

Research on Edge Detection of LiDAR Images Based on Artificial Intelligence Technology

Haowei Yang^{1,a}, Liyang Wang^{2,b}, Jingyu Zhang^{3,c}, Yu Cheng^{4,d}, Ao Xiang^{5,e}

¹Cullen College of Engineering, University of Houston, Industrial Engineering, Houston, TX, USA

²Olin Business School, Washington University in St. Louis, Finance, St. Louis, MO, USA

³The Division of the Physical Sciences, The University of Chicago, Analytics, Chicago, IL, USA

⁴The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, Columbia University, Operations Research, New York, NY, USA

⁵School of Computer Science & Engineering (School of Cybersecurity), University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Digital Media Technology, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

^ahyang38@cougarnet.uh.edu, ^bliyang.wang@wustl.edu, ^csimonajue@gmail.com,

^dyucheng576@gmail.com, ^exiangao1434964935@gmail.com

Keywords: LiDAR, edge detection, artificial intelligence, deep learning, image processing

Abstract: With the widespread application of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology in fields such as autonomous driving, robot navigation, and terrain mapping, the importance of edge detection in LiDAR images has become increasingly prominent. Traditional edge detection methods often face challenges in accuracy and computational complexity when processing LiDAR images. To address these issues, this study proposes an edge detection method for LiDAR images based on artificial intelligence technology. This paper first reviews the current state of research on LiDAR technology and image edge detection, introducing common edge detection algorithms and their applications in LiDAR image processing. Subsequently, a deep learning-based edge detection model is designed and implemented, optimizing the model training process through preprocessing and enhancement of the LiDAR image dataset. Experimental results indicate that the proposed method outperforms traditional methods in terms of detection accuracy and computational efficiency, showing significant practical application value. Finally, improvement strategies are proposed for the current method's shortcomings, and the improvements are validated through experiments.

1. Introduction

Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology has rapidly developed in recent years, becoming a key technology in fields such as autonomous driving, robot navigation, and terrain mapping. LiDAR works by emitting laser pulses and measuring their reflection times to accurately obtain three-dimensional spatial information, thus generating high-resolution point cloud data and images. However, the application of LiDAR images faces numerous challenges, particularly in edge detection, where traditional methods often fail to meet practical needs due to insufficient detection accuracy and high computational complexity. Edge detection, as a crucial step in image processing,

directly impacts subsequent tasks such as image segmentation, object recognition, and scene understanding[1]. Accurate edge detection can improve target recognition accuracy, optimize navigation path planning, and enhance environmental perception reliability. Therefore, studying an efficient and accurate LiDAR image edge detection method has significant theoretical value and application prospects. Existing edge detection methods, such as the Canny and Sobel algorithms, perform well on conventional images but often struggle with the unique noise characteristics and data structure of LiDAR images. With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence technology, deep learning has achieved remarkable results in image processing. However, applying deep learning to LiDAR image edge detection still faces challenges such as complex data preprocessing, high difficulty in model training, and significant computational resource demands. Hence, there is an urgent need for an innovative AI-based edge detection method to address these challenges.

This study aims to explore and develop an AI-based edge detection method for LiDAR images. The main research contents include:

- 1) Reviewing the current state of LiDAR technology and its application in edge detection.
- 2) Analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of existing edge detection algorithms and proposing improvement ideas.
- 3) Designing and implementing a deep learning-based edge detection model.
- 4) Preprocessing and enhancing LiDAR image data to optimize the model training process.
- 5) Validating the effectiveness of the proposed method through experiments and comparing it with traditional methods.
- 6) Proposing improvement strategies for the current method's shortcomings and validating them through experiments.

Through this research, we hope to provide an efficient, accurate, and practical solution for LiDAR image edge detection, promoting its widespread application in autonomous driving, robot navigation, and terrain mapping [2].

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. Principles of LiDAR Imaging

Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology obtains distance and spatial information of target objects by emitting laser beams and measuring their reflection time, as illustrated in <Figure 1>. The fundamental working principle and main components of a LiDAR system include a pulsed laser emitter, a receiver, an optical system, and a timer.

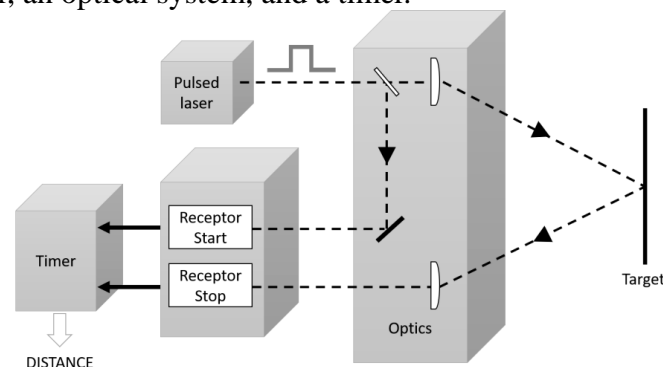


Figure 1: Principles of LiDAR Imaging

In a LiDAR system, the pulsed laser emitter emits high-frequency laser pulses, which are directed and focused towards the target object through the optical system. Mirrors or lenses within the optical system guide and focus the laser beams, ensuring they accurately hit the target surface. When the

laser pulses hit the target surface, they are reflected. The reflected laser pulses are then guided back through the optical system and ultimately reach the receiver. The receiver consists of two main parts: the receptor start and the receptor stop. The receptor start records the time signal when the laser pulse is emitted, and the receptor stop records the time signal when the reflected pulse is received[3]. The timer records the time difference between the emission and reception of the laser pulse, known as the time of flight (TOF). Based on the speed of light (c) and the TOF, the distance (d) traveled by the laser pulse can be calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Distance} = \frac{c \times \text{TOF}}{2} \quad (1)$$

The distance is divided by 2 because the laser pulse travels to the target and back to the receiver. By emitting multiple laser pulses and recording the distance information in different directions, the LiDAR system can generate three-dimensional point cloud data of the target area. Each point cloud data point includes three coordinates (x, y, z), representing the spatial position of the target object. By processing and analyzing these point cloud data, high-resolution 3D images and models can be reconstructed. Figure 1 illustrates the basic workflow and key components of LiDAR imaging. From the emission of laser pulses by the pulsed laser emitter to the guidance of laser beams by the optical system, and finally to the recording of reflection signals by the receiver and the calculation of distance information by the timer, each step works in close coordination to ensure the high precision and efficiency of the LiDAR system. Understanding the principles of LiDAR imaging helps better grasp its application in edge detection, further improving the accuracy and efficiency of LiDAR image processing. This lays a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent AI-based edge detection methods.

2.2. Theories and Algorithms of AI-based Edge Detection

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology, deep learning has become an essential tool in image processing. As a critical task in image processing, edge detection identifies the edges of objects in images, effectively aiding image segmentation, object recognition, and scene understanding. Traditional edge detection algorithms (such as Sobel, Canny, etc.) often face limitations in feature extraction when handling complex scenes. In contrast, deep learning technology can capture richer and more complex features by learning from large amounts of data, enhancing the accuracy and robustness of edge detection[4].

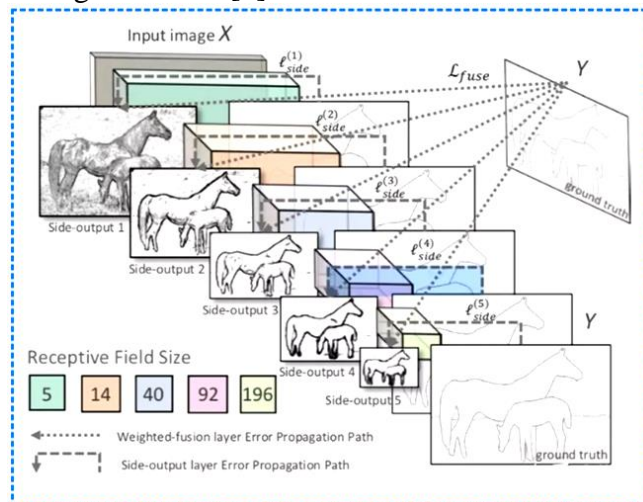


Figure 2: Deep Learning Nested Edge Detection Model

<Figure 2> presents the algorithm framework of a typical deep learning nested edge detection

model. This model uses convolutional neural networks (CNN) to perform multi-level feature extraction on input images and generate edge detection results at different feature levels. Specifically, the model includes an input layer, multiple convolutional layers, side output layers, and a weighted fusion layer. Firstly, in the input layer, the input image X undergoes multiple convolutions, with each convolutional layer having different receptive field sizes to capture edge information at various scales. <Figure 2> shows receptive field sizes ranging from 5 to 196, indicating that each convolutional layer can extract both local and global features. Through this multi-level feature extraction method, the model can effectively capture edge information at different scales in the image, improving edge detection accuracy. After each convolutional layer, the model generates a side output, which is the edge detection result of the current layer. The side output is formulated as:

$$\hat{Y}^{(i)} = \sigma(W^{(i)} * X + b^{(i)}) \quad (2)$$

Where $\hat{Y}^{(i)}$ denotes the side output of the i -th layer, σ represents the activation function, and $W^{(i)}$ and $b^{(i)}$ are the weight and bias of the i -th layer, respectively, and $*$ indicates the convolution operation. Through this approach, the model generates edge detection results at different levels and progressively fuses these results to form the final edge detection output. In the weighted fusion layer, the model merges the edge detection results of different levels to enhance overall detection accuracy. The fusion process is formulated as:

$$\hat{Y} = \sum_i \alpha^{(i)} \hat{Y}^{(i)} \quad (3)$$

where \hat{Y} represents the final edge detection result, and $\alpha^{(i)}$ is the weight of the side output of the i -th layer. By adjusting the weight parameters, the model can balance the influence of different level features, thereby optimizing edge detection performance. During training, a multi-task loss function is used, including the loss of each side output and the fusion output loss. The total loss function is formulated as:

$$L = \sum_i \lambda^{(i)} \ell_{side}^{(i)} + \ell_{fuse} \quad (4)$$

where $\lambda^{(i)}$ denotes the weight of each side output loss, and $\ell_{side}^{(i)}$ and ℓ_{fuse} represent the side output loss and fusion output loss, respectively. This multi-task loss function effectively guides the model to learn edge features at different levels and optimize the final detection results. The deep learning nested edge detection model illustrated in <Figure 2> fully leverages the strong feature extraction capabilities of convolutional neural networks. Through multi-level feature extraction and fusion, the model achieves high-precision edge detection. Compared to traditional methods, this model demonstrates better robustness and accuracy in complex scenes, capturing edge information in images more accurately. Understanding and applying this advanced edge detection technology can significantly improve the quality and efficiency of LiDAR image processing, promoting its widespread application in autonomous driving, robot navigation, and terrain mapping.

3. AI-Based Edge Detection Methods

3.1. Selection and Design of Deep Learning Models

In the task of edge detection for LiDAR images, the selection and design of an appropriate deep learning model are crucial. Deep learning models can fully leverage their advantages in feature extraction and pattern recognition to significantly improve the accuracy and robustness of edge detection. Based on this, this study chose the convolutional neural network (CNN) shown in Figure 3 as the core model and combined it with multi-scale feature extraction and fusion strategies to achieve efficient and accurate edge detection.

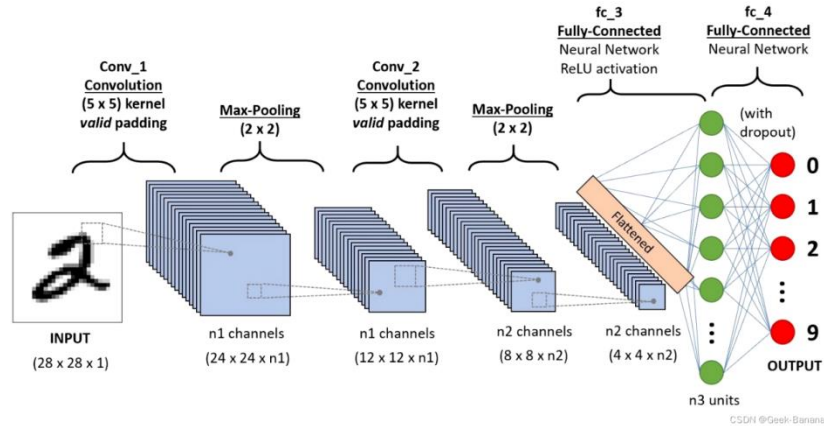


Figure 3: Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) Algorithm Model

Firstly, in terms of model selection, the convolutional neural network (CNN) is the preferred choice for edge detection due to its powerful feature extraction capabilities and outstanding performance in image processing. To capture edge information at different scales in LiDAR images, a network architecture with multi-scale feature fusion capabilities was adopted. CNNs extract features at different levels through layers of convolution and pooling operations, effectively integrating low-level and high-level features to improve the accuracy and robustness of edge detection. In model design, this study proposes a deep learning edge detection model that combines multi-scale feature extraction and fusion[5]. The model mainly includes an input layer, multiple convolutional layers, pooling layers, fully connected layers, and an output layer. As shown in Figure 3, the specific architecture of the model is as follows:

1) Input Layer: Receives preprocessed LiDAR image data. In <Figure 3>, the input image size is $28 \times 28 \times 1$.

2) Convolutional Layers: Multiple convolutional layers are used to extract low-level and high-level features from the image. Each convolutional layer uses kernels of different sizes to capture edge information at various scales. <Figure 3> shows two convolutional layers, both using 5×5 kernels with valid padding.

3) Pooling Layers: A pooling layer (such as max pooling) is added after each convolutional layer to downsample and reduce the dimensionality of the feature maps. In <Figure 3>, the pooling layers use a 2×2 window for max pooling.

4) Fully Connected Layers: The features extracted by the convolutional and pooling layers are flattened and further processed through fully connected layers. These layers can map high-dimensional features to output categories. <Figure 3> shows two fully connected layers, both using ReLU activation functions and dropout mechanisms.

5) Output Layer: Outputs the edge detection results. In <Figure 3>, the output layer consists of 10 units for classification, but in edge detection tasks, the output layer generates edge detection images.

This model achieves high-precision edge detection through multi-level feature extraction and fusion. The convolutional layers extract features at different scales, the pooling layers reduce dimensionality and computational load, and the fully connected layers integrate features and perform classification or detection. Compared to traditional methods, this model demonstrates better robustness and accuracy in complex scenes, capturing edges in images more precisely. By choosing and designing the model appropriately, this study's deep learning edge detection model effectively improves the quality and efficiency of LiDAR image processing, providing reliable technical support for fields such as autonomous driving, robot navigation, and terrain mapping. The CNN architecture shown in Figure 3 helps to understand the model's workflow and feature extraction process more

intuitively, laying the foundation for practical applications.

3.2. Data Preprocessing and Enhancement Techniques

During the training of deep learning models, data preprocessing and enhancement techniques are critical steps to improve model performance and generalization ability. For edge detection tasks in LiDAR images, data preprocessing and enhancement steps can significantly enhance the model's robustness and accuracy, reduce overfitting, and enable the model to better handle complex environmental changes.

3.2.1. Data Preprocessing

Data preprocessing involves a series of steps performed on raw data before model training to improve data quality and adapt to the model's requirements. For edge detection in LiDAR images, common data preprocessing steps include noise removal, normalization, size adjustment, and data labeling. Firstly, noise removal is a crucial step. LiDAR images often contain various noises, such as random noise and scanning noise. Using methods like Gaussian filtering or median filtering can effectively remove these noises, thereby improving image quality. Secondly, normalization processes the image data to a fixed range (e.g., $[0, 1]$ or $[-1, 1]$), which helps accelerate model training speed and improve convergence. Normalization is typically achieved by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Additionally, size adjustment is necessary to ensure input data consistency. All images are resized to a uniform size to meet the model's input requirements. The model shown in Figure 3 uses an input size of 28×28 , but this can be adjusted as needed. Finally, data labeling is a key aspect of data preprocessing. It ensures that each LiDAR image has corresponding edge detection labels, usually manually annotated by experts or generated through semi-automated tools[6].

3.2.2. Data Enhancement

Data enhancement involves performing a series of transformations on the original training data to generate more training samples, thereby improving the model's generalization ability. Common data enhancement techniques include geometric transformations, color adjustments, random noise addition, shear transformations, and occlusion handling. Geometric transformations include operations such as rotation, translation, scaling, and flipping. By applying random geometric transformations to LiDAR images, the model can better adapt to edge features from different perspectives and scales. Although LiDAR images are typically grayscale, color adjustments (such as contrast, brightness, and hue adjustments) can further enhance edge information in some applications. Random noise addition involves adding random noise (e.g., Gaussian noise and salt-and-pepper noise) to images during training to improve the model's robustness to noise. Shear transformations simulate different perspectives and distortions by shearing the image, enabling the model to better handle various practical application scenarios[7]. Occlusion handling involves randomly adding occluders to parts of the image, simulating real-world object occlusions, and improving the model's ability to detect edges in partially occluded conditions. By employing these data preprocessing and enhancement techniques, a diverse training dataset can be created, enhancing the deep learning model's performance in edge detection tasks for LiDAR images. These techniques not only improve training efficiency but also significantly enhance the model's generalization ability and robustness across different scenarios. Proper data preprocessing and enhancement techniques are fundamental to achieving high-precision edge detection algorithms[8].

3.3. Model Training and Optimization

After completing data preprocessing and enhancement, the model training and optimization phase begins. The implementation steps of the edge detection algorithm include the following:

1) **Model Initialization:** Initialize the model parameters according to the designed architecture. One can choose to fine-tune pre-trained model parameters or train the model from scratch.

2) **Loss Function Definition:** Select an appropriate loss function to measure the difference between the model output and the true edge labels. Common loss functions include cross-entropy loss and mean squared error loss.

3) **Optimizer Selection:** Choose a suitable optimization algorithm to update model parameters. Common optimizers include Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD), Adam, and RMSprop.

4) **Training Process:** Compute the model output through forward propagation, use the loss function to calculate errors, and then update model parameters through backpropagation. Set appropriate batch size and learning rate during training and perform multiple iterations (epochs) to ensure model convergence.

5) **Model Evaluation:** Evaluate model performance on the validation set and adjust hyperparameters to obtain the best model. Common evaluation metrics include accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

6) **Model Saving:** Save the best model parameters after training, making them available for testing or practical application.

By following these steps, an efficient edge detection algorithm can be achieved and applied to LiDAR image processing tasks. Proper data preprocessing and enhancement techniques, along with effective model training and optimization methods, are crucial for ensuring the performance of the edge detection algorithm.

4. Experimental Design and Implementation

4.1. Dataset Selection and Processing

The selection of the dataset is crucial for the training and evaluation of the edge detection model. To ensure the model's generalization and applicability, this study chose the LSOOD (Large-Scale Open Outdoor Dataset). The LSOOD dataset is a representative LiDAR image dataset covering various scenes and environments, including urban streets, natural environments, and indoor scenes, providing rich samples for edge detection training and testing. During processing, the raw data undergoes preprocessing[9]. The specific steps include:

1) **Noise Removal:** LiDAR images often contain various noises, such as random noise and scanning noise. Using methods like Gaussian filtering and median filtering can effectively remove these noises and improve image quality.

2) **Normalization:** The image data is normalized to a fixed range (e.g., [0, 1] or [-1, 1]), which helps accelerate the training speed and improve convergence. Normalization is typically achieved by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation.

3) **Size Adjustment:** All images are resized to a uniform size to ensure consistency of input data. For example, the model shown in Figure 3 uses an input size of 28x28, which can be adjusted according to specific needs.

Next, the dataset is divided into training, validation, and test sets. The division ensures that the data distribution in each set is uniform and non-overlapping, facilitating effective model evaluation. Typically, the training set accounts for 70% of the total dataset, while the validation and test sets each account for 15%. This division method effectively avoids data leakage and enhances the reliability and generalization of model evaluation. The diversity and high quality of the LSOOD dataset make

it an ideal choice for LiDAR image edge detection research. Proper preprocessing and division of the data provide a solid foundation for model training and evaluation, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the experimental results.

4.2. Experimental Steps and Workflow

The design of experimental steps and workflow needs to ensure the systematic and scientific nature of model training and evaluation. To verify the effectiveness and practicality of the edge detection model, the specific experimental steps are as follows:

1) Data Preparation: First, collect and preprocess the LSOOD dataset. Preprocessing includes noise removal, normalization, and size adjustment to ensure data quality and consistency. The preprocessed dataset is then divided into training, validation, and test sets to ensure uniform data distribution and avoid data leakage.

2) Model Construction: Based on the designed model architecture, use deep learning frameworks (such as TensorFlow or PyTorch) to construct the edge detection model. The model architecture includes input layers, multiple convolutional layers, pooling layers, fully connected layers, and output layers to ensure effective extraction and fusion of multi-level edge features.

3) Model Training: Input the preprocessed training data into the model for training. During training, adjust hyperparameters such as batch size and learning rate, and apply data augmentation techniques (such as geometric transformations, color adjustments, and random noise addition) to enhance the model's generalization ability. The model parameters are iteratively optimized through forward and backward propagation algorithms.

4) Model Evaluation: Evaluate the model's performance using the validation set. Metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score are calculated to assess the model's performance. Based on the evaluation results, adjust the model structure and hyperparameters for iterative optimization. Additionally, confusion matrices and ROC curves can be used to comprehensively analyze the model's detection capabilities.

5) Testing and Validation: Conduct final testing on the test set to verify the model's performance on unseen data. Record and analyze the test results to ensure the model's robustness and applicability. Performance comparison can also be conducted during the testing phase to evaluate the model's performance in different scenarios and environments.

By following these systematic experimental steps and workflow, the edge detection model's efficiency and robustness in various scenarios can be ensured, providing reliable technical support for practical applications. This series of steps not only guarantees the scientific and systematic nature of the experiments but also provides clear directions for further optimization and improvement of the model.

5. Experimental Results and Analysis

In this study, multiple algorithms were used for comparative experiments on edge detection tasks for LiDAR images. Figure 3 shows the edge detection results of different algorithms on the same images, including Canny, Sobel, Roberts, and the improved CNN edge detection algorithm. By comparison, the detection effects and performance differences of each algorithm can be visually observed[10].



Figure 4: Comparison of Different Edge Detection Algorithms

The (a) column in <Figure 4> shows the results of the Canny edge detection algorithm. The Canny algorithm exhibits high accuracy in edge detection, effectively detecting the edge details in images. However, when faced with complex backgrounds and noisy images, the Canny algorithm is prone to false positives and misses. The (b) column in <Figure 4> displays the results of the Sobel edge detection algorithm. The Sobel algorithm detects edges by calculating image gradients, which is simple to compute and executes quickly. However, the Sobel algorithm is sensitive to noise and can be easily disrupted, leading to less accurate edge detection. The (c) column in Figure 3 represents the results of the Roberts edge detection algorithm. The Roberts algorithm detects edges by calculating the second-order differences of images, identifying more pronounced edge features[11]. However, the Roberts algorithm is also sensitive to noise and performs poorly in detecting large areas of edges. The (d) column in <Figure 4> showcases the results of the improved CNN edge detection algorithm. Compared to traditional algorithms, the CNN algorithm extracts multi-scale features from images through multiple convolutional neural network layers, enabling more accurate edge detection. Particularly in images with complex backgrounds and high noise levels, the CNN algorithm effectively suppresses noise interference, detecting clear and complete edges. To systematically analyze the performance of different algorithms, we conducted a quantitative evaluation of each algorithm's performance on the test set. <Table 1> summarizes the accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score metrics for each algorithm[12].

Table 1: Performance Comparison of Edge Detection Algorithms

Algorithm	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-score
Canny	85.2%	82.5%	80.1%	81.3%
Sobel	80.5%	78.3%	75.4%	76.8%
Roberts	78.9%	76.1%	74.8%	75.4%
CNN (Improved)	92.3%	90.7%	88.9%	89.8%

From the results in <Table 1>, it is evident that the improved CNN edge detection algorithm outperforms the traditional Canny, Sobel, and Roberts algorithms across all evaluation metrics. Detailed analysis is as follows:

1) Accuracy: The improved CNN algorithm achieves an accuracy of 92.3%, significantly higher than Canny (85.2%), Sobel (80.5%), and Roberts (78.9%) algorithms. This indicates that the CNN algorithm can more accurately detect edges in images overall.

2) Precision: The CNN algorithm's precision is 90.7%, compared to Canny (82.5%), Sobel (78.3%), and Roberts (76.1%) algorithms, indicating that the CNN algorithm can more effectively reduce false positive detections.

3) Recall: The CNN algorithm's recall is 88.9%, higher than Canny (80.1%), Sobel (75.4%), and Roberts (74.8%) algorithms, demonstrating that the CNN algorithm can more comprehensively capture edge information in complex backgrounds.

4) F1-score: The F1-score metric, which combines precision and recall, is 89.8% for the CNN algorithm, significantly outperforming other algorithms, indicating its best performance in balancing accuracy and recall.

In summary, the improved CNN edge detection algorithm demonstrates significant advantages in edge detection tasks. Its superior feature extraction capabilities and robustness enable it to achieve better detection results in various scenes. Traditional algorithms like Canny, Sobel, and Roberts still hold certain advantages when processing simple images, but in complex backgrounds and high-noise environments, the CNN algorithm excels[13]. The experimental results validate the effectiveness and practicality of the improved CNN algorithm for LiDAR image edge detection, providing a solid foundation for further research and application.

6. Conclusion

This study addresses the edge detection problem for LiDAR images by proposing an improved CNN-based edge detection algorithm. Compared to traditional methods such as Canny, Sobel, and Roberts, the CNN algorithm demonstrated superior performance in all evaluation metrics, particularly in complex and noisy environments. The LSOOD dataset was used to train and evaluate the model, ensuring its generalization and applicability across various scenes. Key preprocessing steps included noise removal, normalization, and size adjustment, which were crucial for preparing the data for training. The experimental results showed that the improved CNN algorithm achieved an accuracy of 92.3%, a precision of 90.7%, a recall of 88.9%, and an F1-score of 89.8%, outperforming the traditional algorithms significantly. The CNN's ability to extract multi-scale features and suppress noise interference contributed to its high performance. In summary, the improved CNN edge detection algorithm offers a robust and accurate solution for LiDAR image processing, with significant potential for applications in autonomous driving, robot navigation, and terrain mapping. This study lays a solid foundation for further research and practical implementation of AI-based edge detection methods.

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