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BROOKLYN

# NYU Polytechnic Institute's smartphone-controlled robot will allow grannies to read bedtime stories remotely

Caesar, as the project is known, is one of many innovative robotic projects. The phone will transmit the grandma's voice as the robot's mouth does the reading, and the robot's eyes, twin cameras, will allow her to see the grandchildren.

BY LORE CROGHAN / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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TODD MAISEL/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

NYU-Poly student Jared Frank, 25, is creating Caesar. Right now, the robot can swivel its head and eyes to watch people walking around the lab.

Wiz kids from a downtown Brooklyn college are designing a robot to serve as a surrogate granny — and there's an app for that.

Caesar the robot is just one of the space-age creations designed by NYU Polytechnic Institute students. Caesar will be able to read bedtime stories to granny's grandkids through an app on a cellphone.



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Keith Gildea designed Caesar's eyes, each of which is a camera. Students say Caesar could also be turned into a robot receptionist that takes pictures, matches them with online photos and greets visitors by name.

"It can be your avatar," said grad student Jared Frank, 25, who's in the early stages of designing Caesar. "It can read a bedtime story to kids in Brooklyn if you are a granny and live in Miami."

Mobile apps, a new trend in robotics, will make robots easy for regular folks to operate, and Polytech students are also working apps for robots such as an empathetic teddy bear for autistic kids.



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**Vinicius Fernandes with a robotic teddy bear that will play with autistic kids. The kids' phone cameras will pick up their facial expressions, and the bear will respond with appropriate gestures.**

"Robots are going mobile," said Professor Vikram Kapila, who runs the NYU-Poly robotics lab where students are working on new high-tech projects to make machinery act like human beings. "It's all about the apps."

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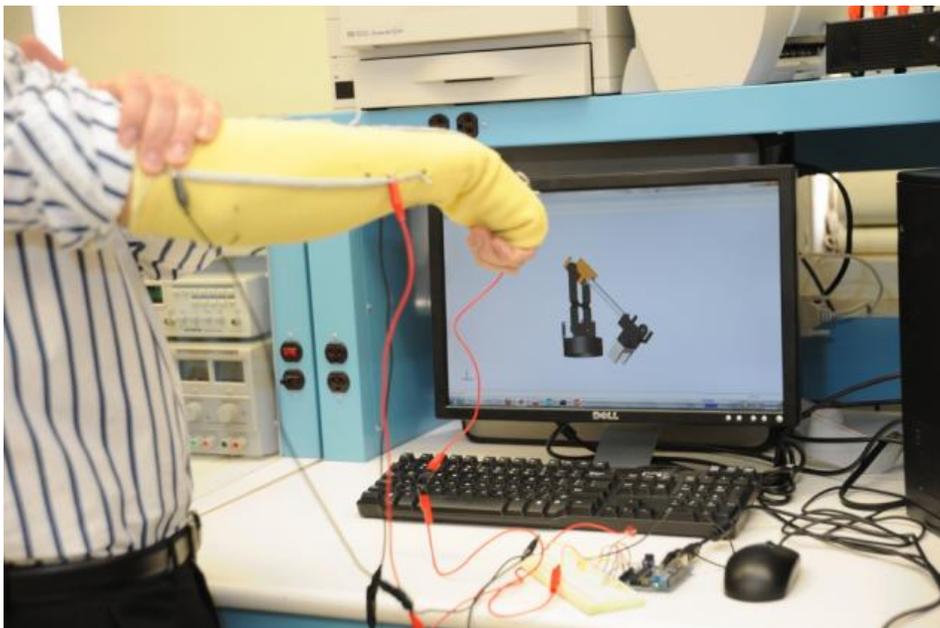
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**Vinicius Fernandes shows off a robotic sleeve. Fernandes is designing jackets and shirts with knitted fabric sensors in them that tell robots what to do.**

"If robots are going to function in society they need to interact with people in an intuitive, simple way," Kapila said. "If you give an iPhone to a 2-year-old they figure out what to do with it."

To make Caesar work, a real-life granny will use her phone to transmit her voice through the robot's mouth to do the reading. She will be able to watch her grandkids' reactions through the robot's eyes, which are twin cameras.

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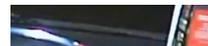


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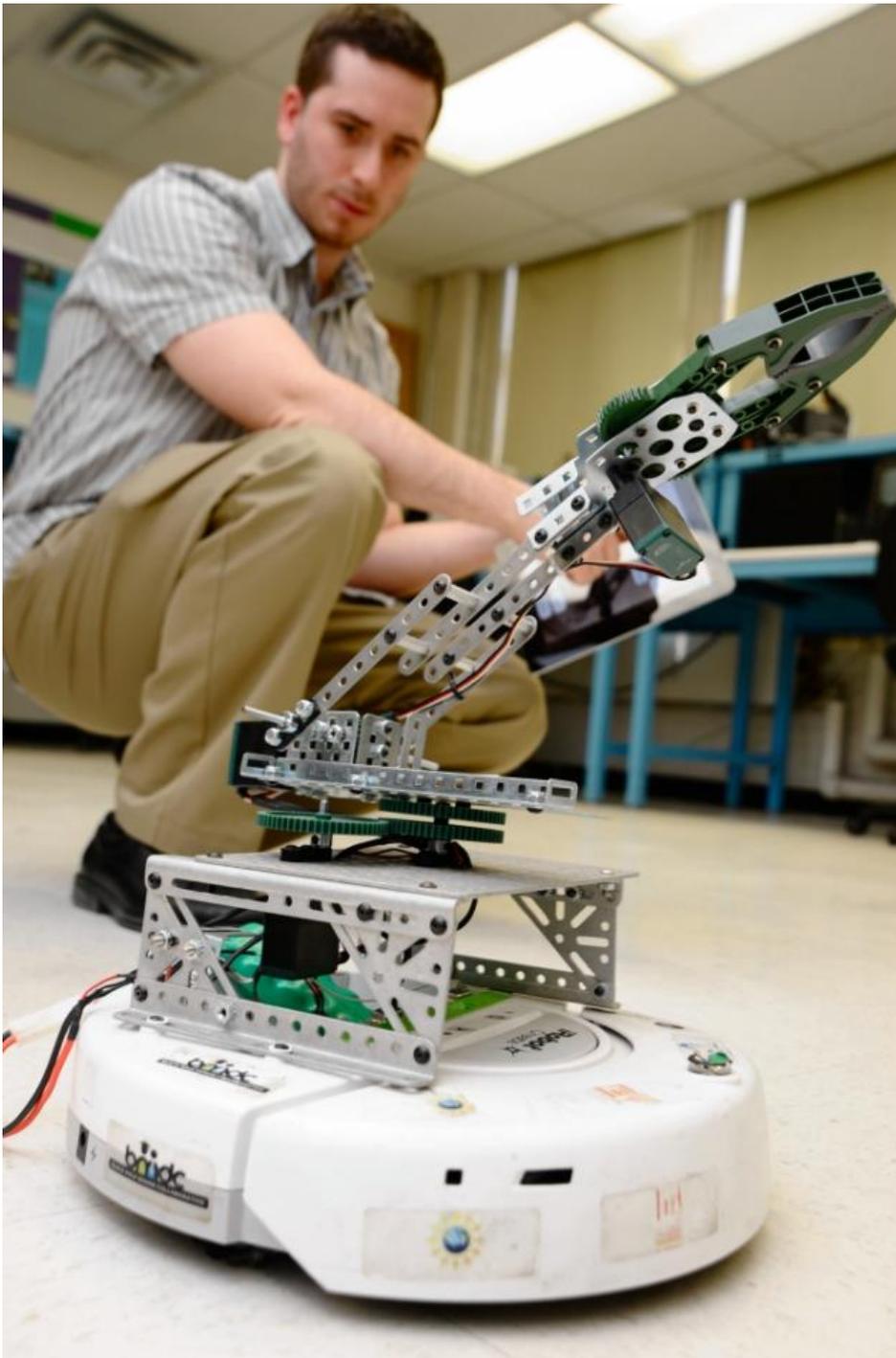
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Jared Frank demonstrates an Ipad-controlled robot. "Robots have been science fiction for so long," Frank said. "We're a part of making science fiction into reality."

Right now the robot — whose name stands for "cellularly accessible expressive semi-autonomous robot" — can swivel its head and eyes to watch people walking around the lab.

Caesar could also be turned into a robot receptionist who takes visitors' pictures and matches them with online photos so it can greet them by name, Kapila said.

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With an iPad app, David Lopez can make his robotic arm do chores such as picking up eyeglasses and medicine bottles.



Polytech students are also turning a motorized teddy bear into a playmate for kids with developmental disabilities like autism.

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The kids' phone cameras will transmit their facial expressions to the stuffed animals, which will react with appropriate gestures. "This toy will be therapeutic," said Frank.

The Polytech team is also working on other robot projects.

Fellow grad student David Lopez, 23, can make a robotic arm pick up a pair of glasses or hand over a medicine bottle with an iPad app he's created.

Exchange student Vinicius Fernandes, 20, is designing jackets and shirts with knitted fabric sensors in them that tell robots what to do.

"Robots have been science fiction for so long," Frank said. "We're a part of making science fiction into reality."

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