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光神经形态计算研究进展与展望(特邀)

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摘要: 脑科学与类脑研究是国际必争战略性前沿。人工智能与深度学习的飞速发展对算力提出了迫切需求。而传统的冯诺依曼架构, 由于存算分离导致功耗墙和内存墙, 摩尔定律也逐渐放缓。光神经拟态计算充分融合高速光通信、光互连、光集成、硅基光电子与神经拟态计算的特点, 具有超高速、大带宽、多维度等优势, 在高性能计算、人工智能领域有广阔的应用前景, 是突破后摩尔时代传统微电子计算极限极具竞争力的方案。本文回顾了国内外主要研究团队在光神经元、光突触、光神经网络的理论、算法及器件方面的工作, 并提出了展望。

关键词: 光神经形态计算; 神经元; 突触; 突触可塑性; 光神经网络

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Progress and Prospects of Photonic Neuromorphic Computing (Invited)

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Abstract: Brain science and brain-like research have become the strategic frontier of international competition. The rapid development of artificial intelligence and deep learning has put forward an urgent demand for the computing capacities. In the traditional von Neumann architecture, the physical separation between memory and computing units results in power consumption wall and memory wall problems. Besides, Moore's law is gradually slowing down. Photonic neuromorphic computing, which fully combines the characteristics of high-speed optical communication, optical interconnection, optical integration, silicon-based optoelectronics and neuromorphic computing, has the advantages of ultra-high speed, large bandwidth and multi-dimension. It has wide application prospects in the fields of high-performance computing and artificial intelligence. Furthermore, it is a highly competitive solution that breaks through the limits of traditional microelectronics computing in the post-Moore era. This article reviews the work of the main research teams at home and abroad on the theory, algorithms, and devices of photonic neurons, synapses, and neural networks, and puts forward a prospect.

Key words: Photonic neuromorphic computing; Neuron; Synapse; Synaptic plasticity; Optical neural networks

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0 引言

在人工智能(Artificial Intelligence, AI)、5G、物联网等应用需求爆发的背景下,各个产业对信息处理的需求量急剧增加,对芯片算力和内存的要求呈指数增长。过去60余年,互补金属氧化物半导体(Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor, CMOS)工艺一直遵循摩尔定律^[1]指引的步伐不断演进,计算机行业在摩尔定律的指导下蓬勃发展。然而,当前集成电路发展已进入后摩尔时代,芯片上的晶体管尺寸缩小与数量增加的速度正不断放缓,传统晶体管正在逼近物理极限,传统计算机正遭遇发展瓶颈。此外,传统的冯诺依曼体系计算系统中,数据需要在中央处理器(Central Processing Unit, CPU)和内存之间来回移动传输,而CPU运算速度较快,内存访问速度较慢,导致所谓的“内存墙”问题。为了应对当前计算机技术面临的冯诺依曼架构导致能效低下以及摩尔定律趋于极限这两个重要瓶颈,各国科学家正在努力探索各种新方法、新原理、新器件、新架构以打造性能更佳、能耗更低的新一代计算机。

近年来,脑科学成为世界各国抢占的战略制高点,欧、美、日相继启动了各种大脑计划。美国于2013年首先启动脑科学计划(BRAIN initiative)^[2-3],随后,欧盟和日本先后启动了欧洲脑计划(The human brain project)^[4]和日本脑计划(Brain/Minds project)^[5]。中国也启动了自己的“脑科学与类脑研究”计划^[6-8],该计划主要有两个研究方向:以探索大脑秘密、攻克大脑疾病为导向的脑科学研究以及以建立和发展人工智能技术为导向的类脑研究。受脑信息处理机制启发的类脑计算因此成为全球前沿科研领域。所谓类脑计算^[9],也称为神经形态计算,是指借鉴大脑的神经系统结构及其处理信息的基本规律及机制,在硬件实现与软件算法等多个层面,对现有的计算体系与系统做出本质的变革,从而实现低能耗、高性能的计算系统。通过类脑神经网络模型和计算方法的建立,以及对类脑计算、处理和存储设备技术的研究,可以开发新一代人工智能机器以及类脑机器人等。与传统冯诺依曼体系架构相比,类脑计算具有颠覆性创新。

目前微电子技术脑科学与类脑研究中取得了重大进展。自1989年类脑工程概念^[10]提出,先后有斯坦福大学研制的Neurogrid^[11]、英国曼彻斯特大学研制的SpiNNaker^[12]、德国海德堡大学的HiCANN^[13]、IBM研制的True-North^[14]、英特尔研制的LOIHI^[15]、浙江大学研制的达尔文类脑芯片^[16]、清华大学研发的“天机芯(Tianjic)”^[17]等神经形态芯片问世。然而,受限于电子瓶颈以及摩尔定律的放缓,难以进一步提高神经形态计算速度及能效。

光子神经形态计算综合了类脑计算、光计算、光互连的多重优势,充分发挥光子学的多维度、超高速、大带宽、低功耗等特点,可显著提升智能计算的速度和功耗性能,在诸如自动驾驶、无人机等大带宽与高实时性需求的应用场景中具有不可替代的天然优势,有望在提高速度和性能的同时节省能源。因此,光神经形态计算属于光电子学、计算机科学、神经信息学、人工智能等多学科交叉前沿,为新型人工智能系统设计提供了新的理论视角与方法支撑,为研制大规模光电集成智能芯片奠定基础,抢占后摩尔时代半导体技术在新型智能计算领域的主战场。

近年来,光子神经形态计算系统从理论、器件、算法、架构和芯片等方面都引起了高度关注,国内外多个团队均开展了深入研究。从硬件层面来说,其中神经元和突触单元的光学模拟实现是国内外高度关注的热点问题,基于半导体光电器件的神经元动力学和光子突触权重器、光子突触可塑性机制的模拟及其实现均受到高度关注。在算法层面,脉冲神经网络(Spiking Neural Networks, SNNs)在类脑科学研究中占据核心地位,其低功耗、高性能的特点是实现人工智能技术的新突破点,因此SNNs的构建及网络算法研究吸引了众多学者的目光。本文首先从模拟神经元和神经突触的光学神经形态器件、光神经网络等方面对国内外研究进展进行了介绍,然后讨论了光神经形态计算面临的挑战,最后进行了总结与展望。

1 光神经形态计算国际研究进展

大脑是由几十亿个神经元组成的复杂神经网络,神经元是神经系统的基本结构和功能单元,它负责接受、整合和传递信息,神经元之间通过轴突和树突由数万亿个突触连接,因此神经元和连接突触构成了信息传递的基本通道与回路,被认为是神经系统学习和适应等过程的关键环节,图1所示为生物神经元和突触的结构示意图。

人工神经网络的研究经历了多个阶段的演化,按照其神经信息处理机制通常可以分为三代。19世纪,

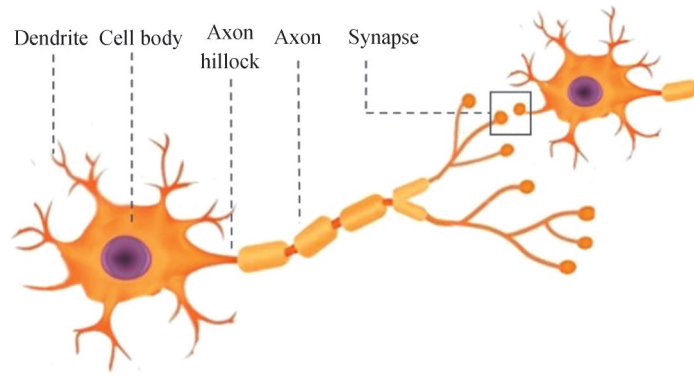


图1 生物神经元和突触的结构示意图

Fig.1 The schematic diagram of biological neuron and synapse

学者们开始研究大脑结构,并试图通过建立相应的神经计算模型来探索复杂的神经活动,1943年,美国神经心理学家 MCCULLOCH W 与逻辑学家 PITTS W 提出人工神经元及人工神经网络(Artificial Neural Networks, ANNs)模型,成为类脑科学研究的基础^[18]。第二代人工神经网络在第一代人工神经网络的基础上使用连续函数作为神经元的激活函数,且神经元支持多输入多输出。MAASS W^[19]提出的脉冲神经网络是目前最具有生物解释性的人工神经网络模型,被誉为第三代人工神经网络,由于脉冲神经元考虑了时间信息,从而更加接近实际生物神经元。脉冲神经网络采用精确定时的脉冲序列来编码神经信息,与第一代和第二代人工神经网络相比,具有更强的计算能力,是处理复杂时空信息的有效工具。

近年来,光学神经形态器件和光神经网络引起了国际上的广泛关注,普林斯顿大学、麻省理工学院(Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT)、牛津大学、普渡大学、英国 HURTADO A 团队和法国 BARBAY S 团队等均开展了深入的研究。

1.1 光神经元器件

神经元是神经网络中最基本的功能单元,本小节主要介绍光学非线性激活函数和光脉冲神经元的研究进展,并简要分析其发展趋势。

1.1.1 光学非线性激活函数

非线性激活函数能够使网络学习输入和输出之间复杂的非线性映射关系,在神经网络中起着至关重要的作用。在电子处理器中已经成功实现各种非线性传递函数,如图2所示的广泛应用的 Sigmoid 函数、Tanh 函数和 ReLU 函数,然而,在光子硬件平台上实现这些非线性传递函数具有一定的挑战性。

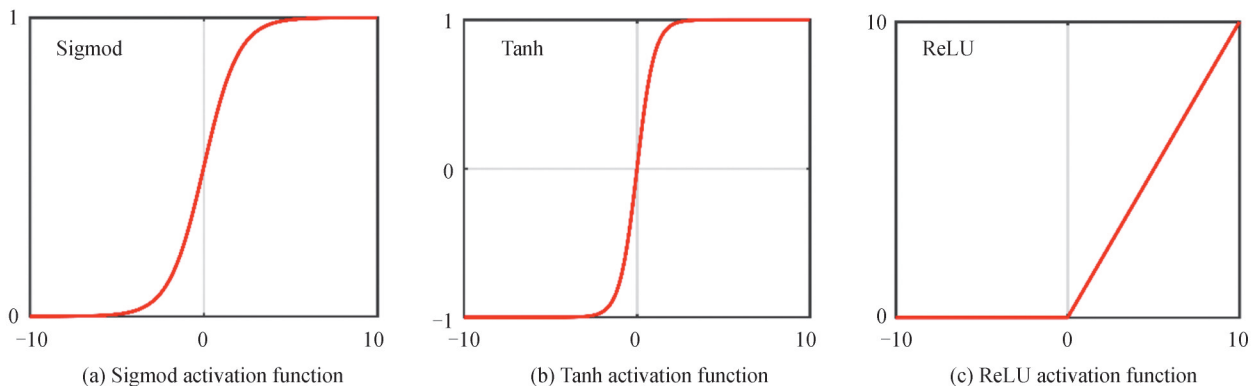


图2 非线性激活函数

Fig.2 Nonlinear activation functions

可以使用多种不同的调制器设计来实现非线性激活功能,包括电光调制器(Electro-Optic Modulator, EOM)、电吸收调制器(Electro-Absorption Modulator, EAM)、微环谐振器(Micro-Ring Resonator, MRR)调制器、马赫-曾德尔干涉仪(Mach-Zehnder Interferometer, MZI)调制器、MRR加载的(MRR-loaded)MZI调

制器。2018年,华盛顿大学GEORGE J等在光学神经网络中演示了利用电光调制器的传递函数提供非线性激活函数,传递函数的形状取决于所使用的电光材料,结果表明,基于石墨烯的光子神经元的ReLU激活函数比基于软件的ReLU对噪声更加敏感^[20];随后,建立了一个电-光全连接神经网络中的吸收调制器模型,并在MNIST数据集上分析比较了5种吸收调制器所提供的非线性激活函数,在吞吐量为数十GHz、低延迟和功率预算几瓦的网络中,这些非线性传递函数都可以产生准确($>90\%$)的前馈推断结果,结果说明基于量子阱吸收调制器的电光神经元具有最佳性能,预测精度为96%^[21]。2019年,普林斯顿大学研究团队基于传统硅光工艺制造了一种由两个光电探测器与MRR调制器电连接组成的神经元,MRR将输入的两个光电流相减,并在新波长上重新调制信号,该神经元可以表现出多种非线性传递函数,并具有扇入、非线性、级联性、抑制性、脉冲压缩和时间分辨处理等能力^[22];2020年,该团队基于硅光平台利用MRR加载的MZI结构实现全光神经元,该装置通过硅波导上的自由载流子色散效应进行有效的非线性操作,并与干涉仪上的调谐偏置配对,可以编程非线性激活函数的形状和阈值,实验中改变马赫-曾德尔耦合器的耦合比和输入信号与MRR谐振波长之间的波长失谐,实现了可编程光学神经元,产生各种非线性激活函数^[23]。同年,斯坦福大学研究团队通过仿真和实验演示了一种可实现任意非线性激活函数的片上电光电路,该线路由1:99直通耦合器和带有金属热移相器的MZI组成,通过将输入光信号的一部分转换成电信号,调制剩余光信号的强度来工作。一种调制方法是用电信号直接调制剩余光信号,这只能实现有限范围的激活函数,另一种方法是在微控制器中实现查找表,可以将光生电流映射到任何期望的调制电压,从而实现任意非线性激活功能,但是微控制器的使用会将光学神经元的工作速度限制在亚GHz范围内^[24-25]。

此外,近年来也有基于半导体光放大器(Semiconductor Optical Amplifier, SOA)的光神经元实现非线性激活功能的报道^[26-27]。

1.1.2 光脉冲神经元

近年来,多种基于光学器件的脉冲神经元被陆续提出,包括基于含饱和吸收区的垂直腔面半导体发射激光器(Vertical-Cavity Surface-Emitting Laser with Saturable Absorber, VCSEL-SA)、含饱和吸收区的分布式反馈半导体激光器(Distributed Feedback Laser with Saturable Absorber, DFB-SA)、基于光纤的石墨烯可激发激光器(Fiber-based Graphene Excitable Laser, GEL)、外光注入VCSEL、量子点激光器、环形半导体激光器、微盘激光器、微柱激光器、嵌在MRR上的相变材料(Phase Change Material, PCM)等实现的高速光子神经元。表1展示了其中一些光脉冲神经元的关键性能指标。

表1 光脉冲神经元的关键性能
Table 1 Key performance of optical spiking neurons

Optical piking neurons	Power	Speed	Cascadability	Footprints	Injection scheme	Pump
VCSEL-SA	mW	sub-ns	Yes	Big	Electrical	Electrical
DFB Laser	mW	sub-ns	Yes	Big	Electrical	Electrical
VCSEL	mW	sub-ns	Yes	Big	Coherent optical	Optical
Quantum-dot laser	mW	sub-ns	Yes	Big	Coherent optical	Electrical
Micropillar laser	mW	sub-ns	Yes	Big	Electrical	Electrical
PCM	mW	ns	No	Small	Photonic laser pulses	/

2008年开始,普林斯顿大学研究团队先后在光子脉冲神经元及光子神经形态系统方向开展了大量理论及实验研究^[28]。2013年提出两段式可激发激光器模拟脉冲神经元,其行为类似于泄露积分放电(Leaky Integrate-and-Fire, LIF)神经元模型,并基于VCSEL-SA激光器模拟了LIF神经元模型的可积分、阈值、不应期特性等^[29]。2015年,理论上提出了基于混合III-V硅平台的两段式DFB可激发激光神经元^[30];随后在2018年研制成功集成DFB和平衡光电探测器的集成激光器光子神经元^[31],其中平衡探测器用于接收来自其他神经元的兴奋性输入和抑制性输入;此外,基于集成激光器光子神经元设计了光子脉冲神经网络集成芯片,该芯片主要由9个两段式DFB神经元、成对的高速平衡光电探测器以及连接的金属线组成,演示了包括兴奋性阈值、不应期和积分等基本脉冲动力学,并通过仿真实现了异或(XOR)分类^[32]。2014年起,先后提出了基于GEL的脉冲处理机制^[33];从理论和实验上验证了基于光纤的GEL和混合硅III-V平台上的集成

GEL的光子神经元模型,模拟了兴奋性阈值、积分和不应期等,其中集成器件可以用与光纤原型相同的理论模型来表征,能在更短的时间以更低的脉冲能量表现出相同的行为^[34];证实其兴奋性和抑制性动力学^[35],并进一步实现了全光数字信号的脉冲编码,速率高达10 Gbps^[36]。

外部光注入VCSEL产生的偏振转换效应和非线性动力学也可以用于模拟脉冲神经元的基本功能,英国思克莱德大学HURTADO A团队对基于VCSEL偏振动力学的光子神经形态系统进行了理论和实验研究,先后模拟了类似神经元的兴奋响应^[37]、tonic和phasic脉冲^[38]、阈值特性、编码特性与抑制响应^[39]、尖峰脉冲的可控产生与传播^[40-41]、脉冲存储、视网膜神经元回路仿真和模式识别等^[42-43]。

此外,其他激光器也可以实现光子脉冲神经元,如量子点激光器、环形半导体激光器、微盘激光器、微柱激光器。爱尔兰KELLEHER B团队及希腊MESARITAKIS C团队先后证实基于量子点激光器的兴奋性和抑制性脉冲响应^[44-46]。2011年,比利时COOMANS W团队研究了基于环形半导体激光器的光子脉冲神经元,揭示了一个刺激触发多个连续兴奋性脉冲的机制^[47]。2013年,比利时VAN VAERENBERGH T团队研究了光注入微盘激光器中的兴奋性与抑制性响应、阈值特性与可积分特性^[48]。2014年开始,法国BARBAY S团队研究使用微柱激光器作为光子神经元,证实了类神经元响应、绝对和相对不应期^[49-50]、漏积分能力^[51],并证明了耦合微柱激光器能够实现尖峰逻辑门和时间模式识别^[52]。

PCM通过电或光激发在其晶态和非晶态之间能实现可逆切换,在光域结合MRR可以实现脉冲神经元功能。2018年,普渡大学CHAKRABORTY I团队首次提出了一个基于嵌入在MRR顶部的Ge₂Sb₂Te₅的相变动力学的新型光子脉冲神经元^[53],通过纯光学操作有望实现亚ns级的“写入”速度;并提出了基于此神经元和非易失性光子突触的光子脉冲神经网络的存内计算模型^[54]。

由此可见,非线性激活函数及脉冲神经元的光学实现依然是光神经网络的主要挑战之一。对于两种光学神经元,未来如何实现大规模光神经元阵列,进一步提高光学神经元的响应速度并降低其运行功耗,是下一步仍需重点关注的方向。

1.2 光突触器件

突触是神经网络中另一个重要的功能单元,通过改变神经元之间的突触权重,可以获得强大的记忆或学习能力。目前,有多种易于片上集成的器件用来实现光子突触权重器件和突触可塑性。基于硅基平台的MRR阵列和MZI网络都可以实现光学矩阵计算,因此可以作为突触权重器件应用于基于矩阵计算的光学神经网络,图3(a)和(b)分别展示了基于硅基平台的集成MRRs和MZIs的4×4突触权重矩阵,表2比较了这两种实现光学矩阵计算的方法。突触可塑性方面,主要有基于SOA、PCM等模拟实现生物突触可塑性机制。

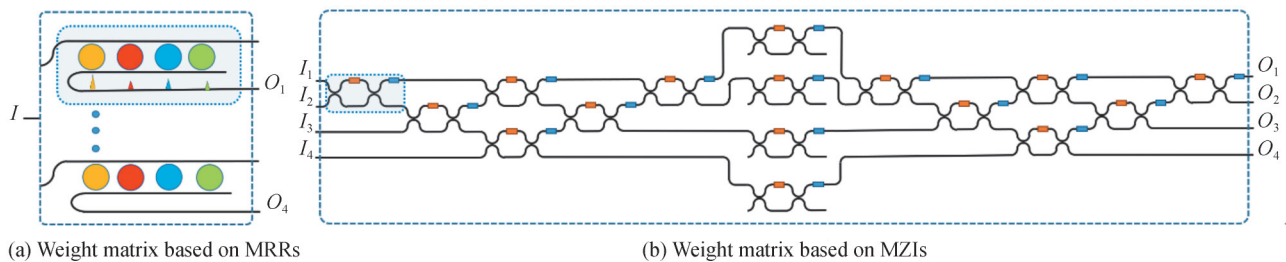


图3 基于MRRs和MZIs的权重矩阵
Fig.3 Weight matrix based on MRRs and MZIs

表2 光学矩阵计算方法比较
Table 2 Comparison of optical matrix calculation methods

Method	Integration	Refresh rate/GHz	Computing range	Computing method
MRRs	Integrated	>10	Real field	Explicit computing
MZIs	Integrated	>10	Complex field	Implicit computing

1.2.1 基于MRR的光权重器件

微环具有非常小的尺寸,其半径可以小到几微米,每个微环可以独立地控制某个波长通道的透射系数,因此微环阵列可用于非相干矩阵计算。由于MRR在光子集成电路(Photonic Integrated Circuits, PICs)中的紧凑封装、波分复用(Wavelength Division Multiplexing, WDM)兼容性以及通过热效应、载流子效应等的良好可调谐性,因此MRR权重库是实现片上可调权重功能的有效器件。

2014年开始,普林斯顿大学研究团队提出了基于传统WDM器件和平衡探测器级联,或基于硅基MRR和平衡探测器级联的多种连续可调谐的光子权重器方案,并成功制备了相应的器件,可实现神经网络中的加权和运算。利用MRR对不同波长信号的滤波特性实现突触权重的改变,利用平衡探测器可实现权重的正负,区分兴奋性和抑制性突触输入,于2017年实现了基于16个硅光MRR的 4×4 权重器件^[55-60]。2020年,基于片上MRR权重库实现对盲源信号的光子独立成分分析^[61],同时提出了基于数字电子和模拟光子的卷积神经网络硬件架构,速度有望达到同期最先进的图形处理单元的2.8到14倍,并节省近25%的能量^[62]。另外,实验演示了四通道MRR权重库的精度控制可提高至7 bit^[63]、9 bit^[64],其中每个通道的MRR权重库由四个MRR和两个总线波导组成,为大规模MRR阵列的调控奠定了基础。

近年来,其他研究团队也开始利用MRR作为光权重器件来构建神经网络。例如,2020年,日本东京大学研究团队提出了一种基于 4×4 MRR交叉阵列实现硅基可编程光神经网络,具有30 TOPS/W的计算效率,在虹膜数据集的分类任务中预测准确率为93%,并利用MRR交叉阵列的转置矩阵运算的片上反向传播实现了片上训练^[65]。2020年,加拿大女王大学研究团队提出了一种用于执行神经网络训练算法的光电计算架构,基于1000个MRRs,理论上每秒可进行9.95 TOPS(每秒10万亿次运算)的计算^[66]。2021年,美国科罗拉多州立大学研究团队提出了一种基于MRR权重库的神经网络加速器,通过对卷积层和全连接层分开处理,实现更高的分辨率、更好的能源效率并提高吞吐量^[67]。

1.2.2 基于MZI的光权重器件

利用光的固有干涉特性,MZI级联网络结构可以实现相干矩阵运算,可以用来替代光神经网络的线性计算部分。

利用MZI进行片上矩阵运算是基于RECK M等于1994年提出的三角形网格结构的酉矩阵分解方法,他们首次证明了使用光学设备可以构造任意有限维酉矩阵^[68]。2016年,牛津大学CLEMENTS W R等提出了矩形网格结构的酉矩阵分解法,通过将MZI的排布形状从三角转化为矩形,减少一半的光学深度,同时也增加了计算网络的误差容忍度^[69]。2017年,麻省理工学院SHEN Yichen等采用三角形级联阵列结构的56个可编程MZI实现 4×4 权重矩阵^[70]。其后,乔治华盛顿大学GEORGE J K利用微环做延时,MZI网络做矩阵计算,实现了全光的卷积神经网络^[71]。2019年,加利福尼亚大学伯克利分校FANG M Y S等仿真研究了网格网络(GridNet)和快速傅里叶变换网络(FFTNet)两种光神经网络,都采用了 8×4 的MZI线性矩阵运算器,在大规模矩阵运算中具有较高的计算精度,手写数据集的分类准确率分别为98%和95%^[72]。酉矩阵分解的MZI阵列不仅仅有三角形和矩形网格拓扑结构,麦吉尔大学SHOKRANEH F等于2020年提出了一种基于菱形网格拓扑结构的现场可编程MZI光处理器,实现了各种尺寸的光神经网络,与三角形网格相比,菱形网格对相位误差和损耗容限有更高的鲁棒性^[73],并通过理论分析发现矩形结构比三角形结构实现的单层 4×4 光神经网络在高损耗和相位误差条件下具有更高的分类精度^[74]。

1.2.3 光突触可塑性

突触权重依赖于历史刺激,可以根据突触前、后神经元的活动进行精确调整,这被称为突触的可塑性。突触可塑性是生物神经突触的一项重要特征,也是人脑学习记忆的生物学基础,丰富多样的突触可塑性使得神经突触在进行信息处理时表现出各种不同的功能。脉冲时间依赖可塑性(Spike-Timing-Dependent Plasticity, STDP)是人脑信息处理过程中的一种重要的突触学习规则,图4为两种不同形式的STDP,即STDP曲线和反STDP(anti-STDP)曲线,成功模拟STDP已经成为SNN硬件系统的主要功能之一。

普林斯顿大学团队提出了基于SOA模拟突触可塑性,2013年通过实验证实基于SOA和EAM可模拟STDP^[75],随后提出了基于单个SOA的光子STDP方案^[76],据此开发了一种基于STDP机制的光学方法测量微波信号到达角^[77],并模拟实现了基于STDP机制的无监督学习和有监督学习算法^[78]。

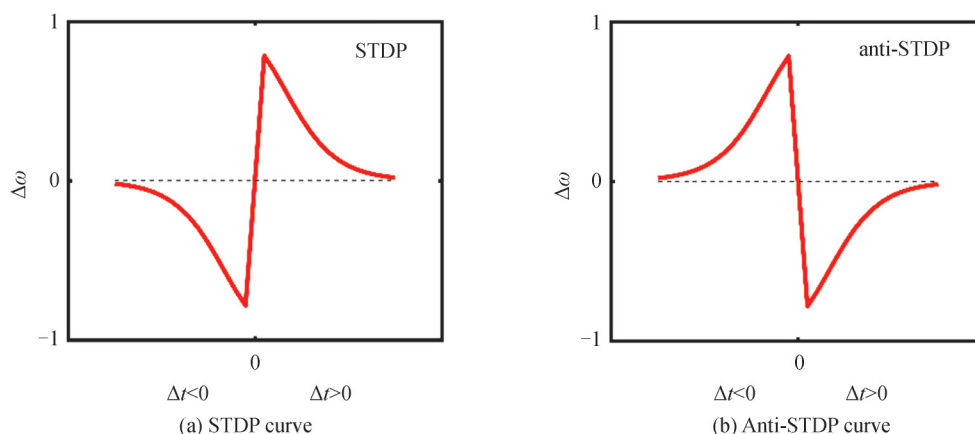


图4 STDP和反STDP曲线
Fig.4 STDP and anti-STDP curves

此外,基于PCM也能实现光子突触可塑性。2017年,英国牛津大学CHENG Zengguang团队制备了基于PCM和集成波导的光子突触芯片,揭示了光子突触权重的调控机制,可使用通过波导的脉冲直接改变突触权重,模拟了STDP突触可塑性^[79]。2019年,美国普渡大学CHAKRABORTY I团队基于相变材料Ge₂Sb₂Te₅研究了非易失性光子突触,突触圆环的最小半径为1.5 μm,可实现高密度突触阵列^[54]。2019年,德国明斯特大学FELDMANN J团队基于相变材料实现光子突触,可模拟STDP^[80]。

上述基于MRR和MZI的光突触权重器件,当前的集成规模依然较小。如何提高光突触权重的集成规模,以及实现光突触权重的稳定控制与独立调谐(MZI网络的相位噪声积累、MRR网络的谐振波长控制等)是下一步仍需重点关注的方向。此外,光突触可塑性如何应用到神经网络中实现在线学习也值得进一步探索。值得注意的是,当前报道的光神经元和光突触分别依赖不同的材料体系实现,如何实现光神经元与光突触的互连与集成也应重点关注。

1.3 光神经网络研究进展

光子神经网络作为光电子技术与人工智能技术的交叉学科产物,能够将两者的优势结合起来,构建出高速低功耗的网络结构,突破传统电子神经网络的瓶颈,表现出强大的计算能力。目前,光子神经网络的实现主要分为两类,一类是在自由空间实现的光神经网络,一类是片上集成的光神经网络。

近年来,《科学》、《自然》、《自然·光子学》及其他权威期刊报道了多项光神经网络领域的突破性工作,部分关键进展如表3所示。由此可见,目前已经实现光学前馈全连接神经网络、光学卷积神经网络、光学递归神经网络、光学脉冲神经网络,以及光学储备池计算网络等。此外,报道的大多数光神经网络只是在光域实现了线性矩阵计算部分,而非线性计算依然采用了电子技术实现。从神经网络的规模看,基于空间光学的光学神经网络可实现更大规模,但是其面积较大。相较于自由空间的光神经网络,片上光神经网络具有

表3 光神经网络的关键进展
Table 3 Key process of optical neural networks

Year	First author/Journal	Type	Network scale	Performance
2014	VANDOORNE K, <i>Nature Communications</i> ^[81]	The integrated passive silicon photonics reservoir chip on a silicon platform	A 16-node square mesh reservoir. The chip contained waveguides, splitters, and combiners	Performed arbitrary Boolean logic operations with memory, 5-bit header recognition up to 12.5 Gbit/s, and classification of spoken digits
2017	SHEN Yichen, <i>Nature Photonics</i> ^[70]	Feedforward fully connected optical neural network based on MZI	4×4 weight matrix based on 56 MZIs The neuron was simulated by a nonlinear activation function in the electrical domain	The accuracy of vowel recognition is 76.7%, which is more than two orders of magnitude faster than the latest electronic chip at that time, but the energy used is less than one thousandth

续表

Year	First author/Journal	Type	Network scale	Performance
2017	TAIT A N, <i>Scientific Reports</i> ^[59]	Recurrent silicon photonic neural network based on MRR	4×4 weight matrix based on 16 MRRs 24 optical neurons based on EOM	The network had a 294-fold acceleration against a conventional benchmark in performing a differential system emulation task
2018	LIN Xing, <i>Science</i> ^[82]	3D-printed diffractive deep neural network	Classification (Imaging) network: 5-layers, 200×200 (300×300) neurons of a layer	In the task of handwritten digit classification, the accuracy was 91.75% for a five-layer design, and 93.39% for a seven-layer design
2019	FELDMANN J, <i>Nature</i> ^[80]	Optical spiking neural network based on PCMs and MRRs	4 spiking neurons based on MRRs with PCMs 60 optical synapses based on PCMs and integrate waveguide	The network can implement supervised and unsupervised learning and was able to successfully classify the four 15-pixel images
2019	ZUO Ying, <i>Optica</i> ^[83]	All-optical neural network (AONN) with linear operations and nonlinear activation functions	Two-layer AONN: 16×4×2	A two-layer AONN can classify the phases of a prototypical Ising model, and successfully capture the essential features that distinguish the order and disorder phases
2019	BERNSTEIN L, <i>Physical Review X</i> ^[84]	A new type of photonic accelerator based on coherent detection	The number of neurons can be extended to $\geq 10^6$ by the massive spatial multiplexing enabled by standard free-space optical components	The standard quantum limit can be as low as 50 zJ/MAC when neural networks are trained on the MNIST dataset
2020	RAFAYALYAN M, <i>Physical Review X</i> ^[85]	Reservoir network based on the spatial light modulator and scattering medium	Up to 50000 optical nodes	The network successfully predicted on large spatiotemporal chaotic datasets
2020	SHI Bin, <i>IEEE JSTQE</i> ^[86]	Feedforward neural network based on SOAs	8×8 InP on-chip weighted circuits The non-linear function of neuron was implemented via software	The prediction accuracy of the Iris flower classification problem by the 3-layer photonic deep neural network was 85.8%
2020	BANGARI V, <i>IEEE JSTQE</i> ^[62]	Digital electronics and analog photonics for convolutional neural networks (DEAP-CNNs)	There are up to 1200 MRRs in the weight bank array theoretically	DEAP-CNN was 2.8 to 14 times faster while using almost 25% less energy than current state-of-the-art graphical processing units. Overall accuracy was 97.6% for a test set of 500 images in the MNIST task
2021	FELDMANN J, <i>Nature</i> ^[87]	A specific integrated photonic hardware accelerator based on photonic tensor core	16×16 PCM integrated array to realize the matrix vector multiplication	The accelerator operated at the speed of 10^{12} MAC operations per second
2021	XU Xingyuan, <i>Nature</i> ^[88]	Optical vector convolutional accelerator	Ten 3×3 convolutional kernels. Optical frequency combs provide 90 optical signals with different wavelengths Using wavelength division multiplexing, time division multiplexing and space division multiplexing	The computing speed of a single processor exceeded 10 TOPS, and the accuracy of handwritten digit images recognition was 88%

可扩展性强、能效高、面积紧凑和可编程性强等优点,然而其规模有待进一步提高。因此,能够在光域同时实现线性计算和非线性计算大规模神经网络,能充分发挥光子技术的高速与并行优势,值得重点关注。

2 光神经形态计算国内研究进展

光神经形态计算也得到国内多个高校和研究机构的高度关注,清华大学、北京大学、北京交通大学、浙江大学、北京邮电大学、上海交通大学、华中科技大学、西南大学、上海理工大学、西安电子科技大学等高校的多个研究团队在该领域都取得了突出的成果。

北京大学研究团队于2015年通过实验证明了基于SOA可模拟突触可塑性,并实现了脉冲序列的模式识别算法^[89-90],曾将神经形态工程的基准测试算法平台——神经工程框架(Neural Engineering Framework, NEF)引入可集成光学神经拟态系统中,可实现等值、平方、积分这三个NEF的基本运算,分别对应于神经表征、表征转换、神经动态这三个NEF的基本规则,仿真研究表明,相比欧盟SpiNNaker电神经拟态系统运算,NEF这三个基本运算要快5~6个数量级^[91]。北京交通大学研究团队于2017年基于单个SOA实现了anti-STDP学习机制,并研制了基于可调光衰减器的光子权重器^[92-93];并讨论了相干扰动与非相干扰动对VCSEL-SA神经元产生脉冲的影响,包括可兴奋阈值、脉冲响应时间、不应期等特性^[94]。西南大学研究团队基于光注入VCSEL,模拟了生物神经元的兴奋性和抑制性响应^[40],并通过实验和数值证明了脉冲动力学在两个耦合VCSEL之间的传输^[95]。浙江大学研究团队于2018年基于硅纳米晶体实现了光电神经突触器件,模拟了突触后兴奋电流、双脉冲易化、短时程可塑性和长时程可塑性及STDP^[96]。北京邮电大学研究团队于2019年研究了基于MZI的光子神经网络芯片在线训练算法,提出基于遗传算法/粒子群算法的非梯度片上训练方案,通过仿真分别实现了神经网络在Iris数据集、Wine数据集上的在线训练^[97]。上海交通大学研究团队于2020年先后证实了DFB的类神经元响应,并设计了基于DFB的光子时空模式识别网络,提出了基于无源微环的光脉冲神经元方案^[98-100]。2020年,华中科技大学研究团队提出了基于MZI网格的光矩阵计算专用处理器,实现了多通道光开关、MIMO解扰器、可调滤波器等多个功能^[101-103]。同年,中科院半导体所研究团队设计了一种基于相干检测的硅基神经网络芯片,该芯片采用SiN-Si双层结构的波导,包含256个MZI调制器和128个平衡探测器,但是激活函数通过电子芯片实现^[104]。清华大学研究团队于2020年提出利用时域拉伸技术进行光电融合神经网络计算,通过高速串行调制与时域拉伸技术,实现了3层、神经元数量大于400个的全连接神经网络,在手写数字识别任务中准确率达到89%^[105];随后,利用时域拉伸技术进行了光电融合卷积神经网络的研究,构建了具有两层卷积层、两层池化层和一层全连接层的卷积神经网络,在手写数字识别任务中准确率达到95%^[106]。2021年,清华大学团队提出了大规模可重构衍射计算处理器,可以有效地构建多种类型的衍射神经网络,并提出自适应的在线训练算法,普适于光电智能计算系统的误差校正,在手写数字图像和人类动作视频分类问题中,实验分类精度与电子计算方法相当^[107]。2021年,上海理工大学研究团队提出了全光推理全息纳米结构方案,研究出一种紧凑型光学衍射神经网络,可以进行全光推理,并可与商用CMOS传感器直接集成;利用纳米打印的可见光和近红外波段的推理感知器的计算能力上限为400 ExaFLOPS,与毫米波、微波等波段运行的衍射设备和集成光子硬件相比,算力提高了3到5个数量级;在单层纳米尺度每平方厘米部署超过5亿个神经元,密度达到人类大脑神经元的1/400^[108]。

西安电子科技大学研究团队自2016年以来,从光神经拟态计算的新原理器件、光脉冲神经网络的理论模型与算法、以及光脉冲神经元芯片的研制等方面开展了一系列的前沿探索研究^[109-110]。如图5所示,光子神经元方面,从2016年开始,建立了VCSEL光子神经元及级联系统的理论模型,成功模拟了VCSELs光子神经元的兴奋型响应尖峰脉冲动力学输出^[111],并在固定连接强度的条件下,实现了VCSELs耦合系统中兴奋响应的稳定级联传输^[112],在此基础上,提出并模拟了基于偏振转换VCSEL及含饱和吸收区VCSEL的多种可控光子脉冲神经元的新方案^[113-114],2019年首次发现偏振模竞争效应引起的类神经元抑制响应^[115],并基于该抑制响应单步实现了异或(XOR)运算^[116]。光子突触可塑性方面,2018年建立了基于VCSEA的光突触可塑性理论模型^[117],随后在2020年提出了基于VCSEL的实时光突触可塑性方案^[118]。神经网络和算法方面,2019年开始,建立了基于VCSEL的“光子神经元-突触-学习算法”一体化光脉冲神经网络物理模型,先后提出无监督学习算法^[119]、有监督学习算法^[120]、赢者通吃竞争学习机制^[121]和“时延-权重协同可塑性”

监督学习算法^[122],实现了声源定位功能^[123]、联想记忆功能^[124]和模式识别任务^[125],还研究了基于VCSEL的储备池计算^[126-129]。硬件方面,2021年,通过实验验证了基于VCSEL的类神经元响应、基于VCSEA的突触可塑性、基于单个VCSEL神经元的全光XOR运算和二进制卷积计算^[130],并研制了光子脉冲神经元芯片。

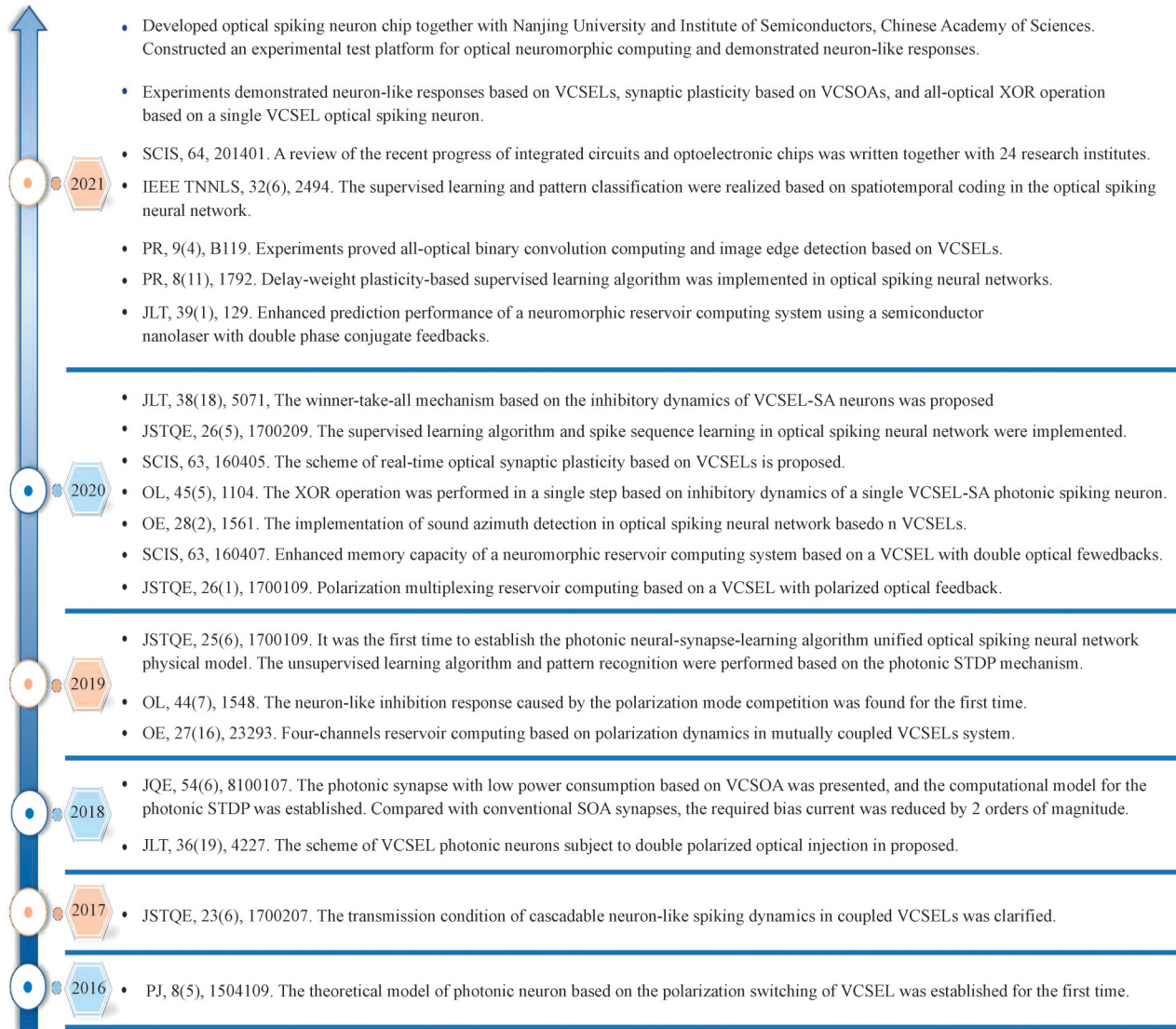


图5 西安电子科技大学团队的研究进展^[109-110]
Fig.5 Research progress of the Xidian University team^[109-110]

从国内进展看,起步比国外相对较晚,但是近年来也得到了系统深入的研究。在光脉冲神经元、矩阵乘法的光学实现、光神经网络算法等方面均取得了较好的成果。结合国内优势单位,通过对光神经网络的架构、理论、算法与芯片等协同创新,必将取得更大的突破。

3 光子AI芯片公司

目前在全球范围内,光神经形态计算芯片处于起步探索阶段,很多光子计算公司仍在进行技术和产品上的探索,其商业化并不成熟,离实际应用还需要一定时间。在利用光进行神经网络计算的领域中,有一些正在探索的公司,如曦智科技(Lightelligence)、Lightmatter、Optalysis、Fathom Computing、Ayar Labs、LightOn、光子算数(Photoncounts)和Luminous Computing,表4对这些光子AI芯片公司作了简单的介绍。

表4 光子AI芯片公司
Table 4 Photonic AI chip company

Company	Date of establishment	Founder/Team/ Place	Achievements
Lightelligence	2017	MIT, Dr. SHEN Yichen	In April 2019, Lightelligence released the prototype of its optical AI computer, the first of its kind in the world In 2021, the world's first commercial optical chip will be available soon
Lightmatter	2017	MIT	In 2020, the chip Mars for AI inference acceleration was presented. It is planned to launch its first optical AI chip Enviser by the end of 2021
Optalysys	2013	University of Cambridge	In 2015, an optical computing prototype was created, with a processing speed of about 320Gflops and very low energy efficiency. On March 7, 2019, FT:X 2000 which is the world's first optical co-processor system for AI computing was announced
Fathom Computing	2014	Britain	Photon prototype computer was the first time that machine learning software used laser pulse circuits instead of power for training. In 2014, the accuracy of handwritten digits recognition was only about 30%, and by 2018, it had exceeded 90%
Ayar Labs	2015	MIT	Ayar Labs demonstrated the industry's first terabit optical link for co-packaged optics and chip-to-chip connectivity, which provided optical communication with high bandwidth, low delay, and low power consumption
LightOn	2016	France	A coprocessor Aurora has been fabricated, embedded with a very efficient optical core Nitro
Photoncounts	2017	Beijing Jiaotong University, Dr. BAI Bing	The field programmable photonic gate arrays chip has been developed, and a server-oriented photoelectric hybrid AI accelerated computing card has been built together with Beijing universities
Luminous Computing	2018	Princeton University	The scheme of Broadcast and Weight based on Micro-ring optical filters was used. The prototype at that time saved three orders of magnitude more energy than other most advanced AI chips

4 光神经形态计算关键挑战

光神经形态计算在传统神经形态计算的基础上,引入了光信号处理技术,充分发挥光子学的多维度、超高速、大带宽、低功耗等特点,可显著提升智能计算的速度和功耗性能。然而,目前光神经形态计算仍存在许多挑战,例如光子神经网络芯片的大规模集成技术、光子神经网络的在线训练算法以及光神经网络处理器与现有电处理器的光电协同机制等。

首先,在大规模集成方面,单个网络中光子神经元的数量越多,网络处理信息的能力越强,大规模神经网络有利于实现更加复杂的功能。但是,大部分非线性光学器件属于分立器件,集成难度较大,而且部分光子器件具有不稳定性难以精细调谐的特性,使得扩展神经网络的规模变得困难。尤其是基于光电混合架构的光子神经网络,包括光学有源/无源器件和射频驱动单元,将数千个控制器与光子网络共同封装是一个很大的挑战,因此电子控制也将是影响网络可扩展性的一个关键限制因素。

其次,在算法方面,传统的电神经网络中不同的算法可适应不同的网络和任务,而且这些算法可以进行在线训练与测试,但是由于光子本身无法像电子一样存储信息,因此无法直接对光子的状态进行记录,需要外接器件来观察和记录当前网络状态,然后根据得到的数据进行后处理,这样的过程降低了网络性能,因此需要通过光器件的特性设计硬件友好的算法对网络进行在线训练,这样会大大提高网络的性能,使其胜任更加复杂的任务。

最后,由于完整的光神经形态计算本质上是一个由光源、无源和有源元件共同工作的系统,但是没有单一的商业制造机构同时在单个芯片上提供这样的平台。目前,实现光源、激光器光子神经元的优势平

台是InP基,实现光突触的优势平台是硅基光平台,构建完整的光神经网络需要光神经元和光突触的高效互连,即需要两个材料体系进行混合集成,这将是面临的关键瓶颈与挑战。

随着光电混合集成技术和先进封装技术的发展,突破神经网络的光电芯片的一体化流片工艺,通过光子神经网络处理器与现有电处理器的光电协同设计,大规模的光电子集成技术可为神经网络芯片实现低功耗和高速率的信息处理提供支撑。

5 结论与展望

光子神经形态计算结合了光子学的优势和神经网络的能力,能以比生物大脑快几百万至十亿倍的运行速度模拟神经形态算法,是其他神经形态硬件系统无法比拟的,并可胜任比传统数字或模拟光计算更复杂的计算任务,如自适应控制、学习与记忆和感觉信息处理等。目前,全世界的光神经网络和光神经形态计算均处于机遇与挑战并存的起步和探索阶段,一方面,受限於现阶段对人脑及其复杂神经网络系统的认识,从信息学和工程学角度的仿脑研究仍处于初级阶段,必须通过神经科学、认知科学、计算机科学、微电子学、光子学等多学科领域更加紧密的交流与合作才能更进一步地推动对人脑和其神经网络系统的工作原理与模式的深入解析与模仿;另一方面,目前基于光学神经形态器件的光神经形态计算芯片尚处在探索阶段,在器件、模型、架构和算法层面还面临诸多挑战。

因此,光子神经网络芯片和光神经形态计算研究既涉及到人工智能、脑科学和神经科学的最新研究成果,又和传统的半导体技术、光电集成技术等内容密切相关。为了在光子神经形态领域取得重大突破,需要在半导体材料、工艺、器件、理论、算法、架构、集成技术等全链条上下游协同发展,加快光神经形态器件及芯片迭代速度,加快软件算法与硬件的真正融合。随着光子技术的成熟,利用越来越高性能的集成光子元件来增强神经形态光子计算技术,将进一步释放人工神经网络的潜力。未来,通过与光电混合集成技术及先进封装技术的协同发展,必将推动光神经形态计算向集成化、芯片化、规模化、低功耗和低成本方向发展,在类脑智能机器人、数据中心运营和云计算、无人平台、自动驾驶等领域具有潜在的应用前景。

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