

MAGICGNSS: QUALITY DATA, ALGORITHMS AND PRODUCTS FOR THE GNSS USER COMMUNITY

Álvaro Mozo García, Ricardo Piriz, Daniel Rodríguez Porcheron
GMV AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE, S.A.
Isaac Newton, 11 (PTM)
28760 Tres Cantos
Spain
Tel. +34 91 807 21 00
amozo@gmv.com

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Abstract

Today, an increasing number of users need high-quality GNSS products, such as precise satellite orbit and clock estimations and predictions, accurate receiver coordinates or tropospheric delays, for their applications (e.g., precise point positioning, GNSS augmentation services, weather services, etc). While there are a number of products and tools available for this purpose (e.g. IGS products, or different GPS processing SW packages developed by research institutions), these are sometimes not tailored to the specific user needs and often difficult to use and not developed according to industry quality standards.

GMV is a developer of high-technology solutions and products in several domains, including aerospace, defense, transport, IT and medicine. Over the last two decades, GMV has accumulated a vast expertise in the development of precise Orbit Determination and Time Synchronization (ODTS) algorithms and tools, especially in the GNSS field, through a number of activities. These activities include the development of Precise Orbit Determination SW packages for use in several satellite missions, the participation in the European GNSS programmes EGNOS and Galileo since their early stages, as well as a strong R&D activity to improve skills and foster innovation in this key area.

With all this background, GMV is in the process of developing *magicGNSS*, a suite of software and data products covering a wide range of GNSS user needs. *magicGNSS Beta* is already available online at magicgnss.gmv.com. This is a free-of-charge online service for registered users. At present it provides a fully-functional demo version of the Orbit Determination & Time Synchronization (ODTS) module processing past and current GPS data from a network of global IGS stations.

1 Introduction

magicGNSS is envisaged to be a suite of data and software products to support a wide variety of GNSS projects and objectives, including service volume simulations, core operational functions (such as orbit, clock, and ionosphere determination and prediction), receiver performance analysis, added-value services including integrity, local augmentation developments, and all related performance and accuracy analyses. The *magicGNSS* suite may be applied to projects related to GPS, Galileo, or Glonass, as well as their augmentation systems, both space-based (SBAS) and ground-based (GBAS).

For example the Precise-Point-Positioning (PPP) algorithm calculates the user receiver coordinates and clocks by fixing the satellite and orbit clocks to precise solutions (instead of the GPS navigation message) and applying detailed modeling to the user position and the tropospheric and ionospheric delays. PPP processes dual-frequency user receiver data (pseudorange and phases) in RINEX format.

Another product of the suite is an SBAS module. This module receives data from a number of tracking stations and generates corrections and integrity messages compatible with those provided by currently deployed SBAS (EGNOS, WAAS). This is the ideal tool to analyse SBAS performances over specific areas, or to perform demonstrations. The SBAS module has the capability of computing SBAS information in real time, so the SBAS service can be tested with high realism if tracking information is available in real time as well.

The first version of the suite is called *magicGNSS Beta* and it provides online near real-time GPS data processing using the Orbit Determination & Time Synchronization (ODTS) algorithm to generate precise orbits, clocks, tropo and station coordinates in a very friendly and easy way. *magicGNSS Beta* is a free-of-charge online service for registered users and can be accessed at the <http://magicgnss.gmv.com> web address.

2 Overview of magicGNSS Beta

magicGNSS Beta (hereafter in this paper referred to as simply *magicGNSS*) is a web application whose address is magicgnss.gmv.com. Figure 1 shows the application's main page.

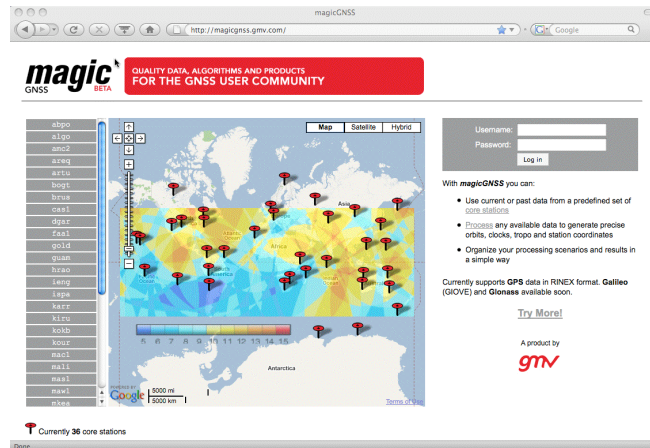


Figure 1: The *magicGNSS Beta* web site

The *magicGNSS* server maintains data from a selected subset of ground stations from IGS, the International GNSS Service [1]. They are called *core stations* throughout the application. Core station data is available for the last 30 days (with a latency of typically two hours).

The algorithm that processes station data to generate products in *magicGNSS* is called ODTS, which stands for *Orbit Determination & Time Synchronization*. The basic ODTS input measurements are pseudorange (code) and phase L1-L2 dual-frequency iono-free combinations. The raw input code and phase measurements are decimated and used internally by ODTS at a typical rate of 5 minutes. ODTS is based on a batch least-squares algorithm that minimizes measurement residuals solving for orbits, satellite and station clock offsets, phase ambiguities, and station tropospheric zenith delays.

The ODTS process generates the products shown in Table 1. As far as possible the products follow the file formats endorsed by the IGS (see <http://igsceb.jpl.nasa.gov/components/formats.html>).

Product	Format
ODTS Report	PDF
Estimated satellite orbits	SP3
Predicted satellite orbits	SP3
Estimated satellite clocks	clock RINEX
Predicted satellite clocks	clock RINEX
Estimated station clocks	clock RINEX
Estimated Zenith Tropo Delay	txt
Estimated Station Coordinates	SINEX
Estimated Solar Radiation Parameters	txt
Estimated Earth Rotation Parameters	erp

Table 1: The ODTS products

What accuracy can be expected from the *magicGNSS* products? Figure 2 shows a comparison between orbits and clocks estimated by ODTS and the final IGS products. The comparison has been done for a set of consecutive ODTS executions covering one week of data using data from 30 IGS stations.

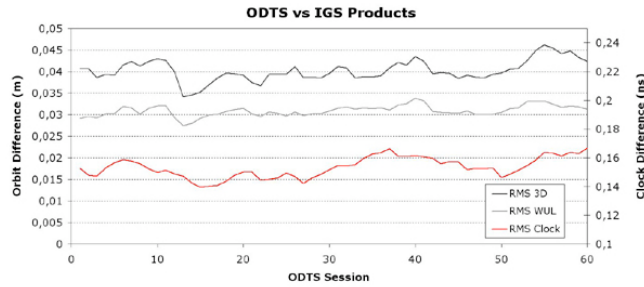


Figure 2: Comparison between ODTS vs IGS products

As can be seen from the figure the orbit RMS difference is at the level of 4 cm and the clock RMS difference is around 0.15 ns. This shows that ODTS products achieve a quality similar to that of the IGS products. This is of course assuming you use the full core station network, and data from all core stations is available.

3 Input data

As a general rule, the products generated by the ODTS process (orbits, clocks, tropospheric delay and station coordinates) are of a better quality if you use data from a high number of globally distributed stations. On the other hand, the higher the number of stations, the greater the computer time required to process their data on the server.

A station coverage map like the one shown on the *magicGNSS* web page (and in Figure 3) shows how well the network of stations is distributed to provide coverage for GNSS satellite tracking.

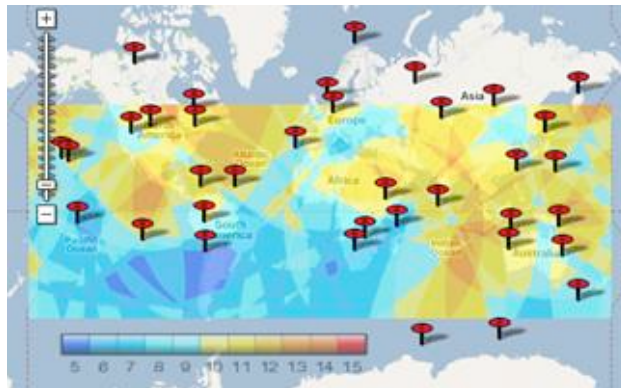


Figure 3: The coverage map of the core stations

On such a map, the color code indicates the number of stations in view of the satellite at the sub-satellite point and at the GPS height (20,200 km). The number of stations in view is also expressed as *Depth of Coverage* (DOC). The coverage, or DOC, map is truncated at $\pm 55^\circ$ latitude, which corresponds to the GPS orbit inclination towards the equator, and is then the maximum latitude for a GPS sub-satellite point. The DOC color scale ranges from the minimum to the maximum DOC (between $\pm 55^\circ$ latitude), for the selected network of stations.

The *magicGNSS* core stations guarantee at least a $DOC=5$ everywhere. For maximum product accuracy all core stations should be used in the ODTS process. For faster processing, but less accurate products, you can use a smaller station network in your scenario. As a rule-of-thumb, the smallest network of stations that can be reliably processed by ODTS should be one that provides at least a $DOC=2$ everywhere. This corresponds to a minimum network of around 13 stations distributed evenly worldwide.

The core station data is shared with the IGS Real Time Pilot Project in which GMV participates. Every hour, the latest data is downloaded from the IGS servers in RINEX format (15-minute files) and stored in the *magicGNSS* server. Thus the data latency is typically 2 hours. This allows the user to monitor in near real-time the status of the station network and of the GPS constellation, for example to analyze the behavior of all atomic clocks (on-ground and in-space) with a delay of just a couple of hours.

One interesting feature of *magicGNSS* is the automatic download and processing of the *Notice Advisory to NAVSTAR Users* (NANUs) issued by the U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Center (www.navcen.uscg.gov). This allows maintaining a database where unhealthy or unusable satellites are identified at any time. These satellites

are automatically removed from the ODTS processing, which greatly increases the robustness of the algorithm and the quality of the resulting products.

Earth Rotation Parameters (ERPs) are also automatically downloaded from the International Earth Rotation Service (IERS) server, in such a way that the ODTS always uses the latest IERS estimations and predictions. By default ODTS uses the values published by the IERS, but it is also possible to estimate ERPs within the ODTS process.

For all the core stations, a priori coordinates from the International Terrestrial Reference Frame (ITRF) or IGS solutions are kept in the *magicGNSS* database. The user has the possibility to refine the a priori coordinates within the ODTS estimation process.

4 The ODTS algorithm

The ODTS software is based on a batch least-squares algorithm that processes stations data files in RINEX format, solving for orbits, satellite and station clock offsets, phase ambiguities, station tropospheric zenith delays, and station coordinates.

Dual-frequency measurements from the two GPS carriers (L1 and L2 frequencies) are processed in ODTS in order to remove the ionospheric delay. This is done at pre-processing level. The tropospheric delay is removed as part of the estimation process, modeled as a zenith delay for each station using a mapping function to account for the measurement elevation. Station tropospheric zenith delays are estimated as constant values every two hours. Pseudorange (code) and phase measurements are used in ODTS. The code measurements are smoothed using the phase by means of a Hatch filter. This reduces the level of noise/error of the code from typically one meter in the raw code to around 30 cm or less in the smoothed code. This technique reduces the level of error in the satellite and station clock estimations.

Within ODTS, the satellite and Earth dynamics are based on high-fidelity models that follow IERS recommendations. Modeled forces include a full Earth gravity model, Sun, Moon and planetary attractions, solid Earth tides, and Solar Radiation Pressure (SRP), including eclipses. Earth Rotation Parameters (ERPs) are downloaded from the IERS server, but they can also be estimated by ODTS itself. A priori station coordinate values come from ITRF or IGS solutions, and they can be refined within the ODTS process.

The orbit fit is based on the estimation of the initial state vector (position and velocity) and 5 empirical Solar Radiation Pressure (SRP) parameters. The satellite orbits can be propagated (predicted) into the future time using the estimated parameters and the ODTS internal dynamic model.

Satellite and station clock offsets are estimated with respect to a reference clock, normally provided by one of the stations. Clocks are calculated as snapshot values, i.e., as instantaneous values at the measurement time stamp. Thus, clocks are estimated at the same rate as the internal measurements used by the ODTS (typically every 5 minutes). These estimated snapshot values are adjusted to a linear model that can be extrapolated into the future for clock prediction.

An empirical satellite radiation model simplifies the satellite dynamics and requires no a-priori information about the satellite geometrical and reflectivity properties, just approximate mass and area values are needed. The estimation of the 5 empirical SRP coefficients, together with the 6 components of the satellite initial state vectors (position and velocity), i.e. 11 dynamic parameters in total, allows orbit estimation accuracies well below the decimeter. No other empirical accelerations are used.

5 A tour of magicGNSS

This section describes a typical *magicGNSS* session on the web. The screenshots have been extracted from the video tour available for download on the *magicGNSS* main web page. The username *johnsmith* is used as an example of new user. Figure 4 shows how the web page looks like when *johnsmith* logs in for the first time.

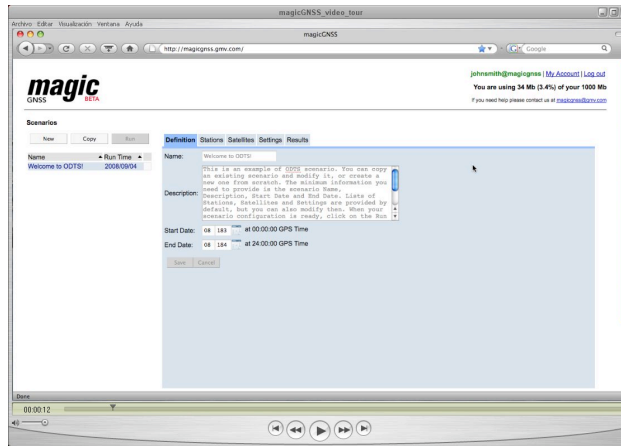


Figure 4: A new user logging in for the first time

The concept of *scenario* is fundamental within *magicGNSS*. A scenario is simply an interval of time for which station data is to be processed and results generated. A scenario is defined by its Start Date and its Duration. Scenarios are listed on the left side of the page. Of course the user can create new scenarios (using the *New* button) or copy existing ones (using the *Copy* button).

In the following we show how to create and run (i.e., process) a new scenario. We click on the *New* button and go to the *Definition* tab where we enter the scenario Name (“Example 1” in this case), optionally a Description (blank), the Start Date and the Duration. This is shown in Figure 5.

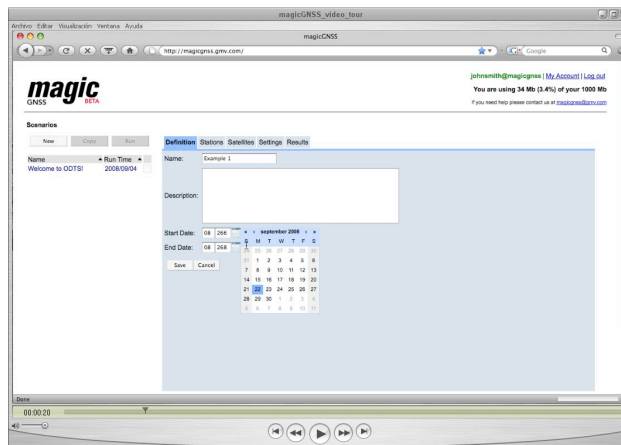


Figure 5: Definition of a new scenario

By default yesterday is selected as Start Date and 2 days is selected as Duration (relative to GPS Time, which is currently ahead of UTC by 14 seconds). In this way the user can process very easily the latest data available. Dates can be entered as year (yy) and day-of-year (doy) but a calendar is also available to select days in a more common way. Of course the user can select any other dates from the last 30 days. The minimum duration of a scenario is one day and the maximum one is currently two days.

The web technology behind *magicGNSS* is based on AJAX. This technology allows communicating with the server in an asynchronous way to update different parts of the web page without having to refresh the whole page. This results in more responsive and dynamic web applications, allowing for example to create/copy/delete scenarios while the ODTS is running and the progress banner is being updated. Figure 6 shows an example of this where, while “Example 1” is running, *johnsmith* has created a new scenario (“Example 2”), copied an existing one (“Copy of Example 1”), and is just deleting this one.

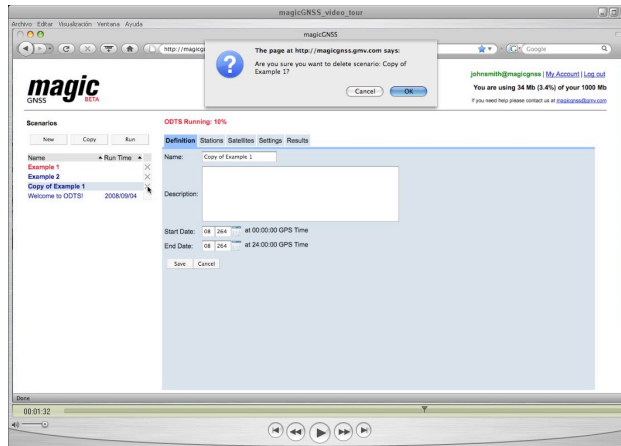


Figure 6: A responsive and dynamic web application

Finally, once the ODTS process has finished, the “Example 1” scenario turns from bold red to normal typeface with the Run Time attached to it. The Results tab shows now the message “Results successfully generated.” By clicking on the *Download Results* button shown in Figure 7 the user downloads a ZIP file containing the 10 product files described in Table 1.

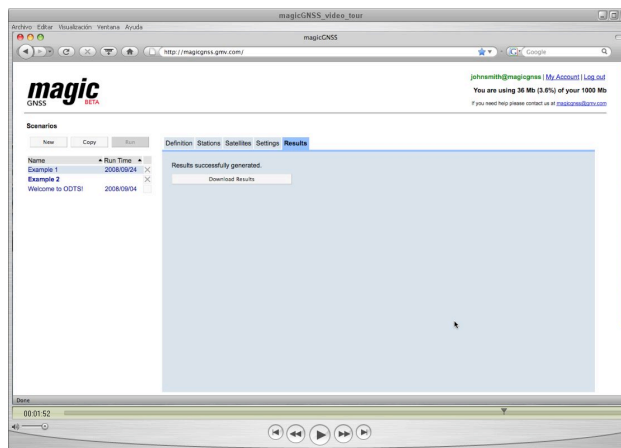


Figure 7: Results are ready to be downloaded

The most relevant of the products is the ODTS Report in PDF format that is described in the next section. This report allows a very complete diagnosis and understanding of the ODTS process and its results.

Each user scenario takes some disk space on the server, mainly because of the ZIP file containing the results (a few Megabytes). The ZIP file is kept within each scenario, and the user can download the results at any future time as long as the scenario is not deleted. Since the disk quota given by default to the user is quite generous (1 Gigabyte), there is no real need to delete scenarios.

For the user convenience, scenarios can be sorted by Name and by Run Time, in ascending or descending order, by clicking on the ▲ and ▼ arrows. By default the scenarios are sorted by ascending Run Time order in such a way that new and recent scenarios always appear on top.

6 The ODTS report

This section describes the ODTS Report in PDF format, which is the most notorious ODTS product. The report has been designed to be self-explanatory, and a full example is available for download on the *magicGNSS* main web page for the interested reader.

The ODTS Report cover page contains the scenario Definition, including username, scenario Name, Start Date, Duration, and Run Time. An example is shown in Figure 8.

magic
GNSS BETA

A product by

gmV

ODTS REPORT

Username: johnsmith
Scenario: Example
Start Date: 2008/09/15 00:00:00 (08253)
End Date: 2008/09/16 24:00:00 (08250)
Run Time: 2008/09/23 16:53:30 UTC

All times are GPS Time unless otherwise stated

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Figure 8: ODTS Report cover page

The ODTS Report is structured in three main sections:

1. Configuration Summary: this is just a printout of the scenario configuration as defined by the user on the web application, including List of Stations, List of Satellites, and Settings.
2. Processing Summary: a summary of the least-squares iterative estimation process, including total number of measurements and estimated parameters, code and phase residuals on each ODTS iteration, map of non-rejected stations and their corresponding DOC (see example in Figure 9), number of used and rejected measurements per station and per satellite, code and phase residuals per station (see example in Figure 10) and satellite, and information about satellites in eclipse (see example in Figure 11).

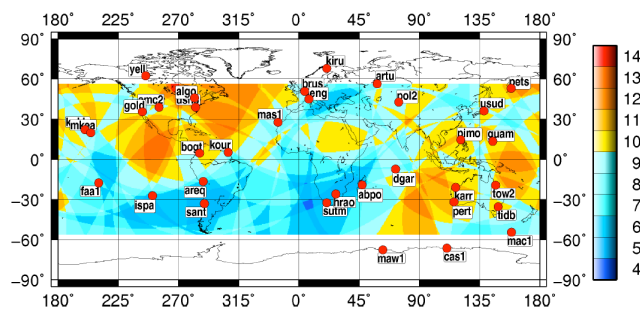


Figure 9: Example of DOC map

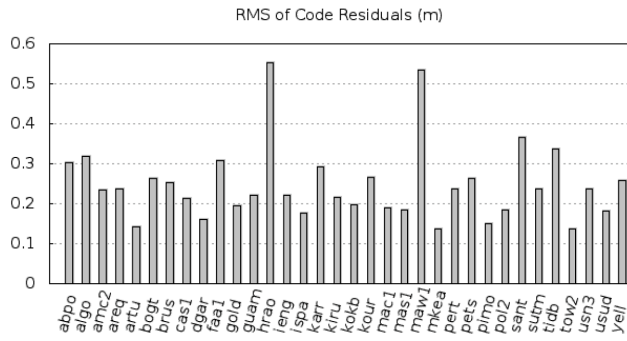


Figure 10: Code residuals per station

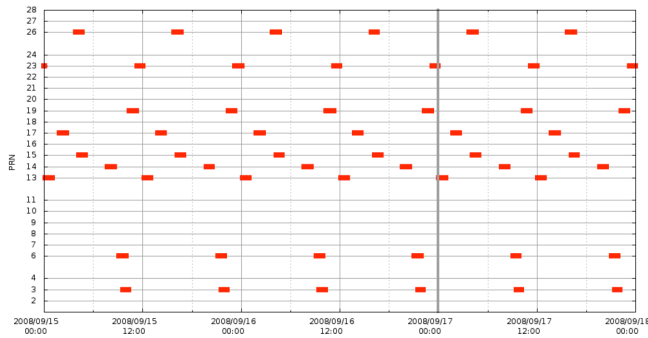


Figure 11: Satellites in eclipse

3. Products Summary: this is the main section in the ODTS report, describing in a graphical way the products that have been generated, including Zenith Tropospheric Delay plots per station (see example in Figure 12), estimated Solar Radiation Pressure (SRP) coefficients for all GPS satellites (see example in Figure 13), satellite clock offset evolution plots with respect to the reference clock after removing a parabola (see example in Figure 14), satellite clock stability plots in terms of Allan Deviation [2] (see example in Figure 15), station clock offset evolution plots (see example in Figure 16), station clock stability plots (see example in Figure 17), and difference between a priori and refined station coordinates, if applicable (see example in Figure 18).

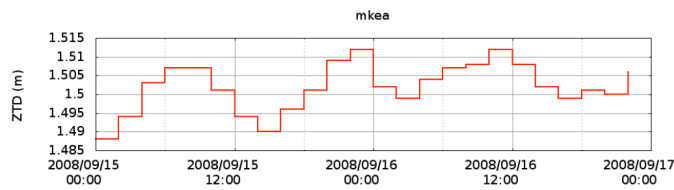


Figure 12: Example of Zenith Tropospheric Delay plot

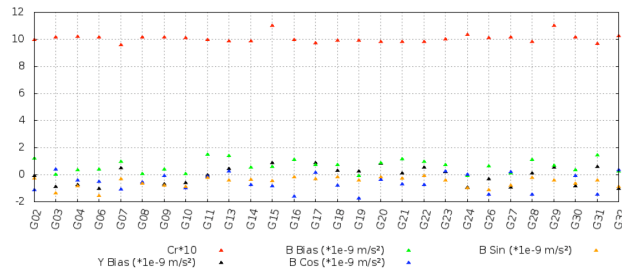


Figure 13: Solar Radiation Pressure (SRP) coefficients

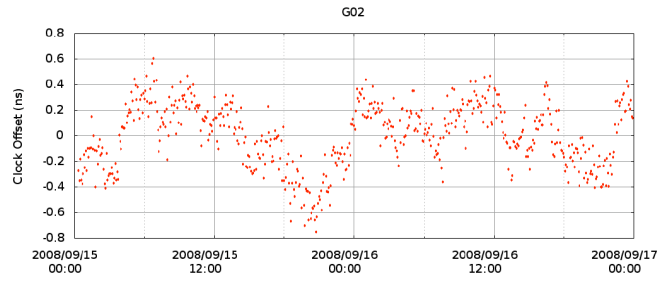


Figure 14: Satellite clock offset evolution

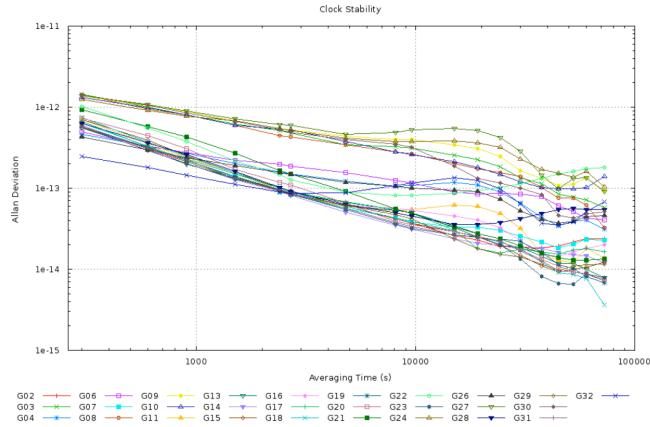


Figure 15: Allan Deviation plot for satellite clocks

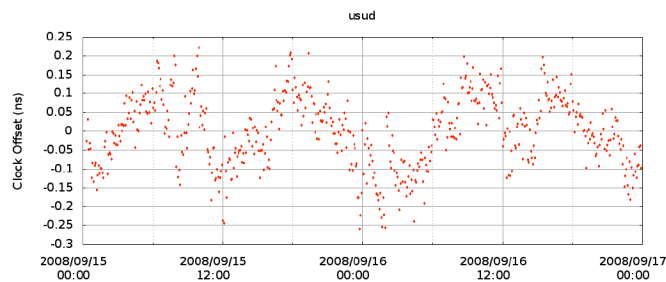


Figure 16: Station clock offset evolution

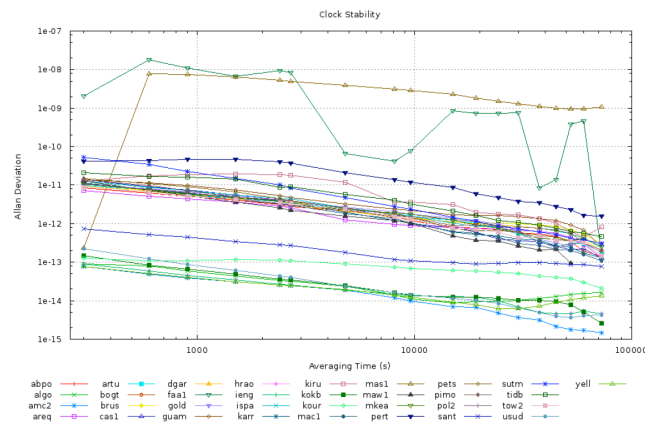


Figure 17: Allan Deviation plot for station clocks

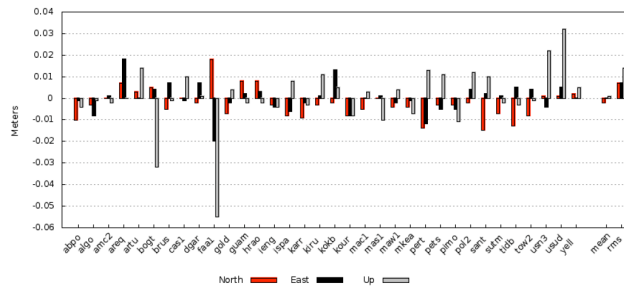


Figure 18: A priori vs refined coordinates

7 Conclusions and future work

magicGNSS Beta is available now online at magicgnss.gmv.com featuring the ODTS algorithm (Orbit Determination & Time Synchronization) using GPS data. Data availability is by default limited to a pre-defined network of core stations from IGS. An advanced feature that is now available for registered users is the possibility to upload data in RINEX format. This allows mixing data from any user station (or stations) with the existing core stations in an ODTS solution.

We plan to implement soon Glonass data processing in ODTS, using data from dual GPS/Glonass stations from IGS. Some key issues like the estimation of an inter-system bias per station and the usage of a generic (empirical) radiation model for the satellites have been already addressed and successfully solved in the frame of the Galileo GIOVE Mission in which GMV participates. This will simplify the implementation of Glonass in *magicGNSS*.

Finally, as indicated in the Abstract and Introduction of this paper, ODTS is just the first product of the *magicGNSS* suite. More data, algorithms and services such as PPP and SBAS will become gradually available.

8 Acknowledgements

We greatly appreciate the efforts done by IGS, the International GNSS Service [1], to generate high quality data and products and make them available to the GNSS community in a timely and reliable way.

References

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doi:10.1016/j.asr.2005.05.125
- [2] D. W. Allan, *Time and Frequency (Time-Domain) Characterization, Estimation, and Prediction of Precision Clocks and Oscillators*, IEEE Trans. UFFC, vol. 34, pp. 647-654, Nov. 1987.