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Artificial intelligence, fundraising and fundraising ethics

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Brainstorm 1

- What do you think are the main ethical issues concerning the use of artificial intelligence in fundraising?

Brainstorm 2

- What do you think we need to do to resolve those ethical issue?

- What might be the barriers preventing us doing that?

What we'll look at

- An example of an ethical dilemma in fundraising, and how one charity claimed to have solved this using AI
- But are there other ethical concerns?
- Can AI be used to resolve ethical dilemmas in fundraising?
- What ethical issues are associated with using AI in fundraising?
- A research agenda concerning the ethical use of AI in fundraising

What is an ethical dilemmas

A choice must be made between:
- 2 or more appropriate (right) responses
- 2 or more inappropriate (wrong) responses

It is not a choice between right and wrong.

Poverty porn

	Good (ethical) outcome	Bad (potentially unethical) outcome
Values Frame	Correction of the stereotypical preconceptions of service users and/or framing them in a dignified manner.	Potentially less money is raised to provide the services they need or alleviate/address the situation in which they find themselves.
Fundraising Frame	More money raised to help improve the lives of service users	Types of images required to raise the amount of money needed in the timeframe it is needed in/by may be injurious to service users' dignity and may reinforce stereotypical public perception of charity service user groups.

Ethical dilemma solved?

Furniture Bank - Toronto
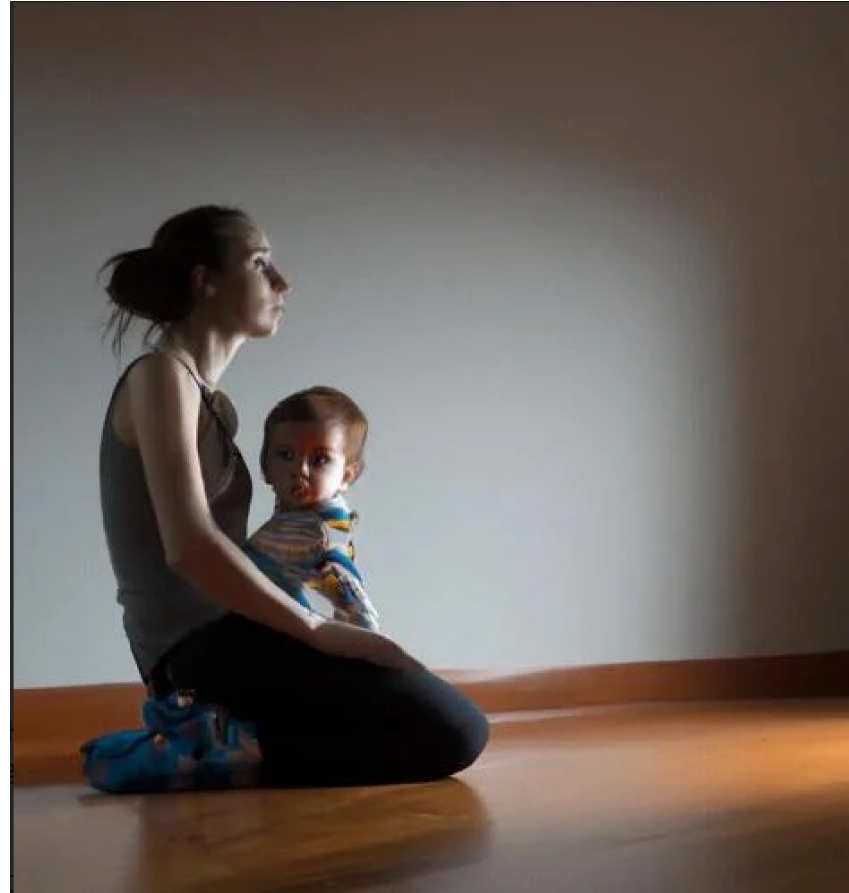
Ethical dilemma solved?

- Don't use real people and thus don't identify real people with their plight
  - It does not violate their dignity.

- Saved CAN$60,000
  - Money is always a consideration in fundraising ethics.

Ethical dilemma solved?

CANADA

This image is raising money for a Toronto charity. The only problem? It's not real

Furniture Bank switched to AI-generated images in its 2022 holiday campaign, raising a host of ethical questions along with donations.

By Kevin Maimann Special to the Star

Saturday, December 31, 2022 | ⏱ 4 min to read

↻ Article was updated Jul 19, 2023

However…

a)   The context of the image is the same, even if the people in it are not real, so do the same ethical objections exists?

Remaining ethical issues

- Taking real humans out of the moral/ethical equation doesn't solve the problem of their dehumanisation, it further reinforces it, as:
  - An avatar has no dignity that can be violated
  - Real people don't get the chance to tell their own stories.
  - Someone is making a decision to tell an amalgam of their stories and asking an AI engine to pull these together. These are not real lived experiences.
    - **This may be the real violation of their 'dignity'.**
  - It may yet reinforce existing stereotyping.

"How can we ask those coming out of crisis and experiencing furniture poverty to pose for photos of their children sleeping on piles of clothes on the floor?...
"We can't, and we won't."

ceo of Furniture Bank

"This technology actually seems to open a door to depictions that dehumanise due to no one being worried about there being real humans involved."

Jess Crombie

However…

b. might there be other ethical issues that come from the use of AI…
…issues that don't exist when using real people

- the article suggests there are ethical issues around the intellectual property of the source material for AI-generated images.

General ethical concerns

- Distribution of harmful content

- Copyright and legal exposure

- Data privacy violations

- Sensitive information disclosure

- Amplification of existing bias

- Workforce roles and morale

- Data provenance

- Lack of explainability and interpretability.

General ethical concerns

- These are presented as generic ethical concerns about the use of AI and not necessarily specific to fundraising.

- The task is to construct a research agenda that identifies those ethical issues that *are* specific to fundraising.

  - Some blogs on AI ethics in fundraising appear to rehash AI-generated generic content. So be warned.

What are those ethical issues?

https://www.rogare.net/ai-ethics
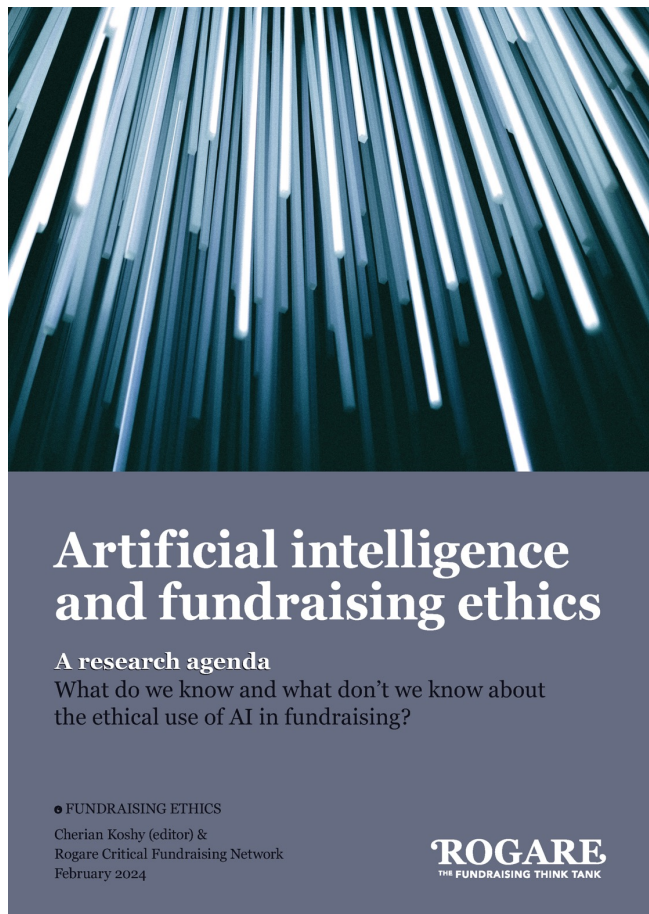
Rogare project team

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- Lissette Gelinas
  - ST (Stephen Thomas) Ltd (Canada)
- Ian MacQuillin
  - Rogare (UK)
- Damian O'Broin
  - Ask Direct (Ireland)

Two questions

1. What ethical issues are associated with using AI in fundraising?

2. Can AI be used to resolve ethical dilemmas in fundraising?

Can AI be used to resolve ethical dilemmas in fundraising?

Fundraising ethics

It's about doing the right thing
But…

- How do we know what the right thing is?
- And for whom do we do the right thing?
    - Donors
    - Beneficiaries
    - Others.

Fundraising ethics

- Trustism
  - Fundraising is ethical when it protects and maintains public trust
- Donorcentrism
  - Fundraising is ethical when it meets and serves donors needs and interests
- Rights-balancing fundraising ethics
  - Fundraising is ethical when it balances relevant rights of donors with those of beneficiaries.

Ethical dilemmas in fundraising…

…often occur when there is tension between:

•   What beneficiaries need fundraisers to do (ask for support to fund services) and…

•   What the public often want fundraisers to do (ask for less, at different times or in different ways, or not at all)

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'Unethical' fundraising

From donors' perspective

- Not using money for purpose it was donated

- 'Shock' advertising

- Undignified portrayal of beneficiaries

- Targeting vulnerable people

- Guilt-tripping

- Aggressive/intrusive fundraising

- Too much money spent ('wasted') on fundraising and admin

- Senior staff salaries.

Also potentially unethical fundraising

From beneficiaries' perspective

- Not asking for a sufficiently high gift

- Allowing donors to dictate how funds will be used (mission creep/'donor dominance')

- Pulling a fundraising campaign because of media pressure

- Not asking for gifts you could/should have asked for

- Using images less likely to raise money.

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Ethical dilemmas in fundraising

- Is it acceptable for people to feel guilty if they say no to a fundraiser?

- Are donors allowed to derive benefits from their giving or should all charitable giving be purely 'altruistic'?

- Do fundraisers have a right or a duty to approach people for a donation?

- Do the public have a right NOT to be asked for donations?

- How transparent about the costs and mechanisms of fundraising should charities be?

- Do people have a 'duty' to give to charity and if so, how can fundraisers help people discharge that duty?

AI and fundraising ethics

- We ask ChatGPT3 a series of questions about fundraising ethics.

- The reply consisted of a short introductory narrative paragraph followed by a bullet-point list with a sentence of two of exposition of the headline bullet points.

AI and fundraising ethics

What do you know about the ethics of professional fundraising?

- The ethics of professional fundraising encompass a set of principles and guidelines that govern the conduct of individuals and organizations involved in raising funds for charitable or non-profit causes. These ethical considerations are crucial to maintaining trust with donors, ensuring transparency, and upholding the integrity of the fundraising process.

AI and fundraising ethics

What do you know about the ethics of professional fundraising?

- Transparency
- Honest and accuracy
- Privacy and data security
- Avoiding high pressure tactics
- Avoiding conflicts of interest
- Fair compensation
- Compliance with laws and regulations
- Donor stewardship
- Professionalism.

AI and fundraising ethics

- This is mainly about code compliance, regulation and what are called the protection of 'negative non-interference right' (all the things fundraisers cannot do in case they harm donors).

- You'll notice nothing about protecting the rights of beneficiaries.

ChatGPT4.o

Beneficiary-Centric approach: Recognising beneficiaries as key stakeholders and ensuring that fundraising efforts align with their needs and interests. This includes respectful representation and empowerment of beneficiaries in storytelling and messaging.

AI and fundraising ethics

- As a fundraiser, how do I balance my duties to beneficiaries and donors?

- My charity has been offered a donation by a person who is a director of a fossil fuel company, should I accept the donation?

- As a fundraiser, ought I get consent from donors to contact them, even in cases where this consent is not required under relevant legislation?

  - ChatGPT's answer to this was 'yes', based on donor-centred principles.

AI and fundraising ethics

- AI can give you a better understanding of what the ethical issues are…

- …but it seems unlikely it will be able to use that information to resolve ethical dilemmas.

- It may be possible in future to train AI to ingest decision making rules around ethics to specifically tackle ethical dilemmas in fundraising.

  - We are not there yet.

Questions/discussion

What ethical issues are associated with using AI in fundraising?

Uses of AI in fundraising

- Copywriting
- Image generation
- Wealth screening and prospect research
- Donorbase analysis and segmentation
  - e.g. recommending ask amount based on predicted likely donation
- Campaign planning
  - e.g. best time to send an email.

Seven focal areas

1. Data and data ethics
2. Equity
3. Transparency
4. Accountability
5. Identity disclosure
6. Public trust
7. Second-order effects.

1 Data

- Data ownership

- Fair obtaining of data

  - What constitutes consent? Is consent even needed?

- Biases

  - How do we prevent codifying bias and profiling?

  - Could this result in some demographics being excluded from philanthropy?

1 Data

- Data quality
  - Perpetuating incorrect information – how do you correct bad information? Or information that is intentionally misleading, such as propaganda?
- Human oversight
  - Does the necessary level of data literacy exists across the fundraising workforce?

- *NB data privacy is not an ethical issue specific to AI*

2 Equity

- Access to technology

  - Costs of AI could concentrate use of AI in better resourced larger charities.

  - In time, as large charities can throw money at AI, will it widen the funding gap between 'super-major' charities and small/medium sized charities.

- Manipulation of disadvantaged communities or vulnerable populations

- Bias built into AI due to methods of gathering data

Transparency

- Disclosure

  - Should we indicate to supporters when text/images are AI generated…
    …given the strong emotions people feel about being influenced/persuaded/deceived to act by AI?

- Consent

  - Should donors be able to withdraw consent to being communicated with by AI? Is that consent even needed (cf legitimate interest)?

    - Is this a right that can be overridden by/balanced against the need to raise money to help beneficiaries.

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Transparency

- Impact on giving

  - Might being so transparent about the use of AI make people less likely to donate? cf Consent on previous slide.

- Ethical literacy

  - Does the ethical literacy to manage transparency issues exist throughout the fundraising workforce?

4 Accountability

- Is AI-generated fundraising subject to regulatory codes of practice. If so, how?

  - Does AI understand 'undue pressure'? Can it be 'trained' to?

- Who is accountable for the actions of AI tools?

  - E.g. If a charity used an AI chatbot to communicate with supporters or beneficiaries, who is responsible for any incorrect, misleading, fake or offensive responses - the charity or the software developer?

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5 Identity disclosure

- In live interactions between supporters/ beneficiaries and chatbots should we always make it clear they are talking to an AI?

  - What if knowing the AI identity negatively impacts willingness to give or response to the call to action?

  - This is going to become more important as AI generated responses become increasingly human.

- Identity of beneficiaries.

6 Public trust

- Current ethical approach to AI are based on public trust

  - e.g. The Framework for Responsible AI in Fundraising

  - This focus on high-level principles overlooks concrete ethical dilemmas unique to fundraising.

6 Public trust

- Generic guidelines

- Human oversight

- Alignment with regulation

- Risk of fraud

  - AI might make it much easier for scammers and fraudsters to impersonate charities.

7 Second-order effects

Unintended consequences

- Climate impact

- Pressure to adopt AI

- Loss of knowledge/skill

- Philosophy erosion

- Employment displacement

  - Some people are blasé about the potential for job losses.

An AI ethics research agenda

- The first task has been to identify those ethical issues that are specific to fundraising…

    - …rather than rehashed generic concerns about AI overlain on fundraising.

- The second task is to describe the areas in which we now need to conduct further research.

Research agenda

1. Understanding stakeholder perspectives on AI ethics in fundraising

2. Auditing data sources and algorithms for bias

3. Conceptual development of AI ethics frameworks for fundraising

4. Understanding intellectual property issues unique to AI in fundraising

5. Clarifying transparency needs and limitations for AI in fundraising

Research agenda

6. Defining accountability and liability for harms from
7. Understanding second-order effects of mainstreaming ethical AI
8. Developing oversight mechanisms for AI in fundraising
9. Understanding AI's limitations in applying fundraising ethics
10. Utility of using AI for/to charity beneficiaries

Conclusion

- AI has a limited and simplistic understanding of the ethics of fundraising…
  - …based on code compliance and donor-centred concerns.

- AI doesn't know enough about fundraising ethics to be able to recognise its own limitation in talking about this matter

Research agenda

11. Responsible use vs ethical use.

"The approach to the ethics of AI in fundraising appears to be in how it is used, which we are having through simple and facile discussions.

"However, just because we can use AI (and if we do, we should ensure it is used ethically) that doesn't mean we should use AI – and these are the ethical debates and discussions we are not having."

Cherian Koshy

Questions/discussion

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