

## PREFACE

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Interest in the automatic processing and analysis of document images has been rapidly increasing during the past few years. New conferences were established, existing ones received a growing number of submissions, and many related publications appeared. The increasing interest in this field is motivated by several factors. First, document image analysis has a history of over thirty years and many fundamental ideas have been known for a long time. But it was only recently that powerful and cheap hardware became available to put these ideas into practice. Secondly, the first low-cost OCR devices, i.e. scanners with OCR-software running on personal computers, were very successful and there are many other practical problems for which the development of similar solutions seems possible in the near future. Moreover, there are close links between document image analysis and some other currently popular research topics in computer science, like multi- or hypermedia systems, and a new generation of man-machine interfaces.

This book is a reprint of a special issue of the *International Journal of Pattern Recognition and Artificial Intelligence (IJPRAI)*. It consists of 14 contributions that address different subfields of document image analysis, including preprocessing and segmentation, form processing, handwriting recognition, line drawing and map processing, and contextual processing. Most of the papers included in this book were regularly submitted to *IJPRAI*. A few of them are revised, extended and resubmitted versions of papers that were originally presented at the *1992 IAPR Workshop on Structural and Syntactic Pattern Recognition* held in Bern. All papers were subject to the standard *IJPRAI* reviewing procedure, i.e. they were refereed by at least two independent experts.

We want to thank the authors very much for their contributions. It is our hope that this collection of papers will further stimulate research and development in this exciting and fast growing field.