

Tom Donahue

(339) 707-0125
dev@donahut.email
donahut.github.io
github.com/donahut
linkedin.com/in/donahut

Experience

- Feb. 2025 – **Senior Software Engineer, Familiar Machines & Magic, Woburn, MA**
Currently in stealth mode — utilizing robotics and AI to develop health-related solutions
- 2022 – 2025 **Software Development Engineer II, Amazon Lab 126, Boston, MA**
Focused on imbuing character and social intelligence into Astro, Amazon’s mobile, autonomous, home robot
- Designed and built core architectural components for intelligent proactivity and planning in Astro
 - Led design, development and deployment of attention system which provides Astro with intentional gaze behaviors and real-time reactions to environmental stimuli
- 2020 – 2022 **Character AI Lead, NTT Disruption, Boston, MA**
Engineering Lead in charge of conversational and character experiences for Jibo
- Led design, development and collaboration with Microsoft on *Project Pupil*—a multi-lingual, multi-turn, memory-assisted dialog experience built atop Neo4j and BotFramework
 - Integrated and deployed multi-lingual TTS engine into existing conversational pipeline; replacing aging, unsupported mono-lingual on-board engine
 - Contributed to ideation, design and definition of collaborations with, and Jibo deployments to, B2B customers (e.g. Children’s Hospitals)
- 2018 – 2020 **Human-Robot Interaction Engineer, Piaggio Fast Forward, Boston, MA**
Software Integration Lead and Smart Behaviors liaison; bridged the gap between the investigation and design of high-level behaviors in gita and their implementation
- Managed, tracked and tested feature development in the pre- and post-launch phases of gita
 - Co-designed, implemented and integrated brokerless, type-safe messaging framework atop ZeroMQ and Cereal as replacement for ROS core / messages
 - Core contributor to the investigation, design and specification of numerous novel human-robot dyad behaviors for gita
- 2016 – 2018 **Character AI Engineer, Jibo, Boston, MA**
Member of the team tasked with making the first social robot for the home—Jibo—feel lifelike, produce dynamic behavior, and ensure a consistent character experience across his wide range of interactions and skills
- Co-architect and lead developer of *Embodied Speech*, a subsystem that blends Jibo’s speech with animation, graphics and sound to create character-rich dialog interactions
 - Lead developer of *Chitchat*, Jibo’s ontological dialog ability—the most frequent user-initiated interactions with the robot
 - Co-designed and implemented distributed robot/cloud skill architecture resulting in a significant interaction latency reduction and a far more scalable content-delivery pipeline
 - Led development of an animation database, a core module that enables queries for, and configuration of, animation and sound assets for on-demand playback and control on Jibo

2014 - 2016 **Robot Software Engineer, Softbank Robotics (Aldebaran), Boston, MA**

Member of a small agile team working across the Aldebaran stack—from NaoQi middleware modules to core applications

- Designed and built Act framework for semi-autonomous multi-robot-human interactions
- Co-developed *ALTactileGesture*, a high-level touch sequence gesture recognition module
- Released *Mad Chats*, an interactive Mad Libs-esque word game played between human and robot
- Member of team that designed and built a core application launching and dialog interaction framework for all Aldebaran robots

Research Experience

2012 - 2014 **Graduate Research / Teaching Assistant, Human Robot Interaction Lab, Tufts University, Medford, MA**

Research focus: human-robot teaming, embodiment, situated natural language understanding and generation

- Overhauled system GUIs for ADE middleware, yielding improved stability, efficiency and a simplified UI
- Developed data-mining tools for rich audio and video corpora and annotations
- Designed and built web-survey platform for multiple HRI studies
- Designed, conducted and analyzed multiple HRI studies investigating multiple factors within human-robot teams

2010 - 2012 **Graduate Research / Teaching Assistant, Computer-Human Interaction Lab, BGSU, Bowling Green, OH**

Research focus: Tangible and accessible interfaces

- Designed, built and tested an alternative UI for World of Warcraft for the visually impaired community
- Investigated the learning benefits of—and trade-offs between—mouse, touch and tangible input systems via a novel deduction puzzle/ game.
- Part of a team that developed a novel tangible password input system

2008 - 2010 **Research Assistant, Rhythm, Attention and Perception Lab, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH**

- Independently designed and built neural-network that modeled human auditory tone categorization

Technical Skills

Languages

Primary: Java, C++, Typescript/ JS

Rusty: Python, Clojure, PHP, R, HTML/ CSS

Software

Database: Neo4j, MongoDB, MySQL

Cloud: AWS, Docker, Elastic/Kibana

Platforms / Robots

- Amazon **Astro**—Autonomous, mobile, home robot deeply integrated with Alexa & Ring
- **Jibo**—One of the first social robots for the home
- Piaggio Fast Forwards' **gita**—Hands-free cargo carrying, following robot
- **ROS**—Most widely adopted open-source robotics middleware
- Softbank / Aldebaran's **Pepper and Nao**—Humanoid robots used in various business/educational settings
- **ADE**—A research-focused, distributed, multi-agent robotics middleware

Education

- 2012 - 2014 **Doctoral studies in Computer Science & Cognitive Science, Tufts University, Medford, MA**
Withdrew in good standing from multi-disciplinary joint-Ph.D. program in Human-Robot Interaction
- 2011 - 2012 **M.S. in Computer Science, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH**
Concentration: Human-Computer Interaction
- 2007 - 2011 **B.S. in Computer Science & Psychology, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH**
Minor in Mathematics, Cum Laude

Patents

- 2018 *Embodied Dialog and Embodied Speech Authoring Tools For Use With An Expressive Social Robot*
US20180133900A1. Jibo/NTT Distruct. Patent Pending
- 2018 *Maintaining Attention and Conveying Believability via Expression and Goal-Directed Behavior with a Social Robot*
US20180229372A1. Jibo/NTT Distruct. Patent Pending

Publications

- 2015 *Investigating the Effects of Robot Affect and Embodiment on Attention and Natural Language of Human Teammates.* (CogInfoComm '15)
- 2014 *Investigating Human Perceptions of Robot Capabilities in Remote Human-Robot Team Tasks based on First-Person Robot Video Feeds.* (IROS '14)
- 2013 *On Interface Closeness and Problem Solving.* (TEI '13)
- 2012 *Leveraging Motor Learning for a Tangible Password System.* (CHI '12)
- 2011 *Access-a-WoW: Building an Enhanced World of Warcraft UI for Persons with Low Visual Acuity.* (UAHCI '11)

Achievements

- 2020 gita awarded Red Dot's 'Best of the Best' in 'Innovative Products' meta-category
- 2017 Jibo named Time Magazine's #1 of the "25 Best Inventions of 2017"