

Towards a new generalized Simson's identity

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to develop an elegant and simple generalization of what is usually called Simson's Identity, with variations named after Cassini, Catalan and Gelin-Cesàro. It can shed a new light on Simson's identity, and possibly how to extend it to some reciprocals of these identities and how to generalize it to arbitrary order with some conjectures.

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1 Introduction

Variations of the identities of Simson, Cassini, Catalan and Vajda have provided opportunities for extensions and generalizations [10]. In its simplest Fibonacci form, the Simson identity can be expressed as

$$F_{n-1}F_{n+1} - F_n^2 = (-1)^n. \quad (1.1)$$

More specifically, the Catalan identity is usually [16, 20] expressed as

$$F_{n-r}F_{n+r} - F_n^2 = (-1)^{n-r+1} F_r^2,$$

and a generalization of (1.1), the Gelin-Cesàro identity [5, 15]

$$F_{n-2}F_{n+2}F_{n-1}F_{n+1} - F_n^4 = -1,$$

with a variation by Mangon [14]

$$F_{n-1}F_{n-2} - F_nF_{n-3} = (-1)^n,$$

and the related Vajda identity [20]

$$F_{n+i}F_{n+j} - F_nF_{n+i+j} = (-1)^n F_iF_j.$$

Knuth [10] and others have restated (1.1) neatly in its determinant form

$$\begin{vmatrix} F_{n+1} & F_n \\ F_n & F_{n-1} \end{vmatrix} = (-1)^n \quad (1.2)$$

and proceeded to generalize this format by induction to an elegant arbitrary order, with examples from a variety of well-known sequences. This, for the third-order Tribonacci sequences $\{T_n\}$, his generalization was, in effect,

$$\begin{vmatrix} T_{n+2} & T_{n+1} & T_n \\ T_{n+1} & T_n & T_{n-1} \\ T_n & T_{n-1} & T_{n-2} \end{vmatrix} = \begin{vmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{vmatrix}, \quad (1.3)$$

which is a neat extension of (1.1) and (1.2); but, the left-hand side of (1.3) when expanded is

$$\begin{vmatrix} T_{n+2} & T_{n+1} & T_n \\ T_{n+1} & T_n & T_{n-1} \\ T_n & T_{n-1} & T_{n-2} \end{vmatrix} = T_{n+2}(T_nT_{n-2} - T_{n-1}^2) - T_{n+1}(T_{n+1}T_{n-2} - T_n^2) + T_n(T_{n+1}T_{n-2} - T_n^2).$$

This raises the question which we seek to answer: whether there can be a succinct and elegant generalization to arbitrary order, with connections to other recursive sequences, which includes a format such as either of the following for arbitrary order r ,

$$F_{n+1}^{(r)}F_{n-1}^{(r)} - (F_n^{(r)})^2 \quad \text{or} \quad F_{n+r-1}^{(r)}F_{n+r-3}^{(r)} - (F_{n+r-2}^{(r)})^2,$$

both of which would have the format of the left-hand side of (1.1) when $r = 2$, such as conjectured in (3.4) and (3.5) below, rather than the longer determinantal expansion when $r = 3$ as above, which obviously becomes less simple as r increases.

2 Some preliminary notation

r is the order of the recurrence relation which, with its initial terms, defines a recursive sequence [17]. Let $\{x_n^{(s)}\}$ symbolize an “ r -related sequence of order s ”, which satisfies the s -th order recurrence relation with yet to be initial terms

$$\begin{aligned} x_n^{(s)} &= \sum_{i=1}^s (-1)^i Q_{r,i} x_{n-i}^{(s)}, & n > 0, \\ x_n^{(s)} &= -1, & n = 0, \\ x_n^{(s)} &= 0, & n < 0, \end{aligned} \quad (2.1)$$

in which the $Q_{r,i}$ are integer functions of $\alpha_{r,i}$ (Equation (3.5)), and $s = \binom{r}{2}$, with $f_2(x)$ as its auxiliary equation, in which

$$f_2(x) = \prod_{\substack{i,j=1 \\ i < j}}^r (x - \alpha_{r,i} \alpha_{r,j}) \quad (2.2)$$

and $\alpha_{r,i}$ are the roots, assumed distinct, of the other auxiliary equation for the sequence of generalized Fibonacci numbers of arbitrary order r , $\{u_n^{(r)}\}$, represented by

$$f_1(x) = \prod_{j=1}^r (x - \alpha_{r,j}). \quad (2.3)$$

When $r = 2$, $s = 1$, and $x_n^{(1)} = -x_{n-1}^{(1)} = -1$, and for the fundamental sequence of Lucas [10], Simson’s identity then takes the form

$$(u_n^{(2)})^2 - (u_{n-1}^{(2)})(u_{n+1}^{(2)}) = x_n^{(1)}, \quad (2.4)$$

which is what we seek to generalize. Table 1 is the incentive for our conjecture. We are seeking relations with other recurrence relations, if they exist, in a consistent manner. To put the discussion in a broader context, we utilize r “basic” sequences of order r , $\{U_{s,n}^{(r)}\}$, $s = 1, 2, \dots, r$, by the recurrence relation

$$U_{s,n}^{(r)} = \sum_{j=1}^r (-1)^{j+1} P_{r,j} U_{s,n-j}^{(r)}, \quad n > r, \quad (2.5)$$

with initial terms defined by the Kronecker delta: $U_{s,n}^{(r)} = \delta_{s,n}$, $n = 1, 2, \dots, r$, and where the $P_{r,j}$ are arbitrary integers [16]. The adjective “basic” is used by analogy with the corresponding third

order sequences of Bell [2]. To correspond with the second order “primordial” sequence of Lucas, we define $U_{o,n}^{(r)} = v_{n-1}^{(r)}$, which also satisfies (2.1) but has initial terms given by

$$U_{o,n}^{(r)} = \begin{cases} 0, & n < 1, \\ \sum_{j=1}^r \alpha_{r,j}^{n-1}, & 1 \leq n \leq r, \end{cases} \quad (2.6)$$

where the $\alpha_{r,j}$ are the distinct roots of $f_1(x)$ in (1.3). In the literature, generally only one basic sequence is mentioned, namely the fundamental one, but Gootherts [7] has shown a need for two basic second order sequences as well as the primordial sequence [12].

One of the basic sequences is labelled “fundamental” by analogy with Lucas’ “fundamental” sequence, $U_{2,n}^{(2)}$. The sequence of arbitrary order, r , is labelled $\{U_{r,n+r}^{(r)}\}$. Since, this sequence is used frequently, we let $U_{r,n+r}^{(r)} = \{u_n^{(r)}\}$ for notational convenience. The fundamental nature of the sequence $\{u_n^{(r)}\}$ was illustrated by d’Ocagne (Dickson [5]) who effectively established that any element $\{w_n^{(r)}\}$ of the set $\Omega = \Omega(P_{r,1}, P_{r,2}, \dots, P_{r,r})$ of all sequences which satisfy (2.1) can be expressed in terms of the fundamental sequence and the initial terms of $\{w_n^{(r)}\}$ [8]:

$$w_n^{(r)} = \sum_{j=0}^{r-1} \sum_{k=j}^{r-1} (-1)^{k-j} P_{r,k-j} u_{n-k}^{(r)} w_j^{(r)}, \quad n \geq 0, P_{r,0} = 1. \quad (2.7)$$

3 Simson’s identity

We define sequences

$$x_n^{(2)} = -x_{n-1}^{(2)} = \mp 1 \quad (3.1)$$

and

$$x_n^{(3)} = -x_{n-1}^{(3)} - x_{n-2}^{(3)} + x_{n-3}^{(3)}, \quad n \geq 3, \quad (3.2)$$

with initial terms $-1, 1, 0$, so that the first few terms of $\{x_n^{(3)}\}$ are

$$\{x_n^{(3)}\} \equiv \{-1, 1, 0, -2, 3, -1, -4, 8, -5, -7, 20, 18, -9, \dots\}. \quad (3.3)$$

which is effectively $\{x_n^{(3)}\} = A057597$ of Sloane [19]. For example, when $r = 2$,

$$x_n^{(2)} = -x_{n-1}^{(2)} = -1,$$

and for the fundamental sequence of Lucas [12], Simson’s identity then takes the form

$$\left(u_n^{(2)}\right)^2 - \left(u_{n-1}^{(2)}\right)\left(u_{n+1}^{(2)}\right) = x_n^{(2)}, \quad (3.4)$$

For the Tribonacci sequence $\{w_n^{(3)}\} \equiv \{1, 0, 0, 1, 1, 2, 4, 7, 13, 24, 44, 81, 149, \dots\}$ (A000073) of Sloane [19]), we have Table 1 which seems to support the conjecture that

$$u_{n-1}^{(3)} u_{n+1}^{(3)} - \left(u_n^{(3)}\right)^2 = x_n^{(3)}. \quad (3.5)$$

Table 1. Simson conjecture for Tribonacci numbers

n	$w_n^{(3)}$	$(w_n^{(3)})^2$	$w_{n-1}^{(3)}w_{n+1}^{(3)}$	$w_{n-1}^{(3)}w_{n+1}^{(3)} - (w_n^{(3)})^2$	$x_n^{(3)}$
0	1	1	—	—	-1
1	0	0	0	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	0
3	1	1	0	-1	-2
4	1	1	2	1	3
5	2	4	4	0	-1
6	4	16	14	-2	-4
7	7	49	52	3	8
8	13	169	168	-1	-5
9	24	576	572	-4	-7
10	44	1936	1944	8	20
11	81	6561	6556	-5	-18
12	149	22201	22194	-7	-9
13	274	75096	75076	-20	47

These equations do not tell us much about the specific terms of $\{x_n^{(s)}\}$, but it seems that we can relate them to the initial terms of $\{u_n^{(r)}\}$, such as,

$$\begin{aligned} (u_0^{(r)})^2 - u_{-1}^{(r)}u_1^{(r)} &= 1 = x_0^{(s)}; \\ (u_1^{(r)})^2 - u_0^{(r)}u_2^{(r)} &= \sum_{i < m} \alpha_{r,i} \alpha_{r,m} = x_1^{(s)}; \\ (u_2^{(r)})^2 - u_1^{(r)}u_3^{(r)} &= \sum_{\Sigma \lambda = 4} \prod_{i=1}^r \alpha_{r,i}^{\lambda_i} = x_2^{(s)}. \end{aligned}$$

4 Related combinatorial properties

We see this in the following because we can also express $\{u_n^{(r)}\}$ in multinomial terms from Macmahon [13], namely, $u_n^{(r)}$ is the product sum of weight n of the terms of $P_{r,1}$, and $P_{r,j}$ is the product sum, j together of the terms of $P_{r,1}$. By the product sum of weight n of the quantities a_1, a_2, \dots , we mean

$$h_n = \sum a_1^n + \sum a_1^{n-1}a_2 + \sum a_1^{n-2}a_2^2 + \dots,$$

in which each h_n is the sum of a number of symmetric functions each of which is related to a partition of the number n . Thus,

$$\begin{aligned}
x_n^{(s)} &= u_{2n}^{(r)} - \sum_{n < \lambda \leq 2n} \alpha_{r,1}^{\lambda_1} \alpha_{r,2}^{\lambda_2} \cdots \\
&= \sum_{\sum \lambda = 2n} \alpha_{r,1}^{\lambda_1} \alpha_{r,2}^{\lambda_2} \cdots - \sum_{n < \lambda \leq 2n} \alpha_{r,1}^{\lambda_1} \alpha_{r,2}^{\lambda_2} \cdots
\end{aligned}$$

and so

$$x_n^{(s)} = \sum_{\sum \lambda = 2n} \prod_{i=1}^r \alpha_{r,i}^{\lambda_i}. \quad (4.1)$$

For example, when $r = 3, s = 3$, which seems to work for the cases listed in Table 1,

$$\begin{aligned}
x_1^{(3)} &= \sum \alpha_{3,1} \alpha_{3,2} \\
x_2^{(3)} &= \sum \alpha_{3,1}^2 \alpha_{3,2}^2 + \sum \alpha_{3,1}^2 \alpha_{3,2} \alpha_{3,3} \\
x_3^{(3)} &= \sum \alpha_{3,1}^3 \alpha_{3,2}^3 + \sum \alpha_{3,1}^3 \alpha_{3,2}^2 \alpha_{3,3} + \alpha_{3,1}^2 \alpha_{3,2}^2 \alpha_{3,3}^2
\end{aligned} \quad (4.2)$$

Each term $x_n^{(s)}$ of the r -related sequence of order s seems to be the product sum of weight n of the quantities $\alpha_{r,i} \alpha_{r,j}$ ($i < j$), such that

$$x_n^{(s)} = \sum_{\sum \lambda = 2n} \prod_{i=1}^r \alpha_{r,i}^{\lambda_i}$$

and

$$u_n^{(r)} = \sum_{\sum \lambda = n} \prod_{i=1}^r \alpha_{r,i}^{\lambda_i}$$

so that

$$x_n^{(s)} = \sum_{i=1}^r \alpha_{r,i}^{r+2n-1} / \prod_{i>j} (\alpha_{r,i} - \alpha_{r,j}) \quad (4.3)$$

which is expressed entirely in terms of the zeros of $f_1(x)$ rather than $f_2(x)$. Thus, we seem to have the format

$$x_n^{(s)} = \sum_{\sum i \mu_i = n} (-1)^{n+\sum \mu} \frac{(\sum \mu!)}{\mu_1! \cdots \mu_n!} \prod_{i=1}^r Q_{r,i}^{\mu_i}, \quad (4.4)$$

the first few terms of which are

$$\begin{aligned}
x_0^{(s)} &= 1, \\
x_1^{(s)} &= Q_{r,1}, \\
x_2^{(s)} &= Q_{r,1}^2 - Q_{r,2}, \\
x_3^{(s)} &= Q_{r,1}^3 - 2Q_{r,1}Q_{r,2} + Q_{r,3},
\end{aligned}$$

which conform with (4.2) when the terms are simplified, such as when $r = 3$, as follows,

$$\begin{aligned}
x_0^{(s)} &= 1, \\
x_1^{(s)} &= \sum \alpha_{3,1} \alpha_{3,2} \\
x_2^{(s)} &= \left(\sum \alpha_{3,1} \alpha_{3,2} \right)^2 - \left(\sum \alpha_{3,1}^2 \alpha_{3,2} \alpha_{3,3} \right) \\
x_3^{(s)} &= \left(\sum \alpha_{3,1} \alpha_{3,2} \right)^3 + \left(\alpha_{3,1}^2 \alpha_{3,2}^2 \alpha_{3,3}^2 \right) - 2 \left(\sum \alpha_{3,1} \alpha_{3,2} \right) \left(\sum \alpha_{3,1}^2 \alpha_{3,2} \alpha_{3,3} \right).
\end{aligned} \tag{4.5}$$

5 Reciprocals

The following theorems harmonize with, and are developed in the style of the family of reciprocal series involving Fibonacci and harmonic numbers [6], which also carries recent developments of the Riemann Zeta function, referred to in the next section.

Theorem 1. (Reciprocal of Simson [3, 10]): *Let $\mathbb{N} = \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}$ and $A: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ on application such that $A(0) = 1, A(1) = 2$, and*

$$A(n-1).A(n+1) - (A(n))^2 = (-1)^n \text{ for } n \geq 1, \tag{5.1}$$

then

$$A(n+1) = A(n) + A(n-1) \quad \forall n \geq 1. \tag{5.2}$$

Proof. Applying (5.1) for $n = 1$, we get $A(2) = 3$, so (5.2) is true for $n = 1$. Now assume that (5.2) is valid for n , and we shall prove it for $n + 1$. Applying (5.1) for n and $n \rightarrow n + 1$, one has in turn

$$A(n+1).A(n-1) = (A(n))^2 + (-1)^n, \tag{5.3}$$

$$A(n+2).A(n) = (A(n+1))^2 + (-1)^{n+1}. \tag{5.3'}$$

On adding (5.3) and (5.3'), we get

$$A(n+2).A(n) + A(n+1).A(n-1) = (A(n+1))^2 + (A(n))^2$$

so

$$A(n)(A(n+2) - A(n)) = A(n+1)(A(n+1) - A(n-1)). \tag{5.4}$$

By the inductive hypothesis, one then has

$$A(n+1) - A(n-1) = A(n),$$

so by (5.4) we obtain

$$A(n)(A(n+2) - A(n)) = A(n+1).A(n). \tag{5.5}$$

Now as $A(n) \geq 1 \forall n$ (which follows from (5.1) and also from a simple induction), by (5.5) we get $A(n+2) - A(n) = A(n+1)$, so that (5.2) holds for “ $n + 1$ ” too. \square

Theorem 2 (Reciprocal of Mangan [14]). Assume that $A: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ satisfies $A(0) = 1$, $A(1) = 2$, $A(2) = 3$, and

$$A(n-1).A(n-2) - A(n).A(n-3) = (-1)^n \text{ for } n \geq 3, \quad (5.6)$$

then

$$A(n+1) = A(n) + A(n-1) \forall n \geq 1. \quad (5.7)$$

Proof. From (5.6) we get $A(3) = 5$, so (5.7) holds true for $n = 1$ and $n = 2$. Assume that (5.7) holds true for $n - 1$ and n . We shall prove that (5.7) also holds for $n + 1$. Thus assume

$$A(n+1) - A(n-1) = A(n)$$

and

$$A(n) - A(n-2) = A(n-1).$$

Applying (5.6) for $n + 1$ and $n + 2$, one has

$$\begin{aligned} A(n).A(n-1) - A(n+1).A(n-2) &= (-1)^{n+1} \\ A(n+1).A(n) - A(n+2).A(n-1) &= (-1)^{n+2}. \end{aligned} \quad (5.8)$$

By adding the two relations of (5.8), we find

$$A(n+1)[A(n) - A(n-2)] + A(n-1)[A(n) - A(n+2)] = 0,$$

and reducing with $A(n-1) \geq 1$, we get

$$A(n+1) = A(n+2) - A(n);$$

that is, (5.7) is valid for $n + 1$. □

Theorem 3 (Reciprocal of Gelin-Cesàro identity [5, 15]). Assume that $A: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ satisfies $A(0) = 1, A(1) = 2, A(2) = 3, A(3) = 5$, and if

$$A(n-2)A(n+2)A(n-1)A(n+1) = (A(n))^4 - 1 \text{ for } n \geq 2, \quad (5.9)$$

then we also have

$$A(n+1) = A(n) + A(n-1) \quad \forall n \geq 1. \quad (5.10)$$

Proof. From (5.9) we get $A(4) = 8$, so (5.10) holds true for $n = 1, 2$ and 3 . Assume that (5.10) holds true for $n - 1, n$ and $n + 1$, and we shall prove it true for $n + 2$. Thus, assume

$$\begin{aligned}
A(n) &= A(n-1) + A(n-2) \\
A(n+1) &= A(n) + A(n-1) \\
A(n+2) &= A(n+1) + A(n),
\end{aligned}
\tag{5.11}$$

and we wish to prove that

$$A(n+3) = A(n+2) + A(n+1).$$

Using (5.9) for n and $n+1$, one has

$$\begin{aligned}
A(n-2)A(n+2)A(n-1)A(n+1) &= (A(n))^4 - 1 \\
A(n-1)A(n+3)A(n)A(n+2) &= (A(n+1))^4 - 1.
\end{aligned}
\tag{5.12}$$

By subtraction in (5.12), we get

$$\begin{aligned}
&A(n+2)A(n-1)[A(n+3)A(n) - A(n+1)A(n-2)] \\
&= (A(n+1))^4 - (A(n))^4 \\
&= [A(n+1) - A(n)] \cdot [A(n+1) + A(n)] \cdot [(A(n+1))^2 + (A(n))^2] \\
&= [A(n-1)] \cdot [A(n+2)] \cdot [(A(n+1))^2 + (A(n))^2]
\end{aligned}
\tag{5.13}$$

from which we can obtain

$$A(n+3)A(n) = A(n+1)A(n-2) + (A(n+1))^2 + (A(n))^2. \tag{5.14}$$

From (5.11) we obtain

$$A(n-2) = A(n) - A(n-1) = 2A(n) - A(n+1),$$

So, from (5.14), we have

$$\begin{aligned}
A(n+3)A(n) &= A(n+1)[2A(n) - A(n+1)] + (A(n+1))^2 + (A(n))^2 \\
&= A(n+1)[2A(n) - A(n+1)] + (A(n+1))^2 + [A(n+2) - A(n+1)]^2 \\
&= 2A(n)A(n+1) - (A(n+1))^2 + (A(n+1))^2 + (A(n+2))^2 \\
&\quad - 2A(n+2)A(n+1) + (A(n+1))^2 \\
&= 2A(n)A(n+1) + (A(n+1))^2 + (A(n+2))^2 + 2A(n+2)A(n+1) \\
&= 2A(n)A(n+1) + [A(n+2) - A(n+1)]^2 \\
&= 2A(n)A(n+1) + (A(n))^2.
\end{aligned}$$

By reducing with $A(n)$ up to

$$\begin{aligned}
A(n+3) &= 2A(n+1) + A(n) \\
&= A(n+1) + (A(n+1) + A(n)) \\
&= A(n+1) + A(n+2);
\end{aligned}$$

thus, (5.10) is valid also for $n + 2$. □

6 Conclusion

Vajda [16, 21] has supplied other elegant generalizations which are worth extending, such as

$$F_{n+i}F_{n+j} - F_nF_{n+i+j} = (-1)^n F_iF_j. \tag{6.1}$$

The story is not over though, because in this vein, van der Poorten [22] proved that (in our notation) the sequence $\{(w_n^{(r)})^i\}$ satisfies a linear recurrence relation of order $\binom{i+r-1}{i}$ with auxiliary polynomial

$$f_i(\lambda_i x) = \prod_{\sum \lambda_n = i} (x - \alpha_{r,1}^{\lambda_1} \alpha_{r,2}^{\lambda_2} \cdots \alpha_{r,r}^{\lambda_r}), \tag{6.2}$$

the zeros of which are the roots of $f_1(x) = 0$ taken i at a time. If $i = 2$ and $\lambda_1 = \lambda_2 = 1$, then $f_i(\lambda_1 x) = f_2(x)$, and if $i = 1$ and $\lambda_1 = 1$, then $f_i(\lambda_1 x) = f_1(x)$, as in Section 1. The point of mentioning these is for the interested reader to search whether Williams' [23, 24] generalized Lucas numbers can lead to a more elegant generalized Simson's identity. These numbers, $\{L_{s,n}^{(r)}\}$, are defined in effect by

$$L_{s,n}^{(r)} = d^{-s} \sum_{j=1}^r \alpha_{r,j}^n \zeta_r^{s(j-1)}, \quad s = 0, 1, \dots, r-1, \tag{6.3}$$

in which $\zeta_m = \exp(2\pi i / m)$, the Riemann Zeta Function $i^2 = -1$, is a modification of Carlitz [4], and d is some real number for $r > 2$; for $r = 2$, d is the difference between the roots, $\alpha_{2,1}$ and $\alpha_{2,2}$, of the auxiliary equation, as usual. Thus, when $r = 2$, Equation 5.2 becomes an ordinary Lucas number, as in Section 2,

$$L_{0,n}^{(2)} = \alpha_{2,1}^n + \alpha_{2,2}^n = v_n^{(2)}. \tag{6.4}$$

These generalized Lucas numbers, $\{L_{s,n}^{(r)}\}$, are related to $\{H_{s,n}^{(r)}\}$, another arbitrary order recursive sequence defined by Williams [22, 23] in an additive formula

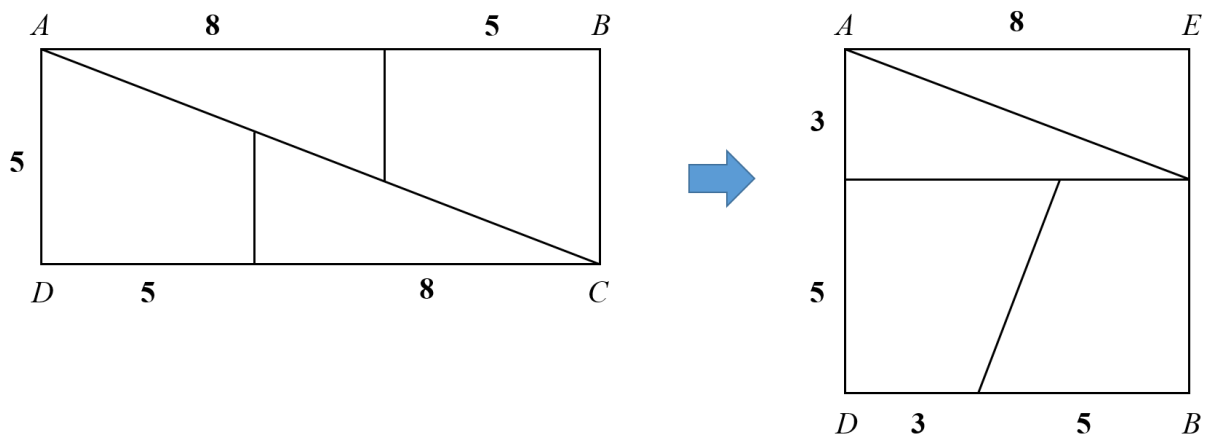
$$H_{s,n+m}^{(r)} = \sum_{h=0}^{r-1} \sum_{j=0}^{r-1} U_{s,h+j}^{(r)} H_{h,n}^{(r)} H_{j,m}^{(r)}, \tag{6.5}$$

which was simplified by Shannon [18]

$$H_{s,m}^{(r)} = \sum_{j=1}^r U_{s,j}^{(r)} H_{j,m}^{(r)}, \quad (6.6)$$

of which the main properties (in the sense of current fashions) have yet to be explored.

Finally, the Simson Identity is sometimes presented in disguise as a Fibonacci puzzle of how a rectangle of area 65 cm^2 can apparently be transformed into a square of 64 cm^2 . What is the geometry of any generalized Simson's identity [1, 3, 9]?



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