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Artificial Intelligence

Takeaways from the Research and Applied AI Summit

CITI'S TAKE

Research and Applied AI Summit 2026 represents the focus of leading technologists working at the frontier of AI: Recursive Self-Improvement, Token-Cost Efficiency, World Models, and Physical AI. Scientists presenting from DeepMind focused on 1) a future beyond sequential, autoregressive transformer models via world models, robotics, diffusion, and open-source; 2) self-improving agentic models; and 3) the real-time impact of AI on healthcare sciences. The focus on token efficiency threaded throughout the day, as Revolut noted an "8x cost savings" from its internally developed platform routing work away from frontier models, while ElevenLabs detailed techniques that drove a 70x throughput gain at the hardware level. We expect the combination of rising costs and increasing focus on frontier model risks will continue to drive incremental focus on token efficiency.

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Inference economics. Revolut's head of ML Engineering detailed the development of a routing platform governed via a central gateway and graceful fallbacks. It is built on the observation that "the frontier model is usually the wrong one," with model "right-sizing cutting cost up to 8x at no quality loss." ElevenLabs' research engineer detailed a 70x throughput gain on fixed hardware (where continuous batching alone can account for a 15x gain), FP8 quantization with quantization-aware training (QAT), multi-token-prediction speculative decoding, and KV-cache quantization plus distillation, alongside architectural frontiers like DeepSeek's MLA and Nvidia's SSMs. ElevenLabs' router agent selects requests to route from large to small models outperforming the large model alone.

Recursive self-improvement. Last year's RAAIS featured DeepMind presenting on AI Squared, the ability of AI to improve AI via recursive self-improvement. This year's research scientist framed scientific discovery as a reinforcement-learning problem progressing from discovery to open-ended discovery to *accelerated* open-ended discovery, where meta-learning accelerates the pace of discovery. Enabling infrastructure included DiscoGen (which supports 400M+ generated-research tasks), MLGym-Bench, and Rainbow Teaming. Odyssey's PROWL extended the theme with an RL agent that improves the world model itself rather than just the decision-making policy (which builds on their philosophy that "your agent will never be better than your learned environment model").

World models. Commercialization of world models remains early-stage, though they are emerging as the data-generation engine to break robotics' teleoperation bottleneck. Odyssey positioned the world model category at its "GPT-2 moment," arguing that modeling interaction with the world is a richer substrate than language. It showcased Odyssey-2 Max (which adapts an autoregressive diffusion transformer architecture to score 93 in Physics on PAI-Bench), Starchild-1 (for real-time joint pixel/audio generation), and Agora-1 (a multi-agent model capable of enabling ~17

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concurrent four-player sessions on a single H100). DeepMind Genie 3, a real-time, promptable, video-generation model lends itself to education and agentic training applications, while their two-part modeling solution for robotics has achieved human-level dexterity that learns across embodiments.

AI in healthcare. AI's value has been overly constrained by the focus on language models, obscuring the value of models created around, among other categories, the data of biology. DeepMind presented Co-Scientist (a Gemini-based, multi-agent system that generates, debates, and evolves hypotheses ranked in an Elo-style tournament). Researchers at Imperial College found it reproduced a decade-long antimicrobial-resistance result in about two days, with novel hypotheses now being pursued; Houston Methodist applied it to drug repurposing in acute myeloid leukemia (AML); at Stanford, two of its recommended compounds showed anti-fibrotic activity (including Vorinostat, an FDA-approved cancer drug that cut TGF-β-induced chromatin structural changes by 91%). The AMIE co-clinician matched or exceeded physicians on diagnosis and empathy in simulated evaluations published in *Nature*, with a Beth Israel Deaconess study logging zero safety stops across all patient-AMIE interventions.

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