**Unit 4 - Activity 5 - Ethical Practices Emerging Technologies Reading**

**The Legal and Ethical Issues Related to the Use of Computers**

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Technology is something that society is privileged to have. With technology, people can share and spread knowledge, keep in touch, and see things from all around the world. It is a wonderful tool-when used properly. Unfortunately, there are both legal and ethical issues related to computer use. File sharing and piracy is a huge issue. The developing robotics industry is creating questions about legislation. Cyber bullying is also a big problem. These issues are very important for users to understand so that technology can be as safe and morale as possible.

***File Sharing***

Many people download music off of file sharing websites. This may seem harmless, but file sharing is actually a criminal offence and is having an effect on the entertainment industry. In a BBC article, it was stated that "The growth of illegal file-sharing could cost European countries 1.2m jobs and 240bn euros (£215bn) by 2015, an industry report claims" ([6](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/8573162.stm)). Those numbers are staggering. In the United States, music sales have dropped by 47 percent since Napster, a file-sharing site, arrived in 1999 ([5](http://www.riaa.com/faq.php)). Furthermore, "NPD reports that only 37 percent of music acquired by U.S. consumers in 2009 was paid for" ([5](http://www.riaa.com/faq.php)). Actions are being taken against file sharing, however. One popular pirating website, *The Pirate Bay*was shut down after a raid on December 9, 2014. It was shut down "on grounds of copyright infringement, on a complaint by Swedish anti-piracy group, Rights Alliance" ([3](http://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/the-pirate-bay-comeback-news-will-they-manage-it-yet-again-27966)). However, the website has a countdown, hoping to re-launch on February 1, 2015. As long as there is a demand for these file sharing websites, it is hard to protect the work of musicians and actors. Websites similar to *The Pirate Bay*will keep bouncing back. This is both a legal and ethical issue. People need to decide what is more important to them- free music, or supporting the economy.

***Robotics***

Today, there is an interest in robotic devices that are autonomous. However, these devices pose major problems. How do you legislate products that think independently? An article by *The Guardian*phrased the issue well. "While driverless cars could offer many benefits, from bringing independence to the elderly to reducing the number of road accidents, disasters could still happen. Who then pays the damages - the owner, or the car producer?" ([2](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/oct/20/artificial-intelligence-impact-lives)). It is a hard situation to legislate, because the owner of the product has no control over the system, but neither does the producer. A similar situation is arising in the medical field. Robots are beginning to enter the medical field to assist doctors in diagnosing diseases. These robots can store all sorts of information, but "With intelligent systems accessing medical records comes the fear of compromised privacy and security, as many will be connected via the internet" ([2](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/oct/20/artificial-intelligence-impact-lives)). These systems can aid doctors, but how will people react to having their medical records online? Will people be able to choose between a doctor or a robot? Implants are also creating ethical issues. While they can be helpful to people with diseases, they can be problematic. Should people be able to connect to the Internet through their brain ([2](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/oct/20/artificial-intelligence-impact-lives))? These issues are quite challenging to solve. Driverless cars can provide freedom and independence to the elderly, but how can they be legislated? Robots in the medical field can improve the quality of health care, but may compromise privacy. Brain chips can help make the lives of people living with disabilities much easier, but for people who don't need them, brain chips can mean that people are constantly "plugged in". Society needs to strike a balance between the benefits and the draw backs of all of these new products, and make sure that they are properly legislated. While there are many benefits to robotics, they need to follow the law and maintain a balance.

***Cyberbullying***

With the popularity of the Internet, cyberbullying is a prominent issue. "Nearly 43% of kids have been bullied online" ([7](https://www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-cyber-bullying)), and "About 58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online. More than 4 out 10 say it has happened more than once" ([7](https://www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-cyber-bullying)). Cyber bullying "...involves the use of communication technologies such as the Internet, social networking sites, websites, email, text messaging and instant messaging to repeatedly intimidate or harass others"([1](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/bull-inti/index-eng.htm)). While most people know this definition, they may not know that cyberbullying is, in fact, punishable by law. Threats, harassment, sexual exploitation (sharing nude photos or videos of minors), and hate crime can all be players in cyberbullying, and all of them are criminal offences ([1](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/bull-inti/index-eng.htm)). In addition, "81% of young people think bullying online is easier to get away with than bullying in person" ([1](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/bull-inti/index-eng.htm)). What sort of morale message is this sending children? How will they see the Internet? Furthermore, cyberbullying has an impact on those whom it affects. Children who are bullied can experience depression, headaches, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts, among other effects ([1](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/bull-inti/index-eng.htm)). Children who bully can grow up to not know the difference between right and wrong and become involved in gangs or other criminal activities. They may become delinquents, abuse drugs, have academic problems, drop out of school, have difficulties in human relationships, and be a part of sexual harassment and dating aggression ([1](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/bull-inti/index-eng.htm)). There are many effects of cyberbullying, and there are both legal and ethical aspects of the issue. Children and adults alike need to be educated about cyberbullying so they can identify, prevent, and stop cyberbullying situations before they arise.

Technology is a great gift, when used properly. However, it's development creates many legal and ethical issues that need to be dealt with. File sharing is harming the entertainment industry, but that does not seem to stop people from illegally downloading music. While robotics can be very advantageous, they can also lead to privacy, ethical, and legal issues. Robots can now assist doctors, and implants are becoming a possibility. How can these things be legislated? Furthermore, cyberbullying gives children a freedom online that makes it easier to hurt others. What is that teaching them? How will the ability to harm people invisibly influence children's growth? It is apparent that there are many legal and ethical issues related to the use of computers. They cannot be solved overnight, but these issues do need to be addressed so that computers can be the best tool they can be.

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