

Thermal Interaction In Spatial Augmented Reality

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ABSTRACT

I will discuss two approaches in this paper; one approach goes over the use of thermal sensors to be able to utilize any real object with mobile technology and the other uses spatial augmented reality as a tool for 3D data visualization. Taking both of these ideas and putting them together is the goal of this paper. Imagine being able to interact with 3D data visualization, without having to actually touch an electronic device. This can reduce the amount of electronic devices needed for modern life.

Keywords

thermal interaction, 3D data visualization, augmented reality, AR, spatial augmented reality, SAR

1. INTRODUCTION

Imagine being able to touch a table and have a phone know where was touched. Now think of the same scenario, but this time the phone says the number 0 was pressed because the area touched corresponded to the number 0 on a dial pad see figure 5. Kurz [2] wrote a paper on this very topic. Being able to use thermal technology to accurately tell if a surface was touched by a finger and where. Kurz [2] states that as wearable technology becomes more prominent, alternative solutions to touch screens will be sought after. With that in mind being able to interact with technology with a screen would help advance the wearable technology.

Now think of a table that has a cone on it with projectors displaying data on cone. This is how Thomas et al. describes one of the ways to utilized spatial augmented reality as a tool for 3D data visualization (See figure 6). Using technologies to track where the person being able to move the cone to define a new visualization. Also mentioning the scalability of the proposed system. CAVE systems would be the larger versions of the table-top design mentioned above.

I will discuss both and then joining them together in a way to minimizes the limitations that each has. Showing

the possible applications that would be possible when joining these two methods.

2. BACKGROUND

Before starting this paper there are some concepts that should be made clear. It will be helpful to have a clear understanding of the differences between virtual reality, augmented reality and spatial augmented reality. Also knowing the concept of six degrees of freedom is beneficial.

2.1 Virtual Reality

Personally, one of the more well known example of Virtual Reality (VR) today is the Oculus Rift. An earlier take on this type of VR from Nintendo in the 90's is the Virtual Boy. Like the Oculus Rift the Virtual Boy is a device that strapped to the head of the user and used to simulate a virtual world mainly through sight. VR is nothing new another early example would be the view master, the stereoscopic toy that had circular inserts requiring the user to look into a light source to illuminate the picture. Being a more primitive the view masters still "artificially creates sensory experiences, which can include sight, hearing, touch, and smell"[6].

2.2 Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality (AR) can be described as augmenting the environment of the real world. It's different from VR because it is based in the physical world instead of the digital world. An example is Google Translate: using the camera from a phone, it translates foreign words that the camera is pointed at. Using a program it can detect words, mainly printed words, then using the roughly the same font and font size. Then the program overlays the translation onto the sign, billboard, or menu on the screen. Another example would be for anyone who bought a 3DS might the 3D cards the device came with the system, those are also a form of AR. A 3DS is a hand held gaming device that make the game being played 3D without the use of 3D glasses. The cards that came with the system were little mini games. Placing a card on the table, or any surface, and going into the application started a game. Creatures would pop up that the user would fight, or trying to hit bulls-eye on target. All this is done on the surface the card was placed on.

2.3 Spatial Augmented Reality

Spatial Augmented Reality (SAR) is similar to AR. The difference is that it focuses more on augmenting reality through projection technology, instead of using conventional moni-

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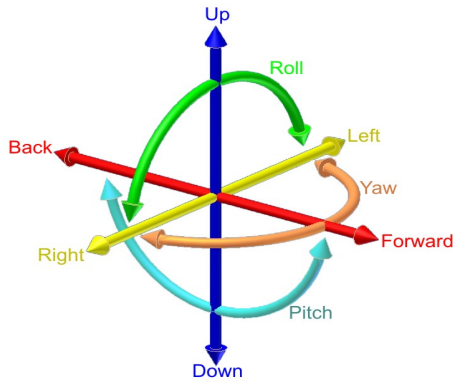


Figure 1: Shows the 6DOF axes related to 3D space [5]

tors or other such devices. A good example of SAR is if a user has a sandbox with a topographical map overlaid onto the sand. They could move the sand around and the projector would be able to detect the height of the sand and match the peaks and valleys in the sand with the correct topographic overlay for displaying peaks and valleys. The way Thomas et al [4] defines SAR is

Spatial Augmented Reality (SAR) enhances the visual aspects of physical objects, allowing users to better understand the virtual content. The users not only view the digital information but also gain a tactile understanding through touching the physical object.

2.4 6DOF

6DOF, 6 degrees of freedom, are the different ways one can move in three dimensional space. Front/back, left/right, up/down, roll, pitch, yaw are all the ways to move in 3D space. Roll is moving clockwise or counter clockwise in relation to the front/back axis. Yaw is moving the front/back axis to either left/right axis. Pitch is the same yaw, except the up/down axis instead of the left/right axis. For any certification see figure 1

3. THERMAL INTERACTION

Kurz [2] provides a way to interact with AR applications using surfaces around in everyday life. Using infrared thermography, his system can detect if the user touched a surface or came close to touching it. Keeping in mind that one's finger(s) are warm and the surface is presumably cool, a touch leaves a heat signature on the cool surface. Kurz's system assumes that the interaction is taking place in a controlled environment where surfaces will be cooler than body temperature. When the thermal image detects a heat signature, the same system is able to determine the 3D position on the touched physical object. A series of tests were done using an array of materials and users to show the intuitive interaction with mobile AR and common surfaces.

3.1 Hardware

The hardware in Kurz's [2] set up was a camera mounted to a tablet computer as shown in Figure 2. It needed to be custom fitted since the technology for thermal imagery is not typically built into everyday devices, like tablets or

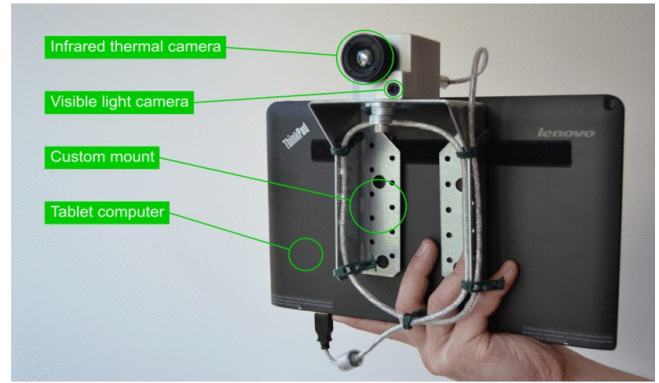


Figure 2: The hardware prototype used throughout Kurz's paper comprises a visible light camera and an infrared thermographic camera attached and connected to a tablet computer with a custom mount. [2]

phones. The camera on the tablet mixes a visible light camera, and a infrared camera in one package. The visible light camera is able to capture RGB images at 480x360 pixels and the infrared at 160x120 pixels. The parameters of the visible light camera and the infrared camera along with the 6DOF rigid body transformation from both cameras were calibrated. The calibration method Kurz used had a checkerboard pattern cut into bright cardboard, then attached to a warm dark surface like an LCD screen. This is done so that the visible light camera sees dark squares on a light surface, but the infrared camera sees light squares on a dark surface.

3.2 Object Tracking

As mentioned above, Kurz's goal is detecting touch in 3D space with real objects, which requires the ability to transform real objects relative to the camera. Metaio is a AR company that developed an object tracking software that can find the position and orientation of an object relative to the visible light camera in real time [2]. He used the Metaio software so that the visual light camera on the prototype was able to get the position and orientation of the object(s) used in the experiments.

3.3 Thermal Detection

The two main obstacles that Kurz brings up is detecting the touch in thermal imaging, and being able to find where the touch occurred on a 3D object. First he explored temperature profiles of a surface being touched, obstructed, or not interacted with at all. The 4 cases of temperatures profiles are: Object-only, hand-only, obstruction-by-hand, and touch-by-hand. Object-only is just using the cameras to measure the relative constant temperature of an object. Hand only measured the temperature of a hand, expecting moderate temperature changes relative to fluctuating body temperature. Obstruction by hand starts with detecting an object and then having a hand come between the object and the camera, while not touching the object. The infrared will detect the rapid change from cool surface to a warm body, then rapidly back to the cool surface. Touch by hand is when the object is actually touched. The observed temperature will start with the cool surface temperature and then

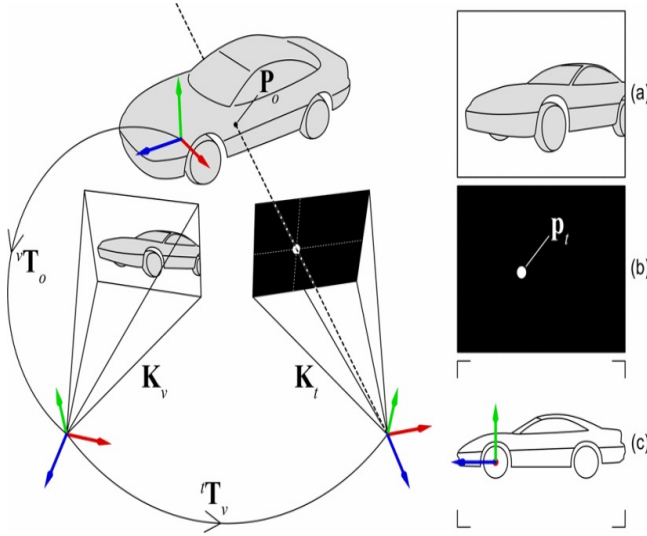


Figure 3: Illustration of the involved coordinate systems and re-sources: a visible light camera image (a), a thermal camera image (b) and a model of the real object to interact with (c).[2]

rise when the warm body obstructs the area. Then once the hand moves away instead of a rapid change back to a cool surface there is a rapid decrease to a temperature between that of the hand and the object. After this initial rapid decrease the area will slowly cool, reverting back to the starting temperature.

$$t_1 = (1 - \frac{1}{16})t_{min} + \frac{1}{16}t_{max} \quad t_2 = (1 - \frac{3}{8})t_{min} + \frac{3}{8}t_{max}$$

$$a_1 = 0.32\text{cm}^2 \quad a_2 = 1.54\text{cm}^2$$

Above is the OpenCV SimpleBlobDetector that Kurz used to calculate the sized of the thermal fingerprints left on the object. t_1 and t_2 is the temperature range the thermal camera is looking for when to detect if an object was touched. This is calculated by taking t_{min} and t_{max} , the minimum and maximum temperature recorded from the thermal camera, then applying those numbers to the SimpleBlobDetector. Along with knowing the temperature range to expect an area range of a_1 and a_2 that is used for detecting the blobs. Blobs are the set of circular areas returned by OpenCV's SimpleBlobDetector. Ignoring blobs with centers close to 10 pixels to the edge of the image, this is to reduce the amount of false positives from fingers entering and leaving the image. Kurz's experiments focused on single touch events, ignoring all blobs if there are multiple.

The touch position p_t is the center of a detected blob in 2D space (see Figure 3(b)), this position needs to be transformed in order to find the 3D position P_o . Taking p_t and using the Metaio software from above, one is able to find P_o . Taking the visible light image K_v and a tracking model an object tracker can find the 6DOF ridged body transformation tT_o . Attaching that ridged body transformation to the calibrated transformation tT_v resulting in the position of the object to the thermal camera K_t .

3.4 Materials Tested

The blob detector is designed to handle objects that differ

in material and temperature. This should also work for different users that have differing finger or body temperatures. The touch time and pressure would most likely be different for user to user. Kurz tested the algorithm with an array of materials one would encounter everyday. This consisted of different applicants touching different surfaces at different temperatures [4]. Figure 4 is the testing environment Kurz used to test different materials. The materials tested are paper, plastics, glass, and metal, being placed on the table centered with the camera, and the camera is 300 mm from the table-top. The test involved four different people in a controlled office environment with ambient temperature at 25°C.

A different group of four people did the same experiment, but outside in temperature of 12°C, leaving the test samples in the environment that they would be tested in for around thirty minutes to ensure they conformed to the environments temperature. The test consisted of having the person first pass their hand between the material and the camera, not touching the material. After that they were told just to touch the middle of the material as if it were a key on a keyboard. Notably it was not specified which finger to use and how to have the finger leave the object, leaving that entirely up to the subject.

After this test was done Kurz had around 400 thermal images with a time stamp and labeled according to the action, material and testers name. The results of the tests showed that number 8, steel, from Figure 4 does not work well with thermal interaction. This is due to the high rate at which steel dissipates heat, making it difficult to detect using their method. The data collected on steel was removed from test results, because of steels inability to retain heat. Out of the remaining 9 material sequences only two detected a touch in the wrong area, the rest detected touched areas correctly. Material 6, glass, from the outside tests had a false positives because the sticker appears warmer then the glass outdoors. 7 sequences could not detect touch due to the short period of contact. The false positives in the sequences without touch were quite high. This was attributed to residual heat left during the placement of the material under the camera.

3.5 Applications

Since the prototype from Figure 2 was a more of a hand held device Kurz mentions that the thermal interaction could be possible with wearable technology, or head-mounted displays. A quick example of wearable technology would be a smart watch and for head-mounted displays it is Google Glass. If this method is applied to wearable technology, or head-mounted displays, it would be a solution for interacting with technology without a touchscreen.

Two of the main applications mentioned in the paper are Spray-On GUIs, Graphical User Interface, and augmented floor plans. A Spray-On GUIs utilize any surface available to the user, an example would be a number pad on a granite countertop (see Figure 5). Using the camera of the mobile device this application superimposes a virtual number pad onto a surface. Now, the GUI is not on the actual surface, but is visible via the screen of the mobile device. Using the screen as a reference dial numbers by pressing the location the device says they are. Once sprayed on the GUI stays in one place Kurz called it instance tracking, which creates an image and can track it. The camera can move around freely and the object remains in one place. When one of the keys is

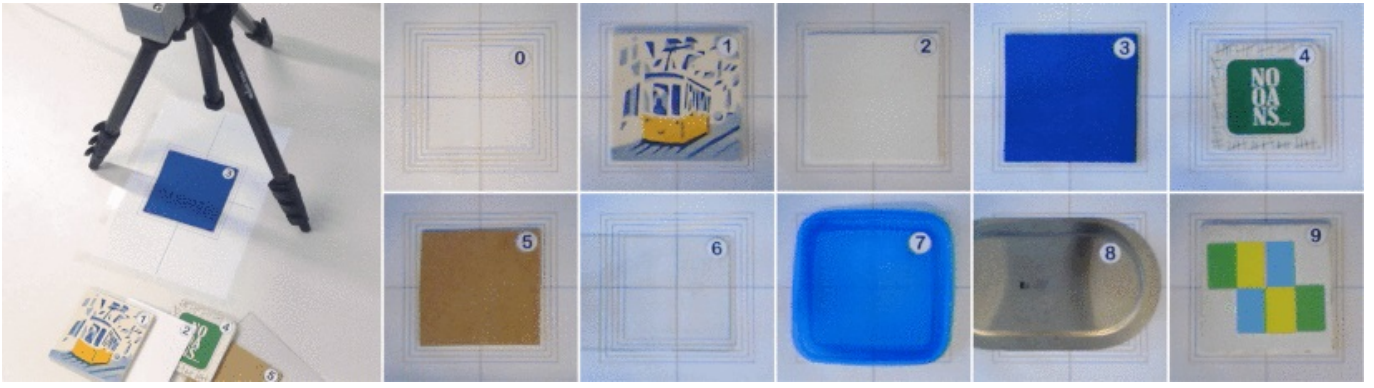


Figure 4: Different materials used in Kurz's evaluation: (0) paper on a plastic table-top, (1) ceramic, (2) rigid PVC, (3) foam plastic, (4) cardboard, (5) laminated fiber sheet, (6) glass, (7) thin plastic, (8) steel, (9) multi-layer board. [2]

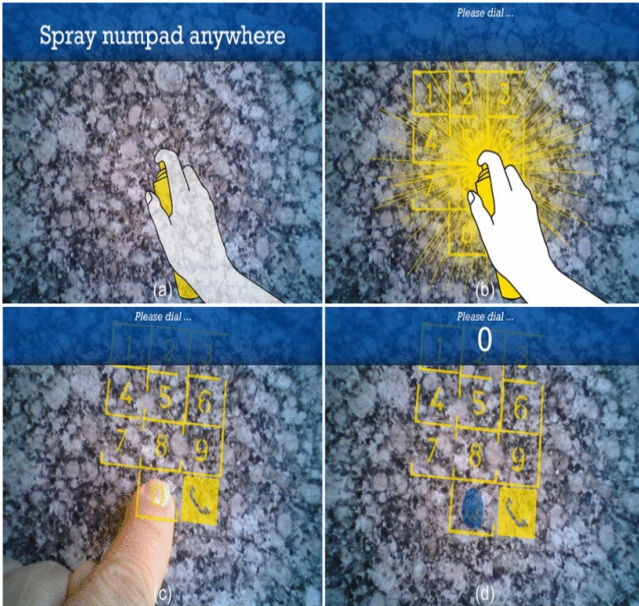


Figure 5: A number pad on a granite countertop seen through the screen of a mobile device [2].

touched the camera is able to determine the corresponding key that was touched based on the location in the thermal image.

The AR floor plan is used when there is a printed floor plan of a building, for example a mall. The AR floor plan allows a user to press his/her desired location on the floor plan while pointed the mobile device at the map. Detecting this interaction with the map the device is able to make a query and tell what store or restaurant is at the pressed location. Also being able to display other information such as business hours, ratings, website link, and contact information. With this approach there would be no need for Spray-on GUI since the camera would use the shapes of the floor plan in lieu of virtual buttons. This type of method would work best for interfaces that are less pertinent to everyday function. The map of a mall is the prime example of AR floor plans, but if a user had to find a dial pad sticker to make a call that would be less appealing to users.

4. 3D DATA VISUALIZATION WITH SAR

I will now focus on a paper that explores the use of SAR as a tool for 3D data visualization. As mentioned from Section 2.3, SAR uses projectors to augment what is already there. Thomas et al. focus more on 3D data visualization, and not manipulation [4]. Being able to see and touch the data is their main focus, because using multiple inputs can to help the user remember the data being displayed. They define their proposed use of SAR as a tool for 3D visualization in following ways. First they propose the use of SAR to benefit the user ability to see, understand, and manipulate 3D visualization data. Second is the tabletop SAR prototype (see Figure 6) that is able to demonstrate many possibilities. Some of which would include charts, maps, or graphs. The projections on the physical object defines areas of investigation in a 3D volume. The monitor provides detailed views of the data in a 2D space. Third is the large applications of SAR, called *CAVE* which is discussed later in this section.

4.1 Visualizing Data

Data visualization is the representation of data visually. Some basic examples would be pie charts, scatter-plots, bar charts, and the can list goes on. Data visualization can be

used in any field, from showing the demographic of a neighborhood to displaying how many shooting stars happen over the course of a year, or even weather maps. Visualizing data is an effective way to show information quickly and efficiently. Humans tend to recall pictures easier than words. That is why there are many different types of charts. As mentioned above, the wide range of data types one can visualize makes what the papers proposes versatile in the real world.

4.2 Applications

Thomas et al. mention two ways that 3D data visualization can be applied in the real world. The main one they mention is the tabletop. This is a proposed system where there is a 2D display (they call it a fish tank view), a table with the physical object(s), the virtual volume, the hand held pointing device, 6DOF trackers, and the projectors (see Figure6). The virtual volume is the space around the tabletop, starting from the surface of the table extending up a foot or two. In the virtual volume one could zoom in, or out, on the data being visualized using the hand held device. An example this action would be displaying the weather maps of North America then zooming in on the north west region, or zoom out to displaying more of the world.

The second method is the CAVE system, Marner et al. states

The virtual environment (VE) closest to SAR is probably the CAVE (Cave Automatic Virtual Environment). Both SAR and CAVE systems employ projectors as the primary display technology. [3]

They also state differences between SAR and CAVE systems. SAR systems will project onto the object of interest; where as in a CAVE the object being projected onto becomes a window to the virtual world. Making the area of focus on the data instead of the object itself. Thomas et al. used the CAVE system as a large scale version of the tabletop method. CAVE systems require more space than the tabletop method this is due to the need for more 6DOF tracers and projectors for the setup to work. Other then that how the user interacts with CAVE in no different then the tabletop system. The benefit the CAVE model is being able to increase the number of collaborators/viewers. Figure 7 is one of a couple CAVE variations possible with this technology. The scenarios that would benefit from the CAVE over the table-top method would be larger scale of collaboration or the need to display the visual date to a larger audience, like a class.

4.3 Limitations

The initial experimentation with Thomas et al. [4] prototype showed a number of limitations with the approach they took. The first is that the lighting the room must be controlled, as details in the gradients of the projected data may be lost with too much ambient lighting. Like anything projector-related, it works best in dim to dark room/places, depending on the type of projector. Normally someone would not take a projector outside in the middle of the day and try to use it. Even inside can be too bright; teachers tend to shut off the lights closest to the screen when they use a projector. they mention that depending on the ambient lighting in the room one possible solution would be upgrading to a more powerful projector.

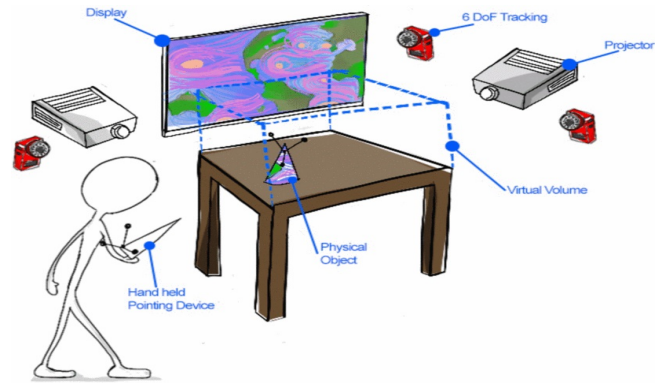


Figure 6: the tabletop set up that Thomas et al. propose [4]

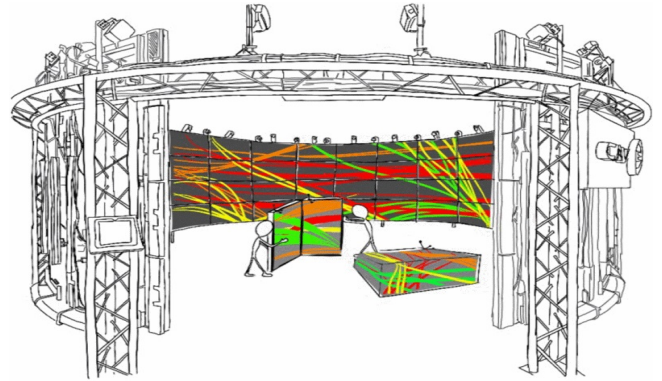


Figure 7: One of the CAVE systems mentioned by Thomas et al. [4]

4.4 Conclusion

The goal of Thomas et al. [4] was presenting SAR as a tool to enrich the process of 3D visualization. They layout their plan on using SAR with these three goals. They start by explaining the benefit to the user's abilities to interpret and retain the data being presented. The second goal was the implementation of the table-top they proposed. Letting the user manipulate the data by zooming in or out, this way the user handles the data improving retention of the information. Lastly, increasing the possible applications of visualizing 3D data with SAR buy proposing the CAVE system. The CAVE would allow more people to view the data being displayed at one time.

5. JOINING TOGETHER

Both sections 3 and 4 talk about different ideas. Section 3 talks about using thermal heat signatures to detect interaction in AR. Where section 4 discusses using SAR as a tool to visualize data. This section is dedicated to joining those two sections together, and how they could work together. In section 4 a 6DOF object is needed to track ones position, but with the Thermal Interactions, section 3, the camera is able to detect positions of objects using viable light cameras. Knowing the position and orientation of the object one can find the position and orientation of the person looking at it.

5.1 Applications

Some of the possible application would consist of education and transportation. With education the proposed idea would be for a class to wear head-mounted displays containing a visible light camera and a thermal camera, like the camera from Figure 2, but smaller. Also, each of the students desks students would essentially become the table-top system mentioned from Figure 6 with a physical object, in this example a sphere. The lesson in this example is geography, the sphere on each students desk has the map of the world being displayed onto its surface. The teacher would have control over the zooming in and out aspect, unless the teacher wanted the class to explore the maps to ask or answer questions.

Transportation would benefit from the ability to detect where a user wants to go and then display the information pertaining to route and time the train, bus, or lite rail would take. Using the AR floor plan system, from section 3.5, in the form of a train or bus route a system could detect someone wants to a bus to the local store. In turn the projector would highlight where the closest bus on the route is, and if the user would have to take multiple buses to reach the destination.

5.2 Strengths and Weaknesses

This section will highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses of both the methods in Sections 3 and 4. Starting with Section 3 moving towards using AR more in everyday life could lead to ethical problem. Heimo et al. [1] mentions that in an age where government surveillance is almost everywhere, an increase in AR technology could lead from the current way surveillance is conducted to a more self surveillance type of system.

5.3 Conclusion

As mentioned above education and transportation are just a few areas that would benefit from the union of these technologies. Working together to combine strengths they reduce the weaknesses the methods had prior, but also they will share the weaknesses that were not taken care of.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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