Ethics & E-Mail

Computer Technology

Day 18

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Spring 2003

Ethics

- A set of principles of right conduct

- A theory or a system of moral values

- The rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession

Situation 1

- You are hired to manage the network at a local business. On your first day of work, your boss hands you the latest upgrade for Microsoft Office and asks you to install it on all the computers in the business. When you ask if the business has a site license, your boss says "No, do you have a problem with that?"

- What should you do?

Situation 2

- You are hired as programmer for a local school district. The Superintendent asks you to write software that will monitor online access and report online activities to the Superintendent. No permission has been given for this access to be monitored and the Superintendent feels that if people don't know they are being monitored it won't hurt them.

- Should you write the program?

Issues dealing with Ethics

- Software Licenses
- Copyrights
- Citing Internet Information
- Acceptable Use Policies
- Rights of Privacy, Accuracy, Property, and Accessibility

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Software Licenses

- A legal contract that defines the ways in which you may use a computer program

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Copyrights

- A form of legal protection that grants certain exclusive rights to the author of a program or the owner of a copyright
- Provide severe restrictions on
  - Copying
  - Distribution
  - Reselling

Citing Internet Information

- When using someone else's information you must give them credit, even if information is obtained from the Internet
- Internet references should include the following
  - Author's last name
  - Author's first name
  - Title of the complete work
  - Version of file number if available
  - Date the document was created
  - Internet address
  - Date you accessed the information
  - (If any information is missing, skip to the next item)

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Acceptable Use Policies

- Used to protect a network and the users on that network
- Guidelines to how a network can and should be used

Rights of Privacy, Accuracy, Property, and Accessibility

- There is an astonishing amount of information stored about you in computer databases
- This information comes from
  - Banks
  - School Records
  - Medical Records
  - Credit Card Companies
  - Phone Companies
  - Driver's License Bureau
- Privacy advocates are encouraging lawmakers to restrict the sale and distribution of information about individuals
- Started in April 2003, doctors, insurance companies and other health groups have to have a patient's consent before medical information can be disclosed

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Privacy Issues

- Do you think that data about you should be distributed without your permission?
    - Why or why not?
- What are some situations that you know of where your personal information was shared?
    - Catalogs you didn't request
    - Credit Card Applications sent to your home
    - E-Mail advertisements you receive

E-Mail

- When one person sends an electronic message to another person or to a group of people

- Important E-Mail terms
  - Account – provides the rights to a storage area or mailbox
  - Address – the person to whom a message is sent
  - Attachment – any file that travels with a message
  - Netiquette – customs or guidelines for maintaining civilized communication

Guidelines for Good E-mail

- Do not type everything in all capital letters
- Be concise so your messages will be read and not just discarded
- Use short paragraphs for easier reading on a monitor
- Leave a blank line between paragraphs for easier reading on a monitor
- Proofread and spell-check your e-mail before sending
- Provide a meaningful subject line that introduces your message
- Do not send messages out of anger because you can't retract the message once it is sent

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Resources

Brown, Gordon W., and Paul A. Sukys. Understanding Personal & Business Law. Misson Hills: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 1998.

Mulbery, Keith. "E-mail etiquette requires concise communication." The Daily Herald 17 August 1997: E3.

Parsons, June Jamrich, and Dan Oja. Computer Concepts. Boston: Course Technology - Thompson Learning, 2002.