# CLOSING REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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The *Routledge Handbook of Artificial Intelligence and Philanthropy* provides a robust foundation for understanding and harnessing the potential synergies between AI and philanthropy, bringing together contributions by leading academics, artificial intelligence (AI) specialists, and philanthropy professionals. Through multiple disciplinary and professional lenses, contributors unveiled the multifaceted relationship between the two fields – from mapping the application of AI within the philanthropic sector and advocating for philanthropy's role in guiding the future development of AI in a responsible way to evaluating ethical considerations and risk mitigation strategies. To complement this theoretical knowledge, case studies have provided practical examples of how AI can aid philanthropies' work and how philanthropic organizations (POs) can champion ethical principles to guide future developments of AI. Importantly, this multidisciplinary approach has allowed for a nuanced discussion on the intersection between AI and philanthropy, not only bringing opportunities and challenges to the forefront but also remarking that the underuse of this technology within the non-profit sector may in itself be a form of misuse that needs to be addressed.

One central value guiding this Handbook has been the importance of enabling collaboration between scholars and practitioners in shaping the future of AI and philanthropy. We strived to fulfill this goal by bridging the divide between research and implementation, academia, and industry, to demonstrate the power of collective intelligence in developing innovative solutions that address real-world challenges and maximize social impact. In this spirit, a first milestone in providing opportunities for collaboration through interactive exchanges among experts has been the first international conference on *Artificial Intelligence and Philanthropy* hosted in March 2024 by the University of Geneva's (UNIGE) research team on AI and philanthropy and the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy (GCP).[1] The conference gathered prominent scholars and practitioners in the field to create a space for critical thinking and multi-stakeholder dialogue on these two subjects. Comprising a series of interactive thematic sessions, workshops, and a public conference with a keynote speech by Prof. Luciano Floridi, the conference unveiled many areas of fruitful debate that clearly delineate some of the most pressing priorities for future research, detailed below.

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## Insights from the AI and philanthropy conference

The AI and philanthropy conference had a dichotomous structure, similar to the present Handbook, with a first thematic session dedicated to discussing how AI can be used to support philanthropic work and a second one on how philanthropy can shape the use and development of AI. These two perspectives were then brought together in a final session examining the future roles of philanthropy for AI and AI for philanthropy.

The first thematic session, *AI for Philanthropy,* explored the opportunities, challenges, and ethical considerations for adopting AI in the philanthropic sector. Within the most relevant opportunities, the main fields of importance identified were environmental conservation, education, and fundraising, parallel to the critical need to develop better data philanthropy practices built on top of the open-source movement. In addition, several important challenges were also identified, the most important being fostering AI literacy and expertise among philanthropists and sector experts. Ethical considerations were also discussed, especially those regarding potential biases, the need for transparency, accountability, and cybersecurity – the latter being a crucial area to be addressed. Words of caution were spoken about the data being fed into AI systems, given the imperative of protecting sensitive information and following applicable privacy regulations (many of which are either absent or underdeveloped, lagging behind the technology's exponential use in society). A common viewpoint emerged: philanthropy could, and perhaps should, play a critical role in shaping AI regulation, serving as an accountability interim body rooted in the collaboration between non-profits, policymakers, and regulators.

This first session was followed by the *Ethical and Inclusive AI empowered by Philanthropy* session, which focused on the ethical debate. Here, panelists emphasized the importance of ensuring AI's usage for the betterment of societies and the minimization of risks posed by this technology. In this respect, it remarked how POs have crucial roles to play in (a) shaping the development of responsible and democratic AI solutions and (b) promoting its ethical and inclusive use. To achieve this, two essential milestones were identified. First, the need to establish international guidelines on ethical AI, which requires collaboration between governments, industry leaders, and philanthropic organizations. Second, the importance of empowering underrepresented groups in AI's development and use, such as open-source communities or vulnerable populations with scarce access to technology and education. Philanthropy can support these by providing resources and funding to mission-aligned researchers, developers, and organizations helping to close the digital divide (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). However, the complex and fast-evolving nature of AI development calls for an imminent and proactive action of philanthropy toward shaping its trajectory. This requires preventive and proactive intervention led by networks of philanthropists, governments, industry leaders, and the civil society in an institutionalized manner, as opposed to the current status quo of delayed crisis response interventions after harm already took shape. In doing so, early intervention, cooperation, and strategic planning are essential to ensure that AI is developed and used in a way that prioritizes ethical considerations and ultimately holistically benefits society.

The closing debate was centered on discussing *The Future of AI and Philanthropy*. Experts shared cases and identified philanthropy's role in shaping the future of AI, emphasizing the need for dynamic adaptation in the face of rapid technological change. To remain competitive and become competent in the field of AI, philanthropy must invest in learning, share use case experience, forge meaningful partnerships, and build a collaborative network of action. Moreover, philanthropy has a unique opportunity to amplify the voices of civil society, including marginalized communities, in shaping the agenda for AI development and applications that benefit humanity.

Numerous cases were highlighted of the involvement of civil society in the matter, such as for tackling climate change response, global health, and cultural sovereignty. As philanthropy gets empowered in AI adoption, it has the potential to emerge as a force in debating and addressing the potential risks and unintended consequences of AI. By taking a leading role in promoting responsible AI, philanthropy can advocate for safe digital identity systems, build trust in AI through transparency, and sound the alarm on unacceptable risks that AI may pose to societies.

*Recurrent topics in the AI and philanthropy conference*

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| Ethics | Ethical dimensions associated with AI development and implementation |
| Opportunities | Emerging possibilities by philanthropy adopting AI |
| Challenges | Hurdles faced with AI implementation |
| Guidelines | Need of framing universal standards regulating AI usage |
| Empowerment | Elevating the representation of underserved demographics in AI |
| Responsibility | Encouragement for thoughtful approaches to AI design and use |
| Security | Vulnerabilities arising due to increased reliance on digital tools and AI |
| Use cases | Example success stories from philanthropist adopting AI solutions |
| Collaboration | Endorsement of within- and cross-sector partnerships to drive AI innovation |
| Education | Need for philanthropist to increase their knowledge about AI |

In addition to the thematic sessions, a spotlight session was held by a representative of the World Economic Forum (WEF), a non-profit foundation, to showcase the applicability of AI tools within non-profit organizations. This session presented a practical use case of how the WEF leverages AI to manage the knowledge it generates and shares with the broader society, as well as the use of generative AI to increase its operational efficiency. Specifically, the WEF has built its own Generative Pre-Trained Transformers (GPT) based on its internal data to help staff navigate and support their day-to-day operations. The session detailed the multiple steps taken by the WEF during the development and implementation phases, demonstrating how a small pilot project evolved into a company-wide tool. While the value of this customized GPT still needs to be assessed, staff testimonials show positive reactions to this day. This case study offered a valuable example of how organizations can tailor AI technologies to meet their specific needs rather than having to adapt to pre-existing AI tools. For the non-profit sector, where ethical and practical concerns often hinder technology adoption, such an approach may prove to be more suitable. In addition, the WEF's Strategic Intelligence tool, partially freely available online, leverages trusted external data (e.g., white papers and news articles from well-established providers) to inform users on global issues such as climate change or geopolitical topics.

## Future perspectives and learning opportunities

This Handbook has been conceived to set the stage for future research endeavors at the intersection of AI and philanthropy. The regional and country level differences characterizing POs' relationship with AI, in particular, call for further scholarly attention. As this book has already brought forward, the intersection of AI and philanthropy is not a homogeneous phenomenon across countries. A number of external factors, including, but not limited to, state regulation, availability of technological resources, and the maturity of the non-profit sector, influence philanthropies' interaction with AI technologies. To break down barriers for POs to better understand and use AI innovations, it is necessary to understand what these differences and commonalities are.

The collection, centralization, and dissemination of information on POs' current use of AI is another important research endeavor that needs pursuing. Having a baseline understanding of where the philanthropic sector is when it comes to technology (and AI in particular) and where it wants to go is important for the formulation of recommendations that speak to the sector's needs. Surveys are important starting points, as they allow to collect information directly from POs and assess where the sector currently stands in respect to AI technology and what are the obstacles and opportunities. The survey launched by UNIGE's research team on AI and philanthropy,[2] which provides information on the current and potential use of AI in Swiss philanthropic organizations, and the survey recently organized by Philea to corroborate its study entitled *Data Science, AI and Data Philanthropy in Foundations: On the Path to Maturity*[3] are two first steps in this direction. Surveys are also central for identifying best practices and informative case studies. Ongoing research endeavors on AI and philanthropy as well as philanthropic organizations intending to engage with AI could indeed largely benefit from a collection of case studies bringing together insights on how POs have either effectively integrated AI technologies or successfully advocated for the implementation of regulatory norms promoting responsible AI in their work.

In addition to research, the Handbook and international conference have further highlighted POs interest and need to build up their internal AI know-how. This knowledge-building can occur in a variety of forms, some of which we illustrate below.

### *The AI Learning Journey and beyond*

The *AI Learning Journey* is a hands-on AI education and training initiative tailored for philanthropists in Switzerland. It emerged as a Stiftungschweiz initiative that, from its early stages, was designed as a cross-sector collaboration involving industry (Stiftungschweiz and PeakPrivacy), philanthropy (SwissFoundations), and academia (University of Geneva, Geneva Center for Philanthropy). At the end of its first yearly cycle, its success is renowned since the journey is a path of learning and building together, where all participants collaborate to build responsible and secure AI tools to automate philanthropic internal operations, communications, and partner matching among others. You may find additional information in the links of Stiftungschweiz[4,5] and SwissFoundations.[6]

Similarly, the Technology Association of Grantmakers put together a *Responsible AI in Philanthropy Guide.*[7,8] Additional resources on AI Ethics can be learned from Prof. Luciano Floridi's – director of the Digital Ethics Center at Yale University – YouTube Lectures[9] and TechBetter's Workshops and Resources.[10] Similar topics are also covered by ImpactIA Foundation's Projects and Workshops[11] and by the CyberPeace Institute.[12]

There are plenty more resources to mention, among which are books (*The Technology Fallacy: How People Are the Real Key to Digital Transformation),*[13] blogs summarizing current AI developments (*AI Tidbits),*[14] the general AI Community (*HuggingFace),*[15] and of course the MOOC on Coursera and other similar platforms.

***If you are interested in joining a network to shape the future of AI and Philanthropy, feel free to reach out to us!***

## Notes

1 https://www.unige.ch/artificial-intelligence-philanthropy/international-conference
2 https://www.swissfoundations.ch/fr/actualites/current-and-potential-ai-use-in-swiss-philanthropic-organizations-survey-results/

3 https://philea.issuelab.org/resource/data-science-ai-and-data-philanthropy-in-foundations-on-the-path-to-maturity.html
4 https://stiftungschweiz.ch/blog/en/artificial-intelligence-new-rules-of-the-game-for-philanthropy-a-learning-journey
5 https://stiftungschweiz.ch/blog/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/StiftungSchweiz-AI-in-Everyday-Philanthropy-Learning-Journey-29.11.2023.pdf
6 https://www.swissfoundations.ch/aktuell/insights-from-the-learning-journey-ai-in-everyday-philanthropy/
7 https://www.tagtech.org/page/AI
8 https://www.tagtech.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/AI-Framework-Guide-v1.pdf
9 https://www.youtube.com/user/floridi
10 https://www.techbetter.ai/
11 https://impactia.org/
12 https://cyberpeaceinstitute.org/
13 https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262545112/the-technology-fallacy/
14 https://www.aitidbits.ai/
15 https://huggingface.co/

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