Graphical Analysis in Polar Coordinates

Douglas Meade, Ronda Sanders, and Xian Wu
Department of Mathematics

Overview

One of the most challenging aspects to polar coordinates is being able to visualize the graph of a polar function, $r = f(\theta)$. An animation showing exactly how the curve is traced out as the angle moves through its domain is even more useful than a static graph of the function.

The simplest polar plots can be created with the `plot` command — with one additional argument. To create an animation in polar coordinates it is easier to work with a *parametric form* of the equation. (Parametric curves will be discussed in more detail in Calculus III.)

Related Course Material/Preparation

- §11.1.
- Know the basic conversions between rectangular and polar coordinates:

$$r = \sqrt{x^2+y^2} \qquad x = r\cos(\theta)$$
$$\tan\theta = \frac{y}{x} \qquad y = r\sin(\theta)$$

- Remember that all angles need to be specified in radians.
- Be prepared to create some surprising plots that would be almost impossible to create in rectangular coordinates.

Maple Essentials

- The *PolarCurveID* and *Basic14Polar* maplets are available from the course website (last column in Lab 14):

  `http://www.math.sc.edu/calclab/142L-S07/labs`

- New Maple commands introduced in this lab include:

Command	Description
`arctan( y, x )`	two-argument version of the inverse tangent this is essentially equivalent to `arctan(y/x)` except that the signs of `x` and `y` are used to extend the range from $(-\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{\pi}{2})$ to $(-\pi, \pi)$; this modification makes the two-argument arctan ideal for converting from rectangular to polar coordinates
`plot( ..., coords=polar);`	plot a function in polar coordinates the most common usage is: `> R :=t-> 2*cos(4*t)` `> plot( R(t), t=0..2*Pi, coords=polar );`
`animatecurve`	animated sketch of a curve e.g., the limaçon $r = 1 + 3\sin(\theta)$ could be animated as follows: `> R :=t-> 1 + 3*sin( t );` `> animatecurve([R(t),t,t=0..2*Pi], coords=polar);` **Note:** *Execute* `with( plots ):` *before using* `animatecurve`.
`unassign`	remove assignments from a Maple name to prevent the name from evaluating to its value, it is necessary to enclose each name in single quotes, e.g., `> unassign( 'x', 'y', 'r' );`

Activities

1. Convert the following points to polar coordinates: (2,0), (3,3), (0,2), (-2,3), (-2,-5), (0,-3), (1,$-\sqrt{3}$). **Note:** *Compare the angles obtained with* `arctan(y/x)` *and* `arctan(y,x)`*.*
2. Create plots of the unit circle, $x^2 + y^2 = 1$, in both rectangular and polar coordinates. **Note:** *In which coordinate system is it easier to plot the unit circle?*
3. For each of the curves below:
   - Find a parameter interval that traces the curve <u>exactly</u> once.
   - Plot the curve in polar coordinates.
   - Animate the sketching of the curve.
     Hint: *A polar function $r = f(\theta)$ can be written in parametric form as $r = f(t)$, $\theta = t$.*
     Note: *Optional arguments to the* `animatecurve` *command include:*
     - `frames=`*num creates an animation with num frames; the default number of frames is 16.*
     - `numpoints=`*num instructs Maple to use num points in each frame of an animation; the default number of points is 50.*

(i)	$r = 2 + \sin(\theta)$	(ii)	$r = \cos(4\theta)$	(iii)	$r = 3(1 - \cos(\theta))$
(iv)	$r = \sin\left(\frac{\theta}{5}\right)$	(v)	$r = \sin(\theta) + \cos\left(\frac{\theta}{3}\right)$	(vi)	$r = 2 + \sin\left(\frac{5\theta}{3}\right)$
(vii)	$r = \ln(\theta)$	(viii)	$r = \frac{\theta}{2}$	(ix)	$r = 1 + (\cos(\theta))^3$
(x)	$r = (\cos(\theta))^2$	(xi)	$r^2 = \cos(2\theta)$		

4. The polar function $r = e^{\cos(\theta)} - 2\cos(4\theta) + \left(\sin\left(\frac{\theta}{4}\right)\right)^3$ is called the "butterfly curve".
   (a) Find a parameter interval that traces this curve <u>exactly</u> once.
   (b) Plot or animate the curve.

Assignment

- There is no assignment this week but you need to complete an end-of-course survey. Your TA has instructions for turning in the survey.
- You have just completed the last math-142 lab. Congratulations and have a great break!