Let GOPHER Find the Best MCUs

Filed by Jon on May 19, 2010
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You and your colleagues face a difficult problem when you must choose the best microcontroller (MCU) for a design. Because manufacturers offer many types of MCUs with a wide spectrum of capabilities, it proves difficult to determine which one to use. Rick Hully at GruntWare (www.gruntwareinc.com) has created a database of MCU specifications that greatly simplifies the "hunt" for an MCU. The Gopher software provides a database of normalized information that includes information about conflicting pin assignments. So, if you need an MCU with two UARTs, 18 digital I/O lines and an I2C port Gopher will narrow your list to only those devices that provide this capability--without pin-assignment conflicts. So you no longer need to go through MCU specs to ensure the UARTs don't gobble up the same pins you want to use for digital I/O lines.

For more information about Gopher, you can read my hands-on review published in *Design News* magazine. Hully has a copy posted on the GruntWare site at: www.GruntWareInc.com, click on "In The News" and select "2009-06-01 Design News Article.pdf".

Hully recently contacted me about new enhancements to Gopher. One, called the "Application Search Configurator," lets developers and engineers describe in a sentence an application, such as a motor controller. Afterward, Gopher constructs the proper search equation and identifies the MCUs that meet the stated requirements. Now you can type in, for example, "Motor control of a brushless 3-phase DC motor using BEMF for control with optimal MCU op amps for use with the BEMF." Wow, what a great way to start a search! (BEMF denotes back-emf; a common motor-control technique.)

The Gopher Pro version also lets you enter an MCU part number and look at parameters and specifications. Then you can find competitive MCUs.

GruntWare has done a nice job with Gopher and the database now covers 15,455 MCUs from 25 vendors. I have used this software and recommend it highly as a way to find the MCU you need without going through mounds of vendor specs to narrow your selection.
--Jon Titus