

Representing Rotations as Quaternions

When looking at the computational efficiency of the simulations one thing that can jump out is the use of `expm`. During the computations we use `expm` to step the kinematics, but this can be a relatively expensive thing to compute. We can specialize `expm` to work on $SE(3)$ and $SO(3)$ to improve the efficiency a bit, but it can still be expensive. So, we want to improve this and avoid expensive `expm` calls.

The reason we needed `expm` in the first place is because rotation matrices are not closed under addition. When we step the rotations using a Runge-Kutta integrator we add the current step and a term based on the derivative to get the next step, but doing this causes the determinant of the rotation to drift making it no longer a pure rotation. One way to avoid this was the RKMK integration scheme, but we can change the representation to get more efficient computations. If we represent rotations as quaternions we no longer need the RKMK scheme, and therefore don't use `expm`, because quaternions are closed under addition. One issue is that unit quaternions are rotations, but with addition they won't remain unital. This can be avoided by having normalization be included in the change from quaternion to rotation matrix form. This ought to result in a more computationally efficient implementation of the kinematics.

The main piece the quaternions change is the derivative in space and time, everywhere else in the computations we want to keep the rotation matrix form. To convert a quaternion to a rotation matrix we have:

$$q = q_0 + q_1 i + q_2 j + q_3 k = \begin{bmatrix} q_0 \\ q_1 \\ q_2 \\ q_3 \end{bmatrix} \quad (1)$$

$$R = I + \frac{2}{q^T q} \begin{bmatrix} -q_2^2 - q_3^2 & q_1 q_2 - q_3 q_0 & q_1 q_3 + q_2 q_0 \\ q_1 q_2 + q_3 q_0 & -q_1^2 - q_3^2 & q_2 q_3 - q_1 q_0 \\ q_1 q_3 - q_2 q_0 & q_2 q_3 + q_1 q_0 & -q_1^2 - q_2^2 \end{bmatrix} \quad (2)$$

where q is the quaternion using the typical i, j, k basis.

So, now we need to see how the derivative and integration changes. For rotations we originally had:

$$R' = R\hat{\omega}$$

With quaternions we instead have:

$$q' = \frac{1}{2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -\omega_x & -\omega_y & -\omega_z \\ \omega_x & 0 & \omega_z & -\omega_y \\ \omega_y & -\omega_z & 0 & \omega_x \\ \omega_z & \omega_y & -\omega_x & 0 \end{bmatrix} q$$

where ω has been broken into components.

Using this we have a fairly straightforward change in the integration steps except we have to do rotations and translations separately rather than unified in g . The change to quaternions changes how g is stored and accessed in the code and we will need a transformation from quaternion form to matrix form.

Adding to utils:

```
# quaternion form to matrix form
def toMatrix(q):
    return np.eye(3) + 2 / (q @ q) * (np.array(
        [[-q[2] ** 2 - q[3] ** 2, q[1] * q[2] - q[3] * q[0], q[1] * q[3] + q[2] * q[0]],
         [q[1] * q[2] + q[3] * q[0], -q[1] ** 2 - q[3] ** 2, q[2] * q[3] - q[1] * q[0]],
         [q[1] * q[3] - q[2] * q[0], q[2] * q[3] + q[1] * q[0], -q[1] ** 2 - q[2] ** 2]]))
```

Also it will be useful to convert from rotations to quaternions in the initialization of the rod and we will have:

```
# matrix form to quaternion
def toQuaternion(R):
    t = np.trace(R)
    r = np.sqrt(1 + t)
    w = r / 2
    x = np.sign(R[2, 1] - R[1, 2]) * np.sqrt(1 + R[0, 0] - R[1, 1] - R[2, 2]) / 2
    y = np.sign(R[0, 2] - R[2, 0]) * np.sqrt(1 - R[0, 0] + R[1, 1] - R[2, 2]) / 2
    z = np.sign(R[1, 0] - R[0, 1]) * np.sqrt(1 - R[0, 0] - R[1, 1] + R[2, 2]) / 2
    return np.array([w, x, y, z])
```

For ease we can modify the `flatten` and `unflatten` functions to work with the new representation and keep the same structure.

Now we can change g to be storing the quaternion form and the position rather than a flattened representation of itself.

The resulting changes are incorporated into the stepping and should give the same results just a bit more efficiently.