Computing and Information Ethics

CS 2190
Spring 2010

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What is Moral?

mor·al (môr¹el, mòr¹-) *adjective*

1. Of or concerned with the judgment of the goodness or badness of human action and character: *moral scrutiny; a moral quandary.*

2. Teaching or exhibiting goodness or correctness of character and behavior: *a moral lesson.*

3. Conforming to standards of what is right or just in behavior; virtuous: *a moral life.*

...

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What is Ethics?

eth·ic (èth¹îk) *noun*

1. **a.** A set of principles of right conduct. **b.** A theory or a system of moral values: *"An ethic of service is at war with a craving for gain"* (Gregg Easterbrook).

2. **ethics** *(used with a sing. verb)*. The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy.

3. **ethics** *(used with a sing. or pl. verb)*. The rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession: *medical ethics.*

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Controls on Human Behavior

- Courtesy

- Law

- Ethics

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The Scope or Context of Behavioral Rules

- Individuals

- Organizations / Groups

- Society / Government

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Information Ethics

- We know how to apply this to:
  - Direct interaction
  - Personal correspondence
  - Telephone
  - Print media, radio and television
  - Business, governments

- "It seems different with a computer"
  - Scope
  - Speed

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Areas of Ethical Problems

- Personal intrusion

- Privacy

- Morality

- Deception

- Security

- Resources

- Intellectual property

- Inappropriate use

- Technology & social responsibility

Some General Comments on Ethics

- The world of ethics is gray

- Ethical conflict is characterized by
  - Intense feelings
  - Rapid development

- In our world, the amazing thing is how well it works

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The Top Ten Rules of Computer Ethics

1. Thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people.
2. Thou shalt not interfere with other people's computer work.
3. Thou shalt not snoop around in other people's computer files.
4. Thou shalt not use a computer to steal.
5. Thou shalt not use a computer to bear false witness.
6. Thou shalt not copy or use proprietary software for which you have not paid.
7. Thou shalt not use other people's computer resources without authorization or proper compensation.
8. Thou shalt not appropriate other people's intellectual output.
9. Thou shalt think about the social consequences of the program you are writing or the system you are designing.
10. Thou shalt always use a computer in ways that insure consideration and respect for your fellow humans.

(http://cpsr.org/issues/ethics/cei/ -- written by the Computer Ethics Institute)

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Netiquette - Network etiquette

- The conventions of politeness recognized on e-mail and other e-communications.
- For example: about email or posts:
  - The most important rule of netiquette is "Think before you post."
  - Re-read and edit your e-mail carefully before you send. Check the spelling and grammar.
  - When responding, quote the minimum necessary to give some context to your reply and be careful to attribute the quote to the right person.
  - Be aware that your e-mail is permanent and can be saved forever!

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UVa Resources

UVa Responsible Computing Handbook

http://www.itc.virginia.edu/pubs/docs/RespComp

UVa Information Technology Policies

http://www.itc.virginia.edu/policy

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Sources and Other Information

- Ethics in Computing: http://ethics.csc.ncsu.edu/
- Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility http://cpsr.org
  - (Defunct) Computer Ethics Institute http://www.brook.edu/its/cei/cei_hp.htm
- Netiquette:
  - NetManners: http://www.netmanners.com/
  - Netiquette Home Page http://www.albion.com/netiquette/