

Don't miss Ars Frontiers 2023: Top minds talk AI, mRNA, and TikTok bans

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Ars Technica is pleased to announce the return of Ars Frontiers, our single-day event that explores tech's most vexing and fascinating issues. This year's event will be held on May 22, and everyone is invited! Attendance this year is virtual, so we'll be streaming all six sessions over the course of three and a half hours.

Readers who stop by the front page every day already know that Ars is a leader in bringing smart people together to talk about important topics—whether that means interviewing experts about current events or watching our highly skilled readers dissect an issue in the comments. In that same spirit of fostering brilliant discussions, this year we've curated a list of topics that explore the modern interconnectedness of innovation, with panels led by our subject matter authorities like Eric Berger and Dr. Beth Mole. All sessions will be streamed live on the Ars YouTube channel.

The main event

Ars Frontiers 2023 will feature six virtual sessions on May 22, starting at approximately 13:30 US Eastern Daylight Time (-4 UTC). Ars Technica Editor-in-Chief Ken Fisher and I will

host the event from our studio in Manhattan. Each session will run about 30 minutes, which will include some time at the end for audience questions. Here's the line-up! (Session order might change between now and when the event happens.)

Session 1: TikTok—banned or not, it's probably here to stay

Ars senior policy reporter Ashley Belanger will be taking on a current hot topic: While Congress and various states are vowing action against TikTok, will “banning” the app (whatever “banning” actually means) really come to anything? What are the policy implications around this kind of regulation, and how did we get here? We'll feature EFF Legal Director Corynne McSherry among the panel's guests.

Session 2: Beyond COVID—what does mRNA technology mean for disease treatment?

Next up is Ars chief scientist Dr. John Timmer with a panel on everybody's favorite four-letter word of the 2020s: mRNA. Thanks to the research generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, mRNA-based vaccines went from lab prototypes to commercial realities in an incredibly short amount of time. But mRNA tech can extend far beyond simple vaccinations—we could use it on other diseases, too. This panel will include Dr. Karen Bok, the director of pandemic preparedness and emergency response at the Vaccine Research Center of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at NIH.

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Session 3: Pandemic lessons from epidemiologists

Ars science writer and chief pandemic correspondent Dr. Beth Mole pulls together a panel of infectious disease experts to

look at what we've learned from the last three years and what our *next* pandemic response might look like. Beth will talk with a panel including epidemiologist Dr. Jennifer Nuzzo of Brown University, among others.

Session 4: Internet everywhere—satellites are suddenly sexy

Our chief space reporter, Eric Berger, will then lead a conversation on the rise of satellite Internet as a viable and accessible alternative to standard wireline Internet. What does the prospect of fast, low-latency Internet anywhere on Earth mean for travelers and locals around the globe? What do tens of thousands of orbiting satellites mean for our skies—and for the new space industry that will launch them? Guests joining Eric for this panel will include Charity Weeden, vice president of Global Space Policy and Government Relations at Astroscale.

Session 5: The lightning onset of AI—what suddenly changed?

A year ago, few of us had heard of “ChatGPT.” Twelve months later, large language model-based AI threatens to forcibly revolutionize entire industries. What innovations led to this explosion of functionality? How did we come so far, seemingly overnight? Ars AI reporter Benj Edwards dives into the subject with a group of experts that includes Paige Bailey, lead product manager for generative models at Google.

Session 6: What happens to the developers when AI can code?

One area where large language models are making inroads is programming. The same basic skills that make LLMs good at stringing English words together also make them good at stringing together words of *all* kinds—including, say, words in

Python and Rust. I'll be putting on the moderator's hat for this panel and sitting down with a group that will feature, among others, coding expert Katie Moussouris.

How to watch

We'll be streaming the conference primarily on our YouTube channel, and we'll also embed a copy of the stream on the Ars Technica homepage on the day of the event. Each panel will run for about a half-hour and will include some time for audience questions, which we'll pull from YouTube and also from the homepage article comments. This is a fantastic opportunity to hear great minds talk about interesting topics, and everyone will have the opportunity to make their voices heard in the comments.

It will be a packed day, but we hope everyone has at least a few minutes to stop by and stream a session. We'd love to see you there!

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