Cognizant Robot En Route a Canada-Wide Hike

July 17, 2014

This is no ordinary robot. It doesn't jump. It doesn't hoot. It does not run fast like OutRunner or have the stamina, mobility and dexterity of BigDog. Its ad hoc posture has no agile limbs or mechanical extensions, and yet it is a one of a kind robot that beats all the above at least in one sense: hitchBOT understands what you say and socializes with you. Even better it finds its way. As a matter of fact, as you are reading this, it is preparing for a 6000 km. hitchhiking experience across Canada to commence on July 27th from Nova Scotia's NSCAD University, where it is currently in residence.

Second generation (yes he has an older brother kulturBOT 1.0), only a few months old, less than 3 feet tall, plain looking, friendly hitchBOT is wise like none other, for it has a brain that has access to the World Wide Web and growingly indispensable Wikipedia. It maps its way. It tweets. It instagrams. And the trustworthy companion that it is, it politely asks you if it may take photos while in your car. Basically it has the interpersonal skills and etiquette that are desirable in the age of social media.

Conceived in Port Credit, Ontario by a collaborative team of multidisciplinary researchers across Canada, notably David Harris Smith of McMaster University and Frauke Zeller of Ryerson University, hitchBOT was taught how to interpret human language and textual content by Ebrahim Bagheri and his colleagues at Ryerson's Laboratory for Systems, Software and Semantics. At $LS^3$, professors and students work together to approximate machine language learning techniques to the cognitive and linguistic processes that enable humans to communicate. hitchBOT's real-life experiment will gauge human-machine interaction and raise awareness about many aspects of social robotics. Most importantly, for researchers at Ryerson, the hitchBOT project, provides an opportunity to deploy Ls3's semantic annotator technology into the bourgeoning field of human-robot interaction.

To accompany hitchBOT on its pioneer journey, go to http://www.hitchbot.me and support the friendly automaton. And one last word, if you happen to be the goodwill driver to give a hike to hitchBOT on its way to Victoria, be courteous and adjust its seatbelt and plug it into your car's cigarette lighter when the robot asks for a power boost.
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Javad Ghatta writes on a number of subjects including humanities-related computer science projects.

**About $LS^3$**

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have resulted in high impact patent, publication and products for our partners. For more information, please visit http://ls3.rnet.ryerson.ca/