MATH 2023   Fall 2021

Multivariable Calculus

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Chapter 15   **Vector Field**

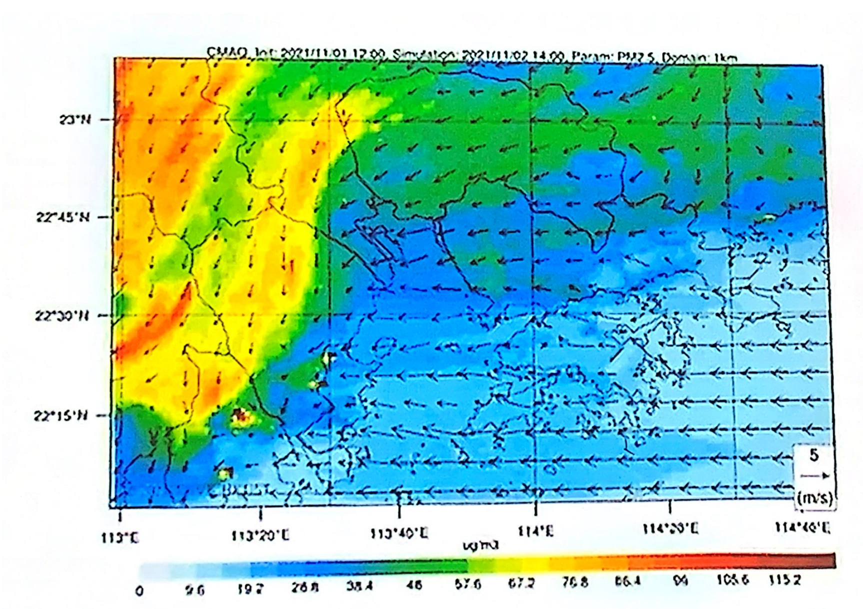
1 Intro. to Vector Field

So far, we have learned two kinds of functions involving vector:

- $\mathbf{r}(t) = x(t)\mathbf{i} + y(t)\mathbf{j} + z(t)\mathbf{k}$: for each t, provides a *position* vector $< x(t), y(t), z(t) >$, so this is a (parametric) curve.
- $z = f(\mathbf{r}) = f(x_1, x_2, \cdots, x_n)$: for a given vector r, this gives a real number, so this is a function of *several variables*. This is also a **scalar field** since for any point $\mathbf{r}$ in **field**, it gives a scalar value.

Now we are looking at **vector-valued** function $\mathbf{F}$ of a vector $\mathbf{r}$, i.e., $\mathbf{F}(\mathbf{r})$. This is a **vector field**, which means for any point $\mathbf{r}$ in **field**, it gives a vector $\mathbf{F}(\mathbf{r})$.

You can consider a world map showing the *speed* and *direction* of wind.



You can see that in a 2D map(like above), if we put a vector on each point, the vector must have same dimension as the map, i.e., all vectors must also be 2D vectors.

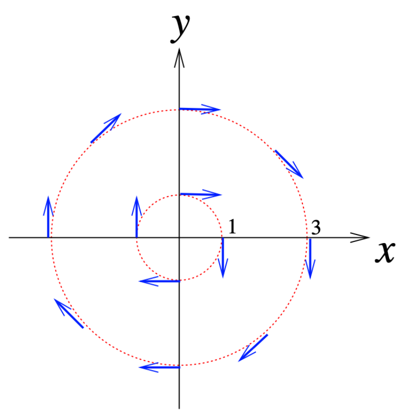
$$\mathbf{F}(\mathbf{r}) = \begin{cases} (F_1(\mathbf{r}), F_2(\mathbf{r})) & \mathbf{r} = (x, y) & \color{blue}{2D} \\ (F_1(\mathbf{r}), F_2(\mathbf{r}), F_3(\mathbf{r})) & \mathbf{r} = (x, y, z) & \color{blue}{3D} \\ (F_1(\mathbf{r}), F_2(\mathbf{r}), \cdots, F_n(\mathbf{r})) & \mathbf{r} = (x_1, x_2, \cdots, x_n) & \color{blue}{nD} \end{cases}$$

Summary: *dimension of* $\mathbf{F}$ *must be the same as* $\mathbf{r}$.

[Example.] Assume a vector field: $\mathbf{F}(x, y) = \dfrac{y\mathbf{i} - x\mathbf{j}}{\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}}$.

[Solution.] Notice that $||\mathbf{F}|| = \dfrac{y^2}{x^2 + y^2} + \dfrac{x^2}{x^2 + y^2} = 1$, all vectors $\mathbf{F}(x, y)$ are unit vectors. Moreover, let $\mathbf{r} = (x, y)$, then $\mathbf{r} \cdot \mathbf{F} = 0$, so $\mathbf{r} \perp \mathbf{F}$.

So all vectors are unit vectors tangent to circles centered at the origin with radius $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$.



2 Divergence and Curl

Recall that the **gradient operator** is a *vector operator*:

$$\nabla = \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial x}, \frac{\partial}{\partial y}, \frac{\partial}{\partial z}\right) \qquad \text{(a vector)}$$

If $\mathbf{F}(\mathbf{r}) = F_1(\mathbf{r})\mathbf{i} + F_2(\mathbf{r})\mathbf{j} + F_3(\mathbf{r})\mathbf{k}$, then we define:

- **divergence** of $\mathbf{F}$, written div $\mathbf{F}$:
$$\operatorname{div}\mathbf{F} = \nabla\cdot\mathbf{F} = \frac{\partial F_1}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial F_2}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial F_3}{\partial z}$$

- **curl** of $\mathbf{F}$, written curl $\mathbf{F}$:

$$\operatorname{curl}\mathbf{F} = \nabla\times\mathbf{F} = \begin{vmatrix} \mathbf{i} & \mathbf{j} & \mathbf{k} \\ \dfrac{\partial}{\partial x} & \dfrac{\partial}{\partial y} & \dfrac{\partial}{\partial z} \\ F_1 & F_2 & F_3 \end{vmatrix} = \left(\frac{\partial h}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial g}{\partial z}\right)\mathbf{i} - \left(\frac{\partial h}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial f}{\partial z}\right)\mathbf{j} + \left(\frac{\partial g}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial f}{\partial y}\right)\mathbf{k}$$

This example shows basic computation of **divergence** and **curl**.

[Example.] Let $\mathbf{r} = x\mathbf{i} + y\mathbf{j} + z\mathbf{k}$ and $\mathbf{u} = a\mathbf{i} + b\mathbf{j} + c\mathbf{k}$, where a, b and c are constants, show that

(a) $\nabla\cdot\mathbf{r} = 3$
(b) $\nabla\times\mathbf{r} = \mathbf{0}$
(c) $\nabla\cdot(\mathbf{u}\times\mathbf{r}) = 0$
(d) $\nabla\times(\mathbf{u}\times\mathbf{r}) = 2\mathbf{u}$.

[Solution.] (a) $\nabla\cdot\mathbf{r} = \left(\mathbf{i}\dfrac{\partial}{\partial x} + \mathbf{j}\dfrac{\partial}{\partial y} + \mathbf{k}\dfrac{\partial}{\partial z}\right)\cdot(x\mathbf{i} + y\mathbf{j} + z\mathbf{k}) = \dfrac{\partial x}{\partial x} + \dfrac{\partial y}{\partial y} + \dfrac{\partial z}{\partial z} = 3$

(b) $\nabla\times\mathbf{r} = \begin{vmatrix} \mathbf{i} & \mathbf{j} & \mathbf{k} \\ \frac{\partial}{\partial x} & \frac{\partial}{\partial y} & \frac{\partial}{\partial z} \\ x & y & z \end{vmatrix} = \mathbf{0}$

(c) $\mathbf{u}\times\mathbf{r} = \begin{vmatrix} \mathbf{i} & \mathbf{j} & \mathbf{k} \\ a & b & c \\ x & y & z \end{vmatrix} = (bz - cy)\mathbf{i} - (az - cx)\mathbf{j} + (ay - bx)\mathbf{k}$

$\therefore\ \nabla\cdot(\mathbf{u}\times\mathbf{r}) = \dfrac{\partial}{\partial x}(bz - cy) - \dfrac{\partial}{\partial y}(az - cx) + \dfrac{\partial}{\partial z}(ay - bx) = 0$

(d) $\nabla\times(\mathbf{u}\times\mathbf{r}) = \begin{vmatrix} \mathbf{i} & \mathbf{j} & \mathbf{k} \\ \frac{\partial}{\partial x} & \frac{\partial}{\partial y} & \frac{\partial}{\partial z} \\ bz - cy & -az + cx & ay - bx \end{vmatrix} = 2(a\mathbf{i} + b\mathbf{j} + c\mathbf{k}) = 2\mathbf{u}$