

# Keystroke Biometric Systems for User Authentication

**Md Liakat Ali, John V. Monaco, Charles C. Tappert & Meikang Qiu**

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# Keystroke Biometric Systems for User Authentication

Md Liakat Ali<sup>1</sup>  · John V. Monaco<sup>1</sup> · Charles C. Tappert<sup>1</sup> · Meikang Qiu<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** Keystroke biometrics (KB) authentication systems are a less popular form of access control, although they are gaining popularity. In recent years, keystroke biometric authentication has been an active area of research due to its low cost and ease of integration with existing security systems. Various researchers have used different methods and algorithms for data collection, feature representation, classification, and performance evaluation to measure the accuracy of the system, and therefore achieved different accuracy rates. Although recently, the support vector machine is most widely used by researchers, it seems that ensemble methods and artificial neural networks yield higher accuracy. Moreover, the overall accuracy of KB is still lower than other biometric authentication systems, such as *iris*. The objective of this paper is to present a detailed survey of the most recent researches on keystroke dynamic authentication, the methods and algorithms used, the accuracy rate, and the shortcomings of those researches. Finally, the paper identifies some issues that need to be addressed in designing keystroke dynamic biometric systems, makes

suggestions to improve the accuracy rate of KB systems, and proposes some possible future research directions.

**Keywords** Authentication · Identification · Keystroke biometrics · Classification · Behavioral biometrics

## 1 Introduction

User authentication is one of the most important and challenging aspects of controlling unauthorized access to a system. Authentication is the process by which the system verifies the user has a legitimate claim to access the system. There are three traditional modes used for authentication of a person, including possessions, knowledge, and biometrics. Figure 1 shows an ontology of various authentication modes, including biometric modalities. A *possession* is typically a unique physical item, such as a key, passport, or smartcard. These can be shared, duplicated, or even may be lost or stolen. *Knowledge* is some secret information, such as a password. Although widely used, many passwords are easy to guess, shared with others, or may be forgotten. *Biometrics* measures a unique human characteristic or trait. Biometric modalities can be classified as physiological and behavioral. Physiological modalities are related to the shape of human body such as fingerprint, face, DNA, hand geometry, iris, retina, ear shape, odor, and skin reflectance. Behavioral modalities are related to the behavior pattern of a person, such as signature, gait, lip motion, voice, keystroke, mouse movement, and stylometry. Biometric characteristics are generally difficult to reproduce and cannot be lost or forgotten [52].

Password-based authentication is the most common and widely used methods to protect data from intruders. Many

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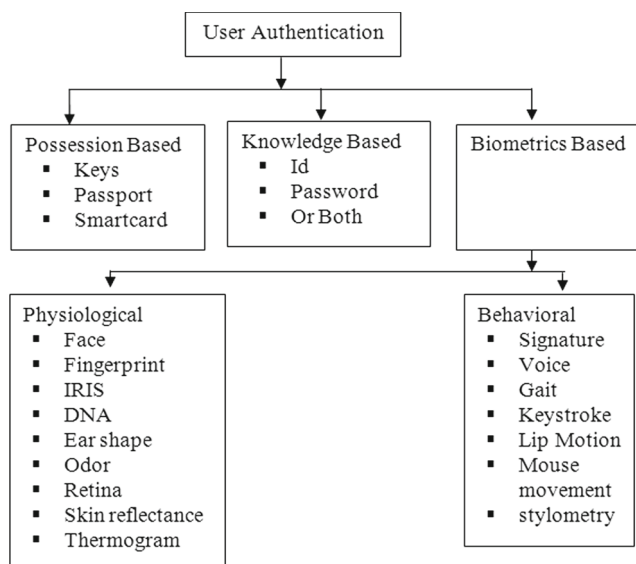
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**Figure 1** Ontology of authentication modes.

people choose their passwords using information from daily life, such as birth date, social security number, or a pet's name, which may be susceptible to dictionary attacks. Although some rules are designed to increase password entropy, such as combination of one or two capital letters, special character(s), and digit(s), these typically create an additional burden for the user. Additional mechanisms are needed to enhance the security and convenience of password-based authentication.

Like written signatures, user typing patterns have neuro-physiological factors that make them unique from others. A unique keystroke profile can be constructed from various typing features, such as typing speed, the duration between successive keys pressed, pressure applied on the keys, and finger positions on the keys. Recognition based on the unique typing pattern is non-intrusive, cost-efficient [63, 64, 93, 94, 130], and transparent to the user [81]. Moreover, it is very easy to capture data as keyboards are common and no special equipment is necessary. As the user types, an authentication decision can be made after each keystroke to provide continuous authentication [16, 18]. Ingo Deutschmann et al. [28] have tested a continuous authentication system on 99 users over a period of 10 weeks and determined that keystroke biometrics is appropriate for continuous authentication.

KB has a number of advantages, such as being low cost, transparent to the user, and non-invasive. However, the main disadvantage of KB is low accuracy when compared to other biometric systems [2–4, 76]. An ongoing challenge in KB authentication is to achieve greater accuracy. This work examines this effort by comparing the performances, data collection techniques, feature extraction, and classification algorithms of existing KB systems. By understanding the

performance and limitations of current systems, this work then proposes some guidelines to enhance the accuracy and performance of the existing KB biometric systems. The main objectives and contributions of this paper are listed below:

- Provide a meta-survey of earlier survey papers on KB systems.
- Offer a comprehensive survey of KB research efforts. Attributes include accuracy, features, hardware, training time, classification time, and memory usage.
- Most importantly, identify the shortcomings of existing KB systems and provide some direction for future research.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 provides a meta-survey of KB authentication systems. Section 3 describes the typical KB authentication system, including system components and evaluation criteria. Section 4 includes a comprehensive survey of KB systems and compares different methods used, as well as limitations. Finally, Section 5 concludes this work with recommendations and future research directions.

## 2 Meta-survey

KB authentication is quite and remains an active area of research area compared to other biometric systems. A limited number of researches have been conducted by the researchers to analyze keystroke authentication systems, and most of them utilize desktop or laptop computers [44, 122], with few studies conducted on ATM [42], mobile phone [21, 73], and even fewer on smartphones with touchscreen [31, 35, 49, 108]. Some of the researches have used timing features [46], some have used extra features such as pressure [71, 105], finger area [125] or a combination of [8, 49]. Few researches were conducted on free long text, [122] with most of the researches utilizing short input [52]. Stewart et al. [117] have used stylometry as a keystroke feature in an effort to develop a robust online examination authentication system. A limited number of researches have developed web based authentication [75, 112, 117, 131].

In mid 2004, A. Peacock et al. [89] surveyed KB researches. They have evaluated the previous researches based on classifier accuracy, usability, and other factors. They also discussed privacy and security issues that come with KB systems. It was found that performance of KB systems is greatly influenced by the number of training samples. They also recommended the creation of a public data set, introduction of schemes that ensure privacy of collected data, and data expiration under certain conditions.

D. Shanmugapriya et al. [110] conducted a survey in 2009 and discussed the performance evaluation of previous

researches. They also summarized different approaches, security, and challenges in KB systems. Another survey of KB was conducted by H. Crawford [24] in 2010. The author reviewed a representative subset of concurrent researches in KB and provided recommendations for future work. The survey found that high quality results from different researches were seen with neural network pattern classification. Although statistical classifiers are less computationally intensive, they do not provide a strong level of classification. The study also recommends not to use same participants for both authorized and unauthorized populations in system evaluation.

An extensive work surveying KB research was conducted by S. P. Banerjee [12] in 2012. The survey compared different researches based on different algorithms used, discussed explicitly the factors that affect system performance, and finally gave their recommendations. The study concluded that KB authentication systems have potential to grow in the area of cybersecurity and biometric monitoring since it is both non-intrusive and cost-effective.

A similar kind of research on surveying KB research was conducted by P. S. Teh et al. [124] in 2013, where the authors claim that KB biometric is unlikely to replace the existing authentication system entirely and cannot be a sole biometric authenticator. However, some properties, such as the ability to operate in stealth mode, low implementation cost, high user acceptance, and ease of integration with existing security systems, makes KB authentication promising and can play a significant rule in enhancing overall system security. Similar studies in KB authentication include A. Alsultan et al. [6], and M. Kanimozhi et al. [56], which vary by the length and depth of the review, the number of research papers covered, the way that the resources were presented, and their recommendations. In [2], Ali et al. have compared KB research those have used Hidden Markov Model (HMM) and in [4], the authors have compared several KB research those have used Neural Networks as classification method.

The following section describes the overview of a KB system—how data was collected, what features was extracted, what are the different classification methods were used by the researchers, and how performance of different experiments were evaluated in various KB authentication systems.

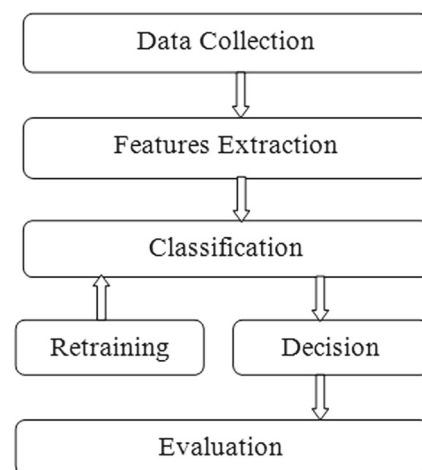
### 3 Keystroke Biometric System Overview

The KB system involves measuring and assessing a person's typing rhythm on some digital devices such as a mechanical keyboard or mobile device touchscreen, and creating a unique signature to identify the legitimate user [86]. According to [80], KB refers to the way a person types and

not what is typed. Although according to H. Crawford [24], the first studies on desktop keyboards were conducted by R. Spillance [116] in 1975. Gaines et al. [34] have studied the habitual patterns in user typing behavior for identification, however the idea of keystroke pattern for user authentication dates back to World War II. During this time, Morse code operators on a telegraph machine were identified by the rhythm, pace, and syncopation of the taps [58, 89]. Figure 2 shows the basis components of the typical KB authentication system. A typical KB authentication system mainly consists of six components including data collection, feature extraction, feature classification/matching, decision making, retraining, and evaluation. Some of the research have all of those six components while some have not considered decision making and/or retraining the system.

#### 3.1 Data Collection

Data collection is the first step in the KB system, where raw data is collected via various input devices. Data acquisition varies in different systems, ranging from normal keyboard [75, 80] to pressure sensitive keyboards [68, 85]. The common choice for the mechanical keyboard is the *QWERTY* keyboard and built-in laptop keyboard [88]. References [118] and [23] have modified existing devices to sense the pressure applied to each key. Other experiments also have used a special purpose number-pad [42, 62], cellular phone [21, 103] and smart phone with touchscreen [8, 49, 74, 126]. Due to the limited number of publicly available standard data sets [5, 32, 38, 41, 60, 128], many researchers have generated their own data set. For example, there were 1254 participants involved in S. Douhou et al. [30] experiment, 118 participants in research [127], and only 3 participants were involved in I. V. McLoughlin [73]. In most works, 10–20 participants were involved [124]. Text input can be divided into two groups: short and long input.



**Figure 2** Overview of general KB Authentication System [3].



**Table 1** Comparison of publicly available KB databases.

| Database              | Feature          | Data size | Input                 | Scope             | Keyboard layout   | Text type       |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Jugurta et al. [33]   | Timing           | 32        | –                     | –                 | Brazilian         | Static, dynamic |
| Giot et al. [38]      | Timing           | 133       | greyc laboratory      | Genuine           | AZERTY            | Static          |
| Killourhy et al. [60] | Timing, pressure | 51        | .tie5Roanl            | Genuine           | U.S.              | Static          |
| Allen et al. [5]      | Timing           | 104       | Jeffrey Allen drizzle | Genuine, imposter | U.S.              | Static          |
| Bello et al. [13]     | Timing           | 54        | –                     | –                 | –                 | Static          |
| Idrus et al. [47]     | Timing           | 110       | –                     | –                 | AZERTY and QWERTY | Dynamic         |

Short input can be a username [87], password [66], or text phrase [14], while long input can be a paragraph [134]. Most of the experiments have used character-based texts, but some have used purely numerical inputs [72], and others have used mixed input [49]. Only a limited number of researches had free-text input, and in many researches data was collected in one session. Table 1 compares some of the publicly available KB databases.

### 3.2 Feature Extraction

After raw data is collected, it needs to be processed, normalized, and stored for classification. Several feature extraction methods have been used in KB research [100, 115, 120]. The most common features are timing measurements. When a key is pressed, it creates a hardware interrupt to the processor and generates a time stamp, typically measured with microsecond precision. Using the time stamps, the durations of and intervals between keystrokes can be calculated. The timing features applied in various researches can be classified into two groups: *di-graph* and *n-graph*.

*Di-graph* is the timing information between two consecutive keystrokes [25, 112] and can be grouped into two classes, including *dwelt time (DT)* and *flight time (FT)*. Figure 3 shows the comparison between *dwelt time* and *flight time*. *dwelt time* corresponds to the hold time, which is the time interval between key press and key release and *flight time* is the time interval between releasing one key and pressing the next key. The keystroke latency is the combination of hold and flight time. Key Press Latency (KPL) is the time interval between two consecutive keys press and Key Release Latency (KRL) is the time interval between two consecutive keys release.

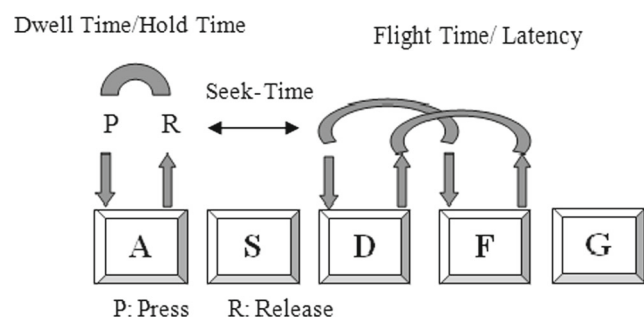
*N-graph* is the timing information from three or more consecutive keystrokes. It is usually taken as the time elapsed between a key and the *n*th key while typing. Most of the researches have used two consecutive key time events (*di-graph*).

Other spatial features extracted from keystroke data include: pressure, position on the touchscreen, length and orientation of major and minor axes of finger-press area on

the touch screen, frequency of word error, keystroke sound [101], typing rate, and text correction features [17].

### 3.3 Classification

Classification is a critical part of any KB system. During the *classification phase*, extracted features are categorized to make decision. Numerous pattern recognition approaches, such as statistical and machine-learning methods, have been proposed with the common goal of increasing accuracy rate. A survey of KB literature suggests that in earlier time, most of the classification methods were statistical approaches; however, in modern times, researchers tend to concentrate on machine-learning approaches. At present, Support Vector Machine (SVM) is the most popular classification method used by several researchers due to good out-of-box performance with reasonable computational complexity. Despite this, large feature sets used in conjunction with SVM tend to overfit and reduce performance. A combination of different machine-learning approaches, especially Artificial Neural Network (ANN) with evolutionary computing, Two-Class classifier [61, 90] have been met with some success. Statistical approaches used by researchers in keystroke biometrics include: mean, median, standard deviation measures, statistical t-test for similarity, and Bayesian modeling. Machine learning approaches include ANNs [29], decision trees [53], fuzzy logic [78], evolutionary computing, and SVM. Common ANN architectures are the multi-layer perceptron

**Figure 3** Dwell time and flight time.

(MLP) [91], radial basis function network (RBFN), learning vector quantization (LVQ), and self-organizing map (SOM). Evolutionary computing techniques include genetic algorithms (GA), particle swarm optimization (PSO), and colony optimization. Taculin et al. [121] have explored an algorithmic solution based on chemical reactions of molecules.

### 3.4 Decision

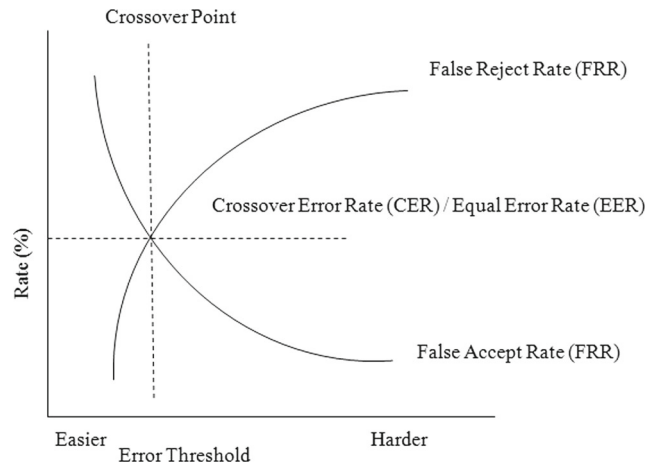
During the decision phase, the classifier outputs are aggregated and compared to a decision threshold. In authentication, the template of the claimant is compared to one or more reference templates, all of which may result in classifier output scores. The final decision is a binary value: either accept or reject the claimant [12, 124].

### 3.5 Retraining

During the retraining phase, the reference template of a user is updated to reflect a change in environment or behavior. Although most researchers do not explicitly consider retraining, some researchers, such as D. Hosseinzadeh et al. [46], have proposed algorithms that constantly renew the reference template. This is necessary because a user's typing pattern may change with time and environment. Other proposed retraining techniques include a growing window, moving window, retraining with impostor patterns, and adaptive thresholds [124].

### 3.6 Evaluation

Biometric systems mainly have two functions: *verification* and *identification*. In the *verification* stage, the system will accept or reject the identity claimed by the user. *Identification*, also called as recognition, is where a system classifies the input pattern into one of the  $N$  known classes [8]. The performance of the biometric verification system is usually characterized by its receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve. The ROC quantifies the tradeoff between the false acceptance rate (FAR) and false rejection rate (FRR). Figure 4 shows the relationship among FAR, FRR, and EER. FAR (also referred to as false match rate [36] or type 2 error) is the rate at which the system incorrectly accepts a sample that is provided by impostor. A system with lower FAR indicates an impostors is less likely to be accepted. FRR (also referred to as false non-match rate or type 1 error) is the rate at which the system rejects a sample provided by a genuine user. Smaller FRR indicates a small number of genuine users rejected. Overall system performance is described by the equal error rate (EER), the point at which FAR and FRR are equal. The EER is sometimes referred as the *crossover error rate* (CER). The lower EER indicates



**Figure 4** Relationship between FAR, FRR, and EER.

better performance. Other system evaluation criteria include efficiency, adaptability, robustness, and convenience.

**Advantages and Drawbacks** There are several advantages of KB systems. Typing patterns are believed to be unique to an individual. KB systems generally have lower implementation and deployment costs compare to other biometric authentication systems. The typically KB system can be fully implemented by software and has low dependency on specialized hardware. From the user's perspective, KB systems are transparent and non-invasive. They offer increased password strength and lifespan and continuous monitoring [79, 124]. The main disadvantage of KB authentication systems is lower accuracy compared to other biometrics authentication systems. There various factors that contribute to lower accuracy rate, such as variations in the typing rhythm, template aging, user injury, and environmental factors.

The following section compares different authentication and identification methods used in different research. It also compares different algorithms used in KB systems based on the training time, classification time and memory usage by the different algorithms. Finally it shows the limitations of existing KB systems.

## 4 Comparison of Research Works Based on Different Classification and Verification Methods

**Statistical Approaches** Table 2 shows the works that have used statistical methods and distance-based classifiers for authentication and identification. Table 3 shows the works that have used other statistical methods, including ensemble methods in which several algorithms are combined to achieve greater accuracy.

**Table 2** Classification based on most common statistical approaches.

| Paper                            | Year | Participants | Features      | Input freedom | Input type | Device | Result%                     |
|----------------------------------|------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Mean and STD</b>              |      |              |               |               |            |        |                             |
| [52]                             | 1990 | 33           | FT            | Yes           | Short      | MK     | FAR: 0.25, FRR:16.36        |
| [80]                             | 1997 | 31           | DT, FT        | Yes           | –          | MK     | Accuracy: 90                |
| [43]                             | 2005 | 205          | FT            | Yes           | Long       | MK     | FAR: 0.5, FRR: 5            |
| [21]                             | 2009 | 30           | –             | –             | Text       | MP     | EER: 13                     |
| [30]                             | 2009 | 1254         | DT, FT        | No            | Short      | MK     | FAR: 16, FRR: 1             |
| [73]                             | 2009 | 3            | –             | –             | Digit      | MP     | Accuracy: 90                |
| [135]                            | 2012 | 51           | –             | No            | Short      | MK     | EER: 8.4                    |
| [125]                            | 2013 | 152          | FT, DT, P, FA | –             | Digit      | MP     | FAR: 4.19, FRR: 4.59        |
| <b>KNN</b>                       |      |              |               |               |            |        |                             |
| [81]                             | 2000 | 63           | DT, FT        | Yes           | –          | MK     | Accuracy: 83.2–92.1         |
| [48]                             | 2002 | 7            | DT, FT        | –             | Digit      | NP     | EER: 78–99                  |
| [104]                            | 2008 | 10           | P             | –             | Digit      | TS     | EER: 1.00                   |
| [133]                            | 2010 | 120          | DT, FT        | –             | –          | MK     | EER: 1.00                   |
| [122]                            | 2010 | 100          | DT, FT        | Yes           | Text       | MK     | EER:2.7                     |
| [117]                            | 2011 | 30           | DT,FT         | No            | Digit      | –      | EER: 0.5                    |
| [77]                             | 2013 | 40           | –             | –             | –          | MK     | Accuracy: 88.2–91.5         |
| [102]                            | 2013 | –            | DT            | Yes           | Long       | MK     | EER: 6.1                    |
| <b>Euclidian distance</b>        |      |              |               |               |            |        |                             |
| [127]                            | 2006 | 118          | DT, FT        | Yes           | Long       | –      | Accuracy: 97.9              |
| [55]                             | 2007 | 21           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Short      | MK     | EER: 3.8                    |
| [42]                             | 2008 | 30           | DT, FT, P     | –             | Digit      | NP     | FAR: 15, FRR: 0, EER: 10    |
| [106]                            | 2009 | 112          | DT, FT        | No            | Long       | MK     | Accuracy: 100               |
| [39]                             | 2009 | 16           | DT,FT         | No            | Short      | MK     | EER: 4.28                   |
| [122]                            | 2010 | 100          | DT,FT         | Yes           | Text       | MK     | EER: 2.7                    |
| [107]                            | 2011 | 189          | DT, FT        | No            | Long       | MK     | FAR: 0.01, FRR: 3           |
| [54]                             | 2011 | 51           | FT            | No            | Long       | MK     | EER: 0.84                   |
| [114]                            | 2011 | 20           | FT            | No            | Long       | MK     | FAR: 2, FRR: 4              |
| [77]                             | 2013 | 40           | –             | –             | –          | MK     | Accuracy: 88.2–91.5         |
| <b>Degree of disorder method</b> |      |              |               |               |            |        |                             |
| [44]                             | 2005 | 31           | FT            | Yes           | Long       | MK     | FAR: 1.99, FRR: 2.42        |
| [43]                             | 2005 | 205          | FT            | Yes           | Long       | MK     | FAR: 0.5, FRR: 5            |
| [26]                             | 2009 | 21           | –             | Yes           | Long       | –      | FAR:0.14, FRR: 1.59         |
| [95]                             | 2011 | 50           | FT            | No            | Long       | MK     | EER: 10                     |
| [131]                            | 2011 | 186          | –             | Yes           | Long       | –      | FAR: 1.65, FRR: 2.75        |
| [51]                             | 2012 | 42           | DT, FT, P     | –             | Digit      | MK, TS | Better: MK (timing feature) |

FT - Flight Time, DT - Dwell Time, P - Pressure, FA - Finger Area, FAR - False Acceptance Rate, FRR - False Reject Rate, EER - Equal Error Rate, TPR - True Positive Rate, FPR - False Positive Rate, MK - Mechanical Keyboard, MP - Mobile Platform, TS - Touchscreen, NP - Number Pad

Gunetti et al.'s experiment focused on using the degree of disorder [44] and combination of degree of disorder, mean, and standard deviation [43]. By combining mean and standard deviation, they achieved lower FAR but higher FRR. Kang et al. [55] have used a combination of k-means and Euclidian distance and achieved 3.8 % EER. Giot et al. [39] have used Bayesian decision theory and Euclidean distance and achieved 4.28 % EER. In another work, they achieved

EER 6.96 % using Bayesian, Euclidean, and Hamming distance [36].

A comparison between KB on personal computers and smartphones was performed by Johansen [51]. Their experiments utilized data collected from 42 participants on both standard keyboards and smartphones. By using the degree of disorder, the study concluded that the performance on smartphones is less than standard keyboard if only timing



**Table 3** Mixed and other statistical methods used in different researches.

| Paper | Year | Participants | Features      | Input freedom | Input type | Method                                     | Device | Result%                     |
|-------|------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------|--|--------|-----------------------------|
| [34]  | 1980 | 7            | FT            | No            | Long       | t-Test                                     | MK     | Accuracy: 95                |
| [14]  | 1990 | 26           | FT            | Yes           | Short      | Baysian, Minimum Distance classifier       | MK     | FAR: 2.8, FRR: 8.1          |
| [46]  | 2004 | 41           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Short      | Gaussian mixture modeling                  | MK     | FAR: 4.3, FRR 4.8, EER: 4.4 |
| [62]  | 2005 | 9            | DT, FT, P     | –             | Digit      | ANOVA                                      | MK     | EER: 2.4                    |
| [69]  | 2006 | 100          | DT, FT, P     | –             | –          | Dynamic time warping                       | MK     | FAR, FRR, EER: 1.4          |
| [99]  | 2006 | 20           | –             | –             | Digit      | Hidden Markov model                        | MK     | EER: 3.6                    |
| [20]  | 2006 | 20           | –             | –             | Digit      | Euclidian, Mahalanobis, FF-MLP             | TS     | FAR: 0, FRR: 2.5            |
| [103] | 2009 | 25           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Short      | Gauss, Parzen, K-NN, K-mean                | MK     | EER: 1.00                   |
| [40]  | 2009 | 100          | DT, FT        | No            | Short      | Bayesian, Euclidean, Hamming distance      | MK     | EER: 6.96                   |
| [59]  | 2010 | 51           | DT, FT        | No            | Short      | Manhattan distance                         | MK     | EER: 7.1                    |
| [119] | 2010 | 35           | FT            | No            | Long       | Kolmogorov-Smirnov                         | MK     | EER: 7.55                   |
| [123] | 2011 | 100          | DT, FT        | No            | Short      | Gaussian PDF, Direction similarity measure | MK     | EER: 1.401                  |
| [75]  | 2011 | 55           | –             | Yes           | Long       | Spearmans's foot rule distance metric      | –      | FAR: 2.02, FRR: 1.84        |
| [11]  | 2011 | 33           | DT, FT        | No            | Long       | Naive Bayesian                             | MK     | EER: 1.72                   |
| [125] | 2013 | 152          | FT, DT, P, FA | –             | Digits     | k-mean                                     | MP     | FAR: 4.19 FRR: 4.59         |
| [50]  | 2013 | 10           | DT, FT, FA    | Yes           | Short      | Bayesian                                   | TS     | FAR: 0.02 FRR: 0.178        |
| [17]  | 2014 | 30           | DT, FT        | No            | Digit      | SMD, SED                                   | MK     | EER: 26                     |

FT - Flight Time, DT - Dwell Time, P - Pressure, FA - Finger Area, FAR - False Acceptance Rate, FRR - False Reject Rate, EER - Equal Error Rate, TPR - True Positive Rate, FPR - False Positive Rate, MK - Mechanical Keyboard, MP - Mobile Platform, TS - Touchscreen, SMD- Scaled Manhattan Distance, SED- Scaled Euclidean Distance

features are used. Moreover, if additional smartphone sensors are used, performance increases over the standard keyboard. The data consisted of a numerical password on a 12-key mobile phone keyboard. Trojahn et al. [125] performed a similar experiment with 152 participants and a 17-digit password. In a single session, each participant typed the password ten times during a single session. They determined that the pressure and size of the finger, in addition to timing features, can reduce the error rate of a mobile KB system. The study found 4.19 % FAR, and 4.59 % FRR by using hold time combined with *di-graph*, and *tri-graph* features.

**Machine Learning Approaches** Table 4 shows the comparison between various works that have utilized machine learning approaches, such as random forest decision trees, SVM, and ANN. Table 5 shows works that have used other methods in their experiments. Some researchers have implemented new approaches and combined several algorithms together for better accuracy.

N. Harun et al. [45] have discussed various issues to enhance the security of password authentication schemes by using KB for user authentication. The authors have used

the time interval between keystrokes as input to a multilayer perceptron neural network (MLP-NN) trained by back propagation (BP). Equalization histogram and principal component analysis (PCA) were used for preprocessing. This resulted in greater than 80 % correctly classified users.

M. Antal et al. [8] have examined keystroke data with and without touchscreen features, such as pressure and finger area. Data was collected from mobile Android devices, and both time and touchscreen-based features were extracted. Classification accuracies were obtained by several machine learning classification algorithms, including Nave Bayes, Bayesian Network, C4.5(J48), K-NN(1Bk), SVM, random forest, and MLP. The best performances were obtain by random forest, Bayesian nets, and SVM, respectively. The addition of touchscreen-based features to the timing feature set resulted in an increase of over 10 % accuracy for each classifier. Verification results were obtain using Euclidean, Manhattan, and Mahalanobis distance metrics. The study showed that the lowest error (12.9 %) was obtained by the Manhattan distance using both timing and touchscreen-based features. The research concluded that touchscreen-based features increase classification and verification accuracy.

**Table 4** Classification based on most common machine-learning approaches.

| Paper                       | Year | Participants | Features      | Input freedom | Input type | Device | Result%  |
|-----------------------------|------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------|--------|--|
| Random forest decision tree |      |              |               |               |            |        |  |
| [85]                        | 2004 | 41           | DT, FT        | No            | Short      | MK     | EER: 2   |
| [112]                       | 2010 | 10           | FT, DT        | –             | –          | MK     | FAR: 0.41, FRR: 0.63, EER: 0.53                |
| [113]                       | 2010 | 21           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Long       | MK     | FAR:3.47, FRR:0, EER: 1.73                     |
| [72]                        | 2010 | 28           | DT, FT        | –             | Digit      | MK     | FAR: 0.03, FRR: 1.51, EER:1                    |
| ANN                         |      |              |               |               |            |        |  |
| [15]                        | 1993 | 24           | FT            | Yes           | Short      | MK     | FAR: 8, FRR: 9                                 |
| [86]                        | 1995 | 15           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Short      | MK     | EER: 0   |
| [22]                        | 1999 | 10           | DT, FT        | –             | Short      | MK     | Accuracy: 97                                   |
| [70]                        | 1999 | –            | FT            | –             | Short      | MK     | MLP ( AR: 84, RR: 69), k-mean (AR: 85, RR: 85) |
| [48]                        | 2002 | 7            | DT, FT        | –             | Digit      | NP     | Accuracy: 78–99                                |
| [132]                       | 2003 | 21           | DT, FT        | –             | Short      | MK     | FAR: 0, FRR: 0.814                             |
| [88]                        | 2007 | 100          | DT, FT        | No            | Short      | MK     | FAR:1, EER: 8                                  |
| [67]                        | 2007 | 100          | DT, FT, P     | –             | –          | MK     | EER:11.78                                      |
| [23]                        | 2007 | 32           | FT            | Yes           | Long       | MP     | EER: 12.8                                      |
| [105]                       | 2009 | 10           | P             | –             | Digit      | TS     | EER: 1   |
| [118]                       | 2009 | 30           | DT, FT,P      | –             | –          | MK     | FAR: 2   |
| [1]                         | 2009 | 7            | P             | –             | –          | MK     | FAR:0, FRR: 0                                  |
| [57]                        | 2010 | 25           | FT, DT        | –             | Digit      | MK     | Accuracy: 92.8                                 |
| [84]                        | 2010 | 20           | DT, FT, P     | –             | –          | MK     | FAR: 4.12, FRR: 5.55                           |
| SVM                         |      |              |               |               |            |        |  |
| [132]                       | 2003 | 21           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Short      | MK     | FAR:0, FRR: 0.814                              |
| [9]                         | 2007 | 24           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Long       | MK     | FAR: 0.76, FRR: 0.81, EER: 1.57                |
| [92]                        | 2007 | 61           | –             | No            | Short      | –      | FAR: 14.5, FRR: 1.78                           |
| [71]                        | 2007 | 5            | P             | –             | Digit      | MK     | FAR: 0.95,FRR: 5.6                             |
| [83]                        | 2011 | 24           | –             | –             | Digit      | MK     | EER:2  |
| [65]                        | 2011 | 117          | DT, FT        | Yes           | Short      | MK     | EER: 11.83                                     |
| [37]                        | 2011 | 100          | DT, FT        | No            | Short      | MK     | EER: 15.28                                     |
| [35]                        | 2014 | 300          | FT, DT        | –             | Short      | TS     | TPR = 92, FPR = 1                              |
| [49]                        | 2014 | 30           | FT, DT, P, FA | No            | Digit      | MK, TS | EER: 10.5(MK data), EER: 2.8 (TS data)         |

FT - Flight Time, DT - Dwell Time, P - Pressure, FA - Finger Area, FAR - False Acceptance Rate, FRR - False Reject Rate, EER - Equal Error Rate, TPR - True Positive Rate, FPR - False Positive Rate, MK - Mechanical Keyboard, MP - Mobile Platform, TS - Touchscreen, NP - Number Pad, AR - Acceptance Rate, RR - Rejection Rate

Similar to M. Antal et al., L. Jain et al. [49] have studied the timing and sensor features on a mobile device. Data was collected from 30 participants over several days, and a one-class SVM was used to obtain results. The experiment yielded a 10.5 % EER using timing features only, 3.5 % EER using non-timing touchscreen features, and 2.8 % EER with combined timing and touchscreen features. The results suggest that performance on mobile touchscreen devices is superior to that on hardware keyboards due to additional sensors.

M. Brown et al. [19] have developed a system to identify users via keystroke by using simple MLP-NN with BP. D. T. Lin [66] worked on the M. Brown system, modifying the architecture and parameters of the neural network.

He achieved a 1.1 % FAR, and 0 % FRR. N. Capuano et al. [22] proposed an authentication system that used MLP with radial basis function, and found a 0 % FAR and 3 % FRR. M. S. Obaidat et al. [87] proposed a technique to verify the identity of legitimate users using KB with several neural network and pattern recognition algorithms. The study showed that the combination of hold times and flight times as features, with fuzzy ARTMAP, radial basis function networks and learning vector quantization neural network paradigms, achieved a 5.8 % EER.

L. K. Maisuria et al. [70] compared keystroke classification performance using MLP and k-means cluster algorithm and found 16 % and 15 % FRR, and 31 % and 15 % FAR, respectively. Sulong et al. [118] have proposed a system

**Table 5** Other less common machine-learning approaches used in different researches.

| Paper | Year | Participants | Features      | Input freedom | Input  | Method  | Device | Result%                      |
|-------|------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------|---|--------|------------------------------|
| [98]  | 1998 | 10           | DT, FT        | Yes           | Short  | Inductive learning classifier                               | MK     | FAR: 9, EER: 10              |
| [111] | 2005 | 43           | DT, FT        | No            | Long   | Decision trees, Monte Carlo                                 | MK     | FAR: 0.88, FRR: 9.62         |
| [68]  | 2005 | –            | DT, FT, P     | –             | –      | Fuzzy ARTMAP  | MK     | FAR: 0.87, FRR: 4.4          |
| [96]  | 2005 | 100          | DT            | No            | Short  | Genetic Algorithm   | MK     | Accuracy: 95                 |
| [134] | 2006 | –            | DT, FT        | No            | Long   | Decision tree c4.5.j48                                      | MK     | Accuracy: 93.3               |
| [97]  | 2007 | 30           | DT, FT        | No            | Short  | Sequence alignment algorithms                               | MK     | FAR: 0.2, FRR: 0.2, EER: 0.4 |
| [10]  | 2013 | 30           | –             | Yes           | Long   | Dichotomy classifier  | –      | EER: 8.7 (Pass), 6.1 (Num)   |
| [129] | 2014 | –            | DT, FT        | –             | Short  | –   | MK     | FAR: 4.8, FRR: 3.1, EER: 5   |
| [108] | 2014 | 10           | P             | –             | Digits | –   | TS     | EER: 15.2                    |
| [31]  | 2014 | 13           | FT, DT, P, FA | –             | –      | –   | TS     | FAR: 14 FRR: 2.2             |
| [8]   | 2014 | 42           | FT, DT, P, FA | No            | Short  | Naive, Bayesian, C4.5(J48),<br>KNN, SVM, MLP, Random forest | MP     | EER: 12.9                    |
| [7]   | 2015 | 42           | FT, DT, P, FA | No            | Short  | Two-class   | MP     | EER: 3                       |

FT - Flight Time, DT - Dwell Time, P - Pressure, FA - Finger Area, FAR - False Acceptance Rate, FRR - False Reject Rate, EER - Equal Error Rate, TPR - True Positive Rate, FPR - False Positive Rate, MK - Mechanical Keyboard, MP - Mobile Platform, TS - Touchscreen

combining maximum pressured applied on the keyboard and latency between keystrokes as input to a radial basis function network. They achieved 100 % classification rate with 22.4 s average training time. Based on FRR and FAR, the authors claimed that the proposed system is effective for biometric-based security systems. Robert S. Zack et al. [133] developed a long-text input keystroke biometric system that consists of three components: raw keystroke data collection over the Internet, a feature extractor, and a pattern classifier. The system was tested with 120 participants and achieved approximately 1 % EER. The system showed higher performance with a closed system of known users than an open system, as well as performance variations with the number of enrolled users.

A similar experiment was conducted by R. A. Maxion et al. [72], where 28 users typed the same 10 digit number using only the right-hand index finger. The authors used a random forest classifier and have achieved a 10 % EER. H. Saevanee et al. [105] studied timing features combined with finger pressure and used notebooks with touchpads as a touchscreen. Data was collected from 10 users, who entered their 10-digit cell phone number. The experiment yielded 99 % accuracy using the finger pressure features. A limitation of this approach is lack of impostor data due to each participant having a different phone number. In this case, only FRR was measured.

B. Draffin et al. [31] performed experiments utilizing soft keyboard data collected from 13 participants over 3 weeks. The study used key-press duration, finger area, drift, pressure, and keyboard orientation as features, and achieved a 14 % FAR and 2.2 % FRR. A similar study performed by S. Sen et al. [108] used pressure as a feature, with 4-digit

input from 10 participants. The study presented verification results based on a special impostor mode in addition to the typical performance measures.

**Summary of Classification Algorithms** Based on the review of KB research, there are several algorithms such as Genetic Algorithm (GA), Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) [109] are most commonly used algorithm in KB systems. Killourhy and Maxion [60] performance study of the fourteen existing keystroke dynamics algorithm shows that Manhattan distance outperform other algorithms with an equal error rate of 0.096 and nearest neighbor classifier using Mahalanobis distance with an equal error rate of 0.10 [135]. Table 6 summarizes the most common algorithms used in KB systems. This table also depicts the classification time, training time, and the memory usage of each algorithm. Most works do not consider the time and space requirements of the classification methods. In practice, the problem constraints may limit which methods can be used. Y. Deng et al. [27] have introduced two new algorithms: Gaussian mixture model with universal background model (GMM-UBM) and deep belief nets (DBN). These two approaches leverage data from background users and enhance the model's discriminative capability without using impostor's data at training time. The authors claimed that these two new algorithms make no assumption about underlying probability distribution and are fast for training and testing.

**Limitations** In general, the shortcomings of existing KB systems can be summarized as:

**Table 6** Comparison of different algorithms based on the training time, the classification time and memory usage.

| Algorithm                            | Type          | Training time | Classification time | Memory usage |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Linear regression                    | Parametric    | Fast          | Very fast           | Very low     |
| Logistic regression                  | Parametric    | Medium        | Very fast           | Very low     |
| ANN (back propagation)               | Parametric    | Slow          | Very fast           | Low          |
| RBF ANN                              | Parametric    | Medium        | Medium              | Medium       |
| KNN                                  | Nonparametric | Slow          | High                |              |
| Gaussian mixture                     | Parametric    | Medium/slow   | Medium              | Medium       |
| Kk-means clustering                  | Nonparametric | Medium        | Fast/medium         | Medium       |
| Estimate-maximized clustering        | Nonparametric | Medium        | Medium              | Medium       |
| Learning vector quantization (LVQ)   | Nonparametric | Slow          | Medium              | Medium       |
| Group method of data handling (GMDH) | Nonparametric | Fast/medium   | Fast                | Low          |
| Genetic algorithm (GA)               | Nonparametric | Slow          | Medium              | –            |
| Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO)    | Nonparametric | Fast          | Fast                | –            |

- There is currently not so much emphasis on real-world conditions and many studies have been conducted under laboratory settings.
- To date, there have been no studies that quantify KB system performance for users with low typing proficiency. Almost all works have utilized data collected from participants in an academic environment.
- Touchscreen features, such as pressure and finger area, have not been studied across different devices and platforms.
- In most studies, data was collected in only one session and ignore template aging. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine KB system performance over time.
- The number of standard and publicly available KB datasets remains limited compared to other disciplines.
- Many studies utilize the same keyboard for enrollment and testing.
- In some works, the justification for a particular classification method remains low.
- There is generally very little discussion of negative results (i.e. random-choice accuracy). Non-significant results should be reported in some way, such as through a journal that aims to publish such results of well-designed experiments.

## 5 Discussion

The current KB literature suggests that most of the experimental subjects involved in the research were from institutes, students, academicians or supporting staffs. As KB has a strong psychological basis, this population is not able to represent the greater population. A deeper understanding of typing behavior of people from different ages, genders, and labels of society may enhance the accuracy of existing keystroke biometric systems.

Classification and feature extraction algorithms may continue to be improved to achieve greater accuracy of KB systems. Some works have combined several methods to obtain better results, while others have used platform-dependent features to increase accuracy. Feature engineering remains a viable direction for future work to improve KB system performance. Additionally, advances in feature selection and feature fusion methods can increase the quality of KB systems.

Many researchers have not paid attention to the time and space required by an algorithm for training and testing. The reason behind this may be due to the dramatic increase in processor speed and memory size. Despite this, there are practical constraints that limit the choice of classification algorithm, such as in embedded systems.

Several studies have utilized long text input, although they have used only English as the primary language of communication. KB system performance with non-English input and non-US keyboard layouts remains largely untested.

With the increasing popularity of mobile devices, KB performance on mobile platforms should also continue to be investigated. Modern mobile devices are equipped with multi-touch screens, pressure sensitive panels, accelerometers, and gyroscopes, all of which may provide additional information to a KB system. Recent research has found that KB performance on the mobile devices is generally superior to that on hardware keyboards. However, many works have used fixed input, such as passcodes and phone numbers.

Data collection in works has been performed over a relatively short period of time. Like other biometrics, KB is subject to template aging as the typing behavior of individuals may change due to age, health conditions, and long term behavioral changes. Moreover, most works have not considered the dominant hand in data collection on mobile devices. The development of adaptive templates to

reduce false rejection is another area worthy of future investigation.

Majority of the researchers have not considered security issues in KB system. Like other authentication system, KB systems also vulnerable to various attacks and can be circumvented by a skillful imposter. So mitigation and proper countermeasures of those attacks are essential to gain acceptance of KB technology.

Lastly, the development of KB benchmark datasets will continue to encourage research in this area. While a number of benchmark datasets exist, these are limited to several scenarios. Future datasets should control for variables such as mechanical and touchscreen keyboard, input type, and demographics. The development of standardized protocols evaluating and comparing KB system performance remains an ongoing effort, as demonstrated by recent work [82].

## 6 Conclusion

This work presented a comprehensive review of keystroke biometrics research and an overview of keystroke biometric systems, which can be used as a starting point newcomers to the field. Moreover, a number of references, comparisons based on different techniques, and methods used in different researches has been presented and arranged in chronological order. This serves as a point of reference for other researchers to gauge their work identify future research directions.

Keystroke biometric systems are relatively unexplored compared to other disciplines, and a very limited number of studies have been conducted compared to other biometric systems. Despite generally lower accuracies than other biometric modalities, KB has a number of advantages, such as being low cost, transparent, noninvasive to the user, and offers ability to continuously monitor a system.

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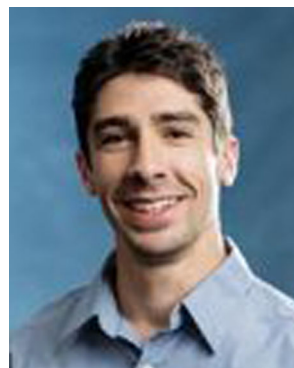


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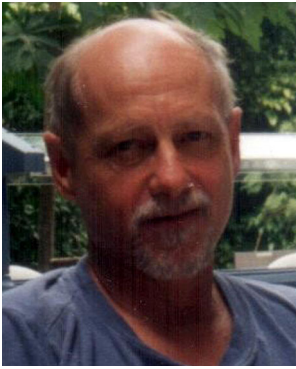
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