Contents

v Authors
vii Conference Committee
ix Introduction

SESSION 1  PERCEPTION

10640 03 Robust homing with stereovision [10640-2]
10640 05 Automated, near real-time inspection of commercial sUAS imagery using deep learning [10640-5]

SESSION 2  SPECIAL TOPICS

10640 07 A translation architecture for the Joint Architecture for Unmanned Systems (JAUS) [10640-7]
10640 08 MAD-VR: machine learning, analysis, and design in virtual reality [10640-8]
10640 09 DRESH: DRone EnSnaring mesh [10640-9]
10640 0A blindBike: an assistive bike navigation system for low-vision persons [10640-10]
10640 0B A game of timing with detection uncertainty [10640-11]

SESSION 3  ROBOTICS CTA

10640 0D Robotics collaborative technology alliance (RCTA) program overview [10640-13]
10640 0E An experiment to evaluate robotic grasping of occluded objects [10640-14]
10640 0F Modeling and traversal of pliable materials for tracked robot navigation [10640-15]
10640 0G When does a human replan? Exploring intent-based replanning in multi-objective path planning [10640-16]
SESSION 4  NAVIGATION

10640 OJ  Image-aided inertial navigation for an Octocopter [10640-20]

10640 OK  UAV vision-based localization techniques using high-altitude images and barometric altimeter [10640-21]

SESSION 5  COLLABORATIVE ROBOTIC TEAMS: JOINT SESSION WITH CONFERENCES 10640 AND 10651

10640 OL  Removing the bottleneck: utilizing autonomy to manage multiple UAS sensors from inside a cockpit [10640-22]

10640 OM  Real-time inspection of 3D features using sUAS with low-cost sensor suites [10640-23]

10640 ON  Benchmarking a LIDAR obstacle perception system for aircraft autonomy [10640-24]

10640 OO  Cooperative cognitive electronic warfare UAV game modeling for frequency hopping radar [10640-25]

POSTER SESSION

10640 OP  Automatic voice control system for UAV-based accessories [10640-26]

10640 OQ  Enabling intelligence with temporal world models [10640-27]

10640 OS  Stopped random walks and control of uncertain systems [10640-30]

10640 OT  Confidence regions with applications to sensing and control [10640-31]
Authors

Numbers in the index correspond to the last two digits of the seven-digit citation identifier (CID) article numbering system used in Proceedings of SPIE. The first five digits reflect the volume number. Base 36 numbering is employed for the last two digits and indicates the order of articles within the volume. Numbers start with 00, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 0A, 0B...0Z, followed by 10-1Z, 20-2Z, etc.

Alicea, Ryan, 0F
Alicia, Thomas J., 0L
Baheerathan, S., 0J
Bednarz, David, 0B
Chen, Xinjia, 0S, 0T
Chester, Dave, 0O
Childers, Marshal, 0E
Clouse, Rich, 0O
Collins, Emmanuel G., Jr., 0F, 0H
Cover, Hugh, 0N
Cutler, Scott, 07
DiBlasi, Michael, 0Q
Dornbush, Andrew, 0E
Erickson, David R., 09
Erlebacher, Gordon, 0H
Fang, Fuqiang, 03
Forrest, Douglas, 09
Gillies, Andy, 0S, 0M
Goodrich, Michael A., 0G
Gresak, Erik, 0P
Grewel, Lynne, 0A
Hagen, O. K., 0J
Harper, Mario Y., 0F, 0H
Hunt, Jodie, 0O
Hurwitz, Arnon, 0E
Jalowiczor, Jakub, 0P
Jeffers, Mike, 0S, 0M
Kapur, Srishti, 0F
Kaukeinen, Brian, 0Q
Kawatsu, Chris, 0S, 0M
Krupansky, Nicholas, 0B
Ladyko, Kyle, 0F
Lagali, Christopher, 0A
Lennon, Craig, 0E
Likhachev, Maxim, 0E
Lyons, Damian M., 03
Matthies, Larry, 0F
Muench, Paul, 0B
Nishikawa, Y., 0K
Ordonez, Camilo, 0F, 0H
Osteen, Philip R., 0Q
Ottoson, Tom, 0Q
Overell, William, 0A
Owens, Jason L., 0Q
Patel, Dilip G., 0D
Purman, Ben, 0S, 0M
Rahmes, Mark, 0O
Rezac, Filip, 0P
Robison, Christo, 0Q
Rothrock, Brandon, 0F
Rozhon, Jan, 0P
Rubini, J., 0B
Safarik, Jakub, 0P
Saxena, Dhruv Mauria, 0E
Serge, Matthew, 0P
Shaikh, Meher T., 0G
Sheridan, Paul, 0S, 0M
St. Amant, Robert, 0Q
Stambler, Adam, 0N
Strabala, Kyle, 0N
Surana, Amit, 0L
Taylor, Grant S., 0L
Turpin, Terry S., 0L
Watanabe, J., 0K
Yamamoto, T., 0K
Yawata, K., 0K
Young, Stuart H., 0D
Zhao, Aaron, 0S, 0M
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1 Perception
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5 Collaborative Robotic Teams: Joint Session with Conferences 10640 and 10651
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Introduction

The Unmanned Systems Technology XX Conference consisted of four sessions and two joint sessions over two days and covered several areas within robotics, primarily from a defense perspective. The conference’s list of papers showed a good variety of applications within unmanned systems, with many papers pertaining to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV’s), but also several for ground and sea vehicles. The conference also included a number of papers from international authors.

This year the conference began Tuesday afternoon with a session on Perception, which consisted of four papers: the first on the subject of visual homing and navigation without using a metric map for a ground robot [10640-2], followed by three papers on airfield damage assessment via UAV’s. Of the latter, the first described a two air vehicle approach with a quick survey followed by more detailed analysis of suspect sites [10640-4], the second described a convolutional neural network approach to image analysis [10640-5], and the third discussed closed loop control and mission planning for the aircraft [10640-6]. Unfortunately, the first and third airfield assessment papers were not submitted in time for inclusion in the proceedings.

The second session on Tuesday was the Special Topics session, which included papers on: creating an interface between the Joint Architecture for Unmanned System (JAUS) and Multi-robot Operator Control Unit (MOCU) version 4 [10640-7]; a description of an architecture for testing autonomy algorithms [10640-8]; the development of a low-cost physical method to counter UAV’s [10640-9]; the creation of a system to assist people with low vision in riding a bicycle [10940-10]; and a game theory approach to ground vehicle mobility [10640-11].

Tuesday concluded with the conference’s poster session, which included a paper on voice control of a camera on a UAV [10640-26], the addition of time history information into a world model [10640-27], the connection between stopped random walks and uncertainty in control systems [10640-30], and the construction of confidence regions for feature extraction in high dimensional spaces [10640-31]. The poster session was well attended again this year.

Wednesday morning began with a session from the Army Research Laboratory’s (ARL) Robotics Collaborative Technology Alliance (CTA) that started with an overview of the program [10640-13], which includes research to realize operational tempo of robots in unstructured environments, human-robot interactions in complex missions, and mobile manipulation. This was followed by papers on experimental analysis of a combined RGB-D vision and manipulation task [10640-14], modeling of vegetation as spring/damper system with associated measures of trafficability [10640-15], a method for understanding and maintaining
human intent in robot path planning [10640-16], and development of a fast any-
time planning algorithm for a legged platform [10640-17].

The second morning session involved Navigation and consisted of three papers: the first on joint planning and control for UAV’s [10640-18], followed by papers on combining visual odometry with an IMU during GPS dropouts for a UAV [10640-20], and methods to correct visual odometry errors for UAV’s performing infrastructure inspection [10640-21].

Wednesday afternoon consisted of an informal joint session with Conference 10639, Micro- and Nanotechnology Sensors, Systems, and Applications X, entitled Deep Learning and Neuromorphic Sensing/Computing for Small Autonomous Systems. The session started with an overview of research interests at ARL in machine learning and artificial intelligence, followed by papers on the creation of a database for visual odometry taken with an event-based camera, sparse coding and event-based processing, and advantages of using an event-based camera, such as high frame rate and high dynamic range.

The conference concluded on Thursday morning with a joint session with Conference 10651, Open Architecture/Open Business Model Net-Centric Systems and Defense Transformation 2018. The session was on Collaborative Robotic Teams and seven papers were presented, with the first discussing the challenges associated with autonomous underwater vehicles, including communications and navigation [10651-20]. This was followed by papers on a graph-theoretical approach to swarming UAV’s [10651-21], a system for managing a team of UAV’s from within a cockpit [10640-22], a comparison between multi-view stereo-vision and LIDAR for autonomous runway damage assessment [10640-23], a nodding LIDAR system for helicopter obstacle avoidance [10640-24], a game theory analysis of radar-based electronic warfare [10640-25], and an auction-based system for decentralized control of autonomous systems.

In its twentieth year, the conference returned to Orlando, Florida (United States) where it began in 1999 as the Unmanned Ground Vehicle Technology Conference with original conference chairs Grant Gerhart, Robert Gunderson, and Chuck Shoemaker. Douglas Gage joined as a conference chair in 2002, Robert Karlsen joined in 2011, and Hoa Nguyen joined in 2017. In 2006, the conference adopted its current name of Unmanned Systems Technology in order to broaden the scope to include unmanned air, sea, and space vehicles.
Through the years we have seen tremendous advancements in many areas of autonomous systems, both in defense and civilian applications, and expect to see much more in the years to come. We want to thank all those that helped make the conference a success this year and we hope that you enjoy these proceedings and are able to attend and participate in the conference next year in Baltimore, Maryland (United States).

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