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Cluster Computing for Robotics and Computer Vision

Damian M. Lyons

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Dedication

To Jeanie Shippey Lyons
and Jeani Shannon Lyons

Preface

Robotic technology is expanding into many new fields including the military, professional service, home/consumer and educational fields. Keeping up with the computational demands of these new applications requires harnessing the latest computational technologies. Cluster computing is an approach to providing supercomputer performance from a collection of off-the-shelf computer systems. The popularization of multi-core processors means that even single computer systems can furnish several processor cores for a cluster.

The objective of this text is to give professionals and students working in the cluster computing field, or in the robotics and computer vision field, a concrete view of the strong synergy between these two areas. A second objective is to spur further fruitful exploitation of this connection.

The book is written at a level appropriate for an advanced undergraduate (or robot enthusiast) or graduate student. To make the text useful to a wide audience in these fields, the key concepts in robotics, computer vision, and cluster computing are introduced before being used.

I chose the algorithms and applications covered in the text because they were either easily accessible to a robotics person looking at cluster computing for the first time, or a cluster computing person looking at robotics for the first time. The first sections are necessarily therefore fairly simple robotics and cluster topics. However, the chapters build on each other and more complex robotics and cluster computing topics are covered in later chapters.

The reader will notice that each chapter ends with a bibliography section containing the references cited in that chapter. The reference numbers in the text refer to this section. I hope this system will offer the reader a convenience in locating references, though it is at the cost of some duplication of references. A merged bibliography is presented at the end of the text for completeness. The Appendices contain a summary of MPI related material from the text and from the MPI V2.2 specification.

It would be very difficult to provide a comprehensive list of robotics and computer vision algorithms and their cluster algorithm designs. My hope is that if a reader does not find the algorithm or analysis they need here, at least they find an entry point into the topic from which they can prototype their own solutions.

I have many to thank for their inspiration, insight and help in producing this text. I start by thanking Michael Arbib and Ken Overton for taking an engineering student with a distributed computing background into the Laboratory for Perceptual Robotics at UMass, kick-starting my interest in concurrency and robotics. I have been lucky to know and work with many brilliant and insightful professionals including Ron Arkin, Paul Benjamin, Tomas Brodsky, Eric Cohen-Solal, Teun Hendricks, MiSuen Lee, Yun-ting Lin, Tom Murphy, and many others. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Frank Hsu, who has been a mentor and friend in my years at Fordham University. Thanks are due to Stephen Fox, Gary Weiss and Arthur G. Werschulz for many comments on an early draft of the text. I also want to thank the many students who took my Parallel Computation course and my Robotics course at Fordham over the years and on which much of this material was dry-run including Sirhan Chaudhry, Sothearith Chanty, Jeremy Drysdale, Jose DeLeon, Giselle Isner, Andy Palumbo, Kiran Pamnany, and many others.

Finally, my family deserves all my thanks and more for graciously putting up with my many absences over the past few years while holed up in my office or lab assembling this text.

Damian M. Lyons
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Contents

Dedication	v
Preface	vi
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiii
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
1.1 Robots	2
1.2 Cluster Computing	4
1.3 Overview of the Book	6
Chapter 2	8
Clusters and Robots	8
2.1 Parallel Computation	9
2.1.1 Parallel Architectures	10
2.1.2 Multiprocessor	11
2.1.3 Multicomputer	12
2.2 Clusters	15
2.2.1 Terminology	16
2.2.2 Cluster Configuration	17
2.2.3 Programming the Cluster	18
2.2.4 Configuring the Cluster	19
2.2.5 Simple Cluster Configuration with OpenMPI	20
2.2.6 Connecting the Cluster to the Robot	21
2.3 Summary	24
2.4 References	25
Chapter 3	27
Cluster Programming	27
3.1 Approaches to Parallel Programming	28
3.2 Programming with MPI	32
3.2.1 Message-Passing	32
3.2.2 Single Program Multiple Data (SPMD) Model	34

3.2.3 Collective Communication.....	35
3.3 Compiling and Running MPI Programs	38
3.4 Analyzing Parallel Computation Time	39
3.4.1 Speedup and Amdhal's Law	41
3.4.2 Communication and Calculation	42
3.4.3 Communication Models	43
3.5 Summary	45
3.6 References	46
Chapter 4.....	48
Robot Motion.....	48
4.1 Motion of a Mobile Robot in Two Dimensions.....	50
4.2 Calculation of Location by Dead-Reckoning	51
4.2.1 Partitioning: Block Data Decomposition.....	53
4.2.2 Program Design.....	54
4.2.3 Analysis.....	59
4.3 Dead-Reckoning with Intermediate Results	60
4.3.1 Partitioning.....	61
4.3.2 Program Design.....	63
4.3.3 Analysis.....	64
4.4 Dead-Reckoning for a Team of Robots	66
4.4.1 Partitioning.....	67
4.4.2 Program Design.....	68
4.4.3 Analysis.....	69
4.4.4 Local and Global Buffers	71
4.5 Summary	72
4.6 References	73
Chapter 5.....	75
Sensors.....	75
5.1 Transforming Sensor Readings	76
5.1.1 Partitioning : Single Robot Location.....	80
5.1.2 Analysis.....	80
5.1.3 Partitioning: Multiple Robot Locations	82
5.1.4 Analysis.....	83
5.2 Drawing a Map from Sonar Data	85
5.2.1 Finding Straight Lines with the Hough Transform.....	86
5.2.2 Partitioning.....	87
5.2.3 Program Design.....	88
5.2.4 Analysis.....	90
5.2.5 Load Balanced Hough Calculation.....	91
5.2.6 Analysis.....	92
5.3 Aligning Laser Scan Measurements	93

5.3.1 Polar Scan Matching	95
5.3.2 Partitioning and Analysis	97
5.3.3 Program design	99
5.4 Summary	102
5.5 References	103
Chapter 6.....	105
Mapping and Localization.....	105
6.1 Constructing a Spatial Occupancy Map	107
6.1.1 Probabilistic Sonar Model	108
6.1.2 Bayesian filtering	109
6.1.3 Partitioning by Map.....	110
6.1.4 Program Design.....	113
6.1.5 Analysis.....	119
6.1.6 Partitioning by Sensor Readings	120
6.1.7 Program Design.....	121
6.1.8 Analysis.....	123
6.2 Monte-Carlo Localization	123
6.2.1 Partitioning.....	126
6.2.2 Program Design.....	126
6.2.3 Analysis.....	129
6.2.4 Improving the Serial Fraction	130
6.3 Summary	132
6.4 References	133
Chapter 7.....	135
Vision and Tracking.....	135
7.1 Following the Road	137
7.2 Iconic Image Processing.....	138
7.2.1 Partitioning.....	140
7.2.2 Program Design.....	140
7.2.3 Analysis.....	142
7.2.4 Spatial Pixel Operations	142
7.2.5 Partitioning.....	145
7.2.6 Program Design.....	145
7.3 Multiscale Image Processing	147
7.3.1 Partitioning.....	148
7.4 Video Tracking.....	150
7.4.1 Spatial Histograms	151
7.4.2 Condensation.....	154
7.4.3 Partitioning.....	155
7.4.4 Program Design.....	156
7.5 Summary	158

7.6 References	160
Chapter 8.....	162
Learning Landmarks	162
8.1 Landmark Spatiograms.....	164
8.2 K-Means Clustering	166
8.2.1 Partitioning.....	167
8.2.2 Program Design.....	168
8.2.3 Analysis.....	170
8.3 EM Clustering	171
8.3.1 Partitioning.....	172
8.3.2 Program Design.....	173
8.3.3 Analysis.....	174
8.4 Summary	175
8.5 References	176
Chapter 9.....	178
Robot Architectures	178
9.1 Behavior-Based Robotics	178
9.2 Static Behavior-Based Architecture	182
9.2.1 Partitioning.....	184
9.2.2 Program Design.....	185
9.2.3 Analysis.....	190
9.3 Dynamic Behavior-Based Architecture.....	192
9.3.1 Program Design.....	194
9.3.2 Analysis.....	198
9.4 Summary	198
9.5 References	200
Appendix I: Summary of OpenMPI Man page for mpirun.....	201
Appendix II: MPI Data Datatypes.....	206
Appendix III: MPI Reduction Operations	207
Appendix IV: MPI Application Programmer Interface	208
Bibliography	216
Index	223

List of Tables

Table 2-1: Hewlett-Packard ProCurve 2848 switch specifications.	15
Table 2-1: HP ProCurve 2924 switch specifications.	15
Table 7-1: Multiscale communication cost comparison	150
Table AII-1: Table of MPI and equivalent C datatypes from MPI Interface Standard Version 2.2, 2009.	206
Table AIII-1: Table of MPI reduction operations from MPI Interface Standard Version 2.2, 2009.	207

List of Figures

Figure 1-1: (a) Robonaut 2 (R2), reprinted with permission from NASA; (b) Humanoid robot HRP-4C, reprinted with permission from AIST, Japan.	1
Figure 1-2: Unimation® Puma® 560 industrial robot.	2
Figure 1-3: (a) iRobot® 510 PackBot® (reprinted by permission of iRobot); (b) da Vinci® Surgical System (reprinted by permission of Intuitive Surgical Inc).	3
Figure 1-4: 128-Processor Beowulf cluster built by Donald Becker while he was at NASA/GSFC (reprinted with permission Michigan Technological University).	4
Figure 2-1: Junior, the Stanford entry in the DARPA Urban Challenge (from [12]).	8
Figure 2-2: Generic symmetric multiprocessor architecture.	11
Figure 2-3: The seven-level OSI communication model.	14
Figure 2-4: Off-board cluster configuration.	22
Figure 2-5(a): Asymmetric on-board cluster configurations.	24
Figure 2-5(b): Symmetric on-board cluster configurations.	24
Figure 3-1: Two dexterous robotic hands: (a) The C6M Smart Motorized Hand from the Shadow Robot Company; and, (b) The RAPHaEL (Robotic-Air Powered Hand with Elastic Ligaments) from the Robotics and Mechanisms Lab at Virginia Institute of Technology (reprinted with permission, Dr. Dennis Hong, Director of RoMeLa, Virginia Tech).	27
Figure 3-2: Overlaid Time Lapse photos of Reaching and Grasping a Ball (Jeannerod et al [8]).	28
Figure 3-3: Synchronous send/receive for object grasping.	33
Figure 3-4: Implementation of a collective communication operation using a logarithmic time method.	37
Figure 3-5: Comparison of estimated versus actual scatter operation times. ($n = 1200*4*8$, $\lambda = 3 \mu s$, $\beta = 1 Gbps$).	44
Figure 3-6: Comparison of estimated versus actual reduce and broadcast operation times. ($n = 1200*4*8$, $\lambda = 3 \mu s$, $\beta = 1 Gbps$)	45
Figure 4-1: Pioneer 3-DX (left), Pioneer 3-AT (center), Sony AIBO (right).	49
Figure 4-2: Robot location and orientation in global coordinate frame.	51
Figure 4-3: Quinn's block allocation macros [8].	54
Figure 4-4: Sketch of dead-reckoning MPI code.	54

Figure 4-5: Scattering of one array.	56
Figure 4-6: Robot moving in a circle of 36 steps; four 0-based calculations of 9 steps in order anticlockwise (left); adding the end point of the previous 9 step sequence to each of the points in the next 9 step sequence reproduces the original circle (right).	57
Figure 4-7: MPI Program for cluster calculation of final robot location	59
Figure 4-8: Design of intermediate result arrays to facilitate reduction, for the case $n/p = 3$, and only showing the first three processors and the reduced array.	62
<p>Figure 4-9(a): Graph of estimated total execution times for parallel final position, serial final position, and parallel intermediate position for 1 to 16 processors ($n = 12000$, $a = b = 7$ ns, $\lambda = 3$ μs, $\beta = 1$ Gbps).</p>	
Figure 4-9(b): Graph of execution times on HPC cluster for parallel final position only.	65
Figure 4-9(c): Graph of execution times on HPC cluster for parallel intermediate position.....	66
Figure 4-10: Graph of execution time versus number of processors for distribution by row and distribution by column ($m = 100$, $n = 400$, $a = b = 7$ ns, $\lambda = 3$ μ s, $\beta = 1$ Gbps).	70
Figure 5-1: Pioneer 3-AT (a), Sonar configuration on 3-AT (b) [5], Local coordinate system (c).	77
Figure 5-2: Translating sensor returns from local to global coordinates.	78
Figure 5-3: Parallel and serial sensor coordinate translation algorithm performance (time vs. number of processors) with one robot and one location showing serial versus parallel column decomposition times for different n ($\lambda = 3$ μ s, $\beta = 100$ Mbps, $a = b = 7.3$ ns).	82
Figure 5-4: (a) Parallel and serial performance (time vs. num processors) with multiple robots and locations, and (b) Speedup and (c) Karp-Flatt metric ($n = 200$, $m = 100$, $r = 20$, $\lambda = 3$ μ s, $\beta = 1$ Gbps, $a = b = 7.3$ ns).	84
Figure 5-5: Sonar data ($n = 16$) from an $m = 12$ location trip by one robot ($r = 1$). Left shows the data in local coordinates and right in global coordinates.	85
Figure 5-6: Body of Parallel Hough Transform	88
Figure 5-7: Top 30 Hough lines for the dataset in Figure 5-5.	89
Figure 5-8: Example Hough space data partitioning for 5 processors.	91
Figure 5-9: Graph of serial versus unbalanced and balanced Hough times. ($n = 1000$, $\chi = 350$ ns, $n_p = n_\alpha = 100$, $\lambda = 3$ μ s, $\beta = 1$ Gbps, $a = b = 7.3$ ns).	93
Figure 5-10: (a) Pioneer 3-AT robot with SICK LMS 200 laser rangefinder; (b) laser rangefinder data	94
Figure 5-11: (a) Closeup of Fig. 5-10(b) showing misregistration; and (b) after Polar-Scan Matching.	95
Figure 6-1: Occupancy grid representation of space.	107

Figure 6-2: Probabilistic sonar model superimposed on occupancy grid (a); Combined region R1 & R2 sonar probability model (b) (Moravec & Elfes [8]).	109
Figure 6-3: Partition of occupancy grid by strips (a) versus checker-board (b).	111
Figure 6-4: Occupancy grid update.	117
Figure 6-5: Gathering occupancy grid on root processor.	119
Figure 6-6: Stages in Monte Carlo Localization (from [4]).	125
Figure 6-7: Parallel Monte-Carlo Localization ($\lambda=3 \mu s$, $\beta=100 Mbps$, $n_s=180$, $\chi=7.3 \mu s$) (a) Graph of Speedup and (b) Graph of Karp-Flatt metric versus number of processors.	130
Figure 6-8: Parallel Monte-Carlo Localization with improved serial fraction ($\lambda=3 \mu s$, $\beta=100 Mbps$, $n_s=180$, $\chi=7.3 \mu s$) (a) Graph of theoretical Speedup and (b) Graph of theoretical Karp-Flatt metric versus number of processors.	132
Figure 6-9: Comparison of original parallel Monte-Carlo Localization algorithm with improved serial fraction algorithm; (a) Graph of Speedups for $m=10000$ and (a) for $m=100$ versus number of processors, measured on a cluster on an HPC cluster of quad-core dual processor Intel® Xeon® processors.	132
Figure 7-1: Pin-hole camera (a) and mathematical model (b).	135
Figure 7-2: Close up (a) of a section of a digital image (b).	137
Figure 7-3: Robot lane following (a) lane closeup (b) and thresholded Cb component of closeup (c).	138
Figure 7-4: Timing graph for parallel pixel-based operations for 640×480 image ($\lambda=3 \mu s$, $\beta=1 Gbps$, $\chi=730 ns$).	142
Figure 7-5: Original image (a); smoothed (b); edges (c).	143
Figure 7-6: 3×3 Image convolution example.	144
Figure 7-7: Original thresholded image (a) and smoothed image (b).	144
Figure 7-8: Multiscale edge operations on the scene in Fig. 7-3(a).	147
Figure 7-9: Histogram (a) of gray-level image (b).	153
Figure 7-10: Comparison of Condensation partitioning approaches.	155
Figure 8-1: Scene with landmarks (a) for topological map (b).	162
Figure 8-2: Landmark images (a), histograms (b), spatial means (c).	165
Figure 8-3: Landmark image (a), histogram (b), spatial means (c).	166
Figure 9-1: Vertical (deliberative) (a) versus Horizontal (reactive) (b) layered approaches.	179
Figure 9-2: Reaching and grasping schema assemblage, after [2].	181
Figure 9-3: Static behavior-based architecture for foraging.	182
Figure 9-4: Dynamic behavior-based architecture for foraging.	194





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Index

- Accelerometer, 75
- Adept Mobilerobots, 49
- AIBO®, 49
- ALOHAnet, 13
- Amdahl
 - Effect, 42
 - Law, 41
- Analysis of algorithms, 40, 48
- Arbitration, 181
- Arbitrator, 189, 190, 191
- Asynchronous send, 34
- Backlash, 124
- Balanced work load, 53, 92
- Bandwidth, 43, 80, 83
- Bayes
 - Rule, 110
 - Update, 117
- Bearing, 78
- Behavior-based systems, 178, 193
- Behaviors, 181
- Beobot, 23
- Beowulf, 4
- BLOCK_HIGH, 54, 88
- BLOCK_LOW, 54, 88
- BLOCK_OWNER, 54
- BLOCK_SIZE, 54, 102
- Blurring, 142
- Broadcast, 36, 45, 55, 80, 88, 127, 156
- Bug algorithms, 105
- C/C++, 27, 31
- Cartesian coordinate system, 50, 77, 86
- Cartesian grid of processors, 113
- C\C++, 38
- CCIR-601, 139
- Ceiling, 53
- Central Processing Unit (CPU), 5
- Checker-board, 111, 112, 115
- Cluster, 15, 19, 52
 - Asymmetrical, 18, 24
 - Beowulf, 4, 16
 - Cluster of Workstations, 16
 - Commodity, 16
 - Compute Farms, 17
 - Computing, 4
 - High availability, 17
 - High throughput, 17
 - Master node, 20
 - Monte-Carlo algorithms, 126
 - Slave node, 20
 - Symmetrical, 18, 24
- Cluster computing, 4
- Cluster configuration, 17
 - OpenMPI, 20
 - OSCAR, 19
 - Parallel Virtual Machine, 18
 - Rocks, 19
 - The Message Passing Interface, 19
- Clustering, 168
- Collective communication, 36, 37, 43, 55
 - Broadcast, 36, 55, 80, 88, 127, 155, 156

- Gather, 36, 44, 68, 69, 71, 81, 83, 88, 112, 113, 118, 119, 120, 123, 141, 142, 145
- Reduce, 37, 57, 58, 61, 89, 98, 122
- Scatter, 36, 37, 44, 68, 69, 70, 81, 83, 88, 99, 100, 103, 112, 122, 123, 127, 129, 140, 141, 142, 145, 149, 155, 156, 159
- Color
 - Channels, 153
 - RGB, 137
 - Space, 136
 - Transformations, 139
 - YCrCb, 139
- Communication network
 - bandwidth, 43
 - Bandwidth, 80, 83
 - Latency, 43
 - Switch, 43
- Communicator, 38, 114, 118, 184, 196
- Compass, 75
- Computational complexity, 40
- Computer vision, 136, 137
- Condensation, 151, 154
- Connection Machine, 11
- Connection network, 12
 - Cartesian grid processor topology, 114
 - Cross-bar switch, 13
 - Hub, 14
 - Latency*, 14
 - Router, 14
 - Shared network, 12
 - Switch, 14
 - Switched network, 13
 - WiFi, 22
- Convolution, 143, 146
 - Kernel, 143
- COTS, 4, 23
- DARPA Urban Challenge, 8
- Data association, 150
- Deadlock, 116
- Dead-reckoning, 51, 55, 59, 61, 63, 66, 67, 94, 123
- Deliberative, 180
- Dexterous hand, 9, 28, 181
- Dynamic occupancy maps, 133
- Dynamic process creation, 194
- Dynamic process networks, 193
- Emergent behavior, 192
- Expectation-Maximization (EM), 164, 171
- Fine grain parallel, 138
- Finite state machines, 180
- Floor, 53
- Flynn's Taxonomy, 10, 16
- Foraging behavior, 182
- Force Field Simulation, 103
- Fusion of occupancy maps, 121
- Gather, 36, 44, 69, 81, 141
 - Two stage, 119
- Google™, 106
- Graphical Processing Unit (GPU), 5
- Grid of processors, 113
- Head node, 21
- Hewlett-Packard ProCurve, 15, 43, 66
- Histogram, 151
 - Bins, 152
 - Spatioqram, 152, 164
- Homogeneous coordinates, 79
- Hough transform, 86, 146
- Hub, 14
- Hysteresis, 191
- Image plane, 136
- Image processing, 86
 - Iconic, 138
 - Sharpening, 143
 - Smoothing, 142
 - Spatial, 143
 - Thresholding, 139
- Inclinometer, 75
- Initial cluster center locations, 167
- Intel® Xeon®, 12, 66
- Iterative Closest Point, 94

- Joint Probability Data Association
 - Filter, 151
- JPDAF, 151
- Junior, 8, 22
- Karp-Flatt metric, 43, 84
- Khepera, 50
- K-Means, 164, 166, 167, 170, 171
- Landmark, 22, 40
- Laser, 76, 79, 93, 127
 - Angular resolution, 94
 - Range, 93
 - Scan matching, 94
- Latency*, 14, 43
- Learning landmarks, 163
- LIDAR, 93
- LinuxPMI, 20
- Localization, 60, 61, 76, 105, 124
 - Monte Carlo, 124
 - Motion model, 124
 - Perceptual model, 125
- Machine learning, 164
- Manager/worker paradigm, 35
- Map, 85, 105, 120
 - Bayesian, 110
 - Fusion, 121
 - Landmarks, 164
 - Metric, 105
 - Occupancy grid, 106, 162
 - Occupancy map, 106
 - Place signature, 163
 - Topological, 106, 163
- Mapping, 22, 60, 105
- Master node, 20
- Maximum likelihood, 171
- MCL, 154
- Message passing interface, 27
- Metric map, 105, 163
- MHT, 151
- MIMD, 201
- Motion model, 124, 126, 154
- Motion planning, 162
- Motion propagation, 126, 127
- Motor Schemas, 182
- MPI, 19, 27, 31, 32, 37, 38, 52, 54, 126
 - API functions, 207
 - Collective communication, 36
 - Datatypes, 205
 - Hostfile, 202
 - OpenMPI, 32, 201
 - Process binding, 203
 - Processor slots, 201
 - Reduction operations, 206
- MPI_Allreduce, 173, 208
- MPI_Bcast, 88, 208
- MPI_Cart_create, 114, 209
- MPI_Comm_rank, 38, 209
- MPI_Comm_size, 38, 209
- MPI_Comm_spawn, 194, 209
- MPI_Comm_split, 118, 210
- MPI_COMM_WORLD, 55, 184, 185
- MPI_Datatype, 56
- MPI_Dims_create, 113, 210
- MPI_Finalize, 39, 210
- MPI_Gather, 69, 211
- MPI_Init, 38, 211
- MPI_Iprobe, 189, 211
- MPI_Recv, 116, 212
- MPI_Reduce, 57, 212
- MPI_Scatter, 55, 212
- MPI_Scatterv, 100, 213
- MPI_Send, 115, 213
- Mpicc, 39
- Mpirun, 39, 201
- MPMD, 35, 184
- Multicomputer system, 12
- Multicore, 12, 21, 138
- Multiple Hypothesis Tracking, 151
- Multiple Instruction, Multiple Data, 10
- Multiple Instruction, Single Data, 10
- Multiple Program Multiple Data, 35, 184
- Multiple robot landmark identification, 40
- Multiprocessor system, 11

- Multiscale image processing, 147
- Navlab, 22
- Nearest Neighbor data association, 151
- Netgear GS608, 43
- NFS, 20, 21
- Nonholonomic motion, 50
- Observation model, 154
- Occupancy grid, 106, 107, 111
- Occupancy map, 106
 - Fusion, 121
- Odometer, 75
- Odometry, 94
- Onboard cluster, 138
- Open MPI, 201
- Open Systems Interconnect (OSI) model, 13
- OpenMP, 19, 31
- OpenMPI, 20
- OpenSSH, 21
- OSCAR, 19
- Oversubscription, 15
- Parallel architecture, 10, 25
 - Cartesian grid processor topology, 114
 - Connection Machine, 11
 - Multicomputer system, 12
 - Multicore, 12
 - Multiple Instruction, Multiple Data, 10
 - Multiple Instruction, Single Data, 10
 - Multiprocessor system, 11
 - Single Instruction, Multiple Data, 10
 - Single Instruction, Single Data, 10
 - Symmetric multiprocessor, 11
- Parallel computing, 9, 10, 52
- Parallel performance
 - Amdahl's Law, 41
 - Balanced work load, 92
 - Collective communications, 43
 - Execution time, 42
 - Hockney model, 43
 - Karp-Flatt metric, 43, 84
 - Parallel calculation time, 64, 70, 80, 83, 98, 119, 123, 129, 148, 174
 - Parallel communication time, 60, 64, 80, 83, 90, 93, 120, 123, 129, 142, 149, 155, 170
 - Parallel execution time, 60, 64, 70, 81, 83, 90, 120, 123, 129, 142, 170, 190
 - Speedup, 29, 41
- Parallel programs, 30
 - Explicit, 30
 - Implicit, 30
 - Manager/worker, 35
 - Message passing, 31, 32
 - Shared-memory, 31
 - Speedup, 29, 41
- Parallel sorting, 90, 130
- Parallel Virtual Machine, 18, 31
- Partition, 184
 - Balanced work load, 53
 - Block data decomposition, 53
 - By column, 67, 70, 81
 - By row, 68, 70, 140
 - Checker-board, 111, 112, 115
 - Unbalanced work load, 53
- Partitioning, 35, 48, 52, 61, 67, 80, 82, 83, 87, 98, 110, 126, 140, 145, 155, 172, 184
- Perceptual model, 125, 126
- Perspective projection, 136, 146
- Pin-hole camera model, 136
- Pioneer 3-AT, 49, 50, 51, 76, 85, 107, 108, 124, 138
- Pioneer 3-AT Sonar, 77
- Pioneer 3-DX, 49
- Pixel, 136, 147, 152
- Pixel-based operations, 142
- Point to point, 115, 116, 185
- Polar scan matching, 94
- Port automaton, 181, 184
- Potential field navigation, 183
- Predator, 2

- Priority arbitration, 189
- Probability of occupancy, 107
- Process algebra, 193
- ProCurve, 66
- ProCurve 2848, 15
- ProCurve 2900, 43
- ProCurve 2924, 15
- Puma® 560, 2
- QsNet(II) Elan, 43
- Range readings, 77
- Rank, 33, 39, 54, 114, 115, 185, 194
- Ray tracing, 128
- Receive, 116
- Reduce, 37, 45, 57
- Reduction operation, 57
- Rendezvous, 33
- Resampling, 125, 128, 157
- Robot, 1
 - Actuators, 9
 - Architecture, 9, 178
 - Autonomous, 3
 - Behavior-based, 9, 178
 - Dexterous hand, 9, 28, 181
 - End-effector, 9
 - Humanoid, 1
 - Laser, 93
 - Localization, 61, 85, 105
 - Locomotion, 48, 75
 - Map, 85
 - Mapping, 9, 105
 - Mobile robots, 48, 75
 - Odometry, 76, 94
 - Pose, 51
 - Principal axis, 51
 - Programming, 178
 - Robot platforms, 48
 - Sensors, 9, 75
 - Sonar, 76, 85
 - Stationary robots, 48
 - Team, 66, 82, 83, 110, 119, 150
 - Visual sensor, 135
 - Workspace, 48
- Robot architecture, 178
- robot platforms, 48
- Robot Team, 110
- Rocks, 19
- Root processor, 56, 63, 71, 89, 115, 128
- Router, 14, 17
- Row-major order, 68
- RSH/RLOGIN, 18
- Salient objects, 148
- Scale, 147
- Scan matching problem, 96
- Scan projection, 96
- Scatter, 36, 44, 55, 68, 81, 99, 122, 127, 140, 156, 168
 - Overlapped blocks, 99, 145
- Schema, 180
 - Assemblage, 181, 183
 - Motor schema, 181
 - Perceptual schema, 180, 193
- Schema Theory, 180
- Seekur, 50
- Segway-Soccer Brain-Based, 23
- Send, 115
 - Asynchronous, 34
 - Synchronous, 33
- SensComp 600™, 108
- Sensors, 75
 - Accelerometer, 75
 - Compass, 75
 - Exterioceptors, 75
 - Inclinometer, 75
 - Laser, 93, 95
 - Odometer, 75
 - Proprioceptors, 75
 - Sonar, 76, 85, 86
 - Vision, 135
- Serial fraction, 41, 129
- Shakey, 179
- Sharpening, 143
- SICK LMS 200, 93, 95
- SIFT features, 147

- Single Instruction, Multiple Data, 10
- Single Instruction, Single Data, 10
- Single Program Multiple Data, 34, 184
- Skid steering, 124
- Slave node, 20
- Smoothing, 142
- SMP, 11, 16
- Sonar, 76, 85, 86, 108, 112, 113, 127, 182, 192, 195
 - Bearing, 78, 111
 - Probabilistic model, 108, 111, 117
 - Range, 77, 78, 111, 185
 - Range readings, 77
 - Sonar beam, 108
- Sonar beam, 108
- Sonar probabilistic model, 111
- Sorting, 130
- Spatial histogram, 152, 164
- Spatial mean, 152
- Spatial occupancy grid, 106
- Spatial occupancy map, 106
- Spatioqram, 157, 165, 167
- Spatioqrams, 152
 - Cluster spatioqrams, 168
 - Image spatioqrams, 168
 - Similarity, 165
 - Spatial histogram, 164
- Speedup, 29, 41, 85, 129, 130, 131, 170
- SPMD, 34, 178, 184, 201
- Stereocamera, 164
- STRIPS, 179
- Subsume, 180
- Subsumption, 181
- Switch, 14, 15, 17, 43
- Symmetric multiprocessor, 11
- Synchronous send, 33
- Target spatioqram, 157
- The Message Passing Interface, 19
- Thresholding, 139
- Topological map, 106, 162, 163
- Tracking, 150
- Transformation matrix, 79, 82
- Two stage gathering, 119
- Ultrasound, 76
- Unimation®, 2
- Unsupervised learning, 164
- Vector summation, 183, 188, 198
- Vision, 76, 135
 - Color space, 136
 - Image processing, 138
 - Perspective projection, 136
 - Pin-hole camera model, 136
 - Pixel, 136
 - Tracking, 150
- Visual landmarks, 163
- Visual similarity, 164