



The Shared Mic: Conversations for the Ages

Episode 5: Twin Brooks Part I

Eric Storey: Hi and welcome to The Shared Mic. I'm Eric.

Salima Suleman: And I'm Salima. Today is a special episode on The Shared Mic. Twin Brooks Community League Seniors Innovation Fund invited us out to a special event in December. It was an intergenerational event and they brought together lots of their community members from diverse backgrounds at different ages and stages of life to have a conversation.

Eric Storey: So we took advantage of that and asked people to come into our recording studio and have conversations about technology and how it's changed or impacted their lives.

Salima Suleman: And by our recording studio, Eric means the back room by the bathroom.

Eric Storey: The hockey rink changing room.

Salima Suleman: If you hear some background noises on this episode, you're hearing the event and all the great conversations happening outside.

Eric Storey: First up we have Dinesh and Yuki.

Dinesh Gupta: So what is the most amazing thing since 2005 you have noticed?

Yuki Yang: The most amazing things?

Dinesh Gupta: Technological change you have noticed.

Yuki Yang: I think it's probably the prevalence of technology in the culture and how much like evolution has been made. Like in 2007, the first, probably the first, I think iPhone came out, and now you can find them everywhere. They used to be extremely expensive. Do you believe it's easier to be an engineer these days than in the past? I

Dinesh Gupta: It is basically an aptitude and your commitment to anything. So to be an engineer, you have to be passionate about it, you have to follow your passion. So doing the engineering was tough in our days, we use the slide tools, there were no calculator we were not allowed to use even the calculator forget about the computers. So there is a tool with variable engineering calculation, logarithmic tables, which the new generation has not heard of. And you think of like the massive constructions have been done, the big bridges and massive structures have been built without all this technology. Today it is an opportunity for the new engineers to use the technology to their advantage and deliver better than what had been done earlier.

Yuki Yang: So, has your career been impacted by technology at all?

Dinesh Gupta: Impacted in the positive way, that means we had to do a lot of things. We have to compile the data, you are keeping one record, you had one transistor which you save it and if you lose it, you lose it forever. Now you have the digital media, you can make multiple copies, you can transmit it, you can share with anybody. So it has impacted but in a very positive way. Well, I started my career in engineering college, and we were doing the programming with IBM trade, there used to be a card which you stack it to write the programming language in the fort room. I am not sure even if have heard of that machine even. You have not seen the cards like how you write your program, you feed in and then you simulate it, and the first computer I ever bought was in 82-86. So it had one MB of RAM.

Yuki Yang: What did that look like ... was it extremely large?

Dinesh Gupta: No, not large. It was larger than what the desktop you have but it had a one MB RAM and hard base.

Salima Suleman: Next, we hear from Ivor and Chris.

Ivor Edwards: You mentioned you wanted to know what part of technology has affected my life. I would say communication, being able to correspond quickly, get information quickly. There's the iPhone, before that various iterations of a telephone. And I found this boring at times, or difficult with some providers. You are pretty well tied to your own system to a certain extent, to a great extent you're tied to your own system but the thing is you can get information more readily. The internet has been fantastic. In taking an MRI I was able to get a CD-ROM off the MRI. Even though they I can't read a lot of it, but in past years, you got an x-ray and that was it, you knew nothing about it,

Chris Carvalho: Mine's actually very similar. I think when I take a look at, you know, a technology that's impacted both personally and in professional settings is the mobile device. So to add to your points in terms of access to communication and access information. But when I take a look at it on a couple different levels, and I've got two young kids, their grandparents are in B.C., so just the ability for FaceTime actually builds that connection, much stronger than just voice. So they actually can see the kids grow up and they can see their grandparents in their setting. It just helps to strengthen that relationship. And then on the professional setting, the mobile device, especially in the health innovation sector really has given the ability for anyone to access information. So whether that's physicians or other allied health professionals that are looking at accessing information for their patients, but also making patients more active in their care. Of interest lately is around the virtual care side of things. So through a mobile device, you can actually very quickly see a provider and get access, where typically you're waiting. So it's amazing at how far the mobile device has actually come, the computing power that you carry

on your pocket when you actually step back and think about it. It is pretty mind-blowing what used to be there and how much implementation power was actually needed to be able to do something like that. Everyone has the power to communicate, everyone has the power to access information. So on a small device for relatively inexpensive the powers is pretty amazing.

Eric Storey: For our third pair, we have Ida and Kathy.

Ida Richards: I guess I'll have to say Facebook. I use it during the federal elections, and I don't use it any time after that, because I found it to be a place I could go to read everybody else's reports. And I didn't have to read or listen to the radio.

Cathy Rong: So I seen like a huge change in like Chrome and Google, since before there weren't any like Google Docs, Google classrooms, Google Slides, Google Forms. So now it's way easier to record my notes on the computer instead of by hand because my hands like dead afterwards.

Ida Richards: I take notes by hand because to be honest with you, I love writing. I think it's an art form that I still practice. I love to write letters, you know that letters, like a 'T' or an 'R'. And I take great pleasure in the physical act of writing. I do record on the computer sometimes because I process a lot of data daily.

Cathy Rong: So like I write some school reports by hand only if the teacher asks, I mostly like going on the computer, since there's like lots of data that is shared online, and I can find a lot of information from it.

Salima Suleman: Now let's hear from Vaughn and Edward.

Vaughn Atkinson: The thing that's strikes me when I think back to when I was young and the difference to today, is the ability to contact people around the world. When I was young, when I was your age, if I had to contact somebody outside of Canada, but the only way you could do that is by writing a letter or by making a very expensive phone call. While now if I have a friend in France or somebody in Japan or somebody in China, it's sit down with the computer and there you go. A whole bunch of different technologies. I look more at the particular task of communicating with somebody far away.

Edward Li: So for me, I think it would just be the cell phone and just smartphones in general, because when I was a kid, I just remember being on my computer or a laptop, like not my personal one, but the family one. And so when people started using cell phones in their pockets, it just made everything easier. And well now every kid has a cell phone to use.

Vaughn Atkinson: So how old were you when you got your first cell phone?

Edward Li: I was in grade seven. That was five years ago. So I was 12.

Vaughn Atkinson: I used to be an elementary school teacher and I haven't taught now for about three or four years. Cell phones were just coming in, especially for the older kids, grade fives. And it was always interesting. It was, don't ask, don't tell. The rules were, you weren't supposed to have cellphones, but everybody knew that you had them and as long as they stayed in the backpacks in the hallways, if didn't cause the problem, then you didn't make them a problem. And nowadays, I'm just wondering, in elementary school and into high school, like are cell phones disruptive or productive more in school, do you think?

Edward Li: I think it depends on who uses them. But for the studious kids, they can use their cell phones to search up information or talk to each other in group projects, but some other kids, they just use it in class and it's a bit disruptive, but usually only for themselves, not the whole class. I was just wondering what really changed that made it easier to communicate with other people?

Vaughn Atkinson: When I started using computers, they were standalone computers. Like the first time I remember really using a computer, was with a student. That would have been in the late 80s. And he was granted use of an Apple 2. And that's ancient technology now, but then when we got online, for a number of years, my class had pen pals in Bermuda, and that's not far away, but still not Canada. And it was amazing being able to talk to colleagues somewhat immediately that were in another country. It's definitely internationalized professions, like teachers can sit down and chat with somebody in the same job in another country. That's just opened the world to a whole bunch of things, for good. Of course, there are things that are, you know, with anything, technology, there's bad sides, but I think just if you want to talk to a colleague or a friend in another country, it's so much easier now or if you want to contact a family member, it would take three or four weeks or a month to write a letter and get one back. And now if you really need to talk to some somebody, you just go and send an email and it's there the next morning.

Eric Storey: Finally, we'll hear from Cheryl and Albert.

Cheryl Atkinson: So the thing that has influenced me that's technological is the cell phone. And the thing that I think about with my cell phone is having opportunity to have my own space to be alone in the world and have to look after myself. Before the cell phone I had to think, I had to be prepared. I had to know what to do in an emergency, I had to not worry that something was going to go wrong with my family or something like that. And it was okay. I managed to do all that through my life until the cell phone came and now people need to get ahold of me every minute of every day, all hours of the day and night and I don't have an opportunity to feel myself. Just me within my own space anymore. So that's how the cell phone has impacted my world.

Albert Wu: So do you like the cell phone?

Cheryl Atkinson: No, to me, it's a necessary evil, I have to have it, like my mom was in care. So I had to have it. So in case something happened, that I would be able to be ready to help out if needed. She's recently passed away. So now I feel like it's something that's intrusive to me. My family members send me What's App things from Las Vegas at four o'clock in the morning. To me, it's just more of an intrusion. And I don't know how to work it very well either. So maybe that would be something that would encourage me more to use the cell phone, but how about you?

Albert Wu: Just any tool that can access the internet has been really good for me. Just because, like I don't have to go to the library anymore. Not that I went to the library before. But now I don't have to go to the library at all to get study material, if I have any questions, I don't have to go to teachers first, I just search up anything. And on top of that, like movie theaters, and entertainment is so good. Video games, YouTube ... YouTube is so good.

Cheryl Atkinson: Okay, different, certainly a different perspective. I don't even think of any of those things when I think of my cell phone. So how about what kind of technological change has impacted your life?

Albert Wu: I kind of grew up in like contemporary technology like what we have today, other than that it's just become faster. I don't know if it's changed my life other than I've spent like way too much time with it because like my English teacher, he says that he's really disappointed that younger generations aren't appreciating older literature. And I like never read old literature because you know, YouTube.

Cheryl Atkinson: Okay, so you spend your time viewing your entertainment rather than reading it?

Albert Wu: Yes.

Salima Suleman: Wasn't that great? I'm so glad we were invited out to that event. Wouldn't you like to hear more of that?

Eric Storey: Boy, I would. And you just happen to be in luck, because this is a two-parter. We'll have another podcast of conversations at a future date. Now, what about takeaways? Should we talk about that?

Salima Suleman: Yeah.

Eric Storey: For me, one of the things was that the seniors had a perspective of the long game. For example, Dinesh talked about logarithmic tables and slide rules.

Salima Suleman: That really took you back, huh Eric?

Eric Storey: I haven't thought of logarithmic tables for a long time, thank God. And yet, and the younger folks, their perspective was really 2007-2008 with the introduction of the iPhone and how much has changed. Still really significant change for them but when you look back on the historical, not as much of a change as the older people have experienced.

Salima Suleman: I think what I heard in these conversations was just how adaptable humans are, that our work, our play or how we study, how we communicate, has been evolving for decades. And just, every time we turn around, there's a new technology available to us and we just pick it up and run with it. And everyone at every stage is constantly going through these adaptations, and we're doing it so fluidly that I don't sit back and reflect about it. Do you?

Eric Storey: No, but the one thing that both generations reflected on was the ease of access to information ... how that had made their life so much easier to have information available on tap.

Salima Suleman: Speaking of information we'd like to have available, you as our listeners can let us know what your takeaways were by leaving us a comment on wherever you listen to podcasts.

Eric Storey: And you could also rate us, you could give us five stars if you wanted!

Salima Suleman: The Shared Mic is a joint initiative between the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council and a project of Age Friendly Edmonton.

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