

The Trick Simulation Toolkit: A NASA/Open source Framework for Running Time Based Physics Models

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This paper describes the design and use at of the Trick Simulation Toolkit, a simulation development environment for creating high fidelity training and engineering simulations at the NASA Johnson Space Center and many other NASA facilities. It describes Trick's design goals and how the development environment attempts to achieve those goals. It describes how Trick is used in some of the many training and engineering simulations at NASA. Finally it describes the Trick NASA/Open source project on Github.

I. Introduction

The Trick Simulation Toolkit is a simulation development environment used to create high fidelity training and engineering simulations at the NASA Johnson Space Center and many other NASA facilities. Its purpose is to generate computer simulations that have a common architecture from a collection of user-supplied model code and a simulation definition file. In doing so, Trick provides automated job scheduling for user-supplied model functions, numerical integration, the ability to write and restore human readable checkpoints, data recording, interactive variable manipulation, a run-time interpreter, and many other commonly needed capabilities. Also included in Trick are tools for plotting recorded data and various other supporting utilities and libraries. Trick is written in C/C++ and Java and supports both Linux and MacOSX computer operating systems.

II. The Goal of Trick

The goal of Trick is to help simulation developers focus on their domain and the algorithms and equations of their problem rather than repeatedly solving the same, time consuming architecture problems and re-implementing required capabilities. Trick seeks to reliably¹ accomplish this by automating the implementation of commonly needed simulation capabilities and by automating the build process of the executable.

III. The Simulation Definition (S_define) File

In order to accomplish the desired automation, Trick needs to "learn" about the specific variables, data types, functions, and scheduling requirements of a simulation's models. This starts with the simulation definition file (S_define), an example of which is shown in Figure 1 below. This example comes from a simulation included in the Trick software distribution, called SIM_cannon_integ. It is a very simple simulation of a cannon ball in flight.

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```

/*****TRICK HEADER*****/
PURPOSE: ( Cannon Simulation )
LIBRARY DEPENDENCIES:
(
(cannon/gravity/src/cannon_default_data.c)
(cannon/gravity/src/cannon_init.c)
(cannon/gravity/src/cannon_deriv.c)
(cannon/gravity/src/cannon_integ.c)
)
)
/*****/
#include "sim_objects/default_trick_sys.sm"

#include "cannon/gravity/include/cannon.h"
#include "cannon/gravity/include/cannon_integ_proto.h"

class CannonSimObject : public Trick::SimObject {
public:
    CANNON    cannon ;
    CannonSimObject() {
        ("default_data") cannon_default_data( &cannon ) ;
        ("initialization") cannon_init( &cannon ) ;
        ("derivative") cannon_deriv( &cannon ) ;
        ("integration") trick_ret = cannon_integ( &cannon ) ;
    }
} ;

CannonSimObject dyn ;

IntegLoop dyn_integloop (0.01) dyn;

```

Compilation Unit Dependencies

System SimObjects (and instances)

Model headers

Job Specifications

Simulation SimObject (data-type)

SimObject Instance (variable)

Integration Scheduler

Figure 1 - Example S_define File

An S_define file specifies everything necessary to build a simulation:

- Data types
- Variable definitions
- Job scheduling specifications
- Compilation unit dependencies

In the S_define, data type information is provided by model header files (preceded by **##include**) and Trick::SimObject class definitions.

Trick::SimObject is a special class (a data-type) for grouping related data members (e.g., cannon above) and job scheduling specifications of a simulation component. The state of a Trick simulation is represented by a collection of SimObject instances, variables of type Trick::SimObject. Some SimObjects and instances are already defined by Trick to provide standard simulation features. In the example above, these are included from "default_trick_sys.sm." A simulation developer creates the remaining SimObjects and instances thereof to fully define the simulation.

The last two lines of the S_define in the example above are variable definitions. The variable *dyn* is an instance of CannonSimObject. The variable *dyn_integloop* is an instance of *IntegLoop* that is executed every 10 milliseconds and operates on *dyn*. The *cannon* data member within *dyn* is accessed as *dyn.cannon*.

The source files specified in LIBRARY DEPENDENCIES are the starting point for the recursive determination of the files that need to be compiled and linked to build the simulation. Trick headers in these files may specify additional source code dependencies, and so forth. Libraries may also be specified for linking into the final simulation executable.

IV. Providing Access to Simulation Variables

Central to automating access to simulation variables are:

- Descriptions of a simulation's variables and data types
- The ability to translate between a variable's name and its address

The ability to translate a variable's name to its address allows a Trick simulation to automatically provide various system components (both internal and external) with access to its variables by name. This capability allows Trick to automate and provide the following capabilities:

- Input-processor
- Data recording
- Restoration of the simulation state from a checkpoint file
- A variable-server, which provides network access to simulation variables

The variable server enables the implementation of networked simulation clients such as:

- Trick Sim Control Panel
- Trick View
- StripChart

Many of Trick's users also implement their own project-specific variable server clients for monitoring and control of their simulations.

The opposite translation, from an address to a name, allows a Trick simulation to automatically represent variables in a human readable form, as is done when writing a checkpoint. A checkpoint is a textual, human-readable representation of a simulation's state. At any time during the execution of a Trick simulation, one can write a checkpoint to file. A simulation's state can also be restored from a checkpoint file.

SWIG (the open-source interface compiler) provides access to variables for Trick's embedded Python interpreter. ICG (Trick's interface code generator) and Trick's Memory Manager provide access for the remaining capabilities listed above.

Data type information is determined by scanning the SimObject classes and the header files listed in the S_define file. This also includes recursively scanning any files that they may include. Variable definitions (i.e., declarations that actually create variables) are also scanned and recorded from the S_define file. This data collection occurs when the utility Trick-CP is invoked to build a simulation. Trick-CP calls both SWIG and ICG to gather information about variables and data-types and to record that information in the form of generated interface code.

A. SWIG, Python and the Input Processor

By scanning and processing SimObjects and header files, SWIG can generate auto-coded interfaces to simulation variables and functions for Trick's embedded Python interpreter, referred to as the "input processor."

The primary purpose of the input processor is to allow a user to conveniently configure a simulation run. Because it provides access to simulation framework variables and functions, as well as those of the simulation models, it provides a great deal of control.

B. Trick's Interface Code Generator (ICG)

Trick's Interface Code Generator (ICG) also scans simulation header files for data type information, which it encodes within C-language tree structures of ATTRIBUTES records within generated "io_src" interface code. Arrays of ATTRIBUTES records are used to encode the elements of user defined data types (that is: struct and class). They can also represent arrays of and pointers to these types in addition to primitive types. The elements of an ATTRIBUTES record are as show in Figure 2 below:

ATTRIBUTES

<i>name</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>type-name</i>	<i>offset</i>	<i>attr*</i>	<i>num_index</i>	<i>index[]</i>
-------------	-------------	------------------	---------------	--------------	------------------	----------------

Figure 2 - ATTRIBUTES Record

- **name** represents the name of an element of a user-defined data type.
- **type** indicates whether the element is a primitive or a composite type. Think of it as the "type" of data-type.
- **type-name** is the C/C++ data-type of the element.
- **offset** specifies the location of the element within its parent. If the element's data-type is composite, then
- **attr** points to the ATTRIBUTES array that describes it otherwise, this element = NULL.
- **num_index** specifies the dimensionality of the element. If num_index is non-zero, then
- **index** specifies the size of each array dimension.

In Figure 3 are four examples of data-type encoding with ATTRIBUTES:

C/C++ Data Type	Trick ATTRIBUTES Representation														
Example 1 double [3] [4]	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>""</td> <td>TRICK_DOUBLE</td> <td>"double"</td> <td>0</td> <td>NULL</td> <td>2</td> <td>{3,4}</td> </tr> </table>	""	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	2	{3,4}							
""	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	2	{3,4}									
Example 2 double*	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>""</td> <td>TRICK_DOUBLE</td> <td>"double"</td> <td>0</td> <td>NULL</td> <td>1</td> <td>{0}</td> </tr> </table>	""	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	1	{0}							
""	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	1	{0}									
Example 3 Class Circle { double radius Point center };	<p><i>Circle_attributes</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>"radius"</td> <td>TRICK_DOUBLE</td> <td>"double"</td> <td>0</td> <td>NULL</td> <td>0</td> <td>{}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"center"</td> <td>TRICK_STRUCTURED</td> <td>"Point"</td> <td>8</td> <td>&Point_attributes</td> <td>0</td> <td>{}</td> </tr> </table>	"radius"	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	0	{}	"center"	TRICK_STRUCTURED	"Point"	8	&Point_attributes	0	{}
"radius"	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	0	{}									
"center"	TRICK_STRUCTURED	"Point"	8	&Point_attributes	0	{}									
Example 4 Class Point { double x double y };	<p><i>Point_attributes</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>"x"</td> <td>TRICK_DOUBLE</td> <td>"double"</td> <td>0</td> <td>NULL</td> <td>0</td> <td>{}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"y"</td> <td>TRICK_DOUBLE</td> <td>"double"</td> <td>8</td> <td>NULL</td> <td>0</td> <td>{}</td> </tr> </table>	"x"	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	0	{}	"y"	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	8	NULL	0	{}
"x"	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	0	NULL	0	{}									
"y"	TRICK_DOUBLE	"double"	8	NULL	0	{}									

Figure 3 – Examples of Data Type Encoding Using ATTRIBUTES

C. The Memory Manager

Access to variables is provided by names or addresses. A variable's data type describes how its values are represented in memory. In Trick, the ALLOC_INFO data type represents the "knowledge" of a variable.

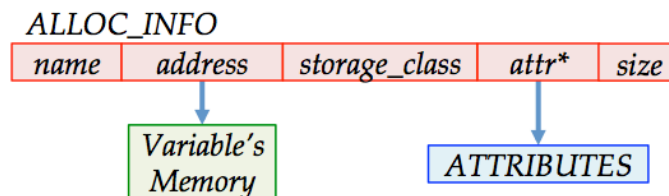


Figure 4 - How Variables are Represented

Trick's Memory Manager represents all of a simulation's state variables as a collection of ALLOC_INFO records. Every instance of a Trick::SimObject defined in the S_define file will have an associated ALLOC_INFO record. Any other variables that have been explicitly defined or declared using calls to the Memory Manager will also have ALLOC_INFO records. Here, **declare** means to provide a data-type and an address to tell the Memory Manager that a variable exists. **Define** means to provide a data-type and request to the Memory Manager to create (allocate) a new variable. A simulation's data types are gleaned from the header files (.h or .hh files) included by its S_define file.

D. An Example Representation of a Variable

Using Circle__attributes from the Example 3 of Figure 3 above, an instance of Circle named *pad* whose radius = 7 and whose center is at (4,5) would be represented in the Memory Manager as shown in Figure 5:

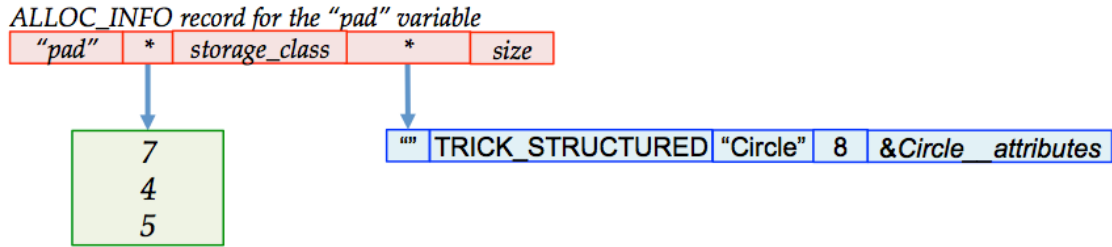


Figure 5 - Example Representation of a Variable

E. Translating Variable References

The Memory Manager's ALLOC_INFO list and ICG-generated ATTRIBUTES provide the necessary information to translate references in both directions.

Using the example of the *pad* variable in Figure 5 above, the two examples below illustrate how these translations are performed.

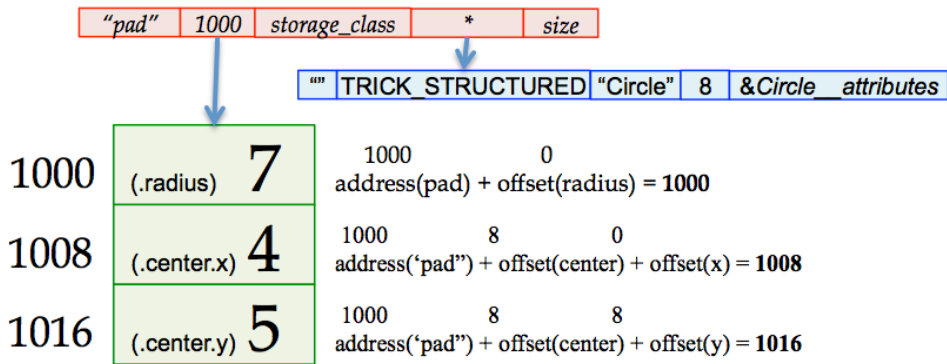


Figure 6 – With Address Calculations

Suppose for the sake of these examples that the address of the *pad* allocation is 1000.

1. Example Translation of an Address to a Name

To translate the address 1008 to a name, the memory manager searches for the ALLOC_INFO record whose address is less than or equal to 1008 and whose address + size is greater than 1008. It's found, and its name is *pad*, so the name of the translated addresses starts with *pad*. Stepping into the ATTRIBUTES, we see the first element *radius*. We add its offset to the address of *pad* and compare it to 1008. It's not the address we're looking for, so we move on to *center* and check the sum of the address of *pad* and the offset of *center*. The addresses match. So far the name we've accumulated is *pad.center*, but *center* is TRICK_STRUCTURED, meaning it's a

composite variable, so we have to look at its ATTRIBUTES. The first element, with offset of 0, is *x*. So, the final name is *pad.center.x*. The name that corresponds to address 1008 is *pad.center.x*.

2. Example Translation of a Name to an Address

To translate the name *pad.center.y* to an address, the memory manager searches for the ALLOC_INFO record whose name is *pad*. In this case, its address is found to be 1000. Following the period, in the name is *center*. So we next search for *center* in the ATTRIBUTES array. Its offset is 8, which we add to the address of *pad*. Remaining in the name is *y*. Because *center* is a composite variable, it too has an ATTRIBUTES array. We search it to find *y*, and we add its offset to the address for a final result of 1016. So, the address that corresponds to *pad.center.y* is 1016.

The data-type of *y* is double, so Trick can print its value as:

```
printf("%g", *(double*) 1016);
```

By maintaining a complete representation of the simulation state, ICG, the Memory Manager, and SWIG make it possible for Trick to automatically provide the input-processor, data recording, checkpoint and checkpoint-restore, the variable-server, and the various client applications.

V. Job Scheduling

A job is a call to a user-supplied C/C++ function that is scheduled in accordance with its specified job class. A job class dictates the circumstances under which a job's associated function is executed. It may also, with additional parameters, specify a job rate, priority, start time, stop time, and thread of execution. The Trick executive maintains numerous job queues. With the exception of **instrumentation** jobs, which can appear in any job queue, a job class indicates to which of the scheduler's job queues a particular job belongs. Also, with the exception of checkpoint job queues, all queues are associated with one of Trick's four basic simulation modes:

- 1) **Initialization**
- 2) **Run**
- 3) **Freeze**
- 4) **Exit**

A. Initialization Mode

The initial job-scheduling mode of a Trick-based simulation is Initialization. Its purpose is to initialize the simulation and Trick's system components. The behavior of the job scheduler during Initialization-mode is show in Figure 7. Initialization Mode and described below.

Simulation time is maintained as integer *time_tics*. The parameter *time_tic_value* specifies the number of tics per second. *software_frame* is another parameter which stipulates how often the job scheduler synchronizes with external services such as data recording and (if enabled) a real-time clock. Both *time_tic_value* and *software_frame* parameters can be user-specified.

Associating a function to the job class **default_data** places it in the default-

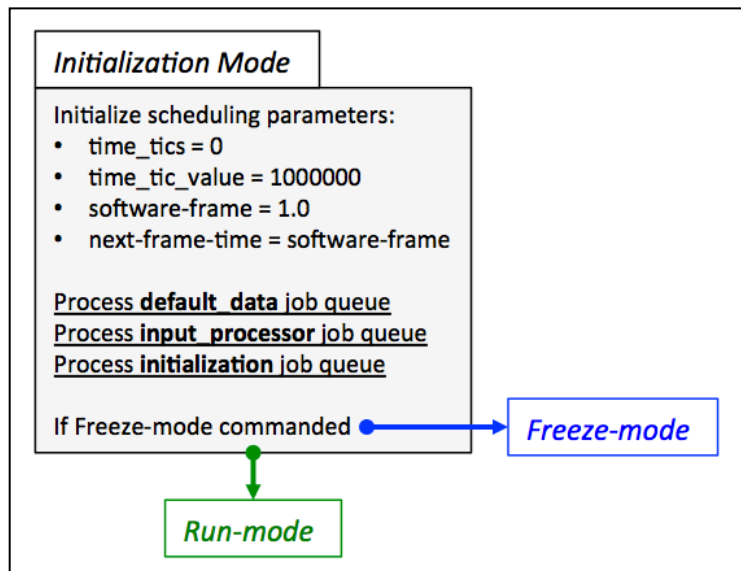


Figure 7. Initialization Mode

data-job-queue, causing it to be executed first, during initialization mode. Default-data jobs are meant to set the default simulation state. If specified in the S_define, they always run first, before any other job class.

In addition to the job classes available to a developer, Trick's main job scheduler also recognizes certain system job classes. Trick's code generators use system jobs to implement framework functionality, such as data recording, check-pointing, real-time synchronization, and so forth.

The **input_processor** class job is a system class. During Initialization mode, these jobs are executed after default data jobs. An input processor job calls an embedded Python interpreter to execute the simulation's "input file." An input file is a python script within which simulation variables can be set and functions, called to initialize a particular simulation run.

The final job queue to be executed in initialization is for **initialization** class jobs. These jobs are meant to perform any final calculations and initialization prior to entering (cyclic) RUN mode.

B. Run mode

In Run mode, simulation time advances. The scheduler executes system and simulation model jobs periodically to propagate the simulation state over time. The behavior of the job scheduler during Initialization-mode is show in Figure 8 and described below.

The *software_frame* parameter specifies the highest period (lowest frequency) of scheduler processing. It specifies how often the scheduler checks for mode change requests and how often it synchronizes with other services, external to the scheduler, like a real-time clock, data recording, and so forth.

The software frame (period) should always be greater (longer) than or equal to that of the highest rate job.

At the beginning of a *software_frame*, the scheduler executes all jobs that are in the

top_of_frame job queue. One such job copies simulation data to the variable server.

Next, the scheduler executes jobs in the **input_processor_run** job queue. Note that this is not the same as the **input_processor** job queue. Jobs in this system-queue evaluate Trick events. A Trick event is a small Python script with a condition that must be met for it to be executed. Whereas events are specified in the simulation's Python input file, their conditions are only evaluated, and their scripts, conditionally executed during RUN mode.

The main scheduling queue may contain jobs of numerous job classes, each of which are to be executed at user-specified simulation times. When the main queue is processed, only those jobs that indicate they are "ready-to-run" and meet their timing criteria are executed. When multiple jobs are ready for execution at the same simulation-time, job class priority and an optional job-phase parameter determine the order of execution. If these too are the same, then execution order is simply the order in which the job specifications occur in the S_define file.

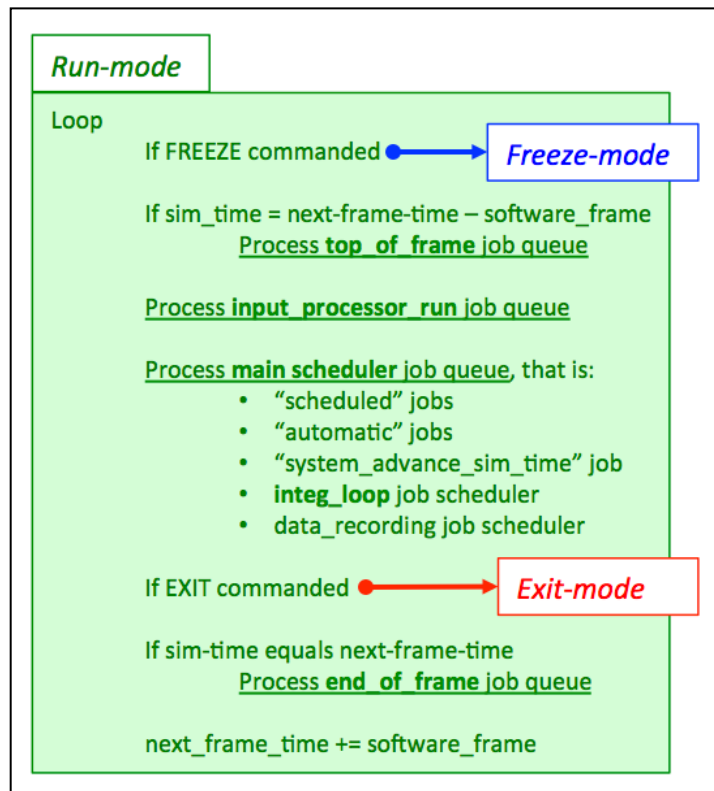


Figure 8 - Run Mode

The highest priority job classes in the main scheduling queue are **scheduled** and **automatic**, in that order. The **scheduled** class is the most common, user-specified RUN-mode jobs. The simulation developer specifies the rate and offset at which these jobs are executed in the simulation's S_define file. When simulation time is equal to a job's offset plus an integer multiple of its rate, the job is executed.

Automatic jobs are self-scheduled. Whereas the job scheduler will run them once, they are expected to tell the scheduler when they are next to be executed.

The **system_advance_sim_time** job is a special system job that advances simulation time. For a given simulation-time, it is always executed after user-specified jobs.

Following the update of simulation time, the **integ_loop** jobs are run, as shown in Figure 9. An **integ_loop** job is itself a job scheduler that schedules jobs associated with numeric integration. It simply executes all jobs in the pre-integration queue, integrates the state derivatives, processes all jobs in the dynamic event queue, process all jobs in the post integration job queue, and then returns to processing of the main scheduler queue.

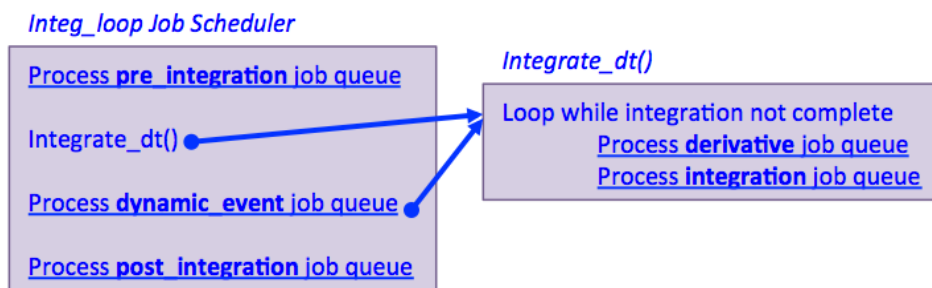


Figure 9 - Integration Loop Job Scheduler

The **pre_integration** and **post_integration** job classes are available simply to allow a developer to execute any code before or after an integration step.

Derivative jobs are expected to calculate derivatives for use by the integration job. **Integration** jobs are expected to load the integrator with the state derivatives, call Trick's *integrate()* utility function, unload the integrated state, and finally return the value that was returned by *integrate()*. Returning a value of zero indicates to the scheduler that the specified integration algorithm has finished the integration. Trick supplies numerous integration algorithms that simulation developers may specify.

As the main scheduler loops and simulation time advances, it eventually reaches the *next-frame-time*. When this occurs, all **end-of-frame** jobs are executed. **End-of-frame** jobs are used to implement system functionality, such as real-time synchronization. If Trick-real-time is enabled, then a real-time synchronization job will monitor the chosen real-time clock source, waiting for it to catch up to simulation-time. When it does, the job returns execution to the scheduler, allowing simulation-time to progress.

C. Freeze mode

When commanded, a simulation will enter freeze-mode, and simulation time will stop. For a real-time simulation that is expected to regularly service hardware-in-the-loop, this might present a problem. Freeze-mode job classes provide a means to define the behavior of a real-time simulation when time stops.

Trick provides four job classes for defining this behavior:

- **freeze_init** jobs are executed on entering freeze-mode.
- **unfreeze** jobs are executed on leaving freeze-mode.
- **freeze_schedule** are scheduled similarly to **scheduled** jobs executed in run-mode.
- **freeze** jobs are scheduled during freeze mode.

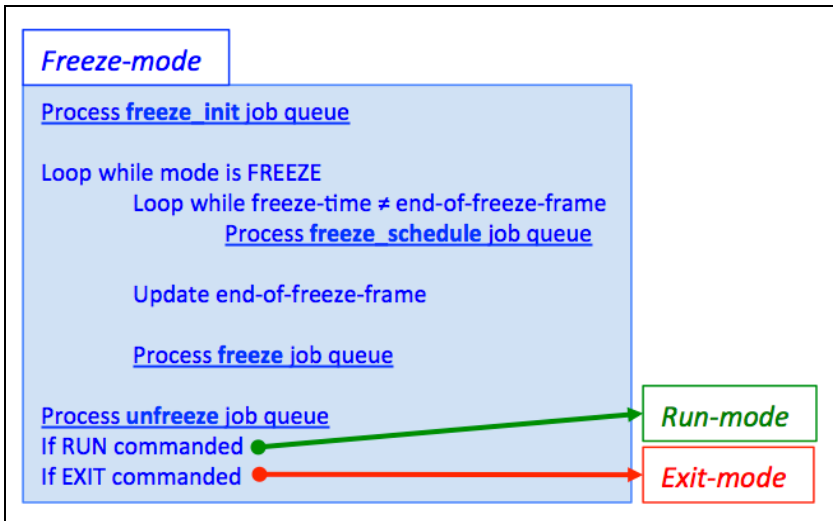


Figure 10 - Freeze Mode

D. Exit mode

When Exit mode is commanded, only the queue for **shutdown** jobs is processed. These jobs allow a simulation developer to define what happens when the simulation ends. An example use might be to disconnect external communications channels in an orderly way.

E. Any Mode

Certain job classes and queues are not necessarily associated with a simulation mode. These are checkpoint jobs and **instrumentation** jobs.

1. Checkpoint Job Classes

Creating complete representation of a simulation state can sometimes require a little help. Certain components of a simulation, such as network socket variables and open file pointers, that simply can't be represented in a checkpoint file. **checkpoint** jobs allow a simulation developer to tidy up just prior to dumping a checkpoint. Jobs of class **post_checkpoint** are for doing whatever a developer might want to do just after a checkpoint is dumped.

do_checkpoint()

Process **checkpoint job queue**
 Dump **checkpoint (save the simulation state)**
 Process **post_checkpoint job queue**

Figure 11 - Checkpoint Job Queues

load_checkpoint()

Process **preload checkpoint job queue**
 Load **checkpoint (restore the simulation state)**
 Process **restart job queue**

Figure 12 – Checkpoint Reload Job Queues

Similarly, **restart** jobs allow a developer to “tidy up” after reloading a checkpoint, like re-opening sockets or files. Jobs of class **preload_checkpoint** are for doing what ever a developer might want to do just before a checkpoint is loaded.

2. Instrumentation Job Class

Instrumentation jobs are system jobs, used to implement certain system features such as frame-logging. These can be placed in any of Trick’s job queues.

VI. Automation of Simulation Building

Finally, the collection and determination of the hierarchy of dependencies between compilation units allows auto-generation of a makefile to build the entire simulation, thus relieving the simulation developer of another potentially tedious and error-prone task.

Building a Trick simulation simply requires executing the **trick-CP** utility in a simulation directory that

contains a well-formed S_define file.

From the S_define file, trick-CP:

- Gathers variable definitions, such as instantiations of SimObjects that the simulation developer has created
- Gathers job specifications from each of the SimObjects specified in the S_define
- Recursively gathers header file dependencies, starting with those in the S_define that start with `##include`
- Recursively gathers compilation unit dependencies, starting with those listed in the LIBRARY DEPENDENCIES section of the S_define.
- Generates Python interface code by processing all of the gathered header files using SWIG
- Generates Memory Manager interface code by processing all of the gathered header files code using ICG
- Generates S_source.cpp from the S_define
- Generates a makefile from the gathered compilation unit dependency information
- Process the generated makefile to generate the simulation executable

The makefile compiles all of the user's model source, the generated S_source.cpp and the auto-generated interface code. It then links the compiled object code, any specified user-supplied libraries, and various pre-compiled Trick libraries to produce the simulation executable.

The makefile generated by trick-CP includes a supplementary file named S_overrides.mk, if it exists in the simulation directory. As its name suggests, the S_overrides.mk file allows one to over ride or supplement rules and environment variables used by the makefile.

The S_overrides.mk file will often contain assignments to the following three environment variables: TRICK_CFLAGS, TRICK_CXXFLAGS, and TRICK_USER_LINK_LIBS.

TRICK_CFLAGS, and TRICK_CXXFLAGS are flags that are passed to the the C and C++ compilers respectively. They contain `-I` flags that specify the directory path to the header files used by the simulation.

TRICK_USER_LINK_LIBS contains `-L` and `-l` flags used by the linker. These specify the library directory paths and the libraries that the simulation wishes to link into the final executable.

VII. Applications of Trick

Trick has a long history spanning nearly 25 years, providing a common simulation environment to all of NASA's crewed vehicle programs since 1991.

In the early 1990s Trick was conceived and developed as a framework to support operational performance evaluations of the Shuttle Remote Manipulator System (SRMS). The Canadian SRMS is six jointed robotic manipulator attached to the side of the Space Shuttle cargo bay. The SRMS was used to deploy satellites and other experiments from the cargo bay as well as retrieve free flyers such as the Hubble Space Telescope and dock them into the cargo bay. The first Trick based SRMS simulations, called the Space Shuttle Payload Deployment and Retrieval System (PDRS), included many of the core features still found in Trick today including the job scheduler, input processor, and data recording capabilities. The PDRS simulation was used to prototype and test SRMS flight software. The PDRS simulation performed dynamic loads analysis for upcoming SRMS operations. The PDRS simulation performed ground and in-flight training for both astronauts and ground controllers.



Figure 13. Shuttle Remote Manipulator System with Androgynous Peripheral Attach System (APAS) docking mechanism

Beginning in the mid 1990s and continuing through today, Mobile Servicing System (MSS) Trick applications featuring the Canadian Space Station Remote Manipulator System (SSRMS) are used for a variety of tasks including flight controller and crew training, robotic operations planning, and dynamic analysis. MSS based simulations are the most prolific Trick applications and are used for engineering analysis, robotic operation planning, and astronaut and flight crew training. These applications are deployed in multiple JSC facilities including the Dynamic Skills Trainers (DST). DST installations combine the MSS simulation, a simulated Robotics WorkStation (RWS), translational and rotational hand controllers, and 3D graphics into a single desktop trainer. DSTs are designed to run on common desktop computer systems. The Robotics On-Board Trainer (ROBoT) project adapts the DST to run on the laptops found onboard the ISS.



Figure 14. ROBoT installation on board the ISS

Project Morpheus is a terrestrial lander used as a vertical test bed platform for developing technology and proving hardware and software systems for use in space exploration. Flight software developed for the lander

uses NASA Goddard's Core Flight Software (CFS). Project Morpheus wraps the lander's Core Flight Software (CFS) applications within a Trick simulation. This CFS embedded within a Trick simulation combination was used throughout the development, test and operations software lifecycle by providing a single simulation supporting multiple test configurations such as single-computer embedded simulation, distributed simulation, hardware-in-the-loop simulation, and operator training.

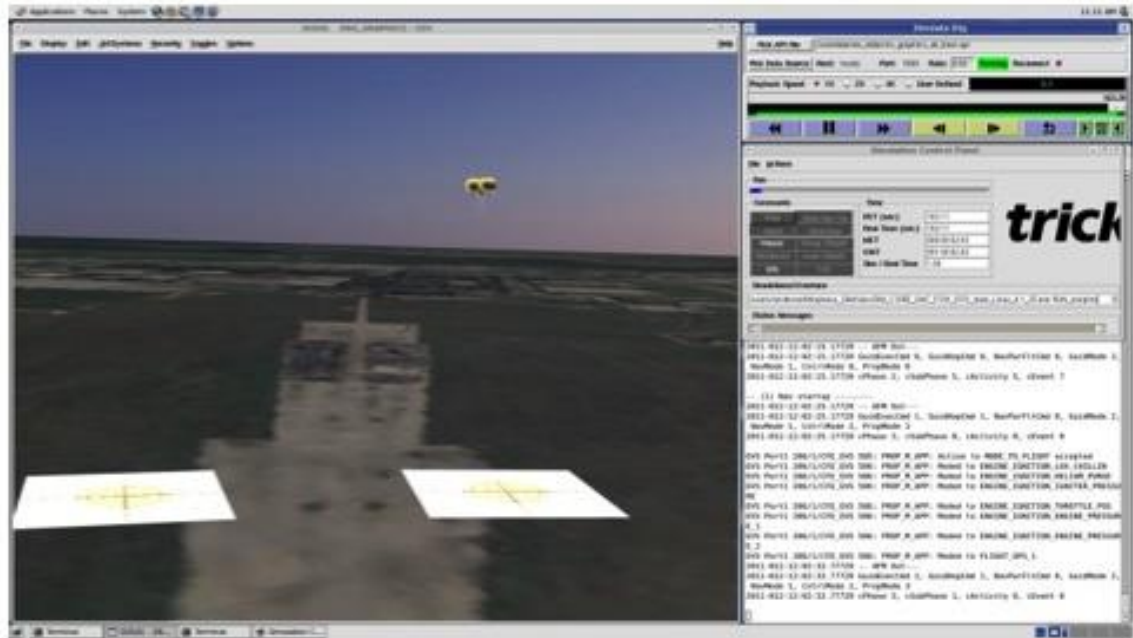


Figure 15. MMSEV above rendering of the Martian moon Phobos.

For the next generation of space vehicles, the NASA Exploration Systems Simulations (NExSyS) project uses Trick applications to perform mission scenario development, vehicle design and performance analyses, and crew operations assessments for potential agency missions including exploration of asteroids and the Martian system.

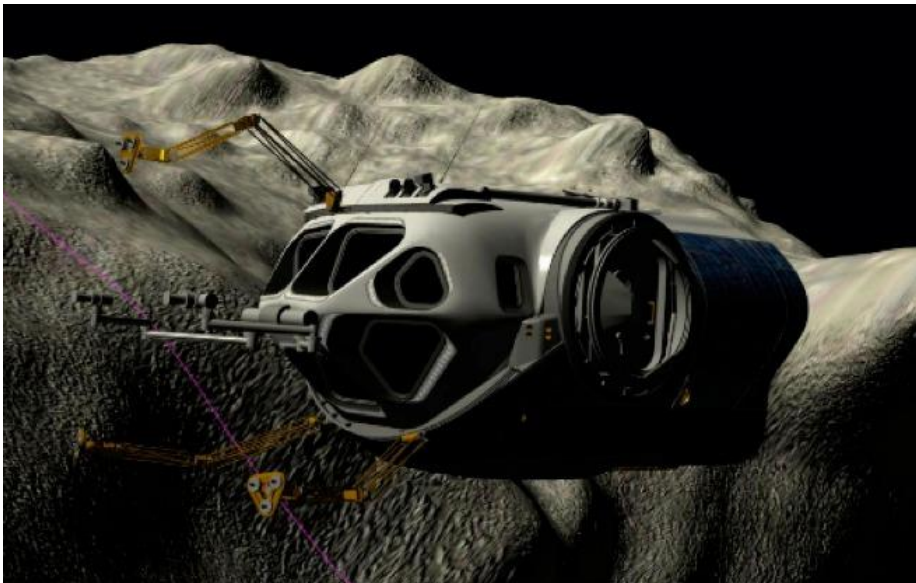


Figure 16. MMSEV above rendering of the Martian moon Phobos

VIII. NASA Open Source: Trick on Github

Historically Trick was only available to other government agencies as a Government Purpose Release. Trick could only be used for the project it was specifically released to. Beginning in 2007 Trick was reclassified as a NASA General Public Release. As a General Public Release product this opened access to corporations, universities, and individuals outside of NASA projects. However Trick was not completely open, Trick was still only available with an approved application, and non-US citizens were forbidden to use Trick. In February 2015 Trick transitioned from a General Public Release to an open source project under the NASA Open Source Agreement 1.3. As of February 2015, The Trick Simulation Toolkit is licensed NASA Open source, and is freely available for download at <https://github.com/nasa/trick>.

IX. Conclusions

The Trick simulation framework provides simulation developers with a development environment that frees them of the need to reimplement commonly required simulation capabilities, and many other tedious and error prone development activities. Trick enables simulation engineers to spend more of their time focused on the unique aspects of their simulation problem. Providing a common architecture and toolset for building computer simulations has additional benefits as well, such as code re-use. Well defined interfaces allow project specific code to be routinely reused for other projects. Also, developers moving between projects aren't burdened with the need to re-learn a different architecture and toolset. These benefits are evident in the many training and engineering simulations developed at the NASA Johnson Space Center.

X. References

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