

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living (WNYIL). Our guest today is Erin Brunelle, director of Client Services at the Center for Assistive Technology at the University at Buffalo. And I am your host, Ernie Churchwell. And welcome back to the program, Erin.

00:00:18 Speaker 2

Thanks for having me, Ernie.

00:00:19 Speaker 1

It's our pleasure. If you could briefly mention that you're here because of TRAIID and what that is.

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So, TRAIID is a state funded program, it stands for Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities.

00:00:33 Speaker 2

And through this program, we provide free demonstrations and short-term loans of assistive technology.

00:00:39 Speaker 1

And speaking of forefronts of technology, one of the most hotly disputed areas for a variety of reasons is AI. Could you tell us what artificial intelligence might bode for people with disabilities? And should they be celebrating or concerned?

00:00:59 Speaker 2

Absolutely. So, I think this is certainly a topic that it's important to think about and discuss now. It's also really in a lot of its infancy. So, in a lot of the ways

00:01:09 Speaker 2

that we likely will see it progress in the world of assistive technology and accessibility, we're not fully there yet. So, within the short amount of time, I'd just like to share some of my really personal thoughts on artificial intelligence and how I think it can be used now as well as how I think it can be.

00:01:31 Speaker 2

Potentially essentially how someone might be very conscious about their use and think critically about using AI as well.

00:01:39 Speaker 1

Alrighty, what would you say is the most promising thing for people with disabilities that AI could be heralding at the moment?

00:01:51 Speaker 2

So, I think the thing that I see as the forefront is really just increasing someone's efficiency. So, if anyone's ever done a Google search, for example, and they've been looking for a very specific thing and they've had to, you know, interact with the computer to open different links and visually search around them for people using assistive technology, whether that's something like a screen magnifier or a screen reader, or switch control or eye gaze. Different modes often make things like searching for a lot of really detailed information quite tedious, and when that does happen, something like AI makes it so someone could essentially just open a tool and put a question in and then get some more direction in terms of their search results.

00:02:37 Speaker 1

There's one of the most controversial aspects of AI is that some people are using it to impersonate other people, put out bogus news, and why?

00:02:47 Speaker 1

Do you have any tips for people with disabilities on how they can tell if what they're getting on AI is the real deal?

00:02:55 Speaker 2

So, I think that's that really points to the big concerns at this point is that AI is so new and it's certainly not perfect yet and I don't know that it ever will get to the point where it's perfect. So, any users who are using some type of AI platform, whether it's man like ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot or Google Gemini.

00:03:16 Speaker 2

And whoever might be using those, I would encourage you, as you're doing your search, think very critically about the pieces of information AI is giving you. Its job is to produce an answer for you whether or not the answer is the best, it's hard to say at this point. So where I've personally used it is then when I have a very specific thing I'm trying to find an answer

for, like maybe on a home improvement project, I'm trying to find this certain type of bracket and I can describe the bracket, but I have no idea what it's called and I'm not sure where I might be able to find it in like a Home Depot. So, I've gone into ChatGPT and said I need this bracket. That's this shape and this size and does this and then they respond back and say, oh, you're looking for this. And I said oh, I guess I am. So there certainly are some useful applications of it, but it also will do its best to give you an answer even if the answer isn't as correct. So, think critically about its responses and use it as a tool, but don't use it as the end all be all for searching at this point.

00:04:15 Speaker 1

Would you believe our time is up?

00:04:16 Speaker 1

If people want to get more information from you, how can they reach out to you best?

00:04:23 Speaker 2

So, they can give our office a call at 716-836-1168 and we also have an email address which is cat-traid@buffalo.edu.

00:04:37 Speaker 1

Thanks so much for being with us, Erin.

00:04:39 Speaker 2

Thanks for having me, Ernie.

00:04:40 Speaker 1

It's been our pleasure.

00:04:42 Speaker 1

We've had as a guest today, Erin Brunelle, director for Client Services at the Center for Assistive Technology at the University at Buffalo here on Independent Perspective, which is a public affairs program of Western New York Independent Living. And I've been your host, Bernie Churchwell.