



**Departamento de Física
da Universidade de Coimbra**

SEM-Botany

Development of a digital system for the Acquisition, Storing
and Processing Images from the SEM

Project Report
5th year
Graduation in Biomedical Engineering

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Resumo

Actualmente o Microscópio Electrónico de Varrimento (MEV) existente no Laboratório de Microscopia Electrónica do Departamento de Botânica da Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia da Universidade de Coimbra é da marca JEOL modelo JSM-5400, adquirido no início da década de 90.

Este equipamento produz uma imagem num ecrã LCD que pode ser capturada usando um sistema fotográfico. No entanto, estas imagens (fotografias) são mais difíceis de partilhar, armazenar e conservar do que as imagens digitais.

O principal objectivo deste projecto consiste no desenvolvimento de um sistema digital para a aquisição, armazenamento e processamento de imagens provenientes do MEV, que poderá ser substituir o actual sistema.

O desenvolvimento deste novo sistema envolve a especificação e instalação de um frame grabber, componente que envolve hardware, e a especificação, codificação e teste de uma aplicação desenvolvida em Matlab, componente que envolve software.

Abstract

The existing Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) in the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy belonging to the Botany Department of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology from the University of Coimbra is a JEOL model JSM-5400, installed in the beginning of the 1990s.

This equipment generates an image on a LCD that can be captured using a photographic system that is attached to the microscope. However, these traditional images (photographs) are more difficult to share, store and conserve than the now familiar digital images.

The main objective of this project was the development of a digital system for the acquisition, storing and processing the images from the SEM, one that may replace the actual onerous system.

The development of the new system involved the specification and installation of a frame grabber (hardware component) and the specification, coding and testing of a Matlab application (software component).

Acronyms

Acronyms	Description
ADC	Analog Digital Converter
EM	Electron Microscope
GUI	Graphical User Interface
GUIDE	Graphical User Interface Development Environment
MEV	Microscópio Electrónico de Varrimento
NTSC	National Television Standards Committee
PAL	Phase Alteration Line
RUP	Rational Unified Process
SECAM	Systeme Electronic Pour Colour Avec Memoire
SEM	Scanning Electron Microscope
STEM	Scanning Transmission Electron Microscope
TEM	Transmission Electron Microscope
UML	Unified Modelling Language
WWW	World Wide Web

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1. Introduction

This report documents the work realized for the final project course of the Biomedical Engineering Degree, a project entitled “*SEM-Botany*”.

The main objective of this project was the development of a digital system for the acquisition, storing and processing the images from the SEM, one that may replace the actual onerous system.

This first chapter main purpose is to present the primary motivations that lead to this project and a description of the objectives and the main requirements.

1.1 Laboratory of Electron Microscopy

The Laboratory of Electron Microscopy is an investigation laboratory integrated in the Botany Department¹ of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology of the University of Coimbra. It offers its services to the academic community, to the students in the form of laboratory classes and to other research teams in the form of specific analysis.

The most important equipments in the laboratory are the following:

- ✓ Transmission electron microscope;
- ✓ Scanning electron microscope;
- ✓ Ultramicrotome;
- ✓ Critic point device;
- ✓ Metalizer;
- ✓ Optic microscope with photographic camera;
- ✓ Binocular magnifying glass with photographic camera;
- ✓ Spectrophotometer.

¹ Instituted in 1991.

The Scanning Electron Microscope is a very important and indispensable tool in some basic and applied functions, and the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy owns a Scanning Electron Microscope, a JEOL model JSM-5400, installed in the beginning of the 1990s.

In a concise and simple way, the SEM operation consists on the scanning of the sample using an electron beam, and the analysis of the reflected electrons. As a consequence of that, we will obtain an image that corresponds to the surface of the sample. Curiously, the image is a two-dimensional object while the surface of the sample is a three-dimensional object. This created image can be visualized on SEM's monitor.

In the existing microscope the registration of images from the samples is made using a separated system which is connected to the SEM. This system can be compared to a normal photographic system that makes possible the image registration on photographic film.

With the development of the new technologies, this form of acquisition present in the SEM is surpassed, and nowadays it does not respond to the existing requirements. Its limitations emerge from the fact that not only the photographic film requires special care, because it is very susceptible to damage, but also that this current system does not allow, not in an easy and fast way, the image acquisition in digital format.

This reality places obstacles to the work developed in the laboratory, because it creates a need of extra time in order to develop the film, as well as not allowing image acquisition in digital format, which makes impossible image processing techniques in order to improve the quality of the acquired images.

Therefore this new system is a development of the old one, and presents itself as an eminent necessity.

1.2 Objectives

The main objective of this project was the development of a digital system for the acquisition, storing and processing the images from the SEM, in order to improve the user conditions and avoid the high costs of a commercial adaptation.

In order for the project to be successful, the system must be easy to operate (user-friendly interface) and meet a set of requirements, namely:

- ✓ Acquire the images from the SEM;
- ✓ Offer some image processing techniques, thus increasing the quality of the obtained or stored images:
 - Contrast and brightness adjustment;
 - Edges detection;
 - Re-sampling;
 - Filter;
- ✓ Store and organize the digital images;
- ✓ Allow the simultaneous visualization of the acquired (or stored) raw image and the processed image.

The availability of digital images will enable the microscope technician to take advantage, for example, of the following benefits:

- ✓ It creates a more reliable storing method, increasing the preservation period and conditions;
- ✓ It facilitates the exchange of images;
- ✓ It permits image visualization in rooms with poor or abusive lighting conditions.

2. Background

To better understand the different aspects involved in this project, a technical background will be presented in this section. Its main purpose is to cover all the subject areas touched by the project.

First a brief description of the main problem will be made, following a brief description of the Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) including references to its history, basic components, main functions, image creation and the output signal.

Since this project involves acquisition of images, it was necessary to study the basic principles of video signals, described in section 2.4, and of digital images in section 2.5.

2.1 Introduction

One of the laboratories of the Botany Department of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology, from the University of Coimbra, more precisely the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy, owns a Scanning Electron Microscope, a JEOL model JSM-5400, installed in the beginning of the 1990s.

Image acquisition is accomplished with the help of a photographic system, which is attached to the SEM, after the scanning of the specimen by an electron beam.

Nowadays, with the development of the new technologies, this existing system presents some restrictions, more specifically related to the image acquisition and processing in digital format, because the registration made on photographic film has to be developed and scanned to obtain the monochromatic digital images.

This project's main purpose is to provide a simpler and faster operation setup, by way of developing an alternative image acquisition system (data acquisition), which enables acquisition from the SEM, allowing image capture in a digital format. In addition, it will offer some image processing techniques, whose function is to improve the acquired images, thus increasing its quality and diminishing the necessity of applying these same techniques afterward.

Acquired images are representations of genuine samples, so obtained digital images must be the as closer as possible to reality, restricting the processing techniques applied to the contrast / brightness adjustment and to the edges detection.

2.2 Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)

The SEM is a type of electron microscope capable of producing high-resolution images of a sample surface [4] (biologic or not), which means that closely spaced features can be examined at a high magnification. It has a large depth of field which allows a large amount of the sample to be focused at one time. Due to the manner in which the image is created, the images from the SEM have a characteristic three-dimensional appearance and are very useful for judging the surface structure of the sample. [5]

Electron microscopy is, by definition, a specialized field of science that makes use of the electron microscope tool. [13]

Electron microscope (EM) is a scientific instrument that uses a highly energetic electron beam to examine objects, called specimen, on a very fine scale. These electrons are accelerated to 10000 keV and have a wavelength equal to 0,12 Angstroms¹ [6]. These analyses can yield topography, morphology, composition and crystallographic information [2]. Because of these characteristics it can be applied in several areas such as biology, geology, chemistry, sciences of materials, paintings reconstruction and others. [1]

The EM has influenced our understanding of tissue organization and especially the cell. It has offered us the capability to visualize molecules and even atoms. [13]

Electron microscopes were developed in the early 1930s, due to a scientific desire to perceive the fine details of the interior structures of organic cells. This desire required superior magnification which was not possible using light microscopes which are limited by the physics of light; they have insufficient magnifications and resolution². [2]

There are two different types of instruments also called electron microscopes. Both were created at about the same time but they have essentially different uses: [13]

1 1 Angstrom = 10^{-10} m

2 Resolution refers to the ability of the instrument 'separates' two closely placed objects as two entities rather than a single object.

- The **Transmission Electron Microscope** (TEM) – projects electrons through a very thin slice of specimen to produce a two-dimensional image in a phosphorescent screen. The brightness of a particular area of the image is proportional to the number of electrons that are transmitted through the specimen.



Figure 1: Image proceeding from a TEM [5].

- The **Scanning Electron Microscope** (SEM) – produces an image that gives the impression of three dimensions. This microscope uses a 2 to 3 nm spot of electrons that scans the surface of the specimen to generate secondary electrons that are detected by a sensor.

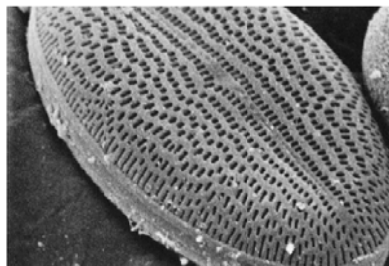


Figure 2: Image proceeding from a SEM [5].

The first type of EM to be developed, in 1931, was the TEM, then in 1942, appeared the SEM [2]. They were built by the engineers Ernst Ruska³, who had developed electromagnetic lenses, and Max Knoll⁴. It was based on the discoveries of the French physicist Louis de Broglie⁵. Although these instruments were primitive, they were capable of magnifying objects several times [3].

3 Ernst Ruska (1906-1988) - The Nobel Prize in Physics 1986;

4 Max Knoll (1897 - 1969);

5 Luis de Broglie (1892 – 1987) – The Nobel Prize in Physics 1929;

Electronic technologies have developed new electron microscopes with higher versatility, higher magnifying parameters and resolution [1]; however they are still based upon Ruska's prototype [3].

Electron microscopes function involves some basic steps [2]:

- First a stream of electrons is formed, using an electron source;
- These electrons are then accelerated toward the specimen using a positive electrical potential;
- Before striking the specimen, this stream is restrained and focused, using metal apertures and magnetic lenses into a thin, focused, monochromatic beam;
- After striking the specimen, and inside the irradiate sample, interactions occur affecting the electron beam.

Electron microscopes are an integral part of many laboratories; however they present some disadvantages, such as [3]:

- They are expensive to buy and maintain;
- They require extremely stable high-voltage supplies;
- They require extremely stable currents to each electromagnetic coil/lens;
- They require continuously-pumped high-vacuum systems, through the lenses and pumps;
- They are very sensitive to vibrations and external magnetic fields.

2.2.1 A Brief History

The developments on electron microscopy started in 1931 with Ernst Ruska and Max Knoll [5].

In 1938, Manfred Von Ardenne⁶ described a scanning electron beam; it was the first scanning transmission electron microscope (STEM), using the electrons passing through a thin sample for imaging [9].

In 1942, Zworykin et al.⁷ developed and described the first true SEM. The instrument consisted of an inverted column, three electrostatic lenses and electromagnetic scan coils placed between the second and third lenses. A photomultiplier tube detected the scintillations on a phosphor screen caused by the secondary electrons emissions.

Further work made large changes to the electron optics. The electrostatic lenses were replaced with electromagnetic coils; a double deflection scanning system was added as were stigmator⁸ coils. To help improve imaging, non-linear signal processing was used, also called gamma processing.

The main improvements were made to the signal collection process. The original phosphor screen / photomultiplier were improved by the addition of a light pipe that allowed for direct optical coupling between the scintillator and the photomultiplier tube, improving efficiency.

These improvements were combined in one instrument, forming a new SEM, known as SEM V, with an inverted column, electromagnetic lenses, double deflection scan system, stigmator coils and the Everhart-Thornley detector⁹ [9], which became the basis for the first commercial SEM, the Cambridge Scientific Instruments Mark I, available in 1965 [13].

2.2.2 Basic Systems

The SEM may be subdivided into various component systems that carry out various functions.

6 Manfred von Ardenne (1907-1997)

7 V. K. Zworykin, J. Hiller and R. L. Snyder, ASTM Bull

8 The stigmator is a device that is used to control any distortions in the roundness of the spot formed by the electron beam that scans the specimen.

9 Everhart-Thornley detector – carries the inventor's names. It consists in a SEM's improvement consisting on an addition of a light pipe to the photomultiplier.

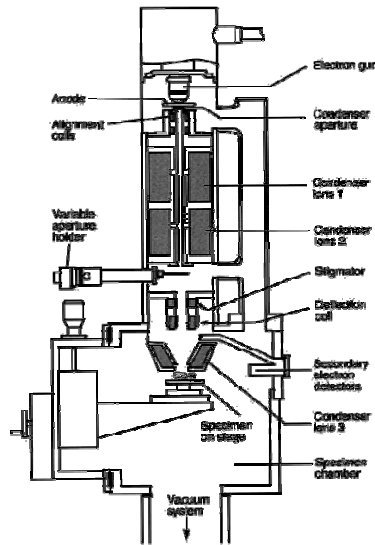


Image 3: Detail diagram of column of standard SEM. [13]

Certain components present on SEM are identical to those found in the TEM.

We can find a lens system which is involved in the production of a small, focused electron beam that is then rastered over a specimen surface by means of a scan deflection system. A specimen stage is needed so that the specimen may be inserted and situated relative to the beam. A secondary electron detector is used to detect and collect the electrons and to generate a signal that is processed by electronics and ultimately displayed on viewing monitors [13].

In order to permit an easy and non-turbulent traveling, a vacuum system is needed to remove air molecules that might interfere with the passage of the high energy electrons down the column and in direction to the detector [13].

After the electron beam leaves the bias shield, it is restrained and focused using metal apertures and magnetic lenses to form an initial focused spot which is diminished using condenser lenses [2]. The final condenser lens, called objective lens, does the final demagnification of the focused electron beam [13].

2.2.3 Functioning

The functioning of the SEM can be resumed to:

- A beam of electrons is produced [7], by a lens system [13] – electrons are thermionically emitted from a tungsten¹⁰ or lanthanum hexaboride cathode and are accelerated towards the anode. Usually, is used Tungsten because it has the highest melting point and lower vapor pressure of all metals [4]; the stream is condensed by the first condenser lens. This lens is used to form the beam and to limit the amount of current [8]; the electron beam can achieve a maximum energy of 100 keV;
- In the condenser aperture¹¹ some high-angle electrons are eliminated and the beam is then constricted [8];
- The second condenser lens forms the electrons into a thin, tight, coherent beam and is usually controlled by the “fine probe current knob” [8];
- In the objective aperture¹² high-angle electrons are eliminated from the beam [8], transforming it to a very fine focal spot sized 1 to 5nm [4];
- After that, the beam is scanned in a grid fashion, by a set of coils, dwelling on points for a period of time determined by the scan speed [8], deflecting the beam horizontally and vertically [4];
- The final lens, placed between scanning coils and the electron detector, focused the scanning beam onto the desired part of the specimen [8];
- When the beam strikes the specimen, interactions inside the specimen occur [8] and electrons, which had lost energy by repeated scattering and absorption [4], are detected with various instruments [8]. The size of interaction volume depends on the beam accelerating voltage and the specimen’s atomic number and density.

¹⁰ Tungsten melting temperature = 3695 K

¹¹ Condenser aperture usually not user selectable;

¹² Objective aperture usually user selectable;

- Before the beam moves to its next dwell point these instruments count the number of interactions and display a pixel on a monitor whose intensity is determined by this number (more reactions represents a brighter pixel) [8];
- This process is repeated until the grid scan is finished and then repeated [8].

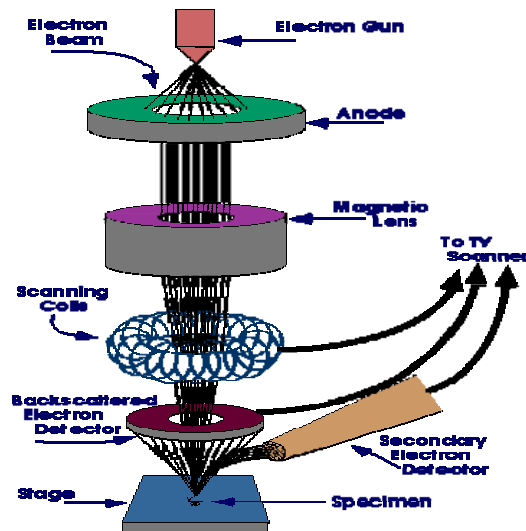


Image 4: SEM's schematic works [7].

2.2.4 Image Formation

At any given moment, a very small specimen's area is bombarded with electrons. A very fine electron beam generated in vacuum focuses and scans, in a series of lines and frames, the specimen's surface [12].



Figure 5: Schematically reading.

Some resulting signals from the beam-specimen interaction are collected [10].

The energy exchange in the beam-specimen interaction results in the emission of electrons and electromagnetic radiation [4] which are converted to a signal that is sent to a viewing screen [7], producing an image.

As a result of this beam-specimen interaction several effects can happen [11] [12]:

- Electrons can be elastically reflected from the specimen, conserving the energy;
- Electrons can be absorbed by the specimen and give rise to secondary electrons of very low energy, together with x-rays;
- Electrons can be absorbed and give rise to the emission of visible light. This effect is also known as Cathodoluminescence;
- Electrons can give rise to electric current within the specimen;

All these effects, electrons and electromagnetic radiation, can be used to produce an image.

2.2.4.1 Detection of Secondary Electrons

Secondary electrons are low energy electrons emitted from the sample as a result of the beam-sample interaction. They are responsible for the surface-sensitive signal, once they are emitted throughout the interaction volume, but due to their low energy they do not travel far in the sample, only a few nanometers [4], before being re-captured. The highest concentration of secondary electron is where the beam first enters the sample [11]. The electrons are detected by a scintillator-photomultiplier device and the resulting signal is rendered into a two-dimensional intensity distribution. The brightness of the signal is related to the number of secondary electrons that reaches the detector. The three-dimensional appearance and a well defined image happens because the “escape” distance of electrons, which is related to the incident angle of the beam, that means that bigger incident angle represents a less “escape” distance [4].

2.2.4.2 Detection of Backscattered Electrons

Backscattered electrons are the first electrons that suffer one or more elastic collisions within the sample and eventually have bounced around enough to re-emerge from the surface they came in, normally these electrons will also undergo several inelastic

collisions during their time inside the solid as well, and so will typically have an energy that is lower than the beam energy upon their escape [11].

Backscattered electrons may be used to detect contrast between areas with different chemical compositions, especially when the average atomic number of the various regions is different, since the brightness of the backscattered electrons image tends to increase with the atomic number [4][11].

2.2.4.3 Detection of X-Rays

During the scanning, two types of x-rays can be produced from the sample; the continuum also called Bremsstrahlung is formed from direct energy loss of the electron beam as they are slowed in the sample, and form a continuous energy spectrum from 0eV up to E_0 . The intensity of the Bremsstrahlung spectrum is directly proportional to the atomic number of the sample. Characteristic x-rays are produced when a beam produces a “hole”, that is when an electron knocks out an inner shell electron. This hole is filled with another electron that lets free some energy, that free energy is an x-ray [11].

Detectors have as main purpose to convert the receipted signal into an electric current [12]. These electric currents modulate the electrons beam's intensity in order to form, point by point, the image in the cathode ray tube [10].

The most important signals are those given for the secondary and backscattered electrons, a time that supply the surface's topography. The characteristic x-rays allow the chemical characterization of the sample's compounds [13].

2.2.4.4 SEM's Output

The specimen's reading, an electrical signal created by the detector, is received in a monitor where images can be seen. However, SEM yields that same information to the outside, in a composite video signal.

This type of signal was developed having in account the compatibility between systems.

2.3 Composite Video Signal

Formally, the video format is a signal type that describes the sequence and structure of frames¹³ that create the moving video image. That describes how one device sends a video picture to another [15].

There are two types of video format:

- **Analog** – oldest; the most common formats in market are: [23]
 - PAL¹⁴/CCIR – video signal standard for 50Hz, where images have 625 lines, only 576 lines are visible;
 - NTSC¹⁵/EIA – color video signal standard for 60Hz, where the monochromatic image is overlapped by color information, it had 525 lines, only 480 are visible;
 - SECAM¹⁶ - similar to PAL.
- **Digital** – most recent; in fact, the most common formats in market are ATSC, DVB and ISDB.

A video format describes a rectangular image carried within an envelope containing information about the image [15].

Although video formats vary significantly in organization, there is a common classification [15]:

- Video format uses a sequence of frames that are organized in a particular order. However, frames may vary small elements to represent further information;
- A frame is a series of lines that have a regular and constant length in order to produce a rectangular image;
- A frame can consist of two or more fields, sent separately, that assemble together to form a rectangular picture. This type of assembly is identified as interlace.

¹³ Frame is a photographic representation of a film;

¹⁴ PAL (Phase Alteration Line) – European standard;

¹⁵ NTSC (National Television Standards Committee) - Standard for North and Central America and Japan;

¹⁶ SECAM (Système Electronique Pour Couleur Avec Mémoire) – Standard for France, Russia, parts of Africa and Eastern Europe.

Actually, there are three video signal standards, they are: [14]

- **Composite video** - is the standard that can connect almost all consumer video equipment. It is a composite of three source signals called Y, U and V (together referred to as YUV¹⁷) with sync¹⁸ pulses. Y represents the brightness or luminance of the picture and includes synchronizing pulses, so that by itself it could be displayed as a monochrome picture. U and V between them transmit the colour information. They are first mixed with two orthogonal phases of a colour carrier signal to form a signal called the chrominance. Y and UV are then added together. Since Y is a baseband signal and UV has been mixed with a “transporter”, this addition is equivalent to frequency-division multiplexing;
- **S-Video** - also called Y/C uses two separate video signals, the luminance (Y) and chrominance, or *chroma* (C). The luminance is the black and white portion, providing brightness information and the chrominance is the colour fraction, providing hue and saturation information. In real meaning, an S-video signal is a composite signal that has been divided into two, transmitting colour and brightness on two separate channels, making a sharper picture image, with fewer granularities, on the receptor device;
- **Component video** - is a newer format of video signal, an improvement of the S-Video. It has separated *luma* (brightness) and *chroma* (colour) which is also separated into two signals, red and blue. The result is a triple-headed RCA cable and an image cleaner than composite with fewer colours bleeding than S-Video. Although common on newer equipments, component video is very rare on older TV sets and VCR's.

¹⁷ YUV – color codification system, different from RGB;

¹⁸ Synchronism - the term used in electronics to describe the necessary alignment of two signals or functions. In video signals, the synchronism signals are essential elements for keeping the time that the receiving device is capable to interpret it and to remove information of when and where to draw the image. The horizontal synchronism is an impulse of small amplitude generated in the beginning of each line, indicating when a new line must be drawn. The vertical synchronism is also an impulse of small amplitude generated in the beginning of each picture, indicating when a new picture must be drawn, that is a new image.

2.4 Digital Images

A digital image is a representation of a two-dimensional function of the intensity of light $f(x,y)$ where x and y represent the special coordinates in any point. It is a grid of n rows and m column of pixels¹⁹, the indices of lines and columns indicate a point in the image and the value of this element represents the gray level [23].

Typically, pixels are stored in computer memory as a raster image [24] or raster map [16], which consists of a data structure representing a rectangular grid of pixels, or points of color, viewable via a display medium.

Digital images can be created by a variety of input devices, normally a physical device [24], and techniques that synthesized from arbitrary non-image data, such as mathematical functions or three-dimensional geometric models. The field of digital image processing is the study of algorithms for their transformation [16].

2.4.1 Digital Images Types

Each image pixel is associated to a particular 'position' in a two-dimensional region, and has a *value* consistent with the signals related to that position.

Digital images can be classified according to the number and nature of those signals:

- **Binary or Bi-level** - is a digital image that has only two possible values for each pixel [18];
- **Grayscale** - is an image in which the value of each pixel is one sample [19];
- **Color** - is an image that includes color information for each pixel [20];
- **False-color** - is an image that illustrates a subject in colors that differ from human perception of the same subject [21];
- **Picture function** - is a mathematical representation of a two-dimensional image as a function of two spatial variables. The function $f(x,y)$ describes the intensity of the point at coordinates (x,y) [22].

¹⁹ Pixels are the smallest individual element in an image, holding quantized values that represent the brightness of a given colour at any specific point.

2.4.2 Digital Image Processing

Human perception in relation to the environmental information results in its bigger part from the vision. After the achievement of a digital image, it is possible to enhance the overall quality of that same image and to select features of interest for image analysis. Images that are electronically manipulated in this way are said to undergo image processing [13].

2.4.2.1 Components of an Image Processing System

In these last years, several models of image processing systems have been sold throughout the world [17]. Basically, digital image processing involves computers algorithms to perform image processing on digital images [25].

The concept of digital image processing started with the satellite imagery, in the 1960s, medical imaging and others; however it presented a high cost because the computing equipment of that era [25]. But along the years, those equipments had suffered some modifications to become cheaper and available to all persons [17].

With the development and cheapest versatile methods the digital image processing had become the most common form of image processing [25].

These methods allow better graphic manipulation, for example [24]:

- **Selection** is a procedure of select part or parts of an image, and manipulate only that specific image area;
- **Image size alteration** is a procedure also called image scaling, where image editor programs use a mathematical process, called resampling, to calculate new pixel values;
- **Cropping an image** is a procedure similar to the selection, but in this case it is created a new image by removing a desired rectangular portion from the original image;

- **Histogram** is a graphical representation of the number of pixels in the image with a particular brightness value, that is number of pixels vs. brightness value;
- **Noise removal** is a procedure using algorithms to add or remove noise in an image;
- **Removal of unwanted elements** is a procedure used to remove unwanted branches;
- **Selective color change** is a procedure that has the abilities of color swapping, to change the color of specific items in an image;
- **Slicing of images** is a procedure used to fragment images for graphical user interfaces or web pages are easily sliced, labeled and saved separately from whole images so the parts can be handled individually;
- **Lens correction** is a procedure used to correct images for various lens distortions;
- **Contrast and brightness adjustment**;
- **Printing** is a procedure used to control the print size and quality of digital images.

2.5 References

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3. Analysis and Specifications

In this section, named *Analysis and Specifications*, the analysis itself will be presented, describing the original problem, as well as all the related studies and the possible solutions.

Firstly, the main problem will be described, and following that same line of thought, the analysis made on the microscope signal will be discussed.

As the project consists on the development of an alternative data acquisition system, the described solution has hardware and software components.

3.1 Introduction

As it was said previously, the SEM used in the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy only allows the images to be registered using a photographic system, combined with the SEM. This system can be compared to a normal photographic system where the results are photographs, not immediately available in digital format.

This type of acquisition existing on the SEM is by far outdated, and nowadays a digital format acquisition is a basic request, in order to improve the quality and speed of the work developed on the laboratory and diminishing the waste of time with the actual system.

So the main intention of this project is the development of a digital system for the acquisition, storing and processing the images from the SEM, one that may replace the actual onerous system improving the user's work conditions.

3.2 SEM Analysis

In a study made to assimilate some information about the characteristics of the SEM, an output signal jack on the microscope was exposed. This was a starting point to our research because the acquisition system needs to be compatible with this output.

A small measure was carried out on the SEM's output using an oscilloscope, whose results are displayed in figures 6 and 7.

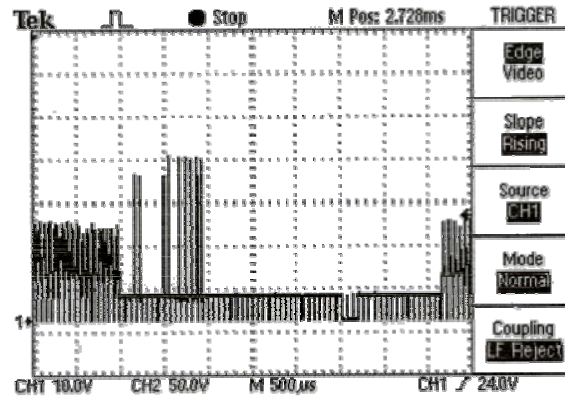


Image 6: SEM's electrical signal, obtained using an oscilloscope.

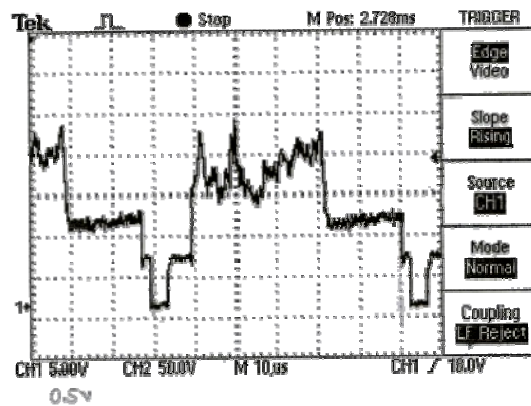


Image 7: SEM's electrical signal, obtained using an oscilloscope.

3.2.1 Signal Analysis

From the output signal analysis it was possible to confirm that the video signal supplied by the SEM was a composite video signal, as can be seen from the synchronism pulses, which mark the beginnings of the lines and frames.

With an analysis of the output signal, it was possible to identify the characteristics of that same video signal. In image 6, it was possible to visualize the vertical synchronism which designates the beginning of one frame; in image 7, it was possible to identify the horizontal synchronism which designates the beginning of one line.

Between two horizontal synchronisms it was possible to identify the information concerning one line, which means the value of each pixel of one determined line.

3.2.2 Associated Calculi

A very important issue in data acquisition systems is related to data transfer rate, which must be supported by the acquisition system.

The transfer rate is dependent on the images size, so the size of the images that will be transferred must be estimated.

The image size can be calculated, knowing that it is the product between the number of lines, number of points and the number of bits.

So we have:

Image size = number of lines x number of points x number of bits

- $number\ of\ lines = \frac{1}{frequency \times line\ time} = \frac{1}{60\ Hz \times 63,5\ \mu s} = 262\ lines\ per\ frame$
- number of points: 640points
- number of bits: 8 bits

(NOTE: As the resulting image is monochromatic, an 8bit ADC will be sufficient and will provide 256 distinct gray levels.)

Being thus, the **image size** can be estimated in **1 341 440bytes** (262 x 630 x 8).

3.3 Hardware Solution

As it was referred before, the main goal of this project is the development of an alternative system of acquiring, processing and storing data, in this particular case, images.

After an initial study, it was concluded that the obtained image is static, so each image can be obtained using a small part of the output signal, which is the corresponding frame.

Following this idea, and in a first inclination, we could think that the alternative solution would be the creation of a circuit, implementing several components like a synchronism separator, an ADC¹, and other components whose functions would be to obtain the relevant information to reconstruct an image, adding some computational treatment.

¹ ADC – Analogue - Digital converter

However, after some reflection and some research, it was possible to come across another solution.

A market study was made in order to inquire some device capable of recognizing a composite video signal, obtaining the necessary information to reconstruct an image.

The potential solution was found in a company named *DATATRANSLATION* that is responsible for the development of PCI bus cards known as frame grabbers, which are able to interpret video signals.

After congregating the requirements of our new alternative acquiring system, and analyzing the characteristics of the produced frame grabbers, we chose the better one, the one that better adjusted to the system requirements.

A viable choice was the DT3155 frame grabber. This card filled the essential requirements having in account the real conditions and having the advantage of bringing its own respective software.

3.3.1 DT3155

3.3.1.1 Characteristics

The acquisition card is a *DATATRANSLATION* model, a DT3155 (MACHI series). It is a programmable monochromatic card with high accuracy.



Image 8: Monochrome frame grabber for the PCI bus, DT3155 [2].

The PCI bus velocity permits that this DT3155 card transfers, with a high speed ($> 132\text{MB/s}$), an unlimited number of consecutive images in real time. We can acquire and store consecutive images until depletion the internal memory, or we can display consecutive images in a monitor and in real time.

The DT3155 card has 4 video signals input, in several monochromatic formats, such as:

- RS-170 – monochromatic video signal standard for 60Hz where images have 525 lines, only 480 lines are visible;
- CCIR – video signal standard for 50Hz, where images have 625 lines, only 576 lines are visible;
- NTSC/RS-330 – colour video signal standard for 60Hz, where the monochromatic image is overlapped by colour information, it had 525 lines, only 480 are visible;
- PAL – colour video signal standard, where the monochromatic image is overlapped by colour information, and it has 625 lines, and 576 are visible.

The DT3155 card digitalises the image and stores the resulting data in the computer system memory or transfers that same data to the computer sampling controller in order to present real time images.

The card works in an interlaced mode, making an image acquisition as soon as it detects the synchronism signal and stops later when the image is completed. The synchronism comes from the input channel and it is used to create the horizontal and vertical input time.

In this card the black level is defined as the tension below of which all the others are digitalised in black and the white level is defined as the tension above of which all the others are digitalised in white. The pixel value is placed between 0 and 255.

The DT3155 card uses an internal memory to store images and the sampling controller to display images.

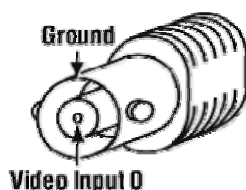


Image 9: Onboard BNC connector. [2]

This frame grabber, DT3155, will be connected to the SEM using the onboard BNC connector.

3.3.2 Computational Treatment

This alternative system could be divided in two parts:

- One involving **hardware** that is responsible for the acquisition;
- Another, involving **software** that is responsible for the data processing.

For the analysis and image processing, it was necessary to develop and implement a computer program that would meet the intended requirements and in this case, it had to be compatible with the hardware the DT3155 frame grabber from *DATATRANSLATION*.

An application was developed and named of *SEM-Botany*.

3.3.2.1 Language

The chosen language for the application program development was MatLab, short for “**Matrix Laboratory**”.

MATLAB is a numerical computing environment and programming language. It was developed by *TheMathWorks*, and it is a system for scientific calculi which provides an easy user environment with intuitive but very powerful notation. It allows the accomplishment of numerical algorithms on matrixes with the minimum of programming. Moreover, in MATLAB environment it is possible to create and manipulate matrixes without the necessity of previous sizing. The manipulation of variables can be carried through in an interactive way [1].

MATLAB was first adopted by control design engineers. Without possessing a special focus, it quickly spread into other domains. It is now also used in education, in particular in the teaching of linear algebra and numerical analysis, and is popular amongst scientists involved with image processing [1], because it has a big library of toolboxes, which are predefined functions that can be used.

MATLAB was chosen among others things for its diverse library that facilitates its applications.

For this particular case it was used the *Image Acquisition Toolbox* and *Image Processing Toolbox*.

The *Image Acquisition Toolbox* provides functions to connect and configure the hardware [4] for acquiring images or/and video directly from it into MATLAB [3]. It can continuously acquire image data while processes the acquired data and it supports any color space provided by the device, such as RGB, YUV and in this particular case

grayscale. The image data is a multidimensional array compatible with standard MATLAB functions. [4]

The *Image Processing Toolbox* provides several standard algorithms and graphical tools for image processing, analysis, visualization and algorithms development.

3.4 References

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4. Methodologies

In this chapter, named *methodologies*, the main purpose is to categorize and examine a number of software development processes. This is followed by a presentation of software life cycle and the model used.

It also has the results of the initial procedure; this is the first accomplished step for this project.

4.1 Introduction

In order to improve productivity and quality of the projects, several processes or *methodologies* have been developed. In general they were used to formalize or apply management techniques to the task of writing software.

4.2 Software Development Process

The software development process, known as software engineering process, is a set of activities, commanded coherently with the purpose of developing or evolving a software system. It is considered one of the main mechanisms resulting in quality software [2] [3].

Between these activities we find [4] [10] [11]:

- **Domain analysis** – in a new project, it includes the design of new software or an addition to an existing one; it is recommended that the first task is to investigate the so-called “domain” of the software, the idea is to comprehend the project to develop;
- **Software elements analysis** – it consists in examining the requirements; identifying the problems that are supposed to be solved, including the operation capabilities, its desired performance characteristics, and the resource infrastructure needed to support operation and maintenance;

- **Specification** – it consists on the task of formally describing the software, in a mathematically rigorous form. Basically, it is the definition of what the program must be able to do;
- **Software architecture** – it consists on the task of representing the system in an abstract approach. The objectives are to guarantee that the software meets the product requirements. It defines the interconnection and resource interfaces between system subsystem components;
- **Implementation / Coding** – it consists on the task of reducing the design to an operational source code;
- **Testing** – it consists on the task of testing the software, the purpose is to find mistakes in order to correct them and to reach superior quality levels;
- **Documentation** – it is an important task, and it consists on documenting the internal design of the software, assisting future maintenance and enhancement;
- **Maintenance** – it consists on maintaining and enhancing software to handle newly discovered problems or new requirements, it can take a longer time than the initial development of the software.

4.2.1 Software Life Cycle

A Software Life Cycle model is either a descriptive or prescriptive characterization of how software is or should be developed [11].

Software goes through several phases since its conception until it becomes outdated, that is known as *software life cycle*.

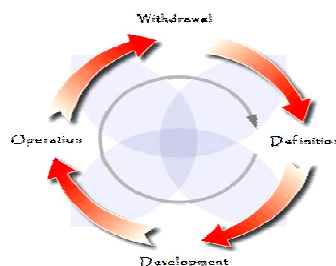


Figure 10: Software Life Cycle schematical representation.

Nowadays, several proposals and denominations for the different phases of the life cycle exist; the following phases are the norm:

- **Definition** – it is the set of activities that look to the knowledge deepened of the current situation in order to identify the main problems and find a possible solution [9], for example [1]:
 - **System analysis** – it is the identification, specification and description of the software system requirements. The functional requirements can be functional / not functional and for user / system;
 - **Process modelling** – it focuses on the software system abstraction using models that describe it, being a powerful instrument for the comprehension and understanding of the final product that will be developed. The biggest difficulty lies in the balance between simplicity and complexity. Four methods can be cited:
 - **Structuralized analysis** – it consists on the construction of models using a proper notation of the method, with the purpose of constructing models portraying the flow and the content of the information used, describing the essence of what is to be developed [2];
 - **Essential analysis** – it consists on the specification of the activities that compose a functional model of transformation according to the user's necessities [12];
 - **Object-oriented programming** – it is based in the composition and interaction between diverse units of software called objects and it consists on the specifications of a set of objects that better describe the software system;
 - **Rational Unified Process (RUP)** – it uses the boarding of the object-oriented in its conception and it is project and register using Unifies Modelling Language (UML) notation to illustrate the process in action.
- **Development** – it is the set of activities that have the purpose of constructing the product. It includes [9]:
 - **Design** – it is the set of activities that have as objective describing how the software will be implemented. It includes:

- **Conceptual design** - it involves the elaboration of basic ideas and concepts that determine the basic software elements;
- **User interface design** – it involves the elaboration of the way how the user can interact to carry through its tasks; it includes the interface objects choice. The interface must guarantee the good usability of the software, guaranteeing thus its success;
- **Architecture design** – it involves the elaboration of a macroscopic vision of the software, describing the interaction between components;
- **Algorithms and data structures design, also known as detailed design** – it involves the algorithmic solutions;
- **Implementation** – it involves codification, compilation, integration and test activities;
- **Verification and validation** – it involves activities that aim to demonstrate that the system works properly;
- **Operation** – is the set of activities that guarantee the distribution / delivery, installation / configuration and maintenance [9];
- **Withdrawal** – is the set of activities involved in the evolution of platforms for new requirements incorporation [9].

Due to the singular characteristics of the different phases of the software life cycle, and depending on the process model adopted, the different phases are delimited by a different form, which is the same as saying that the beginning and end of each phase are not rigorously defined.

4.2.2 Processes Models

Software process models represent a networked sequence of activities, objects, transformations, and events that exemplify strategies for accomplishing software evolution. Such models can be used to develop more precise and formalized descriptions of software life cycle activities [11].

The existing models possess different degrees of sophistication and complexity and must be adapted to the existing conditions, in particular to the team size. For as simple or complex they might seem models are simpler versions of reality [8].

Various methodologies have been developed to guide the processes involved, as for example the waterfall model, spiral model, prototyping, unified process and others.

Along these last years, several life cycle models have been developed with the main purpose of finding a process or a predictable and repeatable methodology that could improve the productivity and quality [3], after a long time of lack of agreement in terms of used methods [8].

A software project that does not possess a good project management has a low rate of success.

4.3 Model used

For the development of any project, including this one, a set of activities can be defined in order to guarantee the success of the project development.

The model used was simplified adaptation of the Rational Unified Process (RUP), a complete software development methodology.

The RUP lifecycle is an implementation of the spiral model, it has been created by assembling the content elements into semi-ordered sequences. It organizes the tasks into the following phases and interactions [15]:

- **Inception phase** – establishment and global definition of the project, using the initial requirements, defining the initial modules of the system and architecture;
- **Elaboration phase** – specification of the major risk points, defining the remain requirements, refining the previously defined diagrams;
- **Construction phase** – development of the system. This phase includes the project implementation, and the accomplishment of tests;
- **Transition phase** – the final phase, it corresponds to the adjustments and transference of the system.

The following figure illustrates the basic model adopted:

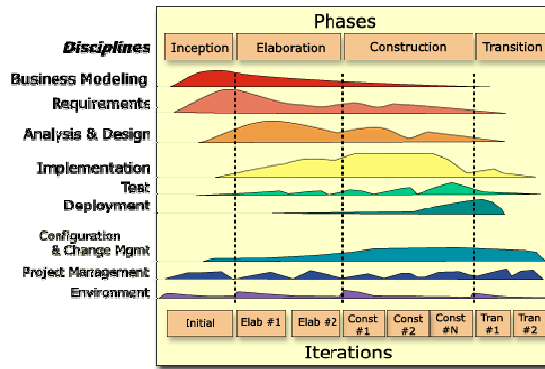


Figure 11: Basic model of RUP [15].

The starting point was the understanding of the necessities that had led to the project proposal, as well as the definition of the main requirements.

After the conclusion of this phase, a first idea was developed, aimed at resolving the described necessities in the previous phase. This led to the development of a prototype that offered an idea about the interface to be developed.

The next step was a critical analysis of the prototype in order to perceive if it answered to the previously described necessities, in the requirement analysis phase. As in the beginning of the project development it was determined that the requirements should not be altered frequently, which would imply constant changes to the development of the work, the defined requirements were kept to the end of the project except for some that were eliminated.

Later the implementation was concluded, using MatLab, followed by several tests in order to confer its correctness. That is, the confirmation that the software not only answered the necessities but also made it in the correct mode.

4.3.1 Initial procedure

As it was said previously, the followed strategy consisted on subdividing the project in phases and carrying them through in sequence.

It was started by writing some “documents” to help understand the necessities and what should be done.

In this section, these initial written documents are presented.

4.3.1.1 Insight and objectives

This document has as main purpose to make a first general presentation of *SEM-Botany*. It is also a brief description of the necessities that led to the proposal of this project.

Insight

With the *SEM-Botany* it is intended the creation of an application that assists the use of the acquired images through SEM. It consists on an attempt of resolving an existing obstacle in the laboratory of electron microscopy.

It was thought that maybe this problem could easily be solved if some hardware and software adaptations were made in the actual data acquisition system, which is a very simple tool that consists only on a photographic system connected to the SEM, working as two separate modules. This system remains this way since its creation.

The idea is the development of an application capable of registering, through the SEM's video signal, information concerning the image that is being analyzed, implying the ability to record a section of the observed sample, and assisting the treatment of the collected images upon the necessities of the user.

Objectives

In general, this project development has the main purpose of an advance of the actual method concerning acquisition and posterior treatment of the images. Enabling the direct access to digital images acquired via the output of the SEM, with fewer steps and lower cost.

In more detail, what is requested is the development of an alternative data acquisition system, capable of connecting the SEM to a computer, having associated an application development that makes possible image capture and posterior treatment, responding to the users most eminent needs.

These are, in general terms, the main ambitions of this project.

It is possible, with the projects development, modest application implementations, to turn it more efficient, giving better response to the actual needs.

Application

After the presentation and description of the principal purposes, follows a presentation of *SEM-Botany* utility.

The *SEM-Botany* does not have in mind the market, but an improvement of the SEM, including some hardware and software adaptations, providing better user conditions, following the development of the new technologies, even with alternative techniques.

Actually, the SEM (JEOL JSM-5400) system only allows image visualization in a monitor and the posterior capture with a photographic mechanism connected to the microscope, because of that, the system becomes very incomplete and impossibilities the digital storage of the collected data, (in this case images), providing imperfect data for posterior studies. Because it does not allow the digital images storage, it compromises posterior studies, making the results of studies completely user dependent.

Therefore, the alternative consists on the use of an acquisition card, the *DATATRANSLATION* frame grabber DT3155. That frame grabber is the sole responsible for the capture of the SEM output signal, and the transformation of that video signal into a digital monochromatic image. Simultaneously, and associated to this method, it is intended that the application also developed in the scope of this project, can also be capable to supply some image treatment and processing options.

Being so, the software that is pretended must only be able to:

- Command the frame grabber to capture images;
- Allow, via some options, the manipulation of some characteristics of the images, facilitating the distinction of important aspects.

This is not a project whose idea is an innovation, much the contrary, the new SEM already possesses technologies of acquisition and treatment of image.

However, as the existing microscope (on the laboratory of electron microscopy of the University of Coimbra) is not exactly recent, it was build in the 90s, and a commercial adaptation of this level would involve high costs that would prove themselves unviable by the department. The solution was then found as an alternative to the data acquisition system.

This method makes possible the “transformation” of the data acquired in a digital format that can be easily stored, a time that that card possesses all the necessary circuits to the recognition and conversion of the video signal into a digital image.

Moreover, the acquired data can remain stored in digital format and later visualized, thus diminishing the deterioration that would occur printing or digitalizing.

4.3.1.2 Requirements analysis

This document has as main purpose the project requirements presentation, which supports the *SEM-Botany* development, requirements that are part of this initial phase.

In general, the exposition of the functional requirements is made, as well as hardware and software requirements that are necessary to posterior development.

As for the functional requirements respective section, a detailed description of the project and of the application to develop is made, as well as the expected and probable usages.

In the hardware requirements respective section, the necessary and used hardware during the development of the *SEM-Botany* is listed, as well as during the phase of use.

In the software requirements respective section, a list is made of the necessary and used software during the development of the *SEM-Botany*, as well as during the phase of use.

Functional Requirements

Having in sight the growth and practicability of project, it is necessary to proceed to the development of an application that has as main purpose to provide an improvement upon the SEM's use conditions.

This application development, for subsequent use, will have to be capable of processing acquired data using a frame grabber that interprets the output video signal of the SEM.

The idea is to supply the possibility of proceeding to the treatment of the acquired images thus enhancing some characteristic, placing the investigators of the Botany Department in brace with the possibility to follow the advances in its inquiry area.

Summarizing, this application must have the following characteristics and functions:

- acquiring images, using the *DATATRANSLATION* Frame Grabber;
- improving obtained image visualization;
- allowing zoom in, and zoom out, of the acquired images;
- allowing contrast/luminosity regulation;
- allowing the contours recognition;
- allowing the selection of regions of interest (ROI), as well as the posterior treatment;
- storing acquired images;
- accessing previously acquired and stored images;
- printing visualized image;
- visualization, in real time, of the acquired and modified image;
- counting events (cells for example).

These were the initial requirements that had suffered adjustments along the development of the project, some of them were eliminated.

Use Cases

In this specific case and as it deals with a simple application, we only have the case of one user, who will almost certainly be a Biology researcher.

It is planned to formulate an approach of the available and accessible options in the application that may be useful to the user.

In a resume way, in this application the user is able to choose at the beginning if he wants to make a new acquisition, or restudy a stored image.

Then the result is visualized, in a respective window. After that, the user must analyse the image, and conclude that the image has, or not, the minimum ‘quality’ for his study.

This application has available defined functions, as options, that can improve the acquired images quality.

Simultaneously the initial and processed (posterior) images are presented, and the user can compare them, and observe if the image as become better or worse.

When the study process is finished, the user has the choice of saving the images, with the alterations made and some images notes.

Language

After some research, the possible chosen language for the computational program development is MatLab, short for “**Matrix Laboratory**”.

MatLab was chosen because it provides an easy user environment with intuitive notation but very powerful. It already possesses several powerful that help data acquisition and processing.

4.3.1.3 Architecture

After some general thoughts and after having delimited objectives and applications that *SEM-Botany* has to support, it is necessary to make a detailed study about the application architecture.

This document has as main purpose the making of an exhausting presentation of this application, bearing in mind that one does not exist preceding this type of application.

For the elaboration of this document, and in order to keep some coherence between the diverse written documents, it was necessary a revision of the *Insight and Objectives* and *Requirement analyses*.

Development and design

This alternative system can be divided in two different parts; one related to the connection to the SEM and obtaining the output signal, it can be thought as a physical part; and another related to processing de data, the software part.

The physical architecture will consist on a computer that will be connected to the SEM, having as intermediate the frame grabber.

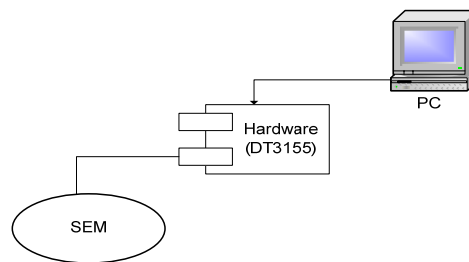


Image 12: Physical architecture

The software architecture can be divided into sub-applications, they are:

- **The beginning phase** - where the user must choose what he wants to do;

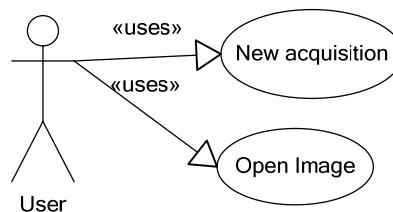


Image 13: Use case diagram 1.

When the application starts the user can choose to start with a new acquisition, or a stored image.

- **The image processing phase** - where the user must choose from the available choices which functions he wants to apply.

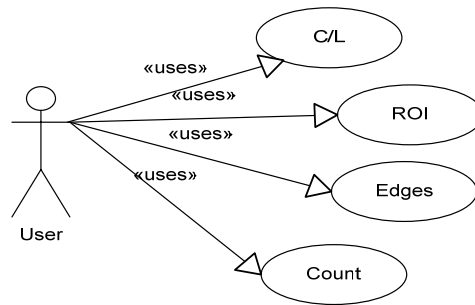


Image 14: Use case diagram 2.

The user must select between the processing options techniques to apply to the image.

- **The ending phase** - where the user has to choose if he wants to save his work.

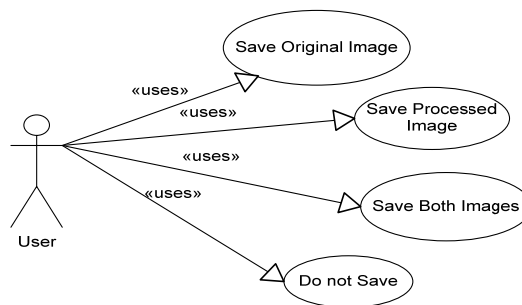


Image 15: Use case diagram 3.

The application provides the possibility of saving all the work that had been developed.

Technologies and Languages

As previously described, this application will have to be capable of acquiring data from the SEM and do its posterior treatment, requiring for this, the support of an interface, the *DATATRANSLATION* frame grabber.

Being so, this application will have to be capable of:

- communicate with the frame grabber in order to obtain the desired data, and/or execute specific functions;
- allow the data visualization, in this particular case images;
- allow data treatment, making possible a better posterior use of it.

Having in sight a better application performance, it was established that the MatLab programming language would be used, because it has a huge performance in data processing.

During the project development phase, which includes all the processes involving a software project, it was necessary the use of following hardware:

- **Computer** - support to the project, a time that this project consists on the software development;
- **Frame Grabber** – interface PCI card that connects the SEM to the computer, responsible for the data interpretation.

During the posterior project development phase, it will be necessary the use of following hardware:

- **Computer** - base of execution of the application to develop;
- **Frame Grabber** - interface PCI card that connects the SEM to the computer, responsible for the data interpretation.

During the project development phase, which includes all the processes involving a software project, it was necessary the use of following software:

- **Microsoft Office Word** – used during the documents writing;
- **Microsoft Office Visio** – project planning; elaboration of the diagram of Gantt, and diagrams construction;
- **Adobe Acrobat Reader** - documents visualization (*.pdf format) and posterior conversion of the written Word documents to *.pdf format;
- **MatLab 7.01** – code edition and compilation.

During the posterior project development phase, it will be necessary the use of following software:

- **Adobe Acrobat Reader** - documents visualization (*.pdf format) and posterior conversion of the written Word documents to *.pdf format;
- **MatLab 7.01** – code compilation.

4.3.1.4 Interface Prototype¹

This document has as main purpose the presentation of the interface prototype that was built to give us an idea about what have to be developed to answer to the described necessities.

Main Functions

The main function of this program is related to acquisition and processing images.

Firstly the program is initiated and a primal window is displayed containing a menu bar with several options, such as *File*, *Tools*, and *Help*, two empty regions and several buttons with the available functions. The options are activated by pushing the bottoms in the main window using the mouse. Each option has associated a descendent menu with several executable functions, some of them executed immediately and others need some confirmations or some parameters specifications. The images will be displayed on the empty regions.

All windows can be moved with the mouse and when some parameter is incorrect or missing an error message is displayed.

Now, a brief description of the visible options will be made:

- *File* – this option will be used to initiate, load, print and save images. It will be also used to quit the applications;
- *Tools* – this option will be used after an image is chosen, and it will apply some processing techniques such as filters, the contrast/luminosity

¹ This was the first idea, so called prototype. Along the project development it suffered some transformations.

adjustment, edges detection, resize images, count events and add notes to the associated file;

- *Help* – this option will provide the access to the "Instructions Manual".

Using Matlab, it was made a first prototype, and a simple representation of it is presented in image 14.

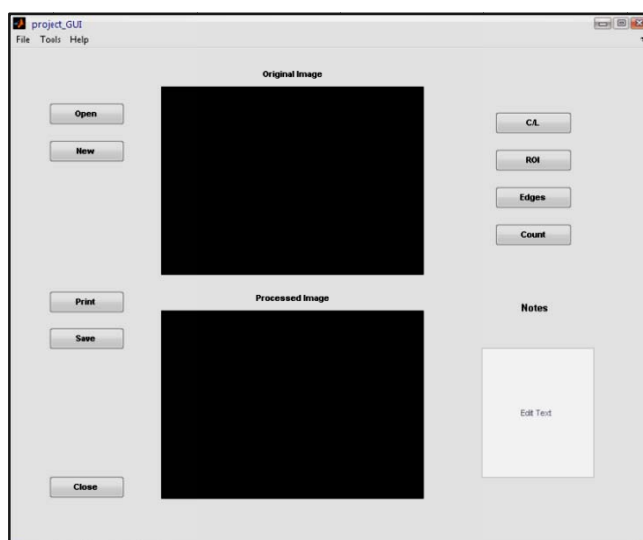


Image 16: Interface prototype.

4.3.1.5 Scheduling

After all the writing phase of the initial documents, it was necessary to proceed to its scheduling, that consists of a management of the tasks for the available time.

The following image represents the Gantt Diagram that shows the initial scheduling of the tasks to the length of the project development.

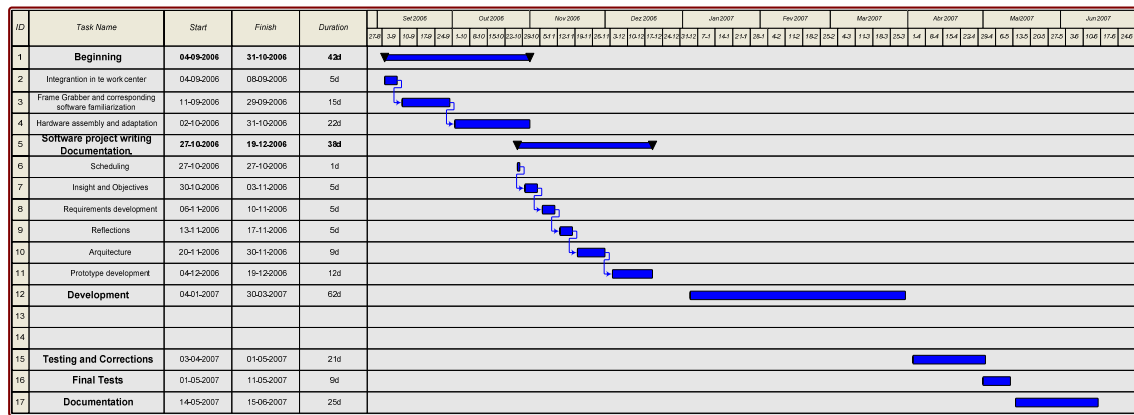


Image 17: Gantt Diagram – Initial schedule

During the project development, these stages previously defined had suffered some alterations mainly due to the fact that the project had been developed from the beginning and the time intervals for each stage were not defined.

The following image represents the final Gantt Diagram, which represents the real scheduling of the tasks to the length of the project development.

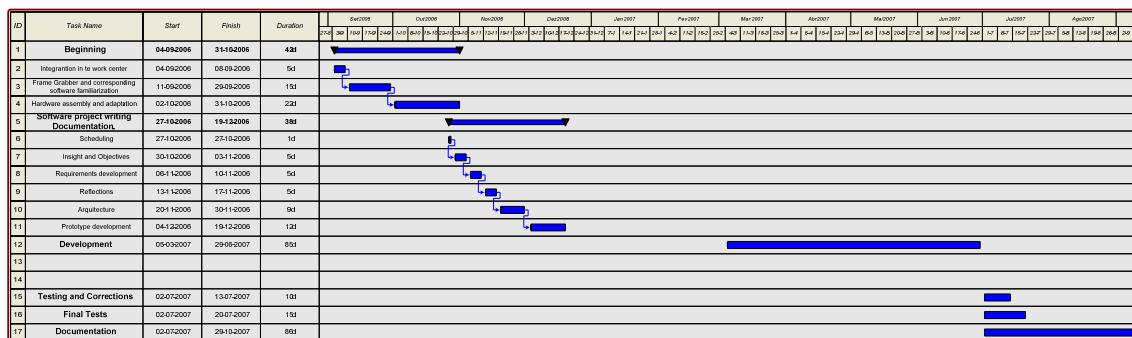


Image 18: Gantt Diagram – Final schedule

4.4 References

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5. Implemented Solution

In this chapter, it is intended to present the system that was implemented after a long study and effort to find viable solutions.

It is intended to make a presentation of the system that was implement in the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy.

5.1 Introduction

Such as was said previously, the objective of the *SEM-Botany* is the development of a new alternative system of data acquisition to that used in the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy, more specifically the development of system for the acquisition, processing and storing of images from the SEM.

For better understanding, the complete system was divided in two components:

- A component that involves the hardware, responsible for the acquisition of images, where the hardware used will be described;
- A component that involves software, responsible for the processing and storage of the images, where the software will be presented, including the development and usage.

5.2 Hardware Component

The part of the system that involves the hardware is responsible for the information flow. It comprises (see figure 19):

- A **signal source** – in this case a SEM composite video output;
- A **signal receiver** – in this case the DT3155 a *DATATRANSLATION* frame grabber, whose choice was already justified in chapter three. It was installed on a computer dedicated to this system;
- A **transmitter** – in this case a cable with BNC connectors in order to connect the output of the SEM to the DT3155 frame grabber.

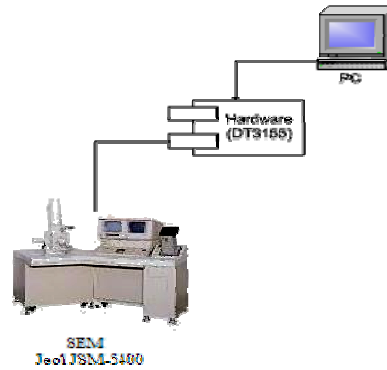


Figure 19: schematical representation of the system.

The output of the SEM is carried to the frame grabber, where it is digitalized.

5.3 Software Component

The developed software is responsible for the acquisition, processing and storing of the digital images.

This section intends to explain the development and operation of the developed software, commenting the most important aspects.

5.3.1 Graphical User Interface (GUI)

A Graphical User Interface, commonly called GUI, is a pictorial interface with a program whose objective is to facilitate its use. For that reason it must presents a consistent appearance with intuitive, understandable and predictable controls in order that the user only concentrates in its use [1].

The three main required elements to create a GUI using MATLAB are: [1]

- **Components** - any MATLAB item is a graphical component, namely:
 - graphical controls, like buttons, edition boxes and lists;
 - static elements, like pictures and chains of characters;
 - menus;
 - axis;

- **Figures** - windows where components are arranged;
- **Return Calls** - the code to be executed in reply to an event¹.

For the development of the GUI, it was used a MATLAB graphical user interface development environment (GUIDE) that provides a set of tools to assist GUIs creation.

It has a layout editor that enables us to create a GUI dragging the components into the layout area, and change their properties, having in count what is intended [2].

When this layout is saved, it automatically generates an M-file with code to initialize the GUI, and to which can be added code to execute when the components are activated. [2] These events are defined as callback functions.

Since the main purpose of the application is related with the acquisition, processing and storing of images, it was found convenient that the GUI must offers a way to visualize the initial and processed images simultaneously, so it was then determined to make use of two windows for this effect; a minor one, where the initial image is displayed, and a larger one where the final image is displayed.

For the processing alternatives it was determined to present the functions, describe latter in this section, available in the menu. The first idea was to offer these same functions in several buttons, but for aesthetic reasons it was dropped.

In order to complete the studies carried through in the laboratory, the possibility to associate information to the image was added, allowing annotations addition. For this purpose a visualization window was created, where is possible to visualize the content of a file that is associated with the image.

The organization of the menu had in account its practical use. For this it was subdivided in four groups, originating sub-menus:

- **File**, which contains:
 - **New Acquisition;**
 - **Open** stored images;
 - **Save / Save As;**
 - **Quit;**

¹ Events can be defined as entrances, for example pressing the mouse button.

Its similarity with any WINDOWS used programs is not coincidence; therefore the users will feel themselves more familiar with the interface.

- **Tools**, which are the result of an attempt to group all the available processing functions. Its organization tends to demonstrate a possible sequence of its use. The available functions are:
 - Filter;
 - Contrast and Brightness Adjustment - using a pre-defined function or manipulating the histogram;
 - Edges Detection - using Canny, Log or Roberts method;
 - Resize - using Bilinear, Bicubic or Nearest Interpolation;
- **Back to the original image** offers the user the chance to return to the initial image, that is, after the application of processing functions fail to work;
- **Help** offers to the user the access to the user manual.

All the components are activated using the mouse or the shortcut keyboard keys previously defined.

The final graphical interface has the following aspect:

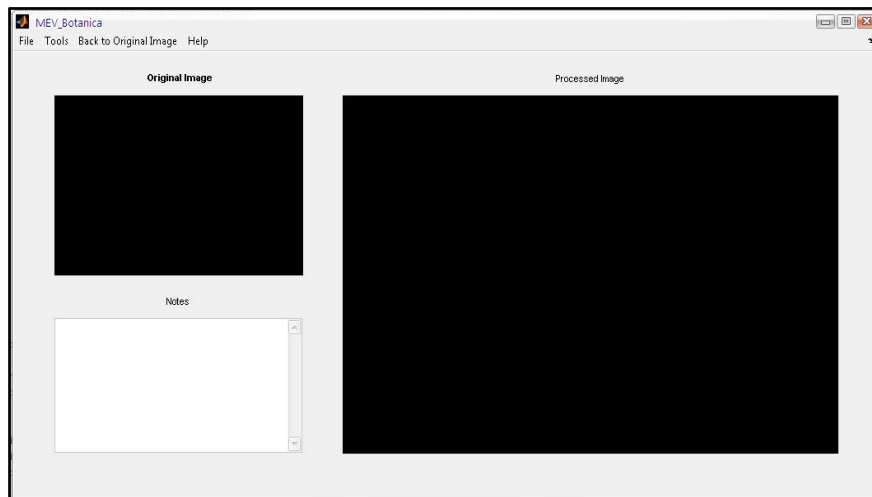


Figure 20: Aspect of the developed GUI.

In the next sections it will be presented and justified the coded return calls in this program.

5.3.1.1 File

New Acquisition

This is the activated function when the objective is to make a new acquisition, so it has to acquire one image using the SEM, for this it will use the DT3155 frame grabber from *DATATRANSLATION*, which have to be activated and its data collected for the MATLAB.

As it was said previously, MATLAB was chosen among others things for its diverse library that facilitates its applications.

For this particular case it was used the *Image Acquisition Toolbox*.

This toolbox help us providing functions to connect and configure the hardware for acquiring images or/and video directly from it into MATLAB [3]. It can continuously acquire image data while processes the acquired data [4] and it supports any color space provided by the device, such as RGB, YUV and in this particular case grayscale. The image data is a multidimensional array compatible with standard MATLAB functions. [4]

A function useful for open, initialize, configure, and control an acquisition device is the function *videoinput*. The opening, initializing, and configuration occur once, at the start of the model's execution, and it represents the connection between MATLAB and a particular acquisition device [5], in this case the DT3155 frame grabber from *DATATRANSLATION*. To obtain a single image frame, the function *getsnapshot* is used.

When this option is activated, several checks are made do ensure that the program is executed without errors, detecting for example the existence or not of an image for study or if exists the risk of losing unsaved images, displaying specific warning dialog in each case.

The following code is responsible for the acquisition of images:

```
vid = videoinput ( 'dt' , 1 );  
start ( vid );  
IMG = getsnapshot ( vid );  
delete ( vid );
```

After this process, the image is presented. First the initial/original image is displayed on the small window, using the following code:

```
set ( handles.original , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' );
```

```
axes ( handles.original );  
imagesc ( IMG );  
colormap ( gray );  
set ( handles.original , 'HandleVisibility' , 'OFF' );  
set ( handles.original , 'XTickLabel' , '' , 'YTickLabel' , '' );
```

Next the processed image, initially similar to the original image, is displayed on the large window, using the following code:

```
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' );  
axes ( handles.processed );  
imagesc ( IMG );  
colormap ( gray );  
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'OFF' );  
set ( handles.processed , 'XTickLabel' , '' , 'YTickLabel' , '' );
```

In this process the image data is stored in the variable *IMG* that is defined as global variable, being available to the others *callback functions*.

Open

This is the activated function when the objective is to open a stored image, which could be stored in any directory.

In order to help in this process, the *uigetfile* function is used, which displays a dialog box that enables the user to select a file to be opened [6].

However, it is necessary to load the image information and for this is used another toolbox, the *Image Processing Toolbox*.

The *Image Processing Toolbox* provides a set of algorithms and graphical tools for image processing, analysis, visualization, and algorithm development [7]. Between them it can be found the *imread* function, which is capable of reading a grayscale or color image from a specified file [8]. The *cd* function is used to change working directory, which is necessary to prevent a general exception.

The following code is responsible for opening images:

```
[filename,pathname]=uigetfile({'*.format'}, 'Choose Image. ');  
cd ( pathname );  
IMG = imread ( filename );  
cd ( current_pathname );
```

After this process, the images are displayed in the same manner that was described. In this process the image data is stored in the variable *IMG* that is defined as global variable, being available to the others *callback functions*.

Save /Save As

This is the activated function when the objective is to save an image.

Again the *Image Processing Toolbox*² assists this task, with *getimage* and *imwrite* functions, that are valuable in retrieving and saving the processed image.

The following code is responsible for saving images:

```
get_image = getimage(handles.processed);  
[ savename , savedpathname ] = uiputfile ( {'*.format'}, 'Save...');  
cd ( savedpathname );  
imwrite ( save_IMG , savename );
```

The *get_image* function returns the first image data contained in the handle graphics object, in this particular case the processed image window; the *uiputfile* option offers the possibility to specify the file name, in this case the image to save and the path where to save it.

Close

This is the activated function when the objective is to terminate the application.

If there is no image to save or if it is discarded by the user the application is closed and with it all the variables from the MATLAB environment.

For this described process is executed the following code:

```
fclose ( 'all' );  
clear all  
close all;  
clc;  
quit;
```

² For further information consult <http://www.mathworks.com/products/image/>

5.3.1.2 Tools

An important fact of this project is centered in the processing of the images using enhancement techniques to increase its quality.

To assist in this task the *Image Processing Toolbox* is used because, as was already said, it has several standard algorithms and graphical tools for image processing, analysis, visualization and algorithms development.

After the analysis of the application requirements, it was defined that the functions, that will be described, are the ones that are necessary to address the most eminent and initial requirements described in chapter four.

Filter

This is the activated function when the objective is to filter the image to analyze.

This option is available, not directly because the initial requirements but because after some tests (acquisition of some images) it was detected a soft noise in the images. The images presented random shining points, as well as an effect that was visible in the contours, the lines were not finely delimited.

With the purpose of reducing that noise in the images, some experiments showed that it could be reduced or partially eliminated with the use of digital filters.

So in the *Image Processing Toolbox* was found a very useful filter that is defined by the *medfilt2* function.

The *medfilt2* perform two-dimensional filtering with a nonlinear operation used to reduce the “salt and pepper” noise preserving the edges [9].

The following code is responsible for filtering the images:

```
IMG_filter = medfilt2 ( IMG , [ 3 2 ] );
```

The filtered image is stored in the variable *IMG_filter*, and the following code is responsible to display the ‘processed’ image in the corresponding window:

```
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' );  
imagesc (IMG_filter );  
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'OFF' );  
set ( handles.processed , 'XTickLabel' , '' , 'YTickLabel' , '' );
```

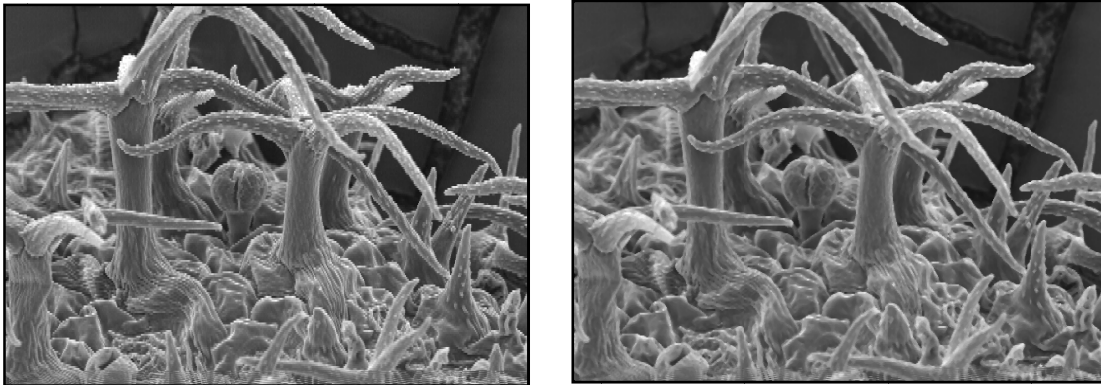


Figure 21: Image before and after the processing

The variable *IMG_filter* is defined as global variable, being available to the others *callback functions*.

Contrast and Brightness Adjustment

This is the activated function when the objective is to provide some adjustments in the contrast and brightness of the image to process.

It allows the contrast and brightness adjustment using two methods. One that relies on the user input and a simpler one that doesn't.

To implement this option some functions provide by the *Image Processing Toolbox*, that contains several image enhancement routines were used, in particular *imadjust* and *imcontrast*.

The *imadjust* function increases the contrast of the image by mapping the values of the input intensity image to new values such that 1% of the data is saturated at low and high intensities of the input data [10].

The *imcontrast* function creates a tool of contrast adjustment in a separate figure, however associated to the image, which provides an interactive contrast and brightness adjustment tool that contains a scaled histogram of pixel values that can be changed by the user [11].

The following code is responsible for ‘adjusting’ the images:

- Using *imadjust*, or the *auto* option from the menu:

```
IMG_auto = imadjust ( IMG ) ;  
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' );  
imagesc (IMG_auto );  
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'OFF' );  
set ( handles.processed , 'XTickLabel' , '' , 'YTickLabel' , '' );
```

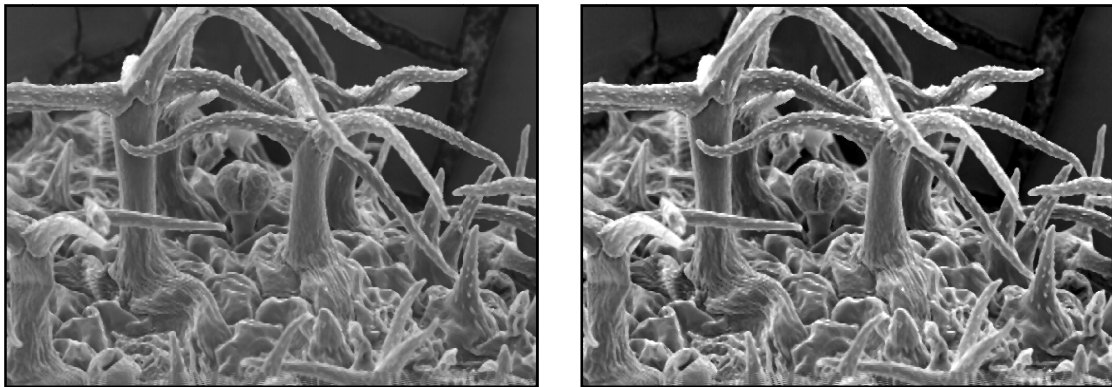


Figure 22: Image before and after the processing

The image data after the adjustment is stored in the variable *IMG_auto* before being displayed.

- Using *imcontrast*, or the *histogram* option from the menu:

```
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' )  
imcontrast ( gca );  
colormap ( gray );  
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'OFF' );  
set ( handles.processed , 'XTickLabel' , '' , 'YTickLabel' , '' );
```

As this tool is associated with the image, in this case to the window containing the processed image, the changes made are instantaneously displayed.

Edges Detection

This is the activated function when the objective is to point out the edges of the image to process.

To programming this option it was used some functions provide by the *Image Processing Toolbox* that contains several image enhancement routines, in this particular case a function named *edge*.

Edge function takes a grayscale or a binary image as its input, returning a binary image with the same size, where 1's designates the edges and 0's elsewhere [12]. This function supports several edge-finding methods, such as:

- **Canny method** – detects edges by looking for local maxima of the gradient of the image. The gradient is calculated using the derivative of a Gaussian filter. The method uses two thresholds, to detect strong and weak edges, and includes the weak edges in the output only if they are connected to strong edges;
- **Sobel method** – detect edges using Sobel approximation, that is where the gradient is maximum;
- **Prewitt method** – detect edges using Prewitt approximation, that is where the gradient is maximum;
- **Roberts method** - detect edges using the Roberts approximation, that is where the gradient is maximum;
- **Laplacian of Gaussian method** - detect edges by looking for zero crossings after filtering the image with a Laplacian of Gaussian filter;

For this application there are available only edges detection using Canny, Log and Roberts method.

The following code is responsible for finding the edges of the image:

```
edges_IMG = edge ( IMG , 'method' );  
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' );  
imagesc ( edges_IMG );  
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'OFF' );  
set ( handles.processed , 'XTickLabel' , '' , 'YTickLabel' , '' );
```

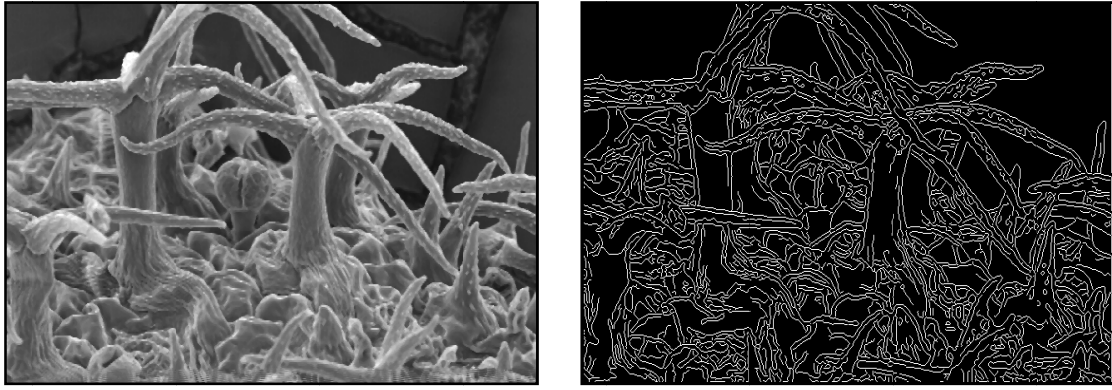


Figure 23: Image before and after the processing

The image data after the edges detection is stored in the variable *edges_IMG* before being displayed.

Resize

This is the activated function when the objective is to change the analyze image size. To programming this option it was used some functions provide by the *Image Processing Toolbox* that contains several image enhancement routines, in this particular case a function named *imresize*.

Imresize function returns an image B that is scale times the size of image A. In this specific case image B will be bigger than the original image, so it can be viewed as ‘zooming’, and it requires the creation of new pixel locations that needs new gray-level values. This gray-level assignment can be made using several methods: [13] [14]

- **Bicubic interpolation** - the output pixel value is a weighted average of pixels in the nearest 4-by-4 neighborhood;
- **Bilinear interpolation** - the output pixel value is a weighted average of pixels in the nearest 2-by-2 neighborhood;
- **Nearest-neighbor interpolation** – the output pixel is assigned the value of the pixel that the point falls within.

The need to resize the images came as a necessity to increase the printing resolution, due to the minimum value for *Dots per Inch* acceptable. So if we have an image to print with a specific width and length, it will have a resolution proportional to the number of pixels, that is, how higher the number of pixels greater the resolution.

Firstly the user must select the parameter for magnification, and then it needs confirmation to change the size of the image.

```
magnifying_parameter = listdlg ( 'ListString' , [ '1' ; '2' ; '3' ;  
'4' ] , 'SelectionMode' , 'single' , 'ListSize' , [ 150 70 ] , 'Name' ,  
'Select...' , 'PromptString' , 'Magnifying parameter' );  
  
[ x y ] = size ( IMG );  
X = num2str ( magnifying_parameter .* x );  
Y = num2str ( magnifying_parameter .* y );  
  
confirm = questdlg( { [ 'Image has ' X ' x ' Y 'pixels.' ] ; 'Do you  
want to continue?' } , 'Confirm Image Magnifying...' );  
  
answer = length ( confirm );  
if answer == 2 | answer == 5;  
    clear magnifying_parameter;  
else  
    interpolation = 'selected interpolation method';  
end  
  
new_IMG=imresize(get_image, magnifying_parameter, interpolation);
```

The modified image is stored in the variable *new_IMG* and is available for others *Callback functions*.

Add Notes

This is the activated function when the objective is to add notes to a file that is associated to the image.

This idea appeared in the attempt to maximize the use of the application, that is, to supply to the user the major number of possible resources, in this case the possibility to register annotations in a file associated with the image.

When this option is selected, appears a new window where the user will be able to write the annotations that desires to include in the file;

```
prompt = ( 'Enter a new comment... ' );
```

```
title = 'Add Notes ...';
numlines = 1;
new_add = char ( inputdlg ( prompt , title , numlines ) );
```

Following, this new entry will be added to the specific file, and its content visualized in the correspondent window;

```
notes_length = length ( new_add );
if notes_length == 0;
    warndlg ( 'Nothing added!!!' );
    return;
else
    fid = fopen ( [ name '.txt' ] , 'a' );
    fprintf ( fid , [ ' - ' new_add '\n' ] );
    visualize = char(fread(fopen([name '.txt' ], 'r' )));
    fclose ( 'all' );
    set ( handles.note , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' );
    set(handles.note, 'String', visualize' );
end
```

5.3.1.3 Back to the Original

This is the activated function when the objective is to return to the original or initial image, discarding all changes made.

The following code is responsible for return to the initial image:

- Firstly the image data is collected from the *original* window

```
get_original = getimage ( handles.original );
```

- Then, those data are displayed on the *processed* window

```
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'ON' );
axes ( handles.processed );
imagesc ( get_original );
set ( handles.processed , 'HandleVisibility' , 'OFF' );
set ( handles.processed , 'XTickLabel' , '' , 'YTickLabel' , '' );
```

5.3.1.4 Help

This is the activated option when the objective is to get some useful help or clarification of doubts on the use of the application. The *User Manual*, available as a pdf file, is opened.

For this described process is only executed the following line of code:

```
open ( 'User Manual.pdf' );
```

5.4 Testing

During the development of the project, several informal tests had been prepared, with the intention to correct the errors and to confirm the correct operation of the implemented functions.

5.5 References

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[14] GONZALEZ, Rafael C.; WOODS, Richard E.; *Digital Image Processing* (2nd edition); International Edition (2002)

6. Conclusion

The SEM-Botany project consisted on the development of a system of acquisition, processing and storing images proceeding from SEM providing better condition for the users of the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy.

It allows the acquisition of digital images, and the application of some processing techniques to improve images quality.

After the terminus of the project some conclusions were made about the work developed during this period, as well as the project itself including its future.

The final results are sufficiently positive, because the project was planned from the beginning, following all the steps to succeed.

6.1 Developed Work

The project objectives, since the beginning, were the development of a system of acquisition, processing and storage of images, to use in the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy, in order to improve the conditions of use of the investigators that use SEM, supplying images in digital format.

For that a system capable of acquiring digital images from the SEM using a DT3155 frame grabber from *DATATRANSLATION* was developed, and made available some processing techniques that can be used to improve image quality, using MATLAB and its toolboxes, more specifically the *image processing* and *image acquisition toolbox*.

The developed work, supported by the obtained experimental results, shows that it is possible to use the new system of acquisition, processing and storage of digital images.

Along the project development, some complications appeared, considering it is a new project development using a new language, as well as the appearance of some unexpected problems from the part of the hardware that had led to the insertion of new functions to

solve small limitations, for example the necessity of the insertion of a filter in order to reduce the noise.

Even with these misfortunes, it was possible to implement all that was intended initially.

6.2 Future Developments

As it was already said, the requirements were delimited initially, upon the first documents, and it was made an attempt to keep them stable, in order to limit the development of the application.

At this moment it is possible, with the developed and implemented methods, to acquire digital images proceeding from SEM, as well as reducing the present noise, filtering them; it is also possible to adjust the contrast/brightness, detecting the contours and storage of these same images in several formats.

This new application corresponds to a valuable and innovative contribution for the improvement of the SEM user's conditions and although the developed application fills the considered initial requirements it will have to be improved in some aspects, such as:

- Improve the GUI to make it more accessible, facilitating its use;
- Improve the functions, algorithms used to improve the application performance;
- Development and insertion of new functions, new processing techniques, such as:
 - counting of elements;
 - measurement of elements;
 - Three-dimensional reconstruction;
- Development of a database.

Appendix 1:

DT3155 DATATRANSLATION datasheet:

DT3155**High-Accuracy Monochrome PCI Bus
Frame Grabber****Key Features**

- Flexible A/D allows precise match of input range to video source.
- Digital Clock Sync™ reduces jitter to less than ± 5 ns (max) for high-accuracy data sampling.
- General-purpose digital outputs for interfacing to peripheral devices.
- Specially designed Fidelity™ circuitry ensures accurate data sampling.
- MACH Series™ PCI bus-mastering architecture enables acquisition and transfer to memory at 30 fps (RS-170/NTSC).
- Sync Sentinel™ improves image capture with VCRs.
- Ships with valuable software bundle featuring WDM drivers, software evaluations, a Frame Grabber SDK, and DT-Acquire ready-to-run application.

Compatible Windows Software

- DTVideo Family
- GIGALAB Image2

Member of MACH Series™*The DT3155 is a high-accuracy, monochrome frame grabber for the PCI bus.***Overview**

The DT3155 is a frame grabber for the PCI bus built using proprietary circuitry that assures high accuracy in a variety of demanding imaging applications. Operating as a bus-master on the PCI bus, the DT3155 transfers images continuously in real-time, to system memory for processing or display.

High Performance**Data Transfer and Display**

The DT3155 employs the industry-leading MACH Series architecture for real-time image display. Taking advantage of the PCI bus' high speed; up to 132 MB/s, the DT3155 can transfer an unlimited number of consecutive frames, in real-time, across the bus to host memory. And by using the DirectDraw (DDI) standard built into Windows 2000/XP, you can display live video with non-destructive overlays without having expensive display hardware on the frame grabber. By using a separate VGA card for display, you are free to choose the graphics card that satisfies your particular application needs and performance requirements.

Ideal Applications

Machine Vision
Motion Analysis
Medical Imaging/Diagnostics

High Accuracy for Scientific and Industrial Image Processing

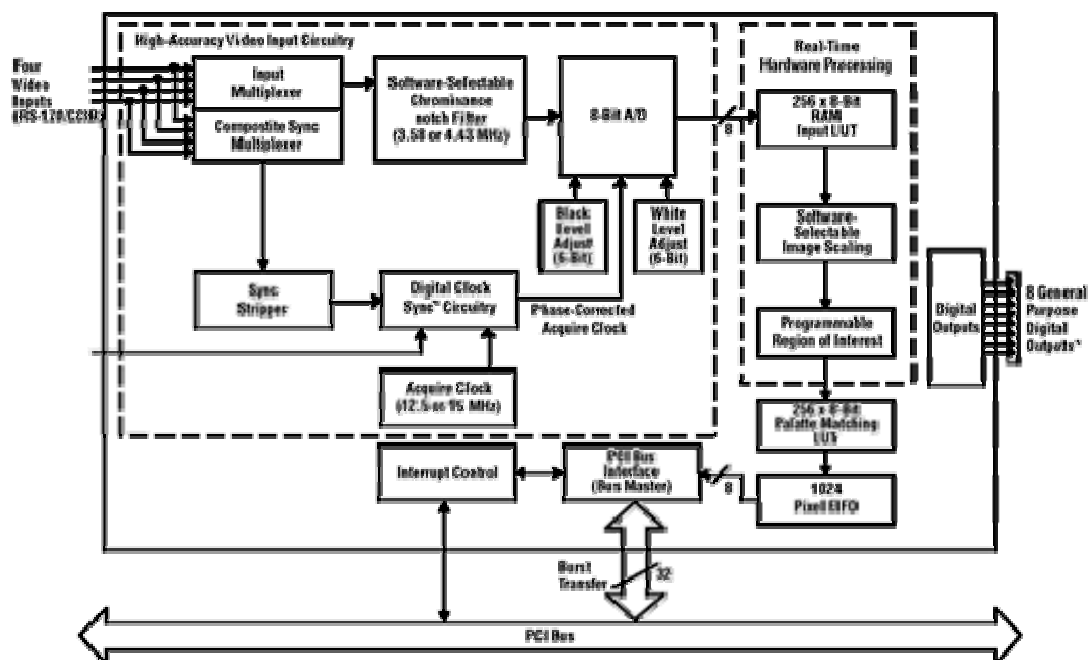
The DT3155 is designed specifically for scientific and industrial applications where data accuracy is critical. The board uses several proprietary circuits to assure accurate data sampling.

UltraSharp™ Analog Design for Crisp Edges

Our high-speed analog circuitry delivers sharp images, even across severe grayscale transitions.

Digital Clock Sync™ for Low Pixel Jitter

More consistent timing yields more accurate data. Our Digital Clock Sync has no more than ± 5 ns max. (± 3.5 ns typical) jitter, twice as good as the best phase-locked loop circuits. This permits flawless operation with asynchronous input devices, which output only one frame at a time, permitting the DT3155 to sync immediately to the incoming signal, on the first frame.



DT3155 Block Diagram

User Connections

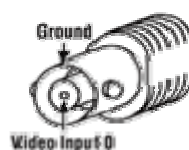
Technical Support

As you develop your application, technical support is available when you need it. Extensive information is available 24 hours a day on our web site at www.datatranslation.com, including drivers, example code, pinouts, a searchable KnowledgeBase, and much more.

Support is also available from your point of purchase. Telephone support is free for the first 90 days; you can also request complimentary support via e-mail or fax at any time.

Description	Pin	Pin	Description
Video Input 0	1	15	Ground
Video Input 1	2	16	Not Used
Video Input 2	3	17	Not Used
Chrominance Input	4	18	Digital I/O 3
Digital I/O 0	5	19	Composite Sync/Out
Digital I/O 1	6	20	Vertical Sync/Out
Digital I/O 2	7	21	Horizontal Sync/Out
External Trigger Input	8		

Connector J1



Onboard BNC Connector for Single Video Input

Single Video Input Only

If you want to connect only a single video input to the DT3155, connection can be made to a female BNC connector on the board; any user-supplied cable with a male BNC connector can be used.

Other User Connections

To access other user signals, a cable assembly connecting to the DT3155's 25-pin D-shell connector is required.

Compatible Cable Assembly

The EP306 cable assembly accommodates four composite video inputs or three composite inputs and an external sync input; and all of the DT3155's eight digital outputs on male BNC connectors.

Mating Connector

AMP 747053-1 or equivalent
(15-pin female D-shell connector)

Specifications

All specifications are typical at 25°C and rated voltage unless otherwise specified.

Video Input

Video Formats: RS-170, RS-170B, and NTSC (60 Hz) or CCIR and PAL (50 Hz); interlaced; software selectable

Timing Format: Standard stills and stills in motion; timing, supported, software selectable

Inputs: 4 composite video inputs; as accepted

Video Signal: 1 V_p peak-to-peak, 75 ohms

Spatial Resolution: 640 x 480 (60 Hz), 768 x 576 (50 Hz)

Chrominance Filter: Notch type, 3.58 MHz (60 Hz) or 4.43 MHz (50 Hz); software selectable

Acquisition

Digitalizer: 8-bit, 256 gray levels

Pixel Filter: ±3.5 nsec typical, ±5 nsec max

Accuracy: Integral non-linearity ±0.5 LSB; RMS Noise 0.7 LSB

Aspect Ratio: 1:1, square pixels

Frame Grab Speed: 1/30 s (60 Hz) or 1/25 s (50 Hz)

Modes: Interlaced (start on next even, next odd, or next field), single frame or continuous operation; all software selectable

Input Ranges: Programmable, over 65,000 ranges available; Black Level range of 1.25 V to 306 mV in 255 steps of 1.195 mV each; White Level range of 502 mV to 1.065 V in 255 steps of 2.58 mV each

Onboard Processing

Input LUT: 256 x 8-bit; allows for gray scale threshold adjustments on image in real-time

Palette-Match LUT: 256 x 8-bit; matches image gray scale map to the palette used by Windows, ensuring proper gray scale image display

Region Of Interest: Programmable ROI window defines video data to be acquired; to memory pixels outside window are discarded

Scaling: Scales images to 1/4 size; useful for reducing size of image on Windows display; memory discarded every other pixel and transferring only one field; software selectable

Data Formats

Image data can be output in 8-bit monochrome format

Control Signals

External Trigger Inputs: One, TTL levels, software selectable on rising/falling edge

Sync Select: Sync can be stripped from any of the four video inputs. Sync detection level is software programmable for 50, 75, 100 or 125 mV.

Digital Outputs: Eight general-purpose TTL outputs, fan-out of two TTL loads each

Video Display

Uses PC's graphics card and monitor for display. Real-time video display and non-real-time, real-time animated overlays performed using Direct Draw (DD)

Video Transfer Rate

As fast as typical, 132 MB/s max. Board operates as a Bus Master using Burst Mode for data transfer to host memory

Power Requirements

• 5 VDC ± 5% typical
• 12 VDC ± 5% typical
• 12 VDC ± 5% typical

Dimensions: 13.5" x 13.5" (short card)

Weight: 1.0 lb (0.45 kg)

Size: 13.5" x 13.5" (short card)

Weight: 1.0 lb (0.45 kg)

Operating Temperature: 0°C to 50°C (32°F to 122°F)

Storage Temperature: -20°C to 70°C (-4°F to 158°F)

Relative Humidity: Up to 90%, non-condensing

Warranty

One year limited parts and labor

DT3155 (MACH-64) Card

BUS: PCI

Form Factor: 16-bit PCI

- 16-bit PCI bus processor
- 16-bit PCI bus and supporting BIOS
- 16-bit PCI bus slot
- 16-bit PCI bus slot
- 16-bit PCI bus slot
- 16-bit PCI bus slot
- 16-bit PCI bus slot
- 16-bit PCI bus slot

Summary

All Data Translation products are covered by a 4-year warranty. For more information, please visit our web site, www.datatranslation.com.

Features

The DT3155 Mach-64 card is designed with the Imaging Card 64, a video interface board which includes evaluation of DT Vision Foundry and GLOBAL LAB Image2, Video data drivers, computer communication, a software development kit, and a real-time software application.

Accessories

Note: Call for information on DT's software packages.

Accessories

- EP306—1.5m (5 ft.) cable assembly, accommodates four composite video inputs or four digital inputs and an external (can) input; digital input input; and all of the DT's eight digital outputs on male BNC connectors; connects using a mini D-shell connector

Software

All software packages include a copy of the software on CD-ROM, and 90 days of complimentary telephone support.

- DT Vision Foundry Machine Vision Software
SP1400-CD Development
SP1400-CD Run-Time
- GLOBAL LAB Image2 Image Analysis Software
SP1500-CD
- DT-Active Open Layers ActiveX Control
SP074-CD

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Germany (07142) 95 31-0

Internet www.datatranslation.com

DT3155 (MACH Series™)

BUS: PCI

Type: Monochrome

Flexible A/D for Optimum Resolution
Allows you to precisely match the input range to your video source to maximize the effectiveness of the A/D converter. Digitally adjustable black level (1.28–306 mV) and white level (502–1009 mV) control let you select from more than 65,000 ranges. The board is also software-configurable for RS-170 or CCIR operation.

Sync Sentinel™ for Excellent VCR Compatibility

For improved image capture with VCRs, even in pause mode, onboard circuitry ignores extra sync pulses and inserts sync pulses where they are missing for accurate image acquisition.

System CPU Free for Image Processing

Because system resources are not involved in transferring data with the DT3155's bus master design, your computer's CPU is free to perform high-speed image processing on the data you acquire. You can acquire a second image while using the host's CPU to process the first.

External Trigger, General Purpose Digital Outputs

The DT3155 accepts an external trigger so that image acquisition can be synchronized with an event external to the PC. It also provides eight programmable TTL-level digital outputs for controlling or actuating external devices.

Extensive Software Support

The included Imaging Omni CD provides the tools you need to set up your Data Translation PCI frame grabber and develop imaging applications.

The Imaging Omni CD includes:

- **DT-Acquire** – Use this ready-to-run software application to verify the operation of your Data Translation frame grabber during startup, and to capture, display and save images.
- **Frame Grabber SDK** – This allows Microsoft C programmers to develop your own application software in Windows 2000/XP.
- **Device Driver** – You must install this device driver to use your Data Translation frame grabber with any of

the supported software packages or utilities. The device driver is for use with Windows 2000/XP.

- **DT Vision Foundry Evaluation** – DT Vision Foundry is a versatile and extensible machine vision software package that integrates powerful vision tools with multiple programming environments to provide a robust, flexible, easy-to-use visual inspection package. DT Vision Foundry is supported under Windows 2000/XP. The Imaging Omni CD lets you evaluate the great new features of DT Vision Foundry for 14 days.
- **GLOBAL LAB Image/2 Evaluation** – GLI/2 is a complete image analysis software package, ideal for scientific and general-purpose applications that require measuring, classification, counting, and other analysis. GLI/2 is supported under Windows 2000/XP. The Imaging Omni CD lets you evaluate the great new features of GLI/2 for 14 days.
- **Documentation** – User and Getting Started Manuals in PDF format.

Real-Time Display, Non-destructive Overlays

MACH Series frame grabbers employ Microsoft's DirectDraw (DDI) standard, allowing you to display real-time, live video with non-destructive overlays without adding costly display hardware (i.e. VGA circuitry) to the frame grabber. This approach offers many advantages over traditional frame grabber display and overlay methods, including:

Minimal CPU Bandwidth: The DirectDraw display technique requires minimal CPU bandwidth, leaving the CPU free to perform image processing or other tasks. Ideal for applications where

display video and processing occur simultaneously, DDI allows for stagger-free images and smooth flowing, real-time video with overlays.

Upgradable Compatibility: With DDI, your MACH Series frame grabber will work with any DirectDraw-compatible graphics card. And since DirectDraw is enabled through the graphics card driver, you can upgrade an existing graphics card to DDI by simply loading a new driver.

Flexible Graphics Card Selection: Because the graphics card is not built onto the frame grabber, you are not "locked in"

to the performance of the frame grabber's display circuitry. This allows you to choose the frame grabber that suits your needs and the graphics card that meets your performance requirements and budget.

Additional Features: Since DDI is the same overlay technique used by video game manufacturers, this capability gives you the ability to have non-destructive overlays of any size, shape, or color on top of live video. In addition, overlays can be translucent (semi clear), rotated, animated, or even placed over scaled images.

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Internet www.datatranslation.com





Appendix 2:

SEM-Botany User Manual

This manual intends to describe, in an easy approach, how to use the SEM-Botany application.

The SEM-Botany is an application that is capable of acquiring, storing and processing images from a Scanning Electron Microscopy existent on the Laboratory of Microscopy of the Botanic Department of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology of the University of Coimbra.

Available options:

-  Open images;
-  Save images;
-  Processing tools:
 - Filter;
 - Contrast and luminosity adjustment;
 - Auto;
 - Histogram;
 - Edges detection;
 - Canny method;
 - Log method;
 - Roberts method;
 - Magnification;
 - Bicubic interpolation;
 - Bilinear interpolation;
 - Nearest interpolation;
 - Add notes;
-  Back to original image.

Acquire images

This option allows the acquisition of images.

To acquire images, select **File** and then **New Acquisition**, or use the shortcut ctrl+N.

Figure 1 exemplifies:

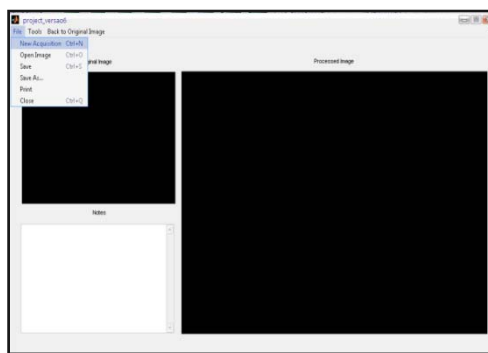


Figure 1 – Image acquisition demonstration.

The acquired image will be visualized. The application has two windows, the first one, which titles is original image, will always contain the initial image; and the second, which titles is processed image, will contain the image and its changes.

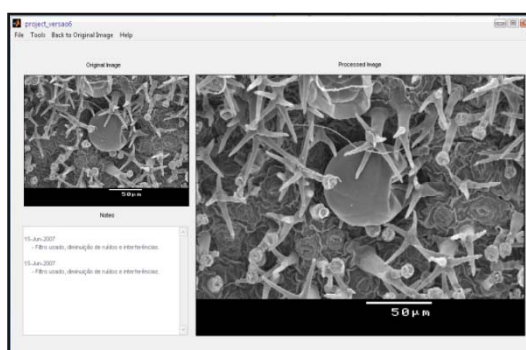


Figure 2: Acquired images visualization.

Notes:



Before image acquisition please make sure that SEM and PC are correctly connected, and the MatLab application is open (figure 3 shows the windows that must appears in the monitor).

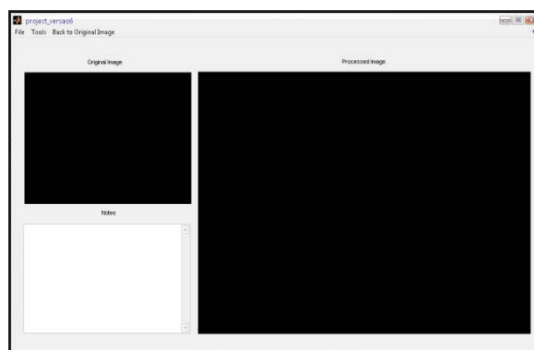


Figure 3: Application interface.

✚ To get better acquisitions, the microscope scanning must be stopped, avoiding errors and reading distortions.

Open...

This option permits the visualization of images previously acquired and stored, making possible new studies in previous images.

For the image, previous acquired and stored, visualization **File** must be selected and then **Open Image**, or using the shortcut ctrl+O.

Figure 4 exemplify:

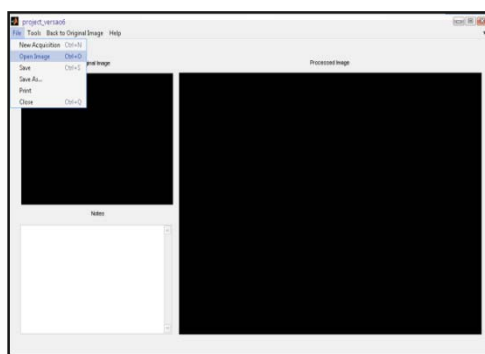


Figure 4 – Open image file demonstration.

Selected image will be visualized in the available windows, as exemplify in figure 5.



Figure 5 – Image file visualization in the two available windows.

Save / Save As

This option permits the storage of the study image, in any directory path.

File must be selected followed by **Save** (ctrl+s), as it demonstrates figure 6.

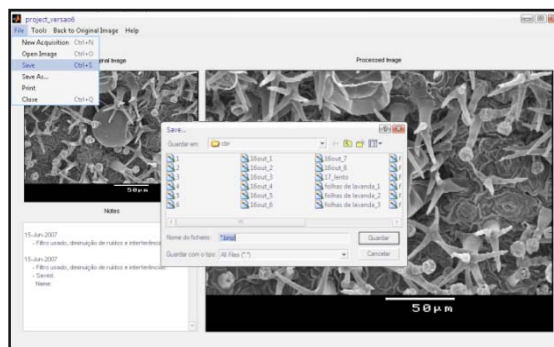


Figure 6 – Demonstration of storage of images

The user can choose the image name and the storage format.

The following table presents all the possible formats:

Format full name	Format
windows Bitmap (BMP)	bmp
Graphics Interchange Format (GIF)	gif
Hierarchical Data Format (HDF)	Hdf
Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG)	jpg ou jpeg
Portable Bitmap (PBM)	pbm
Windows Paintbrush (PCX)	pcx
Portable Graymap (PGM)	pgm
Portable Network Graphics (PNG)	png
Portable Anymap (PNM)	pnm
Portable Pixmap (PPM)	ppm
Sun Raster (RAS)	ras
Tagged Image File Format (TIFF)	tif ou tiff
W Windows Dump (XWD)	xwd

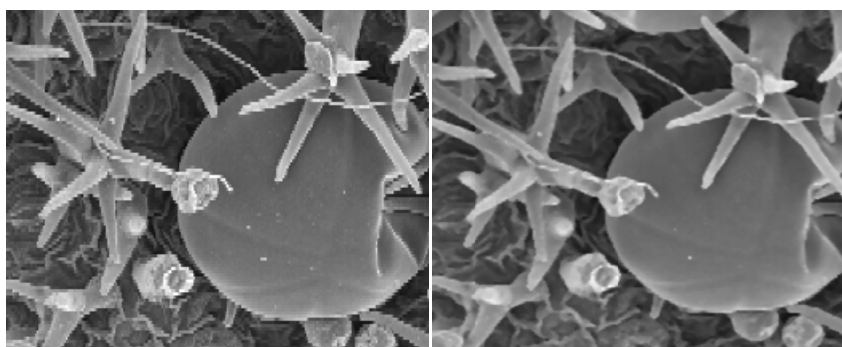
Table 1: Storage image formats.

Available Processing Techniques

Filter

In this option is available a bidimensional median filter. This type of filter acts in a nonlinear filter form, and is used in the noise reduction, preserving the contours.

Its use becomes very useful in the reduction of pixelization effect.



(a)

(b)

Figure 6 – Comparing images not using (a) and using (b) the filter.

To select this option choose **Tools**, following **filter (ctrl+f)**, as showed in figure 7.

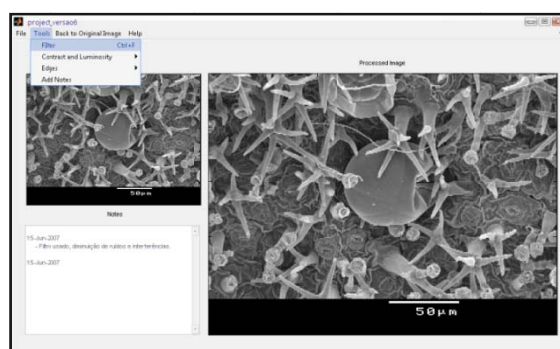


Figure 7 – Demonstration of the application of the filter.

Contrast and Brightness Adjust

This option allows the contrast and brightness adjustment, using two different methods, an automatic adjustment or using image histogram manipulation.

To select these options, select **Tools** followed by **Contrast and Brightness**, as showed in figure 8.

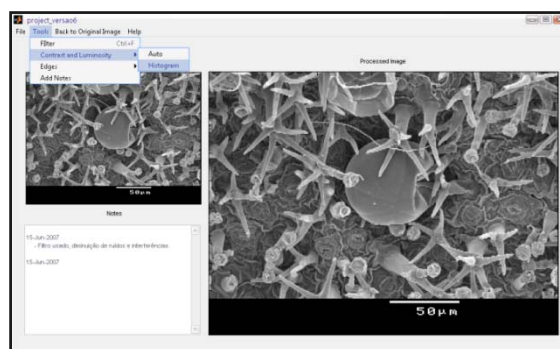


Figure 8 – Method selection.

Edges Detection

This option allows the image edges detection.

In an image the contour is a curve that describes a standard that quickly modifies the intensity of the image. The edges are associated with the objects borders.

To select this option choose **Tools** followed by **Edges**, where later it will have to choose the method that better satisfies the necessities in cause, as shows figure 9.

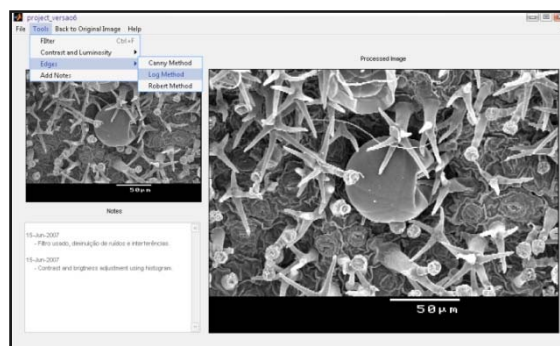


Figure 9: Demonstration of the method selection for edges detection.

Add Notes

This option offers to the user the possibility of introduce annotations that will be added to the description of the image, allowing a posterior comment and reading.

To select these options, **Tools** must be selected followed by **Add Notes**, as showed in figure 10.

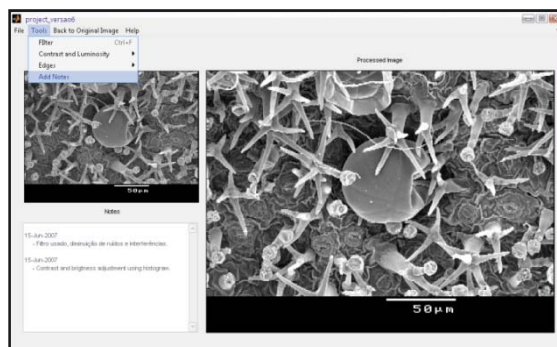


Figure 10 – Adding notes demonstration.

Return to the original image

This option makes possible return to the initial image, eliminating any done alterations.

To select this option the **Return the original image** must be selected, as it shows figure 11.

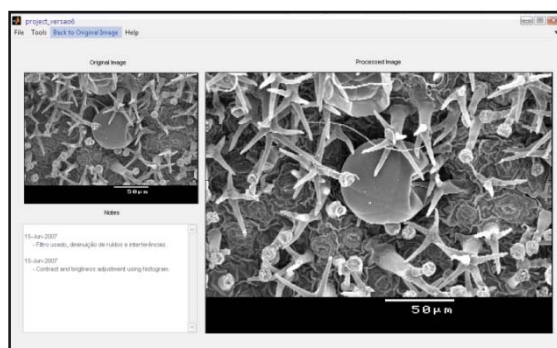


Figure 11 – Return to the original image.