

Senior Design 1

Tank Pack - A Fish Tank Helper



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Chapter 2 - Project Description

2.1 Project Motivation & Background

For our senior design project, the motivation behind creating a smart aquarium that automates the care of fish stems from the desire to simplify and enhance the experience of being a pet fish owner. Many fish enthusiasts and pet owners often struggle to maintain a consistent and healthy environment for their aquatic pets due to busy schedules, forgetfulness, or the need to travel. The last concern is a significant contribution to our motivation behind the project, as it's not always easy for a fish owner to find someone who can take care of their fish pets. Moving a fish tank somewhere else while you are out of the country or far away from home is probably not a feasible idea, and finding someone trustworthy who can come into your house every day to take care of your fish may not always be possible.

By developing and integrating innovative technology into a fish tank, owners can ensure their fish receive optimal care without constant physical intervention. This innovation aims to monitor water quality, temperature, and oxygen level and allow automatic feeding schedules and remote checks through a live stream. Consequently, this can lead to healthier, longer-living fish and a more enjoyable, stress-free experience for the owners by reducing the risk of common issues such as forgetting to feed the fish or letting poor water conditions go unnoticed for long periods of time.

The importance of a smart aquarium goes beyond convenience as it addresses the well-being of the fish regardless of experience level. For a beginner, taking care of fish may be a steep learning curve, requiring constant aquarium monitoring to ensure its well-being. A smart aquarium provides a safety net by offering real-time feedback and automated adjustments, making fishkeeping more accessible to novices. On the other hand, seasoned aquarists won't likely face this issue. However, this technology is still beneficial in their case since it offers an advanced monitoring solution, allowing them to focus on the more enjoyable aspects of their hobby. Ultimately, this technology not only enhances the quality of life for the fish but also promotes better care practices across the board.

As engineering students, creating a smart aquarium offers us a unique opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired throughout our studies to solve a real-world problem since the level of freedom this project provides is one we won't likely be able to experience under the rigorous schedule of an engineering company. Additionally, it tackles our challenges of owning and maintaining a fish tank while balancing personal and academic responsibilities, such as the need to travel out of the country or spend extended hours on campus. This project not only serves as a practical solution to our personal challenges or different experience level owners but also highlights our abilities by

working as a team and applying project management skills and hardware and software development skills, preparing us for future endeavors in the engineering industry.

2.2 Pre-existent Developments

Currently in the market there are quite a few products aimed towards enhancing a consumer's experience when owning pet fish. Although one thing that can be observed is that each product only serves to enhance only a couple things when it comes to taking care of fish. Whether it is to help with simple maintenance or even notify you of the smallest details of your miniature ecosystem, it always feels like there's something more you can add. As we looked through other related products or inventions it either was too expensive or lacked the stability for long-term use.

An example of a product that is currently out in the market is 'Glass Aqua' which presents the slogan of "Aquariums meet Technology". This product allows for the creation and continued maintenance through the innovation of devices that allow for the integration of technology with aquarium care. This product truly does wonders for the consumer experience with the easy creation of a tank that has both the aesthetic and functionality to keep your fish healthy and happy. As this is one of many products currently out on the market, it unfortunately falls under the functional yet expensive side of the spectrum which makes it difficult for the average consumer to be able to utilize this product to the fullest.

Furthermore, there are other products in the market today besides 'Glass Aqua' that already include these innovations such as a smart aquarium system that provides monitoring to alert for any irregularities, or even tanks with built in innovative devices that can feed, and even filter the water through the tap of a button on an app. The product names we found that included some if not all were Maxspect Lagoon, Fluval Flex, Xiaomi Smart Fish tank, etc.

Through a past senior design project that we found, it provided a lot of what we also wanted to add to enhance the experience of owning your very own fish. It included many different types of technology that 'Glass Aqua' and other products may or may not use but at a more reasonable yet efficient rate. With further research and analysis through the findings and designs of both the senior design project and existing products, there was still more left to be desired that we as a group want to capitalize upon by being more innovative with what we add but also enhance further the type of product that was previously created.

As we dive further into our research, we understand that what we are creating isn't anything that hasn't been seen before. We want to take what is an obvious technological addition to a fish tank aid and design our own version that gives much more practicality in the maintenance and longevity of aquarium care that won't break a budget and still provide everything that a consumer will need through a simple press of a button.

2.3 Goals and Objectives

Basic Goals:

- Provide a comprehensive system for managing an aquarium, ensuring the well-being of the fish and ease of use for the owner.
- Maintain optimal water conditions.
- Automated feeding.
- Ensure effective monitoring and control.

Basic Objectives:

- Implement a PH sensor to accurately measure the water's PH level.
- Integrate an automated food dispenser to ensure fish are fed at scheduled intervals.
- Continuously monitor water temperature using a temperature sensor to ensure it remains within a suitable range for fish health.
- Incorporate a PH solution dispenser to automatically adjust the water's PH level based on sensor readings.
- Use a Raspberry Pi to control a smart lighting system that simulates natural light cycles and enhances the tank's aesthetic appeal.
- Include a turbidity sensor to monitor water clarity and detect any quality issues.
- Develop an intuitive mobile application for remote monitoring and control, allowing users to manually override automated systems.

Stretch Goals:

- Integrate a live feed camera to provide real-time video of the fish tank, allowing for remote monitoring.
- Implement an air bubble system controlled by a Raspberry Pi or PCB to enhance water aeration and improve oxygen levels.
- Create a comprehensive analytics dashboard that logs historical data of all monitored parameters and implements alert notifications for critical conditions such as PH imbalances and temperature extremes.

By achieving these goals and meeting the design requirements, the Tank Pack will provide a comprehensive solution for maintaining a healthy and thriving aquarium environment.

2.4 Description of Features/Functionalities

After researching the available "smart" aquariums on the market, we found that none offered an automatic pH solution dispenser or a combination of temperature, pH, and turbidity sensors. Some auto feeders included a live stream camera, but like temperature sensors, were sold as standalone products. Among the smart aquariums found, these would only offer a self-cleaning system or basic smart lighting capabilities limited to simple color selections. In general, we could not find a product that included a combination of all the features above and no product included a turbidity sensor or an auto dispenser of pH solution.

In Spring 2020 – Summer 2020, a senior design team created AquaEco. This iteration of a smart aquarium offered an automatic feeder and sensors for checks of the water's temperature, pH and turbidity level and RGB lighting, which allowed the user to manually select a color. Although this is an impressive project, it lacked features such as live streaming functionality to monitor the tank's activity when the user is away from their house, automation of a pH dispenser, bubbles system or utilizing the smart lighting feature as a visual cue to indicate the quality of the water. With the comparisons of current products in the market and past senior design projects, we were able to choose a set of features to implement in our version of a smart aquarium as follows.

2.4.1 General

- The enclosure for the feeder will be constructed via the 3D printing material PLA since it's cheap, easy to use, and compostable polymer.
- The enclosure will house the required electronics, fish food and pH solution.
- A cutout on the enclosure will provide a spot for the camera to capture a live stream. It will be positioned against the tank's glass for a clear view of the fish activity.

2.4.2 Hardware

- A custom PCB will be powered via DC power and will act as the main board that drives the needed inputs and outputs of the connected components.
- A Raspberry Pi board will power the camera to be used for the livestream of the fish tank. This board will be connected to the main PCB providing the footage.

- There will be a Wi-Fi module connected to the custom PCB which will provide the necessary data to the mobile app and allow remote controls.
- A motor, powered by the PCB, will be used to dispense the fish food.
- A temperature sensor will track the water's temperature.
- A pH sensor will keep track of the water's pH level which will trigger the Ph solution dispenser as needed.
- A servo motor, powered by the PCB will be connected to an IV bag roller clamp which will control the amount of pH drops dispensed into the water.
- A turbidity sensor will keep track of the water's quality triggering a smart lighting system along with app notifications informing the user it's time to replace the water.
- There will be a water pump connected via USB to the Raspberry Pi board which can be manually turned on/off via the mobile app or automatically turned on/off based on a schedule.

2.4.3 App and UI Integration

- The mobile application will focus on easy-to-use, featuring a modern interface, which will allow the user to control the smart capabilities of the fish tank. For example:
 - Smart Lighting System
 - Food Dispenser
 - Ph Solution Dispenser
 - Bubbles System
 - Livestream Camera Access
 - Set Schedules
- Notifications:
 - Notification sent when the feeder dispenses food.
 - Notification sent when the pH sensor detects the Ph level is below or above optimal conditions.
 - Notification sent when the pH dispenser adds the solution to the water if it's found to be below optimal conditions.
 - Notification sent when the turbidity sensor detects the water quality is below optimal conditions.

- o Notification sent when the water sensor detects the temperature is above or below optimal conditions.

2.5 Engineering Specifications & Requirements:

The table below lists our project's specifications that shows clear metrics for testing and assessing success. We will prioritize maintaining these specifications by thoroughly testing the prototype and final product.

Please note that these specifications are subject to change given our limited experience with large-scale projects such as this. We also included the overall project budget to further emphasize and highlight the importance of balancing cost-effectiveness with performance standards.

While each component has specific requirements that are crucial for maintaining optimal conditions for aquatic life, we chose to highlight the sensors, water pump control and servo motor control to illustrate how these components work together to support the health and the stability of the aquatic environment.

Table 2.1: Specifications for the project.

Specification	Criteria
Power Supply	Wall outlet power
Max Power Consumption	<50 Watts
pH Sensor Response time	Response Time: ≤ 2 min
Temperature Sensor Response Time	Response Time: ≤ 2 min
Temperature Sensor Accuracy	Temperature must be between 50-100°F
pH Sensor Accuracy	pH level must be between 7.6 and 8.4
Turbidity Sensor Accuracy	<5 NTU
Food Dispenser Accuracy	Food Dispenser must dispense between 2 oz – 4 oz
pH Dispenser Accuracy	pH dispenser must be between 0.99 mL – 1.01 mL
Dispensers Capacity	5 oz - 10 oz
LED Intensity	Red LED: 700-1000 MCD Green LED: 1500-2200 MCD Blue LED: 700-1000 MCD
Motor Response Time	Response Time: 1ms
Cost	<\$500

For Demonstration:

- *pH Sensor Accuracy*
 - Ensures timely detection and changes of pH levels, which is vital for prompt actions to maintain optimal pH balance for the aquarium
 - Dispenser Accuracy must be between 7.6 and 8.4.
- *Temperature Accuracy*
 - Ensures timely detection and changes of water temperature, which is vital for prompt actions to maintain the ideal temperature for the aquarium.
 - Temperature must be between 50-100°F
- *Turbidity Sensor Accuracy*
 - Ensures timely detection and changes of cloudiness or haziness of water which is critical for prompt actions to maintain water clarity for the aquarium.
 - Turbidity must be <5 NTU

2.6 House of Quality

The House of Quality outlines the relationship between customer requirements and technical specifications. Strong positive correlations indicate that improving one aspect can significantly enhance customer satisfaction. For example, maximizing sensor accuracy (strongly correlated with accuracy, reliability, and automation) and ensuring robust Wi-Fi connectivity (vital for responsiveness and automation) are critical. Power consumption is to be minimized to enhance affordability and energy efficiency.

The relative weights of each technical specification reflect their overall importance, guiding the design focus towards features that will most effectively meet customer needs and expectations. By analyzing the House of Quality, the team can prioritize efforts and resources effectively. Features that show strong positive correlations with key customer requirements are given priority. This ensures that the design and engineering efforts are aligned with what customers value the most. This matrix helps ensure that the final product not only meets but exceeds customer expectations by focusing on key areas that drive satisfaction.

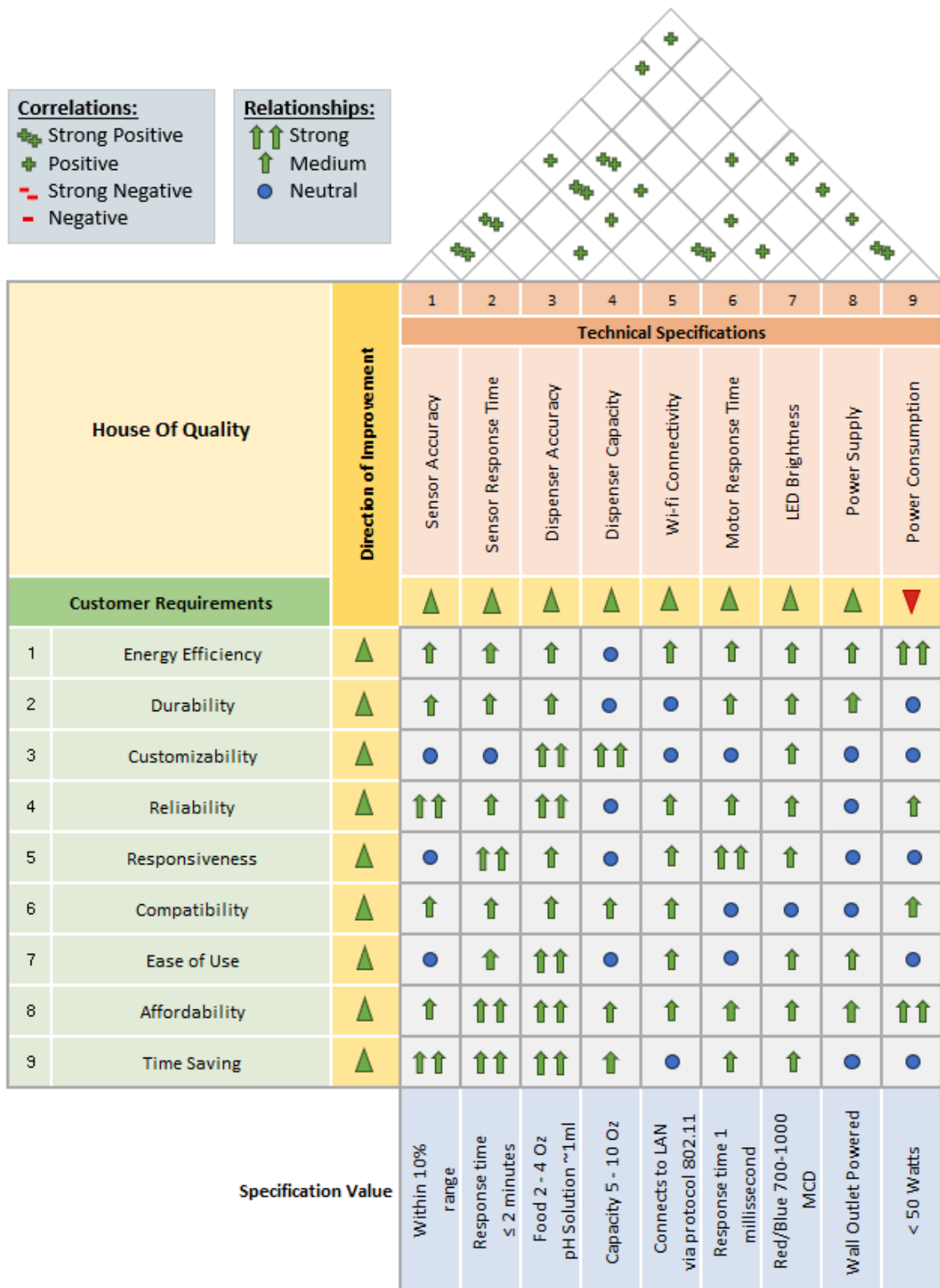


Figure 2.1: House of Quality by authors.

2.7 Hardware diagram/flowchart

The figure below shows the block diagram that we as a group designed to provide an adequate visual representation of the aspects of hardware that we will include in the project. Our goal is to have a system where we can have clear and concise interfacing and communication between the components. With the power supply unit, it will supply the necessary power to the main components which include our sensors, dispensers, Raspberry Pi, and microcontroller. The main purpose of the diagram is to present the roles that each member of the group will have within the creation of this design. Lastly, this diagram shows the specifications that we have set to meet the overall requirements.

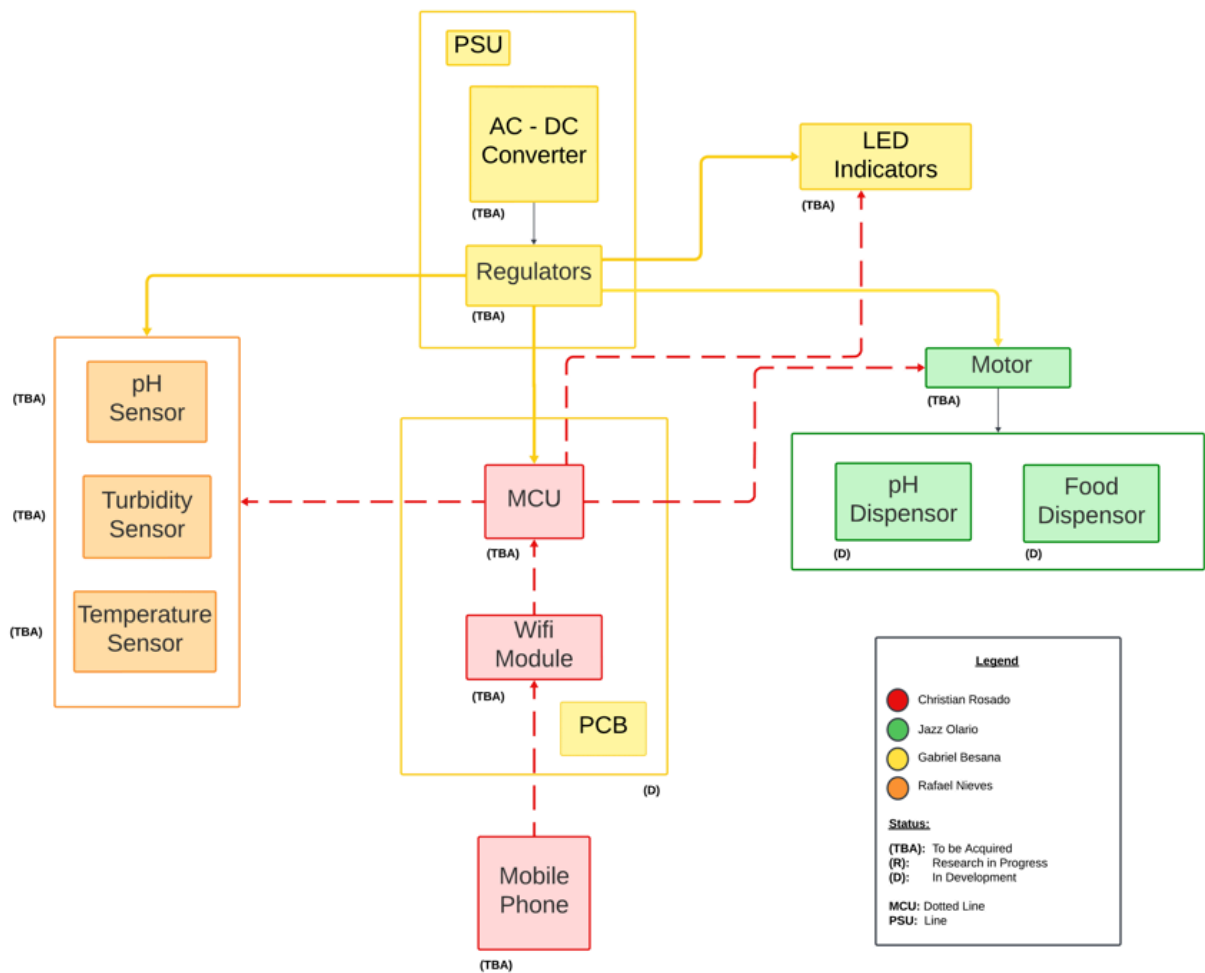


Figure 2.2: Hardware Diagram by authors.

2.8 Software diagram/flowchart

The figure below is the software flowchart/diagram which provides a visual description of the smart aquarium's functionality. It's divided into three blocks: the PCB software, Raspberry Pi software and the companion mobile app. The accompanying legend indicates the work distribution among team members, as well as the status of each block in the diagram, providing a clear overview of the project's progress.

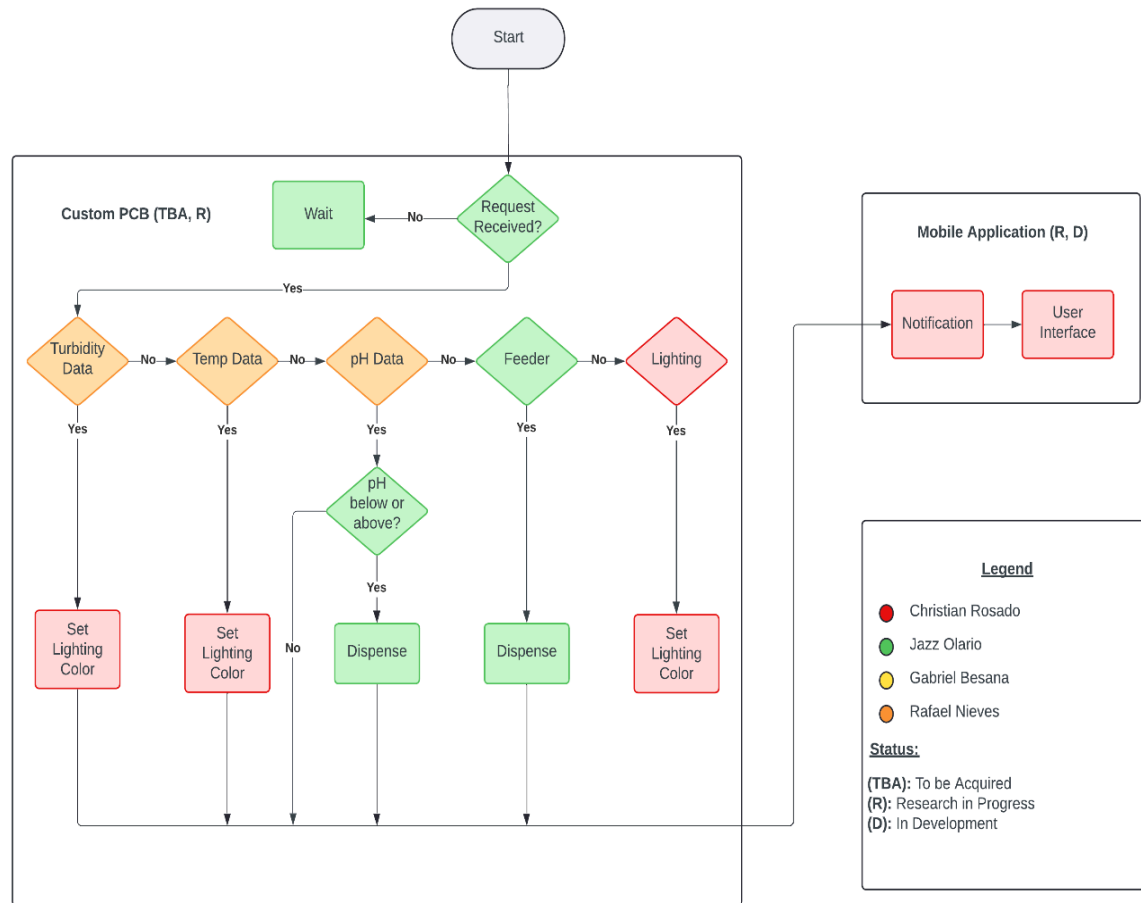


Figure 2.3: Software Diagram by authors.

Chapter 3 - Research

Thorough research and careful part selection are crucial to ensure the project's success. This section provides an overview of the methodologies and criteria used to identify and select the most suitable components for our project. The goal was to choose parts that meet the essential requirements of accuracy, reliability, ease of integration, and cost-effectiveness. Each component was selected based on its performance characteristics, compatibility with other system elements, and ability to fulfill the project's overall objectives. By

prioritizing high-quality, reliable parts, the system aims to achieve functionality, ease of use, and long-term durability, ensuring a healthy and well-maintained aquarium environment. Research helps identify and avoid potential complications that might cause costly delays and potential failures. Our research is further divided into two main categories: hardware and software.

The part selection phase is a critical section of our project, as it determines the performance, reliability, and overall success of the system. In this chapter, we will delve into the process of selecting the appropriate components to meet our design requirements and goals. Our objective is to identify and evaluate sensors, controllers, and other key hardware elements that will ensure optimal water conditions, automate feeding, and facilitate effective monitoring and control.

We will begin by examining the criteria used for selecting each component, considering factors such as accuracy, durability, compatibility, and cost-effectiveness. This process involves a thorough comparison of available options from various manufacturers, evaluating their specifications and performance metrics to ensure they align with our project needs.

For each category of components, we will provide a detailed analysis of the top candidates. This analysis can include technical specifications, pricing, and compatibility with our system architecture, as well as any trade-offs and considerations involved in the selection process.

The goal of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the part selection process, highlighting the rationale behind each choice and ensuring that our final selections will enable the successful implementation of a robust, efficient, and user-friendly fish tank management system. By carefully selecting the best components, we aim to create a reliable and effective solution that meets the needs of both the aquatic environment and the fish tank owner.

3.1 Hardware Research

When looking for ideal components for the project, hardware research and considerations are important to guarantee the highest possible performance as well as its compatibility and cost-effectiveness. Thorough research allows for the selection of components that meet the specific needs of the project, technical specifications and compatibility of each part. Another thing to consider is the durability and scalability of the hardware to prevent issues such as system failures or inefficient performance.

3.1.1 Temperature Readings

Temperature readings are essential for maintaining a healthy and stable environment in a fish tank. They ensure the well-being of aquatic life, prevent stress and disease, support breeding, maintain water quality, and enhance the overall user experience. By continuously monitoring and regulating water

temperature, aquarium owners can provide optimal living conditions for their fish and other aquatic organisms, ensuring a thriving and vibrant aquarium ecosystem.

Digital Thermometer

A digital thermometer is a straightforward and user-friendly option for monitoring the temperature of a fish tank. It features an easy-to-read LCD display and provides quick temperature readings with minimal effort. Digital thermometers are generally affordable, battery-powered, and can be placed inside the tank for continuous temperature monitoring. However, their limited connectivity options make them less suitable for automated systems that require continuous data logging.

Temperature Sensor

On the other hand, temperature sensors are highly accurate and designed for continuous monitoring in aquatic environments. These sensors are fully submersible and can provide real-time digital data, which can be easily integrated into an automated monitoring system. They are ideal for users who want to automate their fish tank monitoring and control systems, ensuring stable temperature conditions without constant manual intervention.

Infrared Sensor

Lastly, Infrared temperature sensors provide high measurement capability with non-contact surface temperature readings. They offer instantaneous data accessibility and digital connectivity options like I2C or SPI, making them suitable for advanced monitoring applications. Despite their higher cost and the need for microcontroller integration, IR sensors' ability to provide quick, accurate measurements without direct contact is advantageous in scenarios where immersion is impractical. However, their detection range is limited to the line of sight, restricting their use to surface temperature monitoring only.

Table 3.1: Tech Comparison of Temperature Reading devices.

Criteria	Digital Thermometer	Temperature Sensor	Infrared Sensor
Measurement Capability	Measures temperature at a single point	Continuous temperature monitoring	Noncontact, surface temperature
Data Accessibility	Requires manual reading	Provides real-time digital data	Provides real-time digital data
Cost	\$10 - \$50	\$5 - \$30	\$20 - \$50
Power Consumption	Minimal (battery-powered)	Typically < 1 Watt	Typically < 1 Watt

Connectivity	None or limited (basic LCD display)	Analog/Digital output, can interface with microcontrollers	Digital (I2C or SPI)
Power Supply	Battery	Direct DC power (3.3V - 5V from a microcontroller)	Direct DC power (3.3V - 5V from a microcontroller)
Detection Range	Limited to physical contact point	Typically -55°C to +125°C	Limited to line of sight

We selected a temperature sensor over a digital thermometer because it offers several significant advantages. Temperature sensors provide continuous, real-time monitoring, ensuring that any fluctuations in temperature are detected immediately, which is crucial for maintaining a stable environment for the fish. Unlike digital thermometers, which require manual readings and only provide snapshots of the temperature at the time of measurement, temperature sensors allow for constant oversight. Temperature sensors can be integrated into automated systems that manage other aspects of the fish tank. This level of automation and integration is not possible with standalone digital thermometers.

Additionally, the temperature sensor offers data logging capabilities when connected to a microcontroller, enabling the logging of historical data for analyzing trends, diagnosing issues, and ensuring long-term stability in the tank environment. This historical data is valuable for making informed decisions based on temperature patterns. It is versatile and can be used in various applications beyond just monitoring the fish tank. They can be part of a comprehensive environmental monitoring system, interacting with other sensors to provide a holistic view of the tank's conditions.

3.1.2 Temperature Sensor Selection

When designing a comprehensive system, selecting the appropriate waterproof temperature sensor is crucial to ensure accurate and reliable monitoring of water temperature. Temperature control is vital for maintaining a healthy environment for aquatic life, and the sensors must be robust enough to withstand prolonged submersion in water.

Table 3.2: Part Comparison of possible Temperature Sensors.

Manufacturer	Model	Price	Size	Key Features
Dallas/Maxim	DS18B20 Waterproof	From \$4.50	Cable length: 1m (Sensor: 6mm diameter)	High accuracy ($\pm 0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$) 1-Wire communication

TE Connectivity	TSYS01P Waterproof	From \$12.00	Cable length: 1.5m (Sensor: 7mm diameter)	High accuracy ($\pm 0.2^{\circ}\text{C}$) I2C interface
TE Connectivity	HTU21D Waterproof	From \$15.00	Cable length: 1m (Sensor: 8mm diameter)	High accuracy ($\pm 0.3^{\circ}\text{C}$) I2C interface

The DS18B20 Waterproof temperature sensor stands out as the superior option compared to the other two sensors due to its exceptional combination of accuracy, durability, and ease of integration. This sensor offers a high degree of precision with an accuracy of $\pm 0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$, ensuring that the water temperature is consistently monitored within optimal ranges for the fish's health. Its waterproof design makes it ideal for continuous submersion in the fish tank, providing reliable and long-lasting performance even in aquatic environments.

Additionally, the DS18B20 is widely supported and easily interfaced with popular microcontrollers, facilitating seamless integration into our automated system. The sensor's robust construction ensures durability, reducing the need for frequent replacements, which translates into cost savings and reduced maintenance efforts over time. Moreover, its affordability, combined with the high-quality performance, makes the DS18B20 a cost-effective choice that does not compromise on functionality, making it the best option for maintaining a stable and healthy aquatic environment in the fish tank.

3.1.3 pH Readings

Monitoring pH readings in a fish tank is essential for maintaining a healthy and stable environment for aquatic life. Consistent and optimal pH levels help reduce stress in fish, making them less susceptible to diseases and infections. Fluctuations in pH can cause significant stress, weakening the immune system and increasing vulnerability to pathogens. Integrating pH sensors into the fish tank system allows for automated monitoring and alerts. This ensures that any deviations from the optimal pH range are quickly detected and corrected.

pH Strips

pH test strips offer a very basic and manual method for measuring the pH of water. They are cost-effective, requiring no power supply or connectivity, making them the simplest option available. However, they are not suitable for continuous monitoring and do not provide digital data accessibility. Test strips are limited to single-point manual readings and require direct contact with the sample, which can be less accurate and less convenient compared to digital meters and sensors.

Digital pH Meter

On the other hand, a digital pH meter is a handheld device used to measure the pH level of water at a specific point. It features a built-in display that shows the pH reading, making it easy to use and read. Digital pH meters are generally affordable and are powered by batteries, making them portable and convenient for spot checks. However, their lack of connectivity and limited data logging capabilities make them less ideal for automated systems.

pH Sensor

Lastly, pH sensors are designed for continuous monitoring of pH levels in real-time. These sensors can be integrated into automated systems and provide digital or analog outputs that can be read by microcontrollers. pH sensors are typically more expensive than digital pH meters, but they offer greater functionality and precision. They require a direct DC power supply, usually provided by the monitoring system, and consume minimal power. pH sensors are ideal for applications that require constant pH monitoring and data logging

Table 3.3: Tech Comparison of pH Reading devices.

Criteria	pH Test Strips	Digital pH Meter	pH Sensor
Measurement Capability	Basic, single point, manual	Measures pH at a single point via manual reading	Continuous pH monitoring in real-time
Data Accessibility	Manual Reading	Requires manual reading on a built-in display	Provides real-time digital or analog data
Cost	\$5 - \$15	\$20 - \$100	\$30 - \$150
Power Consumption	None	Minimal (battery-powered)	Typically < 1 Watt
Connectivity	None	None or limited (basic LCD display)	Analog/Digital output, interfaces with microcontrollers
Power Supply	None	Battery (typically AA or button cell)	Direct DC power (3.3V - 5V from a microcontroller)
Detection Range	Limited to manual, sample contact	Limited to the specific point of immersion	Continuous monitoring, typically 0-14 pH

We selected a pH sensor over a digital pH meter because it provides numerous benefits crucial for maintaining the optimal environment for aquatic life. A pH sensor offers continuous, real-time monitoring of the water's pH level, ensuring that any fluctuations are immediately detected and addressed. This constant

oversight is essential for the well-being of the fish, as even minor changes in pH can have significant impacts on their health. Unlike digital pH meters, which require manual readings and only provide periodic snapshots of the pH level, sensors ensure ongoing vigilance.

pH sensors offer higher precision and customization in readings. They can be configured to send alerts if the pH deviates from a specified range, allowing for immediate corrective actions. This level of accuracy and customization is not available with digital pH meters, which cannot be programmed to trigger alerts or automated responses based on specific thresholds. They can also be integrated into automated systems that manage other aspects of the fish tank, such as dosing systems to adjust pH levels or water changes.

3.1.4 pH Sensor Selection

Maintaining the correct pH level is crucial for the health and wellbeing of aquatic life in an aquarium. pH sensors enable a more proactive approach to maintaining the optimal environment for fish, providing the capability to quickly detect and respond to pH changes. Selecting an affordable and reliable waterproof pH sensor is essential for accurately monitoring and adjusting the pH levels. This comparison aims to identify the best-suited pH sensors that meet the project's requirements for accuracy, durability, and ease of integration at a more affordable price point.

Table 3.4: Part Comparison of possible pH Sensors.

Manufacturer	Model	Price	Size	Key Features
DFRobot	Gravity: Analog pH Sensor v2	From \$39.90	Probe length: 60mm, diameter: 12mm	Good accuracy (± 0.1 pH) Analog output
Milone Technologies	eTape Liquid Level Sensor (pH)	From \$49.95	Probe length: 120mm, diameter: 8mm	Good accuracy (± 0.05 pH) Analog output
DFRobot	Gravity: Analog pH Sensor / Meter Pro Kit	From \$56.90	Probe length: 90mm, diameter: 12mm	Good accuracy (± 0.1 pH) Analog output

The Gravity: Analog pH Sensor v2 is the superior choice among the available options due to its specialized design, ease of calibration, and extensive support for integration. Unlike other pH sensors, the Gravity: Analog pH Sensor v2 is specifically designed for aquariums and hydroponic systems, providing high stability and reliable readings over long periods. Its built-in temperature compensation ensures that pH measurements remain accurate despite variations in water temperature, which is critical for maintaining the delicate balance in a fish tank.

The sensor comes with a pre-calibrated electrode and an easy-to-follow calibration procedure, making it user-friendly and ensuring consistent accuracy with minimal effort. This feature is particularly beneficial for users who may not have extensive experience with pH monitoring equipment. Much like the DS18B20, the Gravity: Analog pH Sensor v2 is compatible with a wide range of microcontrollers which simplifies the integration process into our automated fish tank system.

The sensor also benefits from robust documentation and community support, which facilitates troubleshooting and enhances the overall user experience. Its rugged construction and waterproof probe ensure longevity and resilience in the aquatic environment, reducing maintenance needs and providing dependable performance. Overall, the Gravity: Analog pH Sensor v2 offers a blend of precision, durability, and ease of use, making it the ideal choice for effectively managing the pH levels in our fish tank.

3.1.5 Turbidity Readings

Turbidity measures the cloudiness or haziness of water caused by suspended particles such as algae, detritus, and waste products. High turbidity levels indicate poor water clarity, which can affect the overall aesthetic and health of the aquarium. Fish and other aquatic organisms thrive in clear water. High turbidity levels can cause stress, which weakens their immune systems and makes them more susceptible to diseases. By keeping turbidity levels in check, owners can perform necessary maintenance tasks, such as water changes and filter cleanings, on a regular schedule.

Digital Turbidity Meter

A digital turbidity meter is a handheld device designed to measure the turbidity of water at a specific point, it requires to take a manual sample into a vial, which is then placed into the reader. It features a built-in LCD display that shows the turbidity reading, making it easy to use and read. These meters are moderately priced, but are still somewhat accessible for many users. They are powered by batteries, providing portability and convenience for spot checks. Digital turbidity meters are suitable for hobbyists and small-scale applications where periodic manual measurements are sufficient.

Turbidity Sensor

A turbidity sensor is designed for continuous real-time monitoring of water clarity. These sensors provide digital or analog outputs that can be read by microcontrollers, making them ideal for integration into automated systems. Turbidity sensors are generally more cost-effective for continuous monitoring, with prices typically lower than those of digital turbidity meters. They require a direct DC power supply, often provided by the monitoring system, and consume minimal power. Turbidity sensors are perfect for applications that demand

constant turbidity monitoring and data logging, such as automated fish tank management systems.

Optical Particle Counter

Lastly, an optical particle counter offers advanced turbidity measurements by counting and sizing particles in water, providing detailed continuous monitoring. They require integration with a microcontroller for data display and analysis. While more expensive, they offer high precision and detailed data, making them suitable for applications requiring granular water quality analysis. Their medium power consumption and requirement for microcontroller power supply add complexity but offer advanced capabilities. The wide detection range and detailed particle data make optical particle counters ideal for environments where precise turbidity control is critical.

Table 3.5: Tech Comparison of Turbidity Reading devices.

Criteria	Digital Turbidity Meter	Turbidity Sensor	Optical Particle Counter
Measurement Capability	Measures turbidity at a single point via manual reading	Continuous turbidity monitoring in real-time	Continuous and detailed monitoring in real-time
Data Accessibility	Requires manual reading on a built-in display	Provides real-time digital or analog data	Provides real-time digital or analog data
Cost	\$50 - \$200	\$20 - \$80	\$100 - \$300
Power Consumption	Minimal (battery-powered)	Typically < 1 Watt	Medium to high (varies depending on equipment)
Connectivity	None or limited (basic LCD display)	Analog/Digital output, interfaces with microcontrollers	Analog/Digital output, interfaces with microcontrollers
Power Supply	Battery (typically AA or button cell)	Direct DC power (3.3V - 5V from a microcontroller)	Direct DC power (10V - 15V)
Detection Range	Limited to the specific point of immersion	Continuous monitoring across the entire tank	Wide range with detailed particle data

We selected a turbidity sensor over a digital turbidity meter because it provides several key advantages crucial for maintaining water clarity and the overall health of the aquatic environment. A turbidity sensor offers continuous, real-time monitoring, allowing for immediate detection of any changes in water turbidity. This constant monitoring is essential, as it ensures that any issues affecting

water clarity are quickly addressed, preventing harmful conditions for the fish. In contrast, digital turbidity meters require manual readings, providing only periodic snapshots of turbidity levels. This can result in delays in identifying water quality problems, potentially leading to adverse conditions for the fish before corrective measures are implemented.

3.1.6 Turbidity Sensor Selection

To ensure the clarity and quality of water in an aquarium, monitoring turbidity is essential. Selecting an affordable and reliable waterproof turbidity sensor is crucial for detecting changes in water clarity due to suspended particles. This table provides a comparison of affordable waterproof turbidity sensors, helping to select the most appropriate sensor for maintaining optimal water clarity within the fish tank without exceeding budget constraints.

Table 3.6: Part Comparison of possible Turbidity Sensors.

Manufacturer	Model	Price	Size	Key Features
Seeed Studio	Grove - Turbidity Sensor v1.2	From \$21.90	Probe length: 45mm, diameter: 33mm	Good accuracy Analog output
DFRobot	Gravity: Analog Turbidity Sensor	From \$24.90	Probe length: 42mm, diameter: 32mm	Good accuracy Analog output
DFRobot	Gravity: Analog Turbidity Sensor v2	From \$34.90	Probe length: 50mm, diameter: 30mm	High accuracy Analog output

The Gravity: Analog Turbidity Sensor is the better choice over the other two options due to its precise measurement capabilities, robust construction, and straightforward integration process. This sensor is designed to provide accurate and reliable measurements of water clarity, which is crucial for detecting the presence of particles that can affect the health of the fish. Its high sensitivity allows it to detect even minor changes in turbidity levels, ensuring that the water quality remains optimal.

This sensor is supported by comprehensive documentation and a big community of users, which can be helpful for troubleshooting and optimizing the system. The combination of precision, durability, ease of use, and integration capabilities makes the Gravity: Analog Turbidity Sensor the best option for maintaining clear and healthy water conditions in the fish tank, ensuring the well-being of the fish and the overall success of the tank management system.

3.1.7 LED Lights

LED lights play a crucial role in simulating natural light cycles, enhancing the looks of the aquarium, and promoting the health and well-being of the fish. Proper lighting is essential for maintaining the biological rhythm of the fish and encouraging natural behaviors. The ability to control the intensity and color of the LED lights through our app further allows for custom lighting conditions that can adapt to different species' needs and various times of the day. By integrating LED lights, we ensure a balanced and vibrant aquatic environment that contributes to the overall success of the project.

LED Light Bulbs

LED Light Bulbs are designed to replace traditional incandescent and fluorescent bulbs in various fixtures, offering a direct, energy-efficient alternative. They are known for their ability to produce a high-quality, bright light while consuming significantly less energy. This efficiency results in lower electricity bills and a reduced environmental footprint, making them a sustainable choice for lighting. They can be used in standard fixtures, providing focused, directional light that is ideal for general room lighting, task lighting, and decorative purposes.

LED Light Strips

LED Light Strips consist of multiple LEDs mounted on a narrow, flexible circuit board. LED strips are highly versatile and can be cut to specific lengths, bent around corners, and installed in tight spaces, making them ideal for accent lighting, under-cabinet lighting, and creative projects. Another thing to consider is that one of the key benefits of LED strips is their ability to provide even, diffuse lighting over a large area. LED strips are available in a wide range of colors, including RGB options that can be programmed for dynamic lighting effects.

LED Panel Lights

LED panel lights are designed to provide high light output with a longer lifespan of around 50,000 hours, making them a robust option for aquarium lighting. They offer moderate customization options, with some flexibility in installation and configuration. Costing between \$20 and \$100 per panel, they require a power adapter or controller, similar to LED strips. LED panel lights consume low to moderate power, providing efficient lighting solutions for larger or more demanding aquarium setups.

Table 3.7: Tech Comparison of LED Bulbs and LED Strips.

Criteria	LED Light Bulbs	LED Light Strips	LED Panel Lights
Light Output	Typically provides directional lighting	Offers flexible, linear lighting for even distribution	Directional, high output directional lighting

Lifespan	Long lifespan (15,000-50,000 hours)	Long lifespan (20,000-50,000 hours), but can vary based on usage and quality	Long lifespan (20,000-50,000 hours), but can vary based on usage and quality
Customization	Limited to bulb shape and size.	Customizable length, color, and brightness.	Moderate (some flexibility)
Cost	Generally lower initial cost per unit. Typically < \$12	Can be more expensive overall, depending on length and features. Typically < \$22	\$20 - \$100 per panel, depending on length and features
Power Supply	Typically uses standard household AC voltage	Requires a DC power supply, usually 12V or 24V	Requires a DC power supply, usually 12V or 24V
Power Consumption	Generally low power consumption (6-15 watts)	Variable power consumption (4-20 watts per meter) depending on length and density	Variable power consumption (4-20 watts per meter) depending on length and density

We selected LED light strips because they offer several significant advantages over LED light bulbs, making them a superior choice for many applications. One of the primary benefits is their flexibility and versatility. LED strips can be bent, cut, and shaped to fit various spaces and designs. They provide continuous, linear illumination, resulting in even and diffused lighting across a surface.

Additionally, LED light strips often come with advanced features like color-changing capabilities, dimmability, and programmable lighting effects. Their slim profile allows for installation in tight or narrow spaces, making them suitable for the fish tank helper. And in terms of energy efficiency, while both LED light strips and bulbs are energy-efficient, strips often allow for targeted lighting, reducing the need to illuminate an entire space and leading to additional energy savings, especially in accent or task lighting applications.

3.1.8 LED Light Strips Selection

When selecting an LED light strip, factors such as brightness, color options, control features, and waterproofing must be considered to ensure they meet the

specific requirements of an aquarium environment. Additionally, compatibility with the MCU is essential. By considering these factors, we can choose an LED light strip that meets the aesthetic and biological needs of the aquarium.

Table 3.8: Part Comparison of possible LED Lights Strips.

Manufacturer	Model	Price	Size	Key Features
Adafruit	NeoPixel Digital RGB LED Strip	\$24.95 (per meter)	1 meter	Microcontroller compatible Highly customizable Flexible Weatherproof options
HitLights	LED Strip Light	\$29.99 (per 16.4 feet)	16.4 feet	Remote controlled Dimmable Flexible Waterproof options
Govee	Smart LED Strip Lights	\$25.99 (per 16.4 feet)	16.4 feet	App controlled Wi-Fi/Bluetooth Voice control Flexible

The Adafruit NeoPixel Digital RGB LED Strip stands out as the better option for several compelling reasons. Firstly, it features high-quality WS2812B RGB LEDs, which are known for their vibrant colors and precise control capabilities. These LEDs allow for intricate lighting effects and detailed color animations, making the strip ideal for projects that require high levels of customization and dynamic lighting.

Another significant advantage of the Adafruit NeoPixel strip is its integration with microcontroller platforms such as Arduino and Raspberry Pi. This compatibility enables advanced programming and control, providing users with the flexibility to create complex lighting sequences and responsive lighting systems. Despite being priced at \$24.95 per meter, which might be higher than some alternatives, the investment is justified by the superior performance and extensive features offered.

3.1.9 Motors

Motors are devices developed to transform electrical energy into mechanical energy. This allows movement and operation in various applications. From the refrigerators and washing machines in our household, to the electric motors that power trains and other vehicles, we use motors every day. These motors have become an essential part of modern technology in which they enable automation, improve efficiency and enhance the convenience of our daily life. For this project we are using the motor to be powered by the PCB and will be used to dispense

the fish food. This will also be used to help control the amount of pH drops dispensed into the water. The choice for these motors narrows down between the servo motors and stepper motors, each comes with its unique characteristics and uses.

Servo Motors

Servo motors are well-known for their ability to precisely regulate angular or linear motion. This component functions by sending unique signals to the motor indicating how much to turn and in which direction.

This would be a good addition to use for our project to automate both the feeding process and the pH balance. It is known for its control method and precision. It uses a feedback loop with encoders that continuously monitor and modify the position, speed and torque.

This reduces manual effort to ensure the well-being of aquatic life and its environment which makes it a valuable component to our project.

Stepper Motors

Stepper Motors are a type of DC motor that breaks a full rotation into many equal steps. This component moves in discrete steps making them ideal for applications that need precise position and speed control.

Similar with servo motors, this would also be a good addition to use for our project to automate both the feeding process and pH balance. Unlike the servo motors though, it achieves its precise position without the feedback. Another thing for stepper motors is that it moves consistent torque at lower speeds, but it is limited to lower speeds due to its step-by-step movement.

Brushless DC Motors (BLDC)

Due to their adaptability, simplicity, ease of control and the ability to power consumer electronics, DC motors are an essential component that are widely used in various applications. These applications are toys, small appliances like electric toothbrushes and shavers as well as the cooling fans in computers.

This type of motor would be advantageous for our project. It has higher efficiency due because it has no brushes which reduces friction and energy loss. Another reason for this is its precision control using Electronic Speed Controller (ESC) to accurately dispense food and controlling the amount of pH drops.

Synchronous AC Motors

Synchronous AC Motors are known for their precise speed control and high efficiency. These types are in a form of alternating current (AC) in which the shaft rotates at the same frequency as the supply current making them ideal for applications where constant speed is essential.

This type of motor could be beneficial for our project if for precise speed control. We want to maintain the correct dosage of the food and pH dispensers. This motor maintains a constant speed regardless of load variations. Another thing is that due to its high efficiency at steady speeds. This can help with our power consumption making our overall project energy-efficient and cost-effective over time.

Table 3.9: Tech Comparison of Servo and Stepper Motors.

Criteria	Servo Motors	Stepper Motors	Brushless DC Motors (BLDC)	Synchronous AC Motors
Torque	High at low speeds	High, but can miss steps under load	High and consistent	High and consistent
Step Angle	Based on encoder	(200 full steps)	Based on encoder	Synchronized with supply frequency
Speed	600-5000 RPM	100-<1000 RPM	150-10000 RPM	600-3600 RPM
Power Consumption	5 or more Watts	5 or more Watts	Generally High	Generally High
Positioning	Continuous precise adjustments	Discrete steps	Continuous precise adjustments	Continuous precise adjustments
Cost	\$3-\$150	\$3-\$30	\$30-\$100+	\$10-\$100+

For our project, we need a quick, accurate and dependable control of the motors. pH dispenser is the component that requires these considerations, where maintaining exact dosing and quick adjustments are critical for the health and balance of the aquarium environment. Because of this, we are more likely to choose servo motors for our project.

Another reason why we prefer servo motors, is because stepper motors lack a feedback system, and it is known for missing steps under load which could result in inaccurate dosing for our dispensers.

3.3.10 Servo Motors Selection

When choosing the correct motors, it is important to consider the specific requirements for each task. For now, the thing that is the most important or a primary consideration for us is the precision. This will not only save us from preventing overfeeding or incorrect pH levels, but also benefit our project by maintaining optimal conditions for the overall aquarium itself.

Table 3.10: Part Comparison of possible Servo Motors.

Manufacturer	Model	Price	Power Consumption	Speed	Feedback System
TowerPro	SG90	~\$3	4.0-7.2 V	0.12 sec/60°	Potentiometer
TowerPro	MG996R	~\$10	4.8 - 7.2 V	0.19 sec/60°	Potentiometer
DSSERVO	DS3218	~\$15	4.8 - 6.8 V	0.16 sec/60°	Potentiometer

SG90 stands out for us primarily due to its size, precision and power consumption. Despite its size, this time of servo still offers sufficient precision for our components such as the food and pH dispensers where small controlled movements are crucial. Another thing is the cost because it is generally more affordable than the other servo motors in the market available.

3.1.11 Connectivity

In order to have real-time data transfer, remote monitoring and control various parameters within the aquatic environment, connectivity is an essential component of modern aquarium monitoring systems. Efficient connection enables the user to monitor environmental changes, fish behavior as well as their health and take immediate appropriate action when needed. This is important for maintaining ideal conditions and guarantees the health of aquatic life.

Another thing to consider for having an efficient connectivity allows for seamless integration of various components needed for the project. This includes the temperature and pH sensors, automated dispensers, air bubbles, LED lights and also the camera. These components are able to connect and communicate to one another with the use of either a mobile app or central control unit which provides an overall view of the aquarium's condition. Remote connectivity also benefits the user to observe and modify necessary settings from any location, which guarantees that the environment remains stable even when the user is not physically present.

The choice of connectivity for our project narrows down between Bluetooth and Wi-fi. These wireless communications are two of the common technologies used to connect devices and transfer data. Each of this technology has its own distinctive benefits and limitations depending on the particular requirements of the project.

Bluetooth

Bluetooth is known for connecting devices in close proximity for communication between devices. The ability to operate in the 2.4 Ghz ISM band and known for its low power consumption makes it perfect for battery-powered devices. This feature not only increases the battery life but also makes it more appropriate for devices and applications that require energy-efficient and seamless connectivity. This makes it a popular choice for straightforward, point-to-point communication between components.

Wi-fi

Wi-Fi in contrast to Bluetooth, it offers a much faster data transfer over greater distances and supports a broader range of devices in a more complex network environment. It offers a dependable connectivity that is suitable for large file transfers, high-speed internet access and streaming applications for it operates both on 2.4 GHz and 5Ghz bands. This connectivity is ideal for wide coverage and quick data throughput.

Below is a table highlighting the difference between the Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connectivity.

Ethernet

Ethernet in contrast to both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, is widely used to this day because of its reliability, high speed, and cost effectiveness. Unlike Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, which allows the user to do wireless connectivity, ethernet uses a combination of hardware components such as cables and switches. It also supports speed from 10 Mbps to 100 Gbps and beyond, catering the growing demands for data transfer and communication. This type of connectivity makes it a popular choice for many people due to its ease of use, involving simple plug-and-play hardware components, as well as its enhanced security making it ideal for protecting sensitive data and ensures secure communication.

Table 3.11: Comparison of Connectivity Technologies.

Criteria	Bluetooth	Wi-Fi	Ethernet
Range	Short-range (approximately 10 meters)	Long range (150 feet indoors and 300 feet outdoors)	Up to 100 meters
Data Transfer Rate	3-50 Mbps	Up to 600 Mbps	10 Mbps-10Gps
Power Consumption	0.5-3 Watts	1-5 Watts	0.3-5 Watts

Interference	2.4 GHz ISM (Less interference)	2.4-5 GHz (potential interference)	Minimal (shielded cable)
Security	SSP/AES-128 encryption	WPA2/WPA3	Varies
Cost	\$2-\$10	<\$20	\$2-\$20

We carefully considered this aspect, acknowledging that each connectivity option we compared has its own pros and cons. When choosing the right connectivity, the thing that is the most important or a primary consideration for this is having the user able to communicate anywhere around the world. This capability gives the user the ability to obtain real-time data collection and monitor well-being of aquatic life. Taking these into account, WiFi is our best choice for connectivity. This allows the user to track the overall environmental conditions and gives them the capability to make any changes throughout the tank as necessary as long as they have internet access.

3.1.12 Wi-Fi Board Selection

Wi-Fi is already integrated into the microcontroller unit (MCU). This device is included on for the project and having this existing connectivity capabilities of the MCU simplifies a lot of things. This includes the over design and process, reduces the cost, and gives us a little bit more confidence to ensure that the devices connected to the MCU will be compatible. Overall, taking advantage of the MCU's built-in features helps improve our project's system reliability and performance.

Table 3.12: Part Comparison of possible Wi-Fi enabled devices.

Manufacturer	Model	Price	Operating voltage	Op. Temp
Espressif Systems	ESP32-WROOM-32E Series N16R2	\$3-\$5	3.0V - 3.6V	-40°C to +85°C
Texas Instruments (TI)	MSP430	\$2-\$4	1.8V - 3.6V	-40°C to +85°C
Microchip Technology	PIC32MZ	\$8-\$15 USD	2.1V - 3.6V	-40°C to +85°C

ESP32 is our best bet for this considering that it has a dual-core CPU that enables for efficient multitasking and faster performance which is more than enough for our project. It also has an ease of integration where it simplifies the process of adding Wi-Fi capabilities while making it stable and reliable to our project.

3.1.13 Custom PCB & Development Boards

Choosing the type of central processing unit is one of the most important decisions since it will be in charge of controlling all the connected components and receiving and transferring data from the sensors. This decision can't be taken lightly since it will ensure that all the planned smart aquarium features can be implemented. Additionally, the chosen approach must result in a product that can operate reliably for years, easing the owner's mind and, as a result, ensuring optimal aquarium conditions for the well-being of the fish. With this in mind, we now consider the use of a custom PCB vs an off-the-shelf development board.

Custom PCB

We first investigate the use of a custom PCB. This approach comes with several advantages over a development board. A custom PCB offers the opportunity to be engineered only to include essential components, thus reducing points of failure and enhancing its lifespan. This allows the product to be compact, offering the consumers easy installation while also being compatible with different types of aquarium setups. The ability to choose the components offers the opportunity to select high-quality or industrial-grade components, further increasing reliability. Another benefit is that this allows us to target the product's requirements precisely. By doing so, we can target specific tasks, resulting in better performance, unlike with a development board, which targets a broader set of applications. At the same time, this means better optimization of the circuit, reducing unnecessary overhead with improved efficiency, and reducing costs by eliminating unnecessary components.

Whether a PSU or a battery is utilized, power consumption matters to power the smart aquarium. We can optimize consumption and tailor an efficient design by selecting low-power components. This approach would benefit a battery-operated design where the total operation time is at a premium. However, even if we were to go through the PSU route, this would still be beneficial for electricity savings. Ideally, the device will remain on for years, meaning a greener approach would be desirable. In general, choosing a custom PCB route allows full control over the hardware and software, but the downside is that it takes longer to develop since both areas must be built before the custom PCB is ready for use.

Development Boards

On the other hand, we have the option of choosing an off-the-shelf development board. This approach skips the research, design and development steps, and in doing so, it further contributes to faster development. It can be highly beneficial due to its ease of use. For example, some development boards can be plug and play, such as a Raspberry Pi. Note that there are other plug-and-play options. These boards can ship with a preloaded OS on a micro-SD, so they are ready for use after their initial setup.

Development boards tend to have a large community behind them, meaning there's extensive documentation that accelerates development when working with them, from developers contributing to libraries to countless written or video tutorials to better compatibility with various IDEs facilitating coding and debugging. These adhere to standard interfaces and therefore have better support than custom PCBs.

Peripheral support is typically better for development boards as well. They tend to offer GPIO pins, USB ports, HDMI outputs, serial interfaces, etc. This is a notable advantage over a custom PCB that would need to be designed to include any peripherals as needed. This can be a time-consuming/complex task, which would end up increasing development time. Therefore, the advantage of having built-in peripheral support allows for faster prototyping and reduced development time.

When it comes to its cost, the use of a development board could be beneficial for smaller projects such as this one. They offer a fixed cost so that we can choose a board based on the project's needs and budget. This board will be ready for use, helping avoid design costs, prototyping costs and components outsourcing.

In general, the key advantage of choosing a development board is its ease of use and ability to skip the hardware development phase. In addition, IDEs often offer features or plugins that can seamlessly interact with the hardware. More importantly, they are backed by a large community and abundant documentation. Last but not least, they can be easily repurposed as needed, therefore being a good investment in the long run.

Table 3.13: Tech Comparison of PCB and Dev Boards.

Criteria	Custom PCB	Development Board
Processing Power	Can be chosen to be as powerful as required.	The board can be chosen based on CPU power requirements.
Power Consumption	Can offer reduced power consumption based on design.	The board can be chosen based on power consumption requirements.

Scalability	Design is tailored as needed.	Fixed design.
Ease of Use	Hardware & Software must first be developed.	Ready to use.
Environmental Tolerance	Components can be chosen based on environmental requirements.	Limited board options based on environmental requirements.
Peripherals Support	Must be designed with the required support.	Includes a number of peripherals built-in.
Cost	Cheaper in the long run if limited to required components only.	Fixed cost at the start of a project.
Documentation	Limited by design changes.	Available.

3.1.14 Microcontroller

A microcontroller is a small integrated circuit that is designed for the control of specific tasks and peripherals. In essence, it's a smaller computer that has its own central processing unit (CPU), volatile and non-volatile memory, and input/output interfaces. They are widely used in embedded systems and consumer electronics products such as home appliances and gaming systems. However, they are often powered by a battery, so they are often designed to be low-powered. There are several types of microcontrollers, but among the common ones, we can find 8-bit, 16-bit and 32-bit microcontrollers. Choosing a microcontroller isn't a decision to take lightly, as it will be the brain of the operations of our project.

The main responsibilities of the microcontroller will be to receive and transfer the data gathered by three sensors, control two motors for the dispensers, and control an LED lighting system. If the stretch goals are implemented, then a live stream camera and bubbles system will also be activated. It will use UART, one-wire digital and analogue communications protocols, and the main power source will be DC. Fortunately, companies ship microcontrollers built into their own development board designs, and since many of these boards are open source, we can use their schematic and modify it to accommodate our project's needs, if at all.

To decide which microcontroller board we will use for our custom PCB, there's several factors or project specifications to be considered. Primarily, these include computing power to ensure the quick control of the connected peripherals and accurate processing of data, communication protocols to be used such as UART and analogue to digital, number of pins needed and operating voltage and the need for a compact size board. Considering the number of I/O pins needed, we

have six peripherals connected for a total of 17 connections, out of which we must ensure we have six individual data pins. As for the operating voltages, the temperature sensor utilizes a range of 3V to 5V, 3.3V to 5.5V for the pH sensor and 5V for the turbidity sensor.

Another important aspect to consider is memory size and total storage. We must ensure there's enough non-volatile storage for our code. As for memory size, we mostly need to consider the bit size of the data provided by the sensors to avoid losing accuracy. Since two of our sensors are analogue, there's no selectable resolution (bits) to be considered because the resolution of the sensor measurements will be determined by the analog-to-digital converter of the microcontroller in use. However, our temperature sensor utilizes a digital protocol with a 9-to-12-bit selectable resolution.

Finally, it's important we choose a microcontroller design backed by robust and clear documentation. The development is more likely to go faster if the team is able to look into past problems and how they were solved by the community behind a design.

3.1.15 Microcontroller Selection

The following section focuses on the comparison of microcontroller options including their features and specifications. The requirements detailed in the previous section must be satisfied to be able to build the smart aquarium. Towards the end of the section, we expect to identify the most suitable microcontroller that's able to handle the needed tasks as quickly as possible and efficiently.

Texas Instruments: MSP430FR6989

The MSP430FR6989 is a highly integrated microcontroller from the MSP430 family, designed for ultra-low power applications and created by Texas Instruments. This board's most notable features are 16-bit RISC architecture accompanied by a single core 16MHz of CPU frequency, 2KB of FRAM, 128KB of non-volatile memory, 12-bit ADC, 16-bit timer, support for communication protocols such as UART, SPI, and I2C among other features. Its most impressive features are the addition of a screen that can be used for debugging purposes and FRAM or Ferroelectric Random Access Memory, which allows for fast writing speed, high endurance, and low energy consumption. These are RAM features that are considered ideal for data logging, which is an important aspect of our project when the data is being reported by the sensors and then used within the mobile application. With this configuration in mind, we move on to verify if they can satisfy the needs of our project.

First, we investigate the speed of the CPU, amount of RAM, and storage. While 16MHz would work well for basic tasks such as reading data off the sensors, it's a single-core processor running at a low frequency, which can result in a

bottleneck when it comes to multiple queued requests by the app, working with the database and if the stretch goals were implemented adding a camera into the mix would be out of the question. The same problem is very likely to occur with the memory since 2KB RAM and 128 KB of storage is an extremely low spec, considering we are running a local serverless database, handling multiple inputs and outputs and storing code that handles all these tasks. On the bright side, this configuration supports a selectable resolution of up to 12-bit, which covers the sensor's requirements.

We now explore the required communication protocols, pin number and voltages. The project requires the communication protocols analogue to digital and UART, which the MSP430FR6989 satisfies. As for pin number, there's the necessary amount of PWD, DATA, VCC, and GND pins to check off the requirements for the motors, sensors, LEDs, and stretch goals if implemented. The project sensors require a range of voltages from 3V up to 5V, which the board is perfectly capable of handling while also having more than enough voltage headers.

We finally consider the documentation backing up the board. TI provides the schematic for the board, which is highly important if we want to create our custom PCB to cover the project's needs. There's also plenty of official documentation on the board's web page ranging from user's guide manuals to more technical literature. The community is still very active since it's a very popular board for education and learning as well as open-source projects. Additionally, there's many resources found on its forums.

With all of these considerations in mind, even though the board is still officially supported by TI and covers most of the project's needs, the team has decided to explore other microcontroller options. The CPU, RAM and storage configuration could potentially lead to a bottleneck during development based on the number of operations it must handle. The board design also does not support a Wi-Fi connection which is essential for the product's design.

Microchip Technology: Curiosity PIC32MX470

The Curiosity PIC32MX470 is among the most popular boards of the PIC32 family of microcontrollers designed by Microchip Technologies. It's a versatile board suited for various applications, from simple projects to more complex development. The microcontroller's configuration is a single-core 32-bit CPU running at 120 MHz paired with 128 KB RAM and 512KB of non-volatile flash memory with on-chip temperature measurement capability. The Curiosity PIC32MX470 also supports several communication protocols such as UART, SPI, I2C and analogue to digital with an ADC module supporting 10-bit resolution. Other features include a built-in Bluetooth 4.2 module, several 16-bit and 32-bit timers/counters, an X32 header for audio modules and two mikroBUS sockets, among other general development board features.

The addition of the mikroBUS sockets is one of the board's most notable features and highly beneficial to our project since it allows for the use of MikroElektronika Click boards addons. These boards provide several easy to add functionalities to the custom PCB. For example, sensors, actuators, communication modules such as Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, displays, and more making the PIC32MX470 a highly customizable board.

Now, we investigate if this microcontroller/board design is suitable for our project's requirements, starting off by looking into the CPU, RAM and storage. The PIC32MX470 sports a 7.5 times faster CPU than the previously discussed microcontroller. This would absolutely address our concern of needing to process peripheral and app requests quickly. However, this comes with the downside of remaining at a single core, which again could potentially be a bottleneck under peak performance scenarios. We've now seen a considerable increase in RAM memory, but unfortunately, the non-volatile memory that this configuration is paired with is still too low for the project's needs. This can be solved by utilizing external storage, such as a micro-SD, but the team prefers to keep this as a backup option for several reasons. Performance is worse than that of utilizing the MCU's flash memory, and the reliability of a micro-SD card is lower than that of flash memory. This last point is highly important since micro-SDs can suffer from tear and wear much faster, leading to data corruption. Additionally, it would be bad practice to create a consumer product with such a flaw of having removable code or code that can be easily tampered with.

The PIC32MX470 comes with up to five UART modules, two 4-wire SPI models, two I2C modules and a 10-bit ADC module fulfilling the communication protocols requirements of the project. However, the ADC module is another shortcoming of this board since we would lose precision with our temperature sensor ranging from 8-bit to 12-bit resolution. The microcontroller board design also includes the necessary voltage headers ranging from 3.3V to 5V, which satisfies the project's peripherals requirements.

Documentation-wise, this microcontroller benefits from a strong community presence. Microchip's product web page contains all the necessary guides to understand the hardware and how to get started. For example, it provides user guides, data sheets, software libraries, and technical support, among other resources. There's also a space for the user community full of discussions about projects from developers, engineers, and hobbyists, which are packed with questions, examples, and valuable insight related to Microchip's products.

Overall, this microcontroller would be able to handle every task thrown at it. This controller has the ability to easily integrate extra functionality through addons, fulfills voltage and communication protocol requirements, and is backed by an active and strong community. However, it has a few notable shortcomings. The processor remains at a single core, which could lead to bottlenecks and affect the performance of the final product. There's low built-in storage, which could

force the team to rely on external storage, putting the integrity of the entire device at risk by exposing its code and files to the consumer. Finally, its ADC module would reduce the precision of our temperature sensor. For these reasons, the team has decided to move on from this microcontroller option and investigate a multicore and higher storage solution.

Espressif: ESP32-WROOM-32E- N16R2

The ESP32-WROOM-32 E series N16R2 belongs to the ESP32 family of microcontrollers created by Espressif. It's designed for IoT applications, and it offers robust connectivity options and extensive peripheral support in a compact and cost-effective package. The microcontroller configuration is built around a 32-bit dual-core LX6 microprocessor at a frequency of 240MHz, a 40 MHz crystal oscillator, with 520 KB SRAM, 2MB of PSRAM, 448 KB ROM and 16MB of non-volatile SPI flash memory. It also supports several communication protocols such as UART, SPI, and I2C, among others and features an ADC with a selectable resolution of 12-bit. The board includes Bluetooth 4.2 and Wi-Fi capabilities featuring Wi-Fi 5 or the 802.11b/g/n standard on a 2.4GHz band reaching speeds up to 150Mbps with a built-in PCB antenna. Other features include IR, a pulse counter, a capacitive touch sensor and an SD card interface.

Now, let's delve into whether this microcontroller is well-suited for the project at hand. The configuration offered by this microcontroller sports a dual-core processor now at double the clock rate speed of the previously discussed PIC32 microcontroller. With the multicore requirement checked and much faster speeds, we can confidently say this microcontroller would be able to handle all the smart aquarium tasks quickly while also running a local database that interacts with the mobile application. As for RAM and flash storage, we are now presented with a much higher amount than for previously discussed microcontrollers, eliminating concerns about having enough for storing and running our code. This board design also supports all the necessary communication protocols, and thanks to the 12-bit ADC, we wouldn't have any precision issues with the sensors. There are also the necessary voltage headers ranging from 3.3V to 5V, covering our project's peripherals requirements.

As for documentation for the ESP32 family of boards and microcontrollers, developers consider it quite comprehensive and supportive for a wide variety of hobbyist projects and commercial products. Espressif provides extensive official documentation that includes datasheets, technical reference manuals, SDK documentation and hardware design guidelines. Due to the popularity of the ESP32, there are also numerous tutorials and forums covering all sorts of projects from developers, engineers and hobbyists. There are also various forums and platforms, such as GitHub, providing code examples. The maker, Expressif, is also very active in updating the available official documentation to stay up to date with SDK changes, bug fixes and the latest features.

In general, this microcontroller is perfectly capable of quickly handling the smart aquarium's requests as well as the prompts produced by the mobile application thanks to its higher frequency than previously considered microcontrollers and its multi core processor. It also sports higher non-volatile storage and more RAM, ensuring great overall performance. The ADC module is fully capable of handling the sensors with full precision, and one of the most important features is the capability of Wi-Fi. The final product will connect to Wi-Fi to interact with the mobile application, and if stretch goals are implemented, then there will be a camera livestream that will make use of it as well. For the reasons listed above, this microcontroller is at the top of our list of options.

Table 3.14: Part Comparison of possible Microcontrollers.

Criteria	MSP430FR6989	Curiosity PIC32MX470	ESP32WROOM32 E- N16R2
Architecture	16-bit	32-bit	32-bit
CPU Frequency	16-MHz	120MHz	240 MHz
RAM Size	2KB FRAM	128KB RAM	520 KB SRAM + 16 KB SRAM in RTC + s 2 MB PSRAM
Memory Size	128KB of nonvolatile FRAM	512KB Flash	16 MB
GPIO Pins	83	43	38
Low-Power Mode	Yes	Yes	Yes
UART	Yes	Yes	Yes
SPI	Yes	Yes	Yes
I2C	Yes	Yes	Yes
ADC Supported Resolution	12-bit	10-bit	12-bit
Wi-Fi	No	Via Add-ons	Yes
Operating Temperature	-40°C to +85°C	-40°C to +105°C	-40 to +85 °C
Operating Voltage	1.8 to 3.6 V	2.3 to 3.6 V	3.0 to 3.6 V
Package	LQFP-80	QFN-64	SMD-38
Cost	\$20.00	\$44.26	\$16.00

For our smart aquarium project, we have chosen to create our custom PCB based on Espressif's ESP32-WROOM-32E Series N16R2. This microcontroller

offers several low-power modes; however, this doesn't pertain to our project since this means Wi-Fi would be turned off when any of these modes are active. With that said, there are several benefits to choosing this microcontroller design. It was important to find a compact design that could fit within the enclosure we had in mind. Since this will be an attachment to home aquariums, we want to avoid a bulky design so that it can be easily installed and look like it belongs to the tank's setup. The ESP32 has 38 GPIO pins, which is more than enough while remaining under more than half the amount present on Ti's board and slightly above Microchip's boards. This will ensure that our compact design requirement is met, and any board replacements will be much simpler and cheaper.

Moving onto key features, the ESP32 is equipped with a dual-core processor and sufficient memory to handle all the tasks required by the smart aquarium's design with ease. It also comes with a Wi-Fi module, which is an essential component for the aquarium since it will be set up and controlled by a mobile application. All the communication protocols needed by the selected components are supported, and we won't lose the precision of the components thanks to the ESP32 ADC resolution. The ESP32 can be programmed in C and C++, and while the team isn't as familiar with C++ if we had to use it, the features and design are backed by excellent documentation and a very active community, which would make development perfectly doable.

With these points in mind, the team has concluded that Espressif's ESP32-WROOM-32-E Series N16R2 is the most suitable microcontroller for the project's needs since it includes all the needed features at a low cost and without going overboard with unnecessary hardware.

3.1.16 AC - DC Converters

When choosing the proper topology for AC - DC converters, there is a lot to consider through a large variety of advantages and disadvantages between each. It's important for us to choose the proper topology because it can cause significantly cause impact to the efficiency and performance of our device. Given the scope of work and what requirements we have explained to allow our device to work to its full capabilities, we have laid out different topologies we have considered to fit what we need to make our device function at its peak. Below are the thorough examinations of the strengths, weaknesses, and applications of each topology and the key considerations that we as a team have decided that will benefit our design the most.

Flyback Converter

Flyback converters are a type of isolated buck-boost (step-up or down) AC-DC converter that has the inductor replaced with a transformer. It converts the AC input into a smooth DC voltage through rectification and filtering. When the power switch (like a MOSFET) is on, the DC voltage charges the transformers magnetic

field but when off the transformers secondary winding has the energy transferred to it to once again rectify and filter the energy for a stable DC output. The transformer provides a safety isolation and a PWM controller that adjusts the switch's duty cycle. Flybacks are valuable with the efficiency and versatility this converter has due to its ability to handle a wide range of load conditions and inputs for a large diversity of applications. The feedback mechanism introduced in the converter allows for precise voltage regulation to ensure consistent performance even if there are varying load demands or fluctuations in the input voltage. Considerably more safe for electronic devices that are more sensitive due to the electrically isolated output from the input. Although the disadvantages that the flyback converter has is voltage stress, more noise, more complex design, lower efficiency at higher frequencies, and cost.

Push-Pull Forward Converter

The push-pull converter differs from the typical buck, boost, or buck-boost converters as it is a type of isolated DC - DC converter with an added rectifier stage prior to being fed into the push-pull converter. This converter rectified and filtered the AC input to generate the DC voltage that is then driven through the primary winding of the transformer. But unlike the flyback converter, this converter uses two power switches (either MOSFETs or BJTs) that creates an alternating magnetic field that transfers and stores the energy in the secondary winding during each cycle.

Within the secondary winding is where the energy is further filtered and rectified to provide a smooth DC output.. As a highly efficient converter, the symmetrical operation of two power switches allows for minimal stress on the components and enhances the durability and longevity of the controllers. Similar to the flyback converter, it also offers electrical isolation and a feedback control system to adjust the switching to ensure a stable output voltage and safety capabilities to protect sensitive electronics from the input voltage spikes and electrical noise. Like the Flyback, the disadvantages that the Push-pull converter has is the increased design complexity, switching losses due to needing more than one switch, complex control and drive requirements, lower efficiency under certain conditions, and cost.

Quasi - Resonant Flyback

The quasi-resonant flyback converter is an upgraded version of the traditional flyback converter, designed to reduce switching losses and lower electromagnetic interference (EMI). It operates in a quasi-resonant mode, utilizing zero-voltage or zero-current switching techniques to enhance efficiency and reduce EMI. This makes it ideal for applications where space and noise are critical factors, such as portable electronics or small power adapters. However, the increased control complexity of the quasi-resonant flyback converter requires meticulous design and implementation. Despite this complexity, its ability to offer

high efficiency and low EMI in a compact form factor makes it a preferred choice for modern power supply applications.

Table 3.15: Tech Comparison of AC-DC Converters.

Criteria	Flyback (Step-Up or Step-Down)	Push-Pull Forward (Step-Up or Step-Down)	Quasi-Resonant Flyback Converter (Step-Down Buck)
Efficiency	Medium	High	High
Heat Generated	Medium - High	Low - Medium	Low - Medium
Low Load Efficiency	High	Low	Medium - High
Noise Output (Ripple)	High	Low	High
Design Flexibility	Narrow Input Voltage Range	Wide Input Voltage Range	Medium
Complexity	Low	High	Low - Medium
Cost:	High	Medium	Medium

As a group, we have chosen Flyback converters as they are ideal for small-scale projects that use AC to DC conversion. Due to simplicity, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness are suited for our low to medium-power applications because the design only needs a single compact component to save us space and reduce the design complexity. This design has an electrical isolation between the output and input and can handle various input voltages. With such adaptability and our cost, size, and simplicity constraints, the flyback was the right choice for our project.

3.1.17 AC - DC Converter Selection

As we don't have an external battery or power, having the AC to DC converter allows for our devices that use DC power to receive the necessary voltage to work properly. At the same time, having this converter allows it to have a more stable and consistent DC output voltage and puts less stress on the other components that further filter and step-down or step-up the voltage to meet the different requirements of the overall system.

UCC28C44QDRQ1

Designed as a fixed-frequency flyback converter that uses peak current-mode control, it supports two configuration options: primary-side regulation using an auxiliary winding or secondary-side regulation with an opto-coupler. This converter operates at a high frequency up to 1MHz and minimizes startup and operational currents and improves overall efficiency. Equipped with a fast current sensing mechanism that ensures a quick response time of 35ns from sensing to output. To include, they are able to handle peak output currents of up to $\pm 1A$ which enables direct driving of large external MOSFETs externally. Lastly, this offers flexibility for various power supply applications that are in demand for precise control and efficient performance.

UCC28C45QDRQ1

Similar to the previous device as a fixed-frequency flyback converter utilizing peak current-mode control, this device instead offers options for UVLO and maximum duty-cycle limits. Operating at frequencies up to 1MHz as well while also minimizing initial startup currents and ongoing power consumption to improve overall efficiency. Featuring a fast response time of 35 ns from current sensing to output and to also be able to handle peak output currents of $\pm 1A$ to enable direct driving of large external MOSFETS. Offering similar flexibility to offer precise regulation and high efficiency.

UCC28C54QDRQ1

Part of the UCC28C5x-Q1 family that comprises advanced current-mode PWM controllers that are designed to drive both silicon (Si) and silicon carbide (SiC) MOSFETs across diverse applications. This device represents a more resilient and upgraded version compared to other similar series produced. With the introduction of the new ULVO thresholds that are tailored for reliable operation with SiC MOSFETS but also able to support existing thresholds for Si MOSFETS. Boasting a maximum VDD voltage rating of 30V (previously at 20V), optimizing gate drive capabilities, and eliminating the need for an external low-dropout regulator. Finally, the improvements of this device enhance efficiency and performance through the utilization of advanced semiconductor technology.

Table 3.16: Part Comparison of possible AC-DC Converters.

Model	UCC28C44QDRQ1	UCC28C45QDRQ1	UCC28C54QDRQ1
Brand	Texas Instruments	Texas Instruments	Texas Instruments
Input Voltage (Min-Max)	9V - 18V	7.6V - 20V	28V

Switching Frequency (kHz)	1 kHz - 1 MHz	1 kHz - 1 MHz	100 kHz - 1 MHz
Max Duty Cycle (%)	48%	48%	50%
Operating Temperature Range (°C)	-40°C to 125°C	-40°C to 125°C	-40°C to 150°C
Type	Flyback	Flyback	Flyback
Cost (Per Unit)	\$1.88	\$1.88	\$1.99

Overall, we chose to go with the UCC28C44QDRQ1 as it provided the features that we desired for our project. Since we aren't using any external battery or other power source, it was important to choose a proper converter that we can trust to handle high frequencies and be able to have a quick response time. Lastly, just having the flexibility, and precise control for efficient performance allows the other parts we have chosen to have an easier time handling the output voltage and current provided from this converter.

3.1.18 DC - DC Converter

When choosing the proper topology for DC to DC converters there was a lot to consider like the AC to DC topology. For the common approach of power supply systems to achieve more efficiency, reliability, and versatile power management, having the combination of AC to DC and DC to DC converters allows the device or system to better meet various requirements and challenges. There are various advantages and disadvantages that can impact the efficiency and performance of the device and so it's important to carefully consider which fits the requirements. Below are the thorough examinations of the strengths, weaknesses, and applications of each topology and the key considerations that we as a team have decided that will benefit our design the most.

Buck Converter

The Buck converter is a step-down converter that produces an output voltage that is less than the original input voltage. For an ideal buck converter, the output voltage is equal to the supply voltage and product of the switching duty cycle. It works with a power switch (typically a MOSFET or IGBT) that allows the alternation between two different states and when activated, current flows through the inductor to store energy. When off, the stored energy is released from the inductor to the diode and lastly to the load which ensures a continuous flow of current. The capacitor filters out the output to provide the stable DC voltage. With an efficiency often exceeding 80% and precise voltage control, the buck converter has the versatility to extend to various applications due to stable

and reliable power in compact form. Even with all the positives, the buck converter's disadvantages include design complexity, reduced efficiency when there are low load conditions from switching losses, component stress, and high heat.

Boost Converter

The Boost converter is a step-up converter that efficiently increases the input voltage to an equal or higher output voltage. Like the buck converter, energy is stored in the inductor when the power switch (typically a MOSFET) is in the switch-on phase. During the switch-off phase the boost converter differs from the buck converter when the stored energy flows to the diode as the output voltage is instead increased while the output current decreases.

The output capacitor still smooths out the voltage to provide a stable high output voltage from a lower input voltage. With the design of boost converters, it is important to consider the two types of conduction modes for boost converters which are continuous conduction mode (CCM) or discontinuous conduction mode. Each mode differs with their behavior of inductor current and can affect the performance, efficiency, and design criteria. Overall the boost converter is still highly efficient by being able to often exceed an efficiency of 90%, and has the versatility to operate over a wide range of input voltages while still providing a stable and regulated output. As great as it is, its disadvantages like the buck converter include a complex design, component stress, reduced efficiency at low load conditions and high heat. But it also has reduced efficiency at handling high output currents.

Cuk Converter

The Cuk converter is a type of DC to DC converter that combines features from both buck and boost converters, allowing it to adjust voltage levels up or down efficiently. One of its key advantages is its ability to maintain a continuous output voltage, which ensures stable power delivery. It also excels in reducing input ripple current, which enhances the quality of the power supplied to sensitive electronic devices. These attributes make the Cuk converter ideal for compact applications where consistent, clean power with minimal fluctuations is crucial, such as in portable medical equipment and telecommunications devices. Its versatility in handling various input voltages while ensuring reliable output makes the Cuk converter a preferred choice for applications requiring efficient and precise voltage regulation.

Table 3.17: Tech Comparison of DC-DC Converters.

Criteria	Buck (Step-Down)	Boost (Step Up)	Cuk Converter (Step-Up or Step-Down)
Efficiency	High	High	Medium-High
Heat Generated	Low-High: Condition Dependent	Low-High: Condition Dependent	Medium
Low-Load Efficiency	High	Low	Medium
Noise-Output (Ripple)	Low	High	Medium-High
Design Flexibility	Narrow-Input Voltage Range	Wide Input Voltage Range	Medium
Complexity	Medium	High	Medium
Cost	Medium	Medium	Medium

As a group we have chosen the DC to DC Buck converter because we see this as the optimal choice for small design applications due to its efficiency, simplicity, and versatility. It efficiently steps down a higher input voltage to a lower output voltage, minimizing power loss and heat generation compared to other converter types. This efficiency is crucial for small-scale projects where conserving energy and maximizing battery life are priorities. The Buck converter's straightforward design facilitates easier implementation and reduces overall complexity in circuitry, making it ideal for applications where space is limited and cost-effectiveness is key. Its ability to maintain stable output voltage and handle varying input voltages ensures reliable performance across different operating conditions. Overall, the combination of high efficiency, simplicity, and adaptability makes the Buck converter an excellent choice for powering small electronic devices, ensuring optimal performance and longevity in compact designs.

3.1.19 DC - DC Converter Selection

Having both DC to DC converters paired with a voltage regulator might not be necessary but in our case it's for the added efficiency and longevity of our components that we have chosen. Having a middle device that can further step down or step up the voltage that is outputted from the AC to DC converter allows for a more precise and efficient voltage for our more sensitive equipment. As previously stated, it allows for the longevity of our components by helping

mitigate heat generation, power consumption loss, and enhance overall system performance, reliability and flexibility for the different power requirements.

LTM4673

As an advanced DC/DC step-down module that has four outputs and integrated power management capabilities. This device combines dual 12A and dual 5A channels within a wide input voltage range of 4.5V to 15V while supporting output voltages ranging from 0.6V to 3.3V for the 12A channels and 0.6 to 5.5V for the 5A channels that require only basic input and output capacitors for operation. Featuring a convenient 2-wire serial interface for precise output adjustment, tuning, and programmable sequencing. Also equipped with a built in 16-bit ADC that monitors input and all output voltages, currents, and temperatures. Lastly, it offers substantial protection for overcurrent, undercurrent, voltage, and temperature limits across all four output channels.

LTM4671

Similar to the LTM4673, this model is a quad-output step-down micromodule regulator that delivers dual 12A and 5A outputs and has a combination of switching controllers, power FETs, and support components all in a single package. It operates with a voltage range of 3.1V to 20V and supports output voltages of 0.6V to 3.3V for 12A channels and 0.6V and 5.5V for the 5A channels that are each configured by a single external resistor. For the operation, there is a need for only bulk input and output capacitors. Lastly, this device also offers fault protection, for overvoltage, overcurrent, and even over temperature safeguards.

LTM8051

Similar to the other two devices, this is also a quad-output with a 40V max input and a 1.2A step-down silent switcher μ Module regulator. The setup of this device allows for reduced EMI while providing high efficiency even with switching frequencies from 300kHz to 3MHz. Operating over a broad input range of 3V to 40V and supporting output voltages from 0.8V to 8V, it is all adjustable from a single resistor. Only needing a bulk input and output filter capacitor for the final design.

Table 3.18: Part Comparison of possible DC-DC Converters.

Model	LTM4673	LTM4671	LTM8051
Brand	Texas Instruments	Texas Instruments	Texas Instruments
Efficiency	93%	95%	90%
Input Voltage (Min-Max)	4.5V - 15V	3.1V - 20V	3V - 40V

Output Voltage (Min-Max)	0.6 - 5.5V	0.6 - 5.5V	0.8V to 8V
Output Current (Max)	6A (Dual Output)	14A (Dual output)	1.2A
Type	Buck	Buck	Buck
Cost (Per k.u.)	\$35.07	\$32.35	\$10.63

Overall, we chose to go with the LTM4673 as it fits our specifications and meets the requirements for the AC - DC converter and voltage regulator that we have chosen. The features of the LTM4673 are similar to the other two components chosen but offer a voltage range that is within our components parameters. This may not be as efficient or as cheap as the other selections, but this is more tailored to what we need for our design. With Texas Instruments being reliable and well-known as manufacturers, they have provided the proper documentation on how to properly implement this for our pcb. So we chose the LTM4673 as our DC - DC converter to further step down the voltage to a more stable and precise value to give more longevity and protection for the other components in our design.

3.1.20 Voltage Regulation

The use of voltage regulation is a must due to the various voltage requirements required of many different components in the systems involved. To ensure the reliability of the operation of the devices and systems within the design, a stable and consistent voltage supply is crucial for the longevity and protection of the components.

Voltage regulators are a key component and have two primary types which are linear and switching regulators. Both types have their own individual advantages, applications, and characteristics which may make one or the other stand out more depending on the design specifications. Linear regulators have more simplicity in design, low cost and noise but in turn have lower efficiency if there's a large disparity between the input and output voltage. While switching regulators, which has better efficiency and reliability at the cost of design simplicity and more noise.

Linear Regulator

As a step-down converter, linear regulators will always have an output voltage that is lower than the input. This means that there is a minimum voltage difference between the V_{in} and V_{out} needed to allow the regulator to work properly. There are two types of linear regulators, series and shunt. Series regulators are placed in a series between a load and power supply, while shunt regulators are placed in parallel between a load and power supply. A common

linear series regulator is low-dropout (LDO) and they use a transistor that is controlled by a negative-feedback circuit that produces a stable output voltage.

Unlike the switching regulator, linear regulators aren't able to regulate the desired output voltage if the V_{out} is greater than V_{in} minus the $V_{dropout}$ and any excess power is dissipated in the pass transistor as heat. With a simple design, low noise, fast transient response and cost effectiveness it's worth considering for low power or noise sensitive applications.

Switching Regulator

A switching regulator is different then the linear as it uses a switching element to transform the incoming power supply to a pulsed voltage. By turning on a switch (MOSFET or FET), power is then supplied until the voltage that is desired is achieved. The energy stored in the inductors and capacitors that was supplied is delivered to the output.

Unlike the linear regulator, the way the switching regulator is set up allows for efficient voltage supply while keeping heat generation at a minimum for applications that require more out of the power supply. At the same time, it provides flexibility for designs as the switching regulator is offered in four common different output formats which are Buck, Boost, Buck-boost, and Inverting. The variety of formats allow for a range of efficiency for the output voltage if it needs to be stepped up or down for a design.

With the versatility and efficiency it's important to note that the switching regulator's downsides include the complexity of the design, slow transient response, louder noise, and cost. But should be highly considered for high current and power applications, wide input voltage range, flexibility, and or power-sensitive situations.

Table 3.19: Tech Comparison of Linear and Switching Regulators.

Criteria	Linear Regulator	Switching Regulator		
Flexibility (Types)	Buck	Buck (Step-Down)	Boost (Step-Up)	Buck-Boost (Step-Up or Down)
Efficiency	Low - Medium	High	High	High
Heat Generated	Medium - High	Low	Low	Low
Complexity	Low	Medium	Medium - High	High
Noise Output (Ripple)	Low	Medium	High	Medium

Cost	Low	Medium	Medium - High	High
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As a group we have chosen the Buck-type switching regulator because they are considered top-tier voltage regulators for multiple reasons. They are highly efficient, often exceeding 90%, by converting excess input voltage into current instead of heat, unlike linear regulators. This high efficiency is essential for battery-powered devices, where energy conservation is crucial. Buck converters are also very versatile, effectively stepping down voltage with minimal power loss, making them suitable for a broad range of applications, from small portable electronics to large industrial systems.

Their capability to handle wide input voltage ranges while providing stable output voltage ensures consistent performance under varying conditions. Modern buck regulators also feature integrated protections like overcurrent protection, thermal shutdown, and soft start, which enhance their reliability and simplify their use in complex electronic designs. With their outstanding efficiency, versatility, and advanced features, buck-type switching regulators are the best choice for efficient and reliable voltage regulation.

3.3.21 Switching Regulator Selection

With the inclusion of a DC to DC converter paired with the AC to DC converter a voltage regulator might be unnecessary but it's included for the added protection and fine tuning of our design. By allowing the DC to DC converter the freedom to step up or down the voltage, the voltage regulator helps to fine tune the output voltage to a more precise and stable value that helps to filter noise and maintain a constant output despite variations in input voltage or load conditions.

LMR51430

As a versatile simple switcher synchronous buck converter that's designed for industrial applications, this regulator is capable of delivering up to a 3A of current and has an input range of 4.5V to 36V. It is able to support 500 kHz and 1.1 MHz switching frequencies that enable the use of small inductors for a compact design. This device is available in both the PFM and FPWM versions and it offers high efficiency at light loads and consistent at frequencies with minimal output voltage ripple across the loads. The device also includes a built-in soft start and compensation circuits that minimize the need for external components while also offering protective features such as cycle by cycle current limit, short circuit protection, and thermal shutdown to prevent excessive power dissipation.

LM2596

As an integrated step-down switching regulator, this device is capable of driving 3A loads with excellent line and load regulations. This is available in multiple

fixed output voltages of 3.3V, 5V, 12V and an adjustable version. While requiring minimal external components, it also features internal frequency compensation and a fixed-frequency oscillator that operates at 150 kHz that enables the use of smaller filter components. Other additional features include a $\pm 4\%$ output voltage tolerance, $\pm 15\%$ oscillator frequency tolerance, and an external shutdown with 80 μA standby current. Lastly it has built-in protections such as frequency-reducing current limit and over temperature shutdown.

LM22676MR-ADJ/NOPB

This device is a step-down switching regulator design towards high voltage applications and integrates all essential functions that require only a few external components. Featuring a 42V N-channel MOSFET switch that is able to supply up to a 3A load current, it is able to boast a staggering 90% efficiency with strong line and load regulations. Like the other two devices, the LM22676 is able to offer a wide range between the input and output voltages and includes an internal loop compensation that eliminates the need for external calculations. With the regulator having both a fixed 5V and adjustable output versions, it is able to operate at a 500kHz switching frequency for compact external components. With a built-in 500 μs soft-start, and protections for thermal shutdown and current limiting guards for overload, it provides all the necessary applications.

Table 3.20: Part Comparison of possible Voltage Regulators.

Model	LMR51430	LM2596	LM22676MR-ADJ /NOPB
Brand	Texas Instruments	Texas Instruments	Texas Instruments
Input Voltage (Min-Max)	4.5V - 36V	4.5-40V	4.5V - 42V
Output Voltage (Min-Max)	0.6V - 34.2V	3.3V - 37V	1.3V - 37V
Switching Frequency (kHz)	500 kHz - 1.1 MHz	150 kHz	500 kHz
Output Current	3A	3A	3A
Type	Buck	Buck	Buck
Cost (Per Unit)	\$1.51	\$4.98	\$5.59

Overall, we chose to use the LMR51430 as our voltage regulator as it provided a versatile set of features that we desired to not only increase efficiency. By having the capability to support an input range of 4.5V to 36V, it allows for high efficiency at light loads and is consistent at frequencies with minimal output voltage.

It includes a soft start that minimizes the need for external components and offers necessary protective features to keep the longevity of our devices. With this component being manufactured by Texas instruments, it allows us to have a reliable data sheet to go off of and documentation to help properly implement this device into our design. Cost wise, it is the cheapest of the three and is more than capable of meeting the requirements and specifications of the design needing 5V and 3.3V for our smaller components.

3.2 Software Research

Software research and considerations are important the same way as hardware investigation. This way we can guarantee the highest possible performance and ensure the compatibility with microcontroller units (MCUs), sensors, dispensers and other essential components required for the project. This research helps us understand and ensure that the software chosen communicates well and works together efficiently.

Effective and efficient software research also allows the user to create reliable systems and develop software that performs well, meets user needs, and possibly supports future technology advancements.

3.2.1 PCB Design Software

Printed Circuit Board (PCB) not only serves as a base where each electronic component is mounted and connected but also shows how well the final product performs, how easily it can be manufactured and how reliable it is.

When it comes to designing a PCB, a carefully thought-out plan for the layout ensures that electrical signals flow efficiently between components. This includes setting up the components in a way that minimizes interference and maximizes its performance. This way it prevents signal loss and electromagnetic interference.

Another thing that we need to consider alongside designing the PCB is finding the software for it. Choosing the correct software can greatly increase output and efficiency by providing tools that make it easier to manage projects. The software itself also needs to be user-friendly to reduce learning curve and errors so the user can easily understand how to use it properly.

Altium Designer

“Altium Designer is a PCB and electronic design automation software package for printed circuit boards.”

Developed by Altium Limited, this software includes a feature that enables the designers to work efficiently and effectively on complex projects for it unifies several PCB design components into a single platform. This reduces the

likelihood of errors and provides a smooth transition between different design stages.

Another feature consists of sophisticated tools that enables the user an interactive routing, auto-routing, and more which helps the user handle high-speed design requirements to ensure best performance of the PCB product.

EAGLE (Easily Applicable Graphical Layout Editor)

“EAGLE (Easily Applicable Graphical Layout Editor) is an electronic design automation (EDA) software that lets printed circuit board (PCB) designers seamlessly connect schematic diagrams, component placements, PCB routing, and comprehensive library content.”

Initially developed by CadSoft Computer GmbH but now owned by Autodesk, the software itself offers a robust set of tools for schematic capture and PCB layout.

Another thing to consider for this software is that it is part of the Autodesk family. This means EAGLE can integrate easily with other Autodesk tools such as Fusion 360. This enhances the software’s capabilities to create better and more complete electronic design products.

KiCad

KiCad is a free software suite for electronic design automation (EDA). It provides tools for creating schematics and PCB layouts.

This software is developed by KiCad Development Team that provides the most basic schematic to a complex hierarchical design with sheets. Due to its free availability, it is widely used by hobbyists, educators, and professionals.

Another feature to consider for this software is that its PCB layout editor is powerful and useful for both automatic and manual routing as well as component placement. It also provides the user the ability to create custom components scripting and use plugins.

Table 3.21: Tech Comparison of PCB Design Software.

Criteria	Altium Designer	EAGLE	KiCad
Simulation Tool	Altium’s Mixed Signal Circuit Simulator	N/A Supports external simulation software such as LTspice	Integrates with Ngspice
Component Libraries	Up to date with real-time update	Regularly updated and can be expanded with custom libraries	Default libraries with community contributions

OS Compatibility	Windows, macOS	Windows, macOS, Linux	Windows, macOS, Linux
Memory Usage	8-16 GB RAM 2-4 GB VRAM	4-8 GB RAM 1-2 GB VRAM	4-8 GB RAM 1-2 GB VRAM
User-Friendly	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cost	Free \$355/month	Free \$680/year	Free

When choosing PCB software, we primarily considered our familiarity with the software. We aim to create a robust PCB design without having to learn a new design program. This will not only save us time, but also helps us avoid the frustration of learning new PCB design software.

Altium Designer offers a lot more than just PCB design. It has an all-in-one solution which reduces the need for multiple software solutions when necessary. Another thing to consider is its extensive component libraries and its management tools which allows us to have access to the latest components that can be used across projects. Overall, Altium Designer stands out as the optimal choice for our PCB design needs which can enhance both our productivity and quality of work.

3.2.2 Full Stack Development Technologies

Full stack development encompasses the entire process of application software development. This can be broken down into the front end, which is the user interface, and the back end, which takes care of the background logic. Based on the developer's choices, it enables the creation of modern and seamless cross-platform experiences. Below, we will explore the technologies under consideration that we believe will result in a successful project.

Flutter

Flutter is an open-source UI software development kit. It was created by Google and released in 2017. It allows the development of cross-platform applications for a variety of platforms of operating systems such as web, Fuchsia, Android, iOS, Linux, macOS and Windows. From a developer's perspective, Flutter is easier to learn than React Native. It utilizes Dart as a programming language, also created by Google, and while the team isn't familiar with it, it's easier to pick up than JavaScript. The language's structure is also closer to what native application development looks like.

Flutter's Command Line Interface (CLI) comes with a tool called Flutter Doctor. This tool helps developers set up their chosen IDE for iOS or Android

development. When paired with CLI it becomes among the smoothest setup experiences compared to other stack technologies.

Moving onto performance, Flutter utilizes Impeller which offers runtime rendering. It optimizes GPU usage and UI performance and efficiency. With the use of powerful API's such as Metal and Vulkan, it offers more efficient rendering, lower power consumption and better framerates.

Flutter's documentation provides easy navigation and is meticulously crafted to cater to developers from different backgrounds. It comes with tutorials that offer hands-on experience. However, this comes with the downside of having a low number of active Dart developers compared to other communities, such as the JavaScript community. This can lead to problems when development problems and questions arise, which our team will carefully consider as this is the backbone of every programming language.

React Native

On the other hand, React Native is a mobile development framework created by Facebook, nowadays giving credit to Meta, released in 2015. It's another potential choice when developing mobile, web, and desktop applications, also allowing cross-platform development on iOS and Android. React Native transforms JavaScript components or the "user interface design blocks" into native ones.

React Native's components approach can be highly beneficial when compared to Flutter, but in the long run, it can also become problematic. For example, a React Native application will be able to keep up with the latest native components design. The downside is that as this happens automatically, you can lose part of the application design. To keep a current design, this feature must be turned off.

React Native's powerful platform comes at a price. In general, developers consider the learning curve somewhat steeper. Although JavaScript is a much more popular programming language than Dart, that doesn't mean it's easier to work with.

For example, dealing with classes within classes adds to the complexity and nuances of React Native. This is an important point to consider when choosing our stack since it can lead to hours upon hours of troubleshooting or solving problems throughout development.

React Native's upper hand is called Expo Go. This tool offers a much easier way to design, build and deploy applications, including web applications. Most importantly, it enables developers to view and interact with their apps as they build them directly on their phones. This accelerates development since it removes the need to go through Android Studio or xCode, Apple's iOS development environment.

React Native's performance can be a little slower than Flutter's due to its JavaScript bridge needed for the interaction between JavaScript, the native user interface, and device components. However, this doesn't necessarily mean it's a worse approach. React Native might not be able to compile native code, but unlike other similar technologies, it can produce native-looking user interfaces.

Documentation isn't as meticulously organized or clear as Flutter's counterpart, however it is deemed more user friendly since it encompasses best practices and useful frequently asked questions. React Native on the other hand, has been around for much longer, and therefore, there are many more tutorials and topics being discussed on useful sites such as Stack Overflow and GitHub. This leads to a large and more mature community backing this stack. An important point to consider when it comes to trying to solve unexpected complex development problems.

Table 3.22: Tech Comparison between Flutter and React Native

Criteria	Flutter	React Native
Learning Curve	Easier Difficulty	Higher Difficulty
Development Environment	iOS:Limited on Windows with full support on MacOS Android: Works on both Windows and MacOS	iOS:Limited on Windows with full support on MacOS Android: Works on both Windows and MacOS
Key Development tools	Flutter Doctor	Expo Go
Automatic Component Updates	No	Yes
Performance	Faster	Limited by JavaScript bridge
Operating Systems	Windows & MacOS	Windows & MacOS
Cross Platform Development	Yes	Yes
Documentation	Easier to understand for newcomers.	More complex, but robust backed by a large community.

For our full-stack technology, the team has chosen to develop the application via React Native. While its learning curve is somewhat more difficult than its counterpart, Flutter, it offers near native-looking user interfaces, which brings us closer to our goal of achieving a modern and easy-to-use UI. The use of Expo Go will accelerate development since we can view and interact with the application as it's being built. Additionally, the community behind React Native is more mature. Therefore, documentation is widely available; there are many tutorials on

how to build an application via React Native and code examples on forums and GitHub. Finally, employers are more interested in a candidate who can code in React Native instead of Flutter.

3.2.3 Database

A database is a structured collection of data usually stored either locally on a computer or on the cloud. They are designed to efficiently manage, retrieve and store data allowing easy access to it as needed. A common scenario of a need for a database is an application with usernames and password of its users.

Our project's design requires the use of some type of database to handle the data reported by the sensors in place which will then be sent over to a mobile application. Below we explore the type of databases under consideration.

SQL Database

SQL uses a relational database management system. This approach is suitable for structured data and requires the user to predefine a schema before working with data and inserting it into a table. This restriction means all the data must follow the same structure. Working with an SQL database means a safer beginner option since SQL is known to be one of the most versatile and widely used database structures backed by a large community and abundant documentation. This would also offer us the option of utilizing SQLite, a serverless approach that works as an embedded database within applications. When considering our options, it's a very tempting route since it would avoid any server headaches and with time being at a premium, it would make sense to choose it.

NoSQL Database

On the other hand, we have NoSQL databases. These use a non-relational database system, which means a dynamic and more flexible schema for unstructured data. Documents can be created without a defined structure, and each document can have its own structure. Thanks to this approach, data can be stored in many ways, such as document-oriented, column-oriented, graph-based, or organized as a key-value store. Choosing a NoSQL database would allow us to work on the data without worrying about disrupting the whole system if our data structures were to change at some point during development. MongoDB is known to work well with React Native, which is one of our possible technologies to incorporate in the development of the mobile app, therefore making a NoSQL database a viable option.

In conclusion, the project will make use of an **SQL database**. The reason for this decision is that it comes with the benefit of implementing it as a local database, eliminating the unnecessary complexity that comes with a database on the cloud. This opens the door to the use of technology such as SQLite, which, as previously discussed, is an embedded serverless database. Additionally, the

team is already familiar with SQL. Finally, while this approach is stricter, requiring structured data schemas, its excellent documentation makes learning the language simpler than trying to understand the nuances that come with its NoSQL counterpart.

3.2.4 Operating System

Regardless of which technology we use, Flutter or React Native, both options support cross-platform development for Android and iOS. Before choosing a platform, we must consider particular factors such as the compatibility and limitations when working with the full stack technologies discussed above, the team's coding experience, development cost and the size of the user base. Below, we briefly describe each Operating System and why we are considering one over the other as our development platform.

iOS

iOS is Apple's proprietary mobile operating system, which powers iPhones and iPads. Thanks to the stack technologies in consideration, the team doesn't have to concern itself with learning how to code in Swift, Apple's proprietary language for iOS App development. However, issues may arise when attempting to run the application on an iPhone. There are scenarios which require the use of xCode. This is Apple's integrated development environment (IDE), which was developed for macOS and used to develop iOS applications. We must keep in mind that none of the team members owns an Apple Mac, and while there exist alternatives, they just aren't as good as natively working with an Apple system.

To compile and distribute an iOS app the use of xCode is needed to generate an ".ipa" file or iOS app package. Now, since the distribution of the application is not the focus of this project, it isn't a primary concern, but we are still facing possible issues when attempting to run the app on our own devices without the use of xCode. If we choose to use Flutter, the team will hit a wall since xCode is an absolute requirement to complete the development of the app. If we went with React Native, we could simply use Expo Go to build and test our application. However, this doesn't come without its caveats.

Expo Go is a convenient and powerful tool, but unfortunately, it has its own limitations when working on an iOS application. For example, the limited access to native modules, lower performance, no offline use and limited access to some hardware features. Of all these, the biggest problem being the limited access to native modules since some application features may rely on custom native modules or third-party libraries.

According to online sources, as of 2024, the iOS user base in the US holds 58.81% of the market share and 28.32% of the global market share. If we were to consider the distribution of the application, then this is an important piece of data we must keep in mind. Finally, to publish an iOS app in the App Store,

developers must enroll in the Apple Developer Program, which has a cost of \$99 per membership per year.

Android OS

Android is a mobile operating system based on a version of the Linux kernel and while open source, it's primarily developed by Google. Now while Android applications are traditionally developed in Java and the team has Java experience, going with technologies such as Flutter or a framework such as React Native would speed up development since we wouldn't be coding from scratch.

A great benefit of working with this operating system is the team wouldn't run into similar proprietary "xCode" problems found when developing in iOS. Android's integrated development environment is available on both Windows OS and Mac OS. In the team's case, Windows is the main platform to be used when developing our application. Additionally, Android's IDE enhances development when used in conjunction with either React Native or Flutter, making this option viable for the team.

In the case of React Native we could potentially run into similar issues as with the iOS counterpart. Reiterating these issues, these were limited native module support, lower performance and limited offline use. However, there are solutions to them, such as simply ejecting the application from Expo Go and continuing to work outside of it. As discussed earlier, these problems wouldn't apply to Flutter since it takes a completely different developing approach with the use of IDEs such as Android Studio.

As for Android user stats, according to online sources, the Android user base in the US holds 40.81% of the market share and 70.23% of the global market share. While the user base in the US may be smaller than that of iOS, it more than makes up for it with more than double the size on a global scale. The cost of publishing to such markets is a one-time fee of \$25.

Microsoft Windows OS

Microsoft Windows is a proprietary graphical operating system developed by Microsoft. Developing on a Windows platform opens countless possibilities and approaches for creating the project's companion application. Since this is a desktop operating system rather than a mobile OS we would no longer be limited to Flutter or React Native for mobile development purposes. However, full stack technologies such as Flutter and React Native can still be used to develop the application or web client.

Windows is considered the most popular operating system in the world, and it holds 70% of the global market share. Looking at the global user base, developing for Windows seems like a viable option, but the team must also

consider its limitations. The purpose of the application is to offer the user a convenient solution to be able to monitor and tend to their aquarium while away from home. Windows OS would be running on a desktop PC, laptop or on a more portable option such as Microsoft Surface device. Now, while the Surface is the most portable device, its user base is much smaller than the one of iOS and Android devices. Additionally, it must be considered that not all users are willing to carry around a device of this size. With these factors in mind, it's unlikely the team will develop the application for Microsoft Windows OS.

Table 3.23: Tech Comparison of iOS and Android.

Criteria	iOS	Android OS	Windows OS
IDE Requirements	Requires an Apple Mac system for native access to xCode IDE.	Supports a variety of IDEs on both Windows and Mac systems including Android Studio.	Supports a variety of IDEs larger than Android and iOS.
React Native Compatibility	App can be developed using the framework but cannot be fully tested or deployed without the use of xCode.	Full development can be completed within the framework but can be enhanced/facilitated with the use of Android Studio.	Full development can be completed within React Native.
Flutter Compatibility	App can be developed using the framework but cannot be fully tested or deployed without the use of xCode.	Full development can be completed within the framework but can be enhanced/facilitated with the use of Android Studio.	Full development can be completed within Flutter.
User Base	58.81% of the US market share and 28.32% of the global market share.	40.81% of the US market share and a 70.23% of the global market share.	70% of the global market share for desktop operating systems.
App Publishing Cost	\$99 per developer membership per year.	A one-time payment of \$25.	A one-time payment of \$19 per individual account or one-time payment of \$99 per company account.

For the operating system, we will be developing the application with Android OS in mind. This decision comes from the fact that any React Native limitations can

be resolved via the Android Studio IDE, which is available on both Windows and MacOS. The team does not own a MacOS system that works natively on iOS, and the cost of development and publishing is four times higher than that of Android. Android allows the team to have the best of both worlds. Full compatibility with our development equipment and access to Expo Go without the limitations we would face if we attempted to develop the application for iOS on Windows systems. As a bonus, while Android may have a smaller audience in the US, globally, it takes 70% of the market making our decision to prioritize Android strategically sound.

Chapter 4 - Related Standards and Design Constraints

Adhering to established standards and navigating design constraints are important to ensuring the system's functionality, reliability, and compliance with industry norms. Standards offer a framework for interoperability, safety, and performance, guiding the design and implementation processes.

On the other hand, design constraints define the boundaries within which the project must operate, including technical, economic, and political limitations. This chapter goes into the various standards pertinent to our project and the specific design constraints we must consider. By addressing these aspects, we aim to navigate the complexities of the project effectively and deliver a robust, high-quality product that meets user expectations and requirements.

4.1 Industrial Standards

Industrial standards are established guidelines and specifications that ensure products and systems are safe, reliable, and consistent. They cover a wide range of areas, including materials, processes, safety protocols, and performance criteria. Following established standards gives direction to the design and development process by providing clear guidelines and best practices, ultimately contributing to the efficiency and success of our project.

4.1.1 PCB Standards

The PCB design standards is a criteria set to ensure the quality, reliability, and manufacturability of printed circuit boards within the industry. For our project, we will be using the PCB manufacturer Altium and will follow their set criteria and standards for PCB design. Altium allows the user to be able to comply with a variety of different design standards that include IPC, ASME, and Military. For the most part, Altium follows the general PCB design standard of IPC-2221 which provides a detailed guideline for the design, material selection, electrical and mechanical performance, and environmental resilience. The IPC-2221 standard encompasses a wide variety of design standards to meet high-performance,

streamline production processes, and ensure compatibility with various electronic components and systems.

Subcategories to be aware of that take the IPC-2221 standard as a template and further fine tune specific aspects of the PCB technology on its physical design principles.

- The first sub-category is the IPC-2222 which is the rigid organic printed board structure design. This one focuses on materials, layout and mechanical properties.
- The second sub-category is the IPC-2223 which is the flexible printed board structure design. This one focuses on material selection, bend radius and other unique flexible circuitry.
- The third sub-category is the IPC-2224 which is the Organic, PC card format, printed board structure design. This one focuses on dimensional stability, thermal management and electrical performance.
- The fourth sub-category is the IPC-2225 which is the Organic, MCM-L, printed board structure design. This one focuses on integration of multiple ICs onto a single substrate
- The fifth sub-category is the IPC-2226 which is the High Density Interconnect (HDI) structure design. This one provides guidelines for feature finer lines and spaces, smaller vias, and higher connection pad densities.
- The sixth sub-category is the IPC-2227 which is the embedded passive devices printed board design. This one focuses on addressing the design considerations for incorporating embedded passive devices which aim to optimize space and performance.

When designing a PCB using Altium Designer, we also have to consider the manufacturer limitations to ensure the fabrication reliability. As the limitations may vary between other manufacturers, these are still common values for minimum and maximum sizes for Altium. For our selected manufacturer Altium, we are limited to board thickness of 0.4mm-3.2mm and copper weight to be 0.5oz-3oz. The outer layers have to have a trace width between 0.1mm-0.5mm, trace spacing between 0.1mm-0.5mm which is subject to change depending on width and solder mask clearance at 0.075mm-0.15mm. For the hole sizes they are limited to a drill hole size of 0.2mm-6.3mm, annular ring size of 0.1mm, and a via hole size of 0.2mm-0.8mm. Lastly we also have to consider the clearances of the components which need a minimum of 0.5mm and a copper to edge minimum clearance of 0.25mm.

Besides following Altium's own manufacturing standards, we will be following IPC-2221 general standards as it serves as a proper comprehensive guide to PCB design that will minimize costs when adhering to it. By utilizing these standards, it will aid us by providing the knowledge to create a reliable, quality, safe, reduced error and defective PCB.

4.1.2 Sensor Standards

Ensuring that the sensors used in our project are accurate and reliable is of great importance, and following established sensor standards is essential in achieving this objective. The ISO 14000 family of standards provides comprehensive guidelines for environmental management systems, which are crucial in ensuring that the sensors and electronic components utilized in the project do not negatively impact the environment.

Specifically, ISO 14001:2015 sets the criteria for an effective environmental management system (EMS). By following ISO 14001:2015, we can establish a system of steps that helps us manage our environmental responsibilities. This includes reducing hazardous waste, promoting resource efficiency, and minimizing our ecological footprint. By applying these standards we ensure that our components are operated in an environmentally friendly manner, contributing to sustainability and compliance with environmental regulations.

In addition, ISO 14004:2016 offers general guidelines on principles, systems, and support techniques, providing additional guidance for implementing and maintaining an EMS. By integrating these guidelines, we can enhance our project's environmental performance and ensure that all stages of our sensor lifecycle, from usage to disposal, follow sustainable practices. This not only helps by reducing the environmental impact but also improves the overall efficiency and effectiveness of our project management processes.

In addition to environmental standards, using specific sensor standards is crucial for achieving accurate and reliable measurements. ASTM D1886, for example, consists of standard test methods for turbidity, which is important for accurately measuring water clarity in the fish tank. Turbidity measurement is an essential parameter for maintaining water quality, as it affects light penetration and the overall health of the ecosystem. By following ASTM D1886, we ensure that our turbidity sensor provides precise and reliable readings, allowing for effective monitoring and maintenance of water quality. This standard follows the procedures for calibrating and testing turbidity sensors, ensuring that they meet thorough accuracy and durability requirements.

Furthermore, ISO 7027:2016 specifies methods for determining turbidity, offering an alternative or complementary approach to ASTM D1886. By adhering to ISO 7027:2016, we can compare our turbidity measurements, enhancing the robustness and reliability of our data. This double check ensures that our water quality monitoring system is both accurate and consistent, enabling proactive management of the fish tank environment.

By thoroughly applying these international standards, we demonstrate our commitment to environmental health and technical qualities. This approach not only enhances the credibility and reliability of our project but also follows global best practices. Ultimately, integrating these standards into our project

development process ensures that we deliver a high-quality, environmentally responsible, and technically sound solution for maintaining optimal conditions in the fish tank.

4.1.3 Communication Standards

Communication standards are essential guidelines and protocols that ensure operability, compatibility, and reliable data exchange between different devices and systems. These standards define how data is transmitted, formatted, and processed, providing a common framework that allows diverse hardware and software components to work together seamlessly. In the context of our project, adhering to communication standards is crucial for integrating various sensors, controllers, and user interfaces, ensuring that the system operates efficiently and effectively.

4.1.3.1 UART Communication

UART stands for Universal Asynchronous Receiver-Transmitter. This is a hardware communication protocol that provides asynchronous serial communication between devices. For UART, asynchronous means it's not synchronized by a clock signal, unlike other communication protocols such as SPI or I2C. It is considered one of the simplest methods for data exchange and is typically used in low-cost or simple data transfer applications. It consists of two primary data lines: the transmit line (TX) and the receive line (RX). In other words, this setup enables full-duplex communication and therefore, data can be sent and received at the same time.

As for its communication setup, the devices that will communicate through UART must be set to the same baud rate. UART transmits data in a series of bytes, typically 8-bits. Each byte is framed by a start bit, followed by the data bits and then the stop bits. However, in some cases, there may be optional parity bits after the data bits. With this set, the data to be transmitted is converted from parallel data into serial form and then sent over to the receiving UART, where it is converted back to parallel data.

In general, UART benefits from being a straightforward communication protocol that is easy to implement. It requires minimal hardware resources and it's widely known and popular to use. Thanks to this, there's robust documentation available about implementing it into projects. The fact it uses no clock signal eliminates the complexity that comes with other synchronous communication protocols, such as SPI or I2C. It's more flexible being a full duplex protocol than other methods that can either transmit in one direction or in both ways, but not simultaneously. Additionally, while it includes a basic error detection mechanism, it's very welcome since it is optional, but it also enhances the reliability of the data transmission.

On the other hand, it has its disadvantages when compared to protocols such as SPI or I2C. Its straightforward point-to-point implementation comes at the price of being generally slower than both protocols. This means UART is less suitable for applications that require data transfers at high speeds, but in the case of our project, it wouldn't be a concerning factor since the aquarium automation consists of simple requests. Additionally, the data frame is limited to 9 bits, and the protocol suffers from signal degradation over long distances; therefore, it's typically used within short-distance communication setups. Since UART utilizes a fixed point-to-point communication method, it's also limited to a single master-single slave configuration. Unfortunately, this means it's a less efficient protocol for multi-device networks, but again, this wouldn't affect our project considering that, at most, we would have a single master-single slave setup. Finally, a large drawback of UART is the lack of flow control. This could lead to data loss if the receiver (RX) isn't ready to process incoming data.

With the communication protocol established, it is important to note how it will affect the project. A mobile application will control the smart aquarium, but before we move on to its development, critical components of the smart aquarium must be programmed and tested for demo purposes. Since we are demonstrating the capabilities of our sensors and no application UI is available, the data obtained by the sensors will be displayed on a PC's terminal program. In more detail, the ESP32 will run the code that configures the connected sensors to activate and provide the temperature, turbidity and pH level data. Then, the data will be displayed on the terminal through a USB to UART bridge connection by using functions provided by the ESP32's SDK, such as `Serial.print()` if using the Arduino framework.

In general, while UART has its disadvantages, its advantages far outweigh them when it comes to our project's requirements. The lack of a clock signal makes this protocol straightforward and simple to implement. Finally, it is a key communication protocol for the project since obtained components, such as the sensors, must be tested by printing data obtained by them into a terminal program until the project's mobile application is fully developed.

4.1.3.2 Analog Communication

Analog communication refers to the transmission of data using continuous signals that vary in amplitude, frequency, or phase. These standards ensure that analog devices can communicate accurately and consistently, even in the presence of noise and other environmental factors.

The ESP32 microcontroller is a highly versatile component, one crucial aspect of utilizing it is managing its analog connections. The ESP32 is equipped with multiple ADC (Analog-to-Digital Converter) channels, which are essential for interfacing with analog sensors such as those measuring temperature, pH, and turbidity.

The standard practice for analog connections involves several important considerations to ensure reliable and accurate data readings. First, the voltage levels of the analog signals must be within the ESP32's input range. This may require voltage dividers or level shifters to adjust the signal levels appropriately. Additionally, it is important to implement proper filtering techniques to minimize noise and ensure clean, stable readings. This can be achieved by adding capacitors and resistors in the analog circuitry to filter out high-frequency noise and stabilize the signal.

Proper grounding and shielding are required to prevent electromagnetic interference, which can distort the analog signals. Ensuring that the analog sensors and the ESP32 share a common ground helps maintain signal integrity. Moreover, the placement of components and routing of PCB traces should be designed to minimize interference and crosstalk.

4.2 External Design Constraints

External design constraints are factors outside the control of the team that can affect the design, development, and implementation of our project. These constraints come from various external sources, such as regulations, environmental conditions, market demands, and technological advancements. Recognizing and addressing these constraints is essential to ensure the project's completion and success. These constraints are essential for delivering a reliable and market-ready product that meets the needs of fish tank owners while adhering to all relevant standards and requirements.

4.2.1 Time

The main or probably the most important constraint for this project is time. Various factors limit the availability and effectiveness of how we use time for tasks and activities. For this project for example, we are only given a finite amount of time to design and accomplish the overall project. Because of this we considered some general issues for this constraint as well as required critical decisions along the way.

One of the general issues to consider is time management. This is crucial as we must balance the project with life, schoolwork, and other activities. Our group is a bit unfortunate because we could not decide on what project to do before the start of the semester, which has put us a bit behind schedule. However, we are carefully organizing our required tasks, and working diligently to catch up and stay on course to make up for this lost time.

Another general issue for this is dependency management. We need to understand that some tasks depend on the completion of other tasks. If a preceding task is delayed, it could possibly create a domino effect causing it to push back other tasks. This will also cause a halt and compromise the overall project schedule. One example for this is the PCB (Printed Circuit Board). Before

we can proceed with assembly, testing, and integration into the final product, we must first build this component. If a case where it is not completed in time or is delayed in any way, the entire may come to a pause. An increase of costs can also cause an increase of costs due to rushed work or expedited shipping. Most importantly, because of the said delay, any issues found during testing cannot be addressed in time.

Unexpected Events is a general issue for time as well. Unforeseen events could be something like a technical issue, changes with the project or even personal emergencies disrupt the planned schedules. These incidents could require the team to spend more time troubleshooting or force them to change the original plans, which could cause delays in the overall time frame. Our project requires communication between the components and the app to monitor the aquatic life and its environment as well as control the sensors and dispensers remotely. For example, we encounter a technical issue where one of the sensors is not being accurately transmitted to the app because of a bug around the code. Debugging this issue could have us spend additional unplanned time identifying the root of the problem as well as fixing the overall code.

The following issues above could cause an outcome where the overall project does not reach the desired or necessary standards. This might force us to cut corners, make last-minute changes and possibly just do the bare minimum just to meet the deadline. This will also cause us to skip important details and thorough testing, reducing the overall quality and efficiency of our project. As a possible consequence, we could possibly risk failing our project and our grade if we do not address these constraints/issues as soon as possible.

Effective communication, continuous monitoring and careful planning can help avoid these constraints. These things could help the team to look ahead to spot potential problems and plan how to handle them before they arise. We also made sure that our team is ready to respond to any changes by promoting open communication and continuously reviewing our progress to make required modifications. With the implementation of these proactive methods, we will be able to better manage our time and keep the project on track for completion.

4.2.2 Economic

These constraints set the financial boundaries the project must operate with, influencing every decision from the selection of components to the methods used for prototyping and manufacturing. Given that our project lacks external funding or sponsorship, and all expenses are coming directly from our pockets, the challenge of managing economic constraints becomes even more pronounced.

The most immediate economic constraint is the budget. With no external funding sources, our financial resources are strictly limited to personal contributions from team members. This requires a delicate approach to budgeting, where every dollar spent must be accounted for and justified. The budget will cover a range of

expenses including, but not limited to, purchasing components, tools, and materials, as well as any fees associated with prototyping services or testing facilities.

To minimize costs, we must explore cost-effective prototyping methods. This could include using 3D printing for custom parts, leveraging university facilities for access to tools and equipment, and utilizing open-source hardware and software wherever possible.

Another challenge we face managing economic constraints is balancing cost with quality. High-quality components, while better for their superior performance and durability, often come with a higher price tag. On the other hand, opting for cheaper components can lead to reliability issues and shorter durability, ultimately increasing the total cost of the product to the owner due to frequent replacements and repairs. We must conduct thorough market research to identify suppliers that offer the best value for money. This involves not only comparing prices but also evaluating the reputation of suppliers and the quality of their products.

Economic constraints also impact how scalable the project is. High production costs can make it hard to produce the Fish Tank Helper at a price point that attracts customers. Making sure the project is economically viable involves careful financial planning and smart use of resources. This includes using cost-effective methods for prototyping, optimizing the design for easier manufacturing, and considering long-term maintenance and support costs.

Innovation can also play a role in managing economic constraints. This might involve developing new techniques or methods that are more cost-effective than traditional approaches. Due to a lack of funding or sponsors, creative solutions are needed to make the most of available resources. This means using open-source software and hardware, and trying not to spend a large amount of money if it can be avoided.

Managing these constraints requires a careful balance between cost and quality, strategic sourcing of materials and components, cost-effective prototyping, and efficient resource optimization. By considering long-term costs, exploring alternative funding opportunities, and incorporating cost-saving innovations, we can navigate these economic challenges effectively. Despite the lack of external funding, a thoughtful and strategic approach to budgeting and resource management will allow us to develop a high-quality, affordable Fish Tank Helper that meets the needs of fish tank owners.

4.2.3 Sustainability

For the design and construction of our smart aquarium product, we must consider both hardware and software components. We intend to create a compact device that can self-sustain the aquarium for as long as possible by

auto-feeding the fish, regulating pH water levels and notifying users about the water quality in general. A large selling point of the product is to be able to monitor and take care of your fish while you are away from home; we must always ensure it's powered. Therefore, it should utilize a DC source. Additionally, its material must be able to withstand any accidental water contact.

Now, a large concern is ensuring the electrical components don't come into contact with water. Due to this constraint, the design must implement some sort of waterproofing method, whether it's by strategically placing the components within the product's enclosure, making the enclosure waterproof or the components themselves. The device will be positioned against the glass of a fish tank, so it's essential that its internals are protected at all costs. If the stretch goals are implemented, the product's enclosure will have a cut out for the positioning of a camera. This means there will be a need to implement certain protections against moisture that could affect the camera lens. The device must be able to withstand a range of operating temperatures. We must assume it won't always be utilized in a home with air conditioning, so tropical weather homes must be considered, especially when the device will always need to be powered on due to its Wi-Fi capabilities. In addition, it must be able to withstand the colder temperatures of the markets under consideration. Therefore, we must carefully choose each one of our components to ensure it can self-sustain home aquariums for as long as possible.

Moving onto the software side, the application must offer a modern and intuitive user interface, ensuring ease of use. A visually appealing user interface can keep users engaged longer and encourage the use of the application in the future. The team is aiming to create an application that is easy to maintain so that it can be updated as needed for years to come. This is essential to its lifecycle since it would require updates for new features and bug fixes as well as updates so that it remains compatible with multiple OS upgrades. Sometimes, phone OS will phase out applications that don't meet a certain criterion, such as SDK changes, which can increase the complexity of updating the app by requiring updates to the codebase, dependencies, or any third-party libraries used, which is why keeping the software sustainable is a high priority. A hardware product is only as good as its software. With this in mind, a well-designed application will not only enhance customer loyalty and retention but also increase the chances that the product will achieve success.

Overall, with these constraints set, we have a clear goal on how our product should be designed to ensure it's useful, effective, and durable in terms of how long it'll be able to operate to become a competitive product in the market.

4.2.4 Other Constraints

4.2.4.1 Political

Dealing with these constraints is crucial to make sure the product meets all safety, environmental, and compliance standards, allowing it to be legally sold and used in different markets.

A key political constraint is compliance with local and international regulations. This means following guidelines from regulatory bodies like the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) for wireless devices. Complying with FCC regulations ensures that the ESP32 and other wireless components used in the Fish Tank Helper don't interfere with other electronic devices and operate within approved frequency ranges.

Trade policies also create political constraints, affecting the sourcing and cost of components and materials. Political stability and government support for technological innovation can influence the project's timeline and feasibility. For example, changes in trade policies on imported components can increase costs and disrupt supply chains, requiring adjustments to the project budget and timelines.

4.2.4.2 Ethical

For the development of this project we considered that it is important to take into account a number of ethical limitations in order to prioritize the ethical use of technology.

We make sure that no unethical methods such as labor exploitation or obtaining components from vendors with poor labor practices are involved in the technology being utilized. Working with vendors that comply with the highest moral standards in hiring practices is something we really value.

To guarantee that these ethical requirements are satisfied, we make sure that our project uses components that are obtained from trusted companies in which it includes a thorough search for suppliers and ensures that they uphold ethical standards. Overall, it is important to continue to improve the project while upholding our ethical ideas by routinely evaluating and modifying the system in response to user input and new technological advancements.

4.2.4.3 Health and Safety

Healthy and Safety constraints is another thing that must be factored into this project. We do this by making sure that the water temperature, pH levels and oxygen level are within the safe range for each specific fish being kept. Although we are not using any fish to test this project, we still take this into account to

ensure that we provide ideal living conditions for the aquatic life and its environment.

Considering how our entire product is powered by electricity, user safety is an additional important factor to take into account. In order to ensure that our overall project is safe for users of all ages, non-toxic materials must be used to prevent accidental electrical shock and ensure that all components are safely enclosed to avoid injury for installation and testing.

Lastly, we also need to consider the mechanical safety of the fish and the user who will interact with the aquarium. Again, although this project will not involve any aquatic life, we nevertheless want to make sure that the system works properly in the event that aquatic life is later added to it. This will reduce the risk of injuries, and malfunctions if components are properly installed and protected. This will overall create a safe system and provide better experience for both the fish and the users themselves.

4.2.4.4 Manufacturability

Lastly, with the development of this project we have considered the constraint of Manufacturability. When it comes to accessibility of tools and or equipment, we as a group are limited to the equipment found in the university's lab. When constructing different portions of our project, like the electrical hardware components such as the power supply unit and pcb, we had to design for a more simple approach. The overall impact that this has on us as a group is that it prevents us from branching out to a more complex and innovative design that may require equipment that we aren't able to access easily or at all.

Although, there are portions of the project components that do not have to be created from scratch which reduces the manufacturing time and these include the sensors and motors that will be bought separately. Given the group's technical skill spread, this will allow the design to be less hardware intensive which can allow the group more fluidity in constructing with our limited equipment. This can be seen as a positive as we don't have sole access to the university facilities and may need to share with other students which may limit the manufacturing time of our electrical equipment.

Chapter 5 - ChatGPT

Artificial Intelligence or mainly known as AI refers to the development of machines and systems that are capable of performing activities that require human intelligence. These said activities include thinking, learning, problem solving and language comprehension to overall enhance human capabilities. In this day and age, AI is seen as a commodity; it has impacted our day to day life and businesses, from the most mundane to the most complex applications. One of the primary benefits is its ability to process and analyze vast amounts of data

quickly and accurately, far beyond human capabilities. This allows AI to identify patterns, make predictions, and provide insights that can drive decision-making across various industries. Additionally, AI can automate repetitive and mundane tasks, increasing efficiency and freeing up workers to focus on more complex or creative activities. The consistency and precision of AI systems could also reduce the possibility of human error, improving the overall quality of outcomes. Some popular and well-known examples of AI are ChatGPT developed by Open AI, Copilot developed by Microsoft and Gemini developed by Google DeepMind.

ChatGPT is developed by OpenAI and launched in November, 2022. It is a chat bot and a virtual assistant. Machine learning algorithms are used to process and analyze vast amounts of data in order to provide responses to user inquiries. One of the platform's primary strengths is its capacity to provide responses in real-time. Users may spend hours researching on writing an essay, solve a math problem or debug a code but ChatGPT may provide well-written or solution alternatives in seconds.

Another good example of an AI worth mentioning is Gemini. Formerly known as Bard, this AI platform was developed by Google in March 2023. It works similarly as ChatGPT where they both understand and generate human-like text and provide real-time responses. However, Google's Gemini mainly focuses on increasing productivity within Google Workspace by providing smart ideas and data analysis that are intimately linked with Google's ecosystem.

However, we must also keep in mind that AI can sometimes be unreliable due to several factors. The quality of the data used to train AI models is the most important; data that is biased, untrue, or outdated can lead to inaccurate or incorrect results. Sometimes, AI's inability to understand context and difficulty handling unclear inputs contribute to its unreliability. AI models trained in one discipline might not apply well to others, and they often struggle with edge cases that cannot be related to training data. Technical issues, such as software bugs or hardware failures, can also affect AI performance. Lastly, ethical and security concerns, including copyright infringement and privacy violations, can undermine the reliability and trustworthiness of AI systems. Addressing these issues is essential for developing more trustworthy and dependable AI technologies.

5.1 Case Study 1

"What requirements do I need to maintain a healthy aquarium?"

When asked, OpenAI's ChatGPT answered:

Refer to Chat Log A located in Appendix D

This is a very straightforward, accurate response. Nothing out of the ordinary, not to mention the question wasn't too thorough or specific. It could have given more details on its answer but kept it simple. Most of the information, if not all, could've

been used in the research for our project. These are all well known characteristics of a healthy aquarium that match the information we've gathered so far; if given more context, it might have been able to provide a more in-depth answer that fits our necessities.

However, for this case scenario, the objective will be to compare the different responses that we can obtain, to the exact same question, from different AI models. This way, we can analyze each answer and see how each model differs from each other.

Up next, Google's Gemini:

Refer to Chat Log B located in Appendix D

The two answers differ in several key aspects, particularly in the way they are organized, detail level, and clarity. ChatGPT's response was organized into ten sections, each addressing specific components of aquarium maintenance. It provided a broad summary and included some general recommendations for each aspect. On the other hand, Google Gemini's response was structured into four main sections. Each section was concise and included specific recommendations, such as maintaining tropical fish temperatures between 72°F and 82°F and performing partial water changes of 15-25% every 1-2 weeks. This approach made the information more accessible and easier to follow for beginners.

While both answers are complete in their own right, Google Gemini's response might be considered more complete for a beginner due to its clarity, conciseness, and specific guidance. ChatGPT's response, however, might be more valuable for someone looking for a more detailed and thorough understanding of aquarium maintenance.

5.2 Case Study 2

"What is the price range for servo motors vs stepper motors? Which one should I use?"

When asked, ChatGPT answered:

Refer to Chat Log C located in Appendix D

The overall response of chatGPT shows a straightforward response. The pros and cons for each component as well as the suggestions given provides a comprehensive view to help the user to have an idea and make an informed decision based on specific needs and requirements. However, one must understand that response is arbitrary and not accurate thus giving a result of an approximate price range which could be either out of date or estimated from a database.

For our project, an accurate result could be given if we used a utilized search engine such as Google, Bing or Brave. Prices from various vendors allows us to compare and contrast accurate price ranges as well as more detailed features for each component obtained from the vendor's website. This feature includes the speed, torque, model as well as power consumption.

5.3 Case Study 3

"What are some common lights used for aquariums?"

When asked, chatGPT answered:

Refer to Chat Log D located in Appendix D

As always, chatGPT was able to give us a straightforward answer. By giving us the common lights used in an aquarium, we are able to get a good start and a baseline for our research. It also gave us an understanding which light is beneficial for their type of fish and other aquatic species. The results above gave us a good starting point on what to do and saved us time by narrowing down our searches on several search engines such as Google. This then directly helped us to go to a certain website for further research on each light that the AI suggested to us.

Although this further proves that ChatGPT is a great resource, it is still important to keep in mind that this is 100% considering that GPT3.5 was last updated in November 2023. This also means that we should still do further research on our own and also ensure that we are covering all the aspects thoroughly as well as not miss any critical details and information.

AI has profoundly changed the way we live and how we see the world as a result of rapid advances in machine learning, and data processing. Human skills and capabilities have improved by making work more efficient and productive due to AI tools.

"Adapting to AI is not about pitting human intelligence against artificial intelligence, but about complementing and enhancing it." (Anonymous).

AI has enabled humans to automate repetitive tasks and provide intelligent suggestions. This has significantly reduced manual effort and allows humans to focus on more strategic and creative endeavors. It is essential to use AI wisely and thoughtfully as well as we integrate AI into our daily workflows.

AI can either have a positive and negative impact in regards to our Senior Design Project. The positive impact for this includes enhancing capabilities by automating complex tasks and helping enhance the overall quality of our project. But this also includes a negative impact where we could cause an over-reliance of using AI tools that could potentially result in a loss of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among team members.

It is important to create balance between using AI skills and maintaining human oversight and judgment. It is also important that AI is there to only help and support human intelligence, not replace it.

Chapter 10 - Administration

10.1 Budget and Financing

The table below is a rough estimate of the budget. It covers all the essential components for our project's successful implementation. Each component plays a crucial role in the overall functionality and effectiveness of the project.

Note that the overall budget includes the primary components and accounts for the additional costs. This allocation ensures that we can acquire the required materials while effectively managing costs, which enables us to maintain the balance of affordability and quality.

Table 10.1: Estimated Budget and Financing for the project.

Budget and Financing	
Component	Estimated Price
pH Sensor	\$20
Temperature Sensor	\$10
Turbidity Sensor	\$10
Dispenser(s)	\$20
Air Bubble	\$20
LED Lights	\$15
Raspberry Pi	\$15
Camera Module	\$20
Motor(s)	\$30
PSU	\$20
Custom PCB	TBD
	Cost = \$180

10.2 Project Milestones

With the established due dates, our goal is to follow this time frame as closely as possible. Most of these milestones are paper drafts throughout the semester. While most of our research will be conducted to Senior Design 1 for data collection and conceptual development.

Initiating PCB design and developing the front-end application during this semester would also help us prepare for the tasks ahead in Senior Design 2. It might be difficult to achieve this milestone, especially for the summer semester with limited time to complete it. However, attempting or achieving this milestone will undoubtedly enhance our progress significantly.

Table 10.2: Estimated time of completion for Project Milestones for Senior Design 1.

Senior Design 1		
Overview	Description	Planned Duration
Group formation	Identify group members and define individual roles	1 week
Project ideas	Come together and come up with project ideas	1 week
Divide and conquer	Start writing 10-page proposal for approval	1 week
Divide and conquer submission		Due 5/31/24
Research and planning	Begin writing 60-page document draft	4 weeks
Review draft	Review and revise draft based on feedback from peers and reviewers	1 week
60-page draft submission		Due 7/5/24
HW & SW design	Initiate PCB design as well as the develop front-end application development	1 week
Finalize and review report		1 week
120-page final report due		Due 7/23/24

The planned duration for the Senior Design 2 milestones is based on Fall Semester and will remain unpredictable. Even so, we have our project foundation all set along with a clear direction for our main idea. As we approach the start of Senior Design 2, our focus is on thorough preparation.

PCB design and App Development is crucial for our project's progress. An early completion of these milestones will certainly help with our progress and possibly ensure our team to be ready to meet any challenges ahead for Senior Design 2.

Table 10.3: *Estimated time of completion for Project Milestones for Senior Design 2.*

Senior Design 2		
Overview	Description	Planned Duration
PCB Assembly	Building the PCB	4 weeks
Develop Application	Develop and integrate front-end application	4 weeks
Test Sensors & Dispensers	Test sensors & dispenser accuracy and Responsive	2 weeks
Test application	Test user interface responsiveness and ensure reliability of notification-based sensors	2 weeks
PCB Assembly & App Development	Ensure that hardware and software are communicating properly	4 weeks
Debug & Test	Identify and resolve issues in both hardware and software components	2 weeks
Finalize Paper		1 week
Review		1 week
Final Paper and Demo		TBA

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Appendix B - Copyright Permission Requested

Appendix C - Copyright Permission Approved

Appendix D - ChatGPT Logs

Chat Log A

“Maintaining a healthy aquarium involves several key requirements to ensure the well-being of aquatic life and the overall ecosystem. Here are the essential components:

Tank Size and Setup:

- Choose an appropriately sized tank for the type and number of fish or other aquatic animals.
- Ensure the tank is placed on a stable, level surface and away from direct sunlight to prevent algae growth.

Filtration:

- Use a suitable filtration system to remove waste, debris, and harmful chemicals from the water.
- Regularly clean and maintain the filter to ensure it functions effectively.

Water Quality:

- Test water parameters regularly (pH, ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, hardness, and alkalinity) to keep them within the suitable range for your aquatic inhabitants.
- Perform regular water changes (typically 10-20% weekly) to remove accumulated toxins and replenish essential minerals.
- Dechlorinate tap water before adding it to the aquarium.

Heating and Lighting:

- Use a reliable heater to maintain a stable temperature appropriate for your specific fish species.
- Provide adequate lighting to mimic natural day and night cycles and support plant growth if you have live plants.

Aeration:

- Ensure proper oxygenation of the water using an air pump, airstone, or surface agitation from the filter.
- Monitor oxygen levels, especially in densely stocked or planted tanks.

Substrate and Decorations:

- Choose a suitable substrate (gravel, sand, etc.) that matches the needs of your aquatic animals and plants.
- Add decorations like rocks, driftwood, and plants to provide hiding places and reduce stress for fish.

Feeding:

- Provide a balanced diet appropriate for the species you keep, avoiding overfeeding to prevent water quality issues.
- Remove uneaten food to prevent decay and maintain cleanliness.

Aquatic Plants:

- If keeping live plants, ensure they have adequate light, nutrients, and CO2 if necessary.
- Regularly trim and remove dead or decaying plant material.

Monitoring and Maintenance:

- Observe your fish and other inhabitants daily for signs of stress, disease, or unusual behavior.
- Perform routine maintenance tasks like cleaning the glass, removing algae, and pruning plants.

Disease Prevention:

- Quarantine new fish or plants before adding them to the main tank to prevent introducing diseases.
- Treat diseases promptly with appropriate medications if necessary.
- By paying attention to these aspects, you can create a thriving and healthy environment for your aquarium inhabitants.” (OpenAI - GPT 3.5, 2024)

Chat Log B

“Keeping a healthy aquarium requires a balance between the biological, chemical and physical aspects of the environment. Here are some key requirements:

Setting up the tank:

- Choose the right size tank for the fish you want. Bigger is generally better as it provides more stable water parameters.
- Use a good quality filter system. Filtration is essential for removing waste products and keeping the water clean.
- Consider using a substrate like gravel or sand to house beneficial bacteria that help break down waste.
- Decorate your tank with live or artificial plants, rocks and driftwood. Live plants can help with maintaining water quality and provide hiding spots for fish.

Water Parameters:

- Maintain the proper water temperature for your chosen fish species. Most tropical fish prefer temperatures between 72°F and 82°F.
- Regularly monitor and adjust water chemistry, including pH, ammonia, nitrite and nitrate levels. You can buy test kits to measure these parameters.
- Perform partial water changes (15-25% of the tank's volume) every 1-2 weeks to remove built-up waste and replenish minerals.

Fish care:

- Research the specific needs of the fish you want to keep. Different species have different requirements for water parameters, tank space, and diet.
- Avoid overstocking your tank. Overcrowding can lead to stress, illness, and poor water quality.
- Feed your fish a high-quality diet appropriate for their species and feeding habits. Don't overfeed - uneaten food will decompose and pollute the water.

Maintenance:

- Regularly clean the filter media to ensure proper function.
- Remove uneaten food and debris from the tank to prevent ammonia spikes.

- Trim overgrown plants and remove dead leaves to maintain aesthetics and water quality.

By following these requirements and establishing a regular maintenance routine, you can create a thriving underwater world for your fish to enjoy. Remember, there are many resources available online and at pet stores to help you learn more about specific fish care and aquarium maintenance.” (Google - Gemini, 2024)

Chat Log C

“The price range for servo motors and stepper motors varies depending on their specifications and quality. Here's a general overview:

Servo Motors:

- **Low-end:** \$10 - \$30 (typically small hobby servos)
- **Mid-range:** \$30 - \$150 (used in more demanding applications like RC vehicles, robotic arms)
- **High-end:** \$150 - \$500+ (industrial servos with high precision and torque)

Stepper Motors:

- **Low-end:** \$10 - \$20 (small stepper motors for basic applications)
- **Mid-range:** \$20 - \$100 (larger stepper motors for 3D printers, CNC machines)
- **High-end:** \$100 - \$300+ (industrial stepper motors with high torque and precision)

Choosing Between Servo Motors and Stepper Motors:

The choice between servo motors and stepper motors depends on your specific application and requirements:

Servo Motors:

- **Advantages:**
 - High precision and accuracy
 - Closed-loop control with feedback
 - High torque at high speeds
 - Smooth operation
- **Disadvantages:**
 - Generally more expensive
 - More complex control systems
- **Best For:** Applications requiring precise control, high speed, and high torque, such as robotics, CNC machines, and RC vehicles.

Stepper Motors:

- **Advantages:**
 - Simpler control systems
 - High torque at low speeds
 - Precise position control in open-loop systems
 - Generally more affordable
- **Disadvantages:**
 - Less efficient at high speeds
 - Can lose steps under heavy loads without feedback
 - Potential for resonance issues
- **Best For:** Applications requiring precise control at low to moderate speeds, such as 3D printers, small CNC machines, and automated conveyor systems.

Application Considerations:

- **Precision:** If you need high precision and feedback control, a servo motor is generally a better choice.
- **Speed and Torque:** For high-speed applications with significant torque requirements, servo motors are usually more suitable.
- **Cost:** For budget-sensitive projects, stepper motors might be a better option, especially if the application's precision and speed requirements are moderate.
- **Control Complexity:** Stepper motors are simpler to control and might be more suitable for projects where ease of implementation is a priority.

For your specific project, consider the following factors:

- The required precision and torque
- Budget constraints
- Control system complexity
- Speed requirements

Based on these factors, you can make a more informed decision on whether a servo motor or a stepper motor is more suitable for your needs.” (OpenAI - GPT 3.5, 2024)

Chat Log D

“Common lights used for aquariums include:

1. **Fluorescent Lights:** These are energy-efficient and provide a broad spectrum of light. They are suitable for both freshwater and marine aquariums.

2. **LED Lights:** Popular due to their long lifespan, energy efficiency, and customizable spectrum. They can be used in both freshwater and marine setups and are ideal for planted tanks and coral reefs.
3. **Incandescent Lights:** Less common due to their inefficiency and heat production. They are typically used in smaller, basic setups.
4. **Metal Halide Lights:** Produce intense light and are commonly used in large, deep marine aquariums, particularly for reef tanks with coral.
5. **Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs):** Provide a good amount of light and are suitable for planted freshwater aquariums.
6. **T5 and T8 Lights:** These are types of fluorescent lights with different diameters. T5 lights are thinner and more efficient compared to T8 lights.
7. **VHO (Very High Output) Fluorescent Lights:** These produce more intense light than standard fluorescent lights and are suitable for larger aquariums, especially marine and reef tanks.
8. **Actinic Lights:** Emit light in the blue spectrum, enhancing the colors of marine life and promoting photosynthesis in corals and other marine plants.
9. **Moonlights:** These are LED lights that mimic the natural lunar light cycle, often used to simulate nighttime conditions in the aquarium.

Each type of light has its specific use cases, and the choice depends on the type of aquarium, the inhabitants, and the desired aesthetic and functional outcomes.” (OpenAI - GPT 3.5, 2024)