Holly Dinkel, Ph.D.

★ hollydinkel.github.io | O hollydinkel | In hollydinkel | ► Holly Dinkel

Education

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Ph.D. Aerospace Engineering

• Thesis: Representing and Manipulating Deformable Linear Objects (project: RMDLO)

- Supervisor and Research Director: Timothy Bretl
- Co-Research Directors: Brian Coltin and Trey Smith
- Committee: Timothy Bretl (Chair), Brian Coltin, Trey Smith, Nancy Amato, Huy Tran, and Justin Yim

Stanford University

M.S. Aeronautics and Astronautics, Certificate in Entrepreneurship

• Research Director: Monroe Kennedy III

University of Missouri

Columbia, MO

Urbana, IL

August 2025

Stanford, CA

June 2020

May 2017

B.S. CHEMICAL ENGINEERING, B.A. MUSIC - UNIVERSITY HONORS

- Senior Project: Chromatographic Studies of Yttrium-90 for Radiolabeling of Pharmaceuticals
- Supervisor: Patrick Pinhero
- Research Director: Megan Bennett (DOE Argonne National Laboratory, Deceased)

Honors & Awards

INTERNATIONAL

2024	Best Paper Finalist, IEEE ICRA RMDO Workshop	Yokohama, Japan
2023	Best Poster Finalist, IEEE IROS Workshop on Robotics and AI in Future Factory	Detroit, MI
2023	P.E.O. Scholar (110/825 doctoral applicants), P.E.O. International	Des Moines, IA
2023	Amelia Earhart Graduate Fellow (30 awarded), Zonta International	Oak Park, IL
2023	First Prize, Core Track of OpenCV AI Competition (7/45 teams), OpenCV	San Francisco, CA
2022	Amelia Earhart Fellowship Finalist (30 awarded), Zonta International	Buffalo, NY
2021	Best Technical Presentation Finalist (12/500 papers), IAF GLEX	St. Petersburg, Russia
2020	Space Cooperation Delegate (5% accepted), Stanford U.SRussia Forum	Stanford, CA

NATIONAL

2023	Future Leader in Aerospace, MIT Aeronautics and Astronautics	Boston, MA
2022	Critical Language Scholar (Russian, 10% accepted), Department of State	Washington D.C.
2021	Space Technology Graduate Research Opportunity Recipient (70 accepted), NASA	Washington D.C.
2020	Graduate Assistant in Areas of National Need, Department of Education	Washington D.C.
2015/16	Nuclear Energy University Programs Scholar (30 awarded) , Department of Energy	Idaho Falls, ID

REGIONAL

2023	Faculty Outstanding Graduate Student Award, UIUC Aerospace Engineering	Urbana, IL
2021	Graduate Fellow, Illinois Space Grant Consortium	Urbana, IL
2020	Mavis Future Faculty Scholar, UIUC Grainger College of Engineering	Urbana, IL
2019	Threshold Fellow (12/80 accepted), Stanford Technology Ventures Program	Stanford, CA
2017	Phi Beta Kappa, University of Missouri	Columbia, MO
2015	Junior Scholar (2 awarded), University of Missouri Honors College	Columbia, MO
2014	Sophomore Scholar (3 awarded), University of Missouri Honors College	Columbia, MO
2012	Engineering Excellence Award, University of Missouri College of Engineering	Columbia, MO
2012	Curator's Scholar, University of Missouri	Columbia, MO
2012	Bright Flight Scholar (3% of MO students), MO Department of Higher Education	Jefferson City, MO
2012	International Baccalaureate Diploma Recipient, St. Joseph Central High School	St. Joseph, MO
2012	Valedictorian (Rank: 1/354), St. Joseph Central High School	St. Joseph, MO

Research Experience

UIUC Coordinated Science Laboratory

Urbana, IL

NASA GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW

Jun 2021-Present, 40 hrs/week

- Led the Representing and Manipulating Deformable Linear Objects (RMDLO) project, a multiinstitutional, international collaboration with UIUC, NASA Ames Research Center, NASA Johnson Space Center, Stanford University, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, and TU Darmstadt, focusing on the perception and manipulation of deformable linear objects for applications in robotic surgery, industrial automation, and automated space habitat caretaking.
- Designed, built, and calibrated a dual-arm robotic system featuring a gripper, multiple vision and tactile sensors, and a custom integrated computing platform.
- Developed and published new methods for deformable linear object segmentation, tracking, prediction, and manipulation.

NASA Ames Research Center

Moffett Field, CA

INTELLIGENT ROBOTICS GROUP VISITING RESEARCHER

June 2020-Present, varied

- Developed, open-sourced, and published an algorithm for real-time scene change detection from camera imagery for the Astrobee free-flying robot on the International Space Station
- Developed and published a scene change detection algorithm operating on point cloud data, including reconstructed maps of the environment, for Astrobee
- Developed deformable object perception, segmentation, and reconstruction for Astrobee

NASA Johnson Space Center

Houston, TX

DEXTEROUS ROBOTICS LABORATORY VISITING RESEARCHER

Jun 2022-Aug 2022, 40 hrs/week

• Developed wire tip perception and grasping using a ZED Mini camera and a Sawyer robot arm

UIUC Coordinated Science Laboratory

Urbana, IL

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Aug 2020-May 2021, 30 hrs/week

- Led component selection and assembly of a robot work cell (two Universal Robots UR5 robot manipulators, two Robotiq Hand-E grippers, Intel RealSense and Basler cameras, two state-of-the-art computers for system monitoring and training deep learning-based perception models, a Baxter wheeled robot base for a mobile manipulator, and associated work benches and mounting equipment) used to solve an industrial assembly problem
- Developed real-time communication, control, and data interfacing for all components of the robotic work cell (the robots and their embedded force sensors, the grippers and their embedded force sensors, and the cameras)
- Automated labeling of 30,000 electronic components in RGB images based on one manually-labeled image, saving hundreds of hours of image annotation, for training a Mask R-CNN instance segmentation model used in part pose estimation
- Automated pose estimation of the pose of an electronic component from camera imagery by optimizing the Intersection-Over-Union score between an instance segmentation mask predicted by Mask R-CNN and a template mask

NASA Ames Research Center

Moffett Field, CA

DISTRIBUTED SPACECRAFT AUTONOMY INTERN

Mar 2020-Jun 2020, 30 hrs/week

- Developed Distributed Spacecraft Autonomy (DSA) tools for simulating lunar Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT)
- Generated synthetic measurements among PNT assets considering line of sight, satellite attitude, noise, signal variation due to selected hardware or operational mode
- Developed distributed orbit determination and time synchronization algorithms
- Evaluated localization accuracy using DSA tools considering hardware and operational choices, asset locations, algorithm accuracy, and access to ground truth measurements

Stanford Assistive Robotic Manipulation (ARM) Laboratory

Stanford, CA

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCHER

Jan 2020-Present, 6 hrs/week

• Implemented the Rapidly-Exploring Random Tree (RRT) algorithm for a kinematic chain toward fast motion planning for catching flying objects with workspace obstacles

DOE Argonne National Laboratory

Lemont. IL

SCIENCE UNDERGRADUATE LABORATORY INTERN

Jan 2016-Aug 2016. 40 hrs/week

- Dissolved Scandium, Yttrium, and Titanium in hydrochloric, sulfuric, and hydrogen fluoride acids to optimize their separation for the production of electron linear accelerator-produced therapeutic and diagnostic medical radioisotopes
- Prepared scientific methods, results, and further studies of scandium medical radioisotope research for inclusion in U.S. patent No. 10344355, "Process for the separation and purification of scandium medical isotopes"
- Collected and analyzed radioactive decay data using Matlab for a project seeking to manufacture a Neptunium tracer for nuclear forensics use in the Argonne Analytical Chemistry Laboratory (ACL)

DOE Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory

Batavia, IL

LEE TENG FELLOW IN ACCELERATOR PHYSICS

May 2015-Aug 2015. 40 hrs/week

- Computed particle position, momentum, time, and data group identification (PDGid) information for particles tracked in G4Beamline, a particle tracking simulation software
- Performed a design trade study of a hadron monitor for the Long Baseline Neutrino Facility, the world's highest-intensity neutrino beam facility, using G4Beamline to simulate the electric field, the number of electron-ion pairs incident on the monitor, and the spatial arrangement of the neutrino beam cross section given input power.

University of Missouri Dept. of Chemical Engineering

Columbia. MO

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCHER

Aug 2013-Aug 2016. 6 hrs/week

- Simulated irradiation and isotopic depletion of small samples of uranium and thorium using OrigenARP and the TRITON sequence in the Oak Ridge National Laboratory-developed SCALE package to assess the risks involved with utilizing thorium as a fuel source in accelerator-driven, portable-power systems
- Irradiated lithium-intercalated graphite and detected its radioactivity for advanced beta-voltaic battery research using the cyclotron at the University of Missouri Research Reactor (MURR)

Engineering Experience

NASA Marshall Space Flight Center

Huntsville, AL

PROBABILISTIC RISK ASSESSMENT (PRA) ANALYST, BASTION TECHNOLOGIES INC. May 2017-Aug 2018, 40 hrs/week

- Developed fault tree analyses for Artemis Program loss of mission and loss of crew scenarios
- Developed system-level PRAs for the Space Launch System upper stage reaction control system (RCS); core, booster, and upper stage thrust vector control systems; and ground systems
- Awarded a Bastion Technologies contract-wide on-the-spot award for identifying an upper stage RCS design in violation of NASA's single-fault-tolerance requirement and presenting the risks of this design to the SLS chief safety officer
- Recruited and mentored a Bastion full-time employee and a NASA Pathways intern in PRA and supported their developments of the interim cryogenic propulsion stage RCS PRA and the exploration upper stage
- Analyzed reliability of the self-propelled modular transporter to identify risks of transporting the SLS core stage between NASA centers
- Collaborated with a NASA reliability engineer to collect historical space shuttle hydrazine leak data and analyze statistics on this data for use in SLS risk quantification

Skills

Programming Python, C++, Matlab, Bash, Robot Operating System (ROS), Git, Docker, LaTeX Languages English (native), Mandarin Chinese (B2-level), Russian (B1-level), German (A2-level)

Grant Writing

NASA Urbana, IL

SPACE TECHNOLOGY GRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

Nov 2021

- Wrote grant proposal for \$328,000 for four years of funding from the NASA Space Technology Graduate Research Opportunity program
- Grant title: Instance-Aware Semantic Mapping for Robotic Caretaking of Space Habitats
- Status: Awarded

Service_

Conference Reviewing ICRA, IROS, RSS, CoRL

Award Reviewing NASA TechLeap Prize

Workshop Organizing Beyond Rigid Worlds: Representing and Interacting with Non-Rigid Objects (CoRL 2025)

Session Chair Rendezvous, Proximity Operations, and Docking V and VI at the AAS/AIAA SFM

Teaching Experience _____

UIUC, NASA Urbana, IL

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

Jan 2021-Present. 10 hrs/week

- Mentored undergraduate and graduate research through the following programs and courses:
 - Illinois Space Grant Consortium Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP)
 - Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP)
 - Promoting Undergraduate Research in Engineering (PURE)
 - AE 597: Graduate Independent Study
 - AE 497: Undergraduate Independent Study
 - AE 298: Undergraduate Research Mentoring.
 - FCF 497: Senior Thesis
 - ECE 397: Undergraduate Independent Study
 - CS 397: Undergraduate Independent Study
 - NASA Office of STEM Engagement

Stanford Dept. of Aeronautics and Astronautics

Stanford, CA

GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (AA 1150) COURSE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT Dec 2019-Mar 2020, 10 hrs/week

Wrote and tested course projects on celestial navigation and the global positioning system

Stanford Athletic Academic Resource Center

Stanford, CA

ACADEMIC SKILLS TUTOR

Sep 2019–Jun 2020, 6 hrs/week

• Facilitated undergraduate group tutorial sessions for Dynamics, Probabilistic Analysis, Introduction to Optimization, Mechanics of Materials, and Introduction to Single-Variable Calculus

Stanford Schwab Learning Center

Stanford, CA

ACADEMIC SKILLS TUTOR

Jan 2019–Jun 2020. 5 hrs/week

 Provided individual tutoring to ensure academic success for students with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and other learning disabilities for Dynamics and Physics: Light and Heat

University of Missouri Community Music Program

Columbia, MO

COMMUNITY MUSIC PROGRAM CLARINET INSTRUCTOR

Aug 2016-May 2017. 5 hrs/week

• Coached clarinet performance techniques to middle- and high-school music students, stressing the importance of performance as a learning tool through encouraging every student to participate in a public recital each semester

Mentored Students

• Achintya Gahalaut, January 2023 - May 2023, Current Senior in Computer Engineering at UIUC

Program: UIUC Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program

Project: Adaptive Gripper Finger Position and Force Control

• Justin Galardi, May 2017 - August 2017, Current Ph.D. Candidate in Biochemistry at the University of Rochester

Program: Argonne National Laboratory Student Research Participation Program

Project: Scandium-47 Separation Chromatography

• Naixiang Gao, January 2023 - January 2024, 2024 UIUC B.S. ECE (CE) graduate, Current M.S. Candidate in Mechanical Engineering at Stanford University

Program: ECE 397 Independent Research

Projects: Wire Tracking Under Occlusion (TrackDLO) (see: [11])

• Cameron Hines, May 2018 - August 2018, 2019 Georgia Institute of Technology B.S./M.S. AE graduate, Current P.I. at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center

Program: NASA Pathways Internship Program at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center

Project: Space Launch System Interim Cryogenic Propulsion Stage Probabilistic Risk Assessment

Jagriti Jain, January 2025 - Present, Current Senior in Mechanical Sciences and Engineering at UIUC

Program: Volunteer Research Assistant in the UIUC Bretl Research Group

Projects: Object Detection, Automated Data Generation and Labeling (COCOpen)

• Zikun Liu, August 2022 - December 2023, Current Junior in Computer Engineering at UIUC

Program: UIUC Promoting Undergraduate Research in Engineering, ECE 397 Independent Research

Projects: Gripper Finger Prototyping for In-Hand Tactile Sensing, Optical Flow on Tactile Images

• Raghavendra Navaratna, August 2022 - May 2024, 2023 UIUC M.S. AE graduate, Current Research Engineer at Princeton University Seung Lab

Program: AE 597 Independent Research

Projects: Coordinated Manipulation of Two Robotic Manipulators, Extrinsic Calibration of Two Robot Arms (see: [7])

• Bhumsitt Pramuanpornsatid, August 2024 - Present, Current Junior in Computer Science at UIUC

Program: CS 397 Independent Research

Projects: Learning Rope Dynamics (GraphDLO)

• Yash Rathod, August 2022 - August 2023, Current Senior in Computer Science at UIUC

Program: UIUC Promoting Undergraduate Research in Engineering, CS 397 Independent Research

Projects: Automated Data Generation and Labeling (COCOpen), Deep Learning on Supercomputers, Instance Segmentation

• Fuad Samhouri, August 2022 - May 2023, 2023 UIUC B.S. AE graduate, Current Space Roboticist at NASA Johnson Space Center Program: AE 298 Undergraduate Research Mentoring, AE 497 Independent Research

Project: 3D Object Reconstruction from RGB Imagery with OpenSfM (see: [13])

• Jamie Santos, March 2023 - March 2024, 2023 Chalmers University M.S. Complex and Adaptive Systems graduate, Current Research Engineer at Texas A&M University Robotics and Automation Design Lab

Program: NASA Office of STEM Engagement

Project: Unsupervised Change Detection for Space Habitats Using 3D Point Clouds (see: [9,10])

 Jingyi Xiang, January 2022 - May 2024, 2024 UIUC B.S. ECE (EE) graduate, Current Ph.D. Student in Computer Science at UIUC Program: UIUC Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program, Illinois Space Grant Consortium Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, ECE 397 Independent Research, ECE 497 Senior Thesis

Projects: Automated Data Generation and Labeling (COCOpen), Camera Extrinsic Calibration, Robotic Manipulator Control and Motion Planning, Wire Tracking Under Occlusion (TrackDLO) (see: [11, 12, 16])

• Dan Yang, January 2025 - Present, Current Sophomore in Computer Engineering at UIUC

Program: ECE 297 Independent Research

Project: Object Detection, Automated Data Generation and Labeling (COCOpen)

• Harry Zhao, January 2021 - August 2023, 2023 UIUC B.S. AE graduate, Current M.S. Candidate in Aeronautics and Astronautics at Stanford University

Program: AE 497 Independent Research, Illinois Space Grant Consortium Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program Projects: Object Detection, Automated Data Generation and Labeling (COCOpen), Wire Tracking Under Occlusion (TrackDLO) (see: [11,16])

References

- [1] **H. Dinkel***, M. Büsching*, A. Longhini, B. Coltin, T. Smith, D. Kragic, M. Björkman, and T. Bretl, "DLO-Splatting: Tracking Deformable Linear Objects Using 3D Gaussian Splatting," in IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) Workshop on Representing and Manipulating Deformable Objects, May 2025. [Paper, Video, Code, Poster].
- [2] **H. Dinkel**, M. Zahid, B. Pramuanpornsatid, J. M. C. Marques, B. Coltin, T. Smith, F. T. Pokorny, and T. Bretl, "GraphDLO: Graph-Based Neural Dynamics for Deformable Linear Object Trajectory Prediction," in IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) Structured Learning for Efficient, Reliable, and Transparent Robots, May 2025. [Code].
- [3] S. Choi, **H. Dinkel**, D. Hanley, and T. Bretl, "Sensor Fusion for Distributed Inertial Measurement Units," in AAS/AIAA Space Flight Mechanics Meething, January 2025. [Paper, Video, Code].
- [4] H. Abdul-Rahid, Y. Dai, **H. Dinkel**, M. Q. Ta, T. Chen, J. Geng, and T. Bretl, "Image-Based Pose Estimation of Sub-Centimeter Industrial Parts for Automated Assembly," in Conference on Robot Learning (CoRL) Workshop on Learning Robotic Assembly of Industrial and Everyday Objects, November 2024. [Paper, Code].
- [5] G. Cambone*, **H. Dinkel***, L. Ferrone*, K. Kim*, S. Kito*, and C. Martkamjan*, "Business Innovation in Commercial Space: Culture and Trends in Earth Observation," in IAF International Astronautical Congress (IAC), October 2024. [Paper, Code].
- [6] **H. Dinkel**, J. Di, J. Santos, K. Albee, P. Borges, M. Moreira, R. Soussan, O. Alexandrov, B. Coltin, and T. Smith, "AstrobeeCD: Change Detection in Microgravity with Free-Flying Robots," Acta Astronautica, vol. 223, pp. 98–107, 2024. [Paper, Code].
- [7] **H. Dinkel**, R. Navaratna, J. Xiang, B. Coltin, T. Smith, and T. Bretl, "*KnotDLO: Toward Interpretable Knot Tying*," in *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) 3D Visual Representations for Manipulation Workshop*, May 2024. [Paper, Video, Poster].
- [8] J. Xiang, **H. Dinkel**, H. Zhao, N. Gao, B. Coltin, T. Smith, and T. Bretl, "*TrackDLO: Tracking Deformable Linear Objects Under Occlusion With Motion Coherence*," in *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) Workshop on Representing and Manipulating Deformable Objects*, May 2024. **Best Paper Finalist**. [**Paper**, **Video**, **Code**, **Poster**].
- [9] J. Santos, **H. Dinkel**, J. Di, P. V.-K. Borges, M. Moreira, B. Coltin, and T. Smith, "Unsupervised Change Detection for Space Habitats Using 3D Point Clouds," in AIAA Scitech Forum, January 2024. [Paper, Video, Code].
- [10] **H. Dinkel***, J. Di*, J. Santos, K. Albee, P. V.-K. Borges, M. Moreira, O. Alexandrov, B. Coltin, and T. Smith, "*Multi-Agent 3D Map Reconstruction and Change Detection in Microgravity with Free-Flying Robots*," in *IAF International Astronautical Congress (IAC)*, October 2023. [Paper, Video, Code].
- [11] J. Xiang, **H. Dinkel**, H. Zhao, N. Gao, B. Coltin, T. Smith, and T. Bretl, "*TrackDLO: Tracking Deformable Linear Objects Under Occlusion With Motion Coherence*," in *IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters*, vol. 8, pp. 6179–6186, August 2023. [Paper, Video, Code].
- [12] J. Xiang and **H. Dinkel**, "Simultaneous Shape Tracking of Multiple Deformable Linear Objects with Global-Local Topology Preservation," in IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) Workshop on Representing and Manipulating Deformable Objects, May 2023. [Paper, Video, Code, Poster].
- [13] F. Samhouri and **H. Dinkel**, "3DRP: OpenSfM for Manipulating Deformable Objects," in UIUC Coordinated Science Laboratory Student Conference, February 2023.
- [14] M. Q. Ta*, **H. Dinkel***, H. Abdul-Rashid, Y. Dai, J. Myers, T. Chen, J. Geng, and T. Bretl, "*The Impact of Time Step Frequency on the Realism of Robotic Manipulation Simulation for Objects of Different Scales*," in *IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS) Workshop on Robotics and AI in Future Factory*, 2023. **Best Poster Finalist**. [Paper, Video, Poster].
- [15] **H. Dinkel*** and J. Cornelius*, "Vela: A Data-Driven Proposal for Joint Collaboration in Space Exploration," in IAF International Astronautical Congress (IAC), September 2022. [Paper, Presentation].

- [16] **H. Dinkel***, J. Xiang*, H. Zhao, B. Coltin, T. Smith, and T. Bretl, "Wire Point Cloud Instance Segmentation from RGBD Imagery with Mask R-CNN," in IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) Workshop on Representing and Manipulating Deformable Objects, May 2022. [Paper, Video].
- [17] T. Chen, Z. Huang, J. Motes, J. Geng, Q. Ta, **H. Dinkel**, H. Abdul-Rashid, J. Myers, Y. Mun, W. Lin, Y. Huang, S. Liu, M. Morales, N. Amato, K. Driggs-Campbell, and T. Bretl, "Insights from an Industrial Collaborative Assembly Project: Lessons in Research and Collaboration," in IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) Workshop on Collaborative Robots and Work of the Future, May 2022. [Paper, Video].
- [18] J. Cornelius*, **H. Dinkel***, and A. Kurgan, "Development of a Private Space Sector in the U.S. and Russia," in IAF Global Space Exploration (GLEx) Conference, June 2021. **Best Technical Presentation Finalist**. [Paper, Video, Lightning Talk].
- [19] **H. Dinkel** and K. Hashemi, "Ground Asset Placement Optimization for Lunar Positioning, Navigation, and Timing," in NASA Summer Intern Poster Symposium, June 2020.
- [20] **H. Dinkel** and F. Hark, "An Assessment of Launch Failures from 1989 Present," in Reliability, Availability, and Maintainability (RAM) X Training Summit, October 2017. [Presentation].
- [21] **H. Dinkel**, M. Bennett, M. A. Brown, and D. Rotsch, "Separations and Chromatography Studies of Yttrium-90 for Radiolabeling Pharmaceuticals," in Argonne National Laboratory Summer Research Symposium, August 2016.
- [22] K. Yonehara, R. Abrams, **H. Dinkel**, B. Freemire, and R. Johnson, "Gas Filled RF Resonator Hadron Beam Monitor for Intense Neutrino Beam Experiments," in International Conference on Particle Accelerator Physics (IPAC), May 2016. [Paper].
- [23] **H. Dinkel** and K. Yonehara, "*Pressurized Gas Hadron Monitor for the Long Baseline Neutrino Facility*," in Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory Summer Research Symposium, August 2015. [Paper, Poster].

^{*}Denotes Equal Contribution