



America at 250: A Beacon for the AI Age Conference

BOSTON GLOBAL FORUM · AI WORLD SOCIETY · LOEB HOUSE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY ·
MAY 1, 2026

SPECIAL PROFILE

Cynthia Breazeal

Pioneer of Social Robotics and AI Literacy

Professor of Media Arts and Sciences, MIT

MIT Former Dean for Digital Learning · MIT Open Learning

Founder & Director, Personal Robots Group · MIT Media Lab

Founding Director, MIT RAISE Initiative · Day of AI Program

AAAI Fellow · NAE Gilbreth Lecture Award · TR35

Honored as one of the America 250 · AI Pioneers



I **The Birth of Social Robotics**

FROM KISMET TO A NEW FIELD OF HUMAN-MACHINE INTERACTION

Cynthia Breazeal is among the founding figures of an entire field of artificial intelligence. As a doctoral student at the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory under Rodney Brooks, she developed Kismet — a robot capable of expressive social and emotional exchange with human beings — work so foundational that Kismet has been on display in the MIT Museum since 2000. With her 2004 book *Designing Sociable Robots*, Breazeal launched what is now recognized as the field of Social Robotics and Human-Robot Interaction.

Today, as **Professor of Media Arts and Sciences at MIT** and the founder and director of the **Personal Robots Group at the MIT Media Lab**, Breazeal continues to lead the field she helped create. Her research investigates the long-term theme of “*living with AI*” — the design of personified artificial-intelligence technologies that promote human flourishing, in domains ranging from K–12 education to pediatrics, from health and wellness to the support of older adults aging at home.

She earned her B.Sc. in electrical and computer engineering from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and her doctorate in electrical engineering and computer science from MIT in 2000. She has spoken at TED, the World Economic Forum, the United Nations, SXSW, and CES, and has been featured by TIME magazine’s Best Inventions and the National Academy of Engineering’s Gilbreth Lecture Award.

“We are not designing tools. We are designing the conditions under which human beings will live, every day, alongside intelligent machines.”

II ***AI Literacy for Every Child***

BUILDING A GENERATION READY FOR THE AI AGE

In addition to her research, Breazeal served as **MIT Dean for Digital Learning**, leading MIT Open Learning’s research and engagement units, and as founding Director of the **MIT RAISE Initiative** — Responsible AI for Social Empowerment and Education — an Institute-wide effort to advance access and inclusivity in AI education for K–12 students, the workforce, and learners of all backgrounds.

Through **Day of AI**, a flagship RAISE program she launched, AI literacy education has reached **more than one million K–12 students in 170 countries** — making it one of the largest efforts in the world to equip the next generation with the understanding they will need to live, work, and lead in a society shaped by artificial intelligence. Her work places special emphasis on under-served students and on the principles of design justice in human-machine interaction.

She is the co-founder of Jibo, Inc., a consumer social robotics company, where she served as Chief Scientist and Chief Experience Officer; her Jibo robot was featured on the cover of TIME magazine’s Best Inventions. She is a Fellow of the AAAI and an internationally recognized innovator, designer, and entrepreneur whose work has shaped both the academic field of human-robot interaction and the public conversation about the responsible design of AI in everyday life.

“Children today will spend their entire lives in the company of AI. The question is whether they will be its authors — or only its subjects.”

III ***America at 250: AI Pioneers***

RECOGNIZING A FOUNDATIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE AI AGE

At the **America at 250: A Beacon for the AI Age Conference** at Loeb House, Harvard University, on **May 1, 2026**, **Governor Michael Dukakis and Nguyen Anh Tuan** honor Cynthia Breazeal as one of the **America 250 · AI Pioneers** — the fifty leaders whose work is shaping America in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.

The Conference’s recognition honors a career that has shaped two of the most consequential frontiers of the AI Age: the design of social technologies that interact with human beings as partners rather than tools, and the education of an entire generation of young people in the responsible use, design, and critique of artificial intelligence. From Kismet in the MIT Museum to a million students learning AI in 170 countries, Breazeal’s work is shaping how human beings will live with intelligent systems for generations to come.

“The most important thing we will build in the AI Age is not a system. It is a generation that knows how to live with one.”



From the founding of social robotics to the leadership of MIT Open Learning, from Kismet to Jibo to a million children learning AI across 170 countries, Cynthia Breazeal has spent her career imagining how human beings and intelligent machines might flourish together — and building the technologies, the curricula, and the institutions that make that flourishing possible. America at 250 honors that lifetime of work.

CONCLUSION

*From the founding of social robotics to the global expansion of AI literacy education, from the laboratories of MIT to classrooms in 170 countries, **Cynthia Breazeal has shaped how a generation will live with artificial intelligence** — work that will define the experience of the AI Age for human beings, and remind us that the design of intelligent systems is, finally, the design of a way of life.*



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