

Visual Communications and Image Processing IV

Part 2

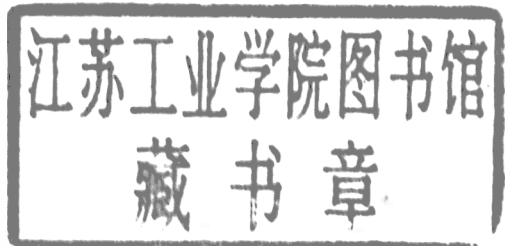
Visual Communications and Image Processing IV

William A. Pearlman
Chair/Editor

8-10 November 1989
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Sponsored by
SPIE—The International Society for Optical Engineering

Cooperating Organizations
IEEE Circuits and Systems Society
IEEE Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing Society
European Association for Signal Processing (EURASIP)



Published by
SPIE—The International Society for Optical Engineering
P.O. Box 10, Bellingham, Washington 98227-0010 USA
Telephone 206/676-3290 (Pacific Time) • Telex 46-7053



Volume 1199
Part Two of Three Parts

SPIE (The Society of Photo-Optical Instrumentation Engineers) is a nonprofit society dedicated to advancing engineering and scientific applications of optical, electro-optical, and optoelectronic instrumentation, systems, and technology.



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Please use the following format to cite material from this book:

Author(s), "Title of Paper," *Visual Communications and Image Processing IV*, William A. Pearlman, Proc. SPIE 1199, page numbers (1989).

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 89-63405
ISBN 0-8194-0238-9

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CONTENTS

	Conference Committee	xii
	Introduction	xv
Part One		
	PLENARY LECTURE	
1199-165	Multiresolution techniques for image representation, analysis, and "smart" transmission P. J. Burt, David Sarnoff Research Ctr.	2
SESSION 1A	MOTION ESTIMATION	
1199-01	Some new techniques in displacement estimation algorithms K. Xie, L. Van Eycken, A. J. Oosterlinck, Catholic Univ. of Leuven (Belgium).....	18
1199-02	Lossless compression of block motion information in motion-compensated video coding A. N. Akansu, J. H. Chien, M. S. Kadur, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	30
1199-03	Multipredictive motion estimation scheme with a prediction along motion axis B. Choquet, D. Pelé, Ctr. Commun d'Etudes de Télédiffusion et Télécommunication (France).....	39
1199-04	Multiple-frame pel-recursive Wiener-based displacement estimation algorithm S. N. Efstratiadis, A. K. Katsaggelos, Northwestern Univ.	51
1199-05	Spatiotemporal motion-compensated noise filtering of image sequences A. K. Katsaggelos, Northwestern Univ.; J. N. Driessen, Delft Univ. of Technology (Netherlands); S. N. Efstratiadis, Northwestern Univ.; R. L. Lagendijk, Delft Univ. of Technology (Netherlands).....	61
1199-06	Video noise reduction in telecine systems G. L. Kennel, Eastman Kodak Co.; M. R. Raghuveer, Rochester Institute of Technology.	71
SESSION 1B	RESTORATION AND FILTERING	
1199-07	Three-dimensional ultrasonic image filtering B. B. Ayral, B. Vachon, Compiègne Univ. of Technology (France).....	80
1199-08	Evaluation of order statistic filters using a modified SNR R. L. J. Martens, A. N. Venetsanopoulos, Univ. of Toronto (Canada).....	92
1199-09	Robust object reconstruction from noisy observations G. Sundaramoorthy, M. R. Raghuveer, S. A. Dianat, Rochester Institute of Technology.	104
1199-10	Optimal detection methods for the restoration of images degraded by signal dependent noise K. E. Barner, G. R. Arce, Univ. of Delaware.	115
1199-11	High speed Kalman filtering for image restoration J. Y. Zhang, W. Steenaart, Univ. of Ottawa (Canada).....	125
1199-12	Characteristics of the motion-sensitive spatiotemporal filters D. Y.-S. Fong, Lockheed Palo Alto Research Labs.; C. A. Pomalaza-Ráez, Purdue Univ.	136
1199-13	Hierarchic and parallel processing schemes for arbitrary multirate filter banks B. Levitan, G. Buchsbaum, Univ. of Pennsylvania.	141
SESSION 1C	MATHEMATICAL MORPHOLOGY AND FRACTALS I	
1199-15	Optimal morphological filters for pattern restoration D. Schonfeld, J. I. Goutsias, Johns Hopkins Univ.	158

(continued)

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IMAGE PROCESSING IV

Volume 1199

1199-16	Generic ribbons: a morphological approach towards natural shape decomposition Z. Zhou, A. N. Venetsanopoulos, Univ. of Toronto (Canada).....	170
1199-17	Mathematical morphology and its application in machine vision D. G. Daut, D. Zhao, Rutgers Univ.	181
1199-18	Representation of geometric features, tolerances, and attributes using mathematical morphology F. Y. Shih, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	192
1199-19	Mathematical morphology on gradient space surface tessellation M.-L. Hsiao, General Electric Co.	203
1199-20	Morphological algorithms for the analysis of pavement structure D. A. Grivas, M. M. Skolnick, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.	211
SESSION 2A VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS I		
1199-21	Method for evaluating the efficiency of block classification in multiple-mode video compression T. Lookabaugh, D. Klenke, B. Chitprasert, J. A. Zingman, W.-H. Chen, Compression Labs., Inc.	222
1199-22	PC-compatible multiprocessor workstation for video, data, and voice communication J. W. Duran, M. Kenoyer, VideoTelecom Corp.	232
1199-23	Multiprocessor-based low bit rate video codec architecture and a well-adapted two-phase software coding strategy T. Kummerow, P. Mohr, P. Weis, Telenorma (FRG).....	237
1199-24	Comparison of techniques for estimating block motion in image sequence coding M. T. Orchard, Princeton Univ.	248
1199-25	Multimedia teleconference terminal controlling quantity of flow in packet transmission N. Kanemaki, F. Kishino, K. Manabe, NTT Corp. (Japan).....	259
1199-26	Low rate video coding based on discrete cosine transform/vector quantization J. Maeng, D. Hein, VideoTelecom Corp.	267
1199-27	Knowledge-based coding of facial images based on the analysis of feature-points motion and isodensity lines T. Mizuno, O. Nakamura, T. Minami, Kogakuin Univ. (Japan).....	274
SESSION 2B IMAGE ANALYSIS I		
1199-29	Polynomial image algebra approach for image processing P. Bhattacharya, K. Qian, Univ. of Nebraska/Lincoln.	286
1199-30	Automatic site recognition and localization P. Thévenoux, Aérospatiale and Etablissement Technique Central de l'Armement (France); B. Zavidovique, Univ. de Paris XI and Etablissement Technique Central de l'Armement (France); G. Stamon, Univ. René Descartes (France).	296
1199-31	Comparison of matrix texture features using a maximum likelihood texture classifier J. R. Berry, Jr., J. I. Goutsias, Johns Hopkins Univ.	305
1199-32	Binary image representation scheme using irredundant translation invariant data structure M.-C. Zhang, S. Chen, Univ. of North Carolina/Charlotte.	317
1199-33	Markov random field model-based approach to image interpretation J. Zhang, J. W. Modestino, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.....	328
1199-35	Elementary holograms and neurocomputer architecture for pattern recognition W. Schempp, Univ. of Siegen (FRG).....	340
1199-36	Automatic modeling of rigid 3-D objects using an analysis-by-synthesis system H. Busch, Univ. Hannover (FRG).	356

1199-37	Stereo-based approach to face modeling for the ATR virtual space conferencing system G. Xu, H. Agawa, Y. Nagashima, Y. Kobayashi, ATR Communication Systems Research Labs. (Japan).....	365
SESSION 2C MATHEMATICAL MORPHOLOGY AND FRACTALS II		
1199-38	Application of mathematical morphology to handwritten ZIP-code recognition A. M. Gillies, P. D. Gader, M. P. Whalen, B. T. Mitchell, Environmental Research Institute of Michigan.	380
1199-39	Shape features using curvature morphology F. Leymarie, M. D. Levine, McGill Univ. (Canada).	390
1199-40	Multiscale fractal and correlation signatures for image screening and natural clutter suppression T. Peli, V. T. Tom, B. G. Lee, Atlantic Aerospace Electronics Corp.	402
1199-41	Measuring fractal dimension: morphological estimates and iterative optimization P. Maragos, Harvard Univ.; F.-K. Sun, The Analytic Sciences Corp.	416
1199-42	Estimating of fractal and correlation dimension from 2-D and 3-D images A. M. Vepsäläinen, J. Ma, Technical Research Ctr. of Finland (Finland).	431
SESSION 2D MATHEMATICAL MORPHOLOGY AND FRACTALS III		
1199-43	Pixel classification by morphologically derived texture features E. R. Dougherty, J. B. Pelz, Rochester Institute of Technology.	440
1199-44	Representation theorems in an L-fuzzy set theory based algebra for morphology D. Sinha, Stevens Institute of Technology; C. R. Giardina, CUNY/Staten Island.	450
1199-45	Digital filters based on threshold decomposition and Boolean functions J. Astola, L. Koskinen, Tampere Univ. (Finland); O. P. Yli-Harja, Technical Research Ctr. (Finland); Y. Neuvo, Tampere Univ. of Technology (Finland).	461
1199-46	Parallel architecture for mathematical morphology F. Lenoir, S. Bouzar, Institut National de Recherche sur les Transports et leur Sécurité (France); M. Gauthier, Ctr. de Morphologie Mathématique (France).	471
1199-47	Morphological networks S. S. Wilson, Applied Intelligent System, Inc.	483
POSTER SESSION I: IMAGE CODING AND VISUAL DISPLAY		
1199-140	Adaptive 1-D discrete cosine transform/vector quantization for motion-compensated video coding A. N. Akansu, J. H. Chien, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	496
1199-144	Low bit rate teleconferencing video signal data compression C. N. Manikopoulos, New Jersey Institute of Technology; H. Sun, Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.; G. Antoniou, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	504
1199-145	New coding method for low bit rate video signals G. Tu, L. Van Eycken, A. J. Oosterlinck, Catholic Univ. of Leuven (Belgium).	514
1199-147	Color image display with a limited palette size C. A. Bouman, Purdue Univ.; M. T. Orchard, Princeton Univ.	522
1199-150	Screening pictorial images with gray-level reproducibility J. S.-P. Shu, NYNEX Corp.	534
1199-154	Hadamard transform classifier for predictive classified vector quantization K. N. Ngan, H. C. Koh, K. Y. Hang, National Univ. of Singapore (Singapore).	541
1199-155	Digital color map compression by classified vector quantization H. Potlapalli, H. S. Barad, A. B. Martinez, Tulane Univ.	550
1199-157	Performance analysis of an intraframe quadrature mirror filter subband coding system S. Brofferio, Univ. di Bari (Italy); E. Marcozzi, L. Mori, D. Raveglia, Italtel SIT (Italy).....	560

(continued)

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IMAGE PROCESSING IV

Volume 1199

1199-158	Two approaches to transform coding using classified vector quantization G. Tu, L. Van Eycken, A. J. Oosterlinck, Catholic Univ. of Leuven (Belgium).	570
1199-159	Software tools for a real-time processing system: ISIS and OSIRIS B. de Rouvray, O. Farabet, Lab. d'Electronique Philips (France).	578
1199-160	Real-time movement detection: an algorithm for the image pipeline processors μPD7281 B. A. Correia, F. D. Carvalho, Lab. Nacional de Engenharia e Tecnologia Industrial (Portugal)	588
1199-163	Vector quantization with replenishment technique for video signal coding H. Sun, Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.; C. N. Manikopoulos, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	595
1199-164	Discriminant operators for the emulation of the visual receptive fields M. M. Gupta, S. K. Hungenahally, Univ. of Saskatchewan (Canada).	606

Part Two

POSTER SESSION II: IMAGE RESTORATION, ENHANCEMENT, AND ANALYSIS

1199-139	Video signal enhancement using fine structure pre-emphasis with modulo limiting C. H. Lu, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	620
1199-141	Detection of a change in a sequence of images based on the free statistics N. A. Nechval, Civil Aviation Engineers Institute (USSR).	631
1199-143	Personal identification through facial images using isodensity lines T. Sakaguchi, O. Nakamura, T. Minami, Kogakuin Univ. (Japan).	643
1199-146	Application of polynomial transforms in image deblurring J.-B. Martens, Eindhoven Univ. of Technology (Netherlands).	655
1199-148	Highly accurate 3-D position measurement and nonlinear coordinate transformation H. Naruse, Y. Nomura, M. Sagara, NTT Corp. (Japan).	667
1199-151	Principles and applications of a new cooperative segmentation methodology P. Bonnin, ETCA/CREA/SP (France); B. Zavidovique, ETCA/Univ. de Paris XI (France).	677
1199-152	Image estimation and missing observations reconstruction by means of a Kalman-like filter M. Dirickx, M. P. Acheroy, Royal Military Academy (Belgium).	689
1199-153	Local thresholding technique based on a run representation V. Eramo, C. Raspollini, IBM Rome Scientific Ctr. (Italy).	699
1199-161	Fast contour line extraction algorithm observing line continuation T. Nishimura, NTT America, Inc.; T. Fujimoto, NTT Human Interface Labs. (Japan).	704
1199-162	Histogram equalization utilizing spatial correlation for image enhancement M. S. Kamel, L. Guan, Univ. of Waterloo (Canada).	712

SESSION 3A HIERARCHICAL IMAGE/VIDEO CODING I

1199-48	Subband encoding of video sequences J. W. Woods, T. Naveen, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.	724
1199-49	Pyramidal image coder with contour-based interpolative vector quantization Y.-S. Ho, A. Gersho, Univ. of California/Santa Barbara.	733
1199-50	Subband coding of image sequences at low bit rates J. Biemond, P. H. Westerink, F. Muller, Delft Univ. of Technology (Netherlands).	741
1199-51	Subband coding of images employing an efficient parallel filter bank J. H. Husøy, T. A. Ramstad, Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norway).	752

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IMAGE PROCESSING IV

Volume 1199

1199-52	Image coding on a hexagonal pyramid with noise spectrum shaping B. Mahesh, W. A. Pearlman, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.	764
1199-53	Multirate monochrome image compression based on a novel deconvolution of the analysis/synthesis filter banks (Invited Paper) M. J. T. Smith, S. L. Eddins, Georgia Institute of Technology.	775
1199-54	Subband coding for advanced television signals based on spatial domain considerations T.-C. Chen, P. E. Fleischer, Bell Communications Research.	787
1199-55	Implementing the Joint Photographic Experts Group still-picture compression algorithm R. Aravind, G. L. Cash, J. P. Worth, AT&T Bell Labs.	799
SESSION 3B IMAGE ANALYSIS II		
1199-56	Reliable Bayes classification using multiple description segments and its applications in scene analysis N. H. C. Yung, K. Jones, Univ. of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK).	810
1199-57	Note on detecting dominant points N. Ansari, New Jersey Institute of Technology; E. J. Delp, Purdue Univ.	821
1199-58	Two-parameter cubic convolution for image reconstruction S. E. Reichenbach, Univ. of Nebraska/Lincoln; S. K. Park, College of William and Mary.	833
1199-59	Tightly linked structures grammars: inference, parsing, and some results J. Blanc-Talon, ETCA/CREA/SP (France); B. Zavidovique, IEF/ETCA and Univ. de Paris XI (France).	841
1199-60	Recognition of equations using a 2-D stochastic context-free grammar P. A. Chou, AT&T Bell Labs.	852
SESSION 3C REAL-TIME VIDEO SIGNAL PROCESSING		
1199-62	Real-time video signal processing system for dynamic images N. Yagi, R. Yajima, K. Enami, K. Fukui, NHK/Japan Broadcasting Corp. (Japan); N. Sasaki, K. Hoshino, K. Harukawa, M. Kogure, Toshiba Corp. (Japan).	866
1199-63	Double precision high speed convolution processor F. Laroche, J. F. Côté, A. S. Malowany, McGill Univ. (Canada).	878
1199-64	NTSC/Common Intermediate Format mutual conversion processor S. Nishimura, H. Kuroda, Y. Suzuki, NTT Human Interface Labs. (Japan); T. Tsuchiya, NTT LSI Labs. (Japan).	885
SESSION 3D DIGITAL IMAGE PROCESSING IN MEDICINE		
1199-66	Fractal-based pattern recognition and its applications to cell image analysis P. Zhang, H. S. Barad, A. B. Martinez, Tulane Univ.	896
1199-67	Using fractal and morphological criteria for automatic classification of lung diseases J. Levy-Vehel, INRIA (France).	903
1199-70	Low level segmentation of multidimensional medical images: an expert system S. P. Raya, Univ. of California; G. T. Herman, Univ. of Pennsylvania.	913
1199-71	Estimation of heart wall velocity using the Wigner distribution E. M. Stokely, M. Mandumula, Univ. of Texas/Arlington.	920
1199-72	Semiautomatic extraction of the left-ventricular chamber from 3-D computed tomography cardiac images W. E. Higgins, The Pennsylvania State Univ.; N. Chung, E. L. Ritman, Mayo Medical School.	932
1199-73	Statistical refinement of transmission computed tomograms in high photon counting noise K. D. Sauer, B. Liu, Princeton Univ.	944

(continued)

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IMAGE PROCESSING IV

Volume 1199

1199-74	Resolution enhancement of magnetic resonance images using an iterative data refinement technique D. W. Ro, G. T. Herman, P. M. Joseph, Univ. of Pennsylvania.	952
1199-75	Combined-coding techniques for radiographic image data compression Y.-Q. Zhang, M. H. Loew, R. L. Pickholtz, George Washington Univ.	963
SESSION 4A IMAGE CODING I		
1199-169	Application of entropy-constrained vector quantization to waveform coding of images P. A. Chou, AT&T Bell Labs.	970
1199-170	Hashing-based search algorithm for coding digital images by vector quantization C.-C. Chu, Univ. of Texas/Austin.	979
1199-166	System for lossless digital image coding/decoding H. H. Torbey, H. E. Meadows, Columbia Univ.	989
1199-167	Adaptive thresholding and sketch-coding of gray-level images T. N. Pappas, AT&T Bell Labs.	1003
1199-168	Block transform image coding by multistage vector quantization with optimal bit allocation L. Wang, M. Goldberg, Univ. of Ottawa (Canada).	1015
1199-171	Discrete cosine transform image coding with sliding block codes A. Divakaran, W. A. Pearlman, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.	1027
1199-172	Two-channel image coding scheme D. P. de Garrido, P. R. R. L. Nunes, IBM Brasil Rio Scientific Ctr. (Brazil); J. Szczupak, Pontificia Univ. Católica do Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).	1038
1199-173	Multistage vector quantization based on the self-organization feature maps J. Li, C. N. Manikopoulos, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	1046
1199-174	Picture coding with switchable dynamic quantizers C. H. Lu, S.-S. Yu, New Jersey Institute of Technology.	1056
SESSION 4B DIGITAL IMAGE PROCESSING HARDWARE AND VLSI IMPLEMENTATION		
1199-76	Machine vision algorithms on the NCUBE/10 D. R. Kaeli, Rutgers Univ.	1068
1199-77	Design and VLSI implementation of efficient systolic array architectures for high speed digital signal processing applications D. V. Poornaiiah, M. O. Ahmad, Concordia Univ. (Canada).	1072
1199-78	Vector-centered content-addressable memory architecture for image coding using vector quantization S. Panchanathan, M. Goldberg, Univ. of Ottawa (Canada).	1084
1199-79	Two-dimensional convolver architecture for real-time image processing D. Landeta, C. W. Malinowski, Harris Semiconductor.	1095
1199-81	Multiprocessor digital signal processing with multistage switching network and its scheduling for image processing Y. Okumura, K. Irie, R. Kishimoto, NTT Transmission Systems Labs. (Japan).	1106
1199-80	Color edge detectors for a VLSI convolver M. E. Malowany, A. S. Malowany, McGill Research Ctr. for Intelligent Machines (Canada).	1116
1199-82	Modular ring architecture for large scale neural network implementations L. B. Jump, P. A. Ligonides, Univ. of Maryland and Caelum Research Corp.	1127
1199-83	Multiprocessor accelerator for 2-D image handling J. S. Sheblee, C. R. Allen, Univ. of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK); C. E. Goutis, Patras Univ. (Greece).	1137

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IMAGE PROCESSING IV

Volume 1199

SESSION 4C	BIOLOGICAL BASIS FOR IMAGE PROCESSING ALGORITHMS I	
1199-84	Image processing by the human eye (Invited Paper)	
	L. N. Thibos, Indiana Univ.	1148
1199-85	Statistical framework for robust fusion of depth information	
	L. T. Maloney, M. S. Landy, New York Univ.	1154
1199-86	Visual issues in the use of a head-mounted monocular display	
	E. Peli, Eye Research Institute and Harvard Medical School.	1164
1199-87	Morphological convolution operations for image processing	
	M. M. Gupta, B. De Baets, Univ. of Saskatchewan (Canada).....	1177
SESSION 4D	BIOLOGICAL BASIS FOR IMAGE PROCESSING ALGORITHMS II	
1199-88	Color vision: machine and human	
	J. Parkkinen, Univ. of Kuopio (Finland) and Univ. of Iowa; T. Jaaskelainen, Univ. of Kuopio (Finland).	1184
1199-89	Multirate filter bank perspective of early vision	
	B. Levitan, G. Buchsbaum, Univ. of Pennsylvania.	1193
1199-90	Algorithms from the fds_k model of paradigmatic recognition	
	P. A. Ligomenides, Univ. of Maryland and Caelum Research Corp.	1203
1199-91	Numerical analysis of image patterns	
	A. C. Bovik, N. Gopal, T. Emmoth, Univ. of Texas/Austin.	1215
1199-92	Image motion processing in biological and computer vision systems	
	A. Bouzerdoun, R. B. Pinter, Univ. of Washington.	1229

Part Three

SESSION 5A	HIERARCHICAL IMAGE/VIDEO CODING II	
1199-100	Nonseparable quadrature mirror filters pyramids	
	E. P. Simoncelli, E. H. Adelson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.	1242
1199-93	Subband coding of images using singular value decomposition	
	T.-H. Yu, S. K. Mitra, Univ. of California/Santa Barbara.	1247
1199-94	Perfect reconstruction filter banks with rational sampling rates in one and two dimensions	
	J. Kovačević, M. Vetterli, Columbia Univ.	1258
1199-95	Pyramid coding of images using visual criterion	
	R. P. Rao, W. A. Pearlman, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.	1269
1199-96	Applications of polynomial transforms in image coding and computer vision	
	J.-B. Martens, Eindhoven Univ. of Technology (Netherlands).	1279
1199-97	High definition television subband/discrete cosine transform coding using infinite-duration impulse response filter banks: coding strategies	
	R. Ansari, A. M. Fernandez, S. H. Lee, Bell Communications Research.	1291
1199-99	Experiments on image compression using morphological pyramids	
	F.-K. Sun, The Analytic Sciences Corp.; P. Maragos, Harvard Univ.	1303
SESSION 5B	CHARACTER RECOGNITION	
1199-101	Flexible segmentation and matching for optical character recognition	
	S.-W. Sun, Ministry of Communications (Taiwan); S.-Y. Kung, Princeton Univ.	1314

(continued)

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IMAGE PROCESSING IV

Volume 1199

1199-102	Clustering and classification for Chinese character recognition B.-S. Jeng, National Central Univ. (Taiwan); S.-W. Sun, C.-J. Lee, K.-H. Shyu, F.-H. Liu, T.-M. Wu, Ministry of Communications (Taiwan).	1324
1199-103	Region and recognition-based segmentation method used for text in mixed Chinese and English characters Y.-P. Lan, B.-S. Jeng, S. H. Lu, B. S. Chien, M. W. Chang, National Central Univ. (Taiwan).	1332
1199-104	Stroke-order independent on-line recognition of handwritten Chinese characters C.-K. Lin, B.-S. Jeng, Ministry of Communications and National Central Univ. (Taiwan); C.-J. Lee, Ministry of Communications (Taiwan).	1338
1199-105	Cartographic character recognition H. B. Rafal, Digital Equipment Corp.; M. O. Ward, Worcester Polytechnic Institute.	1345
SESSION 5C IMAGE SEGMENTATION		
1199-107	Representation and retrieval of symbolic pictures using generalized 2-D strings S.-K. Chang, E. Jungert, Y. Li, Univ. of Pittsburgh.	1360
1199-108	Performance of stochastic model-based image segmentation T. Lei, W. Sewchand, Univ. of Maryland School of Medicine.	1373
1199-109	Model-fitting approach to cluster validation with application to stochastic model-based image segmentation J. W. Modestino, J. Zhang, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.	1381
1199-110	Segment coding and automated document recognition T.-Y. Wang, C.-C. Lee, Northwestern Univ.	1393
1199-111	Token-based optimized correspondence processing for the segmentation of time-varying images D. Moulet, Institut Univ. de Technologie/Nantes (France); D. Barba, IRESTE (France).	1405
SESSION 5D IMAGE CODING II		
1199-156	Comparison of coding performance of image transforms under vector quantization of optimized subbands Y. Du, J. Halfmann, Aachen Univ. of Technology (FRG).	1418
1199-113	Framework for high compression coding of color images F. De Natale, G. Desoli, D. D. Giusto, C. S. Regazzoni, G. L. Vernazza, Univ. of Genoa (Italy).	1430
1199-114	Contour-based postprocessing of coded images Y.-S. Ho, A. Gersho, Univ. of California/Santa Barbara.	1440
1199-115	Using M-transformation to improve performance of discrete cosine transform zonal coding Y. Morikawa, N. Yamane, H. Hamada, Okayama Univ. (Japan).	1450
1199-116	Fast image coding using simple image patterns D. Chen, A. C. Bovik, Univ. of Texas/Austin.	1461
SESSION 5E IMAGE RECOVERY		
1199-117	Simultaneous blur identification and image restoration using the expectation-maximization algorithm A. K. Katsaggelos, K. T. Lay, Northwestern Univ.	1474
1199-118	Projection techniques for image restoration C. I. Podilchuk, R. J. Mammone, Rutgers Univ.	1486
1199-119	Use of convex projections for image recovery in remote sensing and tomography H. Stark, Illinois Institute of Technology; P. Oskoui, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.	1495

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IMAGE PROCESSING IV

Volume 1199

1199-120	Standard image recovery methods in the iterative data refinement framework G. T. Herman, Univ. of Pennsylvania.	1501
1199-121	Image representation by localized phase Y. Y. Zeevi, Rutgers Univ.; M. Porat, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology (Israel).	1512
1199-122	Phase recovery via mathematical programming A. Lent, Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.	1518
1199-123	Applications of image recovery techniques in the earth sciences R. F. Brammer, The Analytic Sciences Corp.	1522
1199-124	Efficient algorithms for least-squares restoration C. Auyeung, R. M. Mersereau, Georgia Institute of Technology.	1534
1199-125	Optimal sampling and reconstruction of magnetic resonance imaging signals resulting from sinusoidal gradients A. Zakhor, Univ. of California/Berkeley.	1541
1199-126	Sampling and reconstruction of nonbandlimited signals J. J. Clark, Harvard Univ.	1556
1199-127	F-CORE: a Fourier based image compression and reconstruction technique E. Micheli-Tzanakou, G. M. Binge, Rutgers Univ.	1563
SESSION 6A	VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS II	
1199-128	Color video coding for packet-switched network: replenishment adaptive vector quantization Y. Feng, N. M. Nasrabadi, Worcester Polytechnic Institute.	1576
1199-129	Study on nonreal-time motion picture coding for read-only digital storage media Y. Miyamoto, M. Ohta, T. Omachi, NEC Corp. (Japan).	1584
1199-130	Seventeen-megabits algorithm for secondary distribution of 4.2.2 video signals J.-P. Henot, Ctr. Commun d'Etudes de Télédiffusion et Télécommunications (France).	1590
1199-131	Low bit rate video codec using block list transform H.-M. Hang, B. G. Haskell, R. L. Schmidt, J. C. Candy, AT&T Bell Labs.	1599
1199-132	Image sequence coding by octrees R. Leonardi, AT&T Bell Labs.	1607
1199-133	Interframe coding scheme for packet video A. Puri, R. Aravind, AT&T Bell Labs.	1610
1199-134	Post filtering for cell-loss concealment in packet video K.-H. Tzou, Bell Communications Research.	1620
SESSION 6B	OBJECT IDENTIFICATION	
1199-135	Using local orientational information as image primitive for robust object recognition P. Seitz, Paul Scherrer Institute (Switzerland).	1630
1199-136	Model generation and inexact matching for object identification C.-L. Huang, National Tsing Hua Univ. (Taiwan).	1640
1199-137	Normalized interval vertex descriptors and application to the global shape recognition problem R. Parra-Loera, W. E. Thompson, G. M. Flachs, New Mexico State Univ.	1651
1199-138	Recovery of straight homogeneous generalized cylinders using contour and intensity information A. D. Gross, T. E. Boulton, Columbia Univ.	1661
	Author Index	1670

POSTER SESSION II

Image Restoration, Enhancement, and Analysis

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VIDEO SIGNAL ENHANCEMENT USING FINE STRUCTURE PRE-EMPHASIS WITH MODULO LIMITING

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Abstract

Companding is required in temporal or vertical pre-emphasis to realize the potential SNR improvement. A modulo limiter (ML) is a nonlinear device which maps the input signal to a predetermined output range. If the input falls within the predetermined output range, no change is made to the input signal and the output equals the input. If the input falls outside the predetermined output range, a DC offset equal to the length of the predetermined output range is repeatedly added to or subtracted from the input until the result falls inside the predetermined output range. Analysis shows that a modulo limiter can be incorporated in the pre-emphasis filters to limit the pre-emphasized signal amplitude to within the range of the input signal from $-\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ volts. The reduced dynamic range will alleviate stringent requirement on companding.

1. Introduction

Baseband noise in FM system has a parabolic power spectrum. Pre-emphasis is a well known technique in FM transmission system to improve received signal quality by suppressing the effect of the larger noise at high frequencies [1]. In video signal transmission with frequency modulation, a CCIR (Comité Consultatif International des Radiocommunications) pre-emphasis/de-emphasis standard is commonly used. The standard specifies the characteristics of the pre-emphasis and de-emphasis processors in terms of frequency response. The pre-emphasis and the de-emphasis processors are complementary to each other so as not to introduce distortion to the video signal, assuming the channel bandwidth is wide enough.

In general, the pre-emphasis processor is a filter whose transfer function tends to feature higher gain at higher frequencies. On the other hand, the de-emphasis processor is a filter featuring lower gain at higher frequencies. The processors are matched so that the end-to-end connection produces a flat frequency response. The FM noise at higher frequencies, which could have been otherwise unacceptably too large, especially at frequencies around color subcarrier, are consequently suppressed to an acceptable level. The high-pass nature of the pre-emphasis filter has the effect of differentiating or accentuating vertical edges and undoubtedly increases the peak-to-peak amplitude of the video signal. The FM carrier may be over deviated by the increased amplitude, leading to the

phenomenon of image distortion known as vertical edge tearing.

Video signal is highly redundant when the signal does not contain much motion or spatial variation. In such cases, the video signal manifest its redundancy with a highly structured power spectrum. Furthermore, the structured spectrum exhibits empty spaces (in frequency domain) where there is no signal energy. It is such structured spectrum which an interline or interframe process attempts to exploit.

Unfortunately, when there is motion or detailed spatial variation, the spectral gaps start to fill up with signal energy of unexpected magnitude and location. Such unforeseeable events can be tracked with an adaptive process. An alternative approach is to predistort the signal at the transmitter and then complementarily restore it at the receiver. This paper describes an interline pre-emphasis process (Section 2) and an interframe pre-emphasis process (Section 3). Collectively, these pre-emphasis processes are called fine structure pre-emphasis processes. Section 4 introduces a modulo limiter (ML) and Section 5 applies the ML in the fine structure pre-emphasis process to ease the requirement of companding, which is needed to realize the SNR improvement capability of fine structure pre-emphasis. Section 6 summarizes the paper.

2. Interline Processing and Vertical Pre-Emphasis

The highly structured spectrum of a video signal makes it possible to design an interline process for video signal enhancement. In a TV signal, strong correlation exists horizontally between adjacent samples and vertically between adjacent lines. Correlation also exists between adjacent fields and adjacent frames. Because of the strong line-to-line correlation, the spectrum of a TV signal consists of spectral components centered around the harmonics of line scanning frequency. The effect of temporal (field-to-field and frame-to-frame) correlation, on the other hand, is to produce around each scanning line harmonic multiple spectral lines. These spectral lines are spaced at a frequency equal to the frame repetition rate.

As the line-to-line correlation increases, *i.e.*, the interline variation decreases, the size of such empty space increases. At the extreme when the image becomes constant vertically, there is no interline variation and the video signal becomes periodic with a period equal to the line scanning period. All spectral lines disappear except the scanning line harmonics. Strictly speaking, because of the vertical blanking and synchronization pulses, the video signal can never become periodic with a period equal to the line scanning period. However, since we are concerned only with active video signal, the above scenario is very much likely. To be sure, the above observation refers to short time spectrum.

For an NTSC (National Television Standard Committee) format signal, the line scanning frequency is 15.73426 KHz and the frame repetition rate is approximately 30 Hz. Thus one sees in the spectrum of an NTSC signal a fine structure which corresponds to the line scanning rate of 15.734264 KHz and a superfine structure which corresponds to the frame rate of 30 Hz. The spectrum consists of pickets of spectral lines separated by 30 Hz. The pickets are separated by 15.734 KHz. For color signals, the chrominance component exhibits a similar fine structure spectrum,

which is interleaved with the luminance component. Thus, in a composite NTSC signal, which contains both luminance and chrominance components, the spectrum consists of spectral pickets spaced by 7.867 KHz. The luminance component has a peak at low frequencies around DC and the chrominance component has a peak centered at the color subcarrier frequency f_{sc} .

High correlation between consecutive scanning lines keeps video signal energy confined around the scanning line harmonics. Vertical variation in the scenes has the effect of spreading the energy spectrum around the scanning line harmonics. The sharper the variation, the broader the spectrum spreads. In most video signals, there are empty spaces between the scanning line harmonics. Transmission channel induced noise does not have such structured spectrum, on the other hand. The spaces are therefore mostly occupied by noise. In principle, a comb filter can be used to suppress such noise. In practice, however, occasional sharp horizontal edges will place energy in these spaces. Simply suppressing energy in these spaces tends to blur the horizontal edges or detailed vertical variation, an effect which is not desirable.

Adaptive schemes have been studied which include a horizontal edge detector and switch the comb filter on and off depending on the absence and presence of horizontal edges. An alternative approach is to incorporate a complementary comb filter at the transmitter [2,3]. The complementary transmitter comb filter acts as a predistortion processor and the receiver comb filter restores the predistorted signal. The end-to-end cascade of the transmitter and receiver comb filters has a flat frequency response. The video signal is therefore not distorted, but the noise between scanning line harmonics is suppressed by the receiver comb filter.

Because of its close resemblance to CCIR pre-emphasis, and because of the structured spectrum of video signals, such process for reducing the inter-harmonic noise is called fine structure pre-emphasis or vertical pre-emphasis. In comparison, CCIR pre-emphasis can be called horizontal pre-emphasis. The transmitter comb filter is called the pre-emphasis filter and the receiver comb filter is called de-emphasis filter.

3. Interframe Processing and Temporal Pre-Emphasis

The structured spectrum of a video signal can be observed also in a smaller (in frequency) scale. Such superfine structure reflects the strong frame-to-frame correlation in a video signal. For still images, the video signal is strictly periodic with a repetition rate of approximately 30 Hz. The signal power spectrum thus consists of spectral lines spaced 30 Hz apart. Because of the strong line-to-line correlation, these spectral lines cluster around each of the scanning line harmonics, with a void between the scanning line harmonics.

Interframe averaging has been studied for applications in noise reduction [4,5]. The averaging process is essentially a (low pass) comb filter which suppresses noise between the spectral lines. As motion or scene change occurs, the spectral lines broaden to fill the void between the spectral lines with signal energy. The broadening of spectral lines increases as motion becomes faster, or scene changes become more drastic, *i.e.*, changing to a totally different scene. Suppressing noise in these regions by direct filtering consequently distorts the signal.

An adaptive scheme incorporates a motion detection mechanism so that averaging can be regulated by the degree of motion. Whether it is adaptive or not, interframe averaging is done only at the receiver. Alternatively, a complementary (high pass) comb filter can be employed at the transmitter to predistort the video signal. The receiver (low pass) comb filter then restores the predistorted signal and suppresses the noise at the same time. Such noise suppression process is called superfine structure pre-emphasis, or interframe or temporal pre-emphasis. The transmitter (high pass) comb filter is called the pre-emphasis processor and the receiver (low pass) comb filter is called the de-emphasis processor.

Interframe process in general and temporal pre-emphasis in particular can be understood both in the frequency domain and in the time domain. First consider the frequency domain point of view. In a video signal of still images, there is no signal power in the frequency ranges between the spectral lines spaced at the frame repetition rate of approximately 30 Hz. Substantial power distribution in these frequency ranges can be found only when there are large interframe differences such as due to scene changes or motion. In most video sequences, there is very little signal power in the regions between the 30 Hz spectral lines. Random channel noises, on the other hand, do not have interframe correlation and therefore do not have a line structured spectrum. As a matter of practice, the noise power spectrum in each of the regions between the 30 Hz spectral lines can be assumed white.

At the transmitter, the low signal energy regions between the spectral lines can be boosted by a frequency selective pre-emphasis amplifier. At the receiver, a complementary de-emphasis filter is then applied to restore the pre-distorted signal and in the process reduce the noise in the regions between the spectral lines at the same time. Such interframe processing can be called superfine structure pre-emphasis/de-emphasis or temporal pre-emphasis/de-emphasis. Therefore, from a frequency domain point of view, temporal pre-emphasis or interframe processing in general reduces the noise energy in the spectral region where there is no signal energy.

From the time domain point of view, temporal pre-emphasis reduces random noise using the principle of averaging. The pre-emphasis is basically a frame differentiator. It takes samples from two consecutive frames, removes the interframe redundancy, and outputs the weighted difference signal. The complementary de-emphasis processor at the receiver is a leaky frame integrator. The leaky coefficient of the frame integrator is equal to the weighting coefficient in the frame differentiator so that the integrator matches the differentiator to obtain a unity transfer coefficient. With such arrangement, the pre-emphasis de-emphasis combination is transparent to the input video signal. On the other hand, the noise is reduced through integration of the de-emphasis.

Interframe processing produces a signal which, on the average, is smaller in dynamic range and requires smaller baseband bandwidth. Only rarely does an extreme signal swing occur. Such extreme signal swing corresponds to motion and scene changes. The original signal is relatively uniformly distributed, but the weighted frame difference tends to be concentrated around zero. In an analog system, a smaller dynamic range and baseband bandwidth facilitates more efficient use of channel bandwidth and improves the received signal quality. In a digital system, a more efficient