

MultiCom

for LabVIEW[®] for Windows[™]



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Introduction

MultiCom is a set of LabVIEW VIs that allow communication with the Star Gate Technologies Avanstar 100i board. The 100i board supports either 8 or 16 RS-232 or RS-422 communications ports. Each port is configurable to support a wide range of baud rates, handshake modes and other communications parameters.

Installation

MultiCom version 4.0 contains two separate installation programs located in two separate directories on the installation diskette. The version in the MCLV16 directory supports LabVIEW versions 3.0, 3.1, and the Windows version of LabVIEW 4.0 (16-bit version). The version in the MCLV32 directory supports LabVIEW version 4.0 for Windows 95 (32-bit version).

A setup program is provided to ensure proper software installation. To run the setup program, perform the following steps:

1. Start Windows and open the Program Manager.
2. Place the MultiCom diskette in a floppy drive.
3. Choose File/Run.
4. Type *d*:\MCLVxx\SETUP where *d* is the floppy drive letter (A or B) and *xx* corresponds to the version of MultiCom that you want to install (16 or 32). Select OK.

The installed files are described below.

Note: If you are installing MultiCom over an older version make sure that the old ASERIAL.DLL file is removed from your hard disk. The installation program checks your \WINDOWS directory for this file but if an older version is located in other directories, problems could result.

\MCLV40 or copy A100I.CP into your current directory before you execute A100LOAD.

Note: Since A100LOAD only loads code to the board's memory space (i.e., no portion of A100LOAD remains resident after execution), A100LOAD can be executed at anytime before the MultiCom VIs are used.

Since the Avanstar board uses memory for its buffer space, Windows and any expanded memory manager such as EMM386 must be informed so that the Avanstar memory addresses are not overwritten. In the [386Enh] section of the SYSTEM.INI file in your \WINDOWS directory include the line:

```
EMMExclude=[start segment]-[end segment]
```

For example, for a board configured to use the 16K block of memory at D0000h, include the line:

```
EMMExclude=D000-D3FF
```

Refer to the documentation for your expanded memory manager to determine the syntax for excluding memory. Typically, an exclude parameter will have to be included in the CONFIG.SYS file on the expanded memory manager device line.

A100I.CP

This file is the control program file for the Avanstar board. This file is used by the A100LOAD download program.

ASERIAL.DLL

This file is the Windows driver file for the Avanstar 100i board for 16-bit platforms. This file should be located in the \WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory. The setup program places this file in the \WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory by default.

ASER32.DLL

This file is the Windows driver file for the Avanstar 100i board for 32-bit platforms. This file should be located in the \WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory. The setup program places this file in the \WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory by default.

PKPK16.DLL

PKPK32.DLL

These are utility files called by ASER32.DLL and are installed only for the 32-bit version of MultiCom. These files are installed in the same directory as ASER32.DLL.

README.TXT

This file contains any last minute information not included in this manual.

SERIAL.LLB

Use this set of VIs if you intend to convert existing VIs that use the computer's COM ports to use the Avanstar COM ports. This file is designed to look exactly like the SERIAL.LLB file that comes from National Instruments as a part of LabVIEW. The MultiCom SERIAL.LLB contains five VIs:

- ▼ Bytes at Serial Port.vi
- ▼ Serial Port Break.vi
- ▼ Serial Port Init.vi

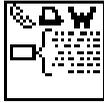
- ▼ Serial Port Write.vi
- ▼ Serial Port Read.vi

Note that the names of the VIs are exactly the same as the names of the VIs in the original SERIAL.LLB. This was done so that an existing LabVIEW application can be switched over to use the Avanstar COM ports by simply replacing the original SERIAL.LLB with the MultiCom SERIAL.LLB. Once the MultiCom SERIAL.LLB is in place, LabVIEW will automatically use the new VIs instead of the old ones and therefore will use the Avanstar ports instead of the computer's COM ports. The MultiCom VIs are wired the same as the LabVIEW serial VIs.

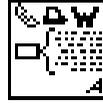
When replacing the original SERIAL.LLB be careful not to overwrite or delete it. It would be a good idea to rename the original SERIAL.LLB file before copying the MultiCom version onto your hard disk.

Also be aware that both the 16-bit and 32-bit versions of MultiCom install a file named SERIAL.LLB. The 16-bit version of SERIAL.LLB is *not* compatible with the 32-bit version. If you plan to install both the 16 and 32 bit versions of MultiCom on the same computer be careful to rename the files or install the two versions to different directories.

Once you have replaced the serial VI library, the only noticeable difference that you will see is on the lower right corner of the icons will be a small "A" to signify "Avanstar" as shown below.



Original icon



MultiCom icon

SERIALAV.LLB

This library contains 15 VIs. The first five are renamed copies of the VIs in the SERIAL.LLB. The sixth VI is a special version of the Avanstar Serial Port Read.vi that include EOS (End-Of-String) detection and timeout – refer to the section below for information on this VI. The seventh VI is a special version of Avanstar Serial Port Init.vi that configures the specified port as an RS-422 port.

- ▼ Avanstar Bytes at Serial Port.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Break.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Init.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Write.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Read.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Read+.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial 422 Port Init.vi

The last eight VIs were added for MultiCom version 2.0:

- ▼ Avanstar Bytes at Output Serial Port.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Comm Input Status.vi
- ▼ Avanstar CTS/DSR Status.vi
- ▼ Avanstar EOS Status.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Max Serial Port.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Output Buf Clear.vi
- ▼ Avanstar RTS/DTR Control.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Init+.vi

To configure a port as an RS-232 port use the Serial Port Init VI. To configure for RS-422 use the Avanstar Serial 422 Port Init VI. Note that the two init VIs wire identically. Therefore you can simply convert a port from 232 to 422 (or vice-versa) by simply replacing the VI in the wiring diagram.

Caution: The cable wiring for RS-232 and RS-422 are not compatible. Be sure that your configuration matches your hardware setup.

Be aware that both the 16-bit and 32-bit versions of MultiCom install a file named SERIALAV.LLB. The 16-bit version of SERIALAV.LLB is *not* compatible with the 32-bit version. If you plan to install both the 16 and 32 bit versions of MultiCom on the same computer be careful to rename the files or install the two versions to different directories.

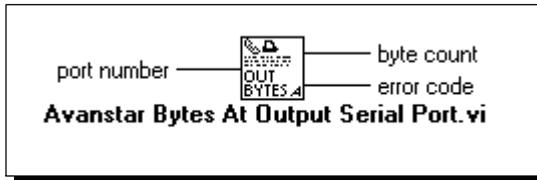
MultiCom VIs

The VIs described in this section are the MultiCom VIs that go beyond the functionality of the serial VIs provided in LabVIEW. For information on the following VIs:

- ▼ Avanstar Bytes at Serial Port.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Break.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Init.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Write.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial Port Read.vi
- ▼ Avanstar Serial 422 Port Init.vi

refer to the documentation on the equivalent VI in the LabVIEW “GPIB and Serial Port VI Reference Manual.”

Avanstar Bytes at Output Serial Port.vi



This VI returns the number of bytes waiting to be transmitted in the output buffer. Typically the only time the byte count will be a non-zero value is if some sort of output handshaking is enabled and the receiver is holding off the data transmission.

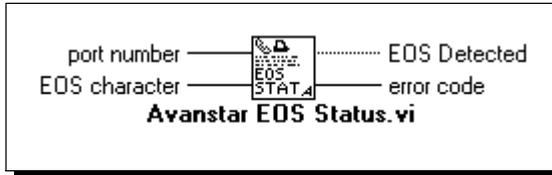


port number is the MultiCom port number (zero-based).



byte count is the number of bytes in the output buffer that have not been sent.

Avanstar EOS Status.vi



This VI checks the input buffer for the specified “end of string” character. No data is removed or transferred out of the input buffer. Use this VI to check for an EOS character before the Avanstar Serial Port Read+.vi is called to eliminate the need for the read operation to wait for the reception of the EOS character.



port number is the MultiCom port number (zero-based).



EOS character is the ASCII value of the character to be checked for.



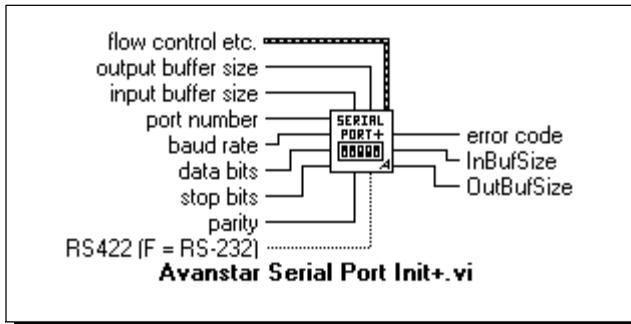
EOS Detected returns a true if the *EOS character* is detected in the input buffer.

Avanstar Max Serial Port.vi



Max Port is the value of the largest MultiCom port number (zero-based) detected in hardware.

Avanstar Serial Port Init+.vi



This VI performs the same function as the Avanstar Serial Port Init.vi and the Avanstar Serial 422 Port Init.vi with several additional inputs to increase functionality. The primary new feature of this VI is the ability to set the input buffer and output buffer to different sizes. Only the additional inputs are documented here – the functionality of the other inputs is unchanged.



output buffer size sets the size of the output buffer.



input buffer size sets the size of the input buffer.



RS422 determines if the port is to be configured as an RS-422 port or an RS-232 port. A true set the port to RS-422.

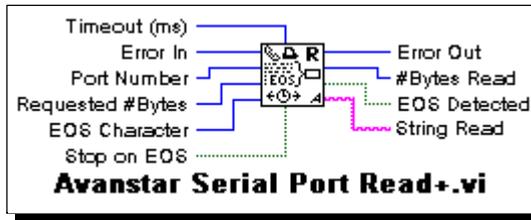


OutBufSize returns the size that the output buffer is actually set to. If the requested size is too large, the buffer will be set to a smaller value based on the amount of available on-board RAM.



InBufSize returns the size that the input buffer is actually set to. If the requested size is too large, the buffer will be set to a smaller value based on the amount of available on-board RAM.

Avanstar Serial Port Read+.vi



This VI performs the same function as the Avanstar Serial Port Read VI but includes options for EOS (End-Of-String) detection and timeout. Also this VI includes an Error In terminal for easy sequencing of multiple reads.

U32 *Timeout* is the maximum time in milliseconds that the MultiCom software will wait for a character to be received. If the *Timeout* period expires, the Avanstar Serial Port Read+ will return with *Error Out* equal to 1 (one). To turn off the timeout feature, set *Timeout* to 0 (zero).

The resolution of the *Timeout* value is one PC timer tick or 54.9 ms. (i.e., the actual timeout used will be a multiple of 54.9 ms.).

I32 *Error In* controls whether the VI will execute. If *Error In* is 0 (zero), the VI will execute normally. If *Error In* is non-zero, the VI will simply pass the *Error In* value through to *Error Out* without executing a read.

Error In can be used to control the sequencing of multiple read+ VIs without using a LabVIEW sequence frame.

I32 *Port Number* is the Avanstar port number to be read. Port numbering is zero based – note that this is different from the labeling on the Avanstar connection panel.

U32

Requested # Bytes is the maximum number of characters that will be read from the Avastar port regardless of whether an EOS is found.

U8

EOS Character is the ASCII code for the character which will cause the serial read to stop (if Stop on EOS is turned on). For example, if a serial device returns a string of the form,

```
+#.####<cr><lf>
```

setting the EOS Character to 10 (a linefeed character) will cause the read to stop after it has received the linefeed character.

TF

Stop on EOS determines whether the read will search for an EOS character. The read will be terminated on EOS if *Stop on EOS* is true.

I32

Error Out is the error value returned by the read function. If *Error Out* is a 1 (one), a timeout occurred. If *Error Out* is a negative number, a board level error occurred.

U32

#Bytes Read is the length of the *String Read*.

TF

EOS Detected shows whether the read stopped because of an EOS detection.

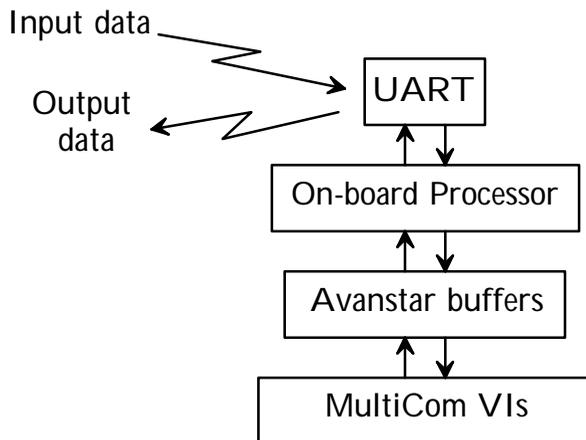
abc

String Read is the data received from the Avastar port.

General Information

Understanding the Avanstar hardware

Much of the job of sending and receiving data is taken care of by the Avanstar board. The Avanstar board contains an individual UART for each channel and an on-board microprocessor to handle data traffic between the UARTs and your PC/LabVIEW. Each UART is a circuit designed to send and receive serial data and contains two 12 byte FIFO (First In, First Out) buffers – one for sending and one for receiving data. The board's processor monitors all data channels and transfers data between the UART's FIFOs and the board's buffer area. The MultiCom VIs send/receive data by transferring data to/from the Avanstar buffers. See figure below.



Stop Bit Support

The Avanstar board supports either 1 or 2 stop bits; the 1.5 stop bits option is not available. To configure a port for 1 stop bit, pass a 0 (zero) to the stop bits parameter in the init VI. To select 2 stop bits, pass a 2 to the init VI.

Port Numbering

In order to remain compatible and consistent with LabVIEW, the MultiCom VIs use a zero based numbering scheme, (i.e., the first port is number zero). Note that this conflicts with the numbering on the Avanstar terminal panel which is one based.

If multiple boards are used, the ports will be numbered according to the I/O address the board is found at. For example, if two 16 port boards are used and have I/O addresses of 200h and 208h, then the ports would be numbered as follows:

<i>I/O Address</i>	<i>Port Numbers</i>
200h	0-15
208h	16-31

Additional Baud Rates

The MultiCom VIs allow you to specify much higher baud rates than the original VIs do. In order to accommodate these higher baud rates, the Baud Rate control in the Serial Port Init VI was changed from a U16 data type to a U32 data type. The following baud rates are supported under MultiCom.

50	300	4,800	57,600
75	600	7,200	64,000
110	1,050	9,600	76,800
134.5	1,200	19,200	115,200
150	1,800	38,400	
200	2,400	56,000	

The Avanstar board has an option for 134.5 baud rate. To select this rate, pass the value 134 to the init baud rate terminal.

Handshaking Modes

All of the handshaking modes featured in the original LabVIEW VIs are supported by MultiCom *except* "Output alt HW Handshake." If you need output hardware handshaking you may have to convert your application to use the CTS line and "Output HW Handshake" mode.

Buffer Sizes

The Avastar 100i board contains 16K of memory. This memory is used for board control registers as well as for input and output buffers. Out of the 16 Kbytes, 15,328 bytes is available for buffers.

The default buffer size is 464 bytes for the 16 port board (i.e. 464 bytes for the input buffer and another 464 bytes for the output buffer for each port.). The minimum buffer size is 2 bytes. The maximum buffer size is only limited by the amount of free space available; therefore to allocate a large buffer for a particular port, it is necessary to reduce the size of the some of the other port buffers.

The init VI default for buffer size is 0 (zero). The effect of this (or any value less than 2) is to leave the buffer size unaltered from its current value. Therefore leaving the buffer size terminal unwired on any of the MultiCom init VIs will not change the buffer size.

Note: The original Serial Port Init VI will default the input and output buffer sizes to 1024 bytes if the buffer size terminal is left unwired. Keep this difference in mind if you replace an original VI with one of the MultiCom init VIs; the operation of your application may be affected.

Caution: Do not change the size of any MultiCom buffer while any port is active. Changing buffer sizes moves the locations of the buffers of many MultiCom ports and could result in lost data.

Reads/Writes May Hang LabVIEW

The MultiCom software is not interrupt driven and therefore once LabVIEW enters the MultiCom code, no Windows (LabVIEW or otherwise) can occur. Consequently, if you request more characters to be read than have been transmitted, the computer will wait indefinitely until the requested number of characters are read (unless a timeout is specified or an EOS character is detected). Likewise, if a write is held off due to a handshake situation, the computer will wait indefinitely until the hold off condition is released. To avoid this problem it is important to follow these guidelines:

Reads

- ▼ Use the *Bytes at Serial Port VI* to determine the number of bytes that can be read. The proper use of this VI will also increase the execution efficiency of your code since no time will be spent in the MultiCom software waiting to data to be received.
- ▼ Use the *Avanstar Serial Port Read+ VI* with timeout enabled to prevent LabVIEW from hanging if no data is available.

Writes

- ▼ Use the *Bytes at Output Port VI* to determine if there is room in the output buffer for the new output string. The proper use of this VI will also increase the execution efficiency of your code since no time will be spent in the MultiCom software waiting for the output buffer to empty.
- ▼ Be careful when using handshaking to ensure a proper setup with the external device.

If LabVIEW hangs in one of these wait loops, press <Ctrl><Alt> followed by <Enter> to shut down LabVIEW and return to Windows.

Serial Port Break VI

The break generated by the Avanstar board is a fixed time length. Although the MultiCom Serial Port Break VI includes a delay terminal for compatibility with the original LabVIEW VI, the value passed is ignored by the Avanstar board.

PCI Bus Computers

If you encounter problems installing/running MultiCom on a PCI bus computer, check your computer's PCI bus configuration. On PCI bus computers the PCI controller controls the ISA bus's access to memory. This memory access is set in the machine's BIOS configuration. The memory that the MultiCom board uses must be accessible to the ISA bus. Check your BIOS configuration program to be sure that the PCI controller allows access to the memory that you will be using for your MultiCom board.

Parity Error Byte in the Flow Control Cluster

If the high-order byte of the Parity Error Byte field in the Flow Control cluster in the serial initialization routines is non-zero, MultiCom will insert an FFh into the input buffer (not the low order byte of the Parity Error Byte field as in LabVIEW) when a parity error is detected. The low-order byte of the Parity Error Byte field is not used by MultiCom.

Error Codes

Listed below are the error codes returned by the MultiCom VIs. The VIs are listed under the VI names in SERIALAV.LLB. The VIs in SERIAL.LLB return the same error codes as their equivalent functions in SERIALAV.LLB.

All MultiCom VIs return the following error codes

- 0 – no error
- 1 – unable to access board or control program
- 2 – unable to access board or control program

Additionally, the following VIs return the error codes listed below:

Avanstar Serial Port Init.vi
Avanstar Serial 422 Port Init.vi
Avanstar Serial Port Init+.vi

- 3 – illegal baud rate specified
- 4 – illegal number of data bits specified
- 5 – illegal parity specified
- 6 – illegal number of stop bits specified
- 7 – board timeout - board did not respond
- 8 – RS-422 not supported
- 9 – External connection panel not installed
- 10 – Not enough room for requested buffer size

Avanstar Serial Port Read+.vi

1 – timeout exceeded

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