

Thesis Title

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Contents

Contents	2
List of figures	4
List of tables	6
List of publications	7
List of abbreviations	8
Abstract	9
Declaration of originality	10
Copyright statement	11
Acknowledgements	12
1 A Literature Review of Terrestrial Robots with Robotic Tails and Their Functions	13
1.1 Introduction	13
1.2 Research Methodology	13
1.3 Tail Functions of Terrestrial Robots	14
1.3.1 Categorisation System	14
1.3.2 Examples from each Category	18
1.4 Discussion	26
1.4.1 Performance Comparison	26
1.4.2 Bio-Inspiration	26
1.4.3 Number of Segments	27
1.5 Conclusion	27
References	27
2 Creating a Configurable Payload for Instability Experiments	33
2.1 Introduction	33
2.2 Mathematical Design	34
2.2.1 Configuration Space	34
2.2.2 Test Point Sets	35
2.2.3 Search Methods	36
2.3 Implementation	38

2.3.1 Container Design	38
2.3.2 Selected Search Method	39
2.3.3 Material Selection	39
2.4 Results	41
2.4.1 Configuration Space	41
2.4.2 Test Points	41
2.5 Discussion & Conclusion	41
2.5.1 Mass & Centre of Mass (COM) Range	41
2.5.2 Future Work	44
2.5.3 Conclusion	45
References	46
3 Investigating the use of a 2DOF Pendulum Tail for Compensating for Instability when Carrying a Payload	47
3.1 Introduction	47
3.1.1 Trajectory	47
3.2 Simulation	48
3.3 Experiments	48
3.3.1 Design	48
3.3.2 Results & Performance	49
3.4 Discussion and Conclusion	51
References	52
Appendices	53

List of figures

1.1	Flowchart of the publication selection process.	14
1.2	Abstract graphs of the different functions of the tail, with the magnitude representing some kind of change in the robot's position and/or orientation.	16
1.3	Tree diagram of all the categorisations found in the publications with accompanying visual diagrams.	17
1.4	Data from [1] showing the effects of a static and dynamic tail on maintaining robot heading in a trotting gait.	18
1.5	Image from [1] showing how the tail moves during the gait in order to correct for heading drift.	19
1.6	Simulation Data from [3] showing the how the body pitch would be reduced when accelerating or braking with an active tail.	19
1.7	Images from [3] showing the robot performing a rapid acceleration test with the tail.	19
1.8	Experimental Data from [3] showing the maximum acceleration achieved with and without an active tail.	20
1.9	Images from [6] showing the robot performing a turn with the tail.	20
1.10	Experimental Data from [5] (left) and [6] (right) showing the maximum lateral acceleration achieved with and without an active tail. Note the right graph manages similar results to the left graph.	20
1.11	Images of the robots in [7] (left) and [8] (right).	21
1.12	Data from [8] comparing the robot path on an XY plane for a 90° differential drive turn, open loop tail turn, and closed loop tail turn. Note the vastly increased sharpness of the turn when a tail is used.	21
1.13	Data from [7] showing the gain in yaw rate for various open loop tail trajectories and different frequencies and amplitudes.	22
1.14	Images from [8] showing the robot using its tail to make a turn.	22
1.15	Data from [9] showing the normalised change in COM for a static and dynamic walk.	22
1.16	Data from [9] showing the trajectory of the COM and Zero Moment Point (ZMP) for a static and dynamic walk.	23
1.17	Video still of the TITRUS-III robot from [11].	23
1.18	Imagers from [10] showing how the tail or body deflect when hit by the wrecking ball, depending on if the tail is active.	24
1.19	Data from [10] showing the difference in hip displacement between a fixed and controlled tail.	24

1.20	Data from [12] showing the optimal spring constant for maximising jumping height.	25
1.21	Images from [12] showing the motion of the tail during a jump.	25
1.22	Data from [13] showing the increase in forward velocity and/or reduction in body pitch for the different tail lengths and masses. Note that a) and c) correspond to a 35° tail amplitude, while b) and d) are a 65° amplitude.	26
1.23	Images from [13] showing the motion of the body and tail over a single stride cycle.	30
1.24	Images from [14] showing the a single stride for the robot, and an image of the robot just before landing.	31
1.25	Diagrams from [16] outlining the two reorientation experiments.	31
1.26	Images from [16] showing the wall reorientation experiment.	31
1.27	Images from [16] showing the slope reorientation experiment.	31
1.28	Diagram from [16] showing the obstacle impact test.	32
1.29	Images from [16] showing the slope obstacle impact test without a tail, with a static tail, and with a dynamic tail with closed loop feedback.	32
2.1	Concept drawing of the configurable payload.	34
2.2	Various temperature cooling profiles for simulated annealing, assuming 1000 steps.	38
2.3	Schematic of the container, including body and lid.	39
2.4	Simulated annealing output for the target $\begin{bmatrix} 1.5 & 0.001 & 0.001 & 0.001 \end{bmatrix}$ with $\alpha = 0.997$ and even weighting $w_m, w_r = 0.25$ for 4.3×10^4 steps.	40
2.5	Masses for each set of eight 35 mm cubes of the configurable payload for each of the four materials, with the mean mass \bar{x} and standard deviation σ of each set.	40
2.6	Scatter graph of all 62969 unique mass and COM vectors.	41
2.7	Mass and COM coordinates for each test point set.	42
2.8	Diagram on the COM dynamics of a fluid filled container. If the container is disturbed, a standing wave forms inside the container which causes the COM to oscillate.	45
3.1	Trajectory sequence of the robot arm and payload.	47
3.2	48
3.3	Simulation block diagram.	48
3.4	Block diagram of the control system.	49
3.5	Graph of the mean Center of Pressure (COP) during the <i>carry</i> phase of the experiment	50
3.6	Resonant frequency of the tail calculated from accelerometer data captured during an impact with a steel hammer. The left graph is the accelerometer data, and the right graph is the real part from a real Discrete Fourier Transform (DFT) on the data.	50
3.7	51

List of tables

2.1	The materials chosen for the cubes.	40
2.2	Table of the vectors of \mathcal{E} , excluding the mass-limited element.	41
2.3	Table of the target and actual vectors for \mathcal{C} , \mathcal{B} and the mass limited element of \mathcal{E} with the L2 norm error. * notation indicates “don’t care” and is excluded from the search algorithm.	42
2.4	Table of all test point configurations,	43
2.5	44
2.6	45

List of publications

Publications go here.

List of abbreviations

AUJ Actuated Universal Joint

2D Two Dimensional

3D Three Dimensional

COM Centre of Mass

DLS Damped Least Squares

DOF Degree of Freedom

PID Proportional Integral Derivative

PI Proportional Integral

PD Proportional Derivative

SHTP Sensor Hub Transport Protocol

MSB Most Significant Bit

LSB Least Significant Bit

I²C Inter-Integrated Circuit

SPI Serial Peripheral Interface

UART Universal Asynchronous Receiver-Transmitter

DIO Digital Input/Output

IMU Inertial Measurement Unit

GOOP Graphical Object Oriented Programming

CS Chip Select

DFT Discrete Fourier Transform

CPG Central Pattern Generator

ODE Ordinary Differential Equation

GRF Ground Reaction Force

ZMP Zero Moment Point

RMS Root Mean Square

COP Center of Pressure

Abstract

This is abstract text.

Declaration of originality

I hereby confirm that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

A Literature Review of Terrestrial Robots with Robotic Tails and Their Functions

1.1 Introduction

The field of terrestrial robots with robotic tails is incredibly diverse, reflecting the many functions of tails in the animal kingdom. Even discounting tails used for fluid dynamics (swimming and flying robots), and focusing only on robots that use their tail during “terrestrial” locomotion (broadly defined as when a robot is moving along a contiguous surface, or jumping from one surface to another surface), there are many applications of robotic tails. In order to make sense of the state of the field, an abstract categorisation system is considered based on the environment the robot is in when the tail is active, the specific action the robot is taking to move itself in space, and what the specific function of the tail is with respect to the robot dynamics. Using this categorisation system, various examples are explored from a set of research articles selected using specific keywords. From this, conclusions can be derived about the general design and operation of robotic tails, which can be used to influence and guide the research covered in chapters ??.

1.2 Research Methodology

Using three online publication repositories, *IEEE Xplore*, *Scopus* and *Web of Science*, a search query was conducted to find relevant publications. The query was tailored to include all publications with **tail*** or **appendage** in the title along with **robot*** (* indicates a wild-card suffix), but to exclude publications that concerned swimming, water walking, or flying robots, as using a tail as a rudder to influence fluid dynamics was outside of the scope of the research. Further exclusions were added upon experimentation with the query in order to remove false positives in areas such as chemistry (as molecules are often described as having “tails”) or medicine (as it did not pertain to mobile robots and usually concerned biological structures such as proteins and cells). The date range was set from January 1980 to December 2018 to exclude outdated publications. The exact queries for each repository can

be found in table ??.

As a result XX publications were discovered. After duplicates were removed and after screening abstracts and full texts, a total of XX unique publications were selected for inclusion. A flowchart of this process can be found in figure 1.1.

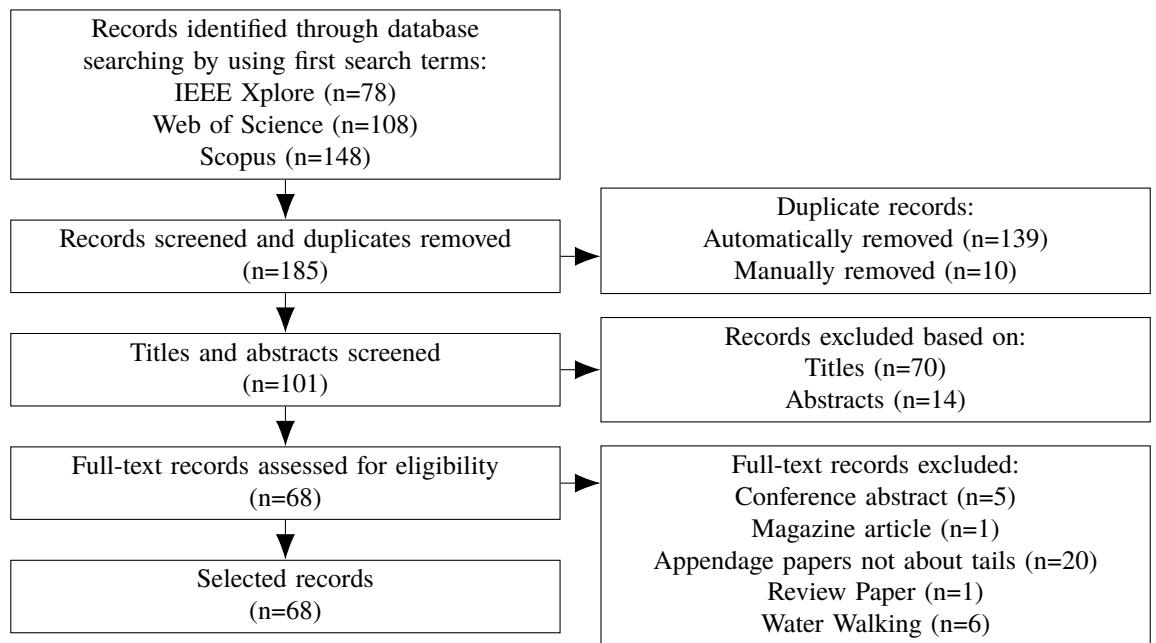


Figure 1.1: Flowchart of the publication selection process.

1.3 Tail Functions of Terrestrial Robots

1.3.1 Categorisation System

The resulting publications represented a wide array of different robot designs and multiple forms of locomotion. Therefore, a simple categorisation system was required in order to better understand the majority of the functions of these tails. After careful analysis of the literature, two questions could be asked that provided common answers:

1. Is the robot on the ground, in the air or transitioning between those states when the tail is active?
2. What precisely is the robot doing when the tail is active?
3. What does the tail do to the dynamics of the robot (i.e. what would happen if there *wasn't* a tail present)?

Each question can then assign a tiered category to a publication based on the answer, the three tiers named *Environment*, *Action* and *Function*.

1. **Environment:** The general domain the robotic system is operating in when the tail is active. From the reviewed literature, three categories have been created:

- *Terrestrial*: A robot with an active tail when the robot is touching a surface, such as a robot driving along the ground.
- *Aerial*: A robot with an active tail when the robot is in free space, such as a robot which *has jumped* into the air, or is falling off a ledge.
- *Transition*: A robot with an active tail when the robot is just about to transition from between the two previous environments, such as a robot *just about* to jump into the air.

2. **Action:** The specific action the robot is performing when the tail is active. Most actions are unique to each environment, except for *hopping*.

- *Straight*: A robot travelling across a surface maintaining its direction of travel.
- *Accelerating*: A robot changing its velocity in the direction of travel across a surface. In the literature, this was a robot coming to complete stop, and starting from stationary.
- *Turning*: A robot changing its direction of travel across a surface, such as a robot turning a corner.
- *Balancing*: A robot undergoing external disturbances while travelling across a surface, typically due to adverse terrain, such as a robot navigating a rough and uneven surface without falling over.
- *Hopping*: A robot executing a sequence of periodic jumps in order to travel across a surface, similar to the method of locomotion of a Kangaroo.
- *Jumping/Falling*: A robot executing isolated non-periodic jumps, falling off a ledge or launching off a ramp, typically to transition from one surface to another at a different altitude and/or orientation.

3. **Function:** The purpose of the tail when the robot is performing the action. These categories usually apply to multiple actions.

- *Stability*: The tail is used to *Maintain* some aspect of the robot's position and/or orientation from the start of the action.
- *Initiation*: The tail is used to *Change* some aspect of the robot's position and/or orientation from the start of the action.
- *Amplification*: The tail is used to *Amplify* the effects of an action by other parts of the robot (such as the legs) which changes the position and/or orientation.

For example, a robot with a tail that helps it increase its apex when hopping, is in the *Transition* environment as it is about to transition from being on the ground to in the air when the tail is active. The robot itself locomotes by hopping, so it is performing a *Hopping* action, and since without the tail the robot would still be capable of hopping, but would not

have such a tall apex, the tail can be considered to be performing *Amplification* of the robot's existing capabilities. Overall, this results in the categorisation *Transition* → *Hopping* → *Amplification*.

Another example is a robot with a tail that prevents it from falling over on rough terrain. The robot is in the *Terrestrial* environment as it is on the ground when the tail is active. The robot itself is performing a *Balancing* action as it is trying to remain upright during locomotion, and since without the tail the robot would fall over, the tail can be considered to be maintaining the *Stability* of the robot. Overall, this results in the categorisation *Terrestrial* → *Balancing* → *Stability*.

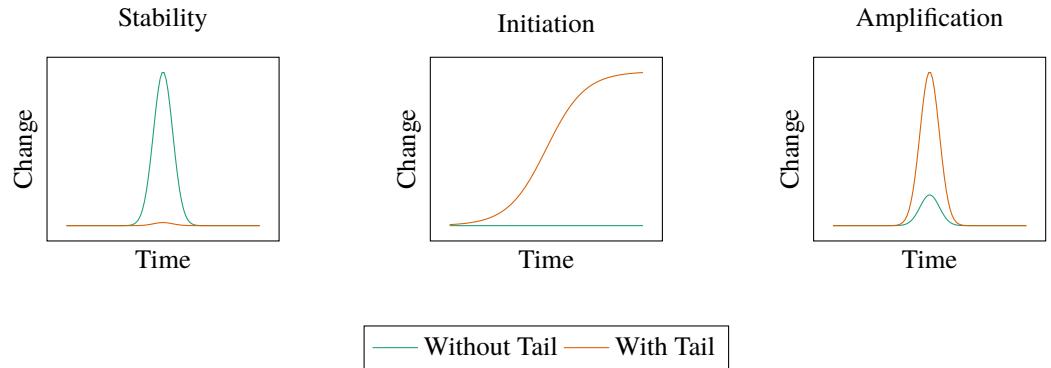


Figure 1.2: Abstract graphs of the different functions of the tail, with the magnitude representing some kind of change in the robot's position and/or orientation.

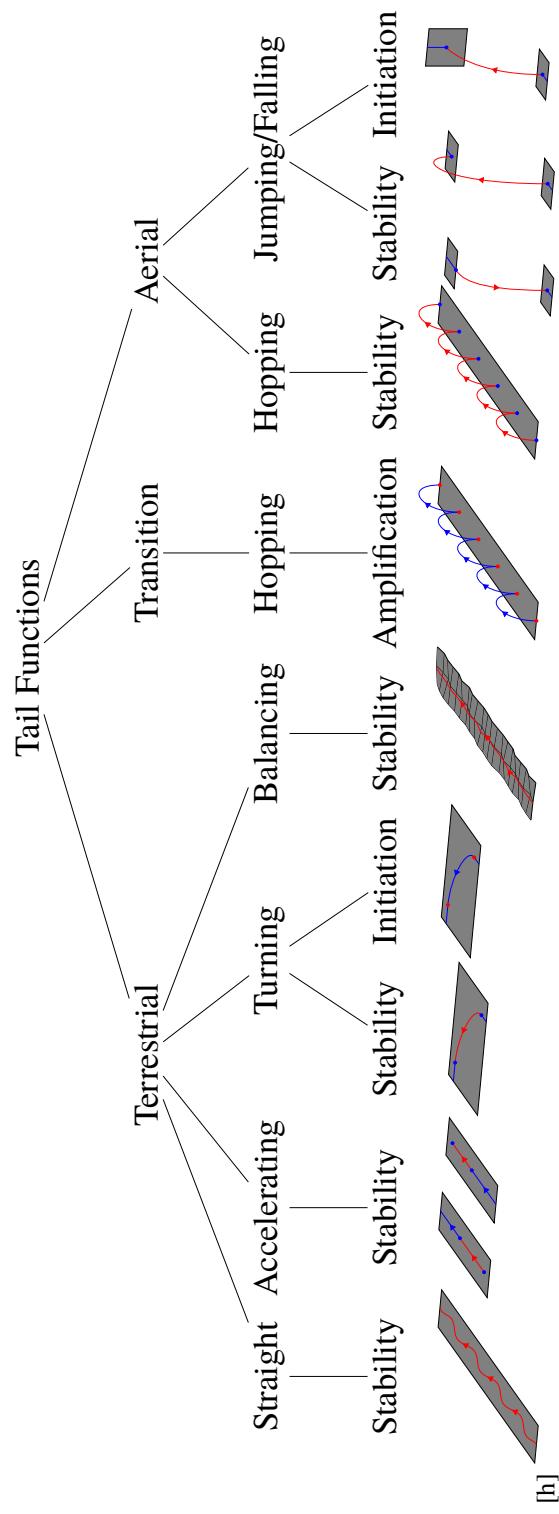


Figure 1.3: Tree diagram of all the categorisations found in the publications with accompanying visual diagrams.

1.3.2 Examples from each Category

1.3.2.1 Terrestrial → Straight → Stability

[1] uses a quadrupedal robot with a gait controlled by a Central Pattern Generator (CPG), an open loop control concept based on neural networks found in the spinal chords of vertebrates and invertebrate thoracic ganglia [2]. A CPG in robotics is typically constructed from a network of oscillators represented by a system of Ordinary Differential Equation (ODE), which accepts the input of another oscillator as a parameter in the system. By chaining these together, complex synchronised trajectories can be generated for multiple actuators in robot locomotion.

Upon initial experiments with a trotting locomotion with no active tail, the robot would not maintain a set heading, it would instead slowly begin to drift in a circle. Visual observations noted that the robot would topple onto its front left leg that was in “swing” phase (lifted off the ground), and it would drag on the ground until in “stance” phase. This resulted in a difference between the Ground Reaction Force (GRF) of the left and right feet which caused the drift in locomotion path.

By implementing a swinging tail that imparted an opposing torque to the direction of the topple, the differences between the left and right GRF were reduced, and the robot could maintain its heading, as can be seen in figure 1.4.

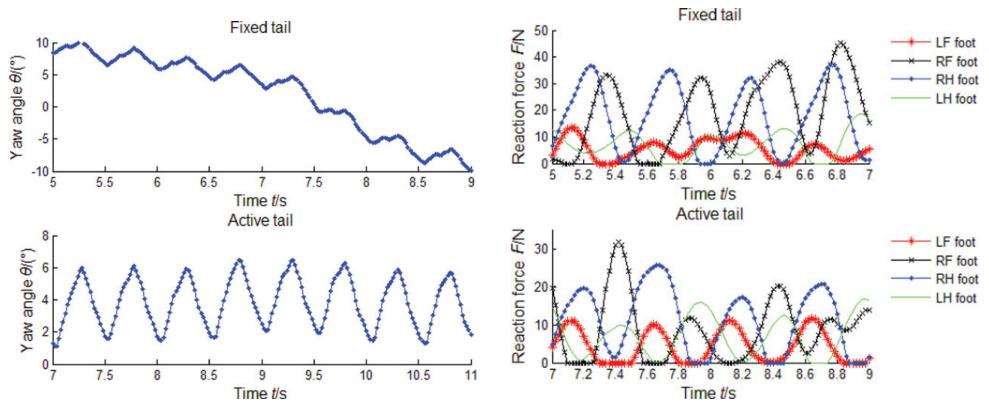


Figure 1.4: Data from [1] showing the effects of a static and dynamic tail on maintaining robot heading in a trotting gait.

1.3.2.2 Terrestrial → Accelerating → Stability

[3] used inspiration from the Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) to improve the acceleration and braking capabilities of a wheeled robot. The research is based on findings from [4], which shows that quadruped acceleration and deceleration in the animal kingdom is limited by their ability to constrain body pitch to prevent toppling over. It can be considered analogous to a motorcycle: accelerate too fast and the vehicle will “pop a wheelie” and potentially flip backwards, decelerate too fast and the opposite may occur.

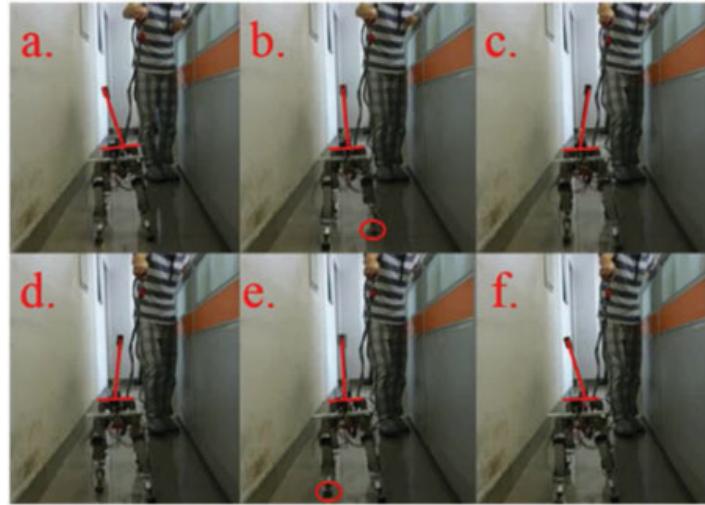


Figure 1.5: Image from [1] showing how the tail moves during the gait in order to correct for heading drift.

Using a combined state feedback and Proportional Integral (PI) controller based on the angular position of the tail, and the angular velocity of the tail and body, the researchers were able to increase the acceleration and braking capabilities of the robot by using the tail to generate an opposing torque to the direction of body pitch, as can be seen in figure 1.8. This was verified by running a series of experiments, increasing the acceleration/braking magnitude until the robot failed to complete the test by toppling over.

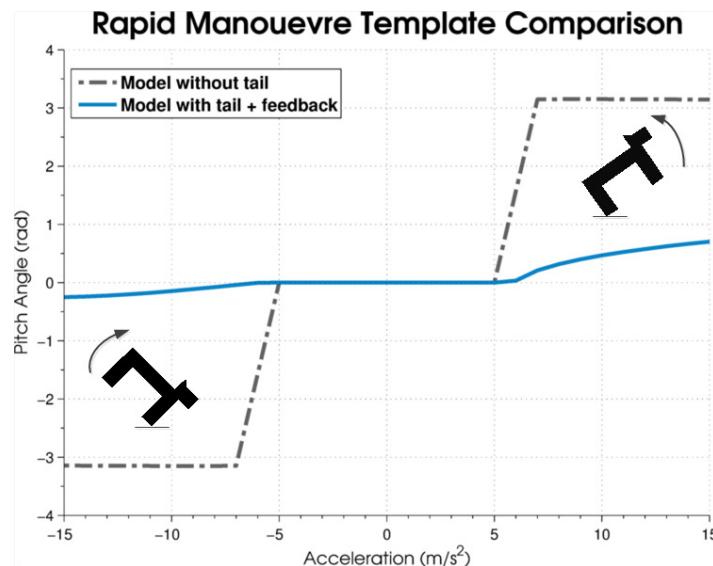


Figure 1.6: Simulation Data from [3] showing the how the body pitch would be reduced when accelerating or braking with an active tail.



Figure 1.7: Images from [3] showing the robot performing a rapid acceleration test with the tail.

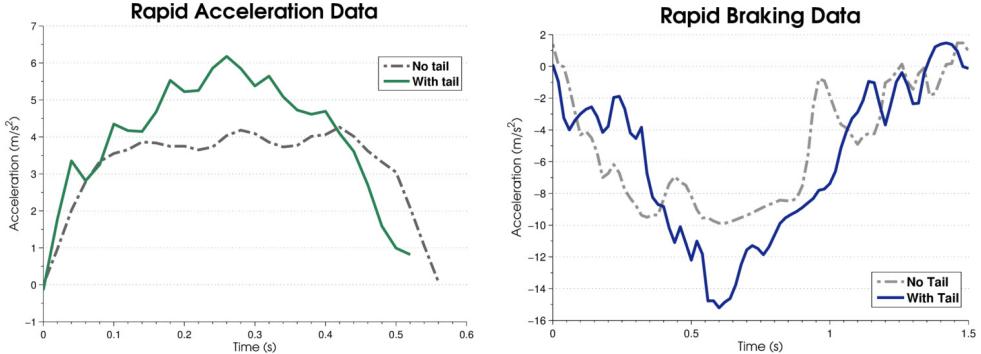


Figure 1.8: Experimental Data from [3] showing the maximum acceleration achieved with and without an active tail.

1.3.2.3 *Terrestrial → Turning → Stability*

[5], [6] took similar inspiration from the Cheetah to allow for tighter turns by allowing greater lateral acceleration. [5] swings the tail out in a single motion in the direction of the turn, producing an opposing torque to the centrifugal force that would otherwise topple the robot during the turn. In contrast, [6] moves the tail constantly in a conical motion, the direction of rotation in the direction of the turn. This also produces an opposing torque in the same fashion, but was not limited in duration, as in the first strategy the tail would eventually contact the ground. This allowed for turns of longer duration to be stabilised.

The control system and experimental procedures were similar to those in [3].

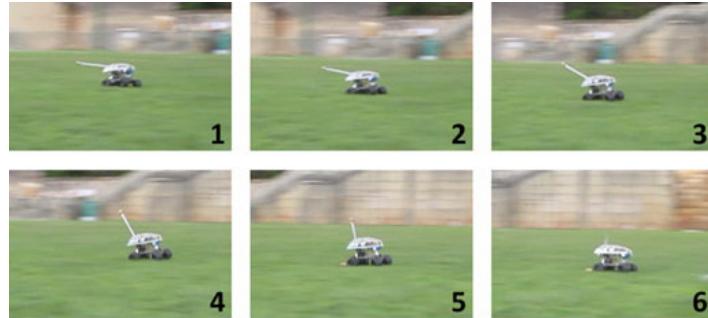


Figure 1.9: Images from [6] showing the robot performing a turn with the tail.

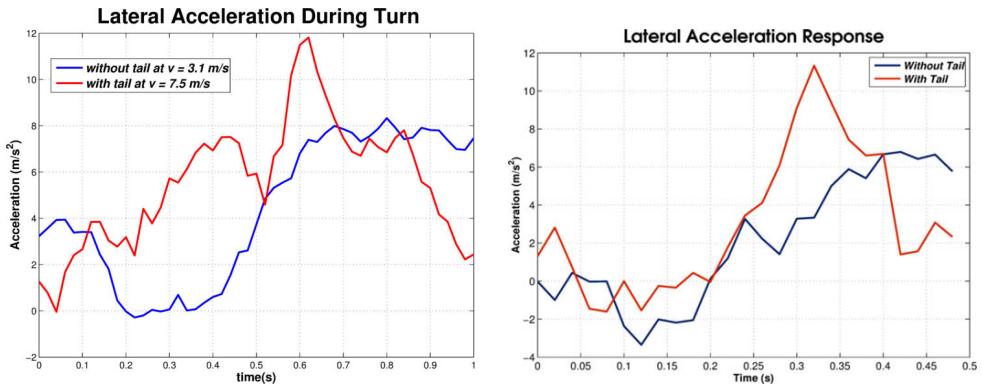


Figure 1.10: Experimental Data from [5] (left) and [6] (right) showing the maximum lateral acceleration achieved with and without an active tail. Note the right graph manages similar results to the left graph.

1.3.2.4 Terrestrial → Turning → Initiation

[7], [8] both use similar robot designs, insect like robots that locomote using 6-8 pairs of small legs (in this case [7] used a robot with eight legs, and [8] used six legs). Both robots are designed to be very light (52 g in [7] and 46 g in [8]) so the legs have a low friction force with the ground. A suitably weighted tail, when swung out in a horizontal motion, can overcome this friction force and impart enough torque to rotate the body of the robot to a new heading.

[8] compared an open and closed loop response of the tail, while [7] only compared open loop tail responses at different frequencies and amplitudes, as can be seen in figure 1.13.

Both experiments were able to greatly increase the turning rate of the robot over a turn using a differential drive, at 360° s^{-1} for [8] and 400° s^{-1} for [7].

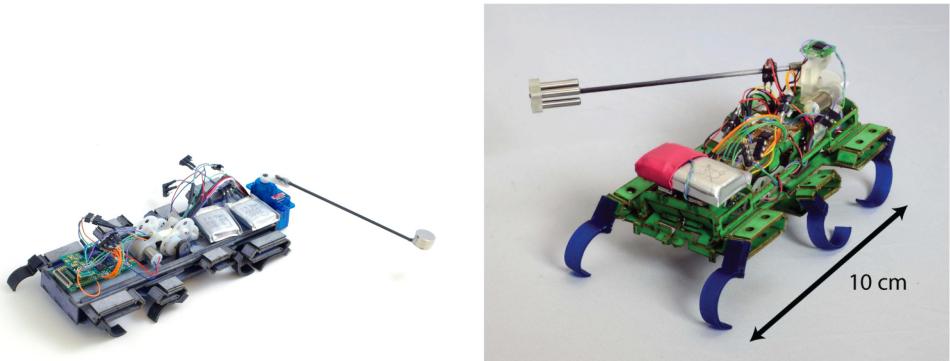


Figure 1.11: Images of the robots in [7] (left) and [8] (right).

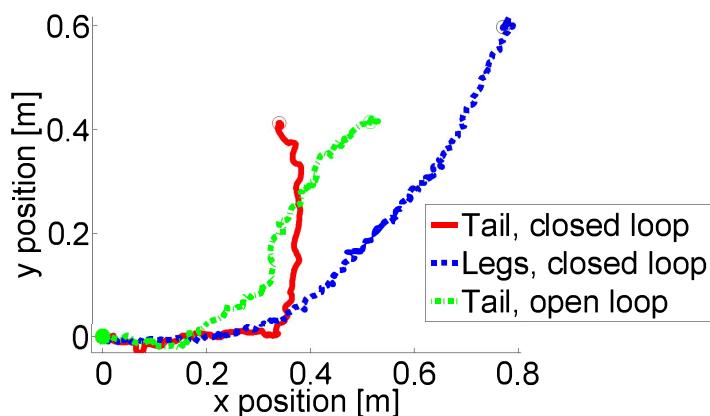


Figure 1.12: Data from [8] comparing the robot path on an XY plane for a 90° differential drive turn, open loop tail turn, and closed loop tail turn. Note the vastly increased sharpness of the turn when a tail is used.

1.3.2.5 Terrestrial → Balancing → Stability

The forces that may cause the robot to topple over when balancing can result from both *internal* forces: robot design or joint inertia when moving at high speed, and *external* forces: uneven terrain or impact. [9] is concerned with internal forces, whereas [10] is concerned with external forces.

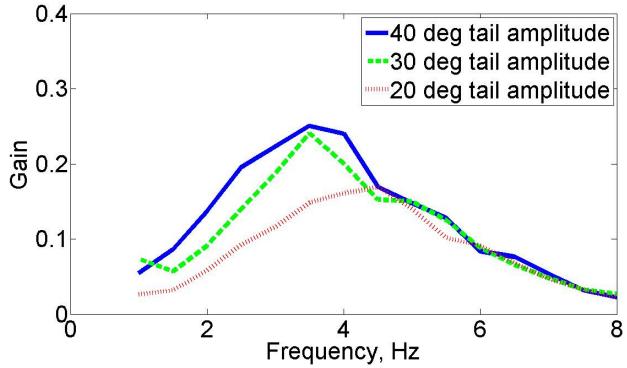


Figure 1.13: Data from [7] showing the gain in yaw rate for various open loop tail trajectories and different frequencies and amplitudes.

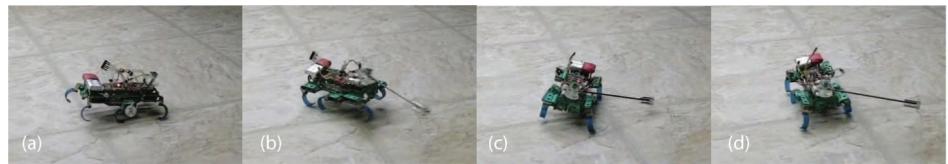


Figure 1.14: Images from [8] showing the robot using its tail to make a turn.

[9] used a dinosaur like bipedal robot with a long neck and tail. The neck and tail then swung from side to side during the gait, maintaining the stability of the robot. Two experiments were conducted using different strategies for maintaining stability. The “static” method swung the neck and tail in a trapezoidal motion in order to keep the COM within the area of the current foot on the ground. The “dynamic” method calculated the ZMP of the robot and instead constrained that to keep it within the are of the foot. This resulted in a smaller motion of the neck and tail which enabled a faster gait.

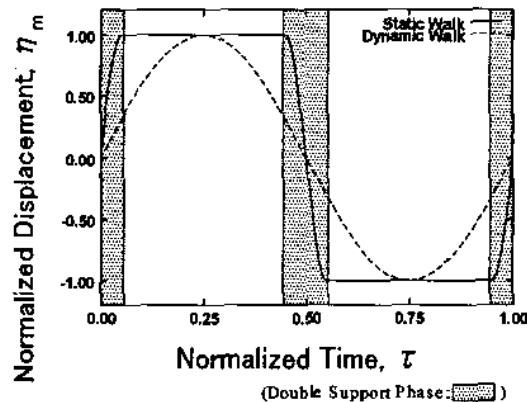


Figure 1.15: Data from [9] showing the normalised change in COM for a static and dynamic walk.

[10] uses a quadrupedal robot closely modelled on a Cheetah which is hit in the torso by a “wrecking ball” to simulate a disturbance. In the control experiment the weighted tail remains static, in the active tail experiment the tail responds in an open loop trajectory when triggered by an accelerometer that sensed the impact. The active tail experiment was able to significantly reduce the hip displacement after impact, as can be seen in figure 1.19.

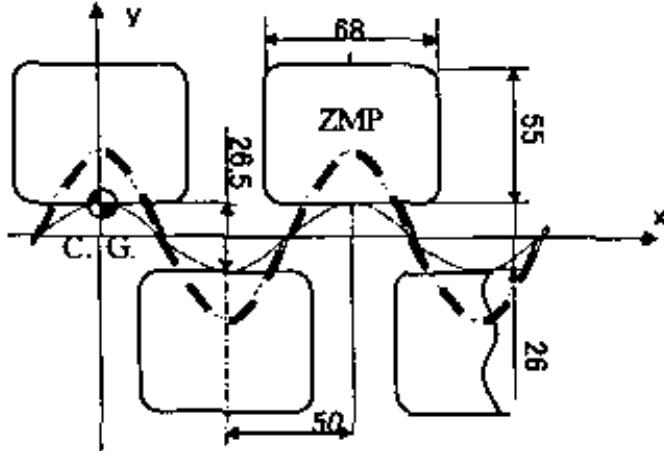


Figure 1.16: Data from [9] showing the trajectory of the COM and ZMP for a static and dynamic walk.



Figure 1.17: Video still of the TITRUS-III robot from [11].

1.3.2.6 *Transition → Hopping → Amplification*

[12], [13] both use a tail to increase the magnitude of a hopping gait. [12] increases the *height* of the hop, while [13] increases the *length*.

[12] uses a bipedal robot with a long, flexible tail. The tail consists of six segments, connected together by passive spring revolute joints. The only active joint connects the tail assembly to the robot body. This creates a “whip-like” motion in the tail when the joint is actuated. By experimenting with different spring constants, an optimum value that maximises jumping height can be found, as can be seen in figure 1.22. Results showed a significant increase in jump height, 256 mm over 240 mm for a model with a rigid tail, and 210 mm for a mode with an inactive tail, demonstrating the superiority of a flexible tail in this application.

[13] uses a quadrupedal robot that locomotes in a galloping motion. By using a weighted tail in an open loop trajectory, the robot is about to increase its forward velocity while also reducing body pitch. Two different tail lengths and masses were used for experiments, a long, light tail (31 g/168 mm), and a short heavy tail (53 g/128 mm). Different open loop amplitudes, 35° and 65°, were also used for each experiment. Results showed an increase in forward velocity and reduction in body pitch, with the best forward velocity of 0.558 m s^{-1}

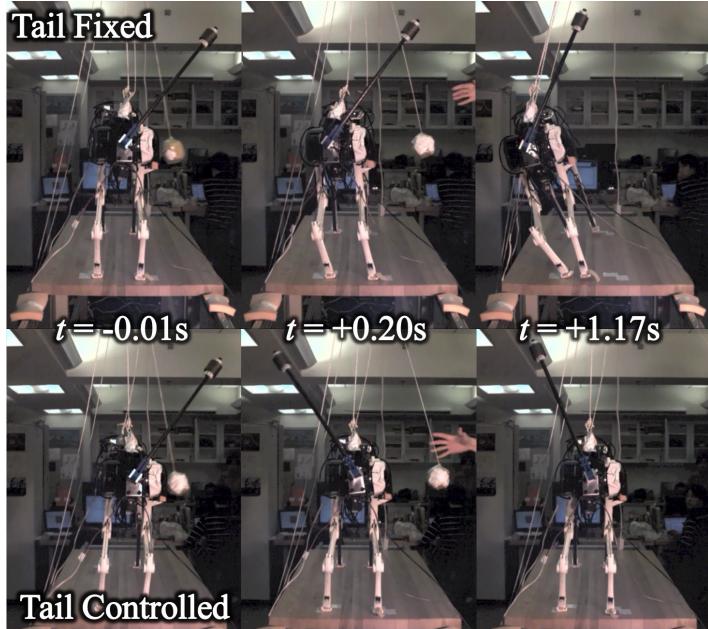


Figure 1.18: Images from [10] showing how the tail or body deflect when hit by the wrecking ball, depending on if the tail is active.

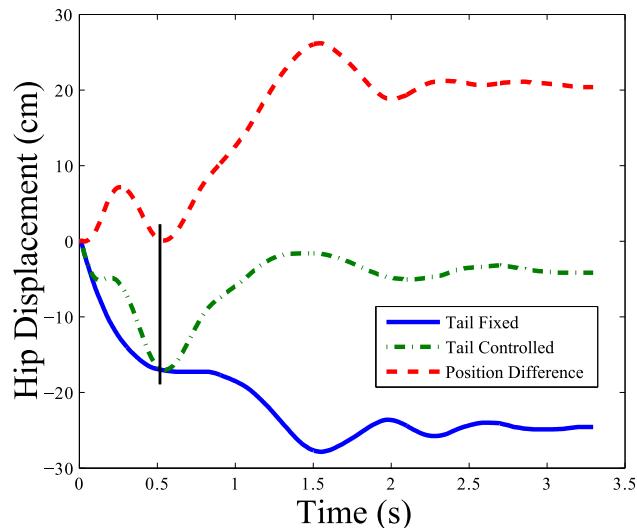


Figure 1.19: Data from [10] showing the difference in hip displacement between a fixed and controlled tail.

from the short, heavy tail at 35° , and the best reduction in body pitch of 4.6° from the long, light tail at 65° . These results compared to a forward velocity of 0.479 m s^{-1} and body pitch per stride of 8.5° for a fixed “passive” tail.

1.3.2.7 Aerial → Hopping → Stability

[13] also used the tail to reduce body pitch, which prevents the robot from falling over forward when hopping. [14] also used a kangaroo like robot with a tail to also decrease body pitch, in both an open and closed loop tail trajectory. The open loop tail was able to reduce the body pitch range to 5.17° and Root Mean Square (RMS) error to 1.17° , and the closed loop tail to 4.49° with an RMS of 0.96° , as compared to 7.18° with an RMS of 2.24° for a stationary tail (in this case, *range* refers to the difference between the maximum and mini-

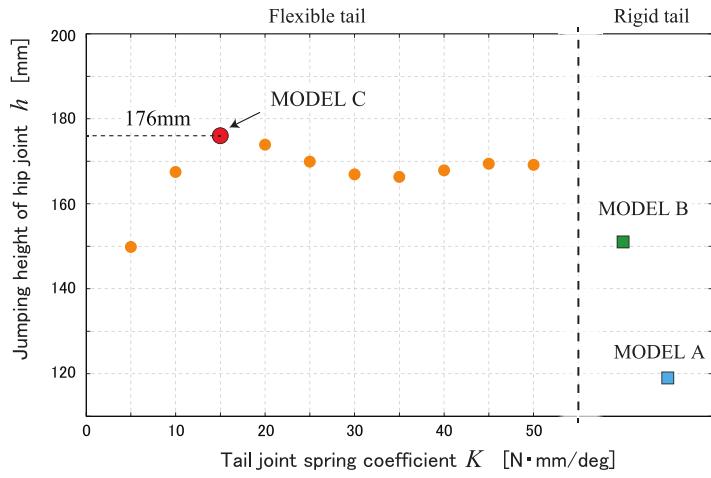


Figure 1.20: Data from [12] showing the optimal spring constant for maximising jumping height.

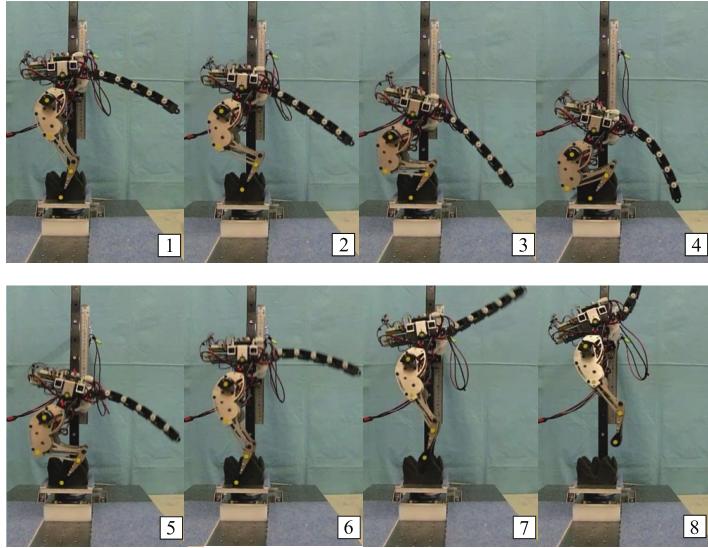


Figure 1.21: Images from [12] showing the motion of the tail during a jump.

mum pitch angle during the hop).

[15] also developed a bipedal robot with a 2 Degrees of Freedom (DOF) tail that was used to maintain a stable hopping motion.

1.3.2.8 *Aerial → Jumping/Falling → Initiation*

[16] uses a wheeled robot with a weighted tail to reorient the robot in mid-air. Two experiments are carried out to this end, where the robot is released from a vertical position on a wall and attempts to land horizontally, and where the robot drives off a ledge and attempts to land on a 45° sloped surface. The tail used a Proportional Derivative (PD) feedback controller with body orientation as input. In both experiments, the robot was able to successfully reorient itself.

[17] used a robot that was able to wheel itself to a specific position, then rotate itself using the tail as an appendage into a different orientation which allowed it to launch itself into the air. Then once in the air it would use the tail itself to orient itself back so it landed on its

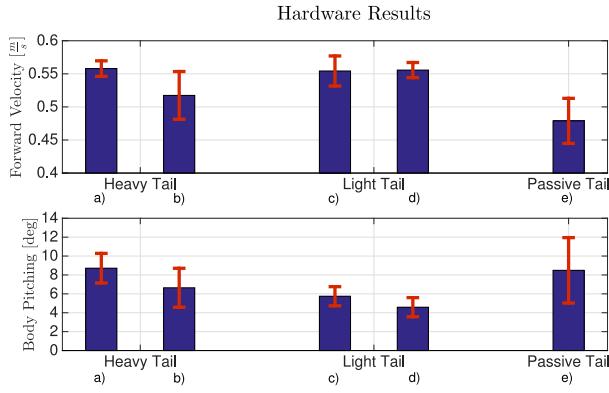


Figure 1.22: Data from [13] showing the increase in forward velocity and/or reduction in body pitch for the different tail lengths and masses. Note that a) and c) correspond to a 35° tail amplitude, while b) and d) are a 65° amplitude.

wheels.

1.3.2.9 Aerial → Jumping/Falling → Stability

[16] also conducted an experiment where the robot would hit a small obstacle when driving along a surface, causing it to go airborne. Experiments were conducted without a tail, with a static tail, and with a closed loop controlled tail.

[18] had a hexapod robot that was able to remain upright when running off a ledge.

1.4 Discussion

Many tails were designed to be multi functional, as evidenced by experiments of different functions within the same publication, and/or multiple publications that included the same robot.

1.4.1 Performance Comparison

1.4.2 Bio-Inspiration

used data from animal tails as a comparison to their own experimental data, clearly showing a link between biological tail functions and robot tail functions. mention an animal tails in as part of the introduction to their research, but do not make any performance comparisons, instead considering their form and function as inspiration for the design and implementation of the robot tail.

- Some papers only experimented with open loop control, used multiple frequencies/amplitudes and compared results. Others also compared with closed loop control, always an improvement in performance?

1.4.3 Number of Segments

1.5 Conclusion

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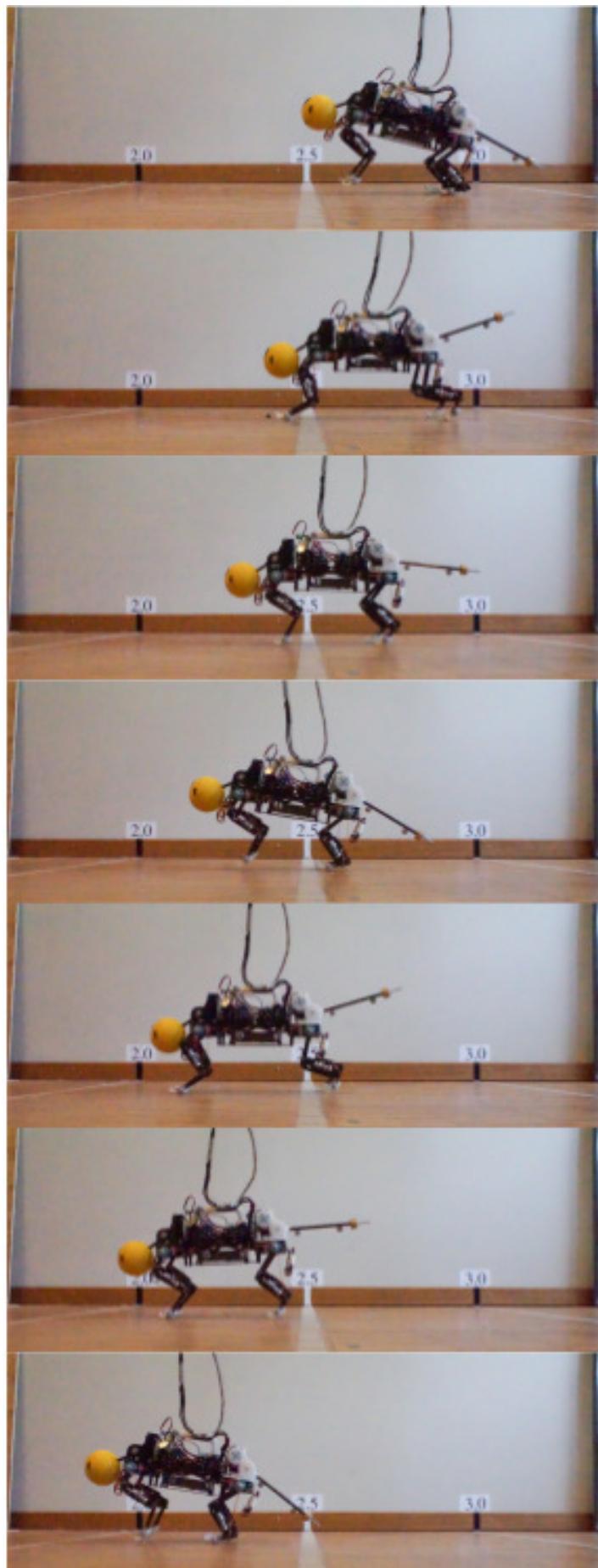


Figure 1.23: Images from [13] showing the motion of the body and tail over a single stride cycle.

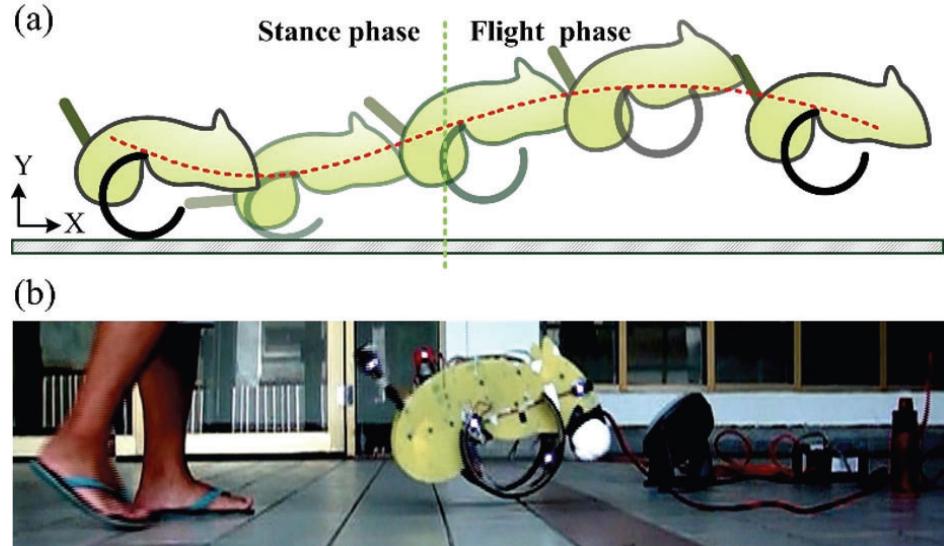


Figure 1.24: Images from [14] showing the a single stride for the robot, and an image of the robot just before landing.

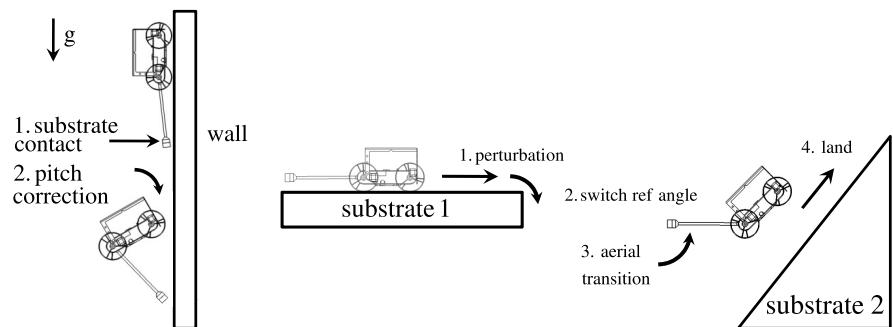


Figure 1.25: Diagrams from [16] outlining the two reorientation experiments.

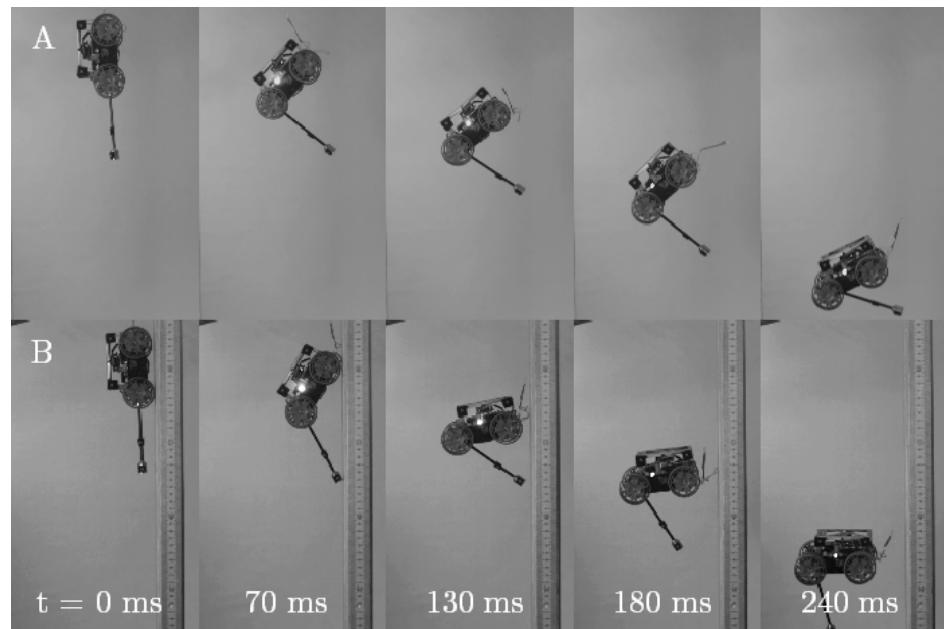


Figure 1.26: Images from [16] showing the wall reorientation experiment.



Figure 1.27: Images from [16] showing the slope reorientation experiment.



Figure 1.28: Diagram from [16] showing the obstacle impact test.

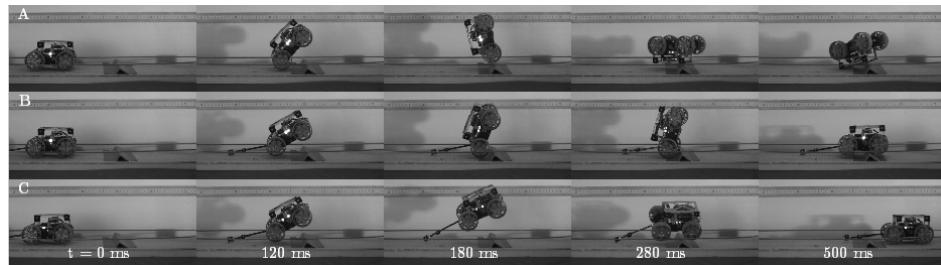


Figure 1.29: Images from [16] showing the slope obstacle impact test without a tail, with a static tail, and with a dynamic tail with closed loop feedback.



Chapter 2

Creating a Configurable Payload for Instability Experiments

2.1 Introduction

In order to generate a diverse set of test data for the experiments in chapter 3, a configurable payload was conceived, an object that could be configured to have a wide range of masses and COM. A series of test points can then be generated which have a specific mass and COM, and a matching algorithm can be used to find the configuration that mostly closely matches these parameters. The experiments can then be run with each of these test points to generate the test data.

The payload consists of a matrix of cubes of various materials packed tightly into a Three Dimensional (3D) printed container. The cubes are designed to be changed after each experimental run to alter the mass and COM of the payload. A lid on the container prevents the cubes from falling out during the experiment, and the exterior design of the box may accommodate additional features to improving the handling of the payload by the robot arm.

The test points can then be generated by considering the *Configuration Space* of the payload design, i.e. how many permutations can be generated given a $n \times n \times n$ matrix of cubes, where each cube can be a number of different materials. The mass and COM can then be calculated for each permutation, taking into account the material density and mass and COM of the container. “Extrema” test points can then be found simply by finding the permutation with the maximum or minimum mass and COM, or combination thereof. Depending on the number of permutations, a search method can then be used that accepts an arbitrary mass and COM as a target, and finds the nearest permutation to that target for other test point sets.

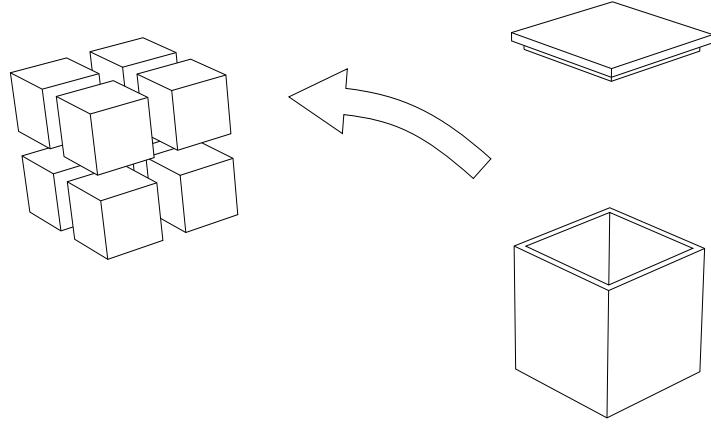


Figure 2.1: Concept drawing of the configurable payload.

2.2 Mathematical Design

2.2.1 Configuration Space

Firstly, consider a positive real set of material densities $\mathcal{P} \in \mathbb{R}^+$, each element the density (in kg m^{-3}) of a material to be used:

$$\mathcal{P} = \{\rho_1, \rho_2 \dots \rho_n \mid \rho_i > 0\} \quad (2.1)$$

Each permutation can then be defined as an $n \times n \times n$ matrix \mathbf{C} , such that each element is an element of \mathcal{P} , where n^3 is the number of cubes in the matrix:

$$\mathbf{C} = (c_{ijk}) \in \mathbb{R}^{n^n} \mid (c_{ijk}) \in \mathcal{P} \quad (2.2)$$

\mathcal{Z} can then be defined as the set of all permutations of \mathbf{C} .

To calculate the mass of the permutation, take the sum of all the cube densities multiplied by their volume a^3 , where a is the cube edge length, plus the container mass m_c :

$$M(\mathbf{C}) = \left(\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^n c_{ijk} a^3 \right) + m_c \quad (2.3)$$

To calculate the COM, take the sum of each cube mass multiplied by its position relative to the centroid of the center cube (c_{222}), which can be calculated from the cube indexes ijk , plus the container COM \mathbf{r}_c if non-zero:

$$R(\mathbf{C}) = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^n c_{ijk} a^4 \left([i \ j \ k] - n + 1 \right) \right) + \mathbf{r}_c}{M(\mathbf{C})} \quad (2.4)$$

The *configuration space* \mathcal{Y} can then be considered as a set of \mathbb{R}^4 vectors containing the target mass and COM concatenated as $\begin{bmatrix} m_i & \mathbf{r}_i \end{bmatrix}$ of each element. As such, \mathcal{Y} is a codomain of \mathcal{X} , such that $H : \mathcal{X} \mapsto \mathcal{Y}$ where map function H is $\begin{bmatrix} M(\mathcal{C}) & R(\mathcal{C}) \end{bmatrix}$

2.2.2 Test Point Sets

Test points can either be derived from subsets of \mathcal{X} defined by logical expressions, or the nearest neighbours of \mathcal{Y} from a target mass and COM concatenated into a vector as in H , found by a *search method* (see subsection ??).

2.2.2.1 Extrema Set (\mathcal{E})

The extrema set is designed to test the extrema of the space of \mathcal{Z} for both $M(\mathcal{Z})$ and $R(\mathcal{Z})$. The extrema set is defined from a set of logical constraints. The first two constraints of the set find the maximum and minimum values of the payload mass using $M(\mathcal{Z})$, and the next four constraints use the payload COM using $M(\mathcal{C})$ to get the maximum and minimum values of the x and y component of the COM. Finally, the last four constraints define the diagonal maximum and minimum values where the COM components match $x = y$ or $x = -y$.

$$\mathcal{E} = \left\{ \mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{Z} \mid \begin{array}{l} M(\mathbf{x}) = \max \{M(\mathcal{Z})\} \\ M(\mathbf{x}) = \min \{M(\mathcal{Z})\} \\ R(\mathbf{x})_x = \max \{R(\mathcal{Z})_x\} \\ R(\mathbf{x})_x = \min \{R(\mathcal{Z})_x\} \\ R(\mathbf{x})_y = \max \{R(\mathcal{Z})_y\} \\ R(\mathbf{x})_y = \min \{R(\mathcal{Z})_y\} \\ R(\mathbf{x})_x = \max \{R(\mathcal{Z})_x\} \wedge R(\mathbf{x})_x = R(\mathbf{x})_y \\ R(\mathbf{x})_x = \min \{R(\mathcal{Z})_x\} \wedge R(\mathbf{x})_x = R(\mathbf{x})_y \\ R(\mathbf{x})_x = \max \{R(\mathcal{Z})_x\} \wedge R(\mathbf{x})_x = -R(\mathbf{x})_y \\ R(\mathbf{x})_x = \min \{R(\mathcal{Z})_x\} \wedge R(\mathbf{x})_x = -R(\mathbf{x})_y \end{array} \right\} \quad (2.5)$$

Mass Limited \mathcal{E} When this set was generated, it was found that $M(\mathcal{E}_1)$ was greater than the chosen robot arm in chapter 3 could safely lift (2.0 kg [1]). Experiment trials also found the grippers were failing to consistently hold masses lower than this for long enough to complete the experiment. Therefore, $M(\mathbf{x}) = \max \{M(\mathcal{Z})\}$ in \mathcal{E} was changed to $\begin{bmatrix} m_{max} & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$ where m_{max} is the mass limit that the robot arm can lift reliably. One of the search methods described in section ?? can then be used to find the nearest point in configuration space.

2.2.2.2 Cube Set (\mathcal{C})

The cube set is defined by the vertices of a cube of size b centred around the COM origin $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$.

$$\mathcal{C} = \left\{ \mathbf{x} \subset \mathcal{C} \mid \begin{bmatrix} \pm \frac{b}{2} & \pm \frac{b}{2} & \pm \frac{b}{2} \end{bmatrix} = \mathbf{x} \right\} \quad (2.6)$$

2.2.2.3 Balanced Set (\mathcal{B})

The balanced set is defined by q points in \mathcal{C} subject to the constraint $R(\mathbf{x})_x = 0 \wedge R(\mathbf{x})_y = 0$. This can be defined as a “balanced” set as the COM x and y components are both zero. The points are evenly spaced between the maximum and minimum mass as defined in section ??.

$$\begin{aligned} m_r &= \frac{\max\{M(\mathcal{Z})\} - \min\{M(\mathcal{Z})\}}{q+1} \\ \mathbf{z} &= \begin{bmatrix} m_r & 2m_r & \cdots & qm_r \end{bmatrix} \\ \mathcal{B} &= \{ \mathbf{x} \subset \mathcal{C} \mid z_i = \mathbf{x} \wedge R(\mathbf{x})_x = 0 \wedge R(\mathbf{x})_y = 0 \} \end{aligned} \quad (2.7)$$

2.2.3 Search Methods

When considering a viable search method given a target, the cardinality of \mathcal{X} is important to consider. It is defined as $|\mathcal{X}| = |\mathcal{P}|^{n^3}$ which increases super exponentially with n . For example, when $|\mathcal{P}| = 4$, $n = 2$ results in 65536 permutations and $n = 3$ results in approximately 1.8×10^{16} permutations. It’s very clear that when $n > 2$ for non-trivial cardinalities of \mathcal{P} , any kind of brute-force method is not computationally tractable. Therefore, a brute-force nearest neighbour method (see subsection 2.2.3.2) would be suitable for when $n = 2$, and a heuristic search method such as simulated annealing (see subsection 2.2.3.1) method would be suitable for when $n > 2$.

2.2.3.1 Multiobjective Simulated Annealing

Simulated annealing [2] is a modification to a gradient descent optimisation that allows the algorithm the chance to “jump out” of local minima early on (even though the approximation becomes temporarily worse). However, as the number of remaining steps decreases, that probability becomes smaller, becoming more and more like gradient descent. First, like any gradient descent algorithm, two things need to be generated, the initial configuration \mathbf{C}_0 , which can be random or manually selected, and the function $\mathcal{N}(\mathbf{C})$ which creates a set of all the “neighbours” of \mathbf{C} . In this case, this can be defined as the subset of \mathcal{X} where the difference between \mathbf{C} and an element of $\mathcal{N}(\mathbf{C})$ is one and only one $c_{ijk} \neq c_{ij'k}$:

$$\mathcal{N}(\mathbf{C}) = \{x \subset \mathcal{X} \mid \exists! (x_{ijk} \neq c_{ijk})\} \quad (2.8)$$

Then the simulated annealing function can be described as follows:

1. Set \mathbf{C} to the initial permutation \mathbf{C}_0 .
2. For each of the optimisation steps:
 - (a) Set the temperature value t with function $T\left(\frac{k_{max}}{k}\right)$ which takes into account the number of remaining steps.
 - (b) Set \mathbf{C}_{new} as a random element from the set of all neighbours of \mathbf{C} as defined by $\mathcal{N}(\mathbf{C})$.
 - (c) Use acceptance probability function $P(E(\mathbf{C}), E(\mathbf{C}_{new}), t)$ where $E(\mathbf{C})$ is the energy function.
 - (d) Compare that value with a random uniformly distributed real number between 0 and 1. If greater than or equal to, then replace \mathbf{C} with \mathbf{C}_{new} . Otherwise, keep it the same.
 - (e) Repeat with \mathbf{C} until there are no remaining steps.
3. Return the approximated permutation \mathbf{C} .

```

 $C = C_0$ 
for  $k \leftarrow 1, k_{max}$  do
   $t = T\left(\frac{k_{max}}{k}\right)$ 
   $\mathbf{C}_{new} = \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{C}) \xleftarrow{R} x$ 
  if  $P(E(\mathbf{C}), E(\mathbf{C}_{new}), t) \geq x \sim U([0, 1])$  then
     $\mathbf{C} = \mathbf{C}_{new}$ 
  end if
end for
return  $\mathbf{C}$ 
```

Energy Function Simulated annealing can also be adapted for multi-objective optimisation [3], so it is possible to generate test points that approximate a desired mass and COM simultaneously.

Cooling Function The function which controls the probability of exiting local minima (known as the *temperature*) is known as the *cooling function*. This function can be any function which monotonically decreases (except in adaptive simulated annealing where it is dependent on the accuracy of the current approximation). Different functions will result in a different cooling profile, generally decreasing quickly in the first few steps, and then slowing down after that.

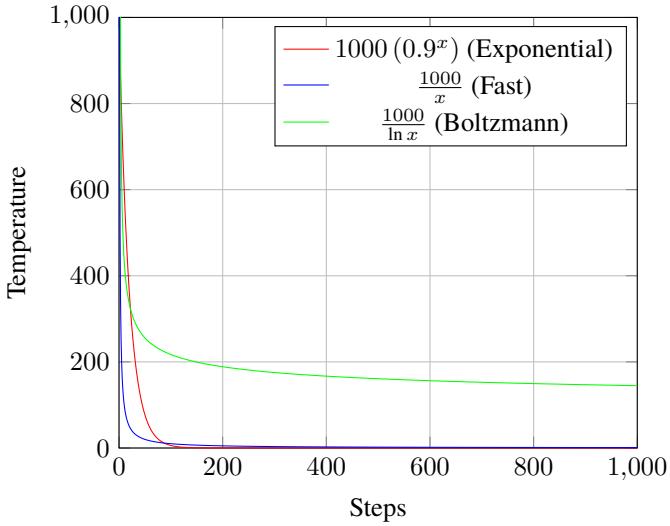


Figure 2.2: Various temperature cooling profiles for simulated annealing, assuming 1000 steps.

2.2.3.2 Nearest Neighbour

If \mathcal{X} is suitably small, then a brute-force method can be used which is guaranteed to find the nearest element to the target within a finite time. This can be done by calculating the L₂ norms between the target vector t and all the elements of \mathcal{Y} and finding the minimum. If there are several elements in the domain of \mathcal{X} , then one is chosen at random from this set.

$$NN(t, \mathcal{X}) = \min \{ \|t - x\|_2 \mid \forall x \in \mathcal{Z}\} \quad (2.9)$$

2.3 Implementation

2.3.1 Container Design

The internal width of the container was chosen to be 76 mm, which combined with a wall width of 5 mm gives an overall width of 81 mm. Therefore, each cube would be $\frac{75}{n}$ mm in size, to allow for fitting clearance. For additional resiliency, the base would be an additional 4 mm, giving the container an overall height of 90 mm with the lid (not including gripper guides).

Two sides of the container were made of a textured pattern designed to enhance grip when picked up by the robot arm. The other two sides had small windows centred around each cube, for permutation verification during the experiments in chapter ???. The lid of the container had a small notch to allow for it to be levered off in case of a tight fit, and guides to ensure the robot arm grippers would pick up the container in the same location each time, ensuring experiment repeatability.

The cube was 3D printed in **PLA!** (**PLA!**) with an 80% fill density. This gave it a total mass of 0 kg which provides the value for m_c . By design, the COM of the container would be

0 mm in both the x and y direction, to within a reasonable manufacturing tolerance. Due to the minimal contribution of the container to the total mass, this was a suitable assumption.

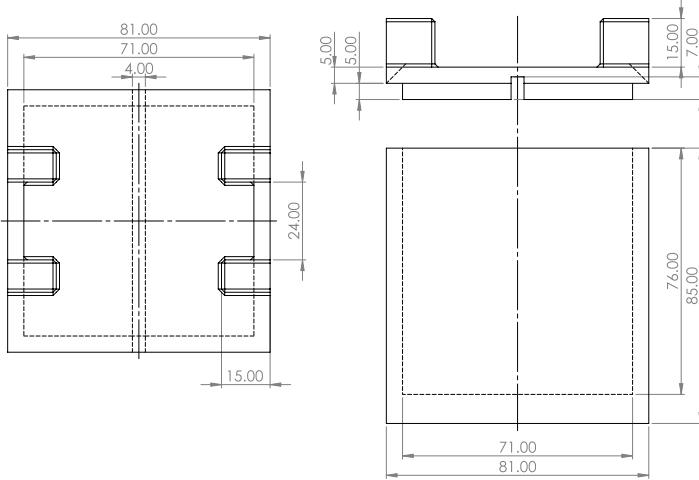


Figure 2.3: Schematic of the container, including body and lid.

2.3.2 Selected Search Method

Initially an $n = 3$ configuration was used with the acceptance probability function *Rule M* from [3]. This is a weighted blend of two other algorithms defined in the paper, *Rule P* and *Rule W* with a weighting coefficient $\alpha \in (0, 1) \subset \mathbb{R}$. There is also a weighting vector for each element of the test point $\mathbf{w} \in \mathbb{R}^4 \mid w_i \in (0, 1)$.

$$P(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}, \mathbf{w}, t) = \underbrace{\alpha \prod_{i=1}^m \min \left\{ 1, e^{\frac{w_i(x_i - y_i)}{t}} \right\}}_{\text{Rule P}} + (1 - \alpha) \underbrace{\min \left\{ 1, \max_{i=1, \dots, m} \left\{ 1, e^{\frac{w_i(x_i - y_i)}{t}} \right\} \right\}}_{\text{Rule W}} \quad (2.10)$$

Unfortunately it was difficult to find a stable and consistent result even after a long time running the algorithm.

Therefore as an alternative, the $n = 2$ configuration was used, with larger cubes to compensate.

2.3.3 Material Selection

In order to produce a reasonably wide and dense configuration space, four materials: *wood*, *plastic*, *aluminium* and *steel*, were chosen. More dense materials, such as nickel and lead, were rejected due to difficulty sourcing stock of the correct size, or issues with machining. Initially estimated densities were used in order to test the simulated annealing algorithm, but after the cubes were manufactured, it was possible to get an average density based on the measured mass of each cube as seen in figure 2.5, given a cube size of 35 mm. Table 2.1 lists the exact kind of material used, and its calculated density. These differ from many

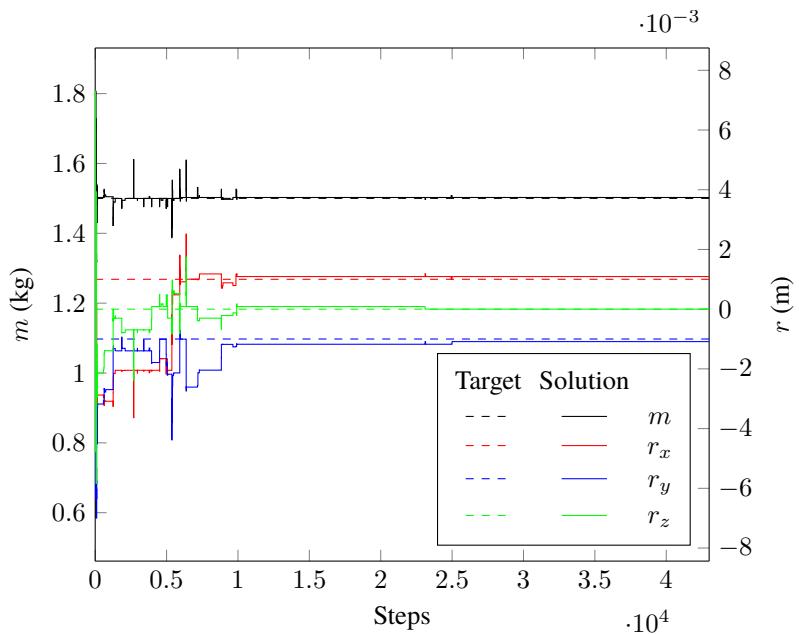


Figure 2.4: Simulated annealing output for the target $[1.5 \quad 0.001 \quad 0.001 \quad 0.001]$ with $\alpha = 0.997$ and even weighting $w_m, w_r = 0.25$ for 4.3×10^4 steps.

stated values available from other sources such as online material databases, likely due to small discrepancies in cube size due to manufacturing tolerances and variability in material composition (particularly for wood since the blocks required sanding in order to fit in the container, and due to the less precise properties of natural materials).

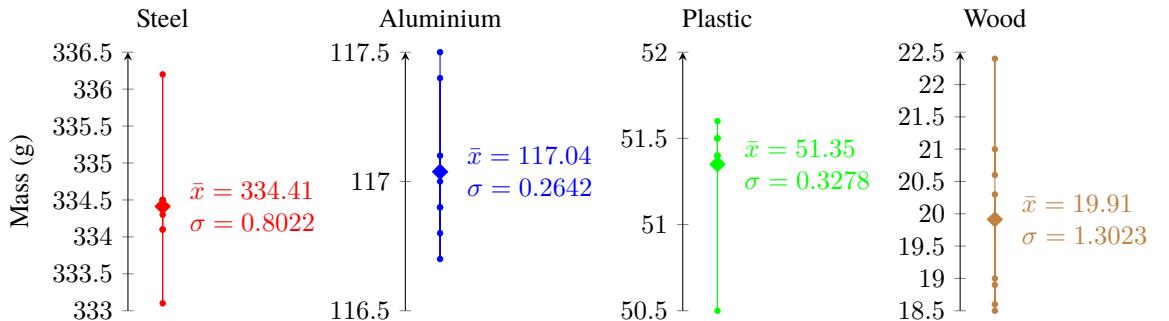


Figure 2.5: Masses for each set of eight 35 mm cubes of the configurable payload for each of the four materials, with the mean mass \bar{x} and standard deviation σ of each set.

Material	Variant	Density (kg m^{-3})
Wood	Pine	464.37
Plastic	Acrylic	1201.9
Aluminium	6082	2740
Steel	EN3B	7800

Table 2.1: The materials chosen for the cubes.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Configuration Space

Given a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ matrix of cubes with the materials in table 2.1, there were a total of 65536 permutations, with a total mass range of $[0.38, 2.90]$ kg, and a total COM range of $[-13.44, 13.44]$ mm on all axes. As some permutations mapped to the same point in configuration space, there were 62969 unique mass and COM vectors.

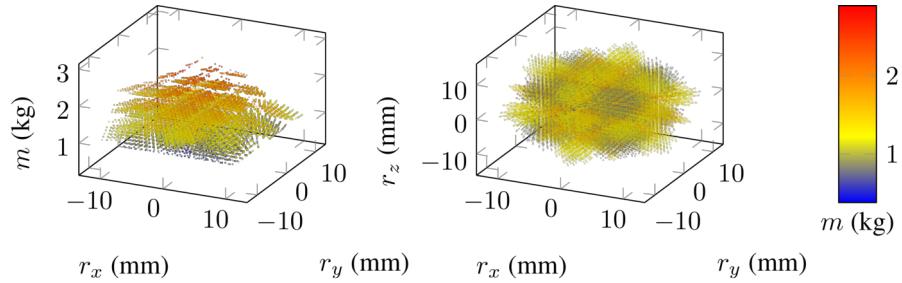


Figure 2.6: Scatter graph of all 62969 unique mass and COM vectors.

2.4.2 Test Points

The mass limit m_{max} for the extrema set was set at 1.25 kg, and the cube set length parameter b was set at 7 mm.

2.4.2.1 Mass and COM

m	r
Extrema Set (\mathcal{E})	
1.204	$[0.012 \quad 0.000 \quad -0.000]$
1.204	$[0.000 \quad 0.012 \quad -0.000]$
1.204	$[-0.012 \quad 0.000 \quad -0.000]$
1.204	$[0.000 \quad -0.012 \quad -0.000]$
0.380	$[0.000 \quad 0.000 \quad 0.000]$
1.009	$[0.011 \quad 0.011 \quad -0.000]$
1.009	$[-0.011 \quad -0.011 \quad 0.000]$
1.009	$[0.011 \quad -0.011 \quad 0.000]$
1.009	$[-0.011 \quad 0.011 \quad 0.000]$

Table 2.2: Table of the vectors of \mathcal{E} , excluding the mass-limited element.

2.4.2.2 Material Permutations

2.5 Discussion & Conclusion

2.5.1 Mass & COM Range

The mass range

Target			Nearest		L2 Norm Error
m	r	m	r		
Extrema Set (\mathcal{E})					
1.250	[0.000 0.000 *]	1.204	[0.000 0.000 -0.009]	4.556 × 10 ⁻²	
Cube Set (\mathcal{C})					
*	[-0.007 -0.007 -0.007]	0.987	[-0.007 -0.007 -0.007]	5.244 × 10 ⁻⁴	
*	[-0.007 -0.007 0.007]	0.987	[-0.007 0.007 -0.007]	2.023 × 10 ⁻²	
*	[-0.007 0.007 -0.007]	0.987	[0.007 -0.007 -0.007]	2.023 × 10 ⁻²	
*	[-0.007 0.007 0.007]	0.987	[0.007 0.007 -0.007]	2.023 × 10 ⁻²	
*	[0.007 -0.007 -0.007]	0.987	[-0.007 -0.007 0.007]	2.023 × 10 ⁻²	
*	[0.007 -0.007 0.007]	0.987	[-0.007 0.007 0.007]	2.023 × 10 ⁻²	
*	[0.007 0.007 -0.007]	0.987	[0.007 -0.007 0.007]	2.023 × 10 ⁻²	
*	[0.007 0.007 0.007]	0.987	[0.007 0.007 0.007]	5.244 × 10 ⁻⁴	
Balanced Set (\mathcal{B})					
0.380	[0.000 0.000 *]	0.771	[0.000 0.000 -0.004]	3.903 × 10 ⁻¹	
1.190	[0.000 0.000 *]	1.136	[0.000 0.000 0.001]	5.434 × 10 ⁻²	
2.000	[0.000 0.000 *]	1.204	[0.000 0.000 -0.009]	7.956 × 10 ⁻¹	

Table 2.3: Table of the target and actual vectors for \mathcal{C} , \mathcal{B} and the mass limited element of \mathcal{E} with the L2 norm error. * notation indicates “don’t care” and is excluded from the search algorithm.

◆ Extrema Set (\mathcal{E}) ● Cube Set (\mathcal{C}) ▲ Balanced Set (\mathcal{B})

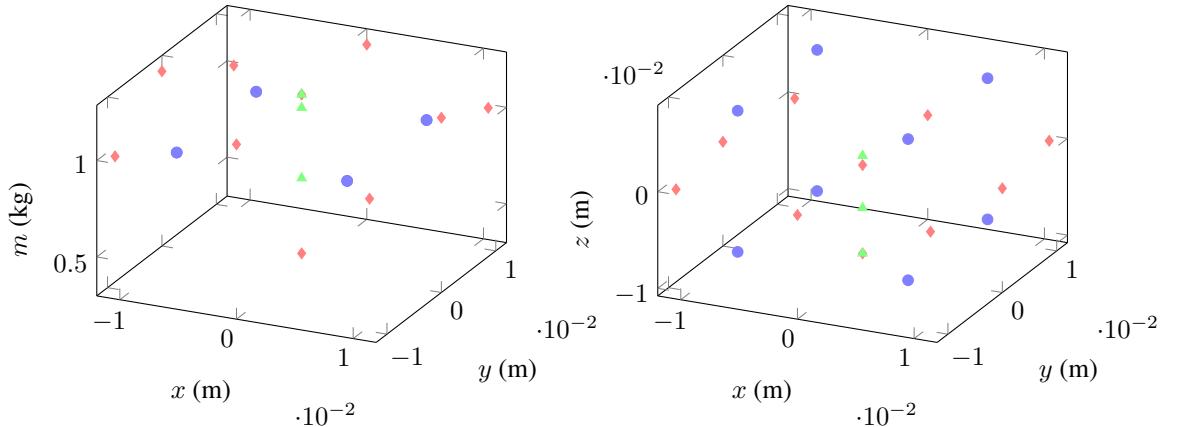


Figure 2.7: Mass and COM coordinates for each test point set.

As mentioned in 2.4.1, the COM range of the configurable payload is very small. Similarly to the mass range, the COM range could be increased by the use of denser and lighter materials. However, with the current design, it is not possible to increase the COM range by a significant amount.

m	r	Material Matrix	3D Preview
Extrema Set (\mathcal{E})			
1.204	[0.000 0.000 -0.009]	$\begin{bmatrix} [S] & [A] \\ [W] & [S] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [A] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.204	[0.012 0.000 -0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [S] & [A] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [A] & [S] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.204	[0.000 0.012 -0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [S] \\ [W] & [A] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [A] \\ [W] & [S] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.204	[-0.012 0.000 -0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [A] & [S] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [S] & [A] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.204	[0.000 -0.012 -0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [A] & [W] \\ [S] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [S] & [W] \\ [A] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.380	[0.000 0.000 0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.009	[0.011 0.011 -0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [W] & [S] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [W] & [S] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.009	[-0.011 -0.011 0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [S] & [W] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [S] & [W] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.009	[0.011 -0.011 0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [S] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [S] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.009	[-0.011 0.011 0.000]	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [S] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [S] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	

Table 2.4: Table of all test point configurations,

m	r	Material Matrix	3D Preview
Cube Set (\mathcal{C})			
0.987	$[-0.007 \ -0.007 \ -0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [S] & [A] \\ [A] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [A] & [W] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.987	$[-0.007 \ 0.007 \ -0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [A] & [S] \\ [W] & [A] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [A] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.987	$[0.007 \ -0.007 \ -0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [A] & [W] \\ [S] & [A] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [A] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.987	$[0.007 \ 0.007 \ -0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [A] \\ [A] & [S] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [W] & [A] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.987	$[-0.007 \ -0.007 \ 0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [A] & [W] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [S] & [A] \\ [A] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.987	$[-0.007 \ 0.007 \ 0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [A] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [A] & [S] \\ [W] & [A] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.987	$[0.007 \ -0.007 \ 0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [A] & [W] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [A] & [W] \\ [S] & [A] \end{bmatrix}$	
0.987	$[0.007 \ 0.007 \ 0.007]$	$\begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [W] & [A] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [A] \\ [A] & [S] \end{bmatrix}$	

Table 2.5

2.5.2 Future Work

2.5.2.1 Payload with Improved COM Range

2.5.2.2 Dynamic COM Implementation: Fluid Filled Container

Not all payloads that a robot may pick up are solid objects, some may have COM that shift during transit due to external disturbances. Generally any container partially filled with either loose material or fluid, such as a bottle or sack, could have a so-called “dynamic” COM. Therefore, a container partially filled with fluid, with a specific viscosity and mass would be a suitable simulacrum for these kinds of payloads. The robot arm could then shake the container from side to side briefly to simulate a disturbance, creating a standing wave

m	r	Material Matrix	3D Preview
Balanced Set (\mathcal{B})			
0.771	[0.000 0.000 -0.004]	$\begin{bmatrix} [A] & [W] \\ [A] & [A] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [A] \\ [W] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.136	[0.000 0.000 0.001]	$\begin{bmatrix} [P] & [W] \\ [W] & [S] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [S] & [P] \\ [P] & [P] \end{bmatrix}$	
1.204	[0.000 0.000 -0.009]	$\begin{bmatrix} [S] & [A] \\ [W] & [S] \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [W] & [W] \\ [A] & [W] \end{bmatrix}$	

Table 2.6

inside the container that would have an effect on the COM.

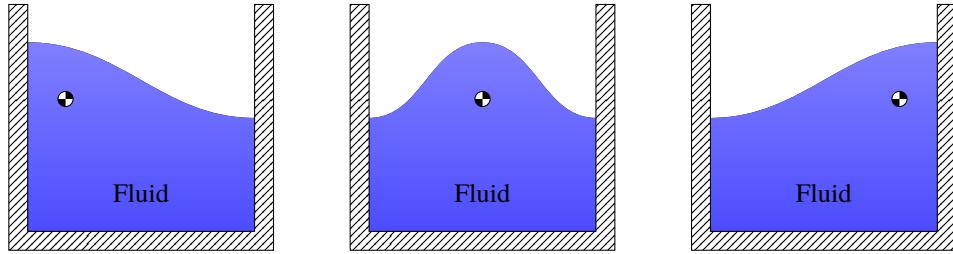


Figure 2.8: Diagram on the COM dynamics of a fluid filled container. If the container is disturbed, a standing wave forms inside the container which causes the COM to oscillate.

- Talk about the limitations on COM, ± 10 mm is pretty small, but expect to see some differences in data (spoiler alert - it mostly didn't).
- Talk about mass limitation due to robot arm but also expect to see differences (this time it did!).
- Anything else?

2.5.3 Conclusion

This work has outlined the design and implementation of a configurable payload that is suitable for the experiments in chapter ???. Using this payload, a range of objects with different mass and COM can be emulated in order to generate a wide range of experimental data.

References

- [1] *Kinova mico™ robotic arm 4dof specifications*, 1.2, Kinova, Inc., Apr. 2018.
[Online]. Available: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xCmpqSDMZvKU4IypSaXBLIEX6p7pigGr/view>.
- [2] S. Kirkpatrick, C. D. Gelatt, and M. P. Vecchi, “Optimization by simulated annealing,” *science*, vol. 220, no. 4598, pp. 671–680, 1983.
- [3] P. Serafini, “Simulated annealing for multi objective optimization problems,” in *Multiple criteria decision making*, Springer, 1994, pp. 283–292.

Chapter 3

Investigating the use of a 2DOF Pendulum Tail for Compensating for Instability when Carrying a Payload

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Trajectory

The experimental trajectory is designed to replicate the actions of a mobile robot that is moving an object from one place to another. The robot arm grasps the payload and lifts it off the ground plane, then holds it for a predetermined period of time, before placing it back down on the ground plane and releasing it.

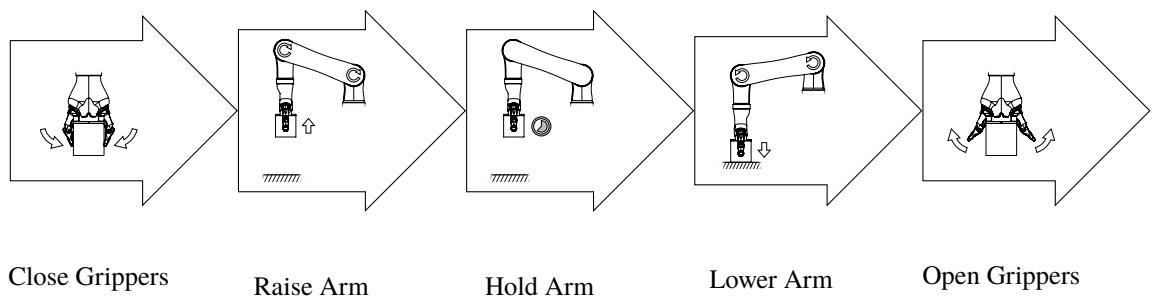


Figure 3.1: Trajectory sequence of the robot arm and payload.

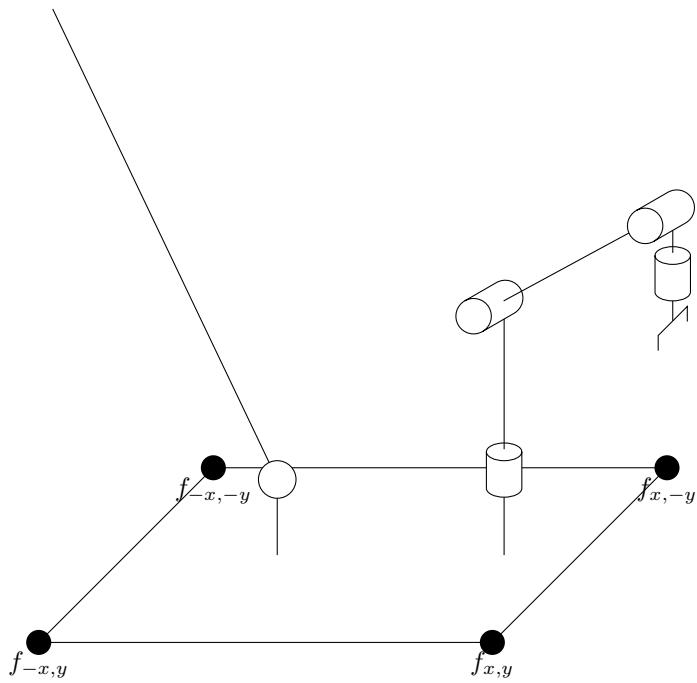


Figure 3.2

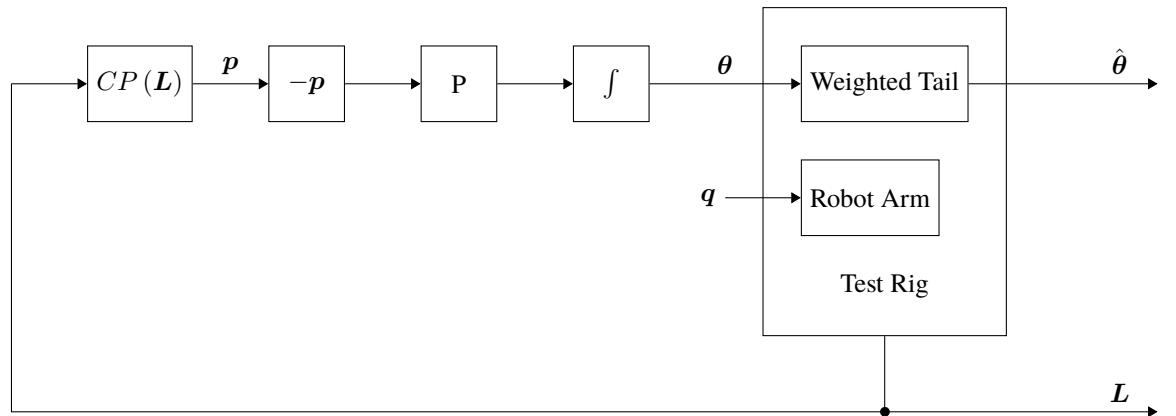


Figure 3.3: Simulation block diagram.

3.2 Simulation

3.2.0.1 Control System

3.3 Experiments

3.3.1 Design

In order to save time and maintain payload alignment between runs and test points, the arm remains close to the payload once it has been set down. Since the grippers are open, the payload does not influence the COP during this time.

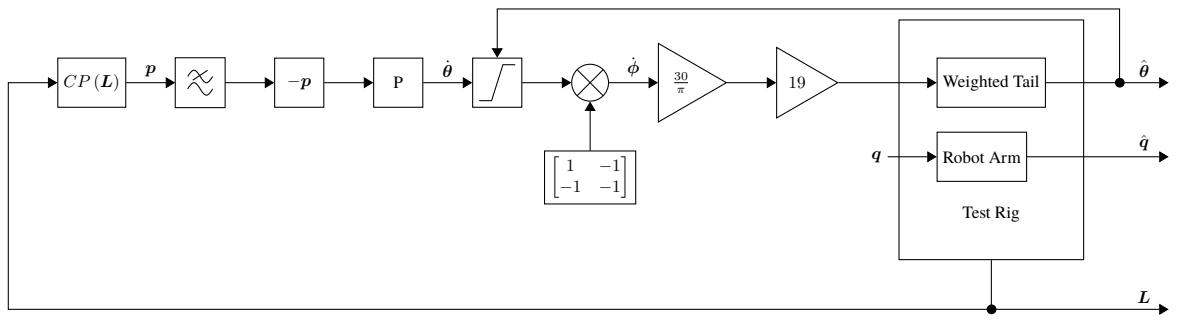


Figure 3.4: Block diagram of the control system.

3.3.1.1 Control System

$$\mathbf{F} = \begin{bmatrix} f_{x,y} & f_{-x,y} \\ f_{x,-y} & f_{-x,-y} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$CP(\mathbf{F}) = \begin{bmatrix} l_x ((f_{11} + f_{21}) - (f_{12} + f_{22})) \\ l_y ((f_{11} + f_{12}) - (f_{21} + f_{22})) \end{bmatrix} \quad (3.1)$$

Equation from [1]:

$$\dot{\phi} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ -1 & -1 \end{bmatrix} \dot{\theta} \quad (3.2)$$

3.3.2 Results & Performance

For each test point, 20 experiments were run, 10 *control* experiments without the tail attached, and 10 *tail* experiments with the feedback controlled tail. The mean values for the 10 experiments were then taken as the performance measurements, with the minimum and maximum values considered as the measurement error.

In order to provide a fair comparison between the control and tail experiments, a perfectly balanced initial condition is assumed for the control experiments. This was done by offsetting the COP data by the value of the initial condition.

The following data was taken from each run of the experiment, where each symbol represents a scalar or vector time series $\{x_t; t \in \mathbb{R}^+ \mid t \leq n\}$ where n is the final sample time:

3.3.2.1 Center of Pressure

One option is to measure the minimum

This point may not exist within the time series

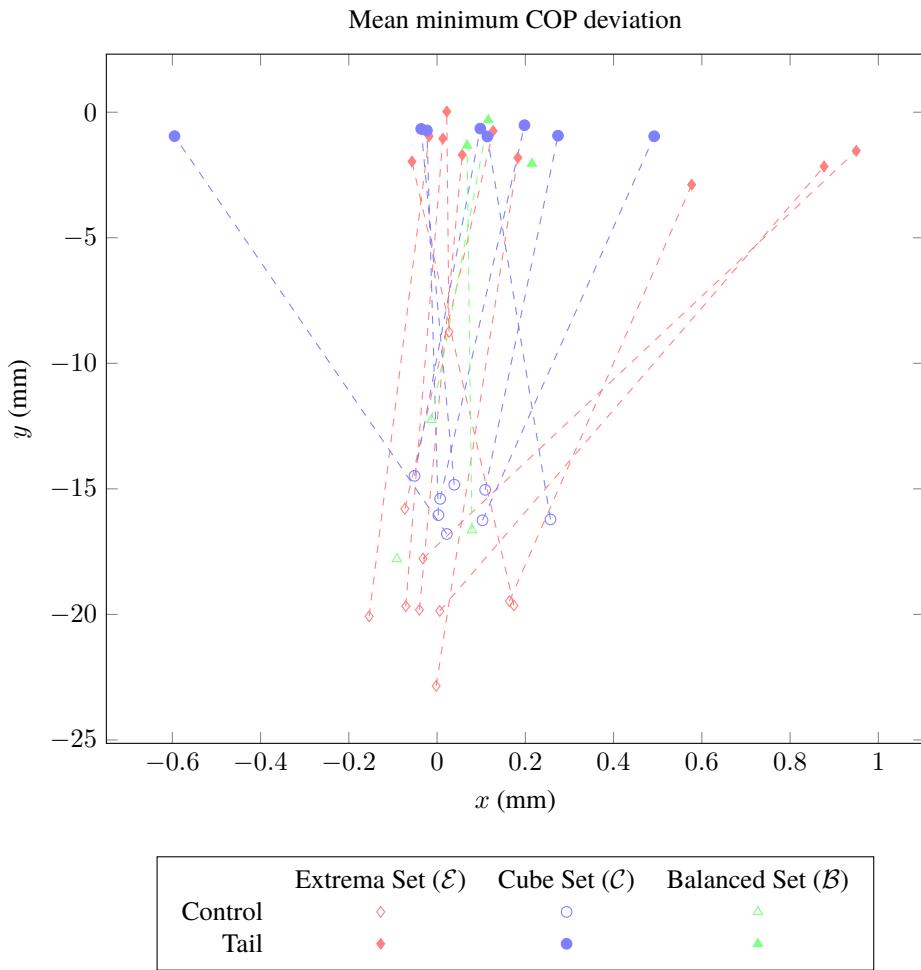


Figure 3.5: Graph of the mean COP during the *carry* phase of the experiment

3.3.2.2 Vibration Analysis

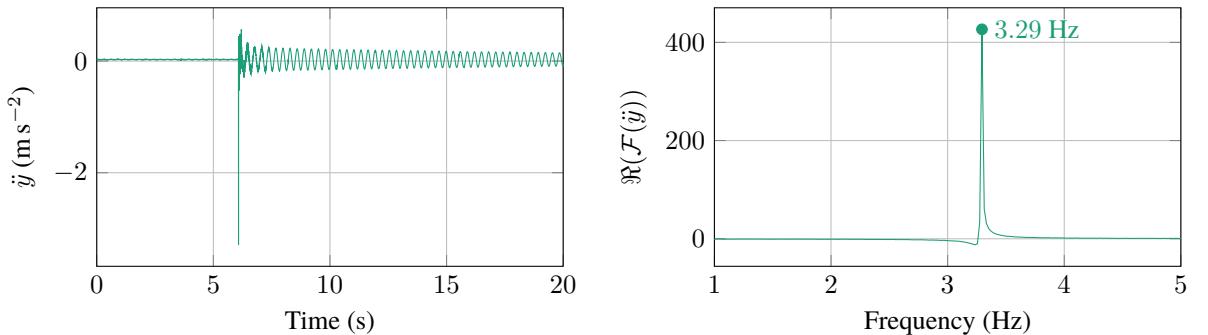


Figure 3.6: Resonant frequency of the tail calculated from accelerometer data captured during an impact with a steel hammer. The left graph is the accelerometer data, and the right graph is the real part from a real DFT on the data.

3.3.2.3 Payload & Tail Angle Regression Analysis

To examine the effects of a varying the payload mass and COM on the tail, a regression study was conducted comparing mass and COM *inputs* to tail angle *outputs*, specifically the peak angle output measured by the maximum magnitude function, where θ represents the vector of tail angle measurements from the experiment:

$$\wedge(\theta) = \begin{cases} \max \theta & |\max \theta| \leq |\min \theta| \\ \min \theta & |\max \theta| > |\min \theta| \end{cases} \quad (3.3)$$

Figure ?? shows the correlations between the maximum magnitude of the tail on both pitch and roll axes, and the mass and corresponding COM of the payload. A change in the x axis of the COM would only affect the roll, and the y axis would only affect the pitch, but a change in mass would effect both, though the y axis to a much greater degree.

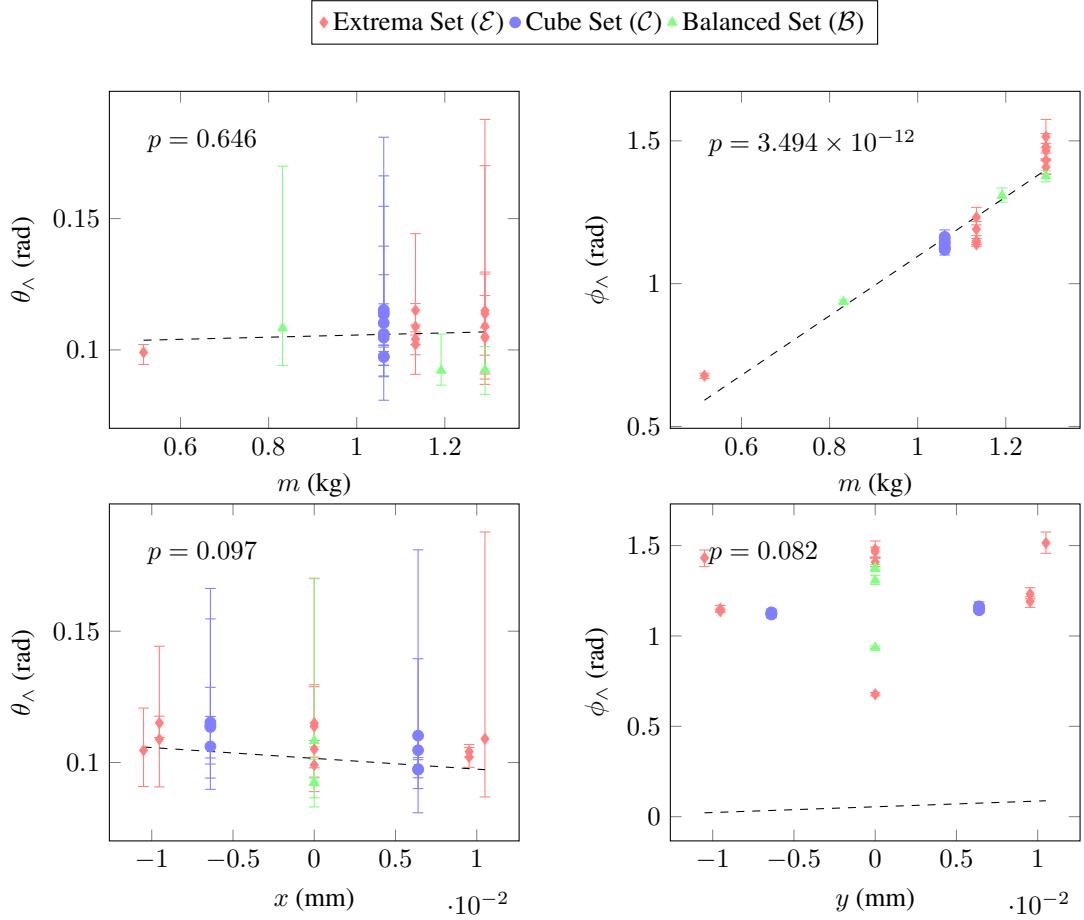


Figure 3.7

The results show that there is a strong correlation ($p = 3.494 \times 10^{-12}$) between the payload mass and the pitch maximum magnitude of the tail of $1.041 \text{ rad kg}^{-1}$. There are also weaker correlations ($p = 0.097$ and $p = 0.082$) between the COM x and y axis and the pitch maximum magnitude of the tail at 0 rad mm^{-1} and 0 rad mm^{-1} respectively. While these are too large to be considered a statistical certainty ($p > 0.05$), they do still suggest a approximately 90% probability there was an effect, assuming the mean values from each test point are accurate.

3.4 Discussion and Conclusion

A major issue with the experiments that likely prevented the collection of more accurate data and more stable control of the tail was the vibration of the tail shaft. This could poten-

tially be alleviated by using a stiffer material for the shaft, or using a shaft of a larger diameter. However, this would likely increase the mass of the tail shaft, or would require more specialised materials to be sought.

References

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IEEE Transactions on Robotics, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 1555–1560, 2015.
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Appendices