



## "Always Interesting" AI in the news

<http://www.aaai.org/aitopics/html/current.html>

**The Jobs of the Future Are a Thing of the Past.** Rick Perlstein. *The Village Voice*. March 30, 2004 ([www.villagevoice.com](http://www.villagevoice.com)). "You may have read about the outsourcing issue, the great X-factor in American politics today, in cover articles in *Time*, *Wired*, *Business Week*. ... In New Hampshire, John Kerry was asked about the problem. His answer: 'We have to create the next wave of those kinds of jobs that come from the fact that we're highly educated and deeply committed to science and technology education.' He mentioned artificial intelligence—and drew a laugh from a computer science professor who noted that artificial intelligence, the gleaming dream of the 1990s, has hardly created a single job in the world."

**Dial 'em for Mumbai.** Garry Barker. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. March 18, 2004 ([www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)). "Increasingly, companies in Australia, the US, Europe, and Britain are cutting costs by moving customer contact to countries where English is good and wages low. It is called outsourcing and, because it is costing jobs in Western countries, it is now a political football, here and overseas. ... But the out-sourcers now face a challenge from fast-developing artificial intelligence and speech-synthesis technologies. Mobile phones, which now outnumber fixed-lines in Australia, do not suit call centers that ask customers to push keypad buttons. If you call ScanSoft, a speech-synthesis company in Sydney, you will be greeted by an Australian voice that is rich, tutored and welcoming. ... Few callers realize they have been holding a conversation with a computer. ... That, some say, is the future for call centers—perhaps the ultimate future of human jobs of many kinds."

**Robots Seen As Companions for Elderly.** Yuri Kageyama. Associated Press / available from *The Sun Herald*. April 10, 2004 ([www.sunherald.com](http://www.sunherald.com)). "To some scientists, robots are the answer to caring for aging societies in Japan and other nations where the young are destined to be overwhelmed by a surging elderly population. These advocates see robots serving not just as helpers—carrying out simple chores and reminding patients to take their medication—but also as companions, even if the

*This eclectic keepsake provides a sampling of what can be found (with links to the full articles) on the AI Topics web site. Please keep in mind that (1) the mere mention of anything here does not imply any endorsement whatsoever; (2) the excerpt might not reflect the overall tenor of the article; (3) although the articles were initially available online and without charge, few things that good last forever; and (4) the AI in the News collection—updated, hyperlinked, and archived—can be found by going to [www.aaai.org/aitopics/html/current.html](http://www.aaai.org/aitopics/html/current.html).*

—Jon Glick, Webmaster, AI Topics

machines can carry on only a semblance of a real dialogue. The ideal results: huge savings in medical costs, reduced burdens on family and caretakers, and old and sick people kept in better health. ... [H]ow robots will change people remains to be seen. Will robots make people lazy if they can do mundane chores? Will they make us more callous or more humane? ... Ranges of appropriate behavior toward robots will have to be socially defined, [John Jordan, a principal at consulting company Cap Gemini] said. Might it be weird to pat a robot for bringing a drink? 'Humans are very good at attributing emotions to things that are not people,' Jordan said. 'Many, many moral questions will arise.' ... [C]an people grow too fond of robots for their own good? Yasuyuki Toki, a researcher at NEC System Technologies, thinks emotional attachments to robots must be studied carefully. NEC's talking robot on wheels was once lent to a family for research. When the robot had to be taken away for an upgrade, the elementary school-aged child cried so much that the family refused to take the machine again. 'People aren't going to be able to throw away robots even when they break,' Toki said. 'These are major issues that researchers must keep in the back of our minds.'"

**U.S. Company Cheers Loss of Its Robot in Iraq.** Greg Frost. Reuters. April 12, 2004 ([www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)). "iRobot Corporation

learned last week from the Pentagon that one of its units, called a PackBot, was 'destroyed in action' for the first time. Its destruction meant the life of a U.S. soldier may well have been saved, the company said. 'It was a special moment—a robot got blown up instead of a person,' said iRobot CEO Colin Angle. ... Between 50 and 100 PackBots are now being used in Iraq and Afghanistan for battlefield reconnaissance, search-and-destroy missions of explosives and ordnance disposal, while the soldiers who control them keep out of harm's way."

**The Semantic Engineer—Profile: Daniel Dennett.** Andrew Brown. *The Guardian*. April 17, 2004 ([books.guardian.co.uk](http://books.guardian.co.uk)). "Conscious robot is not an oxymoron — or maybe it was, but it's not going to be for much longer. How much longer? I don't know. Turing [50 years ago] said 50 years, and he was slightly wrong, but the popular imagination is already full with conscious robots."

**Revenge of the Killer Drones.** Noah Shachtman. *Wired News*. April 1, 2004 ([www.wired.com](http://www.wired.com)). "In just five years, the U.S. military wants a handful of battle-ready fighting drones. ... [T]he Pentagon wants the UCAVs [unmanned combat aerial vehicles] to be able to do more than chat with one another. The unmanned planes should be able to take off, fly and defend themselves as a group without a human telling them what to do. DARPA is working on a 'decision aid system' that will automatically handle the many tasks of directing a UCAV team, explained Marc Pitarys, a deputy program director at the agency. ... Even if the system's autonomy climbs higher, that may not be an entirely beneficial thing, some outside analysts say. 'We already have in this country a predisposition that the world is a set of problems with military solutions. One of the only checks on that is the threat of American boys coming home in body bags,' said GlobalSecurity.org director John Pike. Unmanned systems could remove one of those final checks. Pike asked, 'What happens when we can resort to violence, when we can hurt others, without being hurt in return?'"