

Basic theory behind (X)PBD

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is (X)PBD?

PBD (Position Based Dynamics) proposed at [1] is a popular method because of its stability and ease of implementation. The reason for them is the same, PBD computes physical simulation only using positions inside the [iterations](#) and all we have to do is compute displacement and modify them. In other words, we don't have to use complicated numerical analysis, it sounds pretty good.

But, in contrast to ease of implementation, it isn't easy to understand PBD's background theory. This is the problem when modifying PBD depending on your purpose.

If you start your research from the original PBD paper[1], you will wonder how the authors derive constraints' formulations or why this solver works well. Or you start from XPBD [2], you will be confused by the suddenly appeared Lagrange multiplier or energy potential that we don't know how to handle. Unfortunately, we can't know much from them and it may be common in literature search, there is no clear path to learning them. Then, I decided to write a guidebook on the underlying theory of PBD.

1.2 Difference from existing PBD coursenote

Actually, there are some course notes on PBD written by authors who published papers on PBD and XPBD, e.g. [3]. These course notes describe the basic style of PBD and its extensions. But there is the same problem we saw in [1] and [2], that is, how to implement is described but why this method works well is not. Thus, I believe that this document isn't meaningless. Well then, let's start the journey to XPBD!

2 The history of PBD

I think starting from history is a good way to learn something because there are no leaps in logic and it will be easy to understand where we are. However, there is certainly redundancy, so you can skip this section to save time. I'll make an effort to write that you can understand everything even if you skipped this section.

2.1 PBD's chronicle

The history of PBD can be roughly divided into three parts. Let me name them pre-PBD, post-PBD and post-XPBD.

2.2 pre-PBD

The general flow of pre-PBD began from the appearance of constraint dynamics([4], [5] and [6]) through "Large Steps in Cloth Simulation"[7] used [constraints](#) as shape representation and simulates cloth with energy form [constraints'](#) gradients, "Advanced Character Physics"[8] introduces position-based approach derived from Verlet's integration scheme with the distance constraints and "A Versatile and Robust Model for Geometrically Complex Deformable Solids"[9] generalize [7]'s method. And, finally,

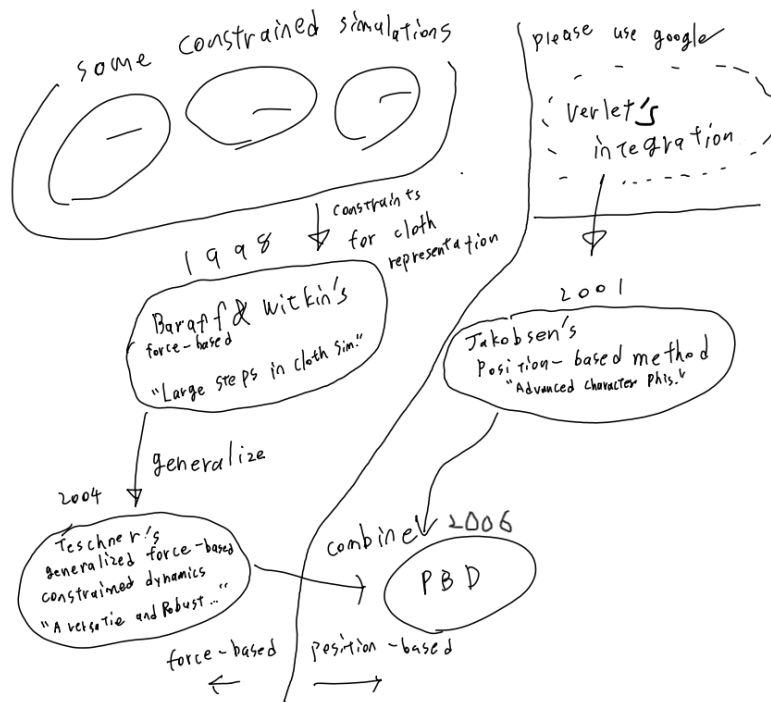


Fig. 1 history of pre-PBD

“Position Based Dynamics” [1] introduced the generalized constraints method from [9] into [8]’s position-based simulation to use various [constraints](#).

2.2.1 Pioneer scholars

- Andrew Witkin
- David Barraff
- Alan Barr
- Ronen Barzel
- Jhon Platt
- Matthias Müller
- Matthias Teschner

2.3 post-PBD

2.3.1 Pioneer scholars

- Matthias Müller
- Nuttapong Chentanez

2.4 post-XPBD

2.4.1 Pioneer scholars

- Miles Macklin

A Importance of papers

A lower number means more important.

1. You must read these papers if you want to understand (X)PBD. But if you want to understand them completely, I recommend reading the others also.
 - “Position Based Dynamics”[1] is one of the main subjects of this document.
 - “XPBD : position-based simulation of compliant constrained dynamics”[2] addressed a numerical artifact that makes dependency between stiffness and iteration count or size of the time-step.
2. These papers are vital in understanding (X)PBD or have a strong impact on the field.
 - “Advanced Character Physics”[8] introduced position based simulation method derived from Verlet’s integration scheme and combined distance constraints. The framework of PBD can be seen here. Specifically, using distance and angular constraints, modifying verticies’ position directly and solving constraints with some iterations. This paper is easier to read than PBD, but the ideas appear here and pseudo codes are presented. I recommend reading this before read PBD.
 - “Large steps in cloth simulation”[7] solved implicit integration with constraints by conjugate gradient method for off-line simulation. The scheme isn’t used at PBD, but this one gives us a perspective of present physical simulations.
 - “Projective Dynamics: Fusing Constraint Projections for Fast Simulation”[10] provided a position-based method that uses energy formulation and local/global solver. The method has a local Jacobi-like solver and a linear global equation one. The solvers enable robust and fast simulation without safeguards against singular or indefinite Hessians. If you want to understand state-of-the-art physics simulation methods, including PBD, it’s better to read this.
3. These papers offer interesting discussions around PBD, deepen your understanding of PBD, or description of basic physical simulation scheme.
 - “Constraint Methods for Neural Networks and Computer Graphics”[6] describes the constraint methods for neural networks and computer graphics. It may not be easy to read because of 150 pages. But, if you have time, it’s more worth reading this paper than some papers published before this one.
 - “Interactive simulation of elastic deformable materials”[11] introduces physical parameters into constrained dynamics; the spirit is inherited by XPBD and there is an interesting discussion about the integrator. But I think this paper does explain the concept poorly, e. g. the integrator provided here, equation (20) lack of explanation, etc. Therefore, this one classified here.
 - “Example-based elastic materials”[12] provides a concept of the elastic manifold and optimization method for deforming into an artist-desirable state. However,

this paper lacks reference to the manifold projection methods that are apparently well-known in the geometric optimization field. This paper helps us understand Projective dynamics, but I don't know Projective Dynamics's relevance with (X)PBD for now.

- “Nucleus: Towards a unified dynamics solver for computer graphics”[\[13\]](#) is a good introduction to constrained dynamics because it shows its implementation aspect. However, it doesn't describe how constraints are resolved, so it isn't full-contained.
 - “Fast simulation of mass-spring systems”[\[14\]](#) describes the local/global type solver to the mass-spring system clearly. Thus this paper helps us understand the variant solvers.
 - “Robust treatment of collisions, contact and friction for cloth animation”[\[15\]](#)'s scheme separates physical simulation into internal parts and external parts. Therefore, we can choose the internal modeling(e.g. mass-spring) and the external modeling(e.g. collision repulsion, friction, or gravity) independently. However, the scheme is not directly related to PBD.
4. These ones have historical value, but deeper discussions are done in other papers.
- “Elastically deformable models”[\[16\]](#) brought the formulation of elastic bodies to computer graphics.
 - “Energy Constraints On Parameterized Models”[\[17\]](#) uses shape representations that quite different from the current ones and the constraints presented in this paper are slightly inconvenient to the current ones. Thus, we no longer have to read this.
 - “A modeling system based on dynamic constraints”[\[18\]](#) uses constraints as models' motion rather than to hold a model's detail and uses linear simultaneous equations when deriving forces. The points that are difficult to understand are that the paper doesn't describe the background of the equation derivation and that the symbols are scattered too much. Fortunately, we don't have to read this paper completely to understand present constrained dynamics because the style varies from the recent ones.
 - “Efficient simulation of inextensible cloth”[\[19\]](#) treated the constrained system as globally linearized form and solved with a direct approach at each iteration. This paper is not in a directory related to (X)PBD.
5. Not be classified yet.
- “A Versatile and Robust Model for Geometrically Complex Deformable Solids”[\[9\]](#)
 - “Meshless deformations based on shape matching”[\[20\]](#)
 - “Fast Simulation of Inextensible Hair and Fur”[\[21\]](#)
 - “Long Range Attachments - A Method to Simulate Inextensible Clothing in Computer Games”[\[22\]](#)
 - “Position Based Fluids”[\[23\]](#)
 - “Position-based simulation of continuous materials”[\[24\]](#)
 - “Strain Based Dynamics”[\[25\]](#)
 - “Unified particle physics for real-time applications”[\[26\]](#)

relation, e.g. distance a vertex to another one, but among more than three vertices, e.g. volume of the tetrahedron . 2–4, 6

iteration : In computer science, iteration is the process of repeating a series of instructions multiple times. Especially at (X)PBD, the part of physical solver which treats constraints is called iteration . 2, 4

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