



## Original software publication

## RXMD: A scalable reactive molecular dynamics simulator for optimized time-to-solution



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## ABSTRACT

RXMD is a parallel reactive molecular dynamics (RMD) simulator designed to perform large-scale RMD simulations on commodity laptop computers to supercomputer platforms. With extensive Time-to-Solution (TtoS) optimization techniques and scalable algorithms implemented, RXMD enables researchers to explore materials design space that requires vast spatial-extent and long-time atomistic events with highly accurate chemistry. Extensible and modular software architecture allows to implement innovative optimization techniques. RXMD is one of core simulation engines at Material Genome Innovation for Computational Software (MAGICS) center, and is freely distributed as an open-source software from MAGICS website and Github. RXMD is also used as computational materials courseware to provide basic training of parallel RMD simulations for computational researchers and community.

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## Software metadata

Current software version	RXMD 3.0.
Permanent link to executables of this version	<a href="https://github.com/ElsevierSoftwareX/SOFTX_2019_32">https://github.com/ElsevierSoftwareX/SOFTX_2019_32</a>
Legal Software License	GPL-3
Computing platform / Operating System	Linux/Unix, OS X
Installation requirements & dependencies	Fortran 2008, MPI, OpenMP
If available Link to user manual - if formally published include a reference to the publication in the reference list	<a href="https://github.com/USCCACS/rxmd">https://github.com/USCCACS/rxmd</a>
Support email for questions	<a href="mailto:cacs@usc.edu">cacs@usc.edu</a>

## Code metadata

Current code version	RXMD 3.0
Permanent link to code/repository used of this code version	<a href="https://github.com/USCCACS/rxmd">https://github.com/USCCACS/rxmd</a>
Legal Code License	GPL-3
Code versioning system used	Git
Software code languages, tools, and services used	Fortran 2008, MPI, OpenMP
Compilation requirements, operating environments & dependencies	None
If available Link to developer documentation/manual	None
Support email for questions	<a href="mailto:cacs@usc.edu">cacs@usc.edu</a>

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## 1. Motivation and significance

Molecular dynamics (MD) is a widely-used materials modeling method, in which atoms are explicitly treated to investigate material of interest. MD method is often categorized by the level of theory to describe the interaction between atoms. For example, quantum MD (QMD) explicitly follows electron dynamics based on quantum mechanics, while classical MD employs simpler functions to approximate the complex electronic dynamics. Though QMD provides deep insights into underlying physics, the rapid increase in the computational complexity with system size prohibits simulating over thousands of atoms. This limitation is especially critical for materials simulations where a typical system size consists of millions of atoms to investigate local heterogeneity, such as dislocations and grain boundary, embedded within bulk of crystalline material.

One approach to circumvent the scalability problem is multi-scale modeling where an accurate QM model is used to describe chemically reactive sites while scalable continuum method describes surrounding bulk mechanical property [1–5]. Such multi-scale modeling approach has been quite successful for biological applications [6,7], however, it poses theoretical and technical challenges if hand-shake region, i.e. the boundary between different models, is not clearly defined and dynamically evolves over the course of simulation [5].

Another popular approach is to develop an interatomic interaction that is scalable and capable to describe targeted chemical reactions. This type of interatomic interaction is called “reactive” force field that consists of a dozen of energy functions, and requires extensive and sophisticated parameter optimizations. To date, a number of reactive force fields with accurate chemistry along with sound materials property have been proposed. ReaxFF [8,9] is one of reactive force fields that employs the bond-order concept and variable charge scheme, realizing dynamic formation and breaking of covalent-bonds and charge transfer between atoms. Several variable charge models, for example EEM [10], QEq [11], polarizable QEq [12], and ACKS2 (Atom-condensed Kohn–Sham DFT approximated to second order) [13], have been used in conjunction with ReaxFF. Fidelity of chemical reaction relies on the level of accuracy of theory used to train parameter sets. Although ReaxFF achieves highly accurate chemistry with several orders-of-magnitude less computational cost, the multi-core paradigm shift necessitated a novel scalable parallel software in order to fully take advantage of emerging and future computing platforms.

Currently several software packages that support ReaxFF MD are available [9]. LAMMPS (Large-scale Atomic/Molecular Massively Parallel Simulator) [14] is an open-source community-based parallel molecular dynamics simulator that has been widely used in research community. The ReaxFF package in LAMMPS, called LAMMPS/User-ReaxC, is based on PuReMD (Purdue Reactive Molecular Dynamics) [15–17]. PuReMD implements highly efficient numerical algorithms to take advantage of state-of-the-art HPC architectures such as many-core and Graphical Processing Unit (GPU).

Amsterdam Modeling Suite (AMS) is a commercial software package that consists of various simulation engines including ReaxFF. AMS comes graphical user interface (GUI), utility tools to construct initial MD system, analyze and visualize MD trajectories, and many online manuals and tutorials that significantly increase users’ productivity. In addition, AMS also offers advanced features, such as eReaxFF [18] and ACKS2 to further extend the simulation fidelity and its modeling capability.

GULP (the General Utility Lattice Program) [19] was originally designed to develop interatomic interactions, and later extended the capability to enable parallel MD simulation. GULP supports

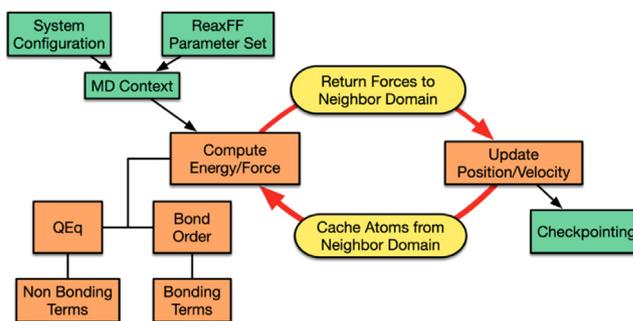


Fig. 1. Schematic of RXMD workflow.

various classical force fields including ReaxFF. GULP also offers many parameter fitting features incorporating a wide range of material properties such as structural, energetic, mechanical, dielectric, and vibrational properties. These are useful to develop new interatomic potentials.

RXMD has been developed for computational scientists and engineers to perform RMD simulation on desktop to million-core supercomputers. RXMD provides excellent scalabilities as well as sound single-node performance.

## 2. Software description

RXMD is based on modern Fortran standard with minimal dependency on third-party library to keep the codebase simple and portable for existing and future computing architectures. RXMD employs an efficient domain decomposition scheme with standard six-way interprocess communication to ensure the sustainable algorithmic scalability. Message Passing Interface (MPI) library is used for interprocess communication across multiple nodes, while multithreading based on Open Multi-Processing (OpenMP) APIs realizes single-node concurrency. Computationally intensive subroutines, such as the bonded and non-bonded energy functions, the neighborlist construction, and the hessian computation in QEq, i.e.  $\frac{\partial^2 E_{\text{Coulomb}}}{\partial q_i \partial q_j}$  where  $E_{\text{Coulomb}}$  is the Coulomb energy and  $q_i$  and  $q_j$  is the charges of  $i$ - and  $j$ th atoms, are multithreaded. Shared data among threads are protected by the low-overhead atomic operation. We fuse the energy functions into a single parallel section to enhance the multithreading scalability and minimize overheads incurred by the fork-join thread model. Scalable I/O function implemented with MPI-I/O stores checkpoint file and other information such as atom connectivity. RXMD has been tested on various Fortran compilers and MPI libraries. The latest RXMD source code is freely available from the Github repository [20] as well as the MAGICS website [21].

### 2.1. Software architecture

Fig. 1 schematically presents a RXMD simulation workflow. The first step is to generate initial configuration file (**rxff.bin**), which contains atom types, positions, and system dimensions, etc. RXMD includes a utility tool called **geninit** to generate initial configuration. RXMD solves the Newton’s equation of motion (indicated by the red arrows) and produces atomic trajectory for later analysis. One MD step consists of (1) cache atom information from neighbor domains, (2) compute energy and force, (3) return the computed force value to neighbor domains, and (4) update atom position and velocity. The step (1) and (3) are done through interprocess communication using MPI. The energy and force computations consist of several sub-steps, including the bond-order calculation, the determination of atomic charge using QEq, and the force and energy calculation based on bonding and non-bonding functions.

### 2.1.1. Directory structure

The list below shows several key files and directories in the RXMD repository.

**DAT:** directory to store checkpoint data and the initial config file (**rxff.bin**). Runtime flag **-o** may be used to overwrite the directory path.

**ffield:** text file of ReaxFF parameter set. Runtime flag **-f** may be used to overwrite the file path.

**rxmd.in:** text file contains RXMD input parameters. Runtime flag **-i** overwrites the file path.

**init:** directory to store utility and create initial configuration using **geninit**.

**src:** directory to store the RXMD source files

Directory **src** contains RXMD source files. In the source files, subroutines and functions are grouped by their functionality indicated by the filename. Most important source files are listed below.

**main.F90:** MD driver that contains main routine and several utility functions

**init.F90:** subroutines for system initialization

**param.F90:** ReaxFF force field parser

**pot.F90:** subroutines for energy and force computations

**qe.F90:** atomic charge computation using QEq scheme

**pqq.F90:** core/shell charge computation using PQEq scheme

**module.F90:** modules for common variables

**comm.F90:** subroutines for interprocess communication

**fileio.F90:** parallel I/O routines for checkpointing, atom connectivity, and data visualization

**bo.F90:** subroutines for bond-order computation

Directory **init** contains Makefile and source files to build the **geninit** utility tool. To prepare an initial configuration, **geninit** requires two input files: (1) a ReaxFF force field file (**ffied**) designed for the system of interest; and (2) an input file that contains simulation system information such as the lattice parameters of MD box, and element name and coordinate of atoms. Fig. 2 presents the input file format. The first line is the total number of atoms followed by a string to describe the system. The second line stores the six lattice parameters, three edges (*a*, *b*, and *c*) in Å unit and three angles ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ). From the third line until the end of file stores element name and *x*, *y*, *z* positions in fractional coordinates per line.

### 2.2. Software functionalities

In this section, we introduce RXMD functionalities such as, the extended Lagrangian method, Shift-Collapse (SC) algorithm and recently added a generalized polarizable charge equilibration scheme, called ReaxPQ+ [22].

The extended Lagrangian method adapted in RXMD was proposed by Nicklasson et al. in the context of quantum molecular dynamics (QMD) [23–25]. It circumvents the computationally-expensive energy minimization step by introducing the fictitious

dynamics of wave functions, achieving the excellent energy conservation and the significant reduction in computing time. The extended Lagrangian method should be used with caution due to the known energy drift problem in the XL-BOMD scheme [26]. The energy conservation however can be substantially improved by the inertial extended Lagrangian/self-consistent field (iEL/SCF) scheme recently proposed by Leven et al. [26].

To achieve linear scaling to evaluate range-limited interatomic interactions on a single node, a standard strategy is to organize atomic positions into bins, often called cells, and traverse atom information using linked-list. Based on the translation and reflection invariance of interatomic potential, SC algorithm completely eliminates redundant computations while minimizing data transfers among computing nodes. A generalization of the SC algorithm, called renormalized SC (RSC), has been applied to ReaxPQ+ and achieved 5.0x reduction in the TtoS [22]. RSC is currently in a development branch and not officially supported.

Despite its enormous success, QEq scheme employs atomic charge model thus the electronic contribution in dielectric constant is ignored. To address the issue, a polarized PQEq model, called PQEq scheme [27–29], based on a core-shell model has been proposed. PQEq describes sufficiently accurate dielectric behavior compared to quantum mechanics for various organic and inorganic materials. Further extending the PQEq scheme, RXMD implements a generalized PQEq scheme (ReaxPQ+) to incorporate the effect of electric field (see Fig. 3(a)). To describe the dielectric response of materials, ReaxPQ+ introduces the effect of an external electric field by solving  $\mathbf{F}_{\text{inter}} + \mathbf{F}_{\text{external}} = \mathbf{F}_{\text{intra}}$  to determine the shell charge position  $\mathbf{r}_{\text{is}}$ , where,  $\mathbf{F}_{\text{intra}}$  and  $\mathbf{F}_{\text{inter}}$  are the Coulombic interactions within an atom and between neighbor atoms, and  $\mathbf{F}_{\text{external}}$  is the induced force by the external electric field. We have successfully applied the ReaxPQ+ framework to high energy-density polymers, Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> crystal, and MoS<sub>2</sub> monolayer.

Fig. 3(b) and (c) present the weak and strong scaling performances of ReaxPQ+ on Intel Xeon Phi (KNL) supercomputer called Theta at Argonne Leadership Computing Facility (ALCF). During the isogranular-scaling (weak scaling), the number of atoms per MPI rank (*N/P*) is kept constant, i.e., 25,576 MoS<sub>2</sub> atoms per MPI rank. In the isogranular scaling, the speedup on *P* cores is defined as the ratio of a product of the total number of atoms in the simulation cell and the number of RXMD steps per second with a reference benchmark based on 64 Xeon Phi cores. Here, the number of cores during the benchmark is varied from 64 to 131,072, consisting of up to 3,221,224,472 atoms. We have achieved a parallel efficiency of 0.989, see Fig. 3(b). We have also performed weak-scalability with smaller granularity (RDX system involving 672 atoms per core) and observed no degradation of parallel efficiency up to 16,384 KNL cores. In the strong-scaling performance test (Fig. 3(c)), a fixed problem size of 50,331,648 MoS<sub>2</sub> atoms is used. The numbers of cores used during the benchmark varies between 2048 and 32,768. We have obtained the strong-scaling parallel efficiency of 0.766, which corresponds to 12.26x reduction in the TtoS.

### 3. Illustrative examples

In this section, we present how to download RXMD, build necessary executables, and perform several example simulations. First step is to clone the RXMD repository by git command.

```
git clone https://github.com/USCCACS/rxmd.git
```

Fortran compiler, MPI library, and MPI Fortran 90 binding have to be properly installed and configured to build the RXMD executable. **mpif90 -version** tells whether the MPI binding is available and which Fortran compiler is being used.

12	"Poly(ethylene) crystal"		
7.40000	4.93000	2.53400	90.000 90.000 90.000
C	0.038000000	0.935000000	0.250000000
C	0.962000000	0.065000000	0.750000000
H	0.197000000	0.970000000	0.250000000

Fig. 2. Example of geninit input file. Atomic coordinates are in fractional coordinates.

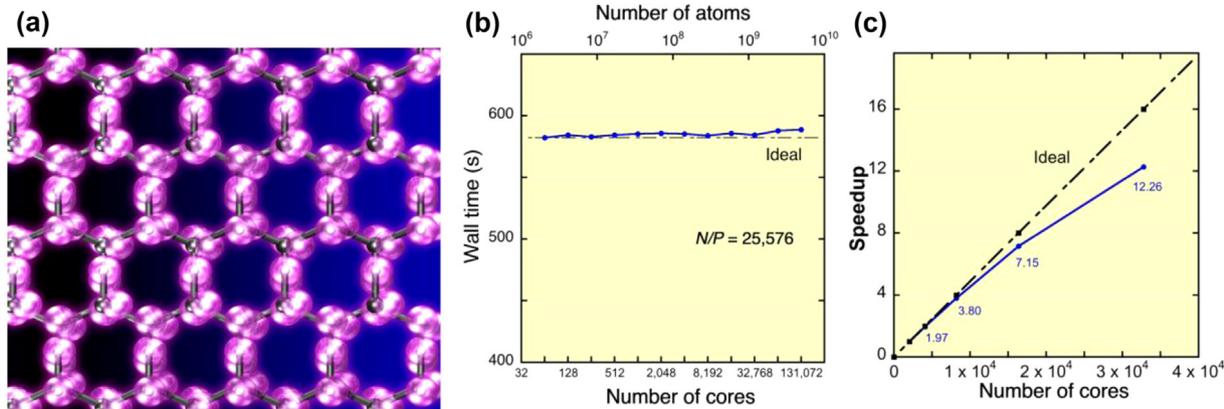


Fig. 3. (a) Distribution of shell charges (purple) of polyethylene crystal subjected to an electric field. (b) Weak-scaling performance of the ReaxPQ+ algorithm using 25,576 MoS<sub>2</sub> atoms per KNL core, in which the number of KNL cores  $P$  ranges from 64 to 131,072. The blue line shows the wall-clock time for single MD step in second. (c) Strong-scaling speedup of the ReaxPQ+ algorithm using a constant problem size - 50,331,648-atom MoS<sub>2</sub> system on  $P$  cores ( $P = 2048, \dots, 32,768$ ) of Theta. The ideal speedup and the measured wall-clock time are shown as black-dotted and blue lines, respectively. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

Directory **config/** contains several predefined build settings. Through the examples, we use a standard make file **config/make\_example.inc** with GNU Fortran compiler. First step is to copy **config/make\_example.inc** as **make.inc**, and type **make all**, which builds the RXMD executable **rxmd** and the utility tool **geninit** under directory **init/** used for all examples.

```
cp config/make_example.inc make.inc
make all
```

Directory **examples/** contains three subdirectories, each of which demonstrates several core functionalities of RXMD.

- 1-**reaxff**: RMD simulation with single domain.
- 2-**reaxff-dc**: RMD simulation with multiple domains.
- 3-**reaxpq+**: ReaxPQ+ simulation with single domain with electric field.

Each directory contains a crystalline polyethylene unit cell (**init.xyz**), ReaxFF parameter set (**ffield**), RXMD input parameters (**rxmd.in**), and **Makefile** to perform the demo simulations.

### 3.1. RMD with single and multiple domains

The first two examples demonstrate how to run RMD simulation on single domain (**1-reaxff**) and multiple domains based on divide-and-conquer approach (**2-reaxff-dc**). Unless explicitly specified, file and directory paths are relative to **rxmd/examples**.

By changing directory to **1-reaxff/** and typing **make** command, following commands are executed.

```
../init/geninit -i input.xyz -f ffield -o DAT/ -mc 2 3 5
mpirun -np 1 ../rxmd
```

The first command creates an initial config using the unit cell structure described in **input.xyz**, replicate the unit cell by 2, 3, and 5 times in  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  directions, respectively. ReaxFF parameter file **ffield** is necessary here to map between element name (string) stored in **init.xyz** and atom type (integer) during RMD simulation. Flag **-o** specifies output directory to place the output file **rxff.bin**, which contains the initial configuration data.

After the computation finishes, the atom trajectories are saved under directory **1-reaxff/DAT/** using XYZ format. Any standard molecular visualization can be used to visualize the trajectory.

To achieve the best TtoS for your system of interest, precise control on simulation domain size and efficient use of available computing resources are crucial. Second example shows how to prepare an initial configuration to perform two-domain RMD simulation. Although this is the simplest case of multiple domain simulation, the same procedure can be used for RMD simulation consists of million domains. Directory **2-reaxff-dc/** contains an example of multidomain RMD simulation using two MPI ranks. The **make** command from directory **2-reaxff-dc/** will create an initial configuration and start a short RMD simulation with multi-domain.

### 3.2. ReaxPQ+ with electric field

Directory **3-reaxpq+/** contains an example of ReaxPQ+ simulation where a polyethylene crystal is subjected to a static electric field of 0.01 Volts/Å in the  $x$  direction. Electric field is applied by the runtime flag **-e** (or **-efield**) followed by two numbers; the direction (integer) and the strength of electric field (float) in a unit of Volts/Å, respectively. Use **make** command from **3-reaxpq+/** to perform the example.

```
../init/geninit -i input.xyz -f ffield -o DAT/ -mc 2 3 5
mpirun -np 1 ../rxmd
```

XYZ files that contains the positions of core and shell charges are created under **DAT/3-reaxpq+/**, which can be used to compute the polarizability of the system as a function of applied electric field.

## 4. Impact

The early generation of RXMD software showed excellent scalability up to one billion-atom system on BlueGene/L at ALCF [30]. The early benchmark opened up the possibility for researchers to investigate a wide range of materials properties, in which the

accurate description of vast spatial extent and accurate chemical reaction is inevitable. Thanks to the simple and modular architecture, RXMD has been serving a software-development platform for novel algorithms to improve the TtoS, including the extended-Lagrangian method to bypass the speed-limiting QEq step [31] and renormalized shift-collapse (RSC) method to absolutely eliminate redundant computations [22,32]. RXMD continues to support excellent scalability on single computing node as well as on many high-end supercomputing architectures at national leadership computing facilities.

Large-scale RMD has broad applications across many materials research fields. One example is sulfur-induced embrittlement, where minute amount of impurity makes tough metal exhibit catastrophic brittle failure. Using 48 million-atom RMD simulation, Chen et al. found that the presence of the sulfur impurities in nickel grain boundary resulted in the order-of-magnitude reduction in shear strength, thereby the crack propagation pathways was confined along grains [33]. With RXMD, scientists can design and investigate novel and unique scientific and engineering problems by fully taking advantage of available computing resources. RXMD has been used to investigate stress corrosion cracking [33], shock-induced chemical reactions [34,35], underwater bubble collapse [36], synthesis of nanocarbon [37] and 2D materials [38,39], force-field training [40,41], and a number of novel algorithmic studies [31,32].

In addition, RXMD has been used as part of courseware of the MAGICS materials software workshop. All training modules and courseware materials are freely distributed from the MAGICS website [42] to create an open educational platform for future computational researchers.

## 5. Conclusions

In summary, RXMD is a scalable and portable parallel RMD simulator specifically designed to perform large-scale RMD simulation using commodity laptop computers to supercomputer platforms. With extensive optimizations on the scalability and the TtoS, researchers are now able to perform quantum-mechanics level accurate RMD simulation at unprecedented spatial and temporal scale. The simple and modular software architecture allows researchers to investigate novel and innovative optimization techniques. RXMD has been shown to be highly scalable from small-to-large granularity problems, which allows to study a wide range of materials-science problems. The software has been developed at the DOE MAGICS center, and the RXMD source code is freely distributed on Github and the MAGICS website. To date, RXMD has been shared with many research groups at universities and national laboratories, and recently used as computational materials training courseware for graduate students and early career researchers.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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