University of Pisa
Master of Science in Computer Science
Course of Robotics (ROB)
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Robot Sensors

Cecilia Laschi
The BioRobotics Institute
Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa

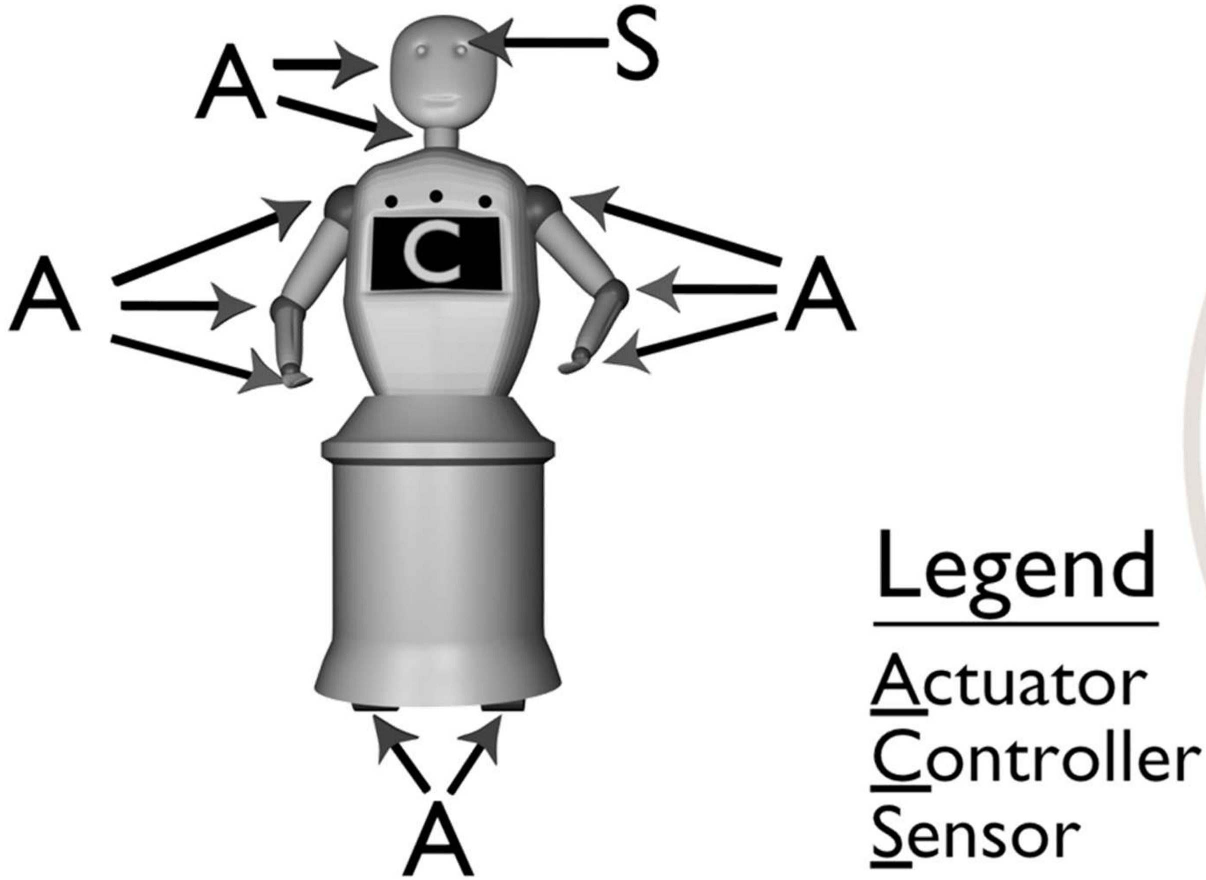
cecilia.laschi@santannapisa.it
http://didawiki.cli.di.unipi.it/doku.php/magistraleinformatica/rob/start

Robot definition

A *robot* is an autonomous system
which exists in the physical world,
can sense its environment,
and can act on it to achieve some goals

Maja J Mataric, *The Robotics Primer*, The MIT Press, 2007

What's in a robot?
Robot components



Maja J Mataric, *The Robotics Primer*, The MIT Press, 2007

Outline of the lesson

- Definitions of sensor and transducer
- Classification of transducers
- Fundamental properties of sensors
- Position sensors: switches, encoders, potentiometers, Hall-effect sensors
- Range/Distance sensors: ultrasound sensors and laser range finders
- Proximity sensors: Hall-effect and infrared sensors
- Force sensors: strain gauges and force/torque sensors
- Inertial sensors

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Definitions of sensor and transducer

- SENSOR:

  device sensitive to a physical quantity and able to transform it in a measurable and transferable signal
- TRANSDUCER:

  device receiving in input a kind of energy and producing in output energy of a different kind, according to a known relation between input and output, not necessarily for measurement purposes

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First classification:

- Passive sensors:
  - convert directly input energy in output, without external energy sources
- Active sensors:
  - require external energy (excitation) for energy conversion

Classification of transducers

based on the kind of input energy, output energy, or external energy

- Radiant – electromagnetic waves:
  - intensity, frequency, polarization and phase
- Mechanical – external parameter of materials:
  - position, velocity, dimension, compliance, force
- Thermal:
  - temperature, gradient of temperature, heat
- Electrical:
  - voltage, current, resistivity, capacity
- Magnetic:
  - field intensity, flow density, permeability
- Chemical – internal structure of materials:
  - concentrations, crystal structure, aggregation state

Trasformations of energy in a transducer

INPUT ENERGY ➡	*AUSILIARY ENERGY* ➡	*OUTPUT ENERGY*
CHEMICAL	CHEMICAL	CHEMICAL
MAGNETIC	MAGNETIC	MAGNETIC
ELECTRICAL	ELECTRICAL	ELECTRICAL
THERMAL	THERMAL	THERMAL
MECHANICAL	MECHANICAL	MECHANICAL
RADIANT	RADIANT	RADIANT
	NONE	

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Fundamental properties of a sensor

- TRANSFER FUNCTION
- CALIBRATION
- LINEARITY
- HYSTERESIS
- ACCURACY
- REPEATABILITY
- RESOLUTION
- SENSITIVENESS
- SENSITIVENESS TO NOISE
- LIFETIME
- STABILITY

Transfer function

The *transfer function* (or *characteristic function*) is the relation between the quantity to measure (input to the sensor) and the output of the sensor

Calibration

The *calibration* procedure consists of measuring the output of the sensor for known quantities

Calibration cycle means a trial that covers the whole working range of the sensor; the trial is divided in two parts, one with increasing values and the other with decreasing values

Linearity

If the transfer function of a sensor is represented in a linear plot, *linearity* is a measure of the deviation of the transfer function from a line.

The line can be chosen in two ways:

1) the line between the output of the sensor for the input values corresponding to 0% and 100% of its working range
2) the line that best fits the sensor transfer function, with the minimum squares method

   Linearity is measured as the maximum difference, expressed in % of the maximum value of the transfer function, between the transfer function and the reference line

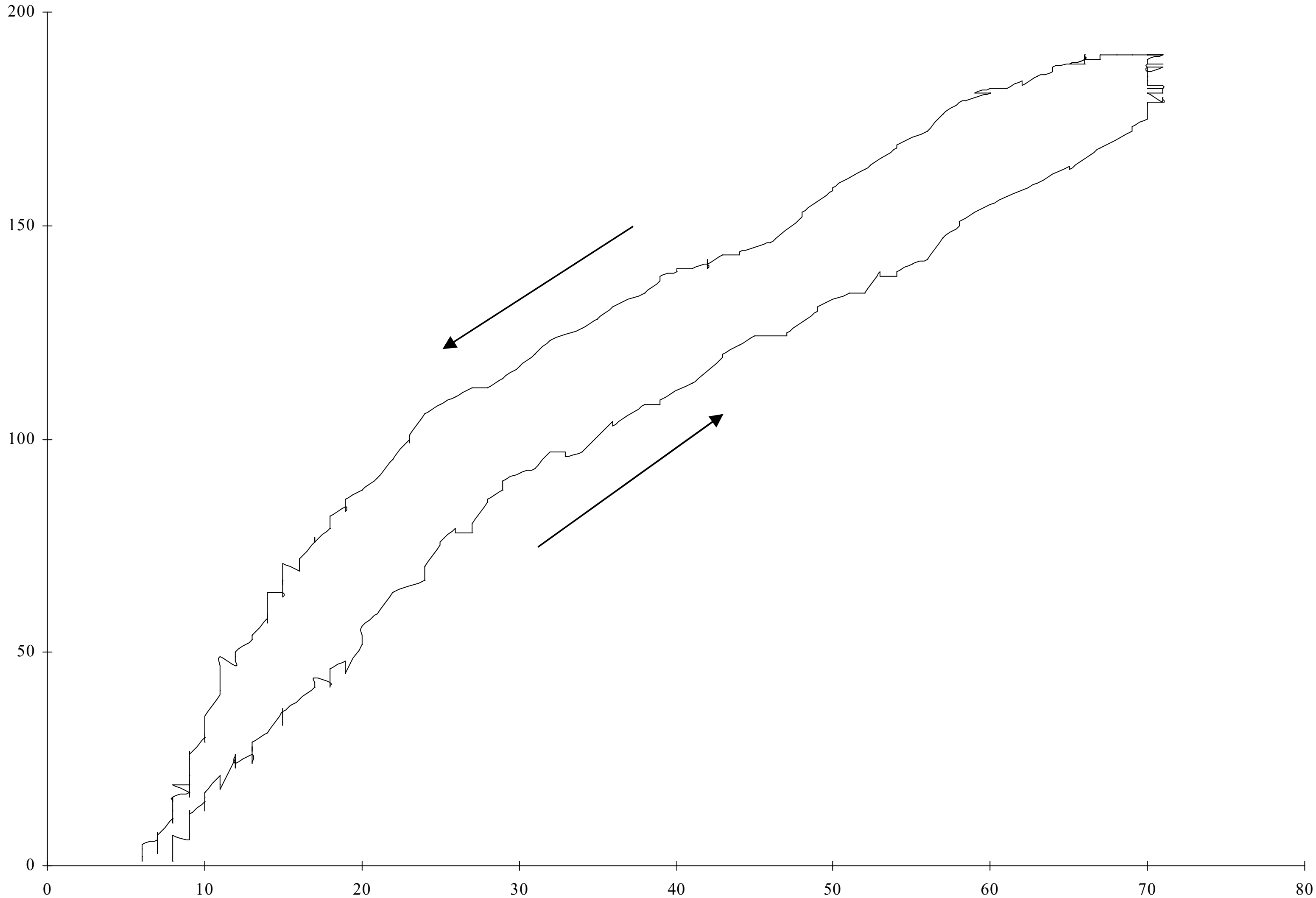
Hysteresis

If a sensor has *hysteresis*, for a same input value, the output may vary, depending on the fact that the input values are increasing or decreasing.

Hysteresis is measured as the maximum difference between the two output curves of the sensor during the calibration cycle.

It is expressed as a % of the maximum value for the transfer function

Example of hysteresis in a tactile sensor



Accuracy

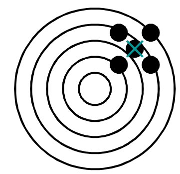
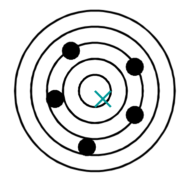
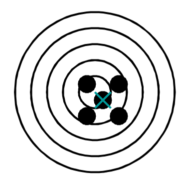
Accuracy represents the maximum error between the actual value and the value measured by the sensor.

Repeatability

When a same input value is applies to a sensor, *repeatability* is a measure of the variability of the output of the sensor.

Accuracy and Repeatability

- accuracy
  - $100\,(x_m - x_v) / x_v$
  - x_m = average value
  - x_v = actual value
- repeatability
  - dispersion of measures

measure	Repeatable	Accurate
	YES	NO
	NO	YES
	YES	YES

Resolution

Resolution is the mimimum variation of the input which gives a variation of the output of the sensor.

Sensitiveness

A small variation of the input causes a corresponding small variation of the output values.

Sensitiveness is the ratio between the output variation and the input variation.

Noise

Noise is the amount of signal in the sensor output which is not given by the input.

Stability

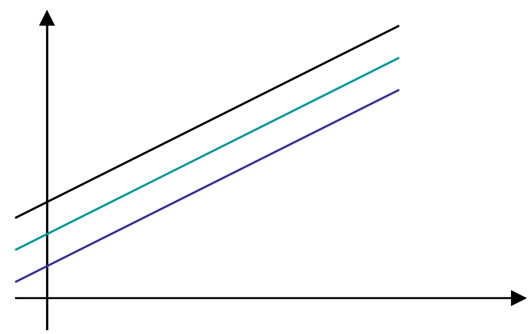
Stability is the capability of the sensor to keep its working characteristics for a given time (short, medium, long).

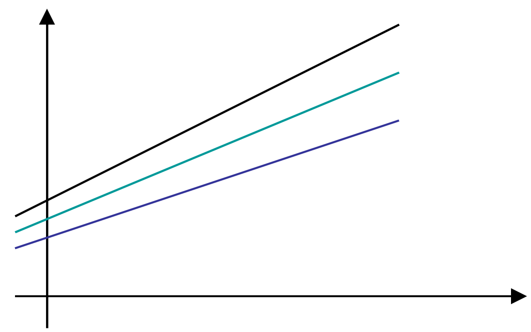
Other static parameters

- Response time
- Input range
- Cost, size, weight
- Response in frequency
- Environmental factors
- Maximum/minimum temperature
- Warm-up time
- Presence of smoke, gas, …
- …

Dynamic parameters

- zero drift
  - For instance,
    due to temperature
- sensitiveness drift





Role of sensors in a robot

- Perception of the **external state**: measurement of variables characterizing the working environment. For instance, distance, proximity, force.

Role of sensors in a robot

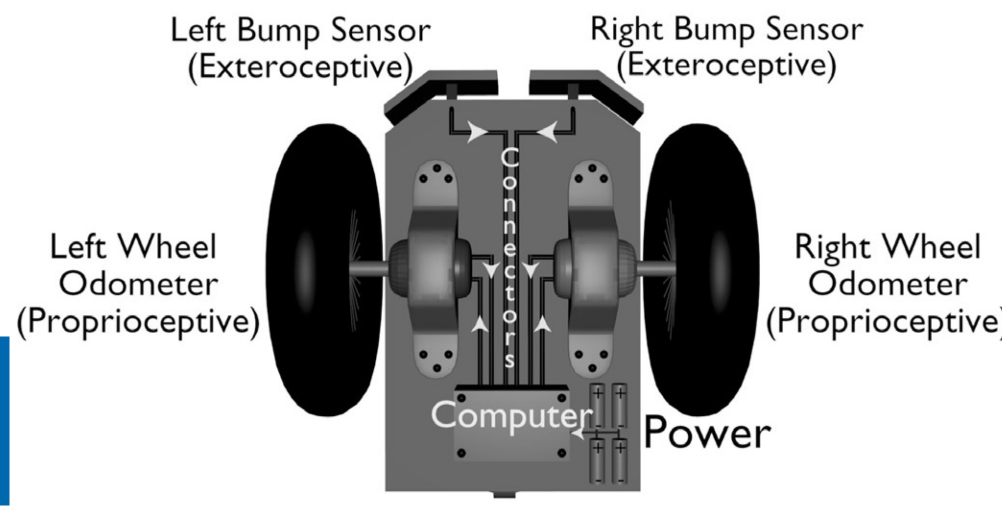
- Perception of the **internal state**: measurement of variables internal to the system that are used to control the robot. For instance, joint position.

Role of sensors in a robot

- Sensing the **<u>external state (exteroception)</u>**: measurement of variables characterizing the working environment.
- Examples:

Physical Property	→	**Sensing Technology**
Contact	→	bump, switch
Distance	→	ultrasound, radar, infra red
Light level	→	photocells, cameras
Sound level	→	microphones
Strain	→	strain gauges
Rotation	→	encoders and potentiometers
Acceleration	→	accelerometers and gyroscopes
Magnetism	→	compasses
Smell	→	chemical sensors
Temperature	→	thermal, infra red
Inclination	→	inclinometers, gyroscopes
Pressure	→	pressure gauges
Altitude	→	altimeters

- Sensing the **<u>internal state (proprioception)</u>**: measurement of variables internal to the system that are used to control the robot.
- Examples:
  - Joint position / encoders
  - Battery level



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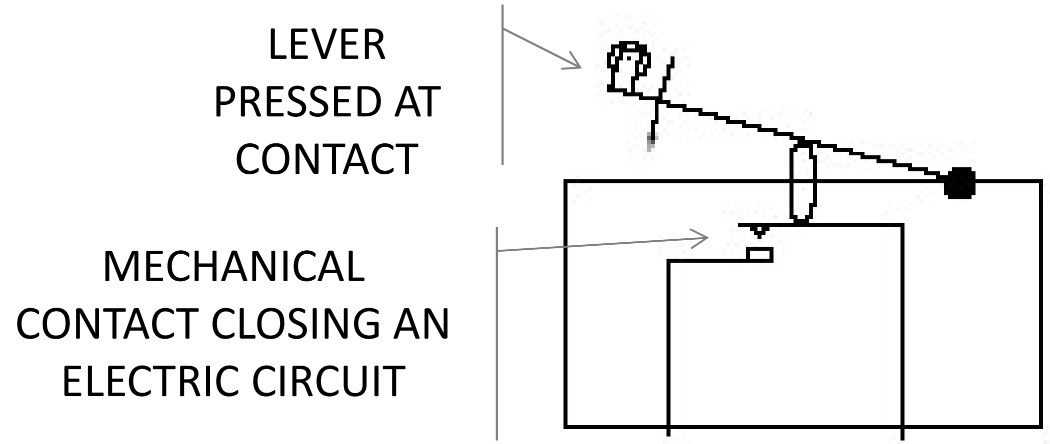
Position sensors

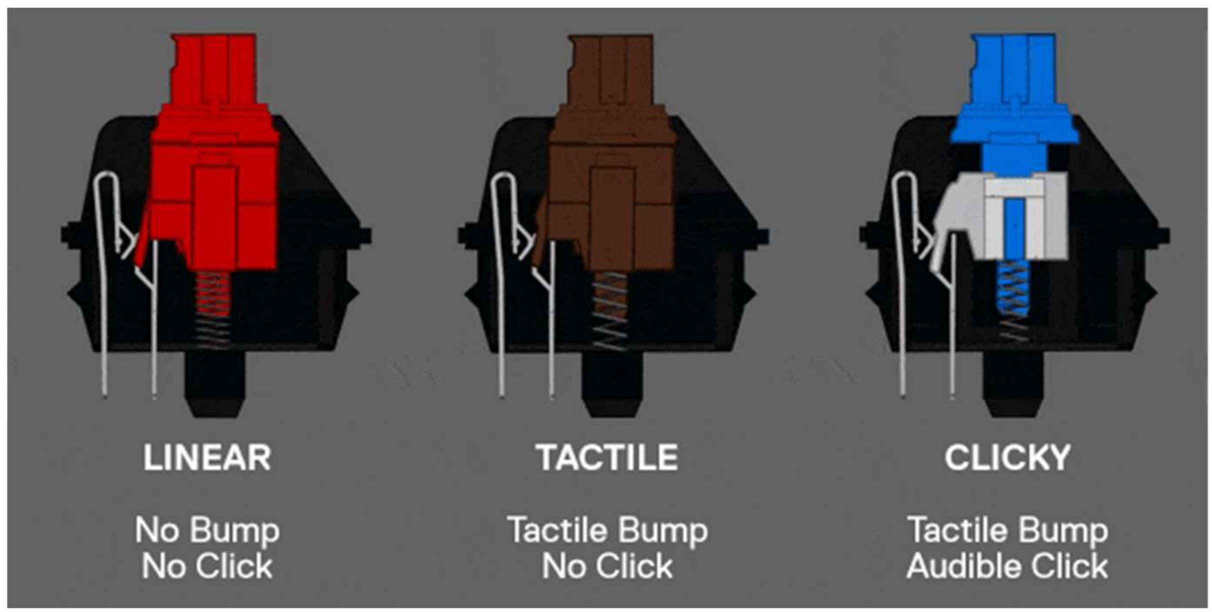
- Switches
- Optical encoders
- Potentiometers
- Hall-effect sensors

Mechanical switches

- Simplest contact sensors
- Provide binary data:

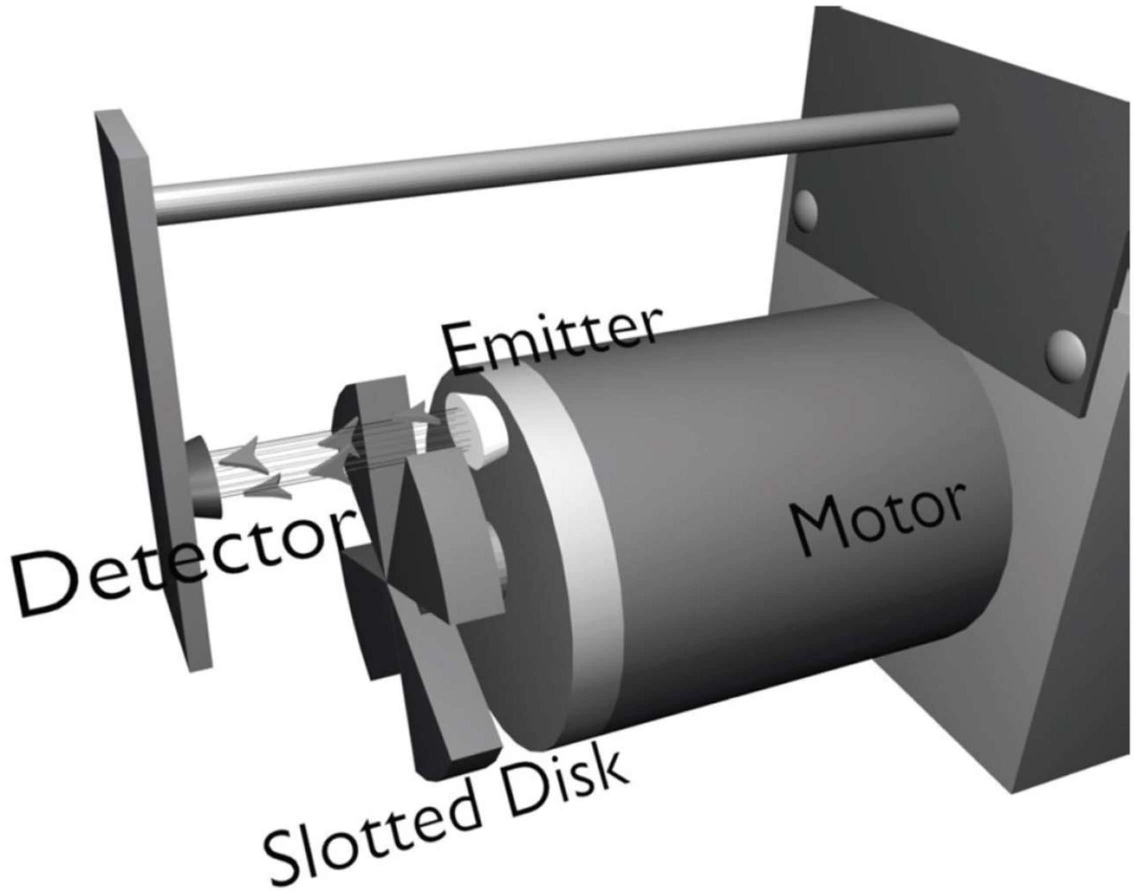
  contact / no contact
- Applications in robotics:
  - impact sensors on mobile robots
  - whiskers
  - endstop sensors for manipulator joints



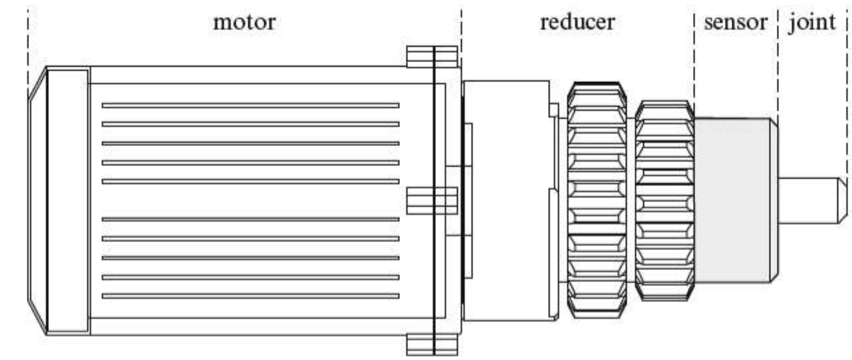


Optical encoders

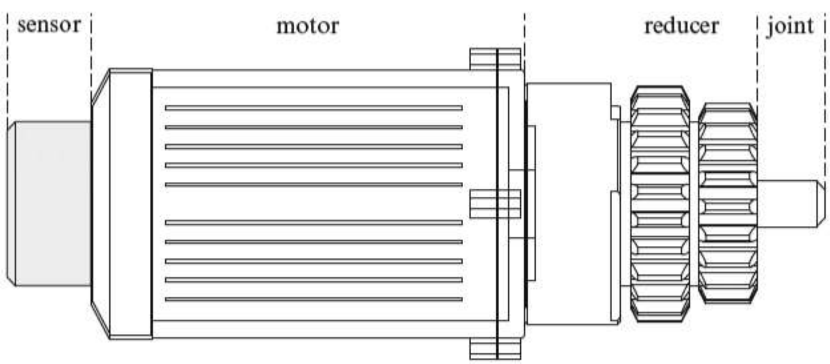
- Measurement of angular rotation of a shaft or an axle



Placement of position sensors



After reducer



Before reducer

θ: joint angular position

θ_m: motor angular position

k: motor reduction ratio

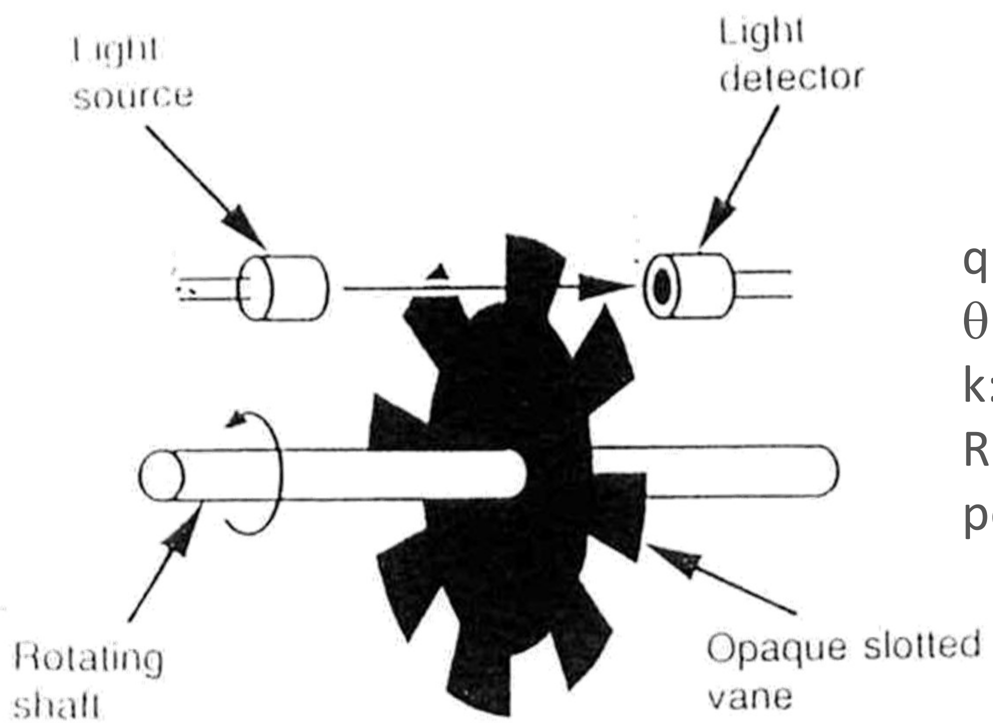
$$\theta = \frac{\theta_m}{k}$$

$$\frac{d\theta}{d\theta_m} = \frac{1}{k} \Rightarrow d\theta = \frac{1}{k} d\theta_m$$

=> The sensor error is reduced of a factor k

Optical encoders

Rotation is measured by counting the **pulses** and by knowing the number of the disk **steps**



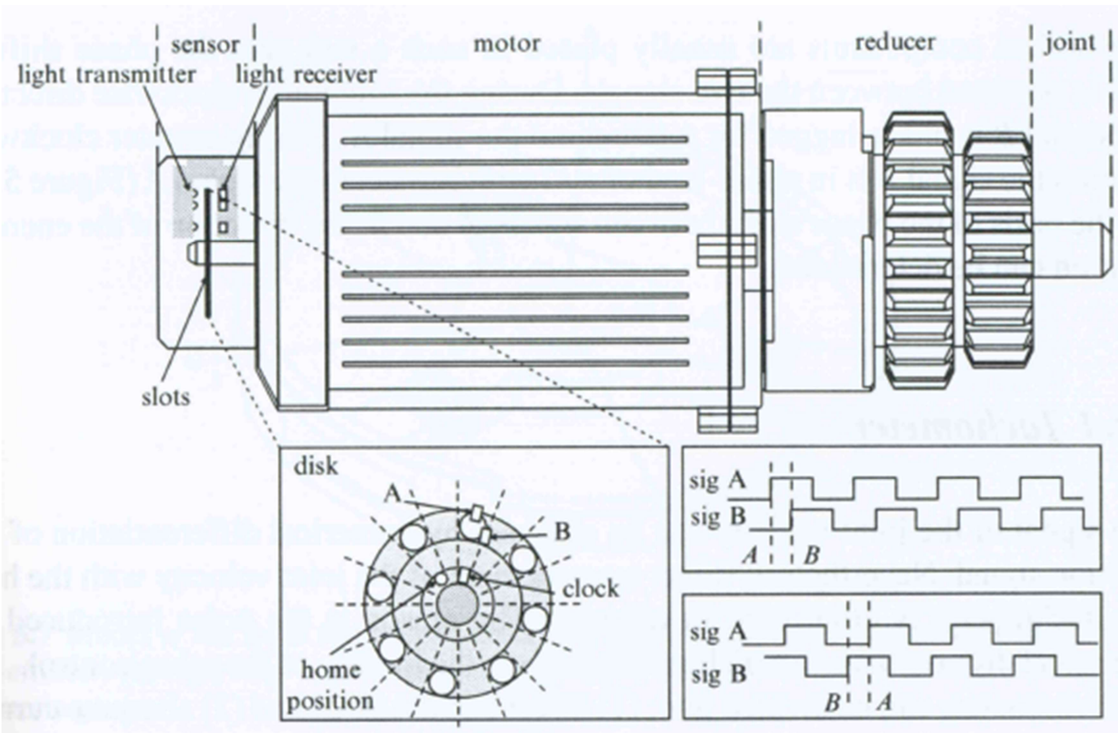
$$q = \frac{\theta \times 360°}{R \times k}$$

q: joint angular position (in degrees)
θ: joint position in encoder steps
k: motor reduction ratio
R: encoder resolution (number of steps per turn)

The **frequency** of the pulse train is proportional to **angular velocity**

Incremental encoders

By using 2 photo-switches it is possible to detect the rotation direction, by means of the relation between the phases of their pulse trains

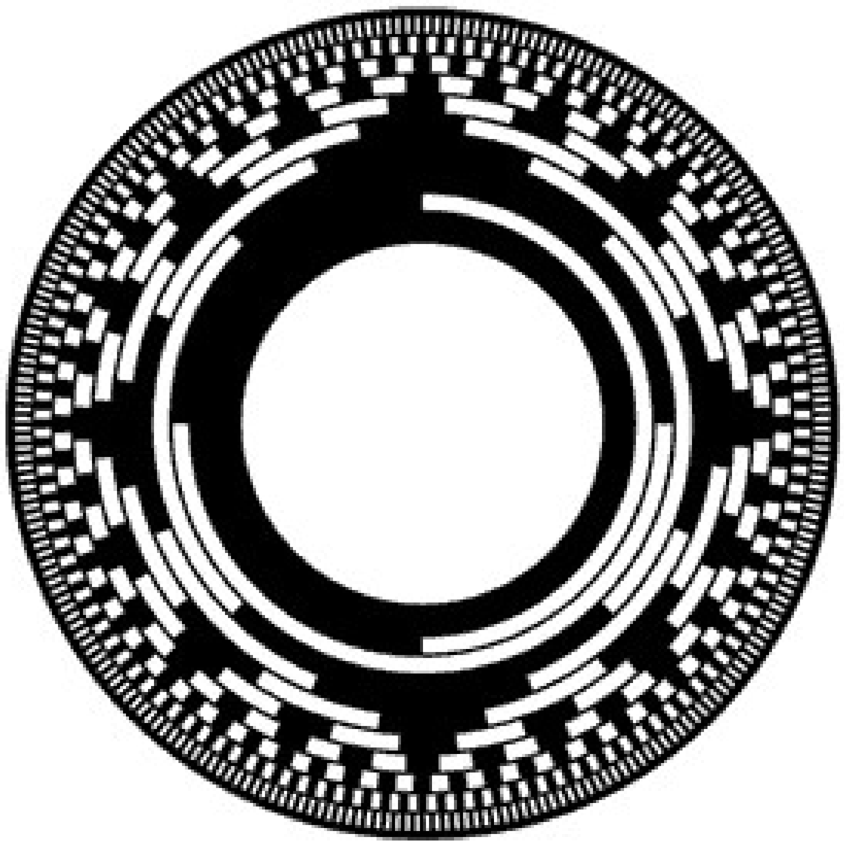


A and B are out of phase of ¼ of cycle

An increase of A with B=0 corresponds to a clockwise rotation

An increase of A with B=1 corresponds to a counterclockwise rotation

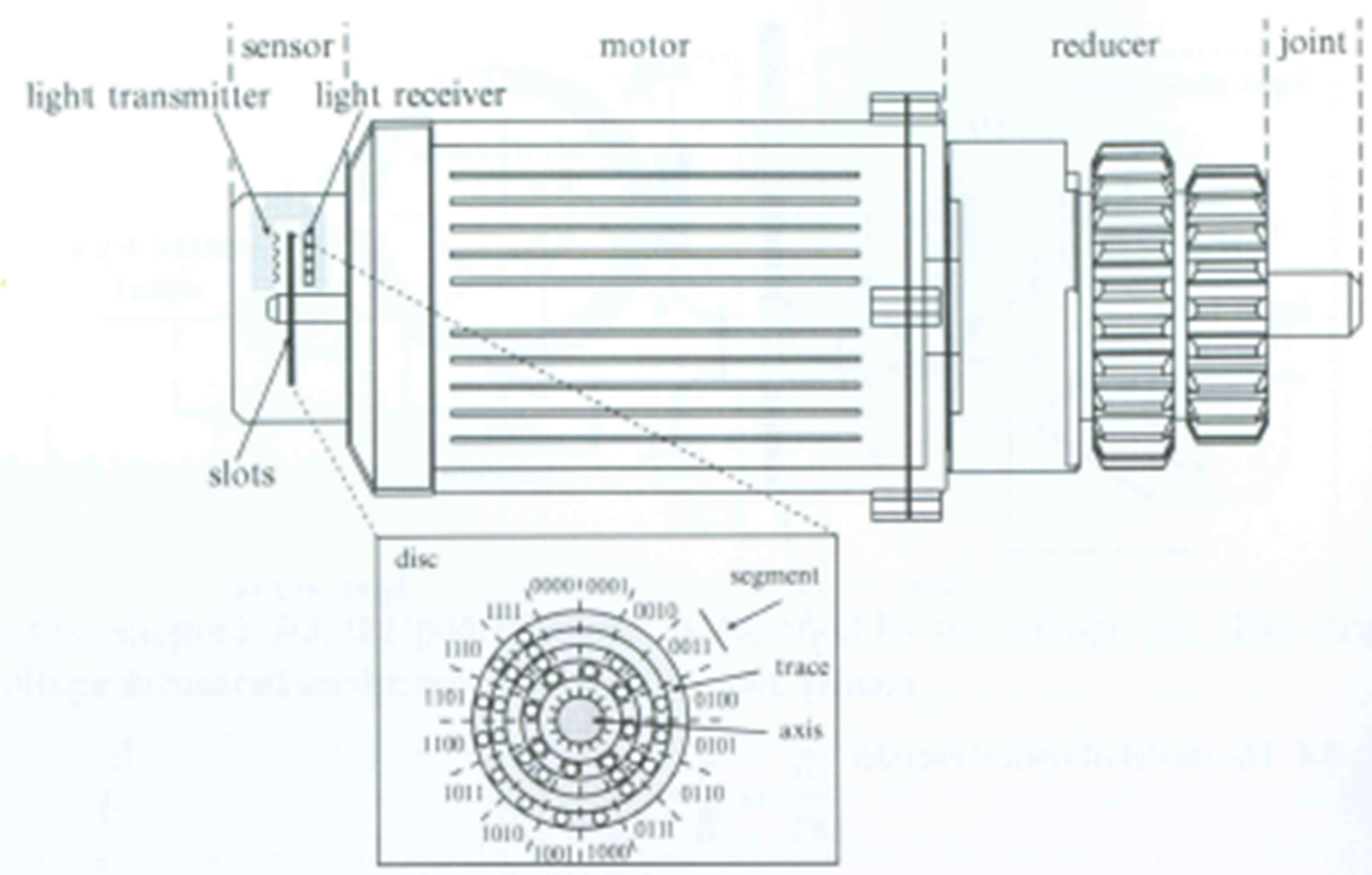
Absolute encoder



k photo-switches
k code tracks
Binary word of k bits, representing 2^k different disk orientations
Angular resolution of $360° / 2^k$

- It gives the absolute rotation angle
- Each position is uniquely determined

Absolute encoder



Absolute encoder

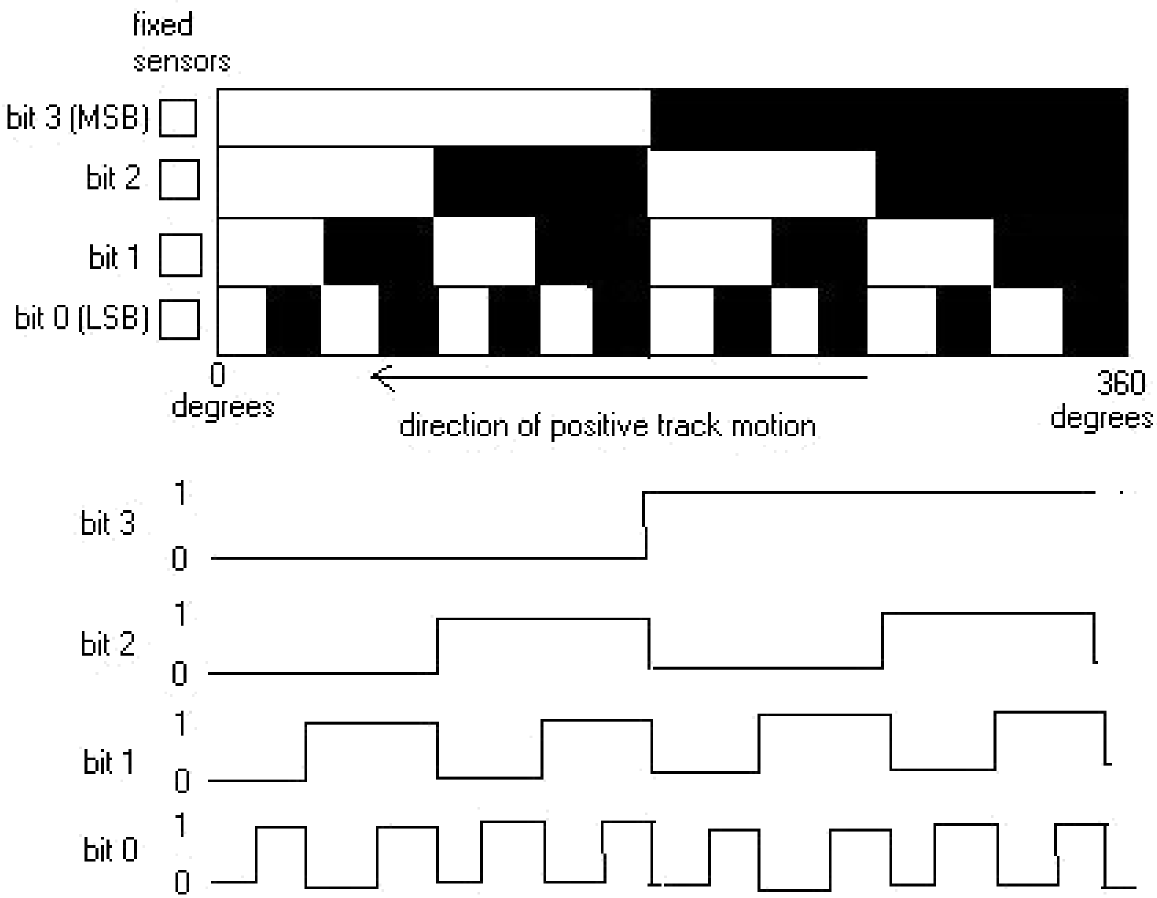


Fig 3 4-Bit binary code absolute encoder disk track patterns

Absolute encoder - Gray Code

Single transition

Decimal	Binary	Gray Code
0	0000	0000
1	0001	0001
2	0010	0011
3	0011	0010
4	0100	0110
5	0101	0111
6	0110	0101
7	0111	0100
8	1000	1100
9	1001	1101

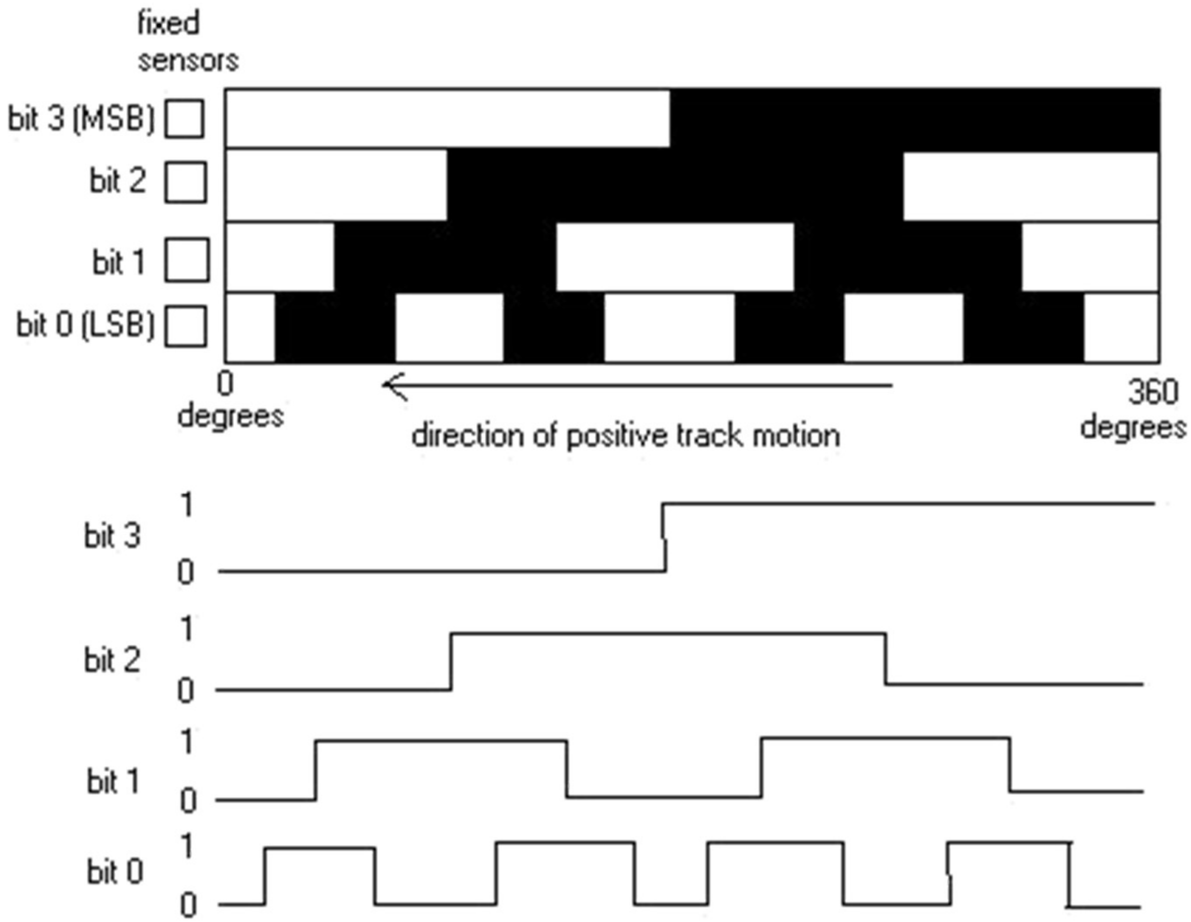
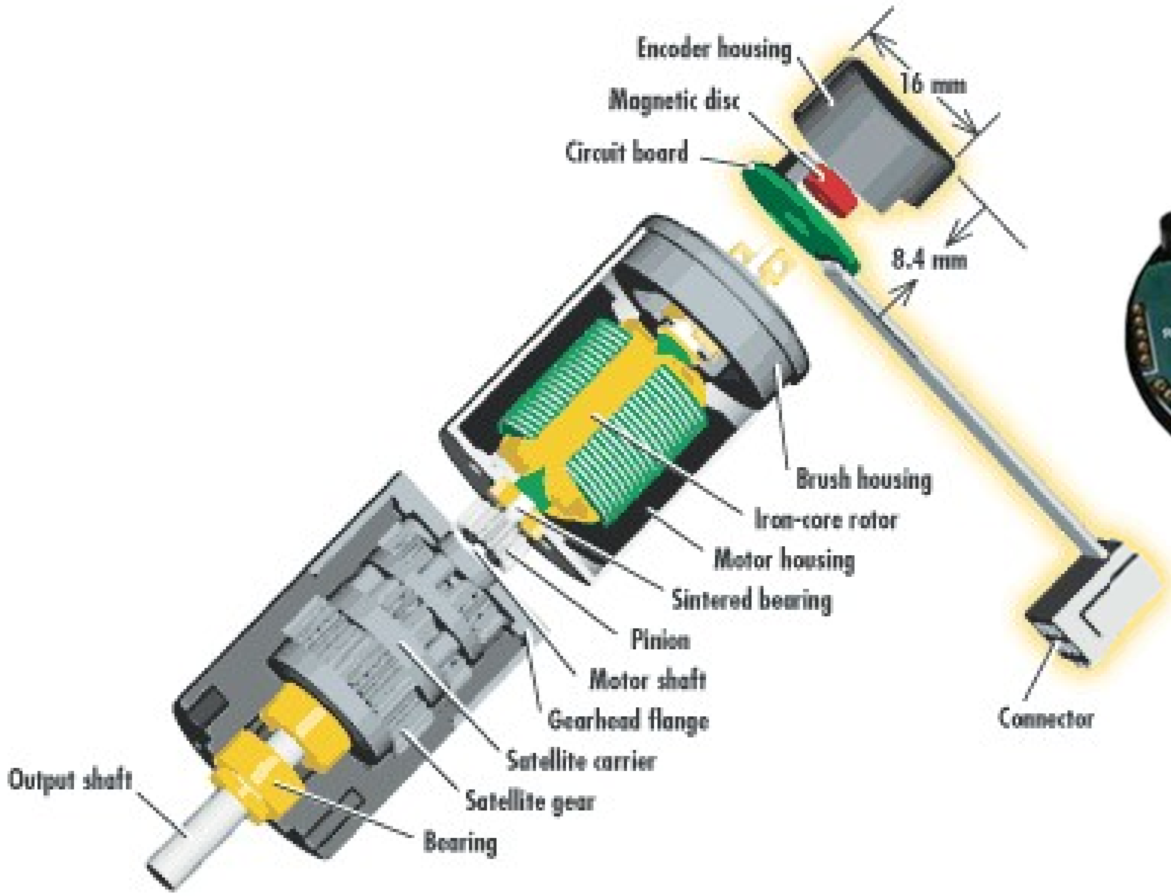
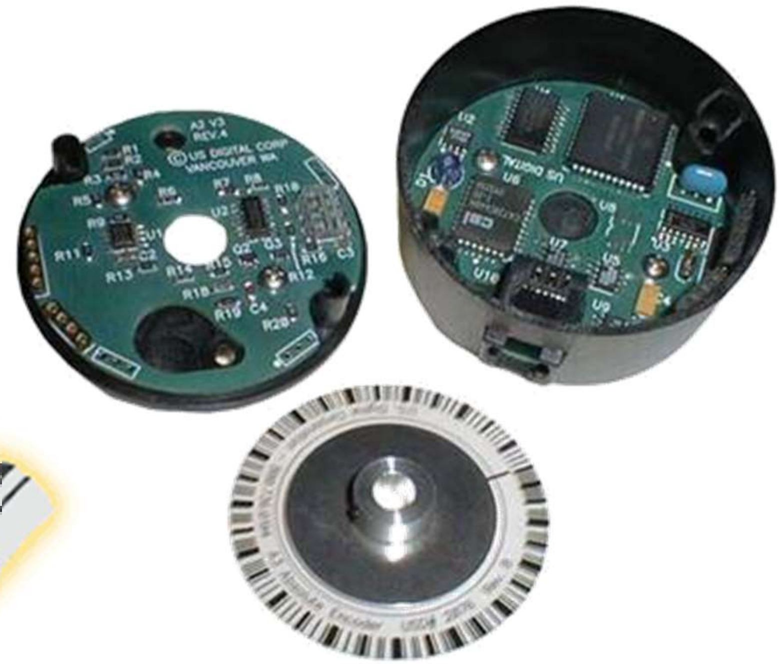


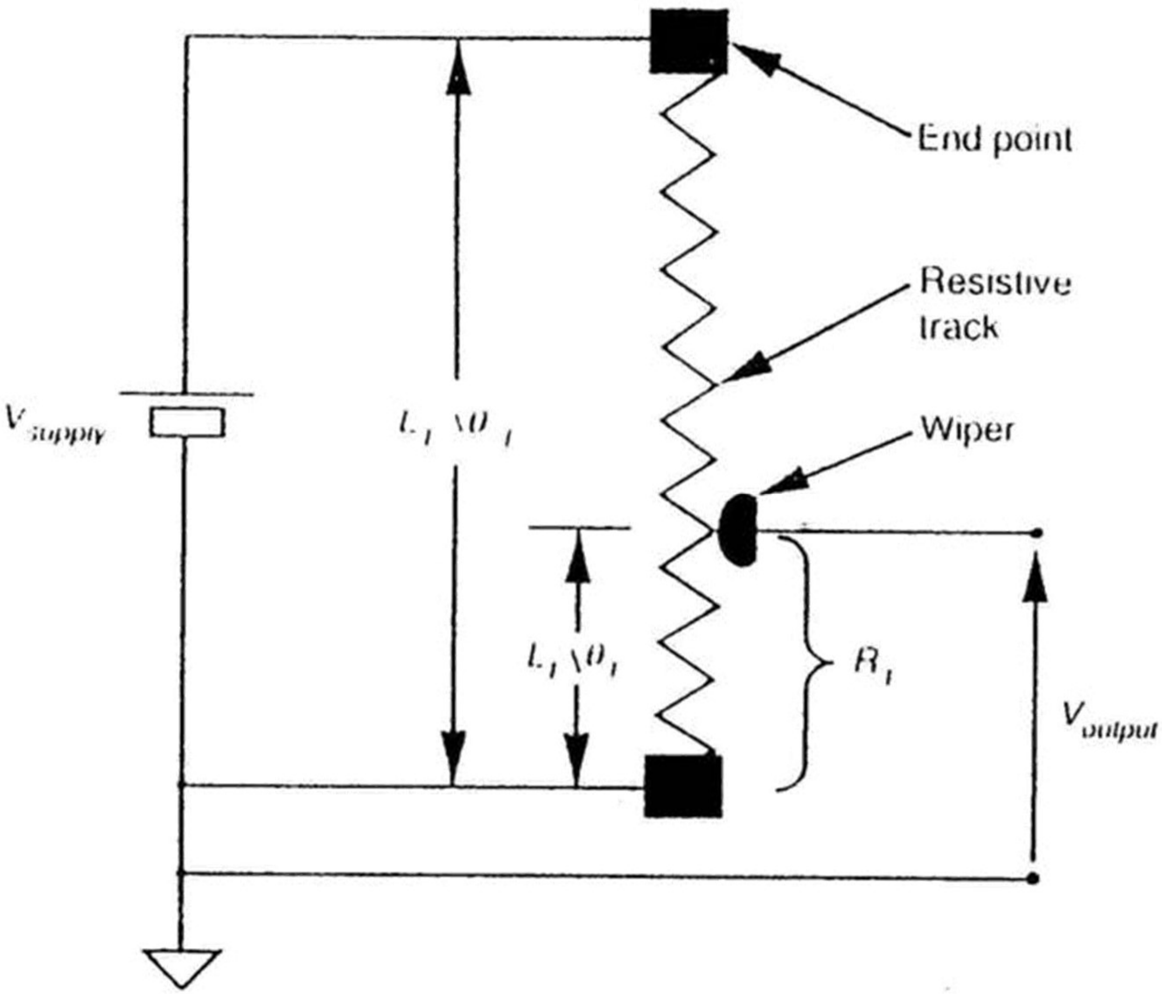
Fig 2. 4-Bit gray code absolute encoder disk track patterns

Optical encoder in an electric motor



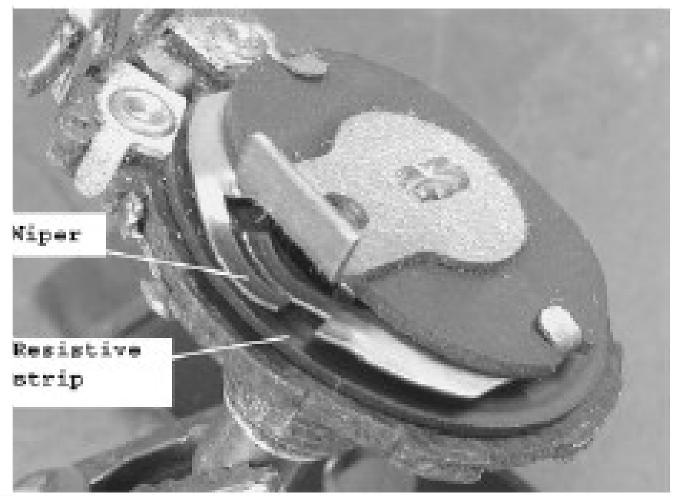


Potentiometers



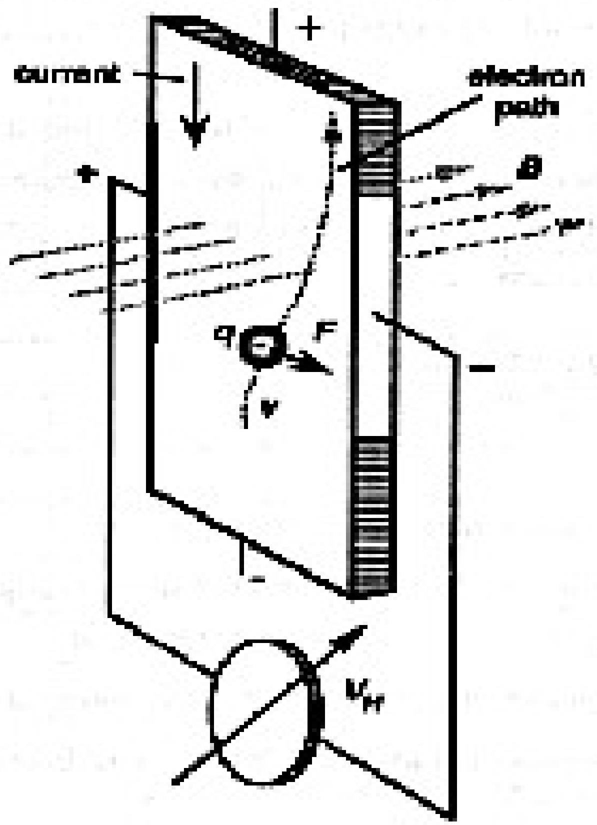
Variable resistor

$$L_1=R_1L_T/R_T=$$
$$=V_{output}L_T/V_{supply}$$



Hall-Effect sensors

In a conductor where a current i flows, immersed in a magnetic field of intensity B, a voltage V originates in the direction normal both to the current and to the magnetic field.



Voltage is proportional to:

- intensity of the current i
- intensity of the magnetic field B,

while it is inversely proportional to:

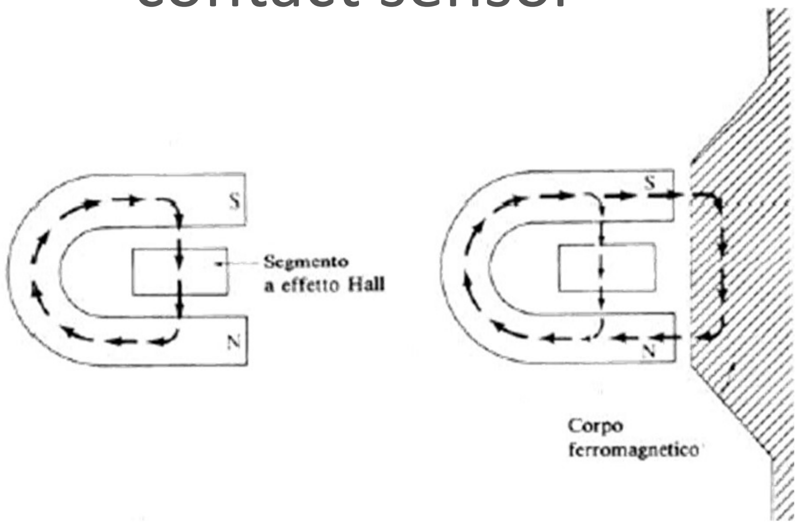
- material thickness d:

$$V = R\, i\, B / d$$

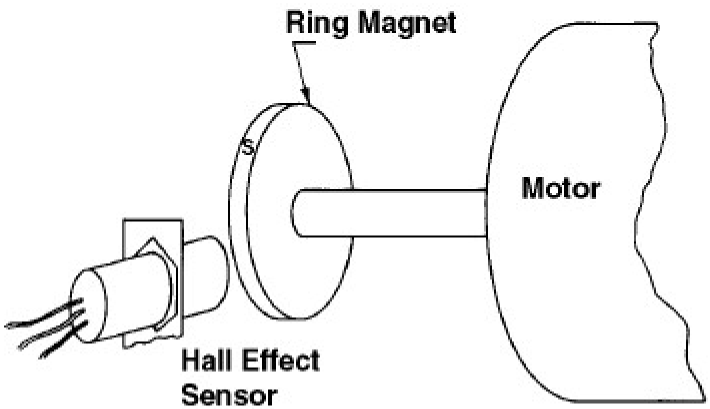
where R = Hall constant or coefficient

Hall-effect sensors

Hall-effect proximity and contact sensor



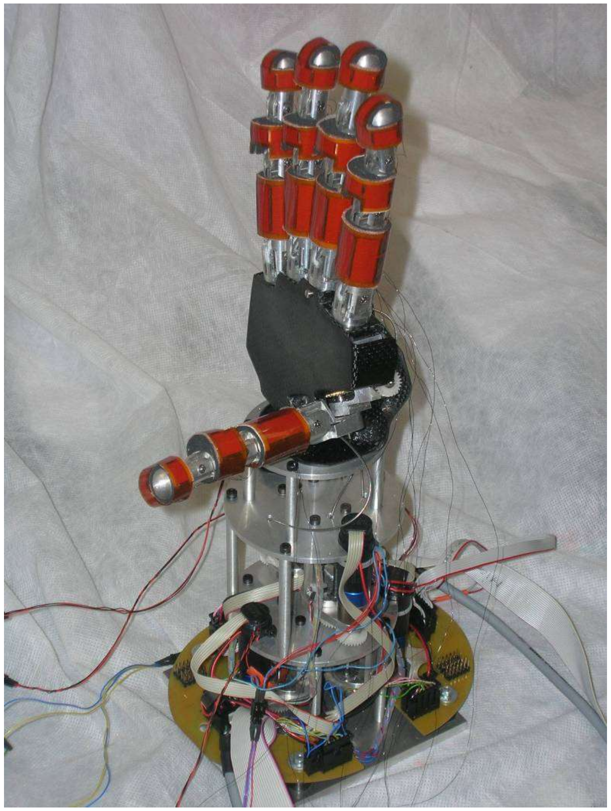
Hall-effect position sensor

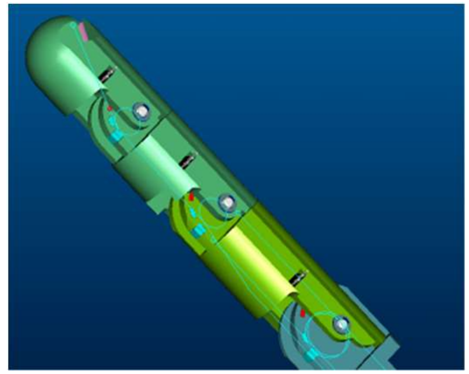


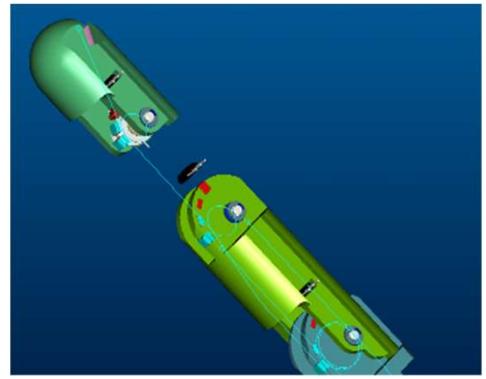
A permanent magnet generates a magnetic field.
The contact with a ferromagnetic object modifies the magnetic field.
The Hall effect measures this variation as a voltage

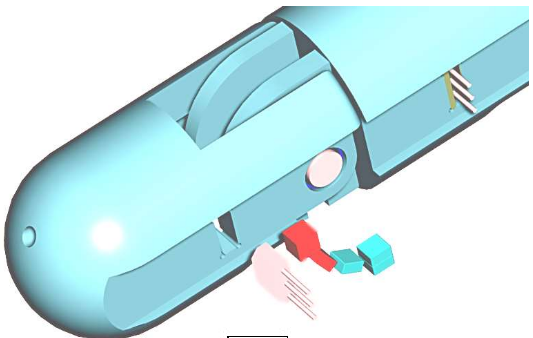
Hall-effect sensors as position sensors in robotics

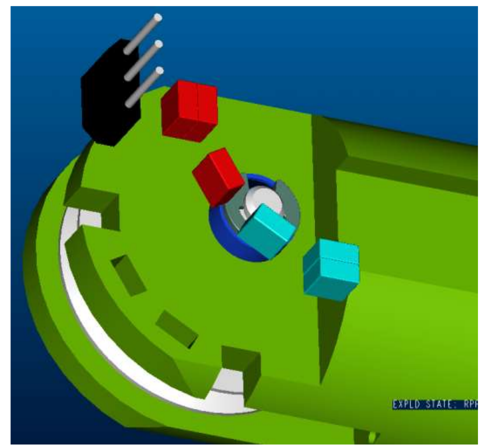
15 Embedded Joint Angle Sensors (Hall effect)
(Operational range: 0 – 90 degrees, Resolution: <5 degrees).

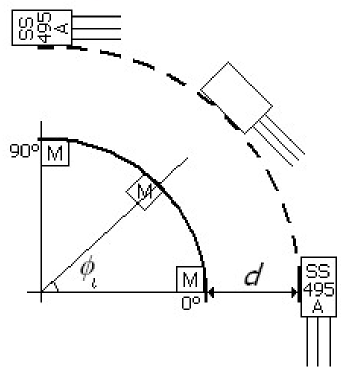






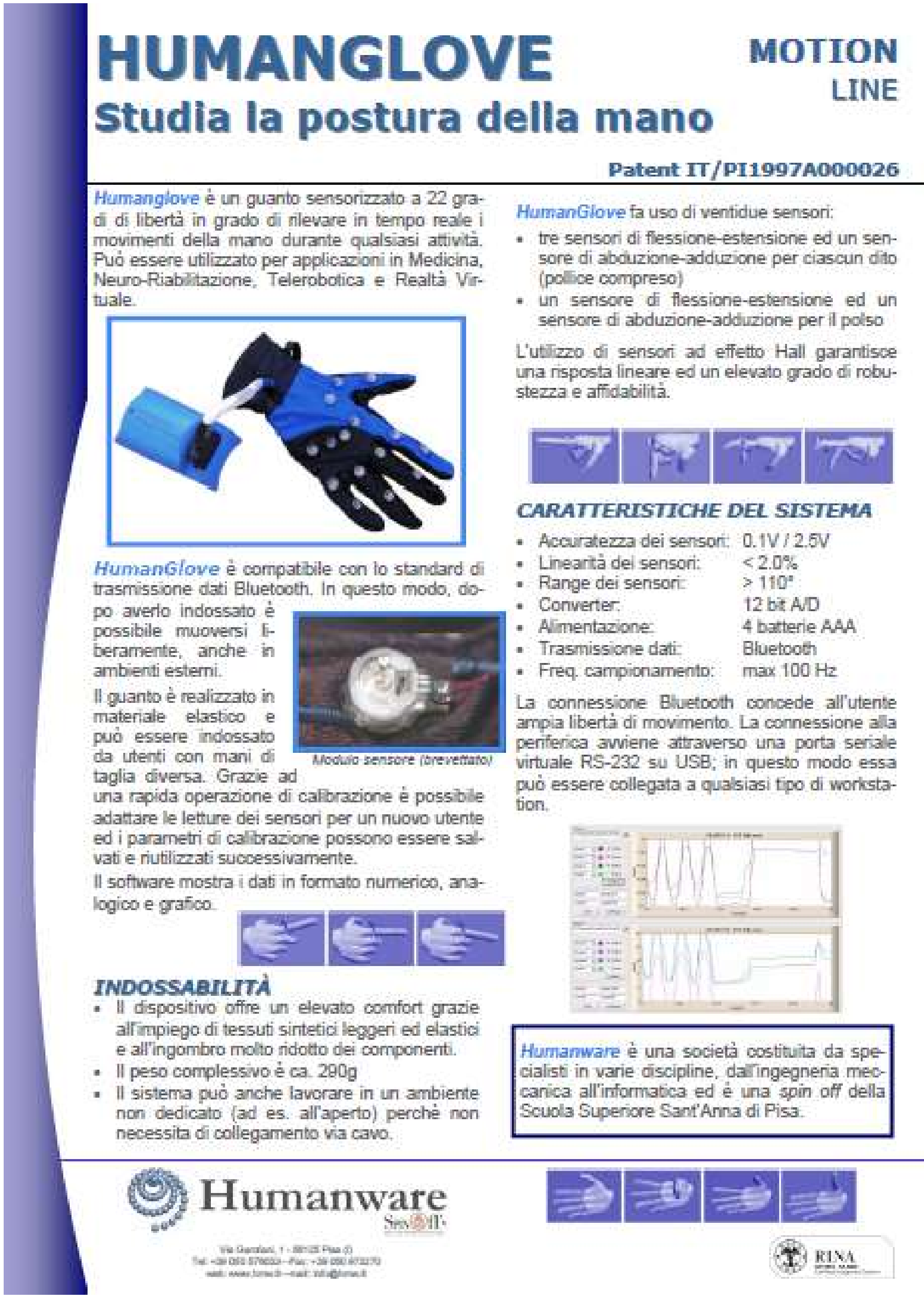






Example of application of Hall-effect sensors

Sensorized glove for detecting finger movements



HUMANGLOVE

Studia la postura della mano

MOTION LINE

Patent IT/PI1997A000026

Humanglove è un guanto sensorizzato a 22 gradi di libertà in grado di rilevare in tempo reale i movimenti della mano durante qualsiasi attività. Può essere utilizzato per applicazioni in Medicina, Neuro-Riabilitazione, Telerobotica e Realtà Virtuale.

HumanGlove è compatibile con lo standard di trasmissione dati Bluetooth. In questo modo, dopo averlo indossato è possibile muoversi liberamente, anche in ambienti esterni.

Il guanto è realizzato in materiale elastico e può essere indossato da utenti con mani di taglia diversa. Grazie ad una rapida operazione di calibrazione è possibile adattare le letture dei sensori per un nuovo utente ed i parametri di calibrazione possono essere salvati e riutilizzati successivamente.

Il software mostra i dati in formato numerico, analogico e grafico.

Modulo sensore (brevettato)

INDOSSABILITÀ

- Il dispositivo offre un elevato comfort grazie all'impiego di tessuti sintetici leggeri ed elastici e all'ingombro molto ridotto dei componenti.
- Il peso complessivo è ca. 290g
- Il sistema può anche lavorare in un ambiente non dedicato (ad es. all'aperto) perchè non necessita di collegamento via cavo.

HumanGlove fa uso di ventidue sensori:

- tre sensori di flessione-estensione ed un sensore di abduzione-adduzione per ciascun dito (pollice compreso)
- un sensore di flessione-estensione ed un sensore di abduzione-adduzione per il polso

L'utilizzo di sensori ad effetto Hall garantisce una risposta lineare ed un elevato grado di robustezza e affidabilità.

CARATTERISTICHE DEL SISTEMA

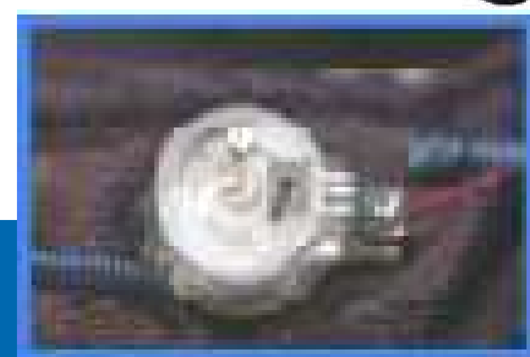
- Accuratezza dei sensori: 0.1V / 2.5V
- Linearità dei sensori: < 2.0%
- Range dei sensori: > 110°
- Converter: 12 bit A/D
- Alimentazione: 4 batterie AAA
- Trasmissione dati: Bluetooth
- Freq. campionamento: max 100 Hz

La connessione Bluetooth concede all'utente ampia libertà di movimento. La connessione alla periferica avviene attraverso una porta seriale virtuale RS-232 su USB; in questo modo essa può essere collegata a qualsiasi tipo di workstation.

Humanware è una società costituita da specialisti in varie discipline, dall'ingegneria meccanica all'informatica ed è una *spin off* della Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna di Pisa.

Humanware

RINA



Modulo sensore (brevettato)