

Comments on Head Box Control

K. G. A. GUNNARSON, ASEA, Dept. FAP, Vasteras, Sweden

THE PAPERS on this subject have described total head controlled by pneumatic valves as actuators. In the Chao & Sanborn paper, the authors mention that a time lag of 5 s or more must be tolerated when using these actuators. I suggest that somewhat more rapid control can be arranged by using a modern electronic controller.

Because pneumatic valves are slow acting, I wish to report on the ASEA head box control system for papermachines in which such valves are not used for control purposes. The system that has been marketed for the last two years (to date 25 September 1969) employs the fan pump as a rapid and accurate actuator for level control.

The level controller was previously combined with a conventional control system for maintaining constant air pressure in the head box. If the short settling time of the fan pump control is to be fully utilised, corresponding demands must be imposed on the control equipment for the air pressure. Furthermore, the characteristics of the level and air pressure controllers must be matched with each other, since the process quantities involved greatly influence one another.

The system has been further developed to reduce the settling time of the air control and eliminate the disadvantages of having two different types of controller. With this new system for integrated total head and level control (patents pending)—

1. The air pressure (total head) is controlled with the aid of a speed-controlled Roots blower.
2. The controller for the air pressure (total head) is of the same type as the level controller and built together with this.

Fig. 1 shows the basic principle of this system.

In this new system, the level is controlled as previously with the aid of a speed-controlled fan pump and it is measured in the overflow channel. If the head box is not provided with an overflow channel, the level is measured

Under the chairmanship of P. E. Wrist

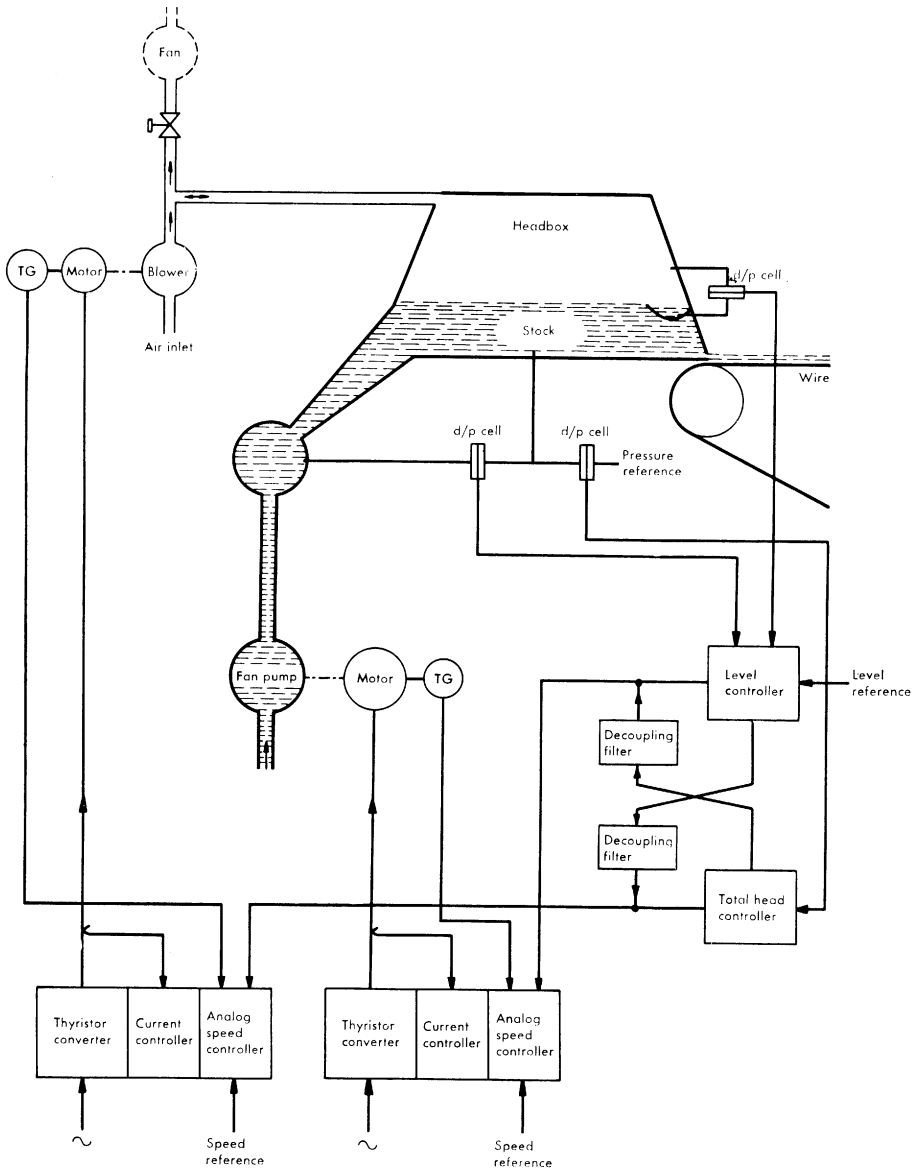


Fig. 1—ASEA head box control system: integrated total head level control in the overflow channel

instead in the pond. When the reference value for the speed is not set so that the flow of the fan pump results in a constant level, the level controller will yield an addition that rapidly eliminates the level error. To counteract as quickly as possible spontaneous flow variations in the inlet, another signal can be fed back to correct the speed of the fan pump, namely, the differential pressure across the manifold or distribution plate by the inlet to the head box. The reference value for the level is set in the level controller.

The control equipment for the total head comprises a total head controller with a speed-controlled blower as actuator. The total head reference is obtained from a column of water, whose height can be steplessly adjusted with the aid of a motor-operated actuator. A dp cell senses the differential pressure between the total head of the head box and the reference pressure. This differential pressure, which is thus the difference between the desired value and the actual value of the total head, is converted into an electrical signal and fed to the total head controller. This yields an addition to the speed reference for the speed controller of the Roots blower with static converter motor drive, according to the same principle as that used for the level control.

In head boxes for which the air cushion head is low, a fan is provided to maintain a constant air exhaust.

The integrated total head and level control is provided also with circuits for the mutual decoupling of the two controllers. If these decoupling circuits were not provided, any trimming measures in one of the systems (for example, the total head control) would influence the other system (the level control). This would mean that the level control would also have to be retrimmed. After this retrimming, the total head control would have to be finely trimmed and so on. When the decoupling circuits are trimmed, each control system can be individually taken into operation, which greatly facilitates the commissioning.

Thyristor converters are well suited for feeding the motors driving the fan pump and blower for the head box control. Very short settling times can be achieved with the current and speed controllers included in the converter equipment (50–100 ms for the elimination of minor disturbances). This ensures that the reaction time of the actuator itself can be neglected. By means of suitable designing of the fan pump, blower and associated drive and control equipment the head box control system will not therefore impose the limit for the resetting time when, for example, the machine speed or slice opening is altered. The resetting rate instead is limited by other factors in the process itself.

If this head box control system is to be utilised, it is essential (as already mentioned) that the fan pump, also the Roots blower should be provided with speed control. In most cases, speed control is also the most economic

alternative for fan pump drives. An uncontrolled drive with, for example, induction motor may be justified from an economic point of view only if the pump is run without any significant throttling of the stock flow.

Conclusion

Main features for the head box control system described are—

1. Extremely fast total head control reduces surges previously intangible for control.
2. Total head and level control use as actuators speed-controlled thyristor drives.
3. Both controllers are suitably interconnected in order to eliminate cross-coupling between the two systems.
4. Level control for the overflow channel is adjusted for minimum consistency variations in the head box.

An integrated total head and level control system was very recently started up for a Wärtsilä head box on the papermachine at Lövhölmens Bruk, Piteå, Sweden, making kraftliner.

As a result, very accurate total head control is achieved. Typical spontaneous surges with a rise time of less than 2 s have been reduced by a factor of 2.5.

Transcription of Discussion

Discussion

Dr L. A. Kirk As we at Manchester University have a similar kind of papermachine, I would be very interested to know the total cost of computerising your papermachine. In view of the papers we have heard on the exact extent to which computer control has been applied in industry, do you consider it worthwhile for our machine to be computer-controlled at this stage?

Mr S. Bauduin The total cost of the project, which extends over a three year period (until the end of 1970) is approximately £140 000, including—

Instrumentation and wiring	£30 000
Computer	£10 000
Ancillaries	£15 000
Personnel salaries, etc.	£85 000

Our machine is quite different from an industrial one, although time constants are nearly the same. We think that the approach to control problems will have to be the same. Besides, such a system is very convenient for training purposes.

Dr J. A. Robinson In the text, it is stated that the response of the model appears to be better than the theoretical response, but the theoretical response in Fig. 7 appears to be better.

Mr Bauduin Our paper states about Fig. 7 that ‘an explanation has not yet been found for the fact that the response of the full model appears at first sight to be better than the theoretical response’. Thus, the ‘theoretical’ curve shows a permanent deviation, whereas the ‘simulation’ (full model) curve does come back to the original signal level.

We have now found the answer: it lies in an ill-adapted coefficient in the model used for the ‘theoretical’ curve (polynomial division program).

In spite of that, we have still shown the two graphs (Fig. 7 and 8) to illustrate the difference between the one time constant model and the three time constant model.

Dr Robinson The only point is that it appears to be in the reverse order on the graph.

Dr D. Wahren You said that the effects of recirculation of whitewater could be ignored. Was this because you had a very high retention on the machine?

Mr Bauduin Yes, I think so. Most of our tests at that moment were done with kraft pulp. In fact, the model showed, at least for high frequency fluctuations, that it is still true for low retention stocks for regulation purposes.

A Speaker In talking about head box control systems, we should remember that machines in operation today range 30–35 in to high speed newsprint machines with widths of over 400 in. A variation between 1 in and 35 in is quite different from 400 in. I think it would be helpful if any speaker who was talking of a specific machine would give the range in which he was working.

A comment on whether to install a computer on the University of Manchester papermachine. We should remember that the Fourdrinier machine is now in the state of obsolescence and, with the new formers available, before anyone can put a computer on such a machine, he should consider carefully whether it is adaptable to the high speed machines that are likely to be used in the near future.

The Chairman We are starting up a new Fourdrinier machine in two weeks' time; I hope such machines are not as obsolete as this speaker suggests.

Mr N. C. Underwood Will the authors and committee consider a uniform set of units for the measurement of gains, frequencies and response functions so that the results presented in the transactions may be more directly compared?

The Chairman These are very good points that the authors should attempt to take care of in editing.

Mr A. J. Ward Would Mr Gunnarson like to indicate the difference in cost between his rapid response electrical system and the more conventional pneumatic approach?

Mr K. G. A. Gunnarson The total cost for an ASEA system depends on delivery time. The estimated price for a complete system, including complete dc drive (500 kW) for the fan pump, Roots blower with complete dc drive, dp cells, pneumatic reference device for the total head is about 20 000 dollars.

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Mr L. D. Edenborough We have now seen two examples in which Mr Jones uses the CONRAD system. It seems to me that perhaps the building block approach of which he has spoken is to some extent comparable with the small mill that cannot justify a large computer system, but wants to do something a little cleverer than is possible with conventional analog control systems, a comparison of these two approaches may be worthwhile. Could Mr Jones please attempt to contrast them from the technical and economic viewpoints?

Mr R. E. Jones Comparing and contrasting is rather a tall order, because it would take quite a long time to cover all the implications of the two techniques. What I will say is that the control strategies that we have used with a CONRAD package certainly could be implemented by analog modules. I think it would be up to the individual customer or systems engineer to decide on the relative costs of going to these two different methods of implementing control. I would point out that *behind* the CONRAD package is a central processor that can do much background work as well.

Dr N. K. Bridge We have heard a lot about head box control this morning and speakers have quoted in passing figures for the control that they can achieve. I wonder whether it might not be of use to people when they get back to their mills if they could have a consensus of opinion from the experts on the platform on how well a flow box might perform with a good controller. What sort of variations might be expected in total head on grade, also how fast should it be possible to change the head?

Dr D. B. Brewster I would like to comment on Dr Sanborn's paper. The head box is a good example of a process for which a mathematical model may be developed directly from physical laws. The advantage of this type of model over the black box empirical model is that there are generally fewer parameters that need to be determined experimentally by identification. Identification experiments tend to make production superintendents nervous, particularly on machines that are being pushed hard. One feature of the head box identification described by Dr Sanborn is that the pond level response is determined open loop—that is, with the analog level controller disconnected. Special care must therefore be taken to ensure that level control is not lost.

It is not necessary to perform the extensive identification described by Dr Sanborn if the valve behaviour is modelled. Dr Al-Shaikh at Westvaco did this and was able to identify the head box completely, using only one experiment with the head box pond level controller on control. A DDC algorithm was designed with the controller parameters being calculated through the

model. The validity of this approach became evident when the machine speed was changed by a factor of 2 and the automatic tuning worked perfectly.

The major problem in the Sanborn paper seemed to be the sluggish valve action that resulted in dead time. It would seem to be preferable to solve that problem mechanically.

Dr I. B. Sanborn The way we set up our system is in some respects rather cunning. We always left the analog control on when there was a mechanical failure in hardware between the computer and the head box or, if we wished to open the loop between one to the other, we always fell back on the controller. The net effect was that, as far as the head box was concerned, it was no particular problem to open loops in identification. The magnitudes of the upsets necessary in identification were in the order of 1–2 in water and this was in total head operating ranges of 50 in down to 20 in. In many instances, unless we told the operator we were making an identification, he never knew it took place.

In this particular instance, identification was not as upsetting as it might otherwise have been. This is not the case with basis weight moisture control, however, which causes a decided upset in the process. I agree that a little cleverness can avoid a lot of identification. In fact, as I pointed out during the discussion after my paper, we have developed means now by which, having identified the parameters at one particular operating point, we have calculated at all other points as well. We probably identify initially when we throw the loop, then vary very infrequently, perhaps once every six months or a year.

Mr W. D. Hoath My first question is how representative is this machine of the process efficiency found on full-scale machines? Do Ramaz *et al.* expect to modify the basic process design on those machines to improve the end product—in other words, do they intend to make major process changes linked with the computers to exploit its power and versatility?

We have heard quite a lot from Dr Smith and Dr Sanborn on the need to improve the process to achieve even better control, but have we anywhere achieved major improvement design of computer control? One suspects that possibly we have gone a little way towards this at Grove Mill, but I would like to know whether any contributions could be made to highlight whether we are able to achieve it.

Mr Bauduin I am not quite sure I understand the question, but I take it that you wonder whether our experimental machine is quite representative of

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an industrial one, as far as our computer project is concerned. We have already said that it is rather different from an industrial machine, but may I remind you that our project deals mainly with studying the principles of computer control. We might undertake a similar study on an industrial machine as a future project; for the time being, we do not really care about production cost or things like that. Therefore, we are not concerned with 'major process changes linked with the computer'.

The Chairman I would like to ask a question of the audience. Is there anyone who has the experience of designing new systems or making major modifications to existing systems and who have made major departures in design as a result of their process control work? In other words, have they changed the size of chests or eliminated chests or other equipment primarily for control purposes?

Mr I. McKnight I should like to comment mainly on Dr Smith's paper with a more detailed question to Dr Sanborn. I think my remarks follow on from those of Mr Hoath and the Chairman.

I wonder, if the Fourdrinier papermachine had not been invented 150 years ago, but just a few years ago, whether the flow box would have been a rather different piece of equipment. I suspect the designer would have produced a device rather like an extruding machine under careful flow control. I suspect also that the measurement of total head would have been scarcely considered. My point is to stress the measurement of flow as the major control parameter and to ask how this conception would have modified the mathematics.

We discussed the Chartham flow box in an earlier paper and there are other machines for which flow control is the main control parameter of the flow box. If a lid was put on this box, I am certain it would continue to run for a reasonable length of time under control without even a blower or level control. If the air cushion was then pared away, you would end up with a solid flow box. Surely, accurate flow control should give the correct answer at the breast roll.

My particular question to Dr Sanborn concerns the flow loop of his flow box scheme. He has created a slightly long-term flow control, whereby the slice is used as a giant slide valve. Now, flow control is a fully established practical technology, with even controllers being manufactured with fixed terms. It is generally accepted that the equal percentage valve gives the correct characteristics. I would like to ask whether this was taken into account when programming his computer to characterise his linear slice valve.

Dr Sanborn No, we have not; we have accepted the valve as it is, but some

of the gain calculations made simply take the change in the valve constant into account.

The Chairman I would like to draw the last questioner's attention to the fact that there has been quite a lot of experimental work of a rather substantial nature done with nozzle type head boxes without any air cushion in the system. In general, most people have found that, in order to eliminate pulsations causing high frequency disturbances to the flow arising from pumps, for example, it is necessary to have a dampening effect of the air chamber.