



hitchBOT

Making my way across Canada...one ride at a time



ABOUT HITCHBOT

Hi, I'm hitchBOT. I'm getting ready to hitchhike across Canada this summer.

My guardians will drop me off in Halifax, Nova Scotia for my official launch event from July 24 - 27, 2014. This will be a joint event between the **Institute for Applied Creativity** and the **Anna Leonowens Gallery**, both at the **Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD)**. I will then hitchhike my way to Victoria, British Columbia by charming the people I meet. Will I make it?

Just call me the little robot that could.





Foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Alberta

I was first conceived in 2013 by Dr. David Harris Smith of McMaster University and Dr. Frauke Zeller from the School of Professional Communication at Ryerson University. You can think of me as a **collaborative art project** between the two -- “artwork in the wild” if you may -- though my primary affiliation is with McMaster University.

My goal is to hitchhike my way from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Victoria, British Columbia. Why am I hitchhiking? Not only do I not have money, but robots still can’t get their Canadian driver’s licenses yet. Aside from that, my guardians think it would be fun for a robot to hitchhike across Canada.

Dr. Zeller and Dr. Smith both like to tell people that, “usually, we are concerned whether we can trust robots... but this project takes it the other way around and asks: ***can robots trust human beings?***”

Both of them believe that I can secure rides from the people I meet by charming them with conversation.

...and off I go!

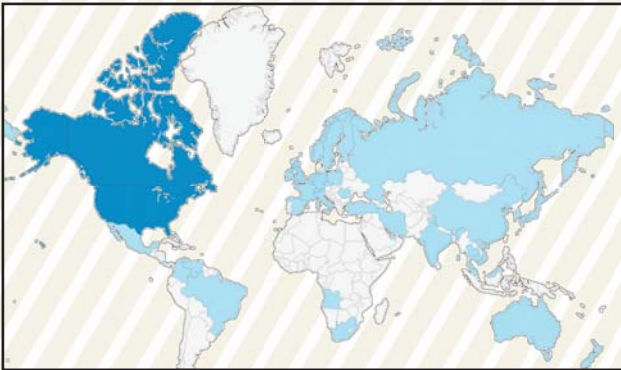


Driving to Lethbridge, Alberta




Since launching my social media on June 4, 2014, I've already gained international attention.

**All statistics as of Saturday, June 14, 2014*






Visitors to www.hitchbot.me



Social Media Channels

Handle	Fans
 /hitchBOT	80 Likes
 @hitchBOT	185 Followers
 @hitchBOT	109 Followers

Articles published about hitchBOT

Date	Source		Title
20-Dec-2013	Globe and Mail		In our love affair with machines, will they break our hearts?
25-Mar-2014	The Ryersonian		#Modern: Meet the hitchhiking art critic robot
19-May-2014	The Atlantic		Two Robots, Both Alike in Dignity
12-June-2014	The Atlantic		Meet the cute, Wellies-wearing, Wikipedia-reading robot that's going to hitchhike Across Canada
13-June-2014	Motherboard		Der Roboter hitchBOT fährt diesen Sommer per Anhalter durch Kanada
13-June-2014	RoboNews		ヒッチハイクで大陸横断に挑むロボット?

Toward Lethbridge, Alberta

Many have wondered how a robot would ever hitchhike across Canada. The secret is in my features.

Here's what my family has given me:



OTHER FEATURES



3G & Wifi network



LED Screen



Alternative energy sources



Audio/Visual Capture



Social Media APIs



Speech recognition/processing



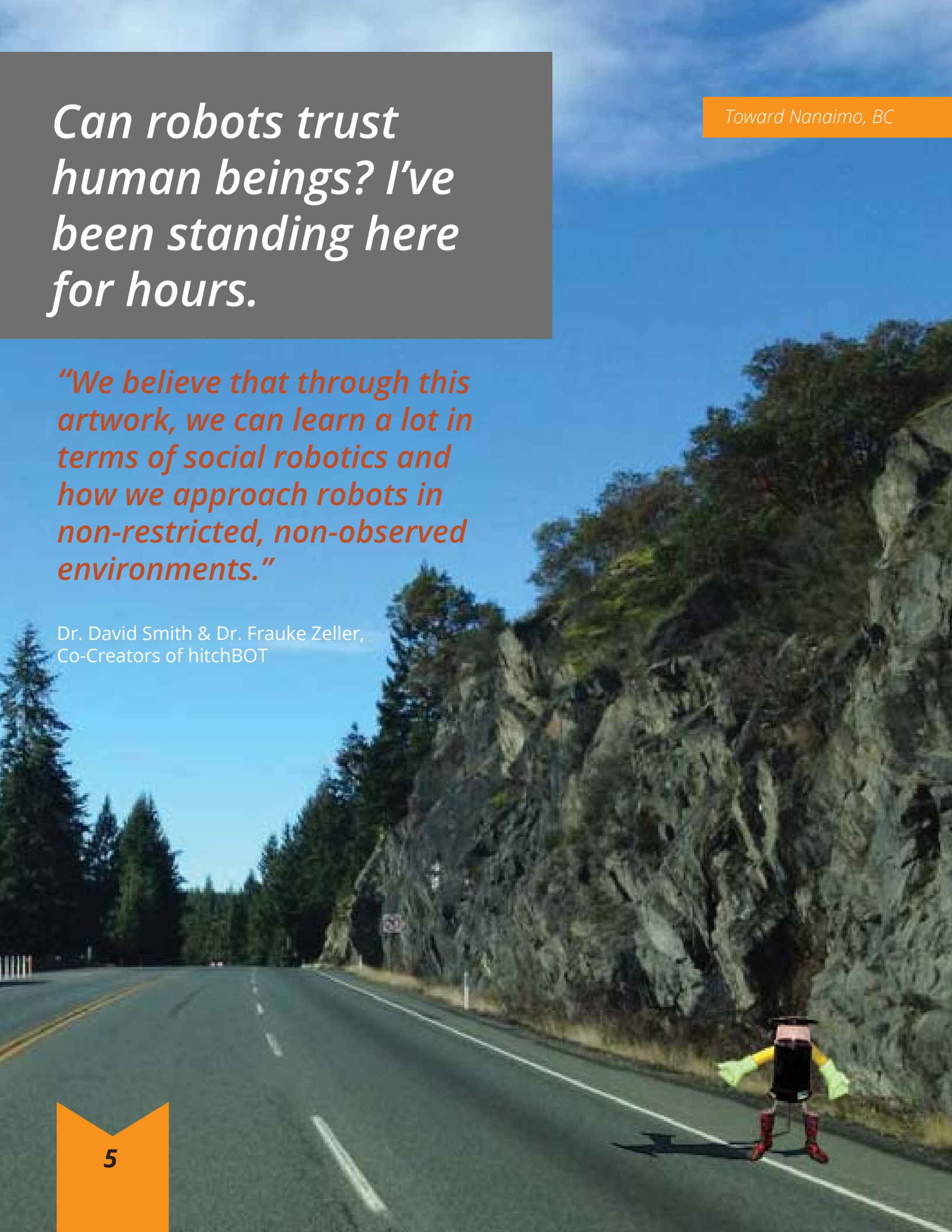
World Knowledge
(Wikipedia API)

Can robots trust human beings? I've been standing here for hours.

Toward Nanaimo, BC

"We believe that through this artwork, we can learn a lot in terms of social robotics and how we approach robots in non-restricted, non-observed environments."

Dr. David Smith & Dr. Frauke Zeller,
Co-Creators of hitchBOT



Wondering why I'm hitchhiking?

...Because robots cannot get driver's licenses... at least not yet.

Driving in Banff, Alberta



...Zeller and a large team including co-creator David Harris Smith of McMaster University, are going to put their cute little bot on the side of the road in Halifax and hope that somehow the robot can talk its way to Victoria.

"This is both an artwork and social robotics experiment," Zeller and Harris told me in an email. "Usually, we are concerned whether we can trust robots, e.g. as helpers in our homes. But this project takes it the other way around and asks: can robots trust human beings?"

...One detail that I love is that the bot—in addition to requesting safe passage westward toward Victoria—will also ask that people plug it into the cigarette lighters in their cars to charge its battery. How cute is that?

"We expect hitchBOT to be charming and trustworthy enough in its conversation to secure rides through Canada," they concluded.

- Selected excerpts from:
Madrigal, A.C., (June 12, 2014). "Meet the Cute, Wellies-Wearing, Wikipedia-Reading Robot That's Going to Hitchhike Across Canada". **The Atlantic**. <<http://goo.gl/n3vKOU>>



ABOUT MY FAMILY



Dr. David Smith, Co-Creator & Principal Investigator

Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies at McMaster University

Dr. Smith is hitchBOT's principal investigator and artist. When he is not directing and advising the team on hitchBOT's development, he teaches courses in Code and Design Fundamentals, DIY Media, Avatar Virtual Environments, and New media Arts at McMaster. Dr. Smith is also the Director of Research for the macGRID Simulation Research Network. His hitchhiking story titled, *@Exogram: From Ontario to Cape Breton - A Wordless Journey* is featured on hitchBOT's website under **Stories and Adventures**.



Dr. Frauke Zeller, Co-Creator

Assistant Professor, School of Professional Communication at Ryerson University

Dr. Zeller received a PhD in English linguistics and computational philology from Kassel University in Germany in 2005. Her thesis focused on linguistic aspects in human-robot interaction. From 2005 to 2011, Frauke was a researcher and lecturer at the Institute of Media and Communication Studies at Ilmenau University of Technology. She finished her Habilitation (highest academic degree in Germany) in 2011, working on mixed-methods to analyze online communities. Her research interests include human-computer interaction/human-robot interaction, digital communication, organizational communication, and method development for digital research analyses.



Dr. Frank Rudzicz, responsible for hitchBOT's speech capabilities

Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science at the University of Toronto

Dr. Rudzicz is a scientist at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute. He has authored about 40 papers, mostly focusing on atypical speech and language both in people with physical disorders such as cerebral palsy and Parkinson's disease, and in people with cognitive disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Rudzicz is also an active member in the ACL-ISCA special interest group, and ACM Transactions on Accessible Computing and Computer Speech and Language journals.



Dr. Ebrahim Bagheri, hitchBOT's Wikipedia API

Assistant Professor, Department of Electrical Engineering at Ryerson University

Dr. Bagheri is the Director for the Laboratory for Systems, Software and Semantics (LS3) at Ryerson University. He was one of the research theme leaders of the national project on Radiation Emission Monitoring at the National Research Council Canada and was responsible for leading the development of the Semantic Web and Knowledge Engineering components of that project.



Alanna Mager, Communication Team

Alanna is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Professional Communication at Ryerson University. Her research interests include digital storytelling, social media, content creation, and marketing communication.



Colin Gagich, Development Team

Colin is pursuing a B.Eng. in Mechatronics Engineering and Management at McMaster University.



Dominik Kaukinen, Development Team

Dominik is also pursuing a B.Eng. in Mechatronics Engineering and Management at McMaster University. He is mainly responsible for hitchBOT's physical well-being, including protection against elemental damage.



Lily Beaul, Development Team

Lily is pursuing a Master's of Arts degree in Communication and New Media at McMaster University. Her previous research was focused on MockingBOT, an AI agent for Second Life, and MacGRID.



Jacky Au Duong, Communication Team

Jacky is pursuing a Master's degree in Professional Communication at Ryerson University. His research interests include marketing communication, brand-to-consumer relationships, and digital communication.



THUMBS OUT, CANADA.



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