Ethics for digital projects and research

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dhinstitutes.org #DHRI

[See: README.MD]

institutional compliance

ethics beyond compliance

[See: README.MD]

What are ethics?

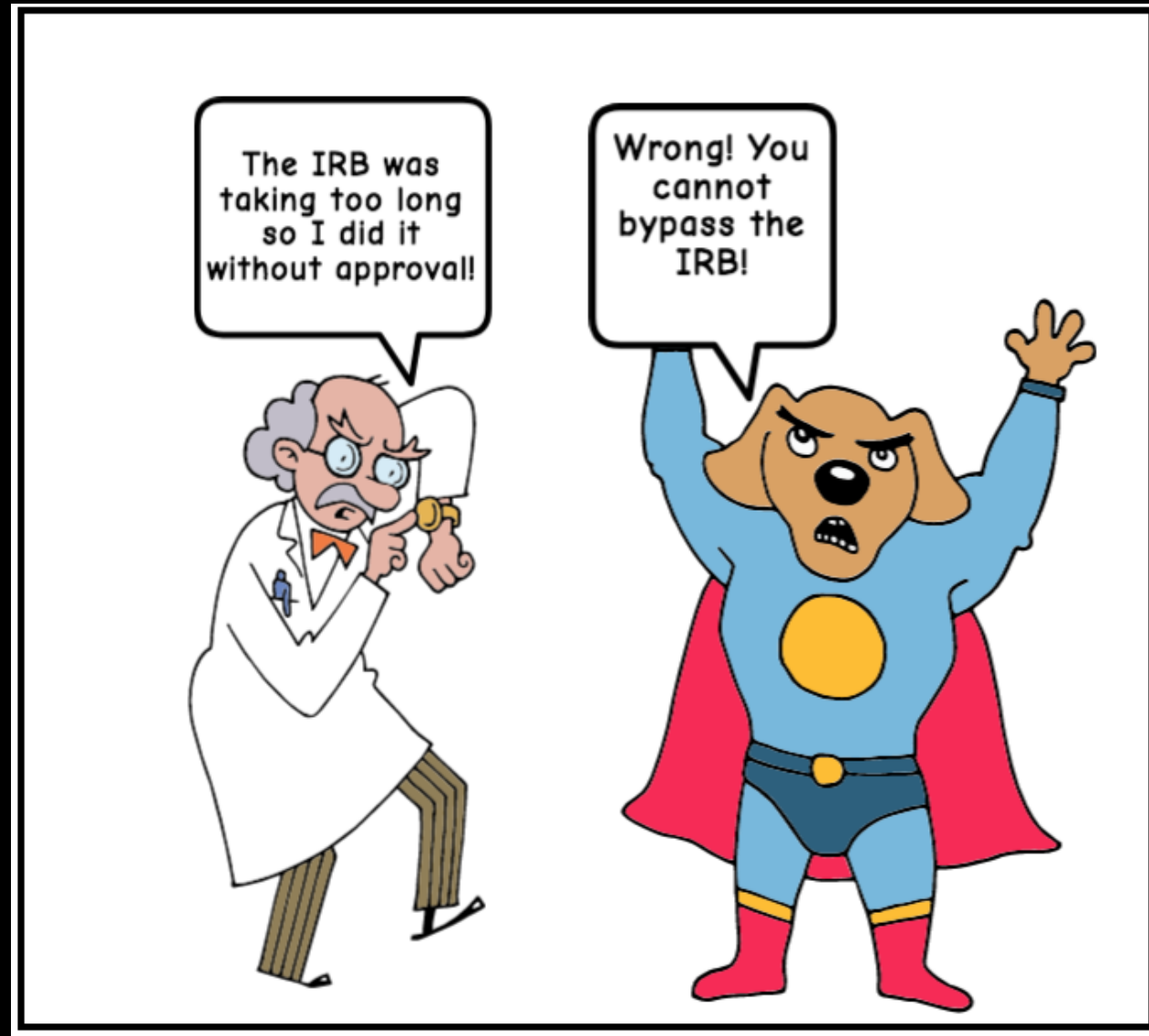# What do we mean by digital projects and research?

"situated ethics"

for example: how were computers developed? By whom? Where? Why?
(see Broussard 2018, chapter 6)

Ethics from the standpoint of the institution

[See: institutional.md]

[Image source: Source: This comic was created for free at MakeBeliefsComix.com]

[See: institutional.md]

The Belmont Report

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, created as a result of the National Research Act of 1974, published the Belmont Report in 1979.

[See: belmont.md]

The Belmont Report

3 core principles

1. Respect for persons
2. Beneficence
3. Justice

3 key concerns

1. Informed consent
2. Assessment of risks and benefits
3. Selection of subjects

[See: belmont.md]

*See the Planned Parenthood Tumblr page for a great definition of consent

Every university or research institution must, legally, have its own or an affiliated *Institutional Review Board (IRB)*.

Usually, IRB review is required when *ALL* of the criteria below are met:

- The investigator is conducting research or clinical investigation,

- The proposed research or clinical investigation involves human subjects, and

- Your university or research institution is engaged in the research or clinical investigation involving human subjects.

[See: irb.md]

*A note on formal methods

[See: beyond.md]

Activity

Think about a digital project or research you are or will be working on. Pair up with another person near you and discuss:

>> In 1 minute each, what is the *purpose* of your project—what does it *aim* to *do*?

>> In 1 minute each, what is the *design* of your project—*how* will you do this?

>> In relation to each of your projects' purpose and design, what might be some ethical concerns that fall beyond questions of legality or the purview of the IRB?

Share as a class.

[See: beyond.md]

Ethics beyond compliance

➡️ An "impact approach"
(Markham 2016)

[See: levelsimpact.md]

This session, drawing from Markham (2016), will focus on three *levels of impact*:

1. Direct impacts on people
2. Ramifications of (re)producing categories
3. Social, political and economic effects

Additionally, this workshop will address the ***range of impact***, or the range of accessibility to your work:

>> to people with disabilities,

>> to people in different countries or who speak different languages, and

>> in terms of cost and proprietary accessibility.

Level of impact 1:

"how our methods of data collection impact humans, directly" (Markham 2016)

[See: impact1.md]

What counts as "human"?
What data should be off limits?

Commonly blurred definitions

\>\> "human subjects"
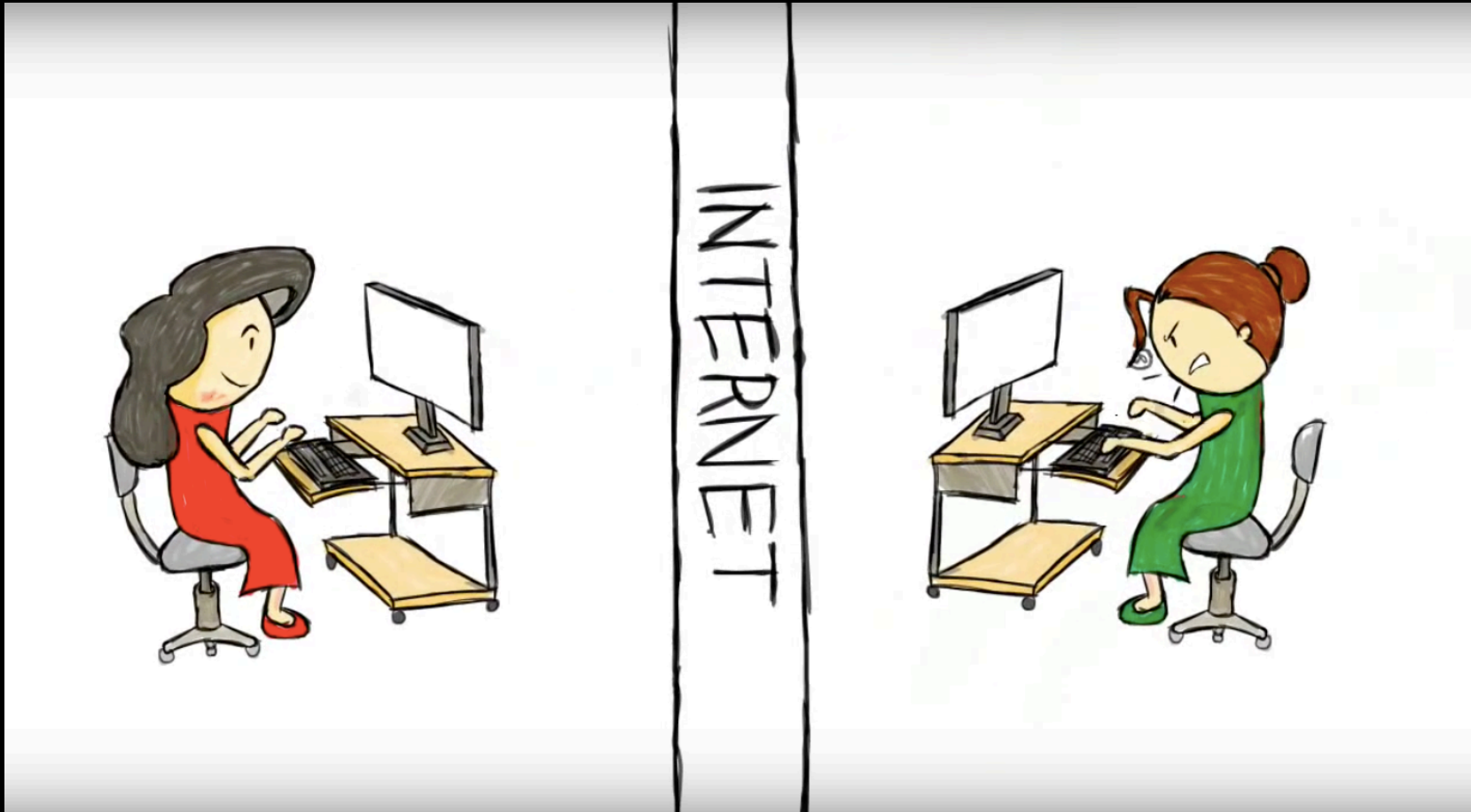
\>\> public vs. private

\>\> data(text) vs. persons

(Source: AoIR 2012 report)

[See: impact1.md]

Human subjects & "the distance principle"

[Image source: A still image from "A real person, a lot like you" by Derek Sivers, shared with his permission]

[See: impact1.md]

"public data"

the question of personhood

Activity

Let's analyze and discuss a case study.

Review Joshua Tabak and Vivian Zayas's academic article and their summary of it for the New York Times, and discuss:

>> What kinds of "human subjects" are involved in this study?

>> Is a social media photo of oneself an extension of the self?

>> Does their methodology raise any ethical concerns?

Discuss with your table, then share as a group.

Further reading: Patrick Sweeney, "Images of Faces Gleaned from Social Media in Social Psychological Research on Sexual Orientation," 2017
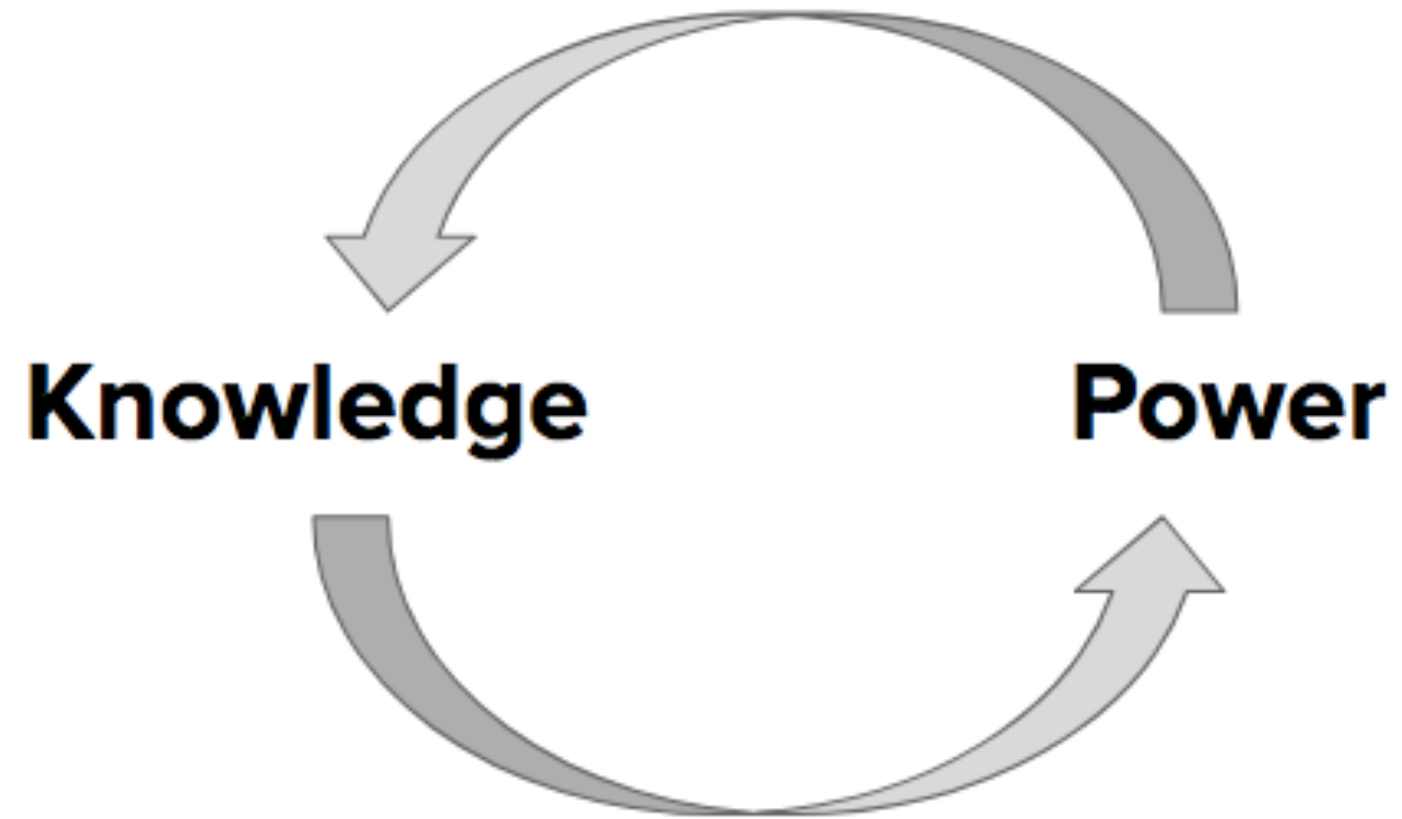
[See: impact1cont.md]

Level of impact 2:

the politics of knowledge production

[See: impact2.md]

"how our methods of organizing data, analytical interpretations, or findings as shared datasets are being used—or might be used—to *build definitional categories* or to *profile particular groups*" (Markham 2016)

[See: impact2.md]

[See: impact2.md]

How do digital tools and projects categorize or rely on categorizations?

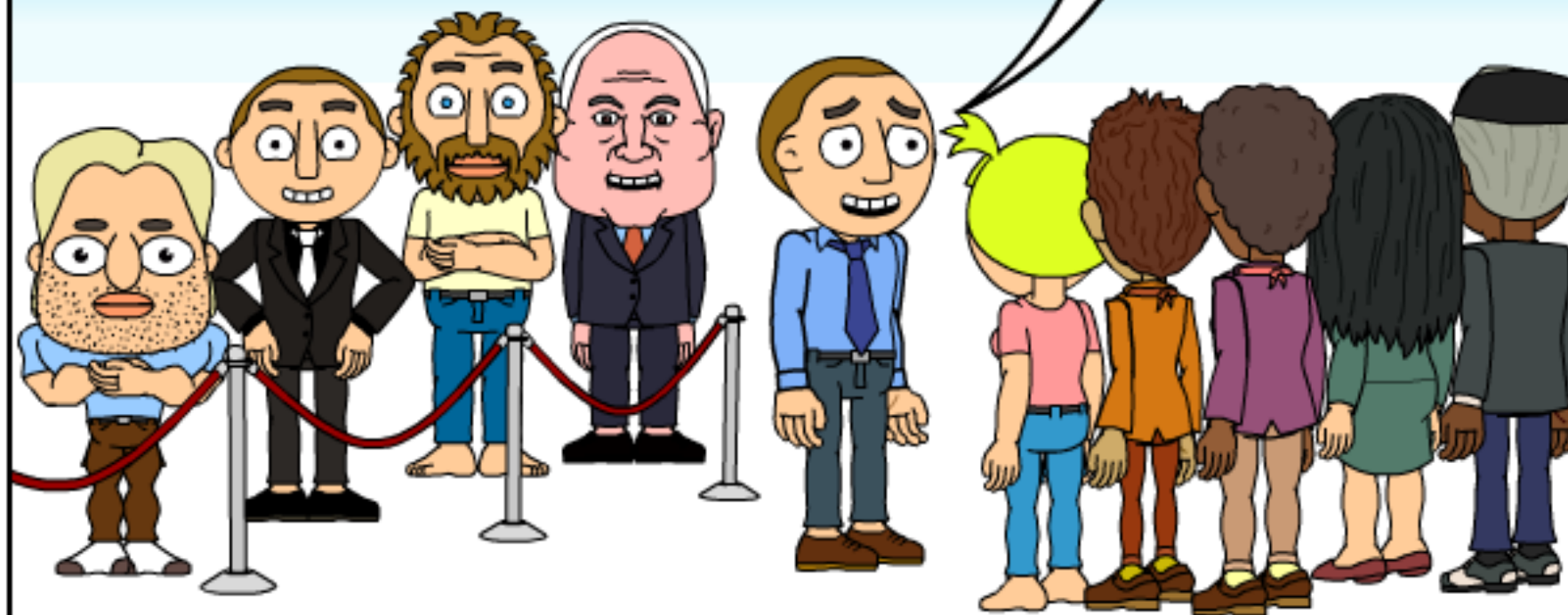What are some ramifications of (re)producing categories?

[Image source: A comic by Adeline Koh from #DHPoco: Postcolonial Digital Humanities, shared here with her permission.]

[See: impact2cont.md]

bias in → ■ → bias out

[See: impact2cont.md]

Can categorical hierarchies and existing bias be *resisted* through digital projects? If so, how?

Activity

Let's analyze and discuss a case study.

Check out the Interference Archive (IA) website, read this brief article and discuss:

>> What kinds of materials does IA host and do they have rights to it?

>> In reference to the article, how does IA see itself as "resisting the hierarchy"?

>> What levels of impact does IA aim to take into account?

Discuss with your table, then share as a group.

[See: impact1cont.md]

Level of impact 3:

social, political, and economic impacts

[See: impact3.md]

Whose *labor* and what *materials* are used to make the digital tools we use? How should we attribute others' labor? How can we be held accountable?

How may digital projects or research be used to justify or facilitate potentially harmful *control* or *surveillance*?

How may digital projects or research influence *social or political discourse*? Modes of *profit*?

All projects and research have impacts.

[See: impact3.md]

Activity

Think about a digital project or research you are or will be working on. Pair up with another person near you and discuss:

>> Whose labor and what materials do you rely upon to do your work?

>> Could your research or project be used to justify or facilitate potentially harmful control or surveillance—by e.g. the state, a vigilante group, an abusive partner?

>> How could your work cause changes to or justify social, economic or political discourses?

>> Will your work be used for profit, for who?

Share as a class.

[See: impact3.md]

Range of impact:

accessibility to your work

[See: range.md]

What is universal design?
What is accessibility?

[See: range.md]

Accessibility to people with disabilities

[See: range.md]

International accessibility and language access

[See: range.md]

Openness and accessibility

*A note on **"*free software*"** and user control (Factor interview with Stallman, 2017)

Other kinds of accessibility?

[See: range.md]

When might researchers or makers *not* want to make their work or data fully open and accessible?

[See: range.md]

When might researchers or makers decide *not* to even record data or media, or to delete?

Activity

Think about a digital project or research you are or will be working on. Pair up with another person near you and discuss:

>> Who will be able to access your research or project?

>> Where and through what media will it be accessible?

>> Will it cost money to access?

>> Will it be accessible in different languages?

>> Will it be accessible to people with visual, hearing, mobility, or other physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities?

Share as a class.

[See: range.md]

See additional *case examples*, a *glossary* of key terms and concepts, and a *resources* page on the DHRI ethics curriculum on GitHub

[See: cases.md, glossary.md, and resources.md]

Workshop debrief

By the end of this workshop, participants have:

>> Reviewed ethical practices to satisfy institutional needs (IRB) when working with "human subjects."

>> Learned specific ethical questions and levels of impact to consider when doing various forms of digital research and using digital tools.

>> Engaged with alternative approaches and case examples.

>> Envisioned the ethics of their own projects and methodologies.

[See: review.md]

Next steps:

>> Determine institutional requirements

>> Explore ethics beyond compliance

>> Reassess your research methodology

[See: review.md]

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