

Bachelor Thesis

Implementation and Evaluation of DRR algorithms (ray casting, wobbled splatting) for the ITK

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Abstract

Intensity-based registration of a 3D volumetric dataset (e.g. CT, MRI) to one or more 2D X-ray images is a common task in medical image processing. It is used in radiotherapy treatment planning and verification, image guided therapy and in the field of computer-aided surgery. Another application is the registration of a 3D statistical model that incorporates a-priori knowledge of the shape and/or intensities. It offers the ability to generate a possible 3D reconstruction from one or more 2D X-ray images. This additional information can be used to make segmentation or contour extraction more robust, stable and accurate. This work is motivated by an earlier work at the IBIA, where a 3D statistical shape and intensity model (“InShape”-model) of the femur is used for segmentation to provide an observer-independent placement of one or more regions of interest, which is used to quantify the local bone quality of the proximal femur with statistical or texture-based methods. The generation of digitally reconstructed radiographs (DRRs), a simulated X-ray image by projecting a 3D dataset, is an important step during the registration process that is computationally expensive and typically a bottleneck. The objective of this thesis is to improve the performance of DRR generation for the intensity-based 3D to 2D registration.

Various direct volume-rendering algorithms that generate DRRs (ray casting, splatting, wobbled splatting, attenuation field, progressive attenuation field, Fourier volume-rendering, shear-warp, texture mapping and Monte Carlo volume-rendering) were compared and their pros and cons are summarized.

The used software framework (ITK) offers a lot of powerful features for medical image processing and registration. Unfortunately, there is currently only one DRR method (ray casting) available that enables the registration framework to perform intensity-based 3D to 2D registration. Furthermore, the currently available functionality has some problems: Missing class architecture for DRR generation methods, unsuited base class, functionality is split up and realised by more classes, missing configuration options, low order bi-linear interpolation, only rigid transformations are supported, problems with the usage and configuration and all disadvantages of ray casting.

To improve the performance of intensity-based 3D to 2D registration the DRR generation method wobbled splatting with focus wobbling was implemented. To address the existing problems and to implement wobbled splatting a new easily expandable and flexible class architecture for DRR generation methods was created. An adapter (wrapper) was implemented to use the DRR methods with the registration framework. The implemented DRR generation methods support multi-threading, share the same configuration for the X-ray geometry, support affine transformations, offer an intensity transfer function, provide different types of compositing and are well configurable.

The standard deviation σ of wobbled splatting has a strong influence on the image quality. If σ is too small, artifacts occur, and if σ is too big, the resulting DRR is blurred. Therefore the minimum value for σ , at which no artifacts occur (σ_{min}), was determined for different volumetric datasets. Ray casting was implemented to generate reference images for evaluation. It could be proved that σ_{min} solely depends on the maximal spacing in the volumetric dataset, the minimal spacing in the DRR, the ratio between FOD and FFD and the used splat-assignment method (nearest, linear), which was theoretically established. An equation was defined to predict σ_{min} with a mean error of 0.325 for a general prediction and 0.058 for a dataset specific prediction.

To determine the performance of the implemented methods an evaluation of computation times was performed. The run-times of ray casting are quite high since it is not optimised, sampling and DRR spacing obey the sampling theorem and all calculations are performed with `double` precision, but the generated DRRs have a very high quality. With more threads the run-times can be reduced by 38.94-74.6% on average. Wobbled splatting with focus wobbling requires 2.10-6.47% on average of the corresponding ray casting time. With more threads the run-times can be reduced by 28.37-41.99% on average. The run-times increase again if more threads are used than CPUs are available. The achieved run-times are competitive to other state-of-the-art DRR generation methods and can be further reduced by pre-computation of the random focal offsets, reduction of the precision to `float` and multi-threading.

Zusammenfassung

Die helligkeitsbasierte Registrierung eines 3D Datensatzes (z.B. CT, MRI) zu einem oder mehreren Röntgenbildern ist eine häufige Aufgabe in der medizinischen Bildverarbeitung. Sie wird in der radiotherapeutischen Behandlungsplanung und Verifikation, bildgeführten Therapie und im Bereich der computerunterstützten Chirurgie angewendet. Eine weitere Anwendung ist die Registrierung eines statistischen 3D Modells, welches a-priori Wissen über die Form und/oder die Helligkeitswerte berücksichtigt. Dies ermöglicht die Rekonstruktion eines möglichen 3D Modells aus einem oder mehreren Röntgenbildern. Diese Zusatzinformation kann für die Segmentierung verwendet werden und macht diese robuster, stabiler und genauer. Die Motivation dieser Arbeit basiert auf einer früheren Arbeit am IBIA, welche ein statistisches 3D Form- und Grauwertmodell („InShape“-Modell) des Femurs zur Segmentierung verwendet. Dies ermöglicht eine beobachterunabhängige Platzierung von relevanten Regionen für die Quantifizierung der lokalen Knochenqualität des proximalen Femurs mit statistischen und texturbasierten Methoden. Die Generierung von digital generierten Röntgenbildern (DRRs) ist ein wichtiger Schritt während der Registrierung, sehr rechenintensiv und typischerweise ein Engpass. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist die Steigerung der Performanz der DRR Generierung für die helligkeitsbasierte 3D zu 2D Registrierung.

Mehrere Volume-Rendering (VR) Algorithmen für die DRR Generierung (Ray-Casting, Splatting, Wobbled-Splatting, attenuation field, progressive attenuation field, Fourier VR, shear-warp, texture mapping und Monte Carlo VR) wurden verglichen und ihre Vor- und Nachteile zusammengefasst.

Der verwendete Softwareframework (ITK) bietet umfassende Funktionalitäten für die medizinische Bildverarbeitung und Registrierung. Momentan ist jedoch nur eine DRR Methode (ray casting) verfügbar, welche eine helligkeitsbasierte 3D zu 2D Registrierung ermöglicht. Zudem bestehen einige Probleme: Fehlende Klassenarchitektur für DRR Methoden, ungeeignete Basisklasse, verteilte Funktionalität über mehrere Klassen, fehlende Konfigurierbarkeit, Bi-Lineare Interpolation, nur rigide Transformationen werden unterstützt, Probleme bei der Konfiguration und alle Nachteile von Ray-Casting.

Um die Performanz der Registrierung zu steigern wurde die DRR Methode Wobbled-Splatting mit Fokus-Wobbling implementiert. Zur Behebung der existierenden Probleme und für die Implementierung von Wobbled-Splatting wurde eine neue einfach erweiterbare und flexible Klassenarchitektur für alle DRR Methoden erstellt. Ein Adapter (Wrapper) wurde implementiert um die DRR Methoden mit dem Registrierungsframework verwenden zu können. Die erstellten DRR Methoden unterstützen Multi-Threading, besitzen eine Einheitliche Konfiguration der Röntgengeometrie, unterstützen affine Transformationen, stellen eine Helligkeits-Transferfunktion zur Verfügung, unterstützen unterschiedliche Methoden für das Compositing und sind gut konfigurierbar.

Die Standardabweichung σ von Wobbled-Splatting hat einen starken Einfluss auf die Bildqualität. Ist σ zu klein treten Artefakte auf und ist σ zu groß ist das DRR unscharf. Deshalb wurde der minimale Wert für σ , bei welchem keine Artefakte auftreten (σ_{min}), für unterschiedliche Datensätze ermittelt. Für die Generierung von Referenzbildern zur Evaluierung wurde Ray-Casting implementiert. Es konnte bewiesen werden dass σ_{min} allein vom maximalen Spacing im Volumen, minimalen Spacing im DRR, dem Verhältnis von FOD und FFD und der verwendeten Splat-Assignment Methode (nearest, linear) abhängt, was auch theoretisch festgestellt wurde. Es wurde eine Formel für die Berechnung von σ_{min} definiert, welche σ_{min} mit einem mittleren Fehler von 0,325 bei einer generellen und mit 0,058 bei einer datensatzspezifischen Vorhersage berechnet.

Um die Performanz der implementierten DRR Methoden festzustellen wurden die Rechenzeiten evaluiert. Ray-Casting hat relativ lange Laufzeiten, da diese Methode nicht optimiert wurde, das Sampling und DRR Spacing das Abtasttheorem erfüllen und alle Berechnungen mit Genauigkeit `double` erfolgten, aber die generierten DRRs besitzen eine sehr hohe Qualität. Mit mehreren Threads können die Laufzeiten um durchschnittlich 38,94-74,6% gesenkt werden. Wobbled-Splatting mit Fokus-Wobbling benötigt durchschnittlich 2,10-6,47% der entsprechenden Ray-Casting Laufzeit. Mit mehreren Threads können die Laufzeiten um durchschnittlich 28,37-41,99% gesenkt werden, aber diese werden wieder länger wenn mehrere Threads verwendet werden als Prozessoren vorhanden sind. Die erzielten Rechenzeiten sind konkurrenzfähig zu anderen „state-of-the-art“ DRR Methoden und können durch Vorberechnung der zufälligen Fokusverschiebung, einer Reduktion der Genauigkeit auf `float` und Multi-Threading weiter verringert werden.

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