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CONTROL SYSTEMS

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Contents

PREFACE

1. INTRODUCTION

2. MATHEMATICAL MODELS OF PHYSICAL SYSTEMS

2.1	Introduction
2.2	Differential Equations and Transfer Functions for Physical Systems
2.3	Electrical Analogs for Mechanical Systems
2.4	Modeling an Armature-Controlled DC Servomotor
2.5	Simplification of Block Diagrams
2.6	A DC Position-Control System
2.7	Mason's Rule
2.8	Summary
2.9	References
2.10	Problems

I *Introduction*

The subject of control systems is of great importance to all engineers. The objective is to free human beings from boring repetitive chores that can be done easily and more economically by automatic control devices. The recent developments in the large-scale integration of semiconductor devices and the resulting availability of inexpensive microprocessors has made it practical to use computers as integral parts of control systems, making them cheaper as well as more sophisticated.

Historically, the first automatic control device used in the industry was the Watt fly-ball governor, invented in 1767 by James Watt, who was also the inventor of the steam engine. The object of this device was to keep the speed of the engine nearly constant by regulating the supply of steam to the engine. A schematic diagram is shown in Fig. 1.1. The two fly balls in the governor rotate about a vertical axis at a speed proportional to the speed of the engine. Due to the centrifugal force acting on them, they tend to move out. This movement controls the supply of steam to the engine through a mechanical linkage to the steam flow valve in such a manner that the steam supply is reduced when the speed is high and increased when the speed is low.

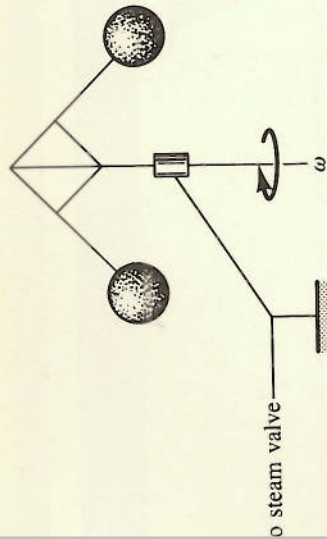


FIGURE 1.1. The Watt fly-ball governor.

It was found that by a proper design of the governor the speed of the engine shaft could be kept within narrow limits of a specified value. It was also observed that to increase the sensitivity of the governor, it tended to "hunt" or oscillate around the desired setting. It was about 100 years later that a complete analysis was made by James Clerk Maxwell (more well known for his contributions to electromagnetic field theory).

Much later it was realized that all automatic control systems worked on the principle of feedback. By a coincidence, about the same time the theory of amplifiers had been developed by electrical engineers who had been concerned with transmitting telephone signals over long distances. In 1904, one may mention the Nyquist theory of stability developed about that time at impetus to the theory of automatic control came during World War I when servomechanisms were utilized for the control of anti-aircraft guns. World War II many peacetime applications followed. Some of these were "autopilot" for aircraft, automatic control of machine tools, automatic control of chemical processes, and automatic regulation of voltage at electric power plants. Although originally the theory was based on frequency response methods, in the 1960s the impact of the digital computer led to the development of time-domain theory using state variables. This theory is useful as more sophisticated multivariable control systems were developed for more complex processes. As computers have become cheaper and more compact, they have been utilized as components of more advanced control systems.

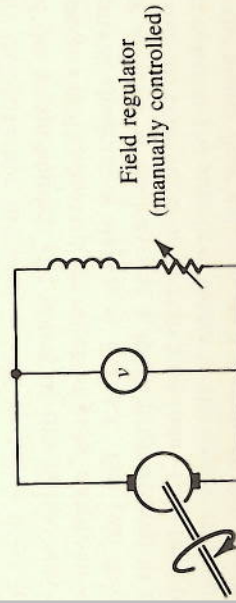


FIGURE 1.2. A voltage control system.

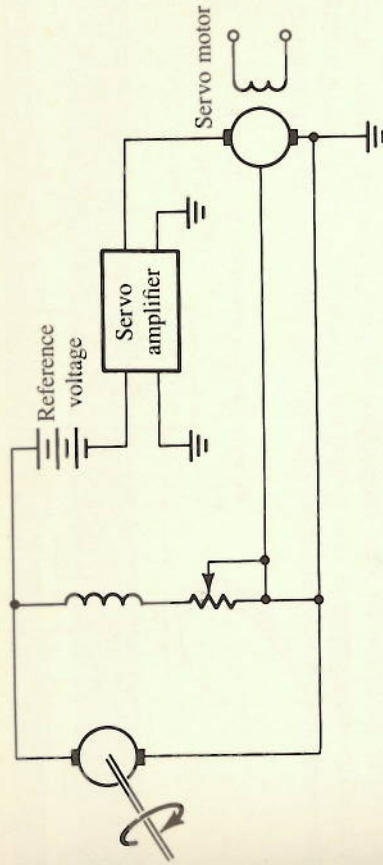


FIGURE 1.3. Automatic voltage regulator.

Let us consider some simple examples of control systems. Figure 1.2 shows the scheme for controlling the voltage at an electric power station in the 1940s. A human operator was required to watch a voltmeter connected to the busbars and adjust the field rheostat in order to keep the voltage close to the specified value. A scheme for automatic voltage regulation is shown in Fig. 1.3 and shows that it works by comparing the actual value of the voltage with the desired value. The difference or "error" is applied to a servomotor, after suitable amplification. This servomotor drives a shaft coupled to the field rheostat to alter the resistance in the field winding in such a manner that the error is reduced. Hence, it may be said that "feedback" is utilized to obtain automatic control. As a matter of fact, all automatic control systems use feedback and can be represented by the block diagram shown in Fig. 1.4. It can be seen that the controlled output is fed back and compared with the reference input. The difference, called the "error," is then utilized to drive the system in such a manner that the output approaches the desired value (i.e., the reference input).

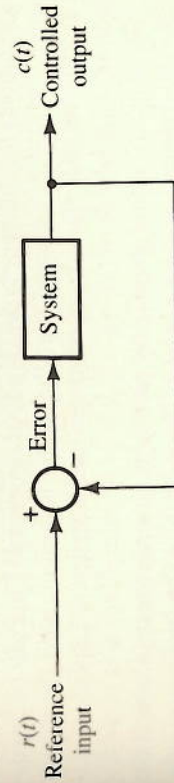


FIGURE 1.4. Block diagram of automatic control system.

Another example is the home heating system. A thermostat senses the temperature and if it is lower than a set value, the furnace is turned on. The furnace is turned off when the temperature exceeds another set value. The block diagram is shown in Fig. 1.5. Although it is similar to Figs. 1.3 and 1.4, it may be noted that this is an on/off-type control system, whereas the voltage regulator is a continuous-type system.

It was noticed at the very outset that if one tried to improve the accuracy of a control system by increasing the loop gain, it led to instability,

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