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Master Thesis

**Master Thesis:**

**Lunar Crater Detection via Deep Learning and its  
Application for Age Estimation**

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## 1 Introduction

Studying impact craters present a valuable information about the geology of planets and characteristics of the surface. Computation of crater density has provided a gateway for the establishment of evolution of planet terrains chronologically [Martins et al., 2009]. This study provide not only the information about geological processes of the planet but also the history of our solar system. According to geologists impact craters are the only modifying and surface forming processes for other planets and moons of all planets [Koeberl, 1994]. Impact craters have also been a useful source of information for planetary scientists in providing the relative age of surfaces. If the relationship between crater size and impact energy is known and flux caused by the impact is understood then craters with larger densities indicate older surfaces [Ivanov, 2002].

Various processes alter crater populations especially of those with smaller diameters [Opik, 1965] more often in planets with dense atmosphere resulting in deviations in the crater size-frequency distributions (CSFD). Such processes are: deceleration, ablation, fragmentation of meteors while passing through the atmosphere prior to surface impact and postformation modification of craters by erosion and deposition. Therefore, crater counts with relatively smaller diameter (i.e. diameter  $< 0.01$  km) are at a larger risk of representing an age which could be misinterpreted if the modeled production function does not take into account the factors responsible for altering CSFD in an observed range of diameter [Hartmann, 1981]. Moreover, several factors may lead to surface age as well as statistical uncertainties because smaller crater's identification is prone to certain biases such as resolution limits, illumination effects, compact crater count areas or limited number of craters [Soderblom, 1970].

In case of earth's Moon, modeling of impact craters depends on the knowledge of age-dated lunar samples with correlation to observed CSFDs [Williams et al., 2018]. Chronology is a system composed of two elements such as a production function describing the CSFD shape and a chronology function which is related to the accumulation of craters density to absolute time. Both of these functions collectively provide a predicted CSFD or isochron for a given time length a surface has been under crater strikes. This is valid for lunar surface as Moon has no atmosphere. This chronology can also be applied to other solar system objects but with an addition of factors such as impactor flux and surface gravity [Ivanov, 2002].

If CSFD and the diameter of crater is known then age of the lunar surface can be determined using both of these parameters. It is only possible to determine the age of the same area where crater count has been performed. There are production functions proposed by planetary scientists which provide an approximation to surface age if CSFD and crater diameters are known. The examples of such functions are Hartmann Production Function (HPF) and Neukum Production Function (NPF).

Crater counts provides the frequency of crater distribution of a certain area. This can be performed by counting craters manually. This task could not only be time consuming but also expensive and labor intensive depending upon the number of images and amount of craters present in images. Satellites are the source of images which provide opportunity to count craters depending on the type of cameras on board. Also number of craters in a certain area may change with a passage of time which would mean that possibly same task for the same surface has to be performed again.

Since early 2000 many missions and satellites have been deployed to Moon for research purposes including crater studies. LRO (Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter) is one of the satellites on lunar mission operated by USA and is collecting lunar images since 2009. LRO has gathered millions of images since its launch. Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera (LROC) was specifically designed for the assessment of meter-scale and smaller features to help carry out safety analysis for future lunar landing sites on moon including polar region. The Narrow Angle Cameras (NAC) mounted on LRO are able to detect craters with diameter of 2.5m or greater [Robinson et al., 2010]. It is common to find craters less than 100m in diameter on lunar surface [Robinson et al., 2010]. Now with this information these images can be utilized to count craters. Traditional methods of counting craters are manual by visual inspection of images. This approach is not practical when dealing large amount of images with craters of various sizes on either Moon or any other planet. But to achieve this task through computers there is a demanding processing hardware requirement.

Images taken from LRO are large in size (resolution of 1.009). The data is available publicly and can be seen or downloaded through this link (<http://wms.lroc.asu.edu/lroc/>). Such images cannot be processed without a competitive machine. There are methods developed to perform image processing tasks which are highly dependent on a machine's memory and performance. Therefore, developing techniques without advancement in computer technology was simply not enough. This problem was already known during 1960s and therefore it lead to the development of Graphical processing unit (GPU). A GPU performs quick math calculations and frees the space for CPU to do other tasks. Unlike CPU it has thousands of cores designed for multi-tasking. A much needed hardware to perform computationally expensive calculations without exhaustion.

In 2000s many companies like Intel, Nvidia and AMD/ATI stepped into the race of manufacturing faster GPUs and dominated market. This competition continues till today and GPUs are becoming more and more powerful. Meanwhile, the need for GPUs is also increasing because of big data processing needs. Nvidia introduced a chip capable of programmable pixel shaders i.e. compute color, position, depth or stencil of a pixel, the Ge-Force 3. A short program could now process each pixel before projecting it to the screen, this processing included but not limited to addition of image textures. By 2002 ATI Radeon 9700 the world's first Direct3D 9.0 accelerator was introduced by Microsoft containing support for multiple render targets, floating point texture formats, multiple-element textures and stencil buffer methods. In 2010 Nvidia began a partnership with Audi to power car dashboards. This mainly increased the functionality of navigation and entertainment systems. In 2014 the PS4 and Xbox One were released powered by GPUs based on AMD's Radeon HD 7850 and 7790. Lately RTX was released by Nvidia with the aim of enabling real time ray tracing. This was a new development in computer graphics for generation of interactive images reacting to lighting, reflections and shadows. RTX also includes artificial intelligence (AI) integration like enhancing video processing, graphics and images directly into applications. Today, parallel GPUs are making complex computations in the fields of oil exploration, machine learning, image processing, 3D reconstruction, statistics and even in stock market for stock rates determination.

With this advancement in computer processing ability, complex computation tasks are now possible to perform. That means a human labor intensive task of counting objects can possibly be automated but the problem of detecting objects could be complicated specially when object background is complex. With advancements in computer technology it was no

longer optimum to rely on manual detection of objects. With big data and challenge of solving tasks in limited time, it was required to develop a mechanism that could solve such tasks faster as compared to expensive manual operations and meanwhile limit man power. This gave rise to research in deep learning approaches to solve this problem.

In the past automatic detection of craters turned out to be a difficult task in cases where rims were overlapped, not clear or if image was noisy [Sawabe et al., 2006]. Multiple automated methods were presented by [Sawabe et al., 2006] using the data acquired by Clementine and Apollo. One of the methods was to thin down a set of edge pixels to one pixel using Hilditch's thinning algorithm. The lines were then connected depending upon the direction and length. If the resultant lines were closed with roundness more than 0.8 then lines were regarded as crater.

However in last decade, new techniques have been developed in object detection, classification, localization and semantic segmentation. These methods can now put into application because of GPUs of today, which are not only capable of performing computationally intensive tasks but also shortens the amount of processing time as compared to previous versions of GPUs.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Based on satellite images characteristics of a planet terrain could be complex that can make craters difficult to identify. Some of the satellite images such as Clementine have noise and that pose challenge for detection of degraded features on a planet surface. With high resolution satellite images (like LRO) opened new horizons of research and in recent decade many approaches have been developed to detect craters. These methods range from generalized Hough transformation, crater development algorithms to deep learning which was mainly applied from other areas (such as medical imaging and computer vision) for craters detection. But the main focus remained on medium to large sized craters on digital elevation models. However, an actual need is to detect smaller crater which are less than a kilometer size, not only located at the smooth surfaces and also present on the part of image with a variable level of illumination. An algorithm should be build to detect smaller craters of few meters located on a varying terrain rather than algorithm only able to detect very large craters and those located on a simple terrain. Small crater detection has also more significance compared to large kilometer sized craters because smaller ones are much shear in number and far less abundant than larger ones and therefore large craters can be detected by visual inspection without a substantial overwhelming human effort. However small craters because of vast quantity requires an automated detection approach. Optical images have complexity of shades and background terrain features, therefore detection of craters directly on optical images was largely neglected. Although high resolution images provide an ease for visual identification of small or partially faded craters but increase in data and overcome the visual inspection effort a need for automatic detection algorithm exist and detection of craters with complex features of terrain, shapes and sizes is a challenging task.

## 2 Related Work

Before wide use of deep learning approaches, different machine learning methods were developed to perform the tasks of object detection. [Viola et al., 2001] proposed a method which was composed of three key components. Firstly objective was to introduce a different image representation called Integral Image to compute rectangle features of the object. The second was an algorithm based on AdaBoost with a purpose to select critical visual features from large amount of data to get a set of classifiers. Third contribution was to combine those classifiers in a cascade to discard the background regions and only compute object-like regions. This algorithm used Haar basis features and was developed to detect faces.

Human detection methods were reviewed by [Dalal and Triggs, 2005] and they came up with Histograms of Oriented Gradient (HOG) descriptors which experimentally outperformed then existing feature sets including wavelets for human detection. A linear support vector machine or (SVM) was used as a baseline classifier. Test was conducted on MIT pedestrian dataset with mostly upright pose. A more challenging set of 1800 images with different poses and background was introduced to test the performance of algorithm and it was concluded that using locally normalized HOG features in a dense overlapping grid provides better results than Haar-like feature approach for human detection. An algorithm for training support vector machine with a latent structure was proposed by [Felzenszwalb et al., 2008]. This method learn the relationships between HOG features of object parts via a latent SVM which is a semi-convex training problem but once latent information is specified for positive examples then it turns into a convex training. This approach was tested on PASCAL dataset and ranked first in 10 out of 20 classes that entered in PASCAL VOC 2007 competition.

A selective search methodology was introduced by [Uijlings et al., 2013] which combines segmentation and exhaustive search. Same as segmentation, image structure was used to guide the sampling process and similar to extensive search the objective was to detect all possible locations of the object. The author introduced a variety of complementary image partitionings to deal with as many image conditions as possible. The resultant search method yielded 99% recall and a Mean Average overlap of 0.879 over 10,000 locations in the test dataset. Results of this methodology were also evaluated on PASCAL VOC 2012 and PASCAL VOC 2010 with mean average precision (mAP) of 0.350 and 0.351 respectively.

Such algorithms had a noticeable performance but such machine learning techniques had a major requirement which was an involvement of an expert to extract features. Moreover state of the art machine learning techniques also requires a problem to be broken down into different parts and then their results to be combined together at final stage i.e. in SVM a bounding box detection algorithm is needed first to identify all the objects to have histogram of oriented gradients as input to the algorithm that will learn to recognize target objects. These limitations gave rise to deep learning algorithms which are capable of not only handling large amount of data unlike state of the art machine learning techniques but also provide an end to end solution.

Availability of larger labeled dataset and competitive GPUs made it possible to implement a deep learning network and test its performance. A notable development in this field took place when [Krizhevsky et al., 2012] showed that a large deep convolutional neural network was able to classify 1.2 million high-resolution images in contest of ImageNet LSVRC-2010. This network was trained into 1000 different classes. On test data top-1 and top-5 error

rates of 37.5% and 17.0% were achieved which was better than previous state of the art [Krizhevsky et al., 2012]. This neural network had 60 million parameters with 65,000 neurons and it consisted of five convolutional layers, some of which are followed by max-pooling and three fully connected layers with a final 1000-way softmax activation. A 1000-way softmax because of 1000 classes. Non-saturating neurons was used to optimize training time and to reduce overfitting in fully connecting layers drop-out regularization was used, a newly developed method at that time. A variant of this model was also introduced in ILSVRC-2012 competition and a winning top-5 test error rate of 15.3% was achieved compared to 26.2% by the second-best entry.

The best performing methods were complex assembled systems that typically combine low-level image features with a high-level context [Girshick et al., ]. In 2014 an approach presented by [Girshick et al., ] aims to get better performance on semantic segmentation as well as object detection than other networks at that time. The network is called R-CNN by its authors because it combines regions with CNN features. Therefore R-CNN means Regions with ConvNet features. Detection and segmentation requires localization of objects within an image unlike image classification. This proposed scalable detection algorithm achieved mean average precision mAP of 53.3% on PASCAL VOC 2012. R-CNN was also compared to OverFeat network (a sliding window detector based on a similar CNN architecture) and it was determined that R-CNN outperforms OverFeat by a margin of 7% mAP on 200-class ILSVRC2013. OverFeat network had the best result with 24.3% mAP before introduction of R-CNN (mAP of 31.4%).

R-CNN finds a region of interest (RoI) from an image, creating a warped image region for all the RoIs and forward it to convolutional network. Once each of the region is forwarded, bounding box regressors are applied and classification is done by SVM. These processes are done in three separate models in R-CNN. This resulted in slow training. Fast R-CNN introduces several innovations to improve training and testing speed while also improving detection accuracy [Girshick, 2015]. Fast R-CNN takes in an entire image and forwards it to convolutional network to create a feature map. Then it determines RoI and on top of that it applies a single layer of RoI max pooling followed by a fully connected layer. Then softmax classifiers and bounding box regressors are applied. This procedure makes the layer below RoI max pooling trainable which makes Fast R-CNN training a single-stage, using multi-task loss, it also does not require any disk storage for feature caching. Unlike R-CNN, Fast R-CNN uses a single model for feature extraction from regions, dividing them into different classes and returns boundary boxes simultaneously. Fast R-CNN trains very deep VGG16 network 9 times faster than R-CNN and 213 times faster at test-time [Girshick, 2015]. Fast R-CNN achieved 66.1% mAP on PASCAL VOC 2012.

Fast R-CNN used selective search as a proposal to extract RoI which also had a room for optimization. That lead to further development of Fast R-CNN. The next version of this network is called Faster R-CNN. It uses region proposal network (RPN) which takes feature maps of an image as input and generates a set of object proposals and each one of them with an objectness score as output simultaneously. RPNs are trained end to end to generate RoI which are used by Fast R-CNN for detection [Ren et al., 2015]. An alternating optimization was introduced so that RPN and Fast R-CNN can be trained to share convolutional features. Faster R-CNN achieved 70.4% mAP on PASCAL VOC 2012.

Now that it was possible to locate different objects with bounding boxes, could this be ex-



tended to locate exact pixels of each object? This problem is known as instance segmentation and was addressed by the framework introduced by [He et al., ]. This method is called Mask R-CNN which extends Faster R-CNN by adding a branch of predicting an object mask in parallel along with existing branch for bounding box recognition [He et al., ]. This branch takes input as CNN feature map and outputs matrix with 1s and 0s. 1 if a pixel belongs to the object and 0 otherwise. This output is known as binary mask as it only has 1s and 0s. Mask R-CNN adds only a small overhead to Faster R-CNN running at 5 frames per second. It does not loose detection accuracy and has been widely used in computer vision for instance segmentation tasks.

Analysis of surface of other planets is a source of learning about our own planet. How crater impacts can effect the life on Earth, climatic change globally and possible consequences of extreme environmental disaster. It is a known fact that solid planet surfaces are covered with tremendous amount of craters of various sizes and shapes [Melosh, 1988]. Largely they form as a result of meteoroid impacts and also considered as windows into the interiors of solid planets [Honda and Azuma, 2000]. Knowledge of lunar surface features including craters is vital for safe landing on Moon [Ivanov et al., 2015]. Finding age from crater-counts is a commonly accepted method. Therefore, crater-counts provide a much less expensive way to find out the age of surface as compared to Radioactive Age-Dating. As for the second, a rock sample is needed and age can only be determined for a specific area whereas by crater-counts it is possible to find out the age of a larger area. Despite the importance of crater and tremendous amount of data available, for decades crater analysis remained dependent on human vision and manual operation [Honda and Azuma, 2000].

## 2.1 State of the Art

Experimentation with pattern recognition algorithms showed that it was possible to automate crater detection task. These algorithms; originally developed for particle physics, medical imaging or optical character recognition were applied on planetary science problems such as crater detection. Types of identified features were ellipses, circles, ridges and lines etc. Hough transformation was developed originally for high energy physics by Hough in 1959. Later, generalized Hough transformation (GHT) methods were developed and applied for crater detection. One of the application of GHT based method was made by [Honda and Azuma, 2000] for selected lunar images taken by Clementine but this method was not validated for scientific use. An ellipse/edge detection method based on GHT was developed by [Leroy et al., 2001]. The efficiency of this method was measured as ratio of detected craters to true craters, which was about 20% and was acceptable for addressing landing problems.

Crater detection and categorization process through data-mining from large scale scientific image database was proposed by [Honda and Azuma, 2000]. The detection module was based on state of the art image processing method including binarization, circular object detection using Genetic Algorithm and Hough transformation. Their method took normalized image vectors, discrete cosine transform (DCT) components and intensity histograms as input vectors. One of the method suggested by [Leroy et al., 2001] was to detect craters using a multi-scale approach based on voting, and tensors as a representation. This method infer curvature estimation from noisy sparse data. The idea was to obtain the oriented normals of the edge curves by applying this method on edge images. This system was applied on

Phobos to compute a dense saliency map corresponding to the position and shape of the craters.

Crater densities scaling and impact rates with crater size is an issues which could be addressed by automating crater counting [Vinogradova et al., 2002]. Geological feature cataloging could be performed by labeling images manually but only for limited number of features, handling massive datasets and high resolution images i.e. Mars Global Surveyor, it is required to automate feature identification [Vinogradova et al., 2002]. The Continuously Scalable Template Matching (CSTM) algorithm is an image-matching algorithm used by authors in this paper which was able to detect 88% craters with no false alarms.

Various machine learning algorithms were applied for cataloging impact craters including bagging and AdaBoost, SVM and CSTM. It was found that all the approaches, in particular SVM with normalized image patches provides detection and localization performance is substantially superior to boundary based approaches such as Hough transform [Wetzler et al., 2005]. The receiver operating characteristics (ROC) curves of the tested algorithms are shown in Figure: 1

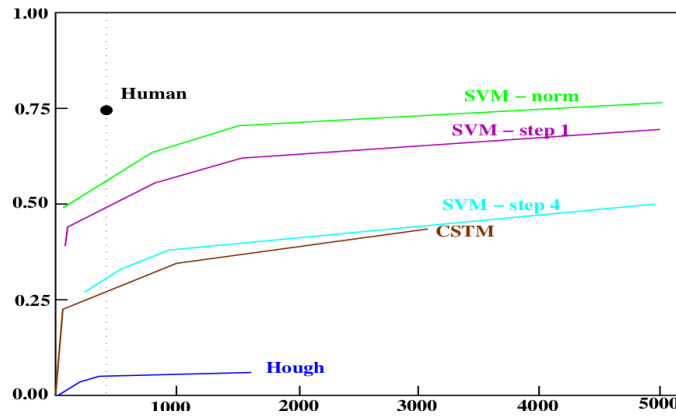


Figure 1: ROC performance of CSTM, SVM and Hough methods. Hough with lowest performance among all other methods [Wetzler et al., 2005].

Impact craters remained some of the most studied features in lunar and planetary science. This lead to development of crater detection algorithms or CDAs based on inspiration from pattern recognition methods. CDAs are an important subject of scientific research, as evident from the amount of publications regarding crater detection in the past. This research range from dating of planetary surfaces, searching of still unknown crater impacts on surface of the Earth and safe landing sites on other planets and asteroids. A notable application of CDAs was introduced by [Salamuniccar and Loncaric, 2010] which was based on edge detection and elevation data. The CDA presented was an improvement to previous CDAs and the purpose was to contribute to Martian crater catalog. With each new planetary and lunar mission, the volume of data increases significantly. This justifies research on automatic detection methods and importance of their role in processing, archiving, retrieving and interpreting large amounts of image data. [Salamuniccar and Loncaric, 2010] provided an overview of 73 CDA-related publications from numerous authors. Working on CDAs has been a challenging task for many reasons, e.g. multiple possible applications of CDA could provide a good solution for one specific problem on the particular planetary surface i.e. dating [Sawabe et al., 2006]

but not necessarily good for other surfaces depending on the terrain features or problems such as autonomous landing on other planets or asteroids [Leroy et al., 2001]. Another challenge of CDA is to distinguish between crater and non-crater objects. Set of features that separates these two depends on the type of surface, properties of illumination and shapes and sizes of craters. Existing algorithms mainly focus on large craters located on simple surfaces which dictates a specific choice of image features [Bandeira et al., 2010]. Therefore, it is not surprising that still no CDA available is robust as scientific community would like and that fits several research groups. Also CDA not only detects craters but also finds crater candidates that needs to be manually rejected, or corrected with diameter by computer-assistance.

Despite of extensive research in CDAs, no algorithm became a standard tool for planetary science practitioners and crater counts continued to be done via visual inspection even as high resolution datasets keep on increasing [Bandeira et al., 2010]. Crater appearance in an optical image depends on their level of degradation, inter morphologies (such as presence of central peaks, central pits, peak rings and wall terraces etc.), amount of overlap on other craters, quality of image (which includes illumination angle and surface properties) and on size that might differ by the order of magnitude. A notable advancement in CDA was proposed by [Bandeira et al., 2010] which used the approach of applying series of filters for background noise removal and creates a set of features that look for the characteristics of crescent-shaped shadow of a crater. In addition to noise removal, texture recognition was added to improve algorithm precision.

Another approach begins with template matching in which image array pixels are rotated, translated or transformed to match pieces of an image. This establishes an image-based paradigm which can be extended to matched spatial features, principle components methods and artificial neural networks [Brunelli and Poggio, 1993]. An image matching algorithm known as The Continuously Scalable Template Matching (CSTM) was implemented and tested by [Burl et al., 2001] on selected lunar images. The algorithm uses templates provided by scientists for generation of a model to detect target in a user specified continuous range of scales. Statistical efficiency of implementation of algorithm was measured on regions of Lunar Maria (images provided by Clementine), which was about 80% with 12% false detection rate. Craters less than 5 pixels were neglected. However, the reduction in performance was caused by complexity in background terrain for crater detection in Europa images.

For crater automation, large focus remained on looking for circular or elliptical shape of edges on crater boundary i.e. Hough transform [Honda and Azuma, 2000]. Boundary based approaches seemed to perform well (relative to image resolution) under certain conditions such as detection of medium to large craters with limited texture in background because of other processes or features. However the performance of these deteriorated with complexity in background terrain or when craters are small. Alternating to boundary-based detection methods [Wetzler et al., 2005] proposed to look directly at the pixel-level pattern in an image. The idea was to automate crater detection process by looking for adjacent bright-dark regions of proper relative size.

Most of the craters are formed as the result of meteoroid impacts. The relative formation age of local area of planet could be estimated when frequency of size distribution of meteoroids and its time variations are known. [Sawabe et al., 2006] proposed an algorithm that did not depend on cameras, spatial resolution or sun illumination. It also did not require to tune any parameters either. This algorithm was improvement to their own previously proposed

algorithm. Their previous method did not include pyramid representation of the image which was included in later method and thus improving accuracy and reducing processing time. The algorithm was applied on images acquired by Clementine and Apollo under different solar elevation. This approach was able to detect craters with diameter larger than 240m. Accuracy rate was validated by comparing with crater count results of [Neukum et al., 1975] which was 80% extraction of craters with multiple interpreters [Sawabe et al., 2006].

Changeability in appearance of craters and surrounding terrain makes passive imaging based autonomous craters detection difficult to be applied. By experimentation it is proven that unsupervised machine learning methods work well with relatively large craters having clear edge information but their efficiency declines with increase in terrain complexity [Meng et al., 2009].

In 2009 [Martins et al., 2009] performed Viola and Jones (2004) algorithm on Mars dataset gathered by the Mars Orbiter Camera onboard Mars Global Surveyor probe. In this paper author claims that no such method existed that is satisfactory for craters detection. Using this approach craters with diameter larger than 7 pixels were detected. Images of 240m/pixel were used as a data set, hence craters larger than 1680m of diameter were detected. The source of images used are taken from Mars orbiter camera.

An automated system for cataloging impact craters was presented by [Stepinski et al., 2009]. The system used digital elevation model of Mars. The process of crater identification consists of two steps, in first step it identifies round and symmetric topographic depressions as crater candidate and second step identifies crater using a machine learning method. This process is AutoCrad system and applicable to any surface represented by a digital elevation model (DEM) [Stepinski et al., 2009].

A crater detection algorithm (CDA) was presented by [Salamuniccar and Loncaric, 2010] which was based on fuzzy edge detectors and it takes input as digital topography data instead of image data. This algorithm claimed to have more correct detections compared to previous CDA. There were also false positives which were removed manually. The data was taken from Mars Orbiter Laser Altimeter. Most of the work in automating crater detection was performed on DEMs.

## 2.2 Deep Learning

Existing approaches to detection techniques can be divided into two categories: supervised (requiring a labeled input data) and unsupervised (fully autonomous). [Stepinski et al., 2009] has discussed both of these approaches and their usage. Unsupervised techniques are based on pattern recognition approaches to identify crater rims in an image as circular objects. Supervised techniques are the machine learning methods to train a classifier which is then used to distinguish between craters and other objects. However, in both approaches features are detected by narrowing down to the set of potential candidates. In a supervised method the narrowing is achieved by thresholding a probability of positive detection by a classifier. In an unsupervised approach narrowing is achieved by thresholding a parameter that measure how well the object fits a circle. In general unsupervised approaches tend to be fast and more appropriate for large sized crater detection; however their performance reduces when dealing challenging terrains and smaller sub-kilometer sized craters. This makes unsupervised not a general purpose crater detection technique [Emami et al., 2015]. On the other hand,

supervised approaches are more robust but usually slower and requires labeled input data, the performance depends on the quality and number of labeled data samples.

In 2015 a CDA was proposed by [Emami et al., 2015] which took into account the optical images and the algorithm worked by employing a multi-scale candidate region detection step which was based on convexity cues and candidate region was verified via machine learning. In this paper a CNN classifier was tested against SVM and it was concluded that CNN classifier outperforms SVM both in terms of recall and precision [Emami et al., 2015]. The data used for both training and testing was partially labeled by NASA scientists. Each image consists of 600x400 and taken from LRO. The result of their experiment is shown in Figure: 2.

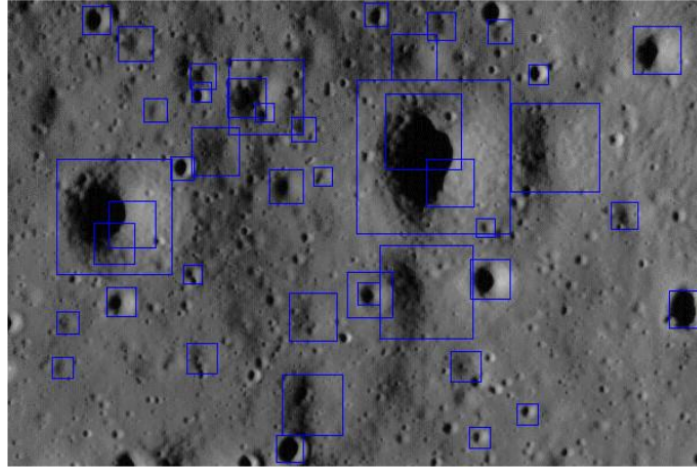


Figure 2: Verified regions in boxes on a test image [Wetzler et al., 2005].

Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter opened a new frontier to automate landforms detection process [Palafox et al., 2017]. Authors came up with two different approaches. These are detection of volcanic rootless cones and transverse aeolian ridges using CNNs and also using SVM with HOG features. They showed that CNNs can detect a wide range of landforms and has a better accuracy and recall than traditional classifiers based on SVMs.

[Wang et al., 2018] presented a method composed of CNN architecture and named it as CraterIDNet which takes remotely sensed planetary images as input and outputs detected craters, their apparent diameters and their positions. The experiments shows that CNN based architecture has the advantages of high robustness, detection and identification accuracy over other methods used by [Urbach and Stepinski, 2009], [Bandeira et al., 2010] and [Ding et al., 2011].

A deep learning model based on CNN architecture was introduced by [Silburt et al., 2019] for crater identification on lunar digital elevation map images also known as DEM. The author also applied transfer learning to craters on Mercury. In this paper random DEM images from LRO and Kaguya were taken as an input data. Thus it was a global gray scale map. The proposed CNN detects only half of the craters per target. The post-CNN recall is lower at  $57\% \pm 20\%$  but detections for craters less than 15 pixels largely improved the post-CNN test recall to  $83\% \pm 16\%$ . The sample of DEM from [Silburt et al., 2019] is shown in Figure: 3.

[Cohen et al., 2016] demonstrated that ConvNet for crater detection outperformed previously

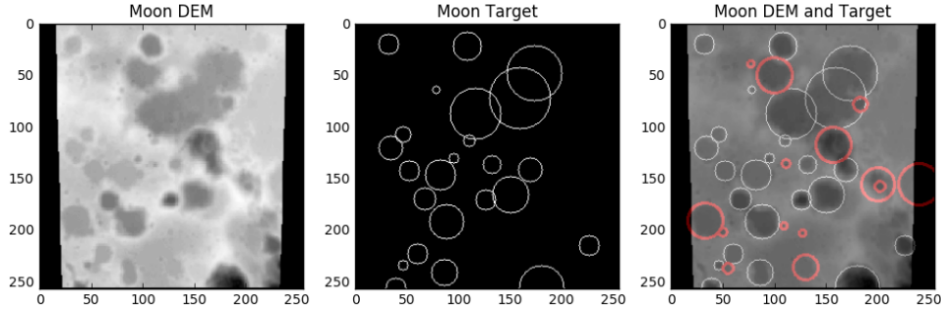


Figure 3: Most left is the Moon DEM sample and middle image shows prediction of craters and most right one shows the missing classifications which are marked in red circles [Silburt et al., 2019].

tested methods including CDAs presented by [Stepinski et al., 2009], [Bandeira et al., 2010] and [Ding et al., 2011] in the same dataset.

## 2.3 Planetary Surface Age Dating

Moon provides an ideal test site for studying crater records, particularly since almost all of the lunar endogenic activities ended more than around 3 Giga years (G.y.) with some exceptions [Hiesinger et al., 2000]. Therefore, in last 3 G.y. crater impacts have dominated to change lunar landscape. Space missions have also studied the Moon extensively and collected samples from Moon have provided a unique opportunity to assign age to craters and areas where accumulated crater are counted [Stöffler and Ryder, 2001]. Therefore, on the Moon it can be estimated that cratering rate is the number of craters of a given diameter that are accumulated at given surface during a given time interval.

Crater population is changed by obliteration processes. If it is assumed that a planetary surface is obliterated by some process and crater population starts to develop then crater SFD represents the production SFD of the projectiles. Many authors have tabulated and generalized large amount of crater-counts data in an attempt to understand this production function. Some of the most commonly known lunar crater SFD are proposed by W. Hartmann and G. Neukum.

### 2.3.1 Hartmann Production Function (HPF)

Hartmann uses a log-incremental SFD representation with a standard bin size for diameter to represent the crater SFD of terrestrial planets. The obtained results are referred as Hartmann production function or HPF. The number of craters per kilometers squared are calculated for a certain diameter range which is  $D_L < D < D_R$ , this range represents a bin where  $D_L$  and  $D_R$  are the left and right boundaries of diameter range respectively. The standard bin width is  $D_R/D_L = 2^{1/2}$ . HPF provides a resultant tabulated data for one specific moment of time, this is the average time of lunar mare surface formation. Findings from most of the lunar mare basalt samples suggests a narrow range of ages between 3.2 to 3.5 G.y. [Stöffler and Ryder, 2001] therefore, the condition of having a fresh surface is satisfied.



Some lava flows on the surface could be younger [Hiesinger et al., 2000] therefore the age variation is represented by a factor of 1.1.

The tabulated HPF is considered reliable for the projectile of a production function because the crater counts from different areas of the Moon are combined and averaged. The incremental form of HPF takes form of a piece-wise three segment power law [Ivanov, 2002].

$$\log N_{2^{1/2}} = -2.616 - 3.82 \log D_L, (D < 1.41km) \quad (1)$$

$$\log N_{2^{1/2}} = -2.920 - 1.80 \log D_L, (1.41km < D < 64km) \quad (2)$$

$$\log N_{2^{1/2}} = -2.616 - 3.82 \log D_L, (D > 64km) \quad (3)$$

The function is represented in Figure: 4. Hartmann chose power law segments in 1960s when this work started. Some of the selections were on the basis of historical reasoning that only the craters branch with diameter range between 1.41km and 64km was well established. At that time there were already existing laws of meteorites and asteroids and Hartmann's attempt was to relate those laws to lunar data.

### 2.3.2 Neukum Production Function (NPF)

Neukum proposed an analytical function describing the cumulative SFD of lunar impact craters. He wrote a series of publications in description of his function. For summaries, see [Neukum and Ivanov, 1994] and [Neukum, 1983]. Neukum showed that the production function is stable since 4 G.y. The time Neukum proposed this function, a full size crater spectrum was known. His approach was different from Hartmann in a way that he computed a polynomial fit to the cumulative number of craters,  $N$  per squared kilometers with diameters greater than the provided values of  $D$ . Where as Hartmann proposed a piece-wise exponential equations for his production function. For the time period of 1 G.y., Neukum's production function can be represented as

$$\log_{10}(N) = a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{11} a_n [\log_{10}(D)]^n \quad (4)$$

In above equation  $D$  is in km,  $N$  is the number of craters with diameters greater than  $D$  per squared kilometers per Giga year and values of coefficients  $a_n$  are provided in table. The above equation is valid for crater diameters from 0.01km to 300km.

On the basis of age assumption NPF was fit to the crater count. It is notable that both HPF and NPF are a good match for the crater diameter ( $D$ ) data under 1km range. However, with  $D > 1km$ , HPF is much higher than NPF and both functions meet again at diameter of approx. 40km. In Figure: 4 it can be seen that the maximum variation between the two functions is a factor 3 around the diameter of approx. 6km. Note that below the diameter of 1km and between 30-100km, both of the functions are same. After 100km both started to decline but HPF declines more rapid as compared to NPF.

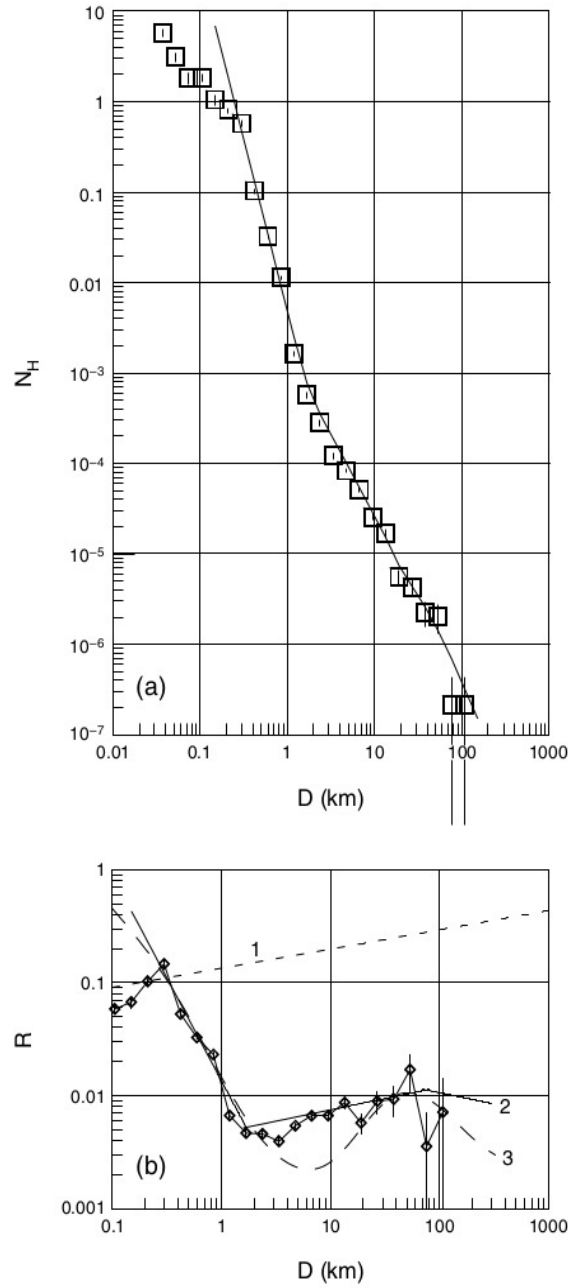


Figure 4: Figure on top shows the representation of the Hartmann production function (HPF). HPF is a function composed of set of points shown in the plot. Straight lines represent the piece-wise power law fitting to the data (equation (15)). Lower figure shows the comparison of Neukum (NPF) and Hartmann (HPF) in the  $R$  plot representation. The maximum discrepancy between HPF and NPF (roughly a factor of 3) is observed in the diameter bins around  $D$  close to 6 km.  $D$  less than 1km and diameter range between 30-100km, both production functions outputs similar results. Fitting the HPF to equation (15), the age estimation is 3.4 G.y. The dashed line 1 represents the approximate saturation level estimated by Hartmann (1995).



### 3 Methods

With multiple lunar missions there are millions of images taken by various satellites which are important source of data for crater detection. Deep learning methods require labeled input data for training so that an algorithm is able to detect objects. Performance of these algorithms increases with increase in training samples. According to size and distribution of lunar craters there can be hundreds of them in one single image. Generating a large labeled or groundtruth dataset is expensive even though a domain expert is not necessarily required for image annotation. Deep neural networks typically require thousands of images for training such as Mask-RCNN. Often transfer learning is also helpful for loss convergence when training on a new dataset. On the other hand, there are deep learning models that have proven to perform well on small dataset with only few hundred images. These shallow networks can also be trained from scratch on a dataset.

#### 3.1 Semantic Segmentation

Image level classification means treating each image as an identical category. In image detection an object is localized and recognized with respect to type of its class. Whereas semantic segmentation is also called pixel-level classification. This is a task of clustering parts of an image together which belong to the same object class [Thoma, 2016]. It can also be treated as pixel-level prediction because it classifies each pixel of an object into its category. However this type of segmentation does not distinguish between different instances of an object.

#### 3.2 Hough Circle Transformation

Hough proposed a procedure for line detection in images. This method was extended to Generalized Hough Circle Transformation for detection of curves in a picture and detailed procedure is provided by [Duda and Hart, 1972]. This has remained one of the widely used methods for circle detection in field of computer vision.

#### 3.3 Instance Segmentation

Instance segmentation provides not only a pixel-level segmentation to an object but also determines the different instances of objects in an image. This addition makes instance segmentation more challenging than semantic segmentation. In last 3 years neural networks have been introduced that are able to perform instance segmentation and also keep better accuracy as compared to state of the art methods. But a successful training of such deep networks requires many thousands of labeled samples.

In this thesis, the proposed method for crater detection with a small dataset is based on an encoder-decoder architecture. This architecture is a slight variation of a neural network also known as U-Net presented by [Ronneberger et al., 2015]. This network is chosen to perform pixel-wise segmentation because of three main reasons; it does not require several thousands of images for training, it does not need transfer learning and can be trained from scratch which makes it robust and it has a simple network structure which can be easily altered to fit

segmentation goals. U-Net has also proven to be an effective network for segmenting single class in satellite data [Snuverink, 2017]. U-Net was originally developed for segmentation of biomedical images and it achieved an average IOU of 77.5% on DIC-HeLa dataset in ISBI cell tracking challenge 2015 which was the best score at that time. A different version of U-Net was applied for Martian craters segmentation by [DeLatte et al., 2019] and 76% accuracy was achieved along with age dating results consistent with human annotations for same geological units. This application demonstrated that CNN offers an advantageous approach to labor-intensive challenging task of satellites image analysis.

### 3.4 Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE)

Histogram equalization considers the global contrast of an image. Therefore in cases where image has high pixel values, such regions tend to loose alot of information as those pixels are stretched further towards 255 and object becomes too bright.

By using CLAHE, the image is divided into small blocks also called tiles (function implemented in OpenCV has default tile size of 8x8). Then each one of these tiles histogram equalized. This makes histogram confined to a small area. It will be amplified if noise is there. Contrast limiting is applied to avoid this problem. The default contrast limit is 40 in OpenCV and pixels with larger values are clipped and distributed to other bins uniformly before application of histogram equilization. After that there are artifacts in tile boardsers which are removed by the application of bilinear interpolation. By applying CLAHE the detection of craters increased up to 40%.

### 3.5 Binarization Methods

Several binarization methods are applied to experiment best suited thresholding for probability maps. These methods are discussed below.

#### 3.5.1 Otsu's Method

This method was presented by Scholar Otsu. It is widely used till today because of its simplicity and effectiveness. Otsu's method determines a threshold value automatically. In lunar images probability map, the histogram has two peaks. Otsu in simple words take the approximate middle value of the two peaks. This is unlike a global thresholding where an arbitrary value is normally chosen. This method works on the principle of minimizing the intra-class variance, defined as weighted sum of variances of two classes. Given in Figure: 15 is the outcome of this method.

$$\sigma_w^2(t) = \omega_0(t)\sigma_0^2(t) + \omega_1(t)\sigma_1^2(t) \quad (5)$$

Here  $\omega_0$  and  $\omega_1$  are the probabilities of two classes which are separated by a threshold  $t$ .  $\sigma_0^2$  and  $\sigma_1^2$  represents the variances of two classes.

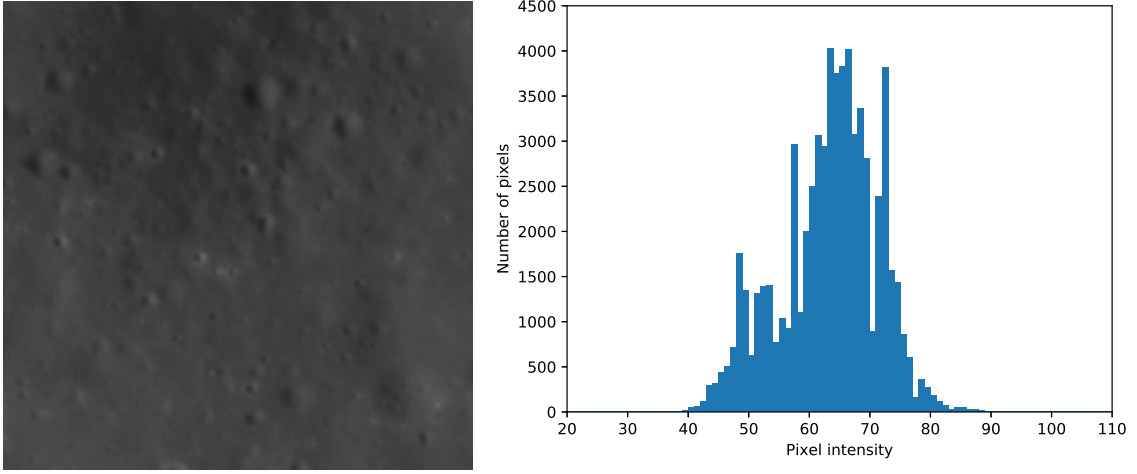


Figure 5: Histogram of an image before contrast limited adaptive histogram equalization

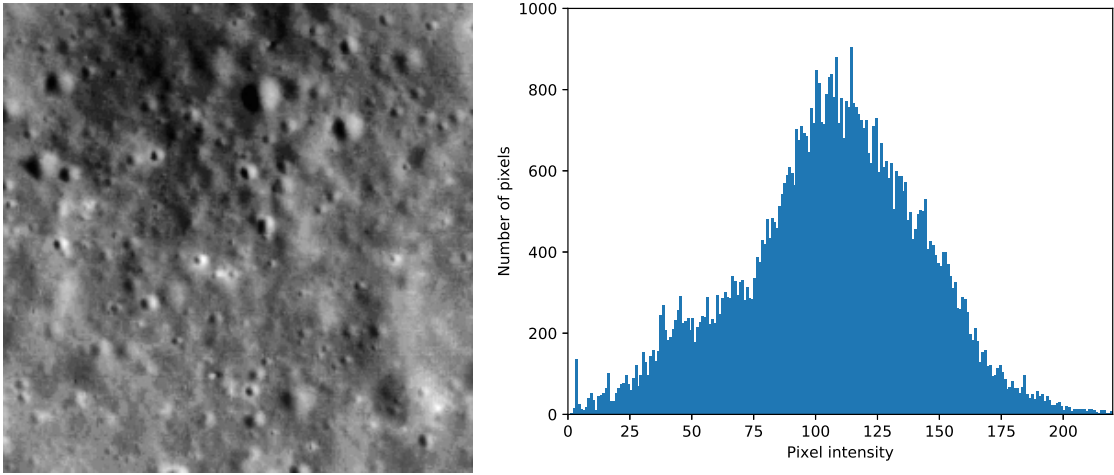


Figure 6: Histogram of an image after contrast limited adaptive histogram equalization

### 3.5.2 Sauvola's Algorithm

It takes grayscale images as input. If an image has three color channels then its necessary to convert that into grayscale image. Savoula proposed to compute a threshold of a grayscale image at each pixel using:

$$T = m \times \left[ 1 + k \times \left( \frac{s}{R} - 1 \right) \right] \quad (6)$$

Here  $k$  is user defined parameter,  $m$  is mean and  $s$  is the local standard deviation computed in a certain window size which is centered on current pixel and  $R$  is the dynamic range of standard deviation.  $R = 128$  with 8-bit gray scale images. Window size for computation of  $m$  and  $s$  is user defined. This method is computationally efficient and relatively works well

on noisy and blurred documents [Szegedy et al., ]. This method performs over-segmentation which can be visualized in Figure: 20.

### 3.5.3 Niblack Method

This method was proposed in 1986 by Niblack. Before introduction to this algorithm, global methods were used for image segmentation which are not capable to preserve the minute details of an image during segmentation. Therefore this method was developed to preserve minute details at local while object separation. A new concept of local window was introduced. Niblack computes the threshold by calculating local mean and standard deviation of pixels value in a local window confined to an image. The equation is given as:

$$T_d = m(x, y) + k \times s(x, y) \quad (7)$$

where  $m(x, y)$  is local mean and  $s(x, y)$  is standard deviation and  $k$  is an image dependent parameter selected manually by the user (normally -0.2 for dark foreground and +0.2 for dark background). The resulting segmentation is not very different from Sauvola's method as can be viewed in Figure: 19.

### 3.5.4 Adaptive Mean Thresholding

In this type of thresholding, algorithm computes the threshold for a pixel on the basis of a small region around it. This results into various thresholds for different regions of the same image. This gives better results for images which are illumination variant. Outcome of this method is given in Figure: 21.

### 3.5.5 Mean Thresholding

This threshold is simply mean of the grayscale values of an image. All the values higher than this mean (which is a float number) are considered to be foreground and rest is background. Output of this method can be seen in Figure: ??.

### 3.5.6 Yen Thresholding

This threshold method takes number of bins used to calculate histogram and returns a threshold based on maximum correlation criterion. It was proposed by [Yen et al., 1995]. Result can be seen in Figure: 17.

### 3.5.7 Li Thresholding

This method is based on minimum cross entropy. The idea is to select a threshold that minimizes cross entropy between thresholded and original image. It was presented by [Li and Lee, 1993]. Thresholding result is shown in Figure: 22.

### 3.5.8 Isodata Thresholding

Histogram based threshold also known as inter-means or Ridler-Calvard method. Threshold is computed by separating the image into two groups of pixels. The resultant threshold lies in the midway between mean intensities of these two groups. That is average of the two. It was proposed by [Ridler et al., 1978]. Figure: 18 shows the outcome of this method.

## 3.6 Evaluation Method

Precision, recall and F1-score evaluate the performance of algorithm. Precision is defined as the percentage of results which are relevant and mathematically written as:

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{\text{True positive}}{\text{True positive} + \text{False positive}}$$

True positives are correctly identified craters and false positives are craters detected by the algorithm but no crater exists on that location.

Recall is defined as the percentage of total relevant results correctly classified by the algorithm and is given by:

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{\text{True positive}}{\text{True positive} + \text{False negative}}$$

In the above equation false negatives are simply missed craters by the algorithms.

For overall evaluation both of these metrics are taken into account and finally F1-score has been computed by the given equation:

$$\text{F1-score} = 2 * \frac{\text{Precision} * \text{Recall}}{\text{Precision} + \text{Recall}}$$

Hence higher the F1-score better is the performance of algorithm and vice versa. Following the experiments of [Emami et al., 2015] a verified region is a true positive if it has more than 40% overlap with a ground truth crater; otherwise, it is a false positive.

## 4 Model Architecture

The model architecture is composed of contracting and expansive paths as shown in the Figure: 8. Like in a typical CNN, the image becomes smaller as a result of convolutional operations. U-net has the same effect and thus left part of this pipeline is referred to as contracting path. It consists of several convolutional operations such that each of two unpadded convolutional layers with an activation of rectified linear unit (ReLU) are followed by a layer of max pooling of the size 2x2. This results into downsampling of the image. During each downsampling step the number feature channels are doubled as seen in the Figure: 8. This part ends up with a dropout function before it starts expanding.

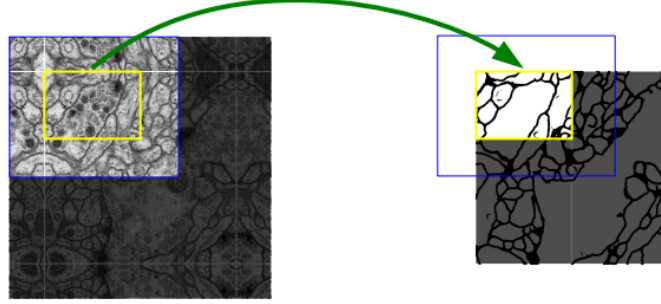


Figure 7: This is example of neuronal structures segmentation. It shows the overlap-tile strategy for seamless segmentation of large images. The yellow area is target for prediction and data inside the blue area is required as in input for prediction. Missing input data is extrapolated by mirroring [Ronneberger et al., 2015].

The right part of Figure: 8 illustrates the expansive path where every step consists of up-sampling of feature map which is followed by a  $2 \times 2$  convolutional operation (also referred to as up-convolution). This halves the number of feature channels. The gray arrow shows the concatenation of corresponding feature map from contracting path where it is cropped from the image. It is then subjected to two  $3 \times 3$  convolutions and each followed up by a ReLU activation function. The cropping is required because of loss of boarder pixels during convolutions. At the final layer a  $1 \times 1$  convolution maps each 64 component feature vector to the target number of classes i.e. background class and crater class. The final layer follows up by sigmoid activation function which determines the output of a class score between 0 to 1. Finally, binary cross entropy determines the loss while training of algorithm. In this model the total number of convolutional layers amounts to 23. It is important to select the input image size so that max pooling operations are applied to a layer with the same x and y size. This allows seamless tiling of segmentation map in output as shown in Figure: 7

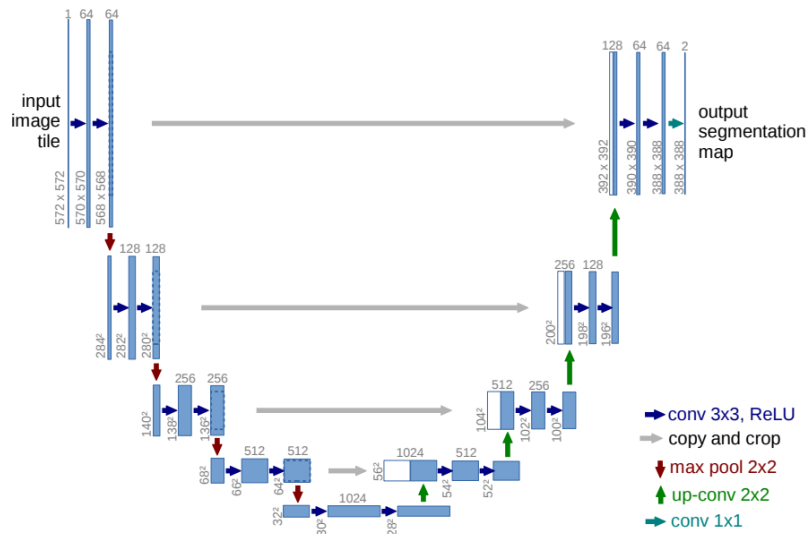


Figure 8: U-net Architecture [Ronneberger et al., 2015].

## 4.1 Convolutional Layer

Convolutional layers essentially extracts a feature map from images. Images are mathematically represented by matrices with three color channels as red, green and blue (RGB). Gray scale images have only single channel. Therefore an image has a size  $h \times w \times d$  where  $d$  is depth represented by number of channels. Convolutional layers includes a filter (also referred to as kernel) which is also composed of  $f_h \times f_w \times d$ . Filter has a height and width smaller than the image size. It slides over (convolves with) the image producing a feature map. This convolution is the sum of element-wise multiplication of filter with the image. It is to be noted that depth of the filter is same as that of the input image therefore it varies with network.

Filter stride is a parameter that needs to be defined before training in convolutional layers. It determines the number of pixels by which a filter shifts at a time. Convolutional layers tend to reduce the output mapping size. A larger stride size will also result in a smaller sized output. Equation shows the relationship between output and input size of an image with a stride  $s$  and filter  $f$ . The size of feature maps decreases by increase in convolutional layers. Row ( $O_x$ ) and column ( $O_y$ ) output size of convolutional layers are calculated as:

$$O_x = \frac{i_x - f_x + 2p}{s} + 1, \quad (8)$$

$$O_y = \frac{i_y - f_y + 2p}{s} + 1 \quad (9)$$

Assuming example of an input image with size  $(256 \times 256)$  and a filter size of  $(3 \times 3)$  having a stride  $s$  of 1 and zero padding  $p$  will result into an output size of  $(254 \times 254)$ . By using additional filters  $n$ , the feature map will be of size  $(254 \times 254 \times n)$ . So, addition of filters will increase the output depth of a convolutional layer.

Example shown in fig: 9 represents a typical convolutional operation without padding and stride of 1. The output 429 in 4x4 matrix is obtained by addition of element wise multiplication of the filter with top left 3x3 portion of the input image. Then filter jumps to next pixel and other values are obtained the same way.

INPUT IMAGE						FILTER			OUTPUT IMAGE			
18	54	51	239	244	188	1	0	1	429	505	686	856
55	121	75	78	95	88	0	1	0	261	792	412	640
35	24	204	113	109	221	1	0	1	633	653	851	751
3	154	104	235	25	130				608	913	713	657
15	253	225	159	78	233							
68	85	180	214	245	0							

Figure 9: Convolutional Operation

## 4.2 Pooling layer

An input image could be large which increases the amount of parameters and introducing a pooling layer helps to reduce the number of parameters. Most commonly used type of pooling

is max pooling. Fig 10 shows an example of max pooling with stride and filter size of 2. The idea is to keep the high values in each quadrant because the highest number represents a particular feature and in the example shown in Fig 10, number 6 is the highest value in this quadrant. It means that the most activated pixel in this quadrant is 6 and same goes for other quadrants. The high values are preserved and lower ones are dropped out which are not as activated. Another pooling layer type is average pooling where averaged output of all the pixels is preserved. As it can be seen in the example below that pooling has reduced a 4x4 matrix to just 2x2 matrix, significant amount of parameters are reduced, in addition pooling may also help in reducing overfitting. The resultant matrix after a pooling operation can be obtained from the eq.(1)

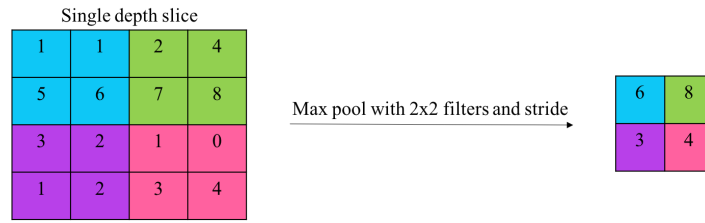


Figure 10: Pooling Operation

### 4.3 Activation Functions

These functions are an extremely important feature of a neural network. These functions decide which neuron (a neuron is nothing but a mathematical function) would be activated. This means whether the information received by a neuron is relevant or should it be ignored. An activation function performs a non-linear transformation on the input signal and forward it as an input to the next layer of neurons.

Without activation functions weights and bias would be simply doing a linear transformation and a linear equation is easy to solve but very limited to the capacity of solving complex problems. Therefore, a neural network without having an activation function is nothing but a linear regression model which will not be capable of learning or performing complex tasks. Image classification or object detection is a complicated task and would require non-linear transformations. These functions make the process of back propagation possible because of the receiving gradients and error which are a measure to update weights and biases.

#### 4.3.1 Sigmoid Function

It is defined as:

$$a = \sigma(z) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-z}} = \frac{e^z}{e^z + 1} \quad (10)$$

where

$$z = Wx_i + b \quad (11)$$



$W$  being weight vector and  $x_i$  is image vector,  $b$  stands for bias

The maximum output of this function is 1 and minimum is 0. Output always lies between values 0 and 1. Plotting a graph of sigmoid function represents its output more clearly:

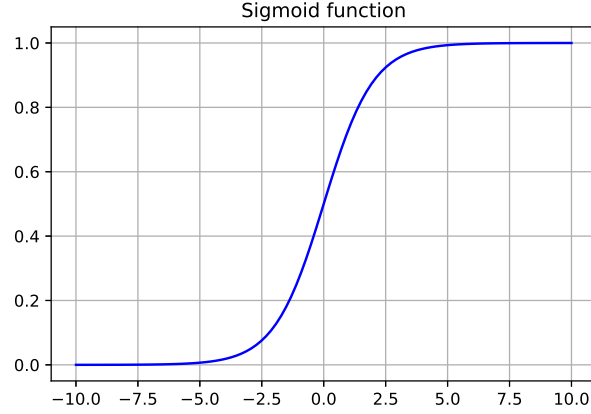


Figure 11: Sigmoid Function

From the graph it can be seen that  $z$  is 0 when the curve is passing through 0.5. In convention a rule can be set if i.e.  $z$  is greater than 0.5 then output is always 1 and if less than 0.5 then it is 0. A notable behavior of this function is that if  $z$  is larger than the dotted region in graph then the derivative of this function is close to zero and same way if it is negative slope is again equal to or close to zero.

This means that it can slow down gradient descent. It also becomes a source of vanishing gradient problem. If the weights are initialized with either very large or very small values then these values saturate the input to sigmoid at very valued region (close to zero or close to one). Even if weights are initialized at a value i.e. 0.2, in a deep network with many layers it will also lead to vanishing gradient problem. In case of only 4 layer network  $0.2^4 = 0.0016$  which is small and will get even smaller in next layers. Also the mean of data is 0.5 which means that data is not centered for the next layer.

It is used for a problem where binary classification is required. In a neural network layer sigmoid must not be used in every layer because of the problems mentioned above. Anyhow, where binary classification is required, it can be useful in the last layer of the network to squash output such as  $1 \geq \hat{y} \geq 0$ .

#### 4.3.2 ReLU Function

It stands for rectified linear unit and defined as:

$$a = \max(0, z) \quad (12)$$

The graphical form is given as:

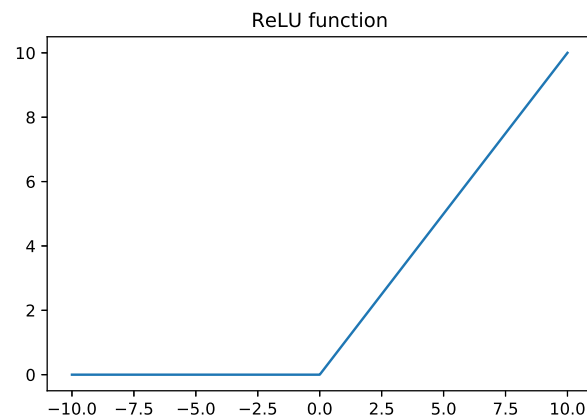


Figure 12: ReLU Function

As seen in the graph ReLU gives an output for a positive value and otherwise the output is 0. It is to be noted that in graph the line looks linear but ReLU is non-linear in nature and it is one of most popular functions used in neural networks because of its simplicity and ability to not let all the neurons fire at once. ReLU is computationally much faster than sigmoid or tanh (written as  $a = \tanh(z)$ ), it does not have exponent computation in such as sigmoid activation function therefore reduces training time significantly in very deep neural networks. [Krizhevsky et al., 2012] observed that training deep CNNs with ReLU is much faster as compared to sigmoid or tanh.

Unlike sigmoid when the receiving input is at the right or left plateau i.e. less than -5 or greater than 5 in Figure: 11 which makes it meaningless to pass a backward pass because of derivative being closer to 0, ReLU only saturate when the input is a negative value. ReLU allows training of larger nets at much less computational costs which means more parameters can be trained at the same computational cost.

#### 4.4 Backpropagation

A CNN requires to update its weight for a given training data in order to reduce loss. Backpropagation is an efficient method for computation of gradients which are required for gradient based optimization of weights or kernel parameters in neural networks [Rumelhart et al., 1988]. This optimization problem refers to minimize the loss function which is performed by the specific combination of weights. Backpropagation requires the computation of loss function at each iteration therefore loss function should be differentiable and continuous.

Initial weights of an untrained network are randomly taken. Without training a network is not able to make meaningful predictions for an input as there is no relation between an image and its groundtruth output yet. The weights in a network are adjusted by exposing a network to training samples which are labeled according the correct class. Before backpropagation there is a forward pass in which an image is taken into the network and first layer of network computes a feature map which is a very low level feature map. Then this activation map is fed to the next layer usually a hidden layer that computers another activation map with

slightly high level features than the previous layer and this goes on till last layer yielding a network output. This results into a feature map which is determined by a loss function how much different it is from that of labeled feature. During backpropagation step of training the aim is to adapt weights in a way that difference between network output and desired output is minimized so that correct features can be extracted from an input image. There are usually multiple epochs till weights are adjusted so that loss is minimized. Backpropagation works on derivation chain rule to minimize loss function and all weights are updated in the negative direction of gradient function. A gradient is a vector containing derivatives. It is computed using partial derivatives and produces a vector field unlike a derivative which is dependent on a single variable. A Jacobian matrix represents gradient. Optimization algorithms such as Adam optimizer minimize or maximize loss function using its gradient values with respect to parameters.

Assuming a multiplication function of two numbers i.e.  $f(x, y) = xy$ , it is possible to derive the partial derivative for either of input:

$$f(x, y) = xy \quad \rightarrow \quad \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} = y \quad \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} = x \quad (13)$$

The derivation function of a variable indicate the rate of change of a function with respect to that variable surrounding an infinitely small region near a specific point.

$$\frac{df(x)}{dx} = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x+h) - f(x)}{h} \quad (14)$$

In above equation the operator  $\frac{d}{dx}$  (a derivative operator) is applied to a function  $f$ . The resultant is a derivative. It can be interpreted as; if  $h$  is very small then a straight line determines approximation of function and slope of the line is derivative. The sensitivity of an expression on a value is determined by the derivative. If  $x = 4, y = -3$  then  $f(x, y) = -12$  and this would return a derivative on  $x \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} = -3$ . It is clear that if value of this variable is increased by a tiny amount, it would create an impact of three times decrement because of its negative sign. It can also be seen by rearranging the above equation such that;  $f(x+h) = f(x) + h \frac{df(x)}{dx}$ . In other way as  $\frac{\partial f}{\partial y} = 4$ , it is also expected that by increasing the value of  $y$  by a tiny amount which is  $h$  would also increase the function output by  $4h$  because of positive sign.

## 4.5 Loss Function

It determines the amount of deviation from the groundtruth or labeled data of the algorithm. Higher loss means the actual outcome is very different than expected result. A high loss function indicates poor performance of the model. If training is carried out in set of batches then a loss function is able to define the average of losses for individual training samples.

There are different loss functions which are mainly chosen according to the type of problem.

## 4.6 Binary Cross-Entropy

As the name suggests, it is a default loss function used for a binary classification problems. It is used where target values are 0 or 1. It calculates a score that summarizes the average difference between predicted and actual probability distributions for a predicting class 1. An ideal value for a cross entropy loss function is 0. Mathematically representation is given as:

$$H_p(q) = -\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N y_i \cdot \log(p(y_i)) + (1 - y_i) \cdot \log(1 - p(y_i)) \quad (15)$$

Where  $y$  is the label and  $p(y)$  is predicted probability for  $N$  points.

## 5 Experiments

### 5.1 Crater Detection Pipeline

After training, to get detected craters from raw images, LRO large images are split into  $256 \times 256$  sized tiles which goes through the following.

1. Each  $256 \times 256$  tile is fed to the segmentation network.
2. Prediction results are stitched back together into the full sized original image. At this stage the resultant is a probability map which is also an image and can be compared to the target input image.

Table 1: Layers in U-Net

Layer type	Comments
<i>Encoder</i>	
Conv2D	Zero padding, ReLU activation
Dropout	Value of 0.5
MaxPooling2D	
<i>Decoder</i>	
UpSamplig2D	Size 2
Conv2D	
Dropout	Value of 0.5
Add	Adding the result of previous dropout with the correspondingly sized Conv2D layer from encoder part
Final Layer	
Conv2D	Zero padding with sigmoid activation

## 5.2 Data Set

The dataset which is in the form of gray scale lunar images is taken from lunar reconnaissance orbiter camera (LROC) archive <http://wms.lroc.asu.edu/lroc/search>. Images from this data source are very large in size (5064x52224) with resolution of 1.009. Which means processing these images would require a competitive hardware. Also each image in this data has several thousands of craters with sizes ranging from very few meters to several hundred meters. Keeping in view the size of an image and amount of craters it contains, it was considered to take one of the image and crop it into several small images of equal size and width. This dimension was chosen based upon the ease for annotation process. Smaller image size would mean less craters to annotate in a single image and therefore more number of images in training set which would make data handling such as pre-processing and post-processing simpler. The amount of cropped images are 300 each with size 350x350 and are gray scale images.

## 5.3 Pixel Normalization

Normalization is a key step in the preprocessing pipeline for any deep learning task. Normalization is also very important for medical images and there are a variety of methods for doing this. The aim of normalization is to remove heavy variation in data that does not contribute to the prediction process and instead accentuate the features and differences that are of most importance. Normalizing image inputs: Data normalization is an important step which ensures that each input parameter (pixel, in this case) has a similar data distribution. This makes convergence faster while training the network. Data normalization is done by subtracting the mean from each pixel and then dividing the result by the standard deviation. The distribution of such data would resemble a Gaussian curve centered at zero. For image inputs we need the pixel numbers to be positive, so we might choose to scale the normalized data in the range  $[0,1]$  or  $[0, 255]$ .

## 5.4 Pre-processing

In this step before training of Neural Network images are processed for annotation and extracting labeled masks for the preparation of input data set for training. It involves following step.

- Image Annotation
- Extraction of Binary Masks

### 5.4.1 Image Annotation

It is one of the most important tasks in computer vision problem related to deep learning. This task is done by human, images are annotated with labels. These are established by the annotator who can perform this task on the basis of simple instructions. No skilled labor is required to do this task. These labels carry information to the Neural Network about what

are the target features in image. In this particular project there is only one label which is "crater" and has shape of a circle.

Annotation (labeling) could be laborious and time taking task. It is specially required when a network is not trained on the same type of class as required for predictions. In the case of lunar craters, there is not a great amount of work that has been done before in terms of machine learning and finding already annotated data set seems difficult to find. Therefore labeling was needed for training purpose.

After performing few annotation experiments from the above mentioned tools, VGG Image Annotator was found most simple and faster to annotate lunar crater dataset. This tool stores annotations in the form of a json format. Once the labeling is complete, a large json file represents the craters with a center point as x and y coordinates and radius respectively.

In Figure: 13, images in the first row are part of the training dataset and below them are the annotations. Images marked with circles on craters are not intended to be used for the training of algorithm, those are only visualizations to labeled data so that wrong annotations could be removed or missing ones could be added.

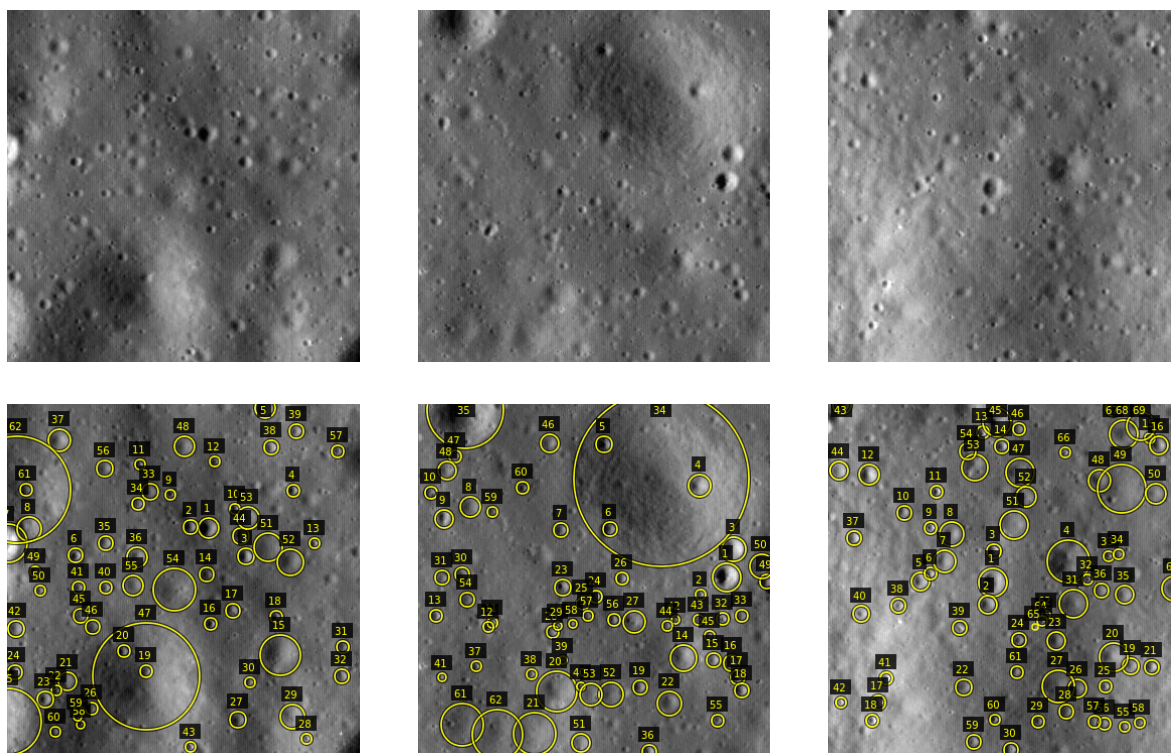


Figure 13: Example of cropped images and corresponding labeled images. Annotation is performed using VIA tool

#### 5.4.2 Extraction of Binary Masks

Like mentioned before the result of these annotations (json) is projected to get the binary masks of craters. These masks are binary images that represents the black and white pixel values of images. White pixels means craters and black means background class as shown in

the Figure: 14. White circles are craters belonging to Figure: 13. These provide learning objective to Neural Network that how the shape looks like and what features to learn. These binary masks have pixel values either 0 or 255 and are of the same shape along  $x$  and  $y$  as of the images. These masks are normalized in side the algorithm architecture to values 0 and 1.

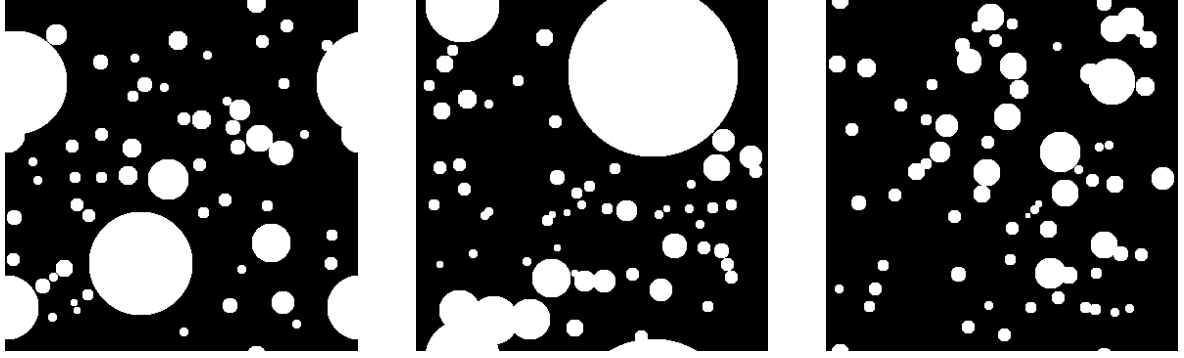


Figure 14: Visualization of binary masks after projection from annotated (json format) images that belong to Figure: 13

#### 5.4.3 Data Augmentation

To create larger dataset without additional annotations, data augmentation is necessary. Creation of a larger dataset is done to achieve better training for the algorithm. Augmentation creates multiple images out of one image which means larger dataset for training of algorithm and thus achieve better performance on test data. Therefore every training image is randomly augmented in following ways:

1. Rotation: Random rotation of images from  $0^\circ$  to  $360^\circ$  angle.
2. Translation: Random change in shift in  $x$  and  $y$  direction of image between -4 to 4 pixels.
3. Flipping: Image is flipped with a factor of 0.5 as probability.

The images are randomly perturbed during training so that augmentation can have maximum effect. This way model have a low probability of seeing same type of training image more than once. In lunar crater dataset there are no RGB images hence color augmentation is opted out.

### 5.5 Training

The data composed of images and their respective masks is divided into training (80%) and validation (20%) data set. This percentage practice is typical in machine learning, however it does not have to be always at this rate. In case of large data set i.e. several thousands of images, 60% or even less can be set for training. In this particular case there is not test data taken out from the data set because of limited annotations. As mentioned in introduction, test data is taken from another thesis student who has labeled all the craters manually.



The input images along with their corresponding segmentation maps are utilized to train network with stochastic gradient decent implementation of Keras (originally written in Cafe [Ronneberger et al., 2015]). Inside training pipeline, the convolutions are unpadded which leads to a smaller output size after every layer. This decrease in size is of the factor of constant border width. The batch size is reduced to a single image to minimize the overhead and utilize maximum GPU memory. In this configuration momentum is kept high (0.99) such that a larger number of already seen training samples determine the update in ongoing optimization step. Momentum helps to accelerate gradients vectors in the right direction. A softmax function over the final feature map combined with cross entropy loss function determines the energy function. In softmax function as defined in eq.7,  $z_j$  denotes the activation in feature channel  $j$  at the pixel position  $z \in \Omega$  with  $\Omega \subset \mathbb{Z}^2$ .  $K$  is the number of classes and  $f_j z$  is the approximated maximum function. This means that  $f_j z$  will be close to 1 for  $j$  with maximum activation and vice versa for other values of  $j$ . The cross entropy function penalizes each deviation of  $q(x)$  from 1 as defined in eq.1.

The weights are saved in a checkpoint when losses are less than previous saved checkpoint. Any of these saved weights could be utilized to apply on a test dataset but definitely saved weights with best performance on validation dataset is the best choice to be deployed on a test dataset.

## 5.6 Prediction

The best trained model is used for prediction on test dataset. Predictions yield a probability map of each image in which light pixels depict maximum likelihood and dark pixels represents less probability of crater existence. Such heat map of one of the test images is shown in binarization methods.

Trained model is used to predict on two testsets. First one is similar to training dataset but test images are not seen by algorithm during training or evaluation. Second dataset is annotated by [Polegubic, 2020] which has a different sun illumination angle as well as incidence angle of the spacecraft. Number of experiments are performed using several binarization methods at different ranges from their respective threshold values. These results are given in Table: 2.

Apart from region proposal algorithm, Hough circle transformation is also used for circle fitting but overall results are poor. It does a reasonable job of detecting some of large-sized or medium craters but overall performance is quite bad compared to SVM and CSTM [Wetzler et al., 2005]. Hough circle fitting on one of the test images can be visualized in Figure: 24.

## 5.7 Post-processing

The resulting predictions from CNN model are post processed in which the amount of detected craters are counted along with respective diameters and location by using region proposal algorithm proposed by [Burger et al., 2009] on binarized images by several binarization methods discussed in binarization section. The test images are taken from similar dataset to training with same sun illumination angle as well as with different illumination (geographic



location of Apollo 17) where number of craters are annotated by [Polegubic, 2020]. The age of this location is already known. Therefore by identifying CSFD and crater diameters it is possible to estimate age which is plotted in a log-log plot.

## 5.8 Results and Discussion

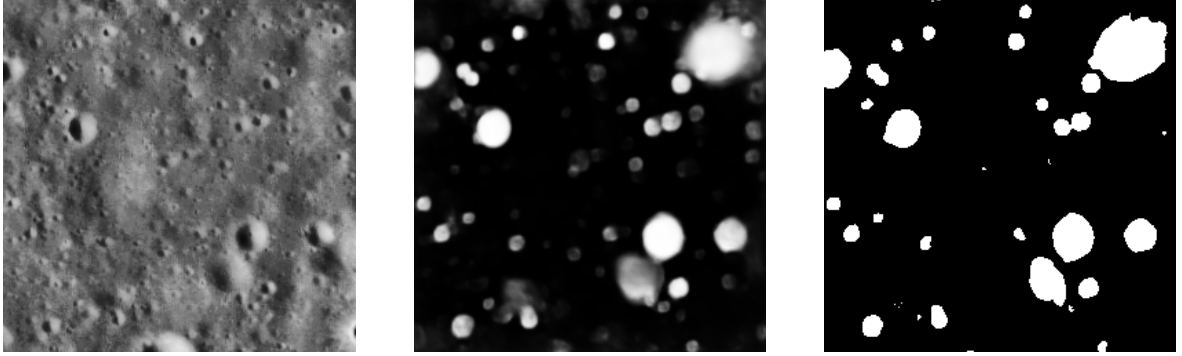


Figure 15: Otsu thresholding

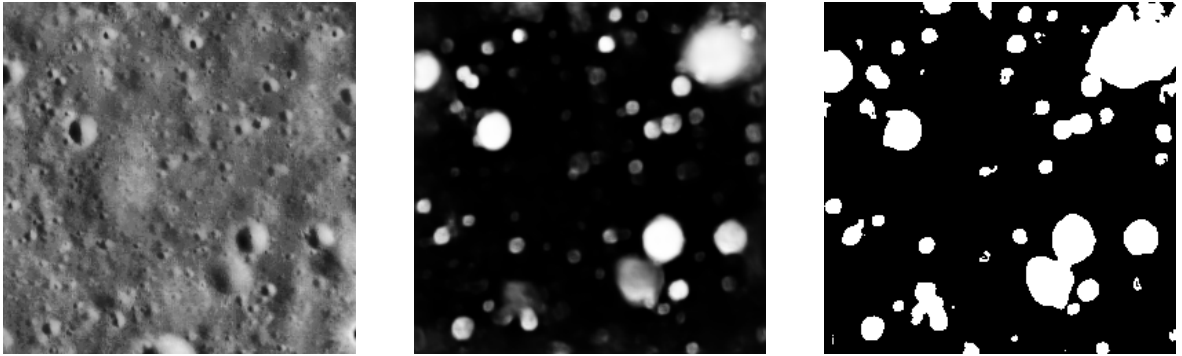


Figure 17: Yen thresholding. Right most image is the thresholded image of the predicted probability mapped image in the middle. Most left is the actual image.

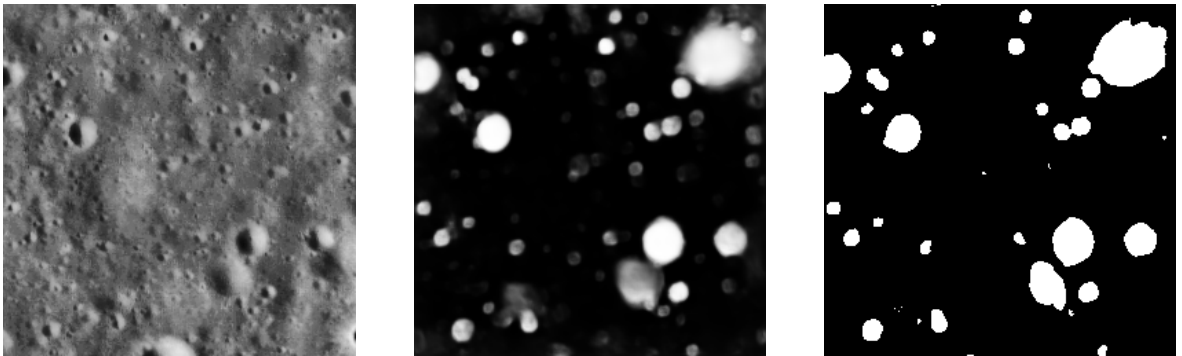


Figure 18: Isodata thresholding. Right most image is the thresholded image of the predicted probability mapped image in the middle. Most left is the actual image.

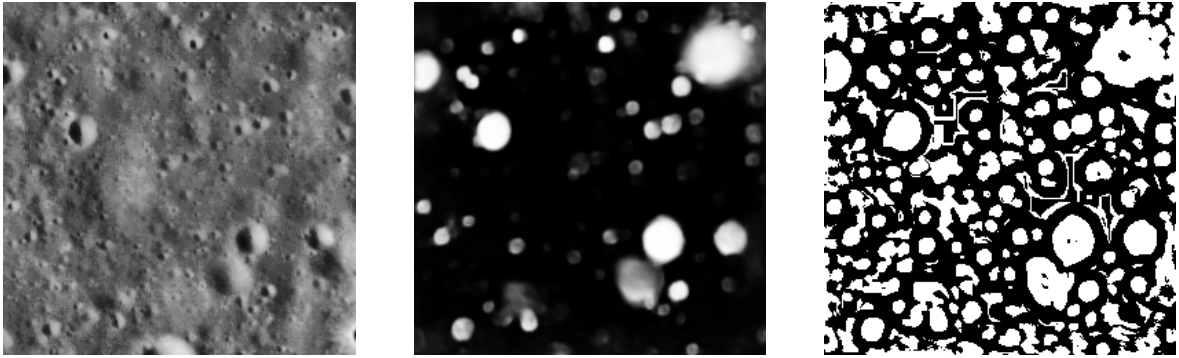


Figure 19: Niblack thresholding. Right most image is the thresholded image of the predicted probability mapped image in the middle. Most left is the actual image.

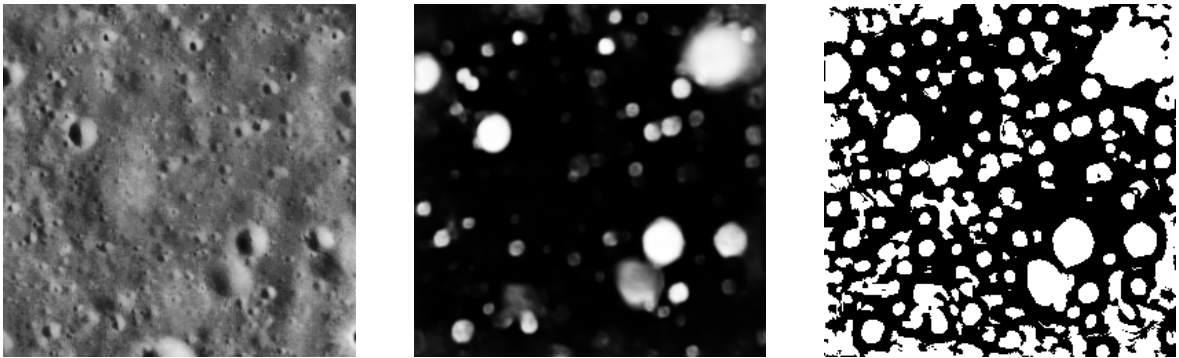


Figure 20: Sauvola thresholding

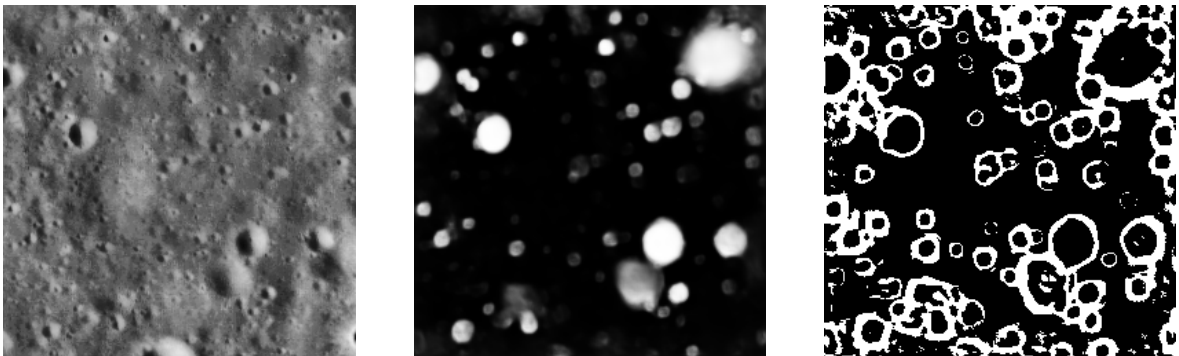


Figure 21: Adaptive mean thresholding. Right most image is the thresholded image of the predicted probability mapped image in the middle. Most left is the actual image.

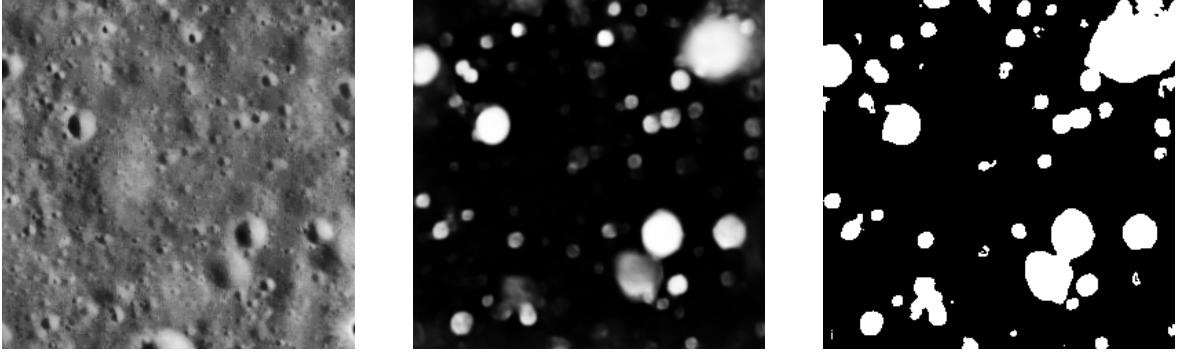


Figure 22: Li thresholding. Right most image is the thresholded image of the predicted probability mapped image in the middle. Most left is the actual image.

Table 2: F1 scores on applied binarization methods on lunar crater probability map. First row shows the percent decrease (indicated with a negative sign) and percent increase of binarization method.

	-50 %	-40 %	-30 %	-20 %	-10 %	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%
Otsu	51.9	53.3	53.0	51.7	52.8	51.9	50.7	50.1	47.9	46.7	45.9
Isodata	47.6	49.2	47.7	48.4	48.6	46.9	47.4	47.6	44.7	44.6	44.1
Yen	36.7	38.7	41.4	44.3	45.1	45.8	45.8	47.7	48.3	49.2	49.4
Li	36.7	38.7	44.2	44.4	45.2	45.8	45.8	48.2	48.4	49.5	49.3
Mean	32.5	35.1	36.0	36.7	38.8	40.1	42.6	44.4	44.6	46.0	45.8
Adaptive mean	2.2										
Adaptive Gaussian	9.3										
Sauvola	14.0										
Niblack	9.3										

Experimental results given in Table: 2 are performed on [Polegubic, 2020] dataset. The dataset consists of a single image of the size 3130x2427 pixels and it is cropped into several 256x256 images for predictions. Cropping is done because the algorithm takes this input size for both training and prediction. Then prediction is performed on all the images and resulting predictions are concatenated together in an order similar to the original image. Then the experiment presented in Table: 2 shows computation of F1-score on several binarization techniques to find out which one yields highest F1-score.

Scores given in Table: 2 are taken as benchmarks for image binarization. It can be seen that the F1-score increases by increasing threshold for methods like Yen, Li and Mean but for Otsu and Isodata it decreases slowly by further increasing threshold. The thresholding methods results into slightly over or under segmentation in the case of crater detection. It can be seen that Otsu and Isodata results into a high threshold value thus by decreasing threshold it is likely that F1-score might increase. Rest of the methods results into over segmentation that specially penalizes recall thus resulting F1-score is lower in comparison. This makes sense and observed in experimentation.

Relationship between precision and recall of different filters is shown in Figure: 23. Adaptive Mean, Adaptive Gaussian, Sauvola and Niblack are not shown in graphs because of their poor performance with respect to F1-scores as shown in Table: 2. It is clear that by setting higher threshold reduces recall but increases precision. This can be observed from Otsu and Isodata methods as both results into higher threshold values. The difference between recall and precision is obvious only if the segmenter is strongly over or under splitting [Badrinarayanan et al., 2017]. In any of the case precision can be misleading as evaluation metric because it favors under segmentation. Contrary to precision, recall is does not favor under or over segmentation, therefore F1-score is taken into account as the evaluation metric for segmentation accuracy. From graphs it can be noted that Otsu and Isodata provides a good trade off between precision and recall thus results into higher F1-score than other methods.

Table 3: Patch wise mean F1 scores on test set distribution from dataset split

	Precision	Recall	F1 score
Otsu	77.5	70.6	73.8
Isodata	76.9	70.1	73.3
Li	56.9	80.5	66.7
Yen	51.8	72.9	60.5

Table 3 shows the F1-score on 20 test images taken out from dataset used for training. Computation is performed on each image separately then average of all the images is taken. Given filters are chosen on the basis of experimentation of different filters and their F1 comparison given in Table 2. It can be seen that Otsu has the best precision because of higher threshold value which yields less false positives. High threshold has a drawback of missing small craters which are usually less than 6 pixels and also those which are highly degraded and barely have a shadow. This can be seen by threshold of Li and Yen’s method where recall is high but precision is punished. Overall, Otsu outperforms are the other binarization methods.

Table 4: Patch wise mean F1 scores on a different test annotated from [Polegubic, 2020]

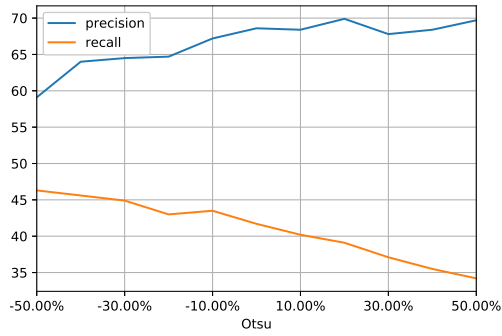
	Precision	Recall	F1 score
Otsu	77.0	55.7	64.6
Isodata	73.9	53.8	62.3
Li	60.7	59.2	59.9
Yen	51.9	53.1	52.5

Table 4 shows F1 results on [Polegubic, 2020] dataset. It is expected to see low F1-score compared to actual test set because of difference of shade length. Precision has not changed too much but there is notable decrement in recall score of methods and after analysing images visually it is concluded to have happened mainly because of different sun illumination angle. Otsu once again outperforms other methods including Isodata by a slight margin.

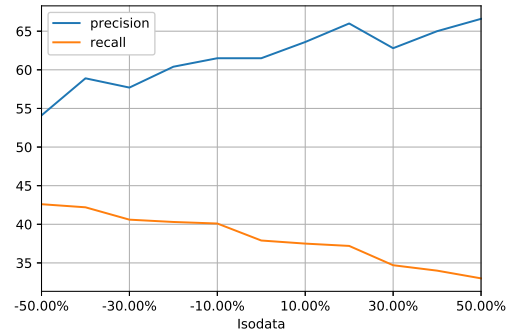
It has been observed that taking a larger image than 256x256, cropping it into 256x256, performing predictions and concatenating prediction images back together to form the actual image results into lower F1-score than computation on every image separately. This is due

to the fact that many of the detected craters are cut into two different images and some are located in such a way on one image there is shadow and other has sun illumination. This results into detection of crater on one image but not on the other which there is one true positive and one false negative which recall is 50% instead of 100%. That is why scores in Table 2 are much lower than Table 3 and 4.

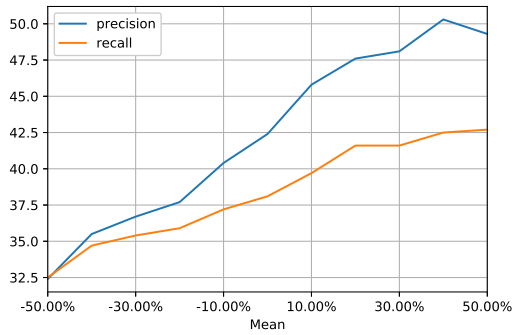
Mask R-CNN which is a deep neural network based architecture was also applied in experimentation. It is observed that performance of this architecture was poor despite of huge success on several types of object classification and instance segmentation problems. It is believed that this happened because of not enough dataset for sufficient training. Lunar craters does not resemble with the classes it is trained on i.e. COCO dataset. Moreover, the complexity of craters in optical images with shades on one side makes it difficult for such a deep architecture to learn from a dataset composed of less than 300 images. However, further research is needed to draw more concrete conclusions in this regard.



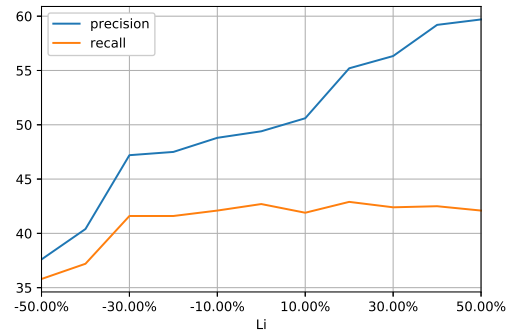
(a) Otsu



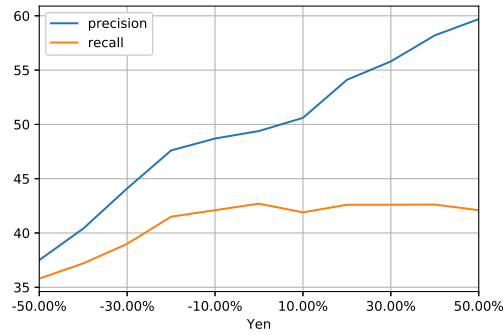
(b) Isodata



(c) Mean



(d) Li



(e) Yen

Figure 23: Relationship between precision and recall on different binarization methods with upto 50% increment and 50% decrement from resultant threshold values at 10% intervals.

Hough circle transformation was also applied for blob detection but the performance is very poor. One of the image is shown with several craters detected by the algorithm but Hough circle method extracted only 4 of them. This phenomena was also observed by [Wetzler et al., 2005] and his performance curves can be seen in Figure: 1.

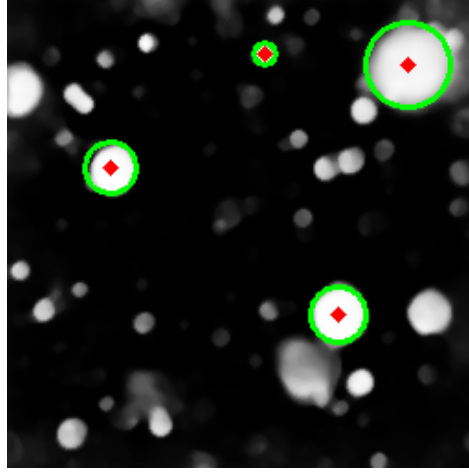


Figure 24: Hough circle fitting on predicted image.

### 5.9 Plotting Age Curve

Another evaluation is comparison of age with the determined age of crater counted surface by planetary scientists.

## 6 Conclusion

Crater automation can be challenging because of variability in appearance of craters and surrounding terrain. U-Net based architecture was applied to detect craters in optical images taken by Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. It is observed that by applying Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE) the detection is increased up to 40%. The resulting probability or heat maps were subjected to several binarization methods to create blobs for the lighter pixels in an image and Regional Proposal algorithm (implemented in scikit) was applied to detect blobs along with their respective diameters. Experiments show that Otsu's binarization method performs best even though Otsu's threshold creates an under-segmentation map.

It is also observed that cropping a large image and performing predictions on smaller cropped images will result into artifacts when segmented maps are patched together. After binarization of patched large image, it results into addition of false positives on reflection to artifacts which penalizes F1-score and has been observed in Table: 2, therefore it makes more sense to perform image wise binarization and calculate F1-score on single image basis.

Several deep learning architectures have been applied to solve crater detection problem but largely are experimented with digital elevation models which eliminates small craters. In this thesis, U-Net was applied on optical images and it was tested on a proportion of dataset used for training and also on a different testset which is annotated by [Polegubic, 2020] with tighter solar longitude angle as compared to training dataset. An F1-score of 73% was achieved on first testset whereas change in solar angle reduced F1-score to a value of 64%.



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