

Postdoc visit to Canadian universities & companies

(applicant: Tom Ziemke, postdoc: Franziska Babel)

Abstract:

During her 3-week stay in Canada in July 2025, Franziska Babel gave three invited talks at three different universities, attended the University of Toronto Robotics conference, and visited four robotics companies in Ontario. Her main host was Shane Saunderson at McMasters University where she gave a talk on persuasion and deception in human-robot interaction (HRI) and visited Denise Geiskkovitch's lab to discuss collaboration on social mechanisms in HRI. She further visited the world-famous RoboHub at the University of Waterloo hosted by Brandon DeHart, visited Yue Hu's Robotics Lab, where she gained new insights into physical HRI and held a well-visited seminar on biases in HRI. In Montreal, finally, she was hosted by AJung Moon at McGill University, where she gave a seminar talk on ethical perspectives on HRI and discussed collaboration on telepresence robots. The four companies she visited produce delivery robots for last-mile delivery (Magna International), non-humanoid outdoor robots (Clearpath Robotics Rockwell Automation), humanoid robots (Merphi Robotics), and distribute social robots to care facilities (Social Robots). At each company, she was given demonstrations of the robots and discussed HRI design aspects with the robot developers.

Results:

Throughout her research stay, Franziska was given the great opportunities to network with amazing female researchers from all over the world which has created a lasting network for future publications and grant proposals. Apart from expanding her international network and gaining a cross-cultural perspective on robotics in Canada, this research visit has led to a CHI'26 conference workshop publication (<https://arxiv.org/abs/2604.15418>) together with Shane Saunderson (main host) and Shalaleh Rismani (postdoc from AJung Moon's lab), which will be further be expanded into a journal paper.

