

Inside the fight to reclaim AI from Big Tech's control | MIT Technology Review

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June 16, 2021

Among the world's richest and most powerful companies, Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, and Apple have made AI core parts of their business. Advances over the last decade, particularly in an AI technique called deep learning, have allowed them to monitor users' behavior; recommend news, information, and products to them; and most of all, target them with ads. Last year Google's advertising apparatus generated over \$140 billion in revenue. Facebook's generated \$84 billion.

The companies have invested heavily in the technology that has brought them such vast wealth. Google's parent company, Alphabet, acquired the London-based AI lab DeepMind for \$600 million in 2014 and spends hundreds of millions a year to support its research. Microsoft signed a \$1 billion deal with OpenAI in 2019 for commercialization rights to its algorithms.

At the same time, tech giants have become large investors in university-based AI research, heavily influencing its scientific priorities. Over the years, more and more ambitious scientists have transitioned to working for tech giants full time or adopted a dual affiliation.

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