

Space debris and its research in Slovak Republic

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Space debris, introduction



Space debris, definition

Probe Phobos Grunt

• "All the man-made objects which are orbiting the Earth and have no further application."



Tesla Roadster

Small debris







Silha (c) 2008



Space debris, history





Space debris, spatial distribution







Space debris, sources

- at present (2019-11-05)
- catalogue 18291
- satellites - functional (~1000)
 - non-operational
- space debris (> 5 cm)
 - upper stages
 - fragments
 - mission related debris
 - anomaly debris







Sentinel 1A event, 23rd of August





Indian ASAT, March 2019

Indian Anti-satellite test performed in 27^{th} of March 2019, ~ 270 fragments reported by US Airforce, candidate Microsat-R satellite.





Monthly Number of Cataloged Objects in Earth Orbit by Object Type: This chart displays a summary of all objects in Earth orbit officially cataloged by the U.S. Space Surveillance Network. "Fragmentation debris" includes satellite breakup debris and anomalous event debris, while "mission-related debris" includes all objects dispensed, separated, or released as part of the planned mission.



Jiří Šilha, Slovak Space Debris Research and its Application on the **Process and Public** Outreach, SuperV ,SSO of September, 2019, Castel Gandolfo Education

Source: ODQN 22i1

Starlink launch,





Starlink launch, May 2019

400



30,000

20,000





Figure 1. Mass distribution in the current LEO environment. The blue histogram is the total Figure 2. LEGEND-simulated historical LEO environment and results from three different and the population breakdown is shown in red (rocket bodies), green (spacecraft), and black future projection scenarios. Each projection curve is the average of 100 MC runs. The effective (others). The yellow bars between 1100 km and 1300 km shows the notional mass distribution number is defined as the fractional time, per orbital period, an object spends between 200 km from 8000 150 kg spacecraft or, equivalently, 4000 300 kg spacecraft.

and 2000 km altitudes.

Source: NASA Orbital Debris Quarterly News issue 22i1

Tiangong 1 reentry

- In spring 2018 uncontrolled re-entry of Chinese space station Tiangong 1
- According to space-track.org (ref. date 2018-02-21) reentry expected 2018-04-10, according to ESA the reentry window (ref. date 2018-02-23) is 2018-03-24 – 2018-04-19
- Still large error margin of $\pm \sim 2.0$ weeks
- Possible period of re-entry $\mathbf{2018-03-24} \mathbf{2018-04-19}$



Impact probability [%]





Active debris removal

- Active removal of the large compact object by decreasing its mean altitude, decrease lifetime from centuries to 10-20 years
- Most popular concepts:
 - Net
 - Robotic arm
 - Harpoon
 - Solar sail

- Most feasible concept combination with commercialization, e.g., mission service, refueling
- Currently demonstration on net, harpoon (RemoveDEBRIS)











ROGER net-based capture concept, EADS Astrium.



Space debris, observations

Research & development, main questions

• Where is it?

- Surveys
- Catalogues
- Population models
- Dynamical models
- ...

• How to protect against it?

- Collision predictions
- Shielding
- Removal
- ...

• What is it?

- Material composition
- Origins
- Reflectance properties
- Model for acting forces
- ...
- How it behaves?
 - Rotation properties
 - Change of rotation
 - Space weathering
 - ...





Observations techniques

- **Survey** observations used to discover new objects, to model space debris population (including small particles e.g. <1mm) spatial distribution
- **Tracking** observations used to investigate the physical and dynamical properties of space debris
- **Optical** (ground-, space-based)
 - Optical passive optical telescopes (e.g. AGO 60cm and 70cm telescopes)
 - * Satellite Laser Ranging (SLR) (optical active) debris SLR systems
- Radar (ground-, space-based) tracking and survey radar systems
- *In-situ* (space-based) in-situ probe, surface







Figure – AGO70cm telescope.



Figure – ZIMLAT SLR.





United States Strategic Command

- US governmental network USSTRATCOM
- Consists from 29 optical and radar systems
- Full coverage from LEO to GEO
- More that 16,000 orbits in form of TLEs (Two Lines Elements) available to public and scientific community
- www.space-track.org



Figure – US space surveillance network (Jakhu et al., 2017).



ISON network

- The former International Scientific Optical Network ISON
- Operated by the Keldysh institute of applied mathematics, Russian academy of sciences
- 90 telescopes in 16 countries
- Covered all regions from LEO to GEO, also NEA
- Focus on cataloguing and research



Figure – ISON surveillance network (Mokhnatkin et al., 2017).

Optical (passive) observations



- Space debris not emitting own radiation (!)
- Interested only in the sun (visible) light reflected from the object



Figure – Schematic demonstrating sun light reflected from the object (satellite) toward observer.



Optical observations

- Surveys to discover new objects for cataloguing and modeling
- **Astrometry** follow-up (tracking) observations, to obtain the astrometric positions (apparent position of the object on celestial sphere) to be used for orbit determination and improvement
- Photometry to get properties of the sun light reflected from the object toward observer
 - · Attitude related information, light curve, rotation axis direction and rotation period size, e.g. ADR application
 - Attitude change over time monitoring, e.g., ADR application, monitoring of the near Earth environment
 - · Reconstructed phase function, shape of object, e.g., object identification, type identification
 - · Colors, color indices, surface properties, e.g., space-weathering, surface composition, origin identification
- **Reflectance Spectroscopy** to get solar spectrum reflected from the object's surface, e.g., surface composition → source/origin identification
- **Spectrocsopy** to get the spectrum of an object during reentry → fragmentation modeling



Space debris on FMPI and AGO

 AGO – FMPI CU Astronomical and geophysical observatory in Modra, Slovakia



Figure – AGO Modra main dome.



Figure – AGO Modra small upper dome.

FMPI/AGO's 70cm telescope



• Main objective:

Perform tracking to space debris in order to support European space debris cataloguing, physical characteristics of debris

- Former *ESA PECS HAMROptSen* dedicated to the main objective, cooperation CU (SK, prime) + AIUB (CH)
- Currently *ESA PECS ImpEuroLEOTrack*, cooperation CU (SK, prime) + AIUB (CH) + IWF (AUT)
- Activities cover all aspects low-level control, planning S/W improvement, observation planning, data acquisition, data processing, image processing SW improvement, tracklet building, object identification, orbit improvement, cataloguing, data format conversion, etc.

Telescope design	Newton
Mount	Equatorial (Open fork)
Camera	CCD
Dimension	1024 x 1024
Primary mirror diameter [m]	0.7
Focal length [mm]; focal ratio	2962.0; f/4.2
FOV [arc-min]	$28.5 \ge 28.5$
iFOV [arc-sec/pix]	1.67

Table – AGO70 telescope configuration.



European Space Agency

Figure – AGO 70cm telescope.





Figure – AGO 70cm telescope installation (left), mount (middle) and 70 cm primary mirror (right).

ESA PECS ImpEuroLEOTrack





Figure – Geographical distribution of sensors to be used during the activity for LEO tracking, namely FMPI's AGO 70cm telescope (Slovakia), AIUB's ZIMLAT telescope and SLR sensor (Switzerland) and IWF's Graz SLR station (Austria). Character (*) indicates optical passive sensor (telescope) and character (') indicates optical active (SLR) sensor.

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ESA Plan for European Cooperating States (PECS)





- European Space Agency Plan for European Cooperating States main objective to prepare Slovakia to be become competitive within ESA once full member.
- Since the beginning of ESA PECS for Slovakia in 2015, 4 ESA PECS calls have already taken place.
- The ministry responsible for the PECS activities is the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.
- In Spring 2018 a 3rd call was closed and winners were announced in summer 2018. Fourth call closed in Feb 2019, winners still to be announced.
- Evaluation of results, outputs in the early 2020s, to decide whether SR to join ESA or not.

FMPI/AGO instruments, AMOS cameras

- AMOS (All-sky Meteor Orbit System) of Comenius University in Bratislava
- · Originally developed optical system for intensified video night sky observation focused on meteors
- Network of 8 AMOS cameras in Slovakia (4), Canary Islands (2), Chile (2),
 plan to expend the network to USA (HI), Australia and Namibia
- AMOS at AGO, Tenerifa and Chile accompanied by AMOS-Spec cameras
- · Currently several different national funding available for improvements
- Properties:
 - Automatic detection S/W
 - Own astrometric reduction S/W, astrometric accuracy around 4'-10', expected after improvement 1.8' (→ 0.5km for 1000 km range)
 - Limiting magnitude comparable to the naked eye, $\sim 5~{\rm mag}$





Figure – AMOS in Chile.



FMPI/AGO instruments, AMOS cameras







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Observations planning

Observation planning



- In space debris community used so-called Two-Lines Elements format for geocentric orbital elements
- TLE fully compatible with the Simplified General Perturbation (SGP) model developed by US Department of Defense in 1980s
- Originally Fortran code, now available from Vallado (2013) in JAVA, Python, C++, etc.
- FMPI has two major sources of TLEs:
 - US www.space-track.org
 - ESA/AIUB's internal catalogue
 - Alternatively Russian ISON network or US NASA



Figure – Example of TLE format for the International Space Station. Reference epoch 12008.47339243, which corresponds to date/time 2012-01-08 11:21:41.11 and MJD = 55934.47339243 days.

Observation planning



- Currently for space debris observations at AGO is used FMPI's JAVA S/W tool SatEph (Satellite Ephemeris)
- SatEph reads TLE and uses SGP to calculate the ephemeris of selected objects for given observer and observation time
- Graphic User Interface (GUI) available
- Program provides several different functionalities and outputs:
 - Topocentric coordinates of the objects, horizontal and equatorial
 - Visualization of the field
 - Output files such as ephemerides file and field emulation image



Figure – Example of SatEph's GUI main window. On left are plotted 2051 objects assuming and FOV=180deg in horizontal coordinates. On the right is plotted one object assuming FOV=0.5deg in equatorial coordinates.



Object identification



Figure – Visual real time object identification by using SatEph program.


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Survey and astrometry

Optical observations with AGO70





Optical observations, astrometry

- To measure relative position of the object from the observer perspective on the celestial sphere
- Aim is to determine and improve orbit, maintain catalogues, orbit prediction
- Except dynamical parameters (a,e.i, RAAN, AoP, M(t)), also physical parameter A/M ratio



Astra satellite AMR ~ $0.02 m^2/kg$







Office A4 sheet of paper AMR ~ $12 m^2/kg$

Optical observations, astrometry



Taken from Schildknecht et al. (2008)

Figure – A/M values as determined for the objects discovered during OGS GEO/GTO surveys.

Figure – AMR value calculated for a one specific discovered GEO/GTO object.



Optical observations, survey







Figure – Demonstration of GEO survey strategy plotted in horizontal coordinates. At first, the field of view (FOV) (black square) is put right behind the Earth's shadow (gray circle) (upper figure). After 1.5 hours of scanning the shadow moved but the FOV didn't (middle figure). Then the telescope's FOV is moved by the observer behind the Earth's shadow to get the maximum phase angle and the scanning starts again (lower figure). Small black dots representing objects on GEO orbit.

AGO70-astrometry





Figure – Astra satellites are tracked. During exposure, the sidereal tracking was ON so the satellites on GEO are displayed as streaks and stars as points. Image acquired by AGO 70-cm telescope. The 5s exposure time was used in both cases.



Figure – Astra satellites are tracked. During exposure, the sidereal tracking was OFF (for GEO equivalent to GEO tracking) so the objects appears as point and stars appear as streaks. Image acquired by AGO 70-cm telescope. The 5s exposure time was used in both cases.

AGO70-astrometry





Figure – GPS satellite 15033A tracked during sequence of 8 images. Images acquired by AGO 70-cm telescope with 0.1s exposure and R filter.



Figure – HAMR GEO object E09233A tracked during sequence of 8 images. Images acquired by AGO 70-cm telescope with 0.2s exposure and R filter.

AGO70 - astrometry, time precision

- CONTINUARY AND A CONTINUARY AND A CONTINUE OF A CONTINUE O
- There were 48 nights of observations in total within ESA PECS activity, 20 nights in 2017 and 28 nights in 2018
- There were 20 nights of GNSS observations processed by AIUB, calculated O-C (Observed Calculated)
- astrometric accuracy between 0.8-0.9 arc-sec for the best period (May and June 2018) and 10.3 arc-sec for the worst period (April 2018)





AGO70 - astrometry, time precision





Figure – International Space Station ISS (98067A) acquired by the AGO 70cm telescope. Field RA=07:42:50 and DEC=+46:17:47.6 observed at 2018-05-28T20:40:30.0 with V filter, exp = 0.05s and sidereal tracking ON.



Figure – LEO cubesat SKCube (17036AA) acquired by the AGO 70cm telescope. Field RA=18:0:22.21 and DEC=+02:40:49.3 observed at 2017-08-01T19:49:00 with 'Clear' filter, exp = 0.2s and sidereal tracking ON.



AGO 70cm

E 🔶







altitude = 2035.7 km range = 2633.5 km phase = 71.7 deg q x Q = 1263.4 x 2085.9 km

AGO70 - observation programs

118

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astrometry

COD	118										
OBS	J.Silha/J. Vilagi										
MEA	J.Silha/J. Vilagi										
TEL	0.7-m f/3.0 reflector + CCD										
ACK	MPCReport file updated 2017.07.25 20:01:53										
AC2	ago@fmph.uniba.sk										
NET	Gaia DR1										
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85830	15	57	11.433+21	04	28.72	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85839	15	57	19.912+21	03	57.01	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85847	15	57	28.406+21	03	25.22	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85856	15	57	36.897+21	02	53.91	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85866	15	57	45.511+21	02	21.01	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85875	15	57	53.969+21	01	49.56	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85884	15	58	02.500+21	01	17.63	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85894	15	58	10.946+21	00	45.36	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85903	15	58	19.417+21	00	13.35	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85912	15	58	27.850+20	59	42.09	17.0 R	
	13034A	C2017	05	09.85920	15	58	36.240+20	59	10.56	17.0 R	
	end										

Figure – Astrometric measurements of object 13034A in IAU MPC format. Measurements acquired by AGO 70cm. Astrometric reduction performed by Astrometrica.

AGO 70	E08219B00	57968.016460000 21.114925000 -06.53244000 12.91 1 '
AGO 70	E08219B00	57968.016890000 21.122551000 -06.51159000 12.91 1 '
AGO 70	E08219B00	57968.023140000 21.210331000 -06.20441000 12.91 1 '
AGO 70	E08219B00	57968.023390000 21.212507000 -06.19278000 12.91 1
AGO 70	E08219B00	57968.023660000 21.214690000 -06.18101000 12.91 1
AGO_70	E08219B00	57968.024680000 21.231154000 -06.13119000 12.91 1
AGO_70	E08219B00	57968.024940000 21.233345000 -06.11539000 12.91 1
AGO_70	E08219B00	57968.025120000 21.234804000 -06.11023000 12.91 1
AGO_70	E08219B00	57968.025380000 21.240994000 -06.09447000 12.91 1 '
AGO_70	E08219B00	57968.079310000 22.384178000 -01.52581000 12.91 1
AGO_70	E08219B00	57968.079570000 22.390361000 -01.51454000 12.91 1 '
AGO 70	E08219B00	57968.079650000 22.391092000 -01.51216000 12.91 1

Figure – Astrometric measurements of object E08219B in AIUB OBS format. Measurements acquired by AGO 70cm. Astrometric reduction performed by Astrometrica.



CCSDS_TDM_VERS = 2.0

DATA START

DATA STOP

COMMENT TDM example created by yyyyy-nnnA Nav Team (NASA/JPL) COMMENT StarTrek: one minute of launch angles from DSS-16

CREATION DATE = 2005-157T18:25:00 ORIGINATOR = NASA META_START TIME_SYSTEM = UTC START_TIME = 2004-216T07:44:00 STOP_TIME = 2004-216T07:45:00 PARTICIPANT_1 = DSS-16 PARTICIPANT_2 = yyyy-nnnA MODE = SEQUENTIAL PATH = 2,1 ANGLE_TYPE = XSYE CORRECTION_ANGLE_1 = -0.09 CORRECTION_ANGLE_2 = 0.18 CORRECTIONS_APPLIED = NO META STOP

ANGLE 1 = 2004-216T07:44:00 -23.62012

ANGLE 2 = 2004-216T07:44:00 -73.11035

ANGLE 1 = 2004-216T07:44:10 -23.04004

ANGLE 2 = 2004-216T07:44:10 -72.74316

ANGLE_1 = 2004-216T07:44:20 -22.78125 ANGLE_2 = 2004-216T07:44:20 -72.53027 ANGLE_1 = 2004-216T07:44:30 -22.59180 ANGLE_2 = 2004-216T07:44:30 -72.37598 ANGLE_1 = 2004-216T07:44:40 -22.40527 ANGLE_2 = 2004-216T07:44:40 -72.23730 ANGLE_1 = 2004-216T07:44:50 -22.23047 ANGLE_2 = 2004-216T07:44:50 -22.08987 ANGLE_1 = 2004-216T07:45:00 -22.08984 ANGLE_1 = 2004-216T07:45:00 -71.93750





European Space Agency



Figure – Astrometric measurements of object E08219B in AIUB OBS format. Measurements acquired by AGO 70cm. Astrometric reduction performed by Astrometrica.



Light curves



FMPI/AGO instruments, 70cm telescope



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Figure - Apogee altitude (crosses) and perigee altitude (open circles) versus inclination distributions of the existing LEO R/Bs and S/Cs that have the highest mass and collision probability products. Only the top 500 are shown. Taken from (Liou, 2011).

AGO70 - instrumental photometry





Figure – Photometric measurements acquired by AGO 70cm telescope during night 20181016 (left) and the constructed light curve (middle) and its phase diagram (right) for the object Titan 3C Transtage R/B (74039C).

AGO70 - instrumental photometry





Figure – Photometric measurements acquired by AGO 70cm telescope during night 20181016 (left) and the constructed light curve (middle) and its phase diagram (right) for the object SL-12, Blok-D (97076D).

AGO70 - instrumental photometry





by outgassing

Figure – Overview of the tumbling period development of the Soviet SL-8 R/B 1974-034B from June 1974 to June 1976. Taken from [Boehnhardt et al., 1989].

Figure – Flash periods evolution of the R/B SL-8 1991-019B (RUS, ~980 km). Figure generated from PPAS database data.





Fig. - Distribution of 226 objects observed by AGO70 system in years 2017 to 2019 according to their rotation properties and type. Plotted are rotators, slow rotators, stable objects and objects for which the light curve could not be processed. Source: *Šilha et al. (2019)*.





Color photometry

Optical observations, color photometry

- Only light with defined wavelengths will pass trough given filter
- Most popular Johnson-Cousins filters (AGO 60cm and 70cm)

- Detected light properties dependent on object's properties (absorption, emission)
- Color indices → B-V, V-R, R-I, V-I, B-R





Figure – Schematic passbands of broad-band system Johnson-Cousins. Taken from Bessel (1990).







Optical observations, color photometry







Figure – The magnitudes of the SL-12 R/B for B, V, R, I filter (y axis) as a function of time (x axis) obtained during single telescope observations.

Figure – The magnitudes of the Astra 1M satellite for B, V, R, I filter (y axis) as a function of time (x axis) obtained during single telescope observations..



Results – Attitude-controlled objects





Fig. Results of the observational night from 24^{th} of the July, 2019. On the B-V vs R-I diagram are plotted three position in phase angles of each object. Objects are situated on the Geosynchronous orbits. Source: Zigo et al. (2019)



Right: Resulting R-I vs B-V diagram of the Falcon's color indices calculated along the phase. The curve in greys color scale represents the path along the phase.



AMOS system, spectroscopy

Optical observations with AMOS



View from north pole

View from equator

Speed 30x

Telkom 3

Optical observations, survey









Figure – Example of meteor spectra of o Hydrids. Taken from Rudawska et al. (2016).

Figure – Example of meteor spectra of sporadic meteor. Taken from Rudawska et al. (2016).







wavelength [nm]





0072 00015 00000 095 AGO-Sper



Taken from Taken from Vananti et al. (2017)



Figure – The observed spectrum of the object (A) is divided by the spectrum of the solar analog (B) to obtain the reflectance spectrum (C). Taken from Vananti et al. (2017).

Figure – Reflectance spectrum of Meteosat satellite MSG-1 (02040B). Errors: σ 450 = 0.05, σ 800 = 0.11. Taken from Vananti et al. (2017).



Figure – Spectra of object 84980 (green; see also Fig. 10) and 'gold' MLI (blue). Vananti et al. (2017), Cowardin (2011)

Figure – Spectra of object S95300 (green; see also Fig. 11) and 'silver' MLI (red). Vananti et al. (2017), Cowardin (2011)





- For AMOS-Spec cameras expected mostly specular "flashes" from compact bright LEO objects (h < 1000 km)
- Specular flashes from highly reflective surfaces such as metal parts, stainless iron (Fe), aluminium alloy (Al), aluminium MLI (Al), copper MLI (Cu), solar panel (Si)







Conclusions and future work



- Space debris research and development mostly on AGO70 system (several <u>ESA PECS and ESA</u> <u>activities</u>)
- Maintainance and extension of light curve catalogue, object's attitude and shape estimation from light curves, fragmentation candidates identification (bachelor project)
- Creation of public color indices catalogue, phase angle dependency analysis, albedo estimation, spaceweathering effects monitoring (PhD project)
- Extension of space debris research and methodology to Near Earth Objects (addition to PhD project)
- Analysis of AMOS reflectance spectra of LEO space debris, link to the color photometry from AGO70 (master project)
- S/W development and validation, cooperation with DAI (PhD project of Mr. Stanislav Krajčovič)



Thank you for your attention.





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