Classes 16: Maxwell's Equations

AP Physics

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Files for You to Download

Download from the school website:

1. `16-maxwellsEquations.pdf`—This presentation. If you want to print the slides on paper, I recommend printing 4 slides per page.

Please download/print the PDF file before each class. When you are taking notes, pay particular attention to things I say that aren't necessarily on the slides.

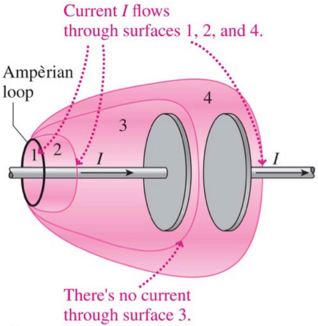
Making Ampère's Law Better

Ampère's law, as we know it, only applied to *steady* currents:

$$\oint_C \mathbf{B} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} = \mu_0 I$$

But current are not always steady in RC circuits. Applying Ampère's law at a charging/discharging capacitor gives an ambiguous answer

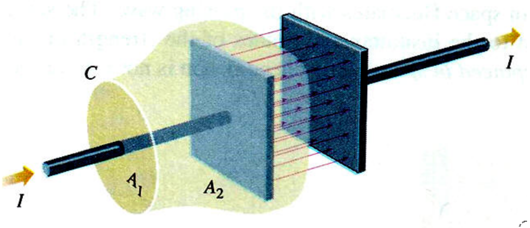
Modifying Ampère's Law for Unsteady Current



Four surfaces bounded by the same circular amperian loop (think blowing a soap bubble). Surfaces 1, 2 and 4 have currents penetrating through them, but surface 3 does not

Modifying Ampère's Law

This might give a better view of what the "soap bubble" looks like



There is no current through the surface A_2 (same as surface 3 in the last slide), but there is definitely a changing *electric flux*

Maxwell's Modification to Ampère's Law

James Clerk Maxwell, in 1860, proposed a modification to Ampère's Law to make it work with unsteady current as well

$$\boxed{\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} = \mu_0 I + \mu_0 \varepsilon_0 \frac{d\Phi_E}{dt}}$$

Maxwell called the correction term $\varepsilon_0 \frac{d\Phi_E}{dt}$ "displacement current".

- The word "displacement" has historical roots, but no real physical meaning
- However, "current" means that the effect of changing the electric flux is indistinguishable from real currents in producing magnetic field

Maxwell's Equations

Maxwell recognized the relationship between electricity and magnetism in **Gauss's law**, **Faraday's law** and **Ampère's law**, and combined them into a unifying set of equations, now known as **Maxwell's equations** for electrodynamics.

Maxwell's Equations in Integral Form

Maxwell's equations can be expressed in its integral form, which is how we have studied the equations in the first place:

$$\oint \mathbf{E} \cdot d\mathbf{A} = \frac{q}{\varepsilon_0} \qquad \text{(Gauss, for } \mathbf{E}\text{)}$$

$$\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{A} = 0 \qquad \text{(Gauss, for } \mathbf{B}\text{)}$$

$$\oint \mathbf{E} \cdot d\ell = \frac{d\Phi_B}{dt} \qquad \text{(Faraday)}$$

$$\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\ell = \mu_0 I + \mu_0 \varepsilon_0 \frac{d\Phi_E}{dt} \qquad \text{(Ampère, with Maxwell's mod)}$$

Maxwell's Equations in Vacuum

$$\oint \mathbf{E} \cdot d\mathbf{A} = 0$$

$$\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{A} = 0$$

$$\oint \mathbf{E} \cdot d\ell = \frac{d\Phi_B}{dt}$$

$$\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\ell = \mu_0\epsilon_0\frac{d\Phi_E}{dt}$$

In vacuum, we can remove all references to matter in the equation, and Maxwell's equations simplifies.

- The equations show "symmetry"
- Magnetic and electric fields are on equal footing
- In a vacuum where charges are currents are absent, the only source of either field is a change in the other field

Maxwell's Equations in Differential Form

For Simplicity, in a Vacuum

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = 0$$

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{B} = \mu_o \varepsilon_o \frac{\partial \mathbf{E}}{\partial t}$$

- Usually Maxwell's equations are expressed in *differential* form, which is obtained using vector calculus. Follow [this link] to see how it's done.
- The differential form gives a clear picture of how the *time* rate of change of $\mathbf{E}$ and $\mathbf{B}$ are related to the *spatial* rate of change of the other field
- The last two equations (Faraday's law and Ampère's law) together represent two set of second order partial differential equations (one for each field), the solution of which represents a traveling wave

Electromagnetic (EM) Wave

We can manipulate Maxwell's equations to show that an "electromagnetic wave" must exist. A simple case where electric and magnetic fields vary in x and time t only, i.e. $\mathbf{E} = \mathbf{E}(x, t)$ and $\mathbf{B} = \mathbf{B}(x, t)$, Faraday's and Ampère's laws reduce to:

$$\frac{\partial E}{\partial x} = -\frac{\partial B}{dt} \qquad \frac{\partial B}{\partial x} = -\mu_0 \varepsilon_0 \frac{\partial E}{dt}$$

Taking the spatial derivative of E with respect to x on both side of Faraday's law, we get:

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x}\left(\frac{\partial E}{\partial x}\right) = -\frac{\partial}{\partial x}\left(\frac{\partial B}{dt}\right) \quad \rightarrow \quad \frac{\partial^2 E}{\partial x^2} = -\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left(\frac{\partial B}{dx}\right)$$

Electromagnetic (EM) Wave

But we already have an expression for $\partial B/\partial x$ from Ampère's law:

$$\frac{\partial^2 E}{\partial x^2} = -\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left(\frac{\partial B}{dx}\right) = -\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left(-\mu_0\varepsilon_0\frac{\partial E}{dt}\right)$$

Rearranging the terms on the right hand side, we get

$$\frac{\partial^2 E}{\partial x^2} = \mu_0\varepsilon_0\frac{\partial^2 E}{dt^2}$$

Compare this to the standard form of the one-dimensional wave equation (a second-order partial differential equation):

$$\frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial x^2} = \frac{1}{v^2}\frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{dt^2}$$

Electromagnetic (EM) Wave

- “Second-order” means that the equation deals with second derivatives, in this case, in x and in t.
- “Partial” means the equation involves partial derivatives, which is the derivative you take when the function is made of more than one variables, and you are only differentiating against one variable
- We can also repeat the exercise by first differentiating Ampère’s law to get

$$\frac{\partial^2 B}{\partial x^2} = \mu_0 \varepsilon_0 \frac{\partial^2 B}{dt^2}$$

Electromagnetic (EM) Wave

- The wave equation shows that disturbances in electric and magnetic fields propagate as an electromagnetic wave with a universal speed

$$v = c_0 = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mu_0 \varepsilon_0}} = 299\,792\,458\,\mathrm{m/s}$$

  generally referred to as the speed of light.
- Our simple exercise can't show (because we have effectively ignored the cross-product) that $\mathbf{E}$ and $\mathbf{B}$ are actually perpendicular to each other

"Failure" of Maxwell's Equation

A peculiar feature of Maxwell's equation:

- When applying *Galilean transformation* (our classical equation for *relative velocity*) to these equations, they seem to fail
- Gauss's law for magnetism break down: magnetic field lines appear to have beginnings/ends
- So does that mean that in *some* inertial frames of reference, Maxwell's equations are valid, but in others, they are not?
- Physicists theorized that, perhaps, there is/are actually *preferred* inertial frame(s) of references
- This violate the long-standing *principle of relativity*, which says that *the laws of physics are equal in all inertial frames of reference*

Making The Equations Work Again

Maxwell's equations didn't "fail"; it was our understanding of space and time that needed to change

- Albert Einstein believed in the principle of relativity, and rejected the concept of a preferred frame of reference
- In Maxwell's equations, the speed of an electromagnetic wave (speed of light) is independent of the frame of reference
- In order to make the equations to work again, Einstein revisited the most basic concepts involved in our understanding of physics: space and time

Einstein and the Principle of Relativity

Einstein's Postulates of Special Relativity:

1. All laws of physics must apply equally in all inertial frames of reference.
2. As measured in any inertial frame of reference, light always propagated empty space with a definite velocity c that is independent of the state of motion of the emitting body.

Published in 1905 in the article *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies* when Einstein was 26 years old working as a patent clerk in Switzerland