Computing Zernike polynomials of arbitrary degree using the discrete Fourier transform

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Abstract.

The conventional representation of Zernike polynomials $R_n^m(\rho)$ gives unacceptable results for large values of the degree n. We present an algorithm for the computation of Zernike polynomials of arbitrary degree n. The algorithm has the form of a discrete cosine transform which comes with advantages over other methods in terms of computation time, accuracy and transparancy. As an application we consider the effect of NA-scaling on the lower-order aberrations of an optical system in the presence of a very high order aberration.

Subject terms:

Zernike polynomial, aberration, high-order, discrete Fourier transform, NA-scaling.

1 Introduction

The Zernike radial polynomials $R_n^m(\rho)$ are widely used in the representation of the aberrations of optical systems and in the computation of the diffraction integral defining the point-spread function of these systems.[1−5] When we are dealing with smooth exit pupil functions, it is, in general, sufficient to consider the R_n^m for modest values of the degree n and azimuthal order m. For such pupil functions, the conventional polynomial representation[1]

$$R_n^m(\rho) = \sum_{s=0}^{(n-m)/2} \frac{(n-s)!\,(-1)^s}{\left(\frac{n-m}{2}-s\right)!\left(\frac{n+m}{2}-s\right)!\,s!}\,\rho^{n-2s}\ , \qquad 0 \le \rho \le 1\ , \quad (1)$$

can be used to calculate the Zernike polynomials. Some low order Zernike polynomials are shown in the table below. In the case that the exit pupil function contains discontinuities, or is roughly behaved in a more general sense, it is necessary to consider Zernike polynomials of much higher degree and order. For instance, when the pupil function has a central obstruction, the coefficient of $R_{2r}^0(\rho)$ in the Zernike expansion of the pupil function decays only like $r^{-1/2}$. Then Eq.(1) becomes cumbersome because of the high-order factorials that are required. Also, for $m = 0$, it can be shown that the largest coefficient of ρ^{n-2s} occurring in the series in Eq. (1) behaves like $(1+\sqrt{2})^n$. Accordingly, when computing with d decimal places, Eq. (1) produces errors of the order of unity or larger from $n = d/log(1+\sqrt{2})$ onwards. Hence, for the commonly used 15 decimal places precision, one has serious problems from $n = 40$ onwards. An alternative to compute Zernike polynomials is to use recursions for them such as those found in Ref. [6]. These recursion schemes are, however, computationally more expensive and less transparent than a direct formula like Eq.(1), while their accuracy due to error propagation is an issue.

In this letter, we present a new computation scheme in which there is virtually no restriction to the degree or order of the Zernike polynomial. This new algorithm is of the discrete-cosine transform (DCT) type, and is direct and transparent. Furthermore, the computation can be done using the FFT-algorithm which comes with the following advantages[7,8]:

- Very favorable and well-established accuracy
- Simultaneous computation of all Zernike polynomials of the same degree n in as few as $\mathrm{O}(n\,log n)$ operations

As an application we consider the effect of NA-scaling on the lower-order aberrations of an optical system in the presence of a very high order aberration. For this we use a recently found formula,[6] entirely in terms of Zernike polynomials, for the Zernike coefficients of scaled pupils.

2 DCT formula for Zernike polynomials

In Appendix A we show that

$$R_n^m(\rho) = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{k=0}^{N-1} U_n\Big(\rho\cos 2\pi\,\frac{k}{N}\Big)\cos 2\pi\,\frac{mk}{N}\ , \qquad 0\le\rho\le 1\ , \qquad (2)$$

where N is any integer $> n+m$. In Eq. (2) we have integer $n, m \geq 0$ with $n-m$ even and ≥ 0 (as usual), and U_n is the Chebyshev polynomial of the second kind and of degree n. No matter how large n is, the evaluation of $U_n(x)$ is no problem since we have

$$U_n(x) = \frac{\sin(n+1)\,v}{\sin v}\ , \qquad x = \cos v. \tag{3}$$

Equation (2) gives $R_n^m(\rho)$ as the m^{th} component of the DCT of the sequence $(U_n(\rho \cos 2\pi k/N))_{k=0,1,\ldots,N-1}$, whence we get all $R_n^m(\rho)$, with $m \geq 0$ and $m = n, n-2, \ldots$, using $O(N \log N)$ operations. Since $m \leq n$, it is sufficient to take N any integer $> 2n$.

In Fig. 1, top, we show $R_n^m(\rho)$ as a function of ρ, $0 \leq \rho \leq 1$, computed according to Eq. (1) and Eq. (2), using 16 decimal places, for $m = 17$, $n = 39$ and for $m = 0$, $n = 50$. We see that Eq. (1) gives unacceptable results for the case $m = 0$, $n = 50$ from $\rho = 0.8$ onwards. In Fig. 2, bottom, we show $R_n^m(\rho)$, computed according to Eq. (2), with $m = 0$ and $n = 10.000$ and ρ very close to 1. We see that $R_n^m(\rho = 1) = 1$ which is in agreement with the theory.[1]

3 High-order aberrations and scaling

In lithographic imaging systems, the numerical aperture (NA) is varied intentionally below its maximum value so as to optimize the performance for the particular object to be imaged. In Ref. [9] the effect of NA-scaling on the Zernike coefficients describing the optical system has been concisely expressed in terms of Zernike polynomials. Thus we consider a pupil function

$$P(\rho, \vartheta) = \exp\{i\,\Phi(\rho, \vartheta)\}\ , \qquad 0 \leq \rho \leq 1\,, \quad 0 \leq \vartheta \leq 2\pi\ , \tag{4}$$

in polar coordinates with real phase Φ, and we assume that Φ is expanded as a Zernike series according to

$$\Phi(\rho,\vartheta)=\sum_{n,m}\alpha_n^m\,R_n^m(\rho)\cos m\vartheta\ . \tag{5}$$

Scaling to a pupil with relative size $\varepsilon=\mathrm{NA}/\mathrm{NA}_{\max}\le 1$ requires computation of the Zernike coefficients $\alpha_n^m(\varepsilon)$ of the scaled phase function $\Phi(\varepsilon\rho,\vartheta)$. For $m=0,1,...$ the $\alpha_n^m(\varepsilon)$ are given in terms of the α_n^m as

$$\alpha_n^m(\varepsilon)=\sum_{n'}\alpha_{n'}^m\,[R_{n'}^n(\varepsilon)-R_{n'}^{n+2}(\varepsilon)]\ ,\qquad n=m,m+2,...\ , \tag{6}$$

where the summation is over $n'=n,n+2,...$ ($R_n^{n+2}\equiv 0$). In case of a non-smooth phase function Φ, one should expect significant values of $\alpha_{n'}^m$ for very high degrees n'. Also, scaling is normally done using values of ε close to its maximum 1. Thus, formula (6) is not practicable in these cases when Eq. (1) is used to evaluate the $R_{n'}^{n,n+2}(\varepsilon)$, but becomes so when Eq. (2) is used instead.

As an example, we consider the effect of a *single* high order aberration term $\alpha_{n'}^m$ on the totality of α_n^m with $n=m,m+2,...,n'$ while scaling to relative size ε. We take $\alpha_n^m=0$ for $n\neq n'$ and $\alpha_{n'}^m=1$, and get from Eq.(6)

$$\alpha_n^m(\varepsilon)=[R_{n'}^n(\varepsilon)-R_{n'}^{n+2}(\varepsilon)],\ \ n=m,m+2,...,n', \tag{7}$$

while $\alpha_n^m(\varepsilon)=0$ when $n>n'$. The numbers $R_{n'}^{n,n+2}(\varepsilon)$ required in Eq. (7), with n' fixed and $n=m,m+2,...,n'$, can be computed simultaneously using $O(n'\log n')$ operations by employing Eq. (2) in its DCT-mode. Figure 2 shows the result for $m=0$ and $n'=100$, $n=0,2,\cdots,100$, $\alpha_n^0(\varepsilon)$ with $\varepsilon=0.50$ and $\varepsilon=0.98$.

Appendix A: Proof of the main result

We write for integer $n, m \geq 0$ with $n-m$ even and $\geq\ 0$

$$z_n^m(\nu,\mu) = Z_n^m(\rho,\vartheta) = R_n^m(\rho)\cos m\vartheta\ , \tag{8}$$

in which the Cartesian coordinates ν, μ and polar coordinates ρ, ϑ are related according to $\nu = \rho\cos\vartheta$, $\mu = \rho\sin\vartheta$ and $0 \leq \rho \leq 1$, $0 \leq \vartheta \leq 2\pi$. Furthermore, we let

$$f_n^m(\nu) = \frac{1}{2(1-\nu^2)^{1/2}} \int\limits_{-\sqrt{1-\nu^2}}^{\sqrt{1-\nu^2}} z_n^m(\nu,\mu)\,d\mu\ , \qquad -1 \leq \nu \leq 1\ . \tag{9}$$

According to the formula for the Radon transform of Z_n^m we have, see Ref. [10], Eq. (8.13.17),

$$f_n^m(\nu) = \frac{1}{n+1}\,U_n(\nu)\ , \qquad -1 \leq \nu \leq 1\ . \tag{10}$$

We consider next the Zernike expansion of $f_n^m(\nu)$,

$$f_n^m(\nu) = \sum_{n',m'} \beta_{n,n'}^{m,m'}\ z_{n'}^{m'}(\nu,\mu) \tag{11}$$

in which the β's are given, due to the orthogonality[1] of the z's, by

$$\beta_{n,n'}^{m,m'} = \frac{(n'+1)\varepsilon_{m'}}{\pi} \iint\limits_{\nu^2+\mu^2\leq 1} f_n^m(\nu)\,z_{n'}^{m'}(\nu,\mu)\,d\nu\,d\mu\ . \tag{12}$$

In (12) we have that m', m', n, n' all have the same parity and $n' \geq m'$, and $\varepsilon_m' = 1$ for $m' = 0$ and $\varepsilon_m' = 2$ for $m' = 1, 2, ...$ (Neumann's symbol). According to Eq. (10) we have

$$\beta_{n,n'}^{m,m'} = \frac{(n'+1)\,\varepsilon_{m'}}{(n+1)\,\pi} \int\limits_{-1}^{1} U_n(\nu) \left(\int\limits_{-\sqrt{1-\nu^2}}^{\sqrt{1-\nu^2}} z_{n'}^{m'}(\nu,\mu)\,d\mu \right) d\nu\ . \tag{13}$$

Then using Eqs. (9), (10) with n', m' instead of n, m, we find

$$\beta_{n,n'}^{m,m'} = \frac{2\varepsilon_{m'}}{\pi(n+1)} \int_{-1}^{1} U_n(\nu)\, U_{n'}(\nu)(1-\nu^2)^{1/2}\, d\nu = \frac{\varepsilon_{m'}}{n+1}\, \delta_{n,n'} \ , \qquad (14)$$

where δ denotes Kronecker's delta, and where we have used the orthogonality of the U's, see Ref. [11], 22.2.5 on p. 774.

We conclude from Eqs. (10), (11), (14) that

$$U_n(\nu) = \sum_{m'} \varepsilon_{m'}\, z_{n'}^{m'}(\nu,\mu) \ , \qquad (15)$$

i.e., that

$$U_n(\rho\cos\vartheta) = \sum_{m'} \varepsilon_{m'}\, R_{n'}^{m'}(\rho) \cos m'\vartheta \ . \qquad (16)$$

By orthogonality of the $\cos m'\vartheta$, $\vartheta \in [0, 2\pi]$, it follows that

$$R_n^m(\rho) = \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} U_n(\rho\cos\vartheta) \cos m\vartheta\, d\vartheta \ . \qquad (17)$$

Finally, $U_n(\rho\cos\vartheta)\cos m\vartheta$ is a trigonometric polynomial of degree $n+m$. Therefore, the integral in Eq. (17) can be evaluated using the sample values of the integrand at the points $2\pi k/N$, $k = 0, 1, ..., N-1$ when $N > n+m$. This yields Eq. (2).

Note. Equation(17) can also be used to get accurate asymptotic approximations to $R_n^m(\rho)$ when n gets large. These can, for instance, be used to explain the various phenomena that can be observed in Fig. 2.

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Table

Degree n	m	$R_n^m(\rho)$
0	0	1
1	1	ρ
2	0	$2\rho^2 - 1$
2	2	ρ^2
4	0	$6\rho^4 - 6\rho^2 + 1$
3	1	$3\rho^3 - 2\rho$
3	3	ρ^3

⋮

Captions

Figure [1]

Top: $R_n^m(\rho)$ as a function of ρ, $0 \leq \rho \leq 1$, computed according to Eq. (1) and Eq. (2), using 16 decimal places, for $m = 17$, $n = 39$ and for $m = 0$, $n = 50$. **Bottom**: $R_n^m(\rho)$, computed according to Eq. (2), with $m = 0$ and $n = 10.000$ and ρ very close to 1

Figure [2]

The disturbance $\alpha_n^0(\varepsilon)$ of the aberration of order $n = 0, 2, \cdots, 100$, due to the presence of an aberration of amplitude 1 and of the order $n' = 100$ when the system is scaled to relative size $\varepsilon = 0.50$ (left) and $\varepsilon = 0.98$ (right).

Figures [1] and [2]

Figure [1]

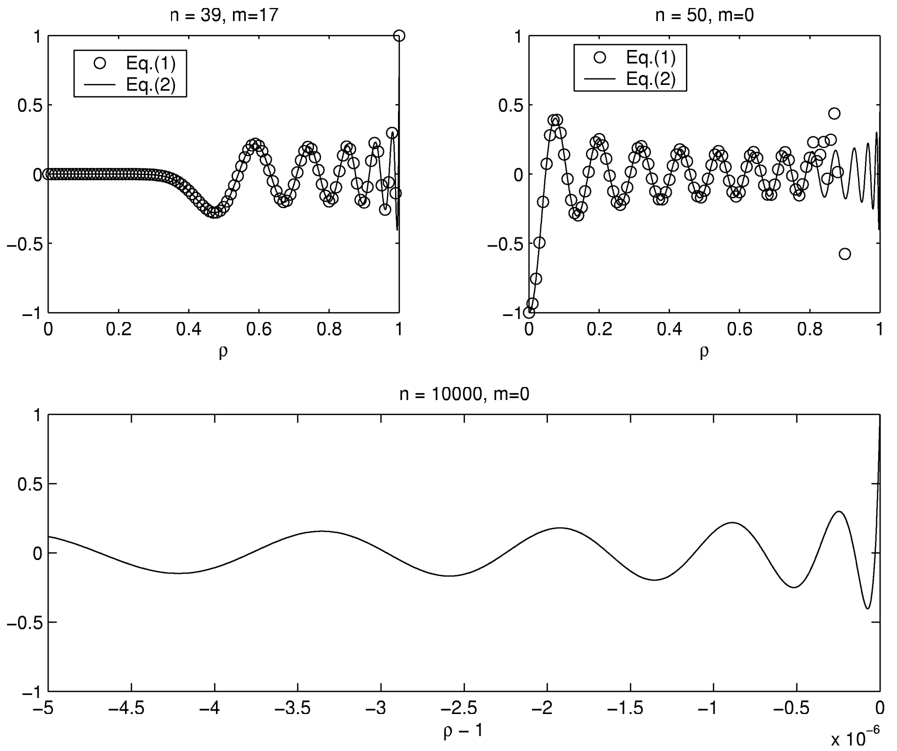
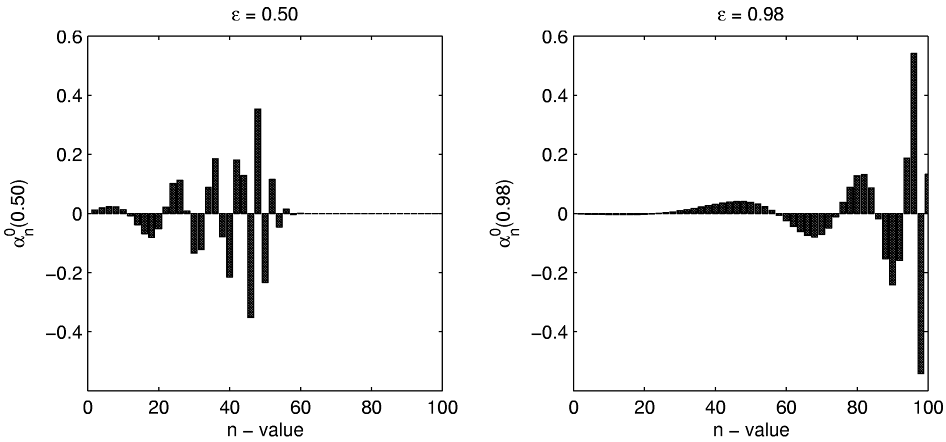


Figure [2]



ε = 0.50
ε = 0.98
0.6
0.4
0.2
0
−0.2
−0.4
α^0_n(0.50)
α^0_n(0.98)
0
20
40
60
80
100
n − value
n − value