

Introduction to the Special Section on Biometric Systems and Applications

NOWADAYS, biometrics is an important technological area receiving continuously growing interest from academia, industry, government, and the general public, due to the criticality and the social impact of its applications. Biometric systems are in fact rapidly being adopted in a wide variety of applications such as security, ambient intelligence, electronic and physical access control, digital rights management, background checking and defense, medical diagnosis as well as for adaptive environments.

To create a biometric system various issues need to be studied in an integrated way: from sensing to measurement procedures, from signal analysis and interpretation to quality assessment, from feature extraction to classification and analysis, from knowledge creation to extraction, from algorithms to data structure, from large data base management to interoperability, from computational complexity to system performance, from system engineering to software engineering, from privacy to social implications, and much more. Interdisciplinarity and integration of various technological areas are a key aspect of biometrics systems and applications.

This special section addresses the use of biometric technologies for creating advanced application systems. Out of 24 papers submitted for consideration in this special section, only seven papers have been accepted by taking into account the technical quality, the originality, and the innovation of the proposed ideas, solutions, and systems.

Recently, the hypothesis that individuals can be distinguished by means of the attributes of their motion behaviors is receiving increasing attention from the scientific community. The paper “User Identification for Home Entertainment Based on Free-Air Hand Motion Signatures” presents a user identification system based on free-air hand signature-gestures acquired with a 3-D camera. The proposed system performs user identification by comparing the distances of a sample to other signatures, adopting an neighborhood component analysis (NCA) based metric. The authors conducted several validation tests to assess the performances of the proposed system that demonstrated its robustness when all users use a single predefined signature-gesture and higher average accuracies if each user adopts a personal signature-gesture.

Performing effective tracking is one of the most critical challenges for real-time applications such as automated video surveillance, traffic monitoring, motion based recognition, video indexing, human-computer interaction, and vehicle navigation. The main goal of a tracking process is to estimate

the trajectory of an object as it moves around a scene from a sequence of images acquired by a set of video sensors. The paper “An improvement of Kernel-based Object Tracking based on Human Perception” provides a new method representing the target through features related to its visual appearance and using a variant of the KbOT algorithm as a metric that exploits the human visual perception (HVP) framework. In order to demonstrate the stability and the robustness of the proposed technique, several experiments are reported also including a set of partial or complete target occlusion in a limited number of subsequent frames.

In the human-pose estimation using a stationary depth sensor, one of the most challenging open problems concerns the reduction of the feature ambiguity and the modeling of human poses in high dimensional human-pose space. The paper “A 3D-Point-Cloud System for Human-Pose Estimation” proposes 3-D point-cloud features, namely viewpoint and shape feature histogram (VISH), capable of trapping some human geometric properties such as orientation and shape, and arranging them into a tree structure that preserves the global and local properties of the 3-D points. As the human poses are based on an action-mixture model (AMM) in a discrete space, a kinematic model is added to model the spatial relationship of body parts in continuous space. Experimental results used a benchmark dataset and showed that the overall error and standard deviation of the proposed 3-D point-cloud system were reduced compared with some existing approaches without action classification.

In last few years electrocardiogram (ECG) as a biometric modality received an increasing interest from the scientific community. The paper “ECG Biometric with Abnormal Cardiac Conditions in Remote Monitoring System” presents an ECG based identification system operating on signals with abnormal cardiac conditions in network environments. The system adopts a normalize-convolute-normalize (NCN) technique and extraction method consisting of QRS sample normalization and convolution methods. In order to assess the performances of the proposed framework, the authors selected three different databases containing various irregular heart states obtaining high accuracy results. The authors also considered improving the classification performance by using ECG recordings with low sampling frequency, but increasing at the same time the number of ECG samples.

Hand shape recognition based on hand geometry characteristics has been intensively investigated, demonstrating some advantages if compared with other biometric traits. In “Pose Invariant Hand Shape Recognition Based on Finger Geometry,” the authors present a pose invariant hand shape recognition technique exploiting the CAF-Fourier descriptors

for the geometry of the fingers. A novel OTSU threshold method and component-based finger segmentation are also employed to remove the sharp corners. Experimental results demonstrated both the soundness of the proposed method and its use for real-world applications.

Multimodal based solutions are known to be able to improve the security and the performance of biometrics systems. The paper "Decision Fusion for Multimodal Biometrics using Social Network Analysis" presents an approach to multimodal biometric system using a social network analysis (SNA) based decision fusion. Final classification result combines two levels of decision fusion methods, where Social Network Classifier improves the confidence level of any classifier. The employ of SNA strategy guarantees the reduction of the false acceptance rate for both single traits and multimodal biometrics. The effectiveness of the proposed system is validated using a virtual database that includes data from several sample unimodal biometric databases of face, ear, and signature.

Advances in the field of RGB-D cameras, as the Kinect sensor, open new scenarios for 3-D data applications including face recognition. The paper "KinectFaceDB: a Kinect Database for Face Recognition" presents and describes a publicly-available face database, namely KinectFaceDB, that is composed of a complete multimodal face database based on the Kinect sensor. The authors describe the method used to obtain the well aligned and processed 2-D, 2.5-D, and 3-D video face data and suggest potential applications of the proposed KinectFaceDB. Several standard face recognition techniques, such as PCA, LBP, SIFT, LGBP, ICP, and TPS, have been intensively tested and compared on different data modalities, providing also quantitative comparison between

the KinectFaceDB and the state-of-the-art FRGC database. The experimental results also suggest the deployment of existing algorithms and the development of new face recognition methods toward more practical systems.

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MICHELE NAPPI, *Guest Editor*
Università degli Studi di Salerno
Fisciano 84084, Italy

VINCENZO PIURI, *Guest Editor*
Università degli Studi di Milano
Crema 26013, Italy

TIENIU TAN, *Guest Editor*
Chinese Academy of Science
Beijing 100864, China

DAVID ZHANG, *Guest Editor*
Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Kowloon, Hong Kong



Michele Nappi was born in Castellammare di Stabia, Italy, in 1965. He received the laurea degree (cum laude) in computer science from the University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy, in 1991, the M.Sc. degree in information and communication technology from I.I.A.S.S. "E.R. Caianiello," Vietri sul Mare, Salerno, in 1997, and the Ph.D. degree in applied mathematics and computer science from the University of Padova, Padova, Italy, in 1997.

He is currently an Associate Professor of computer science at the University of Salerno. His current research interests include pattern recognition, image processing, image compression and indexing, multimedia databases and biometrics, human-computer interaction, and virtual and augmented reality.

Dr. Nappi serves as an Associate Editor for several international scientific journals and won several international awards for best paper and top cited paper. He is member of the International Association of Pattern Recognition.



Vincenzo Piuri (F'01) received the Ph.D. degree in computer engineering at Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy, in 1989.

He has been an Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano and a Visiting Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA, and George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA. He is currently a Full Professor of computer engineering (since 2000) and has been the Director of the Department of Information Technology, Università degli Studi di Milano, Milan, Italy. His current research interests include signal and image processing, biometrics, pattern analysis and recognition, theory and industrial applications of neural networks, machine learning, intelligent measurement systems, industrial applications, fault tolerance, digital processing architectures, embedded systems, and arithmetic architectures. He has published over 350 papers in international journals, proceedings of international conferences, books, and book chapters.

Dr. Piuri is a Distinguished Scientist of the Association for Computing Machinery and a Senior Member of the International Neural Network Society. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the IEEE SYSTEMS JOURNAL, and has been an Associate Editor of the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON NEURAL NETWORKS and the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON INSTRUMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT. He is the 2014 IEEE Vice President-Elect for Technical Activities and will become the 2015 IEEE Vice President for Technical Activities. He has been the IEEE Director, the IEEE Delegate for Division X, the President of the IEEE Computational Intelligence Society, the Vice President for Publications of the IEEE Instrumentation and Measurement Society and the IEEE Systems Council, the Vice President for Membership of the IEEE Computational Intelligence Society, and the Vice President for Education of the IEEE Biometrics Council. He is a Distinguished Lecturer of the IEEE Systems Council and the IEEE Computational Intelligence Society. He received the IEEE Instrumentation and Measurement Society Technical Award in 2002 for contributions to the advancement of theory and practice of computational intelligence in measurement systems and industrial applications, the IEEE Instrumentation and Measurement Society Distinguished Service Award in 2008, and the IEEE Computational Intelligence Society Meritorious Service Award in 2009.



Tieniu Tan (F'04) received the B.Sc. degree in electronic engineering from Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an, China, in 1984, and the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in electronic engineering from Imperial College London, London, U.K., in 1986 and 1989, respectively.

In 1989, he joined the Computational Vision Group at the Department of Computer Science, University of Reading, Reading, U.K., where he was a Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow, and Lecturer. In 1998, he returned to China to join the National Laboratory of Pattern Recognition (NLPR), Institute of Automation, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Beijing, China, as a Full Professor. He was the Director General of the CAS Institute of Automation from 2000 to 2007, and the Director of the NLPR from 1998 to 2013. He is currently the Director of the Center for Research on Intelligent Perception and Computing at the Institute of Automation and also serves as the Deputy Secretary-General of the CAS and the Director General of the CAS Bureau of International Cooperation. He has published over 400 research papers in refereed international journals and conferences in the areas of image processing, computer vision, and pattern recognition, and has authored or edited 11 books. He holds over 70 patents. His current research interests include biometrics, image and video understanding, and information forensics and security.

Dr. Tan is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the International Association of Pattern Recognition (IAPR). He currently serves as the President of the IEEE Biometrics Council, the First Vice President of the IAPR, and the Deputy President of the Chinese Association for Artificial Intelligence. He was the Founding Chair of the IAPR Technical Committee on Biometrics, the IAPR/IEEE International Conference on Biometrics, the IEEE International Workshop on Visual Surveillance, Asian Conference on Pattern Recognition, and Chinese Conference on Pattern Recognition. He was an Executive Vice President of the Chinese Society of Image and Graphics and the Deputy President of the China Computer Federation and the Chinese Automation Association. He has served as a Chair or Program Committee Member for many major national and international conferences. He is or has served as an Associate Editor or member of editorial boards of many leading international journals, including the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON PATTERN ANALYSIS AND MACHINE INTELLIGENCE, the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON AUTOMATION SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING, the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON INFORMATION FORENSICS AND SECURITY, the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON CIRCUITS AND SYSTEMS FOR VIDEO TECHNOLOGY, *Pattern Recognition*, *Pattern Recognition Letters*, and *Image and Vision Computing*. He is an Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Automation and Computing*. He has given invited talks and keynotes at many universities and international conferences, and has received numerous national and international awards and recognitions.



David Zhang (F'09) graduated in computer science from Peking University, Beijing, China. He received the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in computer science from the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT), Harbin, China, in 1982 and 1985, respectively, and the second Ph.D. degree in electrical and computer engineering from the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, Canada, in 1994.

From 1986 to 1988, he was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Tsinghua University, Beijing, and then an Associate Professor at the Academia Sinica, Beijing. Since 2005, he has been a Chair Professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, where he is the Founding Director of the Biometrics Research Centre (UGC/CRC) supported by the Hong Kong SAR Government in 1998. He also serves as a Visiting Chair Professor at Tsinghua University, and an Adjunct Professor with Peking University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, HIT, and the University of Waterloo. He has authored of over 10 books, over 300 international journal papers, and around 30 patents from the U.S., Japan, Hong Kong, and China. According to Google Scholar, his papers have over

26 000 citations.

Prof. Zhang is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Image and Graphics*, a Book Editor of the *Springer International Series on Biometrics*, the organizer of the International Conference on Biometrics Authentication, an Associate Editor of over ten international journals, including IEEE Transactions. He is a Croucher Senior Research Fellow and Distinguished Speaker of the IEEE Computer Society and a Fellow of the International Association of Pattern Recognition.