

Method of Joining Handwritten Input

Field Of The Invention

This invention relates generally to
5 handwriting recognition, and more particularly to the
selection input and editing of discrete continuous segments
of handwritten input.

Background of the Invention

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Machine recognition of human handwriting is a
very difficult problem, and with the recent explosion of
pen-based computing devices, has become an important
problem to be addressed. Machine recognition of human
15 handwriting has various present applications.

One example of the current application for
machine recognition of human handwriting is found in
personal digital assistants, such as the Newton product and
other types of pen based computing devices. Typically
20 these type of products have a touch sensitive screen upon
which a user can impose handwriting. These devices then
function to digitize the handwritten input, such as
alphanumeric input, and thereafter process the input in an
attempt to recognize the information content of the
25 handwriting.

Pursuant to one prior art handwriting recognition
technique, one makes a best determination as to the
identity of each alphanumeric character in sequence, with
the resulting string of characters comprising the result of
30 the recognition activity. There are a variety of drawbacks
to this approach. It is hindered by the difficulty of
identifying spatial boundaries of the candidate inputs (in

this case alphanumeric characters to be recognized. When these boundaries are not located correctly, it is impossible to recognize the character accurately, since it will either be lacking pieces or will incorporate extraneous material from adjacent characters.

One significant problem with machine recognition of human handwriting is the ability to recognize the end of one input and the beginning of the next input. For example, a significant problem exists in locating the end of one handwritten input segment, word, or alphanumeric input, from the beginning of the subsequent handwritten input segment, word, or alphanumeric input. Poor recognition of the handwritten input results in poor, inaccurate interpretation of the information content of the handwritten input. This problem is accentuated by poor input practices of the user or input device, such as poor penmanship or handwriting habits. Machine recognition of handwritten input may incorrectly split a single segment of handwritten input into two or more segments, and recognize them as two or more segments. Alternatively, a user may feel the need to combine or join one or more handwritten input segments after such segments have been entered as separate handwritten input segments.

Accordingly, a need exists for a handwriting recognition technique that allows a user or input device to enter a selection input edit instruction that permits the user, or input device, to join one or more discrete continuous segments to form a single continuous discrete segment for recognition and display and thereby provide a more accurate interpretation of the information content of the handwritten input.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

FIG. 1 Illustrates a flow diagram of operation in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 6 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 7 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 8 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 9 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention.

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FIG. 10 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention.

10 FIG. 11 Illustrates a graphical view of an illustrative display in accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description Of The Preferred Embodiments

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Generally, the present invention as disclosed provides a user with the option of editing handwritten input such that the user may elect to join or combine one or more discrete continuous segments, or blocks of ink, to form
20 a single discrete continuous segment. The joined segments are then presented as a single discrete segment and analyzed as a single discrete segment by the method of machine recognition of handwritten input being employed by a device that functions to receive handwritten input,
25 such as a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). The recognition of the single discrete segment that results is then displayed to the user.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention the handwritten input is alphanumeric, the
30 writing axis is horizontal, and the writing direction is left to right. In accordance with this preferred embodiment, the handwritten input and the resultant recognition are displayed concurrently and in close juxtaposition to each other. This close juxtaposition allows the user to refer to

their original handwritten input when correcting errors in the processing and recognition of the handwritten input.

Typically, handwritten character input is collected from the user in the form of discrete continuous segments. A discrete continuous segment consists of one or more pen strokes, where a pen stroke is the mark left by a pen during its period of contact with an input device such as a digitizing tablet or paper. A stroke is represented as a sequence of points sampled at approximately regular intervals by the input device. Each point is described at minimum by an X coordinate and a Y coordinate. Strokes may be captured electronically using a digitizing tablet, or in alternative embodiment may be derived from a scanned or faxed image through a process of line detection in the image; such methods of capturing input electronically are understood in the art.

In the present invention one or more discrete continuous segments are the units of handwritten input being recognized. Handwritten input is input which is captured electronically that includes but is not limited to the following: handwritten input; electronic input; input captured through pressure, such as stamped input; input that is received electronically, such as via facsimile, pager, or other device. For purposes of explanation of the present invention, handwritten input is typically presented along a writing axis in a direction which is defined as the writing direction. The writing axis is the line along which the handwritten input is added. The writing direction is the direction in which each subsequent handwritten input is added. For example, in English, handwritten input is added typically along a horizontal writing axis with each subsequent alphanumeric input following horizontally after the previous input in a writing direction that is left to right. Various other writing axis and writing directions

alternative are possible with implementation of the teachings of the present invention.

5 In a preferred embodiment, the handwriting axis is horizontal and the handwritten input forms a series of words. In this preferred embodiment, the continuous discrete segments are entered horizontally from left to right. In an alternative preferred embodiment, the handwriting axis is horizontal and the handwritten input forms a series of separate characters, which may be
10 alphanumeric characters, ideographic characters as found in languages such as Chinese, or other forms of characters or symbols of written communications. In this alternative embodiment, the output tells whether the discrete continuous segments belong to separate characters. In
15 another preferred embodiment, the handwriting axis is vertical and the handwritten input forms a series of separate characters, which may be alphanumeric characters, ideographic characters, or other handwritten input. In this preferred embodiment, the writing axis is
20 vertical and the output tells whether the discrete continuous segments belong to separate characters. In another preferred embodiment, the handwriting axis is vertical and the handwritten input forms a series of separate words, alphanumeric input, or other handwritten
25 input, such as a vertical list of words, or numbers. In this preferred embodiment, the writing axis is vertical and the output tells whether the discrete continuous segments belong to separate handwritten input, such as separate words.

30 As disclosed above and as will be discussed further, the present invention demonstrates through the disclosure of several of the preferred embodiments that the writing axis may exist at any angle and the handwritten input may be interpreted more generally as corresponding

to discrete elements (including but not limited to characters and words) containing one or more discrete continuous segments. The application of the methods described herein to any of various preferred embodiments requires only a
5 change in the coordinate system used and such modifications can be made in accordance with the teachings presented.

Referring now to the Figures, a personal digital assistant (PDA) is generally depicted by reference numeral
10 100. The PDA 100 depicted constitutes a generic representation and may be comprised for example of a Newton® or other personal digital assistant device, or other pen based computing device. Such devices typically include a housing and a touch screen upon which input, such as
15 words, can be handwritten using an appropriate hand manipulated stylus, or other input device. Such PDA and pen based computing devices typically include one or more microprocessors or other digital processing devices. These devices comprise computational platforms that can be
20 readily programmed in accordance with the teachings presented herein. It should be understood that, while such devices as personal digital assistants and pen based computing devices comprise ready platforms to accommodate the practice of applicant's teachings, the
25 teachings presented herein may be practiced in a variety of other operating environments as well. Some examples of such environments include computers with digitizing screens, or which are connected to a digitizing input surface, or capable of receiving faxed or scanned image
30 input, or digital or interactive televisions, modems, pagers, or other systems with the ability to capture handwritten input and process it.

Referring now to FIGs.1 through 7, preferred embodiments of the present invention are illustrated. The

present invention is applicable to one or more handwritten inputs of discrete continuous segments, or blocks of ink. In FIGs 2 through 6, the use of three discrete continuous segments, or blocks of ink, S_1 , S_2 , and S_3 of handwritten alphanumeric input is for illustrative purposes only. In FIGs. 1 through 11, S_1 , S_2 , and S_3 correspond respectively to S_n , S_{n+1} , and S_{n+2} . FIGs. 8 through 11 illustrate alternative preferred embodiments of the present invention where the handwritten input, writing axis, and writing direction are varied from those shown represented in FIGs 1 through 7.

Referring now to FIG. 1, a preferred method of the present invention is illustrated. In the preferred method illustrated in FIG. 1, handwritten input consisting of three discrete continuous segments S_1 , S_2 and S_3 (110) is accepted by a device, such as a PDA or other device. Upon receipt of the handwritten input, the input is analyzed by a handwriting recognition method executing on the PDA, or other device being employed, to provide an alphanumeric recognition that corresponds to, or represents the corresponding handwritten input (120). In accordance with this preferred embodiment, the recognition for each, S_1 , S_2 , and S_3 is displayed to the user (130). Preferably, the recognition of S_1 , S_2 and S_3 is displayed in close juxtaposition to a digitized representation of the original handwritten input of S_1 , S_2 and S_3 , as described previously. Once the recognition is displayed (130) the user may select to input, or edit (140), the displayed recognition (130) of S_1 , S_2 and S_3 . If the user does not enter a selection input a recognition is displayed for each S_1 , S_2 and S_3 145 and the process stops 148.

If, however, the user selection input is a join instruction 150 and the user selection input is an instruction to join discrete continuous segments S_1 and S_2 ,

a single continuous discrete segment S_x is formed. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention upon the selection of a join instruction 150, the digitized representation of the original handwritten input of S_1 and S_2 is graphically displayed 155 as single continuous handwritten input to the user representing the single continuous discrete segment S_x (See also FIGs. 6 and 7. The single continuous discrete segment S_x is analyzed by the handwriting recognition method executing on the PDA, or other device, 160, in accordance with a handwriting recognition method described previously 120. The teachings of the present invention may be employed by a variety of handwriting recognition methods. The recognition for S_x is displayed to the user 170. Preferably, the recognition of S_x is displayed 170 in close juxtaposition to a digitized representation of the original handwritten input of S_1 and S_2 , as described previously 130, or to a joined S_1 and S_2 digitized representation of the original handwritten input as described in 155. Once the recognition of S_x is displayed 170 the user may again enter a selection input 180, and may enter a repeat select input instruction 190 to join S_x with another discrete continuous segment, for example S_3 , or S_{n+2} , (provided there is another such segment). In accordance with the preferred method of the present invention a user may continue with one or more selection input instruction to join until the user no longer selects a join instruction or there are no individual discrete continuous segments remaining to join.

Referring now to FIGs 2 through 4 a graphical representation, as described in FIG 1, is given for a preferred embodiment. In this embodiment the discrete continuous segments S_1 , S_2 , and S_3 are recognized as separate segments S_a , S_b , and S_c . This is illustrated in FIG 2. The dotted lines surrounding S_1 , S_2 , and S_3 are provided

for illustrative purposes only to identify more clearly the discrete continuous segments that comprise S_1 , S_2 , and S_3 . S_a , S_b , and S_c represent the recognition result displayed to the user (FIG 1, 130) for S_1 , S_2 , and S_3 respectively. The user, or input device, is given the opportunity to enter a selection input instruction (FIG 1, 140). If the user, or input device, selects a join instruction input, then in accordance with a preferred embodiment the discrete continuous segments of S_1 and S_2 are joined to form a single continuous discrete segment S_x , illustrated in FIG 3 (see also FIG 1, 150). The segment S_x is analyzed as a single continuous discrete segment according to the handwriting recognition method executing on the input device. The recognition of S_x is displayed to the user or input device. Preferably the recognition of S_x is displayed in close juxtaposition to the digitized representation of the original handwritten input of S_1 and S_2 , as illustrated in FIG. 3.

Referring now to FIG 4, if an additional selection input instruction is received from the user, or input device, and the input is a join instruction, the continuous discrete segment S_x [assigned the value S_{x1} in FIG4 for illustrative purposes (where $S_n = S_x$ in FIG 1, 190)] is joined with the discrete continuous segment S_3 . The combination forms a new single continuous discrete segment, illustrated in FIG 4 as the recognized segment S_{x2} , where $S_{x2} = S_{x1} + S_3$. (In FIG. 1, 190, the value of S_n is now assigned the value of S_x and the value of S_{n+1} is assigned the value of S_{n+2} , etc...). Preferably, in accordance with the embodiment illustrated in FIG 4, the recognition of S_{x2} is displayed to the user, or input device. More preferably the recognition of S_{x2} is displayed in close juxtaposition to the digitized representation of the joined handwritten input of S_{x1} (equal to S_1 and S_2), and the digitized representation of the

original handwritten input of S_3 as illustrated in FIG. 4.

The advantage of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrated in FIGs 1 through 4, allows a user, or input device, to repeatedly join an infinite amount of

5 discrete continuous segments, $S_n, S_{n+1}, S_{n+2}, \dots$ etc., to repeatedly form a single continuous discrete segment S_x . More preferably the user, or input device, can repeatedly join an infinite amount of discrete continuous segments, in either a positive or negative direction, i.e. $S_n, S_{n+/-1}, S_{n+/-}$
10 2, to repeatedly form a single discrete segment S_x . This preferred alternative allows the user a variety of editing capabilities.

Referring now to FIG 5, an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention is graphically
15 illustrated. This alternative preferred method is substantially similar to that described above for FIGs 1 through 4. However, in accordance with this preferred alternative a user may select one or more discrete continuous segments to be joined. By way of example, in
20 FIG 5 assume the steps illustrated in FIG 1 as 110 through 130 are substantially similar. In this preferred alternative, the a user selection input is received and the selection input is a join instruction (refer to FIG 1, illustrated as steps 140 through 150). However in accordance with this
25 preferred embodiment, the join instruction of FIG 5, is an instruction to join discrete continuous segment S_2 and S_3 simultaneously with S_1 . [In this preferred embodiment $S_2 = S_n$; $S_3 = S_{n+1}$; and $S_1 = S_{n-1}$.] Thereby joining more than two discrete continuous segments to form one continuous
30 discrete segment S_x . The continuous discrete segment S_x is then processed in a method substantially similar to the method illustrated in FIG 1 as steps 140 through 190. An advantage of this preferred embodiment is to allow the user to join an infinite amount of discrete continuous

segments, in either a positive or negative direction, S_n , $S_{n+/-1}$, $S_{n+/-2}$, etc., simultaneously to form a single continuous discrete segment S_x . This preferred alternative allows the user a variety of editing capabilities.

5 Turning to FIGs 6 and 7, a preferred embodiment of the present invention is graphically illustrated. In this preferred embodiment, upon selection of a join instruction (FIG 1, 150), the digitized representation of the original handwritten input of S_1 and
10 S_2 is graphically displayed as a single continuous handwritten input to the user, being joined at point J, wherein the joined S_1 and S_2 represent single discrete segment S_x . Preferably, the recognition of S_x is displayed in close juxtaposition to the digitized representation of the
15 joined handwritten input of S_1 and S_2 . This preferred embodiment is applicable to the teachings of the inventions regardless of the writing axis, writing direction, or nature of the handwritten input by modification of the coordinate systems.

20 Referring now to FIGs 8 through 11, alternative preferred embodiments of the present invention are graphically illustrated. These alternative preferred embodiments are presented for illustrative purposes, and in no way exhaust the various preferred embodiments and
25 alternative preferred embodiments of the teachings of the present invention. FIGs 8 and 9 represent an embodiment of the present invention substantially similar to those discussed in FIGs 1 through 7, however in this embodiment the handwritten input represents characters, the writing
30 axis is vertical, and the writing direction is vertical. In this alternative preferred embodiment a selection input instructing a join is received. The handwritten inputs S_1 and S_2 are joined to form single continuous segment S_x , of handwritten input, as illustrated in FIG 9. The single

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REPLACED

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continuous segment S_x is then recognized and displayed to the user, or input device, in substantially the same manner as illustrated in FIGs 1 through 7.

Referring now to FIGs 10 and 11, an
5 embodiment of the present invention substantially similar to those discussed in FIGs 1 through 7, is represented. However in this embodiment the handwritten input represents characters, the writing axis is right to left and the writing direction is vertical. In this alternative
10 preferred embodiment a selection input instructing a join is received. The handwritten inputs S_1 , S_2 and S_3 are joined to form single continuous segment S_x , of handwritten input, as illustrated in FIG 11. The single continuous segment S_x is then recognized and displayed to the user, or input
15 device, in substantially the same manner as illustrated in FIGs 1 through 7.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the disclosed invention may be modified in numerous ways and may
20 assume many embodiments other than the preferred forms particularly set out and described above. Accordingly, it is intended by the appended claims to cover all modifications of the invention that fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention and its equivalents.

25

What is claimed is:



1. A method for facilitating recognition of handwriting input, comprising the steps of:

receiving:

5 electronic data comprising a series of data points that correspond to an original handwritten input; and

 recognized words that correspond to the original handwritten input;

10 displaying the recognized words;

 receiving user selection input;

 receiving user input comprising a join instruction;

 upon receiving the join instruction, automatically joining at least a selected series of data points that

15 correspond to a first recognized word with a second series of data points that correspond to a second recognized word to provide a joined series of data points;

 displaying a new recognized word that comprises a recognized word that corresponds to the joined series of

20 data points.





2. A method for facilitating recognition of handwritten input comprising the steps of:

receiving:

- 5 electronic data comprising a series of data points that correspond to an original handwritten input; and
- digitized data comprising at least one [one or more] blocks of ink that corresponds to an original
- 10 handwritten input;
- recognized words that correspond to the original handwritten input;
- displaying the recognized words;
- receiving user selection input;
- 15 receiving user input comprising a join instruction; upon receiving the join instruction, automatically joining at least a selected series of data points that correspond to a first block of ink with a second series of data points that correspond to a second block of ink to
- 20 provide a joined series of data points;
- displaying a new recognized word that comprises a recognized word that corresponds to the joined series of data points.

