

## **Terra-Scope™ - a MEMS-based vertical seismic array**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Terra-Scope™ system is an affordable 4-D down-hole seismic monitoring system based on independent, microprocessor-controlled sensor Pods. The pods are nominally 50 mm in diameter, and about 120 mm long. They are expected to cost approximately \$6000 each. An internal 16-bit, extremely low power MCU controls all aspects of instrumentation, eight programmable gain amplifiers, and local signal storage. Each pod measures 3-D acceleration, tilt, azimuth, temperature, and other parametric variables such as pore water pressure and pH. The following parameters are independently controllable at each pod: pre-trigger length, post-trigger length, trigger time stamp, sampling rate, trigger level, trigger parameters, non-volatile storage, and calibration and self-evaluation. Each Pod communicates over a standard digital bus (e.g. RS-485) through a complete GUI interface, and has a power consumption of less than 400mW. Three dimensional acceleration is measured by all digital force-balance MEMS-based accelerometers. These accelerometers have a dynamic range of more than 115 dB and a frequency response from DC to 1000 Hz. The accelerometer chip uses a 5th order delta-sigma feedback loop to yield a noise floor of less than  $30 \text{ ng}_{\text{rms}}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$ . Accelerations above 0.2 g are measured by a second set of MEMS-based accelerometers, giving a full 160 dB dynamic range. The prototype of the device is currently undergoing evaluation. The first array will be installed in the Fall of 2004.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The increasing availability of vertical array data from around the world has broadened our ability to analyze wave propagation in the near surface. With accelerometers at depth, we can trace the actual effects of the near surface materials on the propagating seismic waves. So-called vertical arrays have come on-line in several sites in California, Taiwan, and Japan. By comparing multiple downhole recordings and a related surface recording, one can observe how the waves change as they progress through the ground, encountering the materials in the soil profile. We are installing two prototype vertical seismic arrays directly on either side of the Hayward Fault on the UC Berkeley campus. The arrays will consist of eight pods spaced over the 35 m embedment depth, and will be unique in the world for its proximity to a major

active fault, its integration into a local and regional seismic system, and its low installation cost due to the use of currently unfolding micro-electronics and computer science devices and methodologies.

Our array uses a powerful yet inexpensive and easy to install down-hole seismic tool called Terra-Scope™. Each station of the array consists of 3-component accelerometer units, tilt sensors, magnetometer, and pore pressure sensor. The sensors will be incorporated into an intelligent networked sensor Pod that includes upwards of 4 Mbyte of non-volatile memory, an 16-bit micro-controller, 62 channels of digital interfaces, 8 analog channels, an ethernet client, power controller, and backup batteries. Since each station is a digital entity, all communications along the array can take place on a bi-directional backbone. The terminus of the array, at the top of each bore hole, will be a powerful Local Gateway that will serve as data aggregator, GPS-based timer and locator, power source, ethernet server, and wireless data link. We estimate that each Pod will cost is about \$6000 using present-day costs.

The system uses a simple software solution based on a custom event-driven scheduler to multiplex the concurrent flows of information across each gateway, which is connected to a transceiver, a secondary storage device, a sensor oriented I/O system, and a power management subsystem. Compared with traditional data logging systems, networked sensors offer two major advantages: they can be retasked in the field and they can easily communicate with the rest of the system.

## **VERTICAL ARRAYS**

A downhole seismographic array is a sequence of instruments installed at various depths in the ground in a set of adjacent boreholes, to record the ground motion (generally in terms of velocity or acceleration) at multiple depths and at the surface of a site during an earthquake. As the authors and others (e.g. Elagmal, Stiedl) have pointed out over the years, vertical array data provides a direct way to quantify the accuracy of ground motion predictions, the models used to make such predictions, and the applicability of our estimates of in situ soil properties.

So-called vertical arrays have come on-line in several sites in California (Baise and Glaser, 2000; de Alba and Faris, 1996; Archuleta et al., 1992), Taiwan (Tang et al., 1989), and Japan (Katayama et al., 1990). These arrays are changing the way we understand seismic ground motion by allowing the 3-D evaluation of seismic wave propagation (Baise and Glaser, 2001; Stidham et al., 1999; Elgamal et al., 1996; Abrahamson et al, 1991). Vertical arrays have traditionally been very expensive to install and maintain (Steidl and Nigbor, 2001), much like traditional structural seismic instrumentation. We propose an easy to install, inexpensive, intelligent vertical seismic imaging array, Terra-Scope™. We envision a field-deployable array that can be installed in a variety of manners. Initially the arrays will be installed into uncased (or cased) boreholes. By the end of the project, the arrays will be inserted into the ground by ubiquitous cone penetrometer equipment, and the array elements being commercial available to the entire community. A cartoon of the scope of the system is shown in Fig. 1.

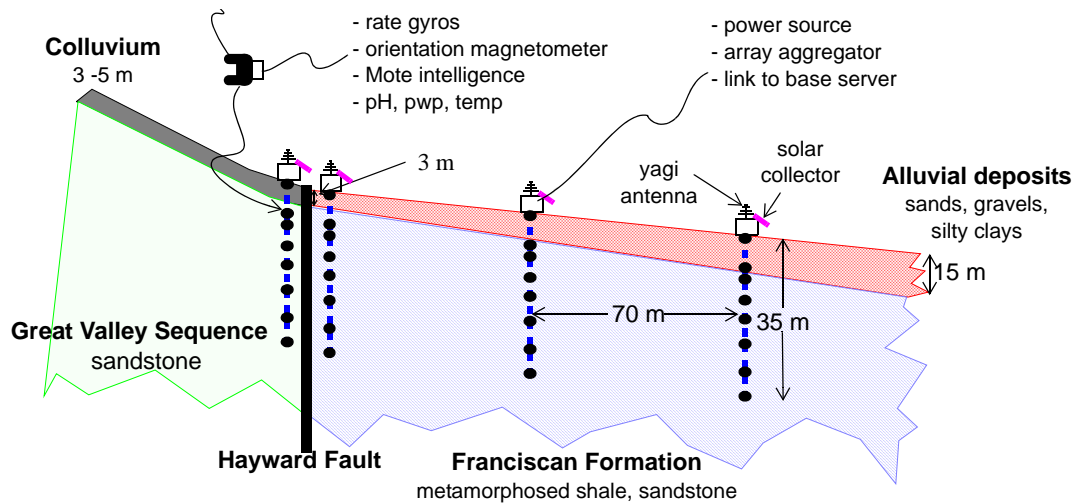


Figure 1 Cartoon of the vertical seismic array and Terra-Scope™ instrumentation

The low unit cost is made possible by utilizing new MEMS-based microsensors. MEMS (micro-electro-mechanical systems) devices are micro scaled machines that are manufactured using the same microfabrication techniques used for integrated circuits. The low unit costs of ICs are made possible by the extremely large volumes turned out per fabrication facility. The total investment per fab is astronomical, but tens of millions of each device are sold each year. Civil-oriented programs will never have the funding to sponsor the development and manufacture of a custom sensor that meets a researcher's every wish. We can, however, leverage the deep pockets of entities such as DARPA and the automotive industry. At present there are tens of MEMS-based accelerometers readily available offering a wide range of specifications. These range from the ADXL202e: \$10/each or less, very accurate, 9-bit dynamic range, to extremely low noise 115 dB fully digital devices that currently cost \$1000/each. We are also leveraging the many millions of dollars invested annually by DARPA in the smart dust and NEST programs on the Berkeley campus.

## TERRA-SCOPE™

### *Networking Gateway*

Compared with traditional data logging systems, networked sensors offer two major advantages: they can be retasked in the field and they can easily communicate with the rest of the system. In situ retasking allows the operator to change system characteristics based on the analysis of the initial results. Suppose that initially we want to collect localized ground motions; however after the initial interpretation of the data we might desire to change the scale granularity and utilize the entire array as a single sensor through beam-forming. Individual sensor nodes communicate and coordinate with one another. If appropriate, the network can perform in-network aggregation

At the head of each array sits a local gateway (LG), about a 75 mm cube. It serves as the host of the absolute time master clock (either from GPS or WWV) as well as an ethernet host to store and distribute data and information out to the world. The LG is based on a variable clocked RISC-based, low power (1.5 amp) LINUX machine with large static memory and an embedded ethernet server. The WAN connection is wireless (e.g., direct radio link, two-way satellite) or wired as is convenient. The LG will aggregate and process the multiple data streams from array stations, and either push the data onto the web or store it until queried by the main server. Included in the LG is a GPS which will provide exact timing for all the array stations, as well as providing accurate array location. Local batteries are charged by an attached solar array, and when possible a hard-wired powered ethernet link will provide ample power for the entire array. The system architecture addresses the possibility of disconnection at every level. Each layer (sensor nodes, gateways, base stations) has some persistent storage which protects against data loss in case of power outage. Each layer also provides data management services. While many types of communication can be unreliable, when it comes to data collection, long-latency is preferable to data loss.

### ***Pods***

The “Pod” is the active independent down-hole measuring device that is the heart of Terra-Scope, shown as a block diagram in Fig. 2. Each Pod is an independent, MCU-controlled agent with four or more Mb of non-volatile memory. The system is designed to implement the following

- Integration of advanced technology accelerometers ( $30 \text{ ng}_{\text{rms}}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$  noise floor, 24-bit direct digital); second set of accelerometers extends dynamic range to 1.7g;
- Tilt (pitch and roll) with 0.003 degree repeatability;
- Azimuth  $\sim$  0.1 degree repeatability;
- Real-time clock within 0.5  $\mu\text{s}$ ;
- Parametric measurands include temperature, pH, pore water pressure, etc.;
- Record all dynamic variables at a digitization rate of 250 Hz for 1 min. before trigger and 2 after;
- Local Gateway integrates solar power, improved batteries, GPS timing, and ethernet server;
- Fully dynamic networking, real-time reprogramming and peer-to-peer sensor fusion. •

### ***System Vision***

We are basing our device on the concept of an instrumentation processor - an “open source” solution, if you will, to embedded networked sensing. This intelligent platform will accept any sensor (analog or digital) as an input signal, process and buffer the signals, and interface with any commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) radio module, embedded system, or computer. The main driver for development of this technology are the many problems that researchers have had in using the Mote devices available from vendors such as Crossbow Inc., and Dust Inc. These devices are in practice sole-source packages, and the user is beholden to the manufacturer to make them work properly. Experience using the Motes by relatively competent

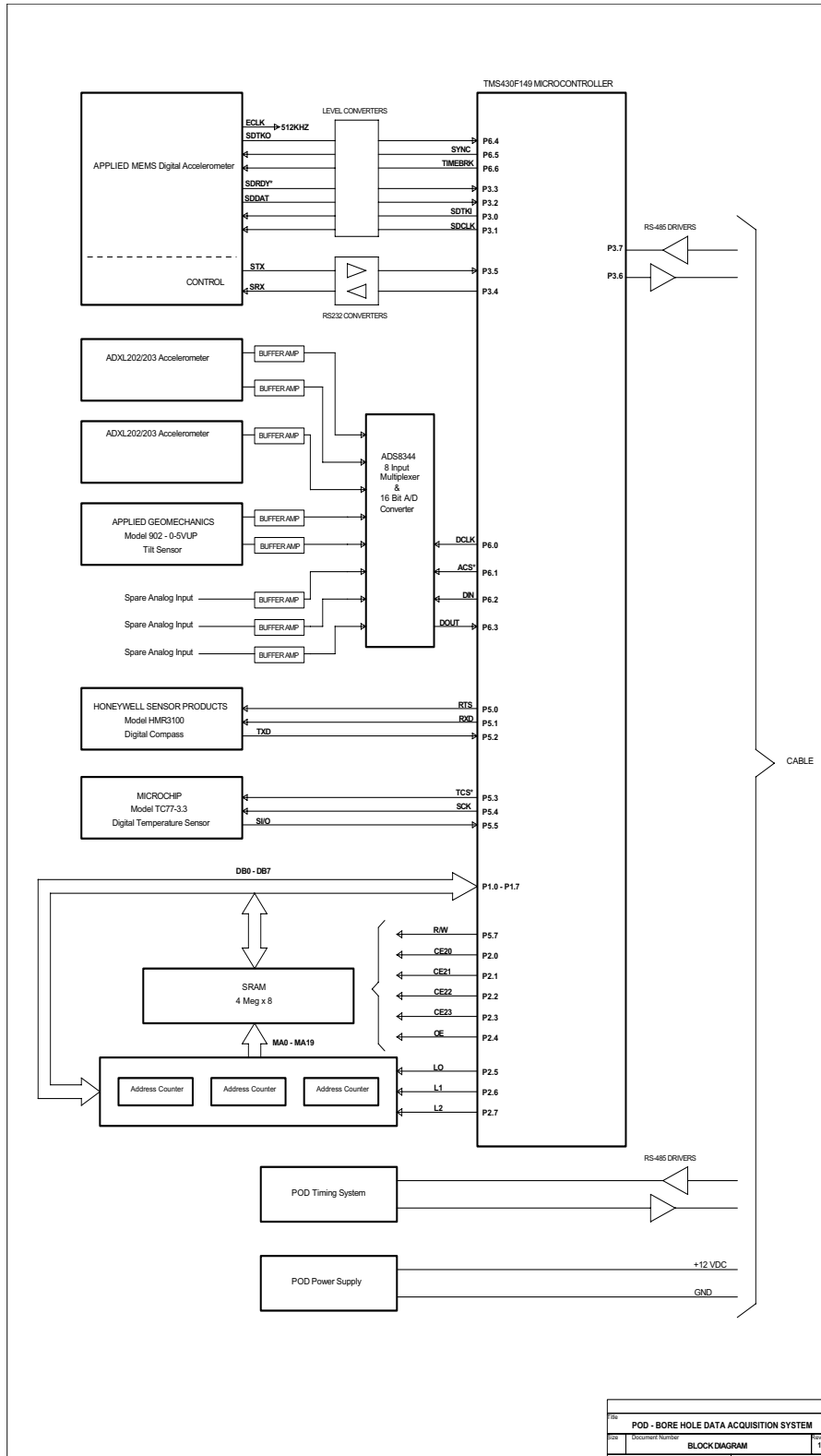


Figure 2 Block diagram of the Pod.

users (e.g. Berkeley, LBNL, UCSD, LANL, MIT, Seneca Inc., Shinkawa Sensor Technologies, etc.) has shown that the devices most often do not work as advertised. It is our opinion that a scientist or engineer who wants to use the wireless sensor node technologies should not have to earn a Computer Science Ph.D. in order to do so.

What is readily available in COTS form, with many varieties and alternatives are MEMS-based sensors and radio frequency (rf) data transmission links. The user will select a wired or wireless link that best serves their need, at a price they can afford. In fact, advanced processing of complex sensor data is the space from which commercial developers are moving away from. Ember Inc. calls itself “experts in embedded wireless networking,” offering customers low-cost, low-power, and high performance best-in breed radio chips, embedded networking software optimized for control applications, and straightforward evaluation, development, and network management tools and services. The business plan of Dust Inc. has moved towards the data streaming model, providing the link for simple data such as thermostats or security. The science/engineering user is not a market driver and will always be left out.

### *System Design*

The system under consideration will be used to measure seismic signals traveling through soil and rock. Given that these are very dispersive materials, the frequencies of interest are very low, up to about fifty Hz at the most. To cover any eventualities and to allow using the systems to perform other types of monitoring, the design criteria is to allow digitization rates of up to 250 samples per second, or a  $\Delta t$  of 4 ms. For this scale a time interval of one ms is small, and for a digital system running at MHz, this data rate can be considered “slow,” and many tasks ordered and completed between samples.

Each gateway is the command center for an array; multiple hardware pods are suspended on a bus cable at different levels, synchronized with the global timer from gateway, and sample data and communicate with base station. Two buses provide both physical connection and communication channel between hardware pods and base station. The base station is a single board machine with Linux operating system. Its main responsibility is to (1) send the real time clock to the pods, (2) connect the users/operators and the system via a web server to allow remote and effortless interaction over the Internet, (3) connect the pods by sending and relaying commands, and (4) and receiving event data from the Pods and storing the data into the database. This will be accomplished by building two applications to run concurrently on each gateway, one to control the Pods and arbitrate tasks, and a GUI web application to interact with the user. At all times the gateway will send regular timing packets to the pods over the bus or power lines.

In order to maximize the number of pods that can be attached to a single gateway, we will utilize two independent bus lines, one for message transmission and the other for data return. Upon start-up the gateway will perform initialization and synchronization of the array Pods. Each Pod lives an independent existence, with its MCU controlling the local sensors and setting a programmable trigger threshold. The 16-bit MCU is also responsible for controlling and segmenting the local four megabytes of SRAM, pre- and post-trigger data lengths, and trigger type. Each Pod waits primed and ready for an event. Upon a local trigger, a message is sent to the gateway over bus 2 (uplink) and the gateway sends a trigger command to all other Pods over bus1 (downlink), and to other gateways over RF or wired network. Data is stored

directly to the local SRAM along with timestamp. At the end of the “event,” the gateway can upload the signals from each Pod in an orderly manner over bus 2, and log to the database. Finally, the gateway takes care of arbitration of the token for the Pod communication. The system is designed so that a second three-minute event can be recorded to SRAM while the first segment downloads independent of system operation. The nominally one minute pre-trigger segment insures that motion occurring before strong shaking are captured. A nominal two minute post-trigger recorded segment insures that all motions and aftershocks are recorded.

All time synchronization is by a master-slave clock mode from the gateway down. Each gateway has a real-time clock with a stability of one part per million per year. In addition the gateway will each have an on-board GPS to set a world-wide absolute time. The clock on each pod will update their time with the real time tick from base station in order to avoid timer drifts.

### *Multi-tasking*

In order to meet the above design demands, we are designing a custom scheduler, similar to a multitasking operating system, to manage internal (Pod) and external (system) behavior in an orderly manner. Considering the properties of the two mode of embedded systems, event-triggered and time-triggered, we chose the time-triggered pattern as the working model. The overall system requires synchronization even while operating at a relatively rapid digitization rate, and using interrupts easily destroys the synchronization. Interrupts are disabled from the communication channel so that a timed scheduler dominates all the behavior on each pod. The communication channel buffer holds the packet until the component reads it so each pod has a fixed routine.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Terra-Scope™ system is an affordable 4-D down-hole seismic monitoring system based on independent, microprocessor-controlled sensor Pods. The pods are nominally 50 mm in diameter, and about 120 mm long. They are expected to cost approximately \$6000 each. An internal 16-bit, extremely low power MCU controls all aspects of instrumentation, eight programmable gain amplifiers, and local signal storage. Each pod measures 3-D acceleration, tilt, azimuth, temperature, and other parametric variables such as pore water pressure and pH. The following parameters are independently controllable at each pod: pre-trigger length, post-trigger length, trigger time stamp, sampling rate, trigger level, trigger parameters, non-volatile storage, and calibration and self-evaluation. Each Pod communicates over a standard digital bus (e.g. RS-485) through a complete GUI interface, and has a power consumption of less than 400mW. Three dimensional acceleration is measured by all digital force-balance MEMS-based accelerometers. These accelerometers have a dynamic range of more than 115 dB and a frequency response from DC to 1000 Hz. The accelerometer chip uses a 5th order delta-sigma feedback loop to yield a noise floor of less than  $30 \text{ ng}_{\text{rms}}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$ . Accelerations above 0.2 g are measured by a second set of MEMS-based accelerometers, giving a full 160 dB dynamic range. The prototype of the device is currently undergoing evaluation. The first array will be installed in the Fall of 2004.

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