Hasti Seifi · Astrid M. L. Kappers · Oliver Schneider · Knut Drewing · Claudio Pacchierotti · Alireza Abbasimoshaei · Gijs Huisman · Thorsten A. Kern (Eds.)

Haptics: Science, Technology, Applications

13th International Conference on Human Haptic Sensing and Touch Enabled Computer Applications, EuroHaptics 2022 Hamburg, Germany, May 22–25, 2022, Proceedings



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Preface

In this volume, you will find the proceedings of the EuroHaptics 2022 conference, held during May 22–24, 2022, in Hamburg, Germany. EuroHaptics is a major international conference, organized every two years, that features the latest advances in haptics science, technology, and applications. This year's proceedings are open access. We follow the example given by the EuroHaptics 2020 team in Leiden and hope that future organizers will decide to do the same.

Organizing a conference of this size and international impact is always special and unique, but our conference in particular faced many challenges due to the circumstances. When Hamburg applied to host the event in 2020, we all assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic would be over by 2022. So, we originally planned optimistically for an on-site conference with global participation. However, the virus proved to be more persistent than expected, so we had to plan three versions of the conference in parallel: an on-site conference, a hybrid conference, and a virtual conference. Fortunately, the situation stabilized such that, with some reassurance from the scientific community, we were able to decide on an on-site conference. However, just as decisions were being made, geopolitical challenges arose from Russia's war in Ukraine. Since this scientific community is traditionally more interested in interaction than in exclusion and separation, we again decided to keep open the opportunity for scientific cross-cultural exchanges. At the time of submitting this conference volume to production, more than 180 participants have confirmed their attendance, and a conference program has been designed with more than 140 papers ranging from oral presentations and posters to numerous hands-on demonstrations.

More than 350 (co-)authors submitted their contributions to the conference. In these uncertain times and after almost two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the long paper category was comparatively small, with 65 papers, 36 of which were accepted for publication, yielding an acceptance rate of 55%. Impressively, 62 Work-In-Progress (WIP) short papers were submitted, of which 51 were accepted for inclusion in the conference, yielding an acceptance rate of 82%. In addition, we received 39 submissions for hands-on demonstrations and several industry exhibitors at the conference. We are excited to see how our scientific communication will evolve in the coming years, what will remain and what will revert to earlier times.

The entire evaluation and peer review process could not have been accomplished without the enthusiastic help of our haptics research community. In addition to the editorial board, 39 associate editors and 140 reviewers invested their time to provide valuable input to the organizers and authors. We are grateful for everyone's help, especially with so many things happening around us.

Haptics research is a growing community. There is no conference or journal on robotics, actuators, psychology, neurology, or human-computer interaction without at least a few papers related to our research area. This proliferation can be seen as a threat to general haptics conferences. However, we see it as an opportunity, since there are no

Preface

conferences like EuroHaptics where technology, psychology, neuroscience, and applications coexist on an equal footing in a single-track event that promotes true interdisciplinary exchange. We are grateful to have been able to contribute to the progress of this community with a great team of editors and reviewers.

April 2022

vi

Thorsten A. Kern
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Contents

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Ha	ntı	r 🝆		an	CO
па	IJЦ		u	CII	L

Haptic Discrimination of Different Types of Soft Materials	3
Moving Hands Feel Stimuli Before Stationary Hands	12
Perception of Friction in Tactile Exploration of Micro-structured Rubber Samples	21
Influence of Prior Visual Information on Exploratory Movement Direction in Texture Perception	30
Guidance for the Design of Vibrotactile Patterns for Use on the Human Back	39
Speed Discrimination in the Apparent Haptic Motion Illusion	48
Neutral Point in Haptic Perception of Softness	57
Pilot Study on Presenting Pulling Sensation by Electro-Tactile Stimulation Shota Nakayama, Mitsuki Manabe, Keigo Ushiyama, Masahiro Miyakami, Akifumi Takahashi, and Hiroyuki Kajimoto	66
A Preliminary Study on the Perceptual Independence Between Vibrotactile and Thermal Senses. Jaejun Park, Jeongwoo Kim, Chaeyong Park, Seungjae Oh, Junseok Park, and Seungmoon Choi	75
Spatial Compatibility of Visual and Tactile Stimulation in Shared Haptic Perception	84

Increasing Perceived Weight and Resistance by Applying Vibration to Tendons During Active Arm Movements	93
A Comparison of Haptic and Auditory Feedback as a Warning Signal for Slip in Tele-Operation Scenarios	101
Experiencing Touch by Technology	110
Effect of Focus Direction and Agency on Tactile Perceptibility Zane A. Zook and Marcia K. O'Malley	119
Haptic Technology	
Haptic Guidance for Teleoperation: Optimizing Performance and User Experience	129
A Multi-modal Haptic Armband for Finger-Level Sensory Feedback from a Prosthetic Hand	138
Sound Pressure Field Reconstruction for Ultrasound Phased Array by Linear Synthesis Scheme Optimization	147
A Rotary Induction Actuator for Kinesthetic and Tactile Rendering Georges Daher, Stéphane Régnier, and Sinan Haliyo	155
Haptic Feedback for Wrist Angle Adjustment	164
Larger Skin-Surface Contact Through a Fingertip Wearable Improves Roughness Perception	171
Expanding Dynamic Range of Electrical Stimulation Using	100
Anesthetic Cream	180

Haptic Rattle: Multi-modal Rendering of Virtual Objects Inside a Hollow Container	189
Emilie Hummel, Claudio Pacchierotti, Valérie Gouranton, Ronan Gaugne, Theophane Nicolas, and Anatole Lécuyer	105
Design of a 2-DoF Haptic Device for Motion Guidance Lisheng Kuang, Maud Marchal, Marco Aggravi, Paolo Robuffo Giordano, and Claudio Pacchierotti	198
Preliminary Design of a Flexible Haptic Surface	207
Human Self-touch vs Other-Touch Resolved by Machine Learning Aruna Ramasamy, Damien Faux, Vincent Hayward, Malika Auvray, Xavier Job, and Louise Kirsch	216
Investigating Movement-Related Tactile Suppression Using Commercial VR Controllers	225
Estimation of Frictional Force Using the Thermal Images of Target Surface During Stroking	234
Spatial Resolution of Mesoscopic Shapes Presented by Airborne Ultrasound	243
Haptic Applications	
Vibrotactile Similarity Perception in Crowdsourced and Lab Studies Ramzi Abou Chahine, Dongjae Kwon, Chungman Lim, Gunhyuk Park, and Hasti Seifi	255
Perception of Spatialized Vibrotactile Impacts in a Hand-Held Tangible for Virtual Reality Pierre-Antoine Cabaret, Thomas Howard, Claudio Pacchierotti, Marie Babel, and Maud Marchal	264
Wearable Haptics in a Modern VR Rehabilitation System: Design Comparison for Usability and Engagement	274

Perceiving Sequences and Layouts Through Touch	283
Whole-Hand Haptics for Mid-air Buttons	292
Proximity-Based Haptic Feedback for Collaborative Robotic Needle Insertion	301
Furekit: Wearable Tactile Music Toolkit for Children with ASD Di Qi, Mina Shibasaki, Youichi Kamiyama, Sakiko Tanaka, Bunsuke Kawasaki, Chisa Mitsuhashi, Yun Suen Pai, and Kouta Minamizawa	310
A Database of Vibratory Signals from Free Haptic Exploration of Natural Material Textures and Perceptual Judgments (ViPer): Analysis of Spectral Statistics	319
Appendix	
Developing a VR Training Environment for Fingers Rehabilitation with Haptic Feedback	331
Impedance Control and Remote Operation of Robotic Wrist Therapy Systems	334
Feasibility of Smartphone Vibrations as a Sensory Diagnostic Tool Rachel A. G. Adenekan, Alexis J. Lowber, Bryce N. Huerta, Allison M. Okamura, Kyle T. Yoshida, and Cara M. Nunez	337
Deixis Without Sight: Use of Spatial Demonstratives in the Absence of Vision	340
A Scalable Haptic Circuit for Multi-digit Grasps	343
Instrumented Force and Optical Point Tracking to Measure Manual	2.45
Brushing in Pleasant Touch	347

Instrumented Object for Finger Pad Imaging During Active Manipulation David Córdova Bulens, Benoit Delhaye, Philippe Lefèvre, and Stephen Redmond	351
Vibrotactile Stimuli are Perceived More Intense at the Front than at the Back of the Torso	354
Bora Celebi, Müge Cavdan, and Knut Drewing	334
Imaging Sub-surface Skin Strain Patterns During Fingertip Sliding Giulia Corniani, Zing Lee, Matt J. Carré, Roger Lewis, Benoit P. Delhaye, and Hannes P. Saal	358
Sense of Agency Over Hands-free Gestural Control is Modulated by the Timing of Haptic Feedback	362
Exploiting a Wearable Extra-Finger for Haptic Applications	366
Finger Pad Deformation Under Torsion	369
Haptic Shape Discrimination is Independent of Weight	372
Human-to-Human Strokes Recordings for Tactile Apparent Motion Basil Duvernoy and Sarah McIntyre	376
Between-Tactor Display Using Dynamic Tactile Stimuli	379
Measuring Oddball Responses to Vibrotactile Textures	382
Distinguishable Virtual Haptic Textures to Understand Multisensory	
Sensation	386
The Role of the Visuo-Tactile Congruence Between the Size of a Collider and Virtual Contents in the Interactions with Virtual Objects	389

Surface	394
Johan Gonzalez Sanjuan and Norihisa Miki	
Simulating the Influence of Surface Hardness on the Contact Area Formation for Dry and Moist Finger Skin Contacts Michael Grießer, Thomas Ules, Christian Schipfer, Peter Fuchs, and Dieter P. Gruber	397
Embedded 3D Printing: A Cost-effective Development Platform for Tactile Sensors	401
Acoustic Finger Force Observation in a Longitudinal Ultrasonic Surface Haptic Device and Its Relation to Friction	404
Design and Implementation of a Cartesian Impedance Control in a Bilateral Telemanipulation System Using UR10e Robots	408
Mid-air Haptic Biosignal Transfer	412
Ultrasonic Friction Modulation Modifies the Area of Contact, Not the Shear Strength	410
Fingertip Friction and Tactile Rating of Wrapping Papers	419
A Psychological and Behavioral Study on Remote Audio-Visual-Tactile Communication System with Pressure Stimulation	422
Using Digital Image Correlation to Quantify the Effects of Thin Films on Skin Deformation	420
Engineering Haptic Devices 3rd Edition in 2022 in Open-Access	429

Contents	xvii
Wearable Haptic Device for Individuals with Congenital Absence of Proprioception	433
Remote High Five: Bidirectional Transmission System for Video, Audio, and Vibrotactile Information Applied for Communication of Athletes with Family; a Case Study	436
Rolling Handle for Hand Motion Guidance and Teleoperation Lisheng Kuang, Maud Marchal, Paolo Robuffo Giordano, and Claudio Pacchierotti	439
Is Tactile Shape Coding Invariant Against Small Location Shifts on the Skin?	443
Precision Grip Discrimination of Object Thickness	447
Use of Multiple Frequencies of Ultrasound in Midair Haptic Stimulation Saya Mizutani, Shun Suzuki, Atsushi Matsubayashi, Tao Morisaki, Yutaro Toide, Masahiro Fujiwara, Yasutoshi Makino, and Hiroyuki Shinoda	452
Presenting Sliding Sensation by Electro-tactile Stimulation	456
Uncoupled Stability Dynamic Range for Kelvin- Voigt and Hunt-Crossley Virtual Environments	460
Fashion Touch. Surface Haptics in Fashion E-commerce	464
The Influence of Aging on Perceptual Grouping in Haptic Search	468
Investigating Haptic Feedback and Arousal for Motor Skill Training in Virtual Reality	472
Safe Movement for the Blind Using Localised Haptic Stimulation	475

xviii Contents

An Immersive Virtual Paleontology Application	478
Mapping of Vibrotactile Stimuli into a Perceptual Space	482
Perception of Guitar Strings on a Flat Visuo-Tactile Display	486
Pseudo Forces from Asymmetric Vibrations Can Modulate Movement	
Velocity	490
Tactile Friction of UV-Curable Coatings and Its Relation to Surface	
Hardness Thomas Ules, Michael Grießer, Sandra Schlögl, and Dieter P. Gruber	494
Electrotactile Patterns for Single Finger Interactions in VR	498
Sit-By-Me: A Multi-Sensory Feedback Bench for Social Impromptu	5 0.1
Interactions	501
ExoSpine: Artificial Muscle-Driven Spine for Posture Correction Yutong Xie, Yun Suen Pai, and Kouta Minamizawa	504
Design of Robot End-Effector to Be Used in Studying Actuator-	
Performance for Vibrotactile Perception in a Telemanipulation Setup Fady Youssef, Maximilian Becker, and Thorsten A. Kern	507
Author Index	511

Exploiting a Wearable Extra-Finger for Haptic Applications

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Abstract. This extended abstract presents the design of a wearable device for haptic stimulation of hand palms and phalanges. Most of the wearable haptic devices for hand palms are based on a parallel structure, that guarantees good precision and stiffness but presents workspace limitations and encumbrance problems. In this work, we improve the design of a wearable extra-finger, previously designed to augment human hands and to provide assistance for people affected by hand and upper-limb diseases to apply as a haptic device. To employ this device for haptics applications, we provided it an additional adduction/abduction degree of freedom and we modified the fingertip/end-effector to include a micro force sensor.

1 Introduction

Human augmentation by means of supernumerary robotic limbs (SRLs) represents a recent and lively research topic [1]. SRLs are developed to allow humans to perform complex actions with increased strength and precision, and also to enlarge the human workspace. Our research group has been involved in particular in the development of supernumerary extra-fingers [2, 3]. Adding a single or double extra robotic finger can improve the grasping capabilities of the human hand and its dexterity even in complex actions.

In this work we propose to exploit supernumerary extra fingers as wearable haptic devices for cutaneous stimuli of hand palm and phalanges. Although the hand is one of the primary interfaces between humans and the surrounding environment, most of the haptic devices that return tactile stimuli are focused on the fingers [4], while fewer of them are developed specifically for the palm. Most of the wearable haptics devices developed for hand palm are based on parallel mechanisms, i.e. mechanical systems using multiple serial chains (typically varying from 3 to 6) to support a single platform, or end-effector [5–7]. One of the main drawbacks of parallel mechanisms is that their workspace, i.e. the set of possible configurations that can be reached by the end effector is rather limited,

and in haptics context this means that a limited part of the hand can be stimulated. Serial mechanisms, on the other hand, typically are more flexible and less precise than parallel ones, but their open structure allows to reach a wider workspace.

2 The Improvement of the Sixth Finger

As mentioned in the previous section, in this work we improved the wearable extra finger developed in [3, 8] to exploit it in haptic applications.

The robotic extra finger [8] has a modular structure, each module is composed of a rigid part realized in ABS (Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene, ABSPlus, Stratasys, USA) and flexible part, made of TPU (thermoplastic polyurethane, Lulzbot, USA). We selected TPU in particular because the high elongation of this material allows for repeated movement and impact without wear or cracking proving. Seven modules were employed in order to achieve a length of the finger similar to the average size of human hand. The robotic extra finger is tendon-driven and is actuated by only one motor, providing the flexion movement.

To exploit the extra finger in haptic applications, we increased its workspace by providing it the adduction/abduction motion, by connecting the proximal module to a platform orientable by means of a gear system. To reduce the encumbrance on the wrist, the motor was substituted by a linear actuator. Furthermore the distal module was sensorised with a microforce sensor, necessary to

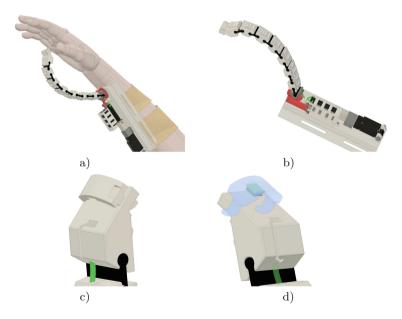


Fig. 1. (a) CAD model of the wearable extra finger exploited for haptic applications, worn by the user. (b) CAD model of the wearable extra finger, showing the actuation. (c) Fingertip module. (d) Sensing elements in the fingertip module.

control haptic interaction with human hand. CAD model of the proposed device is shown in Fig. 1. Furthermore, the stiffness of the flexible elements connecting finger phalanges has been calculated using the procedure proposed in [8] so that when the actuator pull the tendon, the extra-finger flexes by keeping the distal phalanx approximately perpendicular to hand palm.

3 Future Works

The device is currently in the prototyping phase. A first set of experimental tests will be aimed at verifying its functional characteristics, in particular, we will identify the part of the hand that can be stimulated with the device and the corresponding force that can be applied. Then in a second experimental phase we will compare it with the device presented in [7]. Then, users studies will be carried out to assess device usability in VR and AR contexts.

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