

Computer Ethics

By Chuck McKiel

Programmers and developers have certain responsibilities when creating material that will be released to the public. They must always consider the rights and feelings of other people who may be involved. It is also their duty to be able to judge, to some degree, right from wrong and appropriate from inappropriate.

In addition, developers should carefully cover and research all legal areas concerning property rights. Credit for contributions should be properly distributed among those who helped create the software. Programmers should never use programming code that they have not written, unless permission is obtained. In addition, programmers should not use development tools such as compilers that they do not have a legal license for.

Another area in which programmers have tremendous responsibilities is judging what material is appropriate for their audience. For example, it would be wrong to create a children's game containing violence and profanity. All software should be clearly labeled to show to whom it is intended.

One issue that is sure to arise when dealing with any kind of public exchange of information or storage of data is reliability. It is the programmer's responsibility to create reliable systems.

Computer programmers and systems analysts may also have access to a company or individual's private information. It is the duty of such professionals to keep confidential any information learned through access to such private material.

Everyone who works on a project should be held accountable for the impact the product has on society. While most of the advances in computer technology have had a positive impact on society, some applications of technology have been controversial.

An area of computers today that is becoming more important is the Internet. The Internet can be very useful for anyone who wants to use it, but one problem with the Internet is that it is easy to create material on-line and make it available to anyone who has access to a computer with a modem. It is virtually impossible to close off certain sites to, for example, children under the age of eighteen. This is because it is so difficult to verify any information given.

Some material available on the Internet is of a controversial nature, and much of it is inaccurate. Others use the Internet to defraud computer users. Before making information accessible on the Internet, computer users should consider the impact the information will have. There is also a responsibility to provide accurate information and not to use the Internet as a means to commit crime.

In conclusion, there must be boundaries and guidelines to follow when creating software, talking in a chat room, creating a home page, or posting information on-line. Programmers, developers, and all other computer users have a duty to know and judge what is appropriate and what is not.

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Functions

OBJECTIVES

- Learn how to build structured programs that are divided into functions.
- Understand what is meant by the phrase "scope of variables."
- Understand how data is passed to functions.
- Learn how to use the library functions that are included with the compiler.