Now, a social robot receptionist

At Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, current research on robotics has yielded interesting results. The university now has social and telepresence robots that can interact with people and converse intelligently.

The latest example of a social robot that has been developed at the university is Nadine. Being humanoid with soft skin and brown hair, Nadine looks at you in the eye when speaking and responds in a human voice. She even remembers the conversation when you interact with her the next time.

In a news release, Professor Nadia Thalman, creator of Nadine from NTU’s School of Computer Engineering listed these social robots among the media innovations that companies can leverage for commercialisation. Social robots may have a wide range of applications.

“Robotics technologies have advanced significantly over the past few decades and are already being used in manufacturing and logistics. As countries worldwide face challenges of an aging population, social robots can be one solution to address the shrinking workforce, become personal companions for children and the elderly at home, and even serve as a platform for healthcare services in future,” explained Prof Thalmann in the news release.

EDGAR, on the other hand, is a telepresence robot. Such robots can be controlled by a user sitting in a remote location in front of a webcam and the controls. EDGAR would mimic the gestures of the person in front of the webcam, such as raising and lowering hands, and the face and facial expression of the person would appear on the face of the robot. Apart from this, the telepresence robots can also deliver lectures based on prepared texts and interact with people, and even make witty comments.

The EDGAR represents three years of R&D. It is believed that such robots can come in useful in education.