



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

Fram Focus volume 12:2 – September 2026

Welcome Back & Fram Signature Events

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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.
- **We're seeking RIT faculty, students, clubs, and collaborators to showcase at our Signature receptions.** (e.g., posters, digital displays, 3D-printed materials, clubs, etc. Re-use of exhibit materials encouraged!).

Co-Sponsored Events:

Protect Your Art in the Age of AI: Copyright, Scraping & Artist's Rights

- **Protect Your Art in the Age of AI with Atreya Mathur.** October 7, 5:30 – 7:00 pm.

Fram Finds

- **Applications of Topological Data Analysis and Machine Learning Models in Predictive Biology and Drug Discovery:** September 22, 2026.
- **Breaking Bread Special Edition: Is Resisting AI Worth it?** September 29, 2026.

A Few Thoughts

- **S. Manian Ramkumar**, Dean and Professor, College of Engineering Technology.

From Gene Fram

- *Preserving Critical Thinking in an AI-Driven World*
- *In a high-tech world, studying literature is more important than ever*
- *The AI race will be won by strong leadership*

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 Student registration, click [HERE](#).

For RIT Faculty, Staff, and Community members, click [HERE](#).

- **We're seeking RIT faculty, students, clubs, and collaborators to showcase innovative activities (e.g., posters, digital displays, 3D-printed materials, student clubs, etc. Re-use of exhibit materials encouraged!).** Two receptions will feature these:
 - **Monday, Nov. 2 | 5:30–6:30 PM**
University Gallery – Invite-only audience
 - **Tuesday, Nov. 3 | 5:00–6:00 PM**
Fireside Lounge – Open to the RIT community (any and all interesting topics)

Register to exhibit [HERE](#) by October 16, 2026. Any questions? ritframchair@rit.edu

PROTECT YOUR ART IN THE AGE OF AI: COPYRIGHT, SCRAPING, & ARTISTS' RIGHTS

- **Protect Your Art in the Age of AI with Atreya Mathur:** October 7, 2026, 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm, Wegman's Theater, MAGIC Spell Studios.
The College of Art and Design's Digital Summer Institute will Host Atreya Mathur, Director of Legal Research at the Center for Art Law in New York City, for an RIT-wide conversation on copyright, creativity, and AI. Atreya is an expert on copyright, artists' rights, and AI-related legal issues. She has lectured at NYU, Harvard, FIT, Parsons, and SVA, as well as museums, bar associations, nonprofits, and art associations. The event will address questions that are becoming increasingly important across disciplines: Where did AI models learn their content- and were creators compensated? How can we protect our work? When should we use AI—and when shouldn't we?

FRAM FINDS

- **Applications of Topological Data Analysis and Machine Learning Models in Predictive Biology and Drug Discovery:** September 22, 2026, 2:00 – 3:00 pm. Room/Location: Wallace Library 4600 or via Zoom. Topological Data Analysis (TDA) provides a powerful tool to extract robust, multiscale, and shape-based insights from complex and high-dimensional datasets. In

recent years, the integration of TDA with machine learning has opened new opportunities for modeling biomolecular systems, understanding disease mechanisms, and accelerating drug discovery. For more information and to register, click [HERE](#).

- **Breaking Bread Special Edition: Is Resisting AI Worth it?** September 29, 2026, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm. Location: SAU 1500. Breaking Bread is an opportunity for those interested within the RIT community to come together to dialogue not debate social issues. The purpose of the special edition track is to provide a one-time commitment to practice good communication behaviors while exploring ideas and issues that impact our individual and collective lives. During this session we will explore whether artificial intelligence resistance strategies are effective. We will also explore the why behind resisting this technology by weighing the positives and negatives. Participants are encouraged to stay for at least 30 minutes of the conversation. Registration is encouraged but not required. The dialogue will be facilitated by Dr. Taj Smith, executive director for community and education. For more information and to register, click [HERE](#).

A FEW THOUGHTS

In this issue, meet:

- **S. Manian Ramkumar**, Dean and Professor, College of Engineering Technology. Read Ram's thoughts related to critical thinking [HERE](#).

FROM GENE FRAM

- "[Preserving Critical Thinking in an AI-Driven World](#)" by Mark Koulianos, University of South Florida, August 27, 2026.
- "[In a high-tech world, studying literature is more important than ever](#)" by Agathe Mezzadri-Guedj, Open Access Government, September 7, 2026.
- "[The AI race will be won by strong leadership](#)" by Consultancy UK, September 7, 2026.

