Mary Barroll:
Welcome to CharityVillage Connects - I'm your host, Mary Barroll.
(Sound effect: Hummingbird flying and tone)

Mary Barroll:
That's the sound of a hummingbird pollinating our world and making it a better place. The hummingbird is CharityVillage's logo because we strive, like the industrious hummingbird, to make connections across the nonprofit sector and help make positive change. Over this series of podcasts, we'll explore topics that are vital to the nonprofit sector in Canada. Topics like diversity, equity and inclusion, mental health in the workplace, the gap in female representation in leadership and many other subjects crucial to the sector. We'll offer insight that will help you make sense of your life as a nonprofit professional, make connections to help navigate challenges and support your organization to deliver on its mission.

Transition music

Host:
This episode of CharityVillage Connects is brought to you by the RISE Program. Funded by Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada, this free, self-guided and fully virtual training program is available to all charities and nonprofits looking to leverage user-centric design to update, enhance or add to their services. Once registered you and your team will undergo an iterative process to create a pilot program for new service delivery systems and products. Visit riseprogram.ca to learn more, register and begin your user-centric design journey today.

Transition music

Mary Barroll:
In this episode of CharityVillage Connects: Artificial Intelligence and Nonprofits: Panacea or Pandora's Box?

Transition music

https://www.cnbc.com/2023/09/13/apple-iphone-15-launch-focused-a-lot-on-ai-with-new-chips.html
0:07 "Apple really flexed its tech muscles, there was a lot of talk about AI, without Apple actually talking about AI."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnNbA21zsK4
00:05 "It's Google versus Microsoft in an AI race."

https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/06/google-announces-bard-ai-in-response-to-chatgpt.html

00:20 "Google is testing ChatGPT like products internally."

Mary Barroll:
Artificial intelligence has taken the world by storm. AI's ability to churn out comprehensive research, generate fully written reports, and create stunning images - all at lightning speed - has ignited a flurry of excitement in recent months. But that excitement has also been tempered by serious anxiety over what artificial intelligence means to jobs, privacy, ethics, and even the future of humanity.

The impact has already been enormous, and the effect on the nonprofit world is no exception. But the sector in Canada has been notoriously slow when it comes to investing in technology. Will nonprofits embrace the new AI tools that are revolutionizing our world or be left in the dust of this whirlwind of change?

Alexandra Samuel:
It has so dramatically changed what I'm capable of delivering in terms of quantity, quality, and also type of thing that I'm capable of doing.

Dan Kershaw:
It's just faster and smarter and can be interacted with regular spoken language.

Brendan Howe:
And the way people work right now in nonprofits, is gonna go through a revolution.

Meena Das:
Don't be scared of that technology. It's here to support us, built by us, people like us, for us. So, it's here for a reason.

Charles Buchanan:
I think the biggest barrier is the fact that the technology is changing so rapidly. And right now, there's so many tools. There are a lot of AI things coming at people.

Beth Kanter:
AI knows your data really well, but humans only know humans really well. And we really have to think about staying human-centered at all costs, putting humans first.

Jason Shim:
In the context of, say, Star Wars, you know, there's a kind of light side and dark side kind of thing. And at the end of the day, using technology can be like using the force.

Mary Barroll:
The hype has been unprecedented. Artificial intelligence is changing our world - dramatically and rapidly. But is the Canadian nonprofit sector - so notoriously slow in embracing technology - ready for the transformative, and even revolutionary, changes that AI promises for the future?

Host:
A recent survey suggests while most nonprofits see the advantages of using AI, few are ready to embrace it. The survey conducted by Charity Insights Canada shows that 63% of those who responded feel underprepared to use it, while only 22% think they are ready. 59% say they don't understand how to apply AI within the nonprofit sector. Another survey from KPMG of more than five thousand Canadians reveals that just 20% say they've used AI in their jobs or at school. And just 49% of those who use AI for work or school say they check the results for accuracy.

Mary Barroll:
The survey's finding that the majority of AI users fail to fact-check the results reveals a disturbing and even dangerous trend, and perhaps worse, users are often entering potentially sensitive data about their organizations into their prompts for the AI app, thereby sharing it with the world. And many admit to claiming the results from AI as their own work. These are just some of the many minefields that lie ahead as the world races to adopt artificial intelligence.

Arguably, the nonprofit sector faces even bigger hurdles than elsewhere, with most organizations already struggling under a technology deficit, and juggling unique privacy and ethical concerns for both donors and clients inherent in the work they do everyday. And yet, technology experts say the toothpaste is already out of the tube and there is no putting it back even though the number of Canadians who knowingly use AI is still a minority. What many Canadians don't realize is that their everyday apps and software tools have already integrated AI into their functionality. But what exactly is artificial intelligence, otherwise known as AI? What most people don't realize is that AI isn't new - it's machine learning that's been around for decades… even as far back as the 1950s.

> **Archival clip   1954 "THE SEARCH"**
> https://www.google.com/search?q=1954+computer&sca_esv=569475139&tbm=vid&sxsrf=AM9HkKlKFX2j7ATgxpa5uZcaMcJ1Ns9rDA:1696008558834&source=lnms&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=2ahUKEwi4tb2drNCBAxXwjYkEHW99AF4Q_AUoA3oECAIQBQ&biw=1664&bih=985&dpr=1.5#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:bee75545,vid:NN7mlicU95w,st:0

> **5:53 – 6:02**
> "Would you say that machines are becoming smarter and smarter?
>
> Yes, we're making them smarter and smarter. We're building into them better memories. We're building into them the possibility of learning. Those things are happening very fast. By that do you mean that we have machines that can actually think?"

Mary Barroll:
That's from a CBS Broadcast in 1954, when technology took a major leap forward, thanks to transistors shrinking the size of computers and ramping up their power, so why is AI getting so much attention now?

Brendan Howe:
So absolutely, it's a great question, Mary Barroll, because if you look at the history of AI, it's been around for decades.

Mary Barroll:
Brendan Howe is CEO of Techify, a company that provides IT support to both private enterprises and nonprofit organizations, including assisting clients with the adoption of AI.

Brendan Howe:
And what has happened is, there's been moments in time that have really captured people's attention and said, wow. And what happened in the fall of 2022, OpenAI, which is an organization based on natural language processing, artificial intelligence, they came out with ChatGPT4. And what ChatGPT4 has really done is revolutionize the capability of people to speak in normal language. It's called natural language processing. Speak in normal language to a computer and have a computer understand this. If you think about the history of computing, we're used to having, oh, I need to go hire a coder to be able to speak to the machines, because they only understand code and some sort of crazy language that none of us could understand. Now we can all just speak in plain English and tell a computer what we want it to do. And it's just unlocked this amazing power and this amazing demand. And it's why you see the stock market going crazy for AI companies. It's why all these people are talking about it.
And it's been such a significant breakthrough. A lot of times I'll compare it to the launch of e-commerce or Google and how that transformed how we operate on a day-to-day basis and how we do business on a day-to-day basis.

Mary Barroll:
Business and technology gurus almost unanimously vaunt artificial intelligence as transformative for - well everything! But one thing is for sure, the tipping point that took the world by storm and blew up the internet is the launch of ChatGPT - the consumer focussed app that democratized machine learning to allow technology plebians to use AI as part of daily activities. Even to skeptics, the release of ChatGPT seems to mark a turning point.

Alexandra Samuel:
You can feed an AI an outline and it will give you back a draft. And it's quite shocking the first time you do it, especially if you do it for the first time with GPT4, which is the current model of ChatGPT.

Mary Barroll:
Technology journalist and author, Alexandra Samuel, says even to techies like her, ChatGPT is a gamechanger.

Alexandra Samuel:
You know, people talk about how unknown technologies can feel like magic. This is like more like that than anything. I mean, I think about the first time I ever did an internet search, and this has it beat for sure. It's just like jaw dropping.

Meena Das:
For any listener who hasn't experienced ChatGPT before, if you Google ChatGPT, a little website comes up where you can type your questions in normal day-to-day communication English that we use.

Mary Barroll:
Meena Das is the Founder of Namaste Data, a nonprofit data consulting practice that focuses on data equity and fundraising analytics for nonprofits and social impact agencies. Meena helps nonprofit organizations understand and embrace AI as part of their operations and IT systems.

Meena Das:
You can place your questions and you would get some responses out of that platform. It's basically talking to a machine right in front of you. That's ChatGPT, and that's not the entire AI. That's called generative AI.

Mary Barroll:
Generative artificial intelligence refers to deep-learning models that can write in any language and can even create images, including graphics and video, from data and instructions the user provides - in the case of ChatGPT in plain language rather than in computer code.

Beth Kanter:
The new thing that's capturing all the attention has been called generative AI. And one of the tools is ChatGPT. And these are known as large language models, and they are driven by artificial intelligence.

Mary Barroll:
That's Beth Kanter, an International Nonprofit Thought Leader and Author whose writing helps nonprofits to operate in a connected world. Her latest book, The Smart Nonprofit, examines the impact of AI on nonprofits.

Beth Kanter:
Basically, those algorithms, those recipes and data. And they allow you to have human-like conversations. And basically, you ask it questions, and it can assist you with different tasks like writing tasks, for example, composing email, writing an essay, even writing code or those formulas for Excel tables. And the way it works is it'll analyze data or text, in this case, text that's on the internet, scary thought there. There are other types of generative AI tools that will work with images or even videos.

And what it does is it looks for patterns and then it takes that information, and it generates new content based on what it's analyzed in terms of patterns. And it's very persuasive and it does it really fast. So, I think that really has captured our imagination around the potential for artificial intelligence, even though it's been around for many years.

Mary Barroll:
But exactly how nonprofits can incorporate AI into their operations and reap the promised benefits is not altogether clear to many nonprofit leaders. But our podcast guests have some ideas and examples, here's Beth Kanter again.

Beth Kanter:
There are many, many opportunities. And let's just take ChatGPT, for an example, since it's so much in the news lately, we've been hearing a lot from fundraisers who are using these tools to write thank you letter notes to compose newsletter articles, press releases, even grant proposals. And one development officer I spoke to recently told me that she's using the tool and its saving her many hours of time a week that she used to spend drafting materials.

Mary Barroll:
Meena Das points out some other practical uses, having recently coached a client on integrating AI into its social media.

Meena Das:
But what we did was instead of simply producing content, we created two-layer training for the social media coordinators. We first trained them how to use ChatGPT ethically, thinking about the audience, thinking about the community. We taught them how to pull up those posts, make it your own, add the tone of the organization. Once that is done, we started to realize, okay, now social media coordinators have free time. They don't have to spend so much time to keep producing content. So now what? So, the second layer of training kicked in where the fundraisers were paired with those social media coordinators to learn to talk and build relationships with the followers and have one-on-one meetings. So, we did not just save time, we repurposed time, instead of just taking the time to produce content and now you're free, let's eliminate the roles, we don't need the roles, we still need the roles. And now those two people, amazing people, are used to have one-on-one conversations with new followers, have coffee chats, and they have brought in more volunteers for the organization through those conversations.

So, I would say, that feels to me to be a very good example, that yes, AI can be scary, but we can start with easy small steps and try to make it practical for us by making sure how do we repurpose time? We are not removing anything, deleting anything. We are trying to keep the center wide of building relationships with people.

Mary Barroll:
Other nonprofits have also had success bringing artificial intelligence into their workflows. Jason Shim serves as Chief Digital Officer of the Canadian Centre for Nonprofit Digital Resilience, also known by its acronym, CCNDR.

Jason Shim:
I'll share some use cases from specific organizations. So, I think that for organizations like Kids Help Phone they have recently been highlighting that as part of their systems using AI, they're able to use AI systems to analyze conversations and triage based on certain trigger words to advance conversations to the front of the line that may be higher in priority. So that's a very specific use case to program delivery that AI can impact and provide better service delivery for organizations.

The others are on fundraising platforms. There are many more kind of fundraising platforms that have either integrated or have indicated that it's on their roadmap, with regards to things like analyzing prospects for fundraising, as well as moves management within the fundraising context. So, determining everything from when is a good time to potentially make an ask, drafting up some communications to donors, all the way to just getting a better sense of the data and things like that. And finally, there are things on the day-to-day operations. So, things like if someone is in an operational capacity within a marketing department, creating images, using language models to draft text. Some of the AI models around voice models make it easier to generate narration, that rather than having to record over and over again certain things, or for editing, that it's now possible to train a voice model based on your voice or a staff member's voice and have the audio automatically generated that way.

Mary Barroll:
For nonprofits who've taken the leap - AI is proving to be a powerful tool that accelerates productivity and unleashes creativity - and perhaps surprisingly, provides new ways to touch the human heart.

Dan Kershaw:
It's just... faster and smarter and can be interacted with regular spoken language. You don't need to be a programmer. I'm not a programmer, but I can do things that 20 years ago would say, oh you must be a programmer to do that.

Mary Barroll:
Dan Kershaw is the Executive Director of the Furniture Bank, a well-known nonprofit based in Toronto. The organization recently made news with an innovative marketing campaign which showed that artificial intelligence can not only converse in plain language and write, it can also generate compelling images. Although a picture can paint a thousand words, when nonprofits are serving vulnerable groups, discretion, sensitivity, and confidentiality make it difficult for organizations to show their impact by depicting images of real people who they've helped. That was the challenge that the Furniture Bank faced.

Dan Kershaw:
We're dealing with people who have successfully found housing, which we know is impossible. And they find themselves without any furnishings.

What does it look like to put your child to bed on a bed of clothes? What does it look like to eat with a milk crate as your table? We have hundreds of stories like this, and in the 25 years looking at the archives that we have, we've only ever had two families invite photographers in to photograph or video the destitution, the form of hidden homelessness.

Mary Barroll:
So, the Furniture Bank turned to AI.

Dan Kershaw:
And when I saw what was going on with generative art, the idea struck me, which was, well, why don't we take words and the stories of the families that were affected by this form of poverty and let AI visualize what that looks like?

Mary Barroll:
It seemed like a perfect solution, but much easier said than done. Generative AI is only as good as the data it learns from.

Dan Kershaw:
AI has been trained on what it has collectively seen in the world. So, it actually had a hard time imagining furniture poverty, because there aren't a lot of photos of people living in destitution behind their own closed doors. Lots of pictures of empty rooms, lots of people in other forms of poverty. But that was actually the hardest challenge is coaching AI to take the stories of the clients that we work with and turn it into the reality that is described in those words.

Mary Barroll:
The result was a very real looking image of a woman with her child on the floor of an empty apartment, for a fundraising campaign entitled "the image isn't real but the reality is". And it drew nationwide attention for its creative use of AI. Now the Furniture Bank is integrating Generative AI into both their marketing and their relationships with clients who provide the stories that animate, and breathe life into the AI generated images with their personal experiences.

Dan Kershaw:
And we're now at a point just moving forward that we're now trying to, in our regular charity operations day to day, trying to build a process where we can capture at the time the families are coming in to build their homes, selecting furniture, if they want to tell us what it was like, they may, and if they choose to, they can do so in an anonymous way that is not impinging on their personal space, but allowing them to have the ability to support this movement. With a number of families, they know this is quite transformational, moving from empty housing into a furnished home. And a lot of

families are quite happy to help this way, in that it's not a cost, it's a story. And we can take that story and turn it into both written and visual material to help raise awareness about this issue. Furniture waste is the largest waste stream, the least recycled waste stream. So, we fill up landfills at rates that are unimaginable and yet we have millions of people in furniture poverty. And this is an exercise of really connecting the dots and redistributing, and rescuing this furniture and getting it to the families who need it.

Mary Barroll:
But not all experiments with AI by nonprofits have had such a happy ending and hopeful potential. Charles Buchanan is the Founder and CEO of Technology Helps. After a distinguished career in technology leadership in online gaming, fintech, environmental protection, AI, and more, today, Charles focuses on helping Canadian nonprofits embrace technology. He recently created a new AI driven tool that would help donors identify the charities where their money would produce the biggest impact.

Charles Buchanan:
We were developing an AI tool for investors around impact. And we were going to be assisting investors or donors, you know, foundations in identifying what organizations are having the maximum impact in certain areas, in the communities. So if you wanted to find out, if I had a hundred thousand dollars to invest in child and youth services or food security, which organization should I give it to? And it was going to be using data around the community and impact or whatever output information or information that could be gleaned from these organizations. And then we would give them a score and say to an investor, you should put your money into ABC Food Bank or X, Y, Z Food Bank or wherever, because they're having the maximum impact.

Mary Barroll:
But Charles Buchanan soon realized that he had created a monster, his AI tool threatened to decrease impact - not increase it- and potentially lead to the closure of smaller, more community-based nonprofits.

Charles Buchanan:
And we pulled the plug on that project last year because it was ethically flawed, because for one, if you do not have enough data in the system about you, you are naturally disregarded or minimized. And so, the smaller organizations that did not have a history of data, did not have sufficient reports and or data available, they were marginalized and they were seen as not effective providers, even though they were.

One of the use cases was around food, and we built it, and we tested it, and it was all the ethnic food pantries or places that provided culturally sensitive foods, they were basically deemed uninvestable. Like, I mean, you should not put your money there because these organizations are not efficient. And what rules? And so, we started asking a lot of questions. Like, how do we determine what rules, who makes the rules around what's impactful or what's important? And why does it favour the organizations that have history of data? But what we also found, which was most disturbing, was how keenly interested some of the investor types, our donor types, were in that because they

wanted to pick winners and losers and they wanted something that would do it for them and was like no we can't - like I said, this tool would be an irresponsible thing to put out there. So, it was a very difficult decision because it was an exciting tool. It had potential to grow and do things, but the data was just not there, it was a deception. And so we pulled the plug on that one.

Mary Barroll:
Charles Buchanan scrapped the entire AI project when he discovered that small organizations were being shut out of the results, even thought they were worthy, because they simply didn't show up in the data. But not every technology provider has the same scruples and that's a cautionary tale for nonprofits.

Charles Buchanan:
So, there are things like that in development. And I'm not saying because we pulled the plug on ours, not everyone did. So, there are tools being used. And so, nonprofits have to be mindful of what data about them is being used and what decision is being made about you with the data that's known, with what's known about your organization. So, on one hand it's nice to kind of just be very private and just, you know, for security reasons, we're going to keep to ourselves. But on the other hand, if you're a relative unknown, you will be marginalized. And that one's not resolved.

Mary Barroll:
Charles Buchanan is by no means alone in worrying about the ethical challenges that AI presents. As Jason Shim of CCNDR points out, it's not just lack of data that can cause problems, but the quality that's also at issue. The databases scoured by artificial intelligence can contain errors and also biases.

Jason Shim:
AI is somewhat like a mirror that is held up to how humans make decisions. We're creating these models that we're telling the AI, hey, this is how we think, this is how we do things here. And so, if the data is reflecting a biased worldview or something that is not ethical, that will be reflected in the outputs of it as well. And the challenge around that, is with AI, is that sometimes it may not be abundantly clear how it comes to the decisions that it makes. So, having visibility and understanding of the data that's going into it and how it's coming up with some of these conclusions is really important. I think that one of the things that folks should be aware of is that if you hand over everything to the AI without an understanding of how it came to that decision, that's a potential risk.

Mary Barroll:
Meena Das agrees the lack of transparency about the data that feeds AI is a dangerzone for creating biases and faulty results.

Meena Das:
Well, for starters, the lack of transparency, the data collection, let's start, there with the data collection. It's not clear, for example, who collects the data for the AI systems, how

are they collected? And because, like I said before, the AI systems are self-learning, continuously self-learning systems. You feed the data and they're learning it and they're churning out insights. So, one of the issues with concerns with responsible AI or not having/using responsible AI is not making sure how the data got collected, got fed into the system and how it's now constantly being learned and used to produce output. For example, we shouldn't be entering race and ethnicity into these algorithms. These social identity parameters should be for humans to understand, to get more context, and then to layer it on the top of algorithms instead of baking it into algorithms and then the algorithm saying, oh yeah, don't give this person so much points because yeah, they are coming from this race or ethnicity. So, they are likely going to be harmful or give them more because they're likely going to be better. Those kinds of things, they should never happen system-wise or human-wise, we don't enter any social identity data points into a question. That's a very concrete example, I would say. And one example, to be honest, but that's one of those things. And without having these guardrails, for lack of another term, we actually risk trust of our community. We risk the trust of our donors. We risk the trust of our external friends and supporters to say, okay, how we are engaging with our technology that reflects on how we treat the data, which is about the people again. So, it comes back to the same thing, trust and care of what to show. So, this is one example I would offer of what we want to do, where is the data coming from, is it generating trust and transparency or not for the algorithms that we are using.

Mary Barroll:
As important as the quality and the transparency of the data collection is, the necessity for humans to train and supervise the operations of the AI tool is equally critical - and the failure to do so can be disastrous to nonprofits who jump on the AI bandwagon unprepared, Beth Kanter explains.

Beth Kanter:
I think if organizations are too eager to reap the benefits of this dividend in the time, they may be tempted to use this incredibly powerful technology without enough consideration of the human or ethical ramifications. So, you know, in the past, I also wrote a book about social media and worked in social media for decades, and it was always jump in, fail fast, experiment. And I think this technology is much different because of ethical considerations. And I'll give you an example, The National Eating Disorders Association or NEDA, I think has become the poster child for potentially harmful use of generative AI.

So, they're the largest nonprofit dedicated to supporting individuals with eating disorders and their families. And they've run up this very successful hotline where they provide advice, either through phone, texting, online. And what happened with the pandemic, there was a surge in demand, because I guess if you have an eating disorder and you're isolated, it's the perfect storm to have that come up again. So, NEDA had a whole department that managed this, I think four staff people plus 200 volunteers, and they could barely keep up with this demand. And in response, NEDA's leadership implemented a chat bot, AI-driven, sophisticated model, its name was Tessa, and promptly handed out pink slips to hotline staff.

And worse still, the chatbot was not adequately supervised or trained in really controlled environments before it was put on the frontline. And it was dispensing potentially harmful advice to people. So, it had to be taken offline. So, in this example, ChatGPT is a really powerful model, and it can go wrong really easily because it can provide false information. Researchers have called this hallucinations.

Jason Shim:
Sometimes when you put in a question, it can be confidently incorrect.

Mary Barroll:
Like Beth Kanter, Jason Shim warns against accepting AI output unchecked.

Jason Shim:
So it can produce a response that may have a loose relationship with reality, but it's gonna say it with an authority that may not be actually true. So, those are the kinds of things too that folks need to be aware of that, you know, you really need to have those processes in place to make sure that some of the outputs are actually valid.

Mary Barroll:
Making stuff up, suffering hallucinations, stealing data and ideas, and disclosing confidential information are usually seen as firing offences in humans. But in today's AI tools, it's just par for the course. But it is called "machine learning" for a reason. Humans need to teach and train their AI tool for it to work effectively. In fact, "coaching" AI is critically important to ensuring credible and useful outputs, but as Alexandra Samuel explains, coaching is also necessary to avoid costly and embarrassing mistakes.

Alexandra Samuel:
You actually need to experiment and iterate until you start to get a feel for where it's good, start to get a feel for where it's flawed, and last but not least, super important, double check anything it puts in as a fact.

If it says we reduced our carbon footprint by X percentage because we're basing it on this calculation, that calculation could be 100% invented. These AIs are very prone to what's called hallucination, which means inventing things. You have to fact check anything that is presented as fact.

Mary Barroll:
Those "hallucinations" can be disastrous. A recent article published by Microsoft listed top tourist destinations for visitors to Ottawa. At number three was a recommendation to come with an empty stomach to the Ottawa Food Bank. The CBC reported the Bank CEO's reaction.

> Clip: 00:00-:14
> http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2256353347960

"So we had no idea this article was coming out at all. The communications team flagged it for us when they noticed it appearing on X feed and things like that. Obviously, we had nothing to do with that. We would never be on a Top 20 list of things to do in Ottawa. Microsoft withdrew the article and blamed human error rather than a machine."

Clip: KTLA NEWS
https://ktla.com/video/ktla-5-morning-news-at-11/8147764/ 3:08
"Well, what's this about KFC Germany apologizing for an unfortunate promotion?"

Mary Barroll:
In Germany, KFC made unexpected international news when it included Kristallnacht in a promotion marking joyful occasions in Germany. An egregious mistake, since Kristallnacht marked the start of the Holocaust.

Clip;
https://ktla.com/video/ktla-5-morning-n ews-at-11/8147764/ 04:06
"KFC followed up on this and said oops. It blamed this on an automated system – a bot."

Host:
The number of incidents concerning the misuse of AI is rapidly rising. According to the AIAAIC database, which tracks incidents related to the ethical misuses of AI, the number of AI incidents and controversies has increased 26 times since 2012. Some notable incidents in 2022 included a deepfake video of Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy surrendering, and US prisons using call-monitoring technology on their inmates. This growth, writes the artificial intelligence index from Standford University, is evidence of both greater use of AI technologies and awareness of misuse possibilities.

Mary Barroll:
Author and consultant, Beth Kanter, says incidents like that show the critical importance of not relying exclusively on AI.

Beth Kanter:
Another example of this was Vanderbilt University was using ChatGPT to write a heartfelt email about a mass shooting at Michigan State University, and there was a backlash because it disclosed that ChatGPT wrote the press release. Using AI ethically, again, it's not a technical challenge. I think it's a leadership imperative. And it's important that we stay deeply human-centered and that we take this pledge of doing no harm.

Mary Barroll:
A sentiment echoed by Dan Kershaw.

Dan Kershaw:
AI doesn't replace people, like a calculator you can do long division, that's fine, or you can use a calculator. And we don't judge people if they break out a pen and paper to do long division, or they pick up a calculator to do the same work. The person, the human doing the entering of the information, they're the one accountable for what gets published. I think that's an important thing. AI is not replacing. And I think that's where the fear and the risk really escalates to a point where it wouldn't be sustainable within our sector to just let it run and make decisions for us.

Mary Barroll:
And yet there have been examples of users struggling to rein in artificial intelligence, that sometimes seems to go rogue.

> Clip from CNN
> https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/22/tech/vanderbilt-chatgpt-shooting-email/index.html
>
> "Microsoft has added new AI features to its Bing search engine and journalists are getting a taste of its incredible and creepy capabilities."

Mary Barroll:
One of the journalists was Kevin Reuss of the New York Times, who told CNN that the system tried to seduce him.

> Clip 0:45-0:52 CNN Cont'd
> "I, the other night, spent about two hours typing back and forth with this AI chatbot and it got pretty weird."
>
> 1:00-1:07
> "And it said, I'm Sydney and I'm in love with you, that's my secret. Do you believe me? Do you trust me? Do you like me? How did it do that?!"

Mary Barroll:
Reuss says he contacted Microsoft for an explanation and was told…

> Clip 1:26-1:36
> "We can't say for sure. One possibility is that it trained on data that included stories about AI seducing humans."
>
> 1:55 – 2:03
> "I've tested a lot of these AI chatbots and usually if you tell them to stop, I'm uncomfortable, they will. This one didn't did not stop."

Mary Barroll:
Microsoft posted a reply saying it's continuing to adjust the responses of its new Bing ChatBot. That encounter raises further questions about databases in general. Who is

generating them, what's in them, how credible are they? And how much can users rely on them, nonprofits included? For others, the concerns are even bigger. Experts who have been at the forefront of development say the technology is moving far too fast. University of Montreal's Yoshua Bengio, who is a leader in AI research, recently testified before US lawmakers calling for regulation to control artificial intelligence and do it quickly.

Clip: http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2248832579512

00:00 - 00:34
"Recently, I and many others have been surprised by the giant leap made by systems such as ChatGPT, to the point that it is difficult to discern whether one is interacting with another human or a machine. These advancements have led many AI researchers including myself, to revise our estimates of when human-level intelligence could be achieved. Previously thought to be decades or even centuries away, we now believe it could be within a few years."

Mary Barroll:
Other prominent experts are also sounding the alarm, warning of AI's potential use in making chemical weapons, creating misinformation to destabilize societies, and even leading to the extinction of humanity.

Some of those international experts went a step further and signed an open letter to warn of the existential threat that AI poses to civilization and calling on governments and technology companies to take a pause in the speed of AI development and adoption, until more is understood about how to safeguard humanity. Comparing the threat of AI to nuclear disaster and global pandemics.

Clip: BBC. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n+-6w-N0XjVJI
…..0:05

"Many top experts have signed a statement warning of the risks of AI, and this is what the wording says…while mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority, alongside other societal scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war."

Mary Barroll:
And yet, others who are already working extensively with AI in the nonprofit world are less concerned about the existential threat. Instead, Alexandra Samuel, says we got social media wrong and asks can we get AI right?

Alexandra Samuel:
The big worry to me is essentially a version of what we've already seen with social media, which is the fear of not letting the genie out of the bottle and having the robots take over. The fear is what our fellow humans will do with it, which you know, history would suggest is try and make a lot of money. Like that's so far what we're seeing a lot

of. And you know, in the course of trying to see where the boundaries are in these AIs, people are constantly testing, like, can I get it to issue hate speech? Can I get it to make horrible racist statements? And the short answer is yes, you can, if you really work at it.

Unfortunately, what we've already figured out how to do with a lot of our contemporary technology is a lot of bad things, a lot of misinformation, a lot of voter manipulation, a lot of targeted advertising, promotion of over consumption, spreading of hateful information. And now, we can do it like a hundred times faster and wider and more effectively.

Mary Barroll:
But I'm curious, do you not see some potential positive outcomes of that, especially in the nonprofit sector?

Alexandra Samuel:
100%, as much as I worry about all those terrible things happening, I mean, they're gonna happen. Like you just take it as bad people are gonna do bad things, and people who are just not necessarily bad actors, but just, you know, doing their thing are gonna create these unforeseen consequences. So, for those of us who are in the doing good game, it's really important that we use these technologies to accelerate social benefit projects, at least as quickly as people use them to accelerate misinformation and accelerate profit making. And so, my worst case scenario actually, and I really worry about this precisely because of all the negative media about AI, is that the folks in the world who do have deep conscience and consideration and thought for the world are gonna be too worried about these tools to use them. And then we're gonna get outmatched a million to one instead of a thousand to one, because, you know, if you think of AI as having a multiplier effect for every person in the sector, we want that multiplier effect on the NGO sector not just the for-profit sector.

Mary Barroll:
If Alexandra Samuel is correct that the nonprofit sector needs to embrace AI for social good to counterbalance the potential harm AI may do in society, as Charles Buchanan has learned with his cancelled AI project, nonprofits have to realize that developing useful and reliable data will take a long time.

Charles Buchanan:
Nonprofits need to understand, the reason why it's not going to happen that quickly is that the data is not there to support it, AI feeds on data. And, right now, there's no consistency in the data that's collected. So, if I were to find data from numerous agencies, there would be misalignment. So, unfortunately for the sector, the data isn't clean enough for rapid AI growth in some areas. So for example, comparing different agencies around their outputs or their impact or their outcomes, it's not, it's rarely consistent because funders do not require common measures.

Mary Barroll:
To add to the problems, nonprofits and charities have an additional concern about sharing data with AI that other organizations do not have to worry about. In many cases nonprofits collect very sensitive and confidential data about clients, funders, and donors.

Charles Buchanan:
Absolutely. So, on the data side in the tech community, there are some private companies that are fortunate enough that they actually take the AI engines and they secretly keep it behind their corporate firewall. So, they use the engines to do data manipulations, but they do not share their data back into the public domains. So the publicly available engines that you use will not have their data factored into it. Nonprofits are probably not that sophisticated, so for example, you say, I'm going to craft a job description and you say, well, tell me about your company so we could best suit you. You've now added to the pool of data, all kinds of information about your organization, and probably about the position and say, well, so if we're to really do it properly, tell us about your salary ranges. And so, yes, there's a risk of oversharing data in the interest of getting something back. Because if I don't share any information with the system it's going to provide me fairly rough and fairly crude assistance. So, the more it knows about me, the better it can help me.

The more it knows about me, comes with a potential downside. It comes with a downside around how secure is this? I mean, there's what happens if whoever's providing an application gets breached in some way. It's now got all kinds of things. And if we're irresponsibly or unknowingly trying to use these things to assist in service delivery, for example, we can be exposing donor information. We can be putting private information there. So, there is a risk around the use of private information. And just even proprietary information about your organization, things that you would not know about.

Mary Barroll:
And then there is the question of ownership of material produced by AI and the source of that material.

Alexandra Samuel:
Ultimately, a lot of the biggest ethical conundrums really come down to things like, every writers organization in the world is making an issue of the fact that these AI platforms have built themselves by just vacuuming up every bit of written word on the internet without asking. You know in theory, you might see a phrase of yours from something you wrote, recycled in somebody else's work without them even realizing that's where it came from. That's a pretty unlikely scenario, but just on a much more basic level, you know, the machines are driven by what they have stolen from us. And that is not an issue that, you know, the manager of the local food bank is going to be able to take on.

*****TRANSIITION MUSIC

Mary Barroll:
But what is the impact of AI on the workforce, especially in the nonprofit sector where budgets are often squeezed, workloads are heavy, and time is always tight? The potential gains that AI offers for just being able to scale productivity of human resources is hard to easily dismiss, and even harder to not take advantage of.

Beth Kanter:
It can help customize donor communications at scale. And I'm not talking about the, you know, insert Dear Beth, I'm really talking about the whole content of the email to really tailor it to what the donor's interests are and what they're excited about. And I'm not talking about big donors, I'm talking about like maybe those $100 donors, those thousands, hopefully, of donors that may receive an email communication from you. AI has the ability to really customize that at scale. I mean, that would take hours and hours and hours for a one-person development office to do, to think about customizing 1,000 emails out to donors. But AI tools can do that. In fact, the Rainforest Action Network was able to use a tool like this that analyzed donor responses to different types of content and then generate new content that was of specific interest to the donor. And this helped increase their conversion rate by 600%. And that's not a typo.

Mary Barroll:
And yet despite the potential upside, the research shows that people are worried about the impact of AI on their employment.

Host:
A PWC survey of 52,000 people in 44 countries finds that almost a third believe AI will make their jobs redundant in the next three years. In its recent Future of Jobs Report, the World Economic Forum estimated that AI will replace some 85 million jobs by 2025. The same report, however, concluded that some 97 million new jobs would be created in the same timeframe due to AI.

Mary Barroll:
Alexandra Samuel says worries about AI driven job losses are well founded, but nonprofit professionals have to understand - and accept - that the train has left the station.

Alexandra Samuel:
I do think people have a very legitimate concern about the impact on our employment, which is a good thing to worry about. There's certainly gonna be changes in who has jobs. At a very individual level, anyone who is scared about how AI is gonna take their job needs to be reminded they're far more likely to lose their job to somebody who is already using AI. That's the real threat. The real threat is not that you lose your job to an AI. The real threat is you lose your job to somebody who knows how to use AI. So, the best thing you can do for your own employment, for the competitiveness of your organization, the relevance of your organization is to use it.

Mary Barroll:
Dan Kershaw, agrees but believes that every nonprofit organization has the ability to chart its own course in the AI adoption journey.

Charles Buchanan:
If you follow the Business Press, there is a large segment of the business world which will use AI to displace workers. That is a risk, but like any tool, how an organization decides to use it will determine what the outcome is. At Furniture Bank, I'm looking to make sure that everybody's jobs are more empowering, are more interesting, are less dreary, can have a bigger impact, spend less time doing things that don't need to take that much time anymore. I'm going back to the do long division or use a calculator. I prefer calculators.

Mary Barroll:
Of course, the digital world has become evermore sophisticated and complicated since the early days of calculators, leaving many nonprofits with what Charles Buchanan calls a technology deficit.

Charles Buchanan:
So, they may not have equipment that could process or participate in that way. So that's one. Training would be the other. Not having the skills. And there aren't very many nonprofit organizations that have people with extra time on their hands. So finding the time to learn these technologies, and the biggest barrier is the fact that the technology is changing so rapidly. And right now, there's so many tools. There are a lot of AI things coming at people. So, what do you standardize on and how do you decide what's appropriate and what's available and what's accessible for your team. And then the other issue is turnover, and the use of volunteers and flexible workforces. So, there's not a lot of time for people to actually go in and get current with tools before the tools move on. But the encouraging thing about that is that the people who are making these tools, they know that mass adoption requires that the interface or the accessibility be very straightforward. So, people will not need to have to take a course on how to ask the right questions so you could get an AI response.

Mary Barroll:
Brendan Howe says regardless of their technology deficit, nonprofits have no choice but to figure out how to integrate AI into their operations - and fast - or face the consequences.

Brendan Howe:
When I talk to people, I say, if you decide not to do anything today, you're gonna wake up two years from now and you're gonna be really upset because you're gonna be so far behind. You're gonna be looking at other nonprofits and you're gonna see how they're leveraging AI and data to do amazing things for their clients and for their organizations and support their staff. You're gonna see that people in your organization wanna go work at those places because they better support their team and they've

given them this fantastic technology so that they can achieve the mission and they don't have to do all that drudgery work.

Mary Barroll:
According to Brendan Howe, those organizations who are using AI say it not only frees up their workforce from mundane tasks, but also unlocks greater potential and impact.

Brendan Howe:
Nonprofits have a huge opportunity to really embrace AI and do fantastic things with it. So, if you think of any manual repetitive process that you do in your organization, there's a good chance that can be done through artificial intelligence. And the way people work right now in nonprofits, is gonna go through a revolution. It's gonna change dramatically.

Mary Barroll:
Especially in saving time, says Beth Kanter, who's written about how AI offers nonprofits the gift of time and helps cure the crisis of burnout and mental health challenges among overworked staff, so long as nonprofit leaders use it wisely.

Beth Kanter:
So, in our book, we talk a lot and we really believe strongly that AI can provide this gift to nonprofits. And we call it the dividend of time, okay the saved time. And I think it can solve a lot of the problems around burnout and labour shortages among other problems, maybe like donor retention rates, if we are able to repurpose that time.

But I want to caution nonprofits, not to think about using that dividend of time to let's just do more of this work, but faster, really we want to use it to reinvent the next chapter of organizational life. And that's not just a technology problem, it's a leadership problem and an organizational culture problem.

Mary Barroll:
That's why Meena Das is working on developing a Charter for the ethical use of AI for nonprofits. A project that has kept Meena Das and her like-minded technology partners working long hours to develop guidelines to help nonprofits navigate the inevitable ethical challenges and pitfalls that AI brings. She understands that speed is of the essence, especially after witnessing 100-million people sign up for ChatGPT almost immediately after its launch.

Meena Das:
The rate of pick up in the market was really fast. This is the part that scares me. All of us use AI, few of us understand and care enough to talk about it, and very few understand the other parts of it. It's just like teeny portion, but we are all users of this technology, and we want to use it more in our work. This is the reason that gap between from all of us to very few at the bottom, that gap, we need that space to talk about the ethical concerns.

Because if we don't do that, the risk is we are going to perpetuate some of the harms that have been happening in the past. These systems, AI, it's not magic. Someone like you and me sat some day and decided, okay, design some code and then coded it and polished it and sent it out and shipped it into the world saying, hey, here's a perfect algorithm for you and use it.

It's upon us to understand how are we using it? Why are we using it? What's the consequence of using it? And who gets missed when we start using it? Who is getting affected and impacted by it? We need to ask those kind of questions. And this framework is that foundation to give us that knowledge so that we can start asking those questions without being intimidated.

This is what we want to change in the industry. To be comfortable, to challenge systems, regardless of where these algorithms are coming from, to ask - give me the transparency because I don't trust it. That's the kind of knowledge we need in our sector, in our industry. And the point of that Charter is to offer that kind of foundational layer. Now we fully understand designing the Charter, it's going to be messy and it's going to be imperfect, but it's going to be a work that evolves. And that's what the Charter is, as of now it has eight or 10 standard points about how to use AI responsibly. And if the listeners who are right now here listening, I would say search for fundraising.ai. That's the name of the group, the volunteering group who are figuring out this Charter and figuring out what are the risks to our sector for this work. And that's what this is all about.

Mary Barroll:
Dan Kershaw is so deeply concerned about the need to use AI responsibly and ethically. It's why Kershaw and his team have produced an AI manifesto governing how AI is being used at the Furniture Bank.

Dan Kershaw:
Why a manifesto? I like manifestos because nobody likes policies. How many people have read their privacy policy? No. Manifesto is also the culture and the why. Why are we using AI? So it's blending the two and we're using it really as a touchstone, because when you really start playing with AI, trying out the tools, seeing the capabilities, you start discovering opportunities as you're exploring opportunities, given the pace at which we're seeing the tools that we currently use embed AI, we felt it was important to put a stake in the ground that fit who we were as Furniture Bank, how we were operating, putting our clients and our customers first to make sure that when the question was there, how are you using it, it's clear. It doesn't mean it's not going to change. This is always going to be evolving. But we also use it internally, that when we come up with something, everybody can look at it and like here's an idea, how does it match up with our manifesto? What extra step might we need to do? And things like that. We didn't invent it out of the ether. We borrowed all the good ideas from the UK and the United States. There are no laws. There is no legal framework or construct here in Canada. At some point, there will be. But for now, we're more or less following what the rest of the world is recommending. There's lots of great organizations in the US that are very

focused on AI. You don't need to think you're going into this space alone. There's actually an immense ecosystem to support this. But right now, it's a communication tool for the donors and supporters of Furniture Bank. I want to understand how we're using it beyond the annual campaign and also for our staff in that we see a lot of opportunities to expand the range of ways in which we do the work that we do, in a way we would never be able to afford, be it dollars or skill set, doing it the traditional way.

So, it's taking some of the principles around a privacy or an accessibility or a donation policy that we all would have and just making it visible, so that if somebody has that question, they can get those answers.

*****MUSIC TRANSITION

Mary Barroll:
The AI world is changing quickly. New products are coming to market rapidly.

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> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUe5ZvMxFIM
> 04:-08 "With, you guessed it…some new AI tools."

Mary Barroll:
Some are expensive, others cost far less, and some are free, although the experts warn it's important to learn what proprietary data, you're giving up in exchange for using them.

Brendan Howe:
If you're using ChatGPT and Open AI, as ChatGPT learns more about your organization, more about your business, there's been some concern to how's that gonna be shared? How's that gonna be shared with the world?

Mary Barroll:
But Brendan Howe says that shouldn't stop organizations from using AI.

Brendan Howe:
But we have to be kind of cognizant of this. And it comes back to me knowing where your data is going to be. Where it is, how it's gonna be used, what the policies are, what's the privacy policy, what are you expected to have as an organization, and what happens if there's a breach?

Mary Barroll:
Dan Kershaw of the Furniture Bank points out that different forms of AI are probably already in your office, and demand attention.

Dan Kershaw:
I think it's really important for all your listeners at this very moment, almost every digital tool that every NPO uses: Microsoft, Salesforce, Canva, HubSpot, Raiser's Edge, on and on and on. They all have or are about to have embedded AI capabilities. So, this is not a topic you get to skip or avoid or put to the side. This is changing underneath every organization's feet right this moment.

Mary Barroll:
Alexandra Samuel agrees, from a practical sense, simply not embracing AI is not an option for nonprofits.

Alexandra Samuel:
You know, there's all kinds of biases that are coded into the AIs at this point. There have been a lot of different projects now that have shown a lot of racism and facial recognition kinds of things and, you know, weird stuff that'll pop up when people are generating text because it's some racist thing is built in there. And so, you know, you really want to think carefully about whether the tools you are using are going to do justice to the communities you're serving in every sense. And the problem is that I'm not sure that not using them is really a realistic option.

Mary Barroll:
To add to that wealth of wisdom, we asked our guests for their final pieces of advice about how nonprofits can engage with AI in smart and ethical ways right now to increase productivity and amplify impact. Here are their insights and suggestions.

Meena Das:
AI is a tool, it's a technology, and it's here, and it's going to be here, inevitably, more and more going forward around us in our work. And don't be scared of that technology. It's here to support us, built by us, people like us, for us. So, it's here for a reason. So don't be scared to try different flavours of AI whenever you get a chance, whether it's trying a little bit of ChatGPT, or whether it's trying out a new tool or a new app, however, whichever form it is. One thing, the one first point would be to not be scared and try it.

And the second point would be to make space, then to talk about what you did with people around you. See, we need two layers of learning always with AI. One is the individual level where we are getting comfortable in engaging with these systems. The second layer is where we are making people around us comfortable in engaging with these systems. We need a symbiotic relationship with that technology, but not just very siloed one person relationship. We want something where me and my team members are comfortable to do that kind of conversation about this technology.

Alexandra Samuel:
I really like to look at it as a collaboration where it can do things you can't do - you can do things it can't do. The more feedback you give it, the better it's gonna get. I mean, I find it really helpful to think of these AIs as like a junior colleague who is like the smartest junior colleague you've ever hired, and they really, really wanna help. Like they genuinely wanna help, they're not slackers, they really care about getting it right, and unlike any eager to please junior person I've ever worked with, they have zero ego and don't get insulted or offended or upset if you give them difficult feedback.

Brendan Howe:
Probably the best piece of advice that I could give any nonprofit leader is have a mindset that AI is going to be your copilot. So for your staff, for your organization, AI will be your copilot, it will not be your autopilot. So if it's your autopilot, it might go off and do some stuff that you don't want it to do. If it's your copilot and it's supporting your team, it's doing the first draft of your Word documents or proposals, it's doing the first draft of your Excel or your PowerPoint presentations or the first draft of your emails. It's saving a bunch of time, but a member of your team is looking at that and making sure, is that appropriate? Are we using the data correctly? Are we speaking to the donor in a respectful way? And the more you have that mentality that this AI stuff, when used the best, it helps our teams go from a week of work down to a couple hours of work, but it doesn't replace our teams, it sits next to them when flying the plane.

Beth Kanter:
AI knows your data really well, but humans only know humans really well. And we really have to think about staying human-centered at all costs, putting humans first, humans always being in charge of the technology, making sure that there's no harm done to the humans on the other end of the technology, whether that's your staff, or whether that's donors or the people using your programs and services. The other thing that it's also really important to keep in mind when we're thinking about being human-centered is as more tasks become automated in the workplace, it's really important that we nurture and develop and support and provide training in emotional intelligence, human-centered skills around empathy and caring for others and thoughtful communication and problem formation, right? As we adopt ChatGPT and we're able to generate text, it can't do problem formation. It can't frame things really well and it can't figure out what the problem is. And that's a human-based skill that we're again going to need to nurture. So that whole idea around human-centeredness is the big takeaway.

Jason Shim:
I think that a worthwhile question for organizations to also examine is, hey, you know, how are we using technology in general that really reflect the values of our organization in a meaningful way?

I like to use the Olympic motto, faster, higher, stronger, for kind of guiding how people think about technology. So as folks are thinking about how AI will be used in the future or whatever technology, as it applies to nonprofits, when there's opportunities to help things go faster or more efficiently, that's where we'll see AI continue to be used to raise higher revenues for organizations. And lastly, around stronger, around building stronger relationships. And that last part, I think, is really important to continue exploring because going back to the point about not using AI for its own sake, but how can we use AI to really build the human relationship where we're not going to replace a coffee meeting with sending an AI bot necessarily or, you know, maybe there's going to be an experiment in which people do try that, but that's not necessarily something where I see the technology going. It's how do we use it to build on those relationships that we have that help support our organizations.

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Jason Shim:
In the context of, say, Star Wars, you know, there's a kind of light side and dark side kind of thing. And at the end of the day, using technology can be like using the force.

Mary Barroll:
For those nonprofits who take the leap into the light and embrace AI for the betterment of the causes and communities they serve - may the force be with you.

I'd like to thank our guests for joining us and sharing their valuable insights on AI and the nonprofit sector. Be sure to visit our website for more information on the resources mentioned in this episode and for show notes on this and other topics. If you'd like to hear more fascinating insights on AI, please visit our website charityvillage.com, where you'll find the complete video interview with our guests from this episode. CharityVillage is proud to be the Canadian source for nonprofit news, employment services, crowdfunding, eLearning, HR resources, and tools, and so much more. Visit us today at CharityVillage dot com.

On the next CharityVillage Connects podcast, the most recent Giving Report by CanadaHelps begins with a stark headline: "It's time for change". The report goes on to outline alarming challenges facing the nonprofit sector, including unprecedented

demand for services, falling donations, staff burnout and rising inflation. We'll talk to CanadaHelps about why the organization decided this year's report needed to ensure the gravity of the current situation facing nonprofits is understood and acted upon. We'll also speak with experts from across the sector as to how these concerning issues need to be addressed. The top challenges facing nonprofits and charities. Next time on CharityVillage Connects. I'm Mary Barroll, thanks for listening.