

THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF DIGITAL



PERPETUAL
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Digital tools present wonderful opportunities for our civil society and the organisations and individuals that operate within it. For non-profits it can mean fundraising and delivering services in new ways, managing data for greater efficiency and re-imagining how impact is tracked and demonstrated. For philanthropists, digital has the ability to transform traditional approaches to giving, change how decisions for community good are made and how donations can be leveraged.

But the potential is tempered with peril. Funders, non-profit board members and leaders all need to cast an important eye towards risk and what role each has to play in supporting digital risk mitigation.

Civil society has gone digital

Lucy Bernholz and the team from Stanford's Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (PACS) are at the forefront of discussion on what digital means for civil society.

“Digital civil society is not just the old, analog set of activities of civil society conducted online. The dazzling technological advances of the digital age have enabled a set of new behaviours and activities in addition to the

conduct of civil society's old activities in an online environment.” Lucy Bernholz, Ph.D, Stanford University.

These new activities include crowdfunding and the development of digital apps which are setting the stage for fundraising and service delivery in the decades ahead. New ways of capturing, storing and managing data will allow non-profits the ability to deliver greater insight into recipient needs, drive efficiencies in service delivery and extend the social impact of activities.



Lucy Bernholz, Ph.D, Stanford University

“Digital civil society encompasses all the ways we voluntarily use private resources for public benefit in the digital age.” Lucy Bernholz, Ph. D, Stanford University.

There's an elephant called Risk in the room

Privacy underpins civil society. Bernholz points out that civil society depends on people being able to make decisions to do something without anyone knowing. Protecting this privacy is one of the risks inherent in a digital environment. What governance is needed to protect the details of donors, recipients and other stakeholders?

“Digital risk and digital opportunity go hand in hand – you can't have one without the other.

It's important to have an open conversation about risk, both at the operational and governance levels within the organisation and directly with stakeholders.” Caitriona Fay,

Perpetual's National Manager Philanthropy & Non Profit Services.

A powerful partnership with Stanford

In an Australian first, Perpetual has sealed a new global partnership with Stanford PACS to raise awareness of the risks, challenges and opportunities of operating in the digital age.

The three-year partnership will give non-profits, philanthropists and sector leaders in Australia access to Stanford's Digital Civil Society Lab, the world's first research and policy program dedicated to understanding how private resources can be used for public benefit in the digital age.

“In July, I’m looking forward to hosting the team from Stanford in Melbourne and Sydney to allow them to hear directly from the non-profit sector about what unique governance and operational challenges and opportunities digital is currently presenting within sector in Australia. “These conversations and workshops to support non-profit boards and leaders will feed in to the globally significant work Stanford is leading on the digital civil society and ultimately will help us better understand and prepare for the role digital will play in strengthening the health and well-being of our communities,” said Caitriona.

The program will also see 10 non-profit leaders from across Australia spending time in Palo Alto at Stanford’s Non-Profit Management Institute.

Stanford PACS Executive Director, Kim Meredith, said: “We are proud to partner with Australia’s largest independent distributor of funds to Australia’s Not-for-Profit sector.”

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