Robbie the Robot works at Purdue

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Purdue University scientists now have a $1 million robot system at its Math Sciences Building with the capacity to store up to 1 petabyte of data.

The system -- named "Robbie the Robot" for the robot in the 1950s science fiction TV series "Forbidden Planet" -- is a cutting-edge, automated storage and retrieval system.

The system's capability to store one petabyte of data was described by Dwight McKay, director of systems engineering at Purdue: "To put this in context, 1 petabyte equals 1,000 terabytes. The U.S. Library of Congress contains approximately 10 terabytes of data, and our capacity is about 100 times that amount.

"That is substantial, considering all the Internet content in existence is estimated to be 8 petabytes."

Mike Marsh, senior engineer in Purdue's Rosen Center for Advanced Computing, said Robbie is putting Purdue ahead of the curve.

"One exabyte is 1,000 petabytes, and it's estimated that a 5-exabyte library would be able to store all the words ever uttered by every person who has ever lived since the origin of our species," Marsh said. "We should have libraries capable of storing an exabyte of data within the next several years."

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