

A Plane Wave Expansion of Spherical Wave Functions for Modal Analysis of Guided Wave Structures and Scatterers

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Abstract—A new finite plane wave series expansion for spherical wave functions of the first kind is presented in this paper. The formulation converts the spherical wave function described in the spherical coordinate system into a series of plane wave functions represented in the Cartesian coordinate system. The series expansion will be very useful in modal analysis of three dimensional guided wave structures and scatterers containing planar boundary surfaces. For a given range of orders m and degree n and for a region with $|\vec{r}| < R$, the same set of plane waves can be used. The theory is numerically verified for a wide range of parameters, showing its fast convergence characteristics. The plane wave expansions of the vector multipole fields can also be obtained.

Index Terms—Electromagnetic theory, guided waves, modal analysis, scattering, waveguide.

I. INTRODUCTION

SPHERICAL harmonic wave functions are canonical solutions of the Helmholtz equation in spherical coordinates. They have been well-understood [1]–[3] and widely used in analyzing scattering problems as well as microwave devices consisting of curved spherical surfaces.

In solving a practical electromagnetic problem one must frequently resort to some form of series expansion. The nature of the expansion basis functions will be governed by the size of the object with respect to the wavelength of interest and the boundary shapes. The sensible choice for the basis functions is to use the wave harmonic modal functions in the coordinate system that best fits the boundary shapes. This is the way in which Mie considered the diffraction of a plane wave by a sphere [4] using spherical harmonic wave functions. However, in most practical problems, it is not possible to restrict the boundary of a scatterer to a single coordinate system and one often uses numerical techniques to solve such problems.

Electromagnetic modal analysis has been widely used in solving guided wave problems. The solutions provided by the modal analysis are analytical and therefore are more efficient and accurate than numerical techniques. Recently, the authors of this paper proposed the theory of the finite plane-wave series expansion, in which circular cylindrical wave basis functions

were expanded as a finite series of plane wave functions. The theory has been used for solving many guided wave problems such as arbitrarily shaped E- and H-plane waveguide two dimensional (2-D) discontinuities consisting of piecewise planar and cylindrical boundaries without the need of numerical integration [5]–[7].

A question arises when an attempt is made to solve a 3-D guided wave problem using modal analysis, such as the modal analysis of a waveguide taper or an irregularly shaped cavity: Is there a plane wave series expansion for the spherical wave harmonic functions? In this paper we present the general theory for converting a spherical wave harmonic function of the first kind into a rapidly converging series of plane wave functions. This double series is the discretization of the double integral representation given by Stratton [2, p. 410] and which is much more convenient in the numerical solution of scattering problems, e.g., the plane wave scattering by a perfectly conducting cube [8] and scattering of a double plane waveguide taper. Having had the plane wave series expansion, the electromagnetic fields on a piecewise planar boundary of a 3-D inhomogeneous region can be expressed as a series of plane wave functions which will greatly facilitate the modal analysis of such problems and of the scattering from 3-D surfaces with planar boundaries.

II. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

In this section, we will deduce the transformation from the scalar spherical wave function

$$\Psi_{nm}(r, \theta, \phi) = j_n(kr)P_n^m(\cos\theta)e^{jm\phi} \quad (1)$$

to a series of plane wave functions, where $j_n(x)$ is the spherical Bessel function of the first kind and $P_n^m(x)$ is the associated Legendre function.

It is well known that a plane wave propagating in the direction

$$\hat{k} = \hat{x} \sin \alpha \cos \beta + \hat{y} \sin \alpha \sin \beta + \hat{z} \cos \alpha \quad (2)$$

can be expanded in terms of spherical wave functions as [2]

$$e^{-j\vec{k}\cdot\vec{r}} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-j)^n (2n+1) j_n(kr) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} P_n(\cos\alpha) P_n(\cos\theta) \\ + 2 \sum_{m=1}^n \frac{(n-m)!}{(n+m)!} P_n^m(\cos\alpha) \\ \cdot P_n^m(\cos\theta) \cos(m(\phi-\beta)) \end{array} \right\} \quad (3)$$

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where the observation position vector is defined by

$$\vec{r} = r[\hat{x} \sin \theta \cos \phi + \hat{y} \sin \theta \sin \phi + \hat{z} \cos \theta] = \hat{x}x + \hat{y}y + \hat{z}z \quad (4)$$

Since $\cos(m(\phi - \beta)) = (1/2)[e^{jm\phi - jm\beta} + e^{-jm\phi + jm\beta}]$, it is straightforward to show that (3) can be rewritten as

$$e^{-j\vec{k} \cdot \vec{r}} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-j)^n (2n+1) j_n(kr) \sum_{m=-n}^n \frac{(n-|m|)!}{(n+|m|)!} \cdot \left[P_n^{|m|}(\cos \theta) e^{jm\phi} \right] \left[P_n^{|m|}(\cos \alpha) e^{jm\beta} \right]. \quad (5)$$

Using (1) in (5) we have

$$e^{-j[k_x(\alpha, \beta)x + k_y(\alpha, \beta)y + k_z(\alpha, \beta)z]} = \sum_{n=0}^{\bar{N}} \sum_{m=-n}^n M_{nm}(\alpha, \beta) \bar{\Psi}_{nm}(r, \theta, \phi) \quad (6)$$

where

$$M_{nm}(\alpha, \beta) = (-j)^n (2n+1) \frac{(n-|m|)!}{(n+|m|)!} \left[P_n^{|m|}(\cos \alpha) e^{-jm\beta} \right] \quad (7)$$

and

$$\bar{\Psi}_{nm}(r, \theta, \phi) = j_n(kr) P_n^{|m|}(\cos \theta) e^{jm\phi}. \quad (8)$$

In (6), the fact that $j_n(kr) \approx 0$ when $kr < \bar{N} - N_0$, where N_0 is a small integer relaxation constant for a given range of n, m and r , has been used to truncate the infinite series. \bar{N} can be chosen such that $\bar{N} = \{kR\}_I + N_0$, where R is the maximum value in the range of r and $\{\alpha\}_I$ is the first integer greater than α . Strictly speaking, since $P_n^{-m} = (-1)^m ((n-m)!/(n+m)!)$, the absolute value of m in (7) is not necessary. However, it may provide some convenience in programming.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the following relation holds:

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\bar{N}} \sum_{m=-n}^n (\cdot) = \sum_{m=-\bar{N}}^{\bar{N}} \sum_{n=|m|}^{\bar{N}} (\cdot). \quad (9)$$

Thus, (6) can be expressed as

$$\sum_{m=-\bar{N}}^{\bar{N}} \sum_{n=|m|}^{\bar{N}} (-j)^n (2n+1) \frac{(n-|m|)!}{(n+|m|)!} P_n^{|m|}(\cos \alpha) \cdot \{j_n(kr) P_n^{|m|}(\cos \theta) e^{jm\phi}\} e^{-jm\beta} = e^{-j\vec{k} \cdot \vec{r}}. \quad (10)$$

If we denote

$$R_n^m(\alpha) = (-j)^n (2n+1) \frac{(n-|m|)!}{(n+|m|)!} P_n^{|m|}(\cos \alpha) \quad (11)$$

(10) becomes

$$\sum_{m=-\bar{N}}^{\bar{N}} \sum_{n=|m|}^{\bar{N}} R_n^m(\alpha) \cdot \Psi_{nm}(\vec{r}) e^{-jm\beta} = e^{-j\vec{k} \cdot \vec{r}} \quad (12)$$

where $\Psi_{nm}(\vec{r})$ is given by (1).

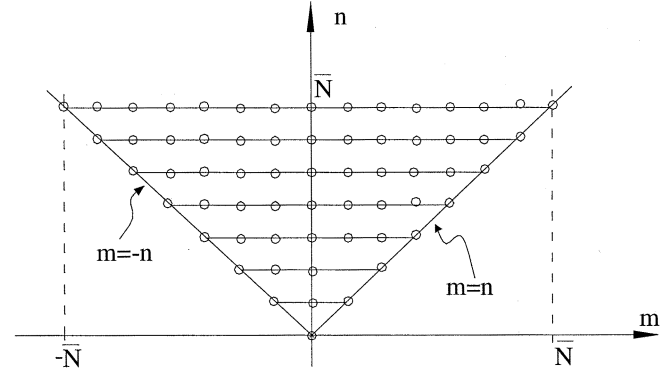


Fig. 1. Indices diagram of the double summation in (6).

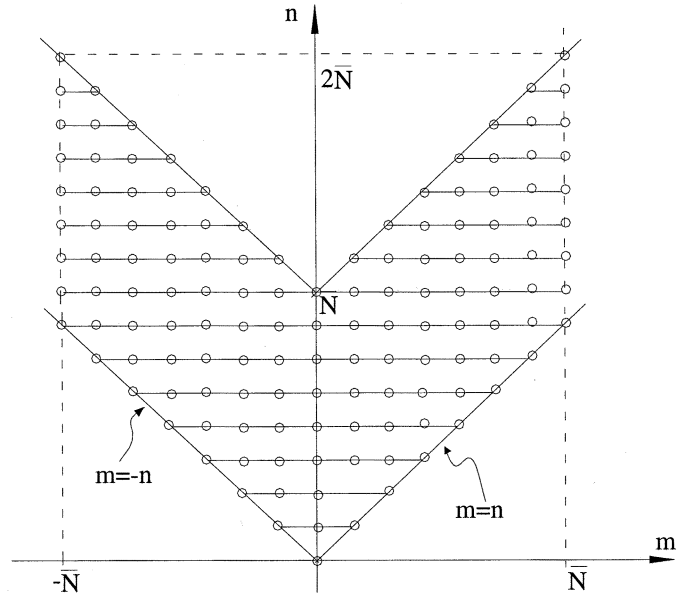


Fig. 2. Modified indices diagram of the double summation in (13).

Since it has been assumed that $j_n(z) = 0$ when $n > \bar{N}$, we can modify (12) as follows:

$$\sum_{m=-\bar{N}}^{\bar{N}} \sum_{n=|m|}^{\bar{N}+|m|} R_n^m(\alpha) \cdot \Psi_{nm}(\vec{r}) e^{-jm\beta} = e^{-j\vec{k} \cdot \vec{r}} \quad (13)$$

The major advantage of (13) over (12) is that, for any m , the number of terms in the series on n of (13) is a *constant* and equal to $\bar{N} + 1$. It is this modification that enables any spherical wave function $\Psi_{nm}(\vec{r})$ to be expanded by a series of *the same set* of plane wave functions, regardless of the vector \vec{r} . In fact, the extra terms added in the inner summation from $n = \bar{N} + 1$ to $n = \bar{N} + |m|$ will make approximation (13) more accurate than its original form (12).

The graphical representation of the modification is given in Fig. 2. As mentioned above, all terms for $\bar{N} < n$ are negligible, but are included in the summation of (13).

If we define

$$\check{Q}_m(\alpha, \vec{r}) = \sum_{n=|m|}^{\bar{N}+|m|} R_n^m(\alpha) \Psi_{nm}(\vec{r}) \quad (14)$$

and set $N = 2\bar{N} + 1$ and $q = m + \bar{N}$, (13) can be uniformly sampled at N discrete azimuth angles β as

$$\frac{1}{N} \sum_{q=0}^{N-1} \underbrace{\tilde{Q}_{q-\bar{N}}(\alpha, \bar{r})}_{Q_q(\alpha, \bar{r})} e^{-jq l(2\pi/N)} = \underbrace{\frac{e^{-j\bar{N}\beta l}}{N} e^{-j\bar{k}(\alpha, \beta_l) \cdot \bar{r}}}_{W_l(\alpha, \bar{r})} \quad (15)$$

where $\beta_l = l(2\pi/N)$. It can be observed that (15) is the *discrete Fourier transform (DFT)* [9, pp. 358–359] of $Q_q(\alpha, \bar{r})$. Therefore, the inverse of the transform gives

$$Q_q(\alpha, \bar{r}) = \sum_{l=0}^{N-1} W_l(\alpha, \bar{r}) e^{jq l(2\pi/N)}. \quad (16)$$

But

$$Q_q(\alpha, \bar{r}) = \tilde{Q}_{q-\bar{N}}(\alpha, \bar{r}) = \sum_{n=|q-\bar{N}|}^{\bar{N}+|q-\bar{N}|} R_n^{q-\bar{N}}(\alpha) \Psi_{n, q-\bar{N}}(\bar{r}). \quad (17)$$

By recalling that $m = q - \bar{N}$, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} & \sum_{n=|m|}^{\bar{N}+|m|} R_n^m(\alpha) \Psi_{nm}(\bar{r}) \\ &= \sum_{l=0}^{N-1} W_l(\alpha, \bar{r}) e^{j(\bar{N}l2\pi/N)} e^{jml(2\pi/N)}. \end{aligned} \quad (18)$$

The next task is to obtain the spherical wave function $\Psi_{n,m}(\bar{r})$ from (18). We simply select $\bar{N} + 1$ sampling values of the polar angle α , regardless of m , say

$$\alpha = \alpha_p = p \frac{0.9\pi}{\bar{N} + 1}, \quad p = 1, 2, \dots, \bar{N} + 1 \quad (19)$$

in (18). The $\bar{N} + 1$ (18) can be written in the form of a matrix equation as follows:

$$[R^m] \{ \Psi^m(\bar{r}) \} = \{ C^m(\bar{r}) \} \quad (20)$$

with

$$\{ C^m(\bar{r}) \}_m = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{l=0}^{N-1} e^{jm(l2\pi/N)} e^{-j\bar{k}(\alpha_p, \beta_l) \cdot \bar{r}} \quad (21)$$

and

$$\{ \Psi^m(\bar{r}) \}_n = \Psi_{nm}(\bar{r}) = j_n(kr) P_n^m(\cos \theta) e^{jm\phi} \quad (22)$$

$$[R^m]_{p,n} = (-j)^n (2n+1) \frac{(n-m)!}{(n+m)!} P_n^m(\cos \alpha_p) \quad (23)$$

is a square $(\bar{N} + 1 \times \bar{N} + 1)$ matrix.

If we denote $[B^m] = [R^m]^{-1}$, the spherical wave function can be expressed as

$$\begin{aligned} \Psi_{nm}(\bar{r}) &= \sum_{p=1}^{\bar{N}+1} B^m(n, p) C^m(p) \\ &= \sum_{p=1}^{\bar{N}+1} B^m(n, p) \frac{1}{N} \sum_{l=0}^{N-1} e^{jm(l2\pi/N)} e^{-j\bar{k}(\alpha_p, \beta_l) \cdot \bar{r}} \\ &= \sum_{p=1}^{\bar{N}+1} \sum_{l=0}^{N-1} C_{pl}^{mm} e^{-j\bar{k}(\alpha_p, \beta_l) \cdot \bar{r}} \end{aligned} \quad (24)$$

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF THE NUMERICAL VALUES OF SPHERICAL WAVE FUNCTION: EXACT VALUE AND THE VALUE CALCULATED BY THE PLANE WAVE EXPANSION, WHERE $m = 2$, $n = 5$, $N_0 = 10$, $\phi = 30^\circ$ AND $r/\lambda = 0.5$

θ (Degrees)	Re part of Exact	Im part of Exact	Re part of Expansion	Im part of Expansion
0	0	0	0	0
9	0.02436843	0.04220735	0.02436843	0.04220735
18	0.08143595	0.14105121	0.08143595	0.14105121
27	0.13278095	0.22998335	0.13278095	0.22998335
36	0.14093303	0.24410316	0.14093303	0.24410316
45	0.09250806	0.16022866	0.09250806	0.16022866
54	0.00734308	0.01271858	0.00734308	0.01271858
63	-0.07198799	-0.12468686	-0.07198799	-0.12468686
72	-0.10436601	-0.18076722	-0.10436601	-0.18076722
81	-0.07399664	-0.12816594	-0.07399664	-0.12816594
90	0	0	0	0

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF THE NUMERICAL VALUES OF SPHERICAL WAVE FUNCTION: EXACT VALUE AND THE VALUE CALCULATED BY THE PLANE WAVE EXPANSION, WHERE $m = 5$, $n = 8$, $N_0 = 10$, $\phi = 30^\circ$ AND $r/\lambda = 0.5$

θ (Degrees)	Re part of Exact	Im part of Exact	Re part of Expansion	Im part of Expansion
0	0	0	0	0
9	0.00444399	-0.00256574	0.00444326	-0.00256532
18	0.11692227	-0.0675051	0.11691046	-0.06749828
27	0.6319977	-0.36488404	0.63197446	-0.36487062
36	1.59766578	-0.92241277	1.59766805	-0.92241408
45	2.32233101	-1.34079844	2.32234561	-1.34080686
54	1.83542817	-1.05968495	1.83541579	-1.0596778
63	0.09642698	-0.05567214	0.09642546	-0.05567127
72	-1.55617505	0.89845809	-1.55616251	0.89845084
81	-1.59835033	0.92280799	-1.59836176	0.92281459
90	0	0	0	0

where $C_{pl}^{mm} = (1/N) B_{np}^m e^{jml(2\pi/N)}$ and $B_{np}^m = B^m(n, p)$ is the (n, p) th element of the square matrix $[R^m]^{-1}$.

Equation (24) states that the spherical wave function $\Psi_{nm}(\bar{r})$ can be expanded by a series of *the same set* of plane wave functions, regardless of n , m and vector \bar{r} , with $|\bar{r}| < R$. The information of the spectral harmonics is reflected in the amplitude of the plane wave expansion coefficient C_{pl}^{mm} . For a given pair of m and n , there is the corresponding row and column, respectively, in the matrices $[R^m]$ and $[B^m]$. Therefore, for a given region with $|\bar{r}| < R$ and the corresponding set of spherical wave functions $\Psi_{nm}(\bar{r})$ that are needed to specify an arbitrary wave function in the region, i.e., $0 < n < \bar{N} = \{kR\}_I + N_0$, $-n \leq m \leq n$, we only need to *invert one matrix* to get the expansion coefficients for all the spherical wave functions of interest.

Having transformed the (n, m) th scalar spherical wave function into the plane wave series as given by (24), it is a straightforward task to deduce the associated (n, m) th multipole fields [2, pp. 414–416]

$$\vec{M}_{nm}(\bar{r}) = \nabla \Psi_{nm}(\bar{r}) \times \bar{r} \quad (25)$$

$$\vec{N}_{nm}(\bar{r}) = \frac{1}{k} \nabla \times \vec{M}_{nm}. \quad (26)$$

Using (24) and $\bar{r} = x\hat{x} + y\hat{y} + z\hat{z}$ in (25) and (26) we can obtain the vector multipole fields in the Cartesian coordinates.

TABLE III

COMPARISON OF THE NUMERICAL VALUES OF SPHERICAL WAVE FUNCTION: EXACT VALUE AND THE VALUE CALCULATED BY THE PLANE WAVE EXPANSION, WHERE $m = 12$, $n = 14$, $N_0 = 40$, $\phi = 30^\circ$ AND $r/\lambda = 0.5$

θ (Degrees)	Re part of Exact	Im part of Exact	Re part of Expansion	Im part of Expansion
0	0	0	-0.00001651	0.0000183
9	0.00002702	0	0.00002924	0.00001489
18	0.08815401	0	0.08815644	-0.00000047
27	7.77629471	0	7.77629868	-0.00001084
36	140.7471545	0	140.7471625	-0.00002078
45	969.5378886	0	969.5378672	-0.0000404
54	3249.984637	0	3249.98453	-0.00003952
63	5673.310294	0	5673.310126	-0.0000392
72	4290.343977	0	4290.343734	-0.0000614
81	-1451.477577	0	-1451.477862	-0.00005108
90	-4964.03399	0	-4964.034301	-0.00005141

TABLE IV

COMPARISON OF THE NUMERICAL VALUES OF SPHERICAL WAVE FUNCTION: EXACT VALUE AND THE VALUE CALCULATED BY THE PLANE WAVE EXPANSION, WHERE $m = 5$, $n = 6$, $N_0 = 20$, $\phi = 30^\circ$ AND $r/\lambda = 1.0$

θ (Degrees)	Re part of Exact	Im part of Exact	Re part of Expansion	Im part of Expansion
0	0	0	0	0
9	0.08959997	-0.05173057	0.08959997	-0.05173057
18	2.59503904	-1.49824649	2.59503904	-1.49824649
27	16.63950714	-9.60682393	16.63950714	-9.60682393
36	54.96380893	-31.73336988	54.96380893	-31.73336988
45	121.0419086	-69.88357853	121.0419086	-69.88357853
54	197.2571065	-113.8864436	197.2571065	-113.8864436
63	246.874899	-142.5332894	246.874899	-142.5332894
72	232.8304309	-134.424712	232.8304309	-134.424712
81	142.3828976	-82.20480424	142.3828976	-82.20480424
90	0	0	0	0

III. NUMERICAL VERIFICATIONS

To validate the proposed transformation, numerical calculations for a variety of parameters are given here. Table I shows the comparison of the values of the spherical wave function from the original expression [(1)] and from the plane wave series expansion [(24)] for a small electrical size problem ($r/\lambda = 0.5$). The series expansion quickly converges to the eighth decimal place by setting $N_0 = 10$. When the orders of the spherical wave function are increased to $m = 5$ and $n = 8$, it can be seen from Table II that the relaxation integer constant N_0 provides only fifth decimal place accuracy. This phenomenon becomes more obvious in Table III, in which a high order case ($m = 12$, $n = 14$) is considered with the relaxation constant $N_0 = 40$.

To show the applicability of the proposed plane wave series expansion to the problem with large electrical size, the comparisons of the numerical values of the original expression and those of the plane wave series expansion are made for the cases of $r/\lambda = 1.0$, $r/\lambda = 2.0$ and $r/\lambda = 3.0$ in Table IV, Table V and Table VI, respectively. As can be perceived, the larger the electrical size, the greater the relaxation constant needed.

IV. CONCLUSION

A finite plane wave series expansion for the scalar spherical wave functions has been presented in this paper. The formulation starts from the well-known spherical wave function expansion of a scalar plane wave and ends with a finite series expansion

TABLE V

COMPARISON OF THE NUMERICAL VALUES OF SPHERICAL WAVE FUNCTION: EXACT VALUE AND THE VALUE CALCULATED BY THE PLANE WAVE EXPANSION, WHERE $m = 6$, $n = 9$, $N_0 = 30$, $\phi = 68^\circ$ AND $r/\lambda = 2.0$

θ (Degrees)	Re part of Exact	Im part of Exact	Re part of Expansion	Im part of Expansion
0	0	0	0	0
9	3.52230852	3.91191992	3.52230852	3.91191992
18	183.6069842	203.9162144	183.6069842	203.9162144
27	1466.824967	1629.074166	1466.824967	1629.074166
36	4856.985287	5394.228644	4856.985287	5394.228644
45	8708.502419	9671.771771	8708.502419	9671.771771
54	8482.809101	9421.113949	8482.809101	9421.113949
63	2050.207705	2276.986336	2050.207705	2276.986336
72	-5639.334794	-6263.115798	-5639.334794	-6263.115798
81	-6722.440842	-7466.026929	-6722.440842	-7466.026929
90	0	0	0	0

TABLE VI

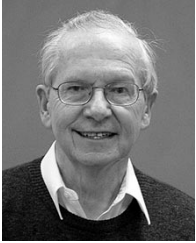
COMPARISON OF THE NUMERICAL VALUES OF SPHERICAL WAVE FUNCTION: EXACT VALUE AND THE VALUE CALCULATED BY THE PLANE WAVE EXPANSION, WHERE $m = 6$, $n = 9$, $N_0 = 40$, $\phi = 68^\circ$ AND $r/\lambda = 3.0$

θ (Degrees)	Re part of Exact	Im part of Exact	Re part of Expansion	Im part of Expansion
0	0	0	0.00000573	0.00000176
9	1.93168	2.14534798	1.93168353	2.14533685
18	100.6924684	111.8303155	100.6925661	111.8304248
27	804.4259714	893.4055511	804.4259956	893.4056404
36	2663.634172	2958.265447	2663.633991	2958.265485
45	4775.856475	5304.125971	4775.856542	5304.125909
54	4652.083312	5166.661947	4652.083439	5166.661926
63	1124.360685	1248.729048	1124.360623	1248.729096
72	-3092.684861	-3434.774511	-3092.684856	-3434.774519
81	-3686.674365	-4094.466688	-3686.674365	-4094.466699
90	0	0	0.00006139	-0.00005115

of plane wave functions for scalar spherical wave functions of the first kind. In the derivation of the series expansion, we have used the DFT and the fact that $j_n(kr) \approx 0$ when the order n is sufficiently larger than the argument kr . For a given region for which $0 < r < R$, each of the spherical wave functions $\Psi_{nm}(r, \theta, \phi)$ can be represented by the same set of plane wave functions with different weighting coefficients for different (n, m). This will greatly facilitate the modal analysis of various practical guided wave and scattering problems involving 3-D irregularly shaped regions.

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