



Computers Take Flight: A History of NASA's Pioneering Digital Fly-By-Wire Project - Apollo and Shuttle Computers, Airplanes, Software and Reliability (NASA SP-2000-4224)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), World Spaceflight News, James E. Tomayk

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From the Preface: One hundred years after the Wright brothers' first powered flight, airplane designers are unshackled from the constraints that they lived with for the first seven decades of flight because of the emergence of digital fly-by-wire (DFBW) technology. New designers seek incredible maneuverability, survivability, efficiency, or special performance through configurations which rely on a DFBW system for stability and controllability. DFBW systems have contributed to major advances in human space flight, advanced fighters and bombers, and safe, modern civil transportation. The story of digital fly-by-wire is a story of people, of successes, and of overcoming enormous obstacles and problems. The fundamental concept is relatively simple, but the realization of the concept in hardware and software safe enough for human use confronted the NASA-industry team with enormous challenges. But the team was victorious, and Dr. Tomayko tells the story extremely well. The F-8 DFBW program, and the technology it spawned, was an outgrowth of the Apollo program and of the genius of the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory staff.

Contents include: Chapter One: The History of Flight-Control Technology * Chapter Two: The Origins of NASA's Involvement in Fly-By-Wire Research * Chapter Three: The Reliability Challenge and Software Development * Chapter Four: Converting the F-8 to Digital Fly-By-Wire * Chapter Five: The Phase I Flight-Research Program: Digital Control Proven * Chapter Six: Phase Shifting: Digital Redundancy and Space Shuttle Support * Chapter Seven: The Phase II Flight-Research Program: Proof of Concept, Space Shuttle Support, and Advanced Experiments * Chapter Eight: The Impact and Legacy of NASA's Digital Fly-By-Wire Project

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