Towards user acceptance and accessibility in today's robots

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Talk Abstract: To truly help people, current robotic technology must (1) solve a problem users have and (2) be accepted and used in the long-term. In this talk, I describe two overarching research projects on this topic: one with a grant from Toyota Research Institute to reduce social isolation of older adults, and one while working as a Visiting Academic at Amazon to improve usability of a warehouse robot that autonomously moves through shared space with people. I describe my trajectory in these projects from need-finding research to work on longitudinal and accessibility acceptance.

Bio: Dr. Marlena R. Fraune (they/them) works to improve today's robots for diverse users. As Founder and CEO of Plover: Human-Centered Technology Consulting, they draw on their experience in industry and academia. They leverage their real-world experience researching and improving robots for industry, via Toyota Research Institute, Amazon, and Kaleidoscope Innovations, to determine current robot needs and capabilities, and user needs and preferences for those robots. They leverage their decade of academic research experience – including five years as a professor at New Mexico State University, and visiting research positions in Germany and Japan – to develop and answer overarching research questions to meet users' real needs with robots, such as: How can we promote long-term acceptance of home robots? How can we enhance these robots for interactions across cultures? How can we transcend current accessibility guidelines to create accessible mobile robots?

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