

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	7
Table of Contents	11
List of Figures	17
List of Tables	23
Acronym List	27
Notation	30
Chapter 1. Introduction	31
1.1 Motivation	33
1.1.1 NASA Technology Readiness Levels	36
1.2 Microgravity Research Facilities	39
1.3 Other Shared Remote Facilities	42
1.4 Thesis Roadmap	43
Chapter 2. Microgravity Research Aboard the ISS	47
2.1 Issues and Challenges of Microgravity Research	47
2.2 Research Areas of the International Space Station	51
2.2.1 Thesis Research Area Identification	52
2.3 Special Resources of the ISS	56
Chapter 3. The MIT SSL Laboratory Design Philosophy	59
3.1 Definitions	59
3.2 Characteristics of a Mature Technology Demonstration	61
3.3 MIT SSL Previous Space Experiments	63
3.4 Features of a Laboratory for Space Technology Maturation	64
3.4.1 Interactions Between the Features	68
3.4.2 Facilitating the Iterative Research Process	71
3.4.3 Experiment Support Features	76

3.4.4 Supporting Multiple Investigators	82
3.4.5 Reconfiguration and Modularity	89
3.5 SSL Experiments and the Laboratory Design Philosophy	94
Chapter 4. The SPHERES Laboratory for DSS Research	97
4.1 SPHERES Problem Statement	98
4.1.1 SPHERES Requirements	98
4.1.2 ISS Constraints	99
4.2 SPHERES Design Introduction	100
4.2.1 SPHERES Sub-systems	103
4.2.2 Further Information on SPHERES	113
4.3 Meeting the MIT SSL Laboratory Design Philosophy	115
4.3.1 Facilitating the Iterative Research Process	117
4.3.2 Support of Experiments	137
4.3.3 Supporting Multiple Investigators	164
4.3.4 Reconfiguration and Modularity	181
4.4 Summary	195
Chapter 5. Microgravity Laboratory Design Principles	199
5.1 Principle of Iterative Research	202
5.2 Principle of Enabling a Field of Study	206
5.3 Principle of Optimized Utilization	207
5.4 Principle of Focused Modularity	210
5.5 Principle of Remote Operation & Usability	212
5.6 Principle of Incremental Technology Maturation	213
5.7 Principle of Requirements Balance	216
5.8 The Design Principles, the Design Philosophy, and the ISS	218
5.9 Science in the ISS to Date: Applicability of the Principles	220
5.10 Design Framework	224
5.10.1 Step 1 - Identify a Field of Study	228
5.10.2 Step 2 - Identify Main Functional Requirements	231
5.10.3 Step 3 - Refine Design	245
5.10.4 Step 4 - Review Requirements and Design	249
5.11 ISS NGO Evaluation Framework	251
5.12 Summary	255

Chapter 6. Assessment of SPHERES	259
6.1 SPHERES Results to Date	259
6.1.1 Current Programs	260
6.1.2 Future Programs	263
6.1.3 Experimental Results	266
6.2 Design Framework	267
6.2.1 Step 1 - Identify a Field of Study	267
6.2.2 Step 2 - Identify Main Functional Requirements	271
6.2.3 Step 3 - Refine Design	286
6.2.4 Step 4 - Review Requirements and Design	295
6.2.5 Design Framework Assessment Summary	299
6.3 Evaluation Framework	301
6.3.1 ISS NGO Evaluation Summary	309
Chapter 7. Conclusions	311
7.1 Thesis Summary	311
7.2 Contributions	333
7.3 Future Work	335
7.4 Concluding Remarks	337
References	339
Appendix A. NASA Technology Readiness Levels	351
Appendix B. Microgravity Research Facilities	355
B.1 3rd Party Ground-based Facilities	355
B.1.1 Flat Floors	356
B.1.2 Drop Towers	356
B.1.3 Neutral Buoyancy Tanks	359
B.1.4 Reduced Gravity Airplanes	361
B.2 Space Shuttle	363
B.3 The International Space Station	367
B.4 Past Space-based Laboratories	370
B.4.1 Salyut	370
B.4.2 US Skylab [Belew, 1977]	371
B.4.3 Space Lab [Emond, 2000]	373
B.4.4 MIR	374

Appendix C. Other Remote Research Facilities	379
C.1 Antarctic Research	379
C.2 Ocean Research and Exploration	385
Appendix D. The International Space Station	391
D.1 Objectives and Research Directions	391
D.2 Components of the ISS	393
D.3 ISS Facilities for Research	397
D.3.1 ISS Modules for Research	397
D.3.2 ISS Resources for Research	401
D.3.3 Multi-user Facilities	403
D.4 Engineering and Operational Challenges of the ISS	405
Appendix E. MIT SSL Previous Microgravity Experiments	409
E.1 MODE & MODE Re-Flight	409
E.2 DLS	413
E.3 MACE & MACE-re-flight	414
Appendix F. SPHERES Avionics Design	421
F.1 SPHERES nano-satellites	422
F.1.1 Power & Control Panel	424
F.1.2 Propulsion	438
F.1.3 Data Processing (C6701 DSP / SMT375)	446
F.1.4 Metrology	448
F.1.5 Communications	471
F.1.6 Expansion Port	482
F.2 Laptop Communications	488
F.3 Metrology Beacons	488
F.4 Metrology Beacon Tester	494
F.5 Expansion Port Items	500
F.5.1 Expansion Port Beacon	500
F.5.2 Expansion Port Tether	504
Appendix G. SPHERES Software Design	507
G.1 Boot Loader	508
G.1.1 Boot Loader Transfer Protocol	509

G.1.2 Master	514
G.1.3 Loader	516
G.2 SPHERES Core	521
G.2.1 System	527
G.2.2 Control	530
G.2.3 Propulsion	534
G.2.4 Communications	537
G.2.5 Metrology	546
G.2.6 Housekeeping	551
G.2.7 GSP Interface	554
G.3 Standard Libraries	557
G.3.1 Controllers	557
G.3.2 Estimators	557
G.3.3 Maneuvers	557
G.3.4 Mixers	558
G.3.5 Terminators	558
G.3.6 Math	558
G.3.7 Utilities	559
Appendix H. SPHERES Communications	561
H.1 DR2000 Configuration	561
H.1.1 DR2000 Packet Structure	561
H.1.2 DR2000 Commands	563
H.2 Link-layer Interface	565
H.2.1 SPHERES Packet Structure	565
H.2.2 Time-Division Protocol	569
H.2.3 Packet Acknowledgement	571
H.3 Application Layer Interface	573
H.3.1 Transmitted Messages	573
H.3.2 Received Messages	582
Appendix I. SPHERES Experimental Results	589
I.1 Results at the MIT SSL	589
I.2 Results aboard the KC-135	591
I.3 Results at the MSFC Flat Floor	599

