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# Development and human performance evaluation of a ground vehicle robotic force-feedback tele-operation system

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**DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE  
EVALUATION OF A GROUND VEHICLE ROBOTIC FORCE-  
FEEDBACK TELE-OPERATION SYSTEM**

by

**ANKUR SARAF**

**THESIS**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University

Detroit, Michigan

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Approved by

---

Advisor

Date

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my family.

Your love and support helped me achieve my goals.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Dr. Abhilash Pandya for all the assistance and guidance he has provided. His guidance was helpful not only for the thesis but also towards my career growth and development. I consider him to be a very friendly mentor who is always ready to help. I would like to thank Dr. Darin Ellis for all his support and precious feedback. My sincere gratitude goes to Dr. Pepe Siy and Dr. Syed Mahmud. I would also like to thank Shawn Hunt, Alex Cao, Luke Reisner, Vishal Lowalekar and rest of the SSIM-CARES team for their help and much required feedback at different stages of the research.

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## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

### 1.1 Background

This thesis project underlines the development of hardware and software architecture in the field of tele-operation of mobile robots with force-feedback capabilities. Tele-operation of mobile robots is often used to perform complex tasks in hazardous environments: some examples include vehicle inspections [1], inspection of underwater structures [2], de-mining operations [3], or cleaning nuclear plants [4]. Generally, the task of mobile robots is to inspect vehicles at traffic control checkpoints e.g. border crossings and security checkpoints. Also, tasks like inspection and exploration of dangerous environments in military and desert areas are becoming more relevant. The tele-operator often gets only the visual information and in many cases it is insufficient to carry out such complex tasks because of restricted visual coverage of cameras [5]. Haptics is still in its preliminary research phase. Therefore, modern tele-operation systems are trying to take into account audio and haptic information in addition to visual data to provide additional feedback to the remote operator.

The meaning of haptics is based on the sense of touch. The word “haptic” is ingrained in Greek (*hpto*, to fasten or bind), and refers to the sensation of touch or feel using a particular device that is either grasped, as a grip, or worn, as a glove. Most of the haptic feedback systems are used with computer entertainment systems such as video games. The virtual environment consists of force magnitude and direction information which is ultimately applied to the user, depending on the position and

velocity of the cursor in the environment. It's a tactile feedback technology which takes benefit of human's sense of touch by applying forces, vibrations, and/or motions to the user. This reflex stimulation can be used to assist the enhancement of remote tele-operation of devices.

## **1.2 Motivation**

Tele-operation is frequently used for controlling mobile robots in unknown and unstructured environments [18]. The majority of vehicle tele-operation (air, ground, and underwater) research has significance on rate-control systems for hazardous environments. User interfaces for remote operation have stayed the same during the past fifty years. In almost all tele-operation systems, a trained tele-operator controls remote vehicle's translation and rotation with the help of hand-controllers while getting feedback from multiple video and data displays. Such tele-operation systems can be difficult to use (especially in unknown, unstructured and hazardous environments), costly to manufacture, time consuming to set up, and require significant training [19].

Additionally, remote driving becomes challenging often because of loss of environmental awareness, poor trough and terrain judgment, insufficient perception of the remote environment and failure to detect obstructions are common consequences [19]. Navigation in dynamic environments of mobile robots like Omni-Directional Inspection System (ODIS) which translate at high-speeds, it is often desirable to provide a sensor-based collision detection method on-board the robot to promise safe navigation. A dedicated tele-operator is not able to perform multiple tasks and controlling the ground vehicle can be problematic when the terrain is rough or communications are degraded [20].

Recently, in modern tele-operation systems, multi-modal operator interfaces including haptic interface is typically used as an additional gesture to assist the user in understanding the remote environment [13, 14, 15, 16, 17]. Haptic displays are being progressively more used for applications including art, medical training, and virtual environments as well [21, 22].

The motivation behind this work was to provide a cost-effective solution for adding values to the tele-operation capabilities of the system by introducing haptic interfaces to overcome the problems tele-operators have to face to perceive and evaluate the remote environment. Also, there is a need to include alternative interfaces for the user to make the tele-operation easier and more productive in case of unknown environments having rough terrains or degraded communications. An additional feedback is needed when the feedback from the camera view and coverage is insufficient for the user to perform complex tasks and give better idea and feel of the remote environment.

### **1.3 Significance and related work**

The objective of this research is to develop a robotic tele-operation system extending the hardware and software architecture to provide the operator with haptic capabilities. These capabilities will enable the user to perform a widespread exploration and investigation of dangerous environments in military and desert areas whilst examining from a safe operating distance. This research focuses on enhancing user performance in manual tasks by implementing force feedback technology.

According to L. Rosenberg, and S. Brave [7], adding both active and passive force feedback for the completion of tasks decreases task completion times, therefore increasing user performance. The motivation of this study was to assist persons with neuromotor disabilities to interact with GUI based computer systems. Active forces are the forces applied by adding energy into the system whereas in passive force feedback, forces are applied by removing energy from the system. Controllers using servo motors are active controllers, and friction brake or magnetic particle brake can be categorized as passive controllers as they dissipate energy from the system. Figure 1 indicates the results comparing the task completion times in seconds with no force feedback and applying active and passive forces as feedback to the user from the Rosenberg paper [7]. Potentially, our research work can also help in assisting persons with such kind of disabilities. A study by Rosenberg shows that force feedback can enhance the performance in tele-operation systems as well as in virtual environments [8].

	<b>Button Task</b>	<b>Menu Task</b>	<b>Scroll Task</b>
<b>No Forces</b>	4.4 sec	5.8 sec	6.6 sec
<b>Active Forces</b>	2.7 sec	4.2 sec	6.2 sec
<b>Passive Forces</b>	2.9 sec	4.8 sec	5.9 sec

Figure 1: Results of [7] indicating performance times in seconds for completing each targeting tasks.

The robotic unmanned ground vehicle for this research is the Omni-Directional Inspection System (ODIS). This research is also significant because the basic hardware and software architecture can be used for not only the underlined ODIS platform, but for any other unmanned ground vehicle platform. Specifically, the hardware involved is

platform independent and can be implemented for many different platforms of unmanned ground vehicle research.

Robotic systems like the ODIS are used where there is a risk to an operator. Figure 2 shows an area in Baghdad, Iraq known as Assassin's Gate. Left scene in the figure was captured on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2004. Right scene is after a car bomb exploded two months later. The main idea behind this thesis is to develop architecture to expand the potential of surveillance type robots in terms of stronger tele-operation capabilities giving more information back to the operator about the environment at a safe operating distance.



Figure 2: This is Assassin's Gate, an area in Iraq. Left scene captured in March 2004 and right scene of the same area after two months with car bomb explosion. Picture used with permission of Shawn Hunt [1].

How does one give more information about the environment back to the operator? The use of sensors which can capture critical data at the remote site and provide high level information to the user is critical. For instance, a user can interact with a specialized force feedback joystick which can provide haptic information to the user. Sensors such as accelerometers, odometers, gyroscopes, force sensors, magnetic compasses, and global positioning systems are considered. Borenstein et al. [9] provide the brief explanation of the characteristics of sensors and positioning systems for mobile robots. There are seven categories of sensor systems for positioning of the mobile robots described in this paper -- odometry, inertial navigation, magnetic compasses, GPS etc. After considering the characteristics of different kind of sensors, accelerometer sensor gives the most appropriate usability for our application as it can give a system-level input for force feedback.

There has been a lot of research on designing haptics tele-operation systems. Additional force feedback to the tele-operator improves the tele-operation performance as per studies in [10]. It's an experiment involving remote control of a mini-rover MERLIN-car over the internet. It uses hall sensor odometers for distance measurement. A force sensor implemented at the front of the car serves the purpose of providing force feedback to the user applying torque to the motors in the force feedback joystick. Also, when the user is not touching the joystick, the control algorithm keeps the joystick in the center. A test run of the system where the robot is made to push the box placed on the floor is performed. The force was felt increasing until the box was moved when the force was felt decreasing. Results indicate a delay of 35ms is noticed for one data package cycle from server to the car and back. The relationship between measured force on the



car, and applied torque on the joystick is shown. The study concluded that mobile robots can be controlled effectively with the help of haptic interfaces.

The haptic feedback system in [11] proved to reduce the learning time required to develop the ability to remotely control the vehicle accurately. The system discussed in the paper remotely pilots the aerial vehicle using haptic force feedback. This system, unlike other systems uses existing off-the-shelf motion capture (MoCap) systems for position tracking for closed-loop movement control. The vehicle motion data is then used as feedback and provided to the haptic controller joystick. The high resolution cameras determine the 3D position of passive retro reflective markers positioned on the parts of vehicle. This paper also involves real-time 3D simulated modeling. This study elaborates on a haptic feedback system which provides a quick response and precise control. Tele-operation which allows the user to feel as if he is controlling the vehicle by direct handling was implemented. To conclude, this study provided more natural haptic interface for vehicle position control which extended precise control abilities to the pilots.

#### **1.4 Advantages of using accelerometer sensor**

Studies mentioned above have used odometer sensors and Motion Capture systems for direction & orientation which does not provide trough & terrain information to the user. Also, force sensors used in [10] which help to provide force feedback have limitations. For instance, these sensors can detect the force applied only in that particular direction and again would not be sufficient to provide the terrain information. It can be used for collision detection only in that particular direction. Hence, force sensors are totally dependent on their position on the robot and the direction of collision or impact. So, it's not efficient to use the force sensor for sensing terrain as we will have to

use multiple sensors in all possible directions. An accelerometer, on the other hand is independent of its placement on the robot and direction of impact. So, no matter where the robot hits the obstacle or goes over a hump, an accelerometer will detect the change in acceleration in the particular direction.

Accelerometer sensor can give a good input for force-feedback, because force is directly proportional to acceleration. Hence, it is hypothesized that an accelerometer can give a better feel of the terrain the robot is going over and also that this information will be useful for exploring areas especially in dangerous environments such as military applications.

## **1.5 Research plan - System Architecture**

The ultimate goal of the robotic system is to provide the operator with haptic information in addition to the video data to perform a widespread exploration and investigation of dangerous environments whilst examining from a safe operating distance. ODIS was originally developed by the Center for Self-organizing and Intelligent Systems at Utah State University under a contract with the Army [1]. ODIS has the capability to translate in all directions and simultaneously rotate. The basic ODIS platform has a video camera with tilt capabilities (Figure 3). The ODIS is on loan to WSU from TARDEC.



Figure 3: Front view of ODIS, Omni-Directional Inspection System.

The description of the first version of ODIS and its hardware is described in [6]. It comprises of two RF links, one connected to a user joystick and another communicates with a path planner. The ODIS was also equipped with a combination of a Global Positioning System, gyroscope unit, optical wheel encoders, sonar, infrared, and laser sensors. Some intelligent behaviors might be available on the ODIS model but there is no known documentation available. Therefore, in [1], it was chosen to add hardware and create a software framework to extend the original design to allow other applications, rather than attempting to decode the firmware commands.

The hardware to extend the architecture with force feedback capabilities is a force feedback joystick, the Novint Falcon Haptic Device. It is a 3-DOF haptic device developed for the gaming industry. The Falcon controller is essentially a robot having 3 arms moving right - left, forwards - backwards, like a mouse, and also moves up and down, giving third degree of freedom. When you hold the Falcon's attachable grip and move the cursor to interact with an environment, virtual object, or character, motors in the device turn on and are updated approximately 1000 times a second.

The research plan of the thesis emphasizes on the expansion of the hardware/software system architecture to engross haptics tele-operation of the ODIS. The architecture mainly focuses here on the ODIS but can be used on any unmanned ground vehicle. The new expanded tele-operation system consists of haptic joystick control with haptic feedback mechanism, client/server software framework, collision detection and terrain detection. The complete closed-loop feedback system architecture is shown in Figure 4.

The ODIS is remotely operated with the Novint falcon joystick connected via a server. The direction of motion can be given from the joystick which is then communicated further by the server via a 900 MHz radio made by FreeWave Technologies. The software framework writes on the serial port the command movement translated from the Novint joystick to the server. The Freewave radio is connected through USB/serial port to the server which communicates with the ODIS. ODIS, on the other hand is equipped with small hardware circuitry – XBee accelerometer module placed on the top. XBee accelerometer module wirelessly transmits the acceleration data to the XBee server module (connected on the server

through USB/serial port). The server module receives the frame containing the acceleration data from XBee accelerometer module. The software framework then extracts the data from serial port, manipulates, and translates the proper format of the acceleration data to the Novint falcon joystick. The user feels the force feedback as a result.

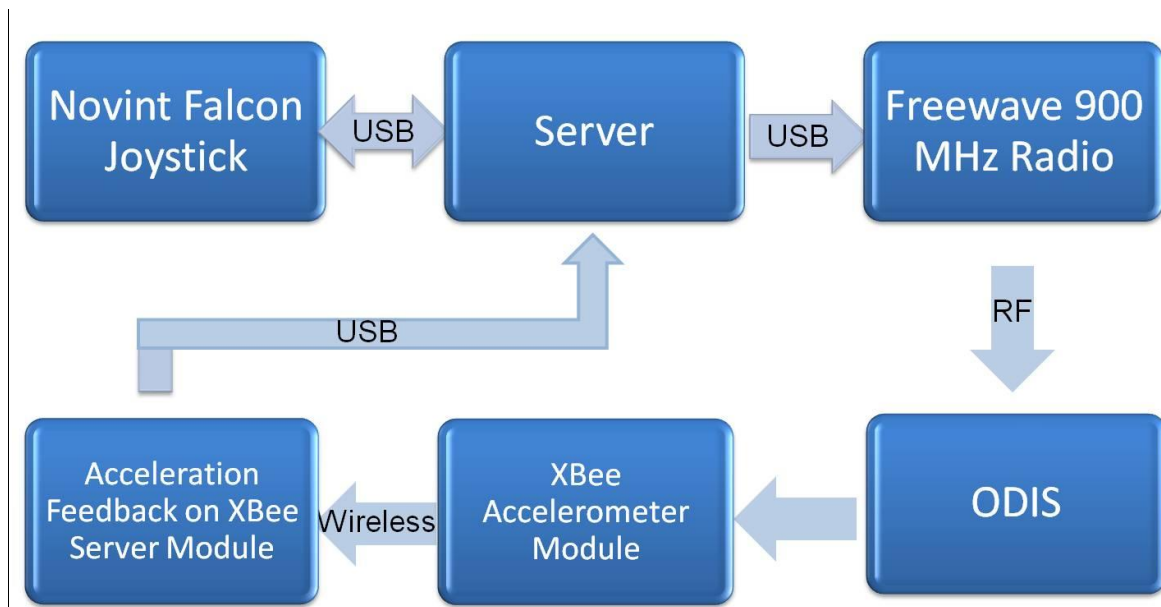


Figure 4: This is the Expanded System Architecture which describes the research plan of the thesis. The new tele-operation of ODIS contains joystick control and haptic feedback mechanism, client/server software framework, collision detection and terrain detection.

This research work is segregated into two specific aims as follows:

Aim 1: Create a testbed for haptic tele-operation

- a) Implement Accelerometer sensor on the top of ODIS.
- b) Get the force-feedback on the Novint Falcon joystick.
- c) Give directions to ODIS using Novint Falcon joystick.

- Aim 2: Execute a performance evaluation of the impact of haptic tele-operation
  - a) Perform a user study which determines if the user can detect surface terrain and bumps/pot holes in the path.

## **CHAPTER 2: ACCELEROMETER SENSOR INTEGRATION WITH A FORCE FEEDBACK JOYSTICK**

### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter provides details of the work done for assessing the accelerometer sensor. The groundwork is done to provide a good proof of concept of using the accelerometer sensor for providing the force feedback to the joystick.

### **2.2 Accelerometer sensor**

To begin with, the “Watchport/A” acceleration sensor from Digi International was taken into consideration (Figure 5). The dual-axis acceleration and tilt sensor was available already in the CARES lab. Watchport/A is a cost-effective plug-and-play USB device used for 24/7 environment monitoring. These sensors are mainly used with surveillance cameras for monitoring systems. Users are allowed to use their own software applications or can also use the included Watchport Manager software.

The sensor represents itself to a user application in the form of virtual serial port. The application can access the serial port in the form of COMx (standard serial port) where x can be between 1 and 255. The Watchport/A sensor can be operated in two types of modes. One mode lets the user use an ASCII command interface whereas another mode uses an RS-232 modem signal interface.



Figure 5: Watchport/A (Acceleration & Tilt Sensor) from Digi International with RJ45 terminated cable. The RJ45 cable connects into corresponding jack on the Watchport base unit.

The ASCII command interface mode was chosen for our application. The set of ASCII commands available for the Watchport/A sensor are listed in Table 1. All the ASCII commands sent to the sensor must be terminated with a carriage return character <CR>. The carriage return character is used as '\r' in c++. The table describes the command and its significance as well as the return value from the sensor. Note that for the return values of commands A and U in the table, +/- means the value will be either positive or negative, m.mm and n.nn represent a number to the hundredth decimal, g stands for gravitational value, and X for the x axis and Y for the y axis.

Before starting, it is always recommended to calibrate the sensor. Place the sensor at its “neutral position”. Calibrate the sensor using C command to establish its “neutral position”. The return value will be ok. Finally verify for correct calibration using A command. The return value will be +0.00gX +0.00gY. The acceleration range



provided is from:  $-2g$  to  $2g$ , where  $g$  is in terms of gravity. In the application, the commands are used to write to the serial port and the return value is read from the serial port.

Command	Description	Return Value
?<CR>	Tells about the command set available for this Watchport.	All commands here.
I<CR>	Tells what kind of Watchport is connected.	Watchport/A<CR>
C<CR>	Calibrates the sensor.	OK<CR>
A<CR>	Returns the current acceleration.	+/-m.mmgX +/-n.nngY<CR>
U<CR>	Reads the raw axis values i.e. the values if C command were never executed.	+/-m.mmgX +/-n.nngY<CR>
E<CR>	Switches to modem signal mode.	OK<CR>
Mn<CR>	Adjusts sensitivity. N = 1 (most sensitive) through 9.	OK<CR>

Table 1: Description of ASCII command set available for Watchport/A sensor with the return value.

To communicate with the sensor via a virtual serial port, the c++ code uses the serial class written by Shawn Hunt [1] which abstracts the details of serial communication. It is based mainly on the serial library developed by Ramon de Klein [12]. More details on calibration command is provided in Appendix D.

Figure 6 shows the acceleration data output when read from the accelerometer. As seen from the output values, the acceleration changes in both x and y axis which indicates the accelerometer moved in both x and y direction. Now, we have the acceleration value on x-axis and y-axis in terms of gravitation in the buffer. These

acceleration values have to be extracted from the buffer and should be provided as an input for force in proper scaled format correspondingly to the x and y direction of the falcon joystick. If the user can feel the force feedback on the falcon joystick, this work provides the proof of concept for usability of the accelerometer for force feedback.

```
sizeof(cmd) = 2
Read 16 bytes...
-0.95gX -0.31gY
" in tokens:0.95gX -0.31gY
-0.95gX
-0.31gY
sizeof(cmd) = 2
Read 16 bytes...
-0.57gX -0.31gY
" in tokens:0.57gX -0.31gY
-0.57gX
-0.31gY
sizeof(cmd) = 2
Read 16 bytes...
-0.50gX +0.00gY
" in tokens:0.50gX +0.00gY
-0.50gX
+0.00gY
sizeof(cmd) = 2
Read 16 bytes...
-0.57gX +0.00gY
" in tokens:0.57gX +0.00gY
-0.57gX
+0.00gY
```

Figure 6: Acceleration data return value from the Watchport sensor in x and y-axis in terms of g.

### 2.3 Novint Falcon Haptic device and SDK

Falcon joystick is a 3-DOF haptic device made by Novint technologies for the gaming industry (Figure 7). The detachable grip is attached to the grip base. There are other grips available as well for gaming purposes e.g. pistol grip but we preferred the ball-grip. The body consists of three Mabuchi RS-555PH-15280 motors whose motion can be monitored by a coaxial 4-state encoder. All three arms are connected to the motors inside the body of the device. It connects to the PC via USB port.

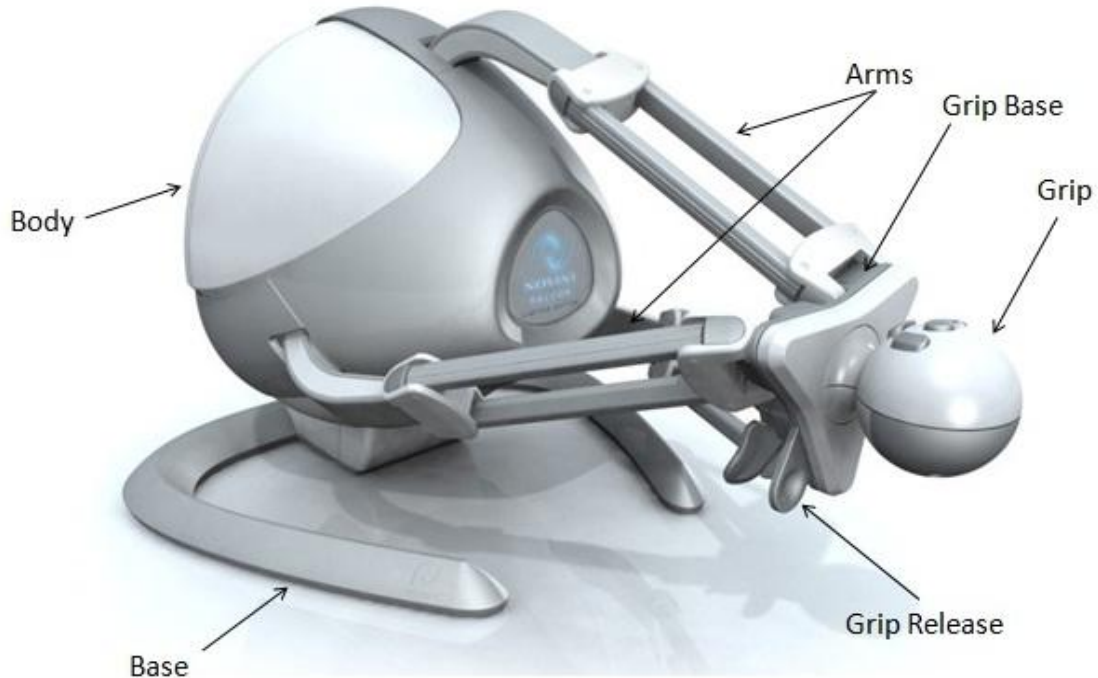


Figure 7: Novint falcon haptic device providing haptic feedback to the user. Details about its parts including its arms, grip are given. © 2007 Novint Technologies, Inc.

Now that we have our acceleration data stored in the buffer, the next part is to program the Falcon device to generate force corresponding to the acceleration data obtained. There are lots of open source libraries available e.g. “libnifalcon” for falcon device as well there is a SDK provided by Novint including the APIs and the abstraction layer. HDAL\_SDK\_3.0.0 evaluation version was chosen for the application, which is the haptics device abstraction layer (HDAL) SDK available from Novint Technologies. It is easy to understand, APIs are available and well documented and also provides examples and samples to start with.

The main aim of HDAL is to offer a uniform interface to all supported device types. The APIs provided are used for selecting a device, initializing it, reading its state (position, buttons, etc.), issuing force commands to it, and shutting it down properly. HDAL is implemented as a sequence of layers (Figure 8). The application layer contains the haptic simulation component, which indicates what the user should feel as a haptic feedback. The application communicates with HDAL through the HDAL API, and the main building block of that communication, after initialization, is via the callback function. The function is called from within HDAL once every servo “tick”, approximately 1,000 times per second. In this function, the user reads the servo position, calculates the forces, and sends the forces to the device. In this particular application, which we are discussing, the forces are calculated in the callback function using the acceleration data, which comes from the application.

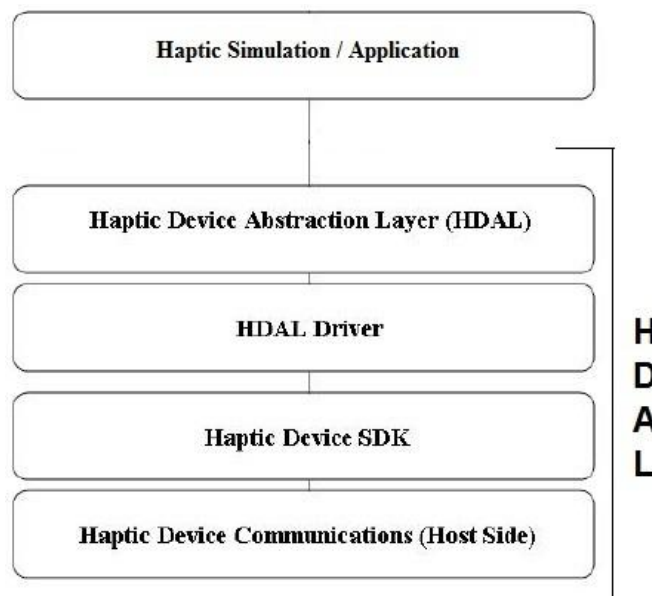


Figure 8: HDAL (Haptic Device Abstraction Layer) Layered Architecture. This picture is taken from HDAL Programmers Guide provided by Novint Technologies, Inc.

The abstraction layer handles a family of drivers, one for every type of device known to HDAL. The primary driver, in this application is for the Novint Falcon. The HDAL driver layer knows how to communicate with the device SDK to provide all the functionality provided by the application. The SDK, in turn, has to communicate with the actual device. This communication here is via USB. The initialization sequence for the Falcon device is provided in Appendix E.

The basic example provided with the SDK, named “basic\_opengl” is used to get familiarized with the SDK APIs, and the implementation of the callback function. The acceleration data from the accelerometer is read from the serial port as an ASCII string and stored in a buffer. The buffer keeps on updating the new values. The buffer values are in turn stored in char type variable. Now, it needs to be converted into a proper format to provide the actual acceleration value which can represent the force on the joystick. So the char type variable is converted first into double type, The value is then scaled according to the force values. The acceleration value range from -2g to +2g whereas the force value ranges from -3 to +3 Newton. The function “hdlSetToolForce” is used to set the tool forces. This function is implemented inside the servo callback function.

This preliminary work connecting the Watchport/A accelerometer and Novint Falcon joystick on the PC accomplishes its goal of proving the concept of using the accelerometer to provide the force feedback to the joystick. This work provides the user with the force feedback in accordance with the accelerometer. So if the accelerometer is moved in the positive x direction, the user feels the force on the joystick in the positive x direction.

## **CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTING THE ACCELEROMETER SENSOR CIRCUITRY ON ODIS**

### **3.1 Overview**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the preliminary work has proved that it is feasible to use accelerometer to give the force feedback. But, there are some disadvantages of using the Watchport/A sensor in this application. This chapter describes the drawbacks and limitations of using the Watchport/A sensor for the application, and the details of the hardware sensor circuitry developed for the architecture are discussed. The sensor circuitry is implemented in order to read the acceleration data when it is placed on the ODIS. Constraints like wireless capability of the sensor, size of the circuitry and its robustness are considered in the implementation.

### **3.2 Limitations of Watchport/A sensor**

First of all, Watchport/A sensor is a dual axis acceleration sensor, which restricts its ability to provide the terrain or trough information. This proves the inefficiency and incapability of the sensor. It has a USB interface to connect and needs a wireless router to be attached along with the Anywhere USB (Digi international) [1]. All the extra equipments will require power as well. All equipments together with power supply counts for the size constraint along with the wireless capability of the sensor. Also, the Watchport sensor when used provides a low frequency output. Hence, it would not be updated as frequent as the Novint joystick can, which will affect the performance of the system.

### 3.3 Wireless accelerometer circuitry

Now, as it was clear that a sensor like Watchport/A was not efficient for this particular application, it was decided to look for an accelerometer which can provide 3-axis acceleration output with better frequency. Also, it should provide the output wirelessly, by itself or by interfacing with other circuitry. The wireless accelerometers available in the market were either costly or had range constraints (having short operating range e.g. Bluetooth).

It was decided to use the accelerometer ADXL335 from Analog Devices along with XBee 2mW series 2.5 chip antenna to provide the wireless capability. The ADXL335 is a small, cost sensitive, thin, low power, complete 3-axis accelerometer (Figure 9). It measures acceleration with a minimum full scale range from -3g to +3g. It can measure dynamic acceleration resulting from motion, shock, or vibration which makes it easier to provide the terrain information. There is no on-board power. Provided power should be between 1.8 and 3.6VDC. The included 0.1uF capacitors, as shown in the block diagram in Figure 10, set the frequency of each axis to 50Hz. The block diagram represents fully assembled board with all the components installed.



Figure 9: ADXL335 triple-axis accelerometer from Analog Devices

The bandwidth of the accelerometer can be selected by using  $C_x$ ,  $C_y$ , and  $C_z$  capacitors at the output pins  $X_{OUT}$ ,  $Y_{OUT}$ ,  $Z_{OUT}$  (Figure 10). Bandwidth range can vary from 0.5 Hz to 1600 Hz for the X and Y axes, and a range of 0.5 Hz to 550 Hz for Z axis. For this application, we have used the included 0.1 $\mu$ F capacitors on board as it provides 50 Hz output per axis which is sufficient for the system.

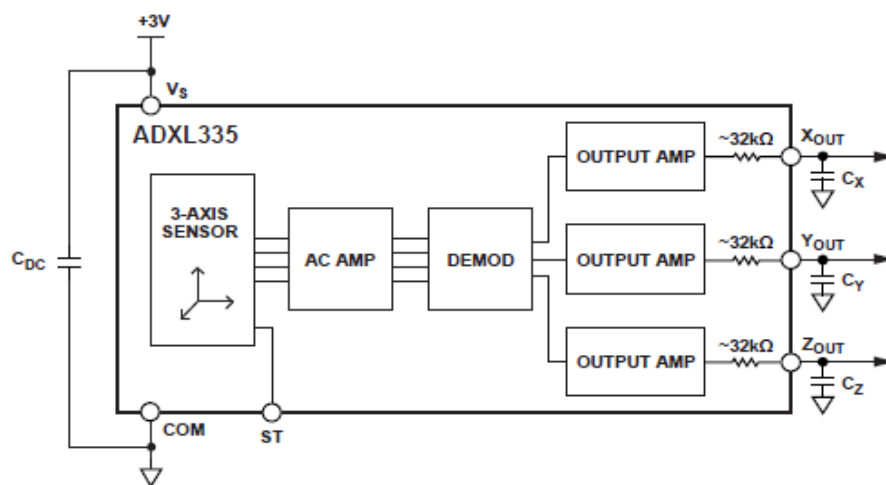


Figure 10: Functional Block Diagram



XBee series 2.5 modules from Digi international, as shown in Figure 11, are used for wireless data transfer. Two of such XBee transceiver modules are introduced in the system, one on the accelerometer circuitry on the ODIS which will transmit the acceleration data wirelessly and another on the server side capturing the data.

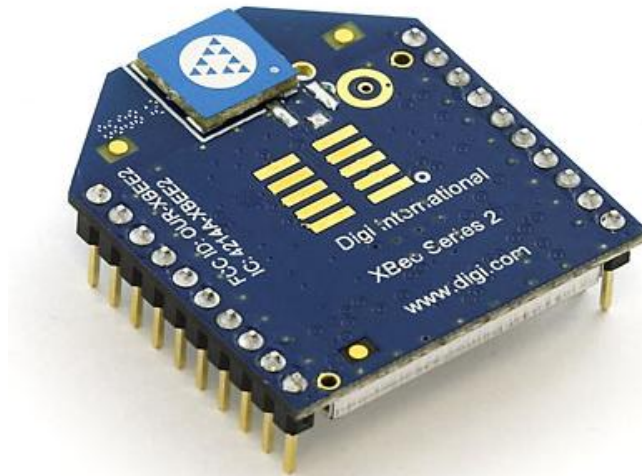


Figure 11: This is the 2.4GHz XBee 2mW series 2.5 chip antenna.

XBee modules are the family of embedded RF modules providing both 2.4GHz and 900MHz solutions. We used 2.4GHz XBee modules for this application. These modules acquire the 802.15.4 stack (the basis for Zigbee) and wrap it into an easy to use serial command set. XBee modules allow a very reliable and simple communication between microcontrollers, systems, computers, or anything with a serial port. It supports point-to-point as well as multi-point networks.

For the XBee modules to behave as a transmitter on the sensor side and as a receiver on the server side, it needs to be configured and firmware upgraded. To

connect the XBee modules to the PC, XBee Explorer USB is used. Figure 12 shows the XBee Explorer USB, which works with all the XBee modules to give direct access to the serial and programming pins on the XBee unit.

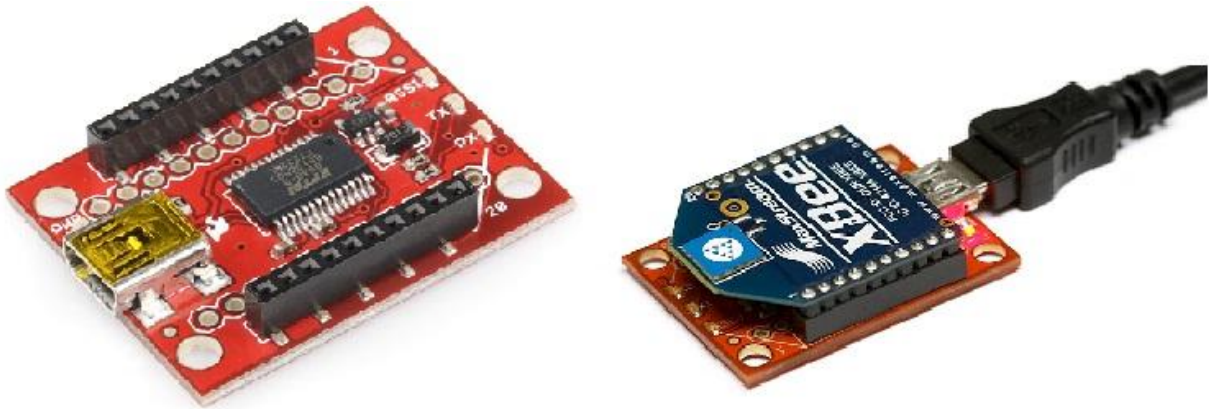


Figure 12: XBee Explorer USB to connect the XBee modules to the PC. Left side picture indicate the USB explorer and right side indicates the explorer with XBee module and USB cable.

To do the firmware configuration and upgrade, “X-CTU” – Configuration and test utility software from Digi International is used. Figure 13 shows the windows-based GUI of the X-CTU software. “PC Settings” tab shows the COM ports where the products are connected (usually connected via USB) and allows the user to select the desired COM port and configure the port for the radios settings. ”Range Test” tab allows the user to perform a range test between two radios. ”Terminal” tab allows accessing the COM port with a terminal emulation program. This tab also allows the ability to access the firmware of the radio using AT commands, discussed later. “Modem Configuration” tab provides the ability to program the radios’ firmware settings via GUI and drop-down menus. Also, the ability to change the firmware versions is allowed in this tab.

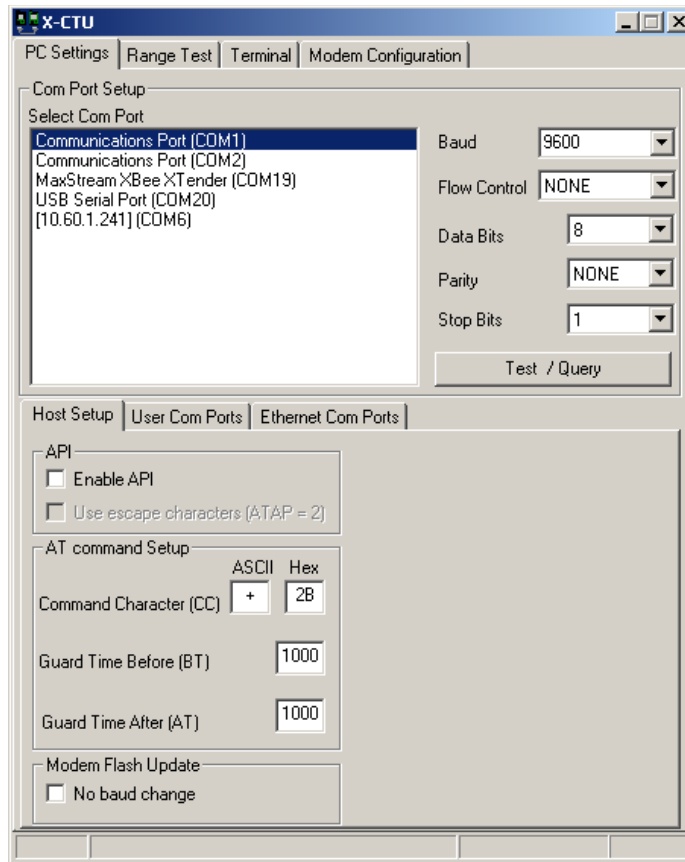


Figure 13: X-CTU software utility is a windows-based utility from Digi International for configuration and upgrade of firmware, and testing of Digi’s RF products like XBee.

To start with, the XBee server module to capture the acceleration data is plugged into the USB explorer and connected to PC for the configuration and upgrade of the firmware. X-CTU software is used to select the appropriate USB com port is made. In modem configuration, click on read will show which XBee type is connected and which firmware is currently on the device. From the Modem pull down list, XB24-ZB is selected and Function set “ZIGBEE COORDINATOR API” is selected. The firmware version “2270” is selected. API mode is required to receive analog/digital data from ADC pin of a remote radio (XBee connected to accelerometer, here). Under “Addressing”, the NI

(node identifier) is named as "JOYSTICK". Under "Serial interfacing", the "baud rate" is selected as 115200kbps.

Now, the XBee module which will be hooked to the accelerometer is plugged into the USB explorer and connected to the PC for the configuration and upgrade of the firmware. In X-CTU software, from the Modem pull down list, XB24-ZB is selected and Function set "ZIGBEE ROUTER AT" is selected. The firmware version "2270" is selected. Under "Addressing", the NI (node identifier) is named as "ACCELEROMETER". Under "Serial interfacing", the "baud rate" is selected as 115200kbps. In the "I/O settings", the DIO0, DIO1, and DIO2 is configured as 2-ADC. These input/output pins will be used to read the values from all the three axes from the accelerometer. Also, in the "I/O settings", IR (input sample rate) is changed to 32 (hex value for 50 milliseconds). The entire configuration settings with the firmware upgrade are written to the device by clicking on "write" button. Now, on the "Terminal" tab, to enter command mode on the XBee module, "+++" command (without pressing enter) is sent. It responds with "OK". Next "ATDNJOYSTICK" command is sent. It responds with "OK". This sets the destination node to another XBee module – "JOYSTICK" module. Next, "ATWR" command is sent which will write the settings to the memory so that the settings are not lost when the XBee is powered off. The terminal window with command looks as following:

```
+++OK
```

```
ATDNJOYSTICK
```

```
OK
```

ATWR

OK

Now, both the “accelerometer XBee” and “joystick XBee” are configured and updated. “Joystick XBee” directly connects to the server via USB port using the XBee USB explorer.” Accelerometer XBee” needs to be connected properly to the pins of ADXL335 accelerometer. For this task, XBee Wireless Shield is used for interfacing XBee with ADXL335. The XBee Shield simplifies the task of interfacing an XBee with any sensor device or other controller. This board assists directly with a USB board, and equips it with wireless communication capabilities using the popular XBee module. Figure 14 shows the XBee Wireless Shield.

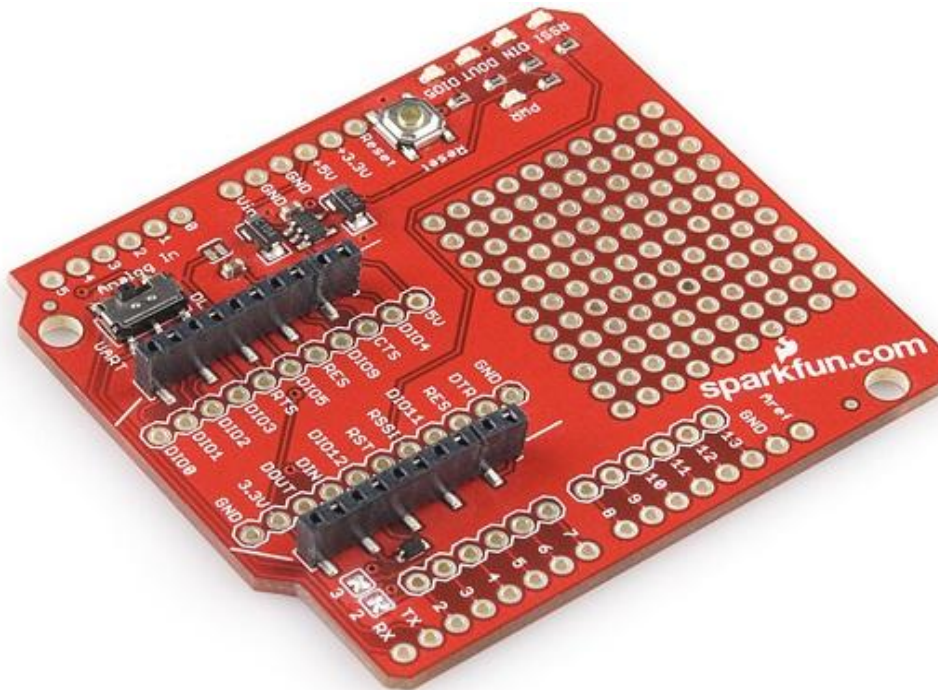


Figure 14: XBee Wireless Shield for interfacing XBee module with the ADXL335 accelerometer.

The shield also takes care of level shifting on the DIN pin of the XBee. The board includes LEDs to indicate power and activity on DIN, DOUT, RSSI, and DIO5 pins of the XBee, and a 12x11 grid of 0.1" holes are available for prototyping, which is used to connect the accelerometer circuitry. In the architecture, the "XBee Accelerometer Module", as mentioned in Figure 4, consists of the XBee Shield with XBee and ADXL335 interfaced. This Shield goes on the top of ODIS.

A 9V power supply (battery) is connected to give power to the circuitry. Power on board is taken from the 5V pin and regulated on-board to 3.3VDC before being supplied to the XBee. Therefore, a positive voltage regulator needs to be used to regulate the power to 5V. A three-terminal positive 5V voltage regulator - L7805C is used with an output voltage of 5V and output current up to 1.5A.

Finally, XBee and ADXL335 are hooked up. Both are powered by 3.3V power with the help of L7805C voltage regulator and on-board power regulation. But, the XBee ADC pins can only accept voltages in the range of 0 - 1.2V and the output X, Y, and Z acceleration from ADXL335 is in the range of 0 - 3.3V (max). So, voltage dividers need to be added on the X, Y and Z axes output acceleration. The schematic of the "XBee Accelerometer Module" is shown in Figure 15. As seen from the schematic,  $X_{OUT}$ ,  $Y_{OUT}$ , and  $Z_{OUT}$  of ADXL335 are connected to DIO0, DIO1, and DIO2 pins of the XBee respectively with voltage dividers for each connection. Voltage dividers use the combination of 6.1K and 3.5K resistors.

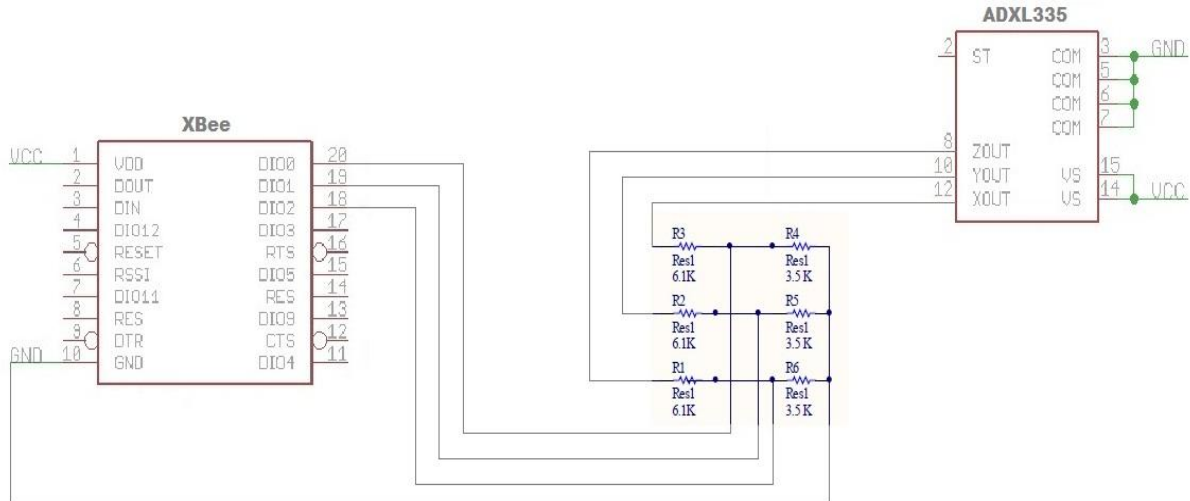


Figure 15: The Schematic Diagram of “XBee Accelerometer Module” showing the interfacing between ADXL335 and XBee.

The complete “XBee Accelerometer Module” with XBee being placed on board, ADXL335, a voltage regulator L7805C, and voltage divider resistor pairs for all the three axes soldered, powered by 9V battery can be seen in Figure 16. This Module can now be placed or attached on the top of the ODIS, which will measure the acceleration data and send it wirelessly to the “XBee Server module” connected on the server via USB explorer.

This concludes the aim 1(a), of implementing accelerometer sensor circuitry on the top of ODIS. Next aim would be to get the force feedback on the Novint Falcon device taking into consideration the accelerometer sensor circuitry designed.



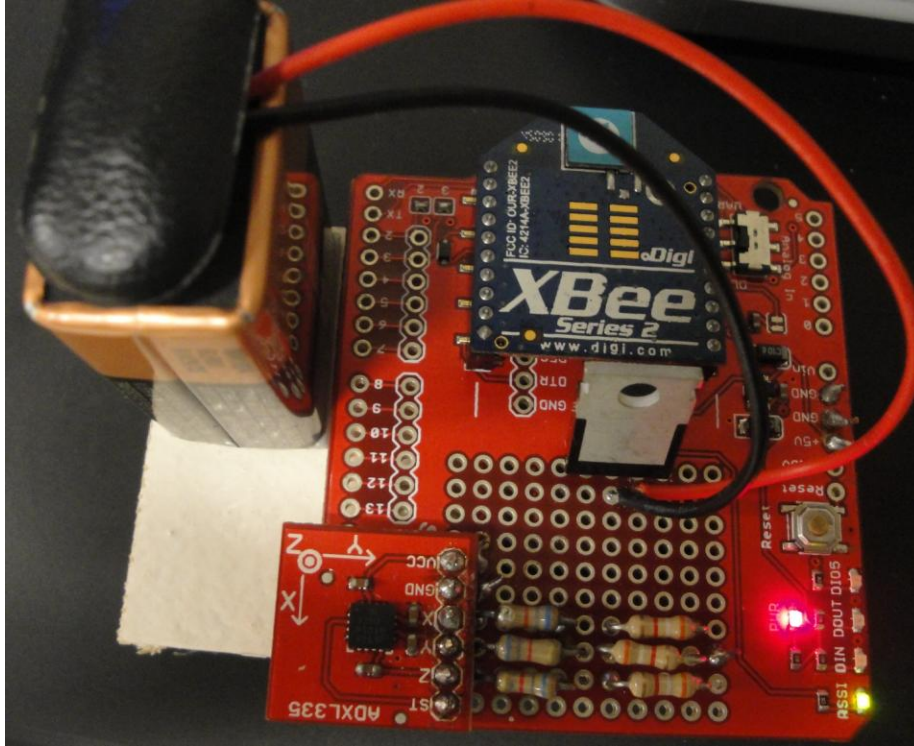


Figure 16: The completely developed “XBee Accelerometer Module” consisting of the XBee and ADXL335 interfaced on the XBee Shield with appropriate voltage regulation, and 9v battery as a power supply.



## **CHAPTER 4: FORCE FEEDBACK INTEGRATION AND TELE-OPERATION**

### **4.1 Overview**

This chapter covers the main aim of teleoperating the ODIS which involves getting the force feedback from the wireless accelerometer sensor circuitry discussed in the previous chapter as well as driving the ODIS with the help of Novint Falcon device simultaneously. This chapter also explains the final design of software and hardware architecture of the system.

### **4.2 Force feedback from “XBee Accelerometer Module”**

The “XBee Accelerometer Module” sends the acceleration data to the “XBee Server Module”, which can be observed as a serial device on the server. The data transmitted from the “XBee Accelerometer Module” is in the form of API packets over the XBee's UART, to the FTDI chip, to the XBee Server Module's USB-serial device. The API packet specification from the XBee 2.5 manual indicates that in this application, ZigBee IO Data Sample Rx Indicator frame type is transmitted. The X, Y and Z axis acceleration data on DIO0, DIO1 and DIO2 has to be transmitted wirelessly from the “XBee Accelerometer Module” to the server respectively.

When the server module receives an IO sample frame from accelerometer module, it sends the sample out the UART using the frame type shown in Figure 17.

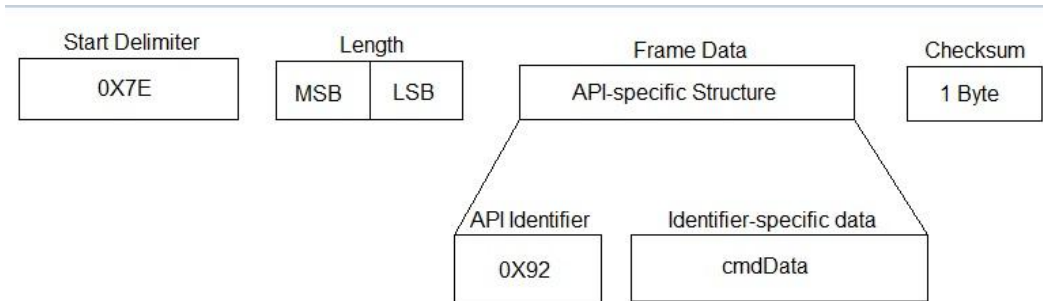


Figure 17: ZigBee IO Data Sample Rx Indicator frame pattern transmitted in this application.

The frame starts with the start delimiter 0X7E. The length field has two-byte value that denotes the number of bytes that will be contained in the frame data field. It does not include the checksum field. The Frame data of the UART data frame forms an API-specific structure containing API Identifier and Identifier specific data. In IO data sample Rx indicator frame pattern, the API identifier value is 0x92. At last, to test data integrity, a checksum is calculated and verified.

Now, the identifier specific data consists of eight fields for IO sample frame. This contains:

1. 64-bit address (Bytes 5 -12), MSB (most significant byte) first.
2. 16-bit network address (Bytes 13-14), MSB first.
3. Receive options (Byte 15), 0x01 – packet acknowledged and 0x02 – packet was broadcasted.
4. Num Samples (Byte 16), number of sample sets included in the payload.
5. Digital Channel Mask (Bytes 17-18), bitmask field indicating which digital IO lines on the remote side, has sampling enabled.

6. Analog Channel Mask (Byte 19), bitmask field indicating which analog IO lines on the remote side, has sampling enabled.
7. Digital Samples (Byte 20, 21), if the sample set includes any digital IO lines (Digital Channel Mask > 0), these two bytes contain samples for all enabled digital inputs.
8. Analog Samples (2 Bytes each sample), if the sample set includes any analog input lines (Analog Channel Mask > 0), each enabled analog input returns a 2-byte value indicating the A/D measurement of that input. Analog samples are ordered sequentially from AD0/DIO0 to AD3/DIO3, to the supply voltage.

In this application, the software architecture takes care of extracting the value of the analog samples (from DIO0 to DIO2) from the IO data frame pattern received at the server, and then converting the voltage values to the acceleration value. The software reads the serial port, observes the frame pattern, stores the frames in buffer, then looks for the start delimiter. Once, the start delimiter is known, it is easy to know the value of analog samples, which are then converted in acceleration values by the software.

Once, the acceleration values are calculated, it's the same method to set the tool force as discussed in the preliminary work. The difference here is the acceleration data is captured by the "XBee Accelerometer Module" which is much more efficient and prominent than the previous one discussed for the application. The function "hdlSetToolForce" is used to set the tool forces. This function is implemented inside the servo callback function, which is called every servo tick. The forces in the X, Y and Z

direction are applied according to the acceleration values captured from the accelerometer in the respective axes.

With the end of this section, the aim 1(b) of getting the force feedback from the designed sensor circuitry is achieved. Next aim would be to give directions to the ODIS using the Novint falcon joystick, which is discussed in the next section.

### **4.3 Direct the ODIS using Novint Falcon**

The task of directing the ODIS using Novint Falcon is principally based on the preliminary work done by Shawn Hunt [1], who proposed the I/O overlapped structure or framework to control the ODIS by giving commands from the computer rather than using the conventional three-degree of freedom joystick (Figure 18). The red and green buttons on the front are used to turn the power on and off on the conventional joystick.

The operator puts on a backpack with a video display mounted where he can view the current video from ODIS. The joystick can be held by the operator where he can control its movement. As discussed in [1], there is no access provided to the proprietary libraries used in the development of the control software in ODIS, so the existing software can't be recompiled or new software can't be added to ODIS' processor. It was proposed to share the existing communications within ODIS implementing a new software framework.



Figure 18: The conventional three degree-of-freedom joystick used to control the ODIS.

ODIS uses a pair of 900 MHz, point-to-point RS-232 modems for communication. One radio placed inside the ODIS and another one inside the ODIS controller (conventional three-degree-of-freedom joystick). The 900 MHz radio is made by FreeWave Technologies. For the purpose of study in [1], a similar radio from FreeWave technologies with a DB9 connector was purchased. This radio is reused in our architecture to communicate with the ODIS for giving directions from Novint Falcon. Figure 19 shows the FreeWave 900 MHz radio with its interface which will be connected to the USB serial port of the server in the architecture.



Figure 19: FreeWave 900 MHz board radio with its interface cable, which is connected to the serial to USB connector, connecting the USB serial of the computer.

The radio had to be configured to be on the same network as ODIS using “EZ-Config” – configuration software by Freewave. This part was already done in [1], so we used the already configured FreeWave radio. The mode of the modem was configured as “Point-to-MultiPoint Master”. The baud rate was configured to 9600 to match that of ODIS. Other transmission characteristics were also set to match ODIS.

In [1], the remote computer sends a valid ODIS command via the radio and the message is executed by ODIS. The commands were sent by the framework in the study using Overlapped I/O serial communication. The framework used the structure for an ODIS packet provided by TARDEC. The structure is shown again here with the permission of Shawn Hunt (Figure 20). The commands to control movement of ODIS are passing a value ranging from -3.0 to +3.0 to X Dot, Y Dot, and/or Yaw Dot. X Dot commanding forward and reverse movement, Y Dot commanding left and right movement, and Yaw Dot commanding clockwise and counter-clockwise movement.

Another field used is “Checksum” which is an eight-bit integer sum over the entire packet.

Field Name	Data Type	Value
Start	uchar	\$
Pad	uchar	0
Size	int16	46
Type	int16	30
Time (MS)	int16	0
Command Mode	int16	0
Emergency Stop	int8	0
Dual Rate	int8	0
X Dot	float	-3.0 to +3.0
Y Dot	float	-3.0 to +3.0
Yaw Dot	float	-3.0 to +3.0
Auxiliary 1	int8	0
Auxiliary 2	int8	0
Auxiliary 3	int8	0
Auxiliary 4	int8	0
Camera Mode	int8	0
Camera Power	int8	1

Figure 20: ODIS packet structure provided by TARDEC. Picture used with the permission of Shawn Hunt [1].

In our architecture, the joystick is set to send the command movements to the ODIS. The framework with the ODIS packet structure is added to the proposed software architecture here, where the joystick movement is set as input for X Dot, Y Dot and Yaw Dot command movement. For example, if the joystick is moved in positive X direction, the value of X Dot will be the corresponding positive value and so on. The scaling of the values is not required because both the ODIS packet and the Novint Falcon joystick values range from -3 to +3. So, instead of giving command manually from the computer,

we enhanced the software in [1] and included the Novint Falcon to send commands to the ODIS. As discussed earlier, using the callback function from the HDAL, we can read the servo position, send forces to the device etc. The current tool position is read using “hdIToolPosition” API.

For the tool position to be consistent and precise, the position needs to be controlled in a way that if the user is not touching the joystick (holding the grip), it should remain at its corresponding position. In other words, there should be gravity compensation control appended in the application, which prevents the joystick arms from falling down because of gravity, when the user is not holding the grip. Apparently, the Novint HDAL\_SDK\_2.1.3 does not support the gravity compensation. But, when checked about this concern with Novint Technologies, they suggested us to use the intermediate/evaluation version HDAL\_SDK\_3.0.0\_EVAL provided by Novint.

The evaluation version included many new features e.g. gravity compensation control, new grip APIs, upgrade of FTDI drivers, smart grip support etc.

Control of gravity compensation is done in a separate file, FalconCommon.txt. This file is searched for according to the same rules as those used to find HDAL.INI. HDAL.INI is the master configuration file and is normally found in the config folder of the pointed to by the NOVINT\_DEVICE\_SUPPORT environment variable. However, if the user has not modified the PATH from the normal Novint installation, a “local” copy of HDAL.INI can be placed in the application executable’s folder, and it will replace the normal copy. Similarly, if FalconCommon.txt file exists in the NOVINT\_DEVICE\_SUPPORT\config folder, it applies to all applications. But, if there is



a FalconCommon.txt file in the application's launch folder, the master version is overridden. The content of the file is only one line: "0 gravity" to turn gravity compensation off, or "1 gravity" to turn it on.

By default, the gravity compensation is on. Still, we created a FalconCommon.txt file in the application's launch folder named "Debug" containing the line "1 gravity". This file is read when the Falcon device is initialized or when the joystick grip is changed.

Camera power on the ODIS camera can also be controlled with the help of any of the buttons on the Novint Falcon joystick. The API for button status is being used to check the button status and the information is sent accordingly on the ODIS packet structure. This helps to control the camera power on the ODIS whenever required. For example, for rough or bumpy terrain surfaces, the video coming from the ODIS camera would not be smooth or useful and will not provide useful information in which case the user can turn the camera power off from the joystick.

With this task, we were now able to direct the ODIS using the Novint Falcon. We now have a software architecture accommodating the force feedback capability as well as tele-operation capability of driving the ODIS. We also have a hardware architecture designed to complete the purpose. This section results in achieving the aim 1(c) of giving directions to ODIS using Novint falcon joystick.

#### **4.4 Software and Hardware Architecture**

At this stage, we are done with specific aim 1 (with its sub-aims) of designing a testbed for haptic tele-operation. The accelerometer sensor circuitry is developed which when kept on the ODIS can provide force feedback on the Falcon joystick. We can drive

ODIS using Falcon joystick as well. This signifies the development of complete haptic tele-operation system. This section will explain the comprehensive view of both the software and hardware architecture developed, inclusive of the components altogether.

The software architecture is written as a c++ code in Microsoft's Visual Studio 2005 which includes HDAL library for interaction with the Novint Falcon device, serial communication for receiving the acceleration data, and overlapped I/O serial communication for sending the commands for the movement of ODIS integrated in one single project. All the header and c source files are located in the "src" folder. There are three header files and four cpp files-

1. "acc.h" – consists of declaration of ODIS packet structure, function prototypes for initializing ODIS, accelerometer communication, getting accelerometer reading, and command movement for ODIS etc.
2. "Serial.h" – consists of CSerial class written by Shawn Hunt [1], to abstract the details of serial communication.
3. "haptics.h" – provided by Novint consists of declaration of Haptics class, call-back function declaration, handle to device etc.
4. "Acc\_ODIS.cpp" – consists of instantiation of ODIS packet structure and CSerial class for serial communication with XBee as well as FreeWave radio, and function definitions which were declared in "acc.h".
5. "Serial.cpp" – consists of methods defined for opening, closing, reading and writing in the serial port with overlapped and non-overlapped I/O communication.

6. "haptics.cpp" – consists of definitions of call-back function, function which provides forces to the Falcon device according to the acceleration data, function to get the current position of the tool for command movement, etc.
7. "main\_opengl.cpp" – consists of the main loop calling the scene setup function. Scene setup function calls the ODIS and accelerometer initialization function, then calls the haptics initialization function.

The hardware architecture design of the tele-operation system (Figure 21) shows all components as a block along with the two wireless networks being implemented. The user provides the command movements using Novint Falcon Haptic Device. The commands are sent through the server via FreeWave radio on the 900 MHz wireless network to ODIS. ODIS is now equipped with the wireless XBee Accelerometer Module which sends the acceleration data using the XBee 2.4 GHz wireless network to the XBee transceiver module attached to the server. The server then calculates the forces according to the acceleration and gives feedback to the Falcon device which is felt by the user. The user now is able to teleoperate the ODIS and get the force feedback simultaneously on the Falcon haptic device.

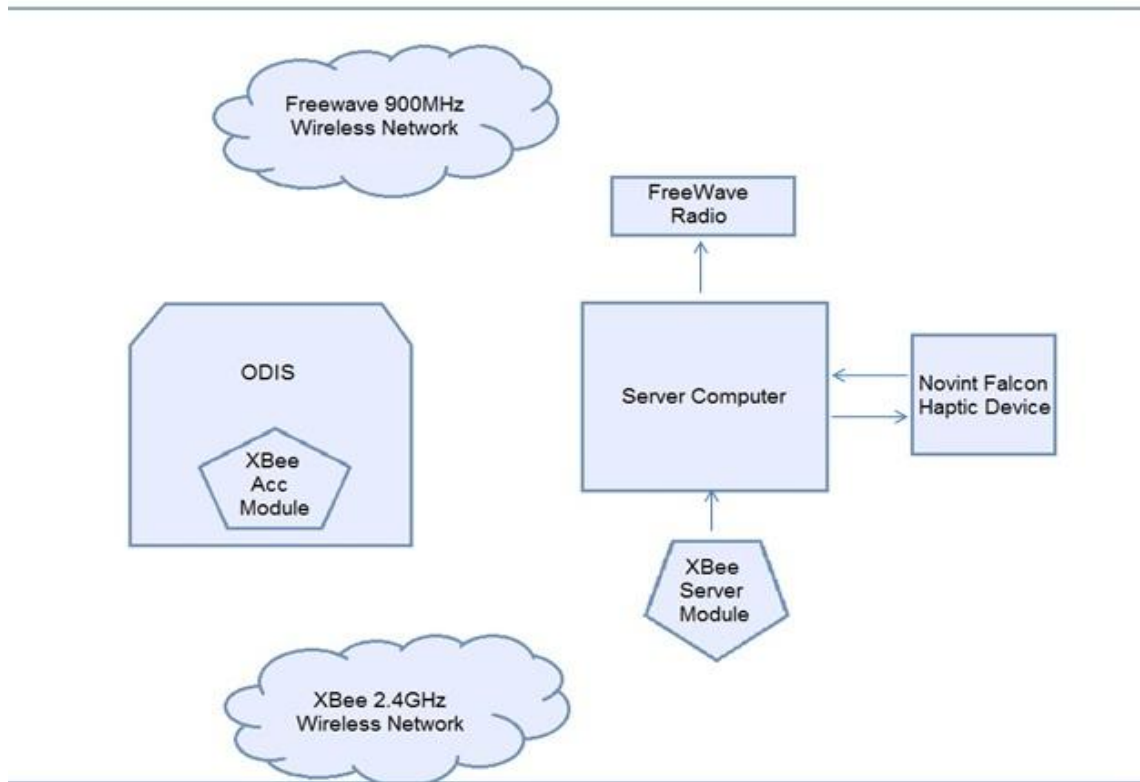


Figure 21: Absolute Hardware Architecture Design of the tele-operation system showing all the components and the wireless networks involved.

## CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1 Performance Evaluation

Specific aim 2 of executing a performance evaluation of the impact of haptic tele-operation is explained in this section. To perform the performance evaluation on the system designed in this research work, the basic idea was to detect the surface terrain and bumps/potholes which the robot operated on. Also, collision detection or impact of the robot with any obstacle in the path is considered.

The tele-operation was restricted to indoor areas. Performance evaluation was done in the CARES lab. The accelerometer was attached on top of ODIS (Figure 22). Two types of tests were performed: bump test and terrain detection test. For the bump test, a wooden plank was put in the path of ODIS which was used as a bump. The user performed the tele-operation of ODIS using the Falcon device and detected the bump when the ODIS ran over the wooden plank with no significant delay. There was significant haptic information observed which gave a better idea to the user the feel of the environment in addition to the visual feedback.

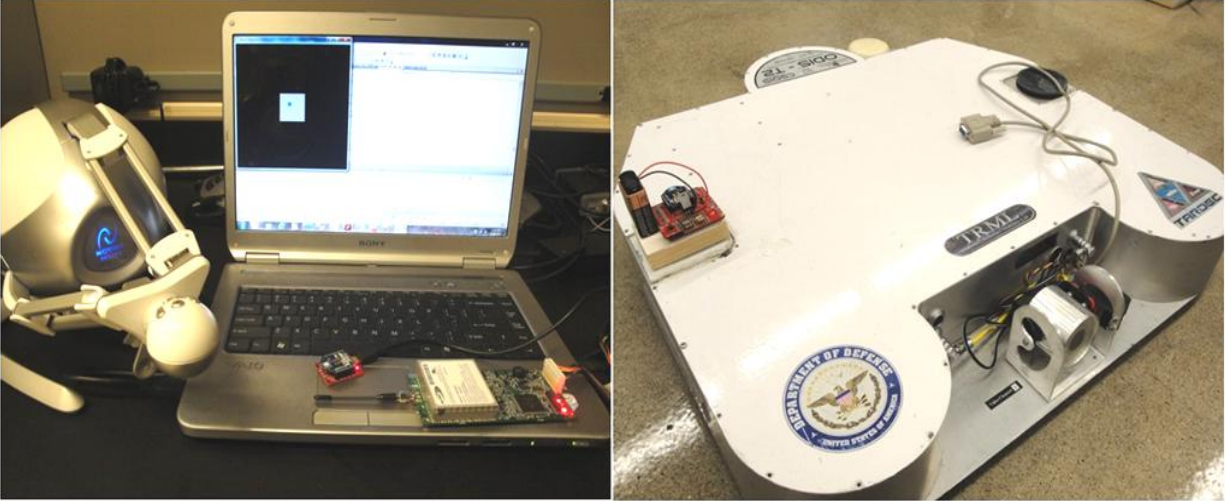


Figure 22: Absolute teleoperation system in the CARES lab. Left side showing the server with the Falcon haptic device, XBee server module and Freewave radio attached and right side shows the ODIS robot with XBee accelerometer on the top.

For the terrain detection test, a testbed was created (Figure 23). For terrain patterns, a wire shelf and floor mats were used. Floor mats with varying terrain (grassy pattern, rocky pattern, or smooth pattern) was used. A wire shelf was used to provide an uneven wavelike pattern. A subject test involving eight subjects was performed.

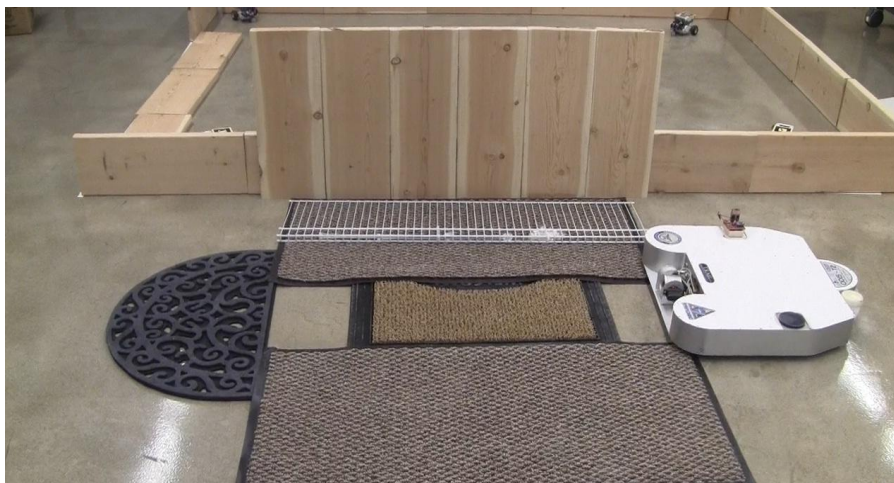


Figure 23: Testbed for terrain detection test showing floor mats and a wire shelf which the ODIS was ran over.

All the subjects were shown the terrain patterns before performing the test and were asked to run the ODIS on one of the patterns, unknown to them and to detect the pattern. They had to detect the pattern within 60 – 80 seconds. No visual feedback was provided. The testbed was also designed in such a way that the subjects were not able to see the surface ODIS was traversing on.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Terrain pattern used on testbed</b>	<b>Terrain pattern detected by user</b>
1	M1	M1
2	M2	M2
3	M4	M3
4	M5	M1
5	M3	M3
6	M5	M5
7	M4	M4
8	M2	M2

Table 2: Results of terrain detection subject test.

Table 2 indicates the results of the subject test where ODIS ran over the top of different surface materials (M1 through M5) to detect terrain patterns by the tele-operators. Here M1 = smooth surface mat, M2 = grassy surface mat, M3 = rocky pattern mat, M4 = wire shelf, M5 = floor tile.

Surface patterns M1 through M4 were known to the users, but floor tile surface (M5) was kept hidden, in the sense it was used as terrain pattern with some users without their knowledge. Results show that one of the subjects failed to detect M5 and detected it as smooth surface pattern (M1) which is very similar to the original pattern. Also, one of the subjects failed to detect wire shelf (M4) and detected it as rocky surface (M3) because of similarities between the patterns. Though, if observed and felt closely, rocky surface pattern provides smoother force-feedback than wire shelf, which allows the most significant acceleration change due to its structure, providing the most significant forces among the patterns. Apart from this test, three of the subjects were asked to tele-operate the ODIS on each pattern available. The subjects were successfully able to detect the difference between the patterns from the forces felt on the joystick.



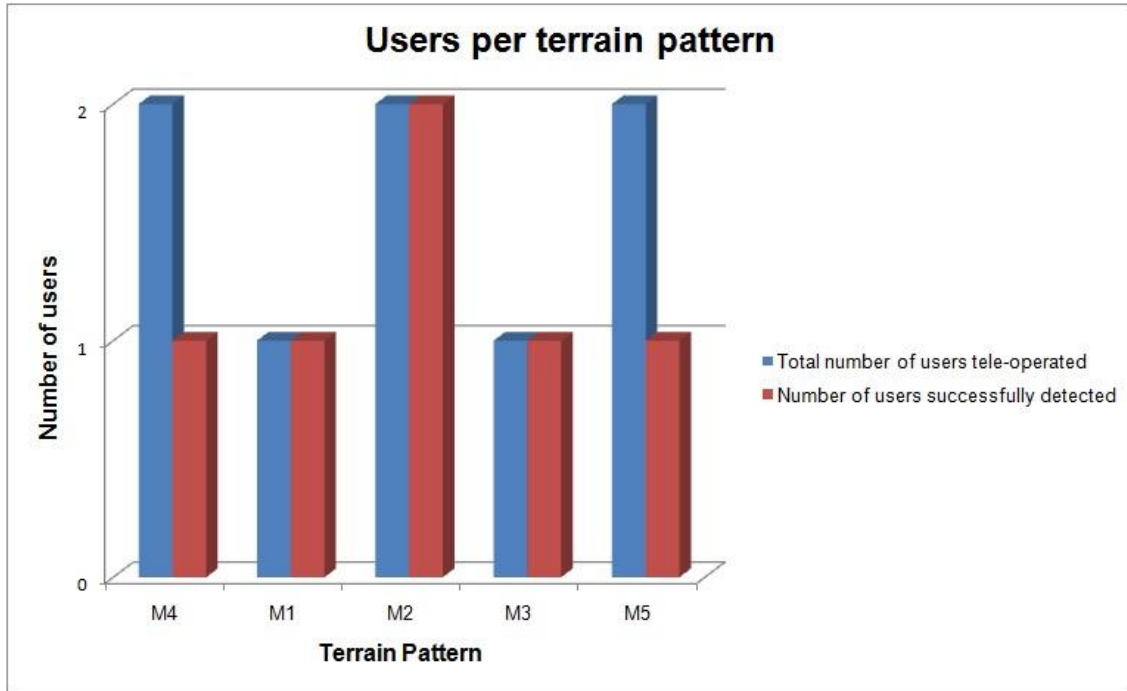


Figure 24: Graph showing the total number of users per terrain pattern v/s number of users successfully detected the pattern. M1 = smooth surface mat, M2 = grassy surface mat, M3 = rocky pattern mat, M4 = wire shelf, M5 = floor tile.

Patterns were chosen randomly for the terrain detection test, so the number users per terrain pattern were different. Figure 24 shows graph representing the total number of users per terrain pattern v/s number of users successfully detected the pattern. Grassy pattern (M2) was detected successfully by maximum number of users because of its distinctiveness from other terrains. Figure 25 shows a subject performing terrain detection test on grassy surface mat.



Figure 25: A subject performing terrain detection test on grassy surface mat.

## 5.2 Conclusion

It is observed from the terrain detection test that six out of eight subjects were successfully able to detect the terrain patterns within the provided time constraints. With the help of force feedback information, 75% of the users were able to detect and feel the terrain pattern. Two subjects failed to detect the correct pattern because of similarities between the patterns actually used and detected. Maximum number of subjects was successfully able to detect the grassy pattern because of the distinct feedback felt with grassy surface compared to the other patterns.

The tests performed in this research focused only on the performance evaluation of haptic capabilities of the system. But, when implementing the system for real world applications, the haptic feedback will be used in conjunction with the visual feedback. In the previous tele-operation system for ODIS with visual feedback, the user only had the video from the camera attached at the front of the ODIS. But being omni-directional, the

ODIS has the capability to move in all the directions, even laterally. So, when tele-operated laterally, the user was not able to get the video information in the direction robot was moving in. This was the drawback in the conventional tele-operation system. Using the proposed tele-operation system, the tele-operator would be able to detect the obstacles and explore the area in all the directions even where the camera view and coverage is not reachable. Hence, inclusion of haptic information to the user added value to the tele-operation capabilities of the system. In general, haptic tele-operation systems add value to the system for similar kind of applications as explained above, when the visual feedback is insufficient for performing tasks.

### **5.3 Future discussions**

This research has extended the previous work done by Shawn Hunt [1] to improve the capabilities of ODIS, especially adding haptic sensory capabilities to the previous conventional tele-operation system. Now, we have the ODIS equipped with the wireless accelerometer sensor to enhance the tele-operation system with haptic capabilities. The leverage of the wireless accelerometer system is it can be used not only with ODIS but with any other unmanned vehicle as well.

The tele-operation system is designed with a modular approach which offers the system a powerful feature. Also, the system's platform independency adds strength to it. The re-usability of the system allows it to be used with other unmanned ground vehicles like SRV-1 with great ease. The inclusion of haptic information in the system by including sensor and haptic device has enhanced the tele-operation capability.

Right now, the operating range of the system is around 400ft (120m) because of the operating range of XBee modules. In the future, it can always be extended by implementing internet communication from server to another workstation where the joystick is connected using the client/server software as discussed in [1]. Also, the methodology discussed in [5] uses the client/server communication for extending the range of tele-operation.

The system can be enhanced by adding autonomous camera control features. This feature will move the camera according to the surface terrain or potholes to provide better visual feedback. It can be done by using the acceleration data to change the camera tilt angle whenever there is change in particular axis acceleration (particularly z-axis).

The re-usability feature can be taken advantage of to implement the system on different unmanned vehicles/ground robots. The architecture can be used in the study of robotic swarms. Particularly, it can be used for tele-operation of SRV-1 robot which is used currently in swarm robotics.

## APPENDIX A: DEVICES/PARTS LIST

Device Name	Part Number	Manufacturer/Distributor
Novint Falcon Haptic Device	None	Novint Technologies
Watchport/A sensor	301-1147-01	Digi International
Accelerometer	ADXL335	Analog Devices
XBee Series 2.5 Chip Antenna	WRL-08691	Digi International
XBee Explorer USB	WRL-08687	Sparkfun.com
XBee Wireless Shield	WRL-09976	Sparkfun.com
Voltage Regulator	L7805C	-
900 MHz Radio	FGR09CS	FreeWave
FreeWave stub antenna	EAN900SQ	FreeWave
FreeWave interface cable (DB9 connector)	ASC3640DB	FreeWave
FreeWave interface cable (un-terminated wires)	ASC3610FL	FreeWave
9 Volt Battery	-	-
12 Volt power supply	-	-

## APPENDIX B: PIN CONFIGURATION OF ADXL335

Pin Number	Name	Description
1	NC	No Connect
2	ST	Self-Test.  The ST pin controls the self-test feature. When this pin is set to $V_S$ , an electrostatic force is exerted on the accelerometer beam. The resulting movement of the beam allows the user to test if the accelerometer is functional. This ST pin can be left open-circuit or connected to common (COM) in normal use.
3	COM	Common
4	NC	No Connect
5	COM	Common
6	COM	Common
7	COM	Common
8	Z <sub>OUT</sub>	Z Channel Output  This is the Z-axis analog voltage output proportional to acceleration.
9	NC	No Connect
10	Y <sub>OUT</sub>	Y Channel Output  This is the Y-axis analog voltage output proportional to acceleration.
11	NC	No Connect

12	$X_{OUT}$	X Channel Output This is the X-axis analog voltage output proportional to acceleration.
13	NC	No Connect
14	$V_S$	Supply Voltage (1.8V to 3.6V)
15	$V_S$	Supply Voltage (1.8V to 3.6V)
16	NC	No Connect

## APPENDIX C: PIN CONFIGURATION OF XBEE 2.5 MODULE

Pin Number	Name	Direction	Description
1	V <sub>CC</sub>	-	Power Supply
2	D <sub>OUT</sub>	Output	UART Data Out
3	D <sub>IN</sub>	Input	UART Data In
4	DIO12	Either	Digital I/O 12
5	RESET	Input	Module Reset (reset pulse must be at least 200 ns)
6	PWM0 / RSSI / DIO10	Either	PWM Output 0 / RX Signal Strength Indicator / Digital I/O
7	PWM / DIO11	Either	Digital I/O 11
8	Reserved	-	Do not connect
9	DTR / SLEEP_RQ/ DIO8	Either	Pin Sleep Control Line / Digital I/O 8
10	GND	-	Ground
11	DIO4	Either	Digital I/O 4
12	CTS / DIO7	Either	Clear-to-Send Flow Control or Digital I/O 7
13	ON / SLEEP/ DIO9	Output	Module Status Indicator or Digital I/O 9



14	Reserved	-	Do not connect
15	Associate / DIO5	Either	Associated Indicator, Digital I/O 5
16	RTS / DIO6	Either	Request-to-Send Flow Control, Digital I/O 6
17	AD3 / DIO3	Either	Analog Input 3 or Digital I/O 3
18	AD2 / DIO2	Either	Analog Input 2 or Digital I/O 2  The output of Z <sub>OUT</sub> pin of ADXL335 is given to this pin in our application.
19	AD1 / DIO1	Either	Analog Input 1 or Digital I/O 1  The output of Y <sub>OUT</sub> pin of ADXL335 is given to this pin in our application.
20	AD0 / DIO0 / Commissioning Button	Either	Analog Input 0, Digital IO 0, or Commissioning Button.  The output of X <sub>OUT</sub> pin of ADXL335 is given to this pin in our application.

## APPENDIX D: C++ CODE SNIPPET USING THE SERIAL CLASS

The code snippet describes instantiation of serial class, open the serial port, define the commands for calibration and write them on the serial port. The variable “accelerometer” in the code is defined as a struct which consists of two char members “command1” and “carriageReturn”. The return value is read from the serial port and the serial port is closed.

```
// Instantiate CSerial
CSerial serial;

//open the serial port at 9600 baudrate
serial.Open("COM9",9600);

//Calibrate the Accelerometer
accelerometer cmd;
cmd.command1 = 'C';
cmd.carriageReturn = '\r';

//Write the calibrate command
serial.Write(&cmd, sizeof(cmd), 0, 0);

//Read the return value
serial.Read(buffer, sizeof(buffer), &bytesRead);

//close the serial port
serial.close();
```

## APPENDIX E: INITIALIZATION SEQUENCE CODE FOR THE NOVINT FALCON

The code represents the normal initialization sequence from initializing the device, then the servo thread to setting up the callback function. Sequence is vital particularly, “hdlCreateServoOp” must not be called before “hdlInitNamedDevice”, and if “hdlStart” is not called until after “hdlCreateServoOp”, the device will not operate.

```
#include <hdl/hdl.h>
#include <hdlu/hdlu.h>
...
// Initialize the device
// Passing 0 initializes the default device based on the
// [DEFAULT] section of HDAL.INI.
HDLDeviceHandle hHandle = hdlInitNamedDevice((const char*)0);

// Now that the device is fully initialized, start the servo thread.
hdlStart();

// Make the device current. All subsequent calls will
// be directed towards the current device.
hdlMakeCurrent(hHandle);
...
// Set up callback function
m_servoOp = hdlCreateServoOp(ContactCB, this, false);
```

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**ABSTRACT****DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF A  
GROUND VEHICLE ROBOTIC FORCE-FEEDBACK TELE-  
OPERATION SYSTEM**

by

**ANKUR SARAF**

May 2011

**Advisor:** Dr. Abhilash K. Pandya.**Major:** Electrical Engineering.**Degree:** Master of Science.

Modern tele-operation systems are trying to take into account haptic and audio information in addition to visual data to provide as feedback to the tele-operator. This research emphasizes on the development of hardware and software architecture to enhance the tele-operation capabilities of omni-directional inspection robot (ODIS). The system enhances the tele-operation capabilities by introducing force-feedback to the tele-operators. The conventional joystick is replaced with Novint Falcon haptic joystick which gets the feedback from the wireless accelerometer sensor module mounted on the top of ODIS. The wireless accelerometer sensor module uses XBee modules for sending the acceleration data to the server. The server in-turn is connected to the joystick which is used to direct the ODIS. The advantage of the wireless accelerometer



system is it can be used not only with ODIS but with any other unmanned vehicle as well. Though this research uses ODIS robot as the platform, the ideas and concepts put forward are applicable to tele-operation of robots in general.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

### **ANKUR SARAF**

The passage of my life began in a city called Ujjain located in the central part of India. I finished my entire schooling in Ujjain. I have been fascinated with electrical circuits, semiconductor devices since school. Curiosity to know how these semiconductor devices work and eagerness to explore them further, I decided to pursue my engineering in electronics and communication from MIT, Ujjain (M.P.), Rajiv Gandhi Technological University, Bhopal.

After completing Bachelors in 2006, I started working as an Embedded Software Engineer in KPIT Cummins, Infosystems Limited, where I got an opportunity to work in the embedded automotive domain. As a software engineer, my responsibilities involved embedded software implementation, completely adhered to “software development life cycle” involving requirement assessment, design & Coding, testing & validation of automotive embedded modules.

After having experience in a real-life environment to develop embedded applications in an industrial setting, I decided to pursue Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering at Wayne State University. I had the opportunity to work in the SSIM-CARES lab as a graduate researcher. While pursuing this research, I got an opportunity to work as a software engineering intern in a company which hired me as a full-time engineer recently. I feel fabulously fortunate for all the opportunities I have had in my life.