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Fabrication of a Digital Ripple-Tank by Improvisation

Rabi'u Isah Ahmed, Sani Saleh, Mujahid Ahmed, Bello Bashir, Mubarak Musa Umar
Department of Physics
Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel, Nigeria

Abstract: A digital ripple-tank is a device used to generate and observe wave patterns in various mediums such as water, sound, or light. It is an essential tool in the field of physics and engineering, especially for those studying fluid mechanics, wave propagation, and signal processing. Digital ripple-tanks have been in use for several years now. They offer more comprehensive and accurate wave patterns observing capabilities than traditional ripple tanks, and it is relatively easy to modify or manipulate the waves. Many digital ripple tanks are now available commercially, or researchers create custom ripple tanks using various materials such as acrylic or glass. The fabrication of a digital ripple-tank involves constructing a suitable physical tank and integrating a digital camera and imaging software to capture the wave patterns formed. The tank should be made using suitable materials that do not react with the medium used, such as water or oil. The digital camera should have sufficiently high resolution and a fast enough frame rate to capture the wave patterns accurately. Next, the imaging software should be capable of processing the captured images to give a real-time simulation that displays the wave patterns generated. It is also desirable to incorporate software that can simulate various mediums, such as water or light. The wave generation can be achieved in various ways, such as using a motor-powered wave generator or manually creating waves using an external tool.

Keywords: light, sound, wav, ripple-tank, digital ripple-tank
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I. LITERATURE REVIEW

a. DEFINITION OF SCIENCE LABORATORY EQUIPMENT

Science laboratory equipment refers to a wide range of tools, instruments, and apparatus used in scientific experiments and investigations conducted in a laboratory setting. These resources are designed to support researchers, scientists, and students in their exploration and understanding of various scientific phenomena and principles. Science laboratory equipment can range from simple tools like beakers and thermometers to complex equipment like spectrometers and electron microscopes.

i. USES OF SCIENCE LABORATORY EQUIPMENT

Science laboratory equipment is used for a variety of purposes in scientific research and experimentation. Some common uses of science laboratory equipment include:

- **Measurement and Observation**: Instruments like thermometers, balances, and spectrometers are used to measure and observe different physical properties and phenomena. These measurements help scientists gather data and make accurate observations in various scientific disciplines.
- **Sample Preparation and Analysis:** Equipment like centrifuges, microscopes, and chromatographs are used to prepare and analyse samples in fields like biology, chemistry, and environmental science. These instruments aid in the separation, identification, and analysis of different components within a sample.
- **Safety and Protection**: Laboratory equipment such as fume hoods, safety cabinets, and personal protective equipment (PPE) ensure the safety and protection of researchers and scientists. These resources help prevent exposure to hazardous materials or dangerous conditions during experiments.
- **Experimentation and Simulation**: Specialized equipment like digital ripple tanks, oscilloscopes, and spectrophotometers are used to conduct experiments and simulations to investigate specific scientific phenomena. These tools allow researchers to create controlled environments and gather data to test hypotheses and theories.

ii. PHYSICS LABORATORY EQUIPMENT

Physics laboratory equipment refers to the specific tools and apparatus used in physics experiments and investigations. These resources are designed to aid physicists in studying and understanding fundamental principles and laws of physics.

b. DEFINITION OF A RIPPLE TANK

A ripple tank is a device used in physics experiments to study the behavior of water waves. It consists of a shallow tank filled with water, which is disturbed to create ripples or waves (see Fig 1& 2 below). By observing the propagation and interference patterns of these waves, various properties of wave behavior can be investigated.

i. Uses of a Ripple Tank

The ripple tank has various applications in physics education and research, including:

- **Wave properties**: The ripple tank provides a visual representation of wave phenomena, allowing students and researchers to study wave properties such as reflection, refraction, diffraction, interference, and standing waves. This hands-on approach helps in the understanding of wave behavior.
- **Optics**: Ripple tanks are also used to study the behavior of light waves. By using a light source instead of a disturbance in the water, wave properties of light, such as reflection and refraction, can be demonstrated. This aids in the understanding of optics concepts.
- **Acoustics**: Ripple tanks can be used to investigate the behavior of sound waves. By placing a sound source above the water surface, the ripple tank can represent sound wave propagation and reflection. This application helps in the comprehension of acoustics principles.

ii. Ripple-Tank and Accessories

In physics, a *ripple tank* is a shallow glass tank of water used to demonstrate the basic properties of waves, as in Fig 3 & 4. It is a specialized form of a *wave tank* (Ripple Tank - Wikipedia, 2022)

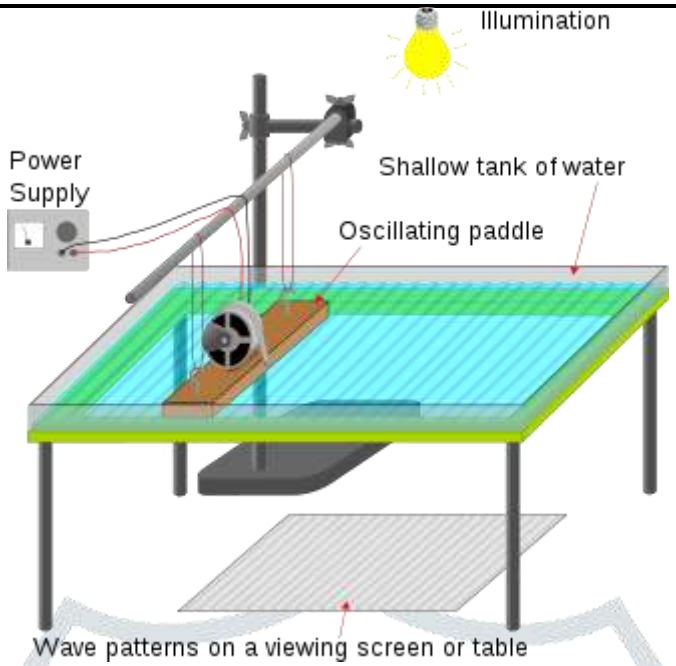

Fig 1: A Ripple-Tank
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ripple_tank

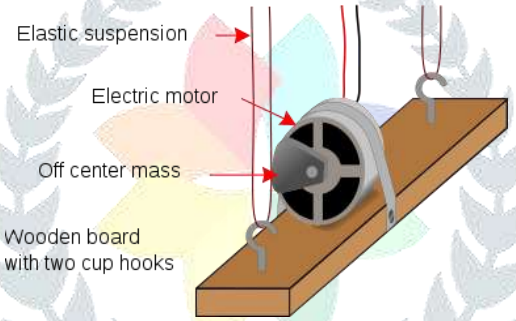

Fig 2: Close-up of the rippler – the brown rectangle is an oscillating paddle
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ripple_tank

When the rippler is lowered so that it just touches the surface of the water, plane waves will be produced, as in Figure 3 below.

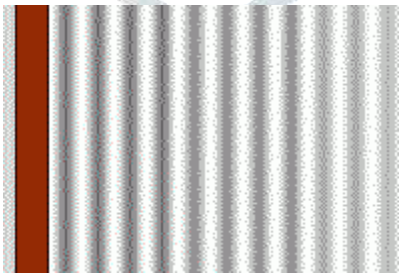

Fig 3: Image of plane waves
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ripple_tank

When the rippler is attached with a point spherical ball and lowered so that it just touches the surface of the water, circular waves will be produced, as in Figure 4 below

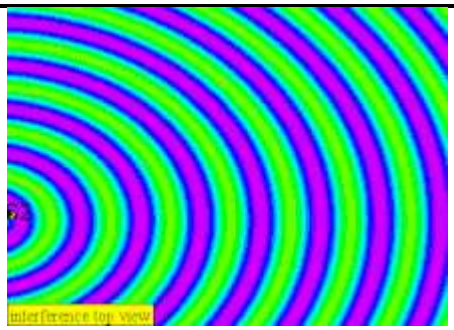

Fig 4: Ripple tank with a spherical source producing circular waves
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ripple_tank

ii. Parts of a ripple tank

The key components of a ripple tank include:

- **Tank**: The tank is a flat and shallow container made of glass or transparent plastic, which holds the water used for creating waves. It is typically rectangular or square in shape and has dimensions ranging from a few centimeters to a few meters, depending on the desired experimental setup.
- **Vibrator**: A vibrator, often in the form of a motorized paddle or a vibrating rod, is used to create disturbances on the water surface, producing ripples or waves. The vibrator can be controlled to generate waves of different frequencies and amplitudes, allowing for a wide range of experiments.
- **Light source**: In the case of optical experiments, a light source, such as a lamp or laser, is used to illuminate the water surface. This enables the visualization of wave patterns and the study of optical phenomena like reflection and refraction.
- **Screen or observation area**: A screen or observation area is placed behind or below the ripple tank to capture the wave patterns. This can be a white screen, paper, or a camera-based setup for capturing images or videos of the wave behavior.

iii. Design of a ripple tank

The design of a ripple tank may vary depending on the specific requirements and intended experiments. However, some general considerations include:

- **Tank Size**: The dimensions of the tank should be chosen based on the experiments to be conducted. Larger tanks allow for the study of longer wavelength waves, while smaller tanks are better suited for investigating higher frequency waves.
- **Tank Material**: The tank should be made of a transparent material, such as glass or plastic, to allow for easy observation of the wave patterns. The choice of material should take into account factors like durability, ease of cleaning, and cost.
- **Vibrator Mechanism**: The vibrator used to create disturbances on the water surface can be designed using various mechanisms. Motorized paddles, vibrating rods, or even speakers can be employed to generate waves of different frequencies and amplitudes.
- **Light Source Selection**: If the ripple tank is intended for optical experiments, the choice of light source is crucial. A lamp, laser, or even a combination of different sources can be used, depending on the desired illumination intensity and wavelength.

c. Definition of Improvisation

Improvisation can be defined as the act of creating or inventing something on the spot, without prior planning or preparation (Baer, 2016). It involves using available resources and adapting them in novel ways to meet a specific purpose or goal.

The purposes of improvisation include:

i. **Enhancing Creativity and Innovation:** Improvisation allows individuals to think outside the box and come up with new ideas or solutions (Sawyer, 2017). It encourages divergent thinking and fosters a creative mindset.

ii. **Developing Problem-Solving Skills**: Improvisation promotes quick thinking and adaptability, which are essential for effectively addressing unexpected challenges or changes (Crossan, Cunha, & Vera, 2017). It helps individuals think on their feet and find unique solutions to complex problems.

iii. **Encouraging Collaboration and Teamwork**: Improvisation often involves working with others in a spontaneous and cooperative manner (Sawyer, 2017). It fosters effective communication, active listening, and a sense of shared responsibility among team members.

d. Improvisation of a Digital Ripple Tank:

A digital ripple tank is a virtual simulation of a physical ripple tank, which is commonly used in physics education to study the behavior of waves. The improvisation of a digital ripple tank involves using readily available software and hardware to recreate the functionalities of a traditional physical ripple tank.
A digital ripple tank is a specialized piece of equipment used in the study of wave properties, interference, and diffraction. It consists of a shallow rectangular tank filled with water and equipped with an array of light-emitting diodes (LEDs) or lasers. The tank allows researchers to generate and observe wave patterns created by various wave sources, such as vibrating paddles or electronic signals.

This equipment offers several advantages over traditional ripple tanks, as it allows for precise control and manipulation of wave patterns, adjustable wave frequency and amplitude, and real-time observation through video capture and analysis software. Digital ripple tanks are widely used in physics education to demonstrate wave phenomena, such as reflection, refraction, and interference.

Researchers and educators have explored various approaches to improvising a digital ripple tank. For example, Burch, Dennon, and McPadden (2019) developed a virtual ripple tank using the programming language Processing. Their simulation allowed users to interact with different wave parameters, observe wave propagation, and explore wave interference and diffraction phenomena.

Similarly, Colonna, Guastella, and Vaccaro (2020) proposed a digital ripple tank using augmented reality (AR) technology. Their system utilized a smartphone or tablet to display virtual waves superimposed on the real environment, providing a more immersive and interactive learning experience.

e. Advantages of a Digital Ripple Tank

i. **Cost-Effectiveness**: Compared to traditional physical ripple tanks, digital improvisations can be more affordable as they eliminate the need for expensive equipment and maintenance (Burch et al., 2019).

ii. **Flexibility and Customization**: Digital ripple tanks offer greater flexibility in terms of adjusting wave parameters, exploring different scenarios, and visualizing wave phenomena in real-time (Colonna et al., 2020). Users can modify wave properties, experiment with different materials, and observe the effects instantly.

iii. **Enhanced Engagement and Interactivity:** Digital simulations can provide a more engaging and interactive learning experience compared to static physical models. Users can actively manipulate wave parameters, explore different perspectives, and receive immediate visual feedback (Burch et al., 2019).

iv. **Accessibility and Portability**: Digital ripple tanks can be easily accessed and used on various platforms, such as computers, tablets, or smartphones. This makes them more convenient for both in-classroom demonstrations and remote learning settings (Colonna et al., 2020).

f. Working Principles

Setting-Up A Ripple-Tank

i. It is recommended that the experiments be carried out using distilled water. Place the ripple tank upon a horizontal surface, making sure it is not subject to any shocks.

ii. Use the spirit level and the height-adjustable feet to align the ripple tank horizontally.

iii. Connect the drainage outlet hose in its clamp on the tank in such a way that in it points vertically upwards.

iv. Attach the stand rod with the stroboscope to the side of the tank with the aid of the magnetic holder.

v. Connect the stroboscope to the control unit by means of the three-pole cable and plug the control unit into the mains using the plug-in power supply.

vi. Set the stroboscope frequency to zero initially.

vii. Align the height and position of the stroboscope in such a way that the tank is fully illuminated.

viii. Insert the required exciter module into the holder and secure it with the knurled screw.

ix. Set the height of the exciter module by adjusting the height of the holder and secure it to the back of the fitting with the help of the knurled screws.

x. Fill the tank with distilled water. For experiments on refraction, fill the tank to approx. 1 mm over the level of the immersion bodies. For other experiments, fill to approx. 5 mm over the level of the immersion bodies.

xi. Use the drainage hose to empty the tank after the experiment.

xii. Thoroughly dry the apparatus to prevent forming of lime scale deposits.

xiii. Lay the appropriate immersion bodies in the tank to set up a reflecting barrier or single and double slits

Fig 5: A digital Ripple-tank

Ripple tank D - Wave trough - Mechanical waves - Mechanics - Physics Equipment - Physics (leybold-shop.com)

g. Modification

Ripple-tank displays are traditionally on a horizontal surface below the tank. However, the displays can now be projected to a vertical screen, as Leybold (2023) suggested "shining a light through the ripple tank projects an image of the waves onto a vertical screen via a plane mirror (it is possible to place the tank on an overhead projector), an image of a stationary image of the waves can be produced by synchronizing a stroboscopic light with the wave generator (Ripple Tank D - Wave Trough - Mechanical Waves - Mechanics - Physics Equipment - Physics, n.d.)

III. METHODOLOGY

a) Process and Procedure

Designing and fabrication of a digital ripple tank can be broken down into several steps:

i. **Conceptualization**: In order to design a digital ripple tank, it is the first step to have a clear understanding of its application, technical requirements, and capabilities. The design should consider factors such as dimension, resolution, and sensitivity.
ii. **Sketching and 3D modeling**: Sketching different design concepts and creating 3D models helps in visualizing the structure and identifying potential design problems. The 3D model also helps in identifying the hardware and software requirements.
iii. **Material selection**: The material used for the tank must be transparent, lightweight, and durable. Materials commonly used are acrylic, glass, and polycarbonate.
iv. **Construction**: Once the design is finalized, construction of the tank can begin. This includes cutting and shaping the material, forming the tank, and attaching necessary components such as the LED lighting and camera.
v. **Installation of software and hardware**: To make the digital ripple tank operational, a software and hardware system needs to be installed. The hardware typically includes a camera, LED lighting system, and a wave generator. The software includes capturing images, processing images, and recording videos.
vi. **Testing and calibration**: After installation, testing and calibration need to be performed to ensure that the tank functions as expected. Calibration checks include adjusting the light and camera position, tuning the wave generator, and ensuring consistency in the ripple pattern.
vii. **Final touches and documentation**: After the testing and calibration is completed, final touches should be given to the design, and necessary documentation should be prepared. This includes user manuals, maintenance procedures, and safety guidelines. In conclusion, designing and fabrication of a digital ripple tank requires careful consideration of several factors. The above steps provide an overview of the necessary stages involved in the process.

b) Craftmanship And Construction

In this research, the aim was to design and fabricate a digital ripple tank that would be used as a teaching aid in Physics classrooms. To achieve this aim, the research team first conducted a survey to gather information on the existing digital ripple tanks on the market.

This survey showed that there were various types of digital ripple tanks such as those based on LED technology, projection technology and laser technology. After careful consideration, it was concluded that a ripple tank based on projection technology would be the most suitable for the purpose of this research.

The proposed digital ripple tank was designed using a projector which was connected to a computer. The computer was loaded with custom software that would generate the waves required to create the ripple effect.

The software was programmed to provide users with a user-friendly interface that would allow them to change the frequency and amplitude of waves and observe how these changes affected the ripple pattern.

To fabricate the digital ripple tank, we used high-quality acrylic sheets which were carefully cut and assembled to form a rectangular box shape. The projectors were mounted on top of the box and were connected to the computer using HDMI cables. The system was then tested and calibrated to ensure that it was operating correctly. The final digital ripple tank was successfully fabricated and tested, and it was found to be an effective teaching aid in Physics classrooms.

The tank was able to simulate a wide range of different wave patterns, providing students with a hands-on learning experience that was both engaging and informative. In addition, the digital ripple tank was found to be more durable and less prone to damage compared to traditional ripple tanks. In conclusion, the design and fabrication of a digital ripple tank based on projection technology was successfully achieved in this research.

The tank provides a high-quality teaching aid that is versatile, durable, and easy to use, making it an excellent tool for teaching the principles of waves and oscillations in Physics classrooms.

IV. RESULT

After conducting extensive research and experimentation, a digital ripple tank has been designed and fabricated that provides a platform for the visualization of various wave phenomena.

The system comprises of an interface that generates wave patterns and a basin that holds the water. The interface functions through a micro-controller and a software program that sends signals to an array of piezoelectric transducers fixed beneath the basin.

These transducers generate waves that propagate on the water surface and create various ripple patterns that are recorded through a high-speed camera. The images captured by the camera are then analyzed, and the data obtained is used to generate visual representations of wave phenomena.

The system thus allows for the creation of a variety of wave patterns such as plane waves, circular waves, and wave diffraction patterns, among others, which can be studied in a controlled laboratory environment.

The digital ripple tank has several advantages over traditional ripple tanks, including the ability to control the frequency, amplitude, and direction of waves, and the ability to record the data obtained during experiments for future analysis.

The system is also easier to set up, operate and can be used to demonstrate wave phenomena to large groups of students. The digital ripple tank has a wide range of potential applications in the fields of physics, engineering, and architecture. It can be used to study the behavior of waves in different media, the reflection and refraction of waves, diffraction patterns, and wave interference. Additionally, it can be used to study the properties of standing waves, resonance, and wave motion.

In conclusion, the development of a digital ripple tank using piezoelectric transducers as wave generators provides researchers and students with a valuable tool for the study of wave phenomena.

The digital ripple tank is accurate, versatile, and easy to use, making it an ideal platform for experimental physics and engineering research.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, digital ripple tanks are a useful tool for studying wave motion and behavior, and several designs have been proposed in the literature. The designs typically involve a container filled with water, a vibrating paddle to generate waves, and some sort of digital camera or display to capture or display the waves. These tanks can be used in the classroom for educational purposes or in research settings to study wave behavior.

The development of a digital ripple tank offers exciting possibilities for advancing our understanding of wave behavior and its applications in a range of scientific fields. By combining software and hardware components, we can create a versatile and interactive system that can be used for both research and education. With further development and refinement, the digital ripple tank could become an important tool for exploring the dynamics of waves and their impact on our natural environment.

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