

Call for Papers

Special Issue of the *AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction*

Anthropomorphism in the Age of AI: When, What, Why and How?

Submission deadline: February 1, 2027

Overview

Artificial intelligence increasingly communicates, advises, collaborates, creates, and makes decisions in ways that evoke human characteristics. Generative AI systems converse in natural language, display emotional expressions, adapt their responses, assume social roles, and exhibit behaviors that may appear intentional, empathic, intelligent, or relational. Social robots, virtual humans, intelligent assistants, algorithmic advisors, autonomous systems, and AI-enabled products likewise incorporate humanlike identities, voices, appearances, personalities, and forms of agency.

These developments have renewed scholarly interest in anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics, intentions, emotions, or mental capacities to nonhuman entities (Epley et al., 2007). Anthropomorphism has long been central to human-computer interaction and information systems research, including studies of anthropomorphic recommendation agents and socially oriented interfaces (Qiu & Benbasat, 2009). Contemporary AI, however, creates qualitatively different conditions for anthropomorphic interaction as AI-enabled systems increasingly exhibit adaptive, conversational, relational, and humanlike capabilities (Li & Suh, 2022).

Recent reviews show that research on technology anthropomorphism has expanded considerably but remains theoretically and empirically fragmented. Anthropomorphic design may increase trust, social presence, satisfaction, engagement, attachment, and willingness to interact, yet it may also create perceptual mismatch, unrealistic expectations, privacy concerns, manipulation, dependency, overreliance, or rejection (Bhatti et al., 2026; Wang & Ngai, 2026). Recent studies illustrate these tensions. For example, a modest response failure reduced perceived humanness and increased uncanniness (Diederich et al., 2021). Anthropomorphic chatbot design affected psychological social distance and, consequently, trust and privacy concerns, while the relationship between privacy concerns and actual self-disclosure varied with information sensitivity (Zhang & Zhu, 2026). Existing research also frequently treats anthropomorphism as a unitary property despite important distinctions among designed humanlike cues, users' perceptions of humanness, the attribution of human mental or social qualities, and the relationships that develop through interaction (Bhatti et al., 2026; Wang & Ngai, 2026).

This special issue seeks to move the field beyond documenting the effects of isolated humanlike cues toward explaining anthropomorphism as a multidimensional, dynamic, and context-dependent feature of human-AI interaction. We invite research examining how anthropomorphic design cues are incorporated into AI systems, how users perceive those cues and attribute humanlike qualities to the systems, and how these perceptions and attributions shape user experience, cognition, affect, trust, behavior, and relationships. We particularly welcome work that advances conceptual precision, explains mechanisms and boundary conditions, investigates both beneficial and harmful consequences, and develops principles for transparent, calibrated, and responsible anthropomorphic AI design. In addition to examining the

forms and effects of anthropomorphism, we invite critical reflection on its appropriateness as a concept, design strategy, and research lens in human–computer interaction. Under what conditions is anthropomorphism useful or desirable, and when might it be misleading, limiting, or ethically problematic?

Special Issue Objectives

The special issue aims to advance IS and HCI scholarship on the design, perception, attribution, and consequences of anthropomorphism in human–AI interaction, while drawing on relevant perspectives from information systems, psychology, communication, design, management, marketing, computer science, and related disciplines.

Submissions should make a clear contribution to understanding one or more of the following questions (or a related question):

- how anthropomorphism should be conceptualized for contemporary AI systems and human-AI interaction;
- how specific humanlike cues and their combinations shape user perceptions and behavior;
- which cognitive, affective, relational, and social mechanisms explain anthropomorphic responses;
- when anthropomorphism promotes appropriate trust, engagement, collaboration, and well-being; and when it produces discomfort, resistance, overreliance, dependency, or manipulation;
- how anthropomorphic perceptions and relationships evolve through repeated interaction;
- how organizational, institutional, and societal contexts shape interactions with anthropomorphic AI and their broader consequences;
- how anthropomorphic AI should be designed, disclosed, governed, and evaluated responsibly; and
- whether, when, and to what extent anthropomorphism is an appropriate concept, design strategy, and analytical lens for contemporary AI and human-AI interaction.

Submissions from adjacent disciplines should clearly articulate their contribution to HCI or information systems theory, design knowledge, or practice.

Scope and Topics

The special issue adopts a broad view of AI. Relevant systems include conversational and generative AI, embodied and disembodied agents, virtual humans and avatars, social and service robots, intelligent assistants, recommendation and decision-support systems, autonomous technologies, and AI systems occupying interpersonal or organizational roles such as advisor, teammate, tutor, supervisor, service representative, or companion.

Studies may examine personal, organizational, commercial, educational, healthcare, financial, workplace, domestic, entertainment, public-sector, or other consequential settings.

Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- **Conceptualization and construct differentiation**, including distinctions among anthropomorphic design, perceived humanness, mind perception, agency, intelligence, empathy, social presence, authenticity, and related constructs.
- **Anthropomorphic cues, configurations, and coherence**, including visual, verbal, vocal, behavioral, emotional, identity-based, embodied, functional, and relational cues, as well as how they complement, conflict, or interact.
- **Psychological, affective, and relational mechanisms**, such as trust, empathy, attachment, psychological distance, expectation formation, perceived competence, emotional contagion, and mindful or mindless anthropomorphism.
- **Capability alignment, expectation violation, and system failure**, including mismatches among humanlike presentation, task requirements, social roles, and actual AI capabilities.
- **Dynamic, longitudinal, nonlinear, and heterogeneous effects**, including how anthropomorphic perceptions, trust, relationships, and patterns of use evolve through repeated interaction, as well as threshold, saturation, or reversal effects.
- **Trust calibration, reliance, and decision quality**, particularly in consequential settings such as healthcare, finance, employment, education, and public services.
- **Transparency, AI identity disclosure, ethics, and dark-side consequences**, including deception, manipulation, privacy invasion, dependency, bias amplification, loss of agency, uncertainty communication, and risks to vulnerable users.
- **Responsible design across user groups, cultures, tasks, and contexts**, including when AI should appear humanlike, machine-like, minimally anthropomorphic, or adaptively personalized.
- **Anthropomorphic AI in organizational settings**, including AI as a coworker, advisor, supervisor, service representative, or organizational agent, and its implications for interaction, trust, role expectations, and accountability.
- **Societal implications of anthropomorphic AI**, including its effects on social norms, human identity and distinctiveness, interpersonal relationships, inclusion and inequality, public trust, labor, and broader human–technology relationships.
- **The appropriateness and limits of anthropomorphism**, including whether, when, and to what extent it serves as a useful concept, theoretical lens, research motive, or design strategy in contemporary human-AI interaction.

We welcome experiments, surveys, field studies, qualitative research, design science research, computational methods, longitudinal designs, mixed methods, theory development, critical reviews, and opinions. We also welcome strong submissions that move beyond documenting associations among anthropomorphic design cues, user attributions, and outcomes. The manuscript should clarify the focal anthropomorphic phenomenon, explain mechanisms or boundary conditions, reconcile conflicting findings, extend or challenge existing theory, or generate actionable design knowledge.

Empirical studies involving generative or adaptive AI should report sufficient information about the system, model or version, interface, prompts, interaction protocol, manipulations, and dates of data collection to support interpretation, transparency, and methodological traceability. Studies manipulating anthropomorphism are encouraged to consider potential confounds involving competence, usability, warmth, attractiveness, novelty, realism, social presence, and related properties.

Submission Guidelines

Please consult the journal's [Information for Authors](#) and [THCI Policies](#) before preparing your manuscript.

Authors may optionally send an abstract or extended abstract of up to two pages to both Special Issue Editors to inquire about fit with the special issue. Feedback on fit does not guarantee that a subsequent submission will pass editorial screening or peer review.

Manuscripts will undergo double-blind review. Authors should submit:

- a blinded manuscript without identifying information; and
- a separate cover page containing author information, acknowledgements, and a statement that the manuscript is intended for this special issue.

Submit manuscripts through [ScholarOne](#) at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/thci> and make sure to specify “Anthropomorphism” in the special issue field.

All manuscripts will undergo an initial screening by the Special Issue Editors to ensure there is a fit with the special issue and there is readiness for review. Manuscripts that pass screening will enter the journal's double-blind review process. Authors are encouraged to submit their manuscripts before the deadline to facilitate timely editorial processing.

Timeline

- Submission deadline: February 1, 2027
- First-round decision: April 15, 2027
- First-round revision due: July 15, 2027
- Second-round decision: September 15, 2027
- Second-round revision due: November 1, 2027
- Final decision: December 1, 2027
- Tentative publication date: April 2028

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