

Caitlin Morris

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Researcher and designer focused on how AI systems shape human behavior, learning, and social interaction. I run experiments, build prototypes, and translate findings into interaction designs tested in real-world settings. My work centers on designing AI systems that support human capability and collaboration.

Experience

PhD Researcher — AI & Learning Systems

MIT Media Lab, Fluid Interfaces Group | 2021–Present

- Designed and deployed AI-assisted interaction systems to study how feedback source, social presence, and collaboration structure influence user behavior and learning (200+ participants)
- Built and evaluated LLM-based pipelines to analyze conversational patterns (e.g., curiosity, explanation, turn-taking) and connect them to outcomes
- Led longitudinal co-design research with high school students, examining how learners adopt and adapt AI tools in real-world contexts
- Translated experimental findings into design frameworks for AI systems that increase engagement, curiosity, and collaborative interaction without reducing user agency

Learning Experience Design & Teaching

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 sensory experience, social interaction, and interface design
- Guided students in developing prototypes grounded in neuroscience and computer science research

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 engineering for large-scale kinetic sculptures and interactive installations
- Worked across engineering and fabrication teams to integrate mechanical systems, electronics, and custom software into interactive systems at architectural scale

Creative Technologist (Front-End Software and Interaction Design)

Local Projects (Museum Media Design) | 2012–2014

- Developed interactive exhibits and media experiences for museums and public spaces

Fellowships

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

Methods & Tools

Methods: Experimental design, behavioral analysis, conversational interaction analysis

Technical: Python, LLM/NLP pipelines, JavaScript/React, C++

Prototyping: Physical computing, PCB design, sensing systems, 3D modeling and fabrication workflows

Education

PhD, Media Arts & Sciences — MIT Media Lab (Expected July 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

Selected Projects

- **AI Feedback Attribution:** showed perceived source (AI vs human) significantly changes user engagement despite identical content, N=150+
- **Peer and AI Collaboration:** identified interaction patterns (explanation, turn balance) that predict learning outcomes and engagement

Selected Publications

Morris, C. & Maes, P. *Shareable Units of Thought: Designing Social Infrastructure Around AI-Scaffolded Cognitive Process*. In preparation. 2026.

Morris, C. & Maes, P. *Same Feedback, Different Source: How AI vs. Human Feedback Shapes Learner Engagement*. Extended abstract accepted (FIE 2026); full paper under review.

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

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

Morris, C., Danry, V., & Maes, P. (2023). *Wearable systems without experiential disruptions: exploring the impact of device feedback changes*. *Frontiers in Computer Science*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomp.2023.1289869>

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>

Morris, C., Danry, V., & Maes, P. (2022). *EmbER: A System for Transfer of Interoceptive Sensations to Improve Social Perception*. 2022 DIS. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3532106.3533550>

Selected Writing

"The Irreplaceable Spark of Human Curiosity" — The Rithm Project, 2026 (with A. Lee)

"Social Tinkering: Why Collaborative Curiosity Beats Vibe-Coding" — Cosmos Institute, 2025