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Preface

Biometric authentication refers to identifying an individual based on his or her distinguishing physiological and/or behavioral characteristics. It associates an individual with a previously determined identity based on that individual's appearance or behavior. Because many physiological or behavioral characteristics (biometric indicators) are distinctive to each person, biometric identifiers are inherently more reliable and more capable than knowledge-based (e.g., password) and token-based (e.g., a key) techniques in differentiating between an authorized person and a fraudulent impostor. For this reason, more and more organizations are looking to automated identity authentication systems to improve customer satisfaction, security, and operating efficiency as well as to save critical resources.

Biometric authentication is a challenging pattern recognition problem; it involves more than just template matching. The intrinsic nature of biometric data must be carefully studied, analyzed, and its properties taken into account in developing suitable representation and matching algorithms. The intrinsic variability of data with time and environmental conditions, the social acceptability and invasiveness of acquisition devices, and the facility with which the data can be counterfeited must be considered in the choice of a biometric indicator for a given application. In order to deploy a biometric authentication system, one must consider its reliability, accuracy, applicability, and efficiency. Eventually, it may be necessary to combine several biometric indicators (multimodal-biometrics) to cope with the drawbacks of the individual biometric indicators.

One of the most important aspects of a biometric authentication system is benchmarking. A biometric authentication system is likely to make some errors. Understanding the inherent limitations of a biometric system and evaluating competing systems are the most difficult, but necessary tasks. The reason is that, quite often, the test data used is not truly representative of the population and the operating environment; the performance evaluation tests only take a snapshot of all the possible behaviors of the system, ignoring the variability due to the differences in the population of all real users as well as the variability due to environment.

We hope that this workshop will help many people working in biometrics to attain a broader vision of the open problems and their solutions. A couple of papers at this workshop deal with the psychological aspects of biometrics, which is a rather unexplored aspect of this discipline. Even though the papers included in this volume do not cover all facets of this emerging and promising discipline and technology, we would be satisfied if this book led to some new insights in developing the next generation of biometric authentication systems.

April 2002

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Table of Contents

Face Recognition I

| | |
|--|----|
| An Incremental Learning Algorithm for Face Recognition | 1 |
| <i>O. Déniz, M. Castrillón, J. Lorenzo, M. Hernández</i> | |
| Face Recognition Based on ICA Combined with FLD | 10 |
| <i>Juneho Yi, Jongsun Kim, Jongmoo Choi, Junghyun Han, Eunseok Lee</i> | |
| Understanding Iconic Image-Based Face Biometrics | 19 |
| <i>Massimo Tistarelli, Andrea Lagorio, Enrico Grosso</i> | |
| Fusion of LDA and PCA for Face Verification | 30 |
| <i>Gian Luca Marcialis, Fabio Roli</i> | |

Fingerprint Recognition

| | |
|---|----|
| Complex Filters Applied to Fingerprint Images Detecting Prominent Symmetry Points Used for Alignment | 39 |
| <i>Kenneth Nilsson, Josef Bigun</i> | |
| Fingerprint Matching Using Feature Space Correlation | 48 |
| <i>Arun Ross, James Reisman, Anil Jain</i> | |
| Fingerprint Minutiae: A Constructive Definition | 58 |
| <i>Ruud M. Bolle, Andrew W. Senior, Nalini K. Ratha, Sharath Pankanti</i> | |

Psychology and Biometrics

| | |
|--|----|
| Pseudo-entropy Similarity for Human Biometrics | 67 |
| <i>Leonid Kompanets, Janusz Bobulski, Roman Wyrzykowski</i> | |
| Mental Characteristics of Person as Basic Biometrics | 78 |
| <i>Tetiana Valchuk, Roman Wyrzykowski, Leonid Kompanets</i> | |

Face Detection and Localization

| | |
|--|-----|
| Detection of Frontal Faces in Video Streams | 91 |
| <i>M. Castrillón Santana, J. Lorenzo Navarro, J. Cabrera Gámez, F.M. Hernández Tejera, J. Méndez Rodríguez</i> | |
| Genetic Model Optimization for Hausdorff Distance-Based Face Localization | 103 |
| <i>Klaus J. Kirchberg, Oliver Jesorsky, Robert W. Frischholz</i> | |

Coarse to Fine Face Detection Based on Skin Color Adaption 112
Hichem Sahbi, Nozha Boujemaa

Face Recognition II

Robust Face Recognition Using Dynamic Space Warping 121
Hichem Sahbi, Nozha Boujemaa

Subspace Classification for Face Recognition 133
Raffaele Cappelli, Dario Maio, Davide Maltoni

Gait and Signature Analysis

Gait Appearance for Recognition 143
L. Lee, W.E.L. Grimson

View-invariant Estimation of Height and Stride for Gait Recognition 155
Chiraz BenAbdelkader, Ross Cutler, Larry Davis

Improvement of On-line Signature Verification System Robust to
Intersession Variability 168
Masato Kawamoto, Takayuki Hamamoto, Seiichiro Hangai

Classifiers for Recognition

Biometric Identification in Forensic Cases According to the Bayesian
Approach 177
*J. Gonzalez-Rodriguez, J. Fierrez-Aguilar, J. Ortega-Garcia,
J.J. Lucena-Molina*

A New Quadratic Classifier Applied to Biometric Recognition 186
Carlos E. Thomaz, Duncan F. Gillies, Raul Q. Feitosa

Author Index 197

Author Index

- BenAbdelkader, Chiraz, 155
Bigun, Josef, 39
Bobulski, Janusz, 67
Bolle, Ruud M., 58
Boujemaa, Nozha, 112, 121
- Cabrera Gámez, J., 91
Cappelli, Raffaele, 133
Castrillón Santana, M., 1, 91
Choi, Jongmoo, 10
Cutler, Ross, 155
- Davis, Larry, 155
Déniz, O., 1
- Feitosa, Raul Q., 186
Fiérrez-Aguilar, J., 177
Frischholz, Robert W., 103
- Gillies, Duncan F., 186
Gonzalez-Rodriguez, J., 177
Grimson, W.E.L., 143
Grosso, Enrico, 19
- Hamamoto, Takayuki, 168
Han, Junghyun, 10
Hangai, Seiichiro, 168
Hernández Tejera, F.M., 1, 91
- Jain, Anil, 48
Jesorsky, Oliver, 103
- Kawamoto, Masato, 168
Kim, Jongsun, 10
- Kirchberg, Klaus J., 103
Kompanets, Leonid, 67, 78
- Lagorio, Andrea, 19
Lee, Eunseok, 10
Lee, L., 143
Lorenzo Navarro, J., 1, 91
Lucena-Molina, J.J., 177
- Maio, Dario, 133
Maltoni, Davide, 133
Marcialis, Gian Luca, 30
Méndez Rodríguez, J., 91
- Nilsson, Kenneth, 39
- Ortega-Garcia, J., 177
- Pankanti, Sharath, 58
- Ratha, Nalini K., 58
Reisman, James, 48
Roli, Fabio, 30
Ross, Arun, 48
- Sahbi, Hichem, 112, 121
Senior, Andrew W., 58
- Thomaz, Carlos E., 186
Tistarelli, Massimo, 19
- Valchuk, Tetiana, 78
- Wyrzykowski, Roman, 67, 78
- Yi, Juneho, 10