RIT | Division of Academic Affairs
Eugene H. Fram Chair in Applied Critical Thinking

Fram Focus volume 12:4 – November 2026

2026 Fram Signature Lecture

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FRAM SIGNATURE LECTURE

- **2026 Fram Signature Lecture: Is AI Just a Stochastic Parrot — Or an Apocalypse Waiting to Happen? *A critical thinker's guide to cutting through the hype and the fear* with Kerrie Holley.** November 3, 3:30 – 5:00 pm, Ingle Auditorium. A reception will follow in the Fireside Lounge, where light refreshments will be served.

  Abstract: Two years ago we asked whether AI was nothing more than machine learning. Today the debate has divided into camps: those who dismiss large language models as "stochastic parrots" mindlessly remixing text, and those who warn that AI is an existential threat waiting to happen. Both mislead the same way: they turn a sprawling landscape of models and systems into a single story about "AI," handing you a verdict instead of a way to think. The questions that actually matter — which system, doing what, with what capabilities, under what context and control — is one you can keep asking, because it changes every time the technology does. We'll trace how AI evolved into today's models and open the hood on how they really work: tokens, attention, next-token prediction. This is not a technical detour, but what lets you navigate alongside AI instead of just reacting to it. Then we'll weigh it: real breakthroughs in healthcare, STEM, and accessibility, against real harm: deepfakes, AI-enabled fraud, and eroding trust in what we see and hear. You'll leave with a playbook: a handful of questions that sort any AI claim into demonstrated, plausible, or speculation, ready for the next model, and the one after that. The parrot and the apocalypse are both stories about a technology. What they can't do is think for you. You can. That's YOUR power in the age of AI.

Bio: Kerrie Holley is a technologist and engineer whose career spans more than five decades of computing. Since beginning his career in 1969, he has engineered systems across a variety of technology eras, from banking mainframes and the web to e-commerce, cloud financial platforms, and AI-powered healthcare. Holley has helped create technology at some of today's most influential companies, including Google, Cisco, IBM, and Optum, the world's largest healthcare company. His contributions to technology have been recognized through his induction into the National Academy of Engineering (2023) and the National Inventors Hall of Fame (2025).

For more information about Kerrie Holley, click HERE to view his website!

For Student registration, click HERE.
For RIT Faculty, Staff, and Community members, click HERE.

FRAM FINDS

- **AI Competency in Language Learning and Teaching:** November 13, 2026, 1:00 – 2:15 pm. Location: Campus Center Bamboo Room (CPC-2650). A panel of RIT faculty and students will share their experiences using artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool for language learning and teaching. Together, we will explore what constitutes meaningful and responsible use of AI in this context, as well as what it means to be AI-competent in language education. For more information, click HERE.
- **AWARE-AI Workshop: When AI Produces Informational Voids:** November 20, 2026, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm.
  Location: George Eastman Hall, Room 3320 (EAS-3320). Generative AI is often discussed in terms of the information it produces, but it can also transform what people are able to know. This workshop explores that possibility through the concept of an informational void, understood as a situation in which information that would otherwise be available becomes difficult or impossible to access reliably. For more information, click HERE.

A FEW THOUGHTS

In this issue, meet:

- **Todd Jokl,** Dean, College of Art and Design. Read Todd's thoughts related to critical thinking HERE.

FROM GENE FRAM

- "*Self-directed learning and critical thinking show weak links to nursing internship scores*" by Bioengineer.org, October 17, 2026.
- "*Does the decline of book reading mark the end of rational thinking?*" by David Adam, Nature, October 12, 2026.