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**INFORMATION SYSTEM SOCIETY AND ETHICS**

**Ethics** is a branch of philosophy that deals with what is considered right and wrong in society. It deals with issues which are not in the realm of legal or statutory domains but which may be considered conventionally right or wrong as per perception of the society of that time. We can say that ethics is a far greater concept than legality. It has something to do with the basic idea of right and wrong that becomes ingrained in us from childhood.

**Information Society** is a term for a society in which the creation, distribution, and manipulation of information has become the most significant economic and cultural activity. An Information Society may be contrasted with societies in which the economic underpinning is primarily Industrial or Agrarian. The machine tools of the Information Society are computers and telecommunications, rather than lathes or ploughs.

**Information Society** is also a society characterized by a high level of information intensity in the everyday life of most citizens, in most organizations and workplaces; by the use of common or compatible technology for a wide range of personal, social, educational and business activities, and by the ability to transmit, receive and exchange digital data rapidly between places irrespective of distance.

The idea of a global Information Society can be viewed in relation to Marshall McLuhan's prediction that the communications media would transform the world into a "global village."

**Ethics in information society** is a very delicate issue and changes with time. At one point of time, stealing of password was an ethical issue. Today it is a crime and has become a legal issue. Such changes in legal and ethical points of view occur with change in legislation and with changes in the norms of society.

The issue of ethics in the [information](http://ecomputernotes.com/fundamental/information-technology/what-do-you-mean-by-data-and-information) age has acquired a different dimension altogether. With more access to information, greater connectivity and anonymity new ethical issues are coming to the fore every day. Some major ethical issues hover around the following questions:

1. How much information about an individual is private and how much that is private which cannot be captured or disclosed?
2. What information can be kept by organizations dealing with individuals?
3. How much right does an individual have over his/her own information?
4. Who can access and who cannot access information?

Most cases of ethical violation in the information society occur due to disclosure of private information. This brings us to the interesting topic of privacy. Let us delve into the issue a little deeper. Is information about a suspected terrorist private or the act that he commits private? Probably not on the other hand if we are asked if information about a dowry victim is private, we will all probably agree that it is. Thus, we see that privacy assumes different degree of severity.

In the first case, one can argue that if information about a suspected terrorist is not made public, then the terrorist will not get caught, and will cause more destruction. Thus, the well-being of a majority is at stake if the privacy of information of the terrorist is to be considered. Hence, it may be argued by some that disclosure of such private information as how he looks and what his height is may be considered fine but the same cannot be said for the latter case about the dowry victim. Thus, we see that ethics, privacy and other such related issues have to be considered carefully.

**However, the following may be considered ethical issues in information society**:

1. Disclosing another individual's personal details to others. This is a serious ethical issue. Sometimes when the disclosure is of a very private nature this can even become a legal issue.
2. Cyber stalking is when an individual is always stalked in cyberspace resulting in violation of an individual's privacy and creating a fear in the mind of the stalked. This on a small scale is an ethical issue but may become a legal issue if the stalking becomes serious.
3. Disclosure of trusted content is also another ethical issue. If an individual is in the possession of some trusted content and he shares it with others then that becomes an ethical issue.

Distribution of pornographic material with open access is another ethical issue and needs to be controlled.

1. Plagiarism is becoming very rampant as content in soft form can just be copied and pasted from other files and claimed as one's own. On a small scale this is an ethical issue but when the plagiarism is intentional and on a large scale then this becomes a violation of copyright which is a legal issue.
2. Sending SPAM is also another ethical issue which creates a lot of problems for ordinary users of information systems

**PRIVACY AND CONTRACT LAW**

**1.PRIVACY LAW**

Privacy law refers to the laws that deal with the regulating, storing, and using of personally identifiable information of individuals, which can be collected by governments, public or private organizations, or other individuals.

Privacy laws are considered within the context of an individual's privacy rights or within reasonable expectation of privacy**.**

Privacy laws can be broadly classified into**:**

a)General privacy laws that have an overall bearing on the personal information of individuals and affect the policies that govern many different areas of information.

b)Specific privacy laws that are designed to regulate specific types of information. Some examples include:

* + Communication privacy laws
  + Financial privacy laws
  + Health privacy laws
  + Information privacy laws
  + Online privacy laws
  + Privacy in one's home

**Information privacy law**

They **data protection laws** prohibit the disclosure or misuse of information about private individuals.

Over 80 countries and independent territories, including nearly every country in Europe and many in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, have now adopted comprehensive data protection laws. The European Union has the General Data Protection Regulation, in force since May 25, 2018. The United States is notable for not having adopted a comprehensive information privacy law, but rather having adopted limited sectoral laws in some areas.

These laws are based on Fair Information Practice that was first developed in the United States in the 1970s by the Department for Health, Education and Welfare (HEW).

The basic principles of data protection are:

* For all data collected there should be a stated purpose.
* Information collected by an individual cannot be disclosed to other organizations or individuals unless specifically authorized by law or by consent of the individual
* Records kept on an individual should be accurate and up to date
* There should be mechanisms for individuals to review data about them, to ensure accuracy. This may include periodic reporting
* Data should be deleted when it is no longer needed for the stated purpose
* Transmission of personal information to locations where "equivalent" personal data protection cannot be assured is prohibited
* Some data is too sensitive to be collected, unless there are extreme circumstances (e.g., sexual orientation, religion)

**2. CONTRACT LAW**

**A contract**is a promise or set of promises that are legally enforceable and, if violated, allow the injured party access to legal remedies**.**

**Contract law** recognizes and governs the rights and duties arising from agreements. In the Anglo-American common law, formation of a contract generally requires an offer, acceptance, consideration, and a mutual intent to be bound.

Each party must have capacity to enter the contract. Although most oral contracts are binding, some types of contracts may require formalities such as being in the form of a signed, dated written agreement in order for a party to be bound to its terms.

**In the civil law tradition, contract law is a branch of the law of obligations.**

**At common law, the elements of a contract are :** offer, acceptance, consideration and intention to create legal relation.

**Formation of a contract**

**a) Offer:**

First, one party must make an offer. They must state the terms that they want the other party to agree to. If the other side agrees to the terms of the offer, the other side may accept it, and the contract is complete.

**b) Mutual intent to enter agreement:**

To have a valid contract, both parties must intend to be bound by the contract. If a document says that it’s only a statement of intent, the parties may not have a mutual agreement to enter into a contract. Informal agreements between friends often fall into this category.

**c) Consideration:** A valid contract requires each party to give something up. That’s called consideration.