

Noniterative blind data restoration by use of an extracted filter function

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A signal-processing algorithm has been developed where a filter function is extracted from degraded data through mathematical operations. The filter function can then be used to restore much of the degraded content of the data through use of a deconvolution algorithm. This process can be performed without prior knowledge of the detection system, a technique known as blind deconvolution. The extraction process, designated self-deconvolving data reconstruction algorithm, has been used successfully to restore digitized photographs, digitized acoustic waveforms, and other forms of data. The process is noniterative, computationally efficient, and requires little user input. Implementation is straightforward, allowing inclusion into many types of signal-processing software and hardware. The novelty of the invention is the application of a power law and smoothing function to the degraded data in frequency space. Two methods for determining the value of the power law are discussed. The first method assumes the power law is frequency dependent. The function derived comparing the frequency spectrum of the degraded data with the spectrum of a signal with the desired frequency response. The second method assumes this function is a constant of frequency. This approach requires little knowledge of the original data or the degradation. © 2002 Optical Society of America

OCIS codes: 100.1830, 100.3020, 100.2000.

1. Introduction

A blind deconvolution technique has been developed that enables efficient restoration and enhancement of degraded data. The process compares the magnitude of the data in Fourier space to the same quality of a specified truth image. A filter function is derived from the comparison and used as a transfer function for restoring the original data. The process, designated self-deconvolving data reconstruction algorithm (SeDDaRA)^{1,2} has been successfully applied to digitized images, ultrasound waveforms, and sound recordings. Application requires little user input and is computer efficient.

Signal reconstruction based on deconvolution has been thoroughly studied.³⁻⁷ Blind deconvolutions are less prevalent although a sizable amount of research has been conducted recently.⁸⁻¹³

SeDDaRA is applicable when the degradation is

space invariant as it estimates the impulse function from the entirety of the data through power-law mapping. In cases where the degradation is not uniform across the data set, some restoration is still possible. However, this produces some nonphysical artifacts. The algorithm has been applied successfully to images that contain significant noise. A formal study on the influence of noise has not yet been conducted.

2. Deconvolution Theory

The objective of data restoration is to remove degradation from data that, with an ideal detection system, would not be present. If the form of the degradation is known, a class of deconvolution processes can be used to remove the defect as best as possible. For one-dimensional signals, the degradation could be caused by unwanted low-pass filtering processes. For images this degradation could be caused by motion blur, a partially blocked aperture, or an improperly focused lens system. The impulse function $d(x)$ represents how an impulse signal is received by the data collection system. A mathematical representation of the degraded data $g(x)$ is

$$g(x) = f(x) * d(x) + w(x), \quad (1)$$

where $f(x)$ is the truth data, $w(x)$ is a noise term, and $*$ denotes the convolution.³ The objective is to find

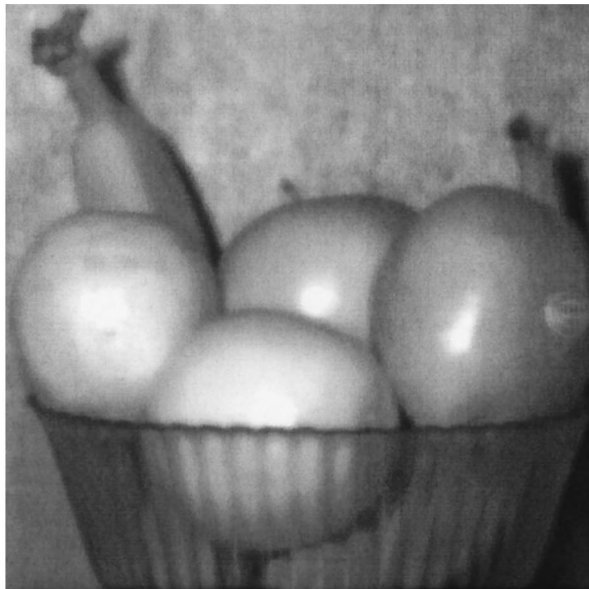
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Received 16 May 2002; revised manuscript received 9 July 2002.
0003-6935/02/326884-06\$15.00/0

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(a)



(b)

Fig. 1. (a) Truth image of a bowl of fruit taken with a digital camera; (b) convolution of the image with a point spread function.

the best estimate of $f(x)$ from $g(x)$ when $d(x)$ and $w(x)$ are unknown. This relationship is simplified by transferring both sides of Eq. (1) into frequency space via application of a Fourier transform,¹⁴ yielding

$$G(u) = F(u)D(u) + W(u), \quad (2)$$

where u is the coordinate in frequency space, and the transformed functions are represented by capital letters.

If $d(x)$ is known, a deconvolution process can be applied to $g(x)$ to approximate $f(x)$. Many deconvolution

algorithms, such as nonnegative least squares and the Wiener filter, can be found in the literature.^{3,15–17} For the following study, a pseudo-inverse filter will be used. The deconvolution is given by

$$F(u) = \frac{G(u)D^*(u)}{|D(u)|^2 + K}, \quad (3)$$

where the parameter K is typically chosen by trial and error. This filter is easy to apply and works well with most data.

In many situations, $d(x)$ is not measurable and cannot be easily modelled. To address this, a range of solutions has been developed known as blind-deconvolution algorithms. Blind deconvolution is a general term describing techniques that remove aberrations where $d(x)$ is unknown. Blind-deconvolution techniques can be either iterative^{8–12} or noniterative.^{13,18} Iterative techniques, which comprise of the majority of blind-deconvolution techniques, are based on equations that require multiple applications. As such, they generally require a significant amount of computation and can be difficult to implement.¹⁸ Often, both classes require that at least a certain amount of information about the degradation be known.

A. Derivation

The objective is to derive the transfer function $D(u)$ from $G(u)$ for use in a deconvolution algorithm. To do so, we assume the degradation is invariant, $D(u)$ is real, and has the form

$$D(u) = [K_G S\{|G(u) - W(u)|\}]^{\alpha(u)}, \quad (4)$$

where $\alpha(u)$ is a tuning parameter and K_G is a real, positive scalar chosen to ensure $|D(u)| \leq 1$. Application of the smoothing filter $S\{\dots\}$ assumes that $D(u)$ is a slowly varying function. For images, a median filter consisting of a 3×3 pixel array is usually used.³ Increasing the size of the array has the effect of reducing the influence of noise, but may limit the reconstruction of the higher-frequency components.

Equation (4) is subject to the conditions that (1.) $0 \leq \alpha(u) < 1$, (2.) the smoothing filter $S\{\dots\}$ is separable, and (3.) that $F(u)$ and $W(u)$ are uncorrelated. Equation (4) states that application of a smoothing filter and power law to the power spectrum of the truth image, when chosen correctly, will produce the degradation. Although stated as an equality, in practice this is an approximation stemming from assumption (2.). For simplicity, $W(u)$ will be assumed to be negligible. To date, to our knowledge, a formal study on the influence of significant noise has yet to be conducted.

Because $D(u)$ is assumed real, Eq. (2) can be restated as

$$D(u) = \frac{S\{|G(u)|\}}{S\{|F(u)|\}}, \quad (5)$$

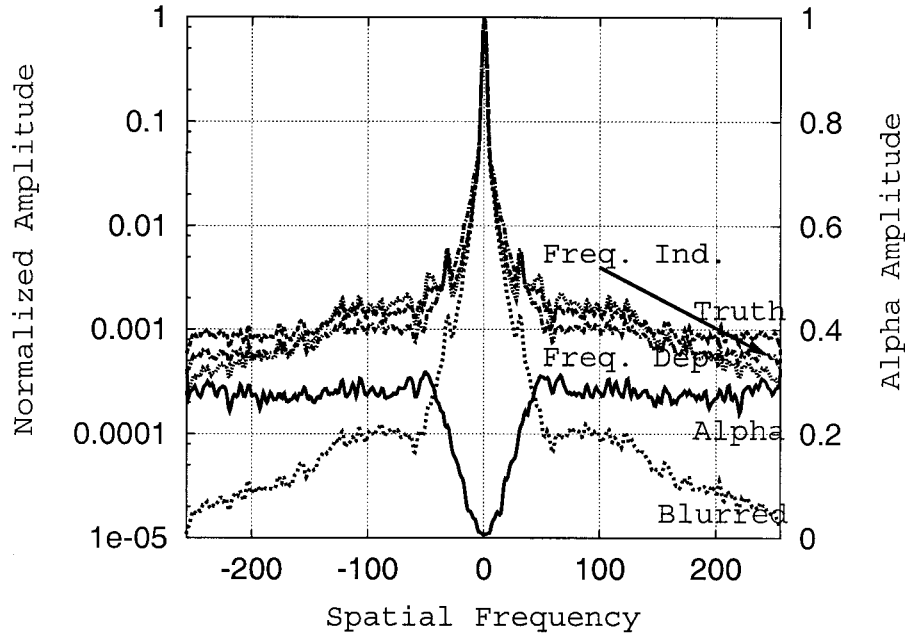


Fig. 2. Line plot of the frequency spectrum of the four images. The y axis is a logarithmic plot of the frequency response amplitude normalized to unity. The second y axis is a plot of the alpha function. Notice how the value can be approximated by 0.28 for all but the lowest frequencies.

where the smoothing operator has been applied. Because $D(u)$ is assumed to be a slowly varying function, it can be removed from the influence of the smoothing operator.

To solve for $\alpha(u)$, Eq. (5) is substituted into Eq. (4)

$$\frac{S\{|G(u)\}}{S\{|F(u)\}} \approx \frac{K_G S\{|G(u)\}}{K_{F'} S\{|F'(u)\}} \approx [K_G S\{|G(u)\}]^{\alpha(u)}. \quad (6)$$

Because the truth data $F(u)$ is unknown, we have replaced it with a data set $F'(u)$ that contains the desired characteristic frequency spectrum, where $K_{F'}$ is another scaling parameter. Given the presence of the smoothing filter, the replacement data set needs to satisfy

$$K_{F'} S\{|F'(u)\} \approx K_F S\{|F(u)\}. \quad (7)$$

Preferably, this function would be a theoretical model of the anticipated result with the source of the degradation removed from the equation. However, because modelling a detection system is often complicated, using an existing fair representation of the truth data can be more efficient. For example, an in-focus image of a terrestrial mountain can be used to restore an out-of-focus image of an extra-terrestrial landscape.

Solving for $\alpha(u)$ produces

$$\alpha(u) \approx \frac{\text{Ln}[K_G S\{|G(u)\}] - \text{Ln}[K_{F'} S\{|F'(u)\}]}{\text{Ln}[K_G S\{|G(u)\}]} \quad (8)$$

In this relation, K_G and $K_{F'}$ must be determined such that $|D(u)| \leq 1$. This condition is satisfied if we set $K_G = 1/\text{Max}[S\{|G(u)\}]$ and $K_{F'} = 1/\text{Max}[S\{|F'(u)\}]$.

It follows that

$$D(u) = \{K_G S\{|G(u)\}\}^{\alpha(u)}, \quad (9)$$

where $\alpha(u)$ is given by Eq. (8).

Substitution of Eq. (8) into Eq. (9) produces an approximation of Eq. (5), providing a more concise result. Expressing the relation as a power-law relation, however, enables one to approximate $\alpha(u)$ as a constant. This permits further simplification of the process and comprises of a fully blind deconvolution algorithm. This approach is discussed in the next section.

B. Frequency-Independent Alpha

In some situations, the function $\alpha(u)$ can be approximated by a constant value. For example, most natural scenes possess a frequency spectrum that peaks in the lowest frequency range and rapidly decreases for higher spatial frequencies. Application of a power law, i.e., with a constant value for α with $0 \leq \alpha < 1$, can enhance the part of the curve that is most affected by a blur function.

This is demonstrated by the following images. Figure 1 is an image of a bowl of fruit (a) and its convolution (b) with a point spread function. The frequency-dependent deconvolution algorithm was applied to the image to produce $\alpha(u)$. A line plot of the function is shown in Fig. 2. Aside from the lowest frequencies, $\alpha(u)$ can be approximated as $\alpha = 0.28$. By using this value and the frequency independent method, a point spread function was extracted and used to deconvolve the image. The



(a)

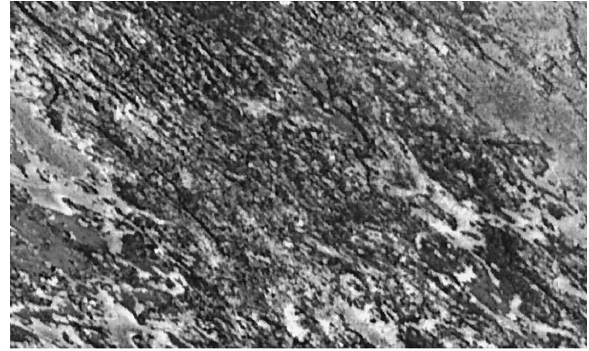


(b)

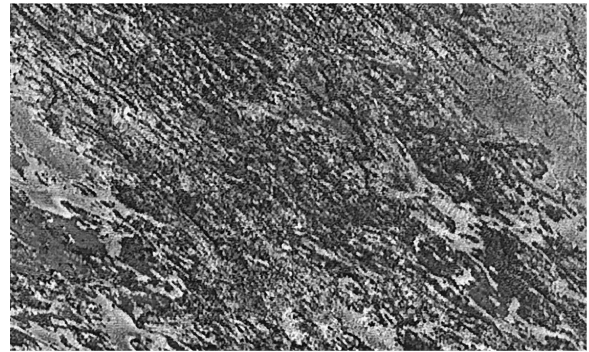
Fig. 3. (a) Restoration of the image using $\alpha = 0.28$ and a pseudo-inverse filter; (b) restoration of the image by using a frequency dependent $\alpha(u)$ and a pseudo-inverse filter.

result, shown in Fig. 3, (a) is a significant improvement over Fig. 1 (b), and compares favorably to either the truth image or the frequency-dependent deconvolution, shown in Fig. 3 (b). The function $|F(u)'|$ in this case has been derived from the actual truth image.

The value α becomes a tuning parameter satisfying $0 \leq \alpha < 1$, chosen by trial and error. In most cases, $\alpha = 0.5$ has proven to be an effective initial choice. Reconstruction quality does not significantly differ



(a)



(b)

Fig. 4. This image (a) was taken by the space probe Galileo of the surface of Io.¹⁹ Although the image already exhibits a fair amount of high resolution, application of the frequency-dependent restoration process brings out more detail (b).

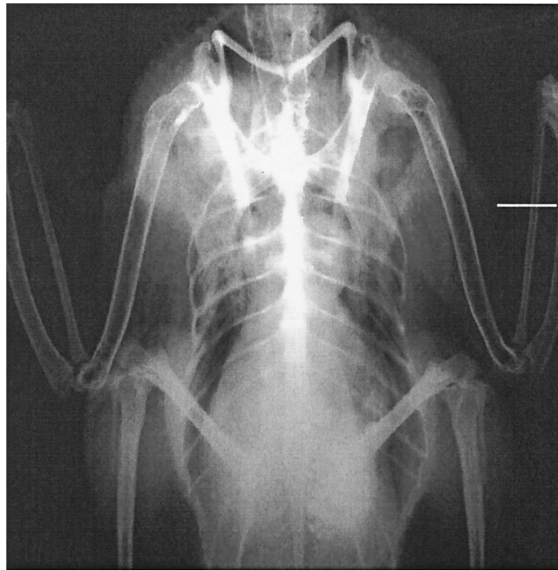
for variations less than ± 0.05 . This approach has been discussed in a previous paper.¹

3. Examples

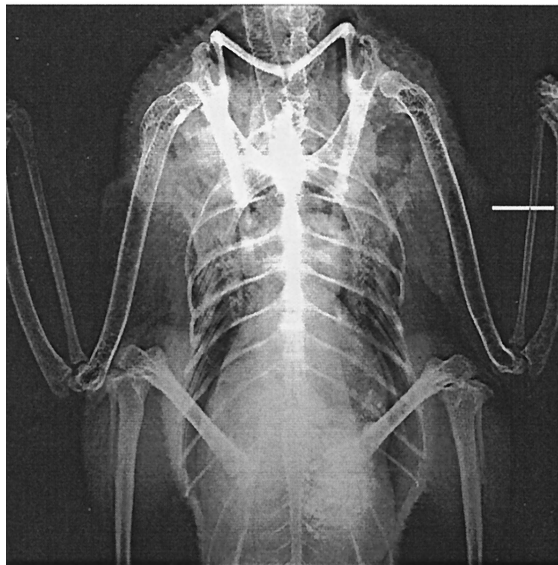
This technique has been applied to an image of the surface of the moon Io of Jupiter taken by the space probe Galileo,¹⁹ shown in Fig. 4 (a). Although the image exhibits good resolution, the application of SeDDaRA, shown in Fig. 4 (b), brings out more detail. This resolution used a synthetic Mandelbrot-type fractal image as the source for $|F(u)'|$.

The detail in Fig. 4 (a) may be recovered by standard means, such as applying an edge filter. However, edge filters can only be described as an image enhancement technique that amplifies spatial frequencies to improve the image visually. SeDDaRA, however, is a true image restoration technique that restores frequencies that were degraded by system optics and electronics. There is less danger of introducing features not present in the original image.

As an example of an application on non-optical imagery, Fig. 5 is an x-ray image of a muscovy duck.²⁰ The restoration displays features that were not visually perceptible in the original image. The source for the representative truth image, $|F(u)'|$, was Fig. 1



(a)



(b)

Fig. 5. This image (a) is an x-ray of a muscovy duck.²⁰ The deconvolution (b) was restored with a frequency dependent $\alpha(u)$. The white line indicates the path of the line plot shown in Fig. 6.

(a). A line plot was made across one wing to demonstrate the improvement in contrast and resolution. This is shown in Fig. 6.

Figure 7 (a) displays an original and restored ultrasound waveform that has traveled through air for approximately a centimeter.²¹ In this frequency range, higher frequencies are greatly attenuated. Using Eq. (9) and a reference waveform, the frequency dependent $\alpha(u)$ was extracted from the image. The transfer function was created and inserted into the deconvolution algorithm. The source for the representative truth data was a synthetic waveform.

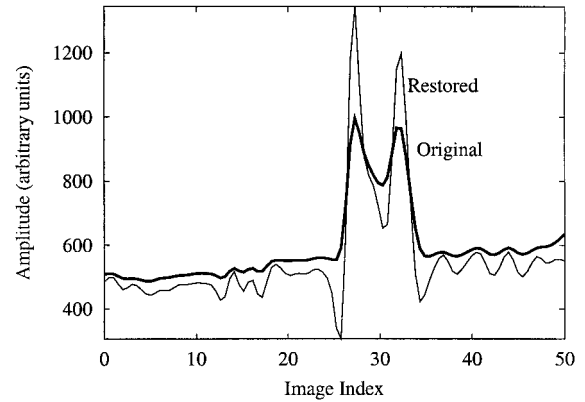


Fig. 6. This is a line plot taken across the wing as shown in Fig. 5. The restored image shows improved resolution when the algorithm is applied.

The restored waveform exhibits additional peaks and features that had not been apparent before. The frequency spectra are shown in Fig. 7 (b).

As shown in the examples, the high-frequency content is significantly enhanced through this process. However, with any blind deconvolution technique, there is a risk of introducing nonphysical artifacts, such as the deep valley at image index 25 in Fig. 6, most likely the result of the influence of the pseudo-inverse filter. Although new features, such as those in Fig. 7 (a), can be revealed by using this technique, their physical existence should be verified independently if possible.

4. Conclusion

The SeDDaRA process has several unique characteristics that are not found in current signal-processing algorithms. At the core of the process, the application of this method extracts a reasonably good approximation for the degradation of a signal in a comparatively short amount of time, provided that the degradation is invariant across the data set. This algorithm is easy to implement, and can be inserted into existing signal-processing packages without much difficulty. As demonstrated, the method works well on a wide variety of signal types, including imagery, acoustic waveforms, and any signal that suffers from low-pass filtering. This is accomplished without direct information about the type or extent of aberration.

Potential commercial applications include image processing, for both research-based and consumer-based imagery. Aging photographs and movies may be restored and preserved digitally, or reprinted. Nonoptical images, such as medical ultrasound scans and x-ray scans can also be improved. This technique can be a valuable research tool to recover the full bandwidth of a signal, restoring the high-frequency content. SeDDaRA may find application in recording studios and home sound systems to counteract effects created by room acoustics and enhance the quality of the reproduction.

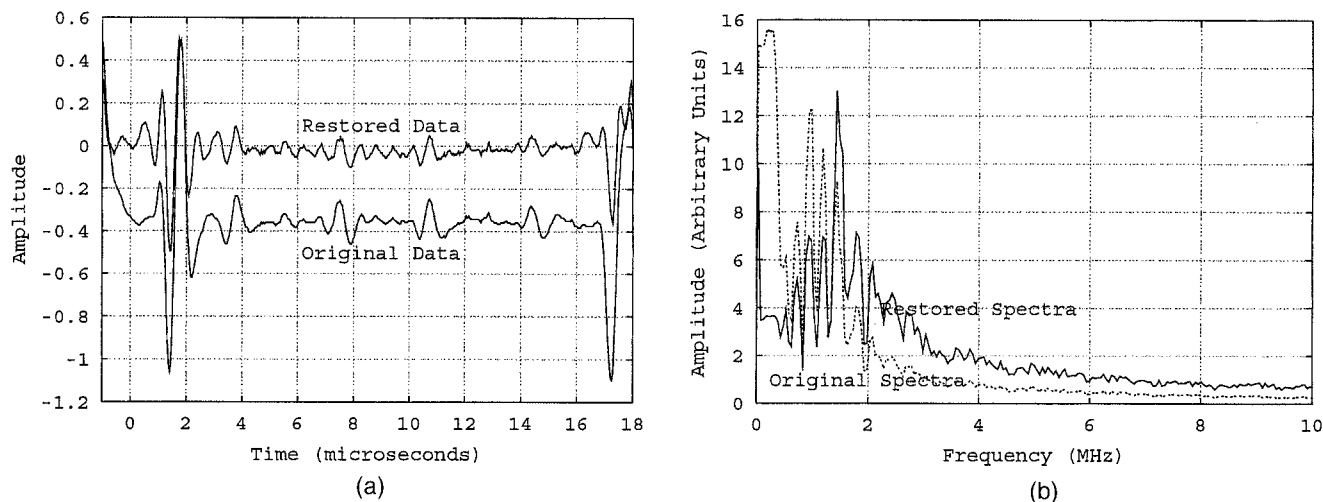


Fig. 7. (a) Lower plot (labelled Original Data) is an ultrasound waveform that traveled through a centimeter of air. In this frequency range, the higher frequencies are strongly attenuated by air.²¹ The frequency dependent alpha function was determined using Eq. (9), producing an appropriate transfer function. The data was deconvolved with the extracted filter function. The restored data (labelled) exhibits several peaks that were not apparent in the original data. An arbitrary offset was added to the data for demonstrative purposes. The frequency spectra are shown on (b). Note the improved higher-frequency sensitivity between 1 and 4 MHz.

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19. Image courtesy of National Aeronautics and Space Administration/Jet Propulsion Laboratory/California Institute of Technology.
20. Image courtesy of the Arizona Board of Regents and the Center for Image Processing in Education, Tucson, Ariz.
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