
Part IV, Sample Topics in Computer Ethics

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Contents

- Computer Security
 - Privacy and Computing
 - Computing and Intellectual property
 - Global Information Ethics
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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
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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)
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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
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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.
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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

- 5, 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 malware 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 policic vacuums
 - Rethink the fundamental concept of "ownership" itself?
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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
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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
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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.

or

- 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?
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Chapter 15 and 16

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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
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The Computer Revolution and Global Ethics



The Computer Revolution and Global Ethics

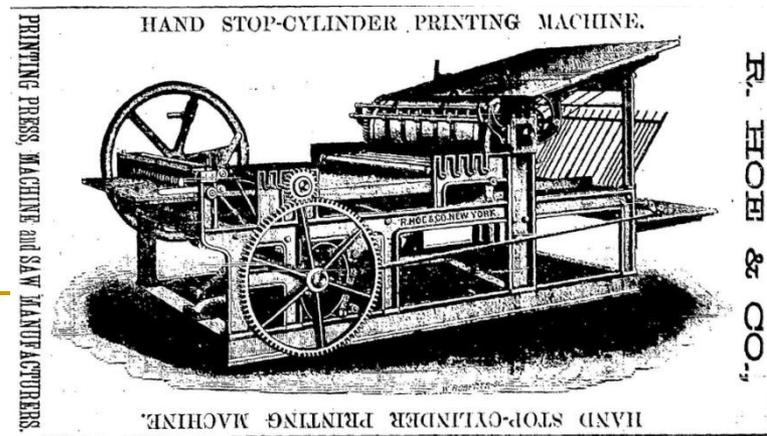
- article based on 5 points of view
 - computer revolution:
 - change of peoples lives, no borders exist
 - global character of problems
 - no universal ethic of a global character was successful so far
 - ethics of future will have global character
 - this future ethic will be a computer ethic
-

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



CHRIS WALKS PRODUCTIONS



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

Enter

Leave

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
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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?
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