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Bachelor's Project

**Interactive visualization system for hybrid active pixel
detectors within the ATLAS experiment at CERN**

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Study Programme: Open Informatics

Field of Study: Computer and Information Science

March 30, 2016

Acknowledgements

Zde můžete napsat své poděkování, pokud chcete a máte komu děkovat.

Declaration

I declare that I elaborated this thesis on my own and that I mentioned all the information sources and literature that have been used in accordance with the Guideline for adhering to ethical principles in the course of elaborating an academic final thesis.

In Prague on May 15, 2016

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Abstract

Translation of Czech abstract into English.

Abstrakt

Abstrakt práce by měl velmi stručně vystihovat její obsah. Tedy čím se práce zabývá a co je jejím výsledkem/přínosem.

Očekávají se cca 1 – 2 odstavce, maximálně půl stránky.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	About the Timepix Detectors	1
1.2	The Timepix Network at ATLAS	1
1.3	The Problem of Efficient Data Manipulation	1
1.4	Structure of This Document	1
2	Data Structure and Storage	3
2.1	Output Produced by Timepix	3
2.1.1	Raw Output	3
2.1.2	Cluster Analysis	4
2.2	Common Storage Formats	6
2.2.1	The Single-Frame and Multi-Frame Formats	6
2.2.2	The ROOT Format	6
2.3	Proposed Data Structure	6
2.3.1	Formal Requirements	6
2.3.2	Proposal	7
2.4	Expected Volume of Acquired Data	7
2.5	Performance Optimizations	7
3	Communication Protocol	9
3.1	Requirements	9
3.2	Underlying Standards	9
3.3	Web Methods	9
4	Data Server	11
4.1	Role of the Application	11
4.2	Decomposition	11
4.3	Dependencies	11
4.4	Object-Oriented Design	11
4.5	A Note on Parallelism	11
4.6	Performance Optimizations	11
5	Web Visualization	13
5.1	Naive Decomposition	13
5.2	Final Decomposition	13
5.3	Underlying Standards	13

5.4	Dependencies	13
5.5	Website Structure	13
6	Conclusion	15
6.1	System Deployment	15
6.2	Data Import	15
6.3	Automating Data Acquisition	15
6.4	Future of the Application	15
A	Obsah přiloženého CD	17

List of Figures

A.1 Seznam přiloženého CD — příklad	17
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List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 About the Timepix Detectors

1.2 The Timepix Network at ATLAS

1.3 The Problem of Efficient Data Manipulation

1.4 Structure of This Document

Chapter 2

Data Structure and Storage

In this chapter, we describe the data which will be subject to visualization later on. By chronologically following the process of data acquisition, we start at the Timepix detectors, pass FPGAs, other intermediate hardware and terminate at the sensor readout. We then give details on structure of measured results and mention various permanent storage formats, their particular advantages and disadvantages. Considering all these properties, we then propose a data scheme capable of archiving such data for longer time periods, while striving to offer almost instantaneous access based on the time of measurement.

2.1 Output Produced by Timepix

Similarly to photodetectors found in common digital cameras, Timepix detectors generate measurements in the form of individual frames. A single captured frame consists of values recorded by all pixels over a given time period, length of which is referred to as *the acquisition time*. Returning to our camera analogy, this figure resembles the time of exposition of a photograph. Prolonging it, we can expect more particles to interact with our detector's pixels, making the resulting frames more saturated.

The technical principle behind the measurements is analogous to that of a Medipix sensor. Every pixel is equipped with an integer register called *the counter*. When acquisition starts, this counter is set to zero. Throughout the set time period, the counter is possibly incremented multiple times, producing a value which is read out as measurement's result for the individual pixel. This process is synchronized across all of detector's pixels, producing an integer matrix which constitutes the captured frame.

Since the pixels may not be identical due to material irregularities and manufacturing errors, every pixel has a *threshold* parameter, which is subject to calibration. If, during the measurement, the analog input measured from the pixel's semiconductor exceeds this threshold, the pixel is considered to be interacting with a particle.

2.1.1 Raw Output

Provided that every Timepix detector installed in the ATLAS network has 2 layers of 256×256 pixel matrices, every captured frame consists of 131,072 integer values in total.

The interpretation of these values depends on another parameter, *the operation mode*. While it is technically possible to configure every pixel to operate in a different mode, we have so far preferred to configure all pixels identically, making this essentially not a parameter of a pixel, but that of a frame.

The following operation modes are available:

Hit Detection Mode (also known as the One-Hit Mode) In this mode, the counter is set to one when the threshold is exceeded. Upon multiple interactions, the counter is not further incremented. The result is a Boolean value, indicating whether the pixel has interacted with a particle.

Hit Counting Mode (also known as the Medipix Mode) In this mode, the counter is incremented upon every transition from a state below the threshold to a state above the threshold. The result is an integer value representing the number of particles which have interacted with the pixel.

Time over Threshold Mode In this mode, the counter is incremented by every clock cycle spent above the threshold. The result is an integer value corresponding to the energy of the interacting particle. Further calibration to convert counter value to energy is required, though.

Time of Arrival Mode In this mode, the counter is incremented by every clock cycle after the threshold is first exceeded. The result is an integer value corresponding to the time interval before the end of the measurement.

If a captured frame contains data from pixels configured in multiple different modes, the frame is said to be measured in the **Mixed Mode** and should contain further details on the exact pixel configuration of the detector.

2.1.2 Cluster Analysis

In ATLAS measurements, we strive to configure our detectors to capture frames containing multiple disconnected components corresponding with individual interacting particles. Naively speaking, we don't want our frames to be neither fully saturated, nor empty, but *just right*. The task of achieving this level of balance is fairly straightforward, as it consists only of fine-tuning the acquisition time parameter while monitoring the levels of saturation in recently captured frames.

In well-balanced frames, we can then observe components of various shapes and sizes, depending on the experiments which were being performed in the ATLAS machine at the time of acquisition. These components, referred to as *clusters*, are discovered and evaluated in an automated process called *the cluster analysis*. This procedure involves a connectivity-checking algorithm, such as *flood-fill*, operating on the pixel matrices to distinguish individual clusters. In later stages, clusters are processed, measured and classified in various categories with regards to their shape. In addition, if the frame has been captured in TOT mode and calibration data are available, the automated processing script converts raw measured counter values to energy approximations.

The output of the cluster analysis consists of two separate lists of clusters, one per every sensor layer. It follows from the definition of a cluster that any pixel contained in it has a non-zero counter value. Consequently, all pixels unreferenced by any cluster are assumed to be equal to zero. The utilized technique of data encoding is well-known as it offers efficient compression rate for sparse pixel matrices which we are expecting to encounter in our measured data. It is however worth noting at this point that in certain cases (represented most notably by saturated or nearly saturated frames), this approach produces voluminous data structures, which may take long time to enumerate, and in turn slow down other algorithms operating on them.

In the cluster list, pixels are stored as tuples of their Cartesian coordinates and their respective counter values. From this information, the pixel matrix can be reconstructed at any time. The original pixel matrix is therefore discarded at the end of the cluster analysis, in order to minimize storage requirements. Please note that should there be any errors discovered in the future, the already processed data could be converted back into the form of pixel matrices by means of simple enumeration. Following that, the patched version of the cluster analysis process would analyze the pixel data once again, replacing any possibly erroneous output with correct one.

Let us now further inspect data generated by the process of cluster analysis. As we hinted at the beginning of this section, many other secondary values are calculated for every cluster during the automated processing, most notable of which are:

Shape Classification By measuring geometric properties of a cluster (such as radius or size), we are able to estimate whether the cluster resembles more a line segment or a circular blob. Similarly, we can also estimate if the cluster looks thin or thick. From that information, we can infer the type of interacting particle and direction of its movement relative to the plane of incidence. To formally define cluster categories, we will use terminology consistent with the ATLAS Medipix research.

Size, Volume The size of a cluster is equal to the number of connected pixels which constitute it. The volume is a sum of counter values of those pixels.

Centroid, Volumetric Centroid The centroid is defined as an unweighted average of pixel coordinates in the cluster. In analogous way, the volumetric centroid is the very same average weighted by corresponding counter values.

Minimum and Maximum Cluster Height These two figures refer to the lowest and the greatest counter values of pixels in the cluster.

Energy-based Properties (*available only in TOT mode*) If the energy approximations are available, many of the above-mentioned values can be also calculated with the energy substituted for counter values.

2.2 Common Storage Formats

2.2.1 The Single-Frame and Multi-Frame Formats

2.2.2 The ROOT Format

Another storage option is the ROOT Data Analysis Framework. Originally conceived at CERN in 1995, the framework provides a set of powerful tools with various applications in data mining, manipulation and visualization. Unlike other similar toolkits, ROOT comes with its own machine-independent binary file format (identified by the `.root` extension). This format is designed to store enormous amounts of data within various types of data structures efficiently, while maintaining good overall performance by employing low-level memory optimization techniques and multi-tier content caching.

Used by many physicists at CERN for several years now, ROOT seems like a good choice of a data archivation format as many researchers have already learned its caveats and know well how to operate it despite often lacking deeper background in Computer Science. For the purposes of programmatic access, ROOT also does well with documented APIs in Python, R and C++.

Should the processed data be stored in ROOT, a basic relational database concept comes to mind. With standard tables generalized in the form of *trees* and their columns in the form of *leaves*. One tree would suffice for the information about captured frames (such as acquisition time, operation mode, etc.) and other for the list of clusters for every frame. Such trees would efficiently abstract the entire storage structure, allowing for multiple frames to be stored in a single file, grouped for instance by a common time interval.

In spite of being over 20 years in development, ROOT is not perfect. Using memory monitoring tools such as *valgrind*, we have confirmed that the C++ implementation of the ROOT framework is riddled with various memory leaks, making it unsuitable for time-extensive operations. Some might also argue, that a full tree data structure might be overly-complicated and too general for a simple output described in previous sections. Lastly, ROOT framework has quite a complex object structure, making it hard to learn for first-time users.

2.3 Proposed Data Structure

2.3.1 Formal Requirements

Having defined the essence of information we wish to store and several data formats as means to do it, we are now ready to focus on the definition of our database.

Requirements on such a data structure are as common as database requirements can get. It should be a reliable permanent storage element, accessible for reading from multiple workstations at a same time and robust enough to withstand minor hardware failures. With 15 detectors already installed at ATLAS, and possible option of installing another 5, the database should be designed to hold processed frames from up to 30 Timepix devices for the entire expected time period of their operation at LHC (that from June 2015 to LS3 in 2021).

As more frames arrive from the detector network, our database should allow to be periodically extended with new data, possibly processing and converting pixel matrices into cluster lists, as described in the previous sections. We also have the advantage of knowing that the majority of user queries on our database will request data by the time of measurement and a specific detector in the network. With regards to all this information, we may optimize the data retrieval procedure to accelerate such queries.

2.3.2 Proposal

The data will be separated into two directories depending on its processing state. When frames are acquired at ATLAS, an operator will transfer them into the first directory

2.4 Expected Volume of Acquired Data

2.5 Performance Optimizations

Chapter 3

Communication Protocol

3.1 Requirements

3.2 Underlying Standards

3.3 Web Methods

Chapter 4

Data Server

4.1 Role of the Application

4.2 Decomposition

4.3 Dependencies

4.4 Object-Oriented Design

4.5 A Note on Parallelism

4.6 Performance Optimizations

Chapter 5

Web Visualization

- 5.1 Naive Decomposition
- 5.2 Final Decomposition
- 5.3 Underlying Standards
- 5.4 Dependencies
- 5.5 Website Structure

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 System Deployment

6.2 Data Import

6.3 Automating Data Acquisition

6.4 Future of the Application

Appendix A

Obsah příloženého CD

Tato příloha je povinná pro každou práci. Každá práce musí totiž obsahovat příložené CD. Viz dále.

Může vypadat například takto. Váš seznam samozřejmě bude odpovídat typu vaší práce. (viz [?]):



Figure A.1: Seznam příloženého CD — příklad