

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

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Introduction

Educational technology is the study and *ethical practice* of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources.

THE EPIGRAPHIC SENTENCE BY the Definition and Terminology Committee shows the successful promotion of professional ethics to the point where it deserves a full chapter (Januszewski, 2006). Previously, professional ethics was a topic only briefly mentioned. The earlier definitional works recognized it by each assigning two pages to reprint the AECT *Code of Ethics*. The AECT (1977) Task Force on Definition and Terminology welcomed the newly created code (pp. 116, 118–119). Seels and Richey (1994) recognized the codification of the profession's ethical standards, especially in light of ongoing and current concerns (pp. 106–107, 152–153). Inclusion in

this book is an achievement based on the educational efforts of the AECT Professional Ethics Committee. Credit is due to the AECT leaders who have chaired the Committee and those members who have served on it productively.

Anything has potential for being assessed along ethical dimensions and that consideration applies to professional activities in educational technology. This chapter looks at the professional ethics of technologists first socio-logically and historically, then by examining the current situation, and finally in predicting areas of progress and growth. The conclusion emphasizes what may be most valuable for readers: that the development of professional ethics offers a rather different way of defining educational technology.

Professional ethics should not be confused with the branch of philosophy known as *ethics*. Nor should “professionally unethical” be accepted as a euphemism for conduct which is illegal, immoral, sinful, or a violation of workplace rules. Similarly, judging a colleague as professionally ethical or unethical is not the same as judging a colleague as polite or rude, agreeable or disagreeable, or professional or unprofessional. Those things mean nothing more than how the person measures up against an unsaid, invisible criterion. It is recommended that, when speaking or writing about professional ethics, the full phrase is employed in order to avoid misunderstanding. It is also recommended that reference be made to upholding specific principles given in the AECT *Code*.

Professional Ethics: A Sociohistorical Perspective

Professional ethics was staked out for sociology as an intellectual territory by Durkheim (1957/1992) in three lectures on professional ethics that were first delivered in the 1890s (pp. xxx, xxxvii). Durkheim wanted to identify how society’s rules of conduct were set up and understand what was achieved through them (p. 1). Freidson (2001) contended “that the resources for morality and ethics lie within occupations and are not available in other modern groupings” (p. 53). Although idealistic hopes for social change tainted those first analyses, and they were misunderstood, the methodological contributions remain foundational to social study (Freidson, 2001, pp. 52–54).

Today, it is understood that professions gain, maintain, and lose power through competition (Abbott, 1988, 1998, 2001) and by alliances with social institutions (Freidson, 1986, 2001). Having a code of professional ethics formalizes occupational territory aside from the requirements of government, law, institutional regulations, religion, and so on. What is “proper” reflects all of these authorities because professions work with them to hold social

things in place. Professional ethics for educational technology are like any other profession's ethics because they are cultural standards. Professional ethics are politically negotiated and maintained as traditions.

Things, as they are thought of conventionally, are rarely based on understanding causal processes. In particular, social things tend not to be isomorphic with how they are regarded by conventional wisdom, which is extremely subjective. When Becker (2006) investigated judgments about quality and conventions for determining goodness or badness, similarities were detected in sociology, art, music, science, and engineering. Not surprisingly, the purpose of their "common sense" is not to aid the investigations of social scientists but to support the established order.

That is to say, "All social groups make rules and attempt, at some time and under some circumstances, to enforce them" (Becker, 1963/1997, p. 1). What is at issue is deviance, usually justified via a medical analogy as behavior that is regarded as sick. Complete agreement between everyone on what is "socially sick" is unusual and it is more enlightening to accept that "*social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance*, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders" (Becker, 1963/1997, p. 9). Much as jazz musicians must endure the paying audience whom they disdain as squares (Becker, 1963/1997, pp. 85–91), the activities of education professors who regard themselves as researchers are justified by the existence of those whom they call practitioners. By extension, within the broad culture of education and training, "true" educational technologists have likewise been tolerated, for the most part, as members of a deviant subculture, albeit relatively harmless. This is the way things are, even more now than ever before, since with mass computerization almost everyone is—to at least some degree—a technologist. The dividing line is moving over and readers may have heard words like these: "I started teaching one of my classes online this term so now I know all about educational technology." A documented example is the contemporary newsletter headline announcing a conference program: "Jazz up your teaching with technology" (Schuetz, 2006).

Investigating a Professional Mystery

Statements on professional ethics should be reconsidered where there is a leaning toward syllogistic fallacies. Consider how the professional ethics discourse is widely accepted as a social convention. It is expected to be working in society but without much verification, either rationally or empirically: An example is the supposition that professions without codes of ethics are

doomed to lose their niches (Gardner, Csiksentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001, pp. 22–24). This is a superficial belief. It gives too much weight to mind determining social function. Each profession selects and negotiates its ethical difficulties with the same code of ethics that polices the profession. In other words, codes of ethics establish the very thing they aim to prevent: Ethical violation is expected because it is named, and then blame can be assigned to individuals or groups. It is not the actuality but the possibility that is potent.

Professional ethics do not directly control and cannot force good behavior. Inclination toward being good is likely to be distributed throughout any population, much like intelligence. Belonging to an organization having an approved and enforceable code serves as a sign of holding professional status. Certainly, for educational technologists, this sign contributes to setting standards related to education, credentialing, and, at least on the face of things, in keeping out charlatans, impostors, and rival professional groups. Only a small percentage of technologists belong to the AECT, but it seems to be the leading established professional society in the technology field with an enforceable code and continual, serious efforts to educate its members about professional ethics.

Archaeology

Professional ethics are a mysterious aspect of educational technology. Many factors have influenced and will continue to influence what is considered professionally ethical for technology (see Table 11.1). It is based on Foucault's (1970/1972) social archaeology (pp. 21–76), which is not such a strange thing, as it may seem. An introductory reading of Foucault is part of the curriculum for many undergraduates, and the American Educational Research Association has a Foucault special interest group. On an episode of *The West Wing*, the cover of a Foucault (1997/2003) book is meaningfully shown twice in a montage (Noah & McCormick, 2006). Foucault rejects and goes beyond Sartre's existentialism (Paras, 2006). In doing so, Foucault wrote his archaeological method, which has subsequently inspired many writers. For instance, Rosemann (1999) found "a kind of manual of archaeological research, providing a comprehensive list of all the factors that need to be taken into consideration in the analysis of an episteme" (p. 40). Kendall and Wickham's (1999) textbook explains that, in opposition to reductive, total history, Foucault's historiography has the continuity of general history (p. 24). On putting this approach into action: "Archaeology helps us to explore the networks of what is said, and what can be seen in a set of social arrangements: in the conduct of an archaeology, one finds out

Table 11.1. An archaeology of discursive factors affecting professional ethics for educational technology. © A.R.J. Yeaman, 2007. Used with permission.

Public awareness and mass media influence	Traditions and customary expectations	Professional knowledge defining good practice
Neighborhood morality	Endless inventions, innovations, and new products, as well as relentless uncertainty	Academic base for preparing licensed professionals and continuing their education
Local laws	Economic forces	Utopian ideals
Regional laws	Technological practicality and probability versus possibility and desirability	Institutional philosophies, policies, and procedures
National laws	Rival professions	
Religious beliefs	Political interests and government	Philosophical ethics Individual interests and personal ethics

something about the visible in ‘opening up’ statements and something about the statement in ‘opening up visibilities’” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 25). Archaeological “tasks” are described, such as “chart the relation between the sayable and the visible” (p. 26), and these are demonstrated through an archaeological analysis of schooling (pp. 27–28).

This is the origin of **Table 11.1**. Some things appear solid and lasting, such as laws, traditions, institutional rules, and professional licensing. Other factors in the map may be more transitory, such as economic pressures, government support, and the cycle of successful inventions becoming successful products and then falling into obsolescence as new inventions arrive. Religious convictions contribute as philosophy does. Do not expect consistency regarding results (consequentialism) or rights (deontology) because professional ethics is sociological.

Alterations in the factors named in **Table 11.1** take place over time. At any moment, the people involved are barely conscious of the ongoing social constructions. It is as if demands for conformity and compliance are nothing more than perennial flowers. Technologists not only accept these requirements but also employ them for professional ends and come to expect them in their season. The purpose of these controlling devices may be no more than to assert control.

A Merton View

In structural functional sociology, the normative control of people is maintained by threats that those who do not conform to social norms will be labeled as “deviant” and, in the frame of this chapter, “unethical.” This comes from Merton (1973), best known for identifying the Puritan norms of science. Social norms have several dimensions (Merton, 1982, p. 75). The spectrum runs from prescribing behavior to proscribing and from what is preferred to what is permitted. Consensus over norms varies. Norms receive unequal amounts of support. Control structures range from formal sanctions to informal reactions. Certain norms demand obvious compliance whereas others do not. Similarly, some norms are more or less flexible in this regard. The individual is subject to the norms imposed by the collective. From among the great mass of individuals, token deviants are labeled and stigmatized. They may be individually deviant or members of an out-group that is considered deviant by an in-group. The quantity of “bad people” thus selected, punished, and processed corresponds to public perceptions of there being a “real” social problem rather than an objective measure. Merton found it interesting that not all unacceptable or unethical actions are detected, and if they are detected, some do not undergo investigation.

Professional associations play a part in this control mechanism not only for their members but also in avoiding “the atomization of society into a sand heap of individuals intent on pursuing their own private interests” (Merton, 1982, p. 206). Professional affiliation is one of the ways of making connections between people possible. It enables the freer, less oppressive forms of society to flourish:

The professional association is one of those intermediate organizations that furnish the social bonds through which society coheres. It provides unity in action and social cohesion without contiguity of its members. It mediates between practitioner and profession, on the one hand, and, on the other, between practitioner and social environment, of which the most important elements, apart from clientele, are allied occupations and professions, the universities, the local community, and the government. (Merton, 1982, p. 207)

A sobering perspective on those high thoughts is desirable: “Professional associations tend more to provide services to their members than to exercise control over their ethical or technical work behavior” (Freidson, 1986, p. 187). Professionalism itself comes from the professionals who gather, see themselves as being in a profession, and are seen that way by others. Professional ethics express professionalism by being normative and are definable through observable beliefs and behaviors.

Correspondingly, there are already strong external pressures on professional educational technologists. The cultural mapping in [Table 11.1](#) shows the inhibiting presence of norming factors. Without being frozen in time, the components on display are likely to constrain educational technologists, to contribute to their professional ethics, and to define their professional ethics. The chart is illustrative, and these social things are not ordered by either hierarchy or structure, something that would be rather un-Mertonian (Gieryn, 2004, p. 93). The cell divisions are figurative, just as in everyday life where there is no risk of tripping over lines of latitude and longitude. Blanks have been left deliberately because it is probable that not all controlling mechanisms could ever be known and understood. Further inquiries are possible and readers can fill in the blanks for themselves. Obvious candidates may be the allied ideas of myth, discourse, and common sense (Mosco, 2004, pp. 12–13, 28–29).

The Pragmatist Philosophical Rationale

One of the more lasting clichés of American culture is that of the redemptive benefits of education. (Stanley, 1978, p. 188)

While Stanley goes on to seek a “nontechnicist” philosophy of education—a discussion beyond the ambit of this chapter, the lasting cliché connects with John Dewey, the great American philosopher. Over 100 years have passed since Dewey’s *Ethical Principles Underlying Education* (1897/1903) appeared. Dewey, the pragmatist, tells readers that ethics, inside and outside of school, are not different because “The moral responsibility of the school, and those who conduct it, is to society” (p. 10). There is a useful convergence here between education as a philosophical ideal and as a social practice requiring teachers to meet professional standards and function with professional autonomy.

As a psychologically inclined philosopher, Dewey emphasizes learners as individuals and emphasizes a need for building character toward social intelligence. Dewey’s conclusion is not particularly optimistic: “We need to translate the moral into the actual conditions and working forces of our community life, and into the impulses and habits which make up the doing of the individual” (1897/1903, pp. 32–33).

Dewey’s synthesis provided a desirable direction for schooling in the new century and supported progressivism as the ethical approach to mass education. It was not easy to disagree with the pragmatics of pulling these values together: traditional and progressive, academic and vocational, and religious and secular. During a career crossing six decades, Dewey sponsored

obligatory consensus and professional unity. Although never Dewey's only message, it was always present between the lines: *Education is both a good thing and a necessity.*

Dewey's reputation as a 20th-century philosopher was built in part on this bridging between radical reform and established customs. Dewey's philosophical ethics ensconced education *comme il faut* (as it should be) on a foundational, taken for granted, ready-made Puritan ethic. This support of education as an ethical endeavor helped advance teaching as a profession, a role philosophers of education have played (argumentatively) ever since. A recent essay following in that tradition (Warnick & Waddington, 2004) draws on Martin Heidegger and Albert Borgmann to show that educational technology, when enacted *properly*, is philosophically ethical. Of course, any professional labor is ethical because that attribute is considered inherent to any occupation deemed worthy of professional status.

Historical Beginnings

The earlier sections of this chapter are prerequisite to comprehending the historical situation. The sociological explorations illustrate what was going on beneath the surface and what is always going on. The philosophical heritage is relevant, too. Whereas the theoretical insights of sociologists are largely neglected, philosophers are routinely called upon to justify the institution of education, especially the works of Dewey.

Walsh's (1926) book *Teaching as a Profession: Its Ethical Standards* provided a history of ethical codes in U.S. education. The first state education association to adopt a code of ethics was Georgia in 1896, followed by California in 1902, Alabama in 1908, and Arkansas in 1910 (pp. 376–377). By 1925, 15 more states had a code of professional ethics for teachers. Walsh commented, "These are usually of little influence," and "There are no universally recognized standards in most fields of teaching activity" (p. 6).

The claim of variance in what the public regards as appropriate educational conduct is illustrated by the story of Miss M.'s frustrating interviews for a high school teaching position (Walsh, 1926, pp. 7–8). The first school would not hire her because Miss M. said she danced and said she enjoyed it. The board informed her that was not thought proper. The second school would not hire Miss M. because "she replied she had danced but did not care for it and would gladly refrain from dancing." The superintendent "wanted someone who danced well" to chaperone student dances and "take part in the social life of the community" where dancing was considered popular. Walsh argued, "The time has come when many phases of teacher relationships

must be standardized; when definite and generally accepted ethical principles must be established, if a profession of teaching is to be developed, or even if it is to hold its place among the respected vocations."

The "requirements of a profession" are listed with the eighth and last criterion being "each profession embodies the foregoing or similar principles in a code of ethics which is formally accepted and rigidly enforced by the members of the profession" (Walsh, 1926, pp. 22-23). Principles are explored in chapters ending with problems for discussion such as this one about teachers as colleagues:

Case 6. Miss T., the fourth grade teacher of long experience, looked over the new third grade instructor, a bobbed-haired, short-skirted, hand-tinted Miss, and exclaimed in disgust to her friend: "Superintendent J. will have to give me another room. I can tell him right now that I shall not stay here next year and attempt to teach children whom that snip has had for a year." (p. 247)

Building on Walsh's (1926) book, Landis' (1927) dissertation examined the professional ethics of education and 10 other professions. It was found that *ethics codes developed around conflicts* with clients, employers, supervisors, and colleagues including competitors, material businesses, and service businesses (p. ix). Landis wrote, "Twenty-seven state education associations and some other groups of educators have adopted codes of ethics during the past thirty years" (p. 1).

A National Education Association (NEA) committee to develop a *national* code had begun work in 1924 (Rich, 1984, p. 128). Subsequently, the NEA adopted the first code of ethics for the education profession on July 1, 1929 (National Education Association of the United States, 1929, p. 69). This action was taken at the Representative Assembly meeting in Atlanta. Enforcement was through each state's teachers' organization having a professional ethics committee (p. 70).

There were three articles: Relations with Pupils and to the Community (with six sections), Relations to the Profession (with seven sections), and Relations to Members of the Profession (with eight sections). The justification for the NEA *Code* was

that the aims of education may be realized more fully, that the welfare of the teaching profession may be promoted, that teachers may know what is considered proper procedure, and may bring to their professional relations high standards of conduct. (National Education Association of the United States, 1929, p. 69)

In the mid-1930s, an effort to produce a uniform national code of ethics for teachers did not gain the support of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (Davidson, 1936). There were several objections by the AFT (p. 34). The strongest was that a national code ignored other influences on the quality of schools. It also held the danger of being used against teachers in unforeseen ways.

The NEA *Code* was revised in 1941, 1944, 1952, 1963, 1968, and 1975 (Rich, 1984, p. 128). Immense efforts to increase acceptance and awareness were made in the 1950s and 1960s, such as distributing over half a million copies of the *Code* in 1964 (p. 129). The NEA informed its members of how the NEA code was being interpreted by publishing its collected *Opinions* (National Education Association of the United States, 1964). These accreted over time and the fourth edition records 44 opinions. Several editions came out, usually in runs of 5,000. Rich (1984) commented that coverage in teacher preparation programs continued to be neglected (p. 129). Books suitable for use in colleges and schools of education were published in recent years, such as Strike and Soltis' (1998) textbook and Wagner's (1996) fastback.

A Different Direction

The organization that became AECT started in 1923 as the Department of Visual Instruction (DVI) of the NEA (Januszewski, 2001). The Department became tied to the NEA *Code* approved six years later, but enforcement was not departmental at that time. References to the NEA *Code* have been sought but not located in either the DVI Board minutes and proceedings housed in the National Public Broadcasting archives at the University of Maryland or in the *Educational Screen*, which was the professional periodical of that era.

A discourse existed whereby the newest educational communication technology was accepted as beneficial. If motion picture projection could be picked up by educators of all types at all levels, it would be certain to bring improvements. The advance toward solving the latest education crisis was balanced by a fear of misuse (Painter, 1926; Yeaman, 2004b). New technology connected with supposedly new problems formed part of the base for professionalization. A related fear was that theatrical motion pictures would corrupt youth (Short, 1928).

The DVI was aligned with the Motion Picture Research Council, whose concerns for moral reform not only diverged from those of the NEA but also were secretly funded by the wealthy wife of a Republican senator. Massive and strenuous research began in the mid-1920s, under W. W. Charters' (1935) management, to scientifically assess the impact of theatrical films on the moral development of youth and to connect that with classroom instruction

(Jacobs, 1990). Mortimer Adler (1937) defended the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) by asserting that, although parts of the research had been conducted brilliantly, much of the science was mediocre, and some was delirium. Edgar Dale started at Ohio State University in 1929 by working on Charters' project, and one of Dale's students from the 1930s and 1940s recalled that Adler's reputation was diminished by becoming thought of as "an industry flack" (R. W. Wagner, personal communication, May 18, 2003). Adler's criticisms were summarized in *Are We Movie Made?* (Moley, 1938), the publication of which was sponsored by the MPPDA (Jowett, Jarvie, & Fuller, 1996, p. 117). Becker (2002) gave a contemporary assessment with implications from a sociological point of view in regard to investigating new media.

The DVI became the Department of Audio-Visual Instruction (DAVI) at the Atlantic City conference held in March 1947. In the new constitution documents, there was no mention whatsoever of professional ethics (Dameron, 1947). Anna Hyer (1969), DAVI's long time executive secretary, recollects, "DAVI had less than 500 members in 1951; perhaps 300 persons attended our first independent convention held in Boston in 1952" (p. 108). Within a few years, the membership increased tenfold.

Growth

It was apparent considerably earlier that DVI was progressing away from NEA. In the early 1930s, Howard McClusky (1934) noted that anthropologists had characterized peoples in relation to their tools and, with a suspiciously mystical sense of certainty, wrote of the coming technology of education:

It is not the province of this paper to venture a prediction of the exact date which will mark the advent of what might be termed the new technology of education. But the writer opines that just as the railroad, steamboat and automobile have transformed the mode of life in the last century, and just as the extension of electric power and the development of aviation will reshape the life of the coming century, just as certainly will the radio, motion picture, television, sound recording (musical and nonmusical), cheap printing, and similar devices transmogrify the cultural life of the masses and the technique of their instruction. The change is inevitable. Its arrival is only a matter of time and ingenuity. (p. 84)

It looks as if the first mention of professional ethics in the audiovisual literature came from Finn (1953). This article on the professionalization of the field has been selected as a classic reading (Finn, 1996). Landis (1927) is briefly cited because "many codes are window dressing" (Finn, 1953, p. 8).

While professional ethics are thought necessary for qualifying as a profession, no examples are given of either existing or anticipated ethical conflicts, issues, or duties.

By the mid-1960s, a Professional Standards Committee had been appointed with reporting subcommittees, sometimes also referred to as Commissions or as committees themselves. The Professional Standards Committee contained a subcommittee on professional ethics (P. W. Welliver, personal communication, January 20, 2005). That group grappled with applying the NEA *Code* to ethical problems specific to technology work, such as copyrights. It also addressed the status of members of the profession who are employed outside of NEA jurisdiction.

Brief descriptions of the activities of the Professional Ethics Committee began to appear in *Audiovisual Instruction*. These appear to be the earliest signs of attention being given to professional ethics as a specific topic of any organizational concern. Positions were taken on copyright compliance and the responsible use of advances in copying technology.

This news comes from the 1966 DAVI Convention in San Diego, California where a particular focus was the DAVI opinion on teacher strikes:

The Commission on Professional Ethics continues to keep in close contact with the NEA's Committee on Professional Ethics in interpreting the NEA Code of ethics as it applies to the specific problems of the audiovisual educator. (Highlights of DAVI, 1966, p. 514)

John A. "Jack" Davis became Chair of the Professional Ethics Committee at the Atlantic City DAVI Convention (Schwartz & Davis, 1967), and next year reported the meeting of the Committee on Professional Ethics, a Professional Standards Subcommittee (Highlights of DAVI, 1968, p. 688). After reviewing "the disposition of cases considered during the year" the Professional Ethics Committee produced a Resolution on Professional Ethics for the DAVI Board of Directors. This was in regard to proposed changes in copyright law (1968 DAVI Resolutions, 1968, p. 679). The Committee on Professional Ethics planned to "study examples and specific cases of ethics problems encountered by the audiovisual profession to determine the desirability and feasibility of adopting or drafting a Code of Ethics for DAVI" (Davis, 1969).

Following the separation from NEA, the AECT Professional Ethics Committee came into existence as a governance committee in 1970. The new executive director wrote that it is easier to standardize hardware than human conduct, and he quoted from the report of the DAVI Professional Ethics Committee (Hitchens, 1970). The report recommended adoption of the NEA

Code because it had previously been accepted by the DAVI Board of Directors 18 months earlier. However, “We have yet to put teeth in the enforcement of that professional code—but that will evolve in due time.”

The editorial’s themes had been drawn from Finn (1953) and concluded by echoing that essay:

Does our field, then, satisfy the criterion of having a standard and a code of ethics to which we can subscribe? I believe we do, even though the job is still unfinished and will perhaps ever remain so. However, each of us should direct his efforts toward the further definition of our professional standards and our professional code of ethics. This is perhaps more appropriate for our field than for any other sector of education, for we have a unique interest in change. (Hitchens, 1970)

A response was printed the next year. The jurisdiction of the NEA was limited and there ought to be a frame for ethical actions by professional educators who work for noneducation organizations. It will help them avoid being “caught in a professional and ethical abyss where normal professional channels for inquiry, employment security, professional rights, and protection against professional and personal abuse are closed” (Welliver, 1971, p. 43).

A public correspondence about professional ethics followed (P. W. Welliver, personal communication, February 27, 2005). The letters are by Davis (1972) and Welliver (1972).

AECT's Code of Ethics

Jack Davis remained the Chair until 1975 and then continued as a member. A new code of professional ethics was drawn up, partly based on the NEA Code, and approved in 1974 when Gerald M. Torkelson was president (J. A. Davis, personal communication, June 7, 2005). The bylaws continued to acknowledge NEA’s *Code of Ethics of the Education Profession* for another 10 years (Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1984, p. 12). The current version of the AECT *Code* was approved by the Board of Directors on November 6, 2001, and it is displayed in [Table 11.2](#). It can also be viewed via a link on the AECT Web site (Association for Educational Communications and Technology, n.d.a.).

Although AECT had its own code of ethics by the mid-1970s, supported intellectual freedom, affirmative action, and “humane” technology, and opposed stereotyping, it did not “enforce its ethical and value positions, and professionals in educational technology do not show a widespread concern for the importance of these positions” (Silber, 1978, p. 179).

Table 11.2. AECT *Code of Professional Ethics*. This version was approved by the AECT Board of Directors on November 6, 2001. Used with permission of AECT.

Preamble

1. The Code of Ethics contained herein shall be considered to be principles of ethics. These principles are intended to aid members individually and collectively in maintaining a high level of professional conduct.
2. The Professional Ethics Committee will build documentation of opinion (interpretive briefs or ramifications of intent) relating to specific ethical statements enumerated herein.
3. Opinions may be generated in response to specific cases brought before the Professional Ethics Committee.
4. Amplification and/or clarification of the ethical principles may be generated by the Committee in response to a request submitted by a member.

Section 1—Commitment to the Individual

In fulfilling obligations to the individual, the members:

1. Shall encourage independent action in an individual's pursuit of learning and shall provide open access to knowledge regardless of delivery medium or varying points of view on the knowledge.
2. Shall protect the individual rights of access to materials of varying points of view.
3. Shall guarantee to each individual the opportunity to participate in any appropriate program.
4. Shall conduct professional business so as to protect the privacy and maintain the personal integrity of the individual.
5. Shall follow sound professional procedures for evaluation and selection of materials, equipment, and furniture/carts used to create educational work areas.
6. Shall make reasonable efforts to protect the individual from conditions harmful to health and safety, including harmful conditions caused by technology itself.
7. Shall promote current and sound professional practices in the appropriate use of technology in education.
8. Shall in the design and selection of any educational program or media seek to avoid content that reinforces or promotes gender, ethnic, racial, or religious stereotypes. Shall seek to encourage the development of programs and media that emphasize the diversity of our society as a multicultural community.
9. Shall refrain from any behavior that would be judged to be discriminatory, harassing, insensitive, or offensive and, thus, is in conflict with valuing and promoting each individual's integrity, rights, and opportunity within a diverse profession and society.

Section 2—Commitment to Society

In fulfilling obligations to society, the member:

1. Shall honestly represent the institution or organization with which that person is affiliated, and shall take adequate precautions to distinguish between personal and institutional or organizational views.

Table 11.2 (continued)

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2. Shall represent accurately and truthfully the facts concerning educational matters in direct and indirect public expressions.
 3. Shall not use institutional or Associational privileges for private gain.
 4. Shall accept no gratuities, gifts, or favors that might impair or appear to impair professional judgment, or offer any favor, service, or thing of value to obtain special advantage.
 5. Shall engage in fair and equitable practices with those rendering service to the profession.
 6. Shall promote positive and minimize negative environmental impacts of educational technologies.

Section 3—Commitment to the Profession

In fulfilling obligations to the profession, the member:

- I. Shall accord just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession in terms of professional rights and responsibilities, including being actively committed to providing opportunities for culturally and intellectually diverse points of view in publications and conferences.
 2. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.
 3. Shall avoid commercial exploitation of that person's membership in the Association.
 4. Shall strive continually to improve professional knowledge and skill and to make available to patrons and colleagues the benefit of that person's professional attainments.
 5. Shall present honestly personal professional qualifications and the professional qualifications and evaluations of colleagues, including giving accurate credit to those whose work and ideas are associated with publishing in any form.
 6. Shall conduct professional business through proper channels.
 7. Shall delegate assigned tasks to qualified personnel. Qualified personnel are those who have appropriate training or credentials and/or who can demonstrate competency in performing the task.
 8. Shall inform users of the stipulations and interpretations of the copyright law and other laws affecting the profession and encourage compliance.
 9. Shall observe all laws relating to or affecting the profession; shall report, without hesitation, illegal or unethical conduct of fellow members of the profession to the AECT Professional Ethics Committee; shall participate in professional inquiry when requested by the Association.
 10. Shall conduct research and practice using professionally accepted and Institutional Review Board guidelines and procedures, especially as they apply to protecting human participants and other animals from harm. Humans and other animals shall not be used in any procedure that is physically invasive to them.
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During the presidency of Paul Welliver, Section 19 of the bylaws was changed so that, in place of the NEA *Code*, "Adherence to the AECT Code of Ethics shall be a condition of membership" (Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1985, p. 10). That requirement of members is now in Section 16 of the bylaws. Last amended and ratified on August 2, 1999, the bylaws can be accessed online via the AECT Web site (Association for Educational Communications and Technology, n.d.b.).

Discipline. Paul Welliver became chair of the Professional Ethics Committee in 1987. At the Committee's meeting during the Atlanta Convention that year, it was "agreed that some assessment of the current thinking of AECT members toward ethics and educational technology was needed since this sort of information was not available and since ethical issues around educational technology are likely to become more pronounced as technological capacity increases" (Nichols, Martin, & Welliver, 1988). A survey was constructed and administered at the May meeting of Professors of Instructional Design and Technology (PIDT). Important issues needing attention were elicited. Completed questionnaires were returned by 43 of the 80 attendees.

In analyzing these data, responses were merged into 11 categories: ownership as in copyright and plagiarism; issues in work with noneducation clientele, such as "needs assessments conflicting with agencies' expectations;" treatment of students; misrepresentation of technological capabilities: the differences between the "promise and the reality" of instructional technology and the "exaggeration of benefits—especially computers;" instructional development/design issues; sociocultural issues; academic/political issues; research issues; ethical issues *per se*; values transmission; and honesty in personal relationships. Respondents were generally favorable to professional ethics and wanted an increased emphasis on professional ethics although slightly more opposed monitoring practicing professionals than supported the idea. The report concluded with five questions and comments generated from the data. The first one was "What does only moderate (Is it *only* moderate?) interest of the professors about raising issues and monitoring imply about AECT membership as a whole?"

Educating the membership. By the time Paul Welliver took on chairing the Committee, the *Code* may have become mostly decorative. It looked like a code, but the meanings of the principles in how they applied to working with technology were seldom obvious. For example, Section 1, Principle 8 prohibited sexual stereotypes. This phrase from the 1960s was replaced with gender stereotypes. However, there was no concrete information at hand on what those who drafted the *Code* intended.

Therefore, as chair, Welliver wisely directed his efforts at raising the consciousness of AECT members about their professional ethics. Consequently, the Committee was put to work. Each member was requested to write one scenario to show a principle helping illuminate an ethics problem. The immediate goal was to have each principle in the *Code* introduced and explained at least once. The Committee's opinions on each principle were published in *TechTrends* and then as a book (Welliver, 2001).

The thoroughness of the Association's illustrated casebook on professional ethics (Welliver, 2001) stands favorably alongside publications from much larger professions. Welliver provided succinct, plain English annotations of each principle based on what, in his informed opinion, was the core meaning of each principle (pp. 11–17).

The biggest issue for any profession in educating members about their profession's ethics is in getting away from textbook answers to textbook problems: The end goal is to prepare and support members for engagement with the imprecise difficulties of professional life. This is where AECT's *A Code of Professional Ethics* (Welliver, 2001) excels in being instructionally effective. The scenario problems appear on right-hand pages. The analysis is not immediately available because it follows overleaf. The pages depicting the ethical dilemmas can be photocopied and handed out to facilitate small group discussions. Here, the text format matches up well with an instructional design calling for *thinking* and for *dialog* before encountering the words of authority. This instructional tactic can work well in promoting the flexibility needed for making ethical assessments.

Reconceptualization

After some years, the AECT Professional Ethics Committee saw that its activities had produced noticeably good results and the Committee's own consciousness had been raised, too. Self-awareness reached the point where certain logical difficulties surrounding the Committee's business could be perceived. These were the unforeseen consequences of having professional ethics for technology.

At the 1992 meeting in Washington, DC, a draft code for information processing professionals had been brought to the Committee's attention and reconceptualization of the AECT *Code* was suggested. It was noted that codes of ethics could be thought of as developing perpetually, especially since they provide guidance not only for individuals but also for their professional societies and the relevant social institutions.

A subcommittee formed and Nick Eastmond, Dennis Fields, and Andrew Yeaman met the next year. Randy Nichols and Paul Welliver were unable to

attend, but they contributed later through extensive phone conversations. Subsequently, the subcommittee reported,

From a process of rereading and rethinking, a need has been perceived for affirming the Association's ethical commitments to our society and the world.... It is not so much necessary to threaten members with investigation as it is necessary to recognize our Association as a group of professionals who are active in the real world. There is a political problem in reducing the membership to individuals without collective power. The stereotype individual is disconnected, ineffectual, passive, and shallow. Our Code threatens to police our members as individuals but no one has ever been punished. Instead, there are ethical areas where our Association should be effective in showing social concern and in taking action.

The subcommittee identified, discussed, and listed new ethical topics for AECT. Here are 4 of the 21 items from the subcommittee report:

- We are in a business that is careless about environmental pollution. We need to negate environmental pollution, especially that caused by our technologically based profession. Pollutants include worn out videocassettes, used toner cartridges, discarded paper, and obsolete hardware.
- Physical and psychological aspects of learning environments are not only less than ideal for effective instruction but they are detrimental to learners' well being. Our field frequently overlooks these human factors and ergonomics considerations.
- Information technology such as word processing putatively increases efficiency but also deskills the task of the writer who now has to spend more time on clerical chores. Authors who are required to distinguish between three types of hyphen in their manuscripts, for instance, are drowning in the minutiae of details.
- Of all the research and development that is done in our field, how much consideration is given to the world's major problems?

The report concluded,

The work of this subcommittee is grounded in our mutual certainty there are ethical issues that are the responsibility of our profession. We believe, therefore, these ethical issues are the responsibility of the Association. The subcommittee is looking at possible avenues for putting our vision of a socially ethical Association into effect, including revising and adding to the Code. Does educational technology have a conscience?

Thinking otherwise. The forward movement in AECT's professional ethics was convergent with another social development in educational technology. Furthermore, some of the same people were involved. In the late 1980s, it became apparent there was an invisible college of educational technology scholars who upheld values somewhat distinct from the wholehearted support of the technosphere (as defined in Galbraith, 1967; Yeaman, Nichols, & Koetting, 1994). Although strongly connected to previous generations (Yeaman et al., 1994, pp. 8–9), they were alternate from their own time in speaking of ethics, social responsibility, and conscience. See chapter 9 for a contrasting view of values in educational technology, one more aligned with the technosphere.

Galbraith (1967) was cited and quoted first by Heinich (1968) and later by others, especially the AECT Task Force on Definition and Terminology (AECT, 1977, p. 57) but there are alternate readings. Galbraith wrote about education but not educational technology and his enthusiasm was unrealistic:

Colleges and universities can serve the needs of the technosphere and reinforce the goals of the industrial system. They can train the people and cultivate the attitudes which insure technological advance, allow of effective planning and insure acquiescence in the management of consumer and public demand. . . . Or colleges and universities can strongly assert the values and goals of educated men—those that serve not the production of goods and associated planning but the intellectual and artistic development of man. It is hard to believe there is a choice. (pp. 375–376)

Winner (1977) noticed that these ideas did not add up to indicate any reasonable hope for either the present or the future (p. 169). Lyotard's (1984) moral and aesthetic response was to identify the postmodern condition. Fuller (2000) objected to the mixing of political interests with the generation of scientific knowledge in universities. That work on social epistemology is close to the alternative points of view in educational technology where critical theory, postmodern thought, and poststructural thought are engaged. An example of thinking otherwise with theory follows in the next paragraph, a project that the successful book by Hlynka and Belland (1991) inspired.

Based on the voices of members heard at national conferences, as well as read in the educational technology literature, the possibility of rethinking educational technology was summarized in 26 points (Yeaman, 1994a, pp. 20–22). They were described collectively as a draft agenda for a postmodern educational technology (Yeaman, 1994b, p. 61; 1996b, p. 285). However, "The contribution of postmodern and poststructural theory appears not in a new social theory but as a sensibility modulating existing theories" (Yeaman, 1996a, p. 293). For example, under the heading *Technoscience*, technologists

were asked to “Acknowledge that technology has art and craft as the foundation of its design creativity rather than science” (Yeaman, 1994a, p. 21). Under *Cultural Aspects*, technologists were asked to “Realize that all educational communications are non-neutral and exist in a sociopolitical context.” While these are uncomfortable observations today, just as they were in the 1990s, such critical demands no longer seem alien.

Nine issues were raised around the practice of instructional design, many of which are now diffusing into the production of educational technology, although probably not from being collected together and printed in a scholarly professional journal:

- Accept there are probably several workable solutions to every instructional design problem, not just one ideal solution.
- Examine and learn from instruction that supposedly fails as well as instruction that succeeds as predicted.
- Be cautious: All media are metaphorical and never mean exactly what they seem to convey. It is not possible to escape from language, but metaphors, symbols, and models should be used with care.
- Look for self-contradictions in your own messages and in other peoples’ messages.
- Expect diversity in the way students and trainees understand and what they understand. This increasingly comes from the teaching of English, and related subjects, where common sense understandings of media are being replaced by analysis and interpretation. Advocate this way of understanding as superior to the myth of the linear, pipeline transmission of knowledge.
- Break away from the tradition of communication that assigns power to the creators of instructional messages and denies it to learners. Its authoritarian approach is its failing.
- Avoid idealism suggesting there is a perfect meeting of minds. Although people are engaged in communication all their lives, there is seldom an absolute correspondence in understandings.
- Evaluate technological fixes, not only to see if the original problem has been solved but also to see what else has been changed. Have new problems been created?
- Plan by considering needs—not just technologies. Your task is to solve real world problems and not to advocate mythical solutions such as computers.

Sorry, not an instant winner. The Board of Directors asked for an addition to the *Code* to cover harassment. The result was Section 1, Principle 9 (Welliver,

1995a). Following this precedent, a decision to further revise and improve the *Code* was made by the Committee at its meeting in February 1995:

The Committee has come to recognize the fact that the existing principles, set forth by the code, deal exclusively with the ethical obligations of individual members of AECT. After considerable discussion, the conclusion was reached that perhaps we also hold important ethical responsibilities, collectively, as an association representing our profession. (Welliver, 1995b, p. 9)

The Committee members wrote out their ideas for new principles and exchanged these drafts in 1996. They were also discussed in two workshop sessions on professional ethics at the leadership conference later that year. Following the usual sort of negotiations, the first two principles were passed on February 12, 1997. After an explanatory memo was composed, these were mailed to each member of the Board of Directors on April 27, 1997.

At the next annual convention, the improvements were announced to the AECT membership. This took place in St. Louis on February 20, 1998, at the session on *Professional Ethics in Practice* presented by Nick Eastmond, Vicki Napper, Randy Nichols, Annette Sherry, and Paul Welliver (Heebner, 1998).

The Committee remained active in following its strategic plan (Welliver, 1995c) and provided a professional development workshop on research ethics with the cosponsorship of the Research and Theory Division at AECT's national convention in 2000. Presentations were made by Rob Branch, Frank Dwyer, Leslie Hall, Steve Ross, and David Shutkin. Randy Nichols and Al Januszewski led the discussion and commentary. In general, the Committee kept up its productivity with panel sessions at the annual conference, annual reports were issued, and budget requests submitted in support of the strategic plan (though neither funded nor acknowledged). Committee members were recruited, appointed, and oriented. Committee members organized workshops at state and local conferences and initiated the teaching of experimental classes on professional ethics.

Following a turnover in AECT staff and the move of the national office to Indiana, the "ethics book" (Welliver, 2001) went into publication with explicit mention of a new section on the Commitment of the Profession to Society. Eventually, it became known from browsing official minutes posted on the AECT Web site that Section 4 and its new principles had been discussed by the Board in Scottsdale in August of 1998 but not fully understood. Forward movement had been anticipated but there was no change. Nothing had happened. Even the textual bloopers in the *Code* continued like the scribal errors and inspired distortions found in sacred scriptures.

It seemed a lack of understanding existed in regard to the status of the Professional Ethics Committee, which, in the bylaws, is one of the required governance committees. What was in play here may have been the confusion of power with knowledge in the hierarchy of credibility, factors that have been delineated to some extent by sociologists (Becker, 1998, pp. 90–91).

Please try again. The situation was disappointing but the Committee soon moved on. Change in the Board was inevitable and organizational memory is short so persistence was likely to pay off. The new goal was to achieve the desired results another way and go even further in the intended direction. Above all else, the Committee kept on going and more convention sessions were organized. The International Council became involved in addressing professional ethics in different nations and across borders (Sherry, 2000). Other sessions looked at philosophy, methodology, and research ethics (Januszewski, Nichols, & Yeaman, 2001) as well as further model cases.

Moving the chairing of the Committee around so that more members had leadership experience would strengthen the Committee and vary its public face. Randy Nichols was appointed as the incoming Chair and went about organizing another revision of the *Code*. Randy made certain this was going to be completed. By the Denver meeting in 2000, it was largely acceptable to the Committee although there was no section showing Commitment to Society.

Assimilation. The next year it was Annette Sherry who took office as the Chair and the Board of Directors adopted the latest revised *Code*. The updated and expanded AECT *Code of Professional Ethics* was submitted to the AECT Board of Directors and approved on Tuesday, November 6, 2001. The principles with alterations are Section 1, Principles 1, 5, 6, and 7 and Section 3, Principles 1, 2, and 5. The new principles are Section 2, Principle 6 and Section 3, Principle 10.

Leadership

The Professional Ethics Committee has been chaired by 10 members as recorded in the DAVI and AECT membership directories, as shown in [Table 11.3](#). This information is particularly relevant to generating sociohistorical understandings. There have been as many chairs since the turn of the century as there had been in the previous 25 years. The rapid turnover may or may not be healthy. Some assessment of this shift is necessary.

The ongoing role of the Committee has been educational rather than as a mechanism for disciplining the errant (Eastmond, 2001). Support for Paul Welliver's emphasis on informing members is also provided by answers to a

Table 11.3. Leaders who chaired the AECT Professional Ethics Committee, 1965–2006. The year each person began service as the chair is to the left. Predecessors continued their leadership into that year. © A.R.J. Yeaman, 2006. Used by permission.

Year	Chair
1965	John C. Schwartz
1967	John A. “Jack” Davis
1975	Margaret E. Chisholm
1985	Richard “Dick” Hubbard
1987	Paul W. Welliver
1995	Andrew R. J. Yeaman
2000	G. Randall “Randy” Nichols
2002	Annette C. Sherry
2004	J. Nicholls “Nick” Eastmond, Jr.
2006	Vicki S. Napper

few “frequently asked questions” (Yeaman, 2001). An ongoing series of essays in *TechTrends* aims at further increasing awareness and understanding of the Committee’s procedures and the *Code*’s principles and social context (Yeaman, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e, 2004f, 2006a, 2006b). These articles drew upon the author’s continuous experience as a Committee member since 1987, five years service as Chair, and initiating and ensuring that the first major revision of the *Code* was carried through.

Professional Ethics: The Present

Becoming Informed

The major thrust of the AECT Ethics Committee at the present is based upon the collective belief that maintaining ethical awareness is vitally important both for individual members and for the Association. Before any AECT member can be expected to act ethically, that person must become informed as to exactly what are the Association’s professional ethics. Exposure to principles and cases, and then discussing and reasoning about them, preferably in a group setting with other professionals, is part of socialization into the profession.

A column in the professional journal, *TechTrends* was first printed in October 1989, with the main aim of educating AECT members about professional

ethics. The column's name changed with the editors: Paul Welliver's column was "Ethics Today," Vicki Napper's was "Ethically Speaking," and Andrew Yeaman's is "Professional Ethics." There was a gap from the mid- to late 1990s. Due to Vicki Napper's successful tenure, the status was changed from column to section, which means there may be more than one item in an issue. All of the editors have diligently attempted to educate members of the profession in navigating the intricacies of professionally ethical behaviors and expressions. Many of the articles in past years have been presented as case studies to illustrate a given principle from the *Code*. In addition, the articles sometimes provided a tentative solution to the dilemma or situation. They are composed in such a way that the scenario problems may function as general purpose instructional materials for teaching and learning about professional ethics.

The articles in the original *TechTrends* series were revised and expanded with additional essays as *A Code of Professional Ethics: A Guide to Professional Conduct in the Field of Educational Communications and Technology* (Welliver, 2001). Besides being available as a book, this publication is also available to AECT members with a required password at the AECT Web site (<http://www.aect.org>). In a few instances, the cases have been presented as trigger videos to stimulate classroom discussion.

What Is Needed

In sum, technology colleagues and students can be alert and informed about what to anticipate. A reading of a scenario that applies a relevant principle could prepare AECT members for how to think and how to proceed when there are suspicions of unethical occurrences. Rather than practice at judging and blaming, practice at seeking understanding and resolution are going to be the activities that are the most beneficial. The articles should be documenting the profession's jurisdictions, areas of expertise, and the performance of tasks and techniques in relation to the profession's ethical principles. Each professional ethics article currently has three parts: a scenario, a principle, and an analysis.

Each article starts with a scenario in which a realistic but hypothetical problem is presented for readers to think through. When the situation is described, it is written as a brief instructional fiction. One of the sites of work where the profession holds jurisdiction, such as a school library media center, is identified in the scenario. It includes a network of actors such as a media specialist, a computer system, a software corporation, and a student's parent. One of the domains of the field is implied: management, utilization, development, evaluation, or design.

The dilemma progresses through factual statements, basic descriptions, and short dialog exchanges but is not overly complicated. The narrative takes readers quickly to the central problem and with sufficient details to be credible. It is readily comprehensible but the sketch is not colored in, which makes it more evocative. Readers may notice absent information and generate “what if” questions.

In the second section, the relevant principle is quoted from the *Code*. The author’s goal in writing the article was to augment general understanding about this principle. At this place, readers may stop to consider the situation for themselves before continuing on.

In the third section, a concise critique that looks at the scenario in light of the principle is provided. The writing style is different. Analytic prose explores the layers of reality found in the scenario. As in Paul Welliver’s memo to the Professional Ethics Committee, dated March 2, 1990, this should aim at “an open discussion which examines a variety of perspectives on the issues and avoids an arbitrarily simplistic answer.”

The analysis does not cover all eventualities and may best provoke insight by suggesting varying interpretations and a range of possible resolutions. It can help defeat the fallacy that professional ethics could ever be 100% effective in being preventive. Being optimistic, there is a strong possibility of becoming ready to handle difficulties. One of the domains of the field is likely to figure explicitly.

The following disclaimer applies: Illustrative articles appearing in the Professional Ethics section of *TechTrends* are either fictionalized or completely made up. The scenario format allows authors to be imaginative in engaging readers with lifelike characters, dramatic events, and realistic details. Although an author’s inspiration for writing could possibly come from something witnessed, experienced, or heard about from another source, there is never any intended resemblance to specific individuals or specific institutions. The instructional purpose is to raise consciousness about AECT’s professional ethics.

How May AECT’s *Code* Actually Operate Among Members?

Beyond subscribing to the *Code*, members have various frameworks for ethics and interpretations of them. Brewer, Eastmond and Geertsen (2003) took a wide view of conduct ranging from acceptable to unethical, to illegal, and to heinous. They described one possible framework for identifying and for acting on ethical infringements. The rationale for building an ethical awareness is that people can analyze their action along a scale ranging from

basic consideration for others, professional judgment, moral considerations, ethical standards, or legal action (or threat). While different considerations may apply under different circumstances, these mechanisms are seen to act as a “series of fences” designed to protect the individual and society from acting inappropriately.

In the case of ethical concerns, the weight of the person’s membership in the Association is proposed as a deterrent to inappropriate action. A better motive than possible expulsion from membership in the Association, *if educational efforts are effective*, is that of individuals wanting to be consistently ethical. The increase of that kind of thinking among the members is what this particular chapter attempts to bring about.

In drawing on the concept of the role set (Merton, 1957), Brewer et al. (2003) converged with the Modern Language Association (MLA) in the acknowledgment that differing levels of intervention are possible. A contemporary discussion of practical ideas for coping with bigotry and suspicions of bigotry was provided by the MLA Committee on Academic Freedom (2003). It identified who may intervene and described how to intervene.

Finding Examples in Daily Life

The point of the written cases and the trigger videos is to encourage colleagues to see ethical situations and trade-offs in everyday life. There are choices to be made in these situations that are experienced by professionals at all career stages. Sensitization to the existence of unethical possibilities should improve ethical performance.

A small change can alter ethical acceptability. For example, if a librarian were asked to supply the names of those who had checked out a certain kind of book, the librarian would be unethical in providing such a list. Even if the reasoning was considered beneficial, such as to enable placement in a community-based literacy program, compliance would be wrong under American Library Association guidelines (Foerstel, 2004) or under the AECT ethics, Section 1, Principle 4 requirement “to conduct professional business so as to protect the privacy and maintain the personal integrity of the individual.”

However, if the librarian were to make available a stack of brochures for the literacy program and mention to patrons about the program’s availability at the time of checkout, that action would be ethically acceptable. The one action is unethical, while the other is not.

As AECT members become more adept at identifying potential ethical violations, they can take action to avoid ethical problems. Sometimes people can only learn from making mistakes, but others can spot an ethical violation ahead of time. Knowing the potential and practicing avoidance is the

preferable course of action. An approach to self-monitoring ethical behavior is the practice of keeping a personal “ethical encounters journal” where ethics issues that surface in daily life can be analyzed privately and the lessons recorded for one’s own use.

Update Knowledge as Conditions Change

New technologies may create opportunities for learning, but they also create ways to run afoul of ethics. For example, someone acting out of maliciousness from the anonymity of the Internet can quickly step over ethical lines in electronic mail or listserv correspondence (Eastmond, 2002). The ease of duplicating digital material available on the Internet continues to have ethical and legal cases and controversies. The point is that, in addition to learning to use new technologies effectively, Association members need to learn how to use these technologies ethically. R. W. Burniske (2004) developed a Web-based program to teach proper Internet behavior, a program called the Cyber-Pilot’s License. It received sustained interest and was tested in cross-cultural settings in Hawaii and Brazil.

Pushing on

Several developments promise to change the practice of ethics within AECT. Some are well under way, while others have only been mentioned and are still being considered.

That technology is having negative effects is an area for attention (Yeaman, 2004f). The human factors and ergonomic aspects of computers in educational settings needs further research into the position of keyboard, chair, and screen for healthy long-term usage. The political, economic, and philosophical aspects of technology and learners need to be comprehended (Nichols, 1991, 2002). The redesign and replacement of tall, unstable equipment carts so they can work more safely needs to be implemented (Sherry, 1998; Sherry & Strojny, 1993). Each of these areas represents an avenue of potential inquiry.

Cultural and cross-cultural aspects need attention. Cultural diversity and cultural pluralism need to be included in instruction (Branch, Brigham, Chang, & Stout, 1991). The *Code* itself is read and used not only within the United States but also internationally; see the special section of the International Review section of *ETR&D* on cross-cultural issues (Sherry, 2000). That theme was taken up in *TechTrends* with more voices from different cultures (Bradshaw, Keller, & Chen, 2003). The steps to have the AECT *Code* translated into other languages have been described (Sherry et al., 2003). In some instances, the meaning conveyed in the *Code* can only partially be transmitted

in another language. It is questionable how much any single code of professional ethics can function across varied cultural settings.

Professional Ethics: Building Into the Future

Like the section of this chapter on the present, this section on the future is presented here because it illustrates the ongoing discourse. There definitely are real fears in people of youth being corrupted by technological media, fears of the dangers of physical media, and fears of victimization and criminality.

The idea that professional behavior should be based on a defined system of ethics is not new. As previously described, the AECT *Code* was adapted from an existing code of the NEA. The current AECT *Code* promotes ethical behavior through sections on the individual, society, and the profession.

Just as the professions within the community of educational communications and technology have developed, so have the definitions of ethical behavior. Based on the contexts of contemporary issues, defining ethical behavior is a developing process. Codes of ethics help define responses to modern issues and give guidance to the individuals who acknowledge those codes.

There are many troubling issues unique to this time in history. New generations encounter the confusions of a computer-emulated world. There have been numerous scandals involving leaders of major corporations whose unethical behavior has caused the loss of millions of dollars and in some cases reduced retirement pension funds to nothing or next to nothing. Just as the actions of individual leaders now effect more than the employees of their companies, the actions of the individuals of those companies effect more than the stockholders. Computer-based technology and its impact on the associated educational and work environments are changing the parameters of ethical action in work and education.

Professional Ethics for Individuals

Many people believe the growth of computer-based technologies has accelerated globalization, a complex process that embraces the rapid transfer of information, funds, and goods from one part of the world to another. Globalization amplifies the consequences of the actions of individuals by transforming them within the larger framework of the worldwide arena. Globalization also amplifies the consequences of actions of entities such as corporations and nations. The behavior of the single unit of the individual is no longer the only factor involved in ethical behavior. One person can change the world, but a group of people may be able to change the world much faster.

The Internet is an example of a globalized technology unique to the 21st-century world. The linking of people in many lands through the mechanism of the World Wide Web has led to an explosion of information and knowledge and a whole new set of ethical dilemmas. Although some people might argue that the information age is not truly the model of the entire world, it certainly is shaping the economy and ecology of the nations leading the world in gross national production and technological innovation. The rapid change occurring today can be threatening to third world nations through an ever-increasing digital divide. Separation between the electronic haves and the electronic have nots is one of the current ethical concerns that the world will continue to face in coming decades.

The AECT *Code* (Table 11.2) was recently revised to reflect an increased awareness of the complex role of the individual in educational settings or workplaces. Individuals who ostensibly work alone but in reality work in the community of the World Wide Web are frequently confronted with issues related to privacy in a public world. This web of information surrounding the life, actions, and identity of employers, workers, students, and citizens in general does not allow technology-based consumers to assume their actions are isolated or independent of consequences affecting others.

Professional decision making now demands an understanding of issues beyond the scope of the local production facility. For example, workers in a multinational educational corporation may reside in different communities of the world with different cultures and rules for behavior in homes, schools, or the workplace. This type of globalization may drive future issues of ethical behavior for all professions connected by technology for knowledge distribution.

Another example of new ethical concerns can be linked from the *Code* to the Internet (see Section 1, Principle 1 in Table 11.2). The *Code* declared,

In fulfilling obligations to the individual, the members shall encourage independent action in an individual's pursuit of learning and shall provide open access to knowledge regardless of delivery medium or varying points of view on the knowledge.

Certainly, the Internet provides this type of multidimensional social environment, and this freedom of information is both desirable and problematic.

Similarly, Section 1, Principle 8 tells members to avoid either designing or selecting educational programs or media with "content that reinforces or promotes gender, ethnic, racial, or religious stereotypes." Again, the Internet provides an environment that may be filtered to eliminate content that reinforces or promotes gender, ethnic, racial, or religious stereotypes. Without

those filters, however, some mechanical and some personally imposed, the individual faces an onslaught of ethical dilemmas. Further, members "shall seek to encourage the development of programs and media that emphasize the diversity of our society as a multicultural community."

Protecting Children

In most cases, this ethical dichotomy lies in the boundary between individual freedom and societal concern. The estimate for pornography sales on U.S. Internet Web sites is \$12 billion a year, and the worldwide estimate is \$57 billion (Family Safe Media, 2004). Thus, the total expenditure for pornography exceeds the "combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises" (Family Safe Media, 2004).

Societal concern has given rise to an entirely new category of employment to provide child-safe environments, free of inappropriate media. Current federal laws have been enacted to balance the safety of children and the rights of adults. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) went into effect on April 21, 2000 and the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) on April 20, 2001 (Carroll & Witherspoon, 2002). Both of these laws protect children from the free ranging environment of the Internet but create situations limiting adult access to information.

The American Library Association (2004) balanced the rights of free speech with the need to protect children. Libraries are the places that offer the wealth of programs and information resources for children and parents in safe and supportive environments in schools as well as after school. School library media specialists need both to support intellectual freedom and to maintain concern about content controls. The ethical considerations of the library media specialist must balance freedom of speech with freedom from unethical uses of information.

Digital Insecurity

The rights of the individual are at stake because of threats to the security of personal information. The Federal Trade Commission (2004) addressed the growth of "identity theft" where one person masquerades as another for purposes of obtaining financial resources or other benefits by fraudulent means. Previously, the United States reported 161,819 identity-theft cases with 214,905 cases reported a year later—a 33% increase. Categories of identity theft included falsification of government documents, employment related fraud, and Internet and e-mail fraud. The category of highest percentage of identity theft was ages 18–29 (28%). Children less than 18

years of age constituted 3% of the victims. Intel Corporation (2004) estimated 800 megabytes of data is recorded yearly on every person on the planet. Never before has it been so easy to use tools that give freedom to take freedom away.

The processes of information access and identity protection are now primary concerns whenever a piece of individually identifiable information passes a checkpoint of access. Technology support professionals are now held accountable for all of the bytes of information flowing through their systems. Filtering for accuracy, content, and privacy are requirements of information environments. The issue of who filters for accuracy of information, what is acceptable content, and the level of privacy of information access are growing ethical issues. The ethical issues of a decade ago have become legal issues of today. Ethical behavior will continue to develop the individual's commitment to society and to protect privacy while promoting freedom of access.

Professional Ethics and Research

An online publication from the Association of Internet Researchers described the ethics involved in Internet research (Wes & AoIR Ethics Working Committee, 2002). The document described ways to go about protecting the privacy of human subjects and obtaining informed consent in Internet related situations. While it is couched more in terms of questions that the researcher should ask while beginning to do Internet research, the group supplied enough guidelines to help researchers stay clear of ethical violations. Particularly interesting are the differences noted for ethical decisions given in the United States—generally more utilitarian and oriented toward outcomes—and those provided in the European Union—more deontological and oriented toward moral content of an action, right, and wrong, according to these researchers. The world of research ethics has been permanently altered by the new means available through the Internet.

The AECT *Code* does not supply guidelines for conducting research. Principle 10 was added to Section 3 but only enjoins the member to

Conduct research and practice using professionally accepted and Institutional Review Board guidelines and procedures, especially as they apply to protecting human participants and other animals from harm. Humans and other animals shall not be used in any procedure that is physically invasive to them.

The *Code* defaults to the guidelines of the institutional review boards and to the ethical codes of other professional societies, like the American Psychological Association (see Nagy, 2000) or the American Anthropological Association (see Fluehr-Lobban, 2003). Now that Section 3, Principle 10 is

in the *Code*, perhaps the Professional Ethics Committee should try outlining what is specifically expected of members while conducting research on educational communications and technology. The topic can be anchored in relation to foundations (Januszewski et al., 2001).

Technology and Health and Safety

This topic may seem beyond the scope of the chapter but it fits in with the discursive heritage of professional ethics. Responsibility emerges when protecting fellow employees or students from conditions harmful to health and safety, including harmful conditions caused by technology itself. Section 1 states the commitment of the members to

- Following “sound professional procedures for evaluation and selection of materials, equipment, and furniture/carts used to create educational work areas” (Principle 5)
- Making “reasonable efforts to protect the individual from conditions harmful to health and safety, including harmful conditions caused by technology itself” (Principle 6)

An epidemic of repetitive-motion injuries in the workplace beginning in the late 1970s raised an alarm for the potential for harm in seemingly safe computerized school environments. An ethical issue has arisen from the fact that, in the United States, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) regulates the workplace environment but not classrooms or other areas used in schools for learning. At the present time, there is no national or state organization responsible for safety and health in classroom environments like there currently is for workers.

Although the idea of safety is not a new issue for professions involved with the daily use of hardware, the idea of creating safe educational study and learning areas is different than in bygone years. The chalkboard for display and sharing of ideas within a classroom may be permanently shifting to computer projection systems and multimedia computers. These machines are not only a production resource and an instrument of learning but also a potential cause of injury.

The evidence is growing that there are health concerns for students related to computer usage. These issues include but are not limited to

- The weight of backpacks for small children
- The amount of time students spend keying information into a computers

- Development of eyesight and the impact of video display terminals on that process
- The decibel level of sound in educational environments and resultant disruption to learning and hearing
- Safe handling of heavy equipment by children and teachers (Ergonomics for Children in Educational Environments, 2004)

As individual members of professions that place us in educational environments, we become legally and perhaps morally responsible for the students placed in our charge. These issues are both imminent and professionally ethical. When budgetary realities conflict with perceptions of safety, the ethical issues arise. For example, the long-term effects of technology usage are easy to ignore because they may not materialize for years. They may not create a sense of danger just as the routine use of televisions did not suggest the heavy carts would fall on small children, causing injuries and deaths (Sherry, 1998; Sherry & Strojny, 1993). The ethics of safety need to become the rules of the classrooms. Future ethical concerns will undoubtedly embrace concerns emerging from the changing physical and psychosocial environments of education.

The *Code* contains sections devoted to the commitment of the member to society and the profession. The idea that the individual is an important shaper of society may grow in importance as technology industries increasingly globalize their operations. Section 2, Principle 1 of the *Code* states that the individual's commitment to society "shall promote positive and minimize negative environmental impacts of educational technologies." This commitment takes on new meaning when educational technologies are being tried out in the jungles of Brazil, a centuries-old village of India, or a classroom on Mars.

Future ethical issues reside in the present as seeds of future actions. These ethical seeds arise from the actions of today but the consequences arrive in the future. The current AECT *Code* was developed with the idea of a culture primarily within the bounds of the United States. Those boundaries have grown considerably since the early years of AECT and now include members from a variety of countries around the world. The commitment of the individual to self, society, and profession will need to expand to include communities of students and workers as defined by globalization and by exploration of space. The future holds the promise of AECT members who live beyond the confines of their own countries and potentially beyond earth.

Conclusions

Professional Ethics Makes Educational Technology Visible

An important way to assess and define the profession of educational technology is to think seriously about the stories that are told inside the profession. It is an old question in cultural anthropology: How do people see themselves? The most insight-provoking tales are seldom straightforward. Being held together by congruent elements in a logical progression is frequently balanced by mystery. Similarly, the stories technologists tell about what is and what is not professionally ethical can be informative.

Readers are probably already familiar with the foundational concept that “technology makes instruction visible” (Heinich, 1970, pp. 157–163). Heinich had discovered a generalizable principle about educational technology and this visibility is distinct from instructing with visual materials (p. 159). It means actions are made manifest, concrete, and perhaps empirically measurable. This is the investigative technique of using a thing, about which many aspects are known, to make an estimation of something else. Likewise, technologists may examine what their professional ethics mean and how their professional ethics are applied, and consequently, they may better comprehend technology itself.

Heinich’s (1971) insight also had a corollary: “Technology can only be effective when we pull apart the elements of a process and step by step devise technical means to achieve our goals in a systematic way” (p. 80). This is sensible as greater awareness of any process should result in improvements. The symmetry applies to professional ethics, too, and “Ethics does not solve problems, it structures them” (Harpham, 1995, p. 404). Therefore, it can be said, “Professional ethics makes educational technology visible” because it is possible to analyze educational technology processes and products to see whether ethical principles are carried out or abrogated. It would be possible for technologists to follow professionally ethical principles in relating to learners and colleagues, and in maintaining social order. While this is associated with the many influential forces and continuing tensions (shown in *Table 11.1*), it is reasonable to expect that the level of sophistication of AECT members about professional ethics ought to grow over time. In this fashion, professional ethics provides a way of knowing the responsibilities of educational technologists.

Obstacles

From an instructional point of view, not only has a code been established but also a functioning set of illustrative scenarios serve to encourage discussion

and generalization in the site of work. Nevertheless, a concerning and substantial question is whether technologists have professional ethics only because they are supposed to have them. As with the NEA, the founders of AECT believed a code of professional ethics is one of the attributes which causes an occupational grouping to merit and gain classification as a profession.

Possibly, these things will be better understood in the future, but at this time, there possibly appears to be a deficiency regarding the *Code's* foundational concepts and their origins. Unlike Heinich's (1970, 1971) *technology*, there seems no overarching structure to the *Code* to help it be understood as part of a process. It seems there are neither reminiscences nor written records explaining the decision to have three sections indicating commitment to the individual, society, and the profession, respectively. It is not obvious from the principles in each section what those abstractly titled sections signify. Readers may wish to refer to [Table 11.2](#) and reflect on this for themselves. Is the first section in the *Code* referring to "the individual" as an abstraction meaning respect for each person as unique or to "the individual learner?" In the latter case, the object of Section 1 would be the person who is the immediate client and supposed beneficiary of the personal transformations promised by educational technology.

Nor is it known why Section 1 states the obligations of the members and the others state the obligations of the member. The distinction between the members and the member is plural compared to singular. This could be a typing error, a stylistic mistake in producing sentence stems that are not parallel, or something meaningful on which accurate interpretation of the *Code* may hinge. Differing from [Table 11.2](#), one printing of the *Code* gave the obligation of members in the plural form in each section (Welliver, 1989, p. 53).

At least two principles are matched like bookends: Compare Section 2, Principle 4 with Section 3, Principle 2, and note their similarities. Furthermore, several principles cover forms of corruption but corruption may be unlikely as a major concern regarding educational technology. Note that Section 2 on society is the shortest and Section 1, Principles 8 and 9 refer to society. The new principles are left to stand at face value. What does the jargon "other animals" really mean in Section 3, Principle 10? Perhaps this inscrutable phrase humorously refers to the hazards of home schooling without technology (see *My Family and Other Animals*; Durrell, 2000).

Developments

Regardless of what has been lost from living memory, the explication of the *Code* continues. Fresh ethics scenarios and analyses are being written

and published for the professional ethics section of *TechTrends*. As before, they are constructed as general-purpose instructional materials with just enough detail to be ambiguous yet evocative of a specific principle.

In the first published collection of cases, one third of the colleagues with a professional ethics problem were media managers and one half were professors (Welliver, 2001). It is not known if this is either accurately representative or generalizable. The extent of any influence on what technologists do is probably unknowable, just as people deviate from norms without being detected, but it will be interesting to see which technologists are afflicted with ethical dilemmas in coming issues of *TechTrends*.

There also exists potential for comparing the AECT *Code* with other codes in educational technology's area of professional jurisdiction. These are the code of the American Society for Training and Development (n.d.), Johnson's (2004) human resources booklet *Ethics for Trainers*, the code of the International Society for Performance Improvement (2006), and the code of a smaller group, the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction, which published (with J. Michael Spector) the *Code of Ethical Standards for Instructional Designers* (Richey, Fields, & Foxon, 2001, pp. 201–202).

No Science Necessary

Preparation in professional ethics is being incorporated as a requirement in the graduate curriculum. An important aspect is that awareness of professional ethics requires thinking through how we want our profession to be positioned in society in the future. Having formal professional ethics helps make that goal both tangible and knowable.

The search for conscience continues in regard to what technologists do, what they say they do, and how things are done because the potential for ethical violations is foundational to technology (Januszewski et al., 2001). The most necessary question regarding technology being ethical is a sign of our profession "coming of age" and an indication that professionals with a conscience are needed (Yeaman, 2000). Nevertheless, it would be misleading to suggest there is (or should be) a *scientific* basis for linking the *Code* to what choices are made by professional technologists (as we may be calling ourselves this decade) and for deciding whether or not technologists' actions (in particular or in general) are in fact professionally ethical. The ethical standards of a profession do not require scientific justification and it would be an opening for excess utilitarianism.

This chapter's engagement with technology through its professional ethics should make technology more visible. It should help technologists do technology well and increase the likelihood of doing well. "How are we to

be ethical professionals?" ought to be the root question in defining educational technology.

Authors' Note

While some pieces of the text have appeared in a different form in *Tech Trends*, many of the authors' ideas given this chapter were first presented by them at AECT conferences.

Acknowledgment

This is to sincerely thank all of AECT's members who, over the years, have generously given their time, wisdom, and resources by sitting on the Professional Ethics Committee. As the profession continues to emerge and mature, their conscientious efforts have decreased the superstitions and increased the rationality of professional ethics for technology.

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