

Kyler Smith

Conference on Human Robot Interaction

March 11th – 14th, 2024 | Boulder, CO

Conference Reflection

In March of 2024, I had the opportunity to attend the 19th Annual ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human Robot Interaction (HRI 2024). This travel was funded in part by the Shackouls Honors College. HRI 2024 was scheduled for March 11th through March 14th of 2024. This conference exposed me to new ideas, new people, and encouraged the progress of my current research ideas.

HRI 2024 presented a wide variety of speeches, posters, and demonstrations. I was able to attend the morning keynote speeches from a Disney engineer, the Google DeepMind director, and a legal robotics scholar. Disney engineer James Kennedy's keynote speech inspired me with a story covering the history and future of Disney robotics. Kennedy reminded me of the idea of character-centered design that is prominent at Disney, and I intend to use it in my own work to give my robots life. Most conference time was dedicated to individuals giving ten-minute presentations about work they've recently completed. One notable presentation was a Korean robot named CollaBot that assists users through library navigation by autonomously serving as a stool, a cart, and a chair. The novel idea of a robot that can detect when it should serve which purpose is a fascinating one to consider in future design.

My main exposure to ideas, people, and encouragement came when we presented our robotic platform "Emotibot" for the Student Design Challenge. We were situated at a table in a room with many other robotic demonstrations, and people could approach and leave as they desired. People were charmed by the crocheted mushroom appearance and amazed at the realistic heartbeat and sounds that communicated their emotional states, making me feel very good about the progress of my work on emotional communication. Many professors from a variety of countries approached our table to compliment the design and hear about what they could do, appearing impressed when they held the robot for themselves. Dr. Brian Scassellati in particular discussed his prior similar research and potential practical applications of Emotibot in situations like pediatric healthcare facilities.

Overall, I am very grateful I was able to attend HRI 2024, see current robotics research, and share my work with the community.