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Who Are We, and Where Is Our Technology Taking Us?

An interview with **Rhonda McEwen**, Professor, Institute of Communication, Culture, Information & Technology
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My work has really framed itself around how do new technologies affect the way that we live our lives, affect the way that policies are created? How it has impacted our relationships, how it changes society, legal systems, all of it.

Social media is a great example. The way that social media has affected politics, elections, social anxiety, all of these kinds of things. And you think, how did we get to this moment? No one started a platform thinking, 'I want to affect social anxiety and depression, and also this election.' These are the things that come about because they are the consequences of use.

So my work is always in these kinds of spaces, coming from the small one-on-one interaction with Alexa, into the big problems we have around surveillance.

User interface has been really in the line of ergonomics. It kind of came along a way of, 'hey let's make it easier for people to use.' I think it's very much a different field now because we start thinking about not just making it easier to use, but it actually goes further back into the cognition. How does the brain actually interact with this information? So that brings in philosophy, it brings in psychology, right? So it's not just about design.



You kind of step back into those spaces and you think this idea of 'The Human Being' being one entity, I think is false and I think you know all the work we've done in diversity in the last little while also should expand into ideas of each human being their makeup. The way you see an object where you see a colour, the way you hear a sound. What sounds you even hear are so different to what I would, so the idea that we can maybe create more customization within some of our technologies, or give the users more the ability to shift and change things so that it actually works for them in a much more meaningful way.