Jeff Bezos is launching a new conference dedicated to AI, optimism, and Amazon

For the last couple of years, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has held an annual invite-only event where billionaires, astronauts, and roboticists could rub shoulders and chat about the future of tech over gourmet nibbles. Now that event is being turned into a public conference — one that "embraces an optimistic vision for scientific discovery" and will feature demos, workshops and talks about machine learning and space exploration.

"We're at the beginning of a golden age of AI," said Bezos in a press statement. "Recent advancements have already led to invention that previously lived in the realm of science fiction — and we've only scratched the surface of what's possible."

The new event will be held in Las Vegas between June 4th and 7th later this year. The earlier, semi-secret conference was known as MARS (standing for Machine learning, Automation, Robotics, and Space), and the new event — an "extension" of the former — has been dubbed re:MARS.

But while the original MARS was exclusive and utopian (imagine a Californian Bilderberg conference, with robots and group meditation), the tenor of re:MARS is difficult to judge.

re:MARS seems like it will include plenty of self-promotion for Amazon

Certainly it seems that the event will be used by Amazon to burnish its own cutting-edge reputation. The press release for

the event starts by listing some of the firms many futuristic projects, from checkout-less stores to drone deliveries (though it doesn’t mention that the latter has stalled in recent years), while the only specific workshops and demos listed right now are for Amazon product like AWS and Alexa.

It also seems there will be a clear, practical business focus. Bezos says the event will bring together “leaders and builders” to “share learning and spark new ideas for future innovation,” while the press release says attendees will be able to learn how AI can “drive business efficiency, streamline operations, [and] improve automation.” For those worried about the affect of new technology on jobs, these buzzwords might not sound so cheery.

Also unknown is whether other tech companies with similar ambitions in AI will make a showing — companies like Google, Facebook, and Tencent. Speakers for the event also seem to be drawn mostly from the academic world, with figures like Ken Goldberg, a roboticist at UC Berkely, and Kate Darling, an expert in robot-human interaction at MIT.

Amazon will likely flesh out the itinerary in the months to come, and it will be interesting to see what other talks and demos are added. Those interested can sign up here.

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