DeepACSON: Automated Segmentation of White Matter in 3D Electron Microscopy

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ABSTRACT

Automated segmentation techniques are essential to tracing the entirety of ultrastructures in big three-dimensional electron microscopy (3D-EM) images of the brain tissue. Current automated techniques use deep convolutional neural networks (DCNNs) and rely on high-contrast cellular membranes to trace a small number of neuronal processes in very high-resolution EM datasets. We developed DeepACSON to segment large field-of-view, low-resolution 3D-EM datasets of white matter where tens of thousands of myelinated axons traverse the tissue. DeepACSON performs DCNN-based semantic segmentation and shape decomposition-based instance segmentation. With its top-down design, DeepACSON manages to account for severe membrane discontinuities inherited with the low-resolution imaging. We applied DeepACSON to ten serial block-face scanning electron microscopy datasets of rats after sham-operation or traumatic brain injury, segmenting hundreds of thousands of long-span myelinated axons, thousands of cell nuclei, and millions of mitochondria with excellent evaluation scores. DeepACSON quantified the morphology and spatial aspects of white matter ultrastructures, capturing nanoscopic morphological alterations five months after the injury.

Introduction

Recent advances in automated serial-sectioning electron microscopy (EM) techniques allow for acquiring 3-dimensional (3D) image datasets of brain ultrastructures, with under ten nanometers resolution and from hundreds of micrometers of tissue[1–3]. Quantitative analysis of key morphological parameters of ultrastructures or mapping neuronal connections known as connectome from the acquired EM datasets requires annotating individual components. But manual annotation of even a small section of a 3D-EM dataset is tedious, consuming thousands of hours of experts' time. Berning *et al.*[4] reported that manual annotation of 215 neurites in 5×10^8 voxels required 1 500 h, and we estimated that the manual segmentation of $15 \times 15 \times 15$ μm^3 of white matter ultrastructures requires 2 400 h[5]. Semi-automated segmentation methods based on machine learning approaches[4,6] have improved the rate of segmentation. However, these methods still require a considerable amount of manual

interaction as the segmentation is driven on the manually extracted skeletons of neuronal processes, proofreading, or correction of errors.

State-of-the-art automated segmentation techniques use deep convolutional neural networks (DCNNs) to trace ultrastructures in 3D-EM images[7–11]. A DCNN-based segmentation technique generally comprises two steps: semantic- and instance segmentation. The former assigns each voxel a probability value of belonging to a tissue type, and the latter turns the probability maps into individual object instances. DCNNs are typically used for the semantic segmentation, whereas other, more traditional image analysis techniques are used for the instance segmentation. Moreover, the segmentation techniques generally favor a bottom-up design, i.e., over-segmentation and subsequent merge. Examples are DeepEM3D[8], applying 3D watershed transform on DCNN probability maps of the neuronal membrane, or U-Net MALA[9], where an iterative region agglomeration is applied on predicted affinities between voxels from a 3D U-Net[12]. More recently, Januszewski *et al.*[10] suggested flood-filling networks (FFNs), a single-object tracking technique, and Meirovitch *et al.*[11] introduced cross-classification clustering, a multi-object tracking technique, merging the semantic- and instance segmentation in recurrent neural networks. These techniques have a bottom-up design, where recurrent networks maintain the prediction for the object shape and learn to reconstruct neuronal processes with more plausible shapes.

Although these automated EM segmentation techniques have yielded accurate reconstructions of neuronal processes, they have focused on EM datasets at very high-resolution to explore synaptic connectivity. At synaptic resolutions, EM imaging of a large tissue volume generates a massive dataset. Imaging 1 mm^3 tissue at $4 \times 4 \times 40$ nm^3 generates a dataset of 1 500 tera-voxels in size, demanding fully automated image acquisition techniques and microscopes which run for several months continuously[2,3]. By taking coarser resolution images, we can make acquiring big tissue volumes a plausible task: imaging 1 mm^3 tissue at $50 \times 50 \times 50$ nm^3 generates a dataset of eight tera-voxels during a few days. However, imaging at low-resolution can limit the visualization of the cellular membranes, such as at nodes of Ranvier, where no distinctive image feature differentiates the intra- and extra-axonal space of a myelinated axon. Distinctive image features are required for a segmentation technique with a bottom-up design. Bottom-up design is subjected to greedy optimization, which makes the locally optimal choice at each stage while intending to find a global optimum. Therefore, the mentioned automated techniques[7–11] cannot be used to segment low-resolution images. Techniques such as DeepEM3D[8] and its cloud-based implementation[7], which only rely on a precise semantic segmentation, encounter either over- or under-segmentation errors, depending on the instance segmentation step. Or techniques such as FFN[10] and its multi-object tracking counterpart[11], where networks learn the shape of a neural process, encounter over-segmentation errors. Merging FFN super-voxels does not necessarily generate a correct segmentation of an axon as the segmentation leaks to the extra-axonal space at nodes of Ranvier. Therefore, we developed DeepACSON, a **Deep** learning-based **A**utomati**C** **S**egmentation of ax**ON**s, to account for severe membrane discontinuities inherited with low-resolution imaging for tens of thousands of myelinated axons.

As the majority of existing techniques, DeepACSON is a two-step segmentation technique, performing DCNN-based semantic segmentation and 3D shape analysis-based instance segmentation. However, the instance segmentation of DeepACSON

approaches the segmentation problem from a top-down perspective, i.e., under-segmentation and subsequent split, using *a priori* knowledge of the topology of myelinated axons and cell nuclei. We applied DeepACSON on low-resolution, large field-of-view 3D-EM datasets acquired using serial block-face scanning electron microscopy[13] (SBEM). The SBEM volumes were obtained from the corpus callosum and cingulum, in the same field-of-view, of five rats after sham-operation ($n = 2$) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) ($n = 3$). The images were acquired ipsi- and contralaterally, thus for five rats, we had ten samples. Each sample was SBEM imaged simultaneously at two resolutions, and in two fields-of-view: high-resolution images, $15 \times 15 \times 50$ nm^3, were acquired in a small field-of-view, $15 \times 15 \times 15$ µm^3, and low-resolution images, $50 \times 50 \times 50$ nm^3, were acquired in a large field-of-view, $200 \times 100 \times 65$ µm^3. The low-resolution images covered a field-of-view 400 times bigger than high-resolution images. We segmented the high-resolution datasets using our earlier automated ACSON pipeline[5]. We used the ACSON segmentation of the high-resolution datasets to train DeepACSON, eliminating the need for manually annotated training sets. We segmented the low-resolution datasets using the DeepACSON pipeline. In sum, we segmented 1.09×10^7 µm^3 of white matter tissue into myelin, myelinated axons, mitochondria, and cell nuclei. The segmentation resulted in about 288 000 myelinated axons spanning 9 m, 2 600 cell nuclei, and millions of mitochondria with excellent evaluation scores. Our segmentation of white matter enabled quantifying axonal morphology, such as axonal diameter, eccentricity, and tortuosity and the spatial organization of ultrastructures, such as the spatial distribution of mitochondria and the density of cells and myelinated axons. The analysis indicated that changes in the axonal diameter, tortuosity, and the density of myelinated axons persisted five months after the injury in TBI rats. Our findings can yield a better understanding of TBI, hence its mechanisms.

Results

Figure 1 illustrates different steps of DeepACSON, where DCNNs perform semantic segmentation, and 3D shape-analysis techniques perform instance segmentation. DeepACSON segmented and analyzed ten low-resolution, large field-of-view SBEM datasets. We acquired the images from the ipsi- and contralateral of white matter from two sham-operated rats and three TBI rats.

Datasets

The samples were prepared for SBEM imaging by a single person following a pedantic procedure (Materials and Methods). We simultaneously acquired SBEM images of the white matter at the low- and high-resolution (Fig. 2a). The low-resolution datasets were acquired from big tissue volumes of $200 \times 100 \times 65$ µm^3 with a voxel size of $50 \times 50 \times 50$ nm^3. Two-thirds of the low-resolution images were from the corpus callosum and one-third from the cingulum (Supplementary Table S1). The high-resolution datasets were acquired from small tissue volumes of $15 \times 15 \times 15$ µm^3 and imaged with a voxel size of $15 \times 15 \times 50$ nm^3. The high-resolution images were acquired from the corpus callosum. All the images were acquired from the ipsi- and contralateral hemispheres of the sham-operated and TBI animals. Figure 2a shows the contralateral corpus callosum and cingulum of a sham-operated rat in the low- and high-resolution. In Fig. 2b, we show images of the low- and high-resolution datasets from the same location. Ultrastructural components such as myelin, myelinated axons, mitochondria,

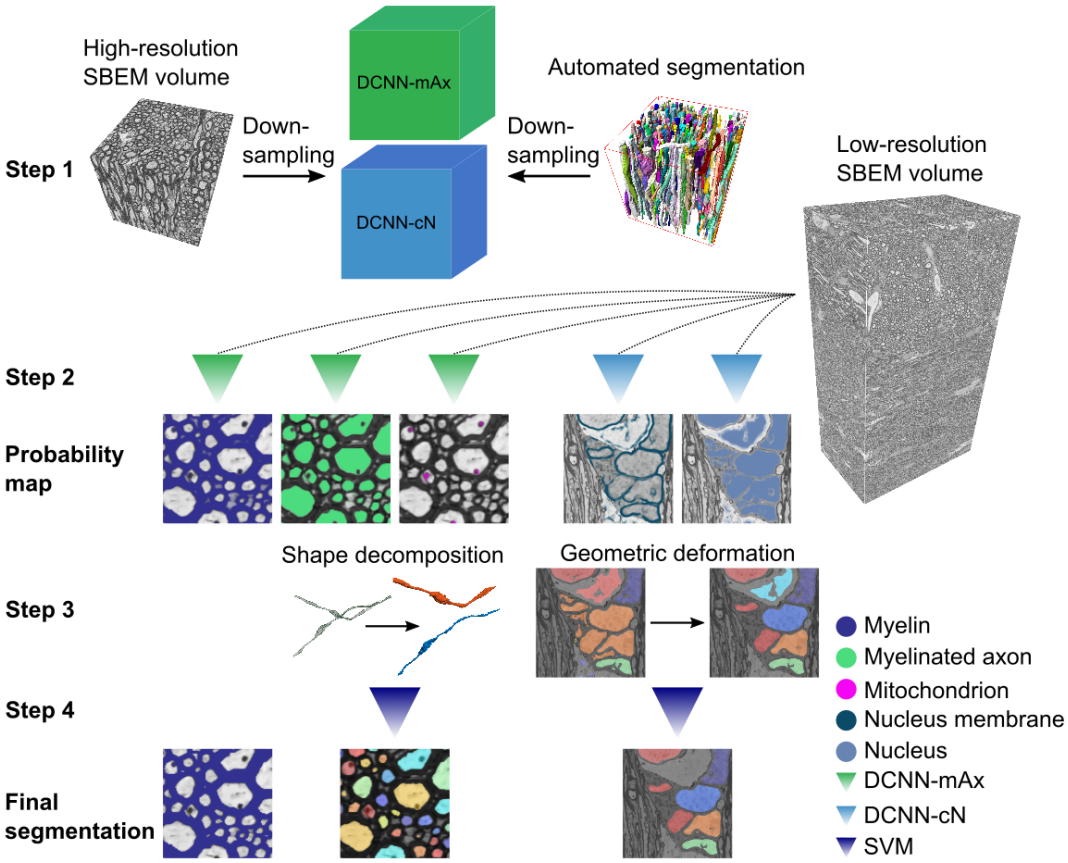

Figure 1. DeepACSON pipeline. **Step 1:** The ACSON segmentation of the high-resolution, small field-of-view SBEM datasets, down-sampled to the resolution of the low-resolution, large field-of-view datasets, was used for training DeepACSON. We trained two DCNNs denoted as DCNN-mAx and DCNN-cN. **Step 2:** DCNN-mAx returned the probability maps of myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria. DCNN-cN returned the probability maps of cell nuclei and the membrane of cell nuclei. **Step 3:** The segmentation of myelin was finalized by thresholding the myelin probability map. We performed the initial segmentation of myelinated axons by the binarization and connected component analysis. The geometry of the segmented components was subsequently rectified using our newly developed cylindrical shape decomposition (CSD) technique[14]. We performed the segmentation of cell nuclei in a geometric deformable model (GDM) framework by applying elastic deformations to the initial segmentation of cell nuclei. **Step 4:** The segmentation of myelinated axons and cell nuclei was finalized by eliminating non-axonal and non-nucleus structures using support vector machines (SVMs).

and cell nuclei were resolved in both settings. However, other components such as unmyelinated axons (Fig. 2b fuchsia panel, asterisks) and exposed axonal membrane, e.g., at nodes of Ranvier (Fig. 2b cyan panel, arrowheads), were only resolved in the high-resolution datasets. Figure 2b (purple panel) shows a cell nucleus from the low-resolution dataset, the membrane of which is resolved, but not continuously.

Semantic segmentation of white matter ultrastructures

To provide a human-annotation-free training set for DCNNs, we segmented the high-resolution SBEM datasets using our automated segmentation pipeline, ACSON[5]. We down-sampled the high-resolution datasets and their corresponding segmentation to the resolution of low-resolution datasets (Fig. 1, step 1). Figure 2c shows a 3D rendering of myelinated axons of a high-resolution SBEM dataset segmented by the ACSON pipeline. Only four of the ten datasets were used as training data,

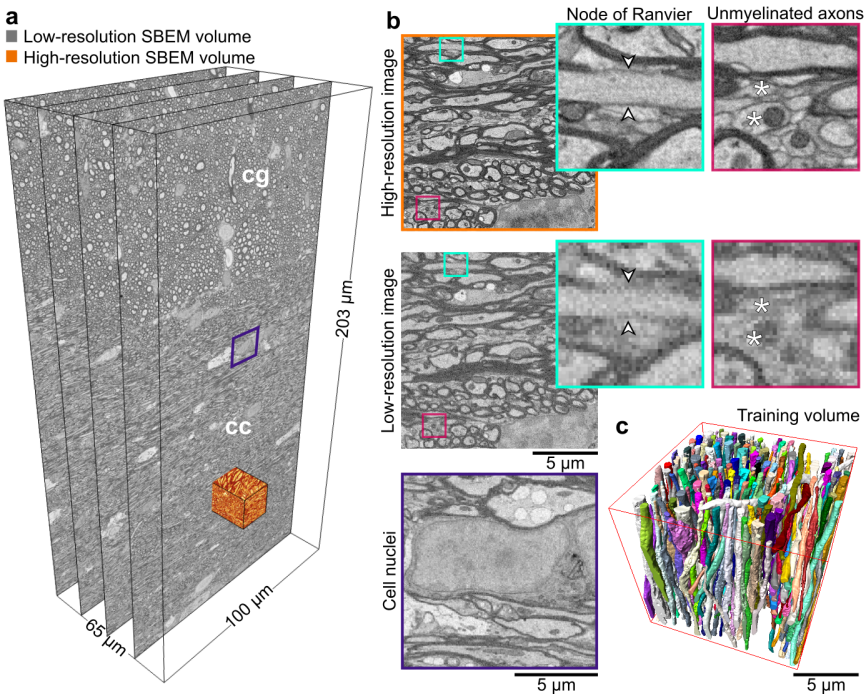

Figure 2. Low- and high-resolution SBEM imaging of the contralateral corpus callosum and cingulum of a sham dataset. (**a**) We acquired SBEM images of the white matter, corpus callosum (cc) and cingulum (cg), simultaneously at the high- and low-resolution. The field-of-view of the low-resolution dataset is $204.80 \times 102.20 \times 65.30$ µm^3 equivalent to $4\,096 \times 2\,044 \times 1\,306$ voxels in x, y, and z directions, respectively, which is about 400 times larger than the field-of-view of the high-resolution datasets. (**b**) Images of the low- and high-resolution datasets acquired from the same location (the orange-rendered volume in (**a**)). The visualization of the high- and low-resolution images shows that myelin, myelinated axons, mitochondria, and cell nuclei were resolved in both settings. In contrast, the axonal membrane at nodes of Ranvier (cyan panel, arrowheads) and unmyelinated axons (fuchsia panel, asterisks) was only resolved in the high-resolution images. The purple panel shows a cell nucleus from the low-resolution dataset (**a**), where the membrane is resolved, but not continuously. (**c**) A 3D rendering of myelinated axons in the high-resolution SBEM dataset (contralateral sham #25) segmented by the automated ACSON pipeline.

while the remaining six datasets were reserved for testing. We trained two DCNNs denoted as DCNN-mAx and DCNN-cN. DCNN-mAx generated the probability maps of myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria, and DCNN-cN generated the probability maps of cell nuclei and the membrane of cell nuclei (Fig. 1, step 2). Figures 3a and b present the semantic segmentation of myelinated axons, mitochondria, and myelin returned from DCNN-mAx. In Figs. 4a and b, we show the semantic segmentation of cell nuclei and the membrane of cell nuclei returned from DCNN-cN.

Instance segmentation of myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria

We segmented myelin by binarizing its probability map (see Fig. 1 step 3 and Fig. 3b) returned from DCNN-mAx. To segment the intra-axonal space of myelinated axons, we first binarized the sum of the semantic segmentation of the intra-axonal space and mitochondria and applied connected component analysis. Because the axonal membrane was not fully resolved, e.g., at nodes of Ranvier (Fig. 3c), this preliminary segmentation was prone to under-segmentation, requiring a further shape analysis step (Fig. 1, step 3). We devised cylindrical shape decomposition[14] (CSD) technique, an algorithm for the decomposition of cylindrical objects (Supplementary Fig. S7). The technique decomposes under-segmented myelinated axons and reconstructs

their shape using generalized cylinders (Fig. 3c, Fig. 3c$_1$, and Supplementary Fig. S8). To finalize the segmentation of the intra-axonal space, we excluded non-axonal instances from the segmentation using a support vector machine (SVM) with a quadratic kernel (Fig. 1, step 4). We segmented mitochondria, applying the connected component analysis on their semantic segmentation. We only included mitochondria, which were connected to the intra-axonal space of myelinated axons. Figure 3d shows the 3D rendering of the DeepACSON segmentation of myelinated axons in the contralateral corpus callosum and cingulum of a sham-operated rat dataset. Figure 3e shows the 3D rendering of myelinated axons randomly sampled at two locations from the corpus callosum and one location from the cingulum. This figure illustrates the variance in the thickness of myelinated axons and the orientation dispersion in bundles of myelinated axons.

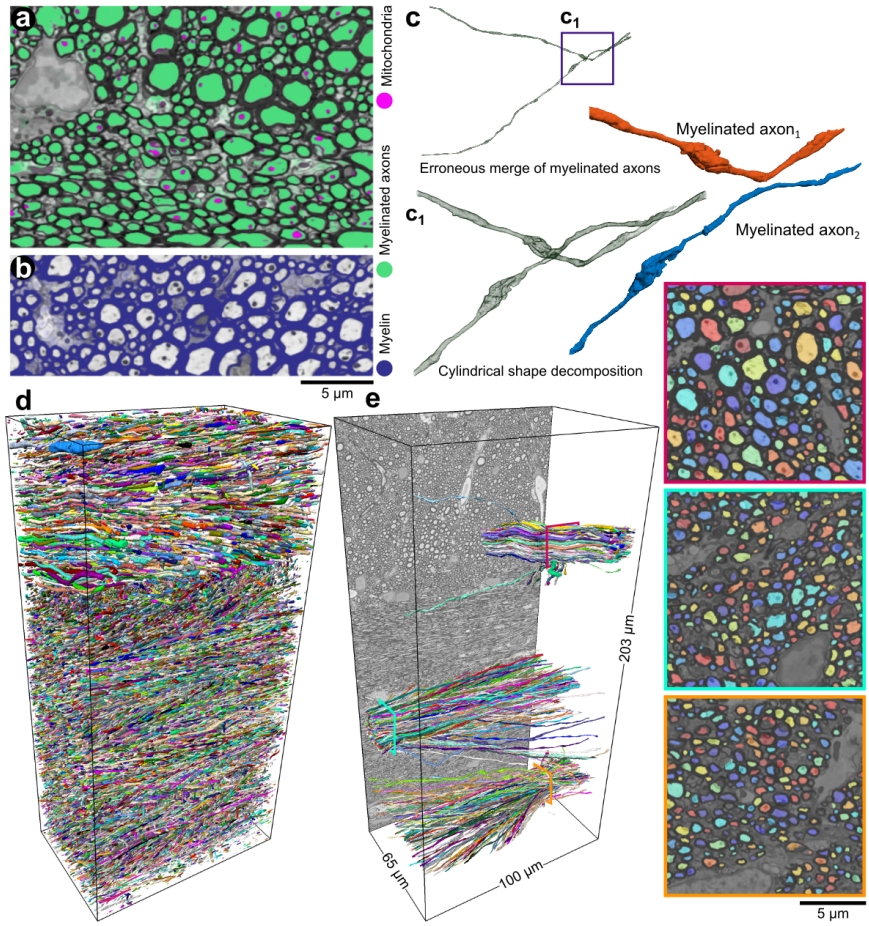

Figure 3. DeepACSON segmentation of myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria in white matter. (**a, b**) The probability maps of myelinated axons, mitochondria, and myelin returned from DCNN-mAx, overlaid on their corresponding block-matching and 4D filtering[15] (BM4D) filtered images. (**c**) The CSD algorithm decomposed myelinated axons with erroneous merges. (**d**) 3D rendering of DeepACSON final segmentation of myelinated axons (at one-third of the original resolution) in the contralateral corpus callosum and cingulum of sham #25 low-resolution dataset. (**e**) 3D rendering of myelinated axons sampled at the corpus callosum and cingulum illustrates the variance of the axonal diameter among myelinated axons and the orientation dispersion in these bundles.

Instance segmentation of cell nuclei

The membrane of cell nuclei was severely discontinuous at low-resolutions, $50 \times 50 \times 50$ nm^3 voxel size, hence the semantic segmentation. We segmented cell nuclei in a geometric deformable model (GDM) framework, where the initial segmentation of a cell nucleus was rectified for its topological errors (see Fig. 1, step 3 and Fig. 4c and d). Non-nucleus instances were excluded from the segmentation using an SVM with a quadratic kernel (Fig. 1, step 4). Figure 4e shows a 3D rendering of cell nuclei in the contralateral corpus callosum and cingulum of a sham-operated rat dataset.

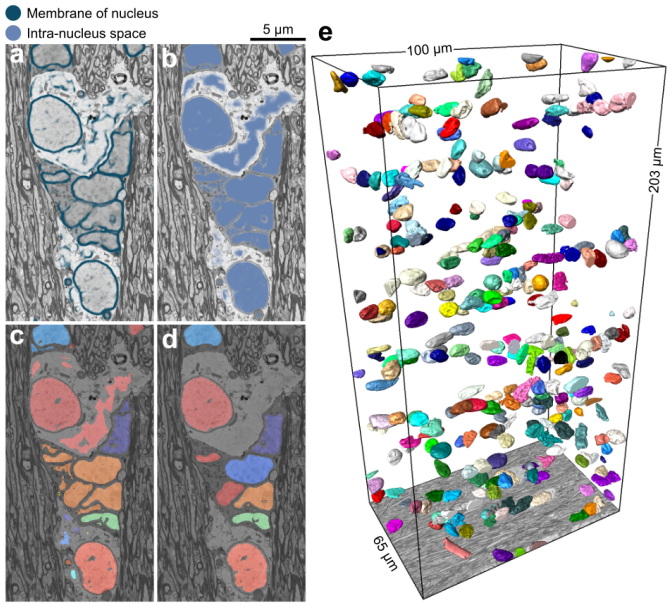

Figure 4. Segmentation of cell nuclei. (**a, b**) The probability maps of cell nuclei and their membrane were returned from DCNN-cN and overlaid on their corresponding BM4D filtered images. (**c**) The initial segmentation of cell nuclei contained topological errors as the membrane of cell nuclei exhibited discontinuity. (**d**) We rectified the segmentation of cell nuclei in a GDM framework and excluded non-nucleus instances by an SVM with a quadratic kernel. (**e**) 3D rendering of cell nuclei in the contralateral corpus callosum and cingulum of sham #25 dataset.

White matter morphology analysis

We quantified several morphological and volumetric aspects of the segmented ultrastructures to demonstrate the applications of the white matter segmentation (Fig. 5). For every myelinated axon, we automatically extracted cross-sections along its axonal skeleton, i.e., central axis, with a plane perpendicular to the skeleton. The cross-sections were quantified by the equivalent diameter, i.e., the diameter of a circle with the same area as the cross-section, and the eccentricity of the fitted ellipse, i.e., how much a conic section deviates from being circular (Fig. 5a and b). We measured the tortuosity of myelinated axons as $\tau = \frac{l_{Gd}}{l_{Ed}}$, where l_{Gd} is the geodesic distance, and l_{Ed} is the Euclidean distance between the two endpoints of the axonal skeleton. To quantify the spatial distribution of mitochondria, we measured the inter-mitochondrial distances along each myelinated axon. We applied two definitions to quantify the inter-mitochondrial distances: we projected the centroids of mitochondria on the axonal skeleton and measured the geodesic distance between the consecutive projected centroids, and we projected the entirety

of mitochondria on the axonal skeleton and measured the shortest geodesic distance between two consecutive mitochondria as shown in Supplementary Fig. S2.

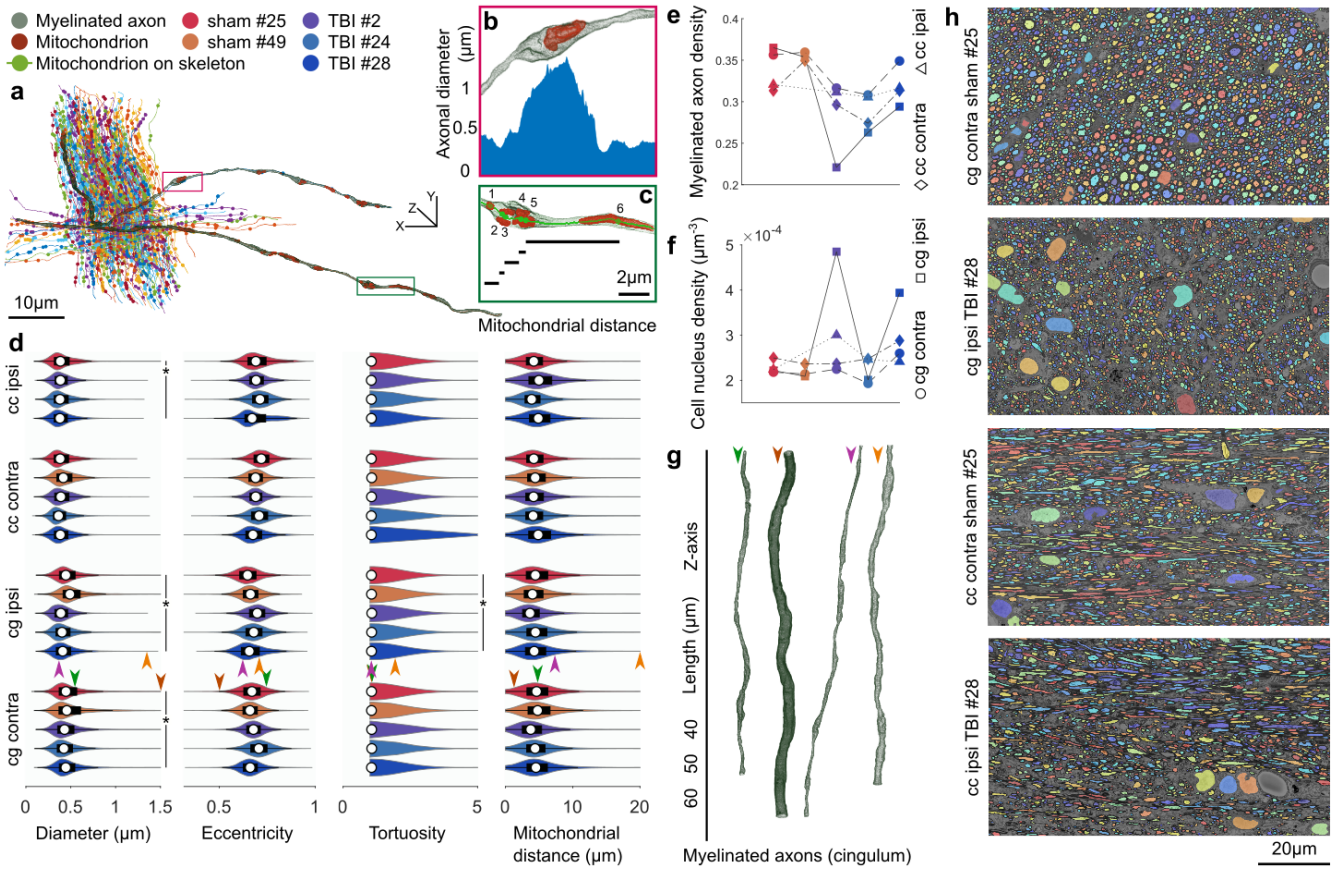

Figure 5. White matter morphology analysis. (**a**) A bundle of myelinated axons was sampled from the cingulum of the sham #25 dataset. Myelinated axons are represented by their curve skeletons. The centroids of mitochondria were projected on the axonal skeletons, shown as filled circles. (**b**) A small section of a myelinated axon from (**a**) represents how the axonal diameter can vary substantially along its length. The increased axonal diameter can be related to the accumulation of mitochondria. The plot shows the axonal diameter along the magnified section of the myelinated axon. (**c**) A small section of a myelinated axon from (**a**) shows the measure of inter-mitochondrial distance. Five mitochondria are accumulated with distances less than 1 μm, and one mitochondrion is distant from others with over 5 μm distance. (**d**) DeepACSON quantified the axonal diameter, eccentricity, and tortuosity of about 288 000 myelinated axons and the inter-mitochondrial distance of about 1 800 000 mitochondria. On each bean plot, the central mark indicates the median, and the left and right edges of the box indicate the 25th and 75th percentiles, respectively. The whiskers extend to the most extreme data points not considered outliers. The colors correspond with the animal ID. (**e**) The comparison of the density of myelinated axons, as the ratio of the volume of myelinated axons to the myelin volume plus the volume of myelinated axons. The color of the indicators corresponds with the animal ID. (**f**) The comparison of the density of cells, as the number of cell nuclei over the dataset volume. The color of the indicators corresponds with the animal ID. DeepACSON segmented about 2 600 cell nuclei in the ten large field-of-view datasets. (**g**) 3D rendering of myelinated axons from the cingulum visualizes the normative and outliers of the axonal diameter distribution. Each myelinated axon is given an arrowhead to mark its measurements in panel (**d**). (**h**) Representative images of the cingulum and corpus callosum in sham-operated and TBI rats visualize the smaller density of myelinated axons caused by the injury.

The analysis indicated that the diameter of myelinated axons varies substantially along the axonal skeleton. Moreover, the distribution of diameters was bimodal, which can partially be related to the location of mitochondria[16] (Fig. 5a, b, and d). The cross-sections of myelinated axons were elliptic rather than circular (Fig. 5d). Myelinated axons were almost straight as the

mean of τ in the corpus callosum was 1.068 and in the cingulum was 1.072, but there was a big variation in the tortuosity as the standard deviation of τ was 0.731 and 0.396 in the corpus callosum and cingulum, respectively (see Fig. 5a and d). The distribution of the inter-mitochondrial distance along a myelinated axon was bimodal because mitochondria were either accumulated or appeared distant from each other (Fig. 5a, c, and d).

For the statistical hypothesis testing between the sham-operated and TBI animals, myelinated axons were represented by the median of equivalent diameters, the median of the eccentricities, tortuosity, and the mean of inter-mitochondrial distances (Fig. 5d). We subjected the measurements to the nested (hierarchical) 1-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) separately for each hemisphere[17]. The nested ANOVA tests whether there exists a significant variation in means among groups, or among subgroups within groups. The myelinated axons were nested under the rats' ID, and the rats' ID was nested under the groups (sham-operated and TBI). We set the alpha-threshold defining the statistical significance as 0.05 for all analyses. The rats' IDs were treated as random effects, and the group was treated as a fixed effect. The equivalent diameter was significantly smaller in the ipsi- ($F = 16.27$, $p = 0.027$) and contralateral cingulum ($F = 29.28$, $p = 0.011$) and in the ipsilateral corpus callosum ($F = 15.75$, $p = 0.047$) of TBI rats as compared to sham-operated rats. Also, the tortuosity in the ipsilateral cingulum of TBI rats was significantly greater than sham-operated rats ($F = 25.23$, $p = 0.018$). The equivalent diameter of the contralateral corpus callosum of TBI rats was slightly smaller than sham-operated rats, but not significantly ($F = 5.78$, $p = 0.095$). In the ipsilateral cingulum, the inter-mitochondrial distance was slightly smaller in TBI rats, but not significantly ($F = 6.27$, $p = 0.086$). We did not observe a difference in the tortuosity of the contralateral cingulum ($F = 3.20$, $p = 0.134$), ipsilateral corpus callosum ($F = 1.30$, $p = 0.292$), and ipsilateral corpus callosum ($F = 0.03$, $p = 0.878$) when comparing sham-operated and TBI rats. We did not observe a difference between sham-operated and TBI rats in the eccentricity (contralateral cingulum: $F = 1.57$, $p = 0.299$; ipsilateral cingulum: 3.33, $p = 0.165$; contralateral corpus callosum: $F = 0.67$, $p = 0.471$; ipsilateral corpus callosum: $F = 0.10$, $p = 0.780$). We did not find a difference between sham-operated and TBI rats regarding the inter-mitochondrial distances (distance between centroids) of the contralateral cingulum ($F = 0.33$, $p = 0.603$), contralateral corpus callosum ($F = 0.07$, $p = 0.812$), ipsilateral cingulum ($F = 6.26$, $p = 0.086$), and ipsilateral corpus callosum ($F = 1.04$, $p = 0.414$) (Fig. 5d), nor for the inter-mitochondrial distances when measuring the shortest distance between consecutive mitochondria in the contralateral cingulum ($F = 0.28$, $p = 0.630$), contralateral corpus callosum ($F = 0.05$, $p = 0.830$), ipsilateral cingulum ($F = 7.10$, $p = 0.073$), and ipsilateral corpus callosum ($F = 0.43$, $p = 0.577$) (Supplementary Fig. S2). Defining the inter-mitochondrial distance as the distance between centroids of mitochondria was highly correlated with defining the inter-mitochondrial distance as the shortest distance between consecutive mitochondria; the Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.99. We also quantified the volumetric aspects of the ultrastructures (Supplementary Tables S3). We could not directly compare the volume of the myelin and myelinated axons among datasets, because the volume of the extra-axonal space varies among datasets. Therefore, we calculated the density of myelinated axons as the ratio of the volume of myelinated axons to the myelin volume plus the volume of myelinated axons (Fig. 5e). We observed that the density of myelinated axons was significantly smaller in the ipsilateral cingulum ($F = 13.03$, $p = 0.037$) of TBI compared to sham-operated rats (Fig. 5e). We did not observe a significant difference in

the density of myelinated axons in the contralateral cingulum (F = 4.29, p = 0.130), ipsi- (F = 3.42, p = 0.162) and contralateral corpus callosum (F = 2.13, p = 0.282) of TBI rats (Fig. 5e). We also calculated the density of cells defined as the number of cell nuclei over the volume of the corresponding dataset. We did not observe a significant difference in the density of cells comparing TBI and sham-operated rats (Fig. 5f): (contralateral cingulum: F = 0.16, p = 0.717; ipsilateral cingulum: F = 1.79, p = 0.273; contralateral corpus callosum: F = 0.48, p = 0.540; ipsilateral corpus callosum: F = 1.02, p = 0.419). Figure 5g shows examples of 3D-rendered myelinated axons in the cingulum, demonstrating the high variability of axonal diameters. Fig. 5h demonstrates the sparsity of myelinated axons due to the injury in the cingulum and corpus callosum of TBI rats.

Evaluations

We used two test sets to evaluate the DeepACON pipeline: 1) a test set that comprised six high-resolution SBEM volumes down-sampled to the resolution of low-resolution images. We applied this test set to compare DeepACSON against state-of-the-art automated segmentation methods and perform an ablation study on the DeepACSON pipeline. Labels for this test set was provided automatically using ACSON[5] pipeline and proofread by A.S. In this test set, each SBEM volume included approximately 300 axons, and thus we evaluated DeepACSON on approximately $6 \times 300 = 1800$ myelinated axons; 2) a test set, which comprised 50 patches of size 300×300 voxels only for the expert evaluations. We randomly sampled every low-resolution (large field-of-view) dataset for five non-overlapping windows of size 300×300 voxels (10 datasets, 50 samples). Each patch, on average, included approximately 130 axonal cross-sections and 30 mitochondria. Therefore, the expert has evaluated about 6 500 axonal cross-sections and 1 500 mitochondria in total. The expert had no access to the dataset ID nor the sampling location. The expert evaluated the sampled images of the final segmentation by counting the number of true-positives (TP), false-positives (FP), and false-negatives (FN).

We compared DeepACSON with the state-of-the-art segmentation techniques; DeepEM2D[8] and DeepEM3D[8], which rely on a precise semantic segmentation, and FFN[10], which accounts for the shape of neural processes during the instance segmentation. We trained DeepEM3D[8] using the same training set as DeepACSON but with two labels, the intra-axonal space of myelinated axons versus the complement. To train FFN[10], we used the same training set as DeepACSON but preserving the label of each myelinated axon. We first trained FFN, including the myelin and mitochondria labels, where the network generated very poor results. Therefore, we excluded the myelin label and included mitochondria to the intra-axonal space of myelinated axons. We trained DeepACSON and DeepEM2D/3D for one day and FFN for one week on a single NVIDIA Tesla V100-32 GB graphics processing unit (GPU). As shown in Fig. 6a-c, we quantitatively evaluated the segmentation on a test set comprising six SBEM volumes. We compared these techniques by the variation of information (VOI, split and merge contribution, lower is better), Wallace indices (split and merge contribution, higher is better), and adapted Rand error (ARE, lower is better), defined in Materials and Methods, on the segmentation of the intra-axonal space. DeepACSON outperformed these current state-of-the-art techniques as it generated the smallest VOI measures and ARE and the biggest Wallace measures.

We also evaluated the DeepACSON pipeline to understand its design parameters, such as denoising, resolution adjustment, and an alternative, deeper architecture. In Fig. 6 d-f, we denoted the standard DeepACSON design as DeepACSON-A, which

used a light fully convolutional network[18] (FCN) for the semantic segmentation. The standard DeepACSON was trained using down-sampled and BM4D filtered volumes. We replaced the FCN design of the standard DeepACSON with a U-Net[19] with residual modules, denoted as DeepACSON-B in Fig. 6 d-f. In this figure, we also show the effect of omitting BM4D[15] denoising as a pre-processing step (DeepACSON-C) and down-sampling the high-resolution images to generate the training set (DeepACSON-D). In addition, we demonstrated the choice of thresholds at which the probability maps were binarized. Evaluations were run over the six SBEM volumes segmented automatically using ACSON[5]. The comparisons showed that the standard DeepACSON performed better than a deeper network, which was prone to over-fitting. Denoising the train/test datasets as a pre-processing step improved our results as did adjusting the resolution between the training and test sets. We binarized the probability maps at thresholds, which generated the smallest VOI split/merge values.

In addition, we evaluated the semantic segmentation of the standard DeepACSON on an ultrastructural level, i.e., myelin and myelinated axons (including mitochondria), on the six SBEM volumes. For this evaluation, we reported precision (positive predictive value), recall (sensitivity), and F1 scores (harmonic mean of precision and recall) in Supplementary Table S2). The average F1 score for myelin was 0.886 ± 0.049, and for myelinated axons was 0.861 ± 0.037.

We evaluated the performance of the two SVMs by the leave-one-group-out (LOGO) cross-validation approach, where the classifier was trained, excluding the data from one group of animals (sham-operated or TBI) and evaluated against the excluded data (Supplementary Table S2). F1 scores were 0.988 and 0.955 for eliminating non-axonal structures while excluding sham datasets and TBI datasets, respectively. For eliminating non-nucleus structures, F1 scores were 0.969 and 0.981, excluding sham datasets and TBI datasets, respectively. The LOGO cross-validation showed that the performance of the SVMs was equally robust in all datasets, regardless of the experimental condition, i.e., sham-operated or TBI.

Finally, an expert (A.S.) evaluated the DeepACSON segmentation of myelinated axons and mitochondria at an object-level using GUI-based visualization software, called gACSON[20] that we developed for this purpose (Supplementary Fig. S1). We developed gACSON to facilitate the visualization and validation procedures for the expert. gACSON enables the expert to manually mouse-click on the segmented image overlaid on the original EM image and express if a segmentation component was a TP, FP, or FN, as shown in Supplementary Fig. S1. The expert's evaluation scores are as follows: myelinated axons (precision: 0.965 ± 0.027, recall: 0.877 ± 0.061, and F1 score: 0.918 ± 0.038) and mitochondria (precision: 0.856 ± 0.100, recall: 0.804 ± 0.091, and F1 score: 0.823 ± 0.067).

Computation time

The pipeline required about five days to segment a raw, low-resolution SBEM dataset of $4\,000 \times 2\,000 \times 1\,200$ voxels into its final segmentation. The details are presented in Supplementary Table S4. Approximately 40 % of the DeepACSON computation time was spent during BM4D denoising[15]. We run BM4D filtering on non-overlapping patches of the SBEM volumes to enable parallel processing. We remark that BM4D filtering can be dropped from the pre-processing steps to improve the computation time, but as shown in Fig. 6d-f, dropping BM4D filtering made segmentations less accurate. Approximately 30 % of the DeepACSON computation time was spent on the CSD algorithm. In more detail, the time complexity of the sub-voxel precise

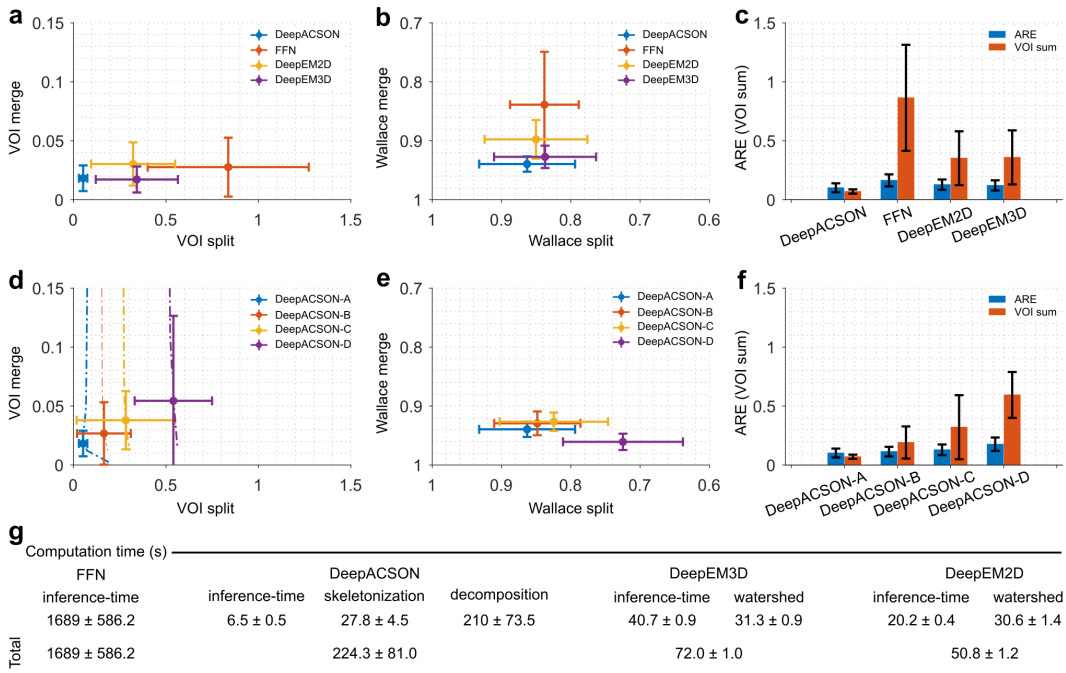

Figure 6. DeepACSON evaluations. Comparison of DeepACSON against state-of-the-art segmentation methods, DeepEM2D, DeepEM3D, and FFN, by (**a**) variation of information (VOI, split and merge contribution, lower is better), (**b**) Wallace indices (split and merge contribution, higher is better), and (**c**) adapted Rand error (ARE, lower is better) and the sum of VOI split and VOI merge (VOI sum, lower is better). DeepACSON outperformed these techniques as it produced the smallest VOI split, VOI merge, VOI sum, and ARE, and the biggest Wallace split and merge values. Comparison of the design parameters of DeepACSON: standard DeepACSON (DeepACSON-A), a U-Net with residual modules (DeepACSON-B), the effect of BM4D denoising (DeepACSON-C), and adjusting the resolution between the training and test sets (DeepACSON-D) over (**d**) VOI (split and merge contribution) (**e**) Wallace indices (split and merge contribution), and (**f**) ARE and VOI sum. The filled circles and error bars show the mean and standard deviation of the evaluations, respectively. The dash-dotted lines show the choice of binarization threshold. The comparisons were run over the best threshold, i.e., smallest VOI merge and VOI split. (**g**) Comparing the computation-time of DeepACSON against DeepEM2D/3D and FFN (mean $\pm$ standard deviation). All comparisons were run over six test SBEM datasets of size $290 \times 290 \times 285$ voxel^3, automatically segmented using the ACSON5 pipeline[5].

skeletonization is $O(n N_\Omega \log N_\Omega)$, where n is the number of skeleton branches, and N_Ω is the number of voxels of a discrete object, i.e., a myelinated axon. The $N_\Omega \log N_\Omega$ factor is from the fast marching algorithm[21]. The time complexity to determine a critical point is $O(N_p)$, where N_p is the number of inquiry points to check for the cross-sectional changes in a decomposition interval. Therefore, the overall time complexity of the CSD algorithm is $O(n N_\Omega \log N_\Omega) + O(N_p)$. Approximately 10 % of the DeepACSON computation time was spent on the semantic segmentation, with time complexity of $O(N)$, where N is the number of voxels in an SBEM dataset.

We also compared the computation time of DeepACSON, DeepEM2D, DeepEM3D, and FFN techniques (see Fig. 6g for results). The techniques were compared over the six test datasets on a computer with an NVIDIA Tesla V100-32 GB GPU, $2 \times$ Intel Xeon E5 2630 CPU 2.4 GHz, and 512 GB RAM. DeepEM2D and DeepEM3D had the shortest computation time (about 1 minute) as the segmentation essentially relies on an Inception-ResNet-v2 network[22] and watershed segmentation. FFN required the longest computation-time for an end-to-end segmentation (about 28 minutes). DeepACSON required about 4

minutes (using 15 CPU cores) to segment the test datasets, which was longer than DeepEM2D/3D and shorter than FFN.

Discussion

We developed DeepACSON, applying DCNN-based semantic segmentation and 3D-shape decomposition instance segmentation. We applied DeepACSON on low-resolution, large field-of-view, SBEM datasets to trace long myelinated axons in the corpus callosum and cingulum, EM imaged in the same field-of-view. DeepACSON annotated hundreds of thousands of long-span myelinated axons, thousands of cell nuclei, and millions of mitochondria in ten such datasets. We provided DeepACSON with human-annotation-free training sets, using segmentation of high-resolution EM volumes by our earlier-developed, fully automatic pipeline, called ACSON[5]. The validation scores of DeepACSON demonstrated excellent scores in the segmentation of white matter ultrastructures, outperforming state-of-the-art segmentation methods. DeepACSON quantified the morphology of myelinated axons, the spatial distribution of mitochondria, and the density of myelinated axons and cells in the white matter of sham-operated and TBI rats. Our findings indicated that changes in the axonal diameter, tortuosity, and the density of myelinated axons were persistent even five months after the injury.

The top-down design of DeepACSON instance segmentation allows for including *a priori* knowledge of the topology of neuronal processes that makes it different from the bottom-up design of the current automated neurite segmentation techniques[8–11,23–25]. A related study is MaskExtend[26], proposing a 3D watershed transform and subsequent merge and continuing with detecting X-shape objects to find under-segmentation errors. Unlike the MaskExtend method, which makes restrictive assumptions about the geometry of under-segmented objects, we address a generic geometry for the under-segmented objects as X-shape objects are a special case in our CSD algorithm. Also, we reconstruct/rectify an under-segmented object on its own by applying generalized cylinders, as opposed to MaskExtend, that requires accessing the watershed segments and merging them at a high merge-threshold[26]. Our CSD algorithm can in itself be applied to any segmentation task to detect under-segmentation errors, saving human proofreading time. Falk *et al.*[27] also developed a plugin in ImageJ software[28] and addressed under-segmentation errors in cells by inserting an artificial one-pixel wide background ridge between touching instances in the training set. This approach is similar to our technique for segmenting cell nuclei, where we inserted an artificial membrane around cell nuclei using morphological operations and assigned high-weights while training.

We have compared the CSD algorithm to state-of-the-art shape decomposition techniques[29,30], and we have shown that it outperforms these methods in the segmentation applications[14]. The CSD technique can analyze myelinated axons in-parallel on high-performance computing (HPC) servers. The parallelizability of the CSD algorithm makes the DeepACSON pipeline highly scalable. For example, we analyzed hundreds of thousands of myelinated axons traversing large field-of-view datasets on different CPU cores of different HPC servers, reducing the computation-time of the segmentation. We also remark that the CSD algorithm evaluates the cylindricity of an object using the object curve skeleton. In cases where the surface protrusion of the object is very irregular the skeletonization may over-estimate the number of skeleton branches. The CSD algorithm detects maximal-length straight sub-skeletons following the skeletonization, but yet over-segment the surface protrusion, yielding

false-positives. We eliminated false-positives after the CSD algorithm using support vector machines.

The validation of DeepACSON demonstrated an equally robust segmentation performance in datasets of both sham-operated and TBI rats. We remark that abnormalities in the shape of myelinated axons, such as myelin delamination, are more frequent in TBI datasets[5]. As well, the expert evaluation showed that the sensitivity of DeepACSON was smaller than its precision; we had a bigger number of false-negatives, i.e., myelinated axons that were not segmented, than false-positives. We speculate that very thin myelinated axons have been over-segmented into small-components. And because we filtered out small-components before the shape decomposition step, it increased the number of false-negatives. For example, an axon with a diameter smaller than 0.2 µm was resolved with less than 13 cross-sectional voxels at $50 \times 50 \times 50$ nm^3 resolution, prone to over-segmentation. Segmentation of myelinated axons at low-resolutions can be difficult for an expert as well. Mikula *et al.*[31] reported that an expert made an error in every 80 nodes of Ranvier in white matter, where the resolution was $40 \times 40 \times 40$ nm^3 and for the axonal diameter greater than 0.5 µm.

The simultaneous high- and low-resolution imaging enables the use of high-resolution images as the training data to segment low-resolution datasets. The high-resolution images can be segmented using automated methods, hence providing a human-annotation-free training set. In our case, we used the ACSON pipeline to segment the high-resolution SBEM datasets[5]. ACSON is fully automated, requires no training data, and segments one of our high-resolution datasets, containing about 400 myelinated axons, in approximately 24 hours. High-resolution imaging resolves the membrane of tissue ultrastructures in several voxels wide, as opposed to low-resolution imaging that does not fully resolve the membrane, resulting in a more accurate segmentation of ultrastructures. Accurate segmentation of ultrastructures yields generating an accurate training set, which technically means that we have less label-noise, i.e., less mismatch between labels and the underlying ultrastructures in the training set.

Acquiring large field-of-view image datasets at high-resolutions for several animals and experimental conditions is time-consuming and costly resource-wise. Despite the improvement in the image acquisition rate[2,3,32], microscopes should run continuously for several months to acquire a cubic millimeter at a resolution of $4 \times 4 \times 40$ nm^3[3]. As a comparison, low-resolution imaging at 50 nm^3 resolution approximately reduces the imaging time and the size of the image datasets 200 times. Low-resolution imaging allows for axonal tracking, as shown in Mikula *et al.* study[31], morphology analysis of myelinated axons, spatial and orientation distribution analysis of myelinated axons, and spatial distribution of cell nuclei and mitochondria. Also, low-resolution imaging and the corresponding segmentation provide a base for neuronal tissue modeling and histological validations in MRI studies.

Large field-of-view imaging enables quantifying parameters whose measurement in a small field-of-view is not reliable as the measurement in the small field-of-view may reflect a very local characteristic of the underlying ultrastructure. Particular examples of such parameters are the tortuosity of myelinated axons, inter-mitochondrial distance, and cell density. We also evaluated DeepACSON quantification. We compared DeepACSON measurements of the axonal diameter and the eccentricity in the low-resolution datasets with measurements from the high-resolution datasets in our earlier work[5]. This comparison

indicated that the quantification in the low-resolution datasets was consistent with the high-resolution datasets[5]. For example, we measured an average equivalent diameter for myelinated axons in the contralateral corpus callosum of sham #25 (sham #49) equal to 0.41 µm (0.44 µm) and 0.44 µm (0.50 µm) in the low- and high-resolution imaging, respectively. Additionally, we measured an average eccentricity for myelinated axons in the contralateral corpus callosum of sham #25 (sham #49) equal to 0.71 (0.69) and 0.72 (0.71) in the low- and high-resolution imaging, respectively. This consistency in the morphology analysis of low- and high-resolution datasets suggests that we have been able to correctly capture the morphology of myelinated axons, despite coarser resolution in the large field-of-view datasets.

We quantified morphological changes in myelinated axons in white matter five months after a severe TBI. The white matter pathology after TBI is extremely complex. The initial response of an axon to a brain injury can be either degeneration or regeneration[33,34]. However, morphological alterations in axons can persist for years after injury in humans[35,36] and up to one year in rats[37]. We found that the axonal diameter of myelinated axons in the ipsilateral corpus callosum, ipsilateral cingulum, and contralateral cingulum of TBI rats has significantly reduced. We further measured that the density of myelinated axons has reduced significantly in TBI, reflecting the degeneration of axons after injury[36]. We also found that the tortuosity of myelinated axons has increased in the ipsilateral cingulum of TBI animals. We speculate that prolonged damage in microtubules might underlie the increase in axonal tortuosity[38].

Ultrastructural tissue modeling is an active research field aiming to bridge the gap between macroscopic measurements and cellular- and sub-cellular tissue levels. Currently, tissue modelings are based on simplistic representations and assumptions of the ultrastructural features. These assumptions typically assume axons to be perfect cylinders, or the variation of the axonal diameter along axons are neglected[39,40]. Segmentation of brain tissue ultrastructures in 3D-EM datasets can substitute simplistic biophysical models and provide realistic models. Such realistic 3D tissue models open the possibility to investigate underlying reasons for the diffusion magnetic resonance imaging contrast and its macroscopic changes in brain diseases[41–44] or investigate conduction velocity in myelinated and unmyelinated axons in electrophysiology[45,46].

Materials and Methods

Animal model, tissue preparation, and SBEM imaging

We used five adult male Sprague-Dawley rats (10-weeks old, weight 320 and 380 g, Harlan Netherlands B.V., Horst, Netherlands). The animals were singly housed in a room (22 ± 1 °C, 50% $-$ 60% humidity) with 12 h light/dark cycle and free access to food and water. All animal procedures were approved by the Animal Care and Use Committee of the Provincial Government of Southern Finland and performed according to the guidelines set by the European Community Council Directive 86/609/EEC.

TBI was induced by lateral fluid percussion injury[47] in three rats (TBI #2, #24, #28). Rats were anesthetized with a single intraperitoneal injection. A craniectomy (5 mm in diameter) was performed between bregma and lambda on the left convexity (anterior edge 2.0 mm posterior to bregma; lateral edge adjacent to the left lateral ridge). Lateral fluid percussion injury was induced by a transient fluid pulse impact (21-23 ms) against the exposed intact dura using a fluid-percussion device. The

impact pressure was adjusted to 3.2-3.4 atmosphere to induce a severe injury. The sham-operation of two rats (sham #25, #49) included all the surgical procedures except the impact. Five months after TBI or sham operation, the rats were transcardially perfused using 0.9% NaCl, followed by 4% paraformaldehyde. The brains were removed from the skull and post-fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde 1% glutaraldehyde overnight.

The brains were sectioned into 1-mm thick coronal sections using a vibrating blade microtome. Sections from -3.80 mm from bregma from each brain were selected and further dissected into smaller samples containing the areas of interest. We collected two samples from each brain: the ipsi- and contralateral of the cingulum and corpus callosum. The samples were osmium stained using an enhanced staining protocol[48]. After selecting the area within the samples, the blocks were further trimmed into a pyramidal shape with a 1×1 mm^2 base and an approximately 600×600 µm^2 top (face), which assured the stability of the block while being cut in the microscope. Silver paint was used to electrically ground the exposed block edges to the aluminum pins, except for the block face or the edges of the embedded tissue. The entire surface of the specimen was then sputtered with a thin layer of platinum coating to improve conductivity and reduce charging during the sectioning process. The details of the animal model and tissue preparation are described in the ACSON study[5].

The blocks were imaged in a scanning electron microscope (Quanta 250 Field Emission Gun; FEI Co., Hillsboro, OR, USA), equipped with the 3View system (Gatan Inc., Pleasanton, CA, USA) using a backscattered electron detector (Gatan Inc.). The face of the blocks was in the *x*-*y* plane, and the cutting was in *z* direction. All blocks were imaged using a beam voltage of 2.5 kV and a pressure of 0.15 Torr. We acquired the high- and low-resolution datasets consistently at one specific location in the white matter in both sham-operated and TBI animals and in both hemispheres. The images were collected with an unsigned 16-bits per voxel. Supplementary Table S1 shows the volume size of the low-resolution datasets.

DeepACSON segmentation pipeline

We devised DeepACSON: a DCNN-based segmentation pipeline to automatically annotate white matter ultrastructures in low-resolution 3D-EM datasets (Fig. 1). The DeepACSON pipeline annotated white matter such that myelin and each myelinated axon, mitochondrion, and cell nucleus carries its label. Figure 1 shows the four steps of the DeepACSON pipeline. **Step 1: Generating a training set for the semantic segmentation**. DeepACSON requires labeled EM datasets as the training material to learn to perform the semantic segmentation task. To automatically provide a training set for DeepACSON, we utilized our previously developed ACSON segmentation pipeline[5]. **Step 2: Semantic segmentation of white matter ultrastructures**. The volume of white matter ultrastructures was highly imbalanced, i.e., numbers of voxels representing different ultrastructures were not equal. Thus, we trained two separate DCNNs: DCNN-mAx to generate the probability maps of myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria and DCNN-cN to generate the probability maps of cell nuclei and the membrane of cell nuclei. **Step 3: Instance segmentation of myelin, myelinated axons, mitochondria, and cell nuclei.** Myelin was segmented by thresholding the myelin probability map. The segmentation of myelinated axons and cell nuclei required further geometrical and topological corrections after the binarization and connected component analysis. The CSD algorithm was applied to decompose an under-segmented myelinated axon into its axonal components. In a GDM framework, elastic deformations of the

initial segmentation of cell nuclei segmented this ultrastructure. **Step 4: Automatic elimination of false-positive instances.** We eliminated non-axonal and non-nucleus instances, i.e., false-positives, from the segmentation of myelinated axons and cell nuclei by training two separate SVMs.

Pre-processing: data alignment and denoising. We used Microscopy Image Browser[49] (MIB; http://mib.helsinki.fi) to pre-process the collected images from the electron microscope. We found the bounding box to the collected images and run voxel-size calibration. We aligned the images by measuring the translation between the consecutive SBEM images using the cross-correlation cost function (MIB, Drift Correction). We acquired a series of shift values in x direction and a series of shift values in y direction. From each series, the running average of the shift values (window size was 25 values) was subtracted to preserve the orientation of myelinated axons in the translation. We applied contrast normalization such that the mean and standard deviation of the histogram of each image matches the mean and standard deviation of the whole image stack. The images were converted to the unsigned 8-bits per voxel format. The size of low-resolution SBEM datasets ranged from 10-15 GB, summing up to 85 GB (8-bits per voxel). To denoise SBEM datasets, we used a non-local filtering algorithm named block-matching and 4D filtering (BM4D)[15]. The algorithm was run in its low-complexity mode to reduce the computation time. We processed the low-resolution SBEM datasets in non-overlapping patches with an approximate size of $1000 \times 1000 \times 300$ to account for RAM requirements and enabling parallel BM4D denoising on CPU clusters (see Supplementary Fig. S3).

Step 1: training sets for DCNNs. We used high-resolution SBEM datasets of the corpus callosum segmented by the automated ACSON pipeline to generate a training set for DeepACSON. The automated ACSON pipeline was designed for segmenting high-resolution small field-of-view SBEM datasets into myelin, myelinated and unmyelinated axons, mitochondria, and cells. The ACSON pipeline segments white matter based on a bounded volume growing algorithm in which seeds are defined automatically using regional maxima of the distance transform of myelin maps[5]. We generated two training sets: one for training DCNN-mAx and one for training DCNN-cN. The segmented high-resolution datasets were modified before using in the training sets. The labels of unmyelinated axons and cells were set equal to the background label to generate the DCNN-mAx training set. The labels of all ultrastructures except for the cell nuclei were set equal to the background label to generate the DCNN-cN training set. We created an additional label for the membrane of cell nuclei by a morphological gradient with a flat 11×11 square structuring element applied to the segmented cell nuclei. The membrane of cell nuclei was relatively thick: 22 voxels or 0.33 µm wide. We over-emphasized the membrane of cell nuclei because the number of voxels representing it was very small compared to the nucleus and background labels. After modifying labels, we uniformly down-sampled the high-resolution datasets in both training sets by a window size of 3×3 in $x - y$ plane to conform to the resolution of the low-resolution datasets. The DCNN-mAx training set included datasets of the ipsi- and contralateral of sham-operated and TBI rats. It is important to include both intact and injured axons to enrich the training set. The DCNN-cN training set included only ten cell nuclei.

Step 2: semantic segmentation of the white matter ultrastructure, architecture and implementation of DCNNs. We implemented the DCNNs and data augmentation using the ElektroNN2 library[6] based on the Python Theano framework[50].

ElektroNN was optimized for short model training times and fast inference on large datasets by eliminating the redundant computations of sliding window approaches[51]. The training set was augmented using randomized histogram distortions to become invariant against varying contrast and brightness gradients. In addition, half of the training set underwent image warping consisting of affine and random perspective transformations. We determined the optimal architectural parameters and hyperparameters of the DCNNs experimentally using the training set. We used an FCN architecture with the same architectural parameters for DCNN-mAx and DCNN-cN, as shown in Supplementary Fig. S4; receptive field was (45, 45, 15) voxels in (x, y, z) directions with approximately 3 million trainable parameters. The DCNNs were trained on a cross-entropy loss with Softmax function. We set the batch size equal to 1 because there was a sufficient number of prediction neurons for updating the gradient. For the optimization, we used Adam optimizer[52] and set its initial learning rate $\alpha = 5 \times 10^{-5}$, the exponential decay rate for the first moment $\beta_1 = 0.9$, the exponential decay rate for the second-moment $\beta_2 = 0.999$, and the weight decay = 5×10^{-6} (we use the same notation as in[52]). After every 1 000 training steps, the learning rate α was decayed by a factor of 0.995. For DCNN-mAx, we set the class weights to 0.2, 0.5, 1, and 1 for the background, myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria, respectively. The class weights for DCNN-cN were set to 0.1, 1, and 4 for the background, cell nuclei, and the membrane of cell nuclei, respectively.

For the semantic segmentation of myelinated axons, we also tested a U-Net[19] with residual modules, implemented in PyTorch[53]. For that, we used a ResNet-34[54] with about 21 million parameters, pre-trained on the ImageNet dataset[55], as the encoder of the U-Net. Supplementary Fig. S5 shows this network architecture. In the encoding path of the U-Net, the height and width of the feature maps were halved, and the depth of the feature maps was doubled. In the decoding path of the U-Net, the height and width of the feature maps were doubled, and the depth of the feature maps was halved. The basic residual blocks of ResNet-34 were constructed on 3×3 convolutional layers, rectified linear unit (ReLU) as the activation function, and batch normalization[56]. The basic decoding blocks applied nearest-neighbor interpolation, up-sampling the feature maps to recover the spatial resolution of input images. Feature maps generated in the encoding path were concatenated to the corresponding feature maps in the decoding path by the skip connections. The model was trained by the softmax function and cross-entropy loss function. We set the batch size equal to 8 and feed every three SBEM images with stride 1, in z direction, as input. The training set was normalized to have the mean of (0.485, 0.456, 0.406) and the standard deviation of (0.229, 0.224, 0.225) in (x, y, z) directions. Also, half of the training set was augmented by geometrical transformation, such as horizontal and vertical flips, scaling, shifting, and rotation. For the optimization, we used Adam optimizer[52] and set its initial learning rate $\alpha = 1 \times 10^{-4}$, the exponential decay rate for the first moment $\beta_1 = 0.9$, the exponential decay rate for the second-moment $\beta_2 = 0.999$, and the weight decay = 1×10^{-5} (we use the same notation as in[52]). We set the class weights to 0.3, 0.3, 0.3, and 1 for the background, myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria, respectively. We trained this U-Net architecture with the same datasets as mentioned for the FCN network for three scenarios: 1) the training set was BM4D denoised and down-sampled, 2) the training set was not BM4D denoised but down-sampled, 3) the training set was BM4D denoised but not down-sampled. In the first case, we evaluated the effect of using a deeper network than our FCN design, and in the second and third cases, we

evaluated the effect of BM4D denoising and down-sampling the high-resolution datasets of the training set.

Step 3.1: myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria segmentation. DCNN-mAx generated probability maps of myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria. We binarized the probability maps of myelin, myelinated axons, and mitochondria with a threshold of $\theta_{myelin} = 0.5$, $\theta_{mAxon} = 0.8$, and $\theta_{mitochondria} = 0.8$; the thresholds were assigned based on the VOI split/merge error values. The binarized volume of myelin required no further processing, and it was considered the final myelin segmentation. The binarized volume of mitochondria was dilated with a flat cubic structuring element of size three voxels, and unified with the binarized volume of myelinated axons to form the intra-axonal space of myelinated axons, I_{IAS}. Initial segmentation of individual myelinated axons was obtained using connected component analysis on I_{IAS}. The segmented volumes underwent a morphological volume closing with a flat cubic structuring element of size three voxels to close the holes. We excluded volumes whose size was smaller than 4 700 voxels (the volume of a circular cylinder with a base radius of 0.25 µm and height of 3 µm, resolved with an isotropic $50 \times 50 \times 50$ nm^3 voxel size).

In the low-resolution datasets, the axonal membrane was not resolved, e.g., at nodes of Ranvier. Thus, the initial segmentation of myelinated axons might exhibit under-segmentation error (Supplementary Fig. S8). We developed a specific shape analysis algorithm, CSD, to decompose an object into its semantic-components. As shown in Supplementary Fig. S7a, b, we defined the object as the union of several tubular components, similar to an axon with under-segmentation errors. The decomposition of such an object requires first identifying its semantic components, and second, to correct the ambiguity at intersections of branches, i.e., to decompose the shape at intersecting branches. The mathematical details of the algorithm and its validation are described in a different manuscript[14], but we summarize the algorithm here:

Step 3.1.1: skeleton partitioning and critical points. We propose to decompose an object into its semantic-components using its curve skeleton and cross-sectional analysis. We determined the curve skeleton of the object Ω by applying the method from Hassouna & Farag[57]. This method also returns the collection of skeleton branches $\Gamma = \{\gamma_1, \ldots, \gamma_n\}$ (see supplementary Fig. S7c). Based on Γ, CSD partitioned the curve skeleton of the object into $m \leq n$ maximal-length sub-skeletons denoted as $\psi_i, i = 1, \ldots, m$ (Supplementary Fig. S7d) via minimizing an orientation cost-function. Each sub-skeleton corresponds to a semantic-component. In other words, in this step, skeleton branches were merged if they were thought to belong to the same semantic component. To identify intersections of the semantic components, we analyzed the object cross-sections along intervals of ψ, called decomposition intervals. A decomposition interval occurs in the proximity of junction-points where skeleton branches connect, denoted as $j \in \psi$. The boundaries of a decomposition interval at j were defined using the radius of the maximal inscribed ball at j, and two factors $\alpha_s = 10$ and $\alpha_e = 1.5$. At each decomposition interval, we search for a critical point. It is such a point that the object cross-section changes substantially; the normalized Hausdorff distance H_ρ[14] between a cross-sectional contour and the mean of visited cross-sectional contours exceeds $\theta_H = 0.85$ (Supplementary Fig. S7e). We cut the object at critical points to obtain object-parts. We assigned the same label to the object-parts along the same sub-skeleton to acquire a semantic-component (Supplementary Fig. S7f).

Step 3.1.2: object reconstruction. To reconstruct a semantic component at an intersection, we used generalized cylinders. We

constructed a generalized cylinder $\Phi : \mathbb{R}^2 \to \mathbb{R}^3$ as a linear homotopy between two simple closed curves C_{c_1} and C_{c_2} elongated on a simple curve $\zeta \subset \mathbb{R}^3$. To define C_{c_1} and C_{c_2}, let $x_{c_1}, x_{c_2} \in \psi$ be two critical points in the proximity of the joint j on a sub-skeleton ψ. We cut the surface of the object $\partial\Omega$ at these two critical points. The cross-sectional curves of $\partial\Omega$ at x_{c_1} and x_{c_2} are C_{c_1} and C_{c_2}. We defined ζ to be the spline interpolation of ψ between x_{c_1} and x_{c_2}. The acquired generalized cylinder was used to reconstruct the object at the intersection, which interior includes j (Supplementary Fig. S7f).

Step 3.2: cell nucleus segmentation. DCNN-cN classifier was trained to generate a semantic segmentation of cell nuclei and the membrane of cell nuclei from the low-resolution datasets. SBEM imaging with $50 \times 50 \times 50$ nm^3 voxel size, however, might not fully resolve the membrane of cell nuclei. Thus, the binarization and connected component analysis of DCNN-cN probability maps at sites where several cell nuclei appear adjacently come with an under-segmentation error. We devised an approach in a GDM framework, i.e., an active surface implemented with level sets[21,58], to segment cell nuclei. Let the probability map of cell nuclei be denoted as $PR_n(x) : X \subset \mathbb{Z}^3 \to [0,1]$, and the probability map of the membrane of cell nuclei as $PR_m(x) : X \subset \mathbb{Z}^3 \to [0,1]$, where x is a 3D coordinate belonging to the 3D image domain X.

The position of the initial surface ∂U was determined by binarizing the curvilinear enhanced version of PR_m. We used Frangi filter[59] to enhance the curvilinear structures of PR_m, i.e., the membrane of cell nuclei, and suppress the background based on Hessian of PR_m (see Supplementary Fig. S6). The Frangi filtered PR_m is denoted as $P\hat{R}_m$. We subtracted $P\hat{R}_m$ from PR_n and thresholded the result at $\theta_{nucleus} = 0.5$. This resulted in a binary image $I_N(x) : X \to \{0,1\}$, where $x \in X$ was a foreground voxel and $I_(x) = 1$ if $PR_n(x) - P\hat{R}_m(x) > \theta_{nucleus}$. The initial position of deformable surfaces was determined using connected component analysis: I_N was segmented to n' individual cell nuclei denoted as $\hat{U}_i$, where $i = 1, \ldots, n'$. At locations at which several cell nuclei appear adjacently, the initial segmentation may include under-segmented cell nuclei. For that, the initial segmentation of cell nuclei required a further topological alteration. Therefore, the surface of each initially segmented cell nuclei underwent a primary deformation, where the surface was propagated for -0.3 µm using a 3D Euclidean distance transform. The inward propagation of the surfaces splits the merged cell nuclei. Relabeling the split cell nuclei resulted in U_i, where $i = 1, \ldots, n$ and $n \geq n'$. We used the volumes in which the number of voxels was greater than 1 000 as initial surfaces for a secondary deformation. The evolution of a surface started at ∂U and stopped at the desired nucleus membrane because we defined the speed function equal to PR_m. Each initial surface ∂U was deformed for 300 iterations, where the smoothing term of GDMs preserved the surface sphericity from taking irregularities at sites where membrane probability map PR_m was discontinuous.

Step 4: eliminating false positives. The final step of the DeepACSON pipeline was to eliminate non-axonal and non-nucleus instances, i.e., false positives. We eliminated false positives from the segmentation of myelinated axons using an SVM with a quadratic kernel (as implemented in MATLAB, Statistics and Machine Learning Toolbox, *fitcsvm* function). For each component segmented as a myelinated axon, we computed several features (at one-third of the original size): volume, surface area, equivalent diameter, extent (the ratio of voxels in the component to voxels in the smallest bounding box of the component), solidity (the volume of the component divided by the volume of the convex hull of the component), and principal axis length

(the length of the major axis of the ellipsoid that has the same normalized second central moment as the component). Features were standardized to the mean of zero and the standard deviation of one. To generate a training set, we randomly picked five datasets out of ten segmented large field-of-view datasets. From the selected datasets, we manually selected representative myelinated axons and non-axonal instances from both the cingulum and corpus callosum (1 097 myelinated axons and 189 non-axonal instances; less than 0.2% of the total number of components segmented as myelinated axons in all ten datasets). To determine the optimal SVM hyperparameters, the regularization parameter C and kernel parameter σ, we selected the pair that minimized 5-fold cross-validation error on the training set using Bayesian optimization algorithm[60,61]. C and σ were constrained in the range $[10^{-6}, 10^{6}]$. The optimal parameters were $C = 1.12$ and $\sigma = 8.48$. The trained SVM was applied to eliminate non-axonal structures from all the datasets. We applied the same approach to eliminate false-positives from cell nuclei. For each component segmented as a cell nucleus, we calculated the same features (as mentioned for myelinated axons) before and after the geometric deformation. To generate a training set, out of ten segmented large field-of-view datasets, we picked four random datasets. From the selected datasets, we manually selected representative cell nuclei and non-nucleus instances (263 cell nuclei and 113 non-nucleus instances; 7.3 % of the total number of components segmented as cell nuclei in all ten datasets) to train an SVM with a quadratic kernel. The optimal hyperparameters were found as described above, where C was equal to 6.51, and σ was equal to 4.17.

Segmentation evaluation metrics. We used precision P, recall R, and F1 scores to compare an automated segmentation to the ground truth, as there is a one-to-one match between voxels constituting the segmentations. To define these measures, let A and B be the sets of voxels of a particular ultrastructure (myelin, myelinated axon, mitochondrion) in an automated segmentation and ground-truth, respectively. We defined $P = \frac{|A \cap B|}{|A|}$, and $R = \frac{|A \cap B|}{|B|}$, and F1 score as $F1 = 2 \times \frac{P \times R}{P + R}$. The maximum for the precision, recall, and F1 score is equal to one when the test segmentation perfectly matches the ground-truth. However, these metrics do not describe topological differences, and they are sensitive to small changes in the region boundary. Therefore, we evaluated automated segmentation with metrics less sensitive to small variations in boundary, but sensitive to topological differences. For that, we measured variance of information[62] (VOI, split and merge contributions) and Wallace indices[63] to account for merge and split errors of a segmentation separately. We also computed adapted Rand error (ARE) as defined by the SNEMI3D contest (`http://brainiac2.mit.edu/SNEMI3D/evaluation`) as 1 minus the maximal F-score of the Rand index[64] (excluding the zero component of the original labels). We performed these evaluations using the Gala library described by Nunez-Iglesias *et al*[65]. The VOI metric is defined as the sum of the conditional entropies between two segmentations $VOI(A,B) = H(A|B) + H(B|A)$, where A is the automated segmentation, and B is the ground-truth. The VOI metric is decomposed into VOI split $H(A|B)$ and VOI merge $H(B|A)$[65]. A lower VOI value indicates a better segmentation; for a perfect match between an automated segmentation and ground truth, we have VOI split = VOI merge = 0. Also, the Wallace splitting index is defined as $\frac{a}{a+b}$ and the Wallace merging index is defined as $\frac{a}{a+c}$, where a is the number of pairs of voxels in the input image that have the same label in A and the same label in B, b is the number of pairs of voxels in the input image that have the same label in A but a different label in B, c is the number of pairs of voxels in the input image that have a different

label in A but the same label in B, and d is the number of pairs of voxels in the input image that have different labels in A and different labels in B. The Wallace indices are between 0 and 1, where a higher value indicates a better segmentation, i.e., less split and merge compared to the ground truth. The Rand index is defined as $\frac{a+d}{a+b+c+d}$, where a, b, c, and d are defined the same as in the case of Wallace indices. Note that we applied the adapted Rand error, where a lower value indicates a better segmentation.

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Author contributions

A.A., J.T., and A.S. conceived the project and designed the study. A.A. implemented the methods and performed the experiments. A.A., J.T., and A.S. analyzed the data. I.B. and E.J. contributed to electron microscopy imaging. A.A., J.T., and A.S. wrote the manuscript. All authors commented on and approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Availability of data and material

The datasets used in the study will be available upon request to the corresponding author. The source code of DeepACSON is available at https://github.com/aAbdz/DeepACSON.

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Supplementary Information

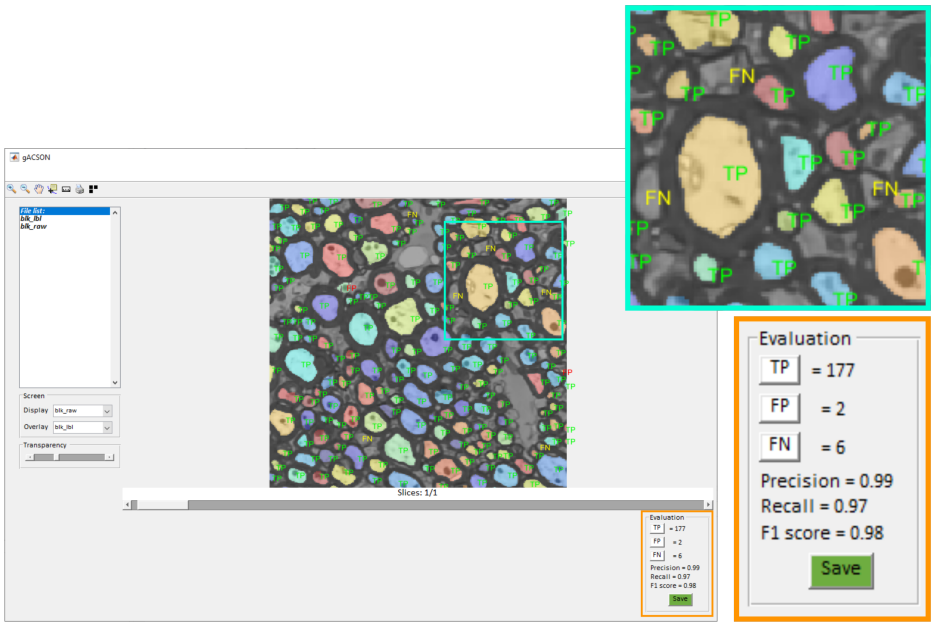

Figure S1. DeepACSON evaluation. We developed a GUI-based software tool, gACSON, in Matlab to load and visualize the segmentation for proofreading. gACSON is designed for the visualization of the large-scale image-datasets/segmentation. Using gACSON, an expert evaluated the DeepACSON segmentation of myelinated axons and mitochondria at the object-level. We randomly sampled each low-resolution dataset and its corresponding segmentation by non-overlapping images of size 300×300 voxels. The sampled images were quantified for the number of true-positives (TP), false-positives (FP), and false-negatives (FN) to calculate the precision, recall, and F1 score. The expert had no access to the dataset ID nor the sampling location.

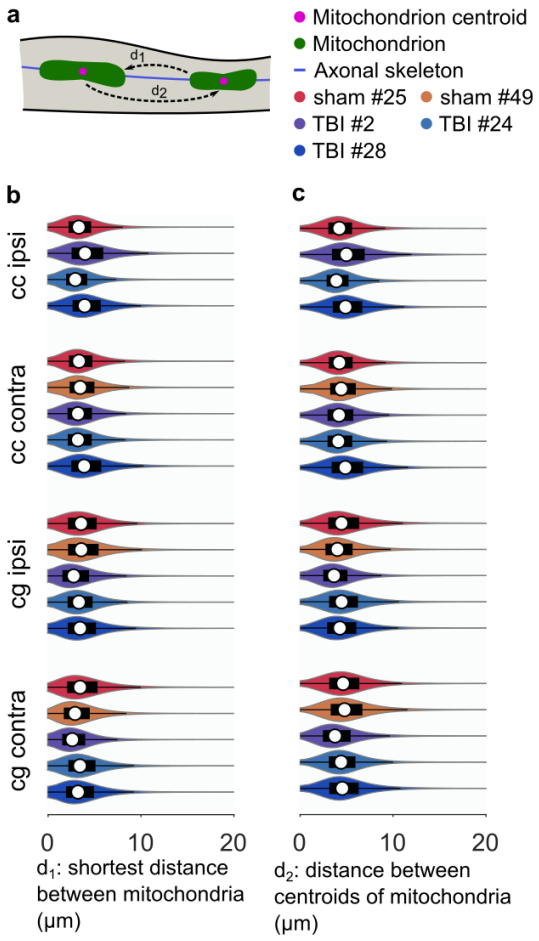

Figure S2. Quantification of the inter-mitochondrial distance. (**a**) We defined the inter-mitochondrial distance in two manners: we projected the entirety of mitochondria on the axonal skeleton and measured the shortest geodesic distance between two consecutive mitochondria (d_1); or we projected the centroids of mitochondria on the axonal skeleton and measured the geodesic distance between the consecutive projected centroids (d_2). (**b**) We compared the inter-mitochondrial distance, based on the d_1 definition, between sham-operated and TBI rats. We did not find significant differences between the groups in any of the brain areas. (**c**) We compared the inter-mitochondrial distance, d_2 definition, between sham-operated and TBI groups. Comparing these two groups, we did not find significant differences in any of the brain areas. On each bean plot, the central mark indicates the median, and the left and right edges of the box indicate the 25th and 75th percentiles, respectively. The whiskers extend to the most extreme data points not considered outliers. The colors correspond with the animal ID.

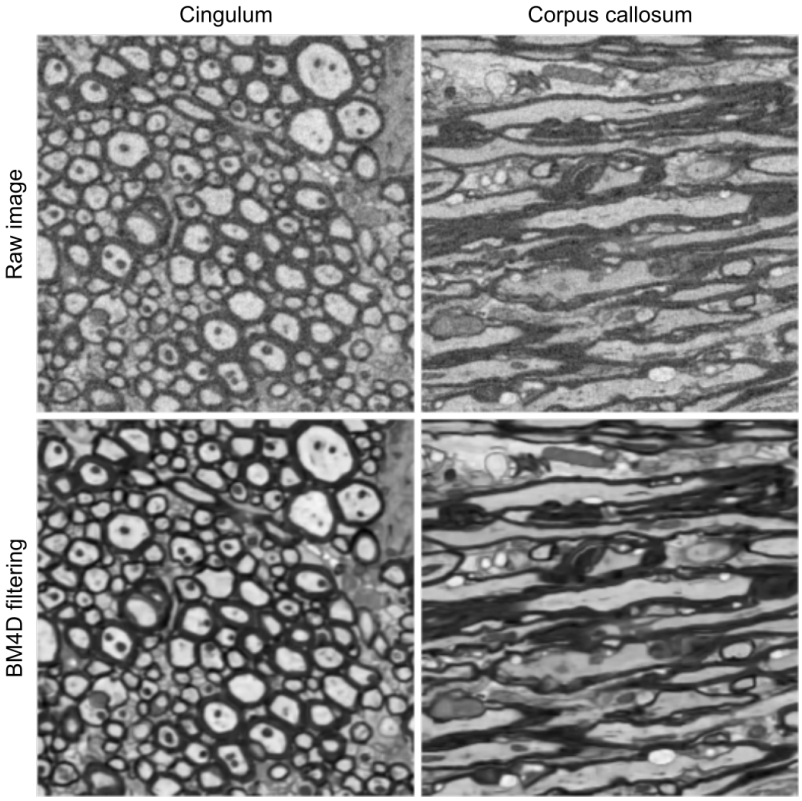

Figure S3. BM4D filtering of the low-resolution SBEM datasets. BM4D recognized the noise as Gaussian-distributed with the standard deviation in the range [17, 22] in our low-resolution SBEM datasets. Shown images were acquired from the cingulum and corpus callosum of sham #25 low-resolution dataset.

Figure S4. The architecture of DCNNs used in DeepACSON. We used the same architecture for DCNN-mAx and DCNN-cN. The size of the convolutional kernels is denoted as $Conv(x,y,z)$. The number of channels/feature maps created from a layer of convolutional kernels is denoted by $@n$. The size of the max pooling operation is denoted as $Max\,pool(x,y,z)$.

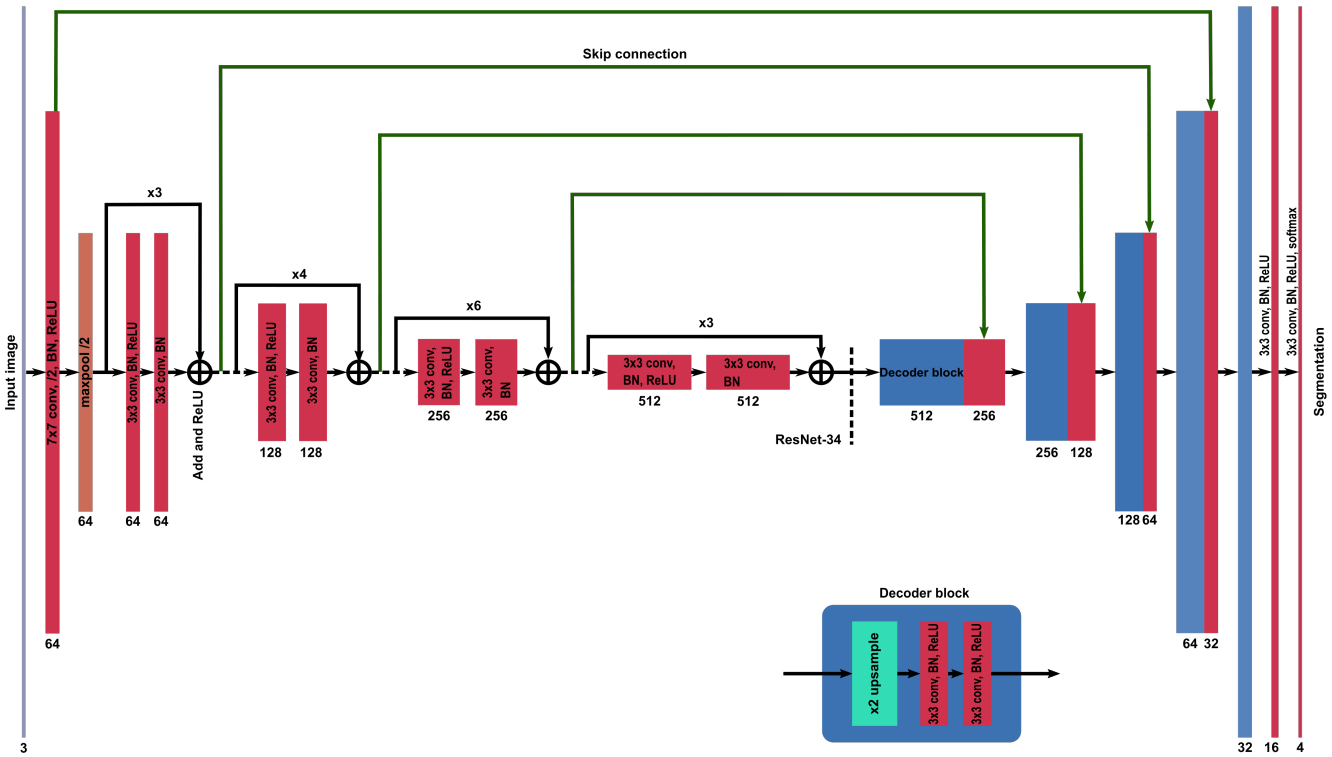

Figure S5. A U-Net[19] architecture with residual modules. We used a ResNet-34[54], pre-trained on the ImageNet dataset[55], as the encoder of the U-Net. Where the size of the feature maps was halved, the depth was doubled, and where the size of the feature maps was doubled, the depth was halved. The basic residual blocks of ResNet-34 were constructed on 3×3 convolutional layers, rectified linear unit (ReLU) as the activation function, and batch normalization (BN)[56]. The basic decoding blocks applied nearest-neighbor interpolation, up-sampling the feature maps to recover the spatial resolution of input images. Feature maps generated in the encoding path were concatenated to the corresponding feature maps in the decoding path by the skip connections. The model was trained by the softmax function and cross-entropy loss function.

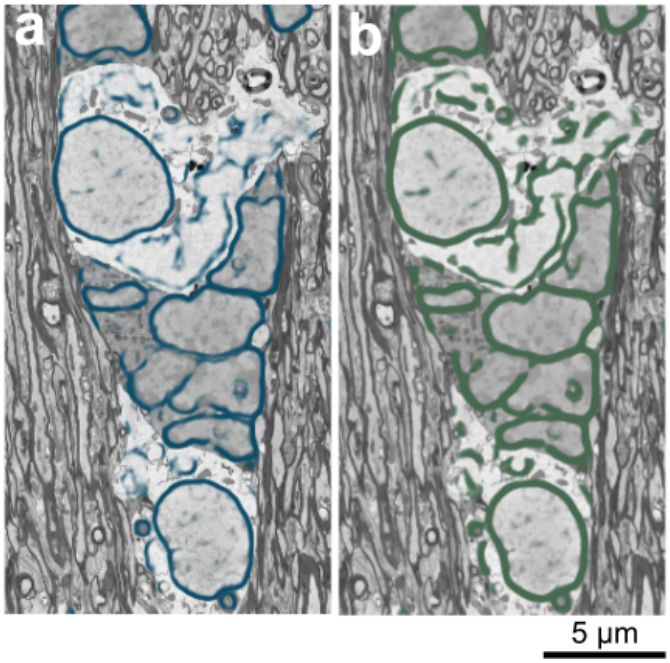

Figure S6. Frangi filtering the probability map of the membrane of cell nuclei. (**a**) The probability map of the membrane of cell nuclei returned by DCNN-cN. (**b**) Application of Frangi filtering on (**a**).

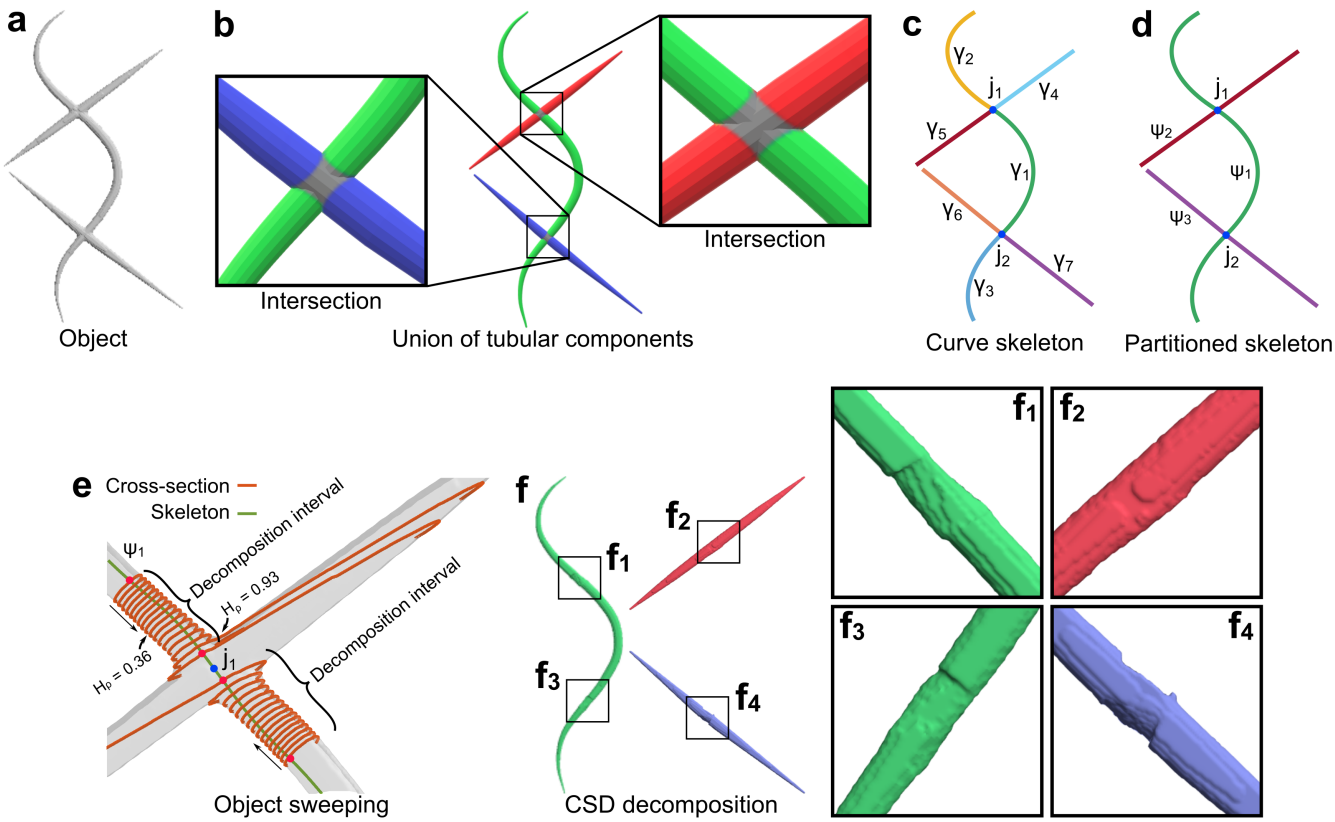

Figure S7. Cylindrical shape decomposition algorithm. (**a**) An object is a union of several semantic-components. (**b**) The semantic-components of the object in (**a**) are color-coded. Intersections of the semantic-components are colored grey. (**c**) The curve skeleton of the synthetic object in (**a**) is the union of all skeleton branches. Skeleton branches are color-coded and denoted as γ. We defined a skeleton junction-point j as such a point that skeleton branches connect. Junction-points are shown as blue filled-circles. (**d**) We found m maximal length sub-skeletons denoted as ψ via minimizing an orientation cost-function. The sub-skeletons are color-coded. (**e**) On a sub-skeleton ψ and in the proximity of a junction-point $j \in \psi$, we defined two decomposition intervals. The boundaries of decomposition intervals are shown with red filled-circles. In each interval, the cross-section of the object was swept along ψ and towards the joint j to find a critical point. At a critical point, the normalized Hausdorff distance H_ρ between a cross-sectional contour and the mean of visited cross-sectional contours exceeds θ_H. Sweeping directions are shown with arrows. (**f**) We cut the object at critical points to obtain object-parts. The object-parts along the same sub-skeleton were assigned the same label to construct a semantic-component. The semantic-components were further reconstructed between their comprising object-parts using generalized cylinders, magnified in (**f$_1$-f$_4$**). The synthetic object in (**a**) comprised of seven object-parts, and our algorithm decomposed it into three semantic-components.

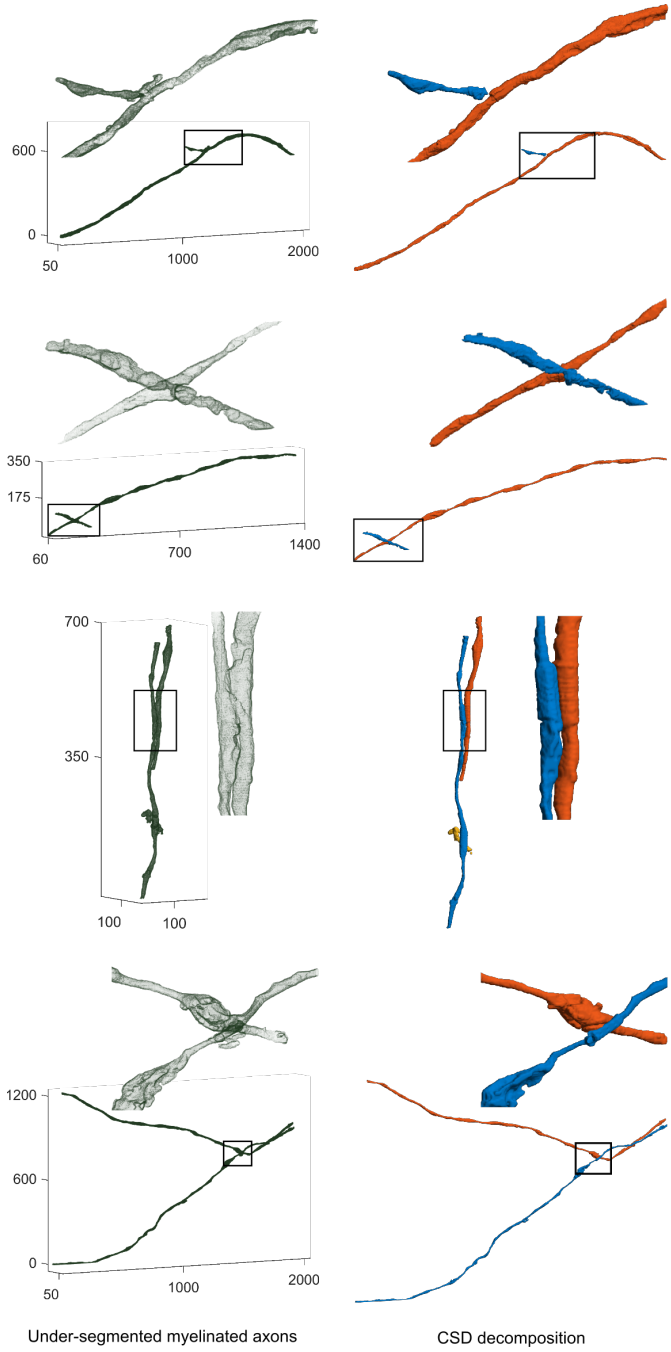

Figure S8. Decomposition of under-segmented myelinated axons into their semantic axonal components using the CSD algorithm.

Table S1. Characteristics of the low-resolution (LR) and high-resolution (HR) SBEM datasets. For each rat, we collected the low-resolution images from the ipsi- and contralateral of the corpus callosum and cingulum. The low-resolution images from the ipsilateral of the sham #49 rat included only the cingulum. The high-resolution images were collected from the ipsi- and contralateral of the corpus callosum. The size of datasets is given in voxels (x, y, z).

Condition	Rat ID	LR-size (voxel)	LR (nm^3)	HR-size (voxel)	HR (nm^3)
Sham	#25 contra	$2\,044 \times 4\,096 \times 1\,306$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,042 \times 1\,048 \times 285$	$13.8 \times 13.8 \times 50$
	#25 ipsi	$4\,096 \times 2\,048 \times 1\,384$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,049 \times 1\,076 \times 285$	$15.4 \times 15.4 \times 50$
	#49 contra	$4\,096 \times 2\,048 \times 1\,882$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,081 \times 1\,053 \times 285$	$18.3 \times 18.3 \times 50$
	#49 ipsi	$2\,048 \times 2\,048 \times 1\,210$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,037 \times 1\,058 \times 285$	$13.0 \times 13.0 \times 50$
TBI	#2 contra	$4\,096 \times 2\,048 \times 1\,086$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,048 \times 1\,124 \times 285$	$15.0 \times 15.0 \times 50$
	#2 ipsi	$2\,154 \times 4\,134 \times 620$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,343 \times 1\,316 \times 285$	$15.0 \times 15.0 \times 50$
	#24 contra	$4\,091 \times 2\,028 \times 1\,348$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,289 \times 1\,280 \times 285$	$15.0 \times 15.0 \times 50$
	#24 ipsi	$2\,946 \times 2\,162 \times 1\,250$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,290 \times 1\,295 \times 285$	$15.0 \times 15.0 \times 50$
	#28 contra	$4\,096 \times 2\,048 \times 1\,278$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,076 \times 1\,051 \times 285$	$16.5 \times 16.5 \times 50$
	#28 ipsi	$4\,075 \times 2\,000 \times 1\,300$	$50 \times 50 \times 50$	$1\,035 \times 1\,056 \times 285$	$16.5 \times 16.5 \times 50$

Table S2. DeepACSON evaluation scores. The performance of DCNN-mAx was evaluated against the automated ACSON pipeline. The performance of SVMs was evaluated using leave-one-group-out (LOGO) cross-validation (CV). An expert evaluated the final segmentation of myelinated axons (mAxons) and mitochondria. The maximum value of all scores is one.

Evaluation	Structure	dataset	Precision	Recall	F1 score
DCNN-mAx (versus ACSON)	Myelin	sham #25 ipsi	0.931	0.894	0.912
		sham #49 contra	0.746	0.840	0.790
		TBI #2 contra	0.937	0.849	0.891
		TBI #24 contra	0.947	0.882	0.913
		TBI #24 ipsi	0.947	0.898	0.922
		TBI #28 ipsi	0.904	0.877	0.890
DCNN-mAx (versus ACSON)	mAxons	sham #25 ipsi	0.946	0.813	0.875
		sham #49 contra	0.910	0.719	0.803
		TBI #2 contra	0.938	0.805	0.866
		TBI #24 contra	0.893	0.895	0.894
		TBI #24 ipsi	0.893	0.897	0.895
		TBI #28 ipsi	0.931	0.751	0.831
SVM (LOGO CV)	mAxons	Sham	0.988	0.988	0.988
		TBI	0.920	0.991	0.955
SVM (LOGO CV)	Cell nuclei	Sham	0.961	0.977	0.969
		TBI	0.964	1	0.981
Final segmentation (expert)	mAxons	samples of all datasets	0.9647 ± 0.0267	0.8773 ± 0.0607	0.9177 ± 0.0384
	Mitochondria		0.856 ± 0.100	0.804 ± 0.091	0.823 ± 0.067

Table S3. Volumetry of ultrastructures. The volume of myelin and myelinated axons was expressed as a percentage of the corresponding SBEM dataset. The volume fraction in which a cell body/process occupies varies between datasets. Therefore, a direct comparison of the volumes is not reasonable.

Treatment	Tissue	Rat ID	Myelin (%)	mAxons (%)	Cell nuclei	mAxons	Mitochondria
Sham	Cc	#25 contra	48.74	22.24	218	42 318	168 512
		#25 ipsi	49.07	23.17	214	43 209	175 508
		#49 contra	43.53	23.39	161	30 723	116 123
		#49 ipsi	-	-	-	-	-
TBI	Cc	#2 contra	46.42	19.56	133	25 865	91 997
		#2 ipsi	44.13	19.95	124	29 883	58 089
		#24 contra	51.38	19.40	221	49 866	172 241
		#24 ipsi	52.20	22.94	102	23 256	96 032
		#28 contra	42.32	19.31	226	34 804	104 102
		#28 ipsi	40.16	18.61	213	35 553	114 204
Sham	Cg	#25 contra	52.61	29.14	90	16 076	58 583
		#25 ipsi	49.72	28.58	97	15 868	62 838
		#49 contra	50.18	28.19	70	10 537	55 825
		#49 ipsi	48.42	26.49	126	16 932	71 742
TBI	Cg	#2 contra	49.14	22.76	120	23 039	97 777
		#2 ipsi	42.98	12.19	100	14 094	21 722
		#24 contra	49.32	21.98	76	16 495	58 180
		#24 ipsi	41.26	14.72	108	20 374	63 798
		#28 contra	42.68	22.89	131	17 510	77 116
		#28 ipsi	39.79	16.58	167	18 297	48 830

Computation time

Table S4. Computation time. M1: Intel Core i7 6700 CPU 3.4 GHz with 64 GB RAM. M2: 2 $\times$ Intel Xeon E5 2630 CPU 2.4 GHz machine with 512 GB RAM. M3: NVIDIA Tesla P100-16 GB GPU. Because the size of datasets and the number of instances segmented in each dataset are different, we measured the computation time based on the sham #25 dataset in the last column.

Process	Machine	Time	Time/dataset (h)
BM4D filtering	M1 - MATLAB R2017b	0.056 MB/s	54.23
Training DCNN-mAx	M3 - Python 2.7	24 h	-
Training DCNN-cN	M3 - Python 2.7	24 h	-
DCNN-mAx inference	M3 - Python 2.7	0.297 MB/s	10.23
DCNN-cN inference	M3 - Python 2.7	0.299 MB/s	10.16
CSD	M2 - Python 2.7	$\sim$ 113.8 s/myelinated axon	44.66
Myelinated Axon feature extraction	M2 - MATLAB R2017b	$\sim$ 15 s/myelinated axon	5.89
2D Frangi filtering	M1 - MATLAB R2017b	0.267 MB/s	11.38
Cell nucleus feature extraction	M1 - MATLAB R2017b	$\sim$ 30 s/nucleus	5.76
SVM Bayesian optimization	M1 - MATLAB R2017b	173 s	-
SVM inference	M1 - MATLAB R2017b	$\sim$ 4.4 µs/component	5.14×10^{-5}