

# neural

## NETWORKS

current  
applications

Edited by  
**P.G.J. LISBOA**



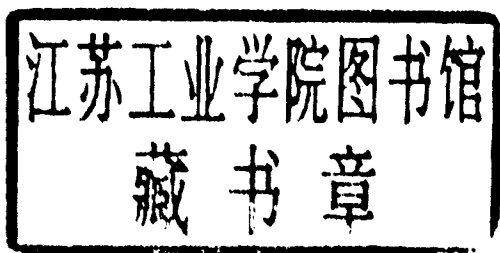
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# Neural Networks

Current applications

Edited by P.G.J. Lisboa

Department of Electrical Engineering and Electronics,  
University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK



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# Neural Networks

To my favourite living neural networks:

Catherine, Corinne and Ciarán.

To my mother. In remembrance of my father.

# Contributors

Z. Ahmad:

College of Engineering  
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Drexel University  
Philadelphia  
Pennsylvania 19104  
USA

S. B. Ahuja:

Nielsen  
Bannockburn Lake Office Plaza  
2201 Waukegan Road  
Suite S-200  
Bannockburn  
Illinois 60015  
USA

T. M. Bell:

BehavHeuristics  
335 Paint Branch Drive  
College Park  
MD 20742-3011  
USA

N. V. Bhat:

Department of Chemical Engineering  
University of Maryland  
College Park Campus  
College Park  
Maryland 20742  
USA

M. Bichsel:

Paul Scherrer Institute  
c/o Laboratories RCA Ltd.  
Badenerstrasse 569  
CH 8048  
Zurich  
Switzerland

B. Boser:

AT & T Bell Laboratories  
Crawfords Corner Road  
Holmdel  
New Jersey 07733-1988  
USA

Y. Le Cun:

AT & T Bell Laboratories  
Crawfords Corner Road  
Holmdel  
New Jersey 07733-1988  
USA

J. S. Denker:

AT & T Bell Laboratories  
Crawfords Corner Road  
Holmdel  
New Jersey 07733-1988  
USA

A. Guez:

College of Engineering  
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Drexel University  
Philadelphia  
Pennsylvania 19104  
USA

D. Henderson:

AT & T Bell Laboratories  
Crawfords Corner Road  
Holmdel  
New Jersey 07733-1988  
USA

- R. E. Howard:  
AT & T Bell Laboratories  
Crawfords Corner Road  
Holmdel  
New Jersey 07733-1988  
USA
- A. Hsiung:  
Rentenanstalt  
AI Research and Development Laboratory  
Department of Organization and Informatics  
General Guisan – Quai 40  
CH-8022  
Zurich  
Switzerland
- W. Hubbard:  
AT & T Bell Laboratories  
Crawfords Corner Road  
Holmdel  
New Jersey 07733-1988  
USA
- W. R. Hutchison:  
BehavHeuristics  
335 Paint Branch Drive  
College Park  
MD 20742-3011  
USA
- L. D. Jackel:  
AT & T Bell Laboratories  
Crawfords Corner Road  
Holmdel  
New Jersey 07733-1988  
USA
- P. J. G. Lisboa:  
Department of Electrical Engineering and Electronics  
University of Liverpool  
Brownlow Hill  
PO Box 147  
Liverpool



L69 3BX  
England

T. McAvoy:  
Department of Chemical Engineering  
University of Maryland  
College Park Campus  
College Park  
Maryland 20742  
USA

P. A. Minderman, Jr.:  
Department of Chemical Engineering  
University of Maryland  
College Park Campus  
College Park  
Maryland 20742  
USA

S. J. Perantonis:  
NSPRC Demokritos  
Athens  
Greece

P. Seitz:  
Paul Scherrer Institute  
c/o Laboratories RCA  
Badenerstrasse 569  
Ch 8048  
Zurich  
Switzerland

J. Selinsky:  
College of Engineering  
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Drexel University  
Philadelphia  
Pennsylvania 19104  
USA

K. R. Stephens:

BehavHeuristics  
335 Paint Branch Drive  
College Park  
MD 20742-3011  
USA

J. G. Taylor:

Department of Mathematics  
King's College  
University of London  
Strand  
London  
WC2R 2LS  
England

N. Sun Wang:

Department of Chemical Engineering  
University of Maryland  
College Park Campus  
College Park  
Maryland 20742  
USA

G. A. Works:

Science Applications International Corporation  
10260 Campus Point Drive  
San Diego  
California  
CA 921121  
USA

W. A. Wright:

Sowerby Research Centre  
Department of Advanced Information Processing  
British Aerospace  
PO Box 5  
Filton  
Bristol  
BS12 7QW  
England

# Preface

Neural network technology is a relative newcomer to many application areas. Its widespread use today is fraught with difficulties in achieving optimum performance, monitoring their activity, and integrating them into existing solutions and operating environments. But most of all, there is a learning curve of a purely practical nature that is involved in understanding what neural networks are about, how they operate, and what they can do.

This book reviews some of the important commercially available applications and also provides an accelerated introduction to this fast developing field. It is intended to bring the reader some of the way up that learning curve. It presents a brief overview of basic history and principles of artificial neural networks, and describes some of the most important tools provided by this technology, together with their use in practical applications; this is followed by examples of detailed applications, some of which are already marketed, concluding with a review of current applications, and perspectives for the future.

It is hoped that in the book the reader will be able to find parallels with particular applications of interest to them, opening up new opportunities by providing a window into the current state-of-the-art of neural network applications. For each user of neural network techniques, whether experienced or inexperienced, active or aspiring, committed or sceptical, the purpose of this book will be fulfilled if it gives a new insight, inspires a new application, or provides the catalyst for new solutions to difficult problems.

The emphasis throughout the book is upon the use of artificial neural networks as a new set of tools, which have special computational properties, and how best to exploit their potential in practical applications.

All the articles are thoroughly referenced in order to give the user the opportunity to follow up the details of every aspect of the techniques and principles described.

The introduction reviews some of the motivations and history of this not so new field, indicates what neural networks are and what is new about them, and introduces the basic tools that are used in the applications that follow. In addition to the technical references, a bibliography for start-up is supplied.

Chapter 2 caters for a shorter introduction, leading straight on to specific commercial applications. One of these, explosive detection in aircraft luggage, deals with an automatic inspection problem in a high-risk situation. The other describes adaptive vibration cancellation in a non-linear system.

Chapter 3 describes a solution to the problem of resource allocation in a highly competitive environment, involving aircraft seat allocation, and makes use of algorithms especially suited to forecasting. This is another example of a neural-based solution which has proved its worth in the market-place.

Chapter 4 discusses the design of a particularly important type of structure, a 'hybrid model' which acquires knowledge in the same way as neural networks do, but is more amenable to the provision of explanation facilities. It constitutes, in effect, an 'active expert system', which is derived for yet another difficult task, medical risk assessment for life insurance underwriting.

Chapter 5 describes another example of modelling for control of systems with non-linearities, this time in greater detail and applied to a standard chemical process, pH control of a stirred tank reactor.

Inverse kinematics is central to many robotic applications, and also typical of a wide class of problems known as 'inverse problems'. These are problems where the results of certain actions are known but the correct action to achieve a desired goal is uncertain. Chapter 6 tackles this problem, and also investigates another important and difficult problem in robotics, namely modelling the transient dynamics of coupled systems, by addressing the case of a simple arm manipulator with two degrees of freedom.

The area of image processing is of particular success in the application of neural network techniques, and is also an area where even real biological systems are partly understood, providing guidance in the design of general purpose artificial vision systems.

Chapter 7 gives a short tutorial on real and artificial neural vision, from a purely operational point of view. It centres around a detailed discussion of the behaviour of arguably the two most commonly used neural network learning algorithms, back error propagation and the self-organizing Kohonen network, which are applied to hand-printed numeral recognition, thereby providing results that are easy to visualize. More advanced areas where future developments are likely are highlighted.

This is followed by yet another real-world application, this time image labelling, which represents a first step in the interpretation of natural scenes, in Chapter 8. This is a crucial step in the development

of automatic navigation systems, and involves feature detection as well as image classification.

Object recognition and the detection of image symmetries is a particularly difficult task for any vision system. Chapter 9 describes an original and very successful approach to this task, which includes automatic detection of human faces against natural scene backgrounds.

Optical character recognition is singularly well suited for solution by neural network methods, since it contains distributed, redundant information. In practice this means that we are able to perform this task with a minimum amount of conscious intervention. Chapter 10 presents what is certainly one of the most powerful and robust solutions to the recognition of handwritten digits, tested on a large database collected from live mail.

Chapter 11 is concerned with invariant pattern recognition, in contrast with an earlier chapter which looked to recognize image invariants in the form of symmetry axes. This is the problem of identifying patterns independently of the basic geometric transformations of translation, rotation and a limited amount of scaling. Conventional and neural techniques are compared, and their benefits discussed. Although applied to character recognition, the approach that is developed could just as easily be extended to problems in industrial visual inspection.

The last paper deals with the future. A close examination of the early stages of the human visual system is linked, in Chapter 12, to a model that can be implemented in silicon.

Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the current state-of-the-art of neural network applications, listing some of the more important developments and prospects for the future.

I am indebted to Dr. J. McTavish for his invaluable assistance in proof-reading the manuscript.

Permission by the Institution of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) and Morgan Kaufman to publish the papers by Thomas J. McAvoy *et al.* and Y. Le Cun *et al.* respectively is gratefully acknowledged.

P. J. G. Lisboa  
University of Liverpool

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