

By Jeanne Dietsch and Raj Madhavan

As global unemployment numbers continue to swell, we in the robotics industry need to be sensitive to the sedan-chair fallacy. According to this logical fallacy, "A sedan chair requires four employees. A carriage needs only one employee. Therefore, the invention of the wheel caused 75% job loss in the transportation industry." In actuality, of course, the wheel, like many technologies, contributed to growth in manufacturing, agriculture, construction, service industries as well as transportation. Helping politicians and the public understand and avoid the sedan-chair fallacy will help dampen backlash against robotics and automation as more people suffer unemployment due to the global economic woes.

Slow Down, If You Want to Move Fast!

According to recent experiments by Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) students under Daniel Goldman, when a robot rotates its legs too fast, it transitions from a rapid walk to a much slower swim.

A video of SandBot demonstrating the effects of technique on a track built by student Chen Li is at <http://gtrresearchnews.gatech.edu/movies/SandBot.wmv>

Goldman plans to use the information to help roboticists design devices with appropriate feet and limb motion that can sense and adjust for changes in terrain. Such smart robots would advance the exploration of other planets and search-and-rescue missions on earth.

Like Father, Like Robot

Alexander Stoytchev, formerly of American University of Bulgaria and Georgia Tech, has founded the Iowa State's Developmental Robotics Laboratory with the goal of reproducing the learning of a two-year-old in a robot. So far, his two-month-old son is ahead of the bots, but the bots are more obedient, reproducing moves after a single teaching. . .

Honda 360 Accords a Better View

Take in the way-cool new view of Asimo at <http://asimo.honda.com/InsideAsimo.aspx>. ASIMO's form, function, movement, and intelligence are displayed in three dimensions (3-D).

French Army Orders 15 EOD Robots

The Direction Centrale du Matériel de l'Armée de Terre has just ordered eight iRobot's PackBot-type mobile robots, customized for bomb disposal, with orders for seven more expected from RoboSoft. In other news, RoboSoft announced



The sedan-chair fallacy could crimp robotics' potential to aid economic growth.

the acquisition of perception and guidance embedded systems (PGES), experts in mobile robotics, image processing, and 3-D image synthesis.

Solar Tech Handling to the Land of the Rising Sun

Adept Technology, Inc., is bringing its solar cell handling system to Japan. The application work cell is a high-speed solar cell handling system with integrated inline inspection and features the Adept Quattro s650, a four-arm parallel robot.

Jeanne Dietsch is the CEO of MobileRobots Inc., where she has led the development of autonomous robotic platforms, cores, and other foundation technologies used by AGV and service robot manufacturers. She serves on the Industrial Activities Board of IEEE's Robotics & Automation Society, as well as editorial boards of various robotics journals. She helped found the Robotics Technology Consortium.

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