LASER INTERFEROMETER GRAVITATIONAL WAVE OBSERVATORY
- LIGO -
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
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Red Pitaya Digital Laser Controller

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Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 LIGO

The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) detects and studies gravitational waves using laser interferometry. The detectors used by LIGO are advanced Michelson interferometers that are 4 km long with Fabry Perot cavities and power recycling mirrors that make them highly sensitive and capable of detecting length changes at 1/10,000th the width of a proton. One significant factor that impacts the sensitivity of these interferometers is a frequency stabilized laser. As such, it is highly desirable to have a feedback controller that makes adjustments to maintain a stable frequency response.

1.2 Problem

The type of laser utilized by LIGO is a non-planar ring oscillator (NPRO), which are known to have a high intrinsic stability (i.e. no external stabilization) on the order of $10^4\text{Hz}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$ at 1 Hz [?]. This is quantity denotes the free-running frequency noise for gravitational wave detection. The frequency of the laser is stabilized by means of a piezoelectric transducer (PZT) . However, the stabilization is impacted by the mechanical resonances of the PZT as they limit the control bandwidth. These mechanical resonances can be suppressed through the implementation of a digital filter.

There are two types of digital filters: infinite impulse response (IIR) and finite impulse response (FIR). Mathematically, these filters are defined by their impulse response (i.e. infinite or finite) and are represented by

$$y(n) = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} h(k)x(n-k), \tag{1}$$

$$y(n) = \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} h(k)x(n-k), \tag{2}$$

where y(n) is the output and x(n-k) are the inputs with associated coefficients h(k). Each filter has its own advantages and disadvantages in practice. For instance, IIR filters consume less memory than FIR filters and have lower latency making them faster as well. However, FIR has linear phase characteristics and are more stable as their output values do not have feedback, and thus will not become unstable for any input signal unlike IIR filters. [?]

1.3 FPGA

A field-programmable gate array (FPGA) is an integrated circuit with programmable interconnects that can be customized for a particular application. As these interconnects can be reprogrammed to be used for other purposes other than the originally desired application, it makes this device quite versatile when used in the field. The Red Pitaya (Figure ??) is an electronic board that possesses a FPGA along with other useful components, such as digital to analog (DAC), analog to digital (ADC) converters, and digital filters that make it well suited for control purposes. The Red Pitaya is preferable to use over other electronic boards with an FPGA as it is low cost, has a user friendly interface, and possesses extensive documentation. In addition, other FPGA-based systems are not as readily usable as the Red Pitaya as this particular board has an open source python package called PyRPL.

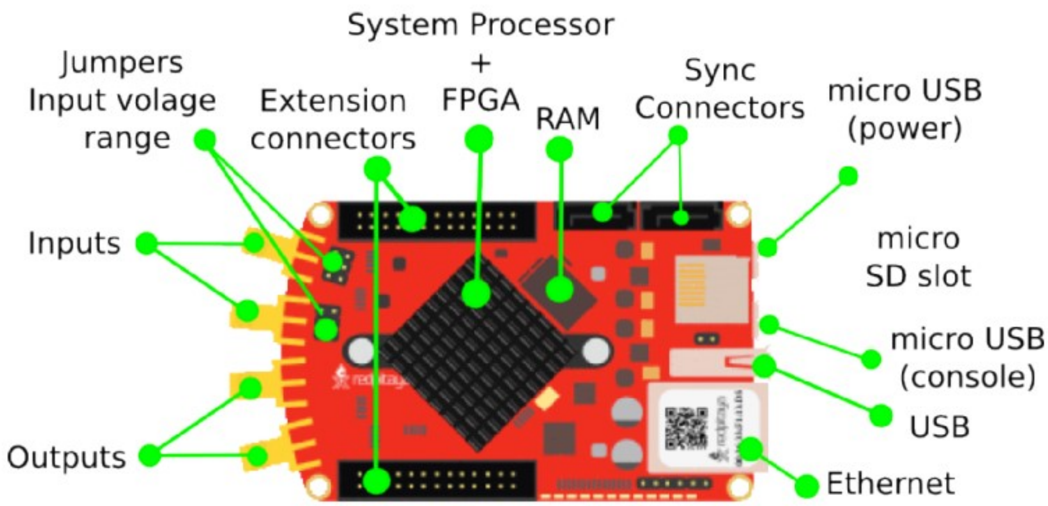

Figure 1: Schematic of the Red Pitaya board[?]

2 Purpose

We aim to improve the stabilization of the laser by suppressing the mechanical resonances of the piezoelectric transducer by the Red Pitaya FPGA [?]. We will accomplish this by programming the FPGA to determine the optimal digital filter — IIR or FIR — to use for suppressing the resonant modes of the piezo. The feedback system is represented by a simple block diagram in figure ??.

3 Approach

As FPGA programming can be time consuming, we will use the customizable DSP modules provided by PyRPL. This software package not only provides many instruments, including high order digital filters, it comes with a graphical user interface and has a python API. Following the API manual on PyPRL, we will program the interface for the necessary modules. However, for our purposes it is necessary to expand the modules provided as PyPRL lacks an FIR filter and only has a module for the IIR filter.[?]

4 Timeline

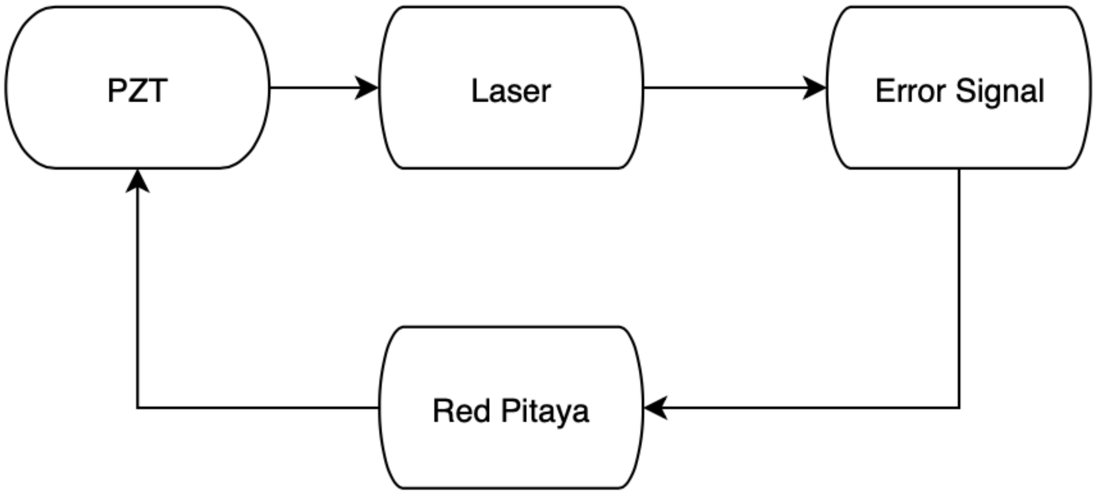

Figure 2: A closed-loop system of the NPRO laser PZT and Red Pitaya controller. The frequency of the laser is compared to a stable reference frequency to produce an error signal that is fed to the controller. The controller then corrects for this error by feeding into the PZT actuator that is used to control the laser frequency.

4.1 Weeks 1/2

First, we will familiarize ourselves with the documentation on the Red Pitaya (125 MHz 14 bit) and PyRPL. Then, begin exploring the various functions and capabilities of the FPGA using a test setup before working on the actual NPRO laser.

4.2 Weeks 3/4

After exploring the Red Pitaya, we will set it up near the optical table and connect it to the NPRO laser PZT input. We will then validate the performance of the Red Pitaya using a plant model approach.

4.3 Weeks 5/6

We will begin developing the digital filters that will be programmed on the Red Pitaya and continue validating its performance.

4.4 Weeks 7/8

After implementing the digital filters, the Red Pitaya will be programmed to determine which is the most optimal filter to use for suppressing the resonances of the PZT based on relevant parameters.

4.5 Weeks 9/10

The final two weeks we will perform a final assessment of the Red Pitaya to determine if it could be utilized in other subsystems of LIGO. Then, the remainder of the time left will be spent writing the final paper and preparing for the symposium.

5 Interim Report 1

5.1 PyRPL

Despite its outdated documentation, the software PyRPL provides convenient modules and a user friendly interface to the Red Pitaya. The network analyzer module is of particular interest as it allows us to probe an unknown system's transfer function (the ratio of the output signal of a system to a given input signal). The network analyzer accomplishes this probe through IQ (In-phase/Quadrature) modulation and demodulation. This involves exciting the device under test with a frequency sweep of sine functions, demodulating the output with the same sine and a corresponding cosine, then low-pass filtering and extracting the phase and magnitude.[?] A bode plot of the transfer function for a 1.9 MHz low pass filter (Mini-Circuits Model BLP-1.9) provided by the network analyzer module is shown in figure ?? and ??. There does appear to be issues with this module, however, as the phase plot does not agree with the one produced by a bode analyzer (a separate application not implemented by PyRPL) using the same Red Pitaya (Figure ??).

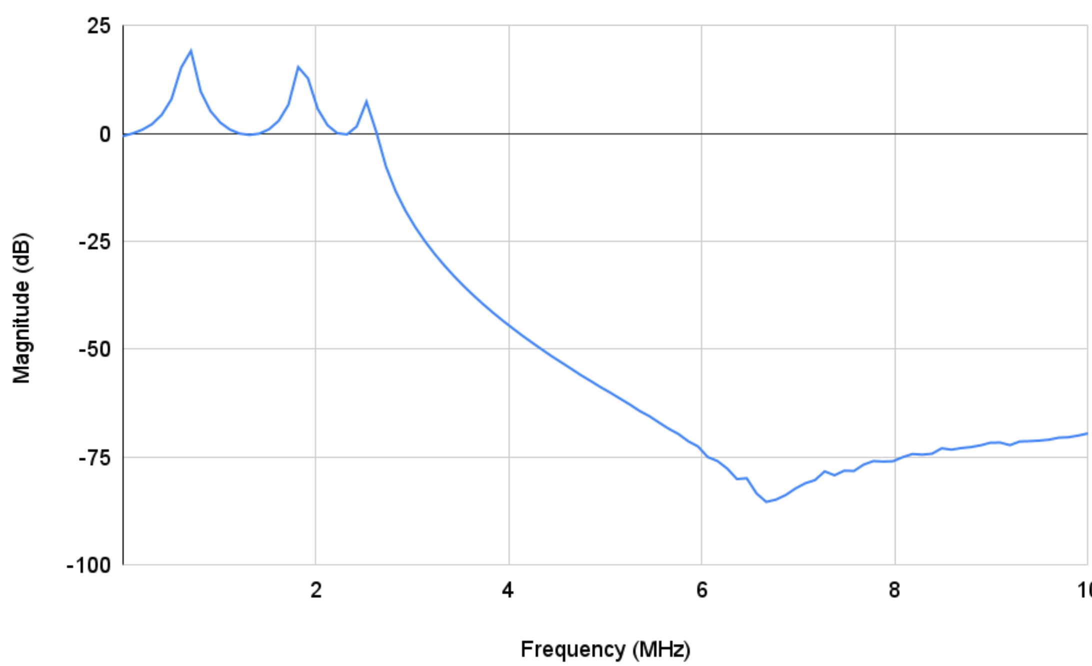

Figure 3: The magnitude of the transfer function for a 1.9 MHz low pass filter produced by the network analyzer.

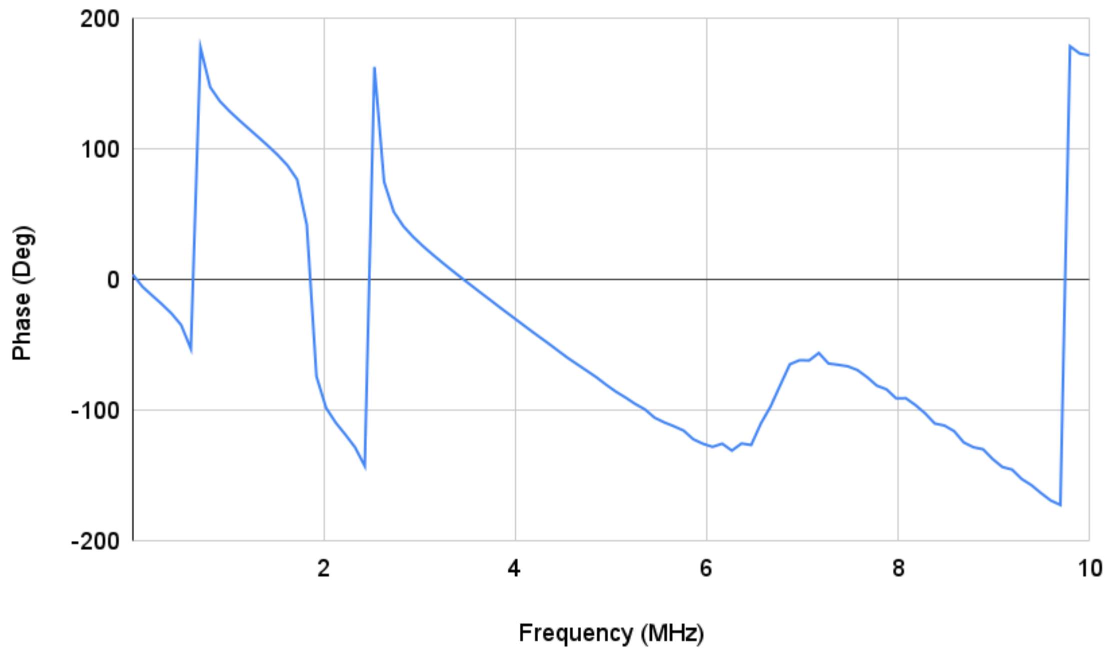

Figure 4: The phase of the transfer function for a 1.9 MHz low pass filter produced by the network analyzer.

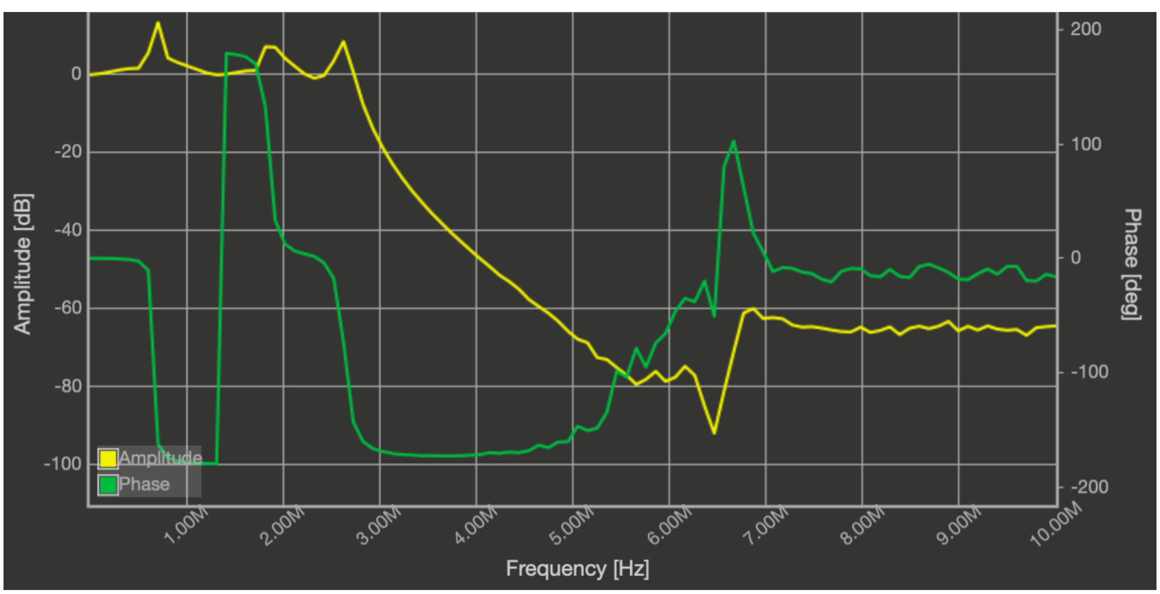

Figure 5: The transfer function of a 1.9 MHz low pass filter produced by the bode analyzer of the Red Pitaya web application.

5.2 System Identification and Modeling

Extracting the transfer function of an unknown system using the network analyzer module enables us to perform system identification. Based on this information, we can develop a model (analytical or numerical) and construct digital filters by taking the model's inverse. This can be achieved using the zpk (zero-pole-gain) representation of transfer functions.

5.3 Next Steps and Expected Challenges

I will conduct a closer examination of the network analyzer module to determine what is the source of this issue with the phase plot by testing other simple filters and parsing through the python code for PyRPL. Then, I expect to use these filters as test systems for implementing digital filters on the Red Pitaya.

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