

CSC 204 Lab 15: Issues in Computer Ethics

The computer is a machine unlike most others. Its widespread use has led to a number of new issues in ethics and social issues. This lab does not assume to teach you to be an ethical human being; instead, it is designed to introduce you to some of the areas of ethical concern and some of the approaches to these issues. Whether you continue on in computer science courses or just continue to live in a world with computing, you will come in contact with these issues again.

Goals

After doing this lab you should be able to:

- Discuss the Mercer University *Computer Facilities Access and Use Policy*.
- Find computer ethics resources on the WWW.
- Discuss a scenario about a particular social impact of computers.

Materials Needed

- This document.
- <http://it.mercer.edu/pdf/ITPolicy.pdf>
- the Lab 15 Worksheet (attached - make a copy, change name to include your name, use your copy)
- some friendly classmates.

Method

“Do” the worksheet.

Deliverables:

When finished, upload your copy of this document, and worksheet (below), to your shared Google folder.

Lab 15 Worksheet

Part 1: The Mercer University Computer Facilities Access and Use Policy

Companies often have problems with employees misusing the computer resources. Sometimes this is inadvertent on the employee's part, but other times it is malicious. Rather than tell employees what the company expects of them *after* they do something wrong, many companies have computer access and use policy statements. Mercer University has one that you may have been required to sign when you first received a Mercer account. Take a look at it (again?): <http://it.mercer.edu/pdf/ITPolicy.pdf>

Read through the policy statement and answer these questions.

1. Name three things that are forbidden by *the Mercer University Computer Facilities Access and Use Policy*.

Joining in sending chain emails, creating and or sending spam and participating in activities that deny electronic communication or use like DDoS.

2. Name three things that are expressly allowed by the *Mercer University Computer Facilities Access and Use Policy*.

Use for education, teaching and research and maintaining privacy.

3. Give at least one "shady" area of an action that is not clearly covered by the policy (or is forbidden by the policy, but does not seem to be enforced). Why is it not clearly covered by the policy?

"Harassment on any kind" is very vague and some people may try and use it to their advantage. Each case is unique and depending on the people reviewing the case, one case of "harassment" is harassment while another case is not.

PART 2: Other resources on the WWW.

There are a number of different ethical and social responsibility resources on the WWW. Search for some such sites. Skim some of these “Code of Conducts” sites and look at one of the on-line resources in some detail. List the sites you found. Which one seems to be the most reasonable to you?

I looked at “Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice”, “ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct” and “Standard Encyclopaedia of Philosophy Computer and Information Ethics” and the one that stood out to me most was to “contribute to society and human well-being”.

Most people are good natured and any program that can better humanity must and should be well-received, but unfortunately, people are also driven by making as much money as possible and use their skills to benefit themselves short-term instead of others long-term.

PART 3: Ethical Scenarios.

Divide yourselves into groups (size 1 or bigger). Each group should then pick an ethical scenario that deals with technology. As your group decides, write your topic on the board. Try not to duplicate topics already on the board.

Each group should compose a short story depicting your scenario. You should address the ethical issues of the scenario and make it relevant to your life at Mercer.

Enjoy and be creative!!

The ethical scenario I will be talking about is a specific point on privacy – how much data can be taken from your habits, examples like when you wake up, how long it takes you to get ready and the places you visit.

Personally on my phone, I keep my location services off unless I need it for directions, but I have been thinking what if a company collects your big data about your habits to benefit your life only and with no hidden agenda like selling the collected data. I wonder how life would improve; big data about when you wake up, noticing your route to your most travelled locations and redirecting the route so not to run into any accidents/traffic jams, taking note of what places you visit to collect information about your interests and habits.

Relating it to Mercer, I like to travel around and see beautiful places and if a company has a complied AI specifically for me, I could tell them that I want to visit this new location and then specific accommodation places would pop up that are most suited to my eating, sleeping, location and price habits, and then it could list – as an example, I like visiting national parks – the most highly rated national parks around the area which is easily accessible, the type of activities and locations I would like to see and do as according to my previous travelling experiences.

BONUS: 1 extra Lab Point.

Compose a short skit about your story, perform your skit, and hold a brief discussion about the topic.

This must be completed during our lab time today.