

David M. Rosen

Postdoctoral scholar

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Research interests

I am broadly interested in the mathematical foundations of machine perception: optimization, geometry, algebra, statistical estimation, and information theory. My research applies analytical tools from these disciplines to design principled, computationally efficient, and **provably robust machine perception** algorithms that “just work” in the real world.

Education

- 2016 **Sc.D. Electrical Engineering and Computer Science**, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*.
Thesis: *Certifiably Correct SLAM*
Advisor: John J. Leonard
Minor concentration: Brain and Cognitive Science
- 2010 **M.A. Mathematics**, *University of Texas at Austin*.
Concentration: Geometric Mechanics
Advisors: Raphael de la Llave, Alan Reid
- 2008 **B.S. Mathematics**, *California Institute of Technology*.
Graduated with Honors
Advisors: David Wales, David Ben McReynolds
Minor concentration: Control and Dynamical Systems
Advisors: Jerrold E. Marsden, Richard M. Murray, Joel Burdick

Honors, awards, and fellowships

- 2020 **Best Student Paper Award**, Robotics: Science and Systems (RSS)
- 2019 **RSS Pioneer**, Robotics: Science and Systems (RSS)
- 2016 **Best Paper Award**, International Workshop on the Algorithmic Foundations of Robotics (WAFR)
- 2011 MIT Intelligence Initiative Fellowship
- 2010 – 2011 MIT Energy Initiative Fellowship
- 2008 – 2009 NSF Research Training Groups in the Mathematical Sciences (RTG) Fellowship (UT Austin, Topology)
- 2004 – 2008 Leon L. Granoff Merit Scholarship (full scholarship)

Experience

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

- 2018 – present **Postdoctoral associate**, *Laboratory for Information and Decision Systems*.
My current research explores the use of semidefinite relaxation as a general approach to synthesizing provably robust machine perception methods [16]. My work aims to formally characterize the conditions under which this approach succeeds, and to develop computational tools that enable practitioners to easily build and deploy estimation methods based upon it.
- 2010 – 2016 **Doctoral candidate**, *Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Marine Robotics Group*.
My doctoral research focused on the development of computationally efficient and provably robust inference methods for robot perception, with a particular emphasis on the fundamental problem of *simultaneous localization and mapping* (SLAM). This work culminated in the development of **SE-Sync**, the **first certifiably correct SLAM algorithm** (i.e., the first SLAM algorithm capable of computing **provably globally optimal** solutions) [3, 9, 21, 17].

Oculus Research/Facebook Reality Labs, Redmond, WA

2016 – 2018 **Research scientist**, *Surreal Vision Group*.

Developed large-scale distributed mapping and localization algorithms as part of the LiveMaps project to enable intelligent, always-on augmented- and mixed-reality devices.

Google, Mountain View, CA

2015 **Software engineering intern**, *Google Robotics*.

Proposed a novel feature-based continuous-time modeling framework (and associated inference algorithms) to describe the temporal evolution of semi-static environments as an aid to long-duration robotic autonomy [10, 19].

2014 **Software engineering intern**, *Google Research*.

Designed and implemented robust mapping and localization systems to support persistent autonomous operation of teams of indoor ground robots. As part of this project, proposed a novel formulation of pose-graph SLAM as a quadratically-constrained quadratic program, and an associated convex relaxation for efficiently recovering high-quality solutions of this problem *without* the need for good initial estimates [11].

University of Texas, Austin, TX

2009 – 2010 **Graduate research assistant**, *Applied Research Laboratories, Advanced Sonar Division*.

Developed sonar image processing algorithms for deployment on autonomous underwater vehicles.

Publications

Preprints

- [1] **David M. Rosen**, Kevin J. Doherty, Antonio Terán Espinoza, and John J. Leonard. *Advances in Inference and Representation for Simultaneous Localization and Mapping*. Under review at *Annual Review of Control, Robotics, and Autonomous Systems*. 2020.
- [2] Yulun Tian, Kasra Khosoussi, **David M. Rosen**, and Jonathan P. How. *Distributed Certifiably Correct Pose-Graph Optimization*. Under review at *IEEE Transactions on Robotics*. 2020.

Journal articles

- [3] **David M. Rosen**, Luca Carlone, Afonso S. Bandeira, and John J. Leonard. “SE-Sync: A Certifiably Correct Algorithm for Synchronization over the Special Euclidean Group”. In: *International Journal of Robotics Research* 38.2–3 (Mar. 2019), pp. 95–125. **Invited article (WAFR 2016 special issue)**.
- [4] **David M. Rosen**, Michael Kaess, and John J. Leonard. “RISE: An Incremental Trust-Region Method for Robust Online Sparse Least-Squares Estimation”. In: *IEEE Transactions on Robotics* 30.5 (Oct. 2014), pp. 1091–1108.

Peer-reviewed conference proceedings

- [5] Irit Chelly, Vlad Winter, Dor Litvak, **David M. Rosen**, and Oren Freifeld. “JA-POLS: A Moving-Camera Background Model via Joint Alignment and Partially-Overlapping Local Subspaces”. In: *IEEE/CVF Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition*. Seattle, WA, June 2020, pp. 12585–12594.
- [6] Frank Dellaert*, **David M. Rosen***, Jing Wu, Robert Mahony, and Luca Carlone. “Shonan Rotation Averaging: Global Optimality by Surfing $SO(p)^n$ ”. In: *European Conference on Computer Vision*. Aug. 2020. **Spotlight talk (top 5%)**.
- [7] Valentin Peretroukhin, Matthew Giamou, **David M. Rosen**, W. Nicholas Greene, Nicholas Roy, and Jonathan Kelly. “A Smooth Representation of Belief over $SO(3)$ for Deep Rotation Learning with Uncertainty”. In: *Robotics: Science and Systems*. Corvallis, OR, July 2020. **Best Student Paper Award**.

*Equal contribution

- [8] **David M. Rosen**. “Scalable Low-Rank Semidefinite Programming for Certifiably Correct Machine Perception”. In: *International Workshop on the Algorithmic Foundations of Robotics*. June 2020.
- [9] **David M. Rosen**, Luca Carlone, Afonso S. Bandeira, and John J. Leonard. “A Certifiably Correct Algorithm for Synchronization over the Special Euclidean Group”. In: *International Workshop on the Algorithmic Foundations of Robotics*. San Francisco, CA, Dec. 2016. **Best Paper Award**.
- [10] **David M. Rosen**, Julian Mason, and John J. Leonard. “Towards Lifelong Feature-Based Mapping in Semi-Static Environments”. In: *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation*. Stockholm, Sweden, May 2016, pp. 1063–1070.
- [11] **David M. Rosen**, Charles DuHadway, and John J. Leonard. “A Convex Relaxation for Approximate Global Optimization in Simultaneous Localization and Mapping”. In: *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation*. Seattle, WA, May 2015, pp. 5822–5829.
- [12] Luca Carlone, **David M. Rosen**, Giuseppe Calafiore, John J. Leonard, and Frank Dellaert. “Lagrangian Duality in 3D SLAM: Verification Techniques and Optimal Solutions”. In: *IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems*. Hamburg, Germany, Sept. 2015.
- [13] **David M. Rosen**, Guoquan Huang, and John J. Leonard. “Inference Over Heterogeneous Finite-/Infinite-Dimensional Systems Using Factor Graphs and Gaussian Processes”. In: *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation*. Hong Kong, China, June 2014, pp. 1261–1268.
- [14] **David M. Rosen**, Michael Kaess, and John J. Leonard. “Robust Incremental Online Inference Over Sparse Factor Graphs: Beyond the Gaussian Case”. In: *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation*. Karlsruhe, Germany, May 2013, pp. 1017–1024.
- [15] **David M. Rosen**, Michael Kaess, and John J. Leonard. “An Incremental Trust-Region Method for Robust Online Sparse Least-Squares Estimation”. In: *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation*. St. Paul, MN, May 2012, pp. 1262–1269.

Workshop papers

- [16] **David M. Rosen**. “Towards Provably Robust Machine Perception”. Presented at Robotics: Science and Systems in the workshop "RSS Pioneers". Freiburg, Germany, June 2019.
- [17] **David M. Rosen** and Luca Carlone. “Computational Enhancements for Certifiably Correct SLAM”. Presented at the International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems in the workshop “Introspective Methods for Reliable Autonomy”. Vancouver, Canada, Sept. 2017.
- [18] **David M. Rosen** and Luca Carlone. “A Certifiably Exact Algorithm for Large-Scale SE(3) Synchronization”. Presented at the International Conference on Machine Learning in the workshop “Gimli: Geometry in Machine Learning”. New York, NY, June 2016.
- [19] **David M. Rosen**, Julian Mason, and John J. Leonard. “Towards Lifelong Feature-Based Mapping in Semi-Static Environments”. Presented at Robotics: Science and Systems in the workshop “The Problem of Mobile Sensors”. Rome, Italy, July 2015.
- [20] Roberto Tron, **David M. Rosen**, and Luca Carlone. “On the Inclusion of Determinant Constraints in Lagrangian Duality for 3D SLAM”. Presented at Robotics: Science and Systems in the workshop “The Problem of Mobile Sensors”. Rome, Italy, July 2015.

Technical reports

- [21] **David M. Rosen**, Luca Carlone, Afonso S. Bandeira, and John J. Leonard. *SE-Sync: A Certifiably Correct Algorithm for Synchronization over the Special Euclidean Group*. Tech. rep. MIT-CSAIL-TR-2017-002. Cambridge, MA 02139, USA: Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Feb. 2017.

Selected talks

Invited keynotes

- 2018 **Certifiably Correct SLAM**: Workshop on Geometry in Machine Learning, International Conference on Machine Learning, Stockholm, Sweden. July 15.
- 2017 **Building Spatially-Aware Systems for Fun and Profit**: Cairo Maker Faire, Cairo, Egypt. April 8.

Invited seminars

- 2017 **The Future of Mixed Reality**: UC Berkeley Institute of Design, Berkeley, CA. December 12.
- 2016 **Towards Certifiably Robust Robotic Mapping**: Oculus Research, Redmond, WA. February 19.
- 2015 **Robust Spatial Perception for Robotics: Progress and Challenges**: UC Berkeley Robot Learning and AUTOLAB groups, Berkeley, CA. August 18.
- 2014 **Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Robotic Mapping, But Were Afraid to Ask**: Google Replicant, Palo Alto, CA. August 13.

Teaching

- 2020 **Kaufman Teaching Certification (recipient)**, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*.
MIT's Kaufman Teaching Certificate Program (KTCP) is a practice-based workshop series for graduate students and postdocs that imparts evidence-based best practices for effective teaching. Topics covered include course design, lesson planning, strategies for student assessment and feedback, and creating an effective classroom environment.
- Spring 2018 **Instructor, Computer Vision (CSE P576)**, *University of Washington, Seattle*.
Served as one of four instructors (together with Matthew Brown, Robert Gens, and Richard Newcombe) for the University of Washington's professional master's course in computer vision. Responsibilities included determining course scope and content, developing and delivering weekly lectures, and designing lab assignments.
- Fall 2013 **Graduate teaching assistant, Machine Learning (EECS 6.867)**, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*.
Served as one of three graduate student teaching assistants for the MIT Electrical Engineering and Computer Science department's doctoral qualifying examination course in Machine Learning, taught by Prof. Tommi Jaakkola. Responsibilities included leading weekly recitation/tutorial sections, holding weekly office hours, and assisting in the composition and grading of weekly problem sets, the midterm and final exams, and final projects.

Mentoring

- 2019 **External doctoral examiner**.
External doctoral thesis examiner for Fangchang Ma (MIT Aeronautics and Astronautics). Thesis: *Algorithms for Single-View Depth Image Estimation*. Thesis committee: Sertac Karaman, John Leonard, Nicholas Roy.
- 2019 – present **Member, LIDS Mentoring Committee**.
Conceived, organized, and ran seminars and workshops on navigating the PhD experience for students affiliated with MIT's Laboratory for Information and Decision Systems.
- 2019 – present **Mentor, IDSS Postdoc-Student Mentoring Program**.
Organized and ran monthly small-group discussions on navigating the PhD experience for students affiliated with MIT's Institute for Data, Systems, and Society.
- 2018 – present **Graduate student research mentor**.
Mentored multiple doctoral students at MIT and other universities on research projects:
- Valentin Peretroukhin (University of Toronto): Novel representations for rotation learning [7]. This project won Best Student Paper at Robotics: Science and Systems (RSS) 2020.
 - Yulun Tian (MIT): Distributed certifiably correct SLAM [2].
 - Irit Chelly (Ben Gurion University of the Negev): Moving-camera background modeling [5].

Service

Professional service

- Journal reviewer **T-RO**: IEEE Transactions on Robotics (2014, 2015, 2019, 2020)
IJRR: International Journal of Robotics Research (2016, 2017, 2019)
RA-L: IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters (2016 – 2019)
L-CSS: IEEE Control System Letters (2020)
SPL: IEEE Signal Processing Letters (2017)
- Conference reviewer **RSS**: Robotics: Science and Systems (2014 – 2019)
ICRA: IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (2015 – 2019)
IROS: IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (2012, 2014 – 2019)
WAFR: International Workshop on the Algorithmic Foundations of Robotics (2018)
ISRR: International Symposium on Robotics Research (2019)
IJCAI: International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (2020)
- Organizer **The Many Faces of Semidefinite Programming**: Co-organizer of a workshop on semidefinite programming at the SIAM Conference on Optimization (scheduled 2020; postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19).
RSS Pioneers: Faculty committee co-chair for the RSS Pioneers workshop; responsible for organizing invited faculty keynotes at the event (July 2020).

Departmental service

- Postdoctoral representative **MIT EECS Visiting Committee**: Prepared and presented a report outlining recommendations for improving the postdoctoral experience to the biennial meeting of the MIT Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science's Visiting Committee (April 2019).
- Application reviewer **MIT EECS Graduate Admissions Committee**: Reviewed applications for admission to MIT's doctoral program in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science as part of the 2019–2020 cycle (January 2020).

Software

My research has been implemented in several high-quality software packages that are regularly used in academia and industry:

- **SE-Sync**: MATLAB and C++ implementations of the SE-Sync algorithm [3, 9] for certifiably correct pose-graph SLAM are provided in the [SE-Sync](#) library.
- **GTSAM**: The RISE online nonlinear least-squares optimization algorithm [4, 15] is implemented in the Georgia Tech Smoothing and Mapping ([GTSAM](#)) library, where it appears as the `DogLegOptimizer`.
- **iSAM**: The RISE algorithm [4, 15] is also implemented in the incremental smoothing and mapping ([iSAM](#)) library, where it appears as the `DOG_LEG` optimizer.

References

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