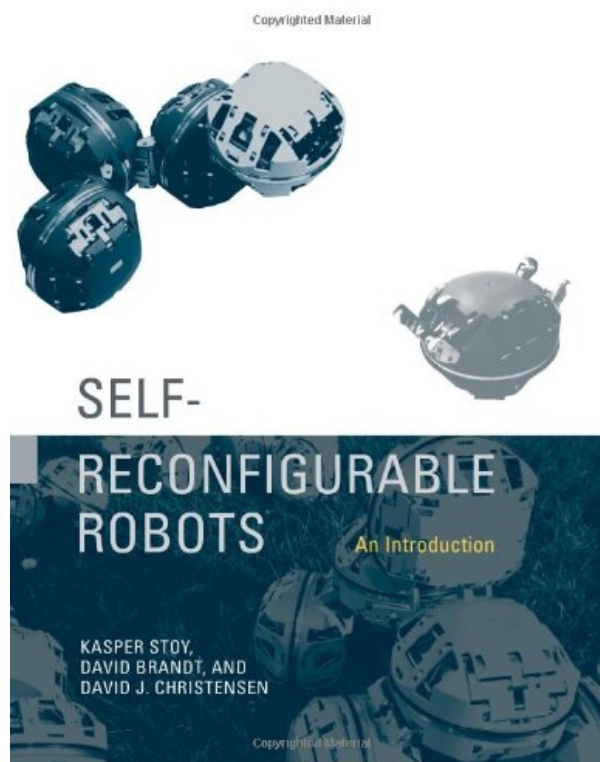


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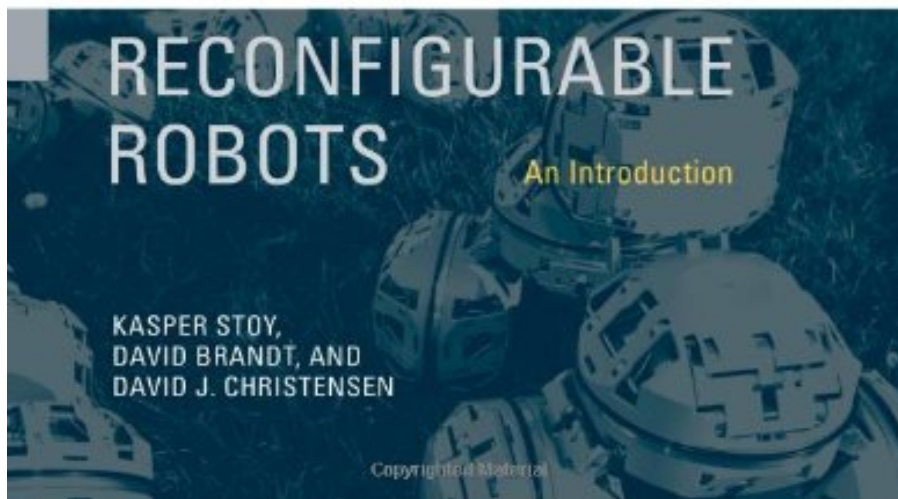
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Self-reconfigurable robots are constructed of robotic modules that can be connected in many different ways. These modules move in relationship to each other, which allows the robot as a whole to change shape. This shapeshifting makes it possible for the robots to adapt and optimize their shapes for different tasks. Thus, a self-reconfigurable robot can first assume the shape of a rolling track to cover distance quickly, then the shape of a snake to explore a narrow space, and finally the shape of a hexapod to carry an artifact back to the starting point. The field of self-reconfigurable robots has seen significant progress over the last twenty years, and this book collects and synthesizes existing research previously only available in widely scattered individual papers, offering an accessible guide to the latest information on self-reconfigurable robots for researchers and students interested in the field. Self-Reconfigurable Robots focuses on conveying the intuition behind the design and control of self-reconfigurable robots rather than technical details. Suggestions for further reading refer readers to the underlying sources of technical information. The book includes descriptions of existing robots and a brief history of the field; discussion of module design considerations, including module geometry, connector design, and computing and communication infrastructure; an in-depth presentation of strategies for controlling self-reconfiguration and locomotion; and exploration of future research challenges.

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A thorough, though still an easy read introduction to Self-reconfiguring modular robotics, a fast growing field within robotics

By per-at-flexibilityenvelope-com

As it says in the title,this is an introduction to a an exciting and growing field within robotics called Self-Reconfigurable (Modular) Robotics. It is thorough,though still an easy read,and I predict that it will be the definite introduction to the area for a very long time! As one of the veteran researchers in the area,Mark Yim,says in the foreword,it describes where SRCMR is today,how it got there and where it needs to go in the future.

SRCMR is a research area that is trying to develop a universal physical machine. We all know what Turing and Neumann's universal computing machine meant for the world,and I think it is safe to say that that a universal (physical) machine will be even more significant. It will impact nearly every aspect of human life over the coming decades. Just like the tremendous changes brought on by the (universal) computer, it will bring changes for nearly everyone and all throughout our lives. Who today doesn't use computers both privately and in their professional life! Therefore I believe that a basic understanding of SRCMR is essential for many people and this book certainly delivers that!

The book is suitable for many different types of readers.

The beginner,having no prior knowledge of robotics or SRCMR,for whom it provides a great and easy to read introduction presenting and explaining all the basic concepts and problems in the field. It presumes no (or little) prior knowledge and starts from the beginning and also gives great recommendations for further reading to aid beginners in their explorations of the SRCMR field.

I also think it is a great read for anyone already in the robotics field,who that has not looked into SRCMR yet,as it contrasts SRCMR to the rest of robotics. This book should be on the must read list for anybody in robotics. I think a basic understanding of SRCMR is essential,and this book is a great way to get that.

For us already in the field,it is great to see the first book appear. It is also interesting to see all the concepts,possibilities,problems and solutions in one coherent text.

The language and structure of the book is great:easy to read yet complete.

The book is thorough and goes through all aspects from module type,

robot type,connector design,power distribution and communications network layout and reconfigurations algorithm related problems and solutions. When dealing with a complex area like this,the choice of what to include and not to include is important. I think the balance in the book in that regard is very good. It focuses nicely on the areas that would be difficult or impossible to find in any other source, and leaves other topics,that might be easier to find elsewhere,out. This results in a very thorough book that is still under 200 pages.

There are also plenty of recommendations for further reading and an excellent list of interesting papers for anybody that would like more information on any of the topics covered. I am reading through the list of papers and they are a coherent set and,combined with the book,they give a great in-depth picture of the area!

Is there anything missing from the book? Actually I do not think so. Naturally there are many things related to SRCMR that are not in the book (although you could find a lot of that in the papers in the further/recommended reading list). But that is just the way it should be,and therefore I feel that what is not there is not missing but purposely left out.

To end this review I must say that I,like Kasper says in the preface, hope that this book will fill the reader with enthusiasm for contributing to the area in whatever way they can! And although this is a hardcover book printed on good paper I fully expect to wear it out either by re-reading/referring to it myself or lending it to friends!

If you have any comments I would be happy to hear from you,  
per@flexibilityenvelope.com

In the interest of full disclosure, I that received a free review copy from MIT Press, and I know the authors.

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