Name: Chih Hsuan Huang

ID:934554197

Email: huanchih@oregonstate.edu

Paper Analysis Project: Animating Human Dressing

Chih-Hsuan Huang

Oregon State University

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Mike Bailey

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The theme of this article is animating human dressing. Although dressing seems like a simple daily activity, it actually requires three to four years of practice to perfect. Dressing involves coordinating different body parts and manipulating soft and deformable objects. As the title "Animating Human Dressing" suggests, the authors have designed a system that allows animators to create motions for characters putting on clothes. This system must consider the physical properties of clothing, including its deformation, collision, and complex dynamic interactions with the human body. The system not only needs to generate physically plausible motion trajectories but also needs to be flexible enough to support different dressing styles and types of clothing, such as jackets, shorts, vests, and robes.

The purpose of this research is to address the lack of systematic methods for simulating the realistic process of human dressing in current animation production. While dressing scenes are common in movies and TV shows, they are rarely realistically presented in computer animation and games. This is mainly because dressing involves high-level interactions between rigid bodies and flexible objects (clothes), which often require detailed physical simulation and path planning techniques. The authors hope that this system will not only provide a powerful tool for animation production but also promote applications in virtual reality, game design, and intelligent assistive dressing.

The paper was co-authored by Alexander Clegg, Jie Tan, Greg Turk, and C. Karen Liu from the Georgia Institute of Technology. According to their LinkedIn profiles, Alexander Clegg and Jie Tan are currently professors at the Georgia Institute of Technology, specializing in computer graphics and robotics. C. Karen Liu, on the other hand, is a professor in the Computer Science Department at Stanford University, focusing on the intersection of computer animation, machine learning, and robotics. Additionally, Greg Turk, one of the co-authors of this paper, is also renowned as one of the developers of the famous Stanford Bunny, a classic 3D model widely used in computer graphics research and a significant contribution to the field.

The system designed by the authors consists of three main components: a primitive action editor, a dressing controller, and a cloth simulator. The system is implemented in C++ and uses DART and ARCSim for character and cloth simulation. The primitive action editor is responsible for defining a set of basic actions, such as aligning hands or feet with clothing openings, pulling the garment to cover body parts, and stretching limbs to adjust the garment's position. Reference motions can be captured motion sequences or sparse sets of keyframes.

These basic actions are the building blocks of dressing behavior, and animators can generate complete dressing sequences by arranging these actions. The dressing controller uses path planning and optimization algorithms to guide the character's body parts to complete the actions and make real-time adjustments based on the current state of the cloth. Finally, the cloth simulator uses the open-source tool ARCSim to perform high-precision physical simulations of the cloth's dynamic behavior, including deformation, self-collision, and interaction with the character.

First, the authors defined features for each garment, such as key parts of the cloth like cuffs and collars, which serve as target points for the character's end effectors to align with. These features help the system accurately position the character's limbs and the contact points of the clothing during the dressing process. ARCSim handles the physical deformation, self-collision, and interaction of the cloth with the character, simulating stretching or folding based on linear stretching and bending models derived from actual measurements. The cloth simulator uses a Bounding Volume Hierarchy (BVH) to detect collisions between the cloth and the character, a data structure commonly used in computer graphics and physical simulations to accelerate collision detection and interaction calculations. Collisions are resolved through non-rigid impact zones, helping to prevent the cloth from passing through the character's body and ensuring a natural dressing effect. When dealing with complex garments (such as jackets or multi-layered clothing), the system can also adapt to interactions between different layers of cloth, ensuring that the inner and outer layers of the cloth overlap and interact correctly, presenting a realistic dressing process.

Alignment is the first step in the dressing process, aiming to accurately align the character's limb end with the key features of the clothing so that the character can smoothly insert the limb into the garment. During alignment, the character's end effector needs to precisely align with the target feature of the clothing, often involving overcoming folds or deformations of the cloth. Since the cloth may hide or obscure the target position, the system needs to calculate the shortest geodesic distance on the cloth surface, select an appropriate target point, and guide the character's limb towards that target. To address the dynamic deformation and invisibility of the cloth target, the system selects visible and closest intermediate target points based on the current state of the cloth and guides the character's end effector to gradually reach the target. Additionally, the system makes real-time adjustments based on the deformation of the cloth to ensure that the end effector does not deviate from the intended path during the alignment process, maintaining the precision of the alignment action. The system also uses Inverse Kinematics (IK) optimization to ensure that the limb movements during the dressing process are physically plausible and dynamically interact with the cloth. First, the IK optimization formula calculates the character's posture, ensuring that the end effector accurately reaches the target position while avoiding collisions between body parts. Second, the formula introduces direction alignment and stretching targets, ensuring that the direction of the character's limb movement aligns with the target direction of the cloth feature, reducing unnecessary collisions. To achieve smooth and realistic motion, the formula includes speed limits to prevent unnatural behavior caused by excessive movement speed. These formulas collectively form the action planning and optimization framework of the system, enabling the character to complete various dressing actions in complex cloth interactions.

Traversal is a crucial part of the dressing process, referring to the movement of the character's limb (such as a hand or foot) through the opening of the garment (such as a sleeve or pant leg) into the interior of the clothing. As the character's limb passes through the garment, the cloth may stretch, compress, or fold due to force, causing dynamic changes in its shape and position. The character's limb needs to avoid collisions with the interior of the cloth or other body parts, especially when traversing narrow spaces (such as sleeves or pant legs). Traversal requires ensuring that the character's limb moves along the correct path and ultimately reaches the target area of the garment. First, Inverse Kinematics (IK) and Rapidly-exploring Random Trees (RRT) are used to generate collision-free motion paths, guiding the character's limb along the correct trajectory. Then, by monitoring the dynamic state of the cloth in real-time, the system adjusts the actions to accommodate the stretching or folding changes of the cloth. At the same time, by aligning predefined target areas and intermediate target points, the system ensures that the limb smoothly passes through narrow spaces and reaches the designated position of the garment, ultimately completing a natural and smooth dressing process.

In summary, the system successfully simulates the process of dressing various types of garments, including jacket sleeves, pant legs, and robe sections, providing animators with a highly flexible tool for controlling dressing motions. By offering reference motions and action sequences, animators can precisely manage the methods and styles characters use to wear clothing. The system demonstrates its capability in creating diverse dressing animations, such as putting on jackets, vests, pants while sitting, pants while standing, and assisting in donning robes. At the core of the system is a path-planning mechanism that employs visibility feedback to align end effectors with fabric features while ensuring collision-free limb motion to prevent self-intersections.

I discovered that the material of the fabric is not just about texture, but also includes physical properties like weight and wrinkles. These factors are crucial for simulating the realistic movement of fabric. The weight of the fabric affects its drape and sway, while wrinkles influence how the fabric deforms and folds during the dressing process. These details make the simulated fabric look more realistic and allow it to interact better with the character.Additionally, the elasticity and friction of the fabric are also key factors. Elasticity determines how the fabric reacts to stretching and compression, while friction affects the interaction between the fabric and the character's skin or other garments. These physical properties enable the simulated fabric to more accurately reflect real-world behavior, thereby enhancing the realism and visual appeal of the animation.

The system described in this paper does not account for certain real-world scenarios, such as clothing with holes or clothing that has been soaked with water. These conditions significantly affect the physical properties of the fabric and the dressing process.Clothing with holes behaves differently during the dressing process because the holes alter the fabric's structure and stress distribution. Simulating clothing with holes requires considering the deformation and tearing behavior around the holes, which may necessitate more precise fabric simulation techniques and more complex physical models.Soaked clothing becomes heavier, softer, and may stick to the skin, affecting both the dressing motions and the fabric's behavior. Simulating soaked clothing requires accounting for the fabric's absorbency, weight changes, and the dynamic behavior of wet fabric, all of which add to the complexity of the simulation.

If I were a researcher, my next step would be to study the simulation of dressing for non-human creatures. This would involve exploring the anatomical structures and movement patterns of different animals and designing dressing systems that accommodate these characteristics. For example, I would investigate how to design dressing simulations for quadrupeds (such as dogs or cats), taking into account their limb movements and body shapes. Additionally, I would explore designing dressing systems for birds or reptiles, as their unique movement patterns and body structures would present new possibilities.