9   Designated spatial surfaces and vertical offsets

9.1 Introduction

Many spatial applications require the specification of object-space surfaces that are more complex than a surface represented by an RD. An RD surface generating function is restricted by definition to be a multi-variate polynomial of degree 2 or less. Surfaces of interest are often more complex than this restriction allows. These surfaces are termed designated spatial surfaces. These surfaces often represent some conceptual or physical aspect of object-space such as a gravity equipotential surface. Some designated spatial surfaces can be analytically represented by means of a smooth surface in position-space and a normal embedding. Such a model is termed a designated spatial surface model.

For SRFs that have a vertical coordinate-component, certain designated spatial surfaces may be used to define vertical offset values. Many real-world measurement systems used in geodesy define the value of the vertical coordinate-component of an SRF to be zero at a designated spatial surface. If the point of intersection between each vertical coordinate-component curve and the designated spatial surface is unique, it specifies a vertical offset value, and the designated spatial surface is termed a vertical offset surface for the given SRF.

In this International Standard, the vertical coordinate-component is always zero at an RD surface. For a given point, the difference in values of the vertical coordinate-component between the vertical offset surface and the RD surface is termed the vertical offset. If the designated spatial surface has a designated spatial surface model, then the vertical offset may be computed. In the case of SRFs that designate ellipsoidal height as the vertical coordinate-component, the API (Clause 11) provides a method for the vertical offset computation.

9.2 Designated spatial surface

A *designated spatial surface* (DSS) is a surface in object-space. A DSS may be used to represent an application-specific aspect of the object-space.

Two important cases of DSSs are:

 a)   equipotential surfaces including geoids, and

 b)   approximations of mean sea level surfaces based on sounding and tidal data.

EXAMPLE   The International Great Lakes Datum 1955 is associated with a DSS that conceptually represents the mean water level of certain bodies of water and extensions of the surface to inland areas. It is empirically represented by a physical network of locations with assigned values for height above the conceptual surface. Various levelling techniques are applied to extrapolate these height values to other locations. There is currently no mathematically defined surface in position-space to model the International Great Lakes Datum 1955 DSS.

A *DSS model* is comprised of a smooth surface in position-space and a normal embedding such that the normal embedding image of the position-space surface either coincides with the DSS or approximates it in an application-specific sense.

An *equipotential surface* is an implicitly defined surface given by $P(x, y, z) - c = 0$, where P is a potential function defined in (a portion of) position-space and c is a value in the range of P.

If P is a smooth function, the equipotential surface is a smooth surface. If the smooth surface is embedded into object-space with a normal embedding, it is a DSS model for the corresponding DSS in object-space.

An important special case of an equipotential surface is a mathematical model of the gravity potential of a celestial body. The *geoid* is a specific equipotential surface of the Earth's gravity field that best fits the global mean sea surface in a minimum variance sense. Global, regional, and local approximations of the geoid are developed from empirical measurements in association with specific ERMs. Gravity equipotential surfaces have also been modelled for other planets.

NOTE   The geoid cannot be measured directly. Current models of the Earth's gravity potential are usually realized as truncated power series in spherical harmonics.

9.3 Vertical offset surface

A DSS is a *vertical offset surface* (VOS) with respect to an SRF in a region of object-space if, for each point in the region, the DSS intersects the vertical coordinate-component curve containing the point exactly once. The VOS concept is restricted to SRFs that have a designated vertical coordinate-component and that are based on an object-fixed ORM (see 8.4.3).

The vertical coordinate-component zero surface is the set of points for which the vertical coordinate-component value is zero (see 5.2.1). Given a point p on the vertical coordinate-component zero surface that is in the region of a VOS, the *vertical offset* at p is the value of the vertical coordinate-component at the intersection of the VOS with the vertical coordinate-component curve that contains p. The vertical offset at p is denoted $v(p)$. If p is not in the region of a VOS or if a VOS has not been specified, the vertical offset at p shall be defined to be zero.

NOTE   All points on the same vertical coordinate-component curve have the same vertical offset value.

For a VOS with respect to an SRF based on an oblate ellipsoid (or sphere) ORM, the vertical offset at a point p on the oblate ellipsoid (or sphere) with surface geodetic coordinate (λ, φ) is denoted by $v(\lambda, \varphi)$.

In many cases, the values $v(\lambda, \varphi)$ are not known or the values are approximately known at specific locations. When a DSS has a DSS model, the $v(\lambda, \varphi)$ values may be computed. If a DSS is a VOS for two SRFs, SRF$_\mathbf{S}$ and SRF$_\mathbf{T}$, and if the vertical offset function for SRF$_\mathbf{S}$ $v_S(\lambda, \varphi)$ is known, then the vertical offset function for SRF$_\mathbf{T}$ $v_T(\lambda, \varphi)$ may be computed from v_S as follows:

Each SRF$_\mathbf{S}$ coordinate of the form $c_S = \left(\lambda, \varphi, v_S(\lambda, \varphi)\right)$ lies on the VOS. If $c_T = \left(\lambda', \varphi', h'\right)$ is the corresponding coordinate representation in SRF$_\mathbf{T}$, then $v_T\left(\lambda', \varphi'\right) = h'$.

The API (Clause 11) provides a vertical offset computation for DSS models that are a VOS with respect to a given SRF with ellipsoidal height as the vertical coordinate-component.
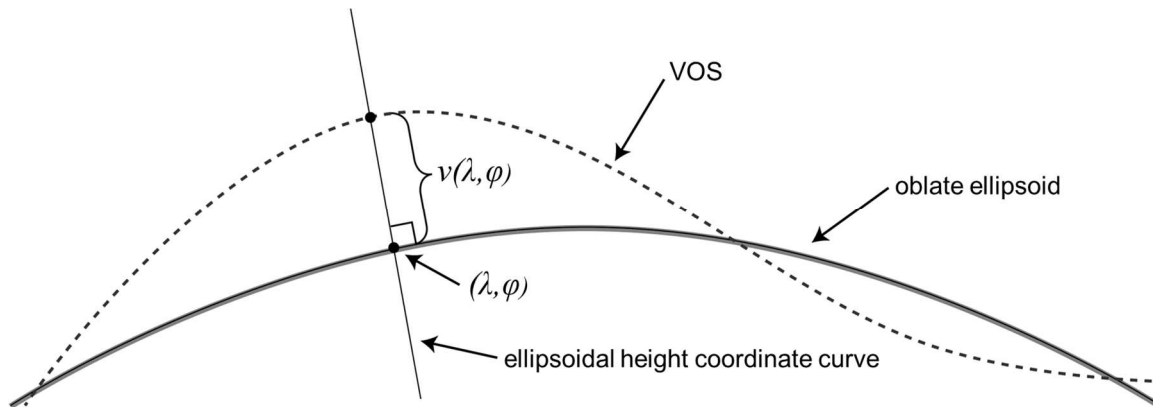

Figure 9.1 — Vertical offset surface for ellipsoidal height

EXAMPLE 1   If an SRF is derived from SRFT CELESTIODETIC or from a map projection SRFT, the ellipsoidal height coordinate-component is the designated vertical coordinate-component. Given a VOS with respect to the SRF, $v(\lambda, \varphi)$ is the distance from the ellipsoid to the VOS along the ellipsoidal height curve at (λ, φ) in the region of the VOS (see Figure 9.1).
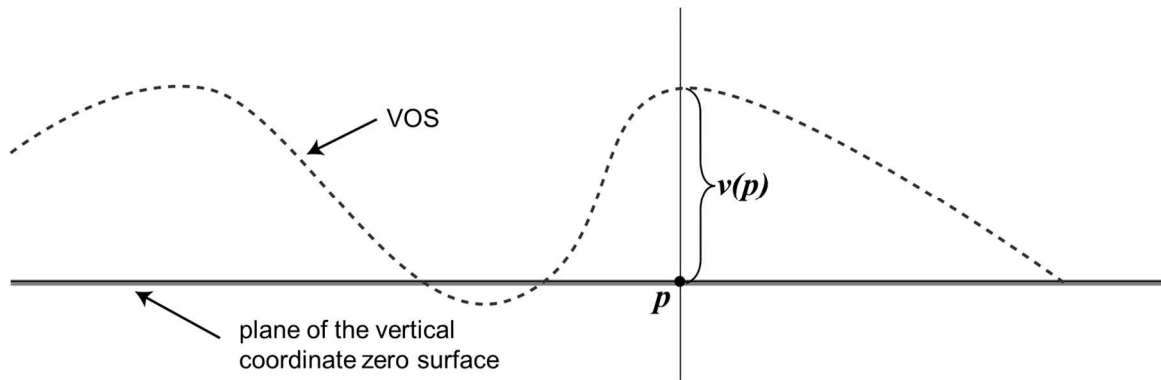
Figure 9.2 — Vertical offset surface tangent plane

EXAMPLE 2   If an SRF is derived from SRFT LOCAL_TANGENT_SPACE_EUCLIDEAN or SRFT LOCAL_TANGENT_SPACE_CYLINDRICAL, the designated vertical coordinate-component is height and the vertical coordinate-component zero surface is a plane. Given a VOS with respect to the SRF, The vertical offset at a point p in the plane is the distance from p to the VOS along a line normal to the plane (see Figure 9.2).

9.4 Geoidal separation

If the VOS is a geoid, $v(\lambda, \varphi)$ is termed the *geoidal separation* at (λ, φ) (see Figure 9.3). The specification of the geoidal separation is equivalent to the specification of the geoid surface because the geoid DSS can be constructed from the set of geoidal separation values.
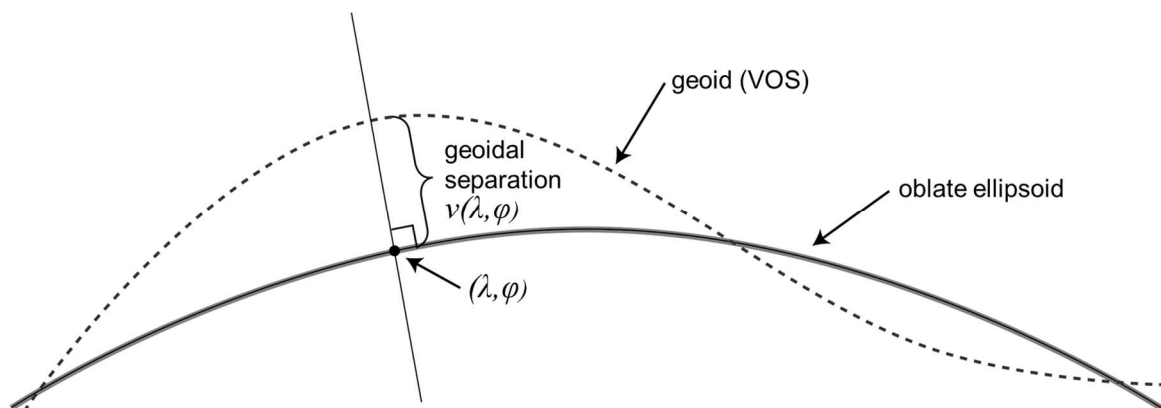

Figure 9.3 — Geoidal separation

NOTE   The geoidal separation is often published as a table of values of $v(\lambda, \varphi)$.

9.5 Vertical offset height and elevation

Given a VOS with respect to an SRF with vertical coordinate-component h, the *vertical offset height* h_e at point p is defined as $h_e = h - v(p)$.

If the VOS is a geoid, then h_e is termed the *elevation* of p with respect to the geoid.

EXAMPLE   If the SRF is derived from SRFT CELESTIODETIC and the coordinate of p is (λ, φ, h), then $h_e = h - v(\lambda, \varphi)$ (see Figure 9.4).
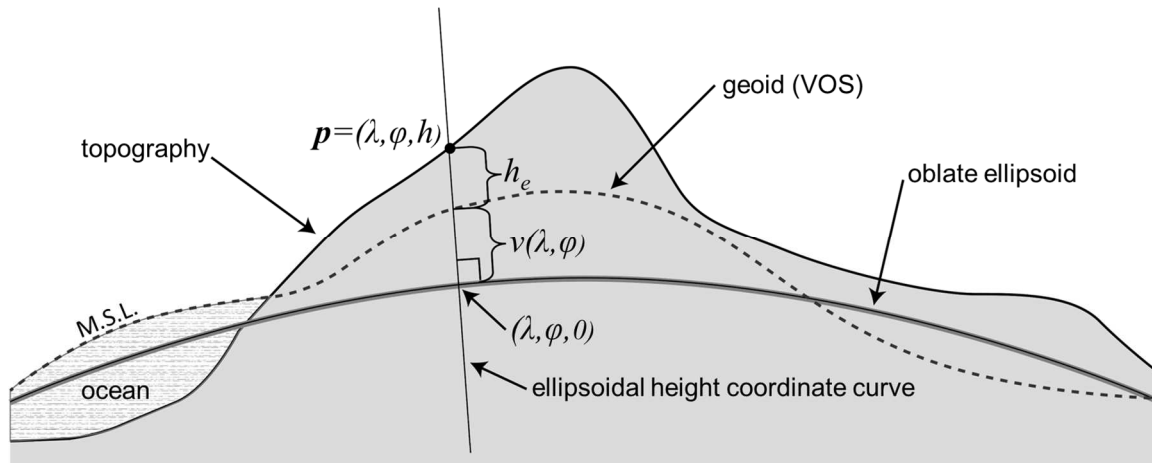
Figure 9.4 — Vertical coordinate-component with respect to a vertical offset surface

NOTE 1 h_e is an approximation of the distance from p to the VOS. In general, the vertical coordinate-component curve intersection with the VOS is not perpendicular to the VOS. When the intersection is not perpendicular, h_e does not equal the distance.

NOTE 2   VOS is similar in concept to vertical datum as defined in ISO 19111. ISO 19111 uses the term vertical datum to define a vertical coordinate reference system as part of a (3D) compound coordinate reference system.

9.6 Use of vertical offset height in spatial referencing

If a DSS is a VOS for a 3D SRF, and $c = (c_1, c_2)$ is a surface coordinate in the induced surface SRF, then c together with vertical offset height h_e represents a unique location in object-space. If $v(c)$ is known, then the SRF 3D coordinate of that location is $(c_1, c_2, h_e + v(c))$. In this case, the 3D coordinate may be changed to other SRF coordinate representations in accordance with the operations specified in Clause 10.

In general, the value of $v(c)$ is not known. In that case, the 3D SRF coordinate of the location cannot be computed nor can it be changed to a different SRF. An important exception is the case of two 3D SRFs, SRF$_S$ and SRF$_T$, that:

a)   use the same ORM, and

b)   use the same vertical coordinate-component.

In this case, if $c_S = (c_{1S}, c_{2S})$ is a coordinate in the induced surface SRF of SRF$_S$ and if $c_T = (c_{1T}, c_{2T})$ is the coordinate in the induced surface SRF of SRF$_T$ for the same surface position, then c_S with vertical height h_e in SRF$_S$ and c_T with vertical height h_e in SRF$_T$ represent the same location in object-space.

EXAMPLE   SRF$_S$ is derived from SRFT LAMBERT_CONFORMAL_CONIC with ORM WGS_1984 and SRF$_T$ is derived from SRFT MERCATOR with the same ORM and p is on the ORM ellipsoid RD and is in the applicable regions of both SRFs. If $c_S = (c_{1S}, c_{2S})$ and $c_T = (c_{1T}, c_{2T})$ are the surface coordinates of p in the respective SRFs, then c_S with vertical height h_e in SRF$_S$ and c_T with vertical height h_e in SRF$_T$ represent the same location in object-space.

9.7 Other vertical measurements

In addition to vertical offset height (and elevation), different fields of application define other vertical measurements. These include:

a)   Orthometric height h_o. Orthometric height depends on a gravity model that specifies a potential for each position in position-space. The gradient operator on the geoidal equipotential surface specifies a vector field in position-space. A *plumbline* is defined to be a curve that follows the gradient vector field (*i.e.*,

the tangent vector at a point on the plumbline equals the potential gradient vector at that point). Let q be a position in position-space. The plumbline containing q intersects the geoid at a position p. The *orthometric height* of q is the plumbline arc length distance from p to q (see Figure 9.5). The tangent to a plumbline at the point where the plumbline intersects the geoid is normal to the geoid.
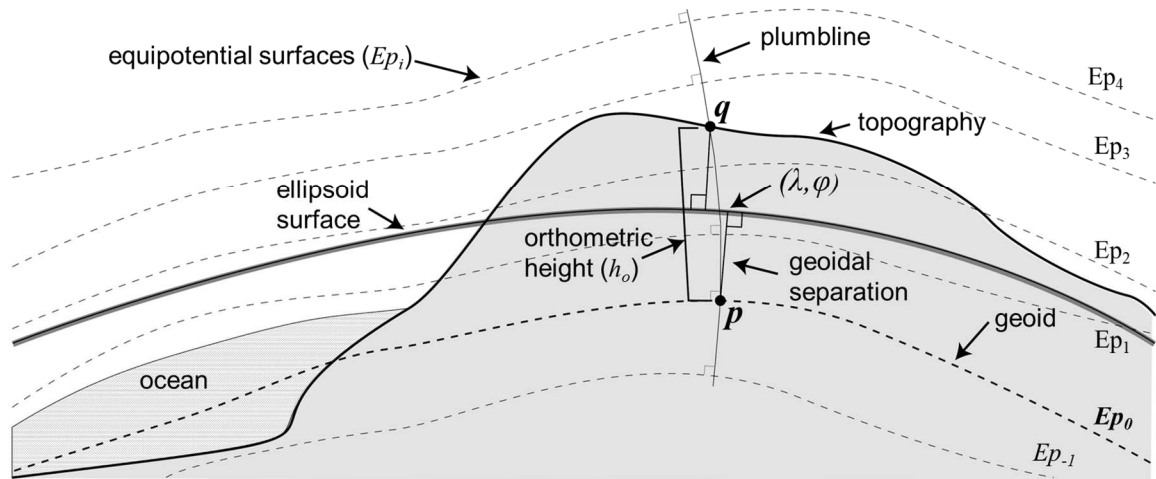

Figure 9.5 — Orthometric height

b) Other specific functional relationships of the form $h_m = f(u, v, h)$, where f is strictly monotonic in h for fixed u and v (or in the geodetic case: $h_m = f(\lambda, \varphi, h)$ for fixed (λ, φ)).

EXAMPLE   An example of a monotonic function of h used in vertical measurement is the standard pressure altitude function.

NOTE   Terrain elevation is not a standardized term and can have several different definitions and, consequently, different values depending on the application domain. The phrase "height above mean sea level" is ambiguous for several reasons. In addition to the varying definitions/approximations/models of the mean sea level VOS, height can be measured along a straight line normal to the surface or along a plumbline (plumbline curves may be empirical or depend on the gravity model used). These height measurements are termed gravity-related heights in ISO 19111. The Global Positioning System uses ellipsoidal height referenced to the ORM_WGS84 ellipsoid.

9.8 Standardized DSS specifications

The elements of a DSS specification are defined in Table 9.1. This International Standard specifies in Table 9.2 and Table J.20 a DSS collection of geoids and equipotential surfaces for celestial bodies. Additional DSSs may be specified by registration in accordance with Clause 13.

In general, if a gravity equipotential surface DSS and the oblate ellipsoid RD of an object-fixed ORM have both been selected to approximate the surface of a planet, then the DSS will be a VOS with respect to any SRF with a specified vertical coordinate-component of ellipsoidal height based on that ORM. In particular, all the geoids specified in Table 9.2 for the Earth are VOSs with respect to the standardized SRFs for object Earth that specify a vertical coordinate-component of ellipsoidal height provided the applicable regions intersect. In these cases the API provides an SRF class method for the computation of the geoidal separation if the DSS specification includes a DSS model.

Table 9.1 — Geoidal and equipotential DSS specification elements

Element	Definition
DSS label	The DSS label (see 13.2.2).
DSS code	The DSS code (see 13.2.3).
Description	The published name of the DSS.
Global/local	Specifies whether the DSS is local or global relative to the object.
Model	A DSS model specification; otherwise "none".
References	The references (see 13.2.5).
Notes	Additional, non-normative information.

Table 9.2 — Geoidal and equipotential DSS specifications

Element	Specification	Element	Specification
Object type: Earth			
DSS label	**EGM96_GEOID**	**DSS code**	1
Description	WGS 84 EGM 96 geoid	**Global/Local**	Global
Model	Specified in the reference.	**References**	[83502T, Section 6]
Notes	The geopotential surface defined by the Earth gravitational model (EGM) WGS 84 EGM 96 that is closely associated with the mean ocean surface. This is a DSS model.		
DSS label	**IGLD_1955**	**DSS code**	2
Description	International Great Lakes datum (IGLD) 1955	**Global/Local**	Local
Model	none specified	**References**	[IGLD79]
Notes	A system of geopotential elevations throughout the Great Lakes region that is based on mean water level at Pointe-au-Pere, Quebec, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence over the period 1941 through 1956. Implemented January 1, 1962.		
DSS label	**IGLD_1985**	**DSS code**	3
Description	International Great Lakes datum (IGLD) 1985	**Global/Local**	Local
Model	none specified	**References**	[IGLD85]
Notes	A revision of the International Great Lakes datum 1955 to address the effects of crustal movement, the development of a common datum between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, new surveying methods, and the deterioration of the zero reference point gauge location. It is based on mean water level at Rimouski, Quebec, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence over the period 1970 through 1988. Implemented January 1, 1992.		
DSS label	**MSL**	**DSS code**	4
Description	Mean sea level (MSL)	**Global/Local**	Global
Model	none specified	**References**	[BOWD, Section 913]

Element	Specification	Element	Specification
Notes	A continuous surface over the oceans (or its hypothetical extension under the land masses) defined by the mean of sea level surfaces approximated and observed over 19 years. A conceptual surface without a specific DSS model.		
DSS label	**NAVD_1988**	DSS code	**5**
Description	North American vertical datum (NAVD) 1988	Global/Local	Local
Model	none specified	References	[NAVD88]
Notes	A fixed reference for elevations derived from a general adjustment of the first-order terrestrial levelling nets of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. In the adjustment, only the height of the primary tidal bench mark, referenced to the International Great Lakes Datum of 1985 local mean sea level height value, at Pointe-au-Pere, Quebec, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence was held fixed, thus providing minimum constraint.		
DSS label	**OSGM_2002**	DSS code	**7**
Description	Ordnance survey geoid model (OSGM) 2002	Global/Local	Local
Model	none specified	References	[OSGM02]
Notes	The geopotential surface defined by the OSGM of 2002, covering the region of Great Britain, 45,5ºN to 61,5ºN and 3,5ºW to 11,5ºE (SRF GEODETIC_WGS_1984).		
DSS label	**WGS84_ELLIPSOID**	DSS code	**8**
Description	WGS 84 ellipsoid	Global/Local	Global
Model	Specified by $v(\lambda,\varphi)=0$.	References	[NGA36, Section 3]
Notes	The oblate ellipsoidal figure of the Earth defined by WGS 84. This is a VOS for all SRFs with ellipsoidal height as the vertical coordinate-component and that are based on ORM WGS_1984. For those SRFs, $v(\lambda,\varphi)=0$. This VOS is provided for applications that require a default VOS. See also the use of DSS code 0 (UNSPECIFIED) in Table 11.15 (VerticalOffset method).		
DSS label	**EGM84_GEOID**	DSS code	**9**
Description	WGS 84 EGM 84 geoid	Global/Local	Global
Model	Specified in the reference.	References	[83502T, Section 6]
Notes	The geopotential surface defined by the Earth gravitational model (EGM) WGS 84 EGM 84 that is closely associated with the mean ocean surface. This is a DSS model.		
DSS label	**EGM2008_GEOID**	DSS code	**10**
Description	WGS 84 EGM 2008 geoid	Global/Local	Global
Model	Specified in the reference.	References	[NGA36, Section 6]
Notes	The geopotential surface defined by the Earth gravitational model (EGM) WGS 84 EGM 2008 that is closely associated with the mean ocean surface. This is a DSS model.		
Object type: Planet (non-Earth)			
Object type: Satellite			

Element	Specification	Element	Specification
Object type: Star			

NOTE   There are no entries in Table 9.2 for non-Earth objects. Such entries may be added by registration (see Clause 13).

http://standards.iso.org/ittf/PubliclyAvailableStandards/