A PMC BASED ADC CARD FOR CMS TRACKER READOUT

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Abstract

The tracking system of the CMS detector at the LHC employs Front End Driver (FED) cards to digitise, buffer and sparsify analogue data arriving via optical links from on detector pipeline chips.

This paper describes a prototype version of the FED based upon the popular commercial PCI bus Mezzanine Card (PMC) form factor. The FED-PMC consists of an 8 channel, 9 bit ADC, card, providing a 1 MByte data buffer and operating at the LHC design frequency of 40 MHz. The core of the card is a re-programmable FPGA which allows the functionality of the card to be conveniently modified. The card is supplied with a comprehensive library of C routines.

The PMC form factor allows the card to be plugged onto a wide variety of processor carrier boards and even directly into PCI based PCs. The flexibility of the FPGA based design permits the card to be used in a variety of ADC based applications.

1. INTRODUCTION

The CMS experiment [1] is due to begin operating at CERN's Large Hadron Collider facility (LHC) in 2005. A key component of the CMS detector is the tracker [2] which is designed to provide robust particle tracking and detailed vertex reconstruction within a strong magnetic field in the high luminosity environment of the LHC. The tracker is implemented using three technologies: Silicon Strips, Micro Strip Gas Chambers (MSGC) and a Pixel Vertex detector. The silicon and MSGC detectors are collectively known as the microstrip tracker.

The microstrip tracker readout system consists of approximately $1.2x10⁷$ detector channels and, at expected track occupancies, will generate over 70% of the final data volume at CMS. The tracker readout system is clocked at the LHC bunch crossing rate of 40 MHz and is designed to operate at Level 1 trigger rates of up to 100 kHz. Microstrips are read out using analogue electronics. A schematic of the proposed system is shown in Figure 1.

Microstrip signals are amplified and stored in analogue pipeline memory chips (APV) located on the detector [3], [4]. After some elementary signal processing and multiplexing the signals are transferred to the counting room via analogue optical links.

In the counting room the analogue optical data is converted back to electrical and digitised on Front End Driver (FED) cards. Each ADC channel processes data serially from a total of 256 microstrips (constituting an APV frame). The FEDs provide digital signal processing, including cluster finding, before storing the data in local memory buffers until required by the higher levels of the central data acquisition system. Each FED receives information from the central Timing and Trigger Controls system (TTC) via a TTCrx ASIC [5]

Figure 1: The microstrip tracker readout and control system¹.

2. FED-PMC PROTOTYPE

2.1 Prototyping Requirements

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The essential functions of the FED have been established using a 9U VME prototype [6]. However, as the card resides in the counting room and does not constrain the design of front-end components, the final implementation will be delayed until nearer to the LHC start up. Meanwhile, in order to fulfill the prototyping needs of the large and diversified tracker community, a FED prototype has been produced as a PCI Mezzanine Card (PMC) [7].

The prototype card (Figure 2) will also enable evaluation of the key components of the final FED such as commercial ADCs, digital signal processing elements and the higher level DAQ interface.

The choice of the PMC format, which interfaces via the popular PCI bus, allows the FED prototype to be

¹ The microstrip tracker control system is outside the scope of this paper.

used on a wide variety of commercial off-the-shelf VME carrier boards. The FED-PMC is thereby able to benefit naturally from the constant improvement in carrier processing performance. With an appropriate interface card it can also be plugged directly on to the PCI bus of a PC or workstation.

The PMC implementation provides a cost effective solution for instrumenting detectors in test beam and laboratory setups. Software drivers are provided in order to hide the complexity of the card's functionality and enable users to install and operate FED-PMC's in a "plug and play" fashion.

Figure 2: Photograph showing both sides of the FED-PMC (Mk2 version).

2.2 Functionality

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A diagram indicating the basic functional units of the FED-PMC is shown in Figure 3. The card has 8 electrical input channels which can be configured at assembly for either differential or single-ended inputs. Each channel utilises commercial ADCs [8] and is capable of digitising 9 bits² at clock speeds from between 2 and 40 MHz.

The data is stored in contiguous blocks inside a Dual Ported Memory (DPM). The DPM is implemented as 4 x 64K x 18 bit synchronous memories [9] and is capable of buffering the raw data from approximately 250 APV frames. The data is read out (can be simultaneous with ADC capture) over the PCI bus via a 32 bit, 33 MHz commercial bridge interface [10]. A FIFO provides storage for event buffer pointers and event counter information.

A CPLD implements the clock and trigger control. Trigger and clock (LVDS) signals can be brought in via the front panel or optionally through the PCI backplane. The fine adjustment of the clock phase with respect to the data can be set under software control in order to obtain the optimum sampling point at the ADC. For testing purposes triggers can be generated internally by software and the card can run from the internal PCI clock (33 MHz).

Figure 3: Block diagram of the FED-PMC.

2.3 Firmware

At the heart of the FED-PMC design is an FPGA [11]. This permits a large fraction of the card's functionality to be re-configurable in firmware and thereby maintains a flexible hardware architecture.

The basic firmware design configures the FED-PMC to provide raw data capture in a "digital scope" mode. VHDL blocks implement the following functions:

- Local data and address bus (slave)
- DPM interface
- Event buffer management
- FIFO and counters control
- Register interface
- Test functions

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The flexibility of the FPGA based approach is demonstrated by the number of extensions to this core design which are in various stages of development for the microstrip tracker readout:

- APV Auto-Synchronisation mode : permits ADC data capture to be triggered on recognition of a header word which accompanies the APV data stream itself rather than on the external trigger.

- Data Generator mode : for exercising the interface to the higher levels of the DAQ using test patterns at high rate, (requires on-board DMA).

- Hit Finding mode : implementing pedestal and common mode subtraction with basic cluster finding3.

² The ADCs are 10 bit, the LSB is not read out.

³ It should be noted that the original specification of the FED-PMC provided by the tracker detector groups did not require hit finding capabilities.

The precise algorithms employed depend on the type of microstrip detector being readout.

Core VHDL libraries are provided for those users wishing to develop their own FPGA designs.

During normal operation the FPGA is loaded on power up under software control from an on-board Flash memory. The memory can be reloaded with a new FPGA design via a local area network using the software tools provided. This permits FPGA design updates to be distributed from a central source and reloaded in situ. The FPGA can also be loaded directly from the network for testing of new designs without overwriting the Flash memory contents.

2.4 Software

The FPGA-based open hardware architecture, described in the previous section, is complemented by the design of the software architecture which forms an integral part of the delivered FED-PMC package. The software design follows a layered approach from the lowest-level drivers right up to a full graphical user interface.

A layered design (Figure 4) has several advantages for the end user:

- It abstracts the details of the hardware implementation. At the simplest level a handful of routine calls are required for card configuration and readout operation.

- It removes the need to rewrite code which has already been debugged in parallel with the hardware4.

- It permits upgrades to the firmware to be transparently implemented. The firmware contains a version identifier permitting the software to recognise the design currently installed and operate accordingly.

Figure 4: Layered Software Design.

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The software is implemented by a comprehensive library of (open source) C routines. A high-level graphical user interface implemented using LabView [12] has also been developed for the test bench at RAL.

2.5 Operating Environments

The FED-PMC has so far been operated in the following environments:

- CES RIO2 PowerPC Single Board Computer (SBC) running with either LynxOS or VxWorks operating systems.

- Motorola MVME2604 PowerPC SBC running LynxOS.

- VMETRO MIDAS-20 PMC carrier.

By using appropriate extender cards up to 6 FED-PMC's, providing a total of 48 ADC channels, can be operated from one SBC.

Each FED-PMC occupies a total of just over 1 MByte of PCI memory space.

3. FED-PMC STATUS

3.1 CMS Tracker Beam Tests

The first FED-PMC's (Mk1) were produced during summer 1998 and commissioned during tracker test beam running at the CERN PS in October 1998. A second version (Mk2) of the card was used extensively during further beam tests at CERN during May and August 1999. Several FED-PMC's were integrated into the test beam DAQ system in a matter of a few hours and operated successfully, and without further expert intervention, throughout the data taking period.

A total of 20 Mk2 cards have recently been distributed to the CMS microstrip tracker community. The card will also be used for prototyping tests of the CMS Pixel Vertex detector.

3.2 Applications outside CMS

The CMS FED-PMC is also being employed by groups working on readout prototypes for the RICH and tracker detectors of the LHCb experiment [13].

The suitability of the FED-PMC for a medical imaging application is currently under study at Imperial College London, UK.

4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The software tools and source libraries together with further information on the FED-PMC can be found at *http://hepnts1.rl.ac.uk/CMS_fed/Default.htm*.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The challenge of providing a flexible, cost effective and easy to use ADC card for the prototyping requirements of the CMS tracker community has been met by the employment of the following standards :

⁴ If the end user chooses to implement their own firmware design they must of course produce the necessary software to operate it.

 - Hardware : PMC (PCI bus) running on commercial carriers

- Firmware : FPGA with VHDL libraries

- Software : C drivers with high level user interface

The FED-PMC has been used successfully for CMS microstrip tracker detector evaluation studies during beam tests at CERN.

The versatility of the design has been demonstrated by the employment of the FED-PMC in applications outside of CMS.

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