

# Effects of JPEG Compression on the Accuracy of Photogrammetric Point Determination

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## Abstract

An empirical investigation into the effects of JPEG compression on the accuracy of photogrammetric point determination (PPD) is described. A pair of black-and-white aerial photographs of a city, taken at a scale of 1:8000, was selected and scanned at a resolution of 25  $\mu\text{m}$ . Eighteen image points were measured with the ISDM module of an Intergraph digital photogrammetric workstation (DPW), and the bundle adjustment of a single model was performed using WuCAPS<sub>SGPS</sub> (Wuhan GPS-supported bundle block adjustment software). In processing various JPEG compressed images with Q-factors from 1 to 100, the accuracy of the 3D coordinates of the pass points was assessed and compared with that obtained from the original images (i.e., without compression). The empirical results show that, when the compression ratios are under 10, the compressed image is near-lossless. In other words, the visual quality of JPEG compressed images is still excellent and the accuracy of manual image mensuration is essentially not influenced. However, no indication can be found from the results that a compression of 10 is the critical value or the optimum compression level for PPD. Indeed, it is clear that the degradation of accuracy in PPD is almost linear.

## Introduction

As we know, aerial photogrammetry has two central tasks, i.e., to accurately locate and to correctly recognize ground objects from airborne/spaceborne remotely sensed imagery, i.e., to extract the positioning and attribute information of the objects from images. The former is known as photogrammetric point determination (PPD).

Conventional PPD is performed in a least-squares adjustment with photo observations based on a certain number of ground control points. The photo observations are obtained by manual mensuration on hardcopy photographs by means of an accurate comparator. The advantage of the operation is the small volume of photo observations requiring storage. Its disadvantage is that it is manual, less efficient, and frequently erroneous. With the development of computer and image processing technology, photogrammetry has stepped into the softcopy photogrammetric era. In softcopy photogrammetry, expensive photogrammetric instruments are replaced by a digital photogrammetric workstation (DPW) and most operations

are implemented automatically, such as interior orientation, image mensuration, DTM generation, etc. However, all operations in a DPW are based on digital images. Hardcopy photographs must be converted into digital images by a scanner. Doing so will create a huge volume of data. For example, a black-and-white digital aerial image scanned at a resolution of 20  $\mu\text{m}$  contains approximately 10,000 by 10,000 pixels or 100 Mbytes of data. Sometimes more than six images are processed at the same time to measure image points automatically. As a result, reduction in image data volume is a matter of great significance in softcopy photogrammetry. Such a reduction in data volume can be achieved by image compression techniques.

A number of mature compression techniques have been developed. They can be broadly classified into two categories: lossless compression, e.g., the Lempel-Ziv and JBIG methods (Howard *et al.*, 1998), and lossy compression, e.g., JPEG, fractal, and wavelet compression (Jackson and Hannah, 1993). Lossless compression reduces the number of bits required to represent an image such that the reconstructed image is numerically identical to the original one on a pixel-by-pixel basis. This is of course ideal for photogrammetric applications. However, the compression ratio for such a method is generally 2 to 4 times for remotely sensed imagery (Wang *et al.*, 2000). The other type of method, lossy compression, on the other hand, allows the degradation of a reconstructed image in exchange for a higher degree of compression in data volume. These degradations may or may not be visually apparent. In this study, attention is paid to the loss of geometric quality due to compression.

In recent years, image compression has been an important topic in photogrammetry. Some researchers have concentrated their efforts on developing compression algorithms for airborne and spaceborne remotely sensed imagery (Lammi and Sarjakoski, 1992; Memon, 1994; Algarni, 1996; Xuan and Hu, 1999; Wang *et al.*, 2000; Zhang *et al.*, 2000). Others evaluate the effects of compression on the information extracted from the compressed digital aerial images (Mikhail *et al.*, 1984; Nunes *et al.*, 1992; Tada *et al.*, 1993; Jaakkola and Orava, 1994; Lammi and Sarjakoski, 1995; Robinson *et al.*, 1995; Novak and Shahin, 1996; Reeves *et al.*, 1997) and classification from the compressed satellite imageries (Paola and Schowengerdt, 1995; Correa *et al.*, 1998). In this study, particular attention has been paid to the effect of compression on the accuracy of image mensuration and PPD. A particular type of compression technique, JPEG, will be investigated. JPEG is selected because it has been

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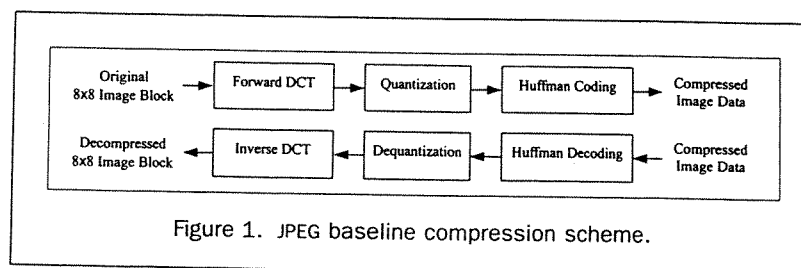
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In lossless compression, the fidelity is 1.0 and the PSNR is infinite. When  $\delta$  is equal to 1, the PSNR is 48.0 while, when  $\delta$  equals 2, the PSNR is 42.0. One can regard image compression as near-lossless compression when the fidelity is more than 0.99 and the PSNR is above 42.0 (Xuan and Hu, 1999). Near-lossless compression means that the RMS of the gray values between pixels of the original and reconstructed images is less than the quantized noise in the radiometry, and positioning accuracy goes beyond the distortion of the sensor in the geometry.

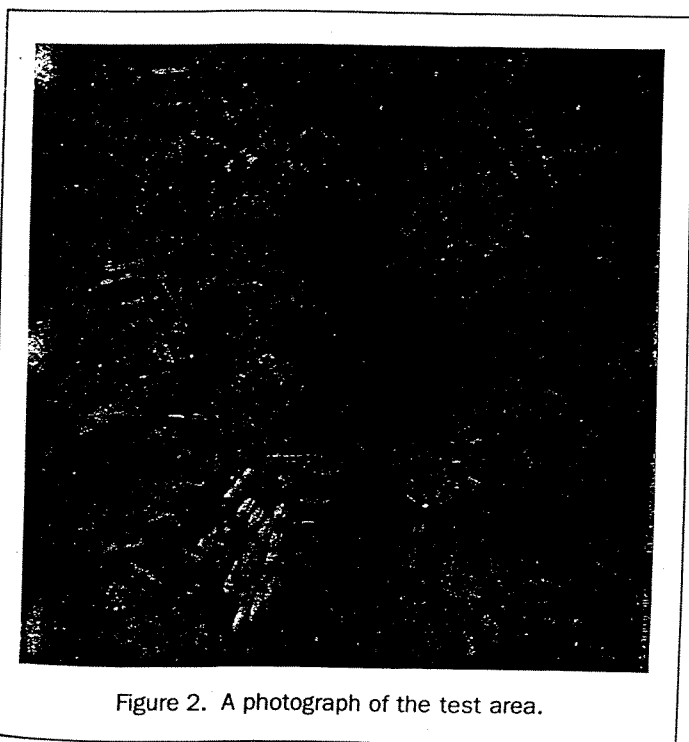
## Design of this Experimental Study

### Platform and Test Area

JPEG has been implemented in all digital photogrammetric workstations (DPW). In this institution, an Intergraph DPW is available to the authors and was therefore used in this study.

A stereo pair of aerial photographs covering the Diamond Hill area of Hong Kong was used in this experiment (Figure 2). The photographs were taken from a flying height of about 1200 m (4,000 ft). The scale was 1:8,000. The area covers different land-cover types such as urban area with high rise buildings, a quarry site, a cemetery, and a hillside with medium vegetation coverage.

Approximately 160 Mbytes of raw image data were obtained by scanning these two photographs at a resolution of 25  $\mu$ m using a Heleva scanner. Image mensuration was performed with the ISDM (ImageStation Digital Mensuration) tool of Intergraph DPW.



### Evaluation of the Effects of JPEG Compression on Image Quality

Equations 3 and 4, given in the previous section, address pictorial quality, i.e., how the pixel values are changed after compression, in comparison with the original image. This kind of measure is about visual satisfaction and is not of great interest to mapping scientists. Indeed, to this group of people, the geometric and thematic quality is the main concern.

Thematic quality means the accuracy of image classification. Classification accuracy is expected to decrease if compressed images are used. This is outside the scope of this study.

In this study, geometric quality is of great concern. Here geometric quality means the accuracy of photogrammetric measurement. Digital terrain models (DTM) and photogrammetric point determination (PPD) are typical results of photogrammetric measurement. An evaluation of the effect of JPEG compression on DTM accuracy has been conducted by Lam *et al.* (2001). In this paper, the effect of JPEG compression on the accuracy of PPD is investigated.

Because this investigation is about how JPEG compression affects PPD, only a relative evaluation was conducted. In other words, the 3D coordinates of the points determined using the original images were used as reference values. The 3D coordinates of the same points, determined using the images compressed at various levels, were then compared with the reference values to produce RMS values. The RMS values are used to indicate the quality of PPD. The distribution of the points to be evaluated is shown in Figure 3.

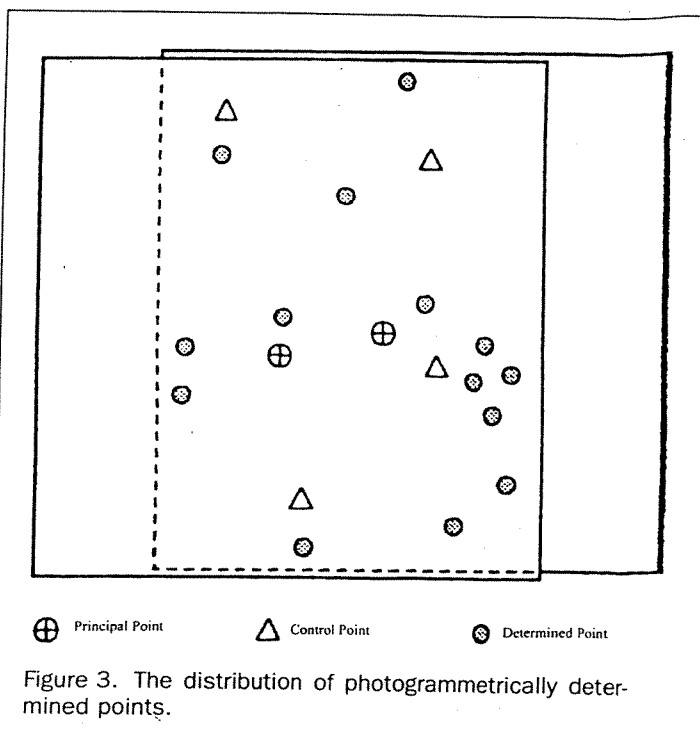


TABLE 1. ACCURACY OF INTERIOR ORIENTATION IN LEFT IMAGE

Q-Factor	0	1	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
Ratio		1.93	5.10	7.94	10.86	13.35	15.60	17.77	19.97	21.98	24.03
Fidelity		1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.998	0.998	0.998	0.998	0.998
PSNR		54.55	43.16	41.25	40.23	39.41	38.76	38.20	37.69	37.23	36.81
$\sigma_0/\mu\text{m}$	5.0	5.0	5.1	4.9	5.0	4.8	5.2	5.1	5.2	5.1	5.2

TABLE 2. ACCURACY OF INTERIOR ORIENTATION IN RIGHT IMAGE

Q-Factor	0	1	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
Ratio		1.92	5.08	7.84	10.77	13.25	15.46	17.56	19.68	21.62	23.60
Fidelity		1.000	1.000	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.998	0.998	0.998	0.998
PSNR		54.54	43.06	41.13	40.12	39.32	38.68	38.13	37.62	37.17	36.75
$\sigma_0/\mu\text{m}$	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.3	5.0	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.2

#### Selection of Compression Level: Q-Factor vs Compression Ratio

As discussed above, in JPEG compression the compression level of an image can be controlled by a constant, which is generally called the quality factor (Q-factor). A higher Q-factor gives higher compression. A lower Q-factor gives a better quality image, but a lower compression ratio. Therefore, variable compression can be achieved by simply scaling the Q-factor. An important property of the JPEG scheme is the adjustment of the Q-factor to balance the reducing image size and degraded image quality. In fact, different JPEG compression programs have different Q-factors. In JPEG compression as applied in the Intergraph DPW, the Q-factors can be valued from 1 to 250 and the default value is 30.

In this experimental study, a number of compression levels with Q-factors ranging from 0 to 100 were tested, at intervals of 10. As a particular case, a compression level with Q-factor equal to 1 was also tested. In this particular case, the compression ratio varies from 1 (i.e., when  $Q = 0$ ) to 26 (i.e., when  $Q = 100$ ).

### Experimental Testing and Results

#### Procedures

In this study, the pair of digital images was first compressed at various levels, using  $Q = 0, 1, 10, 20, \dots, 100$ . The Ratio, Fidelity, and PSNR of the left and right images are listed in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Figure 4 shows the effect of changing the Q-factors on compression ratio and PSNR.

PPD was implemented in each of these compression settings. Each of these compressed image pairs was used for PPD. PPD consists generally of three steps:

- image mensuration,
- field survey of ground control points, and
- photogrammetric adjustment of image observation the minimum number of ground control points.

The flow chart of photogrammetric point determination as shown in Figure 5.

#### Effect of JPEG Compression on the Accuracy of Orientations

The accuracy of the 3D coordinates of the photogrammetric points is influenced by the errors occurring in each of the steps described above.

The interior orientation of the image is the first step to establish the relationship between the pixel and the coordinate system. It is always implemented through manual or automated mensuration of fiducial marks. The accuracy of the interior orientation is determined by using the residuals of the 2D coordinates of the fiducial marks. In this study, semi-automated interior orientation was used using four fiducial marks in the image corners which were manually determined, and the accuracy of the interior orientation was  $5.0 \mu\text{m}$ . This result is similar to those reported by others, e.g., 0.13 pixels by Lue (1997). The effect of JPEG compression on the accuracy of interior orientations is also shown in Tables 1 and 2.

The next step of PPD is relative orientation to determine the relative position and attitude of two images with respect to each other. After this step, a stereo model was formed by adjusting the y-parallax at all pass and tie points. The accuracy of the relative orientation is determined by the RMS of all y-parallax residuals. Although automated relative orientation is accurate, robust, and reliable (Heipke, 1997), the operator had to manually measure all pass points in this study. Only an Intergraph DPW without ISAT (ImageStation automated point measurement, and bundle adjustment) was available to the authors and used in our study.

Eighteen passpoints well distributed over the model were then measured stereoscopically (Figure 3). These passpoints included four artificial points in the playgrounds, four points of some building tops, four control points on buildings, and six identifiable object points. They were very clear in both of the original images. As shown in Figure 6, these points are shown in this figure, the effect of JPEG compression on the position determination of these points is also shown. The effect of JPEG compression on the relative orientation is shown in Figure 7.

In order to get the approximation of the exterior orientation elements and 3D coordinates of the passpoints, the stereo model was registered to the ground by absolute orientation. This was implemented by using three or more ground control points well distributed over the model. The RMS of the residuals

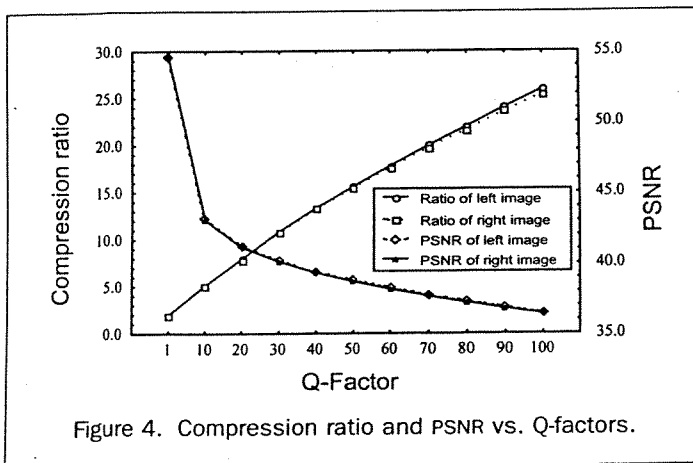


Figure 4. Compression ratio and PSNR vs. Q-factors.

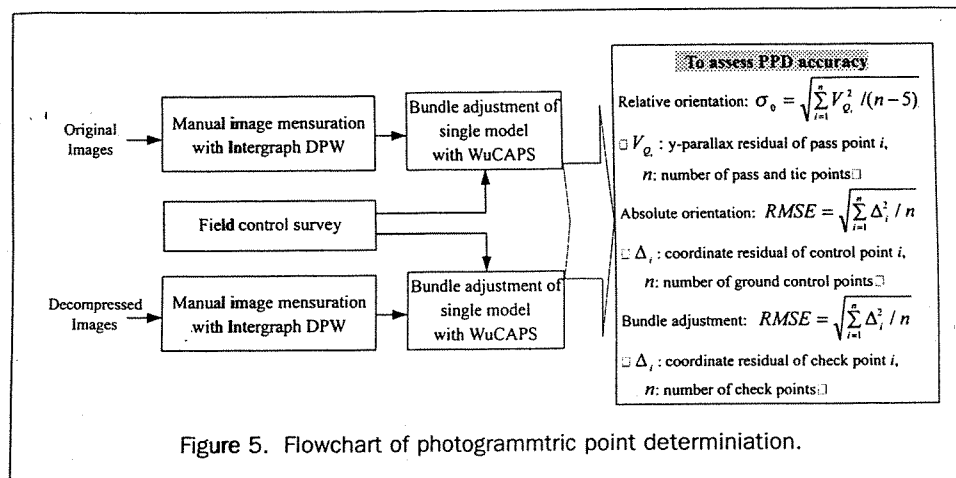


Figure 5. Flowchart of photogrammetric point determination.

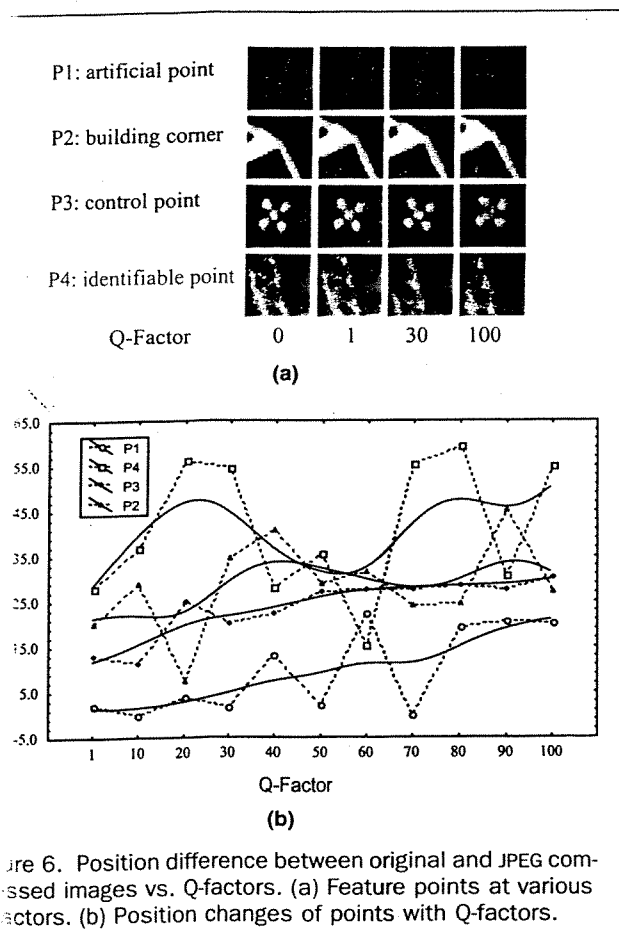


Figure 6. Position difference between original and JPEG compressed images vs. Q-factors. (a) Feature points at various Q-factors. (b) Position changes of points with Q-factors.

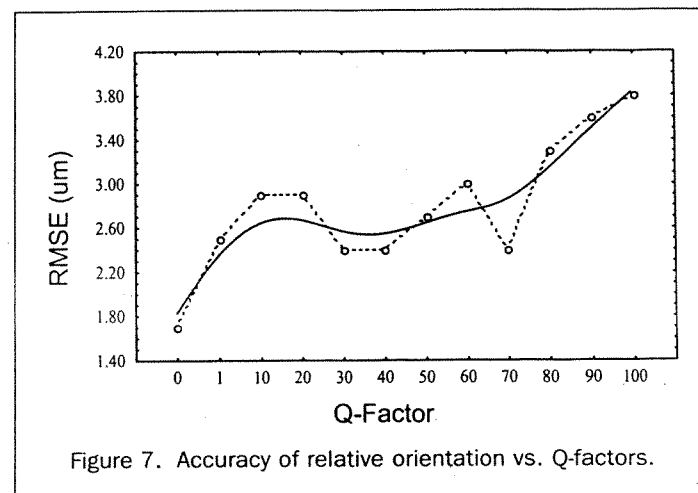


Figure 7. Accuracy of relative orientation vs. Q-factors.

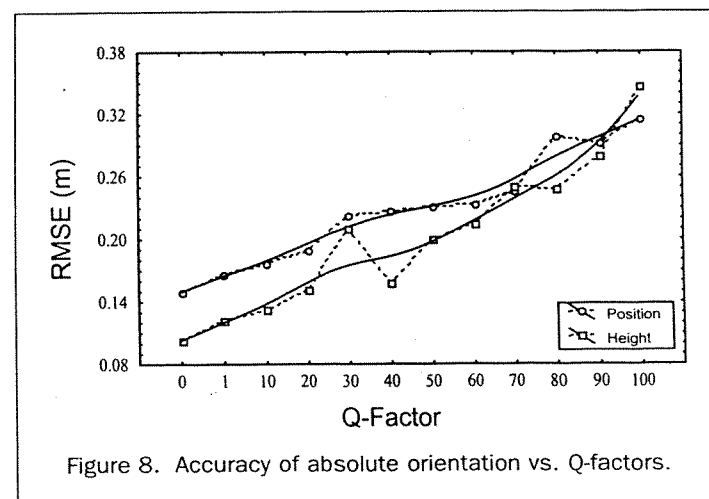


Figure 8. Accuracy of absolute orientation vs. Q-factors.

3D coordinates on these control points is used as a measure of the accuracy of absolute orientation. The effect of JPEG compression on the accuracy of absolute orientation is shown in Figure 6.

#### Effect of JPEG Compression on the Accuracy of PPD

The final step of PPD is the adjustment of image observations. In this study, bundle adjustment of a single model was carried out using WuCAPS<sub>GPS</sub>, a GPS-supported bundle block adjustment system developed by Yuan (2000). The PPD result shows that the unit weight standard deviation of image measurements was

$\sigma_0 = 2.8 \mu\text{m}$ , and the theoretical accuracy of the 3D coordinates of the pass points were  $m_x = 4.7 \text{ cm}$ ,  $m_y = 5.2 \text{ cm}$ ,  $m_{xy} = 7.0 \text{ cm}$ , and  $m_z = 20.1 \text{ cm}$  on the ground, respectively.

The final PPD accuracy is interesting in photogrammetric applications and is often assessed by using the RMS of the 3D coordinates of all checkpoints. In this study, 14 passpoints, excluding control points, were used as checkpoints. As stated

TABLE 3. ACCURACY OF PPD WITH JPEG COMPRESSED IMAGE PAIRS

Q-Factor	Relative orientation $\sigma_0$ ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	Absolute orientation (m)				Bundle adjustment (m)					$\sigma$
		X	Y	XY	Z	$\sigma_0$ ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	X	Y	XY	Z	
0	1.7	0.05	0.14	0.149	0.103	2.8	0.047	0.052	0.070	0.201	
1	2.5	0.08	0.15	0.167	0.122	5.4	0.13	0.22	0.254	0.270	2
10	2.9	0.08	0.16	0.176	0.133	7.3	0.07	0.26	0.272	0.334	2
20	2.9	0.11	0.15	0.190	0.151	5.7	0.17	0.20	0.268	0.341	2
30	2.4	0.10	0.20	0.222	0.210	6.5	0.15	0.24	0.288	0.346	3
40	2.4	0.12	0.19	0.226	0.157	5.6	0.13	0.29	0.312	0.395	3
50	2.7	0.12	0.20	0.232	0.200	5.9	0.17	0.28	0.329	0.417	3
60	3.0	0.12	0.20	0.234	0.215	8.2	0.18	0.28	0.332	0.406	3
70	2.4	0.11	0.22	0.245	0.251	4.6	0.16	0.33	0.367	0.409	4
80	3.3	0.14	0.24	0.298	0.247	8.2	0.16	0.30	0.341	0.452	3
90	3.6	0.15	0.25	0.291	0.280	7.0	0.21	0.33	0.391	0.491	4
100	3.8	0.15	0.28	0.316	0.347	7.0	0.20	0.36	0.412	0.555	4

**Remarks:**

(1) Q-Factor = 0 denotes original image. The accuracy of the bundle adjustment is theoretical accuracy  $m_i = \sigma_0 \sqrt{(Q_{XX})_{ii}}$  ( $i = X, Y, Z$ ).  $\sigma_0$  is the unit weight standard deviation of image measurements;  $Q_{XX}$  is the variance-covariance matrix.

(2) Q-Factor from 1 to 100 denotes JPEG compressed images with various levels. The accuracy of the bundle adjustment is the root-mean-square errors of coordinate differences of passpoints, i.e.,  $\mu_i = \sqrt{\sum \Delta_i^2 / 14}$  ( $i = X, Y, Z$ );  $\mu_{XY} = \sqrt{\mu_X^2 + \mu_Y^2}$ .

(3) The accuracy degeneration of PPD is  $(\mu_i - m_i)/m_i$  ( $i = XY, Z$ ).

previously, the 3D coordinates of these points, determined using the original image pair, were used as reference values and, therefore, the accuracy assessment is used to compare other 3D coordinates of the checkpoints with these reference values. The comparison was done on a point-by-point basis (see Table 3). The results are shown in Table 3 and Figure 9. As stated previously, this accuracy is shown in a relative sense.

**Analysis of Results**

Figure 4 shows that the compression ratios increase almost linearly and image quality falls with an increase in the Q-factor. It can also be seen that there is a sudden transition in image quality on compressing with Q-factors of 1 to 10. The degradation trends of the image quality were then slow with increasing compression ratios. According to the criteria in the section on Principles of the JPEG Compression Technique, the compressions are near-lossless when Q-factors are under 20. When Q-factors are over 20, the compressions are lossy. From this experiment, it can be noted that the JPEG compression with a Q-factor of 30 (or compression ratio equal to 10), which is recommended by Intergraph DPW, is near-lossless.

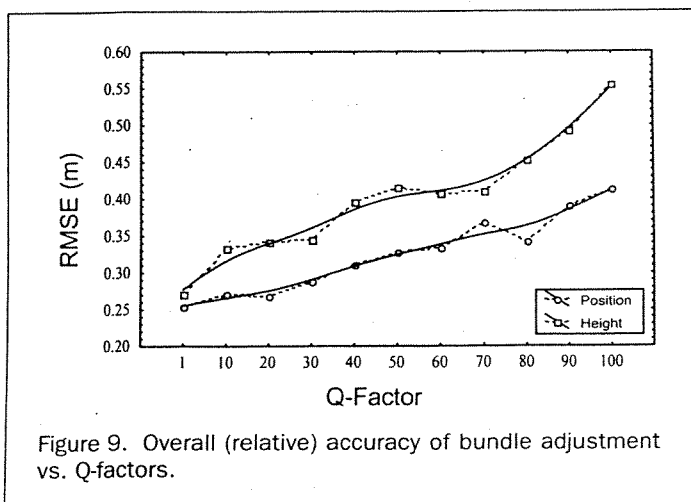


Figure 9. Overall (relative) accuracy of bundle adjustment vs. Q-factors.

From Tables 1 and 2, it can be concluded that the of interior orientation remains almost unchanged with increase in Q-factor (up to 100). This is because, although the images of fiducial marks become more blurred with the increase in compression ratios, one can still recognize and accurately locate their central points due to their very regular "c" shapes. In addition, some systematic errors, for example, metric distortion, are compensated by the affine transformation during the adjustment of interior orientation. In this study, it is concluded that the geometric distortion of the compressed images is small, and the image coordinate system is not affected by the compression ratio is under 25. This is very important for copy photogrammetry.

Figure 7 shows that the higher the compression ratio, the poorer the accuracy of the relative orientation. The increase in RMS is almost linear when the Q-factor is smaller than 70. From Q = 0 to Q = 100, the RMS value increases twofold. This is a consequence of the change in the position of the feature points used for relative orientation. As shown in Figure 6, such a change in position for artificial point corners, and control points is very clear.

Figure 8 shows the variation of the RMS of absolute orientation with compression ratio. With an increase in compression ratio, the increase in RMS is quite linear, and the RMS in planimetry is larger than that in height.

Figure 9 depicts the RMS of PPD in both position and height. These RMS values are computed from the difference between checkpoints both in planimetry and height. From this figure, it can be seen that PPD accuracy falls off rapidly with an increase in compression ratio. It seems that the increase is also linear. Table 3 lists the detailed quantification of the RMS values and their percentage increase:

- 263 percent in planimetry and 34 percent in height for factor of 1.
- 311 percent in planimetry and 72 percent in height for factor of 30, and
- 488 percent in planimetry and 176 percent in height for factor of 100.

On the other hand, if one only looks at the result for Q = 1, then the increase in RMS is not that great. From Figure 9, it also appears that the RMS values in height for Q = 10.

most identical. This might be the reason that the Intergraph recommends a compression ratio of 10:1, which corresponds to a Q-factor of 25 in this case.

## Conclusions

In this paper, an experimental investigation into the effect of JPEG compression on the accuracy of PPD is reported. The experiment was conducted on an Intergraph DPW. A review of JPEG compression on the Intergraph DPW is first given; the design of the study is then outlined, followed by a report of the results. An analysis of the results is also presented. Instead of displaying only the final results of PPD, the intermediate results for interior, relative, and absolute orientations are also reported and analyzed. It is hoped that this will provide a more complete picture.

The empirical results show that, when the compression ratio is smaller than 10, the JPEG compression is near-lossless. This means that the visual quality of the compressed images is excellent, i.e., without noticeable degeneration in pictorial quality. Theoretically speaking, in such a case, manual orientation is still of great accuracy, and the accuracy loss in automatic PPD is acceptable for most photogrammetric applications. However, no indication can be found from the results that a compression of 10 is the critical value or the optimum compression level for PPD. Indeed, it is clear that the degradation of accuracy in PPD is almost linear.

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