INFS 111: INFORMATION IN SOCIETY

Session 10– INFORMATION ETHICS

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Ethical behaviour is an intrinsic part of human society. Therefore, every discipline and every culture has ethics by which practitioners of that discipline or culture needs. So, it is with the discipline of information.

Changes in the information environment have made information ethics a contemporary issue. Thus, the ethics, values and legal obligations and responsibilities among the information profession is the focus of this session.
By the end of this session, the student should be able to:

1. Understand and define the following terms:
   - Values
   - Code of Ethics
   - Morals
   - Digital Divide
   - Ethics

2. Identify the following acronyms and explain the relationship of each to information ethics: COPA CIPA FERPA HIPAA USAPA WSIS.

3. Explain the historical and current issues in information ethics.
The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

• Topic 1: Nature of Information Ethics

• Topic Two: Ethics sources

• Topic Three: Professional codes of ethics

• Topic Four: Equitable access and information literacy


Reading List


Topic One:

NATURE OF INFORMATION ETHICS
Nature of Information Ethics

• Information ethics are extremely complex

• Complexity compounded by constant change in technology
  – challenges to privacy
  – computer hackers
  – creation of new professions
  – new ways of performing old tasks
Related Terms: Definitions

- Value
- Morals
- Ethics
- Code of ethics
- Digital divide
Topic Two:

ETHICS SOURCES
Ethics Sources

• Transcendent to human beings

• Human base which may be individual or social models of ethical sources
Models of Ethical Sources

**Multiple Sources**

1. Higher Authority
2. Morals Folkways
3. Social Norms
4. Basic Norm

**Single Sources**

1. Religion
2. Morals
3. Ethics
4. Law

**Categories:**

- Higher Authority
- Morals Folkways
- Social Norms
- Basic Norm
- Religion
- Morals
- Ethics
- Law

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Topic Three:

PROFESSIONAL CODES OF ETHICS
Professional Codes of Ethics

• Intellectual freedom
• Protecting users right to privacy/ confidentiality
• Intellectual property right
• Professional neutrality
• Preservation of the cultural record
• Equity of access
Issues in Information Ethics

- Privacy
  - personal privacy
- Cultural differences
  - different treatment of private person/public person
- Workplace privacy
  - background check of employees, use of employer-supplied communications
- Internet privacy issues
  - easy breach of privacy on the internet
• Privacy of records
  – public records
    • births, marriages, deaths, asserts, convictions, real property transfers

• Other public records
  – driver’s licenses, professional licenses, vehicle registrations, probated Willis etc.

• Confidential records
  – medical and health records
  – grades and other educational records
  – census data, fax, FERPA;, HIPAA
Issues in Information Ethics Cont’d

• Communication privacy
  – USAPA

• Intellectual freedom
  – COPA, CIPA
Topic Four:

EQUITABLE ACCESS AND INFORMATION LITERACY
Equitable Access and Information Literacy

- Individual responsibilities
- Governmental responsibilities
- The digital divide
- Gap in understanding, capability and access to technology
Exploration of the digital revolution

• two topologies
  – domestic
  – ‘have’ an ‘have not’ in the country

• Countries or regions
  – Information infrastructures
  – Physical infrastructures
  – Training and education of human resources
References


  
