

Subject: The ethics of the software engineer

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To: "Speed, John" <john.speed@mail.capnet.state.tx.us>

John, I thought this might interest you.

As you probably recall, the ACM and IEEE-CS have both approved a code of ethics for software engineers. In a recent conversation with Don Gotterbarn, who spearheaded that effort, I learned that during the public comment period there were a number of comments made that suggest, shall we say, an ethics impaired portion of the populace. Here are some of the comments that were sent in (fortunately by a minority):

- "...remove the clause on testing. Testing is the client's responsibility." - add the clause "avoid criticism of software engineers", - "remove all references to maintenance", - "...not all jobs require the highest professional standards", - a plethora of opinions to the effect that it is OK to use bootlegged software, - delete "consistent with the public interest", - "...there is no specific reference to Y2K in the Code of Ethics"

I guess vigilance will always be needed in this area.

Regards, DJF

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