# **Final Report**

E44: Electronic LED Display

Caroline Gilger, Logan Wedel, Drew Maatman, Kevin Etta, Tuoxuan Ren

3 May 2019

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## Abstract

Project Team:	Caroline Gilger	Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Cris Ababei
	Kevin Etta		
	Drew Maatman		
	Logan Wedel		
	Tuoxuan Ren		

Electronic displays are used in many applications ranging from billboards on the side of a highway, to scoreboards in a sports arena, to the main user interface for a computer or smartphone. Most displays used in consume electronics such as computers or smartphones have used liquid crystal displays (LCDs) as their display hardware, but LEDs are also a popular choice. More recently, Organic LED (OLED) displays have increased in popularity. LED displays are a popular choice for open source hardware projects since they require far less upfront engineering work before they can be used to display images, video or text. While LCD displays require custom integrated circuits to be able to drive them, as well as requiring much more energy, LED displays are sold in panels with standardized serial interfaces. These LED panels can be strung together in a serial fashion to be able to drive many panels from a small number of digital logic signals. This project describes the creation of a 320 by 256 pixel LED display system with 9 bit color resolution, fully integrated logic and power, and an Android App user interface.

The purpose of this project was to develop and electronic display consisting of LED panels. In order to accomplish this, a custom logic PCB was developed, hosting a 32-bit, 252MHz microcontroller, 8 serial Flash memory chips, and a complex image caching system. In addition to the logic board, a power PCB was developed to safely power the LED panels. This power PCB sports a quad-phase 1MHz buck converter, which can supply 5V at up to 45 Amps. The buck converter features many protection and ruggedization features to ensure the LED panels are protected against electrical faults. The project required an extensive microcontroller firmware to be developed to allow the microcontroller to draw images on the LED panels, control the flow of image data, and interact with users. The main user interface is an Android App which allows users to select up to eight images to be displayed in a slide-show like fashion, and the user can select the cycle time between images as well. The android app also allows the user to dim the screen and turn it on and off.

The final project yields a 320 x 256 pixel LED display, the two custom circuit boards, a consumer-off-the-shelf power supply, and a custom fabricated aluminum frame. It can display any set of eight images through the android app, and has a color density of 9 bits of color. The final product is about 2.5 feet by 2 feet in size. Both circuit boards and the COTS power supply are attached to the back of the 20 LED panels, so the project is self-contained, and creates its own WiFi network that a user can connect to using an Android phone. The display is vibrant, and has a refresh rate of 60 Hz, without any visible flickering.

#### **Problem Definition**

The Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering (EECE) Department lacks a modern electronic display for presenting information to students, faculty, and prospective students. This project is intended to fill that need while also providing an opportunity for the department to showcase the engineering talents of Marquette students.

This project's scope is limited to creating a functional color LED display with resolution of 256x320 for the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department office. The display is capable of displaying images which are programmed to the display controller using an Android app interface. The display operates autonomously once programmed. We have prepared a paper for HardwareX, a journal dedicated to presenting open-source hardware projects.

#### **Customer Needs**

After speaking with a few of the people who would be receiving this product, a list of customer needs was developed. The customer needs developed can be seen in the table below.

Question	Customer Statement	Interpreted Need	Need #
Typical Uses	The current display is meant to display the phrase information to students, visitors, and professors passing through EECE office.	The display must be large enough to display information meaningfully to passersby	1
	I want something that will change frames and display multiple images and text messages.	The display must have enough memory to store multiple images	2
	Large and visible display	The display should be big enough to have a resolution which allows for the text to be easily read.	3
	A phone app to control what is displayed on the screen	An Android app will interface with the screen over Wi-Fi to upload images and data	4
Likes – current LED display	Displaying information is helpful to passersby	A functioning display is needed	5
Dislikes – current LED display	The current display does not work anymore	A functioning display is needed	

Table 1. The table below describes the customer needs required for the project design.

	It has a low resolution	A higher screen resolution is needed	6
	It can display one color	The display needs to display more vibrant color	7
Suggested Improvements	Wi-Fi connectivity, full color, larger size and resolution, enhanced functionality	Wi-Fi connectivity needs to be included	8

## **Target Specifications**

Table 2. The table below shows the interpreted target specifications based on the customer needs discovered above.

Original Customer Needs	Original Target Specifications	Final Specifications	Specification Met?
Large display to portray meaningful information	Size must be approximately 3 x 2 feet	2.6 x 2 feet	Yes
	MCU speed must be at least 200 MHz	MCU speed is 252 MHz	Yes
Enough memory to store multiple images	8 different slides	8 different slides	Yes
High resolution so that text can be easily read	Resolution must be 320 x 240 RGB LED pixels	Resolution is 320 x 256 RGB LED pixels	Yes
Android App allows for connectivity over WiFi	Connection from app to device must be across WiFi interface	Connection from app to device must be across WiFi interface	Yes
Must display vibrant colors	Color resolution must be 12 bits (4096 colors)	Color resolution is 9 bits (512 colors)	No
Must have multiple saved "projects" to switch between	15 saved configurations	25 saved configurations	Yes

#### **Justification of Design**

#### Hardware

#### Power Board

To power the LED panels, a power system was designed to provide the required 45A using a 5V buck converter. The power board was needed to provide a tightly regulated and safe voltage for the LED panels, and had various protection features such as overvoltage, overcurrent, and over temperature protection. These features were important because if anything were to go wrong with the power supply or the LED panels, the power board would turn itself off to protect itself and the LED panels from being destroyed.



Figure 1. A diagram for the power supply breakdown for all parts of the project.

#### Logic Board

The hardware concept which was selected for this project was to use a PIC32MZ2048EFH144 microcontroller running at 252MHz using 2MB of flash memory, 512KB of SRAM, and a 32-bit bus width. Using a microcontroller instead of an FPGA is because the associated hardware would be much more complicated with an FPGA where a microcontroller would be less complex. The general-purpose computer such as a Raspberry Pi would not be fast enough to output a proper image with no flicker. The specific 32-bit microcontroller was chosen because it has a clock speed fast enough to provide a smooth image display without flicker. Also, it has 144 pins which is required for providing data input to the LED panels.

The external memory required was 256kB parallel SRAM for the frame buffer cache along with 8 256kB serial flash memory for storing the 8 slides for the display. The 8 256kB flash chips store the existing project slides and the 256kB SRAM stores the current slide being presented on the display. The microcontroller copies the information from a flash chip and stores

it into the SRAM. After the data has been stored into the SRAM, it displays the image onto the display. Flash chips were chosen because they are onboard chips which can be located physically close to the microcontroller to reduce any delays with communication. Flash chips typically can be overwritten 100,000 cycles.



Figure 2. Block diagram of PIC32MZ microcontroller chosen

The WiFi module which was used was the ESP8266 module because it provided its own connection between itself and the Android app. Thus, it was not dependent on external WiFi such as Marquette WiFi. For quick debugging, an FT234 USB-UART bridge was designed which has a ground isolated from the rest of the circuitry.

#### Embedded Firmware

The firmware which was implemented on this design was written in C programming language. It was written completely from scratch including all of the pin out initializations, interrupt functions, and other very low-level operations required for the system to run. This was done to make the firmware completely customized and to keep the program as optimized as possible. The firmware had to run very efficiently in order for the panel to display a clear image with no flicker.

## Software

The software concept which was selected for this project was an Android app to communicate with a WiFi module to send images and text slides to the microcontroller. The

Android app will have the capabilities to create a new project, edit an existing project, preview the existing projects, and upload projects onto the microcontroller. There will also be the capability to add multiple display board's information so that the scope of this app is extensible for the future possibility of multiple boards controlled by one Android device. While adding new images to a "project" the user will be able to choose whether to resize the image to fit the display screen or keep the aspect ratio of the image intact. The app also has the capability to turn the display on and off, along with adjusting the brightness.

## **Display Frame**

The display frame was created to hold the display upright and keep all of the panels together in a secure way. The material used for the frame was chosen to be 80/20 aluminum. This was chosen because it was an inexpensive but reliable material to keep the panels together. The 80/20 was used along the border of the panel and as legs behind the panel to keep it upright. Additionally, acrylic squares with screw holes were used for connecting each panel together in the middle of the display. This kept the panels tightly connected together.

#### **Characteristics of Design**

#### **Overall Block Diagram**



Figure 3. The image above is a block diagram of the full design concept

This project contains 5 major parts. It contains 20 LED panels each containing 64x64 pixels with each pixel holding three LEDs: red, green, and blue colors. Overall there are 245,000 LEDs that need to be driven. The logic board built is the main controller of the system. It holds the image data that the panels display, talks to the Android application through WiFi and can control the power board through various power I/O pins. The power board was built to safely power all the LED panels. Also, a consumer-off-the-shelf 120V to 12V power supply was purchased to plug into the wall to power everything. The final part is the Android app that lets a user customize and configure what images the board displays. Figure 2 shows an overall block diagram of the project.

#### Hardware

Power Board

A power supply circuit board was designed to regulate a very tight 5 volt power rail to be distributed to the 20 panels, since the panels require a very tight tolerance voltage supply. Each panel was found to require around 2 amps of current at a worst case scenario of displaying a fully white image at the maximum brightness. Because of this, the power supply would need to supply at least 40 amps of current at 5 volts.

To give enough headroom, the supply was designed to provide a maximum of 45 amps. In designing the power supply, a four phase buck converter topology was selected since the individual passive components within the supply would be stressed less by distributing the power processing across four phases. At this high of an output current, the inductors within the supply would need to be able to handle a peak current of 11.25 amps per phase. Vishay powdered iron inductors were selected because of their good thermal properties and higher saturation current, and the supply was designed around using this inductors. Various computer simulations were run to determine if the power supply would function as expected.

	Frequency =	100	0000	Hz	ET <sub>ckt</sub>	2.92	V-usec
	l <sub>ind</sub> =	11	.25	Amps	F(eff)	653886.5	Hertz
Ar	nbient Temp =	2	25	°C	Res	0.002655	Ohms
	Volts In =	1	2	Volts	I <sub>max</sub>	12.71	Amps
	Volts Out =	4	5	Volts	I <sub>min</sub>	9.79	Amps
	V <sub>SW</sub> =	0.0	)25	Volts	I <sub>ripple</sub>	2.92	Amps
	V <sub>D</sub> =	0.0	)25	Volts	Duty	0.42	
					P <sub>core</sub>	0.426	Watts
	ET <sub>100</sub> =	1.	12	V-usec	P <sub>dc</sub>	0.336	Watts
	B <sub>pk</sub> =	26	0.8	G	P <sub>ac</sub>	0.077	Watts
А	0.453	Inch	11.5	mm	P <sub>tot</sub>	0.839	Watts
В	0.405	Inch	10.3	mm	Temp. Coeff.	24.1	°C/W
С	0.158	Inch	4.0	mm	Temp Rise	20.2	°C
					Comp Temp	45.2	°C

Figure 4. The image above is a screenshot from the Vishay Inductor Calculator used to calculate the inductor power loss and temperature rise within the power supply.

Figure 3 shows results of a calculation for inductor power loss and temperature rise within the power supply. The operating parameters such as switching frequency (1MHz), input voltage (12V), output voltage (5V), and phase output current (11.25A) were entered based on the design of the power supply for the LED panels. The output parameters of the calculation show that the inductor will have a 20C temperature rise (which is about the highest temperature rise that can safely be tolerated), and the power dissipation will be about 850mW. This calculation proves the 1uH Vishay inductors selected will function properly in the context of this power supply.

Besides the inductors within the power supply, the control loop of the power supply needed to be compensated to ensure that the output voltage reaching the LED panels was tightly regulated across a wide range of frequencies. Components for this function were also selected through a simulation. The controller selected for the power supply was the LTC7851, which is a four phase voltage mode control buck controller. Linear Technology, the company which designed the chip, also provides a simulation tool to accomplish most aspects of designing the power supply. The simulation tool was used to properly compensate the control loop. Figure 4 shows the simulated magnitude response of the control loop for the power supply. The bandwidth is around 12.6kHz, which is substantially lower than 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the 1MHz switching frequency, which is desired. The bandwidth is lower because of the massive amount of output capacitance used in the power supply. The phase margin, not shown, is around 60 degrees, which is higher than the 50 degree benchmark that should be exceeded for control loop stability. This essentially proves the power supply should be stable across a wide range of frequencies and operating conditions.



Figure 5. The image above proves that the power supply control loop will be stable.



Figure 6. The image above is a picture of the power system board with the components populated.

The finished power circuit board is shown in figure 5. In addition to the inductors and control loop components, input capacitors, output capacitors, power stage components, and input power protection were designed such that this power supply can regulate 5 volts at 45 amps.

Logic Board



Figure 7. The image above is the completed Logic board with all parts soldered on.

The logic board serves as the center of the project. It holds the PIC32MZ EF microcontroller, external memory, 3 point of load power supplies, a USB debugging interface, the WiFi module, high speed level shifters, debugging LEDs, the microcontroller programming interface, interface circuitry for the power board, data connectors for interfacing with the LED panels, and lots of silkscreen and copper artwork. The microcontroller is at the center of the logic board, and a plethora of decoupling capacitors surround the MCU. An input protection circuit protects all downstream circuits from input voltage that is too high or low in magnitude, or reversed in polarity. Two buck converters provide 3.3V for most components along with 5V for the level shifters, which are required to allow the 3.3V MCU to control the 5V logic level LED panels. A 5.5V LDO biases interface circuits which allow the MCU to control and monitor the power board, which has a logic level of 5.5V.

In addition to driving the display, the microcontroller also has several other tasks to service. During normal operation, up to eight images are stored across eight 256kB serial Flash memory chips. This external non-volatile memory acts as long-term image storage, and stores image data across MCU resets and power cycles. It is accessed through a Serial Peripheral Interface (SPI). The MCU can read and write entire images worth of data to a Flash chip in around three seconds. When a project is programmed into the system, each image is stored in the SPI Flash, while the number of images for the project and the cycle time between images is stored into the microcontroller's internal Flash.

The microcontroller also has an external parallel 256kB SRAM. It is able to read and write data to this SRAM through the External Bus Interface (EBI). EBI allows external memory to be attached to the MCU and it treats it just like any other virtual memory address space. This allows data in EBI SRAM to be treated like a normal byte array in C firmware. During normal operation, while an image is being shown on the screen, the next image to be displayed is moved from SPI Flash into EBI SRAM. When the image is ready to be displayed, it is moved all at once from EBI SRAM into the internal frame buffer and shown on the screen. In this memory structure, EBI SRAM acts as a data cache, since moving data from EBI SRAM into internal RAM is much faster than moving data from SPI Flash into internal RAM. Using this technique, image transitions appear seamless.

The MCU has a serial interface with a WiFi module included on the logic board. This is the main interface between the Android app (described in the next section) and the system. Through the WiFi interface, the user can turn the screen on and off, adjust the brightness of the screen, and load projects into the system. The WiFi module and the MCU communicate through a UART interface. A ring buffer in MCU firmware allows massive amounts of data to be transferred at a time from the WiFi module into the MCU.

The MCU also has many other features to help with debugging. These include a ruggedized USB debugging interface, which was implemented with a UART to USB bridge. This allows a user to connect to the microcontroller through a 115.2 Kb serial connection from a software such as PuTTY or Tera Term. This was a crucial debugging feature when developing the MCU firmware. The MCU's analog to digital converter was also used to be able to measure system level power supply voltages. The ADC can be initialized through the USB interface, and results can be printed through the serial interface. The ADC is only initialized when the user requests it; this allows for the CPU bandwidth to be maximized when the debug feature is not needed. Finally, the MCU can monitor digital signals returning from the power module. This allows the MCU to record power regulation faults and over-thermal protection events. The MCU logs these events, along with other faults, in an error handler C structure. The flags within this structure can be accessed through the USB debugging interface and are used to also drive LEDs on the logic board. This feature allows the user to see if any faults have occurred at run time.

#### Embedded Firmware

The firmware was written in C programming language which allowed for very simple low-level functions to be implemented efficiently on the microcontroller. A few important aspects of the firmware included the multiplexing algorithm, the UART ring buffer and the state machine algorithm. The multiplexing algorithm is interrupt driven. Thus, once an interrupt has occurred, it begins a sequence of commands to shift data into each row, drive that LED row high to display the LEDs, then increment to the next row and repeat that step. There are two rows of LEDs which data can be shifted into and LEDs can be displayed at one time per panel. Therefore, for the entire display, only eight rows are displayed at one time. This can be seen in Figure 7 which is an image of a prototype developed with only four (2x2) panels. As it is shown, there are only four rows on at one time because each panel has two rows on at a time.



Figure 8. The 2x2 panel prototype showing how data is multiplexed across the panels.

Due to the fact that the RGB LED pixels can only show 8 distinct colors at one time, the screen is refreshed 8 times with different color components. The viewer's eyes blend these 8 frames into one image. The multiplexing algorithm can be shown in the flowchart in Figure 8.



#### Figure 9. Flow chart of multiplexing.

Another development in the firmware was the state machine algorithm. The state machine works so that it is automatically started at power up. The first state includes loading in the first flash chip while displaying the "splash screen". Then, it will incrementally load in the next flash chip while displaying an image at the same time. Once an image has been loaded into the EBI SRAM and the timer set by the user has completed, the new image is loaded into the microcontroller internal memory to be displayed on the screen. To stop the state machine, all SPI interrupts are disabled so that it does not service this process.

#### Software

A custom Android App, named "MU-MatriX" was developed to allow the user to create and upload to the display system new "projects". A "project" consists of eight images that form a presentation displayed periodically at a configured interval. The app stores each project's name, set of images, and duration between image switch into its internal application storage. After naming a new project, a user can populate their project with images, selecting them one-by-one from their device. The images can maintain the aspect ratio of the original image or stretch to fit the size of the display board. There is also the option to rotate images in 90 degree intervals before adding them into the project. In the background, any selected image is saved off into a 320x256 bitmap with black background filling in any gaps created by the aspect ratio lock. As images are being added to a project, they can be reordered by simple up and down arrows next to



their thumbnail on the "Edit Project" screen. A spinner widget provides a simple dropdown selection for the project-level property of duration between slides.

Figure 10. Overall structure of the Android Application

The default display board device is automatically stored under the user's device list on app installation. The IP address and port number used by default for the ESP8266 WiFi module (on the logic board) are simply placed under a device name "Default Display Board". The app allows more than just this one display board configuration to be saved in memory, allowing for this system to scale to multiple screens all managed under one app. A device control screen gives the app simple commands to send the Wifi module on the Logic Board: Power On, Power Off, and a screen brightness slider that sends a numeric value between 5 and 100. Simple WiFi messages holding single-line commands are sent over the network using the TCP protocol. Uploading a project to the Logic Board from the application takes a little bit more work and is given its own screen. After selecting one of the projects, one of the hardware devices, and pressing "Upload", a progress bar and message will become visible on the screen tracking the conversion and transmission of each image within that project. After all the images have been sent, a message will notify the user of the upload completion.



Figure 11. WiFi interface connecting the Android device to the Logic Board.

The conversion step of the project upload performs a variety of operations to turn the 320x256 bitmap into a 245,760 byte long array. This contains the hexadecimal values which represent the intensity of color for each LED in the pixel's RGB matrix. The transmission

operation starts by telling the Logic board to stop multiplexing images across its screen (to allow it to focus on receiving the new data) and clear the parallel RAM chip (about to be filled with the image data). The app separates the long byte array of data into smaller chunks that it sends across a TCP connection to the ESP8266 WiFi module on a new thread. This thread sends a chunk of the image data to the ESP module, and after receiving confirmation from the microcontroller that the message arrived safely, it updates the progress bar on the main thread via a Handler. After one full image is sent, commands are sent to specify which non-volatile flash chip to store the image into. After the full project is sent, a message containing the number of images the project contains and the time duration between images is sent over WiFi again to be stored into nonvolatile program flash and used during the state machine operations.



Figure 12. WiFi interface connecting the Android device to the Logic Board.

The Android App was developed using Android Studio, meaning the code behind the application is mostly Java, xml files, and some Gradle files to define the package and build configurations. With simplicity in mind, a drawer navigation system was used with menu items each navigating to a different fragment within the main activity. A few buttons also provide navigation shortcuts that help the user follow the flow of operation. A separate activity was built to handle image selection from the image gallery and handle the image editing tools at the user's disposal. Due to the lightweight nature of the data being stored outside the images, Shared Preferences were used to store much of the project and device information that needed to be persisted. A couple of screen-shots of the app in action are shown in Figure 11.

#### **Display** Frame

An aluminum frame was fabricated using T slotted extruded 80-20 framing as the base material. Two six foot T-slotted frame bars were cut to lengths to match the four sides of the display, and mounting holes were drilled along the center of the frame to allow M3 screws to attach the frame onto the back of the outside panels of the display. Corner brackets were used to secure the frame corners together, giving the frame its rigidity. Handles were attached along the top section of the frame to allow easy handling of the project. Two support struts were added on

the side frame bars to allow the display to stand upright. The frame provided substantial mechanical rigidity to the project, ensuring that LED panels would not be damaged due to mechanical stress and that the project would be able to be stood upright.



Figure 13. The final assembly of the display, logic board, power board, and power supply, all with aluminum framing.

#### **Design Performance**

## Number of Images to Display

The objective of this experiment was to verify that eight images can be saved to the flash chips located on the logic board and that all images can be displayed correctly in order and repeatedly. The testing strategy was to cycle through all eight flash chips, write and then read the image data from, and drive the LED panels to display each of the images. First, all eight flash chips were written to with eight different images. Then, each image was read from the flash chips and displayed onto the panels. The images displayed on the panels were verified whether they were the desired image. This was repeated five times and all images were changed each repetition to verify the reliability of the entire process of writing and reading images into the flash chips. During this process, we monitored the error (as percentage of pixel data written or read incorrectly) during both writing to and reading from the flash chips. This test was successful with an outcome of 0% error.

#### Color Resolution

The objective for this experiment was to identify the optimal number of bits for the color representation used to render images. The constraints of this experiments included the amount of memory available inside the microcontroller to implement the buffer (stores the data of the image currently being displayed) as well as the time it takes to upload all eight images from the App to the board's flash chips. The desired color representation was 12-bit color code, which would be capable of generating 4096 different colors per pixel. However, due to how the 5x4 panels (64x64 pixels each) are driven by the only 8 PWM frames (giving 3 bits per color channel) with information about pixels forming an image, we arrived at the compromise of using

only a 9-bit color code, which is still capable of generating 512 different colors per pixel. This color code ensures that images have reasonable color resolution to make them appear in natural colors onto the display. While 12-bit color code would obviously be preferable, the 9-bit color code is sufficient to be able to display rich colors, yet to restrict the amount of memory required, achieve better performance (as refresh rate), and to naturally match the PWM control of the 64x64 LED panels.

#### Connectivity

The objective of this experiment was to verify the Android App and the logic board can communicate successfully via WiFi. The ESP8266 module, mounted on the logic board, was used for this connection. The test plan for this experiment involved sending twenty (20) images of data from the Android App to the logic board and verifying that no data was lost during the transfer. Testing to be sure that no data was lost in the transfer involved displaying the image onto the screen and verifying that the image appeared as intended. This test was successful with an outcome of 0% error.

#### Refresh Rate

The objective of this experiment was to verify that the microcontroller was fast enough to properly display the images without any flicker. This was performed by using an oscilloscope to measure the frequency of the clock and latch signals and seeing that the images displayed on the panels did not flicker. This procedure was repeated five times on five different images to verify that a range of different detailed images can be shown without flickering. This test was successful with an achieved refresh rate of 60Hz, which is invisible to the human eye.

#### **Manufacturing Design**

#### LED Panel Array

The display consists of 20 smaller LED panels arranged in a 5x4 array. The panels are attached to each other with acrylic brackets. When assembling the display, it was found that full-size display was flexible. This placed the individual subpanels at risk of damage. Additionally, the edges of the panel were exposed. Contact with a surface caused several individual LEDs to become damaged or fall out of the panels. To mitigate this damage and stiffen the large display, we constructed a frame from 80/20 extruded aluminum struts. We also added handles to lift the display, and legs to prop the display up when placed on a surface.

#### Power and Logic Boards

The power and logic PCBs were manufactured by JLCPCB in Shenzhen, China. Circuit schematics and PCB layouts were created using KiCad. The completed PCBs were populated by the group, each component on all boards is hand-soldered. The logic boards are attached to the display board by aluminum standoffs inserted into the acrylic brackets which connect the LED subpanels. The boards are covered by acrylic panels for protection and user safety.

## **Economic Analysis**

## Tangible Costs

## Product Cost

Table 3. The table below is a depiction of the bill of materials for this project.

Material	Quantity	Cost Per Unit	Calculated Cost
LED Panels	20	\$18.70	\$374
Power System PCB	1	\$100	\$100
Power System Components	N/A	\$150	\$150
12V Power Supply	1	\$60	\$60
Logic Board PCB	1	\$100	\$100
Logic Board Components	N/A	\$150	\$150
Fabricated Aluminum Frame	1	\$100	\$100
Cables, Wires, & Misc.	N/A	\$60	\$60
XC32 Pro Compiler License	1	\$30	\$30
Total Cost		· · · ·	\$1,124.00

The product cost is the cost of producing a one-off prototype. If the circuit boards and electronic components had been purchased in bulk, the price of each unit would drop dramatically, perhaps by greater than 50%. Electronic components and circuit boards drop dramatically in price when purchased/fabricated in bulk.

## Project Cost

The number of hours required to complete this project during the spring semester was estimated to have been approximately 700 hours from the group members and 7 hours from the advisor. The breakdown of the development cost can be shown in the table below. A few constructs were set to estimate to this price including the 14 weeks of next semester, 10 hours per week is expected per team member, \$50 per hour for each team member and \$100 per hour for the advisor's time, Cris Ababei. This equates to approximately \$42,000 in development cost. In addition to the development cost, the cost to build the prototype, seen in Table 6, was factored into the project cost. This makes the overall project cost \$43,044.

Table 4. The table below shows the number of hours which were estimated among the team members and the overall cost of the work.

Team Member Hours/Weel	Number of Weeks	Hourly Wage	<b>Overall Cost</b>
------------------------	-----------------	-------------	---------------------

Drew Maatman	10	14	\$50	\$7000
Tuoxuan Ren	10	14	\$50	\$7000
Logan Wedel	10	14	\$50	\$7000
Kevin Etta	10	14	\$50	\$7000
Caroline Gilger	10	14	\$50	\$7000
Cris Ababei	0.5	14	\$100	\$700
Total Cost	\$42,000			

## Recurring Cost

The project does not require any license fees because all the platforms used to develop the hardware schematics and the Android app is on open source platforms. Therefore, the only possible recurring cost of the project will be maintenance and operation. However, maintenance on this product will be minimal and therefore, the maintenance cost is estimated to be \$0 per year. To estimate the operation cost of this project, the maximum power required to display full white image onto the panel is 225W, calculated by multiplying the 5V by 45A that the panels are pulling. If it is assumed that the panel is on 24 hours all 7 days of the week, this amounts to \$175 per year to keep the panels running. However, the panel will definitely not be on 24 hours per day all 7 days per week and most likely will not be powering a full white image constantly, therefore the overall yearly cost of operation will be lower than \$175.

#### **Economic Justification**

## Tangible Benefits

The monetary benefits for this product are minimal since its scope is only for the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department office and it is not essentially a device developed to make money for its customer. Possible non-monetary benefits from this could be students' tuition money if the students were so impressed by the LED panel that they committed to coming here based on the LED panel. On another note, if this product were to be sold to other companies as advertising modules, that would add some tangible benefits to their sales but that is not within the scope of this project. Although no quantitative values can be applied to the tangible benefits of this product, it has been proven that the LED display will return the customer with added value based on advertising and information shared to all passersby.

#### **Risk Analysis**

The table below describes the risk to the timely completion of the project and the preventative actions we will take to avoid these risks as best possible, which were determined about halfway through the completion of the project.

#### Table 5 – Project Risk Analysis

Project Risk	Preventative Action	Severity	Probability	Risk Calculation
Component failure / Part performance	Order extra parts that are known to have a higher failure rate	10	0.3	3.3
Design shortcomings	Schedule extra time to accommodate difficulties, incremental feature testing, form backup plans	8	0.4	3.2
Misguided/Lack of effort	Meet regularly, keep everyone on task	4	.5	2
Illness	Sharing responsibilities, strict handwashing policy	1	.8	.8
Bottlenecks in design, build or test phase	Parallelizing as many tasks as possible, spreading tasks out which are tolerant for reordering	5	.8	4
HardwareX rejects article	Read HardwareX to determine their publishing standards, contact a representative of HardwareX prior to submittal	6	.1	.6
Hardware damage due to errors in firmware	hage Make incremental changes and in test frequently; have replacement components in case of damage		.4	2
Physical damage to panels from moving or frame assembly	cal damage Be extremely careful in nels from handling hardware and frame g or frame sembly		.2	1.2
Difficulties integrating WiFi functionality	Schedule extra time for Wifi integration, keep WiFi integration off the critical path	4	.5	2

Risky situations that ended up becoming issues were physical damage to LED panels during project development. This was because the LEDs soldered onto the purchased LED panels were very fragile, and not enough care was taken to ensure they were ripped off of the LED panels during project development. Extra care should have been taken. Around 10 of the 81,000 pixels were ripped off of the entire display during project development, mostly along the edges of the display. Adding the frame to the project drastically reduced the damage to the project afterward.

Another situation which arose was hardware failure of components on the power board. We suspect that this was due to poor handling of the project and/or an ESD strike on the component which failed, since the operating parameters of the power board were well understood and the circuitry was heavily ruggedized to ensure damage would not occur due to electrical stresses.

HardwareX did not accept our journal paper, citing that the scope of the project did not fit the purpose of the journal. The project mentor, Cris Ababei, stated that another journal would be sought for publication of the journal paper that was written about project development.

WiFi integration into the system was a lot more difficult than first assumed. In order to integrate WiFi functionality and Android App communication into the project, many compromises in download speed and functionality had to be made. This was due to the serial interface of the ESP8266 WiFi module as used out of the box. The ESP was meant to be used over a serial port with a user typing in AT commands in a slow manner. Trying to automate this with a 252 MHz microcontroller ended up being more challenging. By the end of project development, the fastest image download time achieved was 1.5 minutes, which seemed slower than anticipated. This was a compromise that had to be made due to project deadlines and hardware selected.

Finally, microcontroller performance ended up being a risk that was mitigated through purchasing a pro C compiler license in order to highly optimize MCU code execution at runtime. Without purchasing this higher optimization level, images could only be drawn on the screen with a visible flicker. After using the optimization features of the compiler, microcontroller code executed so quickly that the logic board could not physically support the speed of the I/O signals to drive the LED panels. After fine tuning the signal timing and dialing back optimization settings, images could be drawn on the screen without any visible flicker, and the PCB could support these high speed signals.

## **Project Legacy**

Overall, there were many lessons learned throughout this process. The microcontroller used in this design, though one of the most powerful PIC microcontrollers on the market, was still very limited in speed bandwidth and data throughput. In the future, it would be possible to look into using an FPGA or possibly a full SoC to implement in the design. However, this would require a completely new hardware schematic and PCB along with full VHDL code to run on the FPGA. Perhaps by using this different design concept, it would be possible to provide video capabilities on the display.

Another possible addition to the design would be to implement an authentication PIN code within the Android App to be able to secure the device with a target phone. This way, only users with the proper PIN code can access the device so that strangers who download the app from the Google Play store will not put up their own images onto the display. Another possible future improvement to the app would be to allow simple text to be placed across the display. We hesitated to implement this initially because we did not want the Android app to turn into an image editing/creating software. It serves more as a tool to place ready-to-go images onto the display board.

Although there were various features or design concepts which we could have been done differently, the overall product was successful. The full design was able to provide all of the required target specifications listed at the beginning of the year. The power board was able to supply a safe and regulated 5V supply to the panels as well as a 3.3V supply to the microcontroller. The logic board was able to shift in the data to the panels fast enough so that the display did not flicker. The display has high pixel resolution and color resolution and can be fully controlled by the app. These were the most important aspects of the design which were required and they were all successfully implemented in the project.

## **Appendix I: Hardware Schematics**

## 01. Table of Contents

## Electronic Display Logic Board

Marquette Universiy Senior Design 2018, Group E44 Drew Maatman, Kevin Etta, Logan Wedel, Caroline Gilger, Tuoxuan Ren

	02. Power Input	Power Input	18. External FLASH 1
	03. +3.3V Power Supply	POS3P3 Power Supply POS3P3_Power_Supply.sch	19. External FLASH 2
_	04. +5V Power Supply	POS5 Power Supply	20. External FLASH 3
	05. Microcontroller Programming	Microcontroller Programming Microcontroller_Programming.sch	21. External FLASH 4
	06. Microcontroller Power	Microcontroller Power	22. External FLASH 5
3	07. Microcontroller 10 Bank 1	Microcontroller 1 Microcontroller 1.sch	23. External FLASH 6
	08. Microcontroller 10 Bank 2	Microcontroller 2 Microcontroller 2.sch	24. External FLASH 7
	09. WiFi Module	WiFi Module Wi_Fi_Module.sch	25. External FLASH 8
	10. USB UART Digital Isolation	USB UART Isolation	26. Panel Data Level Shifters 1
	11. USB UART Bridge	USB UART Bridge	27. Panel Data Level Shifters 2
	12. Status LEDs Bank 1	Status_LEDs_1 Status_LEDs_1.sch	28. Panel Data Level Shifters 3
	13. Status LEDs Bank 2	Status_LEDs_2 Status_LEDs_2.sch	29. Panel Data Connectors
	14. Pushbuttons	Pushbuttons Pushbuttons.sch	30. Test Points
	15. Internal Rail Monitoring	Internal Rail Monitoring	31. Mechanical
	16. LED Power Supply Monitoring	LED_POS5_Monitoring LED_POS5_Monitoring.sch	32. Additional Capacitance
	17. External SRAM	External_SRAM External_SRAM.sch	
1			

<u>External Flas</u>h 1 External\_Flash\_1.sch <u>External Flas</u>h 2 External\_Flash\_2.sch <u>External Flas</u>h 3 External\_Flash\_3.sch <u>External Flas</u>h 4 External\_Flash\_4.sch <u>External Flas</u>h 5 External\_Flash\_5.sch <u>External Flas</u>h 6 External\_Flash\_6.sch <u>External Flas</u>h 7 External\_Flash\_7.sch <u>External Flas</u>h 8 External\_Flash\_8.sch Panel Data Level Shifters 1 Panel\_Data\_Level\_Shifters\_1.sch Panel Data Level Shifters 2 Panel\_Data\_Level\_Shifters\_2.sch Panel Data Level Shifters 3 Panel\_Data\_Level\_Shifters\_3.sch Panel Data Connectors Panel\_Data\_Connectors.sch Test Points Test\_Points.sch <u>Mechanical</u> Mechanical.sch Additional Capacitance Additional\_Capacitance.sch

	Marquette Univer	44					
	Sheet: /						
	File: LED_Display_Controller.sch						
Title: Electronic Display Logic Board							
	Size: A	Date: 2018-12-15	Rev: A				
	KiCad E.D.A. kicad (5.1.0)-1		ld: 1/32				

Note: If component footprints, tolerances, and power ratings are hidden, components are: 0603 case size, 1% tolerance, 1/10 W power rating



































![](_page_41_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_42_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_43_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_44_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_45_Figure_0.jpeg)

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![](_page_48_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_49_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_50_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_51_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_52_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_53_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_54_Figure_0.jpeg)

. Table of Contents:	LED Display Power Board
	Marquette University Senior Design 2018/2019, Group E44 Drew Maatman, Kvein Etta, Logan Wedel, Caroline Gilger, Tuoxuan Ren
02. Power Input	Power_Input Power_Input.sch
03. +5V Control	POS5_Control POS5_Control.sch
04. +5V Phase 1	POS5_Phase_1 POS5_Phase_1.sch
05. +5V Phase 2	POS5_Phase_2 POS5_Phase_2.sch
06. +5V Phase 3	POS5_Phase_3 POS5_Phase_3.sch
07. +5V Phase 4	POS5_Phase_4 POS5_Phase_4.sch
08. +5.5V MNG	POS5P5_MNG POS5P5_MNG.sch
09. Power Output	Power_Output Power_Output.sch
10. Mechanical	Mechanical Mechanical.sch
11. Active Load 1	Active Load 1 Active_Load_1.sch
12. Active Load 2	Active Load 2 Active_Load_2.sch
13. Active Load 3	Active Load 3 Active_Load_3.sch
14. Loop Response	Loop_Response
Note: If component footprints, tolerances 0402 case size, 1% tolerance, 1/16W po	s, and power ratings are hidden, components are: ower rating Marquette University Senior Design 2018/2019 Group E44 Sheet: / File: LTC7851_Demo.sch Title: Electronic Display Power Board Size: A Date: 2018-11-28 KiCad E.D.A. kicad (5.1.0)-1 Id: 1/14

![](_page_56_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_57_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_58_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_59_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_60_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_61_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_62_Figure_0.jpeg)

09. Power Output	5		FF
3	+5V 1901 100 +5V OUT 1902 100 +5V OUT 1903 100 GND OUT 1904 100		
	GND OUT		
		Marquette University Senior Design 2018/2019 Group E44         Sheet: /Power Output/         File: Power_Output.sch         Title: Electronic Display Power Board         Size: A       Date: 2018-11-28         KiCad E.D.A. kicad (5.1.0)-1	Rev: A Id: 9/14

![](_page_64_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_65_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_66_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_67_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_68_Figure_0.jpeg)