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Introduction

This is our 12th consecutive successful offering in the ongoing series on multisensor, multisource information fusion. We are glad to mark another milestone, namely we have so far published in these proceedings over 400 papers. As we have noted in prior editorials, we have modified the title over the years to reflect the broadening of the scope of the conference to include fusion of information not only from multiple traditional sensors but also from other nontraditional data sources. The expanded scope also includes fusion of information derived through multiple information extraction algorithmic processes. As the title indicates these proceedings are spread across the three key facets of developments in the field, namely, architectures, algorithms, and applications. In order to better reflect the ground truth, the sessions and their titles are redefined each year to represent the changing contents driven by the evolving research and development in the community. This year, the presentations have been grouped into the following five sessions:

- Image Level Issues and Applications
- Detection and Classification
- Surveillance and Tracking
- Applications
- Miscellaneous Topics

An innovation this year is a panel session on "Performance Evaluation for Impact Assessment Systems." A written report on the panel session will be published in due course either in the next year's issue of the conference proceedings or elsewhere as convenient.

In accordance with the traditions followed over the years at this conference, and in contrast to the general policy of post-conference publication of the proceedings at most SPIE conferences, we have worked hard to once again provide the printed proceedings on-site at the conference. This has not only served the purpose of rapid dissemination in print form of the most recent developments in this area but also helped in better understanding of the oral presentations. Incidentally, it also complements the prime archival journal in this field, *Information Fusion*, which because of its dependence on formal and rigorous peer reviews is a more drawn-out process along the timeline. Another benefit, of this procedure of making the proceedings available on-site at the time of the conference, is that it enables better quality control over the presentations by limiting the program to those that have the full manuscript ready and thereby ensuring a more mature presentation. Indeed this process resulted in a significant culling of the initial submissions. While this decrease represents the downside of the process, we remain confident of its upside, namely, better quality control.

The international character of this conference is once again reflected, not only in the program committee, but also in the contents of the proceedings, which includes 26 papers from 10 countries (representing a significant doubling in the spread as compared to last year) spread over multiple continents: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, South Korea, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and, obviously, the United States. We plan to continue this series in the coming year and look forward to your participation, hopefully in greater numbers and depending upon the state of global politics and economy from a wider geographical background and at a higher level. Further details regarding the call for papers and schedule for next year will be made available in due course on the Internet at SPIE (www.spie.org) as well as on my home page (<http://belur.no-ip.com>).

In accordance with our long held tradition, the variation in the size of these proceedings in terms of the number of papers offered under this series over the years is graphically illustrated below in Figure 1 to provide us with an introspective look at our performance over the years. While the presentations this year is on par with last year, the number of presentations is still down from our peaks attained earlier in the decade. Possible reasons for this include:

(a) multiplicity of conferences catering to the fusion topic across the globe, a distinct change from the scenario of uniqueness we had when this event was initiated 12 years back,

(b) perhaps a more significant one is the increasing overlap in terms of the scope with other conferences here itself at this Defense and Security Symposium at Orlando that do not impose our stringent requirement of full manuscripts well before the conference time. (It is far easier to put together an abstract than to complete writing a full manuscript).

(c) a third cause, we suspect, is international travel related hardships including meeting stringent visa requirements, economic and geopolitical realities, all of which continue to have a chilling impact on attendance in US.

It is therefore critical that all of us who are interested in the continued success of this annual event to maximize our efforts for next year to ensure continued viability of the conference in the future. Towards this end, we welcome from the conference participants and the readership of this proceedings on ways to rejuvenate the growth of this conference and broaden its appeal in the coming years. Those interested in active participation, perhaps in terms of joining the program committee and/or develop special sessions for the next year should contact me at fusion_consultant@yahoo.com as soon as possible (preferably by March 31, 2008).

In closing, I am pleased to acknowledge the authors for choosing this avenue for publication of their contributions. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of my program committee and the session chairs for their continued support. Thanks are also due to SPIE staff for their invaluable help in making this all possible.

कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा
बुध्यात्मनावा प्रकृते स्वभावात्
करोमि यद्यत् सकलं परस्मै
श्रीमन्नारायणायेति समर्पयामि

"kaayena vaachaa manasendriyaiirvaa
budhyaatmanaavaa prakR^ite svabhaavaat
karomi yadyat sakalam parasmai
shriiman naaraayaNaayeti samarpayaami"

*Be it with my body, or with my mind
With words, or organs of any kind,
With my intellect, or with my soul,
Or by force of Nature pushing me to my goal,
Whatever it is, with all these I do,
Oh! Supreme Lord! I surrender to you.*

Wishing all of you a safe return journey

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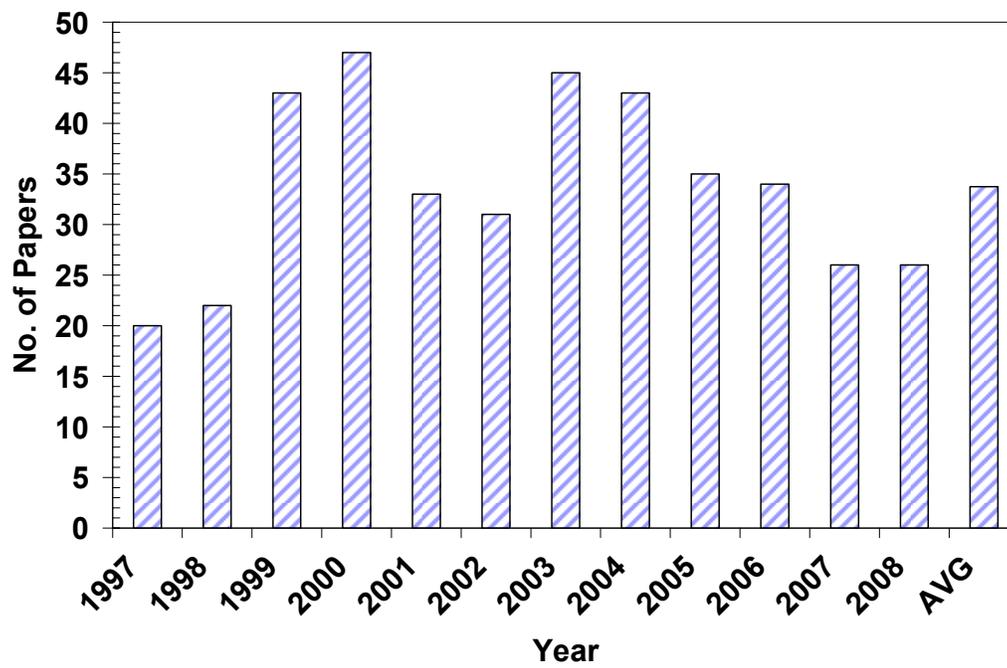


Figure 1. Number of papers published over the years in this series