



"Always Interesting" AI in the news

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The shape of playthings to come—Today's toys are more technologically advanced than ever. What will toys of tomorrow be like? Chip Walter. *The Boston Globe*. December 24, 2002 (www.boston.com). "‘You're going to see what 10 years ago we would have defined as science fiction,' says Randy Pausch, codirector of Carnegie Mellon University's Entertainment Technology Center. 'Toys that know where they are, that can recognize people and respond to them; toys that build up a mental state of the things around them; toys that talk to each other and interact with the television set or the computer. You can envision all kinds of scenarios.' ... What are the downsides as toys grow more intelligent and networked? Privacy is a big issue because of the vulnerability of children. How, exactly, would toys use their intelligence, and with whom would they be connected? What if the smart doll your daughter is playing with suddenly says she's hungry and wants to go to McDonald's, or is bored and suggests talking to mom and dad about a trip to Disneyland?"

Intel creating smart system to keep old folks at home — Technology gives more independence to those suffering cognitive decline. Gail El Baroudi. *The Globe and Mail*. January 16, 2003 (www.globetechnology.com). "The smart-home system is a joint project of the Proactive Health Research Project, which was launched in April, and Intel Research Seattle. ... There will be a network of tiny connected and hidden sensors throughout the smart home that might be contained in clothing, furniture or even jewellery and that will relay information on daily routines and behaviour to a central computer for analysis. ... All these sensors simply collect data. It is the home PC's artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that have the challenging job of translating all the raw sensor network data into meaningful information about the normal activities that go on in the home and then deciding if there are meaningful deviations from that norm. 'For example, if a person forgot to take their medication on time, there will be a reminder -- maybe a voice, or a buzz and written reminder from a personal digital assistant, such as a Palm Pilot,' Prof. [Philippe] Fauchet says."

We'll All Be Under Surveillance — Com-

puters Will Say What We Are. Nat Hentoff. *The Village Voice*. December 6, 2002 (www.villagevoice.com). "Orwell died in 1950. Prophetic as he was in 1984, however, he could not have imagined how advanced surveillance technology would become. ... Our government's unblinking eyes will try to find suspicious patterns in your credit-card and bank data, medical records, the movies you click for on pay-per-view, passport applications, prescription purchases, e-mail messages, telephone calls, and anything you've done that winds up in court records, like divorces. Almost anything you do will leave a trace for these omnivorous computers, which will now contain records of your library book withdrawals, your loans and debts, and whatever you order by mail or on the Web. As Georgetown University law professor

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—Jon Glick, Webmaster, AI Topics

Jonathan Turley pointed out in the November 17 *Los Angeles Times*: 'For more than 200 years, our liberties have been protected primarily by practical barriers rather than constitutional barriers to government abuse. Because of the sheer size of the nation and its population, the government could not practically abuse a great number of citizens at any given time. In the last decade, however, these practical barriers have fallen to technology.'

Privacy — Who Needs It? We're better off without it, argues Canada's leading sci-fi writer. Essay by Robert J. Sawyer. *Maclean's*. October 7, 2002 (www.macleans.ca). "Earlier this year, I was keynote speaker at the 12th Annual Canadian Conference on Intelligent Systems, Cana-

da's principal gathering of experts on robotics and artificial intelligence. The two tasks most of the researchers there were concentrating on were pattern recognition and data-mining. So far, most applications for these technologies have been commercial: if you buy a Walkman and are enrolled in a night-school course, you might be interested in buying textbooks on tape. ... But I can't see the downside of an RCMP or CSIS computer noting that my neighbour has bought all the materials to make a pipe bomb and has booked a one-way flight to Tahiti. ... Still, Luddites will continue to insist that monitoring of humans means giving up too much. Perhaps. But as Scott McNealy, CEO of computer giant Sun Microsystems, says, 'You have zero privacy anyway. Get over it.' In other words, such monitoring and tracking is already going on to benefit big business. Why not take advantage of it to improve our own lives? ... Why shouldn't we take advantage of technology to protect ourselves? Instead of having a knee-jerk reaction that says any loss of privacy is bad, let's discuss the potential pitfalls and work out ways to relieve them."

Good Morning, Dave... The Defense Department is working on a self-aware computer. Kathleen Melymuka. *Computerworld*. November 11, 2002 (www.computerworld.com). "Any sci-fi buff knows that when computers become self-aware, they ultimately destroy their creators. From *2001: A Space Odyssey* to *Terminator*, the message is clear: The only good self-aware machine is an unplugged one. We may soon find out whether that's true. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is accepting research proposals to create the first system that actually knows what it's doing. The 'cognitive system' DARPA envisions would reason in a variety of ways, learn from experience and adapt to surprises. ... But what about HAL 9000 and the other fictional computers that have run amok? 'In any kind of technology there are risks,' [Ronald J.] Brachman acknowledges. That's why DARPA is reaching out to neurologists, psychologists—even philosophers—as well as computer scientists. 'We're not stumbling down some blind alley,' he says. 'We're very cognizant of these issues.'"