

CSC 258 - Lab 7

Memory and VGA Display

Winter 2020

1 Learning Objectives

The purpose of this lab is to learn how to create and use on-chip Block Random Access Memories (BRAMs) as well as use the video graphics adapter (VGA).

2 Marking Scheme

This lab worth 4% of your final grade, and also includes a bonus part that worth 1% of your final grade. You will be graded out of 8 marks for this lab, as follows:

- Prelab (including Simulations, Schematics and State Diagram): 3 marks
- Part I (in-lab): 2 marks
- Part II (in-lab): 3 marks
- Part III (Bonus): 2 marks (1 mark for prelab, 1 mark for inlab; 1% of your final grade)

Preparation Before the Lab

You are required to complete Parts I and II of the lab by writing and testing Verilog code and simulating it with ModelSim using reasonable test vectors. You should include your state diagrams, schematics, Verilog code, and simulation outputs for Parts I and II in the prelab.

Note: When submitting your pre-lab exercises, you don't need to submit the `ram32x4.v` file. Please submit your high level modules as `*.v` files though.

In-lab Work

You are required to implement and test all of Parts I and II of the lab and demonstrate them to the TAs.

3 Part I

In addition to logic blocks and flip-flops, contemporary FPGA devices provide flexible embedded memory blocks that have configurable memory bit widths and depths along with many other parameters. To access these blocks you will use another feature of Quartus, which creates modules that serve as interfaces to embedded blocks in FPGA devices. The module built using this feature provides all inputs and outputs required to work with the specific embedded block, and can be instantiated in your design. In this part of the lab, you will create a small RAM block and interact with it to understand how it works. Using the Quartus *IP Catalog* you will first create a module for the desired memory and then test the memory module using the switches and hex displays for inputs and outputs.

The memory module we would like to create is shown in Figure 1. It consists of a memory block, an address register, a data register and a control register. You can see that the address, input data, and the write enable control signal are all stored in registers before being presented to the memory array. Using the registers means that the *DataOut* value will be stable for one clock cycle and allows the inputs to be changed after the rising clock edge in preparation for the next clock cycle. It is a small memory so that we can easily interact with it using the available switches and displays on the DE1-SoC board.

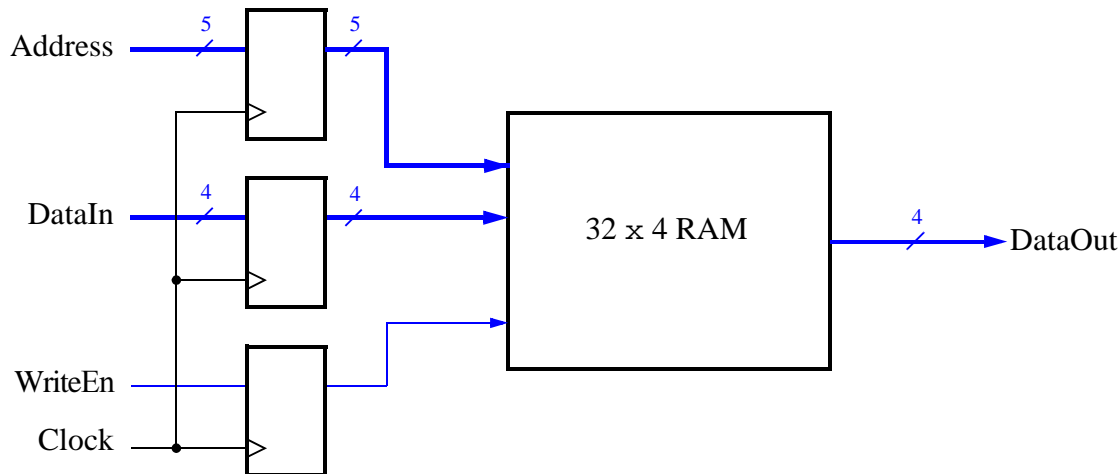


Figure 1: Schematic of the 32×4 embedded memory module.

A timing diagram showing reading of the memory is shown in Figure 2. Four locations at addresses $A0$, $A1$, $A2$ and $A3$ are accessed and the corresponding data $D0$, $D1$, $D2$ and $D3$ are read from those addresses, respectively. Figure 3 shows the timing for writing data to the memory. Observe that *WriteEn* is only high for addresses $A1$ and $A2$. This means that only data words $D1$ and $D2$ are written, respectively.

Perform the following steps:

1. Open Quartus Prime.
2. You will now create a memory module that you can include into your design. First, select Tools→IP Catalog. Note that the IP Catalog usually shows up as a pane on the right side of the Quartus Window, and may have already been there by default. **(PRELAB)**
3. In the IP Catalog pane, expand Installed IP→Library→Basic Functions→On Chip Memory, then double-click on *RAM:1-PORT*. **(PRELAB)**
4. Browse to the folder or directory where you want to build your project. This is where the file for the memory module will be created. Call the file `ram32x4.v`. Choose the IP variation to be Verilog and click OK. **(PRELAB)**
5. Select a 4-bit wide (width of 'q' output bus) memory with 32 words. Leave the memory block type as *Auto* and use a *Single Clock*. Observe how the memory block diagram on the left side of the window changes automatically as you change different parameters. Pay particular attention to the fact that registers that hold the address, data and write enable signals are included in the block diagram. This means they will be part of the memory module, and you do **NOT** need to add extra registers outside the memory module. Click Next. **(PRELAB)**
6. **Deselect** q as a registered port. **(PRELAB)**
7. Click Finish and Finish again to generate the new Verilog file, `ram32x4.v`. **(PRELAB)**
8. Examine the newly created Verilog file. Observe that it declares a module with the required ports as shown in Figure 1. You can now instantiate the module into any design. **(PRELAB)**

Note that the created Verilog file contains some new Verilog constructs that we did not covered in this course. You do not need to understand all of these constructs to use the memory module, as long as you correctly connect all required input and output ports.

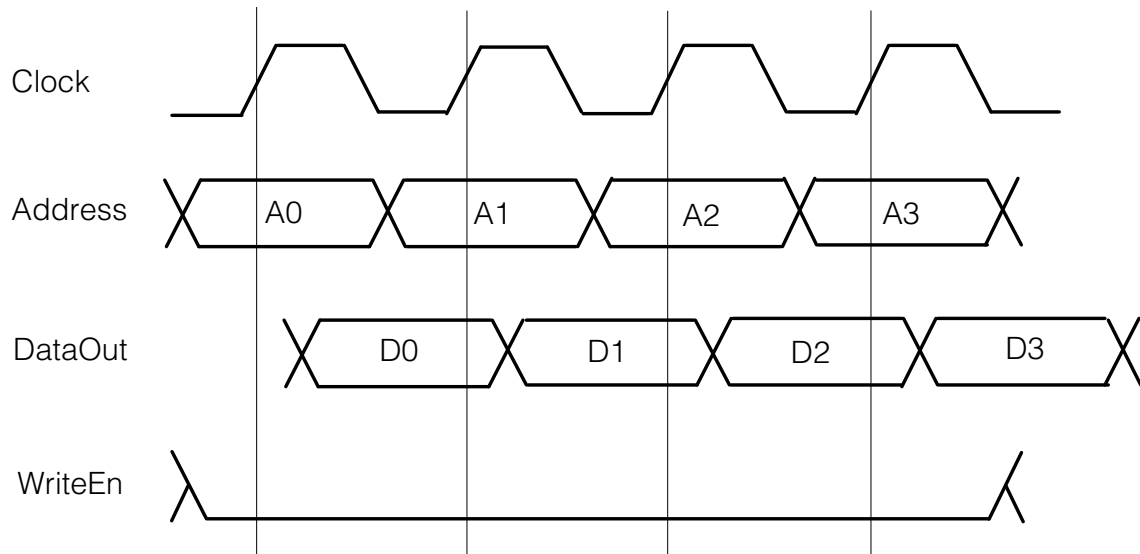


Figure 2: Timing diagram for read operations.

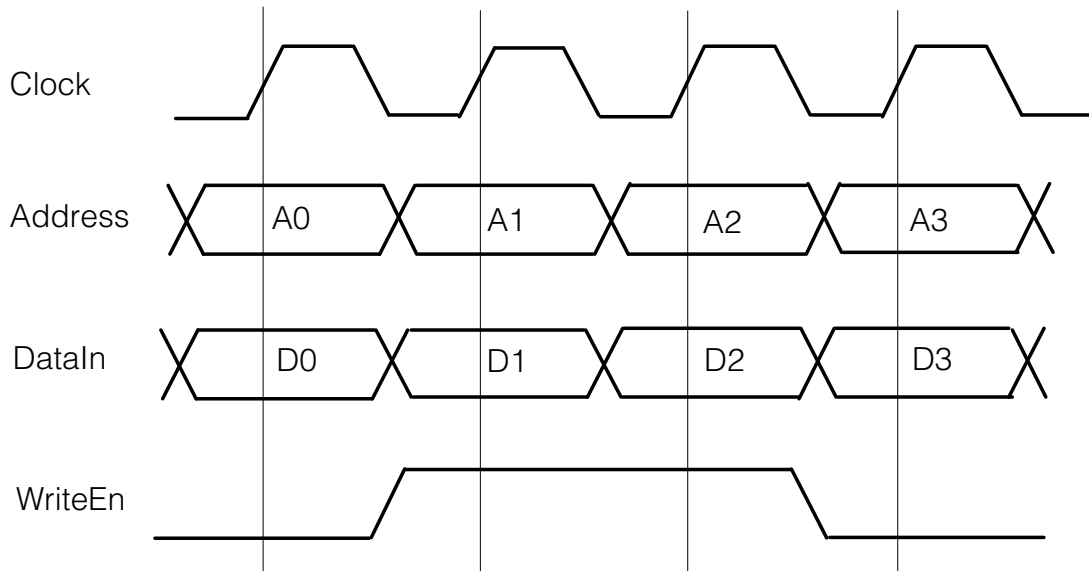


Figure 3: Timing diagram for write operations. Note that only addresses *A1* and *A2* are written.

9. Simulate the created memory module using ModelSim for a variety of input settings, ensuring the output waveforms are correct. Show that you can read and write to the memory at several locations. You must include screenshots to show that you performed these simulations as part of your prelab. **(PRELAB)**

Note that since your design includes embedded FPGA blocks, you must add a special switch to your *vsim* command to be able to simulate the circuit in ModelSim:

```
vsim -L altera_mf_ver ram32x4
```

The *-L* switch specifies that ModelSim should include Verilog models for FPGA embedded blocks found in the *altera_mf_ver* library, which are provided with Quartus Prime to allow simulation of FPGA embedded blocks, such as memory blocks.

10. Instantiate the *ram32x4* module into a top-level Verilog module that connects to the inputs and outputs in the following way: Connect SW[3:0] to the data inputs, SW[8:4] to the address inputs, SW[9] to the Write Enable input and use KEY[0] as the clock input. Show the address on HEX5 and HEX4, the input data on HEX2 and the data output of the memory on HEX0. **(PRELAB)**
11. Draw a schematic describing the circuit as part of your preparation. **(PRELAB)**
12. Create a new Quartus project and add your top-level module file and *ram32x4.v*. Make sure the project is stored in your W:\ drive, you selected the correct FPGA device (5CSEMA5F31C6), and imported the pin assignments. **(IN-LAB)**
13. Compile the project. Download the compiled circuit into the FPGA chip. Test the functionality of the circuit. Demonstrate it to the TA when you finished testing it. **(IN-LAB)**

4 Part II

For this part you will learn how to display simple images on the VGA display. Your task is to design a circuit to draw a *filled* square on the screen at any location in any color. You are provided with a VGA adapter module that provides the functionality of accepting a set of (x, y) coordinates, known as a pixel, on the screen and a color to draw at that pixel.

Background

The VGA adapter that you will use is shown in Figure 4. The inputs to the adapter module are similar to the memory interface in Part I. The (x, y) inputs specify a pixel location on the screen while *color* specifies the pixel color. The *plot* input is a write enable signal that tells the controller to update the pixel specified by (x, y) coordinates with the value *color* at the next clock edge. The outputs of the adapter drive the off-chip video digital-to-analog converters (DACs) that subsequently drive the monitor. Please note the VGA adapter code is provided to you and you do **NOT** need to modify it.

To make things a bit easier, you will work with a screen that is **160 pixels wide by 120 pixels high**. In comparison, the standard VGA has 640×480 pixels, and your Full HDTV has 1920×1080 pixels (which is also called 1080). You can think of your 160x120 screen as a 2D array where each pixel's location can be uniquely identified by a set of coordinates (x, y) . The pixel at the top-left corner of your screen (the way you look at it) has coordinates $(0, 0)$, while the pixel at the top-right corner of your screen has coordinates $(159, 0)$. The pixel at the bottom-right corner of your screen has coordinates $(159, 119)$. Note that pixels in the same row share the same y coordinate value, while pixels in the same vertical column share the same x coordinate value.

We will only be using three bits to specify a pixel's color. The three bits correspond to red, green, and blue, which is called an *RGB* color coding. There is one bit for each color so if you want to draw red, then input $(1,0,0)$ as the color bits. You can combine colors as well, such as $(0,1,1)$, which will produce a color you would get if you shone two beams of light, one green, one blue, into the same spot. Note that mixing light beams of different colors produces an *additive* color, which is different than the color

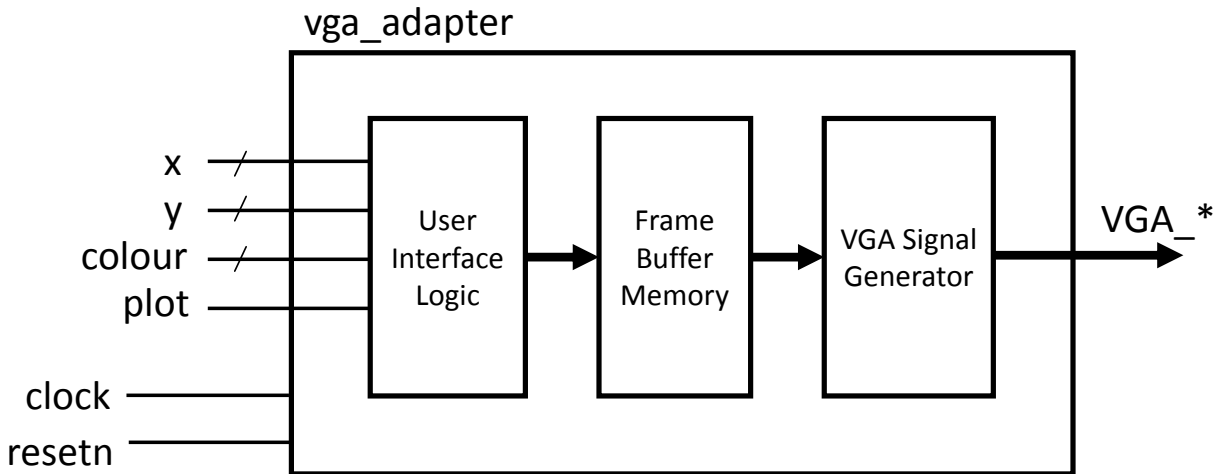


Figure 4: VGA adapter module schematic.

you would get by mixing two paint colors (subtractive color). While you will use only one bit per color, most computer displays and TVs have 24 bits per color, and new HDR displays have 30 bits per color.

An important consideration is the amount of memory required to store the pixels. The reason why we are using a very small screen with only three bits per pixel is so that we will only require a small memory. Figure 4 includes a memory block, which is called the *frame buffer*. The *VGA Signal Generator* in Figure 4 continuously reads the frame buffer and drives the signals that are sent to the monitor. Note that the frame buffer is already implemented within the VGA adapter module provided to you.

Drawing Squares on the VGA - Expected Behaviour

Your circuit will accept an X and Y location as input, as well as a color. All these inputs will be provided via the switches as detailed below. The circuit should then draw a square whose size is 4×4 pixels, and whose *upper-left* corner is at the (X,Y) location specified by the input. The square should be filled with the color specified by the input.

Here are the details about your inputs:

- KEY[0] should be the system active low *reset*.
- SW[9:7] should be used to specify the color.
- SW[6:0] should be used to input (X,Y).

Notice that although the VGA adapter has 160×120 pixels, we don't have enough switches to be able to specify the coordinates separately and to the full range of X. For X we need eight bits and for Y we need seven bits. We are short one switch for eight bits, so we will just use seven switches and only be able to access the first 128 columns of the display. However, we will still use an 8-bit register to hold the X value. To set a value for X, first set SW[6:0] to that value and then press KEY[3] to load the register with the X value. This load should also set the most significant bit of X to 0. Then change switches so that they represent the value of Y. The value of switches will be used for Y.

- The filled square should be drawn when KEY[1] is pressed.

After a square has been drawn, your circuit should allow additional squares to continue to be drawn (say, at different locations in possibly different colors). The high-level design of the circuit for the system is given in Figure 5. It contains 3 major blocks:

1. The VGA adapter is responsible for the drawing of pixels on the screen. This code is provided to you and also includes the frame buffer.

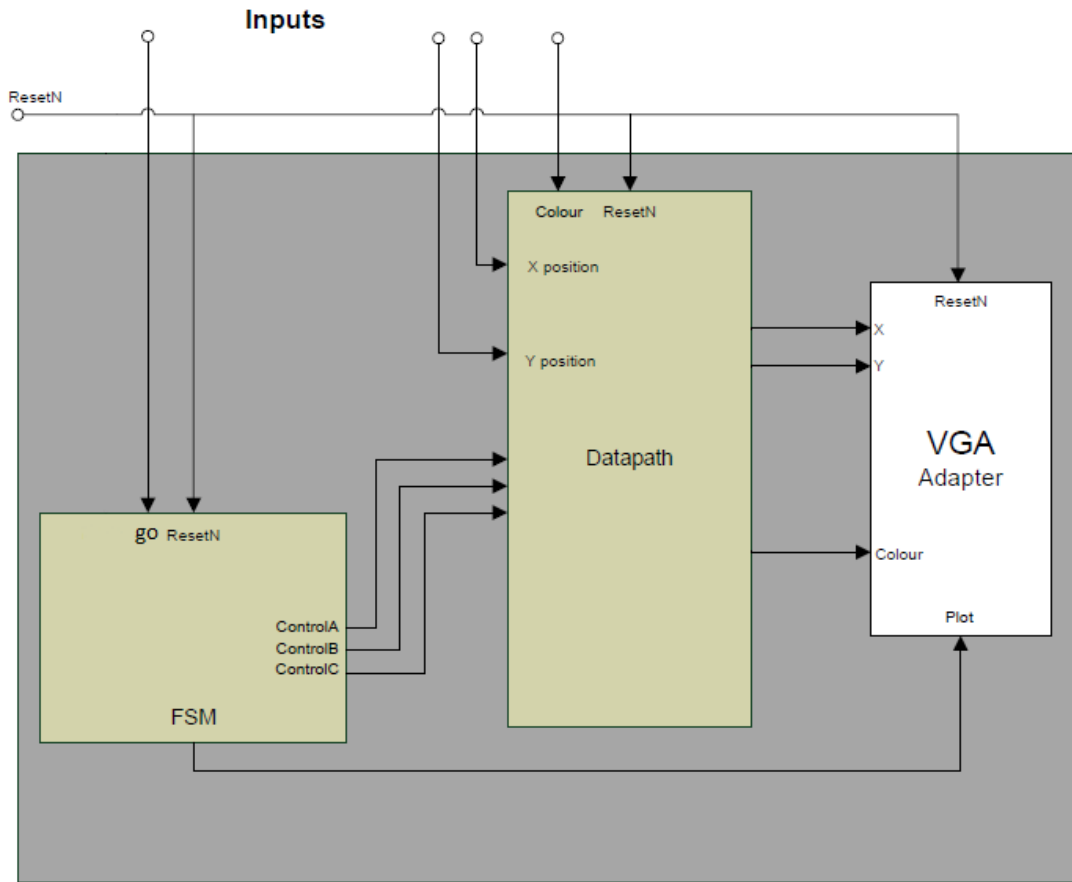


Figure 5: Design Overview - State Machine, Datapath and VGA Adapter. Although not shown, the **ResetN** signal should be connected to all the registers in the circuit (including the FSM state registers). The enable signal (*KEY*[3]) for the register that holds coordinate X is not shown.

2. The datapath that contains arithmetic circuitry and registers, controlled by the FSM, that produce the (X,Y) values that are fed into the VGA Adapter to draw the 4×4 filled square.
3. A finite state machine that serves as a controller for the datapath. Some of output control signals are shown in Figure 5. You need to decide how many control signals are needed based on your datapath. The three signals (ControlA, ControlB, ControlC) shown in the figure are just examples.

Perform the following steps:

1. Design (draw the schematic and write Verilog code by adding to the provided skeleton code in `lab7-part2.zip`) and simulate a datapath that implements the required functionality. Note that the provided skeleton code incorporates the VGA adapter. Your simulation for this part should only include the datapath only, and not the FSM or the VGA adapter. Include schematics, Verilog code, and screenshots of simulation output in your prelab. **(PRELAB)**
2. Design (draw a state diagram, state table, and write Verilog code by adding to the provided skeleton code) to implement and simulate an FSM that controls the implemented datapath. Your simulation for this part should only include the FSM. **(PRELAB)**
3. Since the VGA adapter connects to an external circuit whose details you may not fully understand, it is not straightforward to simulate your entire top-level design. You should simulate the combination of the FSM and datapath circuits (and not including the VGA adapter). You should then verify that the outputs from the datapath (inputs to the VGA adapter) are correct. That is, your prelab should include a simulation that demonstrates that all of the pixel writes to the `vga_adapter` module work as anticipated. **(PRELAB)**
4. Build your top-level design. If you examine the provided skeleton code carefully, you will note that it refers to a file called `black.mif`. This initializes the frame buffer when the FPGA is first configured. The `black.mif` file provided to you creates an "all-black" image, meaning that the screen will be blank when the circuit is programmed into the FPGA.
5. Compile and implement the design on the FPGA using Quartus. Make sure your project is stored in your `W:\` drive, you selected the correct FPGA device (5CSEMA5F31C6), and imported the pin assignments.

Advice

You may want to first draw a single pixel on the screen to ensure the pin assignments are all OK. And keep in mind that color `3'b000` is black, so if your switches are all set to zeros, you won't be able to see anything on the black background.

You will need to use a counter to help you plot the 16 pixels of the 4×4 color-filled square. If you were to draw a 2×2 square, one way to implement this would be to use a 2-bit counter to represent the four pixels that need to be drawn. If the most significant bit of the counter was added to the y coordinate and the least significant bit of the counter added to the x coordinate, this would end up writing to all four pixels of a 2×2 square. You will need to adapt this idea for the larger 4×4 square.

Note that your circuit will be sending the coordinates to be filled to the VGA adapter one pixel at a time. However, since you will be using the 50 MHz clock `CLOCK_50` to drive your circuit, this will occur so fast that you will not be able to see this process(i.e., all pixels will appear to be drawn on the screen at once).

5 Part III - Bonus

You are strongly encouraged to at least attempt this part, especially if you are planning to use animations for your course project.

In this next part we will create a simple animation of the box from Part II by having it bounce around the screen. The color of the box (4×4 pixels) will be selected by the switches but now the (X,Y) location

of the box will be controlled by your circuit and will change over time. To accomplish the animation, your circuit will have to make it seem as though the box is seamlessly moving around the screen. It will do this by erasing and redrawing the box each time it is to be moved. We would like the box to always move in a diagonal fashion at four pixels per second. The VGA adapter updates the monitor at 60Hz or 60 frames-per-second, meaning that the entire contents of the frame buffer are output to the monitor every 1/60th of a second. Your circuit should not erase and redraw the box any faster than this rate.

You should use a counter to track how much time has passed. The counter should count for 1/60th of a second. You should also use a second counter to track how many frames have elapsed. If we want the box to move at four pixels per second, the box should only move one pixel every 15 frames.

You will implement the circuit in two steps. First, you will design the datapath for a module that is able to draw (or erase) the image at a given location. The datapath of this circuit will basically be the circuit used for Part II. In addition, you will need two counters that will contain the current (X,Y) location of the box as well as two single-bit direction registers (horizontal and vertical) that will track the direction the box is moving. The (X,Y) counters will be able to count up or count down since the box can be moving in any direction on the screen. The two single-bit direction registers will track the current diagonal direction of the box (up-left, up-right, down-left, down-right). To implement the *bounce* off the edges of the screen, the current location of the box and direction of travel should be used to update the direction registers. For example, if the box is moving in the down-right direction and the next position of the box would move it off the bottom of the screen, the vertical direction bit would be flipped indicating the box should start moving in an up-right direction. Likewise, if the box was moving in the down-right direction and the next position of the box was further than the right edge of the screen, the horizontal direction bit would be flipped indicating the box should start moving in a down-left direction.

A block diagram of your circuit is shown in Figure 6. It is not complete and lacks some details and signals. Consider it only as a starting point.

Use the same switches as you used in Part II, as needed. Remember that X and Y inputs of that module are no longer input from the switches.

A rough outline of the algorithm is as follows:

1. Reset the 1/60th second Delay Counter and the Frame Counter. Reset Counter_X to 0 and Counter_Y to 60, which will define the starting position of the square. Reset the direction registers to indicate up-right. You can choose how you encode the directions in terms of what a 1 means in the direction register.
2. Use the Part II datapath to draw the box in the current location.
3. Reset the 1/60th second Delay Counter and the Frame Counter. Then count 15 frames.
4. Use your Part II datapath to erase the current box.
5. Update Counter_X, Counter_Y based on the direction registers. Update the direction registers themselves (if necessary).
6. Go to Step 2.

Implement the circuit by completing the following steps (required if you are attempting the bonus part):

1. Design (draw the schematic and write Verilog) and simulate a datapath that implements the required functionality. **(PRELAB)**
2. Design (draw state diagram and write Verilog) and simulate an FSM that controls the implemented datapath. **(PRELAB)**
3. Since the VGA adapter connects to an external circuit whose details you may not fully understand, it is not straightforward to simulate your entire top-level design. If you wish, you can skip detailed simulation of the combined controller/datapath circuit. However, you may need to perform this simulation for debugging purposes if your circuit does not work on the board. You should at least verify that the outputs from the datapath (inputs to the VGA adapter) are correct. **(PRELAB)**

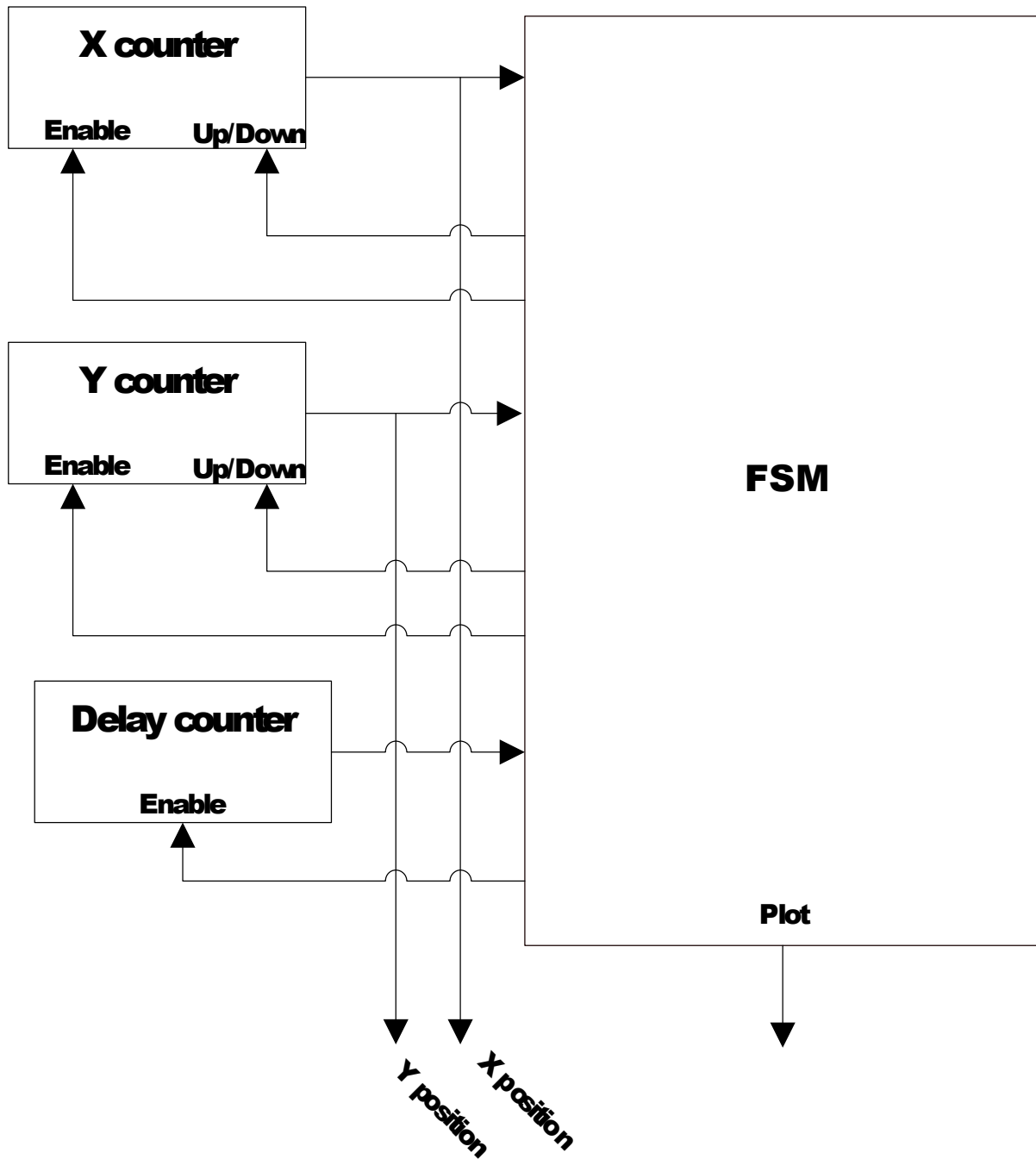


Figure 6: Rough schematic for your animated image circuit. There may be signals and pieces missing.

4. Build your top-level design. Compile and implement the design on the FPGA using Quartus. Make sure your project is stored in your `W:\` drive. Make sure to select the correct FPGA device (5CSEMA5F31C6) and import the pin assignments.
5. Test you circuit and demonstrate the working circuit to your TA. **(IN-LAB)**