R})$
- $I_{\text{transmitted}} = k_t I(Q, \mathbf{T})$

Typically, we set $k_r = k_s$ and $k_t = 1 - k_s$ (or 0, if opaque).

[Generally, k_r and k_t are determined by "Fresnel reflection," which depends on angle of incidence and changes the polarization of the light.]

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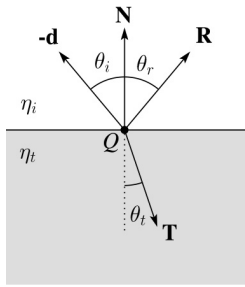
Refraction

Snell's law of refraction:

$$\eta_i \sin \theta_i = \eta_t \sin \theta_t$$

where η_i , η_t are **indices of refraction**.

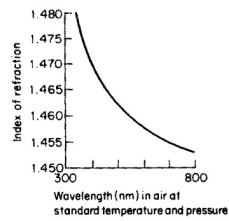
In all cases, **R** and **T** are coplanar with **d** and **N**.



The index of refraction is material dependent.

It can also vary with wavelength, an effect called **dispersion** that explains the colorful light rainbows from prisms. (We will generally assume no dispersion.)

Medium	Index of refraction
Vacuum	1
Air	1.0003
Water	1.33
Fused quartz	1.46
Glass, crown	1.52
Glass, dense flint	1.66
Diamond	2.42



Index of refraction variation for fused quartz

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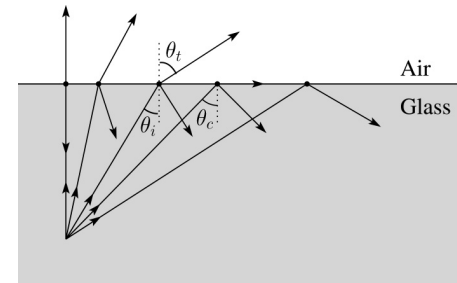
Total Internal Reflection

The equation for the angle of refraction can be computed from Snell's law:

What happens when $\eta_i > \eta_t$?

When θ_i is exactly 90° , we say that θ_i has achieved the "critical angle" θ_c .

For $\theta_i > \theta_c$, *no rays are transmitted*, and only reflection occurs, a phenomenon known as "total internal reflection" or TIR.



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Watt handout

Watt uses different symbols. Here is the translation between them:

$$\mathbf{l} = -\mathbf{d}$$

$$\phi = \theta_i$$

$$\theta = \theta_r$$

$$\mu_1 = \eta_i$$

$$\mu_2 = \eta_t$$

Also, Watt had some important errors that have already been corrected in the handout.

But, if you're consulting the original text, be sure to refer to the errata posted on the syllabus for corrections.

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Ray-tracing pseudocode, revisited

function *traceRay*(scene, P, d):

(t, N, mtrl) ← scene.intersect(P, d)

Q ← ray(P, d) evaluated at t

l = shade(scene, mtrl, P, N, -d)

R = reflectDirection(N, -d)

l ← l + mtrl.k_r * traceRay(scene, Q, R)

if ray is entering object **then**

n_i = index_of_air

n_t = mtrl.index

else

n_i = mtrl.index

n_t = index_of_air

if (notTIR ()) **then**

T = refractDirection ()

l ← l + mtrl.k_t * traceRay(scene, Q, T)

end if

return l

end function

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Terminating recursion, incl. refraction

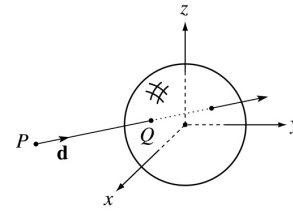
Q: Now how do you bottom out of recursive ray tracing?

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Intersecting rays with spheres

Now we've done everything except figure out what that "scene.intersect(P, \mathbf{d})" function does.

Mostly, it calls each object to find out the t value at which the ray intersects the object. Let's start with intersecting spheres...



Given:

- The coordinates of a point along a ray passing through P in the direction \mathbf{d} are:

$$x = P_x + td_x$$

$$y = P_y + td_y$$

$$z = P_z + td_z$$

- A unit sphere S centered at the origin defined by the equation:

Find: The t at which the ray intersects S .

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Intersecting rays with spheres

Solution by substitution:

$$x^2 + y^2 + z^2 - 1 = 0$$

$$(P_x + td_x)^2 + (P_y + td_y)^2 + (P_z + td_z)^2 - 1 = 0$$

$$at^2 + bt + c = 0$$

where

$$a = d_x^2 + d_y^2 + d_z^2$$

$$b = 2(P_x d_x + P_y d_y + P_z d_z)$$

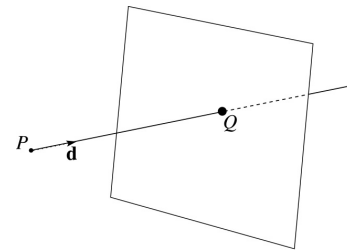
$$c = P_x^2 + P_y^2 + P_z^2 - 1$$

Q: What are the solutions of the quadratic equation in t and what do they mean?

Q: What is the normal to the sphere at a point (x, y, z) on the sphere?

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Ray-plane intersection



We can write the equation of a plane as:

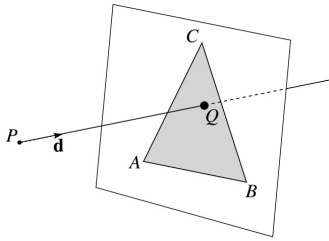
$$ax + by + cz = d$$

The coefficients a , b , and c form a vector that is normal to the plane, $\mathbf{n} = [a \ b \ c]^T$. Thus, we can rewrite the plane equation as:

We can solve for the intersection parameter (and thus the point):

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Ray-triangle intersection



To intersect with a triangle, we first solve for the equation of its supporting plane.

How might we compute the (un-normalized) normal?

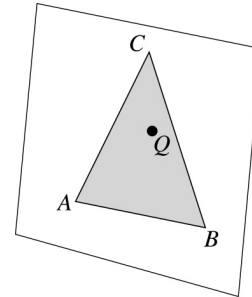
Given this normal, how would we compute d ?

Using these coefficients, we can solve for Q . Now, we need to decide if Q is inside or outside of the triangle.

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3D inside-outside test

One way to do this "inside-outside test," is to see if Q lies on the left side of each edge as we move counterclockwise around the triangle.

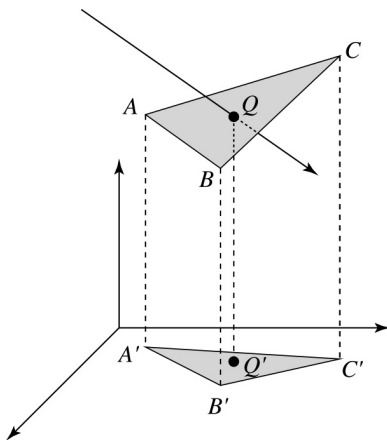


How might we use cross products to do this?

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2D inside-outside test

Without loss of generality, we can perform this same test after projecting down a dimension:



If Q' is inside of $A'B'C'$, then Q is inside of ABC .

Why is this projection desirable?

Which axis should you "project away"?

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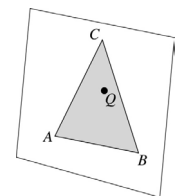
Barycentric coordinates

As we'll see in a moment, it is often useful to represent Q as an **affine combination** of A , B , and C :

$$Q = \alpha A + \beta B + \gamma C$$

where:

$$\alpha + \beta + \gamma = 1$$



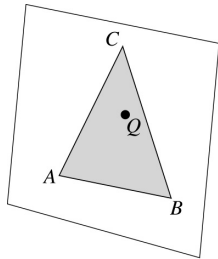
We call α , β , and γ the **barycentric coordinates** of Q with respect to A , B , and C .

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Barycentric coordinates

Given a point Q that is inside of triangle ABC , we can solve for Q 's barycentric coordinates in a simple way:

$$\alpha = \frac{\text{Area}(QBC)}{\text{Area}(ABC)} \quad \beta = \frac{\text{Area}(AQC)}{\text{Area}(ABC)} \quad \gamma = \frac{\text{Area}(ABQ)}{\text{Area}(ABC)}$$



How can cross products help here?

In the end, these calculations can be performed in the 2D projection as well!

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Interpolating vertex properties

The barycentric coordinates can also be used to interpolate vertex properties such as:

- ♦ material properties
- ♦ texture coordinates
- ♦ normals

For example:

$$k_d(Q) = \alpha k_d(A) + \beta k_d(B) + \gamma k_d(C)$$

Interpolating normals, known as Phong interpolation, gives triangle meshes a smooth shading appearance. (Note: don't forget to normalize interpolated normals.)

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Epsilons

Due to finite precision arithmetic, we do not always get the exact intersection at a surface.

Q: What kinds of problems might this cause?

Q: How might we resolve this?

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Summary

What to take home from this lecture:

- ♦ The meanings of all the boldfaced terms.
- ♦ Enough to implement basic recursive ray tracing.
- ♦ How reflection and transmission directions are computed.
- ♦ How ray--object intersection tests are performed on spheres, planes, and triangles
- ♦ How barycentric coordinates within triangles are computed
- ♦ How ray epsilons are used.

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