

## **New robot butler "HERB" can microwave your dinner (w/ Video)**

May 3 2012, by Bob Yirka

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(Phys.org) -- One of the big disappointments of the computer age is the distinct lack of robots in our everyday lives. For years we've all been teased by the possibilities of robots in SciFi movies and television shows, and still, the only robots in our lives are those little Roomba vacuum cleaners.

Now, though, it looks like we might finally be getting somewhere thanks to the efforts of the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Institute - started and run by Siddhartha Srinivasa, all courtesy of a grant from Intel. There, a research team has been hard at work trying to create robots that do stuff that everyday people might consider useful. Their latest creation is the Home Exploring Robot Butler, aka HERB.

HERB, has arms and hands (more like claws) and of course a lot of sensors and sits atop a Segway base that allows it to move around. For situational awareness in an unpredictable environment, such as the typical home, HERB has been armed with a spinning laser that provides "him" with a 40,000 points per second data stream. All of that allows the robot to move around in an unknown environment without bumping into things. But HERB has a lot of intelligence built in as well, and that's how the research team has taught him to retrieve a frozen meal from a counter top, open a microwave oven door, slip in the meal, close the door and then run the microwave to properly heat the meal. Once it's finished heating, he can retrieve the meal for consumption by its human master. All without a word of encouragement. HERB can also recognize and fetch requested items from a group of other similar objects.

This particular demonstration by the team is meant to convey to those that watch HERB in action that the goal of the Institute is to do research on real-world robotics applications rather than focusing on technology that is used for industrial, military or “cutesy” purposes. Their goal is nothing short of creating a [robot](#) that truly can do the things we all really want them to do, such as taking care of the laundry, cooking, washing the dishes, or perhaps most importantly, fetching a cold beer from the fridge for us as we sit back in kingly fashion in our easy chair watching football on the telly.

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Citation: New robot butler "HERB" can microwave your dinner (w/ Video) (2012, May 3)  
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2012-05-robot-butler-herb-microwave-dinner.html>

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