



## "Always Interesting" AI in the news

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**An Artist at RPI Who Draws on the Future**—Graduate student in electronic arts uses provocative acts to make people think about issues. Kate Perry. *Times Union*. May 16, 2006 (timesunion.com). "Last February, Boryana Rossa and her colleagues sent a decree of robot rights by e-mail to the Pope's people at the Vatican. And the staff of the Bulgarian Orthodox patriarch. It should be considered a sin, the decree said, to kill an artificially created, sentient being (that is, a robot). Robots have the right to chose their own religion, it continued. An entity or creature created by humans must be considered equal to humans. Rossa, a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute student, and the members of her artistic collective, Ultrafuturo, weren't being funny when they sent the e-mail. 'In terms of artificial intelligence, you can't have an intelligent entity without the possibility of free will,' she said. 'It has to have choices and intentions, otherwise it is like a toaster.' ... Ultrafuturo critiques science, specifically the uses of artificial intelligence and the responsibilities that come with that. But Rossa said statements Ultrafuturo makes about robots can often be applied to the marginalized in society, such as women, homosexuals, minorities, and animals. ... 'One of the key things Boryana is interested in, and I am as well, is encouraging public debate around scientific practices,' [Kathy] High said. ... Even if she's demanding rights for robots, Rossa said being over-the-top is important because provocative acts are more likely to get people thinking about societal issues."

**Trust Me, I'm a Robot**—Robot safety: As robots move into homes and offices, ensuring that they do not injure people will be vital. But how? *The Economist Technology Quarterly*. June 8, 2006 (economist.com). "With robots now poised to emerge from their industrial cages and to move into homes and workplaces, roboticians are concerned about the safety implications beyond the factory floor. To address these concerns, leading robot experts have come together to try to find ways to prevent robots from harming people. Inspired by the Pugwash Conferences—an international group of scientists, academics, and activists founded in 1957 to campaign for the nonproliferation of nu-

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— Jon Glick, Webmaster, AI TOPICS

clear weapons—the new group of robo-ethicists met earlier this year in Genoa, Italy, and announced their initial findings in March at the European Robotics Symposium in Palermo, Sicily. ... So what exactly is being done to protect us from these mechanical menaces? 'Not enough,' says Blay Whitby, an artificial-intelligence expert at the University of Sussex in England. ... Robot safety is likely to surface in the civil courts as a matter of product liability. 'When the first robot carpet-sweeper sucks up a baby, who will be to blame?' asks John Hallam, a professor at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense. If a robot is autonomous and capable of learning, can its designer be held responsible for all its actions? Today the answer to these questions is generally 'yes.' But as robots grow in complexity it will become a lot less clear cut, he says."

**The Robot Turns 85.** Brian Sabin. *Radio Prague*. May 29, 2006 (radio.cz [audio available]). "From R2D2 to the Terminator, robots are a common theme in modern fiction, but not many people realize that the robot was born in Prague exactly 85 years ago. To celebrate its birthday a project last week at the University of Cambridge in England examined the life of robots and their Czech creator. Karel Capek was one of the great writers of inter-war Czechoslovakia. His play R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots) coined the term to describe humanlike androids that perform mundane, repetitive labor. In 1921 the play opened right here in Prague and introduced robots to the world. Now Cambridge University's

Robot Project explores their life, their history and what they say about us. Social Anthropologist Kathleen Richardson, who organized the project, says the themes of Capek's seminal play can be used to explore larger issues."

**AI Conference Returns to College after 50 Years.** Alex Belser. *The Dartmouth*. July 18, 2006 (thedartmouth.com). "Fifty years after a group of about 10 young scientists first met to start the nascent field of artificial intelligence, some of them returned for a fiftieth anniversary conference this weekend entitled AI@50, the Dartmouth Artificial Intelligence Conference: The Next Fifty Years. ... 'It felt like it was magic,' Ray Solomonoff, one of the original group who returned to Hanover this weekend, said. 'The idea that a machine could do things that before we thought only humans could do, that was sort of a breakthrough.' Since then, computers have tackled calculus, chess and even had some success at translating languages. There are robots that can vacuum without human assistance."

**The Wisdom of Robots.** David Cohn. *Wired News*. July 20, 2006 (wired.com). "Boston — You have to watch where you're walking at the artificial intelligence conference here this week — you might trip over a roaming robot or bump into one flying around the room. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of AI, the American Association for Artificial Intelligence has gathered leaders in the field from around the world to present research and give students a chance to square off in robot competitions. ... The conference wasn't all fun and games; it was also a chance for AI's best minds to discuss the field's future. At one discussion, Tom Mitchell, chair of the Machine Learning Department at Carnegie Mellon University, wagered a lobster dinner concerning the fate of AI in 10 years. 'By 2016, we will have an AI program that can read 80 percent of the factual content on the web,' Mitchell wagered. If that's achieved, it would dramatically change the face of AI, he said, creating a never-ending language-learning system fueled by the web. ... Several AI researchers have already taken Mitchell up on his bet. 'Either I'm going to get a lot of free dinners, or I'll have to buy a lobster farm,' he said."