DEVELOPMENT OF LUNAR SIMULATOR FOR RESEARCH IN AUTONOMOUS ALGORITHMS FOR TELEROBOTICS

PHOTOMETRIC MODELLING OF REGOLITH AND SIMULATOR FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

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Return to the Moon - Artemis and FARSIDE

- Lunar exploration is resurging
  - NASA returning to moon by 2024
  - Developing Lunar Gateway
  - Radio telescope program on lunar farside for exoplanet detection

- Complicated surface construction requirements specify robust telerobotic exploration capabilities

Low Radio Frequency Array on the Lunar Farside (FARSIDE, P.I.: Jack Burns). Figure courtesy JPL
Motivation

- Simulators can play pivotal role here
  - Generate mission requirements from virtual analog missions
  - Provide training for astronauts
  - Help in operation planning
  - Reduce cognitive load by intuitive information exchange & semi-autonomy

- Simulators work in real-time framerates (25-30Hz) or higher & simulate environment physics to meet functional requirements
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Towards fast and functional regolith photometric models

Question
Can we generate functionally photorealistic rendering of given lunar terrain geometry at near realtime frame rates (60Hz) or higher?

- Simulator must be close to real time (fast)
- Must provide a functionally accurate simulation of the optical response of lunar regolith in the visible spectrum
- Simulate visual artefacts (glare etc.) generated as a consequence in sensors (specifically optical), which might potentially affect autonomous algorithms onboard an exploration vehicle (SLAM, path/operation planners etc.)
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**Scope of Work**

Develop methods to render the observed photometric properties of lunar regolith

Limb darkening (sun)  No limb darkening  Opposition effect

**How?**

Bidirectional Reflectance Distribution Function a.k.a BRDF
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**What is a BRDF?**

BRDF simulates the reflective response of a surface-material combination. It is part of the rendering equation (Kajiya 1986)

\[
L_o(p, \omega_r) = \int_{\Omega} f(p, \omega_r, \omega_i, \alpha) \times L_i(p, \omega_i) \times \mu_0 \times d\omega_i
\]

- \(L_o(p, \omega_r)\): Light reflected towards eye
- \(f(p, \omega_r, \omega_i, \alpha)\): BRDF
- \(L_i(p, \omega_i)\): Incoming light
- \(\mu_0\): Angle weighting
- \(d\omega_i\): Angle weighting differential
How is Lunar Surface Photometry Modelled?

- Sun is modeled as directional reddish source (R:255,G:235,B:238)
- Base terrain → Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera (LROC) Narrow Angle Camera (NAC) Digital Elevation Model (DEM)
- It is synthetically enhanced from \( \approx 0.5m \) /pixel resolution to sub-mm resolution by fractal expansion (Allan et al. 2019)
- Surface reflectance modeled by BRDFs → \( f (\mu_0 = \cos \theta_i, \mu = \cos \theta_r, \alpha) \) & parameters (Single Scattering Albedo (SSA)) etc
BRDF Models Used

- Two BRDFs have been implemented
  - **Hapke model**: Expensive but accurate (B. Hapke 2012; Sato et al. 2014)
  - **Hapke-Lommel-Seeliger model**: Inexpensive, less accurate (B. W. Hapke 1963; Jensen et al. 2001)

- Physically Based Shaders used in Classical rendering pipeline

- Raytracing avoided because
  - SSA of lunar regolith is very low \((\sim 0.15)\) \(\Rightarrow\) secondary light sources are negligible
  - Raytracing is more expensive

Hapke BRDF for incident factor \(\mu_0 = \cos 45^\circ\), viewing factor \(0 \leq \mu \leq 1\) and phase angle \(0 \leq \alpha \leq \pi\)
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RESULTS

The modeling and rendering was done in Unity3D

Input Terrain

Normal shader

Hapke Shader

Hapke-Lommel-Seeliger Shader

By altering parameters, various tests scenarios can be generated