

Preface

Intimate relationships, such as love and sex, between human and machines, especially robots, has been one of the main topics in science fiction. However, this topic has never been treated in the academic area until recently. The topic was first raised and discussed by David Levy in his book titled *Love and Sex with Robotics* published in 2007. The book found an eager public in North America who wanted to know more. During the period immediately prior to publication of the book and for a few months afterwards, the topic caught the imagination of the media, not just in the USA and Canada but on a worldwide scale. During those months David Levy gave around 120 interviews, by telephone, e-mail, and in person; to newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV stations and to electronic media. Television interviews included an appearance on *The Colbert Report* (2008); as well as visits to his home by TV crews from Russia, Canada, Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, and other countries. There was also, not surprisingly, a flurry of interest from women's magazines, including *Elle* and *Marie Claire*. And the coverage in general science publications included articles in *IEEE Technology and Society Magazine*, *MIT Technology Review*, *Scientific American*, and *Wired*.

In the academic world there has already been sufficient coverage of the topic to demonstrate rather convincingly that it is of interest not only for mainstream media; an academically rewritten version of the book titled *Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners* also attracted much media publicity. Conferences on robotics, AI, and other computer science-related subjects began to accept and even invite papers on the subject, and there have thus far been two conferences devoted specifically to human–robot personal relationships. In 2014 the First International Congress of Love and Sex with Robots was held in Madeira. The academic journals that have since chosen to publish papers on the topic have included: *Accountability in Research, AI & Society*, *Artificial Intelligence*, *Current Sociology*, *Ethics and Information Technology*, *Futures*, *Industrial Robot*, *International Journal of Advanced Robotic Systems*, *International Journal of Social Development*, *International Journal of Social Robotics*, *International Journal of Technoethics*, *New Media and Society*, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *Philosophy Technology*, *Social Robotics*, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, and various publications from the IEEE, Springer, and other highly respected technology stables. One paper, from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, achieved a high profile in the general media when it appeared in 2012 for its entertaining depiction of a future scenario in the red light district of Amsterdam – a life, in 2050, revolving around android prostitutes “who are clean of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), not smuggled in from Eastern Europe and forced into slavery, the city council will have direct control over android sex workers controlling prices, hours of operations and sexual services.”

Since the initial burst of media interest late in 2007 there have also been TV documentaries and feature movies in which sex with robots, with virtual characters, or with life-sized sex dolls was the dominant theme: *Lars and the Real Girl*, *Meaning of*

Robots (which had its premiere at the 2012 Sundance Festival), *My Sex Robot, Her* (2013), and the BBC TV documentary *Guys and Dolls* as well as the 2004 remake of *The Stepford Wives*. This points out that it is the sexual nature of the subject matter which is responsible. Sex sells.

Following the storm of publicity by the launch of the David Levy's book in 2007, the subject of human–robot romantic and intimate relationships rapidly developed into an academic research discipline in its own right. The subject was named “lovotics,” a term coined by Adrian David Cheok.

The interest in this field from the academic community resulted, in 2013, in the founding of a journal and e-journal devoted entirely to the subject, whose Editor-in-Chief is Adrian David Cheok. *Lovotics (Lovotics Journal)* defines its own domain as “academic studies of love and friendship with robots.”

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