

# High Performance Digital Electronics with Embedded ARM and Linux<sup>\*)</sup>

Wojtek Skulski

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***SkuTek***  
***Instrumentation***  
SkuTek.com



<sup>\*)</sup> Supported by the Department of Energy Office of Science (Office of Nuclear Physics) under grant number DE-SC0009543

# Outline

- The DAQ challenge: LUX-Zepplin detector with 1,359 channels.
- Custom data acquisition electronics for LUX-Zepplin.
- The benefit of upgrading the electronics using the ARM processor and Kintex-7.
- A broader landscape: the **Cloud** versus the **Fog**.
- The benefits of the Fog.
- FemtoDAQ can become the test bed for the Fog development.

# LUX-Zepplin detector will use our DAQ electronics

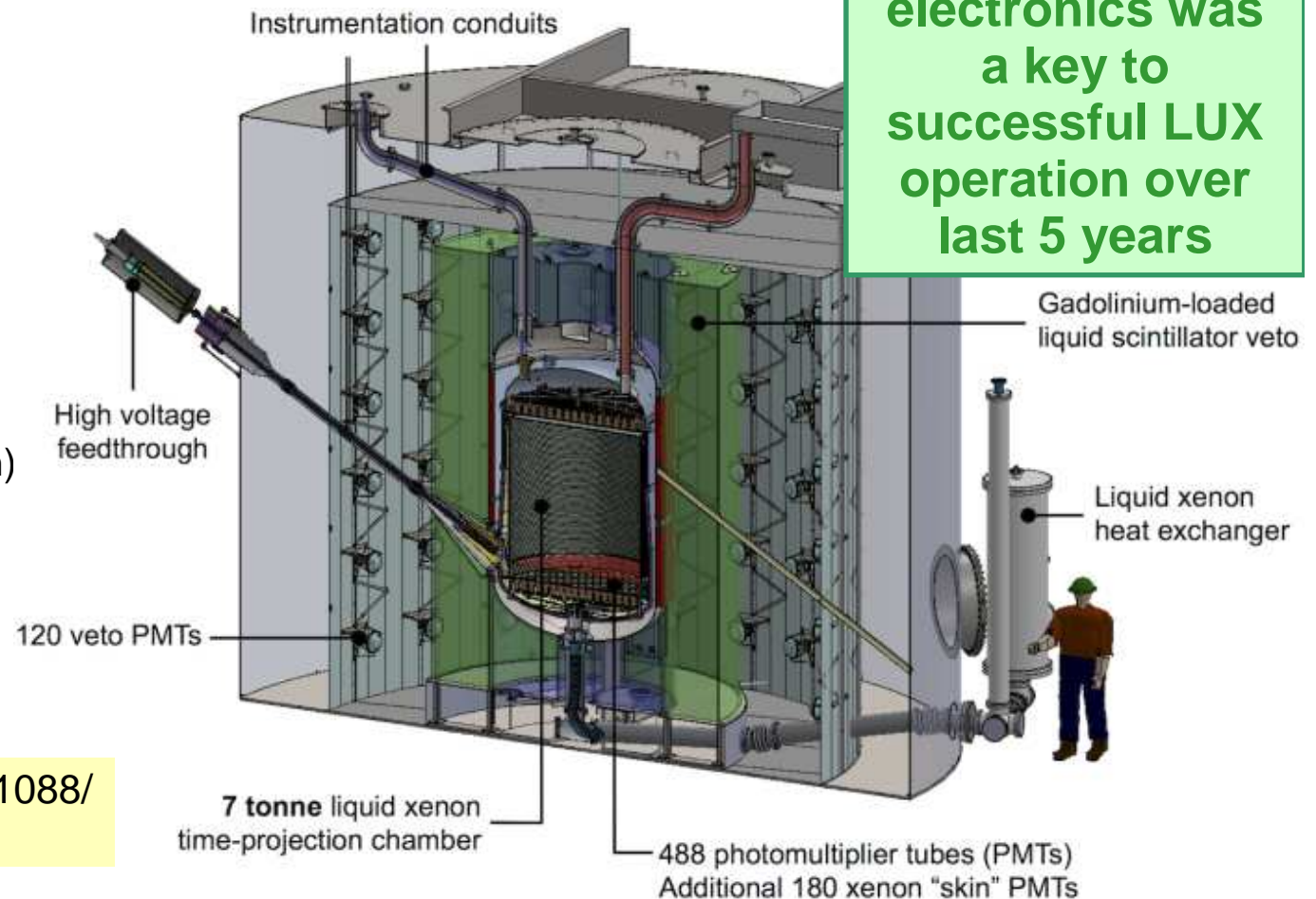
SkuTek collaboration with UofR Physics and Astronomy



LUX-Zepplin is the “ultimate Dark Matter Search Detector” under development by 32 institutions. We are building the digital DAQ for LZ with **1,359** channels.

- Amount of Xenon:
  - 5.6 tons fiducial
  - 7 tons in the vessel
  - 10 tons total.
  - Drift time in Xenon: 700  $\mu$ s.
- Number of PMTs:
  - 494 main volume (dual gain)
  - 131 “skin”
  - 120 outer detector veto (dual gain)
  - Total **745** PMTs.
- Electronic channels:  
 $2 \times 494 + 131 + 2 \times 120 = \mathbf{1,359}$ .

**SkuTek Digital Trigger electronics was a key to successful LUX operation over last 5 years**



<http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-0221/11/02/C02072>

# LUX-Zepplin Data Acquisition System

Custom VME modules: (1) a high density digitizer with 32 channels, and (2) a Trigger / Logic module with fast LVDS links. The prototypes use Blackfin processors and Spartan-6 FPGAs. The ARM + Kintex units are under development.

High density digitizer: 32 channels

32  
channels



Trigger / Logic module

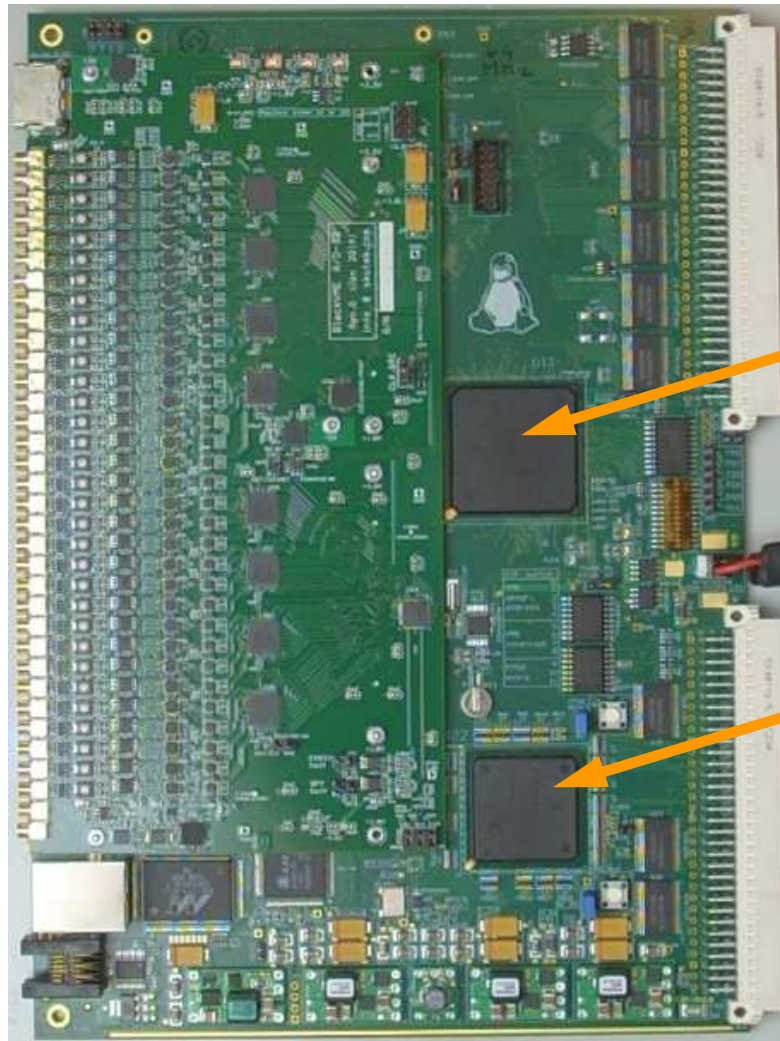
14  
inputs





# Upgrading the CPU and the FPGA

Upgrading the FPGA to Kintex-7 and the CPU to ARM will improve both the performance and the number of channels per board.



FPGA upgrade  
Spartan-6 to Kintex-7

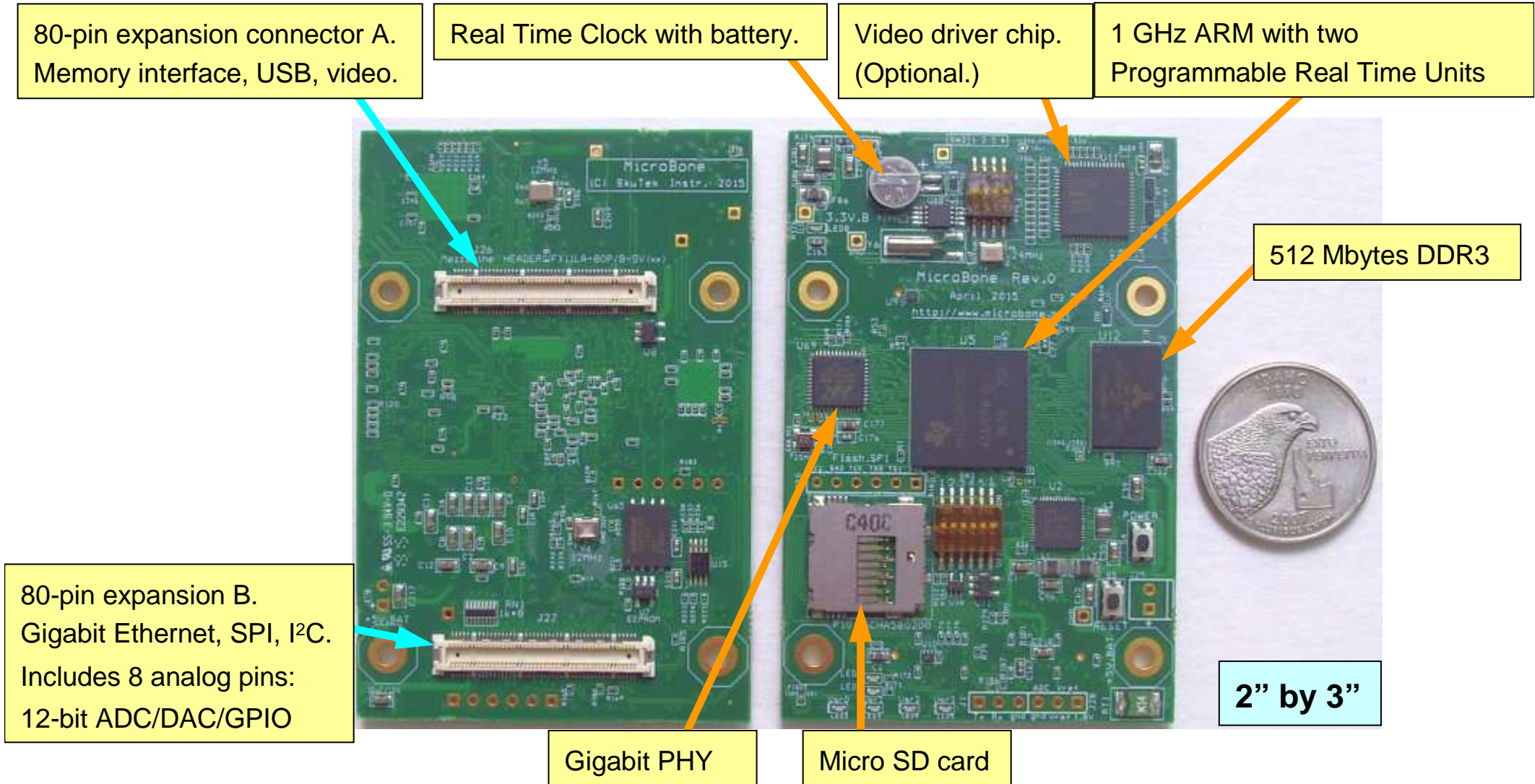
CPU upgrade  
Blackfin to ARM

32 channels

# MicroBone: Linux System on Module (SOM) with ARM, 2" by 3"

In order to upgrade our electronics, we developed the ARM Linux System on Module (SOM) with a low-power, high-performance 1 GHz ARM processor.

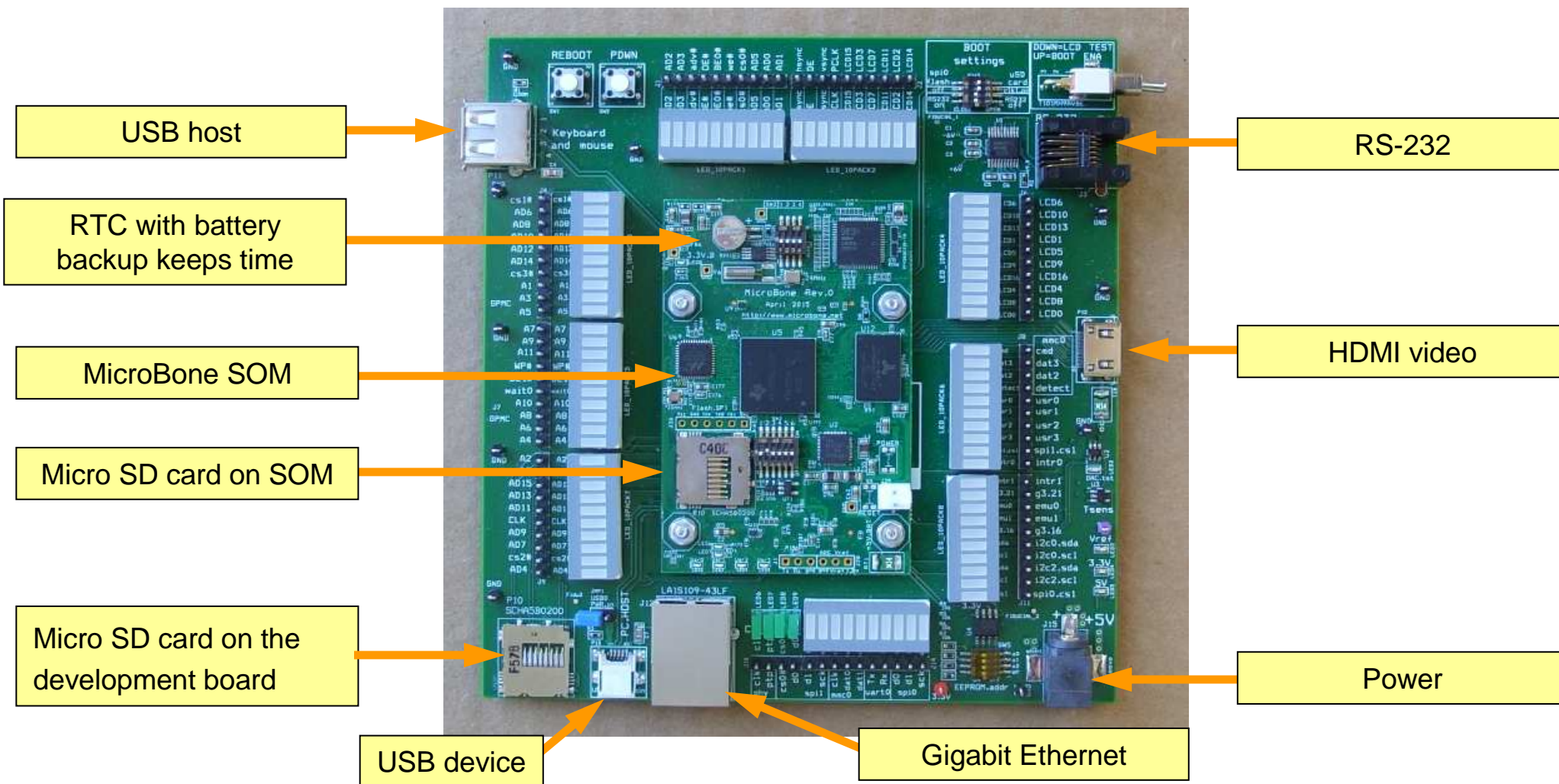
We will use it in our forthcoming electronics. The SOM module itself will also be offered to the community.





# MicroBone Development Board

- The SOM is hosted by a development board.
- The entire Linux is contained on the MicroSD card. **The entire Linux can be upgraded in 10 seconds.**
- The RTC with battery keeps track of the wall clock. (No need to call NTP...)
- Eight analog pins can be individually configured as 12-bit ADC, 12-bit DAC, or 5V-tolerant logic I/Os.



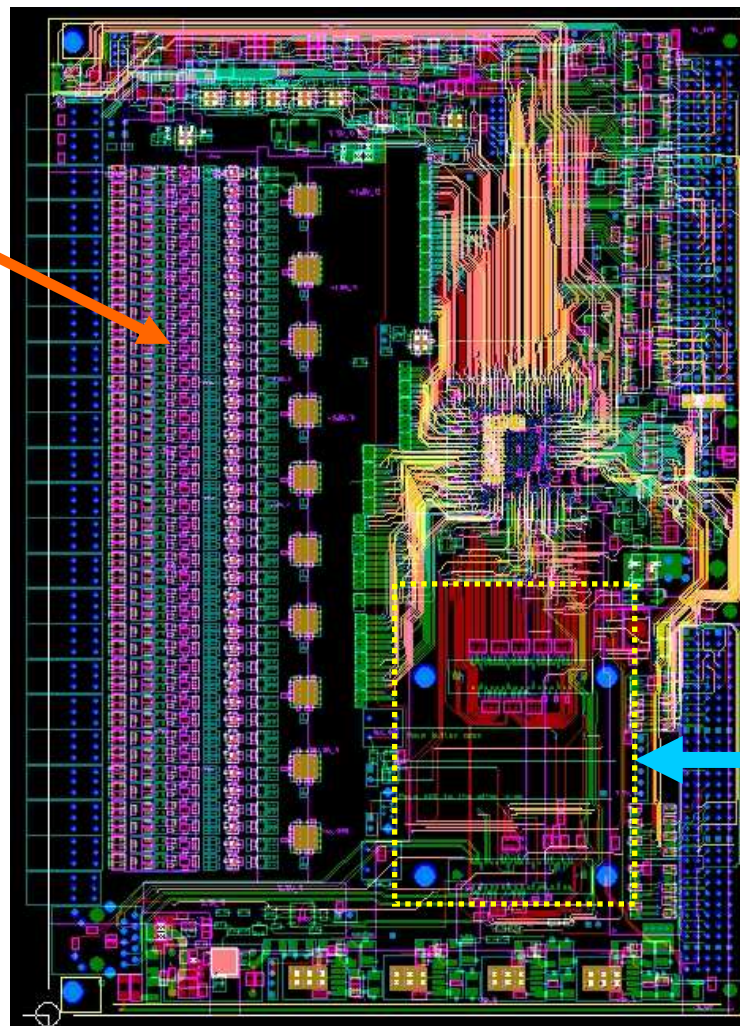
# Benefit of the MicroBone: More ADC channels per board!

- Replacing the Blackfin circuitry with ARM System On Module allows to increase the number of ADC channels up to 40 (forty!).
- The 40-channel unit can be useful for silicon strip detectors, highly segmented HPGe detectors, or high channel count detector arrays.

X-ray view of the recent design file

40 channels  
14 bits @ 100 MSPS

Input connectors  
Dual LEMO



MicroBone SOM





# Possible use for the embedded ARM: **The Fog**

The Industrial Internet of Things transforms isolated programmable devices into intelligent networks of connected machines. The cloud is a component in these systems, but it is hardly primary. The intelligent software that drives these systems must also reside in the field at the "edge." There is no time, bandwidth or reason to send the data from these devices to a data center. Instead, the compute must come to the devices.

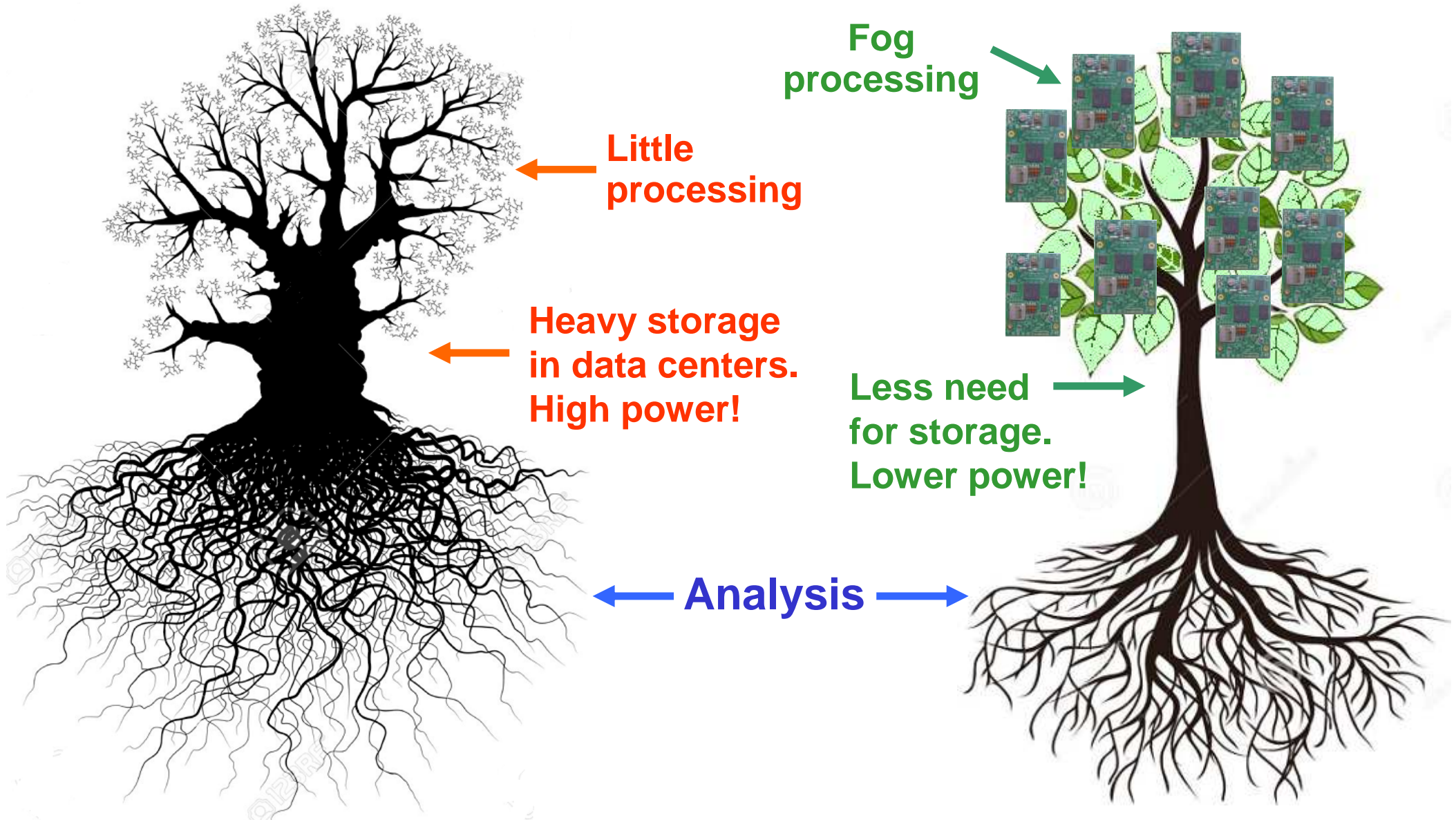
**This design is called "fog computing."**

Dr. Stan Schneider, CEO, RTI

- Do we have the bandwidth to **always** send **all** the data from the digitizers to a data center?
- Can we rather use computing power inside the DAQ modules?
- Can we find worthy tasks for embedded computing?
  - In-situ histogramming?
  - Waveform preprocessing?
  - Pulse deconvolution?
  - Local trigger calculations?
  - Signal quality monitoring?

# Can Fog Computing reduce the need for storage?

Can **this** be replaced with **this**?

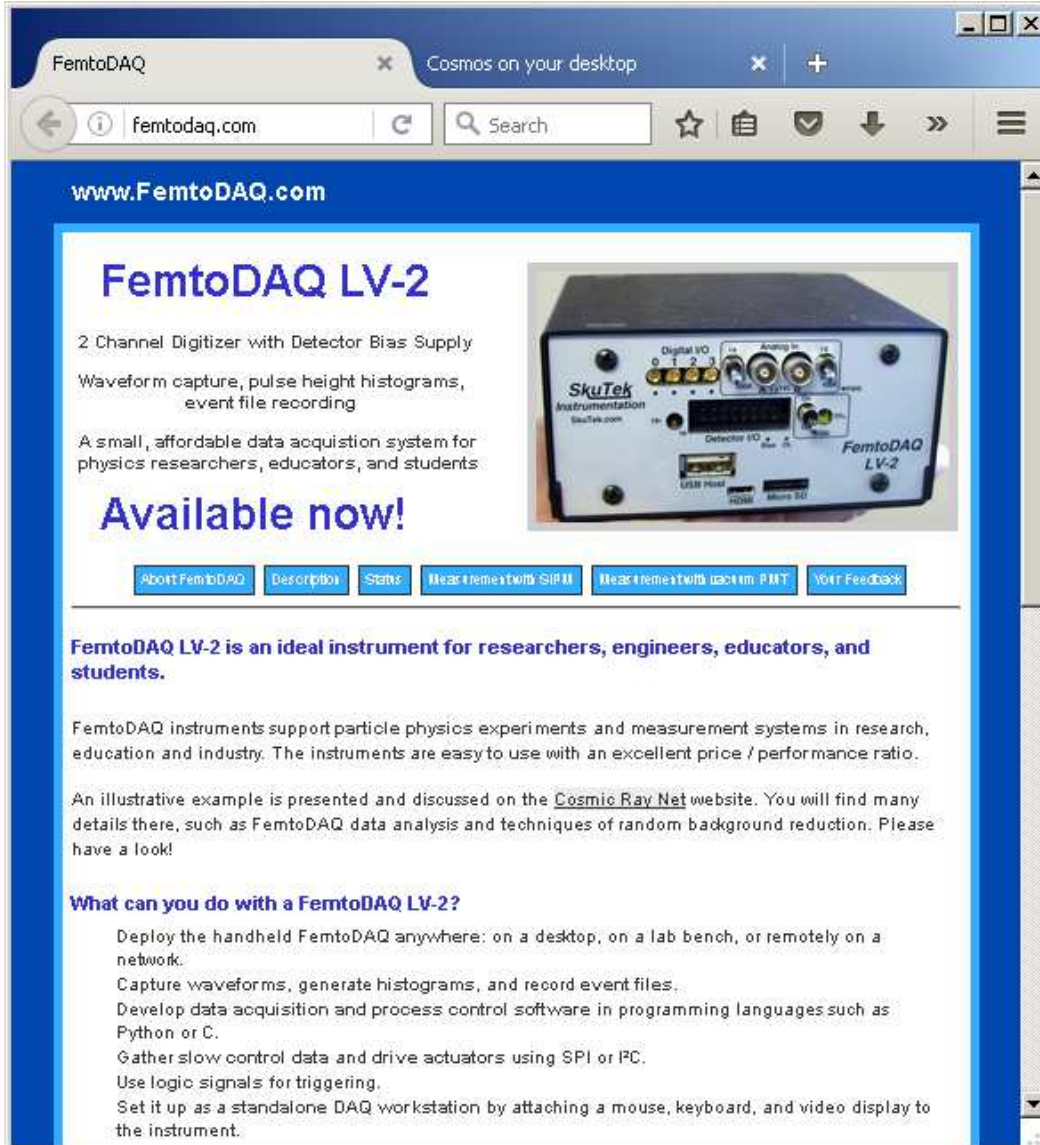


# Low cost ARM Fog Data Acquisition

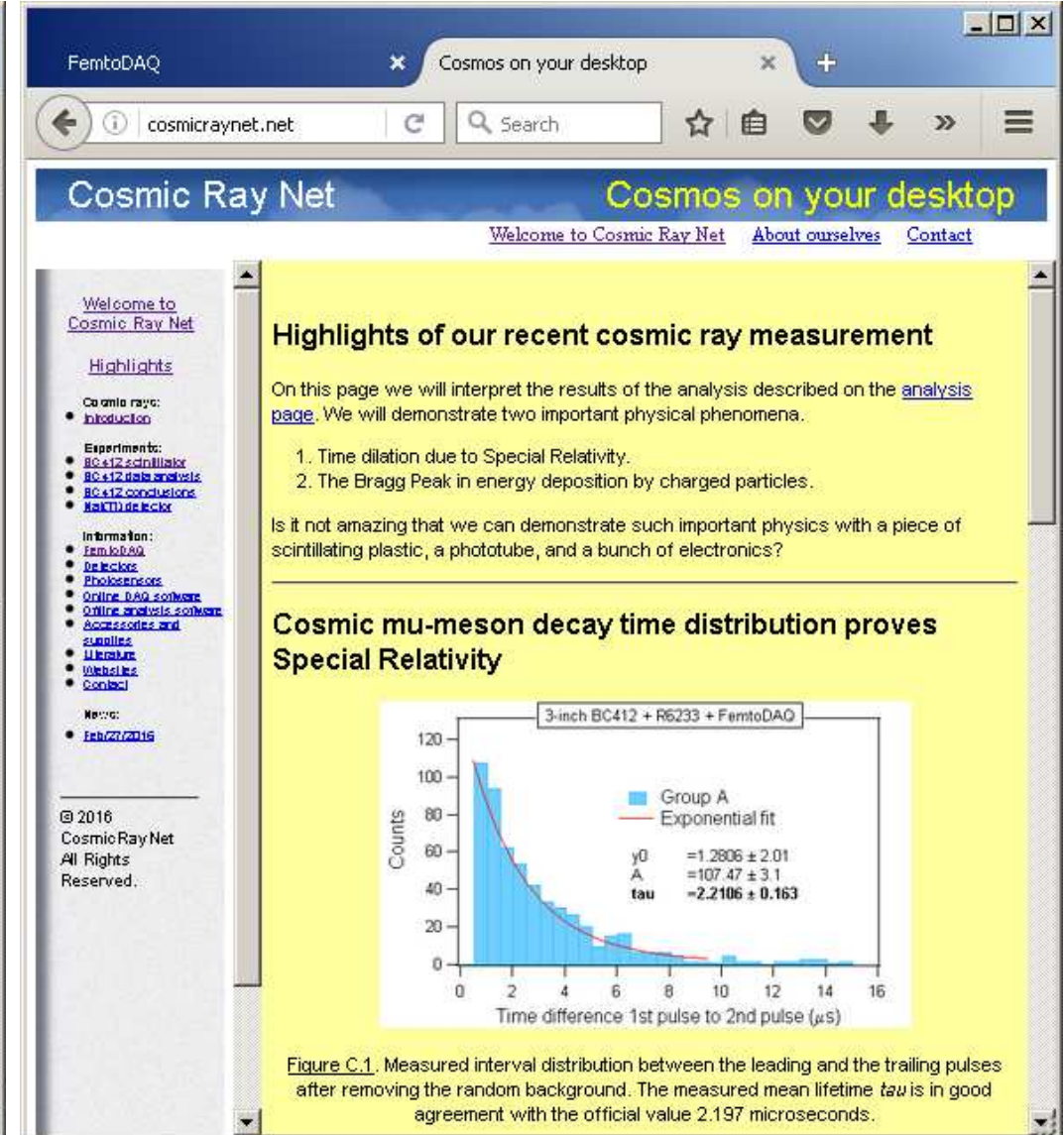
Dual channel FemtoDAQ with Silicon Photomultiplier control: an entry-level, low cost, easy to use DAQ.

Instrument: [FemtoDAQ.com](http://FemtoDAQ.com)

Example application: [CosmicRayNet.net](http://CosmicRayNet.net)



The screenshot shows the website for FemtoDAQ. The browser address bar displays "femtoDAQ.com". The page features a blue header with the text "www.FemtoDAQ.com". The main content area is titled "FemtoDAQ LV-2" and includes a photograph of the device. The device is a small, rectangular, light-colored box with various ports and connectors on its front panel. The text describes it as a "2 Channel Digitizer with Detector Bias Supply" and lists features such as "Waveform capture, pulse height histograms, event file recording". It also mentions that it is a "small, affordable data acquisition system for physics researchers, educators, and students". A prominent "Available now!" banner is displayed. Below the banner are several buttons: "About FemtoDAQ", "Description", "Stats", "Near nearest with SIRIL", "Near nearest with custom PMT", and "Your Feedback". The page also contains a section titled "FemtoDAQ LV-2 is an ideal instrument for researchers, engineers, educators, and students." and another section titled "What can you do with a FemtoDAQ LV-2?" which lists various applications like "Deploy the handheld FemtoDAQ anywhere", "Capture waveforms", and "Set it up as a standalone DAQ workstation".



The screenshot shows the website for Cosmic Ray Net. The browser address bar displays "cosmicraynet.net". The page features a blue header with the text "Cosmic Ray Net" and "Cosmos on your desktop". The main content area is titled "Highlights of our recent cosmic ray measurement" and includes a list of "Experiments" and "Information". A prominent section is titled "Cosmic mu-meson decay time distribution proves Special Relativity" and features a histogram showing the measured interval distribution between the leading and the trailing pulses. The histogram is titled "3-inch BC412 + R6233 + FemtoDAQ" and shows "Counts" on the y-axis (0 to 120) and "Time difference: 1st pulse to 2nd pulse (μs)" on the x-axis (0 to 16). The data points are represented by blue bars, and an exponential fit is shown as a red line. The fit parameters are listed as:  $y_0 = 1.2806 \pm 2.01$ ,  $A = 107.47 \pm 3.1$ , and  $\tau = 2.2106 \pm 0.163$ . The caption below the histogram reads: "Figure C.1. Measured interval distribution between the leading and the trailing pulses after removing the random background. The measured mean lifetime  $\tau$  is in good agreement with the official value 2.197 microseconds." The page also includes a sidebar with "Welcome to Cosmic Ray Net" and "Highlights" sections, and a footer with "© 2016 CosmicRayNet All Rights Reserved."



# Summary

- We are developing a digital DAQ for the LUX-Zepplin detector with 1,359 channels.
- We developed custom data acquisition electronics for LUX-Zepplin.
  - 32-channel digitizer: 14 bits @ 100 MSPS.
  - Trigger / Logic module with 14 LVDS links and a gigabit Ethernet readout.
- We are now upgrading our electronics using the ARM processor and Kintex-7.
  - ARM will provide better performance in less space.
  - ARM can preprocess the events (“**fog computing**”).
  - Kintex-7 provides more logic resources and a larger waveform memory than our present Spartan-6.
- Thanks to the reclaimed board space we are now developing a 40-channel digitizer.
- Powerful embedded ARM processors will enable **fog computing** which is offloading tasks from the Cloud.
- Adopting the **fog** approach can be valuable for the Nuclear Physics DAQ.
- Our inexpensive FemtoDAQ can become the development tool for the **fog** development.

## Acknowledgements:

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**Skutek**  
Instrumentation  
Skutek.com



# Backup slides

# Improved CPU performance in numbers

- ARM has superior performance thanks to integration of many peripherals on chip.
- ARM will provide 4x more RAM with 3x higher nominal performance.
- NEON vector floating point unit and the Mobile GPU which can be used for event processing.
- Programmable Real Time Units (PRU) can be used for software trigger with deterministic latency.
- ARM will run mainstream Linux (Debian, Ubuntu, etc.) with up to date security features.

Feature	BF561 (present)	ARM AM335x (new products)	Improvement?
# cores	two	three (1 ARM + 2 PRU)	yes
Speed	2*600 MHz	1 GHz + 2*200 MHz	~same
Off-chip RAM memory	128 MB	512 MB	4x more
Type of RAM memory	SDRAM	DDR3	
Memory bus	133 MHz * 32 bits	400 MHz * 16 bits * 2 (DDR)	3x more
Separate SDRAM / SRAM buses	no	yes	yes
Floating point	no	yes	yes
USB-2 on chip	no	yes	yes
Gigabit MAC on chip	no	yes	yes
Graphics unit on chip (GPU)	no	yes	yes
Resident GUI	no	yes	yes
Linux version running on-board	uClinux	full Linux (Debian, Ubuntu, ...)	yes
Linux community projects	few	many	yes



# Improved FPGA performance in numbers

More logic, larger waveform memory

- Spartan-6 was the best tradeoff between price and performance circa five years ago.
- The new Kintex-7 FPGAs now offer more digital resources which we need for more channels.

Feature	XC3S5000 Spartan-3 a)	XC6SLX150 Spartan-6 b)	XC7K325T Kintex-7 c)	XC7K410T Kintex-7 c)	Relative to XC3S5000
Equivalent logic cells from Data Sheet	74,880	147,443	326,080	406,720	2.0 / 4.4 / <b>5.4</b>
Multiply-accumulate units	104 d)	180	840	1540	1.7 / 8.1 / <b>14.8</b>
Waveform memory (k samples) e)	104 k	268 k	890 k	1,590 k	2.6 / 8.6 / <b>15.3</b>
Balls per package	900	900	900	900	same
I/O pins	633	576	500	500	0.9 / 0.8 / 0.8
Price lowest speed grade (900 balls)	\$166	\$210	\$1,032	\$1,496	1.3 / 6.2 / 9.0
Price “our” speed grade (900 balls)	\$191	\$210	\$1,550	\$1,796	1.1 / 8.1 / 9.4
\$\$ per channel for 40 channels f)	\$4.8	\$5.3	\$39	\$45	

- a) XC3S5000 is used in present GRETINA digitizers. It is the community’s performance yardstick.
- b) XC6SLX150 is used in our present 10-channel and 32-channel digitizers.
- c) These pin compatible Kintex-7 chips will be used in our forthcoming high density digitizers (40 channels).
- d) XC3S5000 provides multipliers without the built-in accumulate register.
- e) Total number of block RAM bits divided by 18. Parity bits are considered not useful for waveform storage.
- f) FPGA cost per channel for “our” speed grade and 40 channels.