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Fei Tao
Lin Zhang
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Configurable Intelligent Optimization Algorithm

Design and Practice in Manufacturing



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Contents

Part I Introduction and Overview

1	Brief History and Overview of Intelligent Optimization Algorithms	3
1.1	Introduction	3
1.2	Brief History of Intelligent Optimization Algorithms	5
1.3	Classification of Intelligent Algorithms	8
1.4	Brief Review of Typical Intelligent Optimization Algorithms	12
1.4.1	Review of Evolutionary Learning Algorithms	12
1.4.2	Review of Neighborhood Search Algorithms	16
1.4.3	Review of Swarm Intelligence Algorithm	20
1.5	The Classification of Current Studies on Intelligent Optimization Algorithm	23
1.5.1	Algorithm Innovation	23
1.5.2	Algorithm Improvement	24
1.5.3	Algorithm Hybridization	25
1.5.4	Algorithm Parallelization	26
1.5.5	Algorithm Application	26
1.6	Development Trends	28
1.6.1	Intellectualization	28
1.6.2	Service-Orientation	29
1.6.3	Application-Oriented	29
1.6.4	User-Centric	29
1.7	Summary	30
	References	31

2	Recent Advances of Intelligent Optimization Algorithm in Manufacturing	35
2.1	Introduction	35
2.2	Classification of Optimization Problems in Manufacturing	37
2.2.1	Numerical Function Optimization	38
2.2.2	Parameter Optimization	38
2.2.3	Detection and Classification	39
2.2.4	Combinatorial Scheduling	40
2.2.5	Multi-disciplinary Optimization	41
2.2.6	Summary of the Five Types of Optimization Problems in Manufacturing	42
2.3	Challenges for Addressing Optimization Problems in Manufacturing	44
2.3.1	Balance of Multi-objectives	44
2.3.2	Handling of Multi-constraints	46
2.3.3	Extraction of Priori Knowledge	47
2.3.4	Modeling of Uncertainty and Dynamics	48
2.3.5	Transformation of Qualitative and Quantitative Features	50
2.3.6	Simplification of Large-Scale Solution Space	51
2.3.7	Jumping Out of Local Convergence	52
2.4	An Overview of Optimization Methods in Manufacturing	52
2.4.1	Empirical-Based Method	53
2.4.2	Prediction-Based Method	54
2.4.3	Simulation-Based Method	55
2.4.4	Model-Based Method	55
2.4.5	Tool-Based Method	56
2.4.6	Advanced-Computing-Technology-Based Method	56
2.4.7	Summary of Studies on Solving Methods	57
2.5	Intelligent Optimization Algorithms for Optimization Problems in Manufacturing	58
2.6	Challenges of Applying Intelligent Optimization Algorithms in Manufacturing	64
2.6.1	Problem Modeling	64
2.6.2	Algorithm Selection	65
2.6.3	Encoding Scheming	66
2.6.4	Operator Designing	67
2.7	Future Approaches for Manufacturing Optimization	67
2.8	Future Requirements and Trends of Intelligent Optimization Algorithm in Manufacturing	68
2.8.1	Integration	68
2.8.2	Configuration	69
2.8.3	Parallelization	70
2.8.4	Executing as Service	71

2.9	Summary	72
	References	74

Part II Design and Implementation

3	Dynamic Configuration of Intelligent Optimization Algorithms	83
3.1	Concept and Mainframe of DC-IOA	83
3.1.1	Mainframe of DC-IOA	84
3.1.2	Problem Specification and Construction of Algorithm Library in DC-IOA	85
3.2	Case Study	90
3.2.1	Configuration System for DC-IOA	90
3.2.2	Case Study of DC-IOA	93
3.2.3	Performance Analysis	95
3.2.4	Comparison with Traditional Optimal Process	102
3.3	Summary	103
	References	104
4	Improvement and Hybridization of Intelligent Optimization Algorithm	107
4.1	Introduction	107
4.2	Classification of Improvement	109
4.2.1	Improvement in Initial Scheme	109
4.2.2	Improvement in Coding Scheme	110
4.2.3	Improvement in Operator	112
4.2.4	Improvement in Evolutionary Strategy	113
4.3	Classification of Hybridization	114
4.3.1	Hybridization for Exploration	115
4.3.2	Hybridization for Exploitation	116
4.3.3	Hybridization for Adaptation	117
4.4	Improvement and Hybridization Based on DC-IA	118
4.5	Summary	124
	References	124
5	Parallelization of Intelligent Optimization Algorithm	127
5.1	Introduction	127
5.2	Parallel Implementation Ways for Intelligent Optimization Algorithm	131
5.2.1	Parallel Implementation Based on Multi-core Processor	131
5.2.2	Parallel Implementation Based on Computer Cluster	132

5.2.3	Parallel Implementation Based on GPU.	132
5.2.4	Parallel Implementation Based on FPGA.	133
5.3	Implementation of Typical Parallel Topologies for Intelligent Optimization Algorithm	134
5.3.1	Master-Slave Topology	134
5.3.2	Ring Topology	136
5.3.3	Mesh Topology	138
5.3.4	Full Mesh Topology	140
5.3.5	Random Topology	140
5.4	New Configuration in Parallel Intelligent Optimization Algorithm	142
5.4.1	Topology Configuration in Parallelization Based on MPI	144
5.4.2	Operation Configuration in Parallelization Based on MPI	146
5.4.3	Module Configuration in Parallelization Based on FPGA	147
5.5	Summary.	152
	References	152

Part III Application of Improved Intelligent Optimization Algorithms

6	GA-BHTR for Partner Selection Problem	157
6.1	Introduction	157
6.2	Description of Partner Selection Problem in Virtual Enterprise	160
6.2.1	Description and Motivation	160
6.2.2	Formulation of the Partner Selection Problem (PSP)	163
6.3	GA-BHTR for PSP.	165
6.3.1	Review of Standard GA	165
6.3.2	Framework of GA-BHTR	166
6.3.3	Graph Generation for Representing the Precedence Relationship Among PSP	168
6.3.4	Distribute Individuals into Multiple Communities.	172
6.3.5	Intersection and Mutation in GA-BHTR	175
6.3.6	Maintain Data Using the Binary Heap.	177
6.3.7	The Catastrophe Operation	179
6.4	Simulation and Experiment	180
6.4.1	Effectiveness of the Proposed Transitive Reduction Algorithm.	181
6.4.2	Effectiveness of Multiple Communities.	182

6.4.3	Effectiveness of Multiple Communities While Considering the DISMC Problem	183
6.4.4	Effectiveness of the Catastrophe Operation	184
6.4.5	Efficiency of Using the Binary Heap	184
6.5	Summary	187
	References	187
7	CLPS-GA for Energy-Aware Cloud Service Scheduling	191
7.1	Introduction	191
7.2	Related Works	193
7.3	Modeling of Energy-Aware Cloud Service Scheduling in Cloud Manufacturing	195
7.3.1	General Definition	196
7.3.2	Objective Functions and Optimization Model	198
7.3.3	Multi-Objective Optimization Model for the Resource Scheduling Problem	200
7.4	Cloud Service Scheduling with CLPS-GA	202
7.4.1	Pareto Solutions for MOO Problems	202
7.4.2	Traditional Genetic Algorithms for MOO Problems	204
7.4.3	CLPS-GA for Addressing MOO Problems	207
7.5	Experimental Evaluation	211
7.5.1	Data and Implementation	211
7.5.2	Experiments and Results	213
7.5.3	Comparison Between TPCO and MPCO	214
7.5.4	Improvements Due to the Case Library	217
7.5.5	Comparison Between CLPS-GA and Other Enhanced GAs	218
7.6	Summary	221
	References	222

Part IV Application of Hybrid Intelligent Optimization Algorithms

8	SFB-ACO for Submicron VLSI Routing Optimization with Timing Constraints	227
8.1	Introduction	227
8.2	Preliminary	231
8.2.1	Terminology in Steiner Tree	231
8.2.2	Elmore Delay	232
8.2.3	Problem Formulation	233
8.3	SFB-ACO for Addressing MSTRO Problem	237
8.3.1	ACO for Path Planning with Two Endpoints	237

8.3.2	Procedure for Constructing Steiner Tree Using SFB-ACO	239
8.3.3	Constraint-Oriented Feedback in SFB-ACO	241
8.4	Implementation and Results	243
8.4.1	Parameters Selection	243
8.4.2	Improvement of Synergy	244
8.4.3	Effectiveness of Constraint-Oriented Feedback	249
8.5	Summary	254
	References	254
9	A Hybrid RCO for Dual Scheduling of Cloud Service and Computing Resource in Private Cloud	257
9.1	Introduction	257
9.2	Related Works	260
9.3	Motivation Example	261
9.4	Problem Description	263
9.4.1	The Modeling of DS-CSCR in Private Cloud	263
9.4.2	Problem Formulation of DS-CSCR in Private Cloud	267
9.5	Ranking Chaos Algorithm (RCO) for DS-CSCR in Private Cloud	270
9.5.1	Initialization	271
9.5.2	Ranking Selection Operator	271
9.5.3	Individual Chaos Operator	273
9.5.4	Dynamic Heuristic Operator	275
9.5.5	The Complexity of the Proposed Algorithm	277
9.6	Experiments and Discussions	277
9.6.1	Performance of DS-CSCR Compared with Traditional Two-Level Scheduling	280
9.6.2	Searching Capability of RCO for Solving DS-CSCR	280
9.6.3	Time Consumption and Stability of RCO for Solving DS-CSCR	283
9.7	Summary	285
	References	286

Part V Application of Parallel Intelligent Optimization Algorithms

10	Computing Resource Allocation with PEADGA	291
10.1	Introduction	291
10.2	Related Works	294
10.3	Motivation Example of OACR	296
10.4	Description and Formulation of OACR	297

10.4.1	The Structure of OACR	298
10.4.2	The Characteristics of CRs in CMfg.	300
10.4.3	The Formulation of the OACR Problem	301
10.5	NIA for Addressing OACR	308
10.5.1	Review of GA, ACO and IA	308
10.5.2	The Configuration OfNIA for the OACR Problem . . .	311
10.5.3	The Time Complexity of the Proposed Algorithms. . .	314
10.6	Configuration and Parallelization of NIA.	316
10.7	Experiments and Discussions	318
10.7.1	The Design of the Heuristic Information in the Intelligent Algorithms	320
10.7.2	The Comparison of GA, ACO, IA and NDIA for Addressing OACR.	322
10.7.3	The Performance of PNIA.	326
10.8	Summary.	328
	References	329
11	Job Shop Scheduling with FPGA-Based F4SA.	333
11.1	Introduction	333
11.2	Problem Description of Job Shop Scheduling.	335
11.3	Design and Configuration of SA-Based on FPGA	335
11.3.1	FPGA-Based F4SA Design for JSSP.	335
11.3.2	FPGA-Based Operators of F4SA	339
11.3.3	Operator Configuration Based on FPGA	344
11.4	Experiments and Discussions	344
11.5	Summary.	346
	References	346

**Part VI Future Works of Configurable Intelligent
Optimization Algorithm**

12	Future Trends and Challenges	351
12.1	Related Works for Configuration of Intelligent Optimization Algorithm.	351
12.2	Dynamic Configuration for Other Algorithms	353
12.3	Dynamic Configuration on FPGA.	356
12.4	The Challenges on the Development of Dynamic Configuration.	358
12.5	Summary.	359
	References	360

Part I

Introduction and Overview

Intelligent optimization algorithm, which is also called meta-heuristic, is a kind of optimization algorithm that simulates natural phenomena and behaviors with population-based iterations. Its appearance had found a way out for NP-hard problems that are difficult to be solved by many classical deterministic algorithms, and it is able to find feasible suboptimal solutions for complex problems in a relatively short period of time.

The strong versatility, high speed and robustness of intelligent optimization algorithm provide a variety of decision-making solutions for multi-constraint complex numerical and combinatorial optimization problems such as multi-objective service composition, workflow scheduling, manufacturing resource allocation and product quality evaluation and controlling and so on in networked service-oriented manufacturing system. Moreover, it takes advantages of intelligent learning to avoid a large solution space traversal so that the problems can be easily solved. Today, most feasible solutions of these complex manufacturing problems are given by different types of intelligent optimization algorithm. Classic intelligent optimization algorithms, such as genetic algorithm (GA), particle swarm optimization (PSO) and ant colony optimization (ACO) and so on, are also widely reconstructed with various improved and hybrid strategies to adapt different production environments and applications. With highly distributed resources, productions and logistics, more and more improvements or hybridizations are designed to achieve efficient decision-making in every link of product. Intelligent optimization algorithm becomes indispensable in manufacturing.

Therefore, in the Part I of this book, a preliminary introduction of intelligent optimization algorithm and the main optimization problem in manufacturing is presented. This part contains Chaps. 1 and 2. The Chap. 1 presents an overview of the principles, development history and classification of the algorithm. It summarizes the classification of current research emphasis and major trends. The Chap. 2 is a brief overview of complex manufacturing optimization problems, their solution methods and the development of intelligent optimization algorithm in them. From the classification of optimization problems in manufacturing sys-

tem, this chapter lists the major challenges in solving different sorts of the optimization problems. In view of these challenges, typical problem-solving methods are given and the importance of intelligent optimization technology is pointed out. Based on this, we outline the general design patterns and process of intelligent optimization algorithm, and discuss the application challenges, needs and trends of intelligent optimization algorithm in manufacturing systems.

Chapter 1

Brief History and Overview of Intelligent Optimization Algorithms

Up to now, intelligent optimization algorithm has been developed for nearly 40 years. It is one of the main research directions in the field of algorithm and artificial intelligence. No matter for complex continuous problems or discrete NP-hard combinatorial optimizations, people nowadays is more likely to find a feasible solution by using such randomized iterative algorithm within a short period of time instead of traditional deterministic algorithms. In this chapter, the basic principle of algorithms, research classifications, and the development trends of intelligent optimization algorithm are elaborated.

1.1 Introduction

Intelligent optimization algorithm is developed and integrated from a number of relatively independent sub-fields, including the technology of artificial neural networks, genetic algorithms, immune algorithms, simulated annealing, and tabu search and swarm intelligence techniques. As we all know, the current main intelligent optimization algorithms are based on the mode of population based iteration. They operate a population, which represents a group of individuals (or solutions), in each generation to maintain good information in the solution space and find better positions step by step. It is a common method that is independent from specific problems so that it can handle complex optimization problems that are difficult for traditional optimization methods. Their common characteristics are: (1) all operations act on current individuals in each generation; (2) the searching is based on iterative evolution; (3) the optimization can be easily parallelized by multi-population scheme; (4) most of them can give a satisfactory non-inferior solutions close to the optimal solutions, instead of certainly finding the optimal solution; (4) the algorithm is rather random and cannot guarantee the

efficiency of finding non-inferior solutions. Therefore we simplify the basic process of intelligent optimization algorithms in Fig. 1.1.

Specifically, the first step in problem solving is the encoding design according to the problem environment, character and constraints. Coding is a mapping of problem variables, and it also directly determines the evolution speed of the algorithm. When an appropriate coding scheme is selected, the algorithm will initialize and generate a certain number of individuals to form a population according to the definition of problem variables. Each variable of an individual is randomly generated in the definition domain, and the fitness value of individual in each generation is calculated according to problem's objective function, i.e. fitness function. Then, according to the coding scheme, the variables are mapped to form a chromosome. After initialization and encoding, the algorithm iteration will be started. In iteration, the combination of operators plays a major role, such as selection, crossover, and mutation operator in genetic algorithm, and path finding and pheromone update in ant colony algorithm. Different operators have different effects in the algorithm, so different composition of operators can usually produce different results in solving problem. Through a few operations, some or the entire individuals in the population are changed. By decoding of the new individuals, a new group of solutions can be obtained. Through the evaluation of population according to fitness function (objective function), the best and the worst individual in the population can be picked out. Then we could update the whole population in generation by using random alternative strategy, elitist replacement strategy or merge-based individual optimal selection. After that, the next iteration will be triggered. When the number of iterations reaches a certain ceiling or the satisfactory feasible or optimal solution has already been reached, we can jump out the iteration loop, and output the global best solutions.

In this evolution mode, problem variables and objectives are reflected by coding and fitness functions, while constraints are embodied in fitness function as penalty function or in coding as a bound. The operators are independent to the problems and can be easily implemented. The unified iterative process can make the design, improvement and hybrid research of intelligent algorithms simpler, more intuitive, and more flexible. With iteration-based sub-optimal searching, intelligent optimization algorithm can effectively avoid the combinatorial explosion when solving NP-hard problem. However, not all operators can be arbitrarily combined to form an effective algorithm. Since the evolutionary process is quite random, and operators have different characteristics and limitations in exploration and exploitation respectively, many intelligent optimization algorithms still have some defects such as premature convergence and large result deviation and so on. Therefore, researchers in various fields still keep looking for bran-new coding schemes, operators, good improvements and hybrid forms of intelligent optimization algorithms. All these works are trying to search better feasible solution with limit iterations and limit size of population.