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Ethics of Computer Science

Copyrighting has been around since the early 1900's, with most lasting the life of the author plus 70 or so years but there are special cases of longer and shorter terms (Stanford). History with its ever vastly growing forms of technology, must adapt new forms and ways copyrighting may be instituted in the workplace and society as a whole. Focusing specifically on software and programs, copyrighting is “fixed in a tangible medium” or as soon as the program is saved or registered in a physical hard drive or floppy disk (FindLaw). Being in the realm of programming as a computer science major, this will primarily focus on two common codes of ethics, determine what license agreements seem best fit for our usage of code, and our obligations toward reusing code on the internet.

Let's first look at two major codes of ethics for programmers and software developers alike. These would be the IEEE and ACM code of ethics which are similar but are different in a few areas. The IEEE for example, promises to keep safety toward the public, avoid conflicts whenever possible, be honest in stating claims, reject bribery, improve societal implications of technologies, offer full disclosure of information, seek and accept criticism, and treat all people without discrimination (7.8 IEEE). Now the ACM has a few differences like honoring confidentiality instead of disclosing information, know and respect local to international law regulations, perform work only in areas of competence, design systems that are robustly and

usable secure, manage personnel and resources to enhance the quality of work life, and use care when modifying or retiring systems (ACM). For the most part they are very similar but take caution when choosing one for a specific programming task in mind.

Now to decide which one of these codes of ethics best suits what the goal of the program is to satisfy. If the program was a security software or a special scanning of the computer to look for malware it makes more sense to use the ACM code of ethics. This is because of their confidentiality and only performing work in areas of competence with designing secure systems and care retiring or modifying systems. This allows for less chances of personal information to be stolen or leaked as well as keeping the software from being used as a malicious software itself while keeping us litigation free. Perhaps our program was to be used to store information in a public library or political campaign, it would comply more with the IEEE code of ethics because of its rejection of bribery, honesty in stating claims and full disclosure to the public while keeping safety toward said public.

Programmers often find themselves stuck in a situation where they know what they need to do to make their code function but don't know how to implement the tools in their respective writing language. This is where the internet comes in but what are we allowed to use? Make money from our program? Now that we know two forms of codes of ethics, we can implement what we've found on the internet in respects to our code while giving the author full credit and disclosure. Ethically I feel it's scummy to make money using something someone else has created, just because they could have done the same but chose to allow others to use it in the hopes of a greater outcome or knowledge. Hopefully we choose a copyright that gives full credit to anyone who assisted, helped or participated in any respectable way so that they are litigation and hatred free while maintaining their reputation and withholding possibly some honor.

Work Cited

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Stanford University Libraries [Copyright Basics FAQ]. (n.d). Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/faqs/copyright-basics>

7.8 IEEE Code of Ethics, (n.d). Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <https://www.ieee.org/about/corporate/governance/p7-8.html>