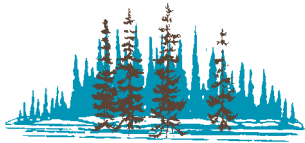


Intersections and Innovations

Change for Canada's Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector



The Muttart Foundation



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ISBN: 978-1-897282-30-4

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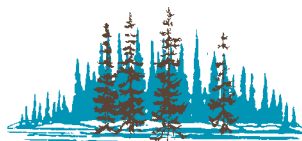
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Acknowledgements

For far too long, Canada has lacked a comprehensive resource examining Canada's charitable sector. That has now ended.

The Muttart Foundation has spent many years focusing on building the capacity of charities in this country. The publication of this collection is another contribution to that effort. By understanding more about itself, the sector can continue to develop and find new ways to serve Canadians and those in need outside our nation.

The authors of these essays bring different perspectives on the role and inner workings of Canada's charities. Collectively, they bring an unprecedented insight into the work of organizations whose diversity is exceeded only by their desire to serve.

It is difficult to express adequate appreciation to Dr. Susan Phillips of Carleton University for her leadership of this project. She has been a source of encouragement, persuasion, cajoling and improving authors from across the country. Her efforts now bear fruit as we make this material available to students, academics, practitioners and others interested in the history and future of Canada's charities.

Amanda Mayer of the Lawson Foundation volunteered at the outset to be the administrative overlord of the project, keeping the editors and authors up to date and keeping track of various versions of articles. We are so grateful for her skills, her patience and her friendship.

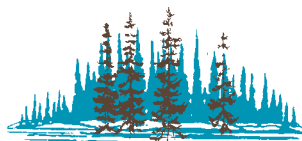
None of this would have been possible, of course, without the work of authors, themselves academics and/or practitioners. They took time from their schedules to contribute to a resource we hope many will find valuable.

Lesley Fraser did an incredible job in editing the various chapters and ensuring consistency. And Don Myhre of P40 Communications has again brought his talent to the fore in providing an attractive design for a Muttart publication.

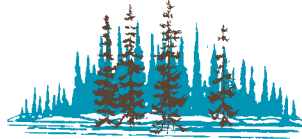
The work of all of these individuals has come together in this resource which we dedicate to all of those in, or interested in, Canada's charitable sector.

Malcolm Burrows, President

Bob Wyatt, Executive Director



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This book may be cited as:

Phillips, Susan D. and Wyatt, Bob (Eds) (2021) *Intersections and Innovations: Change for Canada's Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector*. Edmonton, AB, Canada: Muttart Foundation

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Phillips, Susan D. and Wyatt, Bob (2021) Intersections and Innovations: Change in Canada's Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector. In Susan D. Phillips and Bob Wyatt (Eds.), *Intersections and Innovations: Change for Canada's Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector*. Edmonton, AB, Canada: Muttart Foundation

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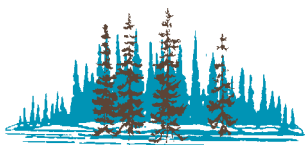


Part II Navigating a Changing Environment

Governance and the
Regulatory Environment

The Funding Environment

The People Environment:
Leaders, Employees,
and Volunteers



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Part II Navigating a Changing Environment

The Funding Environment

Chapter 11 New Technologies and Fundraising

Marina Glogovac
CanadaHelps



Giving in Canada is on the decline. The reasons for this disturbing trend are complex, multi-factorial, and understudied. The potential long-term consequences on charities' declining ability to meet demands for their services, which are increasing, cannot be underestimated.

In *The Giving Report 2021*, analysis from CanadaHelps and Imagine Canada found a number of troubling patterns:

- The number of Canadians claiming a charitable donation on their tax filings, what we call the “participation rate,” fell from 24% of tax-filing individuals in 2007 to 19% in 2017.
- Even as Canada’s population has grown, total donations haven’t kept up at the same rate as the growth.
- CanadaHelps’s projections of total giving in 2020 show that the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession have hurt the charitable sector in similar ways to the 2008 Great Recession, with an estimated drop in total giving of \$1.2 billion in 2020.

In addition, research suggests that millennials (also called Generation Y) are giving less in monetary donations than previous generations, and this group is not expected to start donating more even as they get older and their incomes increase (Rovner, 2013). One exception is related to social justice causes. For example, after the start of protests in May 2020, young Canadians became more active regarding colonization, police brutality, and racism in Canada – and, increasingly, they are donating more to charities involved in social justice movements (CanadaHelps, *The Giving Report*, 2021).

Still, millennials give the least amount in average donations, compared to other demographics, and they give to the fewest charities overall (Rovner, 2013). The millennial generation considers influence among peers as currency and their time to be as useful as a cash gift. They want to see impact, are much more interested in causes, and have little regard as to who is actually doing the work (i.e., social enterprise vs. traditional charity). Just as fundraising is multi-channel,



and donations are difficult to attribute to a particular campaign or program, millennials are comfortable with multiple approaches to making a difference.

These demographic shifts and changes in attitudes have meant that philanthropy in Canada is increasingly falling on the shoulders of a shrinking pool of older donors. A 2018 research study, *30 Years of Giving in Canada*, published by the Rideau Hall Foundation and Imagine Canada, confirms some of these troubling metrics. “The overall trend is clear: the donor base is getting ever-smaller and changes in total donations are now primarily driven by variations in how much donors give. From the peak in 1990, the percentage of taxfilers claiming donations has dropped by roughly a third, while the average amount claimed has nearly doubled. This means that charities are relying on an ever-smaller number of people for donations” (Lasby & Barr, 2018).

The decline in giving is occurring against a backdrop of technology upheavals occurring with increasing intensity in the last couple of decades. Philanthropy – like the media, travel, retail, publishing, and music sectors – is being affected and transformed by the proliferation and widespread adoption of digital, mobile, and social technologies. In this age of technology and all things digital, many charities are failing to engage donors who have become digitally savvy. Charities are failing to move successfully to a place where consumers gather – online and via mobile devices – and failing to replace direct mail or shrinking corporate or government support. As CanadaHelps’s *Digital Skills Survey Results 2021* makes clear, our sector as a whole, and smaller charities in particular, need to transform digitally, and at a much faster rate.

We live in a time of “disruptive innovations” and “creative destruction.” Entire industries have been wiped out, weakened, and in many cases replaced by new ones that did not exist a few years ago. This era of creative destruction has brought about a fundamental change in the way people engage with each other, with businesses, with government, and with charities.

On a deeper level, it is not about new products or new ways of doing things, but rather a wholesale rewriting of both the rules of engagement and the rules of business: who can do what, who can compete with whom, and under what circumstances? All sorts of boundaries are blurring, old monopolies broken and new ones established, and different competitors are emerging. In the charitable space, the question is: what is charitable and who gets to do “charity”? Old definitions are crumbling or expanding, at minimum.

This is a networked information economy dependent on fast-emerging and fickle consumer preferences, and the charitable space is not exempt. Today, consumers are looking for everything to be available anytime, anywhere, and want a seamless experience across devices.

On top of that, COVID-19 has become a wake-up call in the charitable sector and a catalyst for digital transformation because of massive funding losses for charities in 2020 and 2021. Even as total donations plummeted in 2020, online donations skyrocketed, as large numbers of charities adopted or expanded their use of digital tools. However, extensive rethinking, experimentation, and innovation are still required, as a majority of charities report that they do not have enough funding or do not have the skills, expertise, and knowledge for greater use of digital tools (CanadaHelps, *DSSR*, 2021).

There is no reason to assume that the era of rapid change will abate any time soon. This chapter explores some of the key forces driving disruption and the impact of these technological changes on the charitable sector.



Key Forces Driving Disruption

This is the time of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, according to Klaus Schwab, executive chairman of the World Economic Forum:

The First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used electronics and information technology to automate production. Now a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres (Schwab, 2016).

We're experiencing an exponential rate of change, in every industry, including the charitable sector.

Ubiquity of Broadband and Computing Devices

Broadband has taken over the world. In 2020, more than 4.5 billion people worldwide were using the internet (We Are Social, 2021). And a survey from Statistics Canada reported that approximately half of Canadians who used the internet in 2020 used it more than 10 hours per week, excluding time spent streaming content and playing video games, and 88% of internet users reported having a smartphone for personal use, with many using their phones to conduct online banking activities (63%) or to purchase goods and services (54%) in the 12 months preceding the survey (Statistics Canada, 2019).

In Canada and the United States, 33% of donors say that email is the communication tool that most inspires them to give – and 63% of donors prefer to give online with a credit or debit card (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2020).

Peer-to-Peer: New Mechanisms of Influence

Internet-facilitated, person-to-person interaction is the most significant, technology-propelled innovation of the last decade. It enables buyers, sellers, givers, and receivers of niche content to connect individually and in networks. Powered by social sharing and algorithms that analyze individuals' actions, this is a new environment where “peer-to-peer” (P2P) dominates, especially for younger generations. Sites like Trip Advisor and Yelp helped to pioneer the decentralization of service- and information-sharing, paving the way for Airbnb, Uber, and other P2P-powered disruptors. More specifically, in our sector, P2P fundraising empowers individuals to personalize fundraising pages and tap into their personal and professional networks, all of it facilitated by apps, forums, and online tools that galvanize communities around interests, passions, and specific causes.

As a result of this trend, we see a transfer of authority to family and friends and a breakdown of traditional authority structures, with a shift to transparent and shared interactions. This has also led to technologies, such as blockchain and cryptocurrencies, that circumvent centralized authorities, including banks.



There are many examples of how P2P has upended traditional fundraising. Movember, for example, is a campaign that centres on men growing moustaches and beards to raise money for men's cancer, mental health, and suicide prevention and was one of the top P2P initiatives in 2020, raising more than \$24 million that year, up 21% from 2019, in spite of the pandemic (Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Canada, 2021). The campaign had launched a do-it-yourself platform, Mo Your Own Way, that provides people with new ways to create personalized fundraising challenges. The Terry Fox Run (by The Terry Fox Foundation), the Great Cycle Challenge (by SickKids Foundation), and the World Partnership Walk (by the Aga Khan Foundation) are three other examples of successful P2P campaigns in Canada (Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Canada, 2021).

We've also seen the rise of donations as a result of publicized political and social injustices. Some examples:

- In May 2020, after the police killing of George Floyd in the United States and the resulting anti-racism protests around the world, many more Canadians donated to charities working with Black and Indigenous communities and those involved in social justice movements (CanadaHelps, *The Giving Report*, 2021).
- A 2018 Facebook fundraiser raised US\$20 million for the nonprofit RAICES (Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services) in response to President Donald Trump's policies that separated refugee children from their parents at the United States border.
- A GoFundMe campaign raised more than \$15 million for families connected to the 2018 Humboldt bus accident in Saskatchewan (GoFundMe, 2018).

Such P2P campaigns will continue to tap into people's powerful emotions in years to come. Peer-to-peer influence has become ingrained in the way technology is designed and used, and it has fundamentally changed the way we relate to each other in our sector.

Proliferation of Data Volume and Availability

Massive amounts of real-time data are constantly being uploaded from cellphones, computers, smart sensors in appliances, and wearable technology, such as fitness devices. The impacts of such shared data are far-reaching. More information, more accountability, and more competition are changing the nonprofit sector.

In particular, accountability and better programs are being created through the secure sharing of data among charities, governments, and academics. There are many examples, but a few stand out:

1. Statistics Canada runs the Social Data Linkage Environment (SDLE) and the Linkable File Environment (LFE) and allows access to administrative data, such as data about legal aid in Saskatchewan and recidivism rates in Nova Scotia (Statistics Canada, 2021).
2. The nonprofit Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH) runs Project Explorer, an open-access data resource about a wide range of development, humanitarian, human-rights, and gender-equality projects in Canada and the world, a resource that allows users to search, understand, and improve the delivery of programs (CanWaCH, 2021).



3. The State Funding for Social Movements project examined the history of state funding for social movements in Canada and produced a searchable database of 20,000 pages of government records regarding grants to organizations for Indigenous Peoples, the environment, human rights, and women (State Funding for Social Movements, 2021).

In addition, donors want access to some of this data when it comes to accountability. The 2017 Burk Donor Survey found that 72% of donors favour charities that communicate measurable progress on their charitable goals, up from 38% only five years before (Burk, 2017). Today, charities must provide constant access to sophisticated and accurate information, presented well, about what they are doing and how they are progressing.

It is possible to capture, use, and communicate more data through digital technologies. Despite this, charities in Canada lag in the adoption of even basic digital tools. In CanadaHelps's *Digital Skills Survey Results 2021*, a majority of charities rated their skill level as “fair,” “poor,” or “not aware” regarding 12 of 15 basic digital tools (CanadaHelps, *DSSR*, 2021). With digital fundraising continuing to grow, charities are at risk of falling further behind and must consider building capacity as an urgent need.

Cloud Technology

The “cloud” refers to a variety of internet-based computing services that had previously been managed or accessed in-house. Cloud computing provides anytime access to networks, storage, applications, or services and is more cost-effective than traditional models. Common examples are web-based email and document storage and online constituent relationship management (CRM) database systems used by charities to manage donations and donor stewardship.

Not only is this a growing area of the economy; it allows nonprofits to access more stable, up-to-date, and scalable technology services at lower costs and without needing technical expertise and hardware. In theory, this can enable charities to achieve economies of scale while allowing them to focus more on their mission and less on building infrastructure. This is an enabling factor that is the good news for charities as we move into the digital-fundraising age.

Key Areas of Impact of New Technologies in the Charitable Space

Online Giving Is on the Rise

While Canadians have donated less overall, online giving has increased 27% per year on CanadaHelps's platforms from 2006 to 2020. Approximately 1.1 million Canadians donated more than \$480 million online through CanadaHelps in 2020 – and Canadians doubled their donations on GivingTuesday that year, compared to GivingTuesday in 2019 (CanadaHelps, *The Giving Report*, 2021). These increases are indicative of the ease of online giving and the pace at which all digital commerce is moving.



Digging deeper, we see that online donations via mobile devices (smartphones and tablets) is rapidly increasing: mobile donations grew 33% in 2019, compared to 25% for desktop users (CanadaHelps, *The Giving Report*, 2020). And mobile data traffic will likely continue to grow.

Clearly, online giving is on a trajectory to being the dominant method of giving. It is increasing in all demographics: in 2015, 31% of respondents under 35 years of age had responded to at least one online appeal, but so had 26% of middle-aged and 28% of senior respondents.

Email and social media are increasingly where donors learn about causes or are inspired to give; in 2019, 33% of online donors in Canada and the United States said that email most often inspired them to give, up from 31% in 2018 (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2020).

Ubiquity of Social Media and Social Networks

Studies show that social media is an important gathering place for donors of all ages who are already committed to a cause. In 2019, 18% of donors in Canada and the United States said that social media is the most inspiring way for them to donate, down from 25% in 2018, but social media is still dominant. Fundraising tools, such as those run by Facebook and Instagram, are increasingly powerful: 40% donated through Facebook and 12% through Instagram in 2019 (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2020). Millennials, for their part, are likely to donate if coworkers ask, and 7% of them have raised money through person-to-person fundraising platforms three or more times throughout a given year (Hall et al., 2017).

Rise of Crowdfunding and a Preference for Direct Engagement

With its broad reach, low cost, and one-on-one connections, crowdfunding – through GoFundMe, Facebook, Indiegogo, Kickstarter, and other platforms – is growing quickly: US\$34 billion globally and counting (Mayer, 2020). Crowdfunding is similar to peer-to-peer fundraising but is larger. GoFundMe raised US\$5 billion through 2017 (the last year for which fundraising totals are available), and a third of that was for medical campaigns (Monroe, 2019). With crowdfunding, most personal philanthropy does not go to charities and is not receipted – and frauds and scams are regularly discovered – but these facts have not obstructed crowdfunding’s growth (Mayer, 2020).

According to the *2020 Global Trends in Giving Report*, 34% of donors in Canada and the United States gave through crowdfunding, and 10% created P2P fundraising campaigns (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2020).

The overall market of crowdfunding donations may be small, relative to overall charitable giving in Canada, but the for-profit platforms powering this new way of giving are growing at incredible speed. This, combined with changing demographics and donor behaviour, makes crowdfunding worth discussing.

According to *What Canadian Donors Want*, a survey done in 2017, 53% of respondents aged 18 to 34 and 43% of those aged 35 to 54 agreed with the statement “In the future, I think I will be more inclined to give directly to causes (through crowdfunding fundraising) than give to a charity” (Bowyer et al., 2017). What’s more concerning is that 16% of donors surveyed in 2018 reported that they donate less to nonprofits because they have given financially to crowdfunding campaigns (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2018).



The success of crowdfunding highlights yet another paradox: while donors seek increasing accountability for their gifts to the charitable sector, crowdfunded donations are often made impulsively, without that due diligence, out of the belief that this approach eliminates unnecessary bureaucracy and that direct beneficiaries know best what they need. Unfortunately, this trust is not always well placed, and there are many reports of fraudulent crowdfunders, such as a deceitful GoFundMe campaign by a couple in Pennsylvania, who, along with a homeless man, raised \$400,000 based on a fake story of generosity. The trio were all charged criminally, and GoFundMe refunded all the money (Helsel, 2018).

Crowdfunding also often addresses a particular person's situation rather than the broader and systemic problems behind it, which, naturally, are harder to solve. In short, crowdfunding feeds into a naive "solutionism" approach to social problems while circumventing real, potentially long-lasting, and more complex problem-solving.

Need for Increased Security and Privacy

With the growth of digital donations, security and privacy become critical. Digital payments typically require the transmission of personal information to financial institutions and other parties within the transaction process. Personal information must also be stored in a database for recurring transactions, along with purchasing habits, social media data, and other information that can be associated with digital transactions. Canada's anti-spam legislation (CASL), the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, and other legislation around the world protect people from spam and the misuse of digital technology in general. Canadian donors now expect charities to get explicit consent for retention of personal and banking information, as well as provide full transparency on how this information will be used.

Web security trends are not positive. According to The Citizen Lab, an interdisciplinary laboratory based at the University of Toronto, corporations, organizations, and governments have to do more about privacy, security, and surveillance concerns. Hackers regularly take advantage of websites that fall behind in cybersecurity measures, and charities must pay attention to website encryption or risk losing donors (not to mention the risk of reputational damage due to a hacked site or leaked data).

Emerging Technologies Promise More Change

There are a number of upcoming technologies that will affect the charitable sector further. It is not yet clear to what extent, although there are some early case studies and uses that promise to be impactful and potentially transformative.

Artificial Intelligence

The simplest way to describe artificial intelligence (AI), or "machine learning," is: technology that performs tasks or solves problems that were previously done or solved by humans. Because of fine-tuned algorithms embedded in it, AI learns and improves on its own over time.



Charities have a massive amount of data, most of which is not being leveraged. Effectively using AI to mine this data would be an opportunity to increase and demonstrate charities' impact, speed up research, and build internal capacity. While an element of competitiveness will also exist because of scarce fundraising dollars, the shared desire for public good in the charitable sector opens up opportunities for data-sharing that, combined with the power of AI, could be substantial for the sector.

As with any new technology, the risk is that it will not be used for social good, despite promises. With that in mind, several tech giants – including Google, IBM, Microsoft, Facebook, and Amazon – created the Partnership on Artificial Intelligence initiative (Partnership on AI, 2021). Through this network, UNICEF is applying elements of machine learning to private-sector data to create models that assist emergency-response efforts, and, in Colombia, UNICEF is using real-time data about reported cases of dengue fever and human mobility (measured from mobile phone records) for computer simulations that will generate real-time forecasts about the risk of the spread of dengue in Colombian municipalities (UNICEF, 2021).

AI tools will likely become embedded in nonprofit work and fundraising in the future.

Chatbot Messaging

Chatbots are a version of AI that enable users to “chat” with an automated system, asking it questions and receiving immediate answers. You see these “chat” tools in the bottom right corner of large websites that provide customer service. The chatbots route requests and gather information using word-classification processes and, sometimes, sophisticated AI. Often, they channel you to a live agent.

Nonprofits see the benefits of chatbots and are embedding them on websites and messaging platforms such as Facebook Messenger. For example, Raheem.ai offers a chatbot that collects and rates experiences with police officers and publicly reports anonymous data (Raheem AI, 2018).

In fundraising, chatbots provide opportunities to engage donors with a cause, soliciting donations and offering an interactive experience to learn about the cause or the impact of the donation. An international development charity called WaterAid developed a chatbot to connect donors to “Sellu,” a villager in Sierra Leone, providing an interactive experience using messages, photos, and videos related to WaterAid’s work (Hobbs, 2018).

Virtual Reality

As virtual reality (VR) becomes more mainstream, activities other than gaming may also become widely adopted applications. V-commerce, or “virtual commerce,” for example, integrates VR into online purchasing experiences to engage consumers more.

Nonprofits are also starting to use VR to communicate the importance of their work (Matthews, 2017). The Sierra Club created a VR climate change video, in partnership with the Environmental Media Association and RYOT, with a celebrity narrator to help people understand the drastic changes in our climate and create a sense of urgency for their cause (Sierra Club, 2015). The VR experience offers more than just images of impact; it provides donors with the opportunity to



feel the effects of their contributions. It remains to be seen just how widely this technology will be adopted to tell stories in the coming years.

Blockchain

A blockchain is a list of transactions in a cryptocurrency (such as Bitcoin) maintained on many computers connected via a network. Blockchain allows for transactions to be captured digitally and authenticated, and it ensures that the transactions cannot be changed. Blockchain is used for digital payments, subscriptions, receipts, bank accounts, insurance policies, identity documents, contracts, and many other transactions.

Blockchain applications for the nonprofit sector have already started. For example, the Blockchain for Social Impact Coalition, based in the United States, is a nonprofit that develops blockchain products and solutions that can address social and environmental challenges (Blockchain for Social Impact Coalition, 2021). Blockchain for Humanity (b4H), a foundation based in Gibraltar, focuses on emerging technologies that can offer a positive social impact.

In addition, the technology is being used to verify outcomes of nonprofit work. The “ixo protocol,” for instance, uses blockchain technology to verify claims of impacts, which are, in turn, certified with digital assets that nonprofits can use to support funding arrangements. An example of this is the Amply Project, which used a mobile app enabled with the ixo protocol to track attendance in South African schools in 2017. The teachers inputted children’s attendance, which was then confirmed by an evaluator. These confirmations were turned into digital assets using blockchain technology – and were used to access educational funding from the South African government (Fernando, 2018).

In 2017, the United Nations World Food Programme used Ethereum blockchain to pilot a system with Syrian refugees based in Jordan who were given cryptocurrency vouchers to trade at selected markets. The platform was successfully used to record and authenticate transfers for about 10,000 individuals (del Castillo, 2017).

While the uses and implications of blockchain technology are complicated – and still rely on trusting other humans to verify transactions – the downsides include vulnerability to hacking and human error (Stinchcombe, 2018).

Bitcoin and Other Cryptocurrencies

Bitcoin, a cryptocurrency with a value determined by consensus rather than a bank system, has become mainstream. Many nonprofits are accepting cryptocurrencies for fundraising, even though the process is labour intensive and requires careful planning.

Third-party companies, such as The Giving Block and Every.org, facilitate the transfer of cryptocurrencies to charities in Canada and the United States, and many of the firms accept various types of cryptocurrencies, not only Bitcoin (Stiffman, 2021). Pathways to Education, a Canadian charity that works with low-income youth, has been accepting Bitcoin donations since 2013 (Donate Bitcoin, 2017). Similarly, a 2017 Christmas crowdfunding event in Toronto raised more than \$200,000 for Covenant House, enabled by the Ethereum blockchain (Covenant House, 2017). In Canada, charities can offer tax receipts for the value of these donations;



however, donors cannot take advantage of the capital gains exemptions provided for gifts of other types of asset donations, such as securities (Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, 2021). Some nonprofits, such as the Clean Water Coin initiative, have created their own currencies to fund their work (Clean Water Coin, 2021).

It is too early to tell whether cryptocurrencies will gain wider adoption in the charitable space, but savvy charities may be able to reach a new type of donor.

Some Final Thoughts

The current philanthropic context is characterized by:

- repercussions related to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the growth of digital technology and culture;
- reduced giving by millennials;
- increasing fragmentation in online fundraising;
- the rising use of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and other emerging technologies;
- the increasing use of data to drive decisions amid the context of growing regulation and consumer concerns about data ownership and privacy; and
- the unequal adoption of new technologies.

It is clear that charities need to develop new competencies and capabilities to adapt or reinvent their roles and services in the digital age. These new competencies will involve the acquisition and integration of technology and digital skills to benefit from changes and opportunities with donors. The boundaries around the charitable space are more porous because of technologies, and the emerging competition will dictate adoption as the only choice, or else. Boards of directors across all categories of charities will need to abandon the status quo and push for change and risk-taking.

It is tempting to think that technology democratizes access to success, but increased access needs to be paired with expertise and investment in order to be leveraged, especially because the procurement of talent is a big issue.

Digital transformation is the new normal, and it is important for charities to understand the need to reconfigure priorities and disrupt themselves, even as they are disrupted from the outside by crises like the pandemic. In an environment where learning from failure is usually not easily accepted, digital transformation is especially hard for charities. But charities must change their strategies to meet changing donor needs, and must be prepared to challenge deeply held assumptions.

Increasingly, new donors may not care what is and is not a charity and will be more open to social enterprises and for-profits that are seen as making social impacts. The blending of market and non-market organizations may trigger changes in reporting, finance, and regulations, but it is clear that charities need to create an even playing field to successfully pursue their missions amid new and sometimes better-financed entrants into the “charitable” space.



Through technology, charities – the original social enterprises – have significant opportunities to scale their impacts in the world. The limited technology competencies of many small charities means that their success will not be a slam dunk. Charities must decisively and urgently break their own status quo patterns of thinking and embrace change, innovation, and learning (which involves risk-taking and failing). If they do not, the current broader trends that I have just described, along with the general blurring of forms and purposes, will leave them vulnerable.

In the new, fast-changing, and ambiguous world of social change, where we see a convergence of technology and the physical world, charities need to make a case for their importance with renewed vigour, using new tools, methodologies, and competencies. As societal assets of almost unquantifiable import and as effective agents of social change, charities must continue to fight for accurate public perceptions of their work. There are many new tools to help them do that – and it is up to them and their boards to embark on the process of digital transformation. This is a path of investment, learning, and risk-taking, but also of great significance for charities and their causes.



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