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# A Sorting System Using Very Low Resolution Optical Sensor Array in Robot Fingertips 

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CMU-RI-TR-86-10

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May 1986

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#### Abstract

A low-cost optical sensory sorting system is described. Ṫhe sensor is directly mounted on robot gripper fingers, a light source on one and a coherent bundle of optical fibers on the opposing one. The optical fibers carry the shadow of a gripped object, as an eight-by-eight pixel array, to detection, multiplexing, discrimination, and computer interface electronics mounted on the robot base. The system uses a microcomputer for several data processing and pattern recognition functions. This discussion covers the design and analysis of the sensor and its optimal array, the hardware, and the parts recognition and control system. System performance in a demonstration task requiring the acquisition, identification, and sorting of a variety of electronic and mechanical parts is described.


## 1. Introduction

Parts often need to be sorted before packing, conveying or mounting, and a variety of sorting systems are in common use in industry. The most common approach is to use a camera for recognizing parts, and a gripper or fingers for picking or mounting. This kind of eye-hand coordination system is highly anthropomorphic and in principle is thus a good prospect for directly replacing human workers. But because of its high cost, bulk, need for extensive computer support, and the slowness of image analysis, many manufacturers are reluctant to consider it when their parts are small, their designs change often, or when they need large numbers of such systems. An inexpensive, simple, robust and flexible sorting system would presumably be welcome by the many factories in one or more of these categories.

We have designed and tested a sensory array, incorporated in the gripper system of a conventional robot, which we think can meet these challenges. It is an optical occlusive system with some vision-like characteristics and some tactile-like characteristics. It has a simple principle of operation, low cost, and potentially high speed. With suitable software, it also can sense slip. Discussion in this paper includes the design and analysis of the transducers and the sensor array, electronics, and parts recognition and control software. Even our simple prototype shows good potentiality for practical applications.

## 2. Design of the Smart Fingers

The fingertip sensors are based on a simple fiber optic principle [8]. An infra-red light source is built into one finger, and an eight-by-eight square array of optical fibers is built into the opposing finger, as shown in Figüre 2-1. ${ }^{1}$ A shadow image is transmitted through the fibers to a photo-optical detector array removed from the noisy and cluttered work environment. Very small parts (under 8 mm in their largest dimension) are imaged in one frame, and complete images of larger objects are made in a mosaic of multiple frames, by "feeling" them out along a data-directed path. By these means, an object is gripped by the fingers only at a location determined by the sensors to meet programmed appropriateness criteria. Additional sensors, e.g., proximity switches mounted on the hand, detect unexpected obstacles and command evasive action.


Figu re 2-1: Optical illumination and detection arrays

[^0]
### 2.1. Light Source

The light source is composed of five infra-red light emitting diodes (LEDs), arranged as shown in Figure 2-1. Of course, the ideal light source would emit a parallel beam of uniform spatial intensity. Our less-than-ideal system nevertheless works impressively well, especially after some of the hardware deficiencies are compensated in software.

The angular pattern of each LED has a half cone angle at half intensity of $15^{\circ}$. We have found that $15-30^{\circ}$ is a useful compromise between smaller angles, where coverage becomes a problem, and larger angles, where diffuse shadows become a problem.

### 2.2. Receiver

The eight-by-eight sensor array is composed of sixty-four optical fibers each of diameter 0.5 mm . Each transmits its optical signal to one of sixty-four phototransistors installed behind the base of the robot. Future implementations will be able to make use of integrated photosensitive arrays.

Attenuation by the optical fibers is sufficiently low $\left(0.5 \mathrm{~dB}-\mathrm{m}^{11}\right)$ that the transmission loss is no problem. Phototransistor response times are poor compared with photodiodes, but sensitivity is more useful than speed in our application, and phototransistors are 100-500 times more sensitive than photodiodes. With small load resistors ( 2 kfi ), a more than adequate response time is obtained.

### 2.3. Design and Analysis of the Array Geometry

The resolution of the sensor array is important for the design of the whole system. Resolution requirements are determined by the application, with due consideration to cost, speed, space, weight, etc, In this section we estimate the resolution requirements for detecting and recognizing some small objects. Combining these theoretical considerations with some speculation about the sizes and shapes of objects we might like to Sort leads to an appropriate array design.

### 2.3.1. Pixel Layout

Many pixel layout geometries are in common use; in addition many elementary pixel shapes are possible. In our configuration, we are limited by the optical fibers to circular pixels. These might be arranged in rectangular arrays with various inter-pixel separation, or, in tessellated triangular or hexagonal arrays. We have chosen a rectangular array with inter-pixel separation equal to twice the pixel diameter, shown as "Type B" in Figure 2-2. To give the reader a sense of the considerations in these choices, we will compare the expected performance of this array with that of the one labelled "Type $A^{t_{*}}$ in Figure 2-2, where the inter-pixel separation is equal to the pixel diameter.

### 2.3.2. Critical Detectable Object (CDO)

We assume that Image is binary, and all pixels have equal Integral and uniform differential sensitivity. The CDO is then defined as the smallest object that switches the state of one pixel. For the system to have the same detection probability for ${ }^{8 *}$ object" and "background" features of the same area, the signal threshold should be half way between the maximum and minimum intensity levels [4]. Thus

$$
\text { Area(CDO) }=0.5 \times \text { Area(pixel) }
$$

The CDO measure is not too useful in practice because it only shows that an object may be detected, but It does not guarantee that it will be detected ${ }^{\text {TM }}$ For example, a square may be detected wheo its side is $£ \times B 3$ pixel diameters, and an infinite rod may be detected when its width is 0.39 pixel diameters, but the detection probabilities are only 0.013 and 0.0 respectively [4].


TYPE A


TYPE B

Figure 2-2: Two geometries for circular sensory cell arrays

### 2.3.3. Minimum Detectable Object (MDO)

The MDO is the smallest object that can always be detected in any position on the sensor array. Although MDO only means that the object can be detected and does not guarantee that it can be recognized, it is nevertheless a practically useful concept.

The MDO size for some generic shapes (discs, squares, triangles) have been analyzed. The worst cases for detection of these objects are shown in Figure 2-3. The results of the analysis are shown in Figure 2-4. In our case (Type B), for example, to guarantee detection of a disc its diameter must be three times the diameter of the fiber. Similarly, to guarantee detection of a square of unit side the diameter of a fiber must be less than 0.42 units. This guarantees detection, but not identification: if a disc and square (or a disc and a hexagon) of the same area are to be differentiated, much higher resolution will in general be required. The most distinguishing feature between a disc and a square is similar to a $90^{\circ}$ isosceles triangle, and for a disc and a hexagon it is similar to a $120^{\circ}$ isosceles triangle, as shown in Figure 2-5. Simple geometrical considerations based on Figure 2-5 lead to the conclusion that a square and disc can be distinguished when $D>23.7 \mathrm{~d}$, where $D$ is the disc diameter and $d$ is the pixel diameter. Similarly, a hexagon and a disc can be distinguished when $D>51.8 \mathrm{~d}$. Figure $2-4$ shows some additional examples in graphic form. The last two table entries apply to differentiating a disc and a square of the same area, as discussed.

In every case, noise and mechanical tolerances will make the real resolution requirement even higher.

## 3. Hardware

Optical signals from the phototransistors are sent to the computer for data-driven data acquisition, control, and object recognition and sorting. The hardware configuration to achieve this is shown in Figure 3-1.

In our prototype design, based in part on being able to utilize existing resources, we multiplexed the sixty-four phototransistor signals into a single amplifier, compensating for unit-to-unit variation by individually selecting the phototransistor load resistors, $R_{1, i}$ in Figure 3-2. Resistor $R_{3}$ sets the average threshold for creating a binary image. Resistor $R_{1}$ influences both the gain of the amplifier and the response time of the phototransistors.


TYPE A
TYPE B

Figure 2-3: Worst cases for object detection
The ADC converts the scaled analog signals to eight-bit digital signals. These are sent to the computer through a bit selectable parallel input/output port. The control signals for the multiplexer and the ADC are output from the same parallel port. The signal of the auxiliary proximity sensor is routed to another parallel port of the computer. The communications link between the computer and robot is through the computer's RS-232c serial port.

## 4. Object Recognition

The process used to recognize objects can be broken down in to three major steps [3]:

1. Individual pixel data are assembled into an image;
2. Object recognition features are extracted;
3. Detected features are compared with entries in a geometrical or training set data base for object identification.

|  |  | $\begin{array}{lll} \text { Hddt } & \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{array} 0$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\mathrm{b}=1.4 \mathrm{~d}$ | $b=2.4 \mathrm{~d}$ |
|  | $\mathrm{D}=1.5 \mathrm{~d}$ | $D=3.0 \mathrm{~d}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & 1 \\ & \hline \quad D \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | $\mathrm{D}=1.0 \mathrm{~d}$ | $D=2.0 \mathrm{~d}$ |
|  | $\mathrm{a}=2.12 \mathrm{~d}$ | $\mathrm{a}=4.24 \mathrm{~d}$ |
|  | $\mathrm{a}=2.58 \mathrm{~d}$ | $a=5.16 \mathrm{~d}$. |
|  | $\text { or } \begin{aligned} & D=11.8 d \\ & a=10.6 d \end{aligned}$ | or $\begin{aligned} & D=23.7 \mathrm{~d} \\ & \mathrm{a}=21.2 \mathrm{~d}\end{aligned}$ |
|  | $\text { or } \begin{aligned} & D=25.9 \mathrm{~d} \\ & \mathrm{a}=14.2 \mathrm{~d} \end{aligned}$ | or $\begin{array}{r}\mathrm{D}=51.8 \mathrm{~d} \\ \mathrm{a}=28.3 \mathrm{~d}\end{array}$ |

Figure 2-4: Minimum detectable objects for "Type A" and "Type B" arrays


Figure 2-5: Critical features for distinguishing between a disc and a square, and a disc and a hexagon

The number of specific methods available for each step is large. Because our task is to recognize simple objects rapidly, we chose the simplest adequate methods.


Figure 3-1: Sorting system block diagram


Figu re 3-2: Härdware compensation via load resistor array

### 4.1. Segmentation of the Data

In our application, where gray-scale is irrelevant (because our images are shadows of solid objects), we can segment a picture into "object" and "background" by simply choosing a suitable brightness threshold. We define all pixels whose brightness is below the threshold as "object" and all above the threshold as "'background $/ /^{1}$ As mentioned in Section 2.3.3., we can set a threshold half way between the maximum and minimum intensity levels in order to assure that there is parity between figure and background in the image. But in practice, even after hardware compensation by the resistors $R_{1, j,}$ the signal due to each unobstructed pixel is different Thus an additional "'soft compensation ${ }^{\text {ff }}$ table Is stored in memory and used to equalize individual pixel sensitivities.

### 4.2. Feature Extraction and Matching

Very low resolution (VLR) shadow imaging Is simple and efficient, but it results in high uncertainty about the actual shape of small complex objects. Also, it is noisy: the apparent locations of the boundaries are very sensitive to slight movement of the object. Thus the boundaries and perimeters of the image alone may not be suitable features for object recognition.

We are investigating two approaches to solving this problem. The first is to take a heuristic
approach, in what we believe to be a human-like way, to extract what we think are the essential features of the object independent of minor sensor induced distortions. In our case, we use a program shown as (A) in Figure $4-1$ to find the image area (MS), width (IP), length (NM), and existence of enclosed background at the centroid location (IXO,IZO) as a feature set ${ }^{2}$. This method, while efficient to program and execute, requires inspiration to find an appropriate set of features for the set of objects being recognized. The second approach, which is analytic rather than heuristic, uses normalized quadtree representations for shape matching [2]. This method is universal and convenient, but is costly in program length and execution time.

The former method is used in our demonstration of the prototype sensor. This demonstration discriminates among seven objects (a capacitor, a 20 -pin DIP, a 14 -pin DIP, three different machine screws, and a nut). Four parameters (area, length, width, and the existence of any enclosed background) are extracted and matched against the stored feature library shown as ( $B$ ) in Figure 4-1. Three sets of twenty-one trials were run, with each object being presented three times in each trial. The result of the trials shown in Figure 4-2.

## 5. Control System

A TeachMover [5] robot arm is employed in the demonstration our sorting system.

### 5.1. Summary of TeachMover Arm Capabilities

The TeachMover robot arm is a microprocessor controlled, six-jointed mechanical arm. The design and performance characteristics of interest to us are:

- five revolution axes, and a gripper;
- electric stepper motors, with open loop control:
o resolution: 0.011 inch ( 0.25 mm ) maximum on each axis;
o velocity: $0-7 \mathrm{in}-\mathrm{sec}^{-1}\left(0-178 \mathrm{~mm}-\mathrm{sec}^{-1}\right)$, with controlled acceleration;
- load capacity: 16 oz ( 445 gm ) at full extension;
- gripping force: $3 \mathrm{lbs}(13 \mathrm{~N}$ ) maximum.
- dual RS-232c asynchronous serial communications interfaces;
- typical interface commands; transmitted from the computer to the robot as ASCII text:
- @CLOSE: close gripper until grip switch is activated;
- @READ: read values of the internal position registers;
- @STEP: sets arm speed, moves joints.

[^1]

Figu re 4-1: Flowchart for object recognition

## 5.2* Scanning a Composite Image

The eight-by-eight array, with 1 mm resolution, is too small to image any but the smallest object in a single frame, but a complete image of bigger parts can be obtained by moving the hand. The procedure is as follows:

| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. TRY AGATN ? (Y/N)Y | S:L:H= | 103 | 16 | 8 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| THIS IS A 20 PTN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 118 | 26 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IA A 14 PTN CIITP. | S:L:H= | 115 | 21 | 8 |
| TRY AGATN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L:H= | 14 | 3 | 7 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#4-20. | S:L:H= | 70 | 8 | 21 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THTS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | S:L:H= | 67 | 9 | 12 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NUT. | S:L:H= | 108 | 15 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L:H= | 109 | 15 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 112 | 25 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IA A 14 PTN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 109 | 22 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L:H= | 9 | 4 | 5 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#4-20. | S:L:H= | 97 | 9 | 24 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | S:L:H= | 75 | 9 | 15 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NUT. | S:L:H= | 103 | 15 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L:H= | 118 | 16 | 9 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 121 | 25 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IA A 14 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 99 | 21 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L:H= | 11 | 4 | 6 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| **SQ** |  |  |  |  |
| A. |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | S:L:H= | 58 | 9 | 14 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NUT. | S:L:H= | 98 | 15 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)N |  |  |  |  |
| STOP |  |  |  |  |
| A. |  |  |  |  |


| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L:H= | 105 | 15 | 8 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 116 | 25 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IA A 14 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 113 | 21 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L:H= | 11 | 4 | 6 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#4-20. | S:L:H= | 82 | 8 | 22 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | S:L:H= | 62 | 9 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? ( $Y / N$ ) Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NUT. | S:L:H= | 101 | 15 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L:H= | 112 | 16 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | $S: L: H=$ | 117 | 26 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IA A 14 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 113 | 21 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-H3-7 | S:L:H= | 10 | 4 | 6 |


| THIS IS A SCREW-\#4-20. | S:I:H= | 88 | 8 | 23 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| TRY AGATN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THTS IS A SCRFW-HS-13. | S:1.:1] $=$ | 66 | 9 | 14 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NIJT. | S:L:H= | 109 | 15 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L $: H=$ | 107 | 15 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | S:I. $\mathrm{H}=$ | 115 | 25 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| **SQ** |  |  |  |  |
| A. |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L $: 1$ = | 11 | 4 | 6 |
| TRY AGATN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCRFW-\#4-20. | $S: L: H=$ | 82 | 8 | 22 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | $S: L: H=$ | 65 | 9 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| this is a nidt. | S:L $:$ H $=$ | 102 | 15 | 13 |

TRY AGAIN ? $(Y / N) N$
STOP
A. .

| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L $: 1=$ | 105 | 15 | 8 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 116 | 26 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IA A 14 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 110 | 21 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L:H= | 13 | 4 | 6 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#4-20. | S:L:H= | 92 | 9 | 22 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | S:L:H= | 61 | 9 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NUT. | S:I_:H= | 107 | 15 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L:H= | 109 | 16 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 114 | 25 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? ( $Y / N$ ) Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IA A 14 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 108 | 21 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L:H= | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#4-20. | S:L:H= | 89 | 8 | 22 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | S:L:H= | 64 | 9 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NUT. | S:L:Hz | 104 | 15 | 13 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A CAPACITOR. | S:L:H= | 114 | 16 | 9 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A 20 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 112 | 25 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| . THIS IA A 14 PIN CHIP. | S:L:H= | 113 | 22 | 8 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#3-7. | S:L:H= | 11 | 4 | 6 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#4-20. | S:L:H= | 83 | 8 | 22 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A SCREW-\#5-13. | S:L:H= | 70 | 9 | 14 |
| TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)Y |  |  |  |  |
| THIS IS A NUT. | S:L:H= | 106 | 15 | 13 |

TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)N
STOP

Figure 4-2: Trial results (enclosed background check not printed out)

1. Check whether the image is complete, without regard to recognition; if incomplete, generate a strategy for moving the hand;
2. Read and calculate the old joint angles ( $\mathrm{B}_{20}$ and $\mathrm{B}_{30}$ in Figure 5.1);
3. Evaluate the required new joint angles ( $B_{2}$ and $B_{3}$ in Figure $5-1$ ) to reach the desired new position;
4. Check the composite image of the part again; if it is complete, command the robot to move the hand to the middle of the part (or other suitable gripping point); if not, go back to step(2).


Figure 5-1: Simplified three-link articulated manipulator

### 5.3. Motion Control

Motion control is simple, because the TeachMover arm uses stepper motors, and open-loop control is usually adequate:

1. The computer issues a robot motion command, e.g. @CLOSE, @STEP.
2. After executing the motion, the TeachMover arm sends an acknowledgement signal to the computer, signalling that it is ready for next command;
3. Repeat steps (1) and steps (2) until task execution is finished.

If an obstacle is encountered by the proximity sensor, an interrupt will be generated, causing the computer to command an avoidance maneuver.

## 6. Conclusion

A simple, low cost small parts sorter based on "smart fingers" has been developed and demonstrated. The system uses an eight-by-eight optical fiber array with 1 mm resolution. It can recognize and sort parts larger than the array itself by scanning and assembling a composite image.

Because the sensor array is located in the fingers, the information content per bit is very high, and a very small number of bits is usually sufficient for part recognition. The data-base of parts can similarly be stored very compactly, and very efficient identification algorithms can be executed in a limited capability microcomputer. The heuristic approach to extracting essential features for object classification is attractive and efficient. The ability to use auxiliary sensors to interrupt and affect motion control is an especially flexible way to deal with obstacles along the intended trajectory.

There are, of course, limitations to this system. For example, it is difficult to distinguish between similar small complex parts using low resolution, and the parts being recognized must be located a priori within a fairly small work volume to avoid extensive blind search. Also, we have not attempted to address the problem of bin-picking or overlapping parts: our system presents the parts, on a simulated convey or belt, one at a time.

The theoretical analysis of the resolution of pixel arrays provides a foundation for the future design of the special purpose sensor arrays. The design of optimal array geometries for specific applications will bring significant advantages with respect to maximizing information density, minimizing cost, and simplifying hardware and software.

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## APPENDIX

```
C MAIN ROUTINE FOR SORTER
    DIMENSION MP (40,40),MD(8,8),M(40),NAM(6)
    COMMON /CR/VE,HO/PE/NI,NJ,MP,MD/RU/JJ,NAM,MS,NM,IP,IB,IC
    CALL OUT(80,144)
    WRITE(5,6)
    FORMAT(1X,'DISTANCE(5000--15000):')
    READ (5,7) IDIS
    FORMAT(I6)
    WRITE(5,8)
    FORMAT(1X,'INTERVAL(500--1500):')
    READ(5,7) INTV
    WRITE(5,9)
    FORMAT(1X,'CALIBRATE ? (Y/N)')
    READ(5,10) IC
    FORMAT(A1)
    IF(IC.EQ.'N'.OR.IC.EQ.'n') GO TO 15
    CALL INIT
    WRITE(5,12)
    FORMAT(1X,'READY ? (Y/N)')
    READ(5,13) ID
    FORMAT(A1)
    IF(ID.EQ.'N'.OR.ID.EQ.'n') GO TO 11
    DO 24 I=1,40
    DO 26 J=1,40
    MP(I,J) ='0'
    CONTINUE
    CONTINUE
    IX=0
    JY=0
    MS =0
    NM=0
    IP=0
    NI=0
    NJ=0
    NJ1=0
    IP1=0
    I=40
C MOVE HANDS UP TO AVOID MISSLEADING BY゙ ALUMINUM BLOCK
    CALL PEK
    IP1= IP 1+1
    DO 30 J=1,8
    IF(MP(I,J).EQ.'O') GO TO 50
    CONTINUE
    I=I-1
    IF(IP1.GE.8) GO TO 50
    GO TO 28
    VE=FLOAT (IP1)-0.5
    HO=0.
    CALL CRUN
```

```
C
158
155
7 9 0
1 6 0
    SCAN COMPOSITE IMAGE
65 CALL PEK
    J=8*(NJ+1)
    K=33-NI*8
    Kl=K+7
    DO 70 I=K8
    IF(MP (ItJ).EQ. }\mp@subsup{}{}{(}\mp@subsup{}{}{*}\mp@subsup{}{}{9}}\mathrm{ GO TO }8
    CONTINUE
    I=K
    K=J
    DO 75 3=1,K
    IF (MP (I_ J).ECV'*$) GO TO 85
    CONTINUE
    GO TO 100
    NJ=NJ+1
    IF(NJ.GT.NJI) NJ1=MJI
    IF(NJ.EQ,5) GO TO 300
    H0=8.0
    VE=0.0
    CALL CRUN
    60 TO 85
    NI=NI+1
    IF(NI.EQ.5) GO TO 300
    H0=0.0
    VE=8.0
    CALL CRUH
    IF(NJ.GT.O) GO TO 90
    GO TO 65
    CALL PEK
    H0=-8.0
    VE=0.0
    CALL CRUN
    NJ=NJ-1
    IF(NJ.GT.O) GO TO 90
    CALL PEK
```

```
    I=33-NI*8
    K=8*(NJ1+1)
    GO TO 95
    WRITE(5,305)
    FORMAT(1X,'TOO BIG!')
C MOVE HANDS TO THE MIDDLE OF THE OBJECT
100 K1=8*(NJ1+1)
    K2=33-NI*8
    NJ2=NJ1+1
    IF(NJ1.EQ.O.AND.NI.EQ.0) GO TO 510
    VE=-FLOAT (NI*8)+1.5
    HO=FLOAT (NJ1*4)
    IF(NJ1.EQ.0) HO=0.0
    IF(NJ.GT.0) HO=-(HO-(NJ1-NJ)*8)
    CALL CRUN
    EXTRACT FEATURES OF OBJECT
    DO 130 I=K2,40
    N=0
    DO 140 J=1,K1
    IF(MP(I,J).NE.'*') GO TO 140
    IX=IX+I
    JY=JY+J
    MS =MS+1
    N=N+1
    CONTINUE
    IF(N.EQ.0) GO TO 130
    IP=IP+1
    M(IP)=N
    CONTINUE
    DO 132 J=1,K1
    DO 134 I=K2,40
    IF(MP(I,J).EQ.'*') GO TO 136
    CONTINUE
    GO TO 132
    NM=NM+1
    CONTINUE
    IXO=IX/MS
    JYO=JY/MS
C
    OBJECT IDENTIFICATION
    IF(MS.GE.70.AND.MS.LE.140.AND.NM.GE.12.AND.NM.LE.17.AND.
1 IP.GE. 7.AND.IP.LE. 15 .AND.MP(IXO,JYO).EQ.'*') GO TO 210
    IF(MS.GE. 80.AND.MS.LE.150.AND.NM.GE.23.AND.NM.LE.28.AND.
    IP.GE. 6.AND.IP.LE. 9) GO TO 220
    IF(MS.GE. 50.AND.MS.LE.120.AND.NM.GE.18.AND.NM.LE.22.AND.
    IP.GE. 6.AND.IP.LE. 9) GO TO 230
    IF(MS.GE. 2.AND.MS.LE. 30.AND.NM.GE. 1.AND.NM.LE. 8.AND.
    IP.GE. 1.AND.IP.LE. 8) GO TO 240
    IF(MS.GE. 50.AND.MS.LE.110.AND.NM.GE. 5.AND.NM.LE. 10.AND.
    IP.GE. 19.AND.IP.LE. 26) GO TO 250
    IF(MS.GE. 30.AND.MS.LE.100.AND.NM.GE. 5.AND.NM.LE.11.AND.
    IP.GE. 6.AND.IP.LE. 18) GO TO 260
    IF(MS.GE. 60.AND.MS.LE.120.AND.NM.GE.12.AND.NM.LE.18.AND.
    IP.GE. 11.AND.IP.LE. 15) GO TO 270
```

GO TO 460
$J J=I D I S+1 * I N T V$ $\operatorname{NAM}(1)=' C A '$ $\operatorname{NAM}(2)=' P A{ }^{\prime}$ $\operatorname{NAM}(3)=' C I '$ $\operatorname{NAM}(4)=' T 0 '$ $\operatorname{NAM}(5)=$ 'R.'
$\operatorname{NAM}(6)=\cdot$
$I C=51$
GO TO 420
JJ=IDIS+2*INTV
$\operatorname{NAM}(1)={ }^{\prime} 20^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(2)=' p$ '
$\operatorname{NAM}(3)=' I N{ }^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(4)=C^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(5)={ }^{\prime} \mathrm{HI}^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(6)=$ ' $P$.'
IC=48
GO TO 420
$J J=I D I S+3 *$ INTV
$\operatorname{NAM}(1)={ }^{\prime} 14^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(2)={ }^{\prime} P^{\prime}$
NAM(3) = 'IN'
$\operatorname{NAM}(4)={ }^{\prime} C^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(5)=' \mathrm{HI}$ '
$\operatorname{NAM}(6)=' P:$
IC $=48$
GO TO 420
$J J=I D I S+4 * I N T V$
$\operatorname{NAM}(1)=' T H '$
$\operatorname{NAM}(2)=' R E$ '
$\operatorname{NAM}(3)={ }^{\prime} A D{ }^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(4)=\cdot--$,
$\operatorname{NAM}(5)=' 7$.
$\operatorname{NAM}(6)=$ '
IC=53
GO TO 420
JJ=IDIS+5*INTV
$\operatorname{NAM}(1)=$ 'TH'
$\operatorname{NAM}(2)=$ 'RE'
$\operatorname{NAM}(3)=' A D$ '
$\operatorname{NAM}(4)={ }^{\prime}-{ }^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(5)=' 20^{\prime}$
$\operatorname{NAM}(6)=$ '. $\cdot$
IC=50
GO TO 420
$\mathrm{JJ}=\mathrm{IDIS}+6$ *INTV
$\operatorname{NAM}(1)=$ 'TH'
$\operatorname{NAM}(2)=$ 'RE'
$\operatorname{NAM}(3)=' A D '$
$\operatorname{NAM}(4)={ }^{\prime}-{ }^{\prime} \cdot$
$\operatorname{NAM}(5)=' 13$ '
$\operatorname{NAM}(6)={ }^{\prime} \cdot{ }^{\prime}$
IC= 49
GO TO 420
$J J=I D I S+7$ INTV

```
    NAM(1) = 'NU'
    NAM(2) ='T.•'
    NAM(3)=' '
    NAM (4) =' '
    NAM(5) = ' f
    NAM (6) = }\mp@subsup{}{}{\textrm{f}
    IC=49
    GO TO 420
    WRITE (5,465) MS.NM.IP
    FORMAT (1X,3I6/1X,'SORRY, I DO NOT KNOW !')
    GO TO 430
    CALL SSRUN
    VE=-3.5
    H0=-FLOAT (NJl*4)
    CALL CRUN
    GO TO 600
    WRITE (5,455)
    FORMAT(1X,'NOTHING!*)
    WRITE (5,470)
    FORMAT(1X,'TRY AGAIN ? (Y/N)*)
    READ (5,475) IB
    FORMAT (Al)
    IF(IB.EQ.'N'.OR.IB.EQ. 'n }\mp@subsup{}{}{f}\mathrm{ ) GO TO }70
    GO TO 15
    STOP
    END
C SUBROUTINE FOR INITIALIZATION OF ROBOT ARM
    SUBROUTINE INIT
    DIMENSION IRD (6),ID(3Q),ISTP (9),ISTSH(5),ISTEL(12),
    1 IST0(2) tMAA (15)tIH(17) fISTPl(9) tIRSET (7),IRDY(16) f
    2 ISH (5),IBR(5) tIBL (3),IUP (5)
    DATA IRD/64, 82,69, 65 f 68', 13/fISTP / 64f 83 8 84f 69, 80, 49, 49,49,
    44/,ISTSH/44,52,48t48,13/,ISTEL/44,44,51,48,48 144,44,441
    51,48,48,13/,ISTO/48,13/,IBAK/44,45,52,48,44,45,54,48,44,
    44,44,45,54,48,13/,IH/44,54,56,50,44,45,57,57,52,44,44,44
    s 45,57,57»52,13/,ISTPl/64,83,84,69,80f52,48,48,44/_IRSET/
    64,82,69,83,69,84113/, IRJ3Y/44,45149,51,50,44,52,49,51,44,
    44,44,52,49f51.13/,ISH/44,48,50,50,13/,IBR/45,57,57,57,13
    /fIBL/53,48113/,IUP/44,45,53,48113/
        IREP-0
        Ml*0
        M2=0
        CALL SOUT(ISTP
        CALL SOUT(ISTSHf}5
    N1=INP (100)
    IF (N1,EQ.O) GO TO 215
    M1=M1+1
    IF(Ml.LE.lOO) GO TO 215
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT{ISTO92)
```

```
    CALL REIN
    CALL REIN
    CAILL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CAIL SOUT(IBR,5)
    N2=INP(100)
    IF (N2.EQ.64) GO TO 220
    M2 =M2+1
    IF (M2.LE.50) GO TO 220
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTO,2)
    CALL REIN
    CALL REIN
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IBL,3)
    CALL REIN
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IUP,5)
    CALL REIN
50 IREP=IREP+1
    M1=0
    M2=0
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTSH,5)
217 N1=INP(100)
    IF(N1.EQ.O) GO TO 217
    M1=M1+1
    IF(M1.LE.1000) GO TO 217
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTO,2)
    CALL REIN
    CALL REIN
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTEL,12)
    N2=INP(100)
    IF(N2.EQ.64) GO TO 222
    M2 =M2+1
    IF(M2.LE.50) GO TO 222
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTO,2)
    CALL REIN
    CALL REIN
    CALL SOUT(IRD,6)
    DO 70 I=1,30
    ID(I) =INP(81)
    DO }80\textrm{J}=1,1
    G=2*6
    CONTINUE
    CONTINUE
    IF(IREP.EQ.3) GO TO 250
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IBAK,15)
    CALL REIN
    GO TO 50
    CALL SOUT(ISTP1,9)
```

```
CALL SOUT(IBAK, 15)
CALL REIN
CALL SOUT(ISTP1,9)
CALL SOUT(IN,17)
CALL REIN
CALL SOUT(IRSET .7)
CALL REIN
CALL SOUT(ISTP1,9)
CALL SOUT(IRDY, 16)
CALL REIN
RETURN
END
```

SUBROUTINE TO BINARY IMAGE SUBROUTINE PEK
INTEGER $H_{t} P$
DIMENSION MD $\{8,8), \operatorname{MP}(40,4 Q)$
COMMON /PE/NI,NJ $\mathrm{t}_{\mathrm{t}} \mathrm{MP}$, MD
DO $10 \quad 1=1,8$
DO $20 \mathrm{~J}=1_{\mathrm{t}} 8$
N=8* (I-1) +J-1
CALL OUT $(84, N)$
$\mathrm{Nl}=\mathrm{N}+64$
DO $30 \mathrm{P}=1,6$
$\mathrm{F}=2$ * 6
CONTINUE
CALL OUT $(84, N 1)$
CALL OUT ( $84_{\mathrm{f}}^{\mathrm{f}} \mathrm{N}$ )
$\operatorname{MD}\left(I_{f} J\right)=I N P(84)$
$\operatorname{IF}\left(M D\left(I_{f} J\right) . L T \cdot O\right) \quad M D\left(I_{t} J\right)=256+M D\left(I_{f} J\right)$
$\mathrm{K}=\mathrm{I}+32-\mathrm{NI} * 8$
H=J+N3* 8
$\operatorname{MP}(\mathrm{K}, \mathrm{H})={ }^{\mathrm{f}} \mathrm{o}^{*}$
MEN*120
IF (I.EQ.1.AND.J.EQ.1.OR.I.EQ.1.AND.J.EQ.2) MEN*13
IF (I.EQ.3.AMD.J.EQ.8.OR.I.EQ.1.AMD.J.EQ.3.OR.
I.EQ.8.AND.J.EQ.4.OR.I.EQ.8.AMD.J.EQ.7) MEM*35

IF (I.EQ.2.AND.J.EQ.7.OR.I.EQ.7.AMD.J.EQ.8.OR. I.EQ.4.AMD.J.EQ.2.OR.I.EQ.3.AMD.J.EQ.7) MEM=50

IF (I.EQ.7.AND.J.EQ.2.OR.I.EQ.2.AND.J.EQ.8.OR.
I.EQ.4.AND.J.EQ.8.OR.I.EQ.8.AHD.J.EQ.1.OR.
I.EQ.4.AND.J.EQ. 7.OR. I.EQ.2.AMD.J.EQ.2.OR.
I.EQ.1.AND.J.EQ.4.OR.I.EQ.2.AND.J.EQ.3) $M E M=75$

IF (I.EQ.2.AND.J.EQ.5.OR.I.EQ.8.AND.J.EQ.6> MEN=85
$\operatorname{IF}(\mathrm{MD}(\mathrm{I}, \mathrm{J}) . \operatorname{LT} . \mathrm{MEN}) \quad \mathrm{MP}\left(\mathrm{K}_{\mathrm{t}} \mathrm{H}\right)={ }^{\mathrm{t}} \mathrm{*}^{\mathrm{f}}$
CONTINUE
CONTINUE
RETURN
END

```
C SUBROUTINE FOR HANDSHAKING
    SUBROUTINE REIN
    DO 10 J=1,16
    DO 20 I=1,32222
    N1=INP(81)
    IF(N1.EQ.49) GO TO 60
    IF(N1.EQ.48) GO TO 30
    CONTINUE
    CONTINUE
    WRITE(5,40)
    FORMAT(1X,'WRONG!!')
    RETURN
    END
    CONTINUE
    CONTINUE
    IF (ID(2).EQ.48) GO TO 500
    NK2=0
    NK4=0
    NK3=1
    DO 90 I=4,36
    IF (ID(I)-45) 230,210,200
    NK4 = NK 4+1
    NB(NK4)=ID(I) -48
    GO TO 90
    NK3=-1
    GO TO 90
    NK2=NK2+1
    GO TO (205, 206, 207, 208),NK4
    ND(NK2) =NK3*NB(1)
    GO TO 240
    ND(NK2)=NK3*(NB(1)*10+NB(2))
    GO TO 240
    ND(NK2) =NK3*(NB (1)*100+NB(2)*10+NB (3))
    GO TO 240
    ND(NK2)=NK3*(NB(1)*1000+NB(2)*100+NB(3)*10+NB(4))
    IF (NK2.EQ.6) GO TO 250
```

```
    NK3=1
    NK4=0
90
250
345
346
348
349
500
110
510
C SUBROUTINE TO COMMAND ROBOT
    SUBROUTINE SOUT(IO,NDIM)
    DIMENSION IO(NDIM)
    DO 10 I=1,NDIM
    CALL OUT(81,IO(I))
    DO 15 J=1,16
```


## $F=2 * 6$

CONTINUE
CONTINUE .
RETURN
END

```
    SUBROUTINE FOR MOTION CONTROL
    SUBROUTINE SSRUN
    DIMENSION ICLS(7),ISTP (9),IST10(18),ISTl(18),IST2 (5),IST3(15)
    1
        ,IST4 (9),IST6 (6),IST20 (6),IST0 (2),NAM(6)
    COMMON /RU/JJ,NAM,MS,MM,IP,IB,IC
    DATA ICLS/64,67,76,79,83,69.13/,ISTP/64,83,84,69,80,50,50,48.
    1 44/,IST2/50,53,48,48,13/fISTl/44,45,51,48,48,44,45,49,48,48,
    Z 44,44,44,45,49,48,48,13/,IST3/44,49,48,48,44,49,48,48,44,44,
    3 44,49,48,48,13/,IST4/44,44,44,44,.44,50,48,48,13/,IST6/45,50,
    4 53,48,48,13/,IST10/44,45,48,50,48,44,45,48,50,48,44,44,44,45,
    5 48,50,48,13/,IST20/45,48,48,48,52,13/,ISTO/48,13/.
    N1=0
    N4=0
    N6=0
    N8=0
    IST4 (7) =IC
    CALL SOUT (ICLS,7)
    CALL REIN
    CALL SOUT (ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IST1,18)
    CALL REIN
    CALL SOUT (ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IST2,5)
    N1=H1+1
    F=50**3
    N2=INP (100)
    IF (Nl.GE.JJ) GO TO 250
    IF(N2.EQ.O) GO TO 215
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTOf2)
    CALL REIN
    CALL REIN
```


## N8 $=\mathrm{N} 8+1$

```
JJ=JJ+275
CALL SQUT(ISTP,9)
CALL SOUT (IST10,18)
CALL REIN
```


## $\mathrm{N} 4=\mathrm{H} 4+1$

```
M2 «IMP (100)
IF (N2.NE9O) 60 TO 220
CALL SOUT (ISTP,9)
CALL SOUT(IST10»18)
CALL REIN
```


## N6=N6+1

```
IF (N6.EQ.2.OR.N6.EQ.4.OR.II6,GE.6) GO TO 210
```

```
    GO TO 230
250 CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTO,2)
    CALL REIN
    CALL REIN
    IS1=(N4+N6) *2
    IS4=IS1/10
    IS2=49+IS4
    IS 3=48+IS1~IS4*10
    IST3(2)=IS2
    TST3 ( 3)=IS3
    IST3 (6)=IS2
    IST3(7)=IS3
    TST3(12)=IS2
    IST3(13) = IS3
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IST3,15)
    CALL REIN
    WRITE (51260)(NAM(I), I=1,6),MS>NM IP
    FORMAT(1X,*THIS IS A \6A2,* S:L:H=\3I6)
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(TST4,9)
    CALL REIN
    IST1(3)=IS2
    IST1 (4)=IS3
    IST1 (8)=IS2
    IST1 (9) =IS3
    IST1(15)=IS2
    IST1 (16) =IS3
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IST1,18).
    CALL REIN
    N1=O
    JJ=JJ-N8*275
    IST3(2)=IS2+2
    CALL SOUT(ISTPf9)
    CALL SOUT(IST6.6)
    N1=N1+1
    F=50**3
    N2=INP(100)
    IF(Nl.GE.JJ) GO TO 280
    IF(N2.EQ.O) GO TO 270
    IF(N2.NE.O) GO TO 270
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(ISTO,2)
    CALL REIN
    CALL REIN
    CALL SOUT(ISTP,9)
    CALL SOUT(IST3»15)
CALL REIM
IST3 (2) =49
IST3(3)=48
IST3 (6) =49
IST3(7) =48
IST3 (12)=49
IST3 (13)=48
```

$$
\begin{aligned}
& \operatorname{IST} 1(3)=51 \\
& \operatorname{IST1}(4)=48 \\
& \text { IST1 (8) }=49 \\
& \text { IST1 }(9)=48 \\
& \operatorname{IST} 1(15)=49 \\
& \operatorname{IST} 1(16)=48 \\
& \text { WRITE } 5,290 \text { ) } \\
& 290 \text { FORMAT (1X.' ') } \\
& \text { RETURN } \\
& \text { END }
\end{aligned}
$$


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ A somewhat similar system employing fiber optics and a linear CCD array is reported by Agrawal and Epstein ffj .

[^1]:    ${ }^{2}$ The $X$-axis is radial and $Z$-axis is vertical, as defined in Figure 5-1

