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THE SQUARE ROOT CORDIC

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The CORDIC (Coordinate Rotation Digital Computer) algorithm[1] computes certain functions such as the sine, cosine, and $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ using only additions and bit shifting operations.

We have implemented an integer math CORDIC algorithm on a high speed RISC processor. During the course of this work, we identified a convergence problem with the $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ CORDIC. A solution to this problem is presented along with an overview of this algorithm.

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ABSTRACT

The CORDIC (Coordinate Rotation Digital Computer) algorithm[1] computes certain functions such as the sine, cosine, and $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ using only additions and bit shifting operations.

We have implemented an integer math CORDIC algorithm on a high speed RISC processor. During the course of this work, we identified a convergence problem with the $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ CORDIC. A solution to this problem is presented along with an overview of this algorithm.

I. INTRODUCTION

The CORDIC algorithm[1] utilizes a series of rotations on a two dimensional vector to compute the following: sin(z), cos(z), arc tan(y/x), and $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$. In its generalized version it has also been shown to have the capability of performing multiplication and division, as well as computing hyperbolic functions, and $\sqrt{x^2 - y^2}$.

CORDIC has found its way into desk calculators, specifically, the HP-9100 series[2]; moreover, it has proven useful in calculating the Fourier Transform[3], and also the singular values of a matrix[4]. The algorithm can be implemented either in software or on a single digital IC[5].

We first discuss the CORDIC algorithm, and then present a problem we encountered in its use. Since our project involves real time control and requires an extremely small computer, we are using integer math in an RTX 2000 processor[6] programmed in its native FORTH language. A problem arose in the evaluation of $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$. using CORDIC. We characterize the problem and present our solution.

II. THEORY

The main working equations of the CORDIC algorithm can be related to the orthogonal transformation equations used to rotate a two dimensional vector. Let us assume our original vector **R** has components x and y. The transformation equations which rotate this vector through a positive clockwise angle δ are :

(1) $x' = x \cos(\delta) + y \sin(\delta)$

(2) $y' = -x \sin(\delta) + y \cos(\delta)$

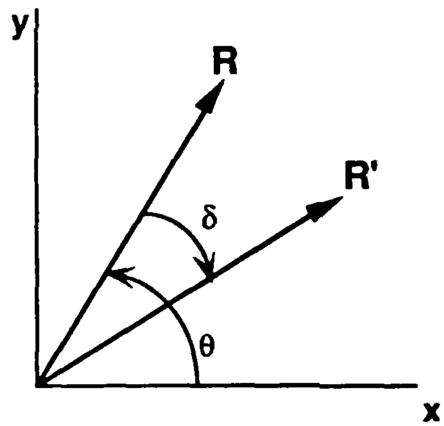

Figure 1: Orthogonal Rotation

Since the polar coordinate θ of a vector is normally defined in the counter-clockwise direction, the change in θ, that is $\Delta\theta$, is the negative of this rotation angle δ ($\Delta\theta = -\delta$) . This is an orthogonal transformation, and the length of the rotated vector, **R'**, is the same as the length of the original vector, **R**.

For very small rotation angles $\sin(\delta) \approx \delta$, and $\cos(\delta) \approx 1$. Plugging in these approximations and reversing the order of the terms in equation (2), we have:

(3) $x' = x + y\,\delta$

(4) $y' = y - x\,\delta$

Equations (3) and (4), along with a third equation which keeps track of the cumulative angle of rotation (when this is relevant), are the main working equations of the CORDIC algorithm. The details of this procedure are discussed below in the ALGORITHM section (Section III).

The transformation equations are now no longer orthogonal, and correspond not only to a rotation, but also a stretching of the vector It is shown below that the stretch factor (K) equals $\sqrt{1+\delta^2}$

(5) $R' = \sqrt{(x')^2 + (y')^2}$

(6) $R' = \sqrt{(x + y\,\delta)^2 + (y - x\,\delta)^2}$

(7) $R' = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2\delta^2 + y^2 + x^2\delta^2}$

(8) $R' = \sqrt{(x^2 + y^2)(1 + \delta^2)}$

(9) $R' = R\sqrt{1+\delta^2}$

Furthermore, δ no longer represents the angle of rotation for the vector, but instead the vector will have been rotated clockwise through an angle α equal to the arctan(δ). The fact that α equals the arctan(δ) is proven next.

Define a vector **V** that has the same length as **R** and the same direction as **R'**.

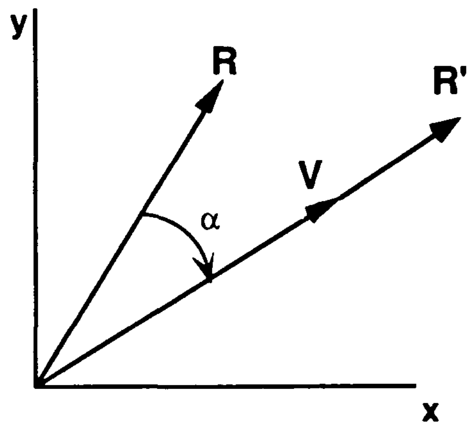

Figure 2: Cordic Rotation

Since the magnitude of $V = R = R' / \sqrt{1+\delta^2}$, the components of **V**, namely x_v and y_v, are equal to $x' / \sqrt{1+\delta^2}$ and $y' / \sqrt{1+\delta^2}$. respectively. Since $x' = x + y^*\delta$, we have $x_v = (x + y^*\delta) / \sqrt{1+\delta^2}$, and therefore,

(10) $x_v = x / \sqrt{1+\delta^2} + y * \delta / \sqrt{1+\delta^2}$

The **V** vector is the **R** vector after an orthogonal clockwise rotation through an angle α, the transformation equation for x_v has the form

(11) $x_v = x * \cos(\alpha) + y * \sin(\alpha)$

Comparing equations (10) and (11) for x_v we see that

(12) $\sin(\delta) = \delta / \sqrt{1+\delta^2}$ and (13) $\cos(\alpha) = 1 / \sqrt{1+\delta^2}$

Recall that

(14) $\tan(\alpha) = \sin(\alpha) / \cos(\alpha)$

Plugging the expressions in (12) and (13) into (14) we get $\tan(\alpha) = \delta$ or $\alpha = \arctan(\delta)$. The same result can be obtained by an analysis of the y component of **V**.

III. THE ALGORITHM

There are two modes for the CORDIC algorithm. One is called vectoring; the other, rotation. The vectoring mode will be explained in detail since our problem arose in this mode when we tried to compute $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$. For an explanation of how the rotation mode can be used to compute such functions as the sine and cosine, the reader should consult one the references[1,2,7,8].

The vectoring mode is useful when the x and y components of a vector are given and the magnitude $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ and/or the arctan(y/x) are desired. In this mode the successive CORDIC rotations are carried out in such a way as to eventually "force y to zero". Each iteration corresponds to a nonorthogonal rotation, and stretches the vector by a factor of $\sqrt{1 + \delta_i^2}$. This stretch factor is independent of the direction of the rotation. The cumulative stretch factors are listed in Table 2. After y has been forced to zero (i.e. the vector has been rotated to align with the +x axis), the magnitude, $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$, is obtained by dividing the value in the x variable by the cumulative stretch factor.

To compute $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ the working equations are:

(15) $x_{i+1} = x_i + y_i \delta_i$

(16) $y_{i+1} = y_i - x_i \delta_i$

where for the ith iteration $\delta_i = \pm (1/2)^i$ and $i = 0, 1, 2, 3 \ldots$

The $\pm$ sign is selected by checking whether y_i is positive or negative. In order to force y to zero, if y_i is positive, then δ_i is positive, and $x_i \delta_i$ is subtracted from y_i (N.B. x_i is always positive). Conversely, if y_i is negative, then δ_i is chosen to be negative also.

Multiplying x_i or y_i by δ_i is achieved by right shifting the value. For example, if i equals 3 then δ_3 equals $(1/2)^3$. The value of $y_3 \delta_3$ is then computed by simply shifting the binary value of y_3 three places to the right.

In the $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ computation there is no need to keep track of the cumulative rotation angle. However, If the arctan(y/x) of the original vector is desired, then one simply sums up the angles of rotation (α_i) produced by each iteration (recall, α_i = arc tan (δ_i)).

IV. INTEGER ARITHMETIC PROBLEM

The RTX processor is equipped with specialized square root instructions. This routine will take the square root of any positive integer up to 31 bits long (corresponding to the decimal range of zero to 2,147,483,647). This may seem like a large range, but in the special case where x equals y in $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$, the maximum value for x is only 32,767. This is not adequate for our purposes. We tried using a 63 bit square root algorithm, but CORDIC executed faster. Using CORDIC we can extend the range of the input values, x and y, to 30 bits.

Unfortunately, when we tested our CORDIC square root function, we came across the difficulty illustrated in the following exampie.

Suppose x equals 333 and y equals 444 . We can expect $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ to yield 555 since this is a 3-4-5 triangle. Below we present a table of x_i , y_i , $x_i \delta_i$, and $y_i \delta_i$ after each iteration as determined by the algorithm discussed above.

Table 1: Example

i	x_i	y_i	$x_i\delta_i$	$y_i\delta_i$
0	333	444	333	444
1	777	111	388	55
2	832	-277	208	-70
3	902	-69	112	-9
4	911	43	56	2
5	913	-13	28	-1
6	914	15	14	0
7	914	1	7	0
8	914	-6	3	-1
9	915	-3	1	-1
10	916	-2	0	-1
11	917	-2	0	-1
12	918	-2	0	-1
13	919	-2	0	-1
14	920	-2	0	-1
15	921	-2	0	-1

The reader will note that after iteration #7 the value of y is closest to zero. If the value of x after iteration #7 (namely, 914) is divided by the stretch facter (see table 2) of 1.6466932543, and then rounded to an integer, the result turns out to be the correct integer, 555. However, after iteration #9, y is stuck at -2, but x (and therefore the result) continues to grow.

Table 2: Stretch Factors

Iteration Number	Stretch Factor (K)
0	1.4142135624
1	1.5811388301
2	1.6298006013
3	1.6424840658
4	1.6456889158
5	1.6464922787
6	1.6466932543
7	1.6467435066
8	1.6467560702
9	1.6467592111
10	1.6467599964
11	1.6467601927
12	1.6467602418
13	1.6467602540
14	1.6467602571
15	1.6467602579
16	1.6467602581
17	1.6467602581
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26	1.6467602581
27	1.6467602581
28	1.6467602581
29	1.6467602581
30	1.6467602581
31	1.6467602581

V. SOLUTIONS

We considered several ways to patch the algorithm. Since the y value could not always be forced exactly to zero, we needed another condition that would reliably halt the iterative process without introducing too much error in the result ($\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$). We considered checking for small rates of change in x, y, xδ, or yδ. We decided instead to check whether the absolute value of y was less than some predetermined cutoff value as our halt condition. The values in Table 1 suggested to us that if the absolute value of y became less than three, it was time to stop. This condition was tested by looping through millions of combinations of integers that maintain the 3-4-5 proportionality and were in our range of interest. We also decided to test other limits for y. The limit for y was incremented from 0 to 127. Table 3 is a representative selection of the distribution of errors as a function of the |y| cutoff. The error frequency counts were truncated to 32760 to avoid overflow. When the |y| cutoff was less than three, a second peak in the error distribution appears between 10 and 14. These occurrences resulted from cases which were never halted at maturity. The drift from the correct result continued until the DO loop was completed (32 iterations).

Using the combinations of integers that maintain the 3-4-5 proportionality, the error stayed below six for a broad range of |y| cutoff values. Eventually, at a sufficiently high cutoff (approximately 100) the size of the error began to rise due to premature halting of the algorithm. These cases involved small initial values of x and y. In particular, when the initial value of y was less than the cutoff, the algorithm halted immediately and returned the initial value of x as its result.

Table 3: Error Frequency Vs. Size of Error and Cutoff

Error	|y|<0*	1	2	3	28	60	80	101
0	26	665	1810	3078	32760	32760	32760	32760
1	2566	16177	32760	32760	32760	32760	32760	32760
2	23370	32760	32760	32760	32760	28259	19375	19150
3	32760	32760	32760	32760	8528	6803	5446	4359
4	21159	26561	19078	9693	1446	734	574	436
5	8043	6709	3809	2385	61	4	2	22
6	3159	1188	272	138	1	0	0	1
7	1190	432	5	1	0	0	0	0
8	812	125	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	15729	3839	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	32760	21286	8	0	0	0	0	0
11	32760	16511	11	0	0	0	0	0
12	7576	3258	3	0	0	0	0	0
13	1465	510	5	0	0	0	0	0
14	412	239	37	0	0	0	0	0
15	68	31	1	0	0	0	0	0
16	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* This is equivalent to the standard CORDIC algorithm (no |y| cutoff).

Other combinations of integers were also tested. For example, integers that maintain the 5-12-13 proportionality, as well as integers generated randomly, were studied. The general features of the distribution of errors as a function of the |y| cutoff remained the same; however, the region where the errors were less than six moved around.

The function which we finally implemented involves a hybrid approach to evaluating $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$. Whenever the input values of both x and y are smaller than 32768, the RTX processor's 31 bit square root function is employed. Otherwise, CORDIC with a |y| cutoff of 100 is used. This combined the best of both worlds. The built in routine was very fast, but could not handle large numbers; whereas, CORDIC produced a much smaller per cent error for large numbers than it did for small numbers. Setting the |y| cutoff at 100 has the advantage of providing a relatively quick exit condition.

Furthermore, very little is lost with this choice of cutoff since we only use CORDIC for large values of x and y. Suppose, for example, the initial values of x and y are 30,000 and 40,000 respectively. Since one of these numbers is larger than 32768 we would utilize CORDIC. The expected result for $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ is 50,000. When the vector has been rotated such that y = 100, the value of x is then 49,999.9 (ignoring the stretch factor for the sake of argument). The truncated value of 49,999 is only one less than the correct value of 50,000.

VI. CONCLUSION

While the CORDIC algorithm provides a simple method of evaluation for a wide variety of functions, we found that caution is necessary in certain circumstances. In particular, when integer arithmetic is used and $\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$ is evaluated by CORDIC, significant errors sometimes arise. This is especially bothersome for small initial values of both x and y. One way to handle this problem is to place a cutoff condition on the absolute value of y. Usually, a built in square root function is available; however, its range may be too limited. We recommend using the built in function because of its speed and accuracy whenever it is possible, and using CORDIC with a suitable cutoff on the absolute value of y to extend the range.

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