

Math 298  
Fundamental Concepts in  
Computational and Applied Mathematics  
Lecture 7: N-Body Methods

Juan Meza  
School of Natural Sciences  
University of California, Merced

# N-Body methods

- Involve computation of interactions between N-bodies/particles
- Examples arise in molecular dynamics, gravitation, electrostatics, etc.
- Also useful for solution of boundary value problems, biharmonic equations, Poisson equation, etc.



## N-Body Problem Description

Want to compute sums of the following form:

$$u(x) = \sum_{i=1}^N w_i K(x, y_i), \quad (1)$$

where

- $x_i, i = 1, \dots, N$  are called the **source** points
- $y_j, j = 1, \dots, N$  are called the **target** points
- $w_i$  are source weights
- $K(x, y_i)$  is called the kernel, e.g. potential function

**Remark:** : A straightforward algorithm would appear to be  $\mathcal{O}(N^2)$

## N-Body problem of gravitation

The gravitational potential is given by

$$\Phi(x_j) = \sum_{\substack{i=1 \\ i \neq j}}^N \frac{m_i}{r_{ij}}$$

and the gravitational field  $E$  by:

$$E(x_j) = \sum_{\substack{i=1 \\ i \neq j}}^N m_i \frac{x_j - x_i}{r_{ij}^3}$$

**Remark:** Same equations applicable to electrostatics

## N-Body Problem (Short Detour)

Recall one such problem from our previous class, i.e. the FFT:

$$u_j = \sum_{k=1}^N e^{2\pi i j k / N} w_k,$$

for  $j = 1, \dots, N$ .

What is the complexity for such an algorithm?

## Finite Rank/Degenerate Kernels

First consider a kernel which can be written as:

$$K(x, y) = \sum_{k=1}^p \phi_k(x) \psi_k(y).$$

These are called **finite rank or degenerate** kernels.

We can reduce our original problem Eq (1) to the following 2-step procedure.

- 1 Compute  $A_k = \sum_{i=1}^N w_i \psi_k(y)$
- 2 Evaluate  $u(x) = \sum_{k=1}^p A_k \phi_k(x)$

What was the complexity for such an algorithm?

## Class Participation

Question:

Can you think of another example where you might be able to use this idea?

Answer:

# Motivation

Like many other problems first take a look at the structure of the problem

- Forces can usually be broken down into “short-range” and “long-range”
- Can we take advantage of this to develop faster algorithms?

## 2 Key Ideas

- 1 Replace group of “distant” particles by one “pseudo-particle”
- 2 Decompose space into a hierarchy of areas that are suitably “distant”



## Replacing group of particles: multipole expansion

Example: Electrostatic Potential due to a set of charges  $q_i$  located at  $x_i$

Want

$$K(y - x) = \frac{1}{|y - x|} \approx \sum_{k=0}^p \phi_k(x) \psi_k(y)$$

which is given by

$$\frac{1}{|y - x|} = \frac{1}{|y|} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} P_n(\cos \theta) \left( \frac{|x|}{|y|} \right)^n$$

where  $P_n(\cos \theta)$  are the Legendre polynomials.

**N.B.** Series is convergent for  $v = \frac{|x|}{|y|} < 1$

# Hierarchy of domains

- Similar to our old friend divide and conquer
- Need to be careful about dividing space
- Too coarse a division and your approximation is not good enough
- Too fine a division leads you back to the original problem

## Four key features of an FMM code

- A specified acceptable accuracy
- A hierarchical subdivision of space into panels or clusters of sources
- A far field expansion of the kernel in which the influence of source and evaluation of points separates
- (Optional) Conversion of far field expansions into local expansions

N.B. From Reference 2, Beatson and Greengard

## Comparison of FFT and FMM

Property	FFT	FMM
Work	$5N \log N$	$N \log N$
Accuracy	exact	approximate
Domain	uniform spatial grid	any
Based on	Algebra	Analytics

Table: Comparison of FFT with FMM

## References

- **A Fast Algorithm for Particle Simulations**, L. Greengard and V. Rokhlin, J. Comp. Phys. 73, 325-348, 1987
- **A Short Course on Fast Multipole Methods**, R. Beatson and L. Greengard
- **A Short Primer on the Fast Multipole Method**, Vikas Chandrakant Raykar, vikas@umiacs.umd.edu