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BSI Standards Publication

Information technology — Biometrics — Overview and application

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National foreword

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A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

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TECHNICAL REPORT

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Information technology — Biometrics — Overview and application

Technologies de l'information — Biométrie — Aperçu général et applications

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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This document was prepared by ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, SC 37, *Biometrics*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC TR 24741:2007), which has been technically revised with the following changes:

— terminology is revised to align with that of ISO/IEC 2382-37;

— clauses on “Overview of biometric technologies” and “Example applications” have been updated to reflect state of art;

— clauses on “Biometrics and information security” and “Biometrics and privacy” have been considerably expanded.

Introduction

"Biometric recognition" is the automated recognition of individuals based on their biological and behavioural characteristics. The field is a subset of the broader field of human identification science. Example technologies include, among others: fingerprinting, face recognition, hand geometry, speaker recognition and iris recognition.

Some techniques (such as iris recognition) are more biologically-based, some (such as signature recognition) more behaviourally based, but all techniques are influenced by both behavioural and biological elements. There are no purely "behavioural" or "biological" biometric systems.

"Biometric recognition" is frequently referred to as simply "biometrics", although this latter word has historically been associated with the statistical analysis of general biological data. The word "biometrics", like "genetics", is usually treated as singular. It first appeared in the vocabulary of physical and information security around 1980 as a substitute for the earlier descriptor "automatic personal identification", in use in the 1970s. Biometric systems recognize "persons" by recognizing "bodies". The distinction between person and body is subtle, but is of key importance in understanding the inherent capabilities and limitations of these technologies. In our context, biometrics deals with computer recognition of patterns created by human behaviours and biological structures and is usually associated more with the field of computer engineering and statistical pattern analysis than with the behavioural or biological sciences.

Today, biometrics is being used to recognize individuals in a wide variety of contexts, such as computer and physical access control, law enforcement, voting, border crossing, social benefit programs and driver licensing.

Information technology — Biometrics — Overview and application

1 Scope

This document describes the history of biometrics and what biometrics does, the various biometric technologies in general use today (for example, fingerprint recognition and face recognition) and the architecture of the systems and the system processes that allow automated recognition using those technologies. It also provides information about the application of biometrics in various business domains such as border management, law enforcement and driver licensing, the societal and jurisdiction considerations that are typically taken into account in biometric systems, and the international standards that underpin their use.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

No terms and definitions are listed in this document.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at http://www.iso.org/obp

4 Introduction and fundamental concepts

4.1 What are biometric technologies?

The definition of biometric in ISO/IEC 2382-37[27] is "automated recognition of individuals based on their biological and behavioural characteristics".

NOTE 1 The all-encompassing term "biometrics" refers to "the application to biology of the modern methods of statistics". In the context of this document, we are concerned with automated technologies that analyse human characteristics for recognition purposes; the general application of statistics to biological systems is a separate discipline.

The term "biometric characteristic" is defined as "biological and behavioural characteristic of an individual from which distinguishing, repeatable biometric features can be extracted for the purpose of biometric recognition". So, biometric technologies are related to physical parts of the human body or the behavioural traits of human beings, and the recognition of individuals based on either or both of those parts or traits. A fuller explanation of the various biometric technologies is given in Clause 6.

NOTE 2 ISO/IEC 2382-37 recommends the use of the term "biometric" only as an adjective and deprecates its use as a noun in places where the fuller term biometric characteristic (as above) would be more appropriate.

The perfect biometric characteristic for all applications would be:

— *Distinctive*: different across all subjects;

— *Repeatable*: similar across time for each subject, over a long time period (several years);