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## Artificial Intelligence and Libraries

On the Sunday evening of April 16, CBS's long-running "60 Minutes" newsmagazine may have outdone itself again with a feature story about artificial intelligence. Scott Pelley was the interviewer and Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google, a very articulate interviewee.

For Scott Pelley this peek into Google and "chatbox" algorithmic technology was clearly a jaw-dropping story. For this writer, little more expert on the subject than Pelley, it was of a piece with a book only recently read, "The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World," by Max Fisher (2022). Both are about algorithms and how they are used to so quickly synthesize new information, sometimes for truth and positive informational purposes, sometimes for conspiracy dissemination, sometimes for useful good, sometimes for evil, always for profit and often with unintended consequences (about which more next time).

First, let me encourage that you take the time to stream the archived CBS report on-line and, then, borrow the book at your local library for more detail on the sour side. I cannot do sufficient justice to either story here, but I can connect this fast coming world of artificial intelligence with what I know more about, Libraries and the corporate world.

About Libraries, I remind you again of some excellent grant-funded programming being offered at Greensburg Hempfield Area and Delmont Public Libraries to teach children about algorithms and computer programming using robots, and, with Makerspace tools, about how electrical devices are built. For adults, there are programs about how to use devices more knowingly, as means to developing skills for the modern workplace.

Here are key Library programs being offered, with short descriptions taken from WLN web page announcements of scheduling; (1) "Smartphones & Tablets" – learn basics about settings, important updates, contacts, texting, camera, & apps; (2) "Snap Circuits for Teens" – how the world is powered; (3) "Computer Basics: Windows 10 & 11" - for beginners; (4) "Bee Bots Bunch!" – hands-on, basic, robot computer programming for children ages 4-9; (5) "Sphero Squadron!" – hands-on robots and computer programming for ages 9-14.

Now, about the corporate world. Google's Pichai was very clear about projecting dramatic changes to come in the workplace, and for the workforce, as a consequence of AI's impact on the corporate world and how it does things. The sheer power of AI's capacity to "learn" from existing knowledge and synthesize answers to questions asked at speeds well beyond those possible by humans is truly mindboggling, even if now those answers do not always comport exactly with reality. That answers do not always add up is simply a statement about current limitations and learning, not the power to eventually effect dramatic changes in solving corporate problems. Relevant to the Library programming mentioned above, there is clear ongoing need for up-to-date digital skills for the workforce.

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AI has put us at an inflection point in how the world works. That is Pichai's big point. He gave Scott Pelley and we viewers just a glimpse of the underlying details. He never mentioned Libraries. But, the programs mentioned above show that Libraries can raise consciousness about this next societal change, and, most importantly, participate in it.

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