

A Scoping Review of Robotic Tails for Land-based Mobile Robot Locomotion

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2 ABSTRACT

3 The aim of this review was to systematically identify and review literature relating to the design,
4 development and implementation of robotic tails that improve land-based mobile robot locomotion,
5 including static and dynamic balance and jumping, to inform the design of future systems. A
6 systematic literature review was conducted to identify papers relating to land-based robots utilising
7 tails to improve performance in IEEE Xplore, Web of Science and Scopus between January 1980
8 and December 2018. 68 papers were identified, of which 47 papers included a physical robot
9 or prototype, and 33 distinct physical robotic systems were determined. In order of prevalence,
10 robotic tails have been utilised for aerial reorientation, locomotion stability, induced turning,
11 turning stability and velocity change stability. The most common tail structure for individual robots
12 was rigid (79%) with the majority of tails identified composed of a single tail segment (70%) and
13 actuation predominately by revolute electric motors (91%). Control systems were predominately
14 closed outer-loop type. The literature illustrates robotic tails can improve performance but existing
15 work has been limited to low degree of freedom systems. The authors propose that increased
16 robot performance should be contrasted with the additional energy consumption and storage
17 requirements needed to facilitate this.

18 **Keywords:** keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword

1 INTRODUCTION

19 The motivation for mobile robotics has predominately been driven by the need for systems which can
20 explore hazardous and extreme environments which are too dangerous for people. For example nuclear
21 decommissioning, where radiation is potentially fatal, or planetary exploration, where it is not possible

to send and retrieve astronauts. Mobile robots have been successfully developed and utilised to explore nuclear sites such as Sellafield and Fukushima as well as the Martian surface, however obstacles and challenging terrain limit activities and can lead to the loss of robots which are often non recoverable. Mobile robots have evolved from wheeled machines to legged systems, which can run, jump or hop. These abilities enable mobile robotic systems to better adapt and navigate adverse terrain; In other words mobile robotic systems are becoming increasingly agile. As mobile robots move more towards increased agility, dynamic abilities and biomimetics, this has influenced the direction of research into investigating strategies for improving dynamic performance and stability by exploring the use of robotic tails to improve performance and robustness. Saab & Rone Saab et al. (2018b) recently published a state-of-the-art review of robotic tails in which the authors considered the design, modelling, analysis and implementation of robotic tails for mobile robots. The authors highlighted that robotic tails can be utilised for enhancing stability, manoeuvrability and propulsion of mobile robots, accomplished by enabling inertial adjustment. The review summarises challenges for future development with respect to mechanical design, modelling and control.

In this paper we present the results of a systematic review of literature relating to robotic tails for land-based mobile robot locomotion. This research complements the work of Saab & Rone Saab et al. (2018b) identifying an additional 41 papers and 16 robotic systems. Furthermore, we provide details of tail structure and classification, control, actuation, mass, length, and tail functionality. In this paper we define “tail” as anything that is referred to in the literature as such that meets the inclusion criteria and the topic of the review. This includes tails that are static or unactuated, as they can still influence robot locomotion.

2 LITERATURE SEARCH

A computerised literature search was undertaken of the electronic databases: **IEEE Xplore**, **Web of Science** and **Scopus** between January 1980 and December 2018, searching for **Tail** or **Appendage** in the document title. Papers were excluded if they concerned water walking, swimming or flying robots, as the use of tails in fluid dynamics was not in the scope of the review. The language was limited to English. To identify relevant studies the titles and abstracts of the literature within the databases were scanned with the search terms:

(Tail* **OR** Appendage) **is contained in** *Document Title* **AND** Robot* **NOT** (Fish **OR** Swim) **NOT** (Surgery **OR** Medic* **OR** Tumour) **NOT** (Helicopter **OR** Unmanned Aerial Vehicle **OR** UAV) **NOT** Underwater **NOT** (Chemical **OR** Chemistry) **NOT** Tailor* **is contained in** *Document Title*

The Chemical **OR** Chemistry search terms were included to exclude “tail” in the molecular sense (i.e. the and tail of a polar molecule). The Tailor* negative search term was included to exclude false positives caused by Tail*. An additional search was also conducted using Tail **AND** Tails **AND** Tailed **AND** Tailor* to verify that no relevant records contained both Tail* and Tailor* stems in separate words in the *Document Title*.

To ensure the author identified all relevant literature, that may have been missed by the database search, the authors screened the reference list of the identified papers and cross referenced with the database results.

2.1 Selection and Exclusion Criteria

The following selection and exclusion criteria were utilised to identify literature to meet the aim of the review:

1. Concerning the use of robotic tails with mobile land-based robots to aid locomotion including static and dynamic stability while rolling (i.e. wheeled), walking, hopping/jumping and in free fall.
2. Excluding robotic tails for aquatic locomotion (including water walking), or to aid aerial robotic flight.

2.2 Study Selection Process

The first author (DC) conducted the initial database searches screening all the titles and abstracts. Duplicate records were removed using MATLAB code, which compared the identified paper titles from each database search result, followed by manual inspection of the results by the first author (DC). The full-text of the selected studies were then independently screened against the selection and exclusion criteria by two authors (DC and AW). Any disagreements were resolved through another author acting as a reviewer (WH).

2.3 Data Extraction and Presentation

After literature that met the inclusion criteria had been identified it was analysed and synthesised to identify approaches and corresponding technical details. The following information was extracted and tabulated:

- The **Paper Structure**, which is one of three categories:
 - **Abstract Model:** Papers that discussed tailed robots as an abstract mathematical concept, based on free body models that were based on first principles.
 - **Simulation:** Papers that discussed a detailed virtual model of a tailed robot similar to a physical prototype.
 - **Experimental:** Papers that used a physical prototype or existing robot to generate experimental data.
- The **Locomotion** of the robot or abstract mechanical model, which contains one or more of the following keywords:
 - **Walking:** Leg-based locomotion (bipedal, quadrupedal etc.) on a solid surface with no aerial phase (e.g. Human).
 - **Hopping:** Leg-based locomotion with an aerial phase (e.g. Kangaroo).
 - **Wheeled:** Wheel-based locomotion (e.g. Car).
 - **Tracked:** Track-based locomotion (e.g. Tank).
- The **Control System Architecture** which categorises the control systems into 4 different types based on a simplified control schema. The types are defined as (and illustrated in Figure 5):
 1. A fully “blind” *open-loop* system with no feedback control whatsoever, the system is controlled by a fixed pattern or model that runs in a sequence and takes no inputs.
 2. An *inner-loop* system where position data from the tail actuators are used as inputs to the control system to control the tail position.
 3. An *outer-loop* system where sensor data from the robot (IMU, accelerometer, gyroscope etc.) are used as inputs to the control system to control the tail position.
 4. A *multi-loop* system where both sensor data from the robot *and* position data from the tail actuators are used as inputs to the control system to control the tail position.
- The **Tail Structure**, categorised into three types and described in Figure 3.
 - **Rigid:** Tail is constructed from one or more *rigid* bodies connected by joints. The joints move in order to move the tail, the bodies do not deform.

- **Flexible:** Tail is constructed from one or more *flexible* bodies connected together rigidly. The bodies deform continuously in order to move the tail.
- **Pseudo-Flexible:** Tail is constructed from a large number of rigid bodies connected by joints, so many that they approximate a flexible body (this is also referred to in some publications as “serpentine”, for example in Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2015, 2017); Saab and Ben-Tzvi (2016) and Saab et al. (2018a)).
- The **Number of Segments** in the tail, which corresponds to the number of bodies connected together with joints in the tail, not including the rest of the robot. Segments can be *Active* or *Passive*, depending on if they are directly controlled by an actuator.
- The **Tail Dimension Class**, which categorises the tails based on the movement space M of the tip of the tail (or end effector). If a volume V is conceptualised, centred around the base of the tail such that $M \subseteq V$, then M can be found on four distinct operations of V . The classes are defined as (and illustrated in Figure 4):
 - **Class 1:** M is on a curve on the surface of V .
 - **Class 2:** M is on a section of V .
 - **Class 3:** M is on the surface of V .
 - **Class 4:** M is a volume within (or equal to) V .
- The **Tail Dimension Class**, which categorises the tails based on the movement space of the tip of the tail (or end effector). The classes are defined as (and illustrated in Figure 4):
 1. A single revolute joint moves the tip along a circular arc on a plane.
 2. Multiple parallel revolute joints move the tip within a trimmed portion of a plane.
 3. Two perpendicular revolute joints move the tip within a trimmed portion of a spherical surface.
 4. Multiple perpendicular or parallel revolute joints move the tip within a volume.
- The **Tail Degrees of Freedom** which is typically the number of active segments multiplied by the dimensions each one can be actuated in.
- The **Actuator** that is used to move the active segments.
- The **Tail Mass**, in kilograms.
- The **Body Mass**, in kilograms.
- The **Tail Length**, in metres.

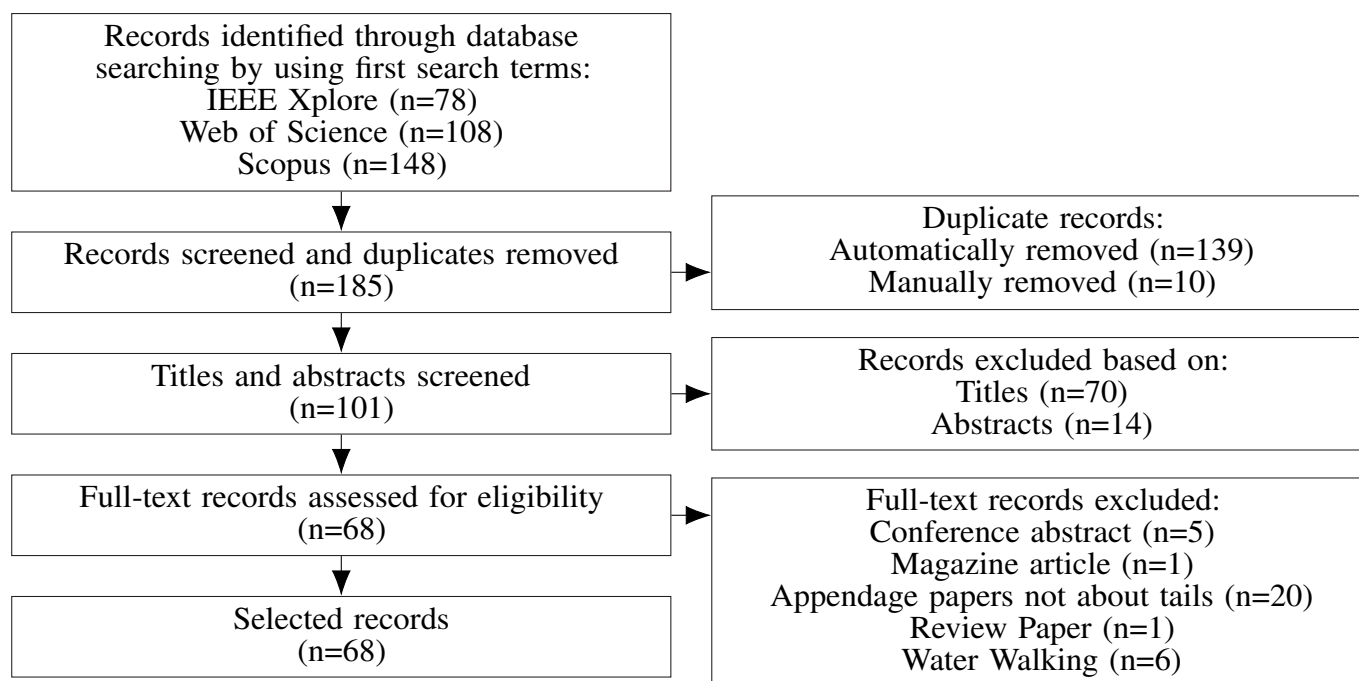


Figure 1. Flowchart of the study selection process.

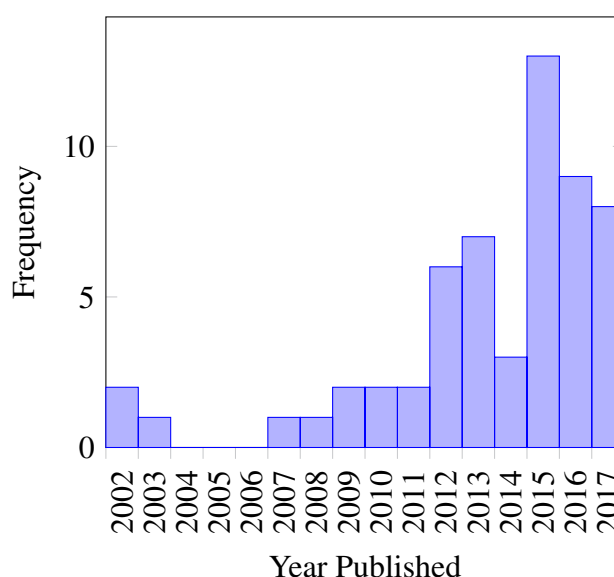


Figure 2. Histogram of the years the 68 selected records were published.

3 RESULTS

Figure 1 illustrates the flowchart of the study selection process and the papers identified. In total **185** studies were identified after duplicates were removed, this reduced to **101** papers after the titles and abstracts had been screened. Out of the **101** papers **33** were excluded because:

- The paper was a short abstract for a conference (**5**).
- The paper was a magazine article (**1**).
- The paper included the **Appendage** keyword in the *Document Title* but was not about tails (**20**).

- 138 • The paper was the review paper Saab et al. (2018b) (1).
- 139 • The paper concerned robots walking on water, like a pond skater (6).

140 This process led to the remaining 68 studies being analysed with data extracted, as detailed in Table 5. 33
 141 unique physical robots have been identified from the records (that were physically experimented on in an
 142 **Experimental** paper), as detailed in Table 2. Since there were some robots which had multiple records
 143 associated with them, some of the records had some duplicate data, which was merged together for each
 144 individual physical robot. The data is displayed in Table 3. Papers which did not have a physical robot
 145 have this data displayed separately in Table 4. Figure 2 is a histogram of robotic tail papers published as a
 146 function of year, the first paper was published in 2002 and approximately 71% (42 papers) of the papers
 147 have been published in the last five years since 2013.

148 3.1 Paper Structure

149 Out of the 68 studies identified, 44 were **Experimental** papers, 16 were **Abstract Model** papers, and 8
 150 were **Simulation** papers. **Experimental** papers typically develop a control system which is first verified
 151 on a simulated model (either an **Abstract Model** or a more complex **Simulation**) then build a prototype or
 152 use an existing robot to experimentally verify the control system.

153 3.2 Physical Robots

154 As explained previously, all **Experimental** papers included a physical robot or prototype. In total, 33
 155 unique physical robots were found (*images can be found in the supplementary material, all images have*
 156 *been sourced from selected papers unless specified*). Out of these, 9 were used in multiple papers. 23
 157 named robots were identified from the literature, the rest of the robots had no name and had only a single
 158 paper associated with them apart from Kim and Shell (2017) and Kim and Shell (2018). Table 2 lists the
 159 physical robots by name, with the papers they were referenced in and the year the first paper mentioning
 160 the robot was published. Table 3 lists the physical robots by their properties. Table 4 lists all the papers that
 161 do not have physical robots connected with them.

162 3.3 Research Objectives of Robots Identified in the Literature

163 Table 6 shows diagrams of non-unique research objectives that involved the tail operating in free space
 164 (i.e. not in contact with the ground or other objects). All of them involved counteracting or reducing
 165 torques.

166 3.3.1 Legged, Wheeled and Tracked

167 Of the 43 **Experimental** papers that included walking, wheeled, tracked or hopping robots, 11 had the
 168 objective of correcting any torques induced on the robot so it lands with the correct orientation (Briggs
 169 et al. (2012); Chang-Siu et al. (2011); De and Koditschek (2015); Johnson et al. (2012); Libby et al. (2012,
 170 2016); Guan-Horng et al. (2014); Wenger et al. (2016); Jianguo et al. (2013, 2015b,a)), 8 had the objective
 171 of correcting torques induced by the unstable motion of the robot to prevent it falling over (Berenguer
 172 and Monasterio-Huelin (2008); Heim et al. (2016); Saab et al. (2018c); Simon et al. (2018); Takita et al.
 173 (2002a,b, 2003); Xiuli et al. (2016)), 4 had the objective of minimising roll torques to prevent the robot
 174 falling over during a turn (Aiello and Crespo (2013); Kohut et al. (2013); Patel and Braae (2013); Patel
 175 and Boje (2015)), and 3 had the objective of initiating a yaw torque on the robot, enabling it to have a
 176 smaller turning circle (Casarez et al. (2013); Kohut et al. (2012); Pullin et al. (2012)). 7 papers dealt with
 177 “tail-dragging” robots (Casarez and Fearing (2018); Guarnieri et al. (2009); Kim and Shell (2017, 2018);
 178 Kwak and Bae (2015); McInroe et al. (2016); Ren et al. (2009)), that had the tail acting as an appendage
 179 for additional stability, locomotion or object manipulation. Briggs et al. (2012) also considered use of a tail
 180 (along with rejecting angular momentum) to rebalance the robot following a disturbance, in their example,

181 a “wrecking ball” impacting the torso of the robot. Sato et al. (2016) used the tail to allow their hopping
 182 robot to jump higher. The remaining 2 papers (Brill et al. (2015); De and Koditschek (2015)) did not state a
 183 specific objective.

184 3.3.2 No Locomotion

185 For the 11 papers that dealt with robots with no locomotion, the objectives were more varied. 5 had
 186 the objective of testing mechanisms for later inclusion on a legged robot (Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2014);
 187 Rone et al. (2017, 2018); Saab et al. (2018a); Iwamoto and Nishikawa (2018)). Chang-Siu et al. (2013)
 188 and Jusufi et al. (2010) had the objective of re-orienting a robot when dropped, Santiago et al. (2016)
 189 had a tail that was designed to vary its stiffness using a novel mechanism, in order for it to be used as
 190 both a “hard” appendage when used as a ground support, and a “soft” appendage for other functions.
 191 Kessens and Dotterweich (2017) used the tail as a self-righting mechanism, and Jovanova et al. (2018)
 192 considered a novel actuation system for a robot appendage based on a scorpion tail. The desire for mobile
 193 robotic systems which can explore hazardous and extreme environments has led to the development of
 194 systems which have greater functionality, adaptability, autonomy and dynamic ability. The enablers for the
 195 development of the next generation of mobile robotic systems include:

- 196 1. Increased simulation capabilities such that designs can be optimised before prototyping,
- 197 2. Advances in embedded computing power improving sensing and intelligent control systems. The
 198 capability of mobile robots, which can walk, run, hop and jump has created a need for the investigation
 199 and development of systems which can improve dynamic performance and robustness of outcome.

200 Many research groups have developed robotic tail models and physical systems for the purpose of impro-
 201 ving the dynamic performance of mobile robots. Mobile robots utilising tail actuators have demonstrated
 202 improvements in performance, and they predominately have a limited number of degrees of freedom
 203 (Briggs et al. (2012); Heim et al. (2016); Libby et al. (2016); Sato et al. (2016)). There are several distinct
 204 areas for future research.

205 3.4 Robot Physical Properties

206 3.4.1 Walking Robots

207 Of the 12 walking robots, 3 were Bipedal (McInroe et al. (2016); Takita et al. (2002a,b, 2003); Berenguer
 208 and Monasterio-Huelin (2008)), 3 were Quadrupedal (Briggs et al. (2012); Heim et al. (2016); Xiuli et al.
 209 (2016)), 5 were Hexapedal (Kohut et al. (2012, 2013); Libby et al. (2016); Casarez et al. (2013); Casarez
 210 and Fearing (2018)), and 1 was Octopedal (Pullin et al. (2012)). (McInroe et al. (2016)) was Bipedal, but
 211 used the tail as a “third leg”, technically making it Tripedal.

212 3.5 Tail Physical Properties

213 3.5.1 Tail Structure

214 Table 3 illustrates that a rigid tail, made up of rigid bodies connected by joints, is the commonest physical
 215 tail structure with 31 robots, followed by a flexible structure, made up of flexible bodies that act as joints,
 216 with 4 robots, and pseudo-flexible, made up of a large number of mostly passive rigid joints that closely
 217 approximate a flexible body, with 3 robots (Figure 3 gives an illustration of this difference). Most of the
 218 non rigid robots were static experiments with no locomotion, apart from (Kim and Shell (2017, 2018)),
 219 though several (Rone et al. (2018); Saab et al. (2018a,c)) were testing static systems with an eventual aim
 220 of mounting on a legged robot.

221 3.5.2 Tail Segmentation

222 Table 3 illustrates that 22 robots had one tail segment, and 9 robots had more than one tail segment. Out
 223 of the 9 robots with more than one tail segment: 5 had 2-segments, 1 had 3-segments, 1 had 4-segments

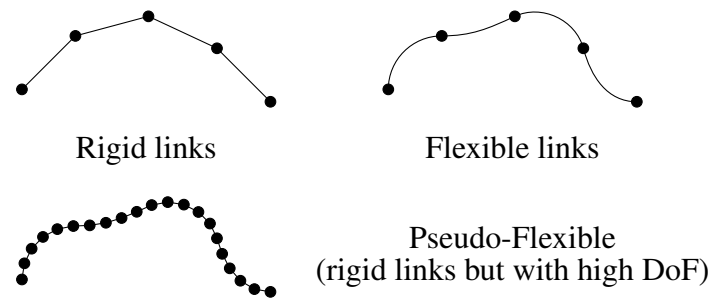


Figure 3. Tail structure classification. Black dots indicate individual joints which may be active or passive.

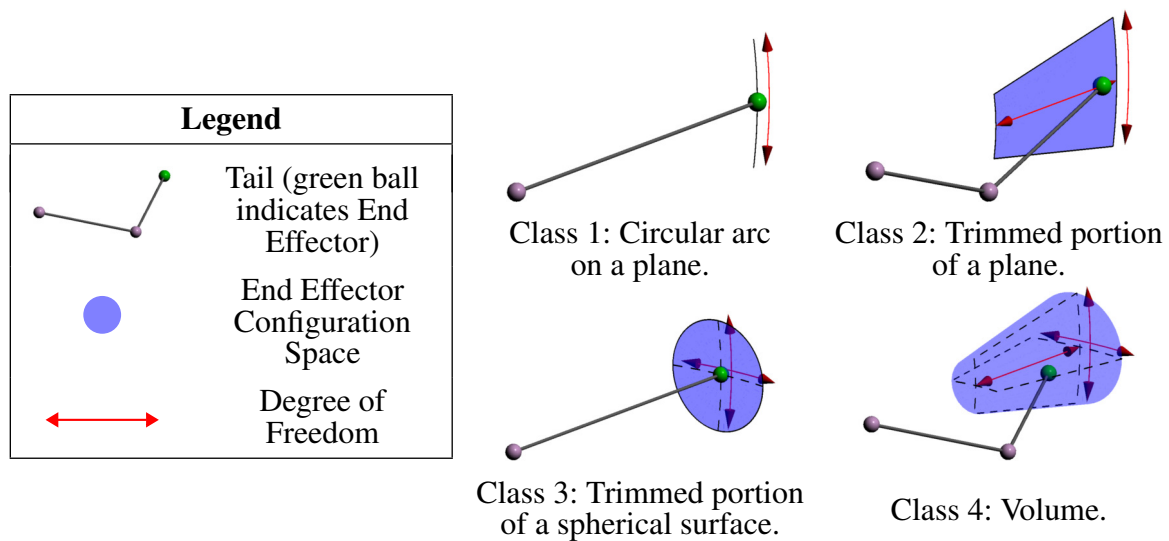


Figure 4. Tail Dimension Class visual illustration.

and 2 had 6-segments. Kim and Shell (2017, 2018) was a piece of unactuated flexible rope, which could be considered to have a nearly infinite number of segments. A common justification for an increased number of segments was the increased reaction torque available for a given length, as found in Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2016). This came at the cost of requiring additional actuators, except in Sato et al. (2016) which used a passive system, though the gains were marginal in that case (a 7% increase in jump height).

3.5.3 Tail Dimension Class

Tables 3 and 1 illustrate that 17 robots had a tail dimension class of **1**, where the range of motion for the tail end effector is restricted to a circular arc on a plane, typically a simple “pendulum” design of a mass on the end (or along) a rod of negligible mass with a rotary joint that allowed the robot to adjust its moment of inertia in one axis when performing a manoeuvre. 9 robots had a similar design but with an extra degree of freedom to turn the the single revolute joint into two perpendicular revolute joints, giving the tail a dimension class of **3**, where the end effector range is restricted to the trimmed surface of a sphere, typically for the purpose of allowing the robot to induce torques in two axes instead of one (such as aerial reorientation in both pitch and roll axes). Inducing torques in all three axes did not appear to be considered, as in stability applications maintaining yaw angle was not required. More complicated multi-segment designs were also found in 9 robots, which all had a tail dimension class of **2**, where the end effector is restricted to a planar cross-section of a volume, or **4**, where the end effector is free to

move within a volume, typically for increased reaction torques as mentioned previously (Figure 4 gives an illustration of the different classes). Finally, 3 robots had a static tail. Of the 12 physical robots which have been developed for walking, 9 had a tail dimension class of **1**, and 3 robots had a class of **3**. For the other types of locomotion, hopping, wheeled, wheeled and hopping, and tracked there were too few papers and different class categories to determine correlations.

3.5.4 Tail Degrees of Freedom

As can be seen from Table 1, 17 robots had 1 degree of freedom, 11 robots had 2 degrees of freedom, 1 robot had 3 DoF, 2 robots had 4 DoF, 1 robot had 6 DoF and 1 robot had 7 DoF. 1 robot had a static tail (Ren et al. (2009); Ren and Hong (2010)) and 1 robot (Kim and Shell (2017, 2018)) had an unactuated rope which had infinite degrees of freedom. Higher degrees of freedom than 2 exclusively corresponded to multi-segment designs with the corresponding performance improvements, whereas 2 degrees of freedom was a mix of additional torque axis (dimension class 3) and multi-segment designs (dimension class 2).

3.6 Tail Actuation

As can be seen from Table 3, 26 robots, or 91% used a **Revolute Motor** to actuate the tail. 4 robots used revolute motors to move cables via pulleys. For the other 9%, 1 robot had a static tail (Ren et al. (2009); Ren and Hong (2010)), 1 robot had an unactuated completely passive tail (Kim and Shell (2017, 2018)), and 1 robot also used stored energy via a spring instead of stored electrical energy (Jusufi et al. (2010)).

3.7 Control Systems

3.7.1 Controller/Model

As can be seen in Figure 5, each system can be described as having a Controller/Model, where the commands for controlling the tail actuators (whether real or virtual) are generated. These can be described as “fixed” or “variable”. Fixed systems (type 1 and type 2) do not accept external input from the robot, running a periodic sequence or pattern, or following remote commands sent by a user. This is a simple control system to implement, and in some highly deterministic stability applications or experiments it is sufficient for satisfactory performance. Variable systems (type 3 and type 4) use sensor data from the robot to influence the output of the Controller/Model, typically when using the tail to correct or induce force, in a quasi feedback loop (Figure 5 shows a block diagram of each controller/model). As can be seen in Table 5, 7 papers described a type 1 (open-loop) system, 15 papers described a type 2 (inner-loop) system (typically due to the use of servo motors, which turn any system they are implemented in into at least inner-loop), 18 papers described a type 3 (outer-loop) system, and 13 papers described a type 4 (multi-loop) system. 5 papers were either static or uncontrolled systems, and 10 papers did not consider, or did not have enough information to determine, a control system.

There didn't appear to be any noticeable correlations between the control system and other properties of the robots, as it depended on the experimental setup, and whether the system was designed to apply to determined torques induced by robot actions (such as a walking or hopping motion) or undetermined torques from the environment (such as driving off a ledge or navigating uneven terrain).

3.7.2 Feedback Control Systems

For position feedback of the tail joints (type 2 and type 4), P (Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2008)), PD (Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2008); Chang-Siu et al. (2013); Guan-Horng et al. (2014); Machairas and Papadopoulos (2015a); Sato et al. (2016)), PI (Patel and Braae (2014)), PID (Kwak and Bae (2015); Pullin et al. (2012); Casarez and Fearing (2017); Saab et al. (2018c)) and State Feedback (Patel and Braae (2014)) control systems were used.

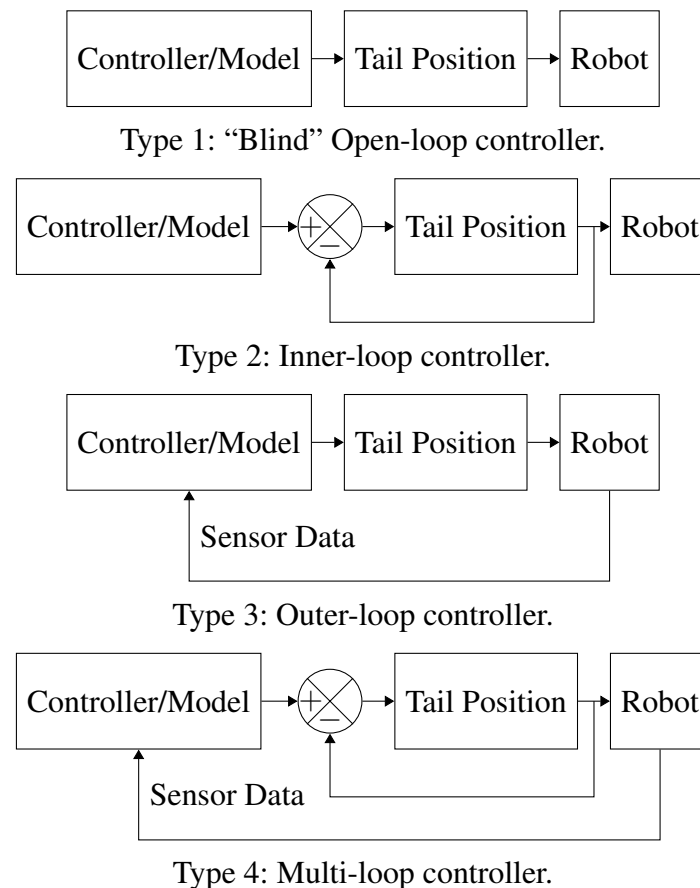


Figure 5. Control system classification for robotic tails.

For variable Controller/Model systems (type 3 and type 4), P (Chang-Siu et al. (2013); Mutka et al. (2013)), PD, (Chang-Siu et al. (2011, 2013); Graichen and Hentzelt (2015); Jianguo et al. (2013, 2015b); Johnson et al. (2012); Libby et al. (2012, 2016); Machairas and Papadopoulos (2015a); Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2017); Xiaoyun et al. (2015)), PI (Patel and Braae (2013, 2014)) PID (Pullin et al. (2012)) and State Feedback (Patel and Braae (2013)) control systems relating sensor data to tail joint position. Kohut et al. (2013) used a simple Bang/Bang control system due to the variable friction present on the model.

Regarding performance of different control systems, Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2007) outlined a simulation comparing a P and PD control law, and found a marginal but noticeable increase in performance in the PD control law (a 6% increase in "crossed distance" and a 9% reduction in mechanical energy), and Jianguo et al. (2015b) compared PD and sliding mode control, again finding an increase in performance (a 75% reduction in overshoot for the tail controller) for sliding mode control.

3.8 Locomotion/Tail Dimension Class

Table 1 shows the relationship between the robot locomotion and the tail dimension class. Class 1 was the most prevalent in all of the mobile robots, followed by class 3, whereas static experiments typically used more complex tails. Tail dimension class was generally associated with the axes the tail was designed to induce torques on, with class 1 only able to induce torque on a single axis, and class 2 being a multi segment version of class 1. Class 3 and 4 could induce torques on 2 or more axes, allowing for enhanced functionality, such as being able to control both the pitch and roll angle of the robot in aerial reorientation.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Potential Future Research

4.1.1 Dynamically Changing Plant

All the studies appear to consider robots (when without their tails) that had a static mass, centre of mass and tensor of inertia. Future work could consider robots with these properties changing dynamically. It is likely that mobile robotic systems will pick up and manoeuvre payloads, carry unstable payloads such as a container filled with fluid, or will have an appendage such as a manipulator arm that is independent of locomotion. As such there will be a motivation for robotic tails to be utilised to compensate for this dynamic behaviour.

4.1.2 Energy Consumption and Storage

The use of energy in control systems is a well understood topic that has been the subject of many publications, such as Ortega et al. (2001), hence the control of the tail may be associated with the consumption of energy. However, the literature reviewed does not indicate there has been significant consideration regarding the energy consumption of the robotic tails. There are some calculations presented regarding peak power output in order to determine actuator specifications (Johnson et al. (2012)), but nothing considering actual energy consumption. There is likely to be a trade-off between energy consumption and the improved robot agility that a robotic tail enables. Furthermore, there are few details in the literature regarding the energy storage needs to enable the increased actuation of a robotic tail, clearly additional storage needs will add mass and therefore impact the dynamic behaviour of the mobile robotic system. The authors would encourage the community to provide more details regarding their systems to enable comparisons between different actuator, sensor and controller configurations.

4.2 Actuator Technologies

The choice of actuator for mobile robotics systems is crucial for achieving the potential increased agility desired. DC brushed and brushless electric motors offer good speed and torque characteristics but will add significant mass and for large numbers of degrees of freedom increase control complexity. Stepper motors decrease control complexity in comparison to DC brushed/brushless motors but will add significant mass and have limited capability for high-speed operation. Relative to electric motor solutions artificial muscles are much lighter whilst having suitable force characteristics, their main limitations include hysteretic behaviour and bandwidth. The search for low mass, high force/torque, high bandwidth actuators will no doubt continue.

5 CONCLUSION

The desire for mobile robotic systems which can explore hazardous and extreme environments has led to the development of systems which have greater functionality, adaptability, autonomy and dynamic ability. The capability of mobile robots which can walk, run, hop and jump, has created a need for the investigation and development of systems which can improve dynamic performance and robustness of outcome. Many research groups have developed robotic tail models and physical systems for the purpose of improving the dynamic performance of mobile robots. Mobile robots utilising tail actuators have demonstrated improvements in performance, predominately these have a limited number of degrees of freedom. Barriers that may inhibit the development of robotic tail systems for mobile robots include the additional storage/drain on system energy supply, high performance low mass actuation for multiple degrees of freedom and complexity of control. There is clearly the potential for further research in this field, which could see improved dynamic performance, and robustness for mobile robotic systems. Robotic tails offer great potential to improve the dynamic performance of mobile robotic platforms. Research in this area has grown over the last 10 years with modelling/simulation and experimental approaches adopted,

demonstrating robotic tails can improve performance. The authors hope that this scoping review will provide a useful reference for those research groups working in this area and those who wish to contribute in the future.

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Table 1. Comparison of Robot Locomotion to Tail Dimension Class.

Locomotion	Tail Dimension Class					Total
	1	2	3	4	0 (Static)	
Walking	9	0	3	0	0	12
Hopping	1	2	1	0	0	4
Wheeled	2	1	2	1	1	7
Wheeled, Hopping	1	0	0	0	0	1
Tracked	1	0	0	0	0	1
None	1	1	2	4	0	8
Total	15	4	8	5	1	33

Table 2. Table of all the physical robots, the year it was first seen in a selected paper and the selected papers it was found in.

References	Robot Name	First Published
Kessens and Dotterweich (2017)	3DoF No Catch	2017
Heim et al. (2016)	Cheetah-Cub	2016
Saab et al. (2018a)	DMST	2018
Xiuli et al. (2016)	Dcat	2016
Patel and Braae (2014, 2013)	Dima	2013
Patel and Boje (2015)	Dima II	2015
Guarnieri et al. (2009)	Helios VIII	2009
Ren and Hong (2010); Ren et al. (2009)	IMPASS	2009
Casarez and Fearing (2018)	LoadRoACH	2018
Briggs et al. (2012)	MIT Cheetah	2012
Jianguo et al. (2015a,b, 2013)	MSU Tailbot	2013
McInroe et al. (2016)	MuddyBot	2016
Pullin et al. (2012)	OctoRoACH	2012
De and Koditschek (2018); Shamsah et al. (2018); Wenger et al. (2016); De and Koditschek (2015); Brill et al. (2015)	Penn Jerboa	2015
Saab et al. (2018c)	R3-RT	2018
Kwak and Bae (2015)	RoMiRAMT	2015
Kohut et al. (2013, 2012)	TAYLRoACH	2012
Libby et al. (2012); Chang-Siu et al. (2011)	Tailbot	2011
Takita et al. (2003, 2002b,a)	Titrus III	2002
Rone et al. (2018)	USRT	2018
Casarez and Fearing (2017)	VelociRoACH	2017
Libby et al. (2016); Johnson et al. (2012)	XRL/RHex	2012
Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2008)	Zappa	2008
Simon et al. (2018)	-	2018
Casarez et al. (2013)	-	2013
Chang-Siu et al. (2013)	-	2013
Jusufi et al. (2010)	-	2010
Guan-Horng et al. (2014)	-	2014
Aiello and Crespo (2013)	-	2013
Sato et al. (2016)	-	2016
Santiago et al. (2016)	-	2016
Kim and Shell (2018, 2017)	-	2017
Jovanova et al. (2018)	-	2018

Table 3. Table of the physical robots. “Tail DoF” refers to the total number of DoF, including passive joints. Robots with passive DoF are denoted with a superscript. Number of decimal places reflects the precision found in the references.

Reference	Locomotion	Tail Structure	Number of Segments	Tail Dimension Class	Tail DoF	Actuator	Tail Mass (kg)	Body Mass (kg)	Tail Length (m)
Kessens and Dotterweich (2017)	None	Rigid	2	4	3	Revolute Motor	0.33	0.99	N/A
Heim et al. (2016)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.053	1.197	0.128, 0.168
Saab et al. (2018a)	None	Pseudo-Flexible	2	3	2	Revolute Motor ³	3.5	9.525	0.3
Xiuli et al. (2016)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.25	5.312	0.3
Patel and Braae (2014, 2013)	Wheeled	Rigid	1	3	2	Revolute Motor	0.4	5	0.5
Patel and Boje (2015)	Wheeled	Rigid	1	3	2	Revolute Motor	0.4	5	0.5
Guarnieri et al. (2009)	Tracked	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	N/A	N/A	0.5
Ren and Hong (2010); Ren et al. (2009)	Wheeled	Rigid	1	0	0 ¹	Static Tail	N/A	N/A	0.889
Casarez and Fearing (2018)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	N/A	N/A	0.09
Briggs et al. (2012)	Walking	Rigid	1	3	2	Revolute Motor	0.74	35	0.54
Jianguo et al. (2015a,b, 2013)	Wheeled, Hopping	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.017	0.0252	0.127
McInroe et al. (2016)	Walking	Rigid	1	3	2	Revolute Motor	N/A	N/A	0.02
Pullin et al. (2012)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.017	0.035	0.1
De and Koditschek (2018); Shamsah et al. (2018); Wenger et al. (2016); De and Koditschek (2015); Brill et al. (2015)	Hopping	Rigid	1	3	2	Revolute Motor	0.15	2.269	0.21
Saab et al. (2018c)	None	Pseudo-Flexible	2	2	2	Revolute Motor	N/A	8.8	N/A
Kwak and Bae (2015)	Wheeled	Rigid	2	2	2	Revolute Motor	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kohut et al. (2013, 2012)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.004	0.045	0.115
Libby et al. (2012); Chang-Siu et al. (2011)	Wheeled	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.017	0.16	0.127
Takita et al. (2003, 2002b,a)	Walking	Rigid	1	3	2	Revolute Motor	0.1	0.1	N/A
Rone et al. (2018)	None	Rigid	6	4	6	Revolute Motor ³	0.51	6.507	0.48
Casarez and Fearing (2017)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.008	0.0767	0.09
Libby et al. (2016); Johnson et al. (2012)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.6	8.1	0.59
Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2008)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.7	0.05	0.15
Simon et al. (2018)	Hopping	Flexible	4	2	4	Revolute Motor ³	0.047	N/A	0.21
Casarez et al. (2013)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.005	0.0395	0.12
Chang-Siu et al. (2013)	None	Rigid	1	3	2	Revolute Motor	0.07	0.105	0.73
Jusuifi et al. (2010)	None	Rigid	1	1	1	Spring	0.048	0.204	N/A
Guan-Hong et al. (2014)	Hopping	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.371	0.423	0.177
Aiello and Crespo (2013)	Wheeled	Rigid	1	1	1	Revolute Motor	0.089	0.862	0.27
Sato et al. (2016)	Hopping	Pseudo-Flexible	6	2	6 ²	Revolute Motor	0.1	1.045	0.235
Santiago et al. (2016)	None	Flexible	2	4	4	Revolute Motor ³	N/A	N/A	0.41
Kim and Shell (2018, 2017)	Wheeled	Flexible	∞	4	∞	Unactuated	0.035	0.7	0.7
Jovanova et al. (2018)	None	Flexible	3	4	7	Revolute Motor	N/A	N/A	N/A

¹(Static) ²(1 Active, 5 Passive) ³(Cable Driven)

Table 4. Table of all the papers that did not use physical robots. “Tail DoF” refers to the total number of DoF, including passive joints. Papers with passive DoF are denoted with a superscript. Number of decimal places reflects the precision found in the references.

Reference	Locomotion	Tail Structure	Number of Segments	Tail Dimension Class	Tail DoF	Actuator	Tail Mass (kg)	Body Mass (kg)	Tail Length (m)
Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2007)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	0.7	N/A	0.15
Graichen and Hentzelt (2015)	Hopping	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iwamoto and Yamamoto (2015)	Wheeled	Pseudo-Flexible	10	1	10 ¹	Revolute Motor	0.307	N/A	0.2
Iwamoto and Nishikawa (2018)	N/A	Rigid	N/A	N/A	Multiple	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Karakasiliotis et al. (2012)	Walking	Flexible	10	2	12 ²	N/A	1327.96 (mg)	N/A	0.2659
Xiaoyun et al. (2015)	Wheeled	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Liu and Ben-Tzvi (2018)	Walking	Rigid	1	3	2	N/A	1.4347	26.9078	0.6
Machairas and Papadopoulos (2015b)	Walking	N/A	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Machairas and Papadopoulos (2015a)	N/A	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	0.5-4	N/A	0.2-0.5
Mutka et al. (2013)	Walking, Hopping	Rigid	1	3	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.1
Patel and Braae (2015)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	1	N/A	0.8
Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2014)	None	Flexible	1/2	3/4	2/4	Linear Screw Motor ³	2.25	N/A	0.5
Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2015)	None	Pseudo-Flexible	2	3	4	Cable Driven	0.33585	N/A	0.44
Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2016)	Walking	Rigid	6	2	1-6	N/A	2.4	N/A	0.5
Rone et al. (2017)	None	Rigid	6	4	6	N/A	0.449	N/A	0.48
Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2017)	Walking	Pseudo-Flexible	12	4	3	Revolute Motor	3.96	N/A	0.5118
Saab and Ben-Tzvi (2016)	Walking	Pseudo-Flexible	2	3	2	Revolute Motor ³	1	N/A	0.12
Saab and Ben-Tzvi (2017)	Walking	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	0.3	15	1.0
Sadati and Meghdari (2017)	Walking	Rigid	1	3	2	N/A	0.026, 0.00753	N/A	0.106, 0.116
Shin et al. (2011)	Wheeled	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Yu et al. (2017)	Hopping	Rigid	1	1	1	N/A	1.5	28.5	0.4

¹(1 Active, 9 Stiffness Adjustment) ²(10 Active, 2 Passive) ³(Cable Driven)

Table 5. Comparison of control system classification with paper structure. In addition to the classifications specified in figure 5, 0 indicates a tail with no control system.

Paper Category	Control System Classification					
	N/A	0	1	2	3	4
Abstract Model	Machairas and Papadopoulos (2015b); Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2014, 2016); Saab and Ben-Tzvi (2017)	Ren and Hong (2010)	Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2007)	-	Graichen and Hentzelt (2015); Iwamoto and Yamamoto (2015); Mutka et al. (2013); Patel and Braae (2015); Xiaoyun et al. (2015); Yu et al. (2017)	Machairas and Papadopoulos (2015a); Sadati and Meghdari (2017); Shamsah et al. (2018); De and Koditschek (2018)
Modelling & Simulation	Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2015); Saab and Ben-Tzvi (2016); Shin et al. (2011); Rone et al. (2017); Iwamoto and Nishikawa (2018)	-	Karakasiliotis et al. (2012)	-	Rone and Ben-Tzvi (2017); Liu and Ben-Tzvi (2018)	-
Experimental	Brill et al. (2015)	Jusufi et al. (2010); Kim and Shell (2017); Ren et al. (2009); Kim and Shell (2018)	Casarez et al. (2013); Kohut et al. (2012); Patel and Boje (2015); Simon et al. (2018); Jovanova et al. (2018)	Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2008); Heim et al. (2016); Kessens and Dotterweich (2017); Kwak and Bae (2015); McInroe et al. (2016); Santiago et al. (2016); Sato et al. (2016); Takita et al. (2002a,b, 2003); Xiuli et al. (2016); Rone et al. (2018); Saab et al. (2018a); Casarez and Fearing (2017, 2018)	Briggs et al. (2012); Chang-Siu et al. (2011); Jianguo et al. (2013, 2015b,a); Johnson et al. (2012); Kohut et al. (2013); Libby et al. (2012, 2016); Patel and Braae (2013)	Aiello and Crespo (2013); Chang-Siu et al. (2013); De and Koditschek (2015); Guarnieri et al. (2009); Guan-Hong et al. (2014); Patel and Braae (2014); Pullin et al. (2012); Wenger et al. (2016); Saab et al. (2018c)

Table 6. Non-unique tail functions operating in free space.

Function	Diagram	Description	Papers
Aerial Reorientation	<p>Roll Axis</p> <p>Pitch Axis</p>	<p>The robot either jumps or moves off an edge. Whilst airborne, the tail is used to correct any torques induced on the robot so it lands with the correct orientation. This can be in the pitch or roll axis.</p>	<p>Briggs et al. (2012); Chang-Siu et al. (2011); De and Koditschek (2015); Jianguo et al. (2013, 2015b,a); Johnson et al. (2012); Libby et al. (2012, 2016); Guan-Hong et al. (2014); Wenger et al. (2016); Shamsah et al. (2018); De and Koditschek (2018); Yu et al. (2017) (Total: 14)</p>
Locomotion Stability	<p>Roll Axis</p>	<p>The robot walks or drives over a rough surface. The tail is used to correct torques induced by the unstable motion of the robot to prevent it falling over.</p>	<p>Berenguer and Monasterio-Huelin (2008); Heim et al. (2016); Takita et al. (2002a,b, 2003); Xiuli et al. (2016); Rone et al. (2017, 2018); Simon et al. (2018); Saab et al. (2018a); Iwamoto and Nishikawa (2018); Liu and Ben-Tzvi (2018); Saab et al. (2018c) (Total: 13)</p>
Induced Turning	<p>Yaw Axis</p>	<p>The tail is used to initiate a yaw torque on the robot, enabling it to have a smaller turning circle.</p>	<p>Casarez et al. (2013); Kohut et al. (2012); Pullin et al. (2012); Saab and Ben-Tzvi (2017) (Total: 4)</p>
Turning Stability	<p>Roll Axis</p>	<p>When a fast moving robot makes a turn, the tail is used to minimise roll torques to prevent it falling over.</p>	<p>Aiello and Crespo (2013); Kohut et al. (2013); Patel and Braae (2013); Patel and Boje (2015) (Total: 4)</p>
Velocity Change Stability	<p>Pitch Axis</p>	<p>When a fast moving robot undergoes acceleration (or deceleration) the tail is used to minimise pitch torques to prevent it falling over.</p>	<p>Kwak and Bae (2015); Patel and Braae (2014) (Total: 2)</p>