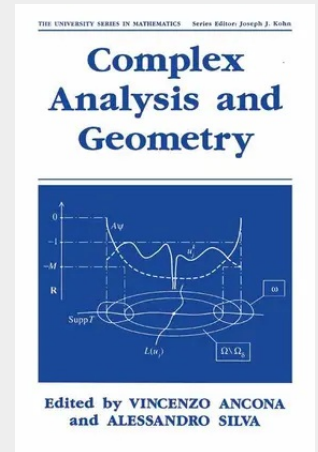


Complex Analysis and Geometry

When we studied complex variables in the late 1960s, modern geometry on the complex plane and complex function theory were identified in teaching and research as several complex variables. A beginner in the field at that time would have the experience of jumping from the sheaf-theoretical methods employed in the theory of analytic spaces to the P.D.E. methods of the $\bar{\partial}$ problem, with the clear understanding that the phenomena lying behind such different methods and problems were the same. A few years later, new important discoveries made clear that complex differential geometry was also in the same company. Looking at the historical development of the subject in the first half of the twentieth century shows this was not astonishing. The origin of the theory of functions of several complex variables was tardier than the familiar of analytic functions of one complex variable. The first comprehensive theory textbook by Behnke and Thullen, in the 1930s, expounded the foundations of the general theory as set up by Weierstrass, Cousin, Hartogs, and Poincaré and clearly put in evidence that the difficulties were all but solved. In a series of papers from 1936 to 1953, Oka introduced a brilliant collection of new ideas and systematically eliminated all difficulties. Oka's work had in itself a fruitful seed and contained the premises for the opening of wider horizons.

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