Part IV, Sample Topics in Computer Ethics

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- Computer Security
- Privacy and Computing
- Computing and Intellectual property
- Global Information Ethics
Chapter 9 and 10

Group 3
Conflict of security

- Integrity, programs and data are not modified by unauthorized personnel
- Protection of privacy
- Protection against viruses etc.
- Simplify concerns for users
Conflict of security

- Automated monitoring to increase security may be a violation of privacy.

- A high security may hinder urgent repair and response to emergencies.

- Hinder routine system use. (bad system design)
Misbehaviour

- The technological gap, What is the system capable of and what do we expect from it.

- The sociotechnical gap, Computer related policies on one hand and social policies on the other (computer crime laws, privacy, codes of ethics etc.)

- The social gap, gap between expected and actual human behaviour
Need of security?

- When dealing with computers "normal" ethics do not seem to apply to some people and unethical behaviours are sometimes justified by arguments 1-5

- 1. All information should be free to any one i.e. no intellectual property and no need for security.

- However if no one owns the information how can we trust it to be correct.
Ethics of hackers

2. To illustrate security problems in a system by trespassing etc. is for a greater good.

However most people do not (and would find it unethical) to break in to some ones house to show that the lock on the door is bad.
Ethics of hackers

- 3, Systems not used to its full capacity makes others entitled to use them.
- However system owners have a purpose in getting such a system for future needs etc.

- 4, I do not steal or destroy anything at my trespass I am just trying to learn how this system work.
- However costs to control that nothing is actually destroyed by the intruder.
Ethics of hackers

- Watch over colleges for data abuse by Big Brother, i.e. governments, head of company etc.

- However no open records laws have been the result of such activities
In general

- Trespassing into computers and or spreading vandalware are always unethical (and in most cases criminal) Just as trespassing and vandalism is in “real life”
Chapter 11 and 12

Group 3
Privacy

- **Greasing effect**
  - Computerised data is *greased* to slide easily and quickly to many ports of call. Information about us can be used in ways that was not obvious when first given.

- **Examples**
  - Insurance companies get information about our traffic offenses and medical journals
  - Grocery chains store information about our buying habits
  - Telephone numbers can be linked to addresses without our knowledge
Grounding Privacy

- **Instrumental values**
  - Values that are good because they lead to something else that is good

- **Intrinsic values**
  - Values that are good in themselves

- **Is privacy an instrumental or intrinsic value?**

- **Privacy has instrumental value as it offers us protection against harm**
  - It could be negative for a person if a potential employer got hold of his/her medical record

- **But privacy does also have intrinsic value as it is an expression of security**
  - Without protection, species and cultures do not survive and flourish
The Nature of Privacy

- The concept of privacy has changed over time
  - Non-intrusion
    - Unreasonable governmental searches and seizures
  - Non-interference
    - Giving a woman the right to choose to have an abortion
  - Limited information access
    - Restricting the collection, use, and distribution of information by Federal agencies

- Natural privacy
  - Simply being on one’s own

- Normative privacy
  - A situation protected by ethical, legal or conventional norms, e.g. consultation with a lawyer or a doctor
  - What is considered as normative private situations can vary significantly from culture to culture, place to place, time to time

- Control/restricted access
  - Different people may be given different levels of access for different kinds of information at different times
  - Regards privacy as a complex of situations in which information is authorised to flow to some people some of the time
Policies for Private Situations

- The Publicity Principle
  - Rules and conditions governing private situations should be clear and known to the persons affected by them.

- The Adjustment Principle
  - If special circumstances justify a change in the parameters of a private situation, then the alteration should become an explicit and public part of the rules and conditions governing the private situation.

- The Justification of Exceptions Principle
  - A breach of a private situation is justified if and only if there is a great likelihood that the harm caused by the disclosure will be so much less than the harm prevented that an impartial person would permit a breach in this and morally similar situations.

Who decides?
- Could the same situation lead to different outcomes for different persons?
Data Protection

- **Data Protection Act 1998**
  Data must be:
  1. fairly and lawfully processed;
  2. processed for limited purposes;
  3. adequate, relevant and not excessive;
  4. accurate;
  5. not kept for longer than necessary;
  6. processed in line with data subjects’ rights;
  7. secure;
  8. not transferred to countries outside the European Economic Area unless there are adequate safeguards

- The overall goal of the legislation is to ensure the **free flow of information to meet business needs**. To ensure that there can be such a free flow it sets out a framework of obligations which will **ensure respect for the private lives of individuals.**
Complaints and Requests for Assessment

- People have become more appreciative of the risks to respect for private life which processing of personal data can bring.

- Persons who believe that they are directly affected by any processing of personal data may request a Commissioner to make an assessment whether the processing has been carried out in compliance with the Act.

- What happens if it appears that there has been a breach of the law?
  - An independent supervisor authority must be able to apply sanctions.
  - Where there has been a breach of principle, enforcement action is possible, designed to remedy the breach.
  - Individuals that have been damaged and distressed by the failure can seek compensation in the court.
  - Some criminal offences may be prosecuted, e.g. organisations who seek to obtain other people’s personal details and pass them on at a price.
Chapter 13 and 14

Group 3
Computing and intellectual property
Ownership

- The right to control what one owns
- Digitizing one’s property can cause one to lose control of it
- Copies of digital entities are essentially identical to their originals
- Loss of ability to sell, lease or rent the property (make a profit)
- Major polic vacuums
- Rethink the fundamental concept of ”ownership” itself?
Ownership - theories

"Creator perspective"
- Labor theory of ownership
- The personality theory of ownership

"Community perspective"
- The utilitarian theory of ownership
- The social contract theory of ownership
Forms of ownership for IP

- **Copyright**
  - Extends several years beyond the death of the creator
  - Prevents other from using a work without permission
  - No monopoly control

- **Patents**
  - Monopoly control for several years

- **Trade secrets**
  - Created and used in-house
Property rights in computer software
Deborah Johnson

- Individual moral question
  - Is it morally wrong to make an illegal copy with respect to the law?

- Policy issue
  - What should the law look like?
  - Is the current system adequate?
Property rights in computer software

Individual moral question
- Is it morally wrong to make an illegal copy with respect to the law?
- Yes, it harms others by depriving their legal rights, although not intrinsically wrong.

Policy issue
- What should the law look like?
- Is the extant system adequate?
- The current aims are good
- Needs adjustment for computer-related invention
Why software should be free
Richard Stallman

- Comparing benefit or copied program with the harm done to the owner.
- The developers’ profits versus the prosperity and freedom of the public in general
- The law should conform to ethics, not an excuse.
Why software should be free

- "Software hoarding is one form our general willingness to disregard the welfare of society for personal gain."
- "If restricting the distribution of a program already developed is harmful to society overall, than an ethical software developer will reject the option to do so."
- Fewer programmers, improved productivity
- Financing of software development?
Chapter 15 and 16

Group 3
Global Information Ethics
Global Information Ethics

In a nutshell

- vast and growing part of computer ethics
- wide diversity of new policy vacuums
  - due to world-wide nature of internet
  - cyber-business, -education, -medicine …
    - which rules to apply?
    - needs to be analyzed and resolved!
- only some few examples covered in the book
  - important field of research for the next decades
The Computer Revolution and Global Ethics
The Computer Revolution and Global Ethics

- article based on 5 points of view
- computer revolution:
  - change of peoples lives, no borders exist
  - global character of problems
  - no universal ethic of a global character was successful so far
  - ethics of future will have global character
  - this future ethic will be a computer ethic
The Computer Revolution

- analogies: industrial revolution, printing press
- similarities to printing press in particular:
  - better communication, new type of network
  - faster and more efficient work
  - valid both for individuals and human mind
Printing Press and Ethics

- new ethical system due to problems resulting from changes caused by printed press
  - economical, social, political changes
- similar process of ethical development will be caused by computer revolution
  - applying existing rules is not sufficient
=> computer ethics
The Global Character of Ethics in the Computer Era

- global problem
  - whole population affected
  - global effects

- more than a professional ethic
  - universal (everybody is using computers)
  - multicultural (computer professionals are part of their society)
Giving Offense on the Internet

This Site Contains Adult Language, Subjects & Themes - Please Leave If You're Easily Offended!
What is Offense?

- people offend other people
- offense has to be taken (unlike a punch)
- it is related to feelings, beliefs, attitudes that are violated
Offense and Respect

Why do people take offense?
- personally hurt => devalued as person
- bound up to self-respect

What is wrong with giving offense?
- lack of respect for person or group
- offence to inborn characteristics serious
- commitment comes with consequences

close connection: taking offense and respect
Offense as an Criterion for Internet Censorship

- important distinction:
  - offended because of characteristics that cannot be changed or controlled (race, gender, etc)
  - then relevant consideration in censorship

- offense should be taken into account
  - but only serious cases
  - otherwise effectiveness of internet is limited
Case study

A Small Matter of Privacy
Questions

- What is the ethical point of view?

- Who has duties and responsibilities related to the kind of situation in question?

- Suggestions to avoid similar cases in the future?