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AWS re:Invent, Las Vegas

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At the end of last year, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend AWS re:Invent (Amazon's large annual tech conference). Over the four or so days I was there, I attended a variety of talks and keynotes from many of the tech leaders at Amazon (including Dartmouth alumnus, Peter Desantis), who all spoke on different developments Amazon was seeking to make as a pioneer in the industry. This time around, the focus surrounded their most recent progress in souping up their AI models, various software platforms, and hardware. It was amazing to see quality presentations made to enormous audiences while learning about innovation that is deeply connected to areas I'm hoping to pursue.

For example, much of their discussion about hardware was on new chips and optimizations Amazon was making to compete with the likes of NVIDIA, with speakers breaking down metrics to show how recent developments stacked up to other industry leaders'. Their software discussions centered around their partnerships with companies like Anthropic and the creation of Amazon's own models.

In addition to the larger talks, I had the chance to explore their Expo, where companies ranging from startups to the Microsofts of the world had set up shop to display their own advancements and projects. Here, I could engage more personally with people showcasing everything from AI training optimizations, to ways they were applying different platforms to things like education technology and drug discovery. All in all, it was really exciting to see the hype and innovation in this sector at all scales and get to experience that in a more intimate setting.

Overall, this event was definitely an order of magnitude larger than previous conferences I'd attended, and while that made it somewhat harder to navigate — especially since this was held at the Las Vegas Strip, meaning I had to move from casino to casino to get from event to event — the scale emphasized how intertwined Amazon was and has been with other prominent members in Big Tech. The type of content and knowledge I was constantly ingesting was eye-opening, and I definitely feel that the experience contributed to my continued interest in AI and innovative software.