**Hands-on Lab**

**Lego Programming – BricxCC Timers**

Timing is important in controller design; data and actions often must be respectively acquired and commanded at prescribed intervals. NxC provides statements for millisecond timers, and when combined with file handling, programs for system identification become possible. Hands-on exercises will culminate in in capturing the step response of an NXT motor.

# **Preamble: #include statement**

# Previously the file displaySquareAndSquareRoot2\_0.nxc iterated numbers from 1 to 10, computed their squares and square roots. These computations were saved into a file, which could be opened with programs like Excel. Recall file handling involved 3 functions that we composed:

1. void InitWriteToFile()allocates memory to save data into. This function does not take any variables, nor does it return any (i.e. void). It creates the filename and writes a header to the file e.g. x, x^2, sqrt(x).
2. void WriteToFile(string someStringVariable) writes the string variable someStringVariable. This function does not return any variable (i.e. void). Recall, someStringVariable will contain the alphanumeric representation of numeric data (like integers and floats).
3. void StopWriteToFile()gracefully closes the file. This function does not take any variables, nor does it return any (i.e. void).

# These 3 functions allowed one to save any data into a file. Note, because WriteToFile wrote data as a string (i.e. collection of alphanumeric characters), one can open the file with an ASCII editor (i.e. plain-text) like Windows Notepad. Also, the file extension was saved as a CSV (comma separated values) which programs like Excel easily recognize.

File-related functions play an important role in future programs and will be used often. It would save time and be more efficient if one could simple re-use such functions (i.e. write it once and use them whenever needed). This time savings is achieved by the ANSI C statement **#include**. One only needs to save the functions in a file with the extension .h (called a header file).

**Step 1:** Click File – Open and load displaySquareAndSquareRoot2\_0.nxc. Click File – Save As with the name “displaySquareAndSquareRoot3\_0.nxc”.

**Step 2:** Copy all file-saving related functions into a new file called fileSavingFunctions.h. Save it the same directory as displaySquareAndSquareRoot3\_0.nxc.

**Step 3:** Delete the file-saving functions from displaySquareAndSquareRoot3\_0.nxc and add the line **#include “fileSavingFunctions.h”**.

**Step 4:** Compile and run from displaySquareAndSquareRoot3\_0.nxc. This program should now run like displaySquareAndSquareRoot2\_0.nxc.

// File: displaySquareAndSquareRoot3\_0.nxc

// Date: 10/14/2012 14:47

// Desc: Display number, its square and square root save to file

// Vers: 3.0 (with file saving functions as include file)

// Refs: displaySquareAndSquareRoot2\_0.nxc

#include "fileSavingFunctions.h"

task main ()

{

int x; // integers from 1 to 10

int xSquared; // square of x

float xSquareRoot; // square root of x

string strX;

string strXSquared;

string strXSquareRoot;

// Create a new file that captures time and motor speed

InitWriteToFile();

for (x = 1; x <=10; x++) {

xSquared = x\*x;

xSquareRoot = sqrt(x);

// TextOut (xPosition, yPosition, string) put string on LCD's x,y position

// NB: x = y = 0 is lower left corner of LCD; +x goes rights, +y goes up

// FormatNum is a string with sprintf syntax

TextOut (10, LCD\_LINE4, FormatNum("x = %d" , x));

TextOut (10, LCD\_LINE5, FormatNum("xSquared = %d" , xSquared));

TextOut (10, LCD\_LINE6, FormatNum("sqrt(x) = %3.3f" , xSquareRoot));

Wait (SEC\_2);

// Create string version of calculated values

strX = FormatNum("%d" , x);

strXSquared = FormatNum("%d" , xSquared);

strXSquareRoot = FormatNum("%3.3f" , xSquareRoot);

// Concatenate the 3 strings into a single one.

// Write resulting string to file. The text will be end with a EOL

text=StrCat(strX, "," , strXSquared, "," , strXSquareRoot, "," );

WriteToFile(text);

} // end of for loop

// Finished computing square and square root, so clean up and quit

ClearScreen();

TextOut(0, LCD\_LINE2, "Quitting", false);

StopWriteToFile();

PlaySound(SOUND\_LOW\_BEEP); // Beep to signal quitting

Wait(SEC\_2);

} // end of main

**New Program:** displaySquareAndSquareRoot3.0.nxc

// File: fileSavingFunctions.h

// Note: Save this .h file in same directory as the file that includes it

// Date: 10/14/12 14:48

// Auth: P.Oh

// Desc: Header file for 3 functions related to file handling

// Global variables (for file writing)

unsigned int result; // flag returned when handling files

byte fileHandle; // handle to the data file

short bytesWritten; // number of bytes written to the file

string fileHeader; // column header for data in the file

int fileNumber, filePart; // integers to split up data file names

string fileName; // name of the file

string strFileNumber; // file number e.g myDataFile 1, 2, 3

string strFilePart; // file part e.g. myDataFile1-1, 1-2, 1-3

string text; // string to be written to file i.e. data values

// Create and initialize a file

void InitWriteToFile() {

fileNumber = 0; // set first data file to be zero

filePart = 0; // set first part of first data file to zero

fileName = "squareData.csv" ; // name of data file

result=CreateFile(fileName, 1024, fileHandle);

// NXT Guide Section 9.100 pg. 1812 and Section 6.59.2.2 pg. 535

// returns file handle (unsigned int)

// check if the file already exists

while (result==LDR\_FILEEXISTS) // LDR\_FILEEXISTS returns if file pre-exists

{

CloseFile(fileHandle);

fileNumber = fileNumber + 1; // create new file if already exists

fileName=NumToStr(fileNumber);

fileName=StrCat("squareData" , fileName, ".csv");

result=CreateFile(fileName, 1024, fileHandle);

} // end while

// play a tone every time a file is created

PlayTone(TONE\_B7, 5);

fileHeader = "x, x^2, sqrt(x)" ; // header for myData file

WriteLnString(fileHandle, fileHeader, bytesWritten);

// NXT Guide Section 6.59.2.43 pg. 554

// Write string and new line to a file

// bytesWritten is an unsigned int. Its value is # of bytes written

} // end InitWriteToFile

void WriteToFile(string strTempText) {

// strTempText stores the text (i.e. ticks and motorRpm to be written to file

// write string to file

result=WriteLnString(fileHandle, strTempText, bytesWritten);

// if the end of file is reached, close the file and create a new part

if (result==LDR\_EOFEXPECTED) // LDR\_EOFEXPECTED is flagged when end-of-file

{

// close the current file

CloseFile(fileHandle);

// NXT Guide Section 6.59.2.1 pg. 535

// Closes file associated with file handle

// create the next file name

filePart = filePart + 1;

strFileNumber = NumToStr(fileNumber);

strFilePart = NumToStr(filePart);

fileName = StrCat("squareData" , strFileNumber,"-", strFilePart ,".csv");

// delete the file if it exists

DeleteFile(fileName);

// NXT Guide Section 6.59.2.5 pg. 537

// Delete the file specified by the string input

**New Header File:** fileSavingFunctions.h

// create a new file

CreateFile(fileName, 1024, fileHandle);

// play a tone every time a file is created

PlayTone(TONE\_B7, 5);

WriteLnString(fileHandle, strTempText, bytesWritten);

} // end if

} // end WriteToFile

// Close the file

void StopWriteToFile() {

// close the file

CloseFile(fileHandle);

} // end StopWriteToFile

**New Header File (continued from previous page):** fileSavingFunctions.h

# **Concept 1 – Timers:**

In lecture, a DC motor with a voltage input and velocity output is modeled as a 2nd-order system. For motors with a low inductance, like the NXT one, modeling can be simplified into a first-order system. A program will be written that commands the NXT motor with a step input. The motor’s velocity is then captured and plotted in Excel. The resulting curve will illustrate a typical first-order response, from which one can determine motor characteristics like rise-time.

**Step 1:** Open BricxCC, click File – New and save your program as nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc. Write the following code.

// File: nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc

// Auth: P.Oh

// Date: 10/14/12 15:33 - works!

// Vers: 1.0: Uses MotorRotationCount which reports encoder count in degrees

// and program calculates difference over delta tic counts

// Desc: NXT motor on Port A, save open-loop step response data to file

#include "fileSavingFunctions.h"

#define MOTOR OUT\_A // set constant MOTOR for Port A

#define FULL\_SPEED 75 // 75 percent of possible motor speed

#define DEG2RPM 166.667 // deg/msec to RPM

#define RPM2RADPERSEC 0.105; // RPM to rad/sec

task main() {

// Motor related variables

long prevAngleInDegrees; // placeholder for degree read by motor encoder

long curAngleInDegrees; // current motor angle [DEG]

long deltaAngleInDegrees; // change in motor angle [DEG]

string strDeltaAngleInDegrees; // string form of deltaAngleInDegrees

float motorRpm; // motor speed [RPM]

string strMotorRpm; // store integer value of motorRpm as string

float motorRadPerSec; // motor speed [rad/s]

string strMotorRadPerSec; // string form of motorRadPerSec

// Timing related variables

long prevTick;

long curTick; // current timer value

long deltaT; // For calculating time between ticks

string strDeltaT; // string form of deltaT

float elapsedTimeInSeconds; // time in seconds

string strElapsedTimeInSeconds; // string form of elapsed time

**Program:** nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc

**Code description:** task main begins by declaring motor related variables. As one will see later, the NxC function MotorRotationCount(MOTOR) will be used. This function reports the position (not the velocity) of the motor connected to the Brick’s MOTOR port (which happens to be Port A). Also, time related variables are declared. As one will encounter later, the NxC function CurrentTick() will be used to poll the Brick’s current clock (called a tick counter). Like a stopwatch, variables curTick and prevTick are used to calculate the time that has elapsed and store the resulting difference in the variable elapsedTimeInSeconds.

**Step 2:** Continue adding code to your program nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc

// Button related variables

bool orangeButtonPushed, rightArrowButtonPushed;

// Create a new file that captures time and motor speed

InitWriteToFile();

// Initialize variables

elapsedTimeInSeconds = 0.0; // set elapsed time to zero

prevAngleInDegrees = 0; // motor initially motionless so set angle to zero

// Prompt user to begin step input

TextOut (0, LCD\_LINE1, "Right Btn starts" );

do { // wait until user hits right button

rightArrowButtonPushed = ButtonPressed(BTNRIGHT, FALSE);

} while(!rightArrowButtonPushed);

// Begin step response

prevTick = CurrentTick();

TextOut (0, LCD\_LINE1, "Orange Btn quits" );

// Command motor to move i.e. step input

OnFwd(MOTOR, FULL\_SPEED); // turn on motor at 100% full speed

**Program (continued from previous page):** nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc

**Code description:** The program declares two button related Boolean variables: rightArrowButtonPushed and orangeButtonPushed. These variables are used to detect which buttons the user pushes on the Brick. The code above then initializes a new file by calling the InitWriteToFile() function where data (like time and motor velocity) will be saved.

We will perform a step response on the NXT motor. As such, we initialize the motor’s position at 0 degrees (prevAngleInDegrees = 0;) and say that 0 seconds has elapsed (elapsedTimeInSeconds = 0.0;).

The program then displays a message on the Brick’s LCD and enters a do-while loop that simply polls for the right button to be pressed with NxC’s ButtonPressed function.

Once the user pushed the right arrow button, the Brick’s internal counter is polled (i.e. the stopwatch is pushed to start) with the prevTick = CurrentTick(); statement. The LCD displays a message to prompt the user to hit the orange button to terminate the program. The program then commands the NXT motor with the NxC function OnFwd(MOTOR, FULL\_SPEED);

**Step 3:** Continue adding code to calculate motor velocity and elapsed time

do {

// Read change in motor angle

curAngleInDegrees = MotorRotationCount(MOTOR); // get relative position

deltaAngleInDegrees = curAngleInDegrees - prevAngleInDegrees;

strDeltaAngleInDegrees = FormatNum("deltaAngle = %ld", deltaAngleInDegrees);

// Measure elapsed time and hence motor RPM

curTick = CurrentTick(); // read timer value

deltaT = curTick - prevTick; // measure time elapsed between angle reads

motorRpm = deltaAngleInDegrees \* DEG2RPM / deltaT;

strMotorRpm = FormatNum("%5.2f" , motorRpm);

motorRadPerSec = motorRpm \* RPM2RADPERSEC;

strMotorRadPerSec = FormatNum("%5.3f" , motorRadPerSec);

elapsedTimeInSeconds = elapsedTimeInSeconds + (deltaT/1000.0); // in sec

strElapsedTimeInSeconds = FormatNum("%5.3f" , elapsedTimeInSeconds);

// Display motor actual speed and elapsed time

TextOut(0, LCD\_LINE4, FormatNum("RPM = %5.2f" , motorRpm));

TextOut(0, LCD\_LINE6, FormatNum("Time = %5.3f s" , elapsedTimeInSeconds));

// Write text data to file. The text will be end with a EOL

text=StrCat(strElapsedTimeInSeconds, "," , strMotorRadPerSec, "," , strMotorRpm,"," );

WriteToFile(text);

// Update current tic value and angle

prevTick = curTick;

prevAngleInDegrees = curAngleInDegrees;

Wait(100); // update loop every 100 milliseconds

// Check if user wants to quit

orangeButtonPushed = ButtonPressed(BTNCENTER, FALSE);

} while( !orangeButtonPushed && (FreeMemory()>=2000) );

**Program (continued from previous page):** nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc

**Code description:** The program begins a do-while loop which exits when the user pushed the Brick’s orange button or when the Brick’s memory storage runs out.

The statement curAngleInDegrees = MotorRotationCount(MOTOR); polls the motor’s internal encoder hardware. The encoder reports values from 0 to 360 degrees and saves the value in the variable curAngleInDegrees. Because the encoder reports relative changes, the change in angle needs to be subtracted from the previously polled value. This is achieved through the deltaAngleInDegrees = curAngleInDegrees - prevAngleInDegrees; statement. For file saving purposes, the numeric data is converted into a string of alphanumeric characters using NxC’s FormatNum function.

Unfortunately NxC does not have a function that reports motor velocities directly. As such, velocity is calculated by polling sequential motor angles and dividing by the elapsed time. The motor velocity in both radians per second and RPM are calculated and saved to file.

Before the loop iterates, the Brick’s “stopwatch” and angle encoder are updated with their last polled values i.e. prevTick = curTick; prevAngleInDegrees = curAngleInDegrees;

Finally, the program invokes the Wait(100); statement. This essentially sets the sampling time of the program to 100 milliseconds. The program loops back unless it detected the user pushing the orange button (or the Brick’s free memory exceeds 2 KB).

**Step 4:** Continue adding code to complete the program

// Orange button pressed, so command 0 speed to motor and quit

ClearScreen();

TextOut(0, LCD\_LINE2, "Quitting", false);

// Stop motor

OnFwd(MOTOR, 0);

StopWriteToFile();

PlaySound(SOUND\_LOW\_BEEP); // Beep to signal quitting

Wait(SEC\_2);

} // end of main

**Program (last part):** nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc

**Step 5:** Lastly, modify your header file fileSavingFunctions.h

In your InitWriteToFile() function define the file name to store data as well as the first row that labels your data:

void InitWriteToFile() {

fileNumber = 0; // set first data file to be zero

filePart = 0; // set first part of first data file to zero

fileName = "nxtMotorData.csv" ; // name of data file

result=CreateFile(fileName, 1024, fileHandle);

// NXT Guide Section 9.100 pg. 1812 and Section 6.59.2.2 pg. 535

// returns file handle (unsigned int)

// check if the file already exists

while (result==LDR\_FILEEXISTS) // LDR\_FILEEXISTS returns if file pre-exists

{

CloseFile(fileHandle);

fileNumber = fileNumber + 1; // create new file if already exists

fileName=NumToStr(fileNumber);

fileName=StrCat("nxtMotorData" , fileName, ".csv");

result=CreateFile(fileName, 1024, fileHandle);

} // end while

// play a tone every time a file is created

PlayTone(TONE\_B7, 5);

fileHeader = "Time [s], Motor Speed [rad/s], Motor Speed [RPM]" ; // header

WriteLnString(fileHandle, fileHeader, bytesWritten);

// NXT Guide Section 6.59.2.43 pg. 554

// Write string and new line to a file

// bytesWritten is an unsigned int. Its value is # of bytes written

} // end InitWriteToFile

In your WriteToFile() function, edit code so that data is saved to the desired file

void WriteToFile(string strTempText) {

// strTempText stores the text (i.e. ticks and motorRpm to be written to file

:

:

:

// create the next file name

filePart = filePart + 1;

strFileNumber = NumToStr(fileNumber);

strFilePart = NumToStr(filePart);

fileName = StrCat("nxtMotorData" , strFileNumber,"-", strFilePart ,".csv");

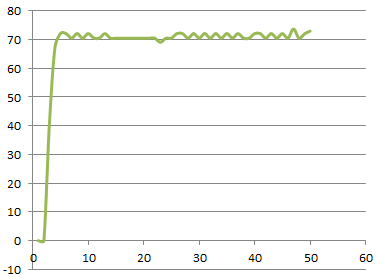
:

} // end if

} // end WriteToFile

**Step 6:** Save both nxtMotorOlsr1\_0.nxc and fileSavingFunctions.h files. Compile and execute. Once the program runs, hit the right arrow button to start the step response. After a few seconds (say 5 seconds), hit the orange button to terminate. Open NXT Explorer to retrieve your data file and plot in Excel.

In Excel, you should have a plot that resembles **Figure 1A**.



**Figure 1A:** Excel plot of nxtMotorData.csv

**Exercise 1:** In NxC create programs for the following:

* 1. Figure 1A is an example of an open-loop step (velocity) response to a 75% motor command. From the plot, calculate the rise time Recall that rise-time (also called time constant) is defined as 63.3% of steady-state.
  2. Theory states for a first-order system, that at 3 time constants, the response will be within 1% of steady-state. Calculate 3 x rise time and find the velocity at the time. Verify that this velocity is within 1% of the steady-state velocity.
  3. Write a new program that performs an open-loop step response but acquires the NXT motor’s position from 0 to 5 seconds (use a 100 millisecond sample time). Plot the curve. Why does this curve loop like a ramp?