Software Piracy and Ethical Computer Use

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# Ethical Issue: Software Piracy

## What is Software Piracy?

Software piracy is one of the most common ethical issues regarding computers. It is the use of unlicensed or stolen software; an illegal practice which most users don’t reflect deeply upon. Examples of software piracy include end user piracy (sharing one’s license with someone who doesn’t have access), counterfeiting (fake copies), and online piracy (illegally downloading software from the internet) as established in [1].

## Why is it an issue?

This is a massive ethical issue because it causes about a $12 billion-dollar loss to the software industry annually as explained by [2]. This demotivates companies to create software, leads to higher prices and the loss of resources. In contrast, users argue that software is very expensive, or they just need a trial. It is a never-ending cycle.

## Consequences

Software piracy seems enticing, but it is consequential for users, too. It causes increased risk of viruses, subjection to fines, and harm to the software industry shown in [3]. To prevent such consequences and the betterment of society, all users should pay and give credit to software companies.

# Essential Elements Of The Code Of Ethics - ACM

## What is the Code of Ethics? Why is it Necessary?

According to ACM [Association for Computing Machinery], the Code of Ethics is a set of ethical principles used by computer professionals to act responsibly, support the greater good, and be held accountable as explained in [4]. Computing professionals impact users of all computer technologies. Their actions must be carefully thought out for the betterment of society. The Code of Ethics ensures technology is not misused.

## Outline of Most Important Elements

ACM’s Code of Ethics, as established in [4] is split up into four subsections:

1. *General Ethical Principles:* As a human being, one should honor general ethics such as promoting human well-being, avoiding harm, being honest, valuing equality for everyone, giving credit, and respecting privacy.
2. *Professional Responsibilities:* As a computing professional, one’s responsibilities include working to provide high quality work, providing thorough evaluations and risk analyses, spreading public awareness, ensuring data is used only when authorized, and providing security.
3. *Professional Leadership Principles:* As a leader who has influence over professionals, one should value principles such as ensuring central purpose of public good, encouraging social responsibility, enhancing quality of work life, creating growth opportunities, and more.
4. *Compliance with The Code:* It is the duty of a computing professional to uphold the principles of The Code and treat the violations as removal of ACM membership (if one is a member).

# Outline Of Ethical Computing Practices

It is very easy to make unethical decisions; thus, it is important to apply ethical computing strategies and practices into one’s lifestyle on a daily basis.

## At Home

Computers are generally used at home for entertainment and media access. It is crucial to stay aware of consequences of one’s actions as most issues arise when users carelessly interact with others. **The best practice is to think about any harm your actions may cause before doing anything.** Make sure you are not stealing, cyberbullying, or committing any form of ill intent.

## At School

Common purposes of computer use at school include research and project work. It is easy to use resources from the Internet, but difficult to develop them. **The most important practice for computer use at school is to give credit to sources.**

## At Work

As a computing professional in the workplace, it is vital to complete work ethically. Most software/computer engineers work in teams. Each team member must work ethically for the success of technology and society. **An effective practice is to ensure the team progresses technologically, socially, mentally, and financially.**

References

[1] Norton LifeLock. “Types of Piracy.” <https://www.nortonlifelock.com/us/en/legal/anti-piracy/types-piracy/> (accessed September 14, 2020)

[2] Dr. R.M.S Siegfried. “GEN 110: Computers and Society.” Adelphi University. [https://home.adelphi.edu/~siegfried/  
gen110/social.html](https://home.adelphi.edu/~siegfried/gen110/social.html) (accessed September 14, 2020)

[3] The Software & Information Industry Association. “Consequences of Software Piracy.” <https://www.siia.net/Divisions/IP-Protection-Services/About/Consequences-of-Software-Piracy> (accessed September 14, 2020)

[4] Association for Computing Machinery. “ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.” <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics> (accessed September 14, 2020)