

I chose to reflect upon the OpenAI case study. To summarize it, OpenAI, a nonprofit AI research company, had created an AI text generator that was able to produce content so realistic that the company decided not to release their work for fear of people misusing the software.

Personally, I think that being a software engineer on the OpenAI project would have been a fascinating experience. Getting to work with some of the latest advances in artificial intelligence and pushing the capabilities of computers to new levels is something that appeals to a lot of software developers. As such, it's very understandable why the company created the program in the first place and why the software engineers stayed on the project, whether or not they had already realized what could be done with it. I would have done the same. At the same time, I completely understand the decision to not release the program. I would like to think that I would have raised concerns at potential ethical issues, as we all would, but there are several factors that would impact my decision: potential pressure from management or stakeholders, a desire to learn more about what computers can do, etc.

I believe that the OpenAI management acted in an ethical way. Choosing not to release the program to the public was the best thing they could have done. Although it was ultimately a loss of time and money, the potential implications of releasing the project would have been very dangerous. Currently, there are developments in the field of artificial intelligence that are troublesome: there are programs that can generate extremely realistic and convincing videos and audio using real or generated people's faces—these are known as “deepfakes”. This is concerning because there are many dangerous uses of such programs, such as creating false news reports, false speeches from public figures, and so on. They could be used to spread misinformation and fear throughout the populace. The OpenAI software is similar; it could be used to write false news stories or “research” documents. I think the company leadership decided that the risk of people using their software for such purposes far surpassed the potential benefits it could have had.