

Screenful gesture library

Overview

Screenful gesture library utilizes **OpenNI 2.2** and **NiTE 2.2** middleware to implement prototype software for sending user interface commands to a browser running the Screenful dashboard software. This allows users to interact with the screen without external input devices. The gestures are detected by server software running on a computer with a depth sensor connected.

A browser can initiate a WebSocket connection to the gesture server, handle the available events as they are received from the server and carry out the UI commands in Javascript. The server uses **Java-WebSocket**¹ and operates stand-alone without additional web server software. The client code in the browser is decorated with **ReconnectingWebSocket**² to enable reconnecting after disconnects.

The gesture server has been developed for **Asus Xtion Pro**³. The server is run via **Java Service Wrapper**⁴, which takes care of restarts on crashes, logging and integration into system services. Configuration of parameters and library paths is done via **server.conf** and **libpaths.conf**.

Since the server operates over a WebSocket, it can control multiple browsers running anywhere on the network. There is also no practical limitation on the number of hands tracked simultaneously as long as they fit in the field of view of the sensor.

The messages sent over the WebSocket are simple strings, like "left", "right", "out", "user-exit". The server program is accompanied by a configuration file that allows setting which directional gestures are recognized and sent and which are used to stop interaction. The server also sends events when hand tracking starts and stops. These messages should be handled by Javascript code in the browser.

For hand tracking to work optimally, the sensor should face the user from about two meters away without too much tilt. The user should have the hand upright with the palm facing the sensor and fingers together during interaction.

Server appliance hardware

The complete prototype system consists of:

- Intel NUC DN2820FYKH
 - 4 GB of RAM
 - 60 GB SSD
- Asus Xtion Pro sensor
- A customized, clonable "kiosk" type **Ubuntu Server 14.04 LTS** configuration that starts the Chromium browser with a certain application URL to pass the gestures to.

WebSocket events

Events are configured in **server.conf**. The user can set the directions that should be used for sending directional events, the directions that are used for exiting interaction and the gestures ("wave" or "click") to be used for starting hand tracking.

The server only sends data and does not respond to messages sent to it. It would be useful if the UI code could change the tracker parameters or request a depth image or other data from the server, but this is unimplemented as of now. To add such support, one should look in **GestureServer** (which extends **WebSocketServer**) and implement the **onMessage** method in some appropriate way. The Java-WebSocket chat server examples⁵ will help.

¹<http://java-websocket.org/>

²<https://github.com/joewalnes/reconnecting-websocket>

³The NiTE hand tracker did not seem to work with the Kinect.

⁴<http://wrapper.tanukisoftware.com/doc/english/download.jsp>

⁵<https://github.com/TooTallNate/Java-WebSocket/blob/master/src/main/example/ChatServer.java>

Event	String	Description
Start hand tracking	hands-start	Sent when a start gesture is recognized and hand tracking starts
Stop hand tracking	hands-stop	Sent when hand tracking stops, will also be sent after user-exit
User exit	user-exit	Sent if an "exit" motion was recognized
Left	left	Sent when a directional gesture to the left is recognized
Right	right	Sent when a directional gesture to the right is recognized
Up	up	Sent when a directional gesture upwards is recognized
Down	down	Sent when a directional gesture downwards is recognized
In	in	Sent when a directional gesture towards the sensor is recognized
Out	out	Sent when a directional gesture away from the sensor is recognized

Using with Javascript

The file `cube.html` contains an example implementation for pushing a 3D cube around with gestures. The required steps are connecting to the server WebSocket and defining event handlers that parse the messages into meaningful action.

To create a `ReconnectingWebSocket` in Javascript:

```
socket = new ReconnectingWebSocket("ws://localhost:8887/");
```

Typically the gesture server would run on the same host the browser runs on and the UI code creating the socket should point to the localhost address. By default the server binds to the localhost address which means it will not be accessible externally. The listening address can be changed in the server configuration file. A `ReconnectingWebSocket` is used so the client keeps trying to reconnect to the server if a disconnect occurs because of a network problem or the server becoming unreachable otherwise.

In cases where multiple applications running on different computers wish to access the same sensor data, the server listening address should be set to an IP the clients can contact. In a real-world scenario - using IP addresses instead of hostnames - this might mean that there is a gesture server computer (192.168.1.20) within a (virtual) local area network (subnet 192.168.1.0/24) and several client computers (192.168.1.[1-15]) where the browser application connects to this common gesture server.

The applications running on the computers could be different but they will all receive the same events from the server. To create such a scenario, the server listening address should be set to 192.168.1.20 and application web-pages should contain the following line:

```
socket = new ReconnectingWebSocket("ws://192.168.1.20:8887/");
```

The port number can also be configured in server settings and outbound connections from the clients should be allowed through any firewalls.

Reading events in Javascript

To read gesture events after connecting the WebSocket (`socket`) one should define an `onmessage` function:

```
function startClient() {
    socket = new ReconnectingWebSocket("ws://localhost:8887/");
    socket.onmessage = function(msg) {
        switch(msg.data) {
            case "hands-start": ... ; break;
            case "hands-stop": ... ; break;
            case "left": ... ; break;
            case "right": ... ; break;
            ...
        }
    }
}

$(document).ready(function(){
    startClient();
});
```

Gesture recognition

Gesture recognition is implemented in a simple way by tracking movement between frames - not depth frames but hand and user tracker frames from NiTE. A NiTE hand tracker frame is a data container of all currently detected hands (and other information) that the library has recognized from the depth data. Likewise user tracker frames contain all currently tracked users and their skeleton joint positions. The NiTE library calculates frames in real-time as the depth frames arrive from the sensor.

The hand tracker is used to supply real world 3D coordinates of tracked hands relative to the sensor in millimeters. The user should wave or push with their palm towards the sensor to start tracking. These are “start gestures” and the NiTE library supports two: “**click**” or “**wave**”. The coordinates of all tracked hands are inspected between two consecutive frames. The **Gesture** class implements keeping track of how many frames a motion has been performed for and it uses a class implementing the **Detector** interface to determine if the movement was appropriate.

Detector interface

In the simple case of directional gestures, a **DirectionDetector** compares the motion vector between the hand points of current and the previous hand tracker frame, and determines which cardinal direction (**left** / **right** / **up** / **down** / **in** / **out**) the hand is moving. The **DirectionDetector** returns a boolean value signifying whether the magnitude of the movement between the current and the previous frame is greater than **traveldistance** and provides the direction. A **Gesture** calls the detector to compare every frame to the previous one and should “true” be returned the desired number of times - parameter **travelframes** - the **Gesture** triggers and notifies its listeners that a directional gesture has been recognized.

In practice this means that for each frame the **DirectionDetector** tells if the movement was big enough and what the direction was, and when this has happened enough times in a row, the hand is considered to have performed a directional gesture. The actual gesture direction is determined when the last required frame is handled - that is, there is no interpolation or smoothing used but in practice it works, since with typical parameters the magnitude of the movement is great enough to trigger the gesture in the middle of the motion.

Parameters and performance

The parameters that can be adjusted are listed below. The recommended values in parenthesis are suitable for a presentation application that detects fairly short motions with some cooldown time between the gestures.

- **startdelay** (800 ms)
 - initial delay after hand tracking starts and gesture events are sent to avoid accidental gestures
 - in milliseconds
- **traveldistance** (10 mm)
 - minimum distance a hand needs to move per frame to be considered moving
 - in millimeters
- **travelframes** (5)
 - number of frames the movement needs to continue for a successful gesture
- **cooldown** (500 ms)
 - the cooldown time between sending gesture events
 - in milliseconds

NiTE should be able to process depth frames in real-time as they’re received, so assuming 30 depth frames per second, setting the “travel distance” to 10 millimeters and “travel frames” to 15 would mean that a hand should move relative to the camera for at least 150 millimeters within half a second. Should the motion stop at some point, the **Gesture** starts counting from zero until the movement meets the criteria again.

The parameters “travel frames” and “travel distance” should be kept fairly low for fast swipes and flicking motions. Using too long motions can be straining for the user and look awkward. With very short travel distance and a small number of frames even the minute motions of the hand will trigger the gestures. Using a short cooldown time such as below 50 milliseconds will make the control feel very responsive, which may be useful if the application requires sliders or similar continuous motion.

The intermediate tracking object, `NiTETracker` keeps track of both hand and user trackers and can be queried for any tracking information. It also handles USB disconnects and waits for the sensor to be plugged back in again. The skeleton joints could be used with the gesture detection similarly to hand coordinates, but as of now a detector for it is unimplemented due to the hand tracker being more suitable for this application.

After creating a `NiTETracker` object, you can add a `HandsListener`, `BonesListener` or `TrackingListener` to it to receive hand tracker frames, user tracker frames or notifications of start/stop of hand tracking, respectively. To look for directional gestures from the hand tracker, one would create a `Gesture`, giving it a `DirectionDetector` in the constructor along with the parameters, then attach the `Gesture` to `NiTETracker`'s hand listeners. Then a class implementing `GestureListener` can be added to the gesture's listeners and receive direction events as they're recognized.

Visualizing

The library allows rendering a `NiTETracker`'s hand and user tracker information in a GUI window. The rendering methods are adapted from NiTE examples. Graphical windows can be spawned to show the depth image overlaid with tracker data. The hand tracker window will show the depth image and draw a blue box centered on any tracked hand. The skeleton tracker window also shows the depth image and draws stick figures of the skeletons it recognizes.

Assuming hand and user tracker is enabled⁶ a GUI window for both can be spawned:

```
// Create a NiTETracker
NiTETracker tracker = new NiTETracker(new TrackerSettings());
// Add visualizations
BonesVisualization bones = new BonesVisualization(tracker, "Skeletons");
HandsVisualization hands = new HandsVisualization(tracker, "Hands");
// Show visualizations
bones.show();
hands.show();
// The program will run until both windows
// have been closed (with Escape)
```

This piece of code also works as a "hello world" program for the library and is the content of the `main` method in `screenful.testapps.BonesAndHandsViewer`.

Bugs and shortcomings

- The code base needs refactoring, settings are scattered and functionality dispersed
- Server does not listen to messages sent by the clients
 - If implemented, the client could for example request changing of parameters
- Sent events are minimalistic and do not convey extra information such as the location where hand tracking starts
- Needs a lot more testing, littered with bugs and oversights
 - Configuration file parsing is flaky and may be prone to errors
- Gesture detection does not utilize skeleton tracking
 - The `DirectionDetector` could be generalized to work with skeleton joints
- The detection method is crude and simple
 - Could smooth out movement and calculate a running average for the vector
 - Should compare the motion to a vector instead of having predefined cardinal directions

⁶By default the `NiTETracker` is created with both hand and skeleton tracker enabled, but the `GestureServer` disables skeleton tracking because it is not used in the application.

- Could use a completely different detection scheme
- If the sensor is at an angle, the user needs to perform the motions at an angle so they're aligned with the axes from the sensor's perspective
 - Could have some automatic calibration to alleviate
- NiTE library is unstable and prone to various crashes in native code
 - No source available, unfixable, alleviated with Java Service Wrapper, using a watchdog for the depth stream and tweaking heap size
 - The entire library should be reimplemented on top of an open source equivalent when such becomes available

API for public class methods

For readability, classes and methods that contribute to the library generally use “Hands” and “Bones” in their names when referring to “hand tracking” and “skeletal tracking” functionality to distinguish them from “Hand”/“User”/“Skeleton” used in NiTE naming scheme. Accessors will work as expected, ie. `NiTETracker.getUserTracker()` will return a `NiTE UserTracker`.

The source code contains more in-depth information about each class. Only methods are included in this listing - container classes such as `TrackerSettings` have public fields that can be set to change the settings, but for brevity these are omitted. The settings classes are somewhat convoluted.

Package `screenful.server`

`GestureServer` extends `WebSocketServer`

The main application for browser communication. Implements a `WebSocket` server for a browser to connect to and sends strings of the detected gestures to the UI running in the browser.

Method	Description
<code>GestureServer</code>	<code>String address, int port : (constructor)</code>
	Creates a new gesture server listening on the specified address and port.
<code>main</code>	<code>String[] args : void</code>
	Initializes <code>NiTETracker</code> and gesture detection and starts listening for web socket connections.
<code>onClose</code>	<code>WebSocket conn, int code, String reason, boolean remote : void</code>
	Actions to be done when a socket closes.
<code>onError</code>	<code>WebSocket conn, Exception ex : void</code>
	Actions to be done when an error occurs with the <code>WebSocket</code> .
<code>onMessage</code>	<code>WebSocket conn, String message : void</code>
	Actions to be done when a message is received.
<code>onOpen</code>	<code>WebSocket conn, ClientHandShake handshake : void</code>
	Actions to be done when a connection is opened.

`GestureServer.Messenger` implements `WebSocketServer`

Inner class of `GestureServer` sends the command to the browser via `WebSockets`.

Method	Description
<code>Messenger</code>	<code>NiTETracker tracker, int startdelay : (constructor)</code>
	Create a new <code>Messenger</code> specifying the <code>NiTETracker</code> to use and the time to wait after tracking has started before sending events.
<code>onGesture</code>	<code>Displacement Gesture : void</code>
	When a detected gesture notifies the <code>Messenger</code> , it checks whether the gesture is assigned to exiting interaction or providing input and either stops hand tracking or sends the appropriate messages over <code>WebSockets</code> .

GestureSettings

Directional gesture detection parameter container.

Method	Description
GestureSettings	no arguments : (constructor)
	Creates empty settings.
GestureSettings	int travelDistance, int travelFrames, int cooldown, int startDelay, HashSet<CardinalDirection> exitDirections, HashSet<CardinalDirection> enabledDirections : (constructor)
	Create new settings with specified values.

ServerSettings

ServerSettings class for GestureServer. Reads and writes a configuration file and allows accessing the fields via a Properties object.

Method	Description
ServerSettings	no arguments : (constructor)
	Create default settings.
ServerSettings	String filename : (constructor)
	Load settings from a file.
save	no arguments : void
	Save settings into a file.

Package screenful.basic

interface BonesListener

Any class that wants skeleton data should implement this interface and add itself to NiTETracker's listeners.

Method	Description
onNewBonesFrame	UserTrackerFrameRef frame : void
	Override to implement behavior using the user tracker frame data.

interface HandsListener

Any class that wants hand data should implement this interface and add itself to NiTETracker's listeners.

Method	Description
onNewHandsFrame	HandTrackerFrameRef frame : void
	Override to implement behavior using the hand tracker frame data.

NiTETracker implements **HandTracker.NewFrameListener**, **UserTracker.NewFrameListener**, **OpenNI.DeviceDisconnectedListener**, **OpenNI.DeviceConnectedListener**

Tracker for NUI features. When a **NiTETracker** is created, it creates instances of **UserTracker** and **HandTracker**, starts them and adds itself to their listeners to get notified of new data.

Method	Description
NiTETracker	TrackerSettings settings : (constructor) Initialize OpenNI and NiTE, create user and hand trackers. A watchdog is started to make sure the depth stream actually starts or the program exits (to be respawned again).
addBonesListener	BonesListener listener : void Add a listener for new user frames.
addHandsListener	HandsListener listener : void Add a listener for new hand frames.
addTrackerListener	TrackerListener listener : void Add a listener for hand tracker start/stop events.
forgetHand	short id : void Stop tracking a specific hand ID.
forgetHands	no arguments : void Stop all hand tracking.
getBones	no arguments : List<UserData> Return list of detected skeletons.
getBufferedImage	no arguments : BufferedImage Access current depth image frame.
getHandFrame	no arguments : HandTrackerFrameRef frame Access current hand tracker frame.
getHandTracker	no arguments : HandTracker Return hand tracker for reading hand positions and gestures.
getHands	no arguments : List<HandData> Return list of detected hands.
getLastHandTrackingStartTime	no arguments : long Return the last time hand tracking was started.
getTrackedHands	no arguments : List<HandData> Return a list of all hands that are currently being tracked.
getUserFrame	no arguments : UserTrackerFrameRef Access current user tracker frame.
getUserTracker	no arguments : UserTracker Return user tracker for reading user poses and skeletal data.
onDeviceConnected	DeviceInfo di : void Actions to be done when a sensor connects.
onDeviceDisconnected	DeviceInfo di : void Actions to be done when a sensor disconnects.
onNewFrame	HandTracker ht : void Handle hand tracker frame.
onNewFrame	UserTracker ut : void Handle user tracker frame.
removeAllListeners	no arguments : void Remove all hands, bones and tracking listeners.
removeBonesListener	BonesListener listener : void Remove a bones listener.
removeHandsListener	HandsListener listener : void Remove a hands listener.
removeTrackingListener	TrackingListener listener : void Remove a tracking listener.

TrackerSettings

Container class for NiTETracker settings.

Method	Description
TrackerSettings	no arguments : (constructor) Create default settings - enable hand and user tracking with empty start gesture list.
	boolean handEnable, boolean skeletonEnable, HashSet<GestureType> startGestures : (constructor) Create settings with hand and/or user tracker enabled and a set of start gestures defined (click / wave).

interface TrackingListener

As NiTE hand tracker lacks its own mechanism of notifying when tracking starts or stops, a class can implement TrackingListener to get the events.

Method	Description
onHandTrackingStarted	no arguments : void Called when hand tracking has been started.
	no arguments : void Called when hand tracking stops (there are no more tracked hands).

Package screenful.gestures

Gesture implements **HandsListener**, **BonesListener**

Gesture implements a generic gesture that notifies its listeners when a gesture has been detected for long enough.

Method	Description
Gesture	Detector detector, int framecount, int cooldown : (constructor) Create a new gesture.
	GestureListener listener : void Add a listener for the gesture.
onNewBonesFrame	UserTrackerFrameRef frame : void Handle user frames.
	HandTrackerFrameRef frame : void Handle hand frames.

interface GestureListener

A class that wants notifications when a gesture is detected should implement GestureListener and add itself to a gesture's listeners.

Method	Description
onGesture	Displacement gesture : void Override to implement behavior with the displacement data.

JointMetrics

Static methods for getting skeleton measurements etc.

Method	Description
jointToJointDistance	UserData user, JointType from, JointType to : double Calculate euclidean distance between two joints (JointType.RIGHT_HAND and JointType.NECK for example) of a user in space.

Poses

Some examples of basic poses that can be calculated in a single frame based on user data.

Method	Description
dorkyClick	UserData user : boolean "Click" by essentially clapping the hands in front of the face or otherwise bringing them close enough. Returns true if hands were above the neck and distance between the hands was less than 150 mm.
handsAboveNeck	UserData user : boolean Returns true if a user's both hands are above the neck.

Utilities

Some examples of basic poses that can be calculated in a single frame based on user data.

Method	Description
convertPoint	Point3D nitepoint : javafx.geometry.Point3D Convert a NiTE Point3D into a JavaFX Point3D. For readability, round coordinates.
determineCardinalDirection	javafx.geometry.Point3D vector, int minSensitivity : CardinalDirection Detect general direction of a vector.
displacementVector	Point3D from, Point3D to : javafx.geometry.Point3D Return displacement vector from starting point to endpoint (simple subtraction). Note that the returned Point3D is JavaFX, the handled Point3Ds are from NiTE.
distance3d	Point3D from, Point3D to : double Calculate euclidean distance between two 3D points.

Package screenful.gestures.detectors

ConsecutiveFrames

A container object for passing two consecutive hand and user tracker frames.

Method	Description
ConsecutiveFrames	HandTrackerFrameRef handsFrame, HandTrackerFrameRef previousHandsFrame, UserTrackerFrameRef bonesFrame, UserTrackerFrameRef previousBonesFrame : (constructor) Create a new object with current and previous hand and user frames.

interface Detector

Interface for detectors, ie. an object that determines whether the movement during two consecutive frames was appropriate (true / false).

Method	Description
detected	Displacement gesture : boolean
	Override to implement behavior.
getData	no arguments : Displacement
	Return the displacement.

DirectionDetector implements Detector

Detects hand point movement direction by calculating the displacement vector of each hand point between two consecutive frames. When any tracked hand performs a big enough movement towards the cardinal directions, the **detected(..)** method returns true. This class is used by the Gesture class for defining the logic of detecting a gesture.

Method	Description
DirectionDetector	int sensitivity : (constructor)
	Create a new direction detector. Sensitivity is in millimeters, the server parameter traveldistance is used here.
detected	Displacement gesture : boolean
	Return true when movement was detected along the cardinal directions.
getData	no arguments : Displacement
	Return the displacement.
getSensitivity	no arguments : int
	Return the sensitivity setting.
setSensitivity	int sensitivity : void
	Set the sensitivity.

Displacement

Extra data related to the movement of a point (joint, hand) between two frames. Stores the general direction and the actual vector.

Method	Description
Displacement	CardinalDirection direction : (constructor)
	Create a new displacement with only a general direction.
Displacement	Point3D directionVector, CardinalDirection direction : (constructor)
	Create a new displacement with a vector and the direction.
Displacement	Point3D directionVector, CardinalDirection direction, short id : (constructor)
	Create a new displacement with a vector, direction and an ID number.
getDirection	no arguments : CardinalDirection
	Return the general direction of the displacement.
getDirectionVector	no arguments : Point3D
	Return the direction vector.
getId	no arguments : short
	Return the ID number.
setDirection	CardinalDirection dir : void
	Set the general direction.
setDirectionVector	Point3D directionVector : void
	Set the direction vector.

Package screenful.gui

GenericWindow implements **Runnable**

Generic frame for displaying graphics. Can be closed by pressing Escape.

Method	Description
GenericWindow	String name : (constructor)
	Create new window with a chosen title.
run	no arguments : void
	Keeps the window running until it is closed.

Package screenful.gui.rendering

BonesRenderer extends **Component** implements **BonesListener**

Draw stick characters from skeleton data on top of depth image. Adapted from NiTE examples.

Method	Description
BonesRenderer	UserTracker skel : (constructor)
	Create a new renderer for a UserTracker.
onNewBonesFrame	UserTrackerFrameRef frame : void
	Handle the user frame.
paint	Graphics g : void
	Draw image and skeletons.

DirectionRenderer extends **Component** implements **GestureListener**

Draw some feedback to directional gestures, ie. text signifying the detected direction.

Method	Description
DirectionRenderer	no arguments : (constructor)
	Create a new renderer for directional gestures.
onGesture	Displacement gesture : void
	Reads the direction from the gesture.
paint	Graphics g : void
	Draw image.

HandsRenderer extends **Component** implements **HandsListener**

Draw boxes over tracked hands in the depth image. Adapted from NiTE examples.

Method	Description
HandsRenderer	HandTracker hands : (constructor)
	Create a new renderer for hand tracker data.
onNewHandsFrame	HandTrackerFrameRef frame : void
	Handles the hand frame and calls repaint .
paint	Graphics g : void
	Draw image.

Package `screenful.gui.visualization`

BonesVisualization extends **GenericWindow** implements **Visualization**

Skeleton tracker visualization window.

Method	Description
BonesVisualization	NiTETracker tracker, String name : (constructor)
	Create a new visualization window for the user tracker with a custom title.
show	no arguments : void
	Makes the window visible.

DirectionVisualization extends **GenericWindow** implements **Visualization**

Directional gesture visualization window.

Method	Description
DirectionVisualization	Gesture direction, String name : (constructor)
	Create a new visualization window for directional gestures with a custom title.
show	no arguments : void
	Makes the window visible.

HandsVisualization extends **GenericWindow** implements **Visualization**

Hand tracker visualization window.

Method	Description
HandsVisualization	NiTETracker tracker, String name : (constructor)
	Create a new visualization window for the hand tracker with a custom title.
show	no arguments : void
	Makes the window visible.

interface Visualization

Interface for classes that provide some sort of graphical presentation of the sensor data.

Method	Description
show	no arguments : void
	Makes the window visible.

Package screenful.testapps

BonesAndHandsViewer

Shows two graphical windows, one for hand tracker and one for user tracker. Program exits when both windows have been closed with Escape.

Method	Description
main	String[] args : void
	Runs the program, spawning two GUI windows for the tracker data.

HandsDirectionViewer

Show the hand tracker visualization and general direction of tracked hand movement.

Method	Description
main	String[] args : void
	Runs the program, spawning two GUI windows for the tracker data.