An Introduction to Electrical Instrumentation and Measurement Systems

An Introduction to Electrical Instrumentation and Measurement Systems

A guide to the use, selection, and limitations of electrical instruments and measurement systems

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Second Edition

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Methods of Measurement	4
1.2 Display Methods	16
1.3 Accuracy	22
1.4 Input Characteristics	37
1.5 Waveform	41
1.6 Interference	49
1.7 Selection	51
2. Analogue Instruments	53
2.1 Moving Coil Instruments	53
2.2 The Electrodynamical Instrument	97
2.3 Other Pointer Instruments	103
2.4 Energy Meters	113
2.5 Solid State Indicators	114
2.6 The Cathode Ray Oscilloscope	115
2.7 Instrumentation Tape Recorders	134
3. Comparison Methods	146
3.1 D.C. Potentiometer	146
3.2 A.C. Potentiometer	155
3.3 D.C. Bridges	156
3.4 A.C. Bridges	166

4. Digital Instruments	186
4.1 Counters	186
4.2 Multi-function Digital Voltmeters	205
4.3 'Intelligent' Instruments	215
4.4 Hybrid Instruments	221
5. Transducers	234
5.1 Resistance Change Transducers	238
5.2 Reactance Change Transducers	255
5.3 Semiconductor Devices	261
5.4 Self-generating Transducers	264
5.5 Ultrasonic Transducers	272
5.6 Digital Transducers	272
6. Signal Conditioning	277
6.1 Voltage Scaling	277
6.2 Current Scaling	287
6.3 Attenuators	294
6.4 Filters	299
6.5 Probes	308
6.6 Modulation and Sampling	316
6.7 Analogue Processing	319
6.8 Digital-Analogue Conversion	329
7. Interference and Screening	331
7.1 Environmental Effects	331
7.2 Component Impurities	334
7.3 Coupled Interference	341
7.4 Noise Rejection Specifications	349
8. Instrument Selection and Specification Analysis	360
8.1 Instrument Selection	360
8.2 Specification Analysis	363
9. Instrumentation Systems	379
9.1 System Design	379
9.2 Analogue Systems	380
9.3 Digital Systems	384

CONTENTS

vii

10. Problems and Exercises	398
10.1 Principles	398
10.2 Analogue Instruments	400
10.3 Null or Comparison Measurements	404
10.4 Digital Instruments	408
10.5 Transducers	410
10.6 Signal Conditioning	411
10.7 Interference	413
10.8 Selection	415
10.9 Systems	421
10.10 Answers	422
 <i>Appendix I: Units, Symbols and Conversion Factors</i>	 425
 <i>Appendix II: Dynamic Behaviour of Moving Coil Systems</i>	 430
 <i>Appendix III: Equations to Determine the components of a Resistive 'T' Attenuator Pad</i>	 437
 <i>Index</i>	 439

Preface

Our ability to measure a quantity determines our knowledge of that quantity, and since the measuring of electrical quantities—or other parameters in terms of electrical quantities—is involved in an ever expanding circle of occupations of contemporary life, it is essential for the practising engineer to have a thorough knowledge of electrical instrumentation and measurement systems. This is especially so since in addition to his own requirements, he may be called upon to advise others who have no electrical knowledge at all.

This book is primarily intended to assist the student following an electrical or electronic engineering degree course to adopt a practical approach to his measurement problems. It will also be of use to the engineer or technician, who now finds himself involved with measurements in terms of volts, ampères, ohms, watts, etc., and faced with an ever increasing variety of instruments from a simple pointer instrument to a complex computer-controlled system. Thus, the object of this book is to help the engineer, or instrument user, to select the right form of instrument for an application, and then analyse the performance of the competitive instruments from the various manufacturers in order to obtain the optimum instrument performance for each measurement situation.

During that period of my career when I was employed in the research department of an industrial organisation I was, at times, appalled by the lack of ability exhibited by some graduates in selecting a suitable, let alone the best, instrument to perform quite basic measurements. Since entering the field of higher education to lecture in electrical measurements and instrumentation, my philosophy has been to instruct students to consider each measurement situation on its merits and then select the best instrument for that particular set of circumstances. Such an approach must of course include descriptions of types of instruments, and be presented so that the student understands the functioning and limitations of each instrument in order to be able to make the optimum selection.

There will undoubtedly be comments on and criticisms of this version and for those of the previous edition I am grateful. In this second edition, I have updated the material of the 1973 edition, taking into account the many changes that

have occurred in instrumentation during the past six years; I have also added instructional problems (a deficiency of the first edition).

I have made appreciable rearrangements to the book, largely to accommodate the changes in instrumentation that have resulted from the developments in integrated circuits, such as the microprocessor, which has made possible programmable and calculating facilities within instruments. Hence, the general theme of the book is to describe the techniques used to produce the various types of instrument available and illustrate their description with examples of manufacturers' specifications. Unfortunately there is a limit to the amount that can be included in a book of realistic size (and price). I have therefore omitted specialised topics such as medical instruments, chemical analysis, radio frequency measurements, acoustic measurements and programming. The last of these topics it might be argued should be included, for more and more instrumentation will involve the use of programmable devices, be it the purpose-built microprocessor-controlled instrumentation system, or the computer-operated system in which a high level language is used. I would suggest that programming instruction is better documented by the expert rather than by myself. To assist the reader with difficulties of this and other kinds, there is a list of references for further reading at the end of each chapter.

I would like to thank all the instrument manufacturers who have willingly assisted me in producing this volume by providing application notes, specifications, reproductions of articles, and also their obliging field engineers. I have endeavoured to acknowledge all sources of diagrams and other material, but I hope that any oversights will be excused. I should also like to thank my colleagues in the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Brighton Polytechnic for their assistance and encouragement; in particular my thanks are due to Doctors R. Miller, R. Thomas and K. Woodcock, for reading and commenting on various parts of the manuscript, also to Brenda Foster for patience and effort in typing the manuscript.

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