Data Structures

Spring 2016

Ethics Questions

You must write at least 1 page to answer each question (without the question)

Use 1.5 spacing/12 pt. font

Question 1:

Consumer surveys have suggested that many Internet users are concerned about losing bits of their privacy when they are engaged in online activities. In fact, many Internet users identify privacy as their number one concern, ahead of concerns about ease of use, security, cost, spam, and so forth. Do only individuals who elect to use the Internet have reason to be concerned about losing their privacy? What about people who have never even used a computer-Should they also worry? Explain.

Question 2:

In our discussion of Internet anonymity, we saw how some forms of anonymous behavior in cyberspace can have profound ethical implications. Imagine that there is a very close political election involving two candidates who are running for a seat in a state legislature. The weekend before citizens will cast their votes, one candidate decides to defame his opponent by using an anonymous re-mailer service (which strips away the original address of the sender of the e-mail) to send a message of questionable truth to an electronic distribution list of his opponent's supporters. The information included in this e-mail is so defamatory that it may threaten the outcome of the election by influencing many undecided voters, as well as the libeled candidate's regular supporters, to vote against her. Does the "injured" candidate in this instance have the right to demand that the identity of the person using the anonymous re-mailer (whom she suspects for good reasons to be her opponent in this election) be revealed?

Question 3:

We have seen that strong arguments can be given as to why encryption tools are needed to safeguard communications in cyberspace, yet we have also seen that these tools can be used by terrorists and criminals to protect their communications in cyberspace. In the wake of September 11, can a case be made for not allowing ordinary users to employ strong encryption tools in the Internet communications? On the contrary, can we still claim to live in a free society if government interception of e-mail communications, as provided for in the Homeland Security Act, is routinely carried out?