Model-Based Development of Multi-iRobot Simulation and Control

by

Shih-Kai Su

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Georgios Fainekos, Chair
Hessam Sarjoughian
Panagiotis Artemiadis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis introduces the Model-Based Development of Multi-iRobot Toolbox (MBDMIRT), a Simulink-based toolbox designed to provide the means to acquire and practice the Model-Based Development (MBD) skills necessary to design real-time embedded system. The toolbox was developed in the Cyber-Physical System Laboratory at Arizona State University.

The MBDMIRT toolbox runs under MATLAB/Simulink to simulate the movements of multiple iRobots and to control, after verification by simulation, multiple physical iRobots accordingly. It adopts the Simulink/Stateflow, which exemplifies an approach to MBD, to program the behaviors of the iRobots. The MBDMIRT toolbox reuses and augments the open-source MATLAB-Based Simulator for the iRobot Create from Cornell University to run the simulation. Regarding the mechanism of iRobot control, the MBDMIRT toolbox applies the MATLAB Toolbox for the iRobot Create (MTIC) from United States Naval Academy to command the physical iRobots.

The MBDMIRT toolbox supports a timer in both the simulation and the control, which is based on the local clock of the PC running the toolbox. In addition to the build-in sensors of an iRobot, the toolbox can simulate four user-added sensors, which are overhead localization system (OLS), sonar sensors, a camera, and Light Detection And Ranging (LIDAR). While controlling a physical iRobot, the toolbox supports the StarGazer OLS manufactured by HAGISONIC, Inc.
To My Parents
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation of the Thesis

Since the cyber-physical nature of real-time embedded systems was recognized, industries have run into problems with the growing complexity of embedded software. The scenario makes Model-Based Development (MBD) a sound strategy to develop robust, reliable systems. However, academia still lacks educational tools exposing engineers to the key elements of MBD. In order to provide the means to acquire and practice the necessary MBD skills, this thesis research will build a robot simulator in MATLAB/Simulink, whose graphical languages exemplify an approach to MBD.

Real-time embedded systems integrate computation with physical processes. Recently, this kind of systems is referred to Cyber-Physical System (CPS) [1]. The nature of CPS enables itself to interact with, or modify the capabilities of, physical world, but it also poses challenges to system developers, for instance, the difficulties in automotive industry [2]. Definitely, engineers must acquire new skills to respond to the challenges.

According to [3], we can say that the challenges of CPS stem from the different abstractions of Electrical/Mechanical systems (hardware) and computational systems (software). Hardware design starts from analytical models, which specify translator functions. Software design, in contrast, begins from computational models, whose semantics is defined by an automaton. Although analytical models are good at handling concurrency and quantitative constraints, these capabilities are exactly the deficiencies of computational models. More specifically, the derivation of most major paradigms in Computer Science, at the very beginning, abstracted away from the physical notions of concurrency and from all physical constraint on computation; for example, “… in
algorithms and complexity theory, actual time is abstracted to big-O time, and physical memory to big-O space” [3]. These facts reveal the intrinsic heterogeneity of CPS.

The complexity of embedded software rapidly increases [4], which necessitates adopting a Model-Based Development (MBD) paradigm for the development of new systems [5] [6]. However, there is still a chasm between how real-time embedded systems are taught and how they are being developed in safety critical applications. In order to bridge this gap, academia and industry need research and education tools that will help engineers develop the appropriate MBD skills, especially the knowledge about Statecharts established by Harel [7].

Harel was inspired by avionics engineers and proved that Statecharts are effective to describe avionics systems that are heavily driven by events [8]. Since event-driven nature is one of the characters of real-time embedded systems, and Stateflow, which is an extension of MATLAB/Simulink, implements a variant of Harel’s Statecharts [9], a robot simulator inside MATLAB/Simulink that can be interfaced with Simulink/Stateflow will provide the means to acquire and practice the necessary MBD skills.

1.2 Contribution of the Thesis

The main contribution of this thesis is the Model-Based Development of Multi-iRobot Toolbox (MBDMIRT). The toolbox is designed to apply Stateflow charts to implement control program to simulate and control multiple iRobot Create ground vehicles [10]. By running the toolbox, end users can evaluate the differences between the MBD-style programming method and the traditional programming languages, like C/C++. Besides, the graphical, intuitive visualization of the iRobot simulation offers valuable information
before running the programs on actual iRobots. Thus, the toolbox creates a unified control program development suite for simulating/controlling virtual/physical iRobot Creates.

The MBDMIRT toolbox reuses and modifies the open-source MATLAB-Based Simulator for the iRobot Create [11] from Cornell University to build its simulator. In order to accommodate multiple iRobots and compute reasonable physical responses, The MBDMIRT toolbox expands the capabilities of the physics engine powering the Cornell MATLAB-based simulator. Besides, a new visualization method is applied in MBDMIRT toolbox. Since MBDMIRT is Simulink-based, the MATLAB Graphical User Interface Design Environment (MATLAB GUIDE) [12] applied in Cornell MATLAB-based simulator is not suitable for the development of the new toolbox. The visualization of the simulation in MBDMIRT is developed upon Simulink Callback-Based Animation [13].

After verification by simulation, the MBDMIRT toolbox enables end users to control real iRobots by running the same Stateflow charts. At this stage, the toolbox calls the corresponding functions in MATLAB Toolbox for the iRobot Create (MTIC) [14] to control the iRobots through Bluetooth wireless communication.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is intended to serve as an introduction and reference guide to the MBDMIRT toolbox. The MBDMIRT implementation of the simulation and control interface are included, as well as installation instructions and Getting-Started examples. The thesis is structured according to the following outline:
• Chapter 1: The first chapter introduces the motivation of the thesis and mentions the result—MBDMIRT toolbox.

• Chapter 2: The second chapter discusses the previous researches that form the fundamentals of the MBDMIRT. Similar researches are also included.

• Chapter 3: The third chapter is the reference guide of the MBDMIRT. It incorporates the development of the toolbox, features implemented in the toolbox, and the restriction on controlling physical iRobots. A tutorial for the MBDMIRT toolbox is included. This chapter ends with a summary of the functions that the toolbox users call in the iRobot Simulation Stateflow chart and the iRobot Control Stateflow chart.

• Chapter 4: This final chapter discusses some possible future work related to the MBDMIRT toolbox.

• Appendices: The Appendices include the instructions for the toolbox installation and configuration, as well as Simulink/Stateflow keyboard shortcuts and tips beneficial for the toolbox users. Appendix E shows the StarGazer map applied in this thesis, and Appendix F discusses the offset table for the StarGazer landmarks distributed in the map.
2.1 Previous Research

Salzberger et al. [11] developed the MATLAB-based Simulator for the iRobot Create at Cornell University. This toolbox was developed under open-source FreeBSD license to help motivate students to learn programming and knowledge about autonomous mobile robots. Its simulation power is augmented in the MBDMIRT toolbox to implement multi-iRobot simulation. Esposito et al. developed the MATLAB Toolbox for the iRobot Create (MTIC) to communicate with physical iRobot Creates. Through MTIC, physical iRobots can be controlled from a host PC running MATLAB. Because MTIC is a free toolbox, it is interfaced with the MBDMIRT toolbox to implement multi-iRobot control.

2.1.1 MATLAB-based Simulator for the iRobot Create

The MATLAB-based Simulator for the iRobot Create [11] is a MATLAB toolbox developed for educational purpose. Fan et al. [15] concludes that in a 300-student introductory programming course at Cornell University, the toolbox helped the students better understand the concept of approximation and error. Meanwhile, the students achieve the same level of programming competence as the prior classes where the simulator was not adopted.

The toolbox consists of a main simulator graphical user interface (GUI) SimulatorGUI and three GUIs for map making, simulation replay, and configuration setting (e.g., set the sensor noise or communication delay). It can simulate and visualize the movements of a single iRobot Create in manual mode or autonomous mode.
During the manual mode, the end-user drives the virtual iRobot with the keyboard or the GUI controls. On the other hand, during the autonomous mode, the user controls the iRobot by editing an autonomous control program, which is a user-edited MATLAB function, and loading the control program into SimulatorGUI. Because the toolbox is based on the MTIC, the autonomous control program can also run on actual iRobot through the MTIC toolbox.

Before SimulatorGUI runs the user-edited control program in the autonomous mode, SimulatorGUI performs initialization process which creates a robot object and sets up a timer object CreateSim as well as its corresponding timer function updateSim. The robot object is an instance of a class CreateRobot that is defined in the toolbox and contains all the properties for simulation. The task of the timer object is to update the simulation periodically with the timer function.

When the initialization process completes, SimulatorGUI parses the autonomous control program and calls the Translator Functions in the class CreateRobot accordingly. Salzberger et al. [16] explains that the Translator Functions is a set of class methods that shares the same function names and simulates the same functionalities of those in the MTIC toolbox, which makes the user-edited control program compatible with the MTIC toolbox. Next, the timer function updateSim will be invoked by CreateSim at a regular interval. The updateSim will recalculate the position of the iRobot and update the plot accordingly. If any sensor is involved in the control program, updateSim will also visualize the position of the sensor.
The discussion above completes the basic workflow of the MATLAB Simulator for the iRobot Create. There are more supplement functions available in the toolbox, which are explained in more details in [17] and [16].

2.1.2 MATLAB Toolbox for the iRobot Create (MTIC)

The Open Interface (OI) [18] built in the iRobot Create allows users to utilize a host PC to control and communicate with the iRobot by sending the OI numerical instructions over serial connection. However, due to the cryptic-nature of the OI commands (e.g. a sequence 152 13 137 1 44 128 0 156 1 144 137 0 0 0 0 drives the iRobot 40 cm, then stops it) and the difficulty in establishing a software serial link between the host PC and the iRobot, Esposito et al. developed the MTIC toolbox to overcome the disadvantages mentioned above.

The MTIC [14] toolbox translates the OI numerical instructions into a set of high-level, intuitive MATLAB functions (e.g. \texttt{SetFwdAngVelCreate} specifies the forward and the angular velocity of the iRobot). These MATLAB functions make easy access to the iRobot Create and let programmers able to write programs for the iRobot Create. Moreover, the MTIC toolbox offers a function that connects the host PC to the iRobot Create through a software serial link.

While the hardware serial link can be achieved by a wired serial cable, it tethers the iRobot to the host PC and limits the movements of the iRobot. Thus, the MBDMIRT toolbox uses the Bluetooth Adapter Module (BAM) [19] instead. As long as the BAM is installed on the iRobot Create, the host PC can communicate with the iRobot through a virtual serial port created by the Bluetooth service.
2.2 Similar Research

This section presents similar researches in the realm of simulation and control. The first one conducts complete Model-Based Design process with LabVIEW, NI Single-Board RIO 9632, and the iRobot Create. The second one implements a virtual environment that allows real robots to involve in the simulation of large-scale cooperative robotic systems.

2.2.1 Model-Based Design with the NI Robotics Simulator and the iRobot Create

Jensen [20] was presented in the NIWeek 2011 Conference [21]. The research conducted a complete MBD process in LabVIEW to develop embedded software controlling an iRobot Create. The involved software and hardware include:

- NI LabVIEW,
- LabVIEW 2011 Robotics Module,
- NI Single-Board RIO 9632,
- Analog Devices ADXL-322 analog accelerometer, and
- ASUS WL-330gE wireless router.

The main development environment, LabVIEW, is a tool capable of capturing the interactions in Cyber-Physical Systems. Jensen et al. [22] shows that “… continuous systems are expressed as ordinary differential equations or differential algebraic equations, and discrete systems are expressed as difference equation, in the LabVIEW Control, Design, and Simulation Module; concurrent state machines are expressed in models created in the LabVIEW Statechart Module (which implements a variant of Harel’s Statecharts)” (p. 2).
Jensen [20] demonstrates the development of embedded software in LabVIEW, following the complete MBD process:

‘‘1. Solve in simulation, deploy on real device
2. Verify experimental results against simulations
3. Revise and repeat.’’

The goal is to develop embedded software driving the iRobot to climb a ramp. The researchers choose LabVIEW Dataflow programming language and LabVIEW Statechart Module to design the embedded software because they expect the software consists of two parts: (1) a controller program driving the continuous system (i.e., adjusting motor speed, reading bump sensor output, reading accelerometer output, etc.) and (2) a control algorithm defining the behavior of the whole system (e.g., iRobot drives straight if it is tilted uphill).

Firstly, they use the Dataflow programming in LabVIEW to design the controller program, and then verified the controller program in the simulator. Next, they develop the control algorithm, using LabVIEW Statechart Module. Finally, they verify and test the developed embedded software in LabVIEW 2011 Robotics Module, which is a 3-D physics-based simulator. If any error is found in the simulation, they revise it and repeat the MBD process. After the error is fixed and verified, they deploy the solution to the NI Single-Board RIO 9632 that is an embedded controller fully compatible with LabVIEW.

2.2.2 A Simulation-Based Virtual Environment to Study Cooperative Robotic Systems
Hu et al. [23] proposed a hybrid simulator that creates a virtual environment where real robots and robot models are able to work together. Experiments have proved that the robot-in-the-loop simulation can effectively support systematic analysis of large-scale
cooperative robotic systems. Very often, this kind of large-scale systems is difficult to be verified in physical world with actual robots due to the complexity and scalability involved.

The effectiveness of the hybrid simulator is achieved by a well-defined architecture, which includes an environment model and a set of robot models. The environment model forms a virtual environment for both the virtual robots and real robots, such that real robots can interact with virtual environment in the hybrid mode. The robot model represents two elements, which are a robot’s decision-making model and sensor/actuator interfaces. The decision-making model defines the control logic. Regarding the sensor/actuator interfaces, it has two different types, but all share the same interface functions. The first sensor/actuator interfaces is sensor/actuator abstractActivities, which represents virtual sensors and actuators; the second one is sensor/actuator RTActivities, which drives the real sensors and actuators of a robot. Besides, the environment model and the decision-making model can pass message with each other through the sensor/actuator abstractActivities.

The advantage of the interface functions shared between the abstractActivities and the RTActivities is that a decision-making model can execute without modification in both a virtual environment and a real environment to command a virtual robot and a real robot respectively. Furthermore, the robot-in-the-loop simulation is also benefitted by the shared interface functions. During the robot-in-the-loop simulation, a real robot is configured to use a combination of abstractActivities and the RTActivities, such that the real robot receives the outputs from virtual robots and makes decisions accordingly. More specifically, the real robot has its own virtual sensors, which are able to detect the virtual
robots and virtual obstacles. Consequently, the real robot is able to interact with the virtual environment.

For large-scale cooperative robotic system involving hundreds of robots, the capability of the robot-in-the-loop simulation makes it possible to conduct experiments without setting up the system-wide environment and all of the real robots. The researchers have succeeded running a robot-in-the-loop simulation with two real robots, and the quantitative results from the simulation will be collected and analyzed.
CHAPTER 3
MBDMIRT TOOLBOX REFERENCE GUIDE

This chapter provides an overview of the major MBDMIRT toolbox components and describes how the main functionalities (MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation and MBDMIRT iRobot Control) are developed. The chapter ends with a tutorial on initializing and using the toolbox, as well as a summary of the frequently used devices in the MBDMIRT toolbox.

3.1 MBDMIRT Toolbox Overview

The main objective of the MBDMIRT toolbox is to provide the means to acquire and practice the Model-Based Development skills necessary to design real-time embedded system. The toolbox focuses on the practice of modeling event-driven systems with Simulink/Stateflow, which exemplifies an approach to MBD [3] [6].

The MBDMIRT toolbox, short for Model-Based Development of Multi-iRobot Toolbox, is an enhancement to MATLAB/Simulink. It links Simulink/Stateflow to a multi-iRobot simulator interface (iRobotSimulation.mdl in the toolbox) and a multi-iRobot control interface (iRobotControl.mdl in the toolbox) respectively. Stateflow is an extension of MATLAB/Simulink, and it implements a variant of Harel’s Statecharts [9], which is widely adopted in many industrial MBD development suites, e.g. SCADE [24] and LabVIEW [25]. The MBDMIRT toolbox, in conjunction with Stateflow, composes an educational environment for practicing the graphical Stateflow programming language in simulating multiple virtual iRobots and controlling multiple physical iRobots.
The MBDMIRT toolbox consists of two user interfaces and supporting utilities. The user interfaces (*iRobotSimulation.mdl* and *iRobotControl.mdl*) are implemented in Simulink model files in order to adopt Stateflow charts. The supporting utilities, mostly coded in switchyard programming pattern [26] [27], are related to simulation processing, simulation updating, real iRobot initializing, and StarGazer (an optional localization system) initializing.

The files in the MBDMIRT toolbox are organized into the directory structure shown in Figure 3.1.

![Figure 3.1: MBDMIRT Directory Structure](image-url)
The *iRobotSimulation.mdl* is the interface (shown in Figure 3.2) for simulating multiple iRobots with Stateflow charts. It provides a Stateflow Chart Block for end-users to design the control logic of the virtual iRobot Creates. In addition, it also contains an iRobot Monitor Block that visualizes the simulation (shown in Figure 3.3). The design process of the *iRobotSimulation.mdl* is described in Section 3.2.4. A tutorial on using *iRobotSimulation.mdl* can be found in Section 3.4.

![Figure 3.2: MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation Interface](image)

![Figure 3.3: Virtual iRobots in Simulation](image)
The *iRobotControl.mdl* is the interface (shown in Figure 3.4) for controlling multiple iRobots with the same Stateflow charts after verification by simulation. It provides a Stateflow Chart Block to run the control logic for the actual iRobot Creates. The design process of the *iRobotControl.mdl* is described in Section 3.2.5. A tutorial on using *iRobotControl.mdl* can be found in Section 3.4.

![Figure 3.4: MBDMIRT iRobot Control Interface](image)

## 3.2 MBDMIRT Design Process

Since MBDMIRT toolbox has to provide functionalities of simulating virtual iRobots and controlling physical iRobots, the MBDMIRT design process is divided up into two sub-processes: the *Development of MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation* and the *Development of MBDMIRT iRobot Control*.

The *Development of MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation* begins from modeling iRobots and continues with two phases of Simulink-based simulator development. The *Development of MBDMIRT iRobot Control* consists of interfacing Stateflow charts with the MTIC toolbox, and interfacing Stateflow charts with the StarGazer indoor
localization systems. Figure 3.5 shows the development process of the MBDMIRT toolbox.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.5: Development Process of MBDMIRT Toolbox**

3.2.1 iRobot Create Mathematical Model

The iRobot Create is a differentially-driven two-wheeled robot. The bottom view of the iRobot is illustrated in Figure 3.6. For simplicity, the distance between the driven wheels approximates to the diameter of the iRobot Create. The top view of the simplified iRobot Create is shown in Figure 3.7.
Bräunl [1] points out that “… driving control for differential drive is more complex than for single wheel drive, because it requires the coordination of the two driven wheels… If both motors run at the same speed, the robot drives straight forward or backward, if one motor is running faster than the other, the robot drives in a curve along the arc of a circle, and if both motors are run at the same speed in opposite directions, the robot turns on the spot.” The above driving actions are illustrated in Figure 3.8 and Figure 3.9.
The kinematics of iRobot Create can be described as the relations among the driven wheel velocities $v_{L,R}$, linear velocity $v$, and angular velocity $\omega$, which are illustrated in Figure 3.10.
In order to model the kinematics of the iRobot Create, I start from Figure 3.11 to determine the distance $S$ the iRobot has traveled, then discuss iRobot’s rotation angle $\theta_{\text{turn}}$ and derive kinematics of iRobot Create. The following derivation references Bräunl [1] and Salzberger [16].

Assume a scenario in which the iRobot move along a circular segment, that is illustrated in Figure 3.11.

![Figure 3.11: Kinematics calculation for iRobot Create](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$d$</td>
<td>distance between the driven wheels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_L$</td>
<td>distance traveled by the left wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_R$</td>
<td>distance traveled by the right wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S$</td>
<td>distance the iRobot has traveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$v_L$</td>
<td>velocity of the left wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$v_R$</td>
<td>velocity of the right wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$c$</td>
<td>turning radius of the iRobot's path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\phi$</td>
<td>traveled part (in radians) of the full circle with the turning radius $\phi \in [0,2\pi]$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\theta_{\text{turn}}$</td>
<td>angle (in radians) the iRobot has turned $\theta_{\text{turn}} \in [-2\pi, 2\pi]$.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the driven wheel velocities $v_{L,R}$, the distances $S_{L,R}$ traveled by the driven wheels can be derived by the following:

$$S_R(t) = v_R \cdot t,$$

$$S_L(t) = v_L \cdot t.$$  \hspace{1cm} (3.1)
Thus, the distance the iRobot has traveled is:

\[
S(t) = \frac{S_R(t) + S_L(t)}{2},
\]

\[
S(t) = \frac{v_R \cdot t + v_L(t)}{2}.
\]

(3.2)

Since \( \theta_{\text{turn}} \) is directional (\( \theta_{\text{turn}} \) is negative if iRobot rotates clockwise, or \( \theta_{\text{turn}} \) is positive if iRobot rotates counterclockwise), the analysis of \( \theta_{\text{turn}} \) can be broken into two cases:

**Case 1 (\( \theta_{\text{turn}} < 0 \), iRobot rotates clockwise):**

![Image of iRobot's Rotation Angle](image)

Figure 3.12: iRobot's Rotation Angle while \( S_R < S_L \)

By observing Figure 3.12, we know:

\[
S_R = \left( c - \frac{d}{2} \right) \cdot \phi,
\]

\[
S_L = \left( c + \frac{d}{2} \right) \cdot \phi,
\]
∵ $S_R < S_L$ and $\phi \in [0,2\pi]$,

$\therefore d \cdot \phi = S_L - S_R,$

$\phi = \frac{S_L - S_R}{d},$

$\theta_{\text{turn}} = -\phi = \frac{S_R - S_L}{d}.$

Therefore, we know

$$\theta_{\text{turn}} = \frac{S_R - S_L}{d} < 0, \text{ if } S_R < S_L. \quad (3.3)$$

Case 2 ($\theta_{\text{turn}} > 0$, iRobot rotates counterclockwise):

![Diagram of iRobot's Rotation Angle while $S_R > S_L$](image)

By observing Figure 3.13, we know

$$S_R = (c + \frac{d}{2}) \cdot \phi,$$

$$S_L = (c - \frac{d}{2}) \cdot \phi,$$
\( \therefore S_R > S_L \) and \( \phi \in [0, 2\pi] \),

\( \therefore d \cdot \phi = S_R - S_L \).

\( \phi = \frac{S_R - S_L}{d} \),

\( \theta_{\text{turn}} = +\phi = \frac{S_R - S_L}{d} \).

Thus, we have

\[
\theta_{\text{turn}} = \frac{S_R - S_L}{d} > 0, \text{ if } S_R > S_L.
\] (3.4)

Due to Equation (3.3) in the Case 1 and Equation (3.4) in the Case 2, we conclude that:

\[
\theta_{\text{turn}} = \frac{S_R - S_L}{d},
\]

\( \theta_{\text{turn}} > 0 \), if \( \text{iRobot rotates counterclockwise} \),

\( \theta_{\text{turn}} < 0 \), if \( \text{iRobot rotates clockwise} \). (3.5)

Next, we can use the driven wheel velocities \( v_{L,R} \) and the angle turned \( \theta_{\text{turn}} \) to derive the kinematics of the iRobot Create by the following:

\[
v = \frac{v_R + v_L}{2},
\]

\[
\omega = \frac{d\theta_{\text{turn}}}{dt}
\]

\[
= \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{S_R - S_L}{d} \right)
\]

\[
= \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{v_R t - v_L t}{d} \right)
\]
Thus, we know the kinematics of iRobot Create is:

\[
\begin{align*}
v &= \frac{v_R + v_L}{2}, \\
\omega &= \frac{v_R - v_L}{d}.
\end{align*}
\]  
(3.6)

Further, Equation (3.6) can be written into matrix form:

\[
\begin{align*}
v &= \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{2} & \frac{1}{2} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_R \\ v_L \end{bmatrix}, \\
\omega &= \frac{v_R - v_L}{d} = \frac{v_R - v_L}{2r} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{2r} & -\frac{1}{2r} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_R \\ v_L \end{bmatrix}.
\end{align*}
\]

Thus, the kinematics of iRobot Create in matrix form is:

\[
\begin{bmatrix} v \\ w \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{2} & \frac{1}{2} \\ \frac{1}{2r} & -\frac{1}{2r} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_R \\ v_L \end{bmatrix}.
\]  
(3.7)

Through Equation (3.6), we can also obtain the inverse kinematics of iRobot Create:

\[
\begin{align*}
\therefore v &= \frac{v_R + v_L}{2}, \\
\omega &= \frac{v_R - v_L}{d} = \frac{v_R - v_L}{2r}, \\
\omega \cdot r &= \frac{v_R - v_L}{2}, \\
\therefore v + w \cdot r &= v_R, \\
v - w \cdot r &= v_L.
\end{align*}
\]
\[ v_R = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & r \\ \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v \\ \omega \end{bmatrix}. \]

\[ v_R = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -r \\ \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v \\ \omega \end{bmatrix}. \]

The inverse kinematics of iRobot Create is:

\[
\begin{bmatrix} v_R \\ v_L \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & r \\ 1 & -r \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v \\ \omega \end{bmatrix}.
\] (3.8)

3.2.2 Physics Engine

With the principles of modeling iRobots discussed in Section 3.2.1, I reuse and translate the physics engine of Salzberger [11] into a Simulink-based simulator for a single iRobot Create that becomes the core of the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation.

The physics engine of Salzberger [11] expects that a virtual iRobot has \texttt{velInt} and \texttt{wInt}, which are properties intentionally set by end-users through control program (e.g. a Stateflow Chart in the MBDMIRT toolbox). The \texttt{velInt} is the intended linear velocity; the \texttt{wInt} is the intended angular velocity.

Salzberger [16] states that with the \texttt{velInt} and \texttt{wInt} set properly, the physics engine determines the new pose of a virtual iRobot by calculating the relevant \texttt{Abs} properties including:

- \texttt{velAbs} containing both the x-axis component and y-axis component of a valid linear velocity,
- \texttt{wAbs} representing a valid angular velocity,
- \texttt{posAbs} representing iRobot’s position in Cartesian coordinates, and
• \(\text{thAbs}\) representing iRobot’s heading angle relative to the positive x-axis.

\(\text{thAbs}\) is wrapped to \([-\pi, \pi]\), which is the smaller angle relative to the
positive x-axis (the definition \(\text{thAbs}\) simplifies the sensor generating
function \text{updateOdom} explained in Section 3.2.3).

The physics engine updates the Abs properties by four physics engine functions,
including:

• \text{driveNormal}: This function is called when the virtual iRobot is not
interacting with any walls.

• \text{drive1Wall}: This function is called when one wall is affecting the
virtual iRobot.

• \text{drive2Wall}: This function works similarly to \text{drive1Wall} but is
called when two walls are affecting the virtual iRobot.

• \text{driveCorner}: This function operates when the virtual iRobot is
contacting the corner of one or two walls.

Salzberger [16] shows that each of the physics engine functions listed above
needs to be fed into \(\Delta t\) that is the time since the last simulation update. Upon receiving
the \(\Delta t\), the physics engine uses the simple rule, \(x_{\text{new}} = x_{\text{old}} + v \cdot \Delta t\), to calculate the
virtual iRobot’s new position. \(\Delta t\) is represented by \text{tstep} in the source code of both
Salzberger [11] and the MBDMIRT toolbox. For more details on the physics engine see
State Manipulator Functions (Physics Engine) in Salzberger [16].
3.2.3 Sensor Generating Functions

The new pose of a virtual iRobot is calculated by the physics engine. In the same manner, the outputs of sensors on a virtual iRobot are processed by sensor generating functions that are summarized in Table 3.1 and further explained in this section. The sensor generating functions are translated from Salzberger [11].

Table 3.1: Sensor Generating Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>iRobot’s Built-in Sensors</th>
<th>Sensor Generating Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bump Sensor</td>
<td>genBump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buttons</td>
<td>(simulated by Button/LED Panel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliff Sensor</td>
<td>genCliff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omni-Directional Infrared Receiver</td>
<td>genVWall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for iRobot Virtual Wall)</td>
<td>updateOdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odometer</td>
<td>genIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall Sensor</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery Meter</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Current Meter</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheel Drop</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User-Added Sensors</td>
<td>genSonar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonar</td>
<td>genLIDAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Detection And Ranging (LIDAR)</td>
<td>genCamera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera</td>
<td>genOverhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead Localization System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘–’ indicates unsupported sensor in the simulation.

**genBump**: The effective detection range of the virtual bump sensors is illustrated in Figure 3.14. Most hits with the side ① or ③ will trigger the left or right bump sensors respectively. Hits with side ② will trigger the front sensor. Note that the actual bump sensors on a real iRobot Create may not be activated on a glancing blow. Whether the real bump sensors are activated depends on the strength and the angle of the hit on an object. For simplicity, these actual, physical effects are not taken into account by the physics engine.
Button/LED Panel: There are Play (>) and Advance (>>|) button on the real iRobot Create. The MBDMIRT toolbox represents these buttons in Button/LED Panel accessible through the button in the upper right corner of the MBDMIRT simulation visualization interface shown in Figure 3.3. The layout of the Button/LED Panel consists of a set of one-touch buttons for all the iRobots and several sets of Buttons and LEDs for a specific iRobot. The one-touch buttons can toggle all the Play buttons the Advance buttons on the panel. The number of the button/LED set for a specific iRobot vary, depending on how many virtual iRobots are currently being simulated. For example, Figure 3.15 shows a panel for three virtual iRobots, and Figure 3.16 shows a panel for seven virtual iRobots. Note that the buttons in the Button/LED Panel are toggle buttons, which are activated by a push, and deactivated by another push. However, on the real iRobot, the relevant MTIC instruction (ButtonSensorRoomba) will return true only if the buttons are currently being held down.
**genCliff**: The location of the virtual cliff sensors is illustrated in Figure 3.17.

Note that, in reality, the cliff sensors on a real iRobot check a single point on the ground, while the point is on a real line that has thickness. However, the virtual lines on the map for simulation have no thickness (see Appendix B for all the elements available on the map for simulation). Thus, the effective detection point of the virtual cliff sensors are increased to ranges that are different between the right (or left) cliff sensor and the front right (or front left) cliff sensor. The right (or left) virtual cliff sensor is activated if a virtual line intersects with the robot perimeter within 6.75°; the front right (or front left)
virtual cliff sensor is activated if a virtual line intersects with the robot perimeter within 5.85°. The effective detection ranges of the virtual cliff sensors are illustrated in Figure 3.18.

Figure 3.17: Location of Virtual Cliff Sensors

Figure 3.18: Detection Range of Virtual Cliff Sensors

genVWall: In reality, there is an omni-directional infrared receiver in front of a real iRobot. One of the usages of the infrared receiver is to read signals from Virtual Wall® (see page 14 of iRobot Corp. [10] for more information about Virtual Wall®). The physics engine supports the simulation of the infrared receiver. A Virtual Wall® in reality produces a field around the emitter and in the direction it faces, which is illustrated in Figure 3.19. Similarly, a Virtual Wall® in MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation is represented
by a halo radius and effective signal range and angle, which is illustrated in Figure 3.20.

See Appendix B for how to set a Virtual Wall® on the map for simulation.

Salzberger [16] explains that “the physics engine checks whether a virtual iRobot is against a Virtual Wall® by first comparing the sensor position to that of the emitter to see if the iRobot is within the halo. If the iRobot is not in the halo, the physics engine uses an area algorithm to see if the sensor position is inside the triangular field.
The area of a triangle is calculated from the vertices of the triangle using the determinant method:

\[
\text{area} = \frac{1}{2} \left| \begin{array}{ccc} x_1 & x_2 & x_3 \\ y_1 & y_2 & y_3 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \end{array} \right|.
\]

Salzberger [16] explains further that “the physics engine calculates the area of the triangular field, and then the area of the three triangles whose vertices are two vertices from the field and the sensor position. If the sensor is within the field, then the area of the field is equal to the sum of the areas of the other three triangles. If not, the area of the three triangles is greater than the area of the field.”

**Figure 3.21: Determination of whether iRobot hits Virtual Wall®**
(revised image from MATLAB-Based Simulator for the iRobot Create Code Documentation)

**updateOdom:** This function is called at every execution of the simulation updating function `updateFigSim` in the MBDMIRT toolbox (or the timer function `updateSim` in Salzberger [11]). Salzberger [16] makes two assumptions regarding `updateOdom`: 

1. The movements of the virtual iRobot between two calls on `updateOdom` is small,

2. The angle the virtual iRobot has turned between two calls on `updateOdom` is small.

The first assumption simplifies the algorithm in calculating the odometry distance. “The odometry distance is calculated by using a linear approximation of the distance traveled between the previous location and the current one. The magnitude of the change `odomDist` comes from a simple distance formula. The sign of the change is more complicated. If the robot is moving in the direction it is pointing, the odometry will increase, and vice-versa” (Salzberger [16], p. 28). The Figure 3.22 illustrates the calculation of the odometry distance.
The second assumption regarding \texttt{updateOdom} simplifies the calculation of the angular odometry. “The angle turned on a given step is calculated from the start \texttt{thAbs}, and the end \texttt{thAbs}, with no knowledge of which path is taken. The path could be determined from \texttt{wAbs}, but that would be more difficult than just assuming that the \texttt{iRobot} turns the shorter amount. This is especially important when the robot turns through $\pi$ or $-\pi$ radians, since \texttt{thAbs} is automatically wrapped to between those values. In the diagram below, the odometry will be changed by the small angle of the two ($\beta$). It will be increased if \texttt{wAbs} is positive, and decreased if negative.” If the maximum allowable turning speed is large compared to the rate of updating the simulation, this method may cause errors (Salzberger [16], p. 28).

\[
\text{current } \texttt{thAbs} = \frac{3\pi}{4}
\]

\[
\text{previous } \texttt{thAbs} = -\frac{3\pi}{4}
\]

\textbf{Figure 3.23: Calculation of Angular Odometry}  
(revised image from MATLAB-Based Simulator for the iRobot Create Code Documentation)

\textbf{genIR}: On the real \texttt{iRobot Create}, there is infrared proximity sensor with a very low effective range on the front right of the bumper. The output of the sensor is a Boolean value indicating whether a wall is detected. The counterpart on a virtual \texttt{iRobot} locates at the position shown in Figure 3.24. The linear effective range is assumed within 0.1 meter from the location.
In addition to the sensors built-in on the real iRobot Create, there are four user-added sensors available in the simulation, including sonar sensors, LIDAR, a camera, and an overhead localization system. A real overhead localization system (StarGazer indoor localization system by Hagisonic, Inc.) is supported in the MBDMIRT iRobot Control. See Section 3.2.5 for more information about StarGazer with the MBDMIRT toolbox.

**genSonar:** Salzberger [16] states that ‘‘… there are four sonar sensors, placed in the cardinal directions on the edges of the robot. This makes it easy to check each sensor since they are evenly spaced around the circumference.’’ Note the difference between the order of outputs from genSonar and the sonar sensor actually called by ReadSonarSpecified, which is a Stateflow graphical function in the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation:

- The output of genSonar is a row vector with four elements, which is [front left back right].

- The syntax of the ReadSonarSpecified is

  `distance = ReadSonarSpecified(serPort, sonarNum).` The sonarNum must be an integer corresponding to sonar to be read, where:

  1 represents the right virtual sonar, 2 – front, 3 – left, 4 – back.
**genLidar:** Salzberger [16] mentions that “... the LIDAR sensor is located on the front of the robot... Like genSonar, this function calls findDist to get the reading for each point in the LIDAR field of view.”

**genCamera:** In Salzberger [17], it is mentioned that “… assumed a camera has been installed on the front of the Create. This camera is to be used for color blob detection only... The camera is used for finding beacons.” Beacons are a kind of elements available on the map for simulation. They are immaterial objects (e.g. colored paint or paper) on the ground, so the virtual iRobot can pass over them. See Appendix B for more information about the elements on the map for simulation.

**genOverhead:** Salzberger [16] states that “… the overhead localization system is assumed to be very accurate, so it outputs the exact location and orientation of the robot with no noise.” In addition to the virtual overhead localization system, the MBDMIRT iRobot Control supports a real localization system (StarGazer manufactured by Hagisonic Inc.). See Appendix A for more information about the StarGazer.

### 3.2.4 Development of MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation

#### 3.2.4.1 Simulink Graphical Animation

The MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation adopts Stateflow, which is an extension to Simulink, for users to design the control logic of the virtual iRobots in the simulation. Thus, an effective way to visualize the movements of the iRobots as Simulink animations is required in the MBDMIRT toolbox, which leads the discussion in this section into Simulink graphical animations.

Simulink graphical animation is an animation displaying the data received from a Simulink model as the model executes. There are several approaches to developing
Simulink graphical animation, such as callback-based animation, S-Function-based animation, the Animation Toolbox, the Dials & Gauges Blockset, and the Virtual Reality Toolbox. These methods are discussed in Dabney [13] [28], where the Dials & Gauges Blockset is obsolete and has been replaced by Gauges Blockset [29] [30]. Dabney [13] [28] shows that the callback-based animation is the most powerful techniques compared to other alternatives. By using the callback-based animation, Dabney [28] states that “... it permits you to include custom controls in the animation window, and also allows you to build an animation block that can be open or closed during a simulation.” Therefore, the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation is implemented with the callback-based animation.

3.2.4.2 Simulink Callback-Based Animation

The technique of Simulink callback-based animation is realized by use of the Simulink callback parameters and an M-file function containing the callbacks written in switchyard style. A template for Simulink callback-based animation is available in Debney [13].

The callback parameters associated with a Simulink block or with a Simulink model contain MATLAB commands, such that when certain events (for example, opening a model or double-clicking a block) occurs, the MATLAB commands are executed. Listed in Table 3.2 is a portion of the callback parameters associated with a particular Simulink block, courtesy of Dabney [13]. See The MATLAB, Inc. [31] for a complete list of the callback parameters.
Table 3.2: Simulink Block Callback Parameters Applied in MBDMIRT toolbox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter Name</th>
<th>When Executed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ModelCloseFcn</td>
<td>Before model is closed. This callback is recursive for subsystem blocks. Use this callback to do any block-specific housecleaning before closing a model. For example, use this callback to close a graphical user interface if the GUI is associated with the block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeleteFcn</td>
<td>Before a block is deleted. Use this callback to close any open user interface windows associated with the block. This callback is recursive for subsystem blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InitFcn</td>
<td>Before the block diagram is compiled and before block parameters are evaluated. This callback could be used to obtain data to set block parameters. After the name of a block changes. Here, name means the full path name of the block. If a subsystem name is changed, all blocks in the subsystem are affected. This callback can be used in conjunction with a graphical user interface associated with a block to prevent the graphical user interface from being orphaned when the block name changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NameChangeFcn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StopFcn</td>
<td>When the simulation stops for any reason.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Simulink Model Callback Parameters Applied in MBDMIRT toolbox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter Name</th>
<th>When Executed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>InitFcn</td>
<td>At start of model simulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CloseFcn</td>
<td>Before model is closed. Use this callback to do any needed housecleaning when a model is closed. For example, if the model uses a custom graphical user interface, all interface windows should be closed before closing the model.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the model callback parameters and the block callback parameters can be set interactively [32] [33] or programmatically [34]. Afterwards, the associate callback code written in a switchyard-style M-file function will be executed whenever a certain event, such as double-clicking a block or changing the name of a block, occurs.

The switchyard-style M-file function contains a single entry point (the switchyard) and a collection of local functions that implement the callbacks. This kind of
switchyard programming has several advantages. Firstly, it encapsulates all the callback functions into a single M-file, such that the problem of M-file proliferation is eliminated [26]. Secondly, “… because each callback function manipulates variables in its own workspace, those variables are protected from changes made in the base workspace” (Webb [35]).

3.2.4.3 Review of Cornell’s MATLAB-Based Simulator in Autonomous Mode

When the MATLAB-based Simulator for the iRobot Create [11] is called, it initializes an iRobot object and a timer object with a timer function updateSim. The iRobot object is an instance of the user-defined class CreateRobot, which contains the properties of the virtual iRobot, such as velInt, wInt, and the Abs properties. The task of the timer object is to update the simulation every 0.1 second.

When the initialization process completes, the user can load a map and a configuration file. Then, the simulator enters into the autonomous mode when the user clicks the Autonomous Start button. Afterwards, the simulation begins and continues as the control program executes. Meanwhile, the timer object will call updateSim to update the visualization of the simulation every 0.1 second by interrupting the execution of the control program. The simulation stops when the control program reaches the end of its code. The above description is shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.25.
The control program consists of statements calling translator functions (TRLT Fcn) and statements computing numerical results. The translator functions are built in the MATLAB-based Simulator for the iRobot Create. Salzberger [16] states that “each of the functions falling into this category are used as the ‘middle function’ between the
autonomous control program and the simulator’s raw algorithms and data.’’ Therefore, the control program can call the relevant translator functions to set intended velocity velInt or read virtual sensor outputs. The character of the translator functions in Cornell’s MATLAB-based simulator is illustrated in Figure 3.26.

![Component Relationships of Cornell's MATLAB-Based Simulator in Autonomous Mode](image)

Figure 3.26: Component Relationships of Cornell's MATLAB-Based Simulator in Autonomous Mode

The main tasks of the timer object are to move the virtual iRobot to its new position and update the sensor visualization. The timer object achieves these tasks by interrupting the control program at a regular interval (every 0.1 sec in real clock time). During the interruption, a timer function associated with the timer object invokes the physics engine to compute iRobot’s new Abs properties. Next, the timer function uses the new Abs properties to update the visualization of the iRobot and the virtual sensors.

### 3.2.4.4 Simulink Solver Type and Simulation Speed

The MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation is a Simulink-based simulator. Therefore, the simulation speed depends on versatile factors such as Simulink model complexity, Simulink solver step sizes, and the CPU speed. In order for the MBDMIRT iRobot
Simulation to have consistent performance such as the same simulation speed and the same total simulation time on different PCs, a RealTime Pacer Block [36] is applied in the MBDMIRT toolbox. The RealTime Pacer Block synchronizes the simulation time with real elapsed time.

The Simulink environment provides a variety of solvers such as a fixed-step solver and a variable-step solver. The main task of a solver is to determine the time of the next simulation step. The MathWorks, Inc. [37] states that “both fixed-step and variable-step solvers compute the next simulation time as the sum of the current simulation time and a quantity known as the step size. With a fixed-step solver, the step size remains constant throughout the simulation. In contrast, with a variable-step solver, the step size can vary from step to step, depending on the model dynamics. In particular, a variable-step solver increases or reduces the step size to meet the error tolerances that you specify.” Moreover, “Simulation time is not the same as clock time. For example, running a simulation for 10 seconds usually does not take 10 seconds. Total simulation time depends on factors such as model complexity, solver step sizes, and computer speed” (The MathWorks, Inc. [38]).

Consequently, the RealTime Pacer Block [36] is introduced in order for the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation to have consistent performance on different PCs. By slowing down the simulation time, the RealTime Pacer Block synchronizes the simulation with real elapsed clock time. However, Vallabha [36] mentions a technical issue: “the matching between simulation time and elapsed time is approximate, with expected difference on the order of 10 to 30 milliseconds. This limitation is due to difficulties of precise timing with a multitasking operating system.”
3.2.4.5 Translating Autonomous Mode of Cornell’s MATLAB-Based Simulator into a Simulink-Based Simulator

The translation of Cornell’s MATLAB-based simulator into a Simulink-based simulator for a single iRobot begins from the Simulink callback-based animation. The technique of Simulation callback animation consists of a callback switchyard M-file and a Simulink model file. The main components of the MATLAB-based simulator such as the physics engine, the sensors generating functions (SENS GEN Fcn), the timer function updateSim, and the translator functions (TRLT Fcn) are coded into the switchyard M-file in the manner illustrated in Figure 3.27. The Simulink model file contains a Stateflow Chart Block, a masked subsystem block, and a RealTime Pacer Block.

![Figure 3.27: Translation of Cornell's MATLAB-Based Simulator into a Simulink-Based Simulator](image)

The Stateflow Chart Block in the Simulink-based simulator has a set of graphical functions and a superstate named CPSLab. The supersate CPSLab is the place where
users can draw Stateflow charts to design their control logic for the virtual iRobot. The
users can call the graphical functions in their Stateflow chart to control the iRobot’s
behavior such as setting iRobot’s intended velocity or reading the virtual sensors.

Recall that in the MATLAB-based simulator, the translator functions (TRLT Fcn)
are middle functions between the autonomous control program and the simulator’s raw
algorithm and data such as the physics engine, sensors generating functions (SENS GEN
Fcn) and the \textit{Int} properties. In the Simulink-based simulator, the Stateflow chart needs
an addition layer to communicate with the TRLT Fcn. The new layer is the set of
predefined graphical functions in the Stateflow Chart Block. The relationships between
the graphical functions and the TRLT Fcn in the Simulink-based Simulator are illustrated
in Figure 3.28.

![Figure 3.28: Component Relationships of MBDMIRT Simulink-Based Simulator](image)

The timer object in Cornell’s MATLAB-based simulator is replaced with the
Simulink Solver and a RealTime Pacer Block in the Simulink-based simulator. The
Simulink Solver is a discrete fix-step solver with step size 1. The RealTime Pacer has a
speed-up parameter named \textit{simTimePerRealTime}, whose value can be changed by users.
Since the Stateflow charts are invoked by the Simulink model in the way depicted in Figure 3.29 [9], with the RealTime Pacer Block working with the discrete fix-step Simulink Solver, the Stateflow charts will be invoked every \( \frac{1}{\text{simTimePerRealTime}} \) second in real clock time, which means the physics engine and the \texttt{updateFigSim} will update the simulation visualization every \( \frac{1}{\text{simTimePerRealTime}} \) second in real clock time. In fact, there is a global variable named \texttt{STperRT} in the switchyard M-file, it stores the same value as \texttt{simTimePerRealTime}. The physics engine is always fed into \texttt{STperRT} to compute the iRobot’s new position according to the basic rule, \( x_{\text{new}} = x_{\text{old}} \cdot \Delta t = x_{\text{old}} \cdot \frac{1}{\text{STperRT}} \).

Therefore, the accuracy of the simulation is determined by \( \frac{1}{\text{simTimePerRealTime}} \). The larger the value of \texttt{simTimePerRealTime} is, the more accurate the iRobot simulation will be.

![Diagram of Stateflow chart interaction](image copied from Stateflow User’s Guide R2012a)

3.2.4.6 Expanding Simulation Capacity

The Simulink-based simulator introduced in Section 3.2.4.5 is able to simulate only a single iRobot Create. In this section, the upgrades of the simulation capacity will be
introduced. The result is the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation, which is a Simulink-based simulator capable of simulating multiple iRobots. Besides, the new simulator can read the local PC clock, such that the virtual iRobots can make decisions based on time stamp or the readings from the local clock.

The representation of both the virtual iRobot and walls in the Simulink-based simulator are MATLAB lineseries graphics objects created by plot function. Originally, the physics engine processes only the interactions among the iRobot graphics object and the wall graphics objects. With the same physics engine, multiple virtual iRobots goes through with each other when they collide. This is incorrect simulation because the collision is not visualized. The solution is to create a view of obstacles for every virtual iRobot. In an iRobot’s view, obstacles include all walls and other iRobot graphics objects. Each iRobot’s view of obstacle is stored in mapObstacles, which is a MATLAB matrix. Each row in mapObstacles represents a line object:

\[
 [x_1 \ y_1 \ x_2 \ y_2].
\]

The whole mapObstacles contains the line objects representing all the wall graphics objects and the other iRobot graphics objects from a specific iRobot’s view. Each iRobot has its own mapObstacles (or its own view of obstacles). The drawback of this solution is that every time the simulation visualization is updated by updateFigSim, updateFigSim has to refresh every mapObstacles associated with each virtual iRobots, which increases the computation burden.

Besides the multi-iRobot simulation, a new Stateflow graphical function, LocalPCClock, reading local PC clock is also introduced into the new Simulink-based
simulator. Through the new graphical function, users can apply time stamps to their Stateflow charts, such that the virtual iRobots behaves according to real clock time.

3.2.5 Development of MBDMIRT iRobot Control

The purpose of the MBDMIRT iRobot Control is for users to control real iRobot Creates by executing, without modification, the control Stateflow charts designed in the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation. In addition, the MBDMIRT toolbox is designed to support StarGazer indoor localization system, so the relevant facilities are introduced in the MBDMIRT iRobot Control.

In order to execute the same Stateflow charts in the simulator and on the real iRobots without modification, the MBDMIRT iRobot Control has a set of Stateflow graphical functions with the same function signatures as those in the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation. The new set of Stateflow graphical functions are interface layer between the MTIC toolbox and the user-created Stateflow charts. In the graphical functions, MTIC commands are accessed through Stateflow `ml` function. For example, calling MTIC command `SetFwdVelAngVelCreate` to set the forward velocity and angular velocity of a real iRobot Create is achieved by the following command in the graphical functions, where the `serObjNum, FwdVel, AngVel` are Stateflow data:

```
ml('SetFwdVelAngVelCreate(iRobot_%d, %f, %f)', serObjNum, FwdVel, AngVel)
```

Similarly, calling MTIC commands `AngleSensorRoomba` to read angular odometry on the real iRobot is achieved by the following command in the graphical functions, where the `AngleR` and `serObjNum` are Stateflow data:

```
AngleR = ml('AngleSensorRoomba(iRobot_%d)', serObjNum)
```
However, Stateflow data is not like MATLAB variables whose size automatically shrinks or expands. The size or dimension of a Stateflow data is fixed and defined through Stateflow Editor or Simulink Model Explorer (see The MathWorks, Inc. [9] for *Sizing Stateflow Data*). Besides, the index notation for Stateflow vector data and Stateflow matrix data is zero-based, and the elements are accessed through C-like syntax (see The MathWorks, Inc. [9] for *How to Assign and Access Values of Vectors and Matrices*). For example:

- To access the first element of a Stateflow vector data `sfVector`, use:

  ```
sfVector[0]
  ```

- To access the element in row 5 and column 4 of a Stateflow matrix data `sfMatrix`, use:

  ```
sfMatrix[4][3]
  ```

Therefore, the Stateflow graphics function calling the MTIC commands that have more than one output argument, such as the `ButtonsSensorRoomba`, is implemented by following steps:

1. For a Stateflow graphical function whose function definition is:

   ```
   function [ButtonAdv, ButtonPlay] = ButtonsSensorRoomba(serObjNum)
   ```

2. Create a container in MATLAB workspace:

   ```
   ml('iRobot_%d_ButtSensor(1:2)=0;', serObjNum);
   ```
3. Run the MTIC *ButtonsSensorRoomba* in MATLAB workspace and assign the sensor reading into the container created in step 1:

\[
\text{ml('iRobot}_{\text{d_ButtSensor}(1), iRobot}_{\text{d_ButtSensor}(2)} = \text{ButtonsSensorRoomba(iRobot}_{\text{d});',
serObjNum, serObjNum, serObjNum);}
\]

4. Define a Stateflow vector data *ButtSensor* with size 1 by 2 (see The MathWorks, Inc. [9] for *Sizing Stateflow Data*). Assign the elements in the MATLAB container to the Stateflow vector data *ButtSensor*:

\[
\text{ButtSensor = ml('iRobot}_{\text{d_ButtSensor}', serObjNum);
}
\]

5. Use C-like syntax to access the elements of the Stateflow vector data:

\[
\text{ButtonAdv = ButtSensor[0];
ButtonPlay = ButtSensor[1];
}
\]

Note that, if the output of the MTIC command *ButtonsSensorRoomba* is directly assigned to the Stateflow vector data *ButtSensor*:

\[
\text{ButtSensor = ml('ButtonsSensorRoomba(iRobot}_{\text{d});',serObjNum);
}
\]

All the elements in *ButtSensor* will be assigned with the same value as the first element of the output from the MTIC command *ButtonsSensorRoomba*. That is to say:

\[
\text{ButtSensor[0] == ButtSensor[1] -- the first element of the output from ButtonsSensorRoomba}
\]

which is not desired in the Stateflow graphical function.

Since the MBDMIRT toolbox controls the real iRobots through Bluetooth channel instead of storing and executing embedded code on the iRobot, in the
MBDMIRT iRobot Control (iRobotControl.mdl) a RealTime Pacer Block works with
the Simulink discrete fixed-step solver in order to run the control Stateflow charts in real
time. The parameter $\text{simTimePerRealTime}$ of the RealTime Pacer Block is set to 1000,
which is based on experiments. Thus, the communication rate between the control
Stateflow charts and the real iRobots is $\frac{1}{\text{simTimePerRealTime}} = \frac{1}{1000} = 1$ ms.

The StarGazer localization system communicates with the MBDMIRT toolbox
through an adapter, which converts StarGazer’s RS-232 serial signal to Bluetooth radio
signal. The Stateflow graphical function OverheadLocalizationCreate, inspired by
the Cornell’s MATLAB-based simulator, reads the Bluetooth signals by calling the
supporting functions in iRobotControl_switchyard.m. Figure 3.29 shows the
system diagram of the MBDMIRT iRobot Control.

![System Diagram of the MBDMIRT iRobot Control](image)

Figure 3.30: System Diagram of the MBDMIRT iRobot Control
3.3 Composition of the MBDMIRT Toolbox

The composition of the MBDMIRT toolbox is summarized in this section. The superstate CPSLab, in other words, is a container of the control logic designed by end-users. The control logic will drive both the virtual iRobots and the real iRobots via the mechanism depicted in Figure 3.32 and Figure 3.33.

![Figure 3.31: The CPSLab superstate is a container of control logic](image1)

![Figure 3.32: Composition of MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation](image2)

![Figure 3.33: Composition of MBDMIRT iRobot Control](image3)
3.4 MBDMIRT Tutorial

This tutorial assumes that the MBDMIRT toolbox is correctly installed (see Appendix A for MBDMIRT installation instructions). We will go through a two-iRobot example in which an iRobot moves along a line on ground, and the other iRobot will perform action according to the local clock on the base station PC. The example begins from Stateflow chart creation, iRobot simulation, and eventually to iRobot control.

Begin by typing

```
>> iRobotSimulation
```

at the MATLAB command prompt to invoke the iRobot Simulation interface shown in Figure 3.2. Double-click the Stateflow Chart Block to enter the Stateflow Chart workspace shown in Figure 3.30.

![Figure 3.34: Stateflow Chart Workspace for MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation](image)

Figure 3.34: Stateflow Chart Workspace for MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation
Double-clicking the superstate CPSLab brings out the Stateflow Chart editor for the simulation shown in Figure 3.31. The decomposition of the superstate CPSLab is parallel.

![Stateflow Chart Editor for MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation](image1)

**Figure 3.35: Stateflow Chart Editor for MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation**

Create two subcharted superstate. One is named iRobot_1; the other is named iRobot_2 (as shown in Figure 3.32).

![Containers of the Stateflow Charts for Two Virtual iRobots](image2)

**Figure 3.36: Containers of the Stateflow Charts for Two Virtual iRobots**
In the superstate \textit{iRobot}_1, draw the Stateflow chart shown in Figure 3.33 and add the relevant Stateflow data through Model Explorer or the Stateflow Editor. Similarly, in the superstate \textit{iRobot}_2, draw the Stateflow chart shown in Figure 3.34 and add the relevant Stateflow data.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example_control_logic_for_irobot_1.png}
\caption{Example Control Logic for \textit{iRobot}_1}
\end{figure}
Figure 3.38: Example Control Logic for iRobot_2
Go back to the iRobot Simulation interface, double-click the iRobot Monitor Block. Then, a pop-up window shows up and inquires the quantity of the virtual iRobots in the simulation. Enter “2” for this tutorial.

![Figure 3.39: Pop-up Window inquiring iRobot Quantity](image)

Clicking the OK button brings out the simulation monitor shown in Figure 3.36.

![Figure 3.40: iRobot Simulation Monitor](image)

Loading an pre-edited example map either through the Setup menu at the upper-left corner the monitor, or through a keyboard shortcut Ctrl+M. Either way bring up a folder window for you to choose a desired map. In this tutorial, we choose the example map. Loading the map refreshes the monitor, which is shown in Figure 3.37.
Next, set up the origin position for the virtual iRobots either through the Setup menu at the upper-left corner of the monitor, or through a keyboard shortcut Ctrl+R. Set the origin positions the same as those shown in Figure 3.38.

Go back to the iRobot Simulation interface, starting the simulation makes the iRobot_1 moves along the line on ground, and the iRobot_2 to make a right turn approximately every 5 second in real clock time.
After verification by simulation, we can execute the same Stateflow charts to control real iRobots. Begin by typing

```
>> iRobotControl
```

at the MATLAB command prompt to invoke the iRobot Control interface shown in Figure 3.4.

In the same manner, double-click the Stateflow Chart Block and go into the superstate CPSLab in the iRobot Control Interface. Then, copy the Stateflow Charts designed in the simulation stages into the superstate CPSLab of the control interface.

Next, prepare two real iRobot, mark one of them as iRobot_1, the other as iRobot_2. Connect the Bluetooth Adapter Modules (BAMs) to the iRobots. Power up the iRobots. Assume the BAM on iRobot_1 has been assigned with COM 5 to communicate with the base station PC, and the BAM on iRobot_2 with COM 6 (see Element Direct, Inc. [19] for BAM installation instructions).

Before start running the Stateflow charts in the MBDMIRT iRobot Control interface, we need to associate each BAM with corresponding iRobots. Now, the BAM with COM 5 is installed on the iRobot_1, and the BAM with COM 6 is installed on the iRobot_2. With the above information, typing

```
>> activate_iRobot(1, 5)
```

```
>> activate_iRobot(2, 6)
```

at the MATLAB command prompt. By doing so, the ideal numbers of each iRobot, such as number 1 for the iRobot_1 and number 2 for the iRobot_2, are bound with correct BAM. Thus, the same Stateflow charts design at the simulation stage can execute on the real iRobots without any modification.
The execution of the function `activate_iRobot` for each real iRobot may take 1 to 2 minutes. After activating each iRobots, go back to the iRobot Control Interface, start the simulation of the Simulink model. This time, instead of the virtual iRobots in the simulation monitor, the real iRobot Creates will move in the same manner as in the simulation monitor, which completes this tutorial.
 CHAPTER 4  
RESULTS AND FUTURE WORK 

In this thesis, the development and structure of the MBDMIRT toolbox is described. The main contribution of this thesis is:

- The MBDMIRT toolbox as an enhancement to MATLAB & Simulink, such that Simulink/Stateflow is linked to both a multi-iRobot simulator interface and a multi-iRobot control interface.

The toolbox was designed to help users acquire and practice the Model-Based Development skills necessary to design real-time embedded system. Through the toolbox, this goal is achieved by:

1. Using Stateflow charts to design control logic for virtual iRobots,
2. Running the simulator to check the correctness of the Stateflow charts,
3. After verification by simulation, running the same Stateflow chart without modification to control real iRobots.

MBDMIRT toolbox was designed to run in real clock time. To enable this functionality, a RealTime Pacer Block is introduced to work with Simulink Solver.

4.1 Future Work

From many viewpoints, the MBDMIRT toolbox could be improved with numerous ways. A few of these are mentioned below:
• Conduct surveys on users’ experience. The effectiveness of the MBDMIRT toolbox in MBD education could be evaluated by surveying its users. The evaluation will be important in updating the toolbox functionalities.

• Generate real-time embedded code from the verified Stateflow charts. Instead of controlling iRobots from a host PC, running real-time embedded code on the iRobots provides more efficient and accurate control. A candidate controller able to execute code on the real iRobot is the iRobot Command Module [10] [39]. One of the concerns about it is that the Command Module has only general purposes I/O (GPIO). Thus, it could be difficult to let devices with RS-232 serial port communicate with the Command Module.

This thesis introduces and demonstrates the MBDMIRT toolbox. There are still numerous ways in which the MBDMIRT toolbox could be revised. I hope it will eventually contribute the education of Model-Based Development in ways I never imagined.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

INSTALLING AND CONFIGURING THE MBDMIRT TOOLBOX
A.1 License Agreement

The MBDMIRT toolbox modifies the source code of the MATLAB-Based Simulator for the iRobot Create by Cameron Salzberger. The MBDMIRT toolbox is written by Shih-Kai Su, and its code is released under the open-source BSD license. A copy of the license is provided with the software and listed below:

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The views and conclusions contained in the software and documentation are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing official policies, either expressed or implied, of Arizona State University.

A.2 Required Hardware and Software for the MBDMIRT Toolbox

This section details the required hardware and software for the MBDMIRT toolbox. The required software includes:

- MATLAB & Simulink 2010b (or newer): The MBDMIRT toolbox was developed on MATLAB 2012a, and has been tested on MATLAB 2010b. It should work on all newer versions of MATLAB including Simulink environment,

- RealTime Pacer Block: It is obtainable through the link in The MathWorks, Inc. [36]. For information about RealTime Pacer Block in the MBDMIRT toolbox, see Section 3.2.4.4 and Section 3.2.5.

The required hardware includes:

- iRobot Create: It is a differentially-driven two-wheeled ground vehicle. For more information about iRobot Create, see the introduction at http://www.irobot.com/us/robots/Educators/Create.aspx,
• BAM: BAM is short for Bluetooth Adapter Module. It is used to connect a control computer wirelessly to the iRobot Create. For more information about BAM, see the introduction at http://www.elementdirect.com.

A.3 Optional Hardware for the MBDMIRT Toolbox

This section details the optional hardware for the MBDMIRT toolbox. The optional hardware includes:

• iRobot Virtual Wall: A Virtual Wall emits an adjustable infrared beam (8 feet in maximum) that the iRobot is able to detect. A Virtual Wall prevents the iRobot from entering a specific area. For more information about iRobot Virtual Wall, see http://www.irobot.com/us,

• StarGazer Indoor Localization System: StarGazer outputs the current Cartesian coordinates with respect to a StarGazer landmark. StarGazer can be mounted on the iRobot Create to do guidance control based on the coordinates. For more information about StarGazer, see http://www.hagisonic.com/,

• SIIG RS-232 Serial to Bluetooth Adapter: It is used to connect a control computer wirelessly to the StarGazer. For more information about the RS-232 Serial to Bluetooth Adapter, see http://www.siig.com/rs-232-serial-to-bluetooth-adapter.html.

A.4 Installing the MBDMIRT Toolbox

1. Unzip the mbdmirt.zip

2. Copy the /mbdmirt folder to the path you desired. For example, 

   C:/userfolder/
3. Go to MATLAB, change MATLAB Current Folder to the path
   C:/userfolder/mbdmirt

4. At MATLAB command prompt (>>), type and enter
   >> install_mbdmirt_toolbox

5. After the function install_mbdmirt_toolbox completes execution,
   the mbdmirt directory is added into and saved in the MATLAB path.
APPENDIX B

CREATION OF THE MAP FOR SIMULATION
The physics engine of the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation is based on that of the Cornell’s MATLAB-Based Simulator for the iRobot Create. Therefore, the MBDMIRT uses the same map format for simulation. This appendix shows the types of elements available in the map and the methods of creating a map, courtesy of the Cornell University’s user manual [17].

B.1 Elements of the Map

There are four types of elements available in a map, including:

1. Walls: Represented by solid lines. The virtual iRobots are unable to pass through them. Walls can trigger bump sensors, infrared proximity wall sensor, sonar, and LIDAR.

2. Lines: Represented by dashed lines. Lines are used to indicate markings on the ground, such as paints or tapes. The virtual iRobots can pass over lines. Lines can change the readings of the cliff sensor signal strength despite that there is no cliff in a map for simulation.

3. Beacons: Represented by colored circles. Beacons are used to indicate some kinds of objects on the ground, such as colorful paints or papers. The virtual iRobots can pass over them. Beacons are detectable only by the camera.

4. Virtual Walls: Represented by a green asterisk and green lines showing the range of the field. The virtual iRobots can pass through them. Virtual Walls can trigger the omni-directional infrared sensor.
B.2 Creating a Map

A map for simulation can be created manually in a text file, or by using the MapMakerGUI in the Cornell’s MATLAB-based simulator. This section describes the approach of a manually-created text file, courtesy of the Cornell University’s user manual [17]. For the usage of MapMakerGUI, see the Cornell University’s user manual [17].

Creating a map manually in a text file allows users to precisely control the positions of the elements. There are a few formatting rules to be followed, such that the simulator can read the files correctly:

- The keywords in the text file are “%”, “wall”, “line”, “beacon”, and “virtwall”. Any row in the text file does not start with these keywords is unrecognized and a warning will display on the command window. Blank rows are allowed in the text file.

- Comments are the row of words that begins with a “%” symbol.

- The syntax for wall definition is,
  
  \[ \text{wall } x_1 \ y_1 \ x_2 \ y_2 \]

  Where \((x_1, y_1)\) indicates the first point of the wall, and \((x_2, y_2)\) indicates the second point of the wall. For example,

  \[ \text{wall 1.5 1.59 2 2.7} \]

- The syntax for line definition is similar to wall definition,
  
  \[ \text{line } x_1 \ y_1 \ x_2 \ y_2 \]

  where \((x_1, y_1)\) indicates the first point of the wall, and \((x_2, y_2)\) indicates the second point of the wall. For example,

  \[ \text{line 2.5 2.59 3 3.8} \]
• The syntax for beacon definition is,

\texttt{beacon x y \[r\ g\ b\] id}

where \((x, y)\) indicates the Cartesian coordinates of the beacon, \([r\ g\ b]\) is the color vector of the beacon, and \(id\) is the beacon’s ID number defined by user. For example,

\texttt{beacon 1.5 -1.7 \[0\ 1\ 0.5\] 1}

• The syntax for Virtual Wall definition is,

\texttt{virtwall x y th r}

where \((x, y)\) indicates the Cartesian coordinates of the emitter; \(th\) is the angle (in radians) of the direction of emission relative to the positive x-axis; \(r\) indicates the range setting (1 is the lowest range, 3 is the highest). For example,

\texttt{virtwall 2.5 3.3 -1.5 2}
APPENDIX C

CREATION OF THE CONFIGURATION FILE FOR SIMULATION
A configuration file defines the properties of the virtual sensors in the simulation, such as communication delay and noise. The physics engine of the MBDMIRT iRobot Simulation is based on that of the Cornell’s MATLAB-Based Simulator for the iRobot Create. Therefore, the MBDMIRT uses the same configuration file for simulation. This appendix shows the types of elements available in the configuration and the methods of creating a configuration, courtesy of the Cornell University’s user manual [17].

C.1 Elements of the Configuration

- Communication Delay: Determines the response time for the iRobots. Increasing this value causes longer delay for all commands, such as setting velocity or reading sensor outputs, to the iRobots.

- Noise Data: Noise data consists of mean and standard deviation. They determine the fluctuation in the virtual sensors outputs. Noise data has different meanings for each kind of virtual sensors, which is explained below:

1. Wall sensor: The default effective range of the virtual wall sensor is defined by a property rangeIR in the source code. The noise data changes the effective range. The mean of the noise causes an offset from the default range. The standard deviation causes the variance in the effective range.

2. Cliff sensors: With no noise, the cliff sensor signal strengths will read 1.5% when over a line, and 21.5% when not. The real values of the readings will vary based on room lighting, floor color and material, and the sensors themselves. If real sensors tend to read higher or lower, set a
value in the noise mean that will change the sensor output. The standard deviation adds to the variance in the readings.

3. Odometry: The odometry noise parameters should be given as a percentage of the true measurement. For example, if the Stateflow graphical function DistanceSensorRoomba consistently reads 2.2 meters, when the robot has only traveled 2 m, the mean should be set to 0.1 to signify an offset of 10%. Or if the standard deviation of readings from the Stateflow graphical function AngleSensorRoomba after turning 6 radians is 0.3 radians, then the noise standard deviation should be set to 0.05 to signify 5% variation. Both angle sensors and distance sensors use the same noise parameters.

4. Sonar: The noise data specifies the difference of the readings from the real distance.

5. LIDAR: The noise data specifies the difference of the reading from each point on the LIDAR range from the real distance.

6. Camera: The noise data specifies the difference between the readings of the distance and angle to the beacons, and the real values, in percent. There is no noise on the color reading. The distance and angle readings use the same noise parameters.

C.2 Creating a Configuration

A configuration file for simulation can be created manually in a text file, or by using the ConfigMakerGUI in the Cornell’s MATLAB-based simulator. This section describes the approach of a manually-created text file, courtesy of the Cornell University’s user
There are a few formatting rules for creating a configuration file:

- The keywords in the text file are “%”, “com_delay”, “wall”, “cliff”, “odometry”, “sonar”, “lidar”, and “camera”. Any row in the text file does not start with these keywords is unrecognized and a warning will display on the command window. Blank rows are allowed in the text file.

- Comments are the row of words that begins with a “%” symbol.

- The syntax for the definition of communication delay is,

  \[
  \text{com\_delay sec}
  \]

  where sec indicates the communication delay (in seconds). For example,

  \[
  \text{com\_delay 0.1}
  \]

- The syntax for specification of noise data is,

  \[
  \text{“sensor keyword”\ noise\_mean\ noise\_std\_deviation}
  \]

  For example,

  \[
  \text{odometry 0.05 0.01}
  \]
APPENDIX D

THE STARGAZER MAP APPLIED IN THIS THESIS
The StarGazer has two operation modes, which are Alone mode and Map mode. In the alone mode, StarGazer will treat each StarGazer landmark as an independent center point (or the origin in Cartesian coordinate system). When StarGazer sees another landmark in the alone mode, it will output coordinates with respect to the second landmark. On the other hand, in the map mode, StarGazer can memorize a set of landmarks through the procedure of map building described in the StarGazer User’s manual.

However, based on practical test, I found that the map mode is problematic. Although it is easy to build a four-landmark map as described in the user’s manual, it is quite difficult to build a map with more than four landmarks. Since the StarGazer can easily identify noise as an inexistent landmark, the whole procedure of map building must be started from the very beginning whenever the StarGazer records an inexistent landmark. Therefore, I establishes an offset table for the StarGazer landmarks distributed in the Cyber-Physical Laboratory (CPSLab) in Arizona State University, such that even the StarGazer operates in the alone mode, the StarGazer can output Cartesian coordinates with respect to the same origin. The layout of the StarGazer landmarks in CPSLab and landmark offset table is shown on the following pages.

The usage of the offset table is shown below:

1. Determine which landmark is the origin. For example, pick up landmark #10576 as the origin.

2. Whenever the StarGazer output coordinates, check the offset table in the manner depicted below: (Assume landmark #10576 is the origin)
Coordinates with respect to the landmark #10678 plus coordinates with respect to the landmark #10576 (the origin).