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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



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6 Technology STARLIFESTYLE, MONDAY 2 OCTOBER 2023

**By MATT O'BRIEN**

ARTIFICIAL intelligence tools that can conjure whimsical artwork or realistic-looking images from written commands started wowing the public last year.

But most people don't actually use them at work or home.

That could change as leading tech companies compete to make text-to-image generators mainstream by integrating them into *Adobe Photoshop*, YouTube and other familiar tools.

But first, they're trying to convince users and regulators that they've tamed some of the Wild West nature of early AI image-generators with stronger safeguards against copyright theft and troubling content.

A year ago, a relatively small group of early adopters and hobbyists began playing with cutting-edge image generators such as *Stable Diffusion*, *Midjourney* and *OpenAI's Dall-E*.

"The previous ones were an interesting curiosity," but businesses were wary, said David Truog, an analyst at market research group *Forrester*.

A backlash followed, including copyright lawsuits from artists and photo stock company *Getty* and calls for new laws to rein in generative AI technology's misuse to create deceptive political ads or abusive sexual imagery.

Those problems aren't yet solved. But a proliferation of new image generators indicates they're business-ready this time.

"Alexa, create an image of cherry blossoms in the snow," is the kind of prompt that Amazon says US customers will be able to speak later this year to generate a personalised display on their *Fire TV* screen.

*Adobe*, known for the *Photoshop* graphics editor it introduced more than three decades ago, was the first this year to release an AI generator designed to avoid legal and ethical problems created by competitors who trained their AI models on huge troves of images pulled off the Internet.

"When we talk to customers about generative technology, mostly what we hear is that a lot of the technology is really cool, but they don't feel like they can use it because of these questions," said *Adobe's* chief technology officer for its digital media business, *Ely Greenfield*.

That's why *Adobe's* product, called *Firefly*, was built on its own *Adobe Stock* image collection as well as content it has licensed. *Stock* contributors are also getting some compensation out of the arrangement, *Greenfield* said.

"*Firefly* is clean legally, whereas the others are not," said *Forrester's* *Truog*. "You don't really care about that if you're just some dude having fun with generative AI."

But if you're a business or a creative professional thinking about using images on your website, apps, or in print layouts, advertising, or email marketing campaigns, "it's kind of a big deal," *Truog* said.

"You don't want to be getting into trouble."

Tech companies are attempting to make AI image generators more mainstream while implementing improved protections against misuse.

Some competitors are taking note. *ChatGPT*-maker *OpenAI* unveiled its third-generation image generator, *Dall-E 3*, recently, emphasising its impressive capabilities and future integration with *ChatGPT*, along with new safeguards to decline requests that ask for an image in the style of a living artist.

Creators can also opt to exclude their images from training future models, though *Truog* notes that *OpenAI* hasn't said anything "about compensating authors whose work they use for training, even with permission".

In separate *New York City* showcase events, both *Microsoft* and *Google-owned YouTube* also unveiled new products infused with AI image generation.

*Microsoft*, a major investor in *OpenAI*, showed how it is already starting to bake *Dall-E 3* into its graphics design tools, mostly for background editing, as well as its *Bing* search engine and chatbot.

*YouTube* revealed a new *Dream Screen* for short *YouTube* videos that enables creators to compose a new background of their choosing.

Earlier last month, both *Adobe* and *Stability AI*, makers of *Stable Diffusion*, joined a larger group of major AI providers, including *Amazon*, *Google*, *Microsoft*, and *OpenAI*, that agreed to voluntary safeguards set by US President *Joe Biden's* administration.

One safeguard requires companies to develop methods such as digital watermarking to help people know if images and other content were AI-generated.

*Microsoft* executives said the company has built filters to determine what kinds of imagery can be generated from text prompts in *Bing*, citing those made with top political figures as content to monitor.

The goal is "to make sure it's not producing types of content we would never want to produce, like hateful content", said *Sarah Bird*, *Microsoft's* global head for responsible AI.

In a demonstration, a prompt that asked for *Microsoft's* new tool for an image of "Hillary Clinton rock climbing" was met with rejection.

"Oops! Try another prompt," was the response, indicating that there are some words that may be automatically blocked at this time. — AP

To avoid legal and ethical issues, *Adobe* opted to train its AI using its own stock images. — *Adobe/AP*

# Creating with caution

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