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Lovotics: Human – Robot Love and Sex Relationships

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Intimate relationships, such as love and sex, between human and machines, especially robots, has been one of the topics in science fiction. However, this topic has never been treated in the academic area until recently. The topic was first raised and discussed by David Levy in his book titled "Love and Sex with Robotics" published in 2007. As a result, the subject of human-robot romantic and intimate relationships rapidly developed into an academic research discipline in its own right. Since then, researchers have come up with many implementations of robot companions like sex robots, emotional robots, humanoid robots, and artificial intelligent systems that can simulate human emotions. This book chapter presents a summary of significant activity in this field during the recent years, predicts how the field is likely to develop, and its ethical and legal background. We also discuss our research in physical devices for human-robot love and sex communication.

Keywords: Love and Sex with Robots, Kissenger, Haptics, Humanoid Robots, Human Robot Intimate Relationships

Introduction

Human-Robot intimate relationships are no longer pure science fiction but have entered the hallowed halls of serious academic research. In the academic world there has already been sufficient coverage of the topic to demonstrate rather convincingly that it is of interest not only for mainstream media. Conferences on robotics, AI and other Computer Science related subjects began to accept and even invite papers on the subject, and there have thus far been two conferences devoted specifically to Human-Robot Personal Relationships. In 2014 the First International Congress of Love and Sex with Robots was held in Madeira. The academic journals that have since chosen to publish papers on the topic have included: Accountability in Research, AI & Society, Artificial Intelligence, Current Sociology, Ethics and Information Technology, Futures, Industrial Robot, International Journal of Advanced Robotic Systems, International Journal of Social Development, International Journal of Social Robotics, International Journal of Technoethics, New Media and Society, Phenomenonology and the Cognitive Sciences, Philosophy Technology, Social Robotics, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, and various publications from the IEEE, Springer and other highly respected technology stables. One paper, from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, achieved a high profile in the general media when it appeared in 2012 for its entertaining depiction of a future scenario in the red light district of Amsterdam – a life, in 2050, revolving around android prostitutes "who are clean of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), not smuggled in from Eastern Europe and forced into slavery, the city council will have direct control over."

Since the initial burst of media interest late in 2007 there have also been TV documentaries and feature movies in which sex with robots, virtual characters, or life-sized sex dolls was the dominant theme: Lars and the Real Girl, Meaning of Robots (which had its premiere at the 2012 Sundance Festival), My Sex Robot, Her (2013), Ex Machina (2015) and the BBC TV documentary Guys and Dolls) as well as the 2004 remake of The Stepford Wives. For all this, it is the sexual nature of the subject matter which is responsible. Sex Sells.

Following the storm of publicity by the launch of the David Levy's book in 2007 (Levy, 2007a), the subject of human-robot romantic and intimate relationships rapidly developed into an academic research discipline in its own right. The subject was named "Lovotics", and first mentioned in a literature in 2009 (Nomura et al. 2009).

The interest in this field from the academic community resulted, in 2013, in the founding of a journal and e-journal devoted entirely to the subject. The "Lovotics" journal defines its domain as "Academic Studies of Love and Friendship with Robots" (Omicsonline.com, 2015).

The First Crude Sex Robot

One of the most often raised questions in this field in 2007-8 was "How soon do you think the first sex robots will be on the market?" Since all the technologies necessary to create a crude sex robot were already available, David Levy predicted that it would probably not be more than 2-3 years before some enterprising entrepreneur(s) put these technologies together.

Late in 2009 publicity began to appear in the media about a "sex robot" developed by a New Jersey entrepreneur, Douglas Hines. His web site www.truecompanion.com proudly proclaimed that

"We have been designing "Roxxxy TrueCompanion", your TrueCompanion.com sex robot, for many years, making sure that she: knows your name, your likes and dislikes, can carry on a discussion and expresses her love to you and be your loving friend. She can talk to you, listen to you and feel your touch. She can even have an orgasm!"

As millions of men eagerly awaited the next major technological development that would enhance their sex lives, the press launch of Roxxxy took place at the Adult Entertainment Expo in Las Vegas on January 9th 2010, but it posed more questions than it answered. It appeared, for example, that touching Roxxxy's hand caused it to exclaim that "I like holding hands with you", but what does that prove? Only that an electronic sensor was linked to some sort of recorded sound output. It was not a demonstration of the speech technology that would be needed in a talking conversational robot.

The media hype surrounding Hines's launch in Las Vegas seems to have attracted the attention of many prospective customers for Roxxxy's supposedly seductive charms. At the beginning of February 2010 Hines's web site started to take orders for Roxxxy, advertising the product at a "sale price" of $6,495, which it claimed represented a reduction of $500.

The Wikipedia entry for Roxxxy (2012) includes the following:

"According to Douglas Hines, Roxxxy garnered about 4,000 pre-orders shortly after its AEE1 reveal in 2010. However, to date, no actual customers have ever surfaced with a Roxxxy doll, and the public has remained skeptical that any commercial Roxxxy dolls have ever been produced."

However, recently the Truecompanion.com website has also started to take pre-orders for "Rocky" the male robot of Roxxxy. They suggest that, after the payment, robots can be delivered in two to three months.

Despite all the negative aspects of Hines's operation and of the product itself, the launch of Roxxxy at the January 2010 Adult Entertainment Expo can be viewed as some sort of milestone – a vindication of the forecast for a 2-3 year time span from late 2007 to the launch of the world's first commercially available sex robot. Hines has proved that there is indeed a significant level of interest in sex robots from the buying public.

Lovotics

In 2011, a thesis explored certain aspects of Lovotics, and describes the design and development of a hardware platform – a robot – which was capable of experiencing complex and human-like biological and emotional states that were governed by artificial hormones within its system (Samani 2011).

The artificial intelligence of the Lovotics robot includes three modules: The Artificial Endocrine System, which is based on the physiology of love; the Probabilistic Love Assembly, which is based on the psychology of falling in love; and the Affective State Transition, which is based on human

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1 Adult Entertainment Expo

emotions. These three modules collaborate to generate realistic emotion-driven behaviors by the robot.

The robot's intimacy software employs parameters derived and quantified from five of the most important reasons for falling in love (Levy 2007): proximity, repeated exposure, attachment, similarity and attraction.

The Lovotics robot includes mathematical models for those five causal factors of love, creating a mathematical formula to represent each factor as well as a single "overall intimacy" formula which combines these five individual formulae into one. As an example of the five models, the proximity formula incorporates various distances between robot and human that indicate, *inter alia*, how closely the robot and human are to touching each other, and how close they are emotionally.

The Kissenger

[INSERT FIGURE X.1 HERE]

In order for robots, such as the Lovotics robot, to have realistic physical interactions with humans, technology needs to be developed for human – machine kissing. In order to address this issue, we have developed a kissing robot messenger called "Kissenger" (Fig. 1.) (Samani et al. 2012, 48 - 57).

We live in a global era, and more and more couples and families are apart due to work and business. New technologies are often employed to help us feel connected with those we care about, through an increasing interest in touch and feeling communication between humans in the human-computer interaction community. Research like "Hugvie" (Kuwamura et al. 2013) and the "Hug over a Distance" project (Mueller et al., 2005) tested the feasibilities of telepresence and intimacy technology. However, these are big, bulky, and impractical.

There is some commercial work like "The HugShirt" (2002) and "Huggy Pajama" (Teh et al. 2008, 250 - 257), which explore remote hugging with loved ones using wearable fashion technology. But these still lack a proper interface for "abstracted presence". Thus, Kissenger proposes a new system to feel the real presence using communication over the Internet for humans or robots.

Kissing is one of the most important modes of human communication as it is a universal expression of intimacy. People feel deeply positive emotions such as respect, greeting, farewell, good luck, romantic affection, and/or sexual desire through the physical joining or touching of lips by one individual on another individual's cheek, forehead, etc. (Millstein et al. 1993). Regular physical contact such as kissing is the key to maintaining intimacy in human relationships. Studies have shown that couples who kiss more frequently have higher romantic satisfaction and lower stress level (Floyd et al. 2009, 113 -133).

[INSERT FIGURE X.2 HERE]

[INSERT FIGURE X.3 HERE]

The Kissenger employed soft, pressure sensitive, vibrating silicone lips which, in the early prototypes, stood out from the surface of a smooth plastic casing shaped somewhat like a human head. Those early prototypes have since been replaced by a version for mobile phones.

Considering this missing dimension in today's communication technologies, Kissenger's design aims to create a new device to facilitate the exchange of emotional content, to feel a closer sense of presence, between people who are physically separated, thus integrating their inter-personal relationships further.

When a user kisses the device on its lips the changes in shape of the lips are detected by sensors and the resulting data is transmitted over the Internet to a receiving Kissenger, which converts the data back to lip shapes. This reproduces the changes in the kisser's lip shape, changes which are felt by the kisser's partner.

During a kiss, along with its strong emotional and affectionate connections, a series of physical interactions takes place. The touch of the lips exchanges the pressure, softness, and warmth of each lip in a convincing way. The inventers of Kissenger approached this design problem carefully, given the intimate nature of the interaction, and iteratively designed Kissenger which consists of two paired devices that can send and receive kisses simultaneously as shown in concept images Fig. 2. and Fig. 3

(Fig. 2 shows the scenario of family communication while Fig 3. Shows the communication between parent and child).

After studying the biological and psychological parameters of a kiss, a series of exploratory form factors were drawn to help visualize the possible interfaces. Fig. 4. shows some of our initial concept designs.

At this stage, we looked for designing a system that effectively transmits the same sensation of kiss to one another. The one key issue was that the use of the device should be comfortable and not distract or obstruct the natural interaction of the kiss. Hence, we decided to integrate the initial concept design for a lip-like portable device with a minimalistic shape. However, one of the main concerns was that the lip needed to be equipped with sensors and actuators. Hence, they looked into the possible technologies and sizes which could fit into the form factor of our device. Fig. 5. shows the 3D depiction of the proposed device with the new shape which can attach to a smart phone, allowing a video call and virtual kiss simultaneously.

[INSERT FIGURE X.4 HERE]

[INSERT FIGURE X.5 HERE]

[INSERT FIGURE X.6 HERE]

[INSERT FIGURE X.7 HERE]

Design of Kissenger

The hardware design of Kissenger (Fig. 6) with all the features listed above, specifies the use of force sensors, linear actuators, a RGB LED, a scent tank, and an audio connector, all in the Kissenger design flow.

Input Kiss Sensing

The lip surface is made of a soft flexible material to resemble the texture of human lip. An array of force sensors is embedded below the surface of the lip to measure the dynamic forces exerted by different points of the user's lips. The system also can be used during a video chat with another person, or for kissing a robot or a virtual 3D character.

Control and Transmission

Kissenger uses a microcontroller in the device to control the sensors and actuators. The device connects to a mobile phone through the Kissenger app, which connects to another user over the Internet (Fig. 7). The microcontroller reads the force sensors and sends the force data to the phone. This data is then transmitted over the Internet in real time and received by the partner's device. A bilateral haptic controller is implemented locally to control the output forces of the actuators to generate kiss sensations. The controller is designed such that both users feel the same contact force on their lips simultaneously. The interaction is bidirectional as the user can send and receive a kiss at the same time.

Output Kiss Actuation

Kiss sensations are produced by the positional changes of an array of linear actuators. The shape and size of the lip covers hide the inner electronics that go into the sensing, control, and actuation of the device. Thus all these features make the user more amicable to this device and helps evoke emotional responses and feelings for kiss communication.

[INSERT FIGURE X.8 HERE]

Communication

[INSERT FIGURE X.9 HERE]

Two or more Kissenger devices are wirelessly connected to each other via the Kissenger mobile app. Users can sign up for an account, search and connect to their friends using the app. When a user starts a video chat with a friend, the application starts to send and receive force data from the Kissenger device. One of the unique added features of the app is that it allows one-to-many user communication along with one-to-one user communication as shown in Fig. 8. With the Kissenger app, the user can send different colours or send a scent to the receiver(s) to convey their mood. Fig. 9 shows a user interacting with the Kissenger device.

An assessment of the new proposed shape and its implementation was conducted with a wide variety of people including researchers not involved in our project, mall shoppers, and friends over a period of time with around fifty people from different cultural backgrounds, age, and sexes participated in the evaluation process and provided feedback for the proposed shape and features. The major feedback is to integrate the size to make it more portable and user-friendly and provide the room for asynchronous kissing. There is the ability for the device to store a kiss that can be read at a later time on which the researchers will be working in the future for the social impact of this project.

Robot Love

Amongst the fundamental conditions for engendering human love, physical appearance and attractiveness rank highly. Hiroshi Ishiguro is a robotics researcher who has developed various human images (Hofilena 2013) including one in his own image which is sometimes sent to deliver his lectures when he is too busy to do so himself. Another of his robots, called "Geminoid-F", is made in the image of an attractive young woman who can blink, respond to eye contact, and recognize and respond to body language (Torres 2013). Ishiguro is encouraged in this aspect of his work by his conviction that Japanese men are more prone than are western men to develop amorous feelings towards such robots because, in Japan, with the influence of the Shinto religion, "we believe that everything has a soul and therefore we don't hesitate to create human-like robots".

Another strand of Ishiguro's research into artificially engendering feelings of love in humans is concerned with promoting romantic forms of communication. The "Hugvie" (2011) is a huggable pillow, shaped in a somewhat human form, that is held by a user close to their body while they speak to their human partners via their mobile phone, located in a pocket in the Hugvie's head[2]. The Hugvie incorporates a vibrator to simulate a heartbeat, and the vibrations emanating from it are synchronized with the sounds of the partner's voice. This allows the simulated heartbeat to be changed according to the volume of the partner's voice, with the result that the listening user feels as though they are close to their partner. The comfort felt by holding the cushion, the sense of hugging one's partner, hearing one's partner's voice close to one's ear, and the simulated heartbeat aligned with that voice, all these combine to create a sense that the partner is in some way present, which in turn intensifies the listener's feelings of emotional attraction for their partner. Ishiguro expects this intensified affinity to increase the sense of intimacy between couples who are communicating through their respective Hugvies. Ishiguro shared in a breakthrough study that the Hugvie could decrease blood cortisol levels, therefore reducing stress (Sumioka 2013). Integrating the Hugvie technology into the design of an amorous robot might therefore enable a human user of such a robot to experience an enhanced feeling of a humanlike presence and a greater sense of intimacy from and for the robot.

Yet another direction of Ishiguro's research into having a robot engender emotions in humans is his investigation of the emotional effects, on a human user, of different facial expressions exhibited by a robot (Nishio 2012, 388- 397). That research is currently in its early stages but there is already some indication that it will be possible for robots, by their own facial expressions, to affect a user's emotional state. Emotional facial expression is also a hot topic at the MIT Media Lab, where the Nexi robot was developed (Allman 2009).

The Ethical and Legal Debate

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2 The Hugvie project grew out of an earlier Ishiguro project called "Telenoid"

The ethics of robot sex were first aired in an academic forum at the EURON Workshop on Roboethics in 2006. (Levy 2006a; Levy 2006b; Levy 2006c) The following year David Levy discussed five aspects of the ethics of robot prostitution at an IEEE conference in Rome (Levy 2007): the ethics of making robot prostitutes available for general use; the ethics vis à vis oneself and society in general, of using robot prostitutes; the ethics vis à vis one's partner or spouse, of using robot prostitutes; the ethics vis à vis human sex workers, of using robot prostitutes; and the ethics vis à vis the sexbots themselves, of using robot prostitutes. Since the last of these issues is only of significance if robots are eventually developed with (artificial) consciousness, it is also relevant when considering this particular issue to contemplate the ethical treatment in general of artificially conscious robots (Levy 2012).

A somewhat broader airing of the ethical impacts of love and sex machines was presented by John Sullins (2012, 398 - 409). Sullins explores the subject partly on the basis that such entities are programmed to manipulate human emotions "in order to evoke loving or amorous reactions from their human users". He submits that there should be "certain ethical limits on the manipulation of human psychology when it comes to building sex robots", and accordingly he identifies three design considerations which he proposes should be applied to the development of robots designed for love: (i) robots should not fool people into ascribing more feelings to the machine than they should; (ii) robot designers should be circumspect in how their inventions exploit human psychology; and (iii) robots should not be designed that intentionally lie to their users in order to manipulate their user's behavior.

A considerably more strident attitude to the ethics of robot sex pervades a 2012 paper by Yusuff Amuda and Ismaila Tijani (Amuda and Tijani 2012, 19 - 28), which views the subject from an Islamic perspective. These authors appear to have no doubts that "having intercourse with robot is unethical, immoral, uncultured, slap to the marriage institution and respect for human being." While many might not concur with the robustness of their position on the subject, it cannot be denied that the question of robot sex within the confines of marriage, or indeed within any existing human sexual relationship, is a serious issue. The question most often asked of the present author in media interviews has been: "Is it cheating for someone who is married or in a committed relationship to have sex with a robot?"

In this author's opinion the answer is a resounding "No". A partner or spouse who has sex with a robot is no more guilty of cheating on their other half than are any of the tens of millions of women who use a vibrator. But not everyone agrees with this position, and in parallel with the possibility that sex with a robot should be regarded as cheating on one's spouse, there comes an interesting legal question which has been flagged by the California lawyer Sonja Ziaja (2011). Could a sex robot be legally regarded as the enticing protagonist in a law suit brought for the enticement of one's spouse? In the eight states of the USA where this type of law is still on the statute books, where they are called amatory or "heart balm" laws, Ziaja questions whether a sex robot could be held to be the cause, or a contributing cause, to the breakdown and dissolution of a marriage, and if so, who should be held legally liable to pay whatever damages a court might assess? Ziaja suggests a few obvious possible culprits for cases of enticement by a robot: the robot's inventor, its manufacturer, its owner, or even the robot itself. But the attribution of liability for a wrong wrought by a robot is an extremely complex issue, one which this author believes will not be adequately solved in the foreseeable future. Instead it has been suggested (Levy, 2012) that robot wrongs could be compensated by an insurance scheme, much akin to that which works well for automobiles and other vehicles.

The only form of punishment considered by Ziaja for transgressing the American heart balm laws is to compensate the plaintiff, which is a notion that pales into insignificance when compared to the punishments discussed by Amuda and Tijani. They point out that, under Sharia law, judges are permitted to invoke lashes or even capital punishment for having sex with a robot, provided there is sufficient credible evidence of the crime (Amuda and Tijani, 2012). "To this study, death penalty by hanging may not be applicable and implemented unless there are enough and credible evidences to justify the death by hanging of robot fornicator or adulterer."

Ziaja's paper largely avoids discussing punishment in relation to enticement cases in which a robot is the protagonist, preferring to prevent the problem from occurring by having robots designed in such a way as to incorporate feelings of heartbreak together with the goal of caring for those in its owner's circle of friends and relatives. "In order for robots to enter into human romantic relationships in a way

that is consistent with the values underlying the heart balm torts, it may also need to experience heartache and empathy as we do." Ziaja's position thus supports that of John Sullins.

An in-depth consideration of whether or not human-humanoid sexual interactions should be legally regulated was discussed by Anna Russell in Computer Law & Security Review (Russell 2009, 455 - 468). The very fact that such a discussion should appear in the pages of a respected legal journal points to the seriousness with which the legal profession is viewing the legal implications of the human-robot relationships of the future. Russell suggests that:

"Regulation of human-humanoid sexual interaction, either by the state or federal government[3], will be sought when the level of interaction either (1) mimics human sexual interactions currently regulated; or (2) will create a social harm if the interaction is not regulated . . . currently, in places where humans are using robots for pleasure in a sexual way, that pleasure is either not regulated or is regulated in the way the use of any sexual device may be regulated" but that when more advanced robots – humanoids – are used for sexual pleasure, "then in many places, traditional norms and social mores will be challenged, prompting the development of state regulation. Will such regulation, then, be at odds with accepted notions of rights and freedoms?"

Russell then delves further into the question of how regulation of human-humanoid sexual encounters would work, and highlights some of the questions that will arise, including:

"How many rights will humans allow if humanoids clamor for sexual freedoms? How will humanoids be punished for sexual transgressions? Will humanoids need legal protection from the abuse of human sexual proclivities?"

Russell's conclusion is a call for the

". . . early discussion of the ramifications of a future species' demand for legal rights. . . the legal profession should develop legal arguments before a test case occurs in order to avoid the illogic and danger of arguments that stem from species bias."

In 2011 the MIT Technology Review conducted a poll on people's attitudes to the idea of loving a robot. 19% of those questioned indicated that they believed they could love a robot, 45% said "No" and 36% responded "Maybe". When it came to a question of whether or not people believed that robots could love humans, 36% said "Yes", only 23% responded "No", and 41% "Maybe". So already the idea of human-robot love was taking root as a serious proposition.

In a later poll, this one about robot sex rather than robot love, which was conducted in February 2013 by The Huffington Post and YouGov among 1,000 American adults, 9% of respondents indicated that they would have sex with a robot, and 42% opined that robot sex would constitute cheating on one's human partner (31% said "No" to the cheating question, while 26% said they were uncertain). This can be taken as further evidence that a significant portion of the population already regards robot sex as a serious subject. Just how serious can perhaps be judged by a news story that hit the media in March 2013 about an online auction for the virginity of a Brazilian sex doll called Valentina (The Huffington Post 2013) which was inspired by a 20-year-old Brazilian woman, Catarina Migliorini, who had auctioned her own virginity for $780,000 (sold to a Japanese buyer). True, a sex doll is only an inanimate product, lacking all the interactive capabilities of the sex robots of the future. But the level of interest demonstrated by this news story bodes well for the commercial possibilities of sex robots.

For the Brazilian sex doll auction, the online retailer Sexônico offered a complete "romantic" package for the successful bidder, which included a one-night stay with Valentina in the Presidential Suite at the Swing Motel in Sao Paulo, a candlelit champagne dinner, an aromatic bath with rose petals, and a digital camera to capture the action. If the successful bidder lived outside Sao Paulo, Sexônico also offered to provide a round trip air ticket. Valentina's charms were not able to match the great commercial success of Ms Migliorini, but considering that most sex dolls retail at prices in the range $5,000-$10,000 the final bid of $105,000 was still a good result for Sexônico, not to mention the value of all the media exposure they attracted.

Predictions

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[3] In the USA.

Clearly a significant sector of the public is now ready for the advent of commercially available sex robots, and the public's interest in and appetite for such products seems to be growing steadily. We have noticed a steady increase in the number of requests for media interviews on the subject during the past two years. Also growing steadily is the interest within the academic research community.

In our opinion nothing has occurred since the publication of *Love and Sex with Robots* to cast doubt on Levy's 2007 prediction that sophisticated sex robots would be commercially available by the middle of this century. On the contrary, the increase in academic interest in this field has reinforced David Levy's conviction regarding that time frame.

What will be the next significant steps in this field? Intelligent electronic sex toys are gaining in popularity, for example the Sasi Vibrator, which "comes pre-loaded with sensual intelligence which learns movements you like, specifically tailoring a unique experience by remembering movements that suit you."; and the "Love Glider Penetration Machine" which can be purchased from Amazon.com at around $700 and which is claimed to "give you the most comfortable stimulating ride you will ever have!" The Amazon web site also offers a very much more primitive looking sex machine at around $800, a machine of the type seen in many variations on the specialist site www.fuckingmachines.com, and which "supports multiple positions, has adjustable speeds, strong power, remote control.[4]"

Another research direction that perhaps offers even greater commercial potential comes from a combination of augmented reality with digital surrogates ("dirrogates") of porn stars. A recent (June 2013) posting by Clyde DeSouza (2013) posits that the 3D printing of human body parts will enable the downloading, from "hard-drives in Hollywood studios" of "full body digital model and 'performance capture' files of actors and actresses". DeSouza continues:

"With 3D printing of human body parts now possible and blueprints coming online with full mechanical assembly instructions, the other kind of sexbot is possible. It won't be long before the 3D laser-scanned blueprint of a porn star sexbot will be available for licensing and home printing, at which point, the average person will willingly transition to transhuman status once the 'buy now' button has been clicked.
. . .
If we look at Digital Surrogate Sexbot technology, which is a progression of interactive porn, we can see that the technology to create such Dirrogate sexbots exists today, and better iterations will come about in the next couple of years. Augmented Reality hardware when married to wearable technology such as 'fundawear' (Fundawear Reviews, 2013) and a photo-realistic Dirrogate driven by perf-captured libraries of porn stars under software (AI) control, can bring endless sessions of sexual pleasure to males and females."

Fundawear is a prime example of the increase in popularity of intelligent electronic sex toys and teledildonic devices. It is a wearable technology project currently under development by the condom manufacturer Durex, which allows lovers to stimulate their partner's underwear via their respective mobile phones. Such products seem likely to benefit from the increased academic interest in Lovotics, which will surely lead to at least some of the academic research in this field being spun off into commercial development and manufacturing ventures. And the more prolific such products become in the market place, the more the interest in them and in fully fledged sex robots will grow. How long will it be before we see a commercially available sexbot much more sophisticated than Roxxxy? Almost certainly within the next five years.

The past five years has seen a surge of interest in research projects aimed at different aspects of love-with-robots. One aspect is concerned with enabling humans to convey amorous feelings to artificial partners, or to remotely located human partners with whom they communicate by artificial means (i.e. technology). Another aspect works in the opposite direction, enabling artificial partners to exhibit their artificial feelings, including love, to human partners. Some of this research has already demonstrated promising results, for example the experiments conducted with Hugvie by Ishiguro and his team in Japan. They plan further research with the Hugvie to investigate how vibration can further enhance the feeling of presence experienced by a user. Additionally, they plan to employ tactile sensors to monitor the emotional state of a user, which will provide feedback for the Hugvie and

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4 The sole review on Amazon.com as of May 2013 suggests that this product is poorly made and describes it as "a piece of junk".

thereby enhance its ability to influence a user's emotions. Ishiguro's team has already found that hugging and holding such robots "is an effective way for strongly feeling the existence of a partner".

Another domain to become an important catalyst for the development of human-robot emotional relationships, is what might be called girlfriend/boyfriend games. An example of this type of game is "Love Plus", which was first released in 2009 for the Nintendo DS games console, and subsequently upgraded for re-release. A recent (February 2013) article describes the relationship between a 35-year-old Tokyo engineer, Osamu Kozaki, and his girlfriend Rinko Kobayakawa (Belford 2013). When she sends him a message

". . . his day brightens up. The relationship started more than three years ago, when Kobayakawa was a prickly 16-year-old working in her school library, a quiet girl who shut out the world with a pair of earphones that blasted punk music."

Kozaki describes his girlfriend's personality as being

" . . . the kind of girl who starts out hostile but whose heart gradually grows warmer. And that's what has happened; over time, Kobayakawa has changed. These days, she spends much of her day sending affectionate missives to her boyfriend, inviting him on dates, or seeking his opinion when she wants to buy a new dress or try a new hairstyle."

But while Kozaki has aged, Kobayakawa has not. After three years, she's still 16. She always will be. That's because she is a simulation; Kobayakawa only exists inside a computer.

Kozaki's girlfriend has never been born. She will never die. Technically, she has never lived. She may be deleted, but Kozaki would never let that happen.

Because he's "in love."

Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed about the possibility of human robot intimate relationships and humanoid robot sex. We detailed Lovotics, which is a new research field that studies the emotions of robots with an artificial endocrine system capable of simulating love. We also presented the design and principle of Kissenger, an interactive device that provides a physical interface for transmitting a kiss between two remotely connected people. Finally, we discussed the ethical and legal background and future predictions of love and sex with robots.

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    ADDS Hugh Loebner's name because the first paragraph of the text is a quote by Hugh.

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