# Smooth Surface Curvature

Justin Solomon

6.8410: Shape Analysis

Fall 2026



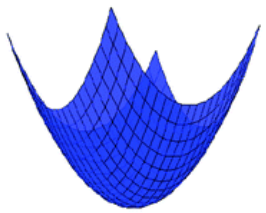
# Today's Goal

Quantify how a surface

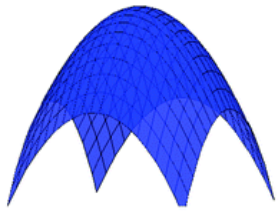
**deviates from flatness.**

***Curvature.***

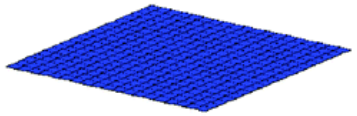
# High-Level Questions



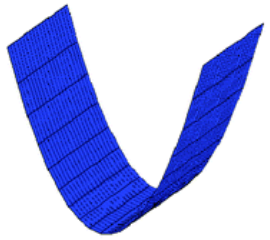
(a) $KG > 0, KH > 0$
elliptic concave



(b) $KG > 0, KH < 0$
elliptic convexe



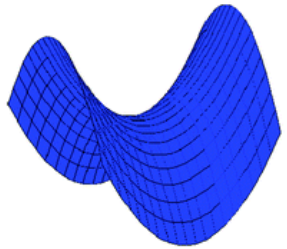
(c) $KG = 0, KH = 0$
plane



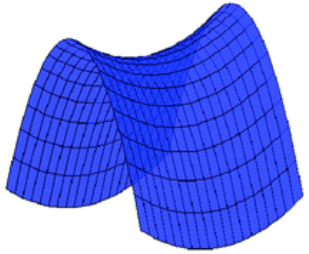
(d) $KG = 0$, KH $> 0$
parabolic concave



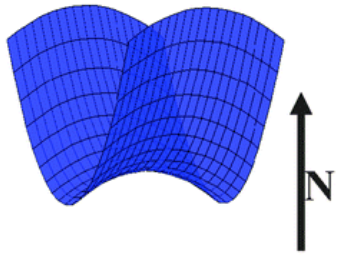
(e) $KG = 0, KH < 0$
parabolic convexe



(f) $KG < 0, KH = 0$
saddle (hyperbolic)



(g) $KG < 0, KH < 0$
hyperbolic-like

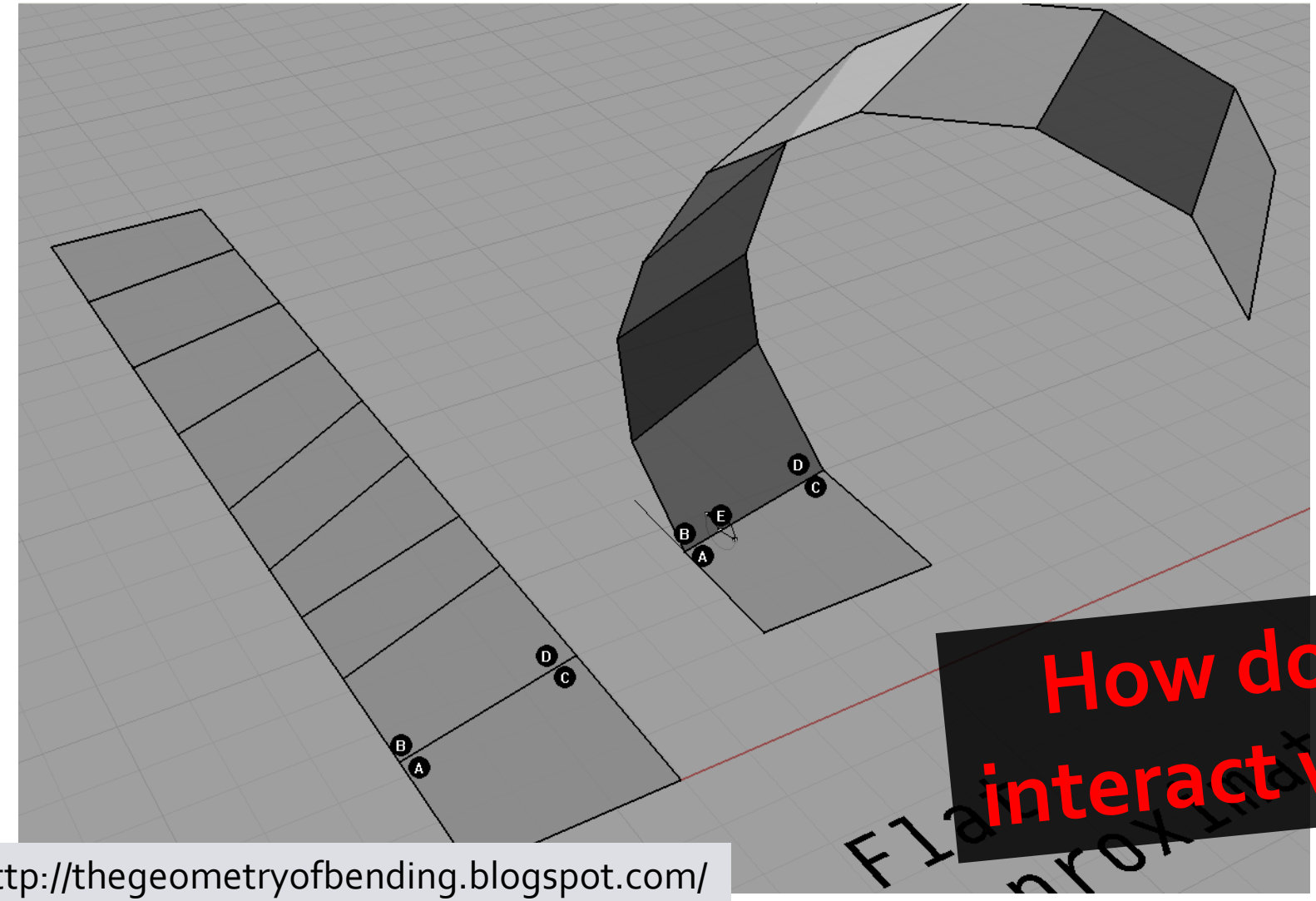



(h) $KG < 0, KH > 0$
hyperbolic-like

**How to distinguish?**

http://pubs.rsc.org/is/content/articlelanding/2013/cp/c3cp44375b

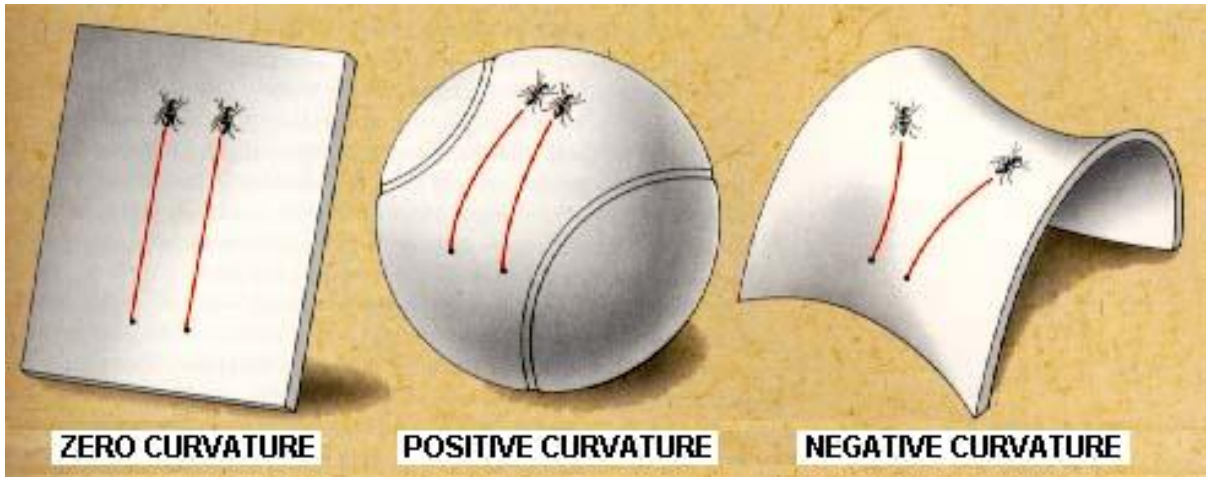
# High-Level Questions




**How do surfaces interact with space?**

http://thegeometryofbending.blogspot.com/

# High-Level Questions

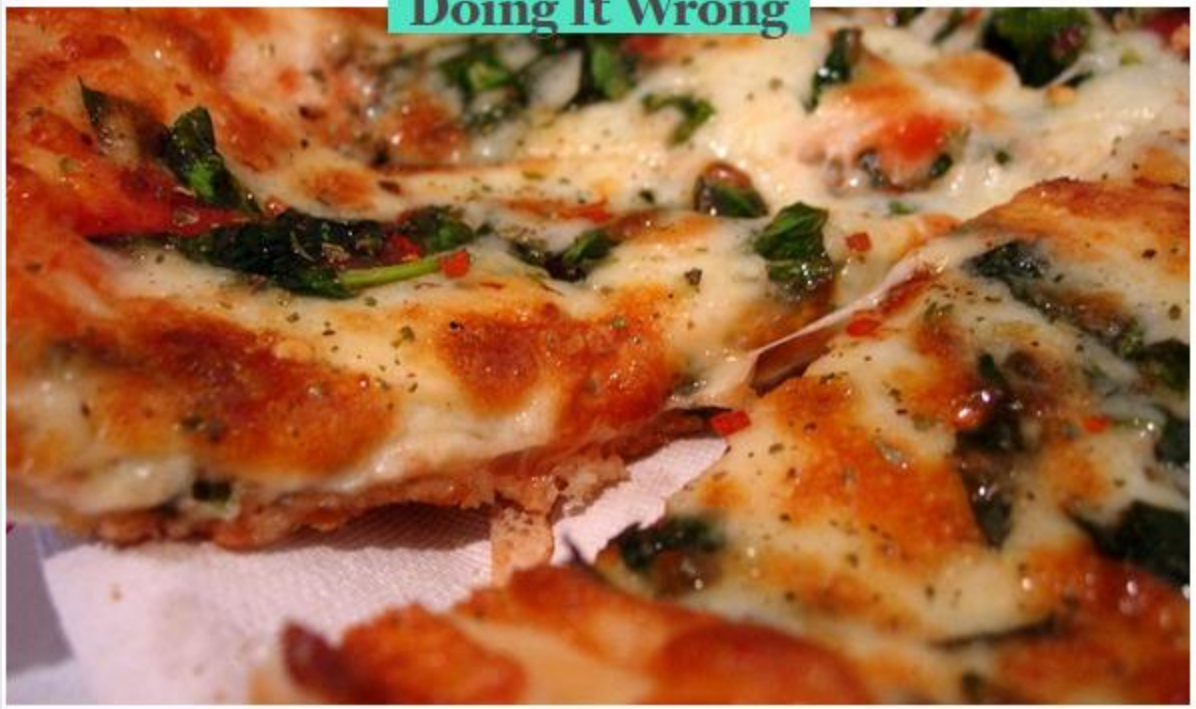



**Does surrounding space matter?**

http://starchild.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/StarChild/questions/question35.html

# Practical Application

## The Best Way to Eat Pizza, According to Science, Means You Probably Have Been Doing It Wrong



Share this

By LUCIA PETERS Oct 10 2014

Congratulations, New Yorkers: Here's proof that you are apparently

Bend It Like Gauss:



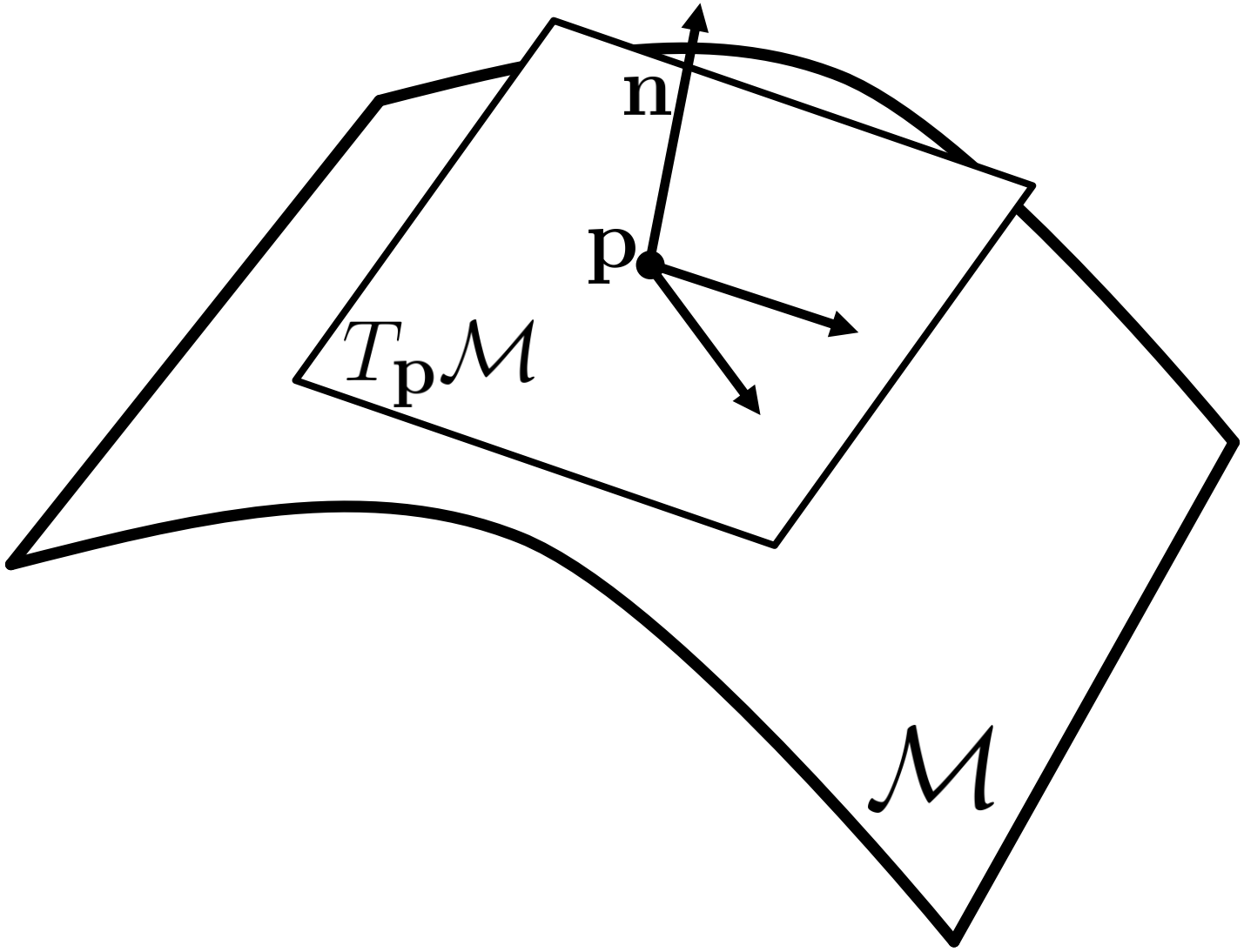

https://www.bustle.com/articles/43697-the-best-way-to-eat-pizza-according-to-science-means-you-probably-have-been-doing-it

$Q:$

Can curvature/torsion of a curve help us understand surfaces?

*Recall:*

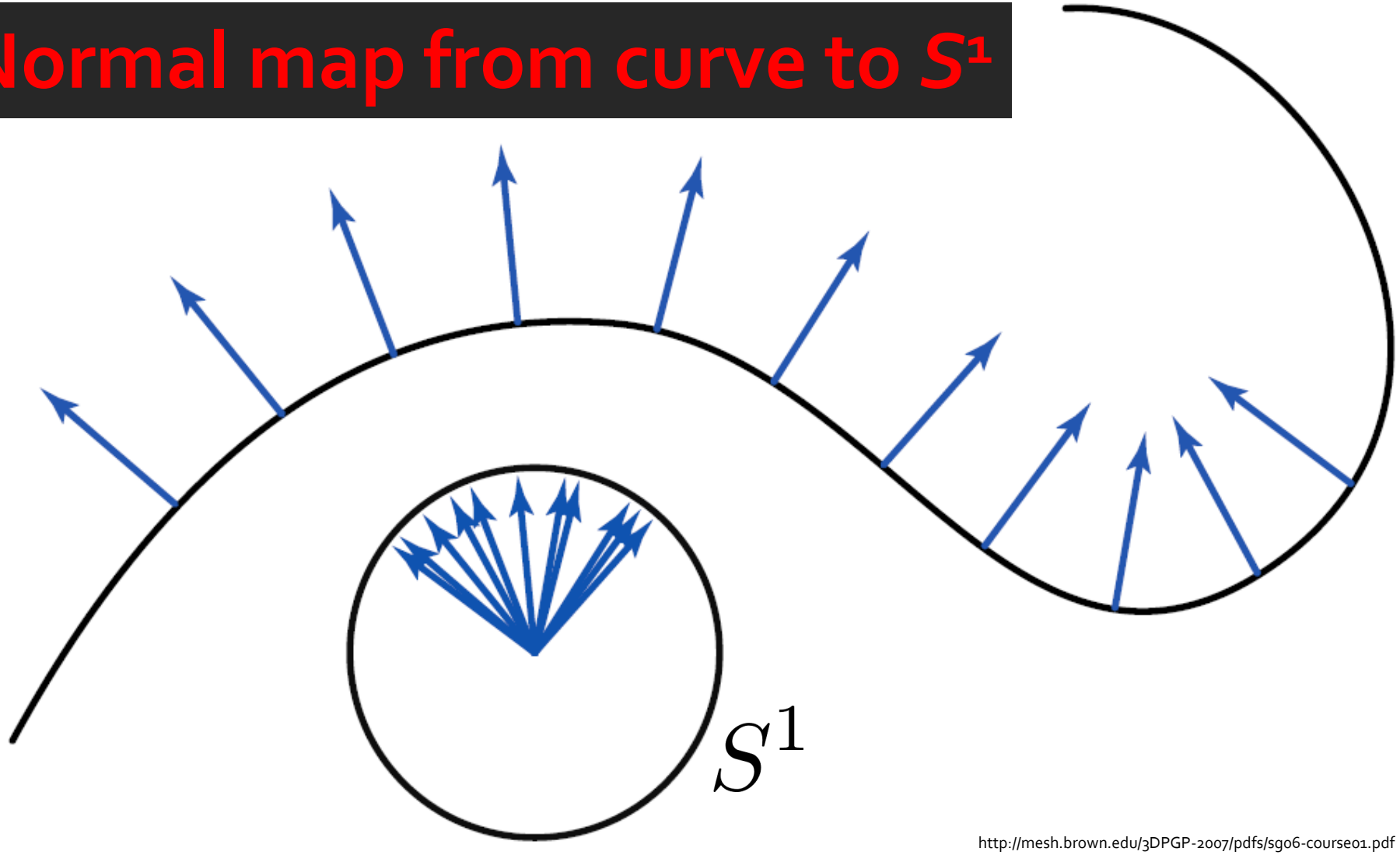
# Unit Normal



*Recall:*

# Gauss Map

## Normal map from curve to $S^1$




http://mesh.brown.edu/3DPGP-2007/pdfs/sg06-course01.pdf

*Recall:*

# Frenet Frame: Curves in $\mathbb{R}^3$

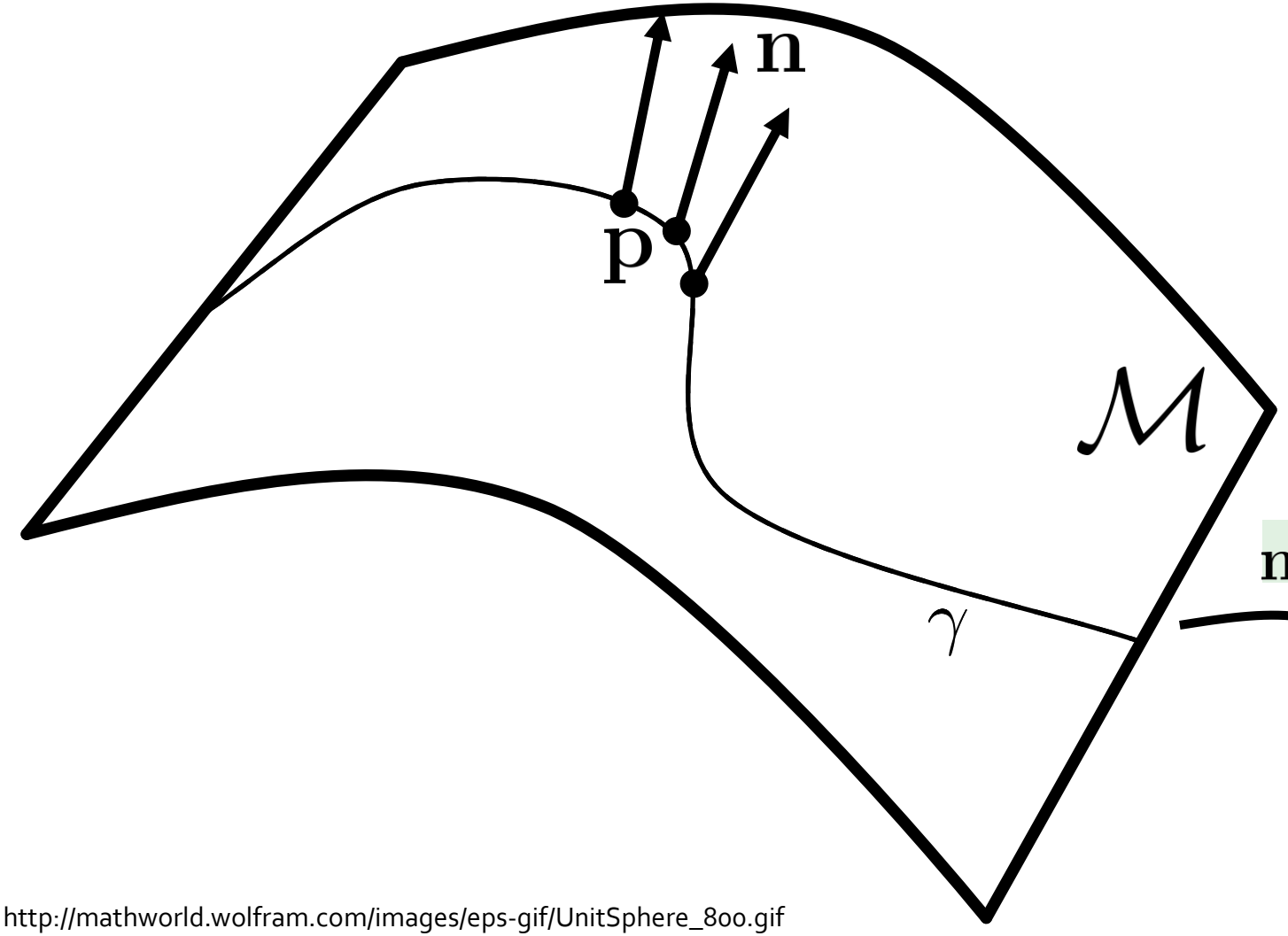
$$\frac{d}{ds}\begin{pmatrix}\mathbf{T}\\ \mathbf{N}\\ \mathbf{B}\end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix}0 & \kappa & 0\\ -\kappa & 0 & \tau\\ 0 & -\tau & 0\end{pmatrix}\begin{pmatrix}\mathbf{T}\\ \mathbf{N}\\ \mathbf{B}\end{pmatrix}$$

- **Binormal:** $\boldsymbol{T} \times \boldsymbol{N}$
- **Curvature:** In-plane motion
- **Torsion:** Out-of-plane motion

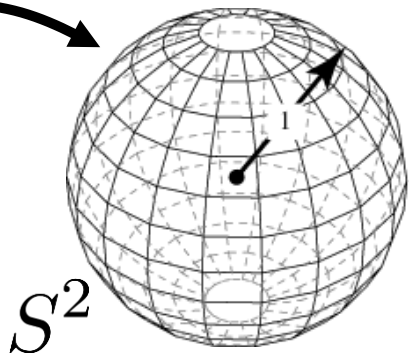
***Theorem:***

**Curvature and torsion determine geometry of a curve up to rigid motion.**

# Gauss Map for an Oriented Surface




$\mathbf{n} : \mathcal{M} \to S^2$




http://mathworld.wolfram.com/images/eps-gif/UnitSphere_800.gif

# Differential of a Map

**Definition** (Differential). *Suppose* $\varphi : \mathcal{M} \to \mathcal{N}$ *is a map from a submanifold* $\mathcal{M} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^k$ *into a submanifold* $\mathcal{N} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^\ell$. *Then, the* differential $d\varphi_{\mathbf{p}} : T_{\mathbf{p}}\mathcal{M} \to T_{\varphi(\mathbf{p})}\mathcal{N}$ *of* $\varphi$ *at a point* $\mathbf{p} \in \mathcal{M}$ *is given by*

$$d\varphi_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{v}) := (\varphi \circ \gamma)'(0),$$

*where* $\gamma : (-\varepsilon, \varepsilon) \to \mathcal{M}$ *is any curve with* $\gamma(0) = \mathbf{p}$ *and* $\gamma'(0) = \mathbf{v} \in T_{\mathbf{p}}\mathcal{M}$.

## Linear map of tangent spaces

$$d\varphi_{\mathbf{p}}(\gamma'(0)) := (\varphi \circ \gamma)'(0)$$

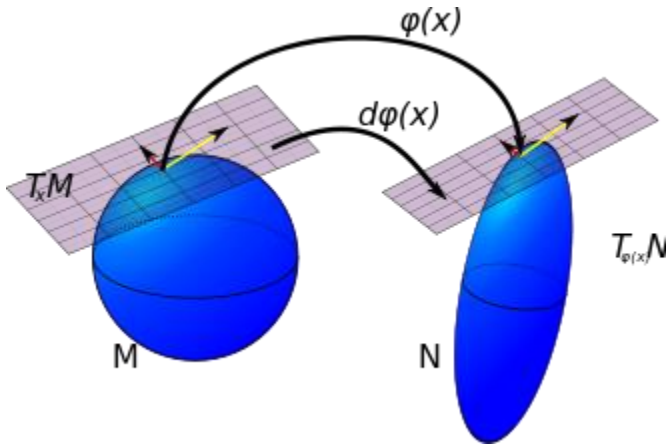



Image from Wikipedia

# Calculation

Where is the

**derivative of *n*?**

$$d\mathbf{n}_\mathbf{p} : T_\mathbf{p}\mathcal{M} \rightarrow ??$$

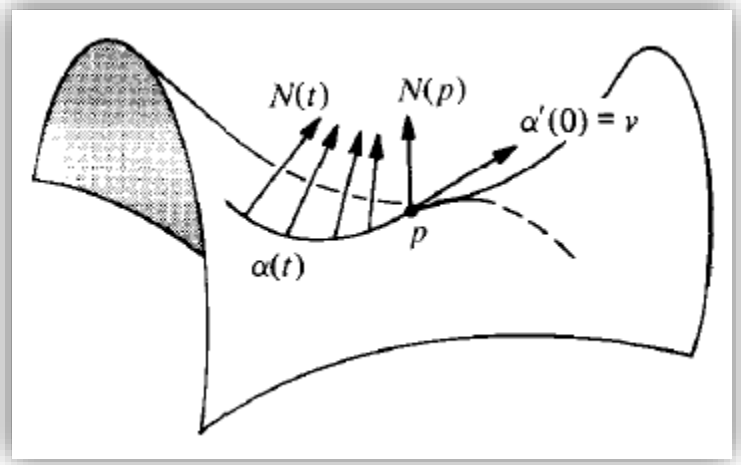
**"Shape operator"**

# Second Fundamental Form

$$\mathrm{I\!I}_{\mathbf{p}} : T_{\mathbf{p}}\mathcal{M} \times T_{\mathbf{p}}\mathcal{M} \to \mathbb{R}$$

*Defined by:*

$$\mathrm{I\!I}_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w}) := -\mathbf{v} \cdot d\mathbf{n}_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{w})$$

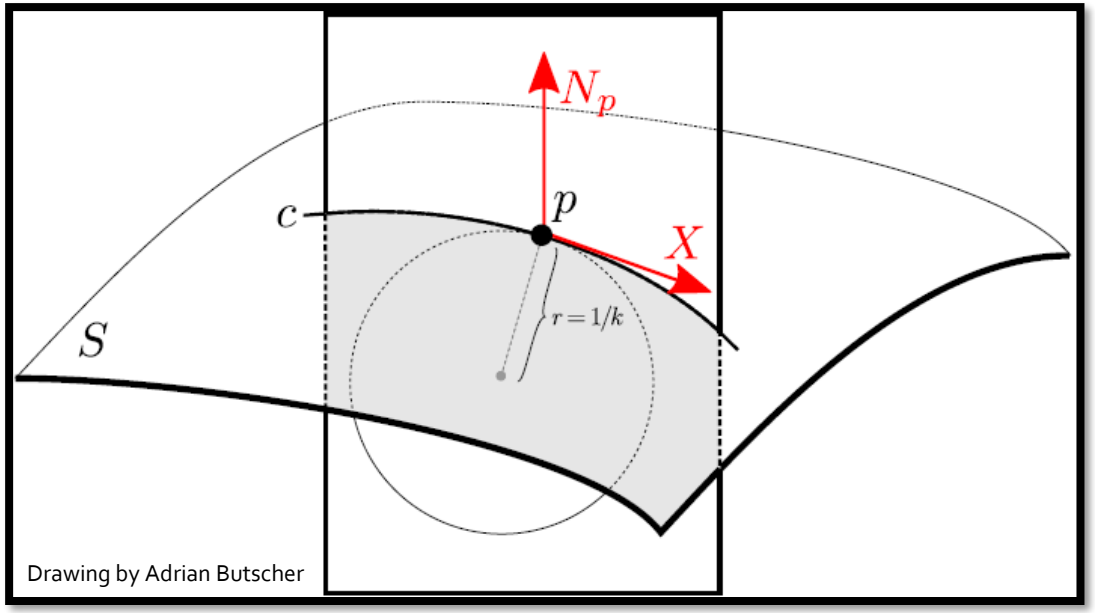



"Lower the index"

# Calculation

$$\mathbb{I}(\mathbf{T}, \mathbf{T})$$

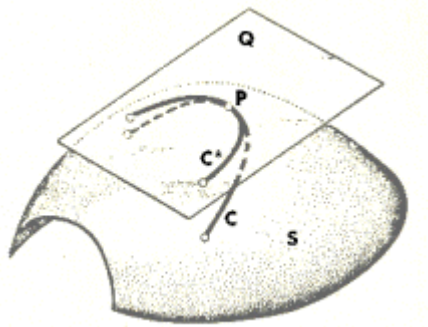
# Relationship to Curvature of Curves



Drawing by Adrian Butscher

$$\kappa_{\mathbf{n}} = \mathbf{K} \cdot \mathbf{n} = \mathrm{I\!I}_{\gamma(s)}(\mathbf{T}, \mathbf{T})$$

"Acceleration due to geometry"



http://www.solitaryroad.com/c335.html

$$\kappa_g := \mathbf{K} \cdot (\mathbf{n} \times \mathbf{T})$$

**Geodesic curvature**

# Calculation

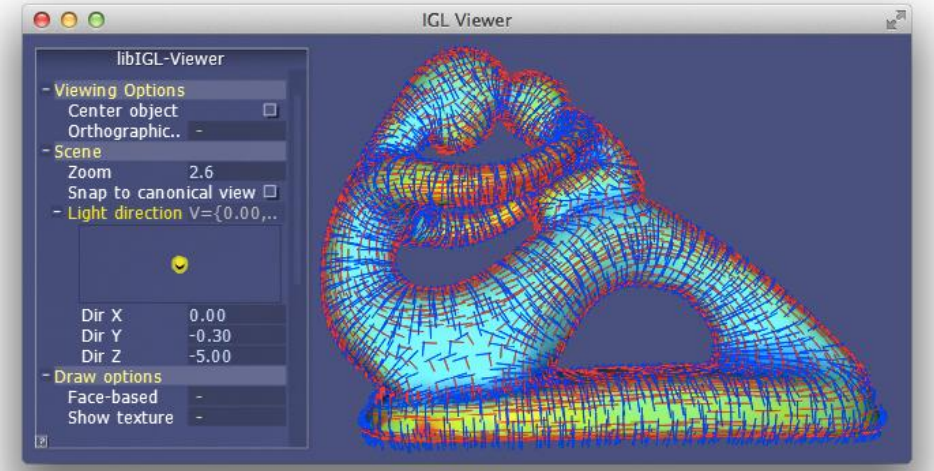
$$\mathrm{I\!I}(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w}) = \mathrm{I\!I}(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{v})$$

Request for help:
How to visualize this?

# Principal Curvatures/Directions

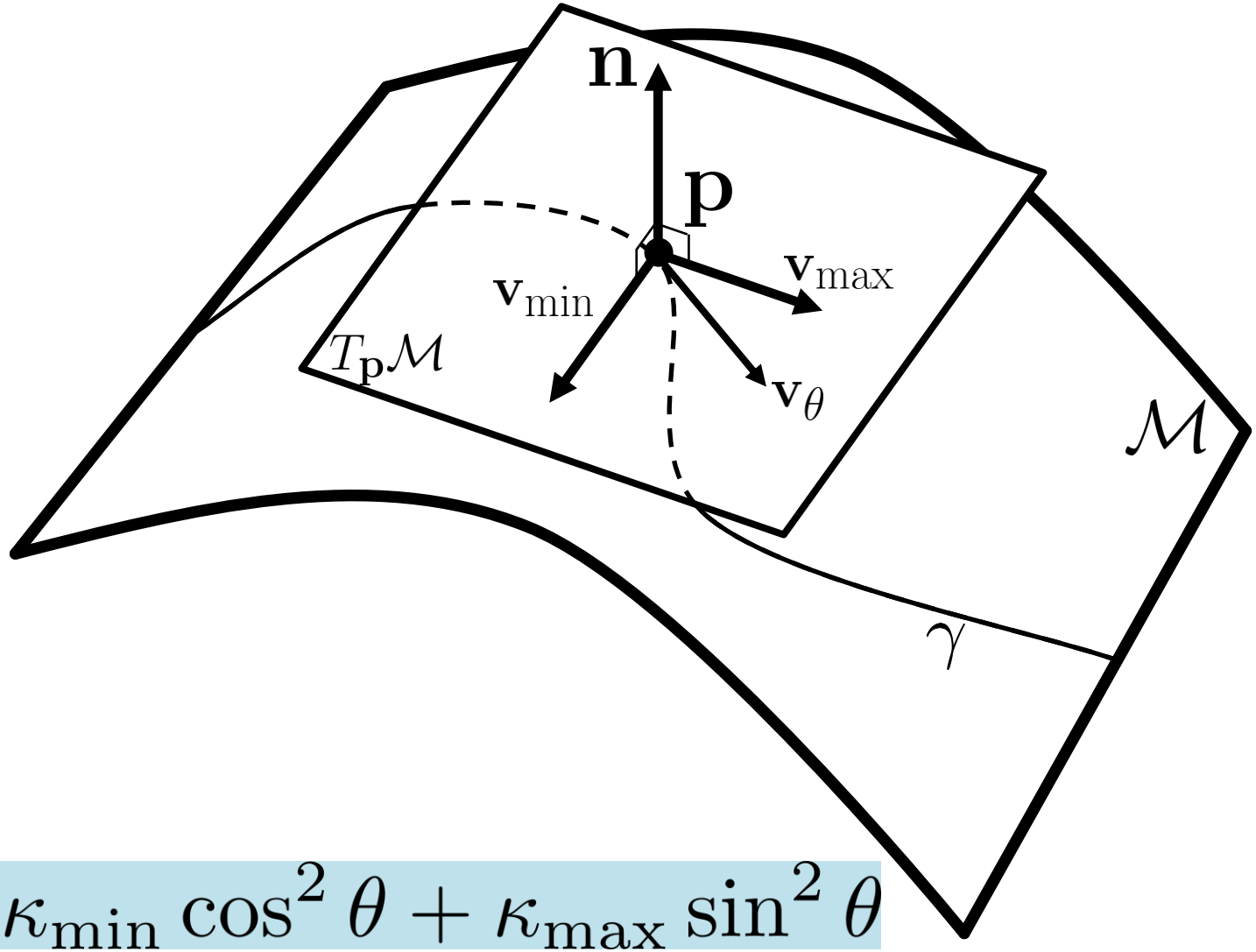
$$\kappa_{\min} := \begin{cases} \min_{\mathbf{v} \in T_{\mathbf{p}}\mathcal{M}} & \mathrm{I\!I}(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{v}) \\ \textit{subject to} & \|\mathbf{v}\|_2 = 1 \end{cases}$$

$$\kappa_{\max} := \begin{cases} \max_{\mathbf{v} \in T_{\mathbf{p}}\mathcal{M}} & \mathrm{I\!I}(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{v}) \\ \textit{subject to} & \|\mathbf{v}\|_2 = 1 \end{cases}$$




https://libigl.github.io/tutorial/

# Principal Directions and Curvatures




$$\kappa_\theta = \kappa_{\min} \cos^2 \theta + \kappa_{\max} \sin^2 \theta$$

# Principal Curvatures

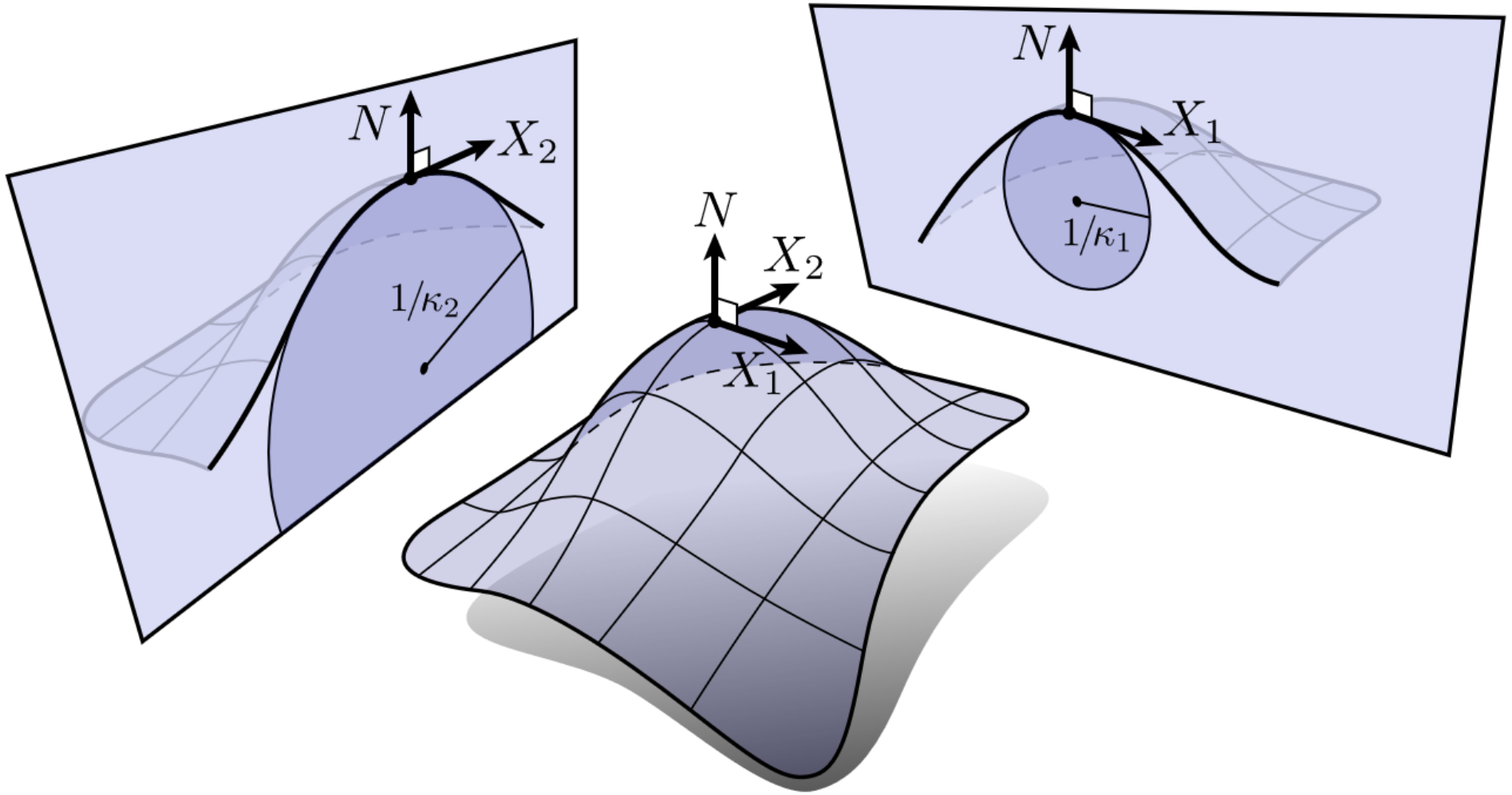
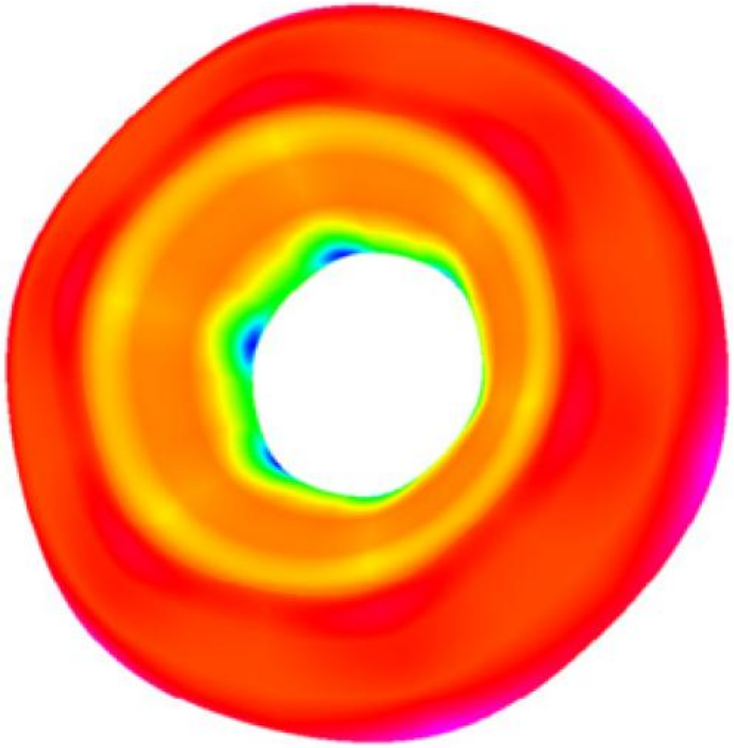


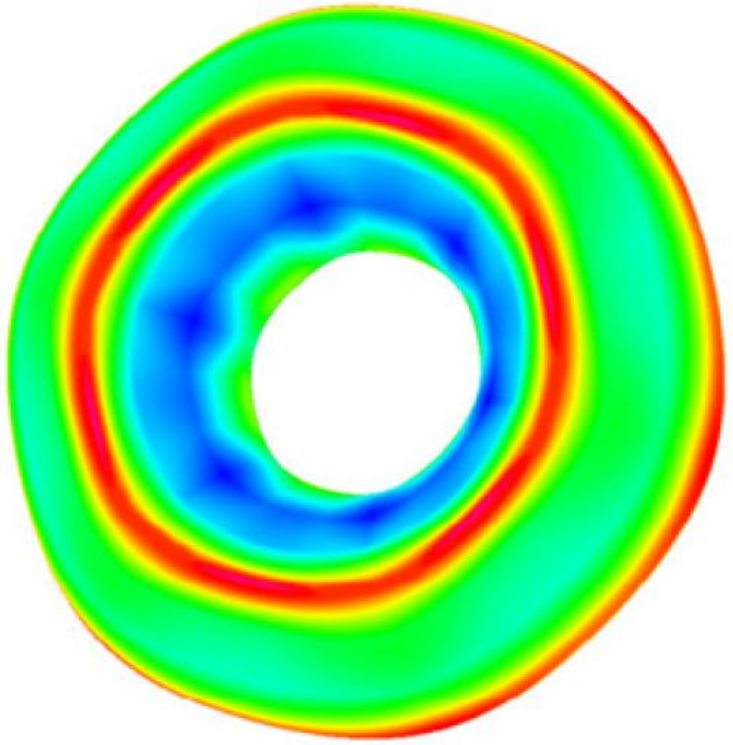

Image courtesy K. Crane, CMU

# Curvature Measures



$$K := \kappa_{\min} \cdot \kappa_{\max} = \det \mathrm{II}$$

Gaussian curvature

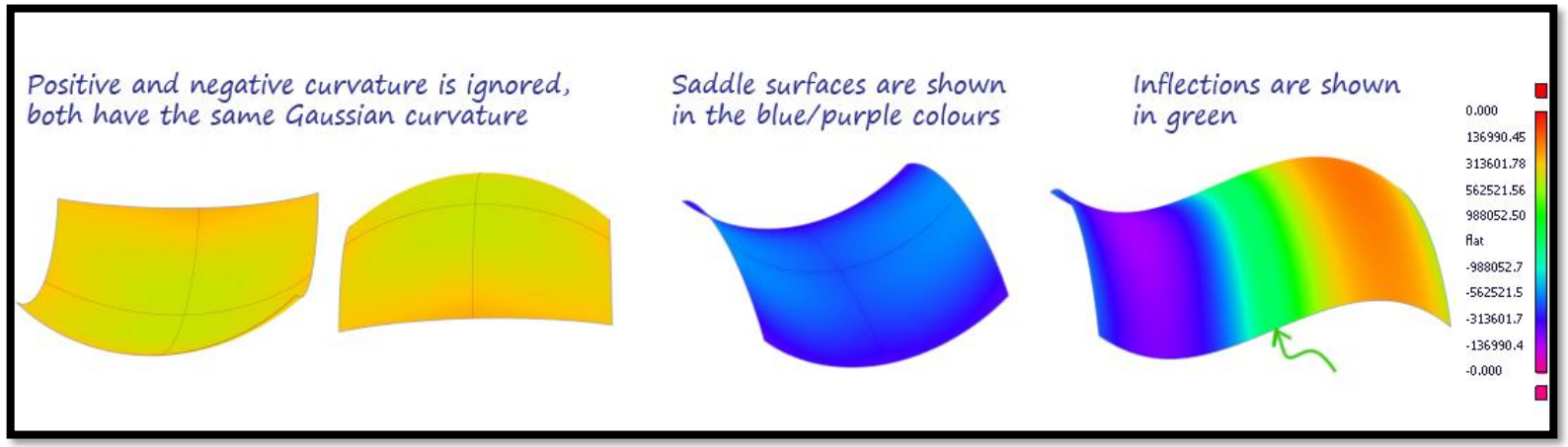


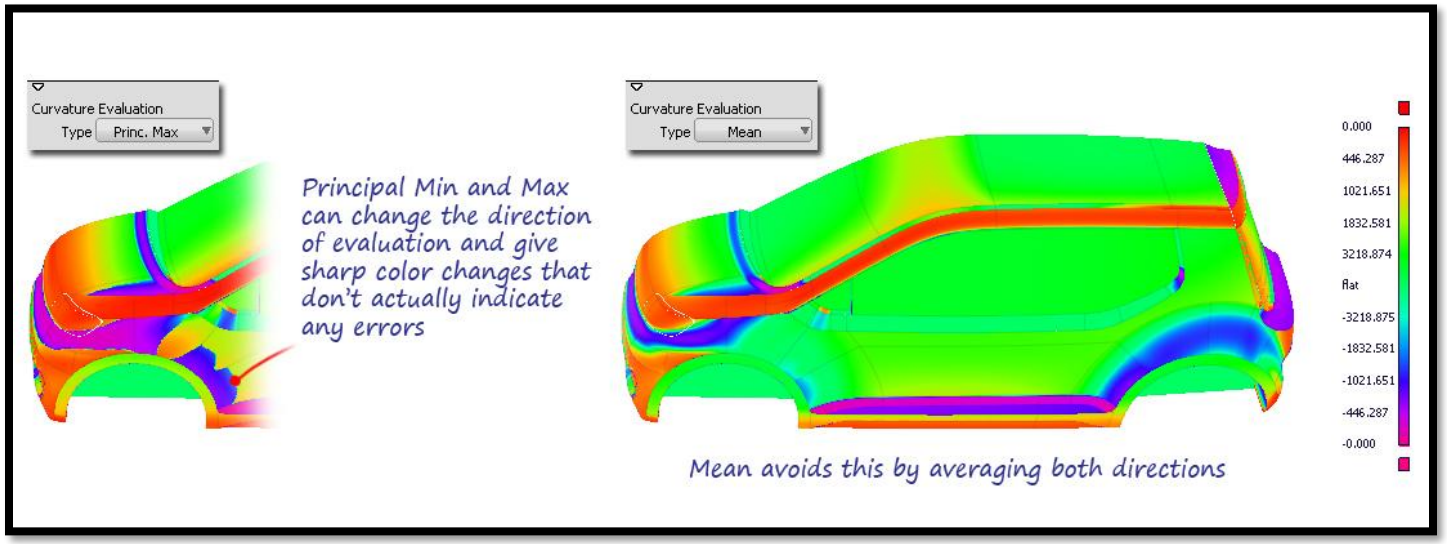
$$H := \frac{1}{2}(\kappa_{\min} + \kappa_{\max}) = \frac{1}{2}\mathrm{tr}\,\mathrm{II}$$

Mean curvature

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0010448510001983

# Interpretation



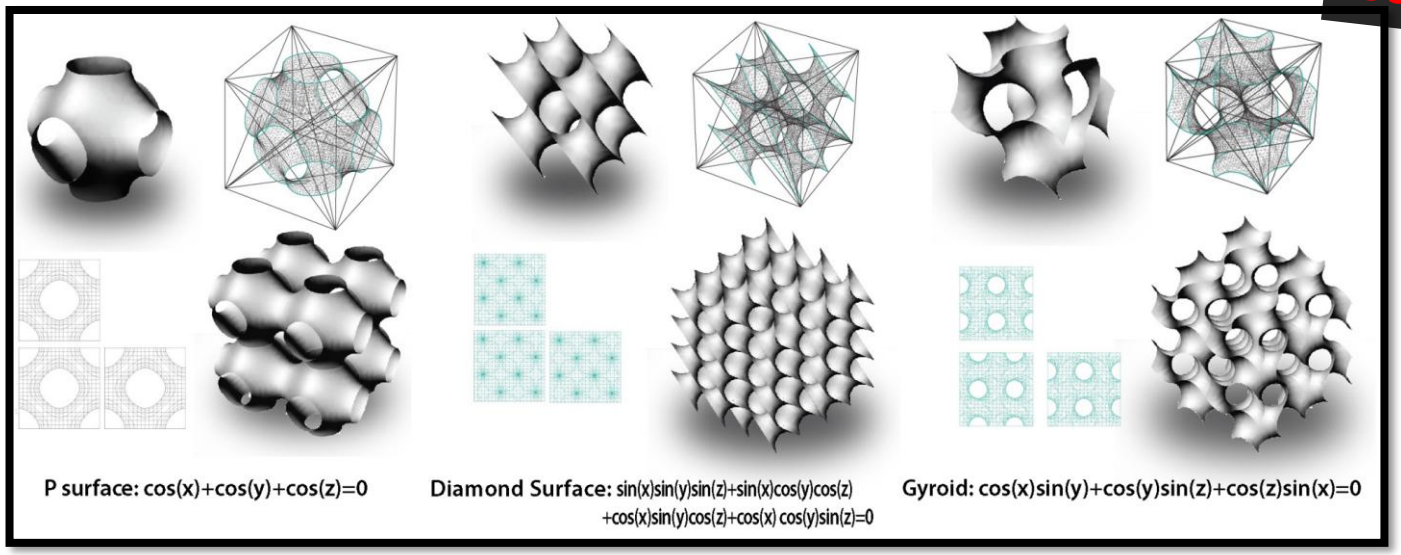

http://www.aliasworkbench.com/theoryBuilders/TB7_evaluate3.htm (Credit: Autodesk Alias Automotive)

# Mean Curvature

$$H = \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} \kappa(\theta)\, d\theta$$

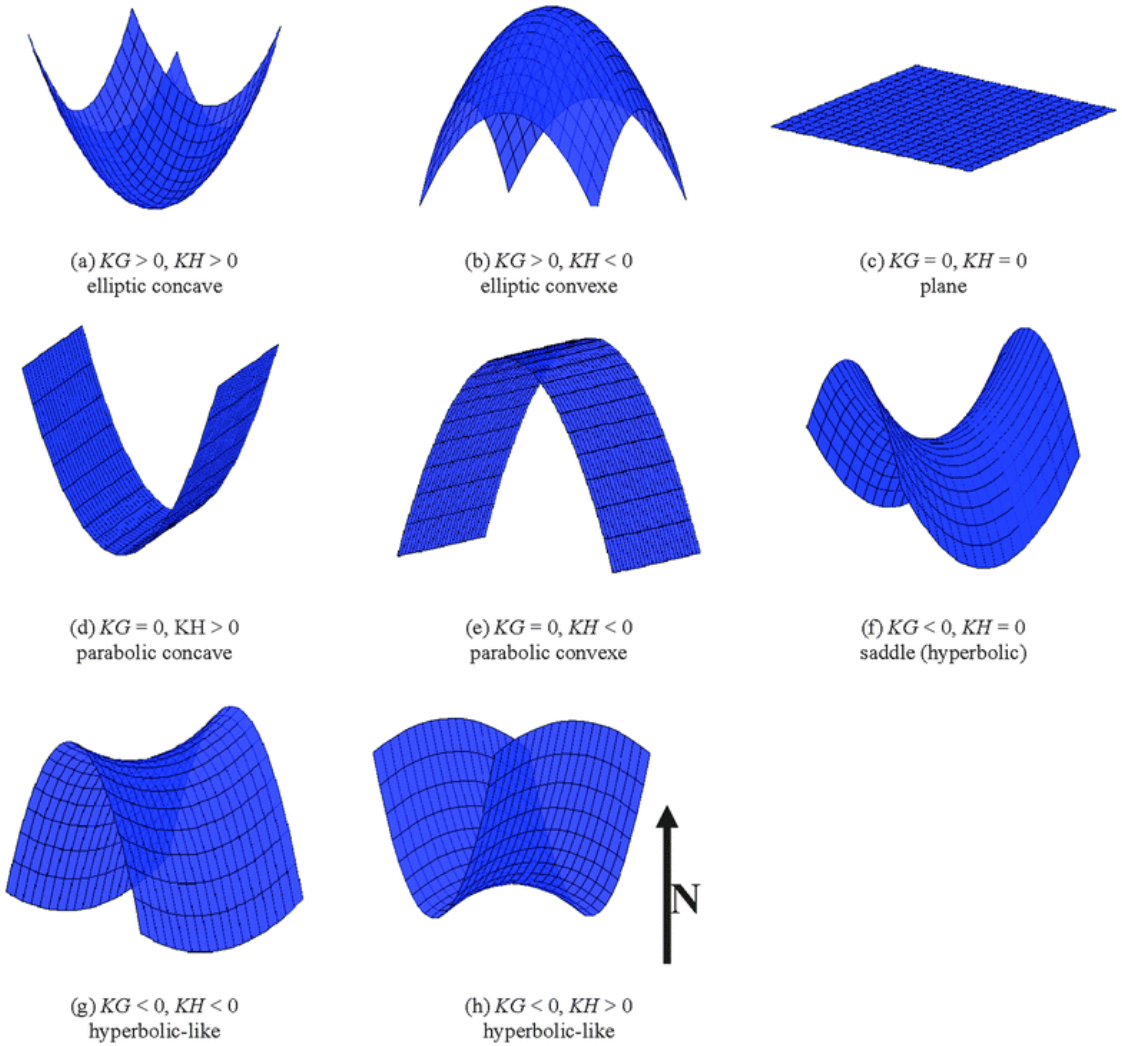
**Byproduct of linear structure**

**Minimal surfaces**




"Form is Matter: Triply periodic minimal surfaces structures by digital design tools" (Rossi and Buratti)

# Gaussian Curvature




(a) $KG > 0$, $KH > 0$
elliptic concave

(b) $KG > 0$, $KH < 0$
elliptic convexe

(c) $KG = 0$, $KH = 0$
plane

(d) $KG = 0$, KH > 0
parabolic concave

(e) $KG = 0$, $KH < 0$
parabolic convexe

(f) $KG < 0$, $KH = 0$
saddle (hyperbolic)

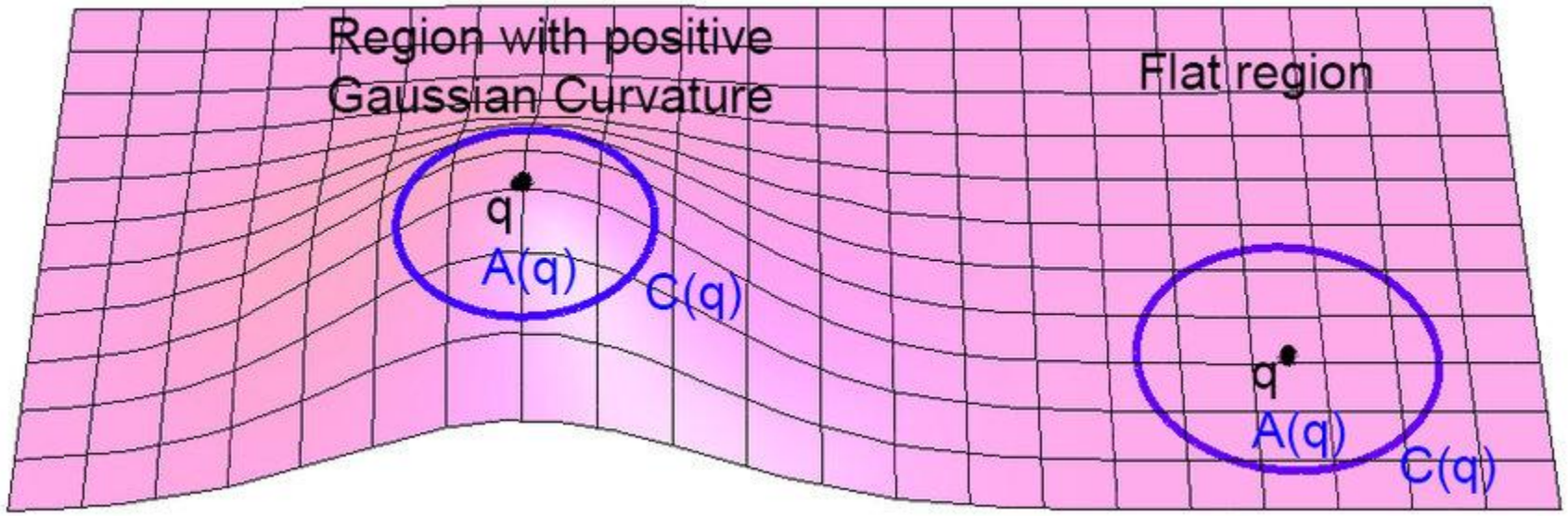
(g) $KG < 0$, $KH < 0$
hyperbolic-like

(h) $KG < 0$, $KH > 0$
hyperbolic-like

http://pubs.rsc.org/is/content/articlelanding/2013/cp/c3cp44375b

# Geodesic Circle Formulae

$$K = \lim_{r \to 0^+} 3\frac{2\pi r - C(r)}{\pi r^3} = \lim_{r \to 0^+} 12\frac{\pi r^2 - A(r)}{\pi r^4}$$




https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-two-blue-circles-represent-geodesic-circles-about-a-point-q-black-dot-with-both_fig8_309551474

# Uniqueness Result

*Theorem:*

**The first and second fundamental forms determine a surface up to rigid motion.**

**Gauss-Codazzi-Mainardi equations:**
Compatibility conditions

# Who Cares?

**Curvature**
**determines**
**local surface geometry.**

# Smooth Surface Curvature

Justin Solomon

6.8410: Shape Analysis

Fall 2026



# Discrete Surface Curvature

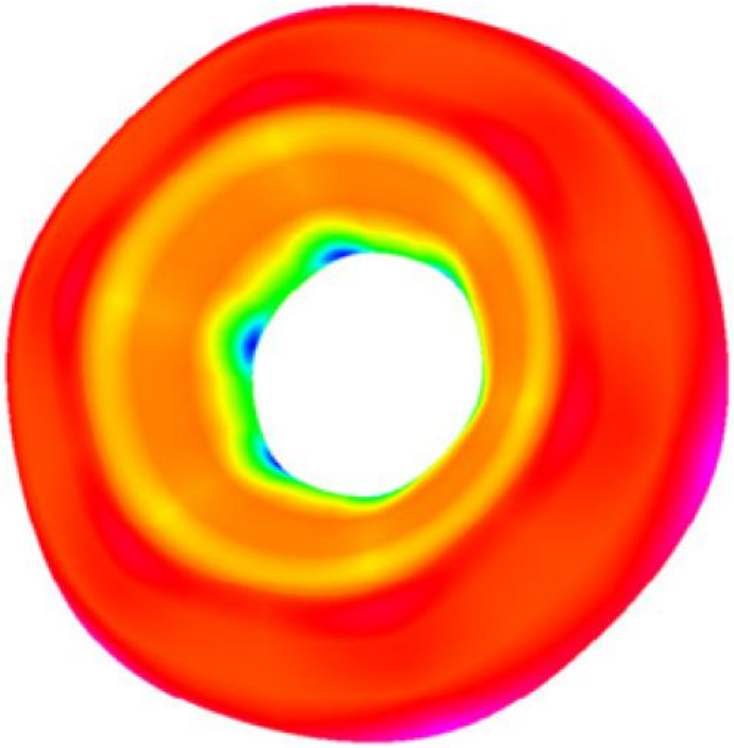
Justin Solomon

6.8410: Shape Analysis

Fall 2026

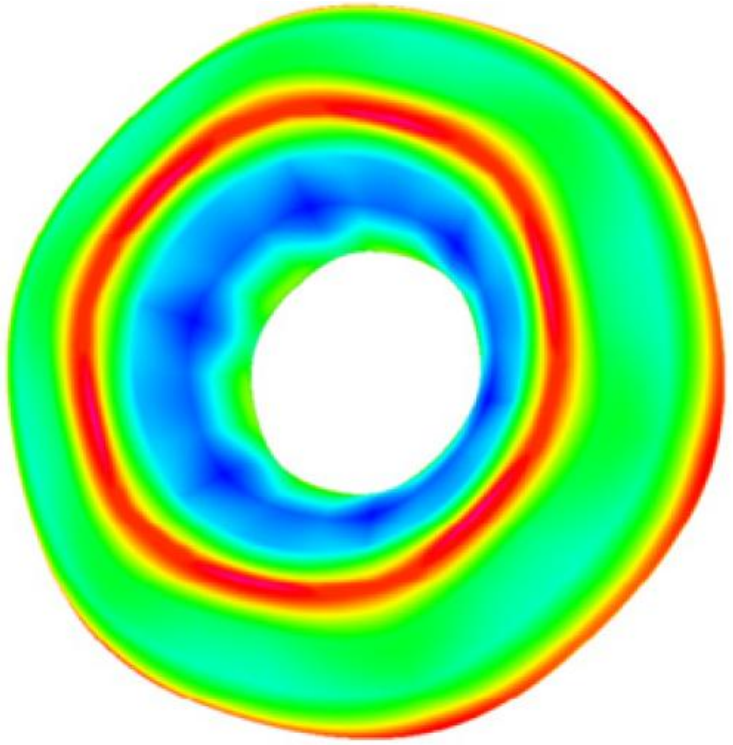


# Curvature Measures



$$K := \kappa_{\min} \cdot \kappa_{\max} = \det \mathrm{II}$$

Gaussian curvature

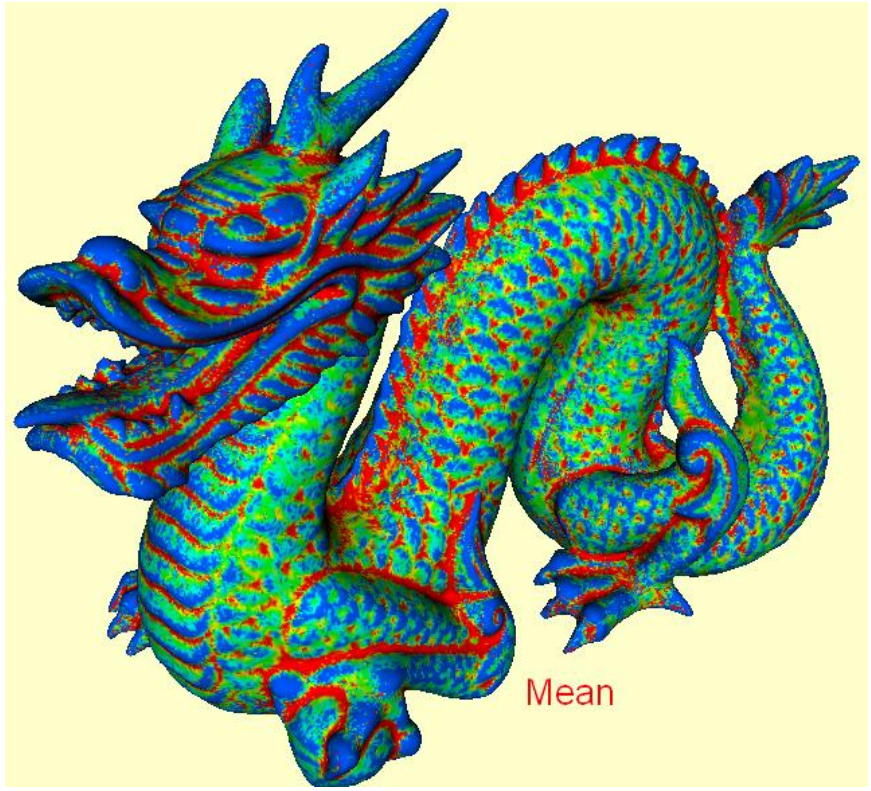


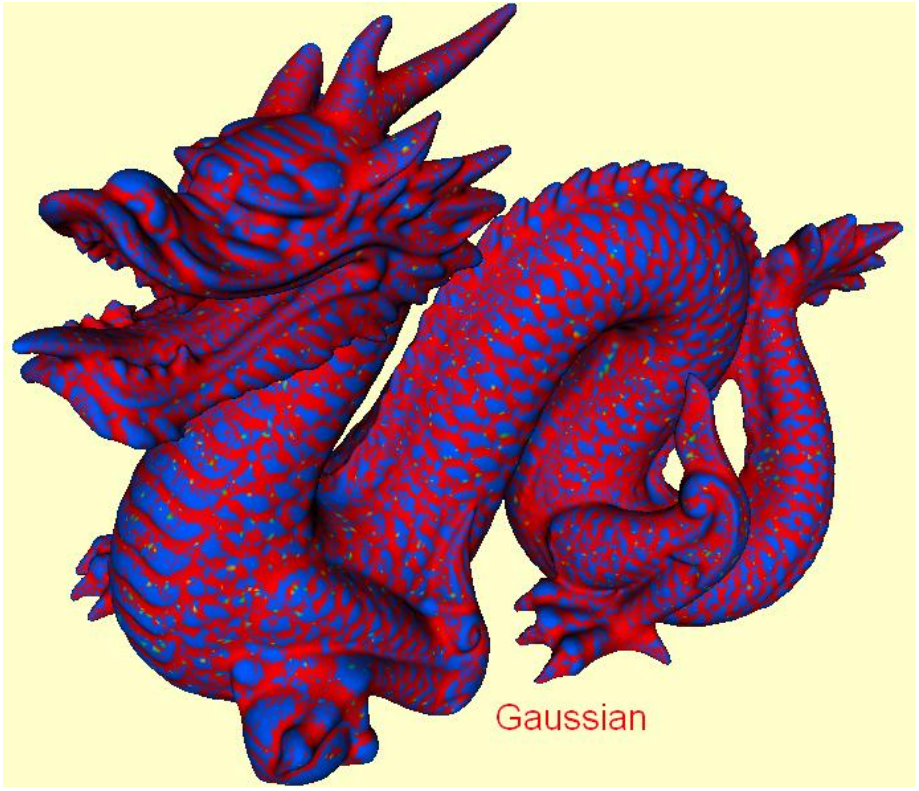
$$H := \frac{1}{2}(\kappa_{\min} + \kappa_{\max}) = \frac{1}{2}\mathrm{tr}\,\mathrm{II}$$

Mean curvature

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0010448510001983

# Use as a Descriptor




http://graphics.ucsd.edu/~iman/Curvature/

# Smoothing and Reconstruction

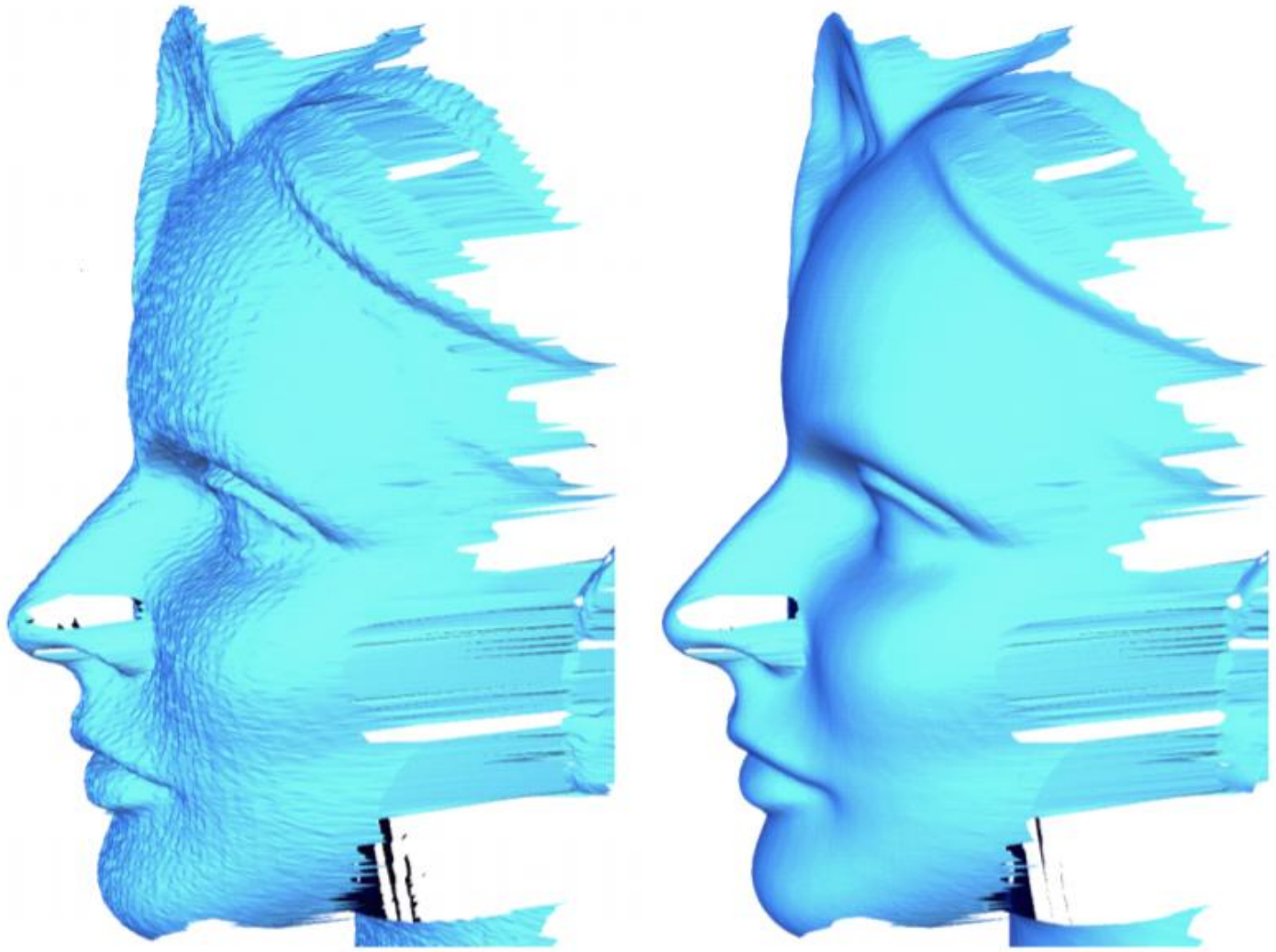


**Linear Surface Reconstruction from Discrete Fundamental Forms on Triangle Meshes**

Wang, Liu, and Tong

*Computer Graphics Forum* 31.8 (2012)

# Fairness Measure



**Implicit Fairing of Irregular Meshes using Diffusion and Curvature Flow**
Desbrun et al.
SIGGRAPH 1999

*...and many more*

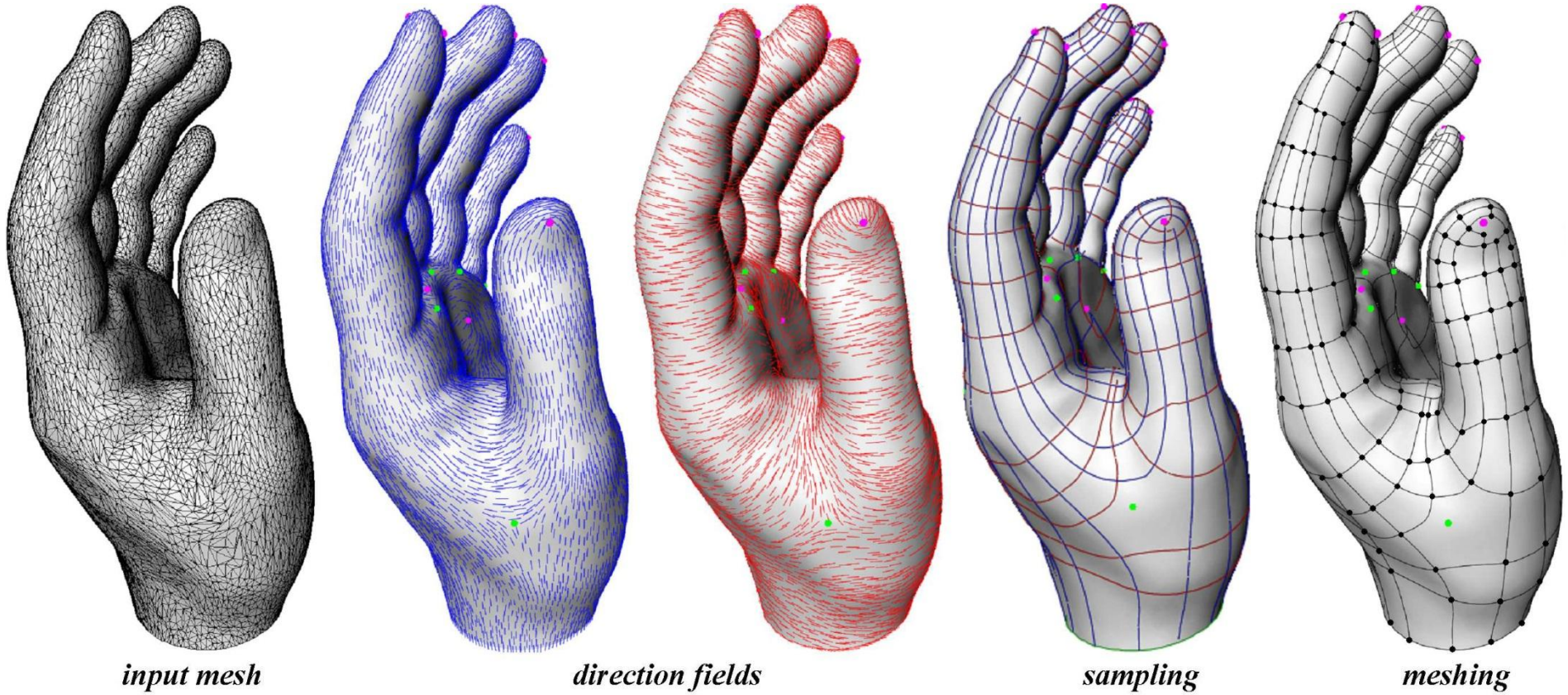
# Guiding Rendering



**Highlight Lines for Conveying Shape**
DeCarlo, Rusinkiewicz
*NPAR* (2007)

http://www.cs.rutgers.edu/~decarlo/pubs/npar07.pdf

# Guiding Meshing




**Anisotropic Polygonal Remeshing**
Alliez et al.
*SIGGRAPH* (2003)

# Special Topic for Me…

US 20090244082A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**

**Livingston et al.**

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2009/0244082 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Oct. 1, 2009**

(54) **METHODS AND SYSTEMS OF COMPARING FACE MODELS FOR RECOGNITION**

(76) Inventors: **Mark A. Livingston**, Alexandria, VA (US); **Justin Solomon**, Oakton, VA (US)

Correspondence Address:
**NAVAL RESEARCH LABORATORY**
**ASSOCIATE COUNSEL (PATENTS)**
**CODE 1008.2, 4555 OVERLOOK AVENUE, S.W.**
**WASHINGTON, DC 20375-5320 (US)**

(21) Appl. No.: **12/416,716**

(22) Filed: **Apr. 1, 2009**

**Related U.S. Application Data**

(60) Provisional application No. 61/041,305, filed on Apr. 1, 2008.

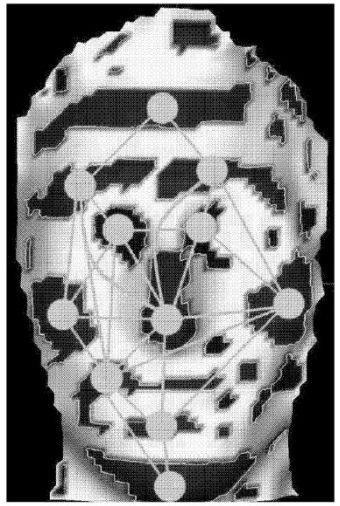
**Publication Classification**

(51) **Int. Cl.**
***G09G 5/00*** (2006.01)
***G06K 9/46*** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **345/581**; 382/203

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Methods and systems of representation and manipulation of surfaces with perceptual geometric features, using a computer graphics rendering system, include executing algorithmic instructions to compute a plurality of vertices, edges and surfaces in a mesh for the purpose of defining representations of surfaces on grids. Normals and distances are determined for triangular surfaces to be considered. Additionally, height fields of a function are defined. A set of feature curves and a set of feature points are derived, based on the defined function. Infinitesimal movements along the representations of the surfaces are determined, along with derivations of properties of representations of continuous surfaces. Additional determinations of perceptual geometric features include determinations such as zero crossings, parabolic curves, flecnodes, ruffles, gutterpoints, conical points and biflecnodes in a given mesh. After these determinations are made, visual representation are rendered which captures perceptually important features for smoothly varying shapes.



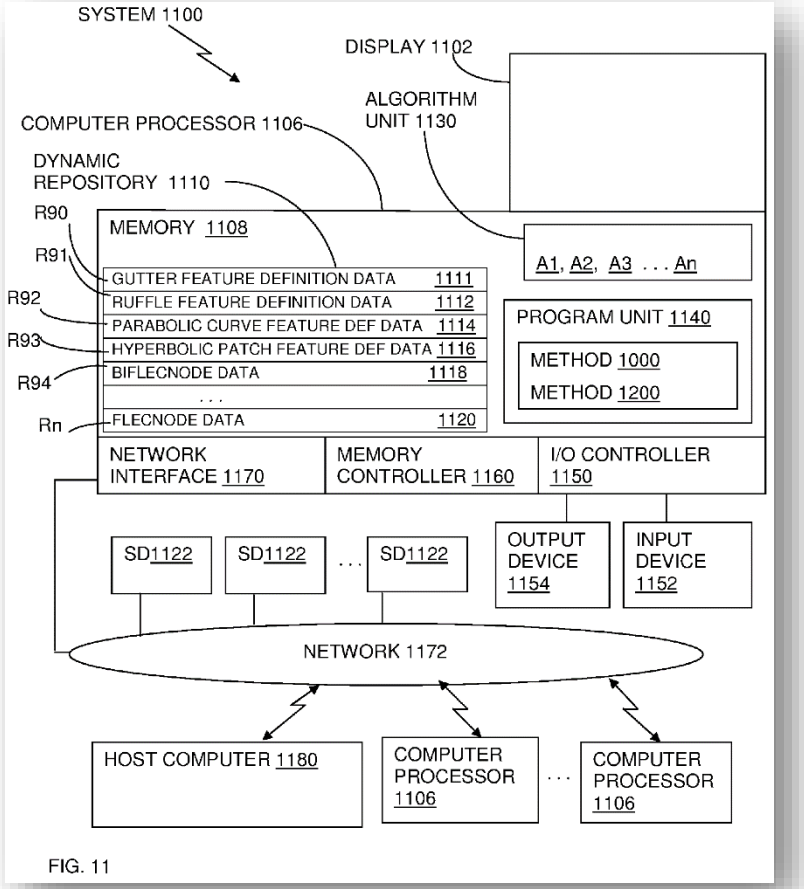
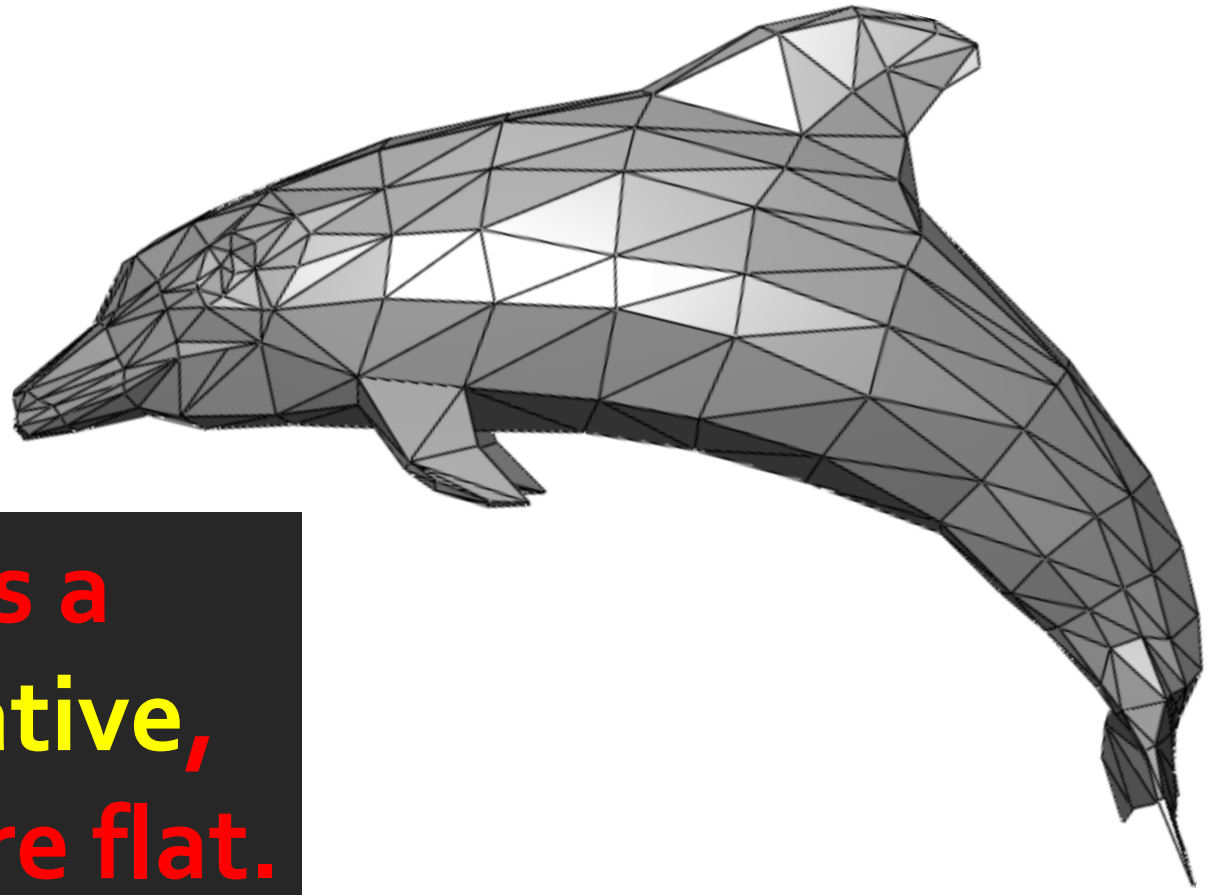



FIG. 11

# Challenge on Meshes



Curvature is a second derivative, but triangles are flat.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fb/Dolphin_triangle_mesh.png

# Standard Citation

## ESTIMATING THE TENSOR OF CURVATURE OF A SURFACE FROM A POLYHEDRAL APPROXIMATION

ICCV 1995

*Gabriel Taubin*

IBM T.J.Watson Research Center
P.O.Box 704, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
taubin@watson.ibm.com

### Abstract

Estimating principal curvatures and principal directions of a surface from a polyhedral approximation with a large number of small faces, such as those produced by iso-surface construction algorithms, has become a basic step in many computer vision algorithms. Particularly in those targeted at medical applications. In this paper we describe a method to estimate the tensor of curvature of a surface at the vertices of a polyhedral approximation. Principal curvatures and principal directions are obtained by computing in closed form the eigenvalues and eigenvectors of certain $3 \times 3$ symmetric matrices defined by integral formulas, and mate principal curvatures at the vertices of a triangulated surface. Both this algorithm and ours are based on constructing a quadratic form at each vertex of the polyhedral surface and then computing eigenvalues (and eigenvectors) of the resulting form, but the quadratic forms are different. In our algorithm the quadratic form associated with a vertex is expressed as an integral, and is constructed in time proportional to the number of neighboring vertices. In the algorithm of Chen and Schmitt, it is the least-squares solution of an overdetermined linear system, and the complexity of constructing it is quadratic in the number of neighbors.

### 2 The Tensor of Curvature

# Taubin Matrix

$$M_{\mathbf{p}} := \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} \kappa_\theta \mathbf{t}_\theta \mathbf{t}_\theta^\top \, d\theta$$

$$\kappa_\theta := \kappa_{\min} \cos^2 \theta + \kappa_{\max} \sin^2 \theta$$

$$\mathbf{t}_\theta := \mathbf{t}_{\min} \cos \theta + \mathbf{t}_{\max} \sin \theta$$

# Taubin Matrix

$$M_{\mathbf{p}} := \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} \kappa_\theta \mathbf{t}_\theta \mathbf{t}_\theta^\top \, d\theta$$

- Eigenvectors are $\boldsymbol{n}$, $\boldsymbol{t}_1$, and $\boldsymbol{t}_2$
- Eigenvalues are $\frac{3}{8}\kappa_{min} + \frac{1}{8}\kappa_{max}$ and $\frac{1}{8}\kappa_{min} + \frac{3}{8}\kappa_{max}$

*Prove at home!*

# Taubin's Approximation

$$M_{\mathbf{p}} := \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} \kappa_\theta \mathbf{t}_\theta \mathbf{t}_\theta^\top \, d\theta$$

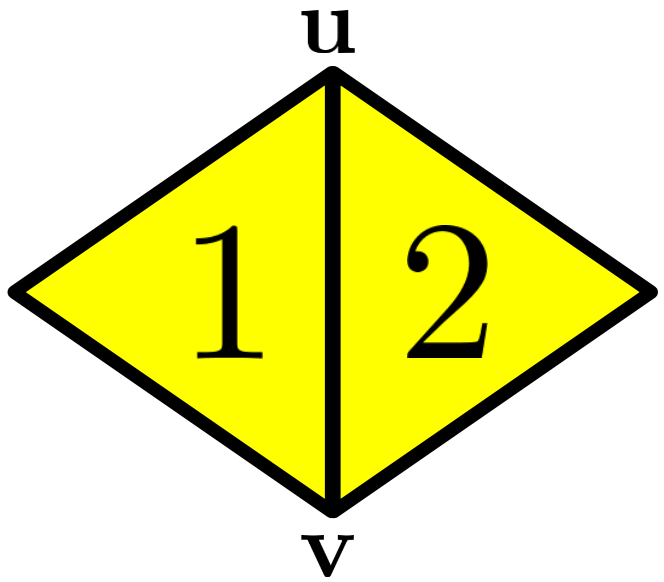


$$M_{\mathbf{v}} \approx \sum_{\mathbf{u} \sim \mathbf{v}} w_{\mathbf{vu}} \kappa_{\mathbf{vu}} \mathbf{t}_{\mathbf{vu}} \mathbf{t}_{\mathbf{vu}}^\top$$

# Taubin's Approximation

$$\mathbf{t_{vu}} := \frac{(I_{3\times 3} - \mathbf{n_v}\mathbf{n_v}^\top(\mathbf{u}-\mathbf{v})}{\|(I_{3\times 3} - \mathbf{n_v}\mathbf{n_v}^\top(\mathbf{u}-\mathbf{v})\|_2}$$

$$\kappa_{\mathbf{vu}} := \frac{2\mathbf{n_v}^\top(\mathbf{u}-\mathbf{v})}{\|\mathbf{u}-\mathbf{v}\|_2^2}$$

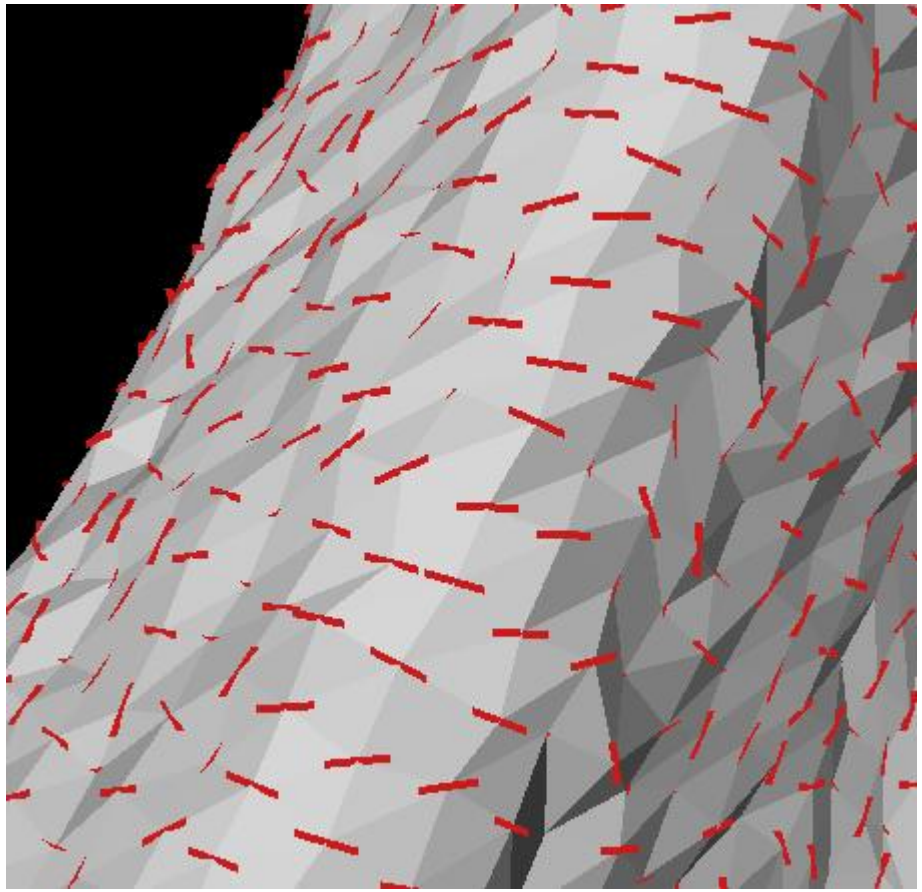



Divided difference approximation

$$M_{\mathbf{v}} \approx \sum_{\mathbf{u}\sim\mathbf{v}} w_{\mathbf{vu}}\kappa_{\mathbf{vu}}\mathbf{t_{vu}}\mathbf{t_{vu}}^\top$$

Area-based weighting

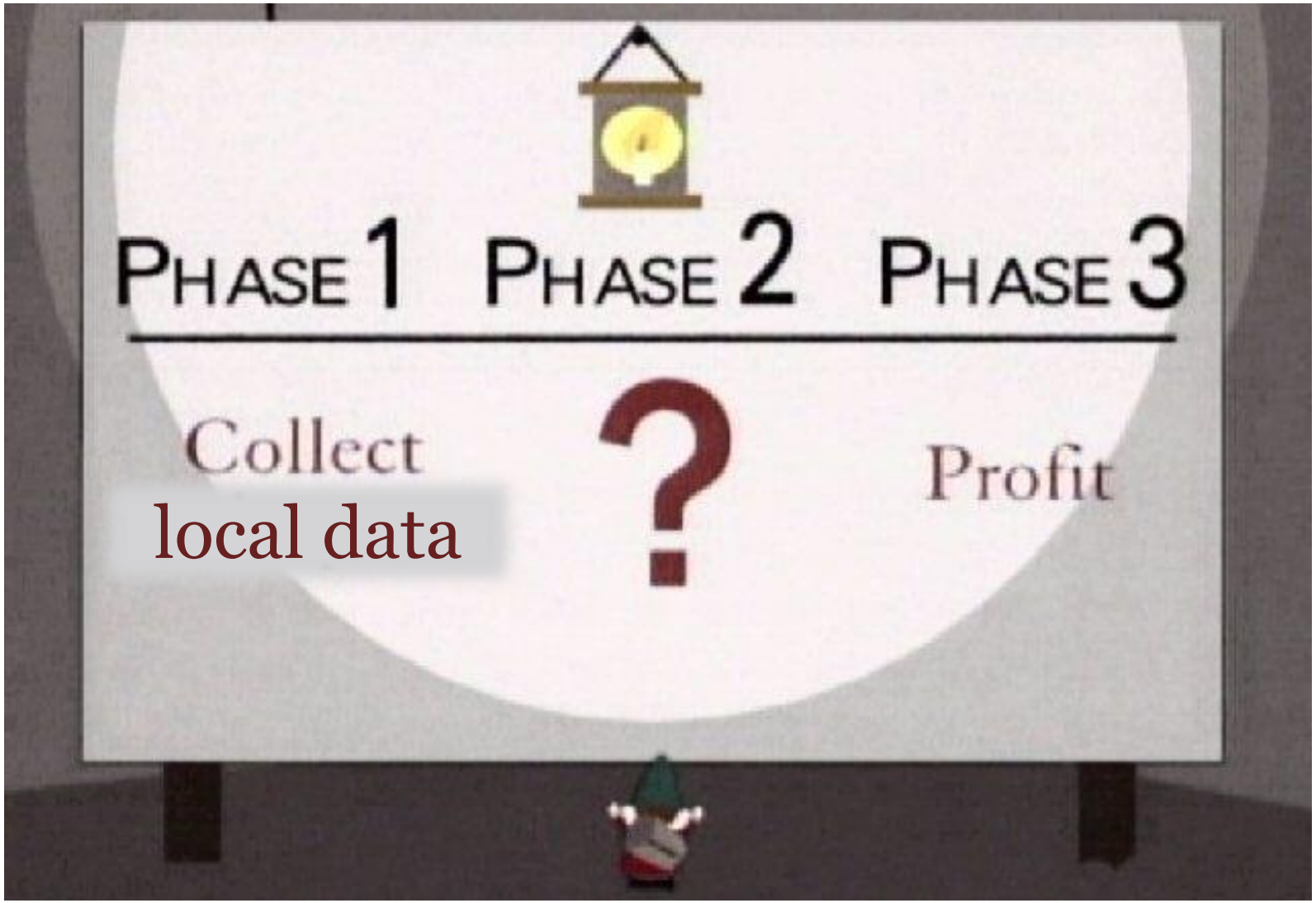
# Problem



http://iristown.engr.utk.edu/~koschan/paper/CVPR01.pdf

**Local estimates are noisy**

# General Strategy




⚠ WARNING
ENGINEERING DISGUISED AS MATH

# Main Take-Away

**Use application to motivate choice of curvature.**

Simulation, smoothing, analysis, meshing,
nonphotorealistic rendering, …

# Another Example

## Estimating Curvatures and Their Derivatives on Triangle Meshes

Szymon Rusinkiewicz
Princeton University

3DPVT '04

### Abstract

*The computation of curvature and other differential properties of surfaces is essential for many techniques in analysis and rendering. We present a finite-differences approach for estimating curvatures on irregular triangle meshes that may be thought of as an extension of a common method for estimating per-vertex normals. The technique is efficient in space and time, and results in significantly fewer outlier estimates while more broadly offering accuracy comparable to existing methods. It generalizes naturally to computing derivatives of curvature and higher-order surface differentials.*

### 1 Introduction

As the acquisition and use of sampled 3D geometry become more widespread, 3D models are increasingly becoming the focus of analysis and signal processing techniques previously applied to data types such as audio, images, and video. A key component of algorithms such as feature detection, filtering, and indexing, when applied to both geometry and other data

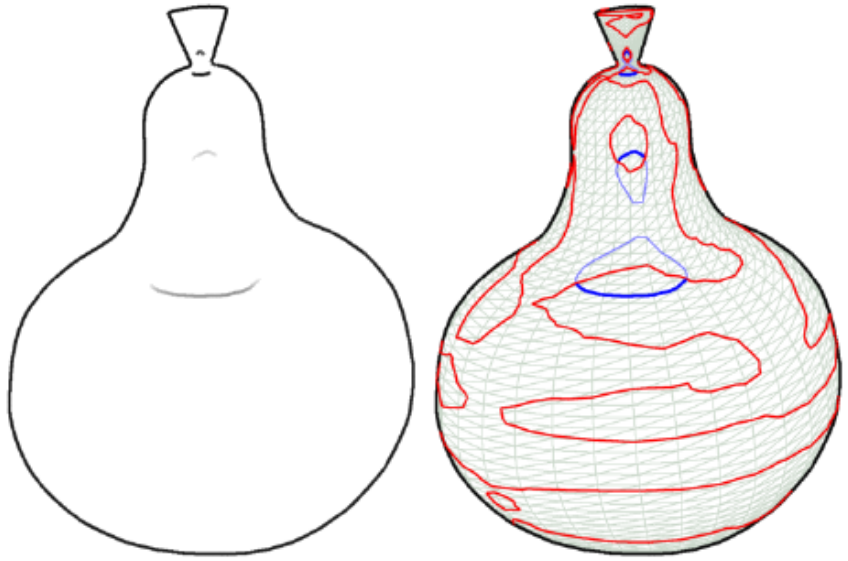


***Figure 1: Left:*** *suggestive contours for line drawings* [DeCarlo et al. 2003] *are a recent example of a driving application for the estimation of curvatures and derivatives of curvature.* ***Right:*** *suggestive contours are drawn along the zeros of curvature in the view direction, shown here in blue, but only where the derivative of curvature in the view direction is positive (the curvature deriva-*

# Second Fundamental Form Matrix

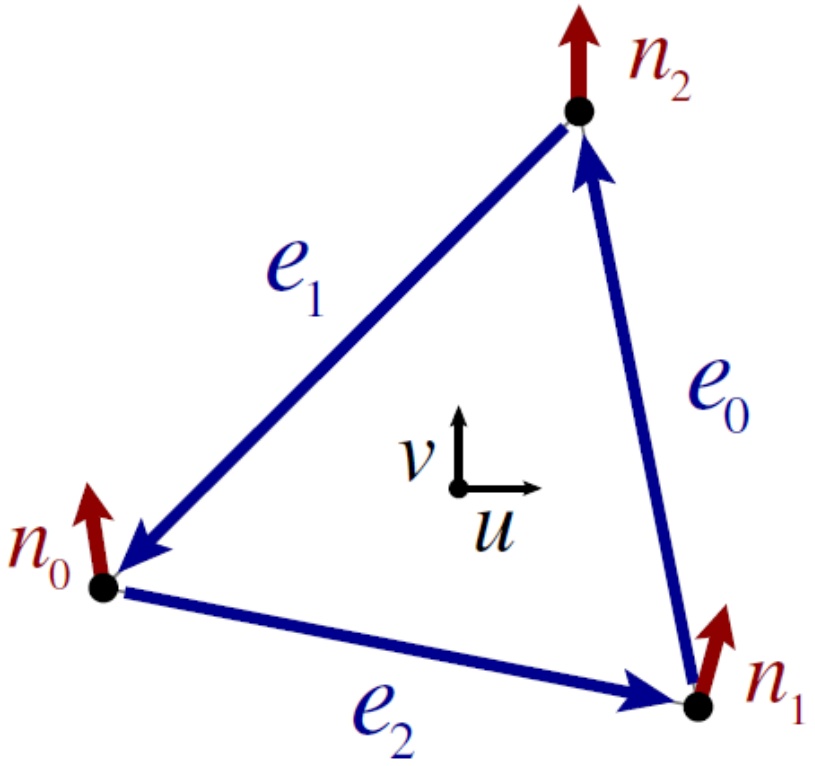
$$\mathbb{I}_{\mathbf{p}} = \begin{pmatrix} d\mathbf{n}_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{u}) \cdot \mathbf{u} & d\mathbf{n}_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{v}) \cdot \mathbf{u} \\ d\mathbf{n}_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{u}) \cdot \mathbf{v} & d\mathbf{n}_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{v}) \cdot \mathbf{v} \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{w} = c^1\mathbf{u} + c^2\mathbf{v}$$

$$\Longrightarrow \quad \mathbb{I}_{\mathbf{p}} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} c^1 \\ c^2 \end{pmatrix} = d\mathbf{n}_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{w})$$

Assume *u*, *v* are orthogonal

# Finite Difference Per-Face




$$\mathbf{II}\begin{pmatrix} e_0 \cdot u \\ e_0 \cdot v \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} (n_2 - n_1) \cdot u \\ (n_2 - n_1) \cdot v \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{II}\begin{pmatrix} e_1 \cdot u \\ e_1 \cdot v \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} (n_0 - n_2) \cdot u \\ (n_0 - n_2) \cdot v \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{II}\begin{pmatrix} e_2 \cdot u \\ e_2 \cdot v \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} (n_1 - n_0) \cdot u \\ (n_1 - n_0) \cdot v \end{pmatrix}$$

Figure from the paper

## Per-triangle II

# Average for Per-Vertex

- **Rotate** tangent plane about cross product of normals
- **Average** using Voronoi weights

# Completely Different Formula

## Consistent Computation of First- and Second-Order Differential Quantities for Surface Meshes

Xiangmin Jiao*
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Stony Brook University

Hongyuan Zha†
College of Computing
Georgia Institute of Technology

**Abstract**

Differential quantities, including normals, curvatures, principal directions, and associated matrices, play a fundamental role in geo-

ible numerical framework to estimate the derivatives of the height function based on local polynomial fittings formulated as weighted least squares approximations. We also propose an iterative fitting

often require *ad hoc* fixes to avoid crashing of the code, and their effects on the accuracy of the applications are difficult to analyze.

The ultimate goal of this work is to investigate a mathematically

give the explicit formulas for the transformations of the gradient and Hessian under a rotation of the coordinate system. These transformations can be obtained without forming the shape operator and the associated computation of its eigenvalues or eigenvectors. We

**Theorem 3** *The mean and Gaussian curvature of the height function* $f(\boldsymbol{u}) : \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ *are*

$$\kappa_H = \frac{tr(\boldsymbol{H})}{2\ell} - \frac{(\nabla f)^T \boldsymbol{H} (\nabla f)}{2\ell^3}, \text{ and } \kappa_G = \frac{det(\boldsymbol{H})}{\ell^4}. \qquad (16)$$

# Conserved Quantity Approach

## Discrete Differential-Geometry Operators for Triangulated 2-Manifolds

Mark Meyer[1], Mathieu Desbrun[1,2], Peter Schröder[1], and Alan H. Barr[1]

[1] Caltech
[2] USC

Visualization and Math. III

**Summary.** This paper proposes a unified and consistent set of flexible tools to approximate important geometric attributes, including normal vectors and curvatures on arbitrary triangle meshes. We present a consistent derivation of these first and second order differential properties using *averaging Voronoi cells* and the mixed Finite-Element/Finite-Volume method, and compare them to existing formulations. Building upon previous work in discrete geometry, these operators are closely related to the continuous case, guaranteeing an appropriate extension from the continuous to the discrete setting: they respect most intrinsic properties of the continuous differential operators. We show that these estimates are optimal in accuracy under mild smoothness conditions, and demonstrate their numerical quality. We also present applications of these operators, such as mesh smoothing, enhancement, and quality checking, and show results of denoising in higher dimensions, such as for tensor images.

*Recall:*

# Structure preservation

[**struhk**-cher pre-zur-**vey**-sh*uh*n]:

Keeping properties from the continuous abstraction exactly true in a discretization.



# Gauss-Bonnet Theorem

$$\int_M K\,dA + \int_{\partial M} k_g\,ds = 2\pi\chi(\mathcal{M})$$

Gaussian curvature

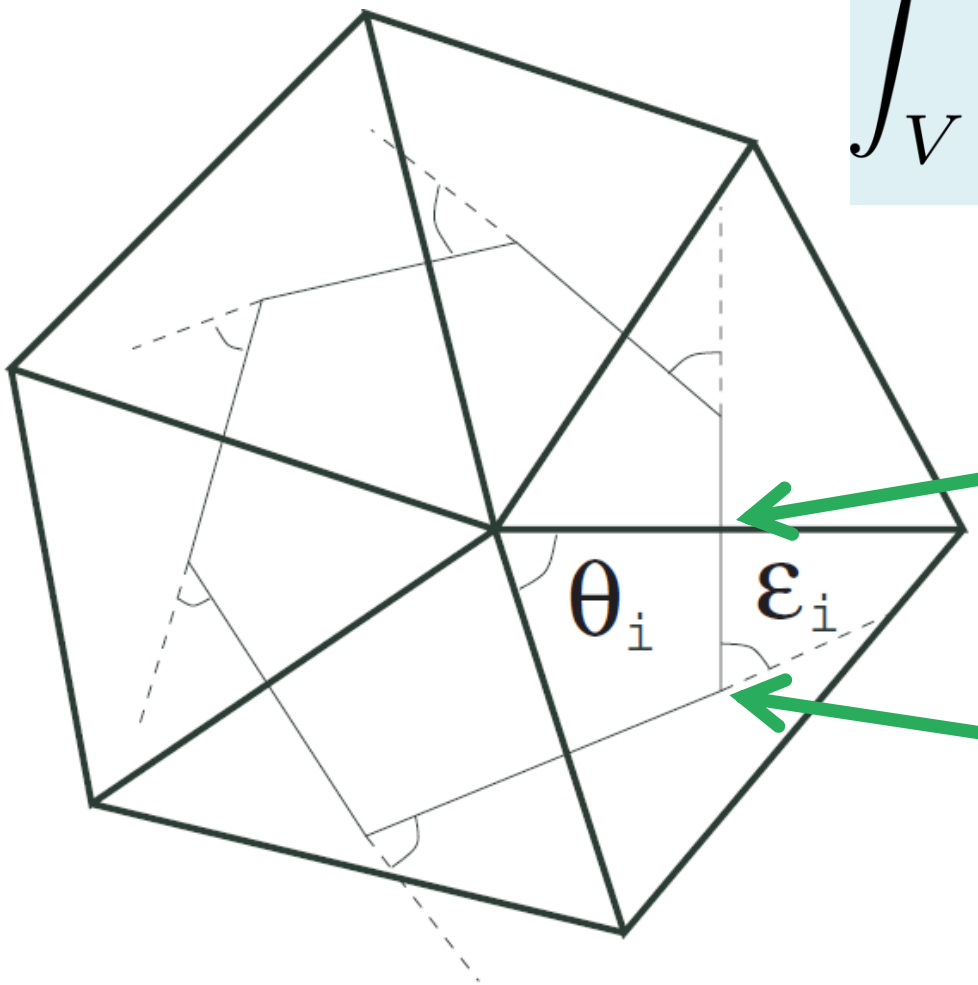
Geodesic curvature (curvature projected on tangent plane)

2-2g-n

\omit{proof}

# For Polygonal Voronoi Cells

$$\int_V K \, dA = 2\pi - \sum_j \varepsilon_j$$




Change is in normal direction

Turning angle integrated curvature

Figure from the paper

# Simplification

$$\int_V K \, dA = 2\pi - \sum_j \theta_j$$

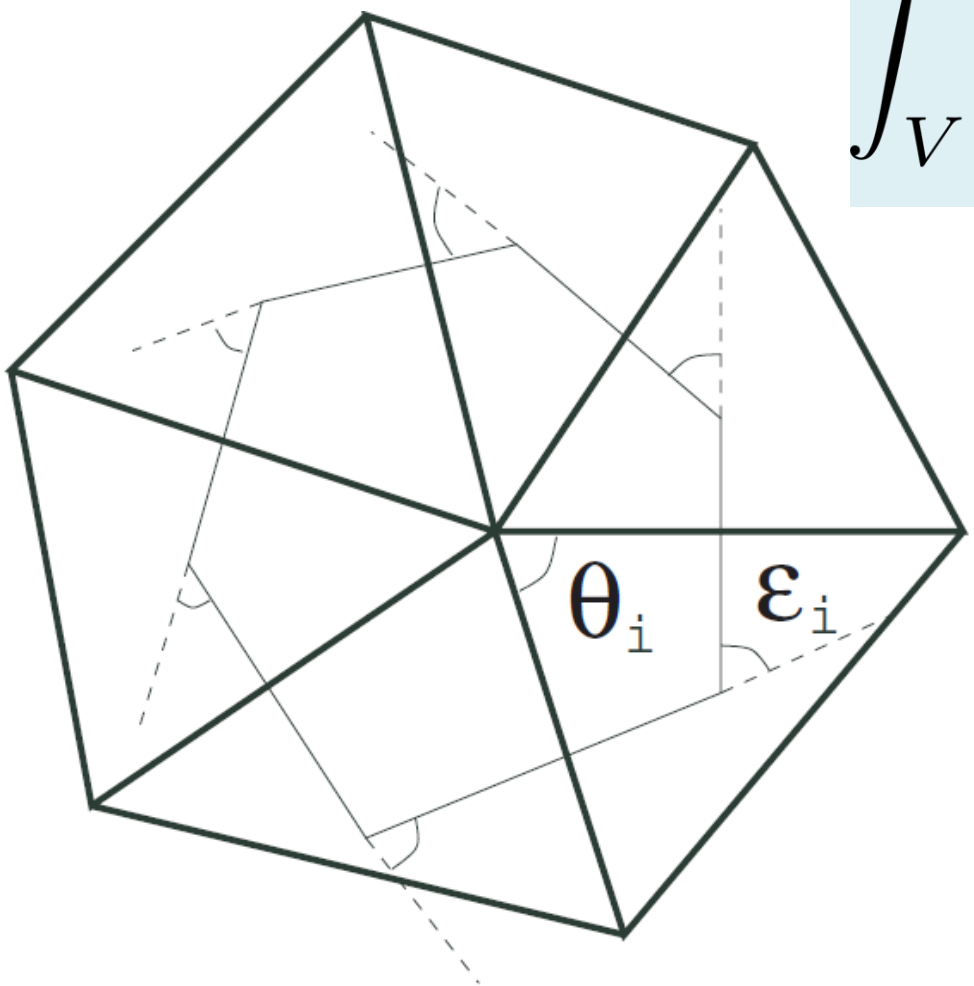



Figure from the paper

# Flip Things Backward

## DEFINITION:

**Gaussian curvature integrated over Voronoi region *V* is given by**

$$\int_V K \, dA = 2\pi - \sum_j \theta_j$$

**Divide by area for curvature estimate**

*Recall:*

# Euler Characteristic

$$V - E + F := \chi$$

$$\chi = 2 - 2g$$



$g = 0$



$g = 1$



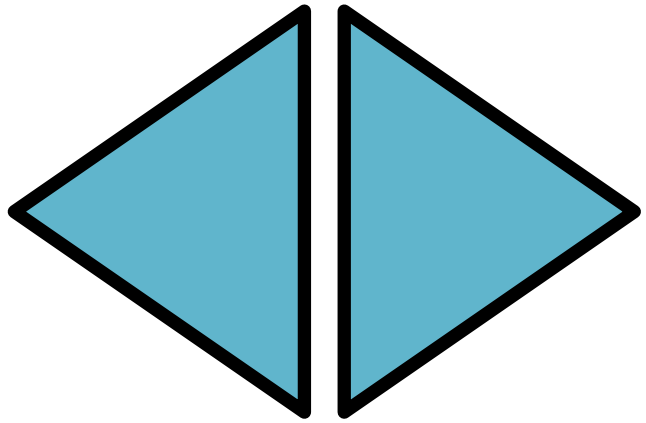
$g = 2$

*Recall:*

# Consequences for Triangle Meshes

$$V - E + F := \chi$$

**"Each edge is adjacent to two faces. Each face has three edges."**



$$2E = 3F$$

**Closed mesh: Easy estimates!**

# Discrete Gauss-Bonnet

$$\int_M K\, dA = \sum_i \int_{V_i} K\, dA$$

**Partition the surface**

# Discrete Gauss-Bonnet

$$\int_M K\,dA = \sum_i \int_{V_i} K\,dA$$

$$= \sum_i \left( 2\pi - \sum_j \theta_{ij} \right)$$

**Apply our definition**

# Discrete Gauss-Bonnet

$$\int_M K\,dA = \sum_i \int_{V_i} K\,dA$$

$$= \sum_i \left( 2\pi - \sum_j \theta_{ij} \right)$$

$$= 2\pi V - \sum_{ij} \theta_{ij}$$

**Pull out constants**

# Discrete Gauss-Bonnet

$$\int_M K\,dA = \sum_i \int_{V_i} K\,dA$$

$$= \sum_i \left( 2\pi - \sum_j \theta_{ij} \right)$$

$$= 2\pi V - \sum_{ij} \theta_{ij}$$

$$= 2\pi V - \pi F$$

**Consider sum over triangles**

# Discrete Gauss-Bonnet

$$\int_M K\,dA = \sum_i \int_{V_i} K\,dA$$

$$= \sum_i \left( 2\pi - \sum_j \theta_{ij} \right)$$

$$= 2\pi V - \sum_{ij} \theta_{ij}$$

$$= 2\pi V - \pi F$$

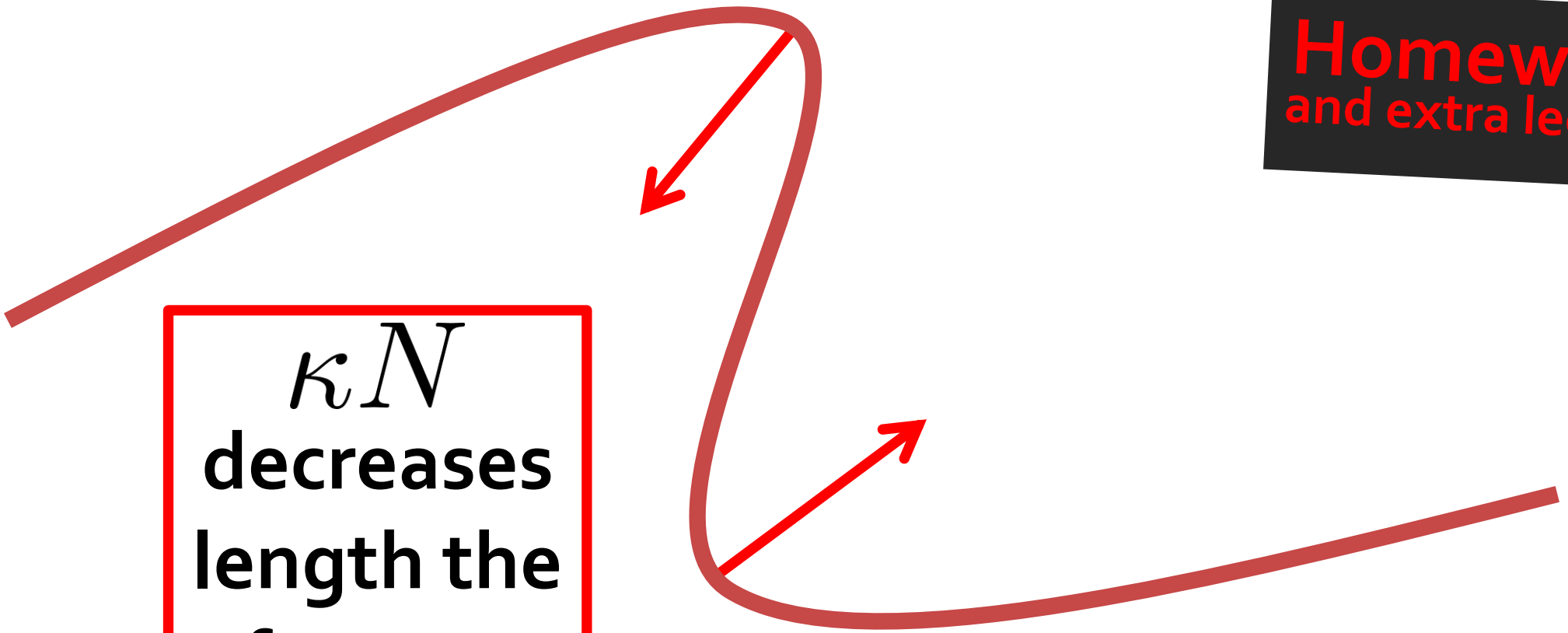
$$= \pi(2V - F)$$

$$= 2\pi\chi$$

**By definition**

<qed/>

# *Recall:* Alternative Definition



$\kappa N$ decreases length the fastest.

**Homework**
and extra lecture

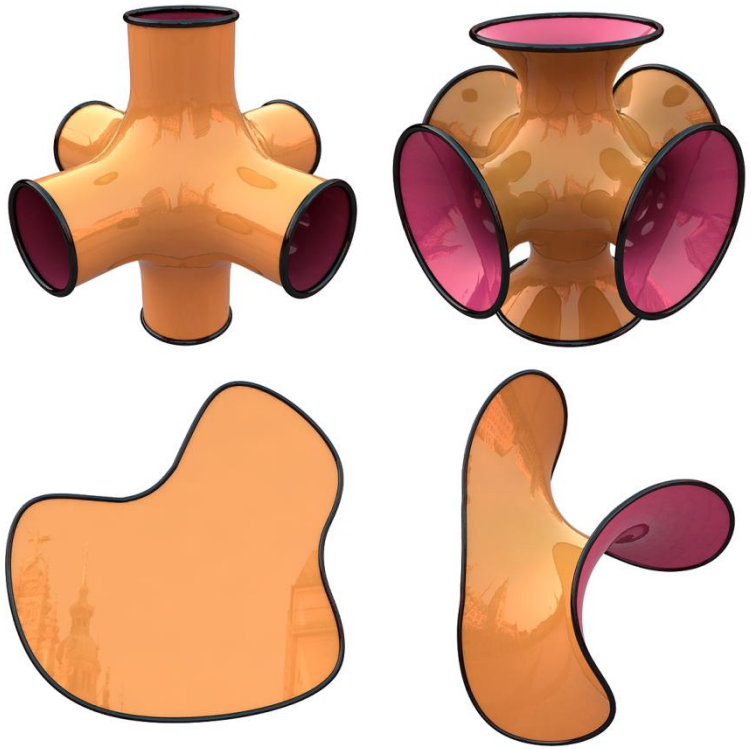
# Mean Curvature Normal

*Derived in extra lecture video.*

$$E(\mathcal{M}) = \text{Area}(\mathcal{M})$$

$$\text{“}\nabla E(\mathbf{p})\text{”} = H\mathbf{n}$$

**“Variational derivative”**

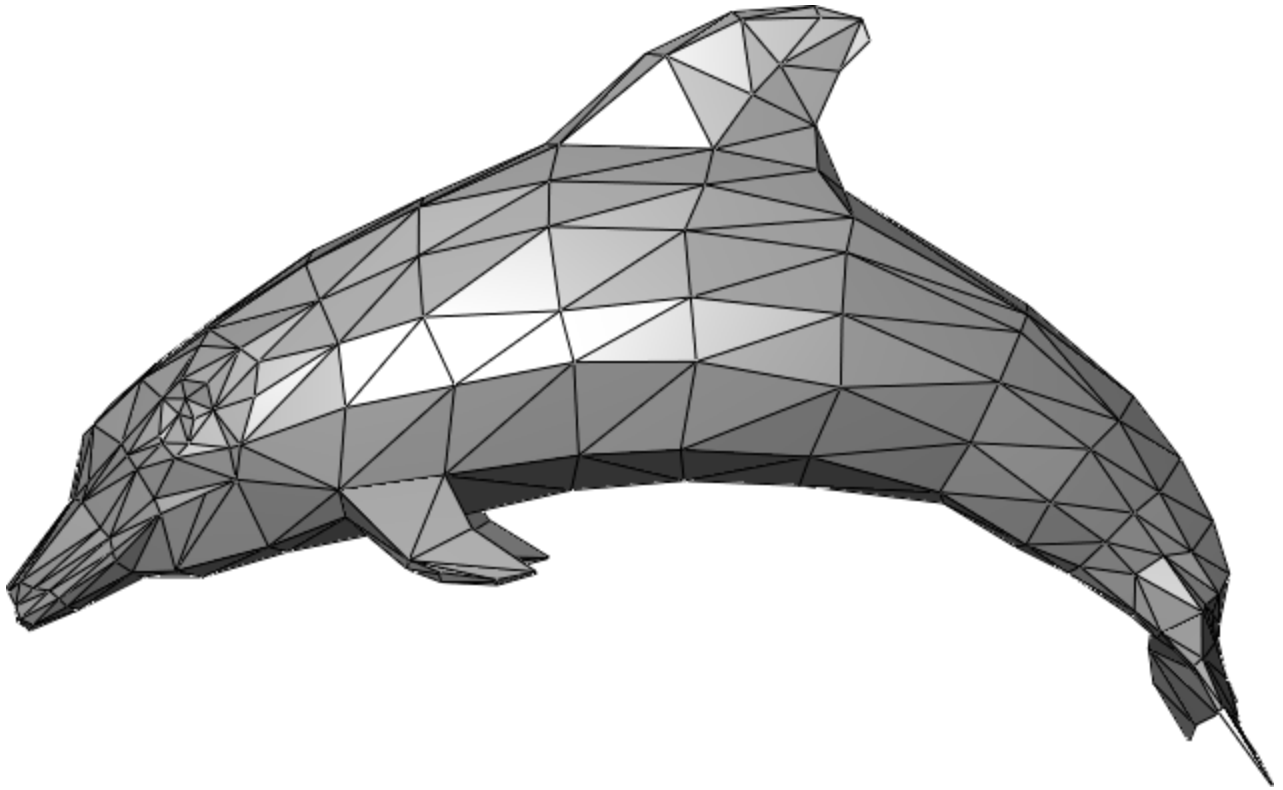


$$\nabla E(\mathbf{p}) \equiv \mathbf{0} \;\; \forall p \in \text{int}\, \mathcal{M}$$

**Minimal surfaces**

Image courtesy K. Crane

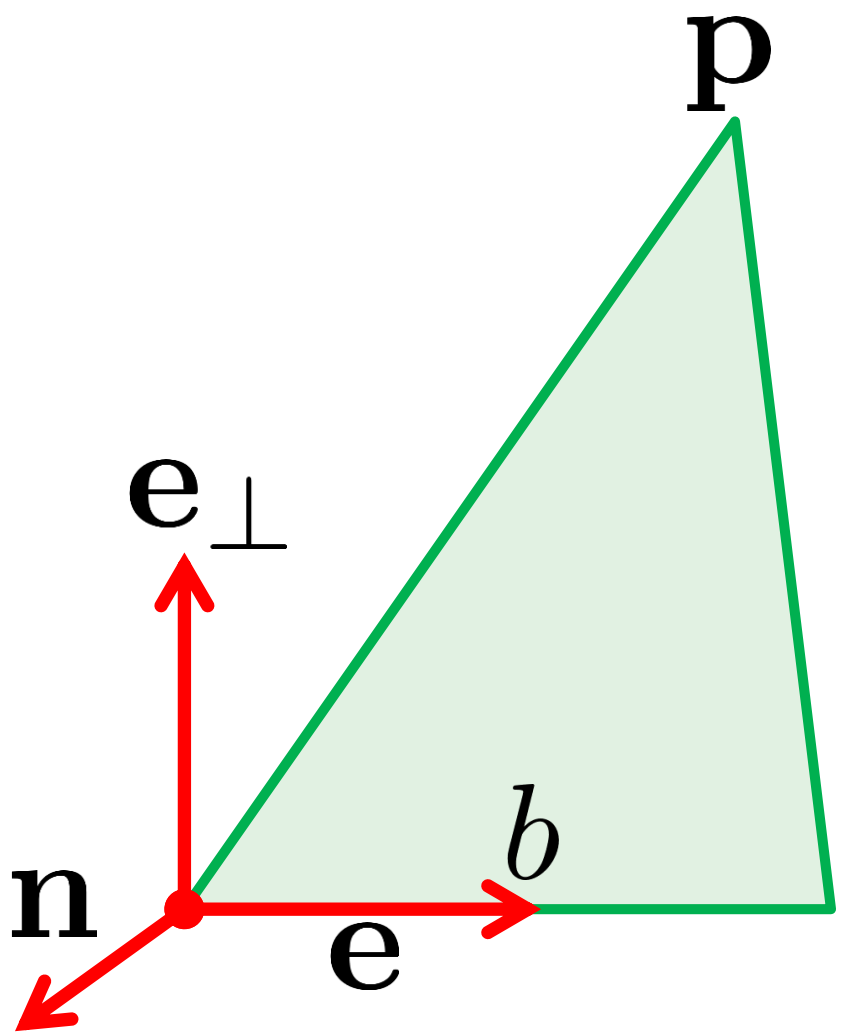
# Area Functional for Meshes



$$\text{Area} : \mathbb{R}^{3V} \to \mathbb{R}$$

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fb/Dolphin_triangle_mesh.png

# Single Triangle




$$\mathbf{p} = p_n\mathbf{n} + p_e\mathbf{e} + p_\perp\mathbf{e}_\perp$$

$$A(\mathbf{p}) = \frac{1}{2}b\sqrt{p_n^2 + p_\perp^2}$$

As a function of $p$

# Single Triangle: Derivatives

$$\mathbf{p} = p_n \mathbf{n} + p_e \mathbf{e} + p_\perp \mathbf{e}_\perp$$

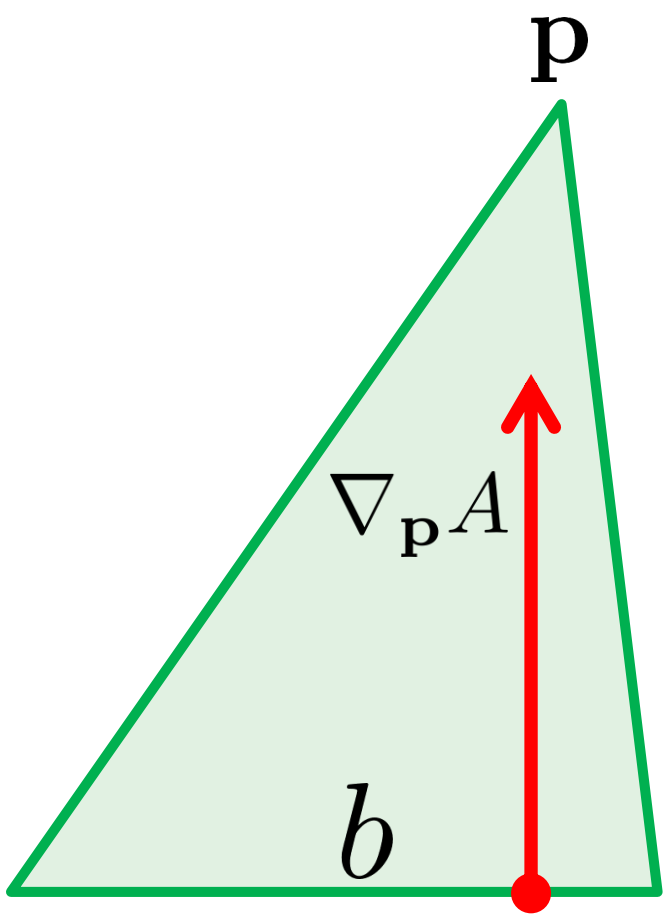
$$A = \frac{1}{2} b \sqrt{p_n^2 + p_\perp^2}$$

$$\frac{\partial A}{\partial p_e} = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial A}{\partial p_n} = \frac{b\overset{0}{\cancel{p_n}}}{2\sqrt{p_n^2 + p_\perp^2}} = 0 \Longrightarrow \nabla_{\mathbf{p}} A = \frac{1}{2} b \mathbf{e}_\perp$$

$$\frac{\partial A}{\partial p_\perp} = \frac{b p_\perp}{2\sqrt{p_n^2 + p_\perp^2}}$$

# Single Triangle: Complete

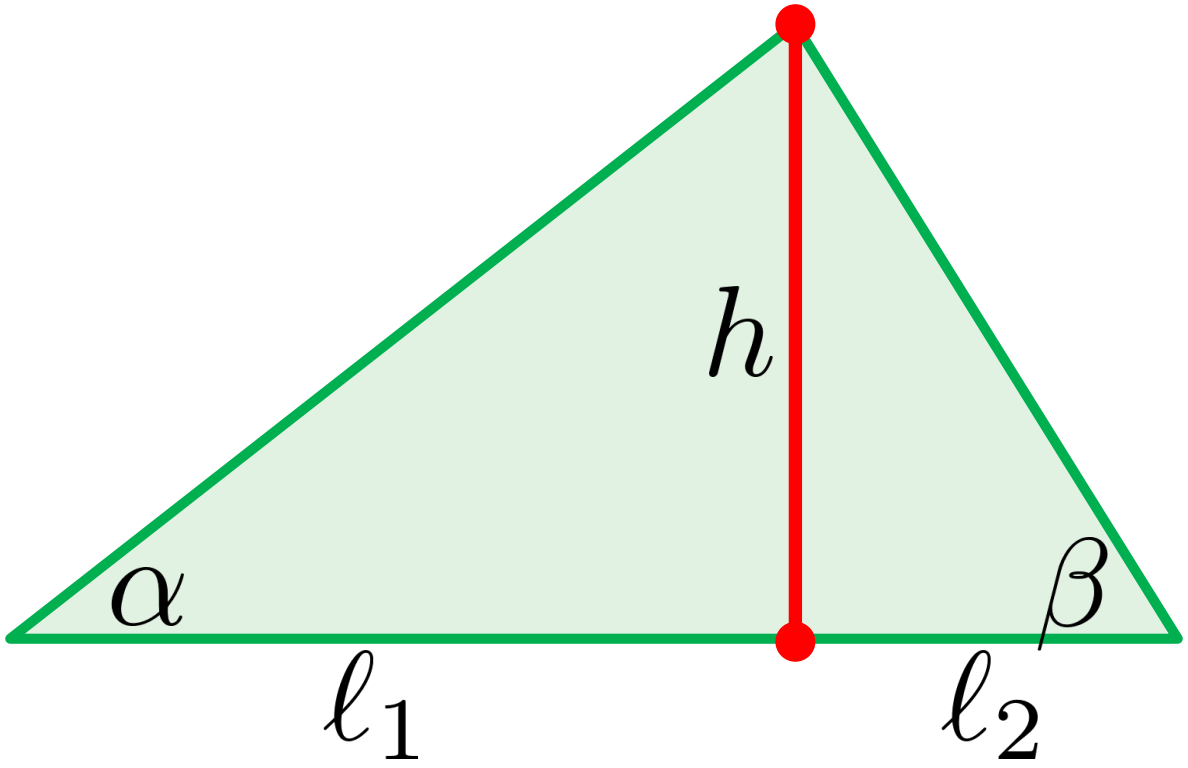



$$\mathbf{p} = p_n \mathbf{n} + p_e \mathbf{e} + p_\perp \mathbf{e}_\perp$$

$$A(\mathbf{p}) = \frac{1}{2} b \sqrt{p_n^2 + p_\perp^2}$$

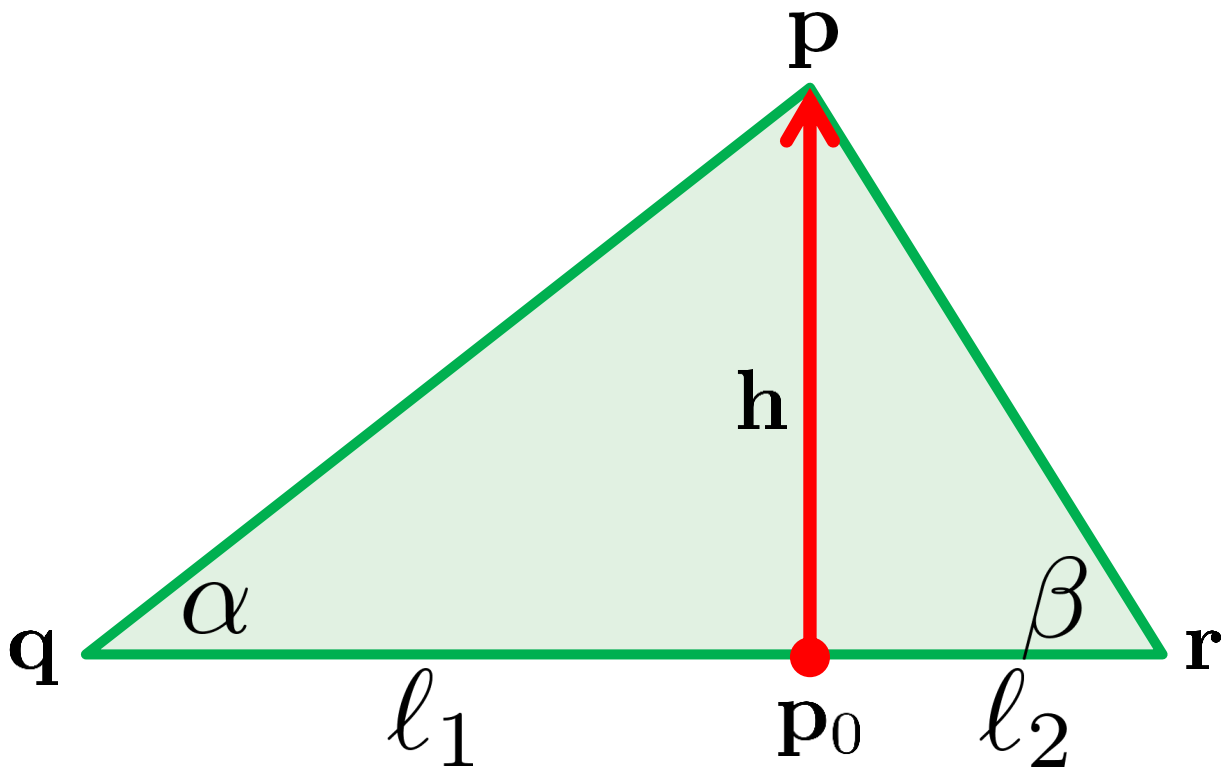
$$\nabla_{\mathbf{p}} A = \frac{1}{2} b \mathbf{e}_\perp$$

# Ratio of Base to Height



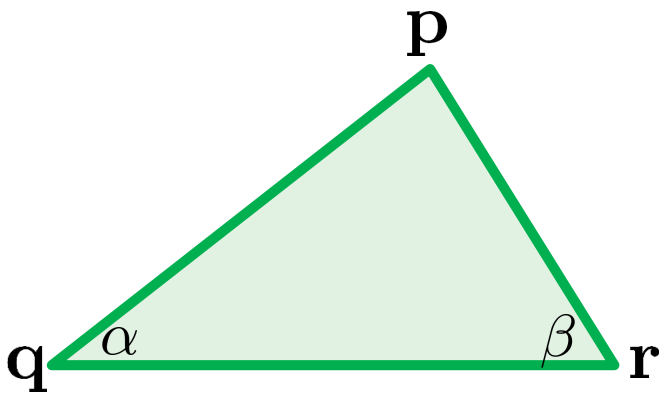

$$\frac{b}{h} = \frac{\ell_1 + \ell_2}{h} = \frac{\ell_1}{h} + \frac{\ell_2}{h} = \cot\alpha + \cot\beta$$

# Height Vector




$$\mathbf{h} = \mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}_0 = \mathbf{p} - \frac{\mathbf{r}\cot\alpha + \mathbf{q}\cot\beta}{\cot\alpha + \cot\beta}$$

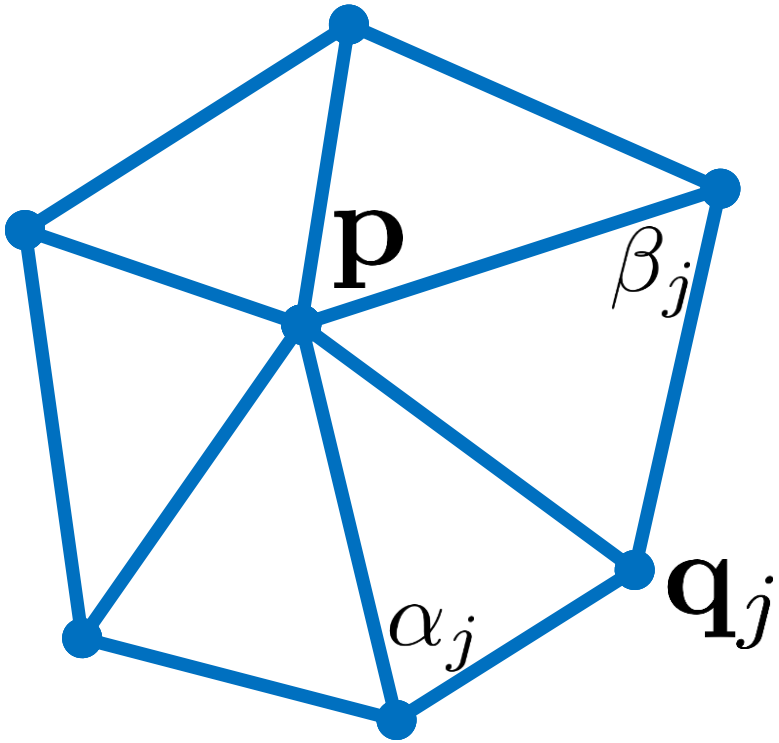
# Alternative Gradient Formula




$$
\begin{aligned}
\nabla_{\mathbf{p}} A &= \frac{1}{2} b \mathbf{e}_{\perp} \\
&= \frac{1}{2} \frac{b}{\|\mathbf{h}\|_2} \mathbf{h} \\
&= \frac{1}{2} (\cot\alpha + \cot\beta) \left[ \mathbf{p} - \frac{\mathbf{r}\cot\alpha + \mathbf{q}\cot\beta}{\cot\alpha + \cot\beta} \right] \\
&= \frac{1}{2} ((\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{r})\cot\alpha + (\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{q})\cot\beta)
\end{aligned}
$$

# Summing Around a Vertex

$$\nabla_{\mathbf{p}} A = \frac{1}{2} \sum_j (\cot \alpha_j + \cot \beta_j)(\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{q}_j)$$




$$\nabla_{\mathbf{p}} A = \frac{1}{2}((\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{r}) \cot \alpha + (\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{q}) \cot \beta)$$

**Vanishes as you refine the mesh**

# Integrated Mean Curvature Normal

## DEFINITION:

**The discrete mean curvature normal integrated over region *V* is given by**

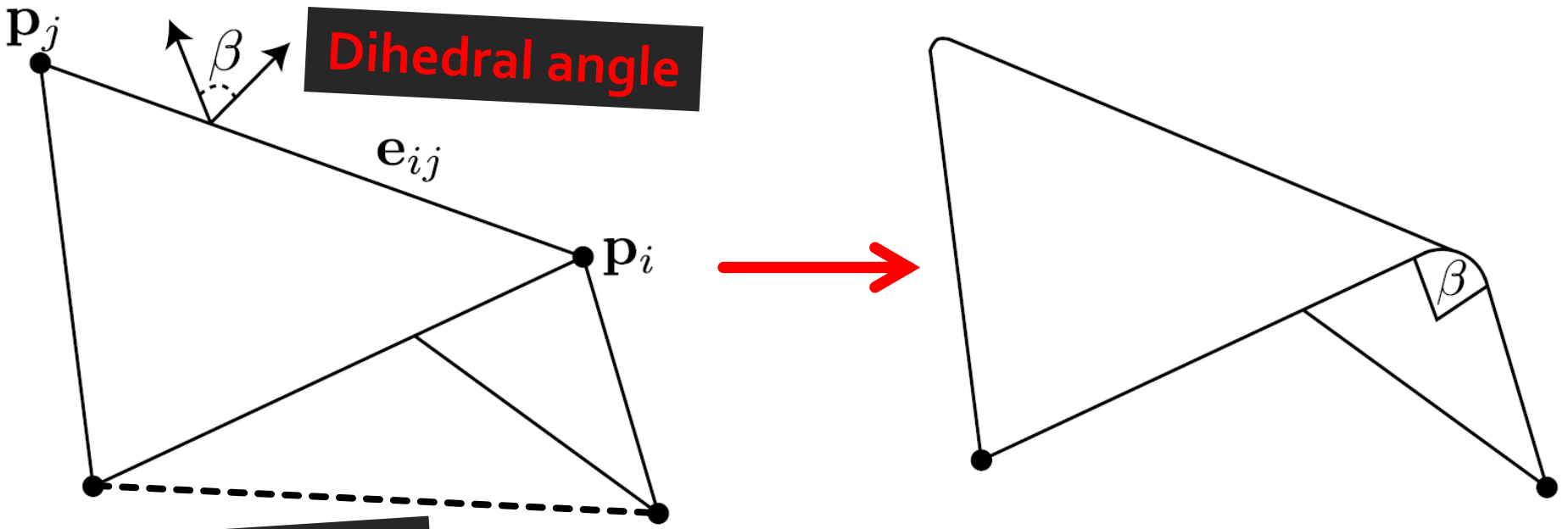
$$\nabla_{\mathbf{p}} A = \frac{1}{2} \sum_j (\cot \alpha_j + \cot \beta_j)(\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{q}_j)$$

**Divide by area for curvature estimate**

# Pipeline

- Compute integrated *H*, *K*
- Divide by area of cell for estimated value

# Another Mean Curvature




Same vertices, lower curvature

$$\int_B H = \frac{1}{2}\beta\|\mathbf{e}\|$$

J.A. Bærentzen et al., *Guide to Computational Geometry Processing* (2012)

**Used for triangulation applications**

# Tuned for Variational Applications

## Computing discrete shape operators on general meshes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**Abstract**

*Discrete curvature and shape operators, which c… out dir…*
*are essential in a variety of applications: simulat… nal obj…*
*geometric data processing. In many of these appl… l by me…*
*approaches for formulating curvature operators … highly…*
*expensive methods used in engineering applicati… techni…*
*computer graphics.*

*We propose a simple and efficient formulation for … al prob…*
*degrees of freedom associated with normals. On… its sim…*
*curvature operators commonly used in graphics; … umber …*
*and produces consistent results for different types …*


Cotan



Theirs



# Tuned for Robustness

Eurographics Symposium on Geometry Processing (2007)
Alexander Belyaev, Michael Garland (Editors)

## Robust statistical estimation of curvature on discretized surfaces

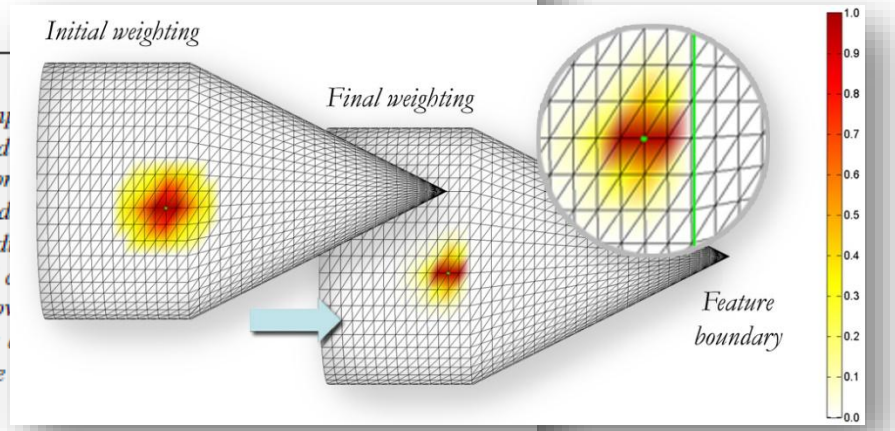
Evangelos Kalogerakis, Patricio Simari, Derek Nowrouzezahrai and Karan Singh

Dynamic Graphics Project, Computer Science Department, University of Toronto

**Abstract**

*A robust statistics approach to curvature estimation on discretely samp*
*point clouds, is presented. The method exhibits accuracy, stability and*
*sampled surfaces with irregular configurations. Within an M-estimatio*
*noise and structured outliers by sampling normal variations in an ad*
*each point. The algorithm can be used to reliably derive higher order d*
*surface normals while preserving the fine features of the normal and*
*with state-of-the-art curvature estimation methods and shown to impro*
*across ground truth test surfaces under varying tessellation densities*
*noise. Finally, the benefits of a robust statistical estimation of curvature*
*applications of mesh segmentation and suggestive contour rendering.*

Categories and Subject Descriptors (according to ACM CCS): I.3.5 [Computational Geometry and Object Modeling]: Geometric algorithms, languages, and systems; curve, surface, solid, and object representations.



# Alternative Strategies

- **Locally fit** a smooth surface
  What type of surface?  How to fit?

- Different **formula**
  Function of curvature?  Where on mesh?
  Convergence of approximation?

- **Learn** curvature computation
  Tune for application?  Training data?

# Practical Advice

**Try as many as you can.**

**Most are easy to implement!**

# Discrete Surface Curvature

Justin Solomon

6.8410: Shape Analysis

Fall 2026

