

Keyboard-Friendly Robotic Hand Is Probably Harmless



Mike Fahey

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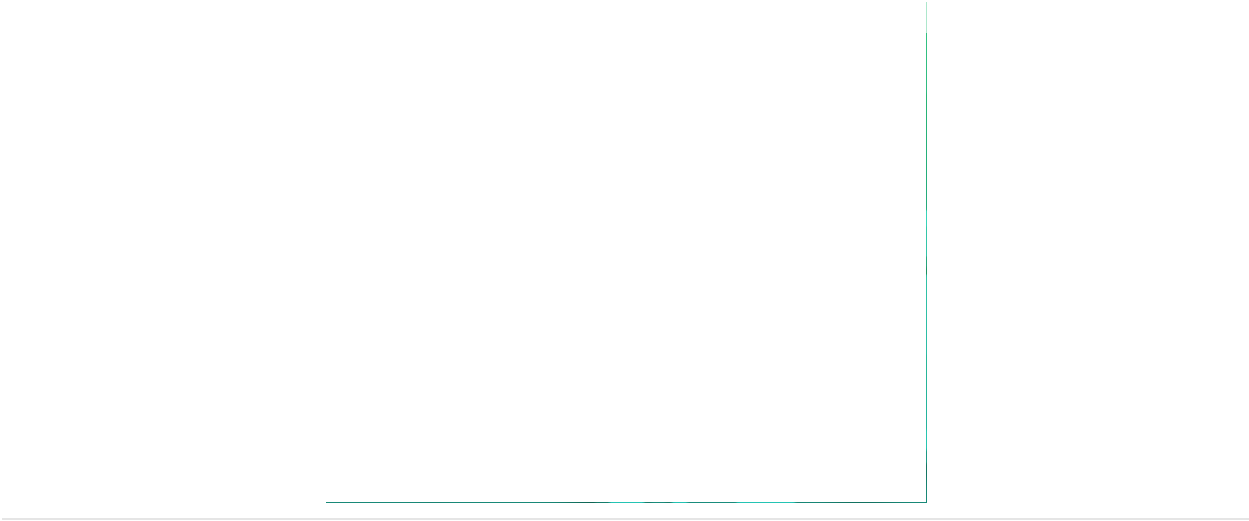
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One thing ever fledgling robotic killing machine needs is a good pair of hands, deft enough to type but strong enough to choke the life out of its victims. Virginia Tech's DART is a good start.

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Robotic hands have been around since the dawn of artificial man, but they haven't been very good. They get the job they were designed for done, surely, but those jobs have mainly required simple grasping and manipulation, nothing nearly as delicate and dexterous as typing or buying a drink from a vending machine. Punching through front of a vending machine, maybe, but not purchasing.

Enter DART, the dexterous anthropomorphic robotic typing hand, created by Shashank Priya and Nicholas Thayer of Virginia Tech.

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The pair has painstakingly studied the human hand to see what makes it tick, specifically what makes it tick away at keyboard keys all day long, aside from caffeine.

Replicating a body part consisting of around 40 muscles controlling 23 degrees of freedom isn't easy, no matter what Star Wars might have told you. It's not just a matter of putting joints in all the right places. It's knowing when and how to restrict those joints, as well as which to use in the first place. DART manages to deliver 19 or the 23 degrees of freedom in the human hand, which is more than enough for its primary purpose.

"DART is being optimized for use by the humanoid robots being developed to assist elderly people who want to operate computers and other machines. And they will be able to do this by giving the robot voice commands."

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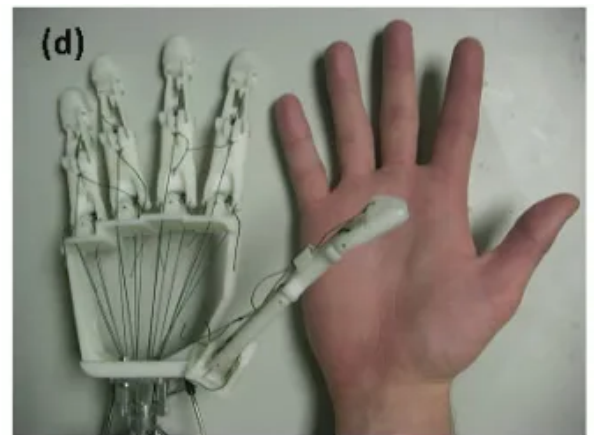
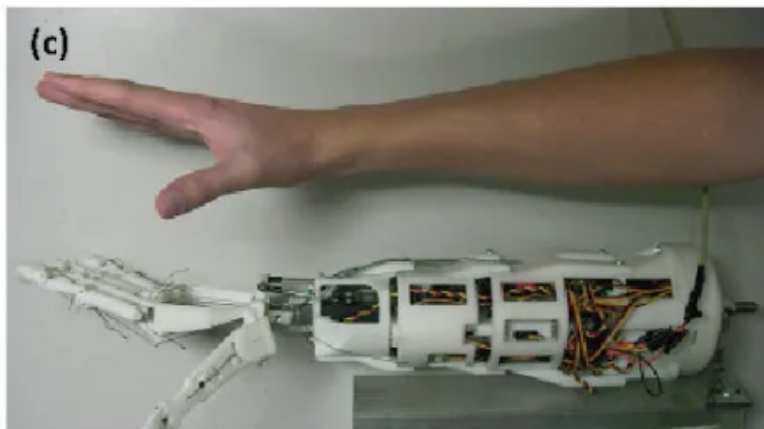
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I'm sure it could be coerced into hovering over the W-A-S-D keys for those first-person shooter fans out there, though with a max typing speed of 20 words per minute, it'll only get you killed.





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Eventually they'll fit these puppies with life-like fleshy sleeves, and we'll not be able to tell the difference between a human hand and a robot hand until it's too late. They say it's for touchscreen control, but they say a lot of things.

[Android, take a letter: Robotic hand helps people type](#) [New Scientist]

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Wait, they give voice commands to the hand, that then uses a keyboard to enter these commands?

How is that easier than simply linking the voice recognition software directly to a keyboard?

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