

Autonomous Quadrotor Project

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And when he [Herod] had apprehended him [Peter], he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

—Acts 12:14, King James Bible, Cambridge Edition

Abstract

This project discusses the design of a four rotor autonomous aerial vehicle platform called the Anzhelka Project. The system is based on the open source Elev-8 quadrotor mechanical hardware platform and the Parallax P8X32A microcontroller. In this paper we discuss the preparation that we have done in order to create a stable, autonomous vehicle. We then propose an implementation sequence that will result in a stable, autonomous hover. This paper focuses on the practical aspects of quadrotor flight. For a theoretical treatment see the Anzhelka project mathematics document [3].

Revisions

Current project status and files can be found at

blog.anzhelka.com
code.anzhelka.com

Version	Changes	Committer
v0.01	All of the spelling was checked and fixed for the first 2 sections.	Luke
v0.02	Needs to be proof read in some areas. Needs tables, conclusions, High level, references, appendices, acknowledgements	Luke
v0.03	Cleaned up the document some, added images and tables.	Cody
v0.04	Added conclusion, estimated control loop speed, small sections, figures.	Cody
v0.05	Fixed some grammatical errors, added weights, cleaned up.	Luke



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1 Executive Summary



Figure 1: Rendering of the Open Source Elev-8 quadrotor platform used in the Anzhelka project (image courtesy of Parallax).

This senior design project's goal is to create an autonomous quadrotor that can be used to film outdoor sports such as mountain biking, snowboarding, and skiing. The quadrotor will have a video camera mounted on a gimbal that will always point at a subject/object to which the tracking device is attached. The tracking device will have its own GPS and IMU in order to be able to determine the location and heading of the subject/object. The quadrotor is intended to fly autonomously, ie without a human controller. The quadrotor should be able to maintain attitude (orientation) and position without human intervention.

Our quadrotor has many features including:

- * 3-axis gyro
- * 3-axis accelerometer
- * 3-axis compass
- * voltage and current monitoring of each motor
- * a separate battery for logic operations
- * the ability to control up to 8 servos
- * the ability to track the exact speed of each motor
- * 8 unallocated analog inputs
- * mounting holes for all components and future upgrades

This senior design project was built around being Open. How Open? Both Open Source and Open Hardware. The open source frame that was used for the quadrotor was designed by Ken Gracey, an employee at Parallax, and is called the "Elev-8". Our project is hosted by Google Code in the form of a Git repository ([1]). Here you can find all the information used and created during this senior design project. There is also a blog which goes into some of the extensive detail that was put into this project ([2]). The main processing board for this quad rotor features a Parallax Propeller¹, overclocked to 100Mhz, and a fully custom board that measures in at 4 inches by 3 inches.

Testing the quadrotor is a challenge in and of itself. But before that, one of the tests that has to be done is to calculate some of the constants for the control algorithms (motor torque and thrust). This means that there must be a test stand that tests and can calculate both of these constants. A slightly different kind of test is testing the functionality of the control board that was designed for the quadrotor.

The project was started without any expertise or experience with autonomous flying or quadrotors, but with a will to learn, create and develop a system that could even be understood by anyone. Software is our group expertise. Both team members have years of experience in multiple programming languages.

Hardware on the other hand is a bit more difficult. Only one team member has any experience with designing PCBs and circuits, but not nothing to the extent of this project. We believe that, based on the work we have put into the project, that we have earned the class credits that we are receiving. Approximately 30 hours per person per week were devoted to this project(terminal program).

2 Introduction

A quadrotor, also known as a quadrotor helicopter or quadcopter, is a multirotor aerial vehicle that has four rotors mounted on a rigid frame to provide lift. Quadrotor designs first appeared in the 1920s, but were abandoned because of bad performance and high pilot work load.

In order to keep a quadrotor from spinning on its own axis, it must be built with counter rotating blades. Without counter rotating blades the quadrotor would create enough torque to spin in a constant direction around its' own axis.

Quadrerors are highly manoeuvrable. A quadrotor can take off and land vertically. They can translate horizontally through the air, and they can also hold altitude. With a suitable pilot(or software) behind the controls one can do amazing aerial acrobatics with the quadrotor.

Quadrerors are very similar to helicopters, so what advantages do quadrerors have? Quadrerors have no mechanical gears between the motors and propellers. Each motor is directly driving its propeller. Having four propellers allows you

¹The coincidence between Propeller and propeller is unfortunate and can be a source of confusion. If Propeller is capitalized then the text is referring to the Parallax microcontroller. If propeller is not capitalized then the text is referring to a fixed pitch airplane "air screw"

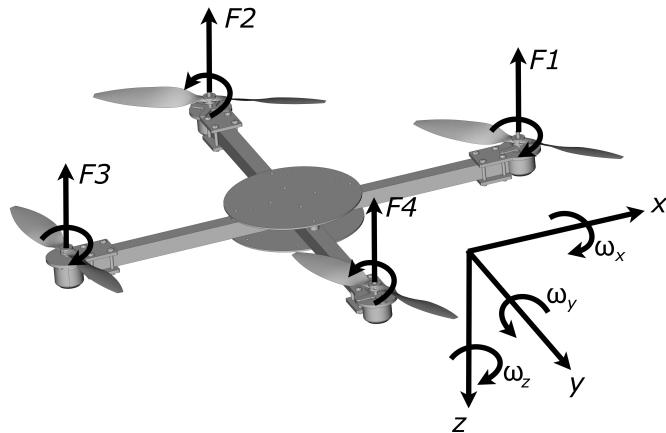


Figure 2: Orientation of the body axis with respect to the motor numbers and rotations.

to have a much smaller propeller than what is on the typical helicopter. This means that the propellers possess less kinetic energy while spinning allowing for a safer platform.

2.1 Quadrotor Mathematics

A quadrotor is a very complex vehicle that is difficult to control. It is an under-actuated system with only one direction of force and three moment directions. The treatment of the math is too complex to include here. Instead, we have a separate document that discusses the math and theory of quadrotor flight in great detail. See citation [3]. The rest of this paper will focus on everything else related to the quadrotor.

2.2 Design Objectives and System Overview

This project was designed to be continuously improved upon and to be used in many different ways. After watching countless videos from Go Pro cameras from a single perspectives and partial views of the subject, project Anzhelka was created. Anzhelka will allow users to be able to capture video angles that were once unattainable without costing thousands of dollars. Anzhelka will allow users to capture video with the same ease as using a Go Pro camera, but without the single perspective and jitter from traditional methods.

The quadrotor will have at least a 15 minute run time, with the ability to carry a 2 pound payload. It will also be optionally controllable by a human from up to a mile away with line of sight. The control loop to keep the platform stable will run at least 100Hz, enabling stable control.

On this project both team members share the same responsibility for all components of the system. This follows in the Agile philosophy. Each team

member understands all aspects of the system, and has worked on all aspects. This creates a universal understanding a commitment to the project while removing territorial hoarding. There is no "my work", only "our work".

2.3 Current Project Status

As of this writing, we still have work to do in order to achieve stable autonomous hover. We have written and tested the complete system of software, from quaternion input to motor control output. The three control loop blocks are written, and the main control loop does the following activities:

- * Check for emergency stop command
- * Parse control loop inputs (quaternion, omega, and rotor speed)
- * Parse serial input (for sending commands/modifying registers)
- * Calculate control loop
- * Calculate main loop frequency, and truncate

The three control loop blocks are described in detail in the Anzhelka mathematics document. [3].

The quadrotor can "balance" on the roll/pitch test stand. Due to the IMU error (see below), the orientation of the quadrotor on the test stand is not true. The quadrotor does, however, react appropriately to changes in orientation. This verifies that all of the other systems (motors, electronics, software) are acting appropriately.

At this point, the quadrotor does not fly. We determined that the error was due to a faulty IMU: the CHR-UM6 IMU that we were using does not have a suitable filtering algorithm, and provides inconsistent orientation estimates. The problem persists over three different IMUs, and so future work will have to use a different IMU.

2.4 Background and Prior Art

There are many different quadrotor designs available, but relatively few open source quadrotors. The most noticeable are the AeroQuad ([16]) and the Arducopter ([17]). Most quadrotor theory seems to be the product of research labs such as [4]. This project is different in that it uses the Parallax propeller as its processor and it is very well documented from the beginning.

2.5 Development Environment and Tools

The Anzhelka project software was developed for the most part using a Linux system. All code and other project files are hosted on the project Git repository ([1]). The code was written in Gedit, compiled and downloaded with the BSTC compiler, and interfaced with using `picocom`.

2.5.1 Directory Structure

The project uses the following directory structure:

```
/doc
    /datasheet
        /mpu60X0
    /reports
    /figures
        /editorial
        /equations
    /notes
    /tests
    /extra
/extra
/hardware
    /frame
    /pcb
        /QaudPower
        /Current
        /REV-A
/software
    /spin
        /lib
        /bma
    /src
    /test
    /tool
```

hardware: Subfolders will store the major components of the project. For example, the frame has several .dxf files that are sent to the laser cutter, so that will all go into a subfolder called `frame`. The project may have several PCBs made as well, and so each should go into a subfolder under `pcb`.

software: The software is separated by language into separate folders. This makes sense because each processor in the project will have only one language running, but separate processors that are running the same language may share components (library files, for example). Each language has a number of sub-folders:

- * `src` is where the source code for the project is stored. Subfolders as appropriate.
- * `lib` stores all general purpose library files (code) such as Propeller Obex objects.
- * `test` stores the test harnesses such as unit tests and Spin code to test a particular module (the latter case would have a 'main' type method and would be self supporting when running on the Propeller).



- * **tool** holds all the relevant development tools for that language (BSTC for Spin, for example).
- * **config** stores any sort of relevant compile time or testing configuration files.

The files that are in the **software** folder should be used only for what runs onboard the quadrotor. Test programs or desktop PC client programs should instead go into the **extra** folder. Note that these programs may still access the **lib** and **tool** subfolders in the software directory.

documentation: This folder stores all the relevant datasheets in the **datasheet** subdirectory, and any other project documentation that is deemed to fit. Note that most documentation probably belongs in the Anzhelka wiki on [1].

The **datasheet** and **reports** folders contain the reference datasheets for each component and the various generated reports of the project, respectively. The **figures** folder holds an images that is used in the documentation. The **notes** folders holds papers that are interesting and relevant to the project, such as the cited research papers. The **tests** folder holds the test results data, and any associated data processing scripts. The **extra** folder holds other documentation material such as project logos and fonts.

extra: This folder contains other associated programs for the project. Since the **software** folder is dedicated exclusively to software that is intended to fly the quadrotor other programs need to be stored in the **extra** folder. This folder stores the Anzhelka Terminal files and the Thrust/Torque test stand files for example.

2.5.2 Development Cycle

To facilitate the development cycle a simple compilation script was developed. A template form of this script can be found in `/software/spin/tool/bst_template.sh`. This script will compile the Spin program, and if no errors are found it will attempt to download to the Propeller. If successful it will open picocom (terminal program) on the USB port to listen for data. Using this script while programming dramatically decreases the write-compile-test debug cycle.

All code was written in Gedit. Gedit is a simple text editor with a few features built in, including syntax highlighting. For most of the languages in this project, Gedit has provided suitable syntax highlighting. Propeller Spin, however, is not available by default. Syntax highlighting was accomplished by writing a language definition file (`/software/spin/tool/spin.lang`) and placing it in `/usr/share/gtksourceview-3.0/language-specs`. Gedit will then automatically highlight the Spin files.

All code is compiled with the BSTC compiler. This is available in [5]. This compiler was selected because it is Linux compatible and it has several optimizations over the Parallax provided compiler. In addition, it has a command line interface which makes it easy to integrate into a compilation cycle script. BSTC will also download the compiled code via the USB COM port to the Propeller.

```

File Edit View Search Tools Documents Help
Open Save Undo Redo Cut Copy Paste Find Replace Insert
Eagle_Tree_Brushless_RPM.spin ✘
30 VAR
31   long   Cog
32   long   Pins[8]
33   long   PinShift
34   long   PinMask
35   long   previous_speed
36
37 PUB setpins(_pinmask)
38 ''' Set pinmask for active input pins [0..31]
39 ''' Example: setpins(%0010_1001) to read from pin 0, 3 and 5
40 '
41   PinMask := _pinmask
42   PinShift := 0
43   repeat 32
44     if _pinmask & 1
45     quit
46     _pinmask >>= 1
47     PinShift++
48
49 PUB start : sstatus
50 ''' Start driver (1 Cog)
51 ''' - Note: Call setpins() before start
52 '
53   previous_speed := 0

```

Spin ▾ Tab Width: 4 ▾ Ln 30, Col 1 INS

Figure 3: A screenshot of an open Spin file in Gedit showing syntax highlighting.

All project files are hosted on the project Git repository, hosted by Google Code at [1]. A Git repository was selected so that all developers would have equal access to the source files, changes would be logged and trackable, issues would be trackable, and so that concurrent work on files could be easily merged. All project files are open source under the MIT license and can be downloaded freely.

2.6 Related Documents and Supporting Materials

Please see the attached QuadRotor Mathematics document for our supporting Materials.

2.7 Definitions and Acronyms

AT	Anzhelka Terminal
\$ATxxx	Anzhelka Terminal Communication String
BSTC	Brad's Spin Tool Compiler
EEPROM	Electrically Erasable Programmable Read-Only Memory
ESC	Electronics Speed Controller
GUI	Graphical User Interface
IMU	Inertial Measurement Unit
OOP	Object Oriented Programming
PASM	Propeller Assembly
PCB	Printed Circuit Board
PID	Proportional-Integral-Derivative
PWM	Pulse Width Modulation
RAM	Random Access Memory
RISC	Reduced Instruction Set Computer
UART	Universal Asynchronous Receiver /Transmitter (serial)
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
WYSIWYG	What You See Is What You Get

3 Requirements

In this section we define the various requirements of the quadrotor platform. The quadrotor must be able to achieve various goals, and since it is a hard real time system the goals must be achieved by a specified deadline.

3.1 Assumptions

For this project, we assume that the quadrotor frame is rigid and that the propellers are rigid. We assume that the IMU orientation information is correct and without error. We expect the quadrotor to operate in still air, and that it moves slowly through the air.

3.2 Realistic Constraints

Every system has constraints and Anzhelka is no exception. The most important constraint is the life of the battery. If each motor consumes 15 amps on average then that is a current drain of 60 amps from the motor battery. Assuming that the battery has 6Ah of energy, then it would be able to power the quadrotor for 10 minutes. Typical flight times for this platform are around 15 minutes, so average current drain is likely less.

The system is also constrained by the maximum acceleration and maximum rotation speed of the propellers. Typically the propeller will not rotate faster than 1200 rpm. This in turn constrains the maximum thrust and torque generated by the motor.

Finally, the system is also constrained by the mass of the vehicle. Since the quadrotor has inertia, to change it's motion requires a greater force from the motors. The motors might not have the power or orientation to change the quadrotor momentum.

3.3 System Environment and External Interfaces

To be able to accomplish all of these tasks there are many of interfacing between many different devices. Our main control board must control all 4 ESC's, communicate with the IMU via a serial UART, control servos via PWM signals, monitor the voltage and current of each motor via A2D circuits, and compute the control loop.

3.4 Industry Standards

We had to learn serveral popular industry standards so that we could use them in our project. Here is a list of the standards that were used.

- * FAT
- * I2C
- * RISC
- * USB
- * UART
- * USART
- * GPS

Those were the industry standards that we used. More standards than these were used, but they were not idustry standards.

3.5 Budget and Cost Analysis

Unfortunately there was no money that was given to the team in order to support the project. All of the funding has been from the team members' personal accounts. As of this writing, \$3156.24 has been spent on parts for the project. Below is the estimated cost per quadrotor vehicle:

Supplier	Name	Unit	Qty	Total
Parallax	Altimeter	\$29.99	1	\$29.99
Parallax	Propeller Chip QFP	\$7.99	1	\$7.99
Parallax	64KB EEPROM	\$1.99	1	\$1.99
Parallax	5 MHz Crystal	\$1.10	1	\$1.10
Sparkfun	Radio Modem UM96	\$44.95	2	\$89.90
Hobby King	450 Outrunner Motor - Trinigy	\$14.04	4	\$56.16
Hobby King	30A ESC	\$5.99	4	\$23.96
Hobby King	3S 30C 1000mAh Battery	\$8.99	1	\$8.99
Hobby King	3S 30C 8000mAh Battery	\$44.11	1	\$44.11
Hobby King	Deans XT Plugs (10 pairs)	\$3.08	2	\$6.16
Hobby King	12 AWG 1 meter wire Black	\$2.49	3	\$7.47
Hobby King	12 AWG 1 meter wire Red	\$2.49	3	\$7.47
McMaster-Carr	5/8" Aluminum Tubing 6'	\$16.38	1	\$16.38
McMaster-Carr	3/32" Delrin 24"x48"	\$70.67	1	\$70.67
McMaster-Carr	1/4" Delrin 12"x12"	\$27.87	1	\$27.87
McMaster-Carr	4-40 5/8" Standoff	\$0.46	12	\$5.52
DIY Drones	Propellers 10x4.5 1 push 1 pull	\$6.00	2	\$12.00
Pololu	CHR-UM6-LT IMU Sensor	\$149.99	1	\$149.99
Anzhelka	Power control board	\$166.60	1	\$166.60
Tower Hobbies	Eagle Tree RPM sensor	\$13.79	4	\$55.16
Total				\$789.48

3.6 Safety

When dealing with any robotic system one must take extreme cautions in order to ensure the safety of everyone. Autonomous systems are particularly dangerous because there is human behind the controls of the system and can become unpredictable in the event of a system failure.

Several precautions are enacted to decrease the likelihood of accidents. During frame construction the team uses fasteners, washers, and nuts that are of suitable specification. All threaded components are secured using blue Loctite to ensure that nothing will loosen on its own. Whenever motors are spinning safety glasses are required. This provides protection in the event that a propeller has a failure and is detached/released from the motor.

3.7 Documentation

Throughout the design, build and testing phase of this project we have been documenting any and all information of interest on the Anzhelka Blog. ([2])

3.8 Professional and Ethical Responsibility

3.8.1 Honesty

The team members of this project strived to have professional ethics in all works they contributed in. We strived to maintain honesty with our professors and peers on that status and development of the project.

3.8.2 Integrity

In order to have a successful project we needed to insure that we did most of our research before we had started the project. This would allow us to know what information was public domain and what we needed to manufacture on our own. It is quite easy for one to lose their integrity when they have fallen behind and have not been honest about their status. Any and all sources that were used in this project have been cited in all of our documents and code.

3.8.3 Transparency

In order to allow others to see how we developed our project we decided that we would create the project in an open environment. All of our source code, reports, designs, documents, can be found on our Git Repository page and/or Blog. All changes of the files can be seen from creation to current state by looking at the differences between each upload. You are also able to see who uploaded that rendition of the file.

3.8.4 Accountability

The members of this project always tried to keep a safe environment no matter where testing was preformed. Safety glasses were given to a guest or member of the public when wanted to view a demonstration of the project. The team members always wore safety glasses while in the same room as the project to ensure the upmost safety. Before each test demonstration an inspection of the components was given.

3.8.5 Confidentiality

Since the project was kept in an open environment all information that was obtained was shared. Had we used proprietary code or hardware we would not have had this luxury. The members of this group are very serious about open source and giving back to the public.

3.8.6 Objectivity

Information that was obtained and written was read by both members of the team to ensure the neutrality of the documentation. For our project there was not much room for opinions other than what was felt to be a good material or platform. The opinions of this project were kept to a minimum.

3.8.7 Respectfulness

The members of the team kept the upmost respect for any of the people who were meet during the length of the project. We showed what we had learned at an Expo and took in information on how we might need to adapt the project in order to achieve the best results. We also visited a professor from UCSD and talked to him about his research on quadrotors and possible issues that we may have run into.

3.8.8 Obedience to the law

In the design of the project we wanted to use mainly off the self parts that were FCC certified and CE approved. By purchasing parts in this manure we had very little laws to worry about breaking. FCC regulations put a limit on how high a hobbyist aerial vehicle can fly and in what zones. Because full flight was never achieved we were able to stay within their regulations.

3.9 Global and Societal Impact

The Anzhelka project could potentially have a large global impact. Our project can change the way things are monitored. With a quadrotor you can monitor a target from a distance without having to move around to stay at the same altitude. Quadrotors also have a greater payload capacity over helicopters because they are much lighter by design.

3.10 Contemporary Engineering Issues

Quadrotor research and design is at the cutting edge of modern technology. They are still in the realm of research, and up until only a few years ago quadrotors still used tethers to send and receive data, and external camera systems to measure position. But recently, several factors have contributed to the advancement of quadrotors: new MEMS based inertial measurement unit components, faster and better processors, and widely available and inexpensive mechanical parts.

The IMU uses MEMS (micro electro-mechanical systems) sensors to record acceleration in three dimensions, rate of orientation change in three dimensions, and magnetic force in three dimensions. Until about 10 years ago, to build an IMU required very expensive and physically large mechanical components to measure these forces. But with the advent of MEMS technology, the IMU can be reduced to a size roughly equivalent to a postage stamp. These smaller, lighter, and cheaper IMUs are hence viable for quadrotor application.

Secondly, the advent of more powerful microcontrollers enables the necessary calculations to be made in real time onboard the quadrotor. Desktop PCs have long been able to complete the required calculations, but those systems are much too heavy for all but the largest quadrotors. Hence, previous quadrotor work required a data tether to the vehicle so that the control loop can be calculated

off-board. In addition, new architectures such as the Parallax Propeller P8X32A allows for innovative and effective system design.

Finally, mechanical parts have become much less expensive. Due to a rise in the Chinese marketplace of inexpensive brushless motors, propellers, and batteries a quadrotor can now be build very economically. This is particularly important for quadrotors (versus fixed wing aircraft) since a quadrotor mechanical system consists of more motors and a larger battery. These components typically have a slightly lower quality than the name brand, expensive, components. In general, though, this cost/quality tradeoff is reasonable and suitable. We selected the cheaper Chinese products for this project.

Together, these three areas have enabled modern research into quadrotor flight. The new MEMS based chips allow for an IMU to be compact, efficient, and still effective while minimizing cost. The rise of faster microcontrollers with more effective architectures has allowed for all the processing to be completed onboard, and still have room for the additional overhead. And finally, the availability of cheaper Chinese components lower financial requirements to experiment with quadrotors.

3.11 Lifelong Learning

This project has been influential to our professional development in a number of ways. To begin, we have recognized the need for lifelong learning. We realize that even after we graduate and leave school, that we cannot stop learning. Many of the tools and techniques that we have used in this project were developed in just the last few years. It is likely that this trend will continue: new technologies will appear on the market, and our job as professional engineers is to understand it and incorporate it into our products.

For example, the main processor of our project is the Parallax Propeller. This microcontroller is relatively recent: introduced in 2006 by a small company, it is relatively unknown in the industrial world. Hence, we as students do not use or learn about this processor (instead we learn about the AVR processor). However, in order to effectively do this project we had to use a powerful processor that supports parallelism. The Propeller fit that specification, so we had to learn about the architecture and how to use the chip. This learning applies throughout our careers: instead of giving problems (I don't know such and such), we should instead give solutions (I don't know, but I can learn).

As we thought about and wrote this section, we realized that we already have the ability to learn independently of school. Indeed, most of our knowledge that we have and use every day we learned on our own, tinkering around and playing with the systems.

3.12 Importance of Team Work

Being able to work in a team is both a skill and a challenge. Working on a project in a group helps you split up the work load and possibly get more

work done in less time, however being able to work together with others on the project could present a greater challenge than the project itself.

This was a foreseen challenge and the team set up a Git repository for all code, data, images, and presentations. There was also an official blog set up where we could go in great detail on what we were working on and what we had yet to complete. With these two resources set up and with the help of keeping an open schedule the team has been able to successfully coordinate and maximize productivity.

4 High Level Design

The system is fairly simple. The general system architecture consists of the central Propeller microcontroller interfacing with a number of different devices. Both hardware and software mimic this layout, which is shown below.

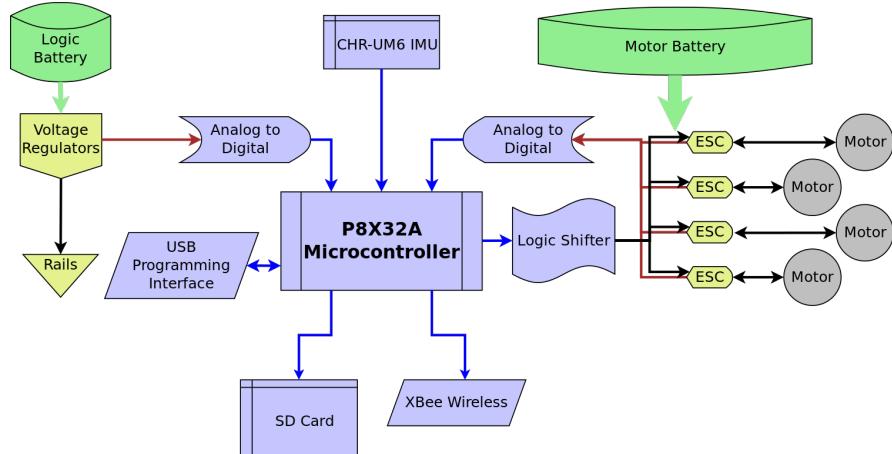


Figure 4: The layout of the devices in the system at a hardware level.

5 Low Level Design

This section describes the quadrotor's low level design.

5.1 Propeller

For this project we selected the Parallax Propeller as our main embedded processor. This chip has several unique features that make it well suited to the real time requirements of quadrotoor flight. The Propeller is relatively inexpensive as well: \$8 per chip, plus approximately \$2 for support components.

5.1.1 Architecture

The Propeller microcontroller has a unique architecture. The Propeller is a microcontroller is a 8 core 32 bit RISC processor. For this project the Propeller has been overclocked from the default 80MHz to 100MHz. This additional speed facilitates more complex computations without sacrificing output rate. Each core, called a COG, is identical with equal access to all chip resources. The Propeller has a central RAM area called the HUB which is COG accessible in a round robin fashion.

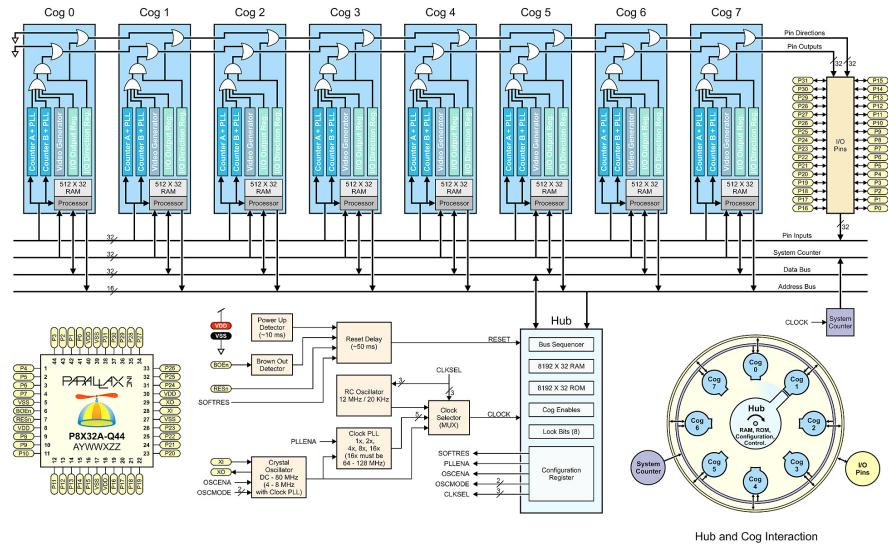


Figure 5: The functional architecture of the Parallax Propeller (courtesy of Parallax).

The Propeller is distinctly different from most other microcontrollers by it's lack of built in hardware. The Propeller does not have any hardware level serial ports, analog to digital or digital to analog ports, or any pulse width modulation ports. Instead, the Propeller is designed to be able to use software for these common interfaces. This is typically done through what is known as bit banging. The only exception is the built in video generation hardware that assists in creating NSTC, PAL, or VGA signals. To make development easier for the programmer, Parallax hosts a source code website that provides code for common tasks such as serial or PWM.

The Propeller has two built in languages: a high level language called Spin and the assembly language called PASM. PASM is executed directly by a COG. Spin is executed by a built in PASM Spin interpreter that can be dynamically loaded into one or more COGs. Other high level languages available for the

Propeller generally operate in a similar manner to Spin. This project uses Spin and PASM exclusively.

The Propeller has three different memory locations: 2KB of COG RAM, 32KB of HUB RAM, and external 64KB of I2C EEPROM. Upon startup, the Propeller copies the contents of the EEPROM to HUB RAM, loads a Spin interpreter into COG 0, and begins execution. Any PASM code, including the Spin interpreter, must fit in 496 instructions or less in order to fit into the COG RAM. The Propeller does not have provisions for fetching PASM instructions from other locations besides COG RAM. For Spin code the compiled interpretable bytes are stored in the HUB RAM, and are fetched and decoded by the Spin interpreter.

5.1.2 Programming

The Propeller is programmed in PASM and a high level language called Spin. In general, PASM is used when speed is required. At 100MHz, the Propeller can execute 25,000,000 assembly instructions each second (each instruction takes 40ns). By contrast, the interpreted Spin language is about 100x slower. Because of this contrast Spin is used where ease of programming is important, and PASM is used where speed is important.

Spin is officially called an object oriented programming language, but there are some subtle differences compared to mainstream object oriented terminology. Spin OOP is used to organize code into logical blocks much like an import statement in C++ or Python. Spin objects do not use techniques such as class instances, inheritance, or subtype polymorphism. A Spin object is used to group related functions together into a unit that can be included in multiple Spin programs.

Typically, Spin objects are used for interfacing with external devices. For example, a typical Spin program might have an object for serial communication, an object for VGA signal generation, and an object for I2C communication. The Parallax Object Exchange ([18]) hosts Parallax written objects and community written objects under the open source MIT licence.

Spin syntax is very similar to Python. To denote a new scope Spin uses indentation instead of curly braces (familiar to C/C++ and Java programmers). Spin code is divided into blocks: CON (constant), VAR (variable), OBJ (object), DAT (data), PUB (public function), and PRI (private function). Most typical programming constructs are a part of the Spin language: conditional IF statements, FOR loops (called REPEAT), boolean conditions, and so on.

All variables in the Propeller are integers. Variables are typically 32 bit signed integers called longs, but in Spin it is possible to create 16 bit or 8 bit sized variables as well (called words and bytes, respectively). Global variables are declared in the VAR block, and global constants are declared in the CON block. PRI and PUB functions can declare local variables, along with function parameters.

5.2 Control Loop Frequency

For our software, the critical portion is the main control loop that keeps the quadrotor flying at the desired attitude (roll, pitch, yaw) and altitude. It is essential that this control loop operates fast enough to respond to disturbances. From our research into what other quadrotor groups have done we have found that 50Hz to 75Hz is sufficient for flying. So for our project we need to analyze our system and determine if we can achieve the desired rate.

The first component to consider is the inertial measurement unit (IMU). The IMU that we have selected is the CHR-UM6-LT IMU. From the datasheet, it can output at up to 300 Hz. On the output we have the ESCs that control the motors. These expect a control pulse every 20ms, so that is an update rate of 50Hz. Most stock components can run with a slightly faster update rate, and we can select ESCs that are designed for a faster rate. In any case, we have guaranteed support for 50Hz updates with the hardware we have.

Now we need to consider the software control loop. We've broken the math into three blocks: attitude control, altitude control, and motor control. The equations can be found in the Anzhelka mathematics document [3]. The attitude control block and altitude control block can be done in parallel, and their output fed into the motor control block. We will be writing the code in Propeller Assembly using the Float32 floating point library ([15]).

The Float32 documentation includes timings and space requirements for each of the mathematical functions. If we count the operations required for each block we can then calculate an estimate of running time and space.

First, we have to count up all of the operations so we know how much math we have to do:

Quantity	+	-	*	/	cos	sin	asin	acos	atan2	sqrt	quat*	Sum
Moment	1	6	20	11	3	4	0	2	2	0	3	52
Altitude	3	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	11
Motor Speed	14	10	18	10	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	56
Sum	18	17	42	22	3	4	0	2	2	4	5	119

Our control loop has 119 mathematical operations. The number sounds small, but it is slightly misleading. In the next table we see that the time to execute an addition or multiplication is much less than it is to calculate arcsin or arccos. For quaternion multiplication we assume that one multiply has 6 floating point additions, 6 floating point subtractions, and 16 floating point multiplies. This follows from the quaternion multiplication formula. In summary, since we have the number of each operation, we can calculate the total times:

Operator	+	-	*	/	cos	sin	asin	acos	atan2	sqrt	quat*	Sum (μs)



Unit Time	3.7	3.8	8.4	10	78	74	261	265	117	173	225
Moment	3	23	168	116	234	298	0	530	234	0	675
Altitude	11	3	33	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	450
Motor	52	38	151	105	0	0	0	0	0	694	0
Sum	67	65	352	232	234	298	0	530	234	694	1125
											3325

Our estimates show that we can have an inner control loop of 260Hz, and if we parallelize the moment and altitude calculations as shown above then we can get about 40Hz faster for a control loop frequency of 300 Hz. Also of interest is that the quadrotor control loop has a response time of 3.3 milliseconds. For reference, the average human reaction time is roughly 200 milliseconds ([14]).

Finally, we are interested in code size. The floating point library has a number of required support functions that do things such as convert to and from floating point, compare floats, and so on that require space. We also assume that 4 longs on average are used to setup each operation. This gives totals of

Block	Longs
Moment	552
Altitude	275
Motors	468

So, if we were to do each instruction in sequence then it would take approximately 850 longs (sum without duplicates). Unfortunately, a Propeller cog only has enough memory for 496 longs. If we break it into sections then the altitude and motor calculations will fit into a single cog, but the moment block is too big. Some optimizations will probably be able to reduce the size to fit.

All in all, the code performance estimates are looking very promising. We should be able to achieve 100Hz update rates and the use of only two cogs without too much trouble.

5.3 Other Software Notes

The other software in this project is standard. This project uses a Python GUI and a shell script for program compilation.

6 Prototype Construction

A quadrotor to the specifications is being constructed for this project.

6.1 Hardware

At this point in the project, we have developed four main areas of hardware: the quadrotor frame, the motors and propellers used, the power board PCB,



and the thrust torque test stand. These components are, roughly, what will be used for the rest of the project and are relatively static.

Frame Dimensions without rotors attached. (longways)
28 1/4 inches (718 mm) X 28 1/4 inches (718 mm) X 4 5/8 inches (117mm)

Frame Dimensions with rotors attached. (longways)
36 1/4 inches (921 mm) X 36 1/4 inches (921 mm) X 6 3/8 inches (161mm)

Item	Mass(Grams)
Frame	450g
Each propeller	8g
Motor (black)	85g
Motor (red)	90g
ESC (black)	20g
ESC (red)	25g
5000MAH Battery	410g
8000MAH Battery	650g

6.1.1 Frame

The quadrotor frame that we are using for this project is the open source Elev-8 frame from Parallax ([6]). The resin plates are constructed out of a material called Delin®[9] made by DuPont™. We had this material laser cut for us by a W9GFO from the Parallax forums. The booms of the Frame are made out of 5/8" thin wall aluminium tubing.

For the screws we are using hex pan head and hex socket cap screws. These screws are very common in the industrial supply industry. For all of the screws we are using blue LocTite or a nylon locknut to ensure that the screws do not loosen from their secured position. Lockwashers are not used due to being completely ineffective and, in fact, worse than nothing at all ([11]).

Diagrams for the frame components have been included in the appendices, and are also available at [1].

6.1.2 Motors/Propellers

Since neither one of the team members has any experience with quadrotors, we have selected two different motors for the testing of our platform. To match with these two motors we picked out two different brands of ESCs in order to determine which would be best with the platform.

We also decided on a 10 inch rotor with a 4.5 degree pitch. We decided on 10 inches because it gave us plenty of clearance between the rotors and should not produce turbulences between each other. As for pitch, if you want a very stable take off and landing of the quadrotor you would go with less of a pitch, however if you want to be able to translate rather quickly you want more of a pitch. Every fixed pitch propeller is designed for maximum efficiency at a

certain free air stream velocity through the blades. Hovering (ie, no free air stream velocity) is most efficient at very small pitches ([12]).

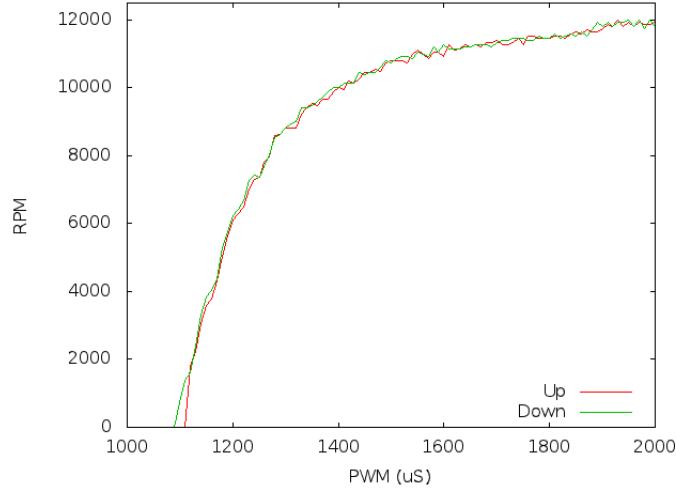


Figure 6: PWM vs RPM under no load. They are nearly the same on the PWM up and down.

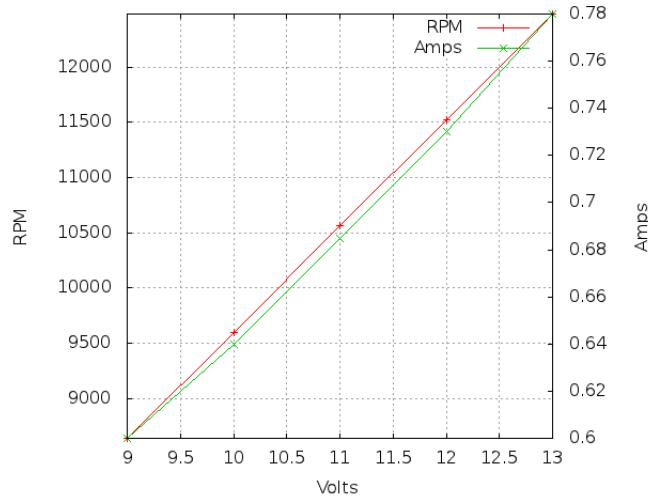


Figure 7: Volts vs RPM under no load. As you can see that the current is linear with the voltage.

6.1.3 Power Board PCB

For this project we developed a custom circuit board to power the quadrotor. This PCB has all the hardware on it to facilitate a number of features:

- * Propeller microcontroller, overclockable
- * Switching regulators for the logic voltages
- * Power distribution for motor ESCs
- * Current and voltage sensing for all motors
- * Level shifting for 5v interfacing
- * 8 free channel of ADC
- * 8 free servo channels
- * I/O headers for I2C, IMU, SD card, and XBee
- * Mounting holes for BoE formfactor, quickstart, SD card, and IMU

PCBs are very difficult in the ways of being able to produce something that will be small enough to fit on your platform and large enough for you to solder the components onto. The PCB design for the prototype took over a month to layout and design. Even though this may seem like a long time, it is not excessive when dealing with many new components. Once the board was designed and ready for production a fabrication house had to be selected. Choosing a fabrication house in the United States provides for a very fast turn around time, but at a much larger cost. Choosing one in China provides for a much cheaper product, but at a slower turn around time. The fabrication house in China that we selected (iTeadStudio) took nearly a month for a full turn around. This is not typical, but was certainly unfortunate.

6.1.4 Thrust/Torque Test Stand Construction

The thrust/torque test stand was constructed out of wood and metal. Everything was hand crafted. A few components needed machining, and those were done in a machine shop. We developed the test stand from scratch with very little prior work to base the project on. The axles are all supported ball bearings to reduce friction to negligible amounts.

As the propeller spins, it creates a thrust force pointing to the left in the picture. This thrust force is measured by a pressure sensor on the bottom foot. Additionally, the propeller creates a torque. This torque pushes the brass lever arm into another pressure sensor on the upper part of the arm, which can then measure the motor torque.

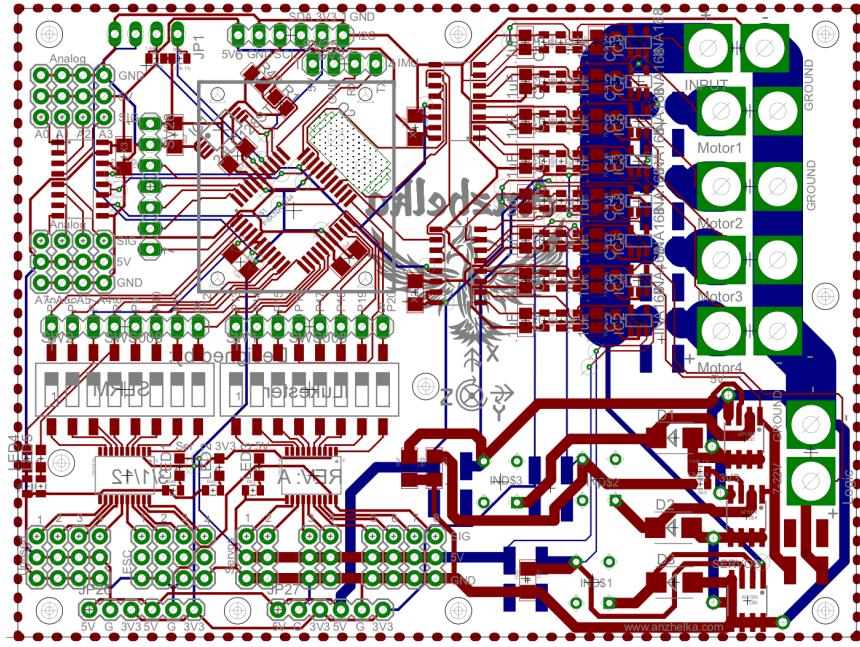


Figure 8: The developed Power Board, REV A. This figure shows both sides of the PCB, along with the silkscreen.

6.2 Software

Most software development to this point has been to work on the various library objects, and to understand the system. In this section various significant software modules are discussed.

6.2.1 Rotation Speed

In order to determine the amount of thrust that a motor is producing the platform must be able to measure the RPM of the motor. For a normal two wire DC motor the only solution would be to use some sort of optical sensor to watch the motor rotate and to count the number of rotations. Usually this is done with an IR sensor that either senses a black stripe on the can of the motor, or watches the propeller and detects as it passes over a sensor.

With a brushless motor, another option is available: monitoring the control pulses. A brushless motor has three control lines that go into the motor, and to make the motor spin the lines are pulsed in a specific order. The timing of the pulses determine the speed of the motor, and the pulses must match the position of the motor rotor. Modern brushless motor controller chips (ESCs: Electronic Speed Controllers) have circuitry built into them that can automatically sense the position of the motor rotor and in theory could be used by a host

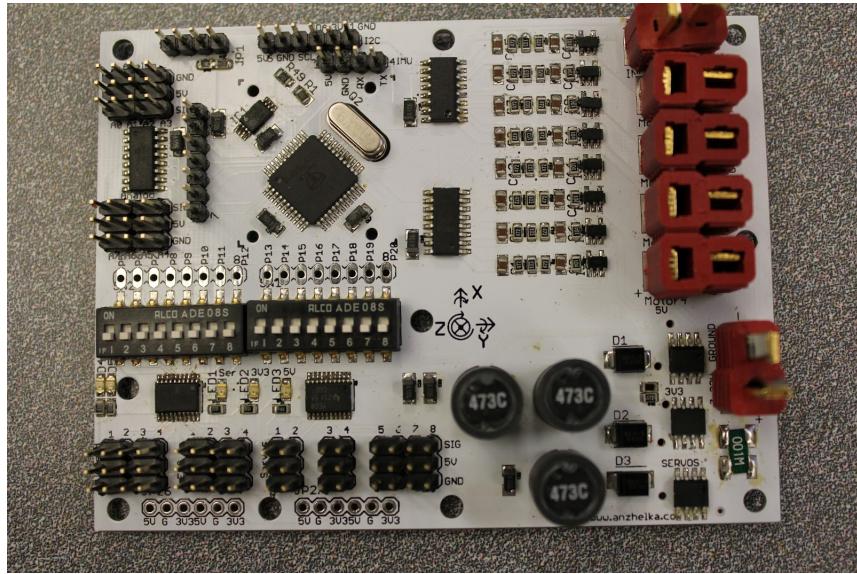


Figure 9: The finished PCB, populated with components. The Propeller is the rotated chip in the upper left. The red connectors are the Deans plugs for high current connections. On the bottom left are the 3.3v to 5v level shifters.

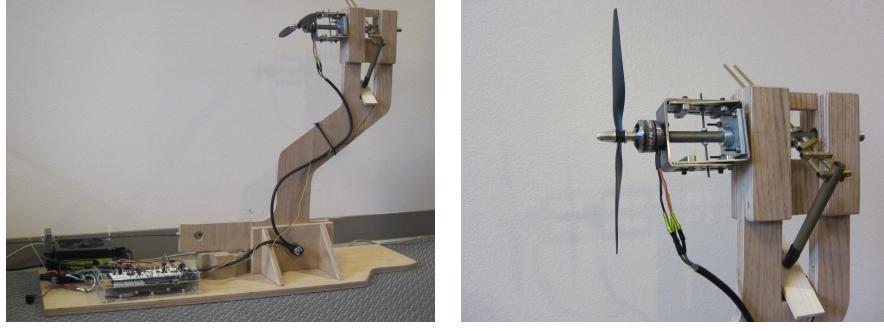
microcontroller to determine motor rotation speed. Unfortunately, most ESCs don't provide this sort of information to a host, so it is necessary to measure the pulses directly and infer from the control pulses instead.

A brushless motor sensor has several advantages over other methods:

- * It is unaffected by optical conditions
- * Mounting the sensor is considerably easier
- * The sensor can give the true no-load rotation speed
- * No modification to the existing motor or its circuits is necessary

The Eagle Tree Brushless RPM sensor ([8]) is the only ready made solution on the market to measure the brushless motor control pulses. It is a very small device, priced at about \$12 a piece, and it can sense the rotation rate of a single motor. The sensor converts the brushless motor signals to a series of pulses where each pulse is proportional to a rotation. The Propeller does not measure the signal directly from a brushless motor control line because there are very high voltages and back EMF from the motor which creates a very nasty environment for the 3.3v microcontroller.

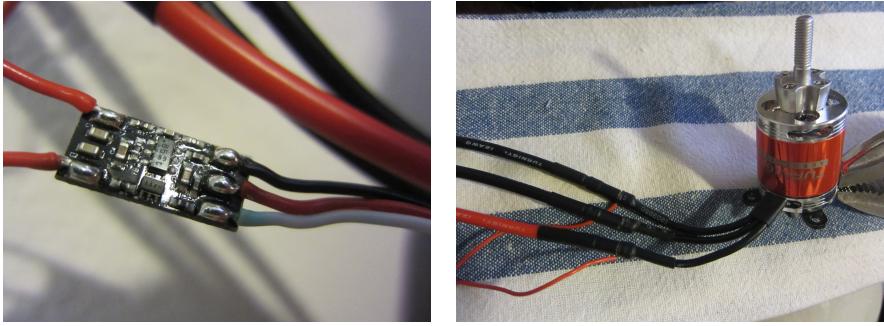
The Propeller object for this sensor is based on code provided by Tim Moore [10]. For this project, interface modifications to the object were made to the code in order to permit the reading of rotations per second. The object can support up to eight brushless motor sensors.



(a) The thrust/torque test stand.

(b) The motor mounting is on the left and torque measurement arm is the bronze piece on the right.

Figure 10: Brushless motor test stand



(a) The Eagle Tree brushless RPM sensor

(b) Motor connection of the sensor.

Figure 11: The Eagle Tree sensor

Connection of the Eagle Tree sensor is straightforward. The two single wires from the Eagle Tree are connected to any two leads of the brushless motor. Connecting only one lead would still allow the sensor to function, but it results in slightly larger errors (15 rps errors, instead of 10 rps errors with both). On the microcontroller side the black line goes to 3.3V, red to Gnd, white to the Propeller I/O pin. Despite going against standard color coding conventions, the red line is connected to ground and the black is to 3.3v (the Propeller VDD).

The Propeller object for interfacing with the sensor counts the number of clock cycles between rising edges of a pulse, and uses this to calculate the rotations per second.

6.2.2 Pulse Width Modulation

Pulse width modulation is the technique of toggling a digital I/O pin high and low in a repeating pattern. We use PWM in this project to interface the electronic speed controllers (ESC). The ESCs use servo type PWM signals: a 1000 us to 2000 us pulse every 20 ms. The width of the pulse is relative to the commanded speed.

6.2.3 UART Serial Communication

Serial communication in this project uses the FullDuplexSerial4portPlus v3 object. This object can support up to four full duplex serial ports, although currently only one port is being used. The Propeller uses serial communication to interface to several devices:

- * Host computer via USB
- * Wireless modem (such as Xbee)
- * GPS
- * Other microcontrollers
- * UART sensors

When communicating with a host computer or other microcontrollers, the Propeller uses the \$ATXXX communications protocol described in 8.1.

7 Constant Identification

The quadrotor platform has a number of different constants that depend on the hardware used. Most constants such as mass and rotor diameter are relatively easy to measure. Other constants are not so easy. This section details the more difficult constant identifications. For a full treatment of the math and a list of all constants, see the Anzhelka mathematics document [3].

7.1 Thrust/Torque Test Stand Theory

A good autonomous quadrotor needs to be able to measure, in real units such as kilograms and seconds, important aspects about itself such as orientation, motor thrust, acceleration, and so on. It's fairly easy to make a remote controlled quadrotor platform since the human in the loop can intuitively correct for many small errors, and our eyes are very good at collecting the necessary raw information. An autonomous quadrotor does not have this luxury, and must explicitly define each kinematic and dynamic equation. Among others, the quadrotor must know the propeller torque and thrust constants.

$$K_T = \frac{T}{\rho n^2 D^4} \quad (7.1)$$



$$K_Q = \frac{Q}{\rho n^2 D^5} \quad (7.2)$$

Above, we have the two equations that define how the propellers affect our quadrotor system. These equations can be found in context in the Anzhelka Project quadrotor mathematics document ([3]). The form that 7.1 and 7.2 are in now makes it convenient for us to measure the constants K_T and K_Q : if we can somehow measure the terms on the right hand side then we can figure out what the constants are.

From these equations, it is clear that we need to measure thrust, torque, air density, rotation speed, and the propeller diameter. Measuring rotor diameter, motor speed and air density are straight forward, and so they are not covered here. The real challenge comes from measuring motor thrust and torque.

Thrust is measured by mounting the motor on the end of the lever arm, then measuring the torque that the propeller exerts as it spins. A pressure sensor rigidly mounted between the lever arm and a stationary base can measure this torque.

Calculating torque is a bit more complicated: the motor body needs to be mounted on a rotating axis that is directly in line with the motor shaft, and the torque along this axis needs to be measured. Most measurement test stands seem to only measure thrust, and ignore yaw. We, however, rely on the torque to yaw the quadrotor vehicle.

To measure torque, our test stand has the motor mounted to a rod, which then has a lever arm attached that presses on a scale. In a same way as thrust the force pressing on the scale can be read, and with the length of the lever arm torque can be calculated.

Our test can measure thrust and torque simultaneously and automatically. To do this we are using the Flexiforce pressure sensors ([7]). These sensors vary the resistance based on the amount of pressure, and resistance is very easy to measure with a microcontroller.

For motor speed we will be using a Eagle Tree brushless RPM sensors [8]. Our main control board is the power board that we have developed for our quadrotor. This has the advantage of being identical to what we will be flying, it will have the motor current and voltage sensing built in.

8 Implementation Details

This section describes various details necessary for the project successfully run.

8.1 \$ATXXX Protocol

The Anzhelka project uses a protocol called \$ATXXX to facilitate data and command exchange between different subsystems. \$ATXXX is very similar to NMEA-0183 where data is exchanged via sentences prefaced with a sentence

code. This allows for the Propeller to send real time information about the running state to other onboard processors or to offboard computers, and to receive commands. The protocol was developed to facilitate predictable and reliable exchanges.

8.1.1 Protocol Implementation Details

All strings are encoded in standard ASCII. Numbers are converted to their ASCII equivalent and are in base 10 unless otherwise noted. If a number is a decimal then it will have the ASCII decimal point included in the sentence string. By having all the data be in ASCII a normal terminal program (such as picocom or cutecom) can be used to receive and send data.

Each string is independent of all other strings. There is no order required to send or receive strings. If multiple strings of the same type are received, the listening devices should assume that the last received is the most recent. If an unknown string or other serial data is encountered then it should be ignored.

Data strings are prefaced with \$ADxxx (short for Anzhelka Data type xxx).

Note that the only defined whitespace in a string is a single space after the sentence code, and a newline (ASCII characters LF and CR) after each string. For clarity of notation the newline is not written in the string lists below.

8.1.2 Example Usages

This protocol is used in the thrust/torque test stand. The test stand measures the thrust and torque using force sensors, and measures the rotations per second of the motor. The test stand then outputs the \$ADRPS, \$ADPWM, \$ADMTH, and \$ADMTQ strings to a USB serial port. A desktop computer reads these strings from the serial port and displays the variable on-screen in a GUI that updates in real time as new strings are received. In this way the user can watch as testing proceeds.

This protocol could also be used to log parameters of the quadrotor as it is flying. The Propeller that is controlling the quadrotor could send these strings via a serial port to an external SD card. If an SD card is not available then the system could perhaps use a wireless transceiver such as an XBee. In the event of a system failure, the developer could look at the logged strings in order to help with debugging.

8.1.3 Protocol String Table

\$ACRDR (Read Data register...)

\$ACSDR	<p>Sets the data type registers that are specified. This command is used to set any of the variables reported on by the data strings. Note that this is a one time update, and it may be ignored or quickly overwritten at the receivers discretion. It's most useful to for setting lower level variables during testing, and higher level registers (such as constants) during runtime.</p> <p>For example, you can set the motor PWM values by the following command:</p> <pre>\$ACSDR PWM,1000,1250,1500,2000</pre> <p>This will tell the receiver to update it's PWM registers with the four values specified, in the same order as the \$AD-PWM command. To set the K,,P,, value of motor 3, you could send the command \$ACSDR MKP,*,*,23.42,*</p> <p>This will set Motor 3 K,,P,, to 23.42, and not set any of the other 3 values. The format of this command depends on the data string format. The xxx should be replaced by the unique three letter data string code, and then the following arguments should match what is described by the associated commands.</p> <p>Format: \$ACSDR xxx,t1,t2,...,tn</p>
\$ACSTP	<p>Quadrotor stop command. This command will stop the quadrotor, based on the parameter: Parameter Choices: * EMG - Emergency stop (complete shutdown of all moving systems) * IMM - Immediate. Will attempt to land immediately. * CON - Controlled stop. Will make an educated decision. There is only one parameter.</p> <p>Format: \$ACSTP parameter</p>
\$ADSTR	<p>Information string, useful for conveying human readable information. Content is any sequence of ascii characters except for single quotes (').</p> <p>Format: \$ADSTR clock,'content'</p>
\$ADNIM	<p>Most recent rotations per second for each motor. Stands for n i measured.</p> <p>Format: \$ADNIM clock,m1,m2,m3,m4</p>
\$ADNID	<p>Most recent motor rotations per second setpoint. This is the speed that motors are trying to achieve, and is fed into the motor PID loops. Stands for n i desired.</p> <p>Format: \$ADNID clock,m1,m2,m3,m4</p>

\$ADMVV	Format: \$ADMVV clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADMIA	Most recent motor current in millamps. Format: \$ADMIA clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADPWM	Most recent motor PWM command, in microseconds (uS) Format: \$ADPWM clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADMKP	Current motor PID loop proportional constant (K,,P,,). No units. Format: \$ADMKP clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADMKI	Current clock,motor PID loop integral constant (K,,I,,). No units. Format: \$ADMKI clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADMKD	Current clock,motor PID loop derivative constant (K,,D,,). No units. Format: \$ADMKD clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADMTH	Most recent motor thrust in units of Newtons. Format: \$ADMTH clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADMTQ	Most recent motor torque in units of Newton-Meters. Format: \$ADMTQ clock,m1,m2,m3,m4
\$ADMOM	Most recent calculated moment. (Units ?) Format: \$ADMOM clock,Mx,My,Mz
\$ADFZZ	Most recent calculated force Z. (Units ?) Format: \$ADFZZ clock,Fz
\$ADMPP	The motor slope and motor intercept constants. Stands for Motor PWM Proportion. Format: \$ADMPP clock,motor slope,motor intercept
\$ADQII	The most recent orientation quaternion. w is the scalar part, and (x,y,z) is the vector part. Format: \$ADQDI clock,w,x,y,z

\$ADQDI	The desired orientation quaternion of the quadrotor. w is the scalar part, and (x,y,z) is the vector part. Format: <code>\$ADQDI clock,w,x,y,z</code>
\$ADQEI	The most recent error quaternion (calculated, by the Propeller, difference between QII and QDI). w is the scalar part, and (x,y,z) is the vector part. Format: <code>\$ADQEI clock,w,x,y,z</code>
\$ADCLF	The current frequency of the control loop, in Hz. Format: <code>\$ADCLF clock,frequency</code>
\$ADKPH	Moment Constant Proportional Heading Format: <code>\$ADKPH clock,x,y,z</code>
\$ADKIH	Moment Constant Integral Heading Format: <code>\$ADKIH clock,x,y,z</code>
\$ADKDH	Moment Constant Derivative Heading Format: <code>\$ADKDH clock,x,y,z</code>
\$ADOMG	Angular rate of the Body processed from the gyros. Omega Format: <code>\$ADOMG clock,x,y,z</code>
\$ADACC	Acceleration rate of the Body processed from the accelerometers. Format: <code>\$ADACC clock,x,y,z</code>

9 User Interface Design

Currently, the only user interface is via the Anzhelka Terminal.

9.1 Anzhelka Terminal

The Anzhelka project uses a PC based GUI platform called Anzhelka Terminal (AT) to display realtime system states and to allow for parameter tuning. AT is written in Python and uses the WxWidgets Python branch WxPython for the GUI. AT is cross platform.

The AT GUI was written in WxPython and developed in part with the WYSIWYG editor WxGlade. WxGlade was suitable for most of the general layout tools, but was insufficient in two areas. First, WxGlade could not specifically layout the dynamic graphs since the graph class is a non standard class. Secondly, WxGlade was not used to layout the motor parameter table. This

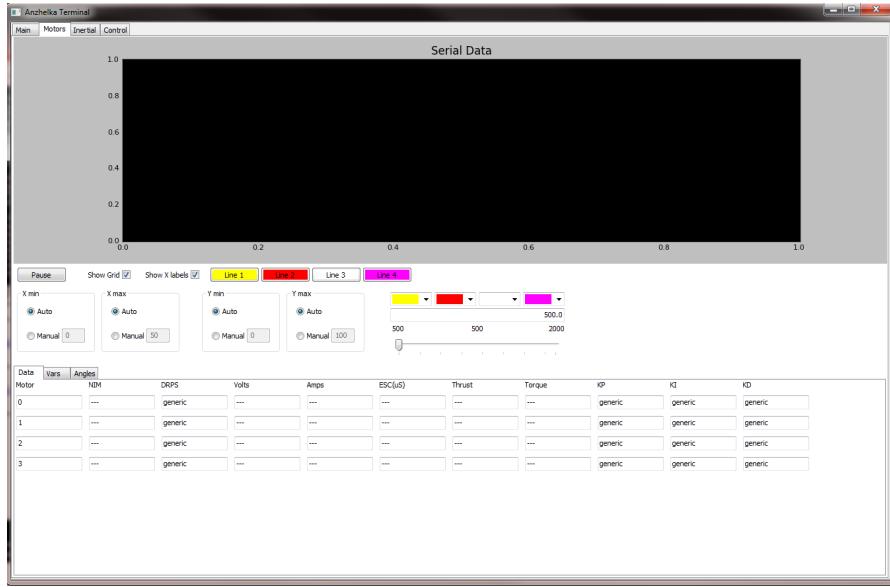


table has a row for each motor (normally 4 motors, but possibly 3 or more) and a column for each parameter of interest. Since this section was hand coded, either number should be easily changeable without excessive GUI editing .

AT will listen on the specified serial port for \$ATXXX strings, and will make these strings available for reading. Within the program, different threads will search the received strings list and extract the strings of interest, then display them onscreen. If an unknown string is encountered then AT will ignore it.

There are two GUI screens that are currently implemented: the COM port setup tab and the motor variable tab. Additional screens planned for the future include a inertial measurements tab, a control parameters tuning tab, and a high level command tab.

The motor control tab has several features that are important. At the top of the pane is a dynamic graph that will display in real time it's received information. This feature was one of the deciding factors to use Python instead of some other language. The graph can be automatically or user scaled on either axis, and is updated behind the scenes with the received serial strings.

Below the graph is the motor parameter table. This table displays all relevant information about each motor, including: motor number rotations per second desired rotations per second voltage current electronic speed controller PWM command thrust torque K_P of the motor PID controller K_I of the motor PID controller K_D of the motor PID controller The table is updated in real time based on the received strings. Some fields are editable as well (such as K_{PID} and DRPM), and when changed AT will send these values through the serial port as a \$ATXXX string (Note: this feature is still in development). This table is generated at runtime so it is easy to change the number of motors and the motor parameters. This was done in particular to support the same AT

program for hexrotors and octocopters as well as quadrotors.

10 Testing

Testing is a critical part of any project, and the Anzhelka project is no exception. All hardware and software is tested thoroughly to ensure correctness. As more time passes we will work on developing automated tests, including regression tests once the project becomes mature.

10.1 Hardware Testing

Because hardware is a physical entity it is subjected to many more points of failure. Parts can be flawed from the factory, assembled wrongly, or miscalculated.

10.1.1 Frame

The frame is rigid and is made up from nearly the same exact components for all 4 booms. The center of the frame is the only thing that is not duplicated, however the top side and bottom side are nearly identical with minor mounting differences and the center plates are symmetric about the z axis. Each boom needs to be identical in both size and weight to ensure proper balancing.

Once each boom is assembled it should weigh identically to the other booms. If there is too much of a difference in the weight of the booms it could cause the center of mass to change too dramatically. Therefore the booms must be matched.

10.1.2 Motors/Propellers

The motors and propellers would also need to be tested and matched to ensure the best performance. We can assemble all of our motors and propellers and then we can test them for torque and thrust ratings. Once we have all of the results we can then match the motors with nearly the same characteristics together.

One slight nick in a propeller can cause a large vibration problem that can affect the entire quadrotor frame. If this is the case the propeller must be balanced using a magnetic propeller balancer. If it can't be balanced then the propeller must be discarded.

We know that most motors made by the same manufacturer with the same specifications should be nearly identical. From this we can assume that all motors are same and can be treated as such. Additionally, by measuring the RPM most motor specific effects can be reduced or eliminated.

10.1.3 PCBs

PCBs can have many points of failure and need to be tested at many different parts of the build phase to ensure the most amount of yield.

Each fabrications house has its own set of limitations on what it can produce as far as trace widths, via sizes, spacing, etc. All fabrication houses will provide you with these details before you place an order so that you know what you can and what you can't do in your design. You must also keep in mind the amount of current or power that will have to travel through your traces that you have designed onto your board. If you are trying to push 10 amps through a 6mil trace you are going to melt the trace and ruin your board. Designers must take care to check and double check these considerations.

Once you have sent off your design to the fabrication house to be produced, the product must then be electrically tested. Electrical testing is a key factor in product yield. What is electrical testing? Electrical testing is a process in testing that checks whether a pad that is supposed to be electrically connected to another pad is actually connected. This may sound quite simple; however, in practice boards can have thousands of points that need to be tested. Some fabrication houses will provided 50% to 100% electrical testing, others will not provide any testing at all.

In the event that you can not get your boards fully tested you will need to create an overlay that will touch all the pads and check to see what is connected and what is not. In practice this is not acceptable to be done outside of the fabrication house or other than a special electrical testing board house.

The physical components that will be soldered onto the PCB have usually been tested and have an acceptable failure rate that will not have a great effect on the yield. With that being said, placement of the components is essential. If a component is misplaced by 20mils this could cause a bridge between two pins causing a short rendering that board unusable.

Once the PCB has been fully populated it now must be tested to ensure that all the components are in working order. One of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to develop test code that will run on the hardware and will give you a set of known outputs. Having something that will test all components several times under different inputs and outputs is key to ensure that the PCB is in good working order.

11 Maintenance Plan

We will continue to work on and develop this project for the rest of the school year, and with any luck beyond the end of the year. The current status of the project can always be found at the project blog ([2]).

11.1 For the next ten weeks

This senior design project is no where it needs to be as for a finished product and will require a lot more time to get there. In the following weeks we hope to

accomplish the following tasks:

- * Write motor PID object
- * Calibrate the pressure sensors for the test stand
- * Characterizing the Motors and Propellers
- * Create Eagle Tree wiring harnesses
- * Finalize mechanical assembly
- * Mount the IMU onto the quadrotor
- * Write the IMU interface object
- * Set up wireless interfacing
- * Balancing of the propellers
- * Build Roll and Pitch test stand
- * Write Motor control object
- * Finish all electrical wiring for the quadrotor
- * Write attitude control object
- * Build yaw test stand
- * Write altitude control object
- * Test for physical limit of payload capacity

These are just some of the many items that we hope to complete in the following ten weeks.

11.2 For the next year

Since the members of this project are so financially invested into it, we plan on continuing this project for a very long time. It is quite possible that we may even turn this project into company or a business.

One of the hopes is to present the project to the investor community(Kickstarter, IndieGoGo, etc.) and to see if there is enough interest in the project to have them help fund this idea to its full potential.

With the right funding we could add things like object avoidance, quadrotor acrobatics, and other ideas provided by users.

12 Project Impacts

Every project has an effect on other people, and autonomous quadrotors are no different.

12.1 Realistic Constraints

The Anzhelka project is relatively unconstrained in time and money. We each work roughly 20-40 hours a week on the project, for a total of 23 weeks. This gives approximately 1400 hours of total time investment in the project. Many other students are unwilling or unable to invest as much time as we have in our project. Once the project is accepted by the open source community it should become self sustaining by volunteers. Most likely these volunteers will come from the Parallax forums, since that is the main source of Propeller based collaboration.

This project is also relatively unconstrained in terms of finances. We have invested roughly \$3000 in this project to get it started and off the ground. This money is from savings. Like the amount of time we invest in the project, many other students are unwilling or unable to invest as much money as we have done. We were able to invest as much as we have by preparing and saving for the project before it actually began. It is no surprise that a senior design project was required before graduation.

12.2 Safety and Reliability

Safety and Reliability are very important for this project. This project conforms to the Remote Control Aerial Photography Association general operation guidelines ([13]). These guidelines give rules for safe operation of remote controlled vehicles.

12.3 Aesthetics



Figure 12: An artistic rendering of the Elev-8 frame.

The Elev-8 platform is very aesthetic. It has appeal simply for it's uncommon design that many people are unfamiliar with. Quadrotors in general are very popular for their novelty. The commercial Parrot AR Drone quadrotor has a booth every year at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, and every year it is packed with spectators.

Several steps were taken to improve the general aesthetics of the quadrotor frame. All wiring was kept to a minimum and hidden wherever possible. The PCB was designed to reduce the number of external components that had to be connected with messy wires. All screws are black oxide coated to match the black of the Delrin pieces. The PCB has a white solder mask to contrast with the black color of the frame.

The Anzhelka Terminal GUI was designed to be intuitive and easy to use, even without any experience. Functionality is divided into tabs for easy access. The motors tab allows for intuitive control of the graph, and the motor table is clear and easy to understand.

The thrust/torque test stand also had aesthetics in mind when it was designed. The stand is build out of oak and finished in a way that makes the wood almost glow. The metal pieces were sandblasted to create a matte finish. Finally, all wiring was routed and organized as best as possible.

12.4 Anzhelka Marketing

We have worked on marketing this project as well. We selected the name "Anzhelka" (meaning angelic in Russian) and made it the core identifier of our project. We have developed the phoenix logo that is used on everything that we produce. We have developed team T-shirts and a display board to simultaneously educate and promote the project. We have a project domain (anzhelka.com) and sensible web addresses. This project now has an identity such as few senior design projects ever achieve.

13 Conclusion and Future Work

13.1 Conclusion

For this project, we have developed the hardware and software frameworks necessary to fly autonomously. We have built and tested the mechanical and electrical hardware, and developed much of the associated sensor software. We have analysed current research papers on the topic of quadrotor control, and have developed a document that clearly and precisely outlines the steps necessary to fly ([3]). We have extensively documented the entire process, and provided all of it as open source. We have created an identity for the project in the form of the name Anzhelka and our phoenix logo. With these accomplishments we are only a few small steps away from flying.

We were, and are constantly surprised by the amount of work even apparently simple tasks take. We had originally anticipated being able to fly by mid

January. Then mid February. Now, it is mid May. The process has been a learning experience for both of us. We have learned the value of a methodical approach and good documentation, and to respect the progress of others in our field.

If we had to do it differently we would make a larger team. Specifically, it would be very beneficial to add several new roles in addition to the computer engineering and computer science roles that we already fill. A mechanical engineer would take care of the quadrotor frame, an electrical engineer would take care of the circuits, and an administration major would maintain all the documentation. With these three other people we could make the excellent project it already is absolutely outstanding.

13.2 Acknowledgements

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Dr. Kastner	Consulting
Tom Wypych	Consulting
Frank Lewis	Algorithms
Emanuel Stingu	Algorithms
Texas Instruments	Samples
Microchip	Samples
Jack Mcbroom	Other

14 References

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15 Appendices

Include the following:

- Mathematics for quadrotors written for simpletons.
- Source code printed in the 2 pages per page format.
- A printed copy of the slides used for your final presentation. If you use animation in your slides, then you need to sanitize the slides so that they are readable when printed..

- A professional quality one-page resume for each member of the group.
Use the same template for each resume.
- Include the frame diagrams