

Facebook opens AI lab in Canada, with Trudeau on hand

September 15 2017



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Facebook opened its first artificial intelligence lab in Canada on Friday, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was on hand to praise the impact of such cutting-edge research.

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Montreal but across Canada," Trudeau told a crowd of McGill University students gathered for the launch.

Joelle Pineau, a specialist in [artificial intelligence](#) at McGill, will head the research center. She said she hopes Facebook's investment in research here will lead to more AI study.

This is the fourth AI lab opened by Facebook. The others are in Paris, New York and Menlo Park, California.

Pineau's focus on enabling computers to talk to humans in a natural way is of key interest to Facebook, which is competing with Apple, Google and others to develop virtual assistants.

The company also announced Can\$7 million (US\$6 million) in seed money for local AI research firms.

Google and Microsoft already have so-called deep learning labs in Canada, which over the years has fostered a small but talented group of AI specialists.

The United States remains the global leader in AI, but much of its talent comes from abroad. Canada, with its less restrictive immigration policies, has become an attractive place to set up shop.

Ottawa has demonstrated a willingness to develop the field, earmarking Can\$125 million (US\$103 million) in its last budget for AI research.

"This new laboratory... will show that Canada is a leader in the economy of the future and an influential player in the field of [artificial intelligence](#) in the world," Trudeau said.

Citation: Facebook opens AI lab in Canada, with Trudeau on hand (2017, September 15)
retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-09-facebook-ai-lab-canada-trudeau.html>

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