

# A New Piezoelectric Tube Scanner for Simultaneous Sensing and Actuation

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**Abstract**—Piezoelectric tubes with quartered external electrodes have been widely used as scanners in modern scanning probe microscopes. Various feedback control techniques have been developed to improve bandwidth and accuracy of these scanners. Non-contact displacement sensors, e.g. capacitive and inductive sensors, have been used for position feedback. However, their measurements contain a significant noise component if operated over large bandwidths. As an alternative measure of displacement, the piezoelectric voltage induced in a tube nanopositioner has been proposed recently. This technique provides a much improved noise figure, up to three orders of magnitude better than capacitive sensors. In this arrangement, an electrode is used to actuate the tube, while the opposite electrode is used as a sensor. Operating the tube in this mode has two drawbacks: i) the operating range of the tube is reduced to half, and ii) the tube is driven asymmetrically, thus the opposite sides of the tube are no longer stressed antisymmetrically, i.e. the tube cannot be considered as a perfectly collocated system. In this paper, a new electrode pattern for piezoelectric tube scanners is presented. This new approach addresses the aforementioned problems and allows simultaneous sensing and actuation of the tube in an efficient way.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Piezoelectric tube actuators with quartered external electrodes have been used for 3D positioning in a scanning probe microscope, SPM, since the 1980's [8]. These nanopositioners have a simple construction, are easy to integrate into a microscope and are relatively inexpensive. The majority of commercially available SPMs use a piezoelectric tube scanner for  $x$ - $y$ - $z$  positioning. The piezoelectric tube scanner reported in [8] comprises a tube of radially poled piezoelectric material, four external electrodes, and an internal electrode. One end of the tube is fixed and the other end is free to move. External electrodes are segmented in four equal sectors of 90 degrees. Opposite electrodes are driven by signals of identical magnitude, but opposite signs. Once a voltage is applied to these electrodes, one side of the tube extends vertically, while the opposite side contracts, resulting in bending. This, in turn, results in a two dimensional movement of the free end of the tube in the  $x$ - $y$  plane. For  $x$ - $y$  actuation, the inner electrode is grounded. To actuate the tube in the  $z$  direction, however, the inner electrode is driven by the  $z$  signal. Appropriate application of the three signals allows for full  $x$ - $y$ - $z$  positioning of the free end of the tube.

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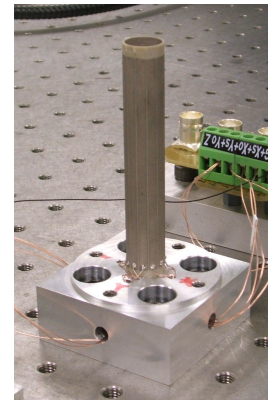


Fig. 1. Picture of the experimental apparatus.

3D deflections of a tube with quartered external electrodes, as well as its dynamics are well understood [9], [22], [29].

In recent years, there has been a consistent effort to improve accuracy and speed of scanning probe microscopes using feedback control techniques, see e.g. [1], [5], [11], [16], [27], [28] and review articles [10], [26]. The key idea associated with feedback-based methods is to damp the first resonant mode of the piezoelectric tube actuator. This “flattening” of the frequency response of the scanner will allow tracking of a faster triangular waveform, and consequently a faster scan. Furthermore, in order to achieve accurate positioning at high frequencies, and to minimize the adverse effect of hysteresis, the feedback gain is often chosen to be high. If the tube is driven by a charge source, however, the effect of hysteresis is substantially diminished [13], and thus the need for high-gain control can be alleviated.

A major complication with the above feedback-based techniques is their need for a displacement sensor. Capacitive sensors appear to be the most widely used displacement measurement device for such applications. These sensors typically have an RMS noise in the order of  $20 \text{ pm}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$  [14], [15]. If the sensor is operated over a bandwidth of 10 kHz, this amounts to an RMS noise of 2 nm, clearly inadequate for scanning tunneling microscopy, and other applications that require sub-nanometer precision.

An idea that has emerged very recently [6], [13] is to use a piezoelectric scanner simultaneously for sensing and actuation. In this arrangement one of the quartered electrodes is used to actuate the tube, while the opposite electrode is

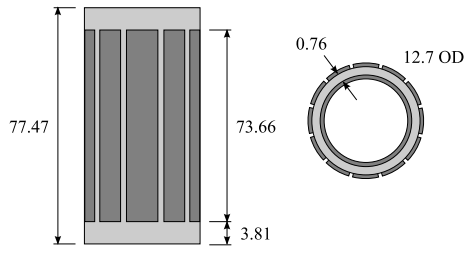


Fig. 2. The proposed piezoelectric tube scanner. Tube dimensions are in mm. The tube is manufactured by Boston Piezo-Optics from PZT-5A piezoelectric ceramic material. The outer electrode of the tube is segmented into twelve equal sections.

used as a sensor. In comparison with capacitive sensors, the piezoelectric sensor has a much better noise profile, about three orders of magnitude better [14], [15], [21]. This has motivated recent research aimed at using the piezoelectric strain-induced voltage in a feedback loop to augment the tube's damping. This idea was recently implemented in [7] and [6] with noticeable success. In this approach, the piezoelectric voltage is used as a measurement, and a controller is designed to add substantial damping to the first resonant mode of the tube. This flattens the tube's frequency response and the better damped scanner is then driven by a triangular signal for rastering. Due to its flatter frequency response, the "controlled" scanner can be used at much higher speeds. This, in turn, results in faster scans. The ability to generate and track fast raster scans is necessary for emerging rapid scanning probe microscopy applications [3], [19].

Operating the tube in this mode has two drawbacks: i) the operating range of the tube is reduced to half since only one electrode is used for actuation, and ii) the tube is driven asymmetrically, thus the opposite sides of the tube are no longer stressed antisymmetrically, i.e. the tube cannot be considered as a perfectly collocated system. The first problem has obvious consequences, while the second complicates the task of designing an efficient controller. These complications arise since the tube with quartered external electrodes is designed to function as an actuator, not as a sensor. In this paper we propose a new electrode pattern that allows both functionalities to be incorporated into the same device in a satisfactory manner.

The remainder of the paper continues as follows. Section II describes the proposed electrode pattern for simultaneous sensing and anti-symmetric actuation of a piezoelectric tube scanner. Section III reports the experimental results obtained from the scanner. Properties of the proposed actuator are compared with a regular scanner with quartered external electrodes in this Section. Finally Section IV concludes the paper.

## II. PIEZOELECTRIC SCANNER WITH A NEW ELECTRODE PATTERN

Schematics of the proposed scanner are shown in Fig. 2 and a picture of the experimental setup can be viewed in Fig. I. The tube was manufactured by Boston Piezo-Optics. It is made of PZT5A piezoelectric material and is poled radially

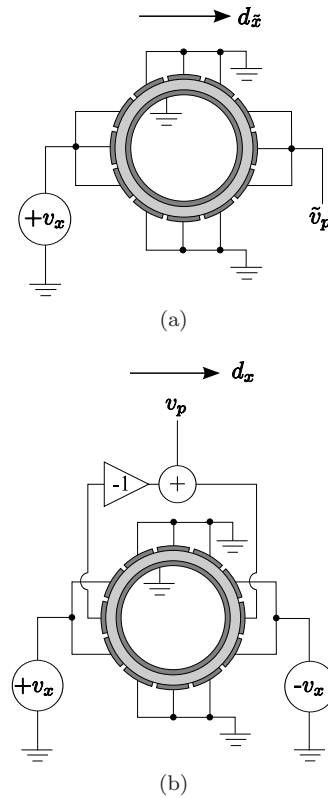


Fig. 3. The tube is divided into four  $90^\circ$  quadrants. Each quadrant consists of three electrodes. Two sets of experiments were performed on the tube. (a) The tube was wired up as a regular quartered electrode scanner. A voltage  $\tilde{v}_x$  was applied to the three electrodes in one quadrant and the strain-induced voltage  $\tilde{v}_{p_x}$  was measured at the opposite quadrant electrodes. Displacement  $\tilde{d}_x$  was also measured at the tip of the tube using a laser vibrometer. (b) A voltage  $+v_x$  was applied to the two outer electrodes of a quadrant and an equal but opposite voltage  $-v_x$  was applied to the opposite electrodes. The piezoelectric strain voltage induced at one of the middle electrodes was inverted and added to the voltage measured at the opposite electrode, resulting in the measurement signal  $v_{p_x}$ . Displacement  $d_x$  was measured at the tip of the tube.

outward. One end of the tube is mounted on an aluminum holder using strong adhesive material. The setup is bolted to an optical table to minimize the effect of floor vibrations on the measurements obtained from the scanner.

Inside of the tube is covered with a continuous electrode. This electrode is grounded at all times. The outer electrode is segmented into twelve equal sectors of  $30^\circ$  each. If every three adjacent electrodes are short circuited together, the tube can be used as a regular scanner with quartered external electrodes. This arrangement is illustrated in Fig. 3 (a) for simultaneous actuation and sensing in  $x$  direction. The remainder of electrodes are grounded. However, actuation and sensing in the  $y$  direction would be identical to  $x$ .

In this paper we propose the arrangement illustrated in Fig. 3 (b). Here, the two outer electrodes on opposite sides are used to actuate the tube. The voltages applied to the opposite electrodes are equal in magnitude, but  $180^\circ$  out of phase. In this mode of actuation, one side of the tube extends, while the opposite side contracts by the same amount. This results in bending. Furthermore, due to the antisymmetric

nature of the actuation, the stress at the opposite sides of the tube will be antisymmetrical [9]. Due to the piezoelectric effect [18], this translates into a voltage at the central electrode of each side. Moreover, due to the antisymmetric nature of the stress, the voltages induced in the opposite electrodes will be of equal amplitude, but  $180^\circ$  out of phase. As illustrated in Fig. 3 (b) the voltage induced at one of the electrodes is inverted and then added to the voltage measured at the opposite electrode.

There are two possibilities to actuate the tube in the  $z$  direction. Instead of grounding the inner electrode, a voltage  $v_z$  can be applied to it. Depending on the polarity of this voltage, the tube will either elongate or shorten in the  $z$  direction. The alternative approach requires a continuous circumferential electrode to be deposited on the top exterior of the tube. In the former approach the inner electrode is at all times grounded, thus the tube is electrically a grounded load.

The arrangement described above allows for simultaneous actuation and sensing with a piezoelectric tube scanner. From a systems point of view, when actuated in one direction, the tube can be considered as a single-input two-output system with the voltage  $v_x$  as the input and the displacement,  $d_x$  and the piezoelectric voltage  $v_{p_x}$  as the output. This SITO system can be described mathematically as

$$\begin{bmatrix} d_x \\ v_{p_x} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} G_{dv}^x(s) \\ G_{vv}^x(s) \end{bmatrix} v_x. \quad (1)$$

The two transfer functions  $G_{dv}^x(s)$  and  $G_{vv}^x(s)$  have identical poles. Thus, a controller that augments the damping of  $G_{vv}^x(s)$  will have a similar effect on  $G_{dv}^x(s)$ . Therefore, the dynamics of the scanner can be significantly improved by establishing a feedback loop that uses  $v_{p_x}$  as a measurement. This removes the need for incorporating a displacement sensor into scanner apparatus.

When used for simultaneous sensing and actuation the tube with this electrode arrangement has a number of advantages compared with an identical tube with quartered external electrodes. When the tube is operated in the quartered electrode mode, an actuation signal is applied to one of the electrodes and the voltage at the opposite electrode is used for measurement. Let us assume that for the quartered electrode case illustrated in Fig. 3 (a) and for a given input signal,  $v_x$  the tube's deflection is  $\tilde{d}_x$  and the voltage measured at the opposite electrode is  $\tilde{v}_{p_x}$ . If the same input signal is applied to the tube illustrated in Fig. 3 (b), one would expect the free end of the tube to undergo a deflection of about  $\frac{4}{3}\tilde{d}_x$ . One would also expect to measure a voltage of somewhat less than  $2\tilde{v}_{p_x}$  at the sensing electrode. Hence, with the arrangement proposed here the displacement range of the tube is improved by over 30%, and one would observe an improvement of the signal to noise ratio at the sensing electrodes. It should be pointed out that these predictions are based on a number of simplifying assumptions. However, they turn out to be in agreement with experimental results presented in the next section.

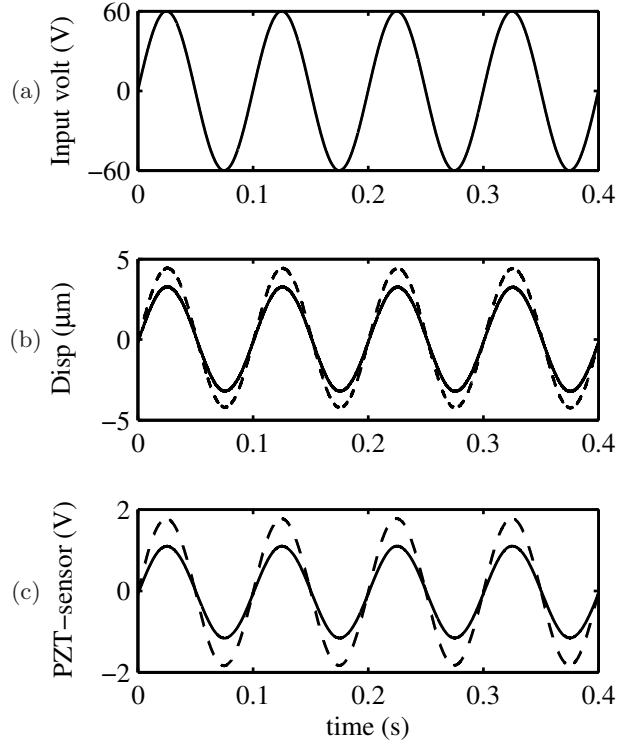


Fig. 5. Measured tip displacements,  $x$  (-) and  $\tilde{x}$ (-) in  $\mu\text{m}$ , and piezoelectric strain voltage,  $v_p$  (-) and  $\tilde{v}_p$  (-) in Volt.

Another important advantage of the proposed scanner is that the tube is now being operated in a fully symmetrical mode. This has important implications for control design which will be discussed in the sequel.

### III. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A number of experiments were performed to compare properties of the proposed scanner with a regular quartered electrode scanner. In one set of experiments the external electrodes of the tube were wired up as illustrated in Fig. 3 (a). This arrangement is almost identical to the case when the tube is being operated as a scanner with quartered external electrodes, where opposite electrodes are used for actuation and sensing [6], [7]. In a second set of experiments the electrodes were wired up as shown in Fig. 3 (b). The purpose of the experiments is to actuate the tube in one direction only. If the tube were to be actuated simultaneously in both directions, as is the case in scanning probe microscopes, the  $y$ -axis electrodes would have to be utilized in a similar manner to the  $x$ -axis electrodes.

Capacitance of each electrode was measured using a HIOKI 3532 LCR impedance bridge. It was found that each electrode had a capacitance of approximately 4 nF. In both set of experiments, the actuating electrodes were driven by high voltage ACX amplifiers. When driving a capacitive load of 4 nF, these amplifiers have a bandwidth of 6.8 kHz. This is reflected in the frequency responses obtained from the scanner. The displacement of the free end of the tube was measured using a OFV-552 Laser vibrometer. Voltages mea-

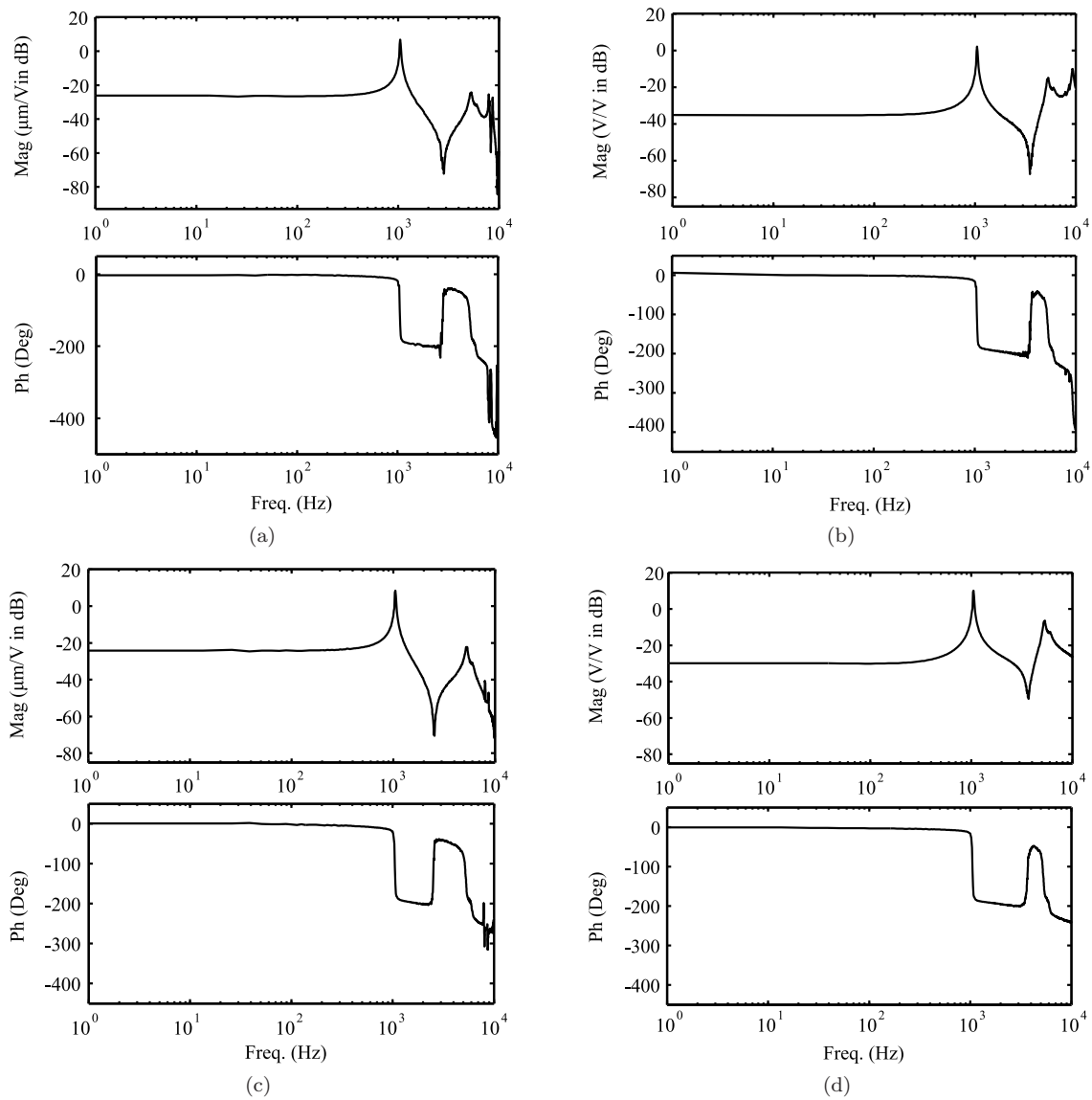


Fig. 4. Frequency responses of the scanner, (a) and (b) when driven asymmetrically; (c) and (d) under antisymmetrical actuation. (a) and (c) display the displacement response of the tube while (b) and (d) correspond to the voltage measured at the piezoelectric strain sensor.

sured at the sensing electrodes were fed to Stanford Research Systems SR560 low noise preamplifiers. This preamplifier has an input impedance of  $100\text{ M}\Omega$ . Together with the  $4\text{ nF}$  capacitance of the sensing electrode, this pushes the cut-off frequency of the sensing device to well below  $1\text{ Hz}$  [2]. The frequency responses were obtained using a HP-35670A Spectrum Analyzer. These are plotted in Fig 4 (a)–(d). Each pair of frequency response functions describes spectral properties of the single-input two output transfer function matrix in (1).

There are clear differences between the two pair of frequency response functions. The differences are particularly more observable at higher frequencies. The key reason for these variations is that the quartered electrode tube is actuated asymmetrically, but the 12-electrode tube undergoes antisymmetric actuation. A feature of the proposed scanner which turns out to be important for control applications is

that its frequency response is much closer to a perfectly collocated system. This would allow one to employ efficient control design tools that are specifically designed for collocated systems, e.g. resonant control [23], positive position feedback control [12], [17], [24], integral resonant control [4] and such controllers that may be proposed in the future due to recent progress in understanding stability properties of negative imaginary systems [20]. Inspection of the FRFs in Fig 4 (a)–(d) shows that the phase of both displacement and voltage transfer functions appear to roll off at higher frequencies. The phase of a collocated system, however, is expected to remain between  $0^\circ$  and  $-180^\circ$  [25]. The apparent roll off is due to the limited bandwidth of the high voltage amplifier used in the experiments, as articulated above, and can be accounted for in any control design scenario.

Another important advantage of the proposed scanner is that, for the same input signal, it has a larger displacement

range and strain induced voltage when compared with the quartered electrode tube. To verify this, a sinusoidal voltage with amplitude of 60  $v$  and frequency of 10 Hz was applied to the tube with the electrode arrangements shown in Fig 3 (a) and (b). The displacement signals and strain induced voltages measured at the sensing electrodes are plotted in Fig 5. For the 12-electrode tube the displacement and the piezoelectric voltage are larger by about 34% and 61% compared with similar measurements obtained from the quartered electrode tube. Thus confirming other benefits one could obtain from the proposed scanner.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

In this paper, we proposed a new electrode pattern that allows a scanner to be used, simultaneously, for actuation and sensing. The built-in sensing capability of the scanner turns out to be an important feature of the proposed tube allowing one to address one of the most troublesome properties of the device – the tube’s highly resonant nature. By using the strain-induced voltage measured at the sensing electrodes, one can augment the damping of the system using a feedback controller. Furthermore, due to the fact that electrodes on opposite sides of the tube are used for actuation, the tube’s deflection range is improved and its transfer function resembles that of a collocated system with an alternating pole-zero pattern. The latter has important implications in terms of control design for the tube. Future work involves using feedback control design techniques, specifically tailored for collocated systems, to improve the damping of the tube. This is expected to result in much faster scanners that can be easily incorporated into existing scanning probe microscopes.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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