

Caitlin Morris

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Builder and researcher focused on designing and evaluating AI-assisted systems that shape human behavior and learning. I develop interactive prototypes, run experiments with real-world learners, and translate findings into system and product directions. My work spans physical and digital systems, with a focus on how people develop deeper capability and agency through complex technologies in practice.

Education

PhD, Media Arts & Sciences — MIT Media Lab (PhD Defense: June 2026)

MS, Media Arts & Sciences — MIT Media Lab, 2021

MFA, Design and Technology — Parsons The New School for Design, 2012

Dual BS, Psychology & Architectural Building Sciences — Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2010

Fellowships

Meta Research PhD Fellow (2021–23) • LEGO Papert Fellow (2023–24) • Morningside Academy for Design Fellow (2024–25) • Cosmos Institute Grantee (2025)

Experience

PhD Research – AI & Learning

MIT Media Lab, Fluid Interfaces Group | 2021–Present

- Designed and built AI-assisted learning systems, using prototypes and experiments with hundreds of learners to evaluate how interaction design choices influence learner behavior and outcomes.
- Developed novel evaluation approaches for complex constructs (e.g., curiosity, intrinsic motivation, interest) into measurable behavioral signals, enabling assessment of growth beyond engagement metrics.
- Translated research findings into interaction designs and learning experiences for audiences from students to professionals, working with collaborators across design, education, and technical domains.
- Conducted embedded research in real-world learning environments, working directly with students and educators to understand how systems are adopted and adapted in practice.

Experience Design & Learning Systems – Selected Examples

Venues including MIT Museum, Innovators for Purpose, NuVu Innovation School | 2021–Present

- Designed and led workshops and programs focused on building understanding of AI systems and design principles, enabling educators and students to apply design principles to their own learning contexts.
- Translated research insights on learner behavior into practical frameworks and activities used in real-world educational settings.
- Co-organized cross-disciplinary events (e.g., “Design Across Disciplines”) bringing together educators across domains to explore agency through design and making as a core cognitive skill.

Teaching & Learning Community Engagement

9 years of teaching experience across high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels

Teaching Fellow — Harvard Graduate School of Education | 2025

- Co-taught “Vibe Coding,” exploring AI-assisted coding tools and how they shape creative learning

Instructor — MIT Media Lab | 2022

- Designed and taught “Extended Cognition,” a course on augmenting cognition through design; guided students in developing prototypes grounded in neuroscience and computer science research

Lead Studio Instructor — NuVu Innovation School | 2019

- Co-taught project-based design studios for high school students; designed studio topics and taught design and technical skills across a range of abilities

Adjunct Faculty — NYU Integrated Digital Media | 2016–2019

- Taught courses in coding, electronics, and human-computer interaction for students in design and computer science

Festival of Learning Co-Designer — MIT Media Lab | 2022–Present

- Designed and facilitated an annual 200+ person event, coordinating 18–20 cross-disciplinary workshops

Lead Design & Engineering | Hypersonic (Design and Engineering Studio) | 2015–2019

- Led design and development of large-scale interactive systems, collaborating across multidisciplinary teams to take projects from concept through deployment
- Built and iterated on physical and software systems based on user interaction and real-world constraints, ensuring reliability and engagement at scale.

Lead Creative Visualist | Fake Love, NY | 2013–2015

- Owned interactive experience design projects from concept through implementation and deployment, collaborating across design, engineering, and client teams.

Creative Technologist (Software Development and IxD) | Local Projects (Museum Design) | 2012–2013

- Developed and shipped interactive exhibits and multimedia learning tools for museums and public spaces, working across design, engineering, and client teams
- Collaborated closely with designers, engineers, and stakeholders to prototype, test, and refine interaction designs in real-world environments

Selected Projects

- **AI Feedback Attribution:** Pre-registered three-condition experiment showing perceived source (AI vs. human) significantly changes learner effort, work complexity, and reported intrinsic interest despite identical content; non-credible attribution produces worse outcomes than transparent AI.
- **Peer and AI Collaboration:** Comparative study identifying real-time interaction quality markers (explanation, curiosity expression, turn balance) that predict learning perception outcomes with human or AI learning partners.
- **Inquiry Bits:** Designed and implemented an interface for trust-based sharing of AI conversation traces, enabling awareness of others' thinking processes within small groups. Iteratively user tested prototypes to evaluate how different representations of interaction history affect collaboration, trust, and engagement.

Methods & Tools

Methods: Experimental design, evaluation design, user research, behavioral analysis, mixed-effects modeling, discourse analysis, ethnographic and co-design methods

Technical: Python, LLM/NLP pipelines, JavaScript/React, C++, web prototyping, AI tools

Prototyping: Rapid prototyping and iteration, PCB design, sensors, 3D modeling and fabrication workflows

Selected Publications

Morris, C. & Maes, P. (2026) *Same Feedback, Different Source: How AI vs. Human Feedback Attribution and Credibility Shape Learner Behavior*. Abstract accepted; full paper under review. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2604.03075>

Morris, C., Elsonni, N., and Maes, P. (2026) *Students as Ethnographers of Their Own Learning Ecology: How Learners' Social-Emotional Insights Shape Their Designs for Technology in Collaborative Learning*. In preparation.

Morris, C. & Maes, P. (2026). *When Peers Outperform AI (and When They Don't): Interaction Quality Over Modality*. International Conference on Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL). <https://arxiv.org/abs/2601.11777>

Morris, C. & Maes, P. (2025). *MoSalC: Understanding Social Curiosity in Digital Learning Environments*. Connected Learning Summit. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.31871980.v1>

Morris, C., Liu, P., Riecke, B. E., & Maes, P. (2023). *InExChange: Fostering Genuine Social Connection through Embodied Breath Sharing in Mixed Reality*. 2023 CHI EA. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3544549.3583917>