

Lecture 33

ODE Boundary Value Problems and Finite Differences

Steady State Heat and Diffusion

If we consider the movement of heat in a long thin object (like a metal bar), it is known that the temperature, $u(x, t)$, at a location x and time t satisfies the partial differential equation

$$u_t - u_{xx} = g(x, t), \quad (33.1)$$

where $g(x, t)$ is the effect of any external heat source. The same equation also describes the diffusion of a chemical in a one-dimensional environment. For example the environment might be a canal, and then $g(x, t)$ would represent how a chemical is introduced.

Sometimes we are interested only in the steady state of the system, supposing $g(x, t) = g(x)$ and $u(x, t) = u(x)$. In this case

$$u_{xx} = -g(x).$$

This is a linear second-order ordinary differential equation. We could find its solution exactly if $g(x)$ is not too complicated. If the environment or object we consider has length L , then typically one would have conditions on each end of the object, such as $u(0) = 0$, $u(L) = 0$. Thus instead of an initial value problem, we have a **boundary value problem** or **BVP**.

Beam With Tension

Consider a simply supported beam with modulus of elasticity E , moment of inertia I , a uniform load w , and end tension T (see Figure 33.1). If $y(x)$ denotes the deflection at each point x in the beam, then $y(x)$ satisfies the differential equation

$$\frac{y''}{(1 + (y')^2)^{3/2}} - \frac{T}{EI}y = \frac{wx(L-x)}{2EI}, \quad (33.2)$$

with boundary conditions $y(0) = y(L) = 0$. This equation is nonlinear and there is no hope to solve it exactly. If the deflection is small then $(y')^2$ is negligible compared to 1 and the equation approximately simplifies to

$$y'' - \frac{T}{EI}y = \frac{wx(L-x)}{2EI}. \quad (33.3)$$

This is a linear equation and we can find the exact solution. We can rewrite the equation as

$$y'' - \alpha y = \beta x(L-x), \quad (33.4)$$

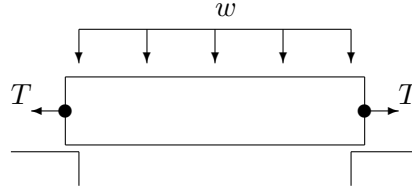


Figure 33.1: A simply supported beam with a uniform load w and end tension T .

where

$$\alpha = \frac{T}{EI} \quad \text{and} \quad \beta = \frac{w}{2EI}, \quad (33.5)$$

and then the exact solution is

$$y(x) = \frac{2\beta}{\alpha^2} \frac{e^{\sqrt{\alpha}L}}{e^{\sqrt{\alpha}L} + 1} e^{-\sqrt{\alpha}x} + \frac{2\beta}{\alpha^2} \frac{1}{e^{\sqrt{\alpha}L} + 1} e^{\sqrt{\alpha}x} + \frac{\beta}{\alpha} x^2 - \frac{\beta L}{\alpha} x + \frac{2\beta}{\alpha^2}. \quad (33.6)$$

Finite Difference Method – Linear ODE

A finite difference equation is an equation obtained from a differential equation by replacing the variables by their discrete versions and derivatives by difference formulas.

First we will consider equation (33.3). Suppose that the beam is a W12x22 structural steel I-beam. Then $L = 120$ in., $E = 29 \times 10^6$ lb./in.² and $I = 121$ in.⁴. Suppose that the beam is carrying a uniform load of 100,000 lb. so that $w = 100,000/120 = 10,000$ and a tension of $T = 10,000$ lb.. We calculate from (33.5) $\alpha = 2.850 \times 10^{-6}$ and $\beta = 1.425 \times 10^{-6}$. Thus we have the following BVP:

$$y'' = 2.850 \times 10^{-6} y + 1.425 \times 10^{-6} x(120 - x), \quad y(0) = y(120) = 0. \quad (33.7)$$

First subdivide the interval $[0, 120]$ into four equal subintervals. The nodes of this subdivision are $x_0 = 0$, $x_1 = 30$, $x_2 = 60$, \dots , $x_4 = 120$. We will then let y_0, y_1, \dots, y_4 denote the deflections at the nodes. From the boundary conditions we have immediately:

$$y_0 = y_4 = 0.$$

To determine the deflections at the interior points we will rely on the differential equation. Recall the central difference formula

$$y''(x_i) \approx \frac{y_{i+1} - 2y_i + y_{i-1}}{h^2}.$$

In this case we have $h = (b - a)/n = (120 - 0)/4 = 30$. Replacing all the variables in the equation (33.4) by their discrete versions we get

$$y_{i+1} - 2y_i + y_{i-1} = h^2 \alpha y_i + h^2 \beta x_i (L - x_i).$$

Substituting in for α , β and h we obtain:

$$\begin{aligned} y_{i+1} - 2y_i + y_{i-1} &= 900 \times 2.850 \times 10^{-6} y_i + 900 \times 1.425 \times 10^{-6} x_i (120 - x_i) \\ &= 2.565 \times 10^{-3} y_i + 1.2825 \times 10^{-3} x_i (120 - x_i). \end{aligned}$$

This equation makes sense for $i = 1, 2, 3$. At $x_1 = 30$, the equation becomes:

$$\begin{aligned} y_2 - 2y_1 + y_0 &= 2.565 \times 10^{-3}y_1 + 1.2825 \times 10^{-3} \times 30(90) \\ \Leftrightarrow y_2 - 2.002565y_1 &= 3.46275. \end{aligned} \quad (33.8)$$

Note that this equation is linear in the unknowns y_1 and y_2 . At $x_2 = 60$ we have:

$$\begin{aligned} y_3 - 2y_2 + y_1 &= .002565y_2 + 1.2825 \times 10^{-3} \times 60^2 \\ \Leftrightarrow y_3 - 2.002565y_2 + y_1 &= 4.617. \end{aligned} \quad (33.9)$$

At $x_3 = 90$ we have (since $y_4 = 0$)

$$-2.002565y_3 + y_2 = 3.46275. \quad (33.10)$$

Thus (y_1, y_2, y_3) is the solution of the linear system:

$$\left(\begin{array}{ccc|c} -2.002565 & 1 & 0 & 3.46275 \\ 1 & -2.002565 & 1 & 4.617 \\ 0 & 1 & -2.002565 & 3.46275 \end{array} \right).$$

We can easily find the solution of this system in MATLAB:

```
A = [ -2.002565 1 0 ; 1 -2.002565 1 ; 0 1 -2.002565]
b = [ 3.46275 4.617 3.46275 ]'
y = A\b
```

To graph the solution, we need define the x values and add on the values at the endpoints:

```
x = 0:30:120
y = [0 ; y ; 0]
plot(x, y, 'd')
```

Adding a spline will result in an excellent graph.

The exact solution of this BVP is given in (33.6). That equation, with the parameter values for the W12x22 I-beam as in the example, is in the program `myexactbeam.m` on the web site. We can plot the true solution on the same graph:

```
hold on
myexactbeam
```

Thus our numerical solution is extremely good considering how few subintervals we used and how very large the deflection is.

An amusing exercise is to set $T = 0$ in the program `myexactbeam.m`; the program fails because the exact solution is no longer valid. Also try $T = .1$ for which you will observe loss of precision. On the other hand the finite difference method still works when we set $T = 0$.

Exercises

- 33.1 Derive the finite difference equations for the BVP (33.7) on the same domain $([0, 120])$, but with eight subintervals and solve (using MATLAB) as in the example. Plot your result, together on the same plot with the exact solution (33.6) from the program `myexactbeam.m`.
- 33.2 By replacing y'' and y' with central differences, derive the finite difference equation for the boundary value problem

$$y'' + y' - y = x \quad \text{on } [0, 1] \quad \text{with} \quad y(0) = y(1) = 0$$

using 4 subintervals. Solve them and plot the solution using MATLAB.