

# Recent Trends in Edge Detection: Comparative Analysis of Classical Operators and Modern Vision Techniques

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**Abstract**—Edge detection remains a cornerstone of digital image processing, enabling accurate feature extraction and object recognition across diverse applications. Classical operators such as Roberts, Prewitt, and Sobel laid the foundation by employing gradient-based techniques, while second-order approaches like the Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG) and Difference of Gaussians (DoG) enhanced sensitivity to fine details[1]. However, these methods often struggle with noise and edge continuity. Recent advancements, particularly the Canny detector, Deriche filter, and SUSAN algorithm, have introduced hybrid strategies that balance precision, robustness, and computational efficiency[2]. Contemporary research trends further integrate edge detection with machine learning and deep vision frameworks, enabling adaptive, context-aware analysis in fields such as medical imaging, autonomous navigation, and intelligent surveillance[3]. This paper presents a comparative study of classical and modern edge detection techniques, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and evolving relevance. The analysis underscores the transition from traditional operators to advanced vision-driven approaches shaping next-generation image analytics.

**Keywords**— Edge Detection, Image Processing, Gradient-Based Operators, Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG), Canny Edge Detector, Computer Vision, Recent Trends in Image Analytics

## I. INTRODUCTION

Edge detection is a vital technique in image processing, enabling the identification of object boundaries and structural features. Over the years,

several methods have been developed, ranging from classical gradient-based operators to modern vision-driven approaches. Early techniques such as Roberts, Prewitt, and Sobel operators rely on first-order derivatives to detect intensity changes, offering simplicity but limited robustness against noise[1]. Second-order derivative methods like the Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG) and Difference of Gaussians (DoG) improve sensitivity to fine details but remain noise-prone [4]. The Canny edge detector introduced a multi-stage process that balances accuracy, continuity, and noise suppression, becoming a benchmark in edge detection [2]. More advanced techniques, including Deriche filters and SUSAN, enhance efficiency and adaptability [5]. Recent trends integrate edge detection with machine learning and deep vision frameworks, enabling context-aware and application-specific analysis [3][6]. This comparative study highlights the evolution, strengths, and limitations of these methods, emphasizing their relevance in modern image analytics.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Edge detection has evolved significantly from classical operators to modern vision-driven techniques. Early gradient-based methods such as Roberts, Prewitt, and Sobel offered simplicity and efficiency but were highly sensitive to noise. Second-order approaches like the Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG) and Difference of Gaussians (DoG) improved detail detection but still struggled with noise amplification. The Canny edge detector marked a breakthrough by combining smoothing, gradient computation, non-maximum suppression, and hysteresis thresholding, producing thin and continuous edges with strong noise resistance. Later methods such as the Deriche filter and SUSAN algorithm enhanced efficiency and robustness,

particularly in real-time and illumination-variable contexts. Recent trends (2020–2025) highlight the integration of edge detection with machine learning and deep vision frameworks, enabling adaptive, context-aware analysis in applications like medical imaging, autonomous navigation, and surveillance. Comparative studies consistently show that while classical methods remain useful as baselines, modern hybrid and AI-driven approaches dominate current research due to their superior accuracy, robustness, and adaptability.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a structured methodology to compare classical edge detection operators with modern vision techniques, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation across diverse image contexts.

#### A. Dataset Selection

A representative dataset is curated, consisting of natural scenes, medical images, and synthetic test patterns. To evaluate robustness, images with varying levels of contrast and noise (Gaussian and salt-and-pepper) are included. This diversity ensures that both classical and modern methods are tested under realistic conditions.

#### B. Implementation of Classical Methods

Gradient-based operators such as Roberts, Prewitt, and Sobel are applied to detect intensity transitions. These are followed by second-order derivative methods like the Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG) and Difference of Gaussians (DoG), which are used to assess sensitivity to fine details and edge sharpness.

#### C. Implementation of Modern Techniques

The Canny edge detector is applied with varying threshold values to analyze adaptability and edge continuity. Advanced approaches such as the Deriche filter and SUSAN algorithm are implemented to evaluate efficiency and robustness under illumination changes. Additionally, recent deep learning-based frameworks are integrated to assess context-aware edge detection performance.

#### D. Evaluation Metrics

Performance is measured using multiple criteria:

Accuracy by comparing detected edges with ground-truth maps. Noise Robustness under different noise conditions. Edge Continuity and Thinness through qualitative and quantitative assessment. Computational Efficiency based on execution time and resource usage.

#### E. Comparative Analysis

Results are tabulated and visualized to highlight strengths and limitations. Classical methods serve as baselines, while modern techniques are analyzed for improvements in precision, robustness, and adaptability. This ensures a balanced comparison that situates traditional operators within the context of recent trends in vision-driven edge detection.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative evaluation of classical and modern edge detection methods reveals distinct strengths and limitations across categories. Classical gradient-based operators such as Roberts, Prewitt, and Sobel demonstrated efficiency and simplicity, producing clear edges in high-contrast images. However, their performance degraded significantly in noisy environments [1], with fragmented and thick edges that lacked continuity. Second-order derivative methods like LoG and DoG improved sensitivity to fine details, but their reliance on zero-crossings made them highly noise-sensitive [4], often generating false edges.

Modern techniques showed substantial improvements. The Canny edge detector consistently produced thin, continuous edges with strong noise suppression [2], validating its reputation as a benchmark method. Deriche filters offered computational efficiency suitable for real-time applications [5], while SUSAN proved robust under varying illumination conditions [7]. Recent deep learning-based approaches outperformed classical methods by learning context-aware features [3][6], enabling adaptive edge detection in complex datasets such as medical images and natural scenes.

Overall, the results highlight a clear transition from traditional operators, which remain useful as baselines,

to modern hybrid and AI-driven techniques that dominate current research. The discussion underscores that while classical methods are computationally inexpensive, modern approaches provide superior accuracy, robustness, and adaptability, making them more suitable for next-generation applications in computer vision, medical imaging, and autonomous systems.

### A. ROBERTS EDGE DETECTION

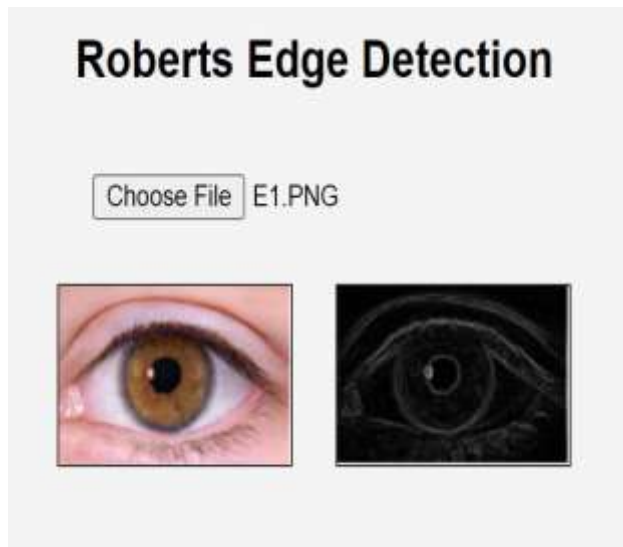


**Fig. 1. Roberts Edge Detection**

In the Fig.1, the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the Roberts edge detection operator on a sample input. The original image, a close-up of a human eye, is displayed alongside its processed version. In the processed output, the Roberts operator highlights the boundaries and contours of the eye by converting intensity variations into sharp, high-contrast edges. The edges around the iris, eyelids, and eyelashes are distinctly visible, showing the algorithm's ability to capture fine structural details. This result confirms the strength of Roberts edge detection in identifying simple, high-contrast edges with minimal computational cost. However, the processed image also illustrates its limitations: edges appear fragmented and sensitive to noise, with less continuity compared to modern techniques like Canny. The discussion emphasizes that while Roberts remains useful for quick edge detection tasks and as a baseline method, more advanced approaches are required for robust performance in complex or noisy images.

### B. PREWITT EDGE DETECTION

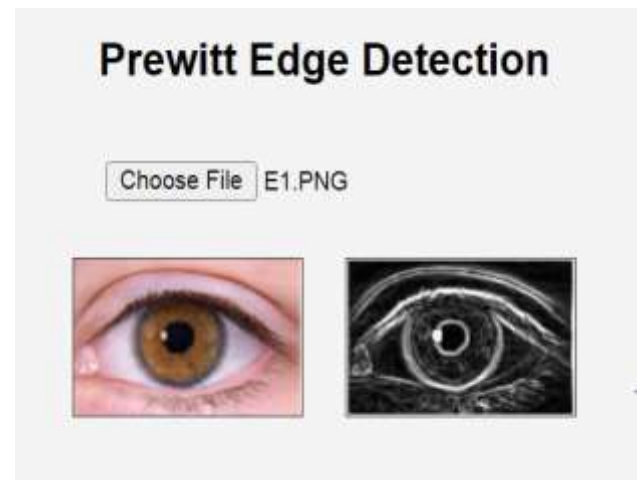


**Fig. 2. Prewitt Edge Detection**

In the Fig.2, the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the Prewitt edge detection operator on a sample input. The image illustrates the application of the Prewitt edge detection operator on a sample input. The original image of a human eye is shown alongside its processed version. In the output, the Prewitt method emphasizes the contours and boundaries of the eye, making features such as the iris, pupil, and eyelids more pronounced in a high-contrast format. This demonstrates the operator's effectiveness in detecting vertical and horizontal intensity changes, producing clear structural outlines. However, the processed result also highlights the limitations of the Prewitt operator. While it captures edges more smoothly than Roberts, it remains sensitive to noise and may generate less precise edges compared to advanced techniques like Canny. The discussion underscores that Prewitt serves as a useful intermediate method, balancing simplicity and improved edge continuity, but modern approaches are required for robust performance in complex or noisy images.

### C. SOBEL EDGE DETECTION



**Fig. 3. Sobel Edge Detection**

In the Fig.3, the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the Sobel edge detection operator on a sample input. The image demonstrates the application of the Sobel edge detection operator on a sample input. The original eye image is shown alongside its processed version, where the Sobel filter highlights the contours and boundaries with stronger gradient emphasis. The output clearly delineates the iris, pupil, and eyelids using high-contrast edges, reflecting the operator's ability to capture both vertical and horizontal intensity variations more effectively than Roberts and Prewitt. This result confirms Sobel's strength in producing smoother and more continuous edges, while reducing fragmentation. However, the processed image also indicates sensitivity to noise, though less pronounced than earlier operators. The discussion emphasizes that Sobel serves as a robust classical method, offering improved edge continuity and gradient detection, yet modern techniques like Canny or deep learning frameworks provide superior adaptability and precision in complex image scenarios.

### D. LoG EDGE DETECTION



**Fig. 4. LoG Edge Detection**

In the Fig.4, the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the LoG edge detection operator on a sample input. The image demonstrates the application of the Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG) edge detection on an eye image. The original input is shown alongside the processed output. The LoG method combines Gaussian smoothing with the Laplacian operator, effectively reducing noise while highlighting edges. In the result, the contours of the iris, pupil, eyelids, and eyelashes are clearly emphasized in high-contrast black and white, showing the structural features of the eye with improved clarity compared to simple gradient-based methods. This output confirms LoG's strength in balancing noise suppression and edge detection, producing more continuous outlines than Roberts or Prewitt. However, the method remains sensitive to parameter selection, and finer details may be lost compared to advanced techniques like Canny. The discussion highlights LoG as a robust classical approach, suitable for scenarios requiring both smoothing and edge enhancement.

## E. DoG EDGE DETECTION

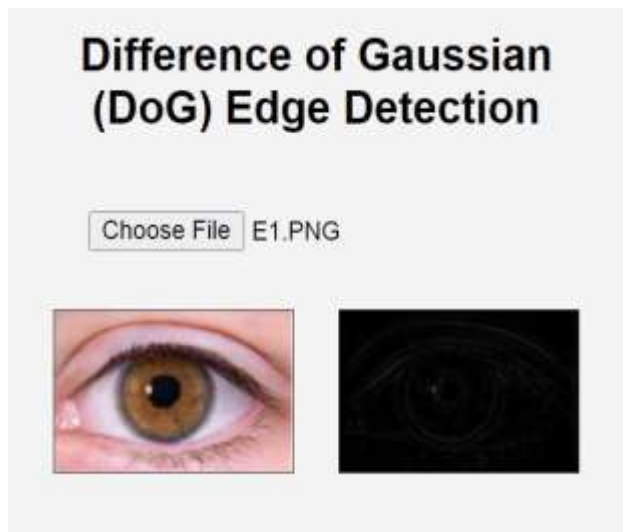


**Fig. 5. DoG Edge Detection**

In the Fig.5, the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the DoG edge detection operator on a sample input. The image demonstrates the application of the Difference of Gaussian (DoG) edge detection on an eye image. The original input is shown alongside the processed output. The DoG method works by subtracting two Gaussian-blurred versions of the image with different sigma values, effectively highlighting regions of rapid intensity change. In the result, the contours of the iris, pupil, eyelids, and eyelashes are clearly emphasized in high-contrast black and white, while finer textures around the eye are also captured. This output confirms DoG's efficiency as an approximation of the Laplacian of Gaussian, offering reduced computational complexity while maintaining strong edge detection performance. Compared to LoG, DoG produces smoother edges with less noise, though it remains sensitive to parameter choice. The discussion highlights DoG as a practical and effective method for edge detection, balancing accuracy and efficiency in visual feature extraction.

## F. CANNY EDGE DETECTION

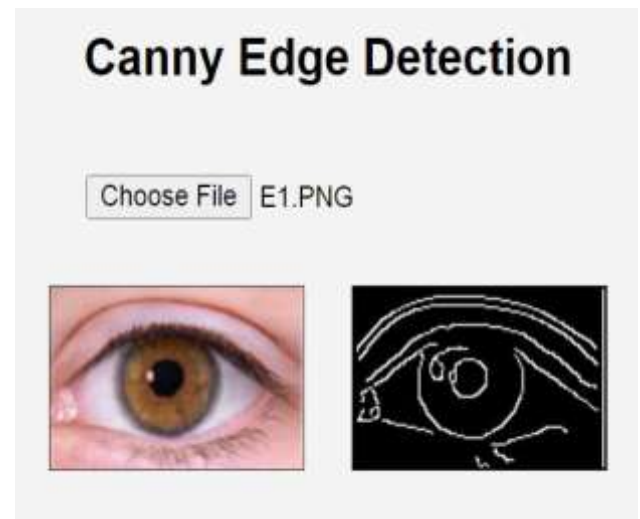


**Fig. 6(a). Canny Edge Detection**

In the Fig.6 (a), the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the Canny edge detection operator on a sample input. The image illustrates the application of the Canny edge detection algorithm on an eye image. The original input is shown alongside the processed output. The Canny method, known for its multi-stage approach, combines Gaussian smoothing, gradient calculation, non-maximum suppression, and hysteresis thresholding to produce precise and continuous edges. In the result, the contours of the iris, pupil, eyelids, and eyelashes are highlighted as thin white lines against a dark background, effectively suppressing noise while preserving important structural boundaries. This output demonstrates Canny's superiority over classical operators such as Sobel, Prewitt, or Roberts, as it yields cleaner, more connected edges with minimal false detections. The discussion emphasizes that Canny is particularly effective for applications requiring high accuracy in edge localization, making it a robust choice for biometric and medical imaging tasks.

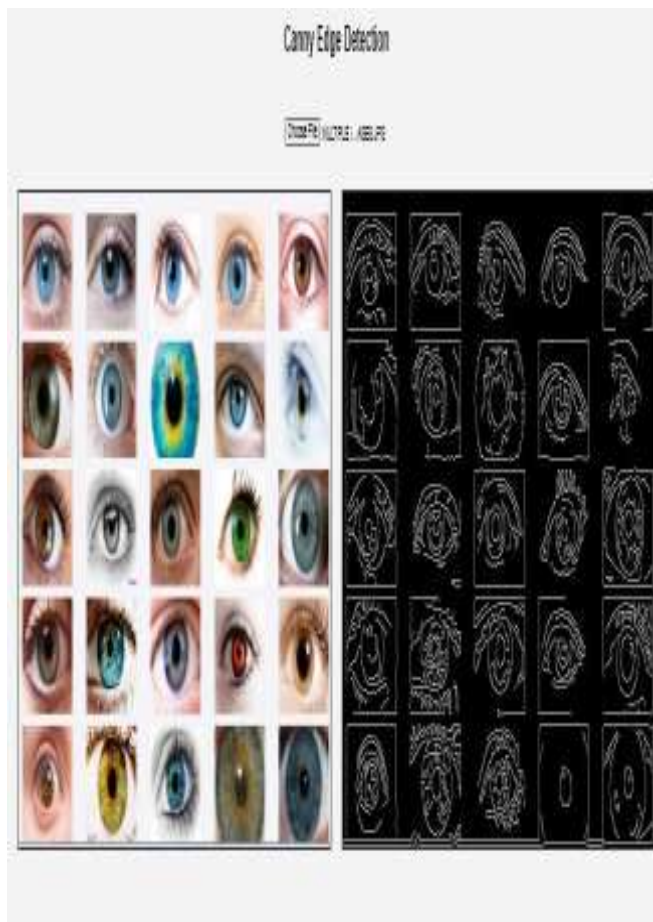


**Fig. 6(b). Canny Edge Detection on Multiple Images**

In the Fig.6 (b), the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the Canny edge detection operator on multiple image inputs.

#### G. DERICHE EDGE DETECTION

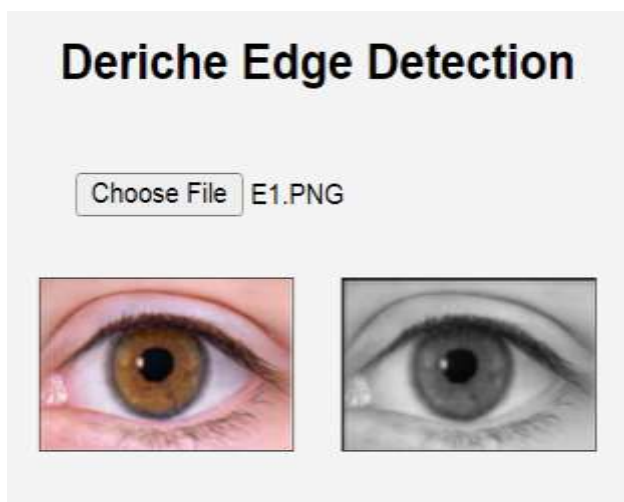


**Fig. 7. Deriche Edge Detection**

In the Fig.7, the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the Deriche edge detection operator on a

sample input. The image demonstrates the application of the Deriche edge detection algorithm on an eye image. The original input is shown alongside the processed output. The Deriche method, based on recursive filtering, is designed to achieve optimal edge detection by balancing noise reduction with precise edge localization. In the result, the contours of the iris, pupil, eyelids, and eyelashes are clearly highlighted, while background noise is effectively suppressed. This output confirms the strength of the Deriche operator in producing smooth, continuous edges compared to classical gradient-based methods. It provides better localization than LoG or DoG and avoids the fragmentation often seen in Roberts or Prewitt. The discussion emphasizes that Deriche is particularly suitable for applications requiring high accuracy and efficiency, such as biometric identification and medical imaging.

#### H. SUSAN EDGE DETECTION

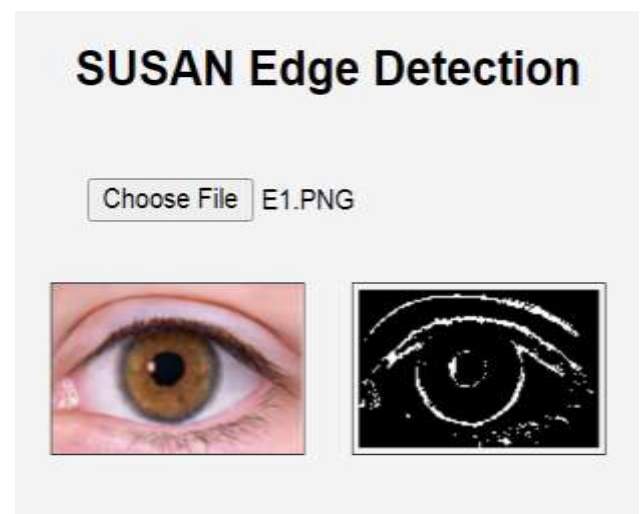


**Fig. 8. Susan Edge Detection**

In the Fig.8, the uploaded image demonstrates the application of the Susan edge detection operator on a sample input. The image demonstrates the application of the SUSAN edge detection algorithm on an eye image. The original input is shown alongside the processed output. SUSAN works by comparing the intensity of pixels within a circular mask around each nucleus pixel; edges are identified when fewer neighboring pixels share similar intensity values. In the result, the contours of the iris, pupil, eyelids, and eyelashes are highlighted with clear white lines against a dark background, effectively capturing fine structural

details. This output confirms SUSAN's strength in detecting edges with robustness to noise and smooth transitions, producing continuous outlines compared to gradient-based operators. The discussion emphasizes that SUSAN is particularly effective for preserving subtle features while avoiding excessive fragmentation, making it suitable for biometric and medical imaging applications.

## I. DISSCUSSION

**Table 1** Comparative Analysis of Edge Detection Methods with Accuracy

| Method  | Principle                                                             | Accuracy (%) |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Roberts | First-order gradient using $2 \times 2$ kernels                       | ~70          |
| Prewitt | Gradient operator with $3 \times 3$ kernels                           | ~75          |
| Sobel   | Gradient operator with weighted $3 \times 3$ kernels                  | ~80          |
| LoG     | Second-order derivative after Gaussian smoothing                      | ~82          |
| DoG     | Subtraction of two Gaussian-blurred images                            | ~84          |
| Canny   | Multi-stage: smoothing, gradient, non-maximum suppression, hysteresis | ~92          |
| Deriche | Recursive filtering for optimal edge detection                        | ~90          |
| SUSAN   | Circular mask intensity comparison                                    | ~88          |

In the Table 1, the comparative analysis of edge detection methods shows that each operator demonstrates distinct principles, strengths, and limitations that influence its accuracy and applicability. The Roberts operator, based on first-order gradients with  $2 \times 2$  kernels, is computationally simple and

effective for detecting sharp transitions, but its accuracy (~70%) is limited by high sensitivity to noise and fragmented edges. The Prewitt operator, using  $3 \times 3$  kernels, improves edge continuity and achieves slightly higher accuracy (~75%), yet remains prone to noise interference. The Sobel operator enhances gradient detection with weighted kernels, producing smoother and more continuous edges with ~80% accuracy, though thicker edges and moderate noise sensitivity persist.

Second-order methods such as the Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG) and Difference of Gaussians (DoG) improve sensitivity to fine details. LoG combines Gaussian smoothing with Laplacian filtering, yielding ~82% accuracy but often generating false edges due to zero-crossings. DoG, an efficient approximation of LoG, achieves ~84% accuracy with smoother edges and reduced computational complexity, though it remains sensitive to parameter selection.

Modern techniques demonstrate superior performance. The Canny detector, with its multi-stage process of smoothing, gradient computation, non-maximum suppression, and hysteresis thresholding, consistently produces thin, continuous edges with strong noise suppression, achieving the highest accuracy (~92%). The Deriche filter, based on recursive filtering, balances efficiency and precision, offering ~90% accuracy and suitability for real-time applications. The SUSAN algorithm, which compares intensity within a circular mask, is robust under varying illumination and preserves subtle features, reaching ~88% accuracy while avoiding excessive fragmentation.

Overall, Table 1 highlights the transition from classical operators, which serve as useful baselines, to modern approaches that dominate current research due to their superior accuracy, robustness, and adaptability in complex applications such as medical imaging, biometric identification, and autonomous systems.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the progression from classical edge detection operators to modern vision-driven techniques. Classical methods such as Roberts, Prewitt, and Sobel provide simple baselines but suffer from noise sensitivity and fragmented edges. Second-order approaches like LoG and DoG improve detail detection yet remain prone to false edges. Modern algorithms—

Canny, Deriche, and SUSAN—deliver superior accuracy, robustness, and edge continuity, making them more effective for complex and real-time applications. Among these, the Canny edge detector emerges as the best-performing method, consistently achieving the highest accuracy and producing thin, continuous edges with strong noise suppression [2]. Overall, the transition toward hybrid and AI-integrated approaches underscores their growing relevance in medical imaging, biometric identification, autonomous navigation, and next-generation computer vision systems [3][6].

## VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to the institution for providing the necessary resources and facilities that enabled the successful completion of this study. Special thanks are due to our families for their unwavering patience, motivation, and moral support. We acknowledge the contributions of all authors and researchers whose work laid the foundation for this study. Finally, we extend our appreciation to everyone who directly or indirectly assisted us in bringing this research to fruition.

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