Meta reveals various AI projects to power the metaverse, but no timeline in sight

Article

The news: Meta offered a glimpse of various AI-related projects in a streamed "Inside the Lab'' event Wednesday. Insights included speech-driven VR world-building tools, real-time

speech and translation, as well as a look into its AI supercomputer.

Why this matters: The metaverse, as imagined by Meta, is still in its infancy and quite limited in terms of functionality. By showcasing its various technologies, Meta can generate interest from potential users, partners, and developers.

"Artificial intelligence is the foundational technology of our time," Meta CEO **Mark Zuckerberg** said while introducing projects that constitute the framework for the metaverse.

- **Builder Bot** is an AI system that allows users to build 3D-generated parts of VR worlds simply by describing them to a voice assistant. Zuckerberg demoed the technology by creating a virtual beach, adding clouds, ships, and a musical soundtrack with voice commands.

- Meta also demoed a **universal language AI translator**, ostensibly to help users in the metaverse better communicate in different languages. "The ability to communicate with anyone in any language is a superpower that was dreamt of forever," Zuckerberg said.

- **AI Research SuperCluster** (RSC) will be among the world's fastest AI supercomputers when it's completed mid-2022. Meta's computer will build AI models for the metaverse, learning from trillions of examples and work across hundreds of languages.

- The company's executives stressed that AI systems driving the metaverse would be focused on **preserving user privacy** and being as transparent as possible.

- Meta, whose products **Facebook** and **Instagram** leverage user tracking to sell ads, has had numerous run-ins with regulators due to privacy abuses.

The bigger picture: Meta needs to continue stoking the fires of the metaverse, and revealing some of the technological underpinnings of its platform can help stir up excitement, user adoption, and potential partnerships.
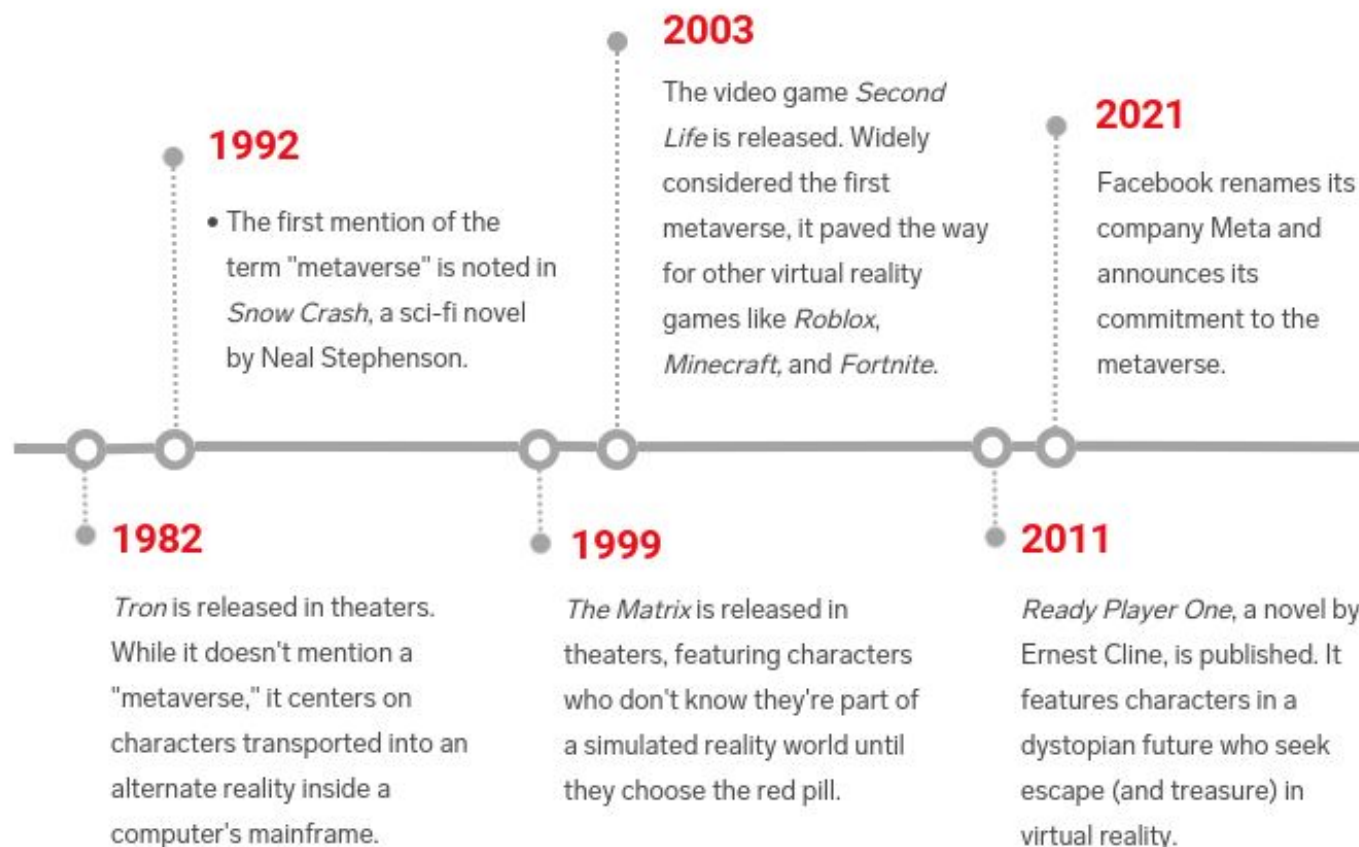
What's the catch? While Meta is actively solving some of the big problems in its metaverse—including how to better communicate and build virtual worlds without traditional input tools—the company offered no timeline as to when these innovations will be operational.

The big takeaway: The revelation of Meta's "Inside the Lab" presentation mirrors the current state of the metaverse, which is very much still under construction and with no cohesive timeline to completion.

- Meta has invested over 10 years of research into AI and is just starting to yield the fruits of its development.

■ Using AI models to accelerate development of any project will only be as successful as the available data sets, a huge challenge for Meta as it is one of the first companies to build an entirely new interactive VR platform.

The beginnings of the metaverse

2003

The video game *Second Life* is released. Widely considered the first metaverse, it paved the way for other virtual reality games like *Roblox*, *Minecraft*, and *Fortnite*.

1992

• The first mention of the term "metaverse" is noted in *Snow Crash*, a sci-fi novel by Neal Stephenson.

2021

Facebook renames its company Meta and announces its commitment to the metaverse.

1982

Tron is released in theaters. While it doesn't mention a "metaverse," it centers on characters transported into an alternate reality inside a computer's mainframe.

1999

The Matrix is released in theaters, featuring characters who don't know they're part of a simulated reality world until they choose the red pill.

2011

Ready Player One, a novel by Ernest Cline, is published. It features characters in a dystopian future who seek escape (and treasure) in virtual reality.

INSIDER INTELLIGENCE | **e**Marketer