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The Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics

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Information is a [conceptual labyrinth](#) and at the same time a [hyperobject](#)

Uit het voorwoord (blz xiii-xv):

In the last 10 years, information and computer ethics has emerged as an important area of philosophical and social theorizing, combining conceptual, metaethical, normative, and applied elements. Interest in the area has increased dramatically in computer science departments, philosophy departments, communications departments, business schools, information and library schools, and law schools. Information ethics has become one of the most important areas of applied philosophy in terms of professional, student, and popular interest. Many of the most pressing new ethical issues we face have arisen in connection with the use and development of new information technologies. For example, debates about the ethics of online music file sharing have led academics and ordinary citizens to reconsider the arguments for the legitimacy of intellectual property protection. New developments in information technology threaten privacy in ways that could not have been imagined 50 years ago, raising new ethical issues about the rights to privacy and anonymity. The growing dependence of large-scale economies on the Internet creates new vulnerabilities that can be exploited by hackers, cybercriminals, and terrorists, raising novel ethical issues about computer intrusions and security.

The Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics responds to this growing professional interest in information ethics with 27 chapters that address both traditional and current issues in information and computer ethics research. Each chapter, written by one or more of the most influential information ethicists, explains and evaluates the most important positions and arguments on the respective issues. As a result, the Handbook reader will be able to come away from each chapter with an understanding of the major positions and arguments, their strengths and weaknesses, and the author's original take on the issue. In addition, each chapter not only contains useful summaries of the most important research on the topic but also makes an important new contribution to the literature, and ends with a bibliography that identifies the most important books and articles on the topic.

Because a number of very good anthologies on information and computer ethics already exist, one might ask: Why another book of readings on ethical aspects of information and computer technology? One justification for the book is that, as noted above, each chapter in the present volume is written in a style that conforms to the objectives of a handbook and thus provides the conceptual background that is often not found in papers comprising other volumes. Consider that many papers included in those volumes are compiled from disparate sources and, thus, can reflect various styles and diverse objectives. With one exception, every chapter in this volume is an original piece that was written specifically for the Handbook. As such, each paper provides an accessible but sophisticated overview of the most important positions and supporting arguments and objections, along with the author's state-of-the-art take on these positions, arguments, and objections.

Another justification for this book is that existing anthologies tend to be narrower in scope than The Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics. For example, many anthologies cover only a limited set of topics that affect one or more subfields of information ethics; as a result, these works often exclude some of the controversies and issues that arise in information ethics as a broader field of inquiry. Consider that some anthologies have focused on Internet- or cyber-specific issues involving information ethics, while others have centered mainly on professional ethics issues affecting responsibility. Other volumes are dedicated to information ethics concerns affecting specific topical areas such as privacy, security, and property.³ Still other anthologies have focused on ethical aspects of information technology that converge with ethics-related concerns affecting medicine and genetics/genomics research.⁴ And other anthologies are dedicated to the examination of ethical issues in information technology that intersect either with disciplines, such as philosophy, or with new or emerging fields, such as nanotechnology. So even though there is no shortage of anthologies that examine ethical issues centering on these, and related, ethical aspects of information technology, none addresses the breadth of topics covered in the present handbook.

The Handbook is organized into six main parts, which cover a wide range of topics - i.e., from foundational concepts and methodological approaches in information ethics (at the theoretical level) to specific problem areas involving applied or practical ethical issues.

At the theoretical level, conceptual frameworks underlying topical areas such as intellectual property, privacy, and security are examined. These frameworks provide Handbook readers with some conceptual tools needed to analyze more systematically the kinds of issues examined in the chapters comprising the remaining sections of the book. At the practical level, a number of contemporary controversies ranging from professional-ethical issues to issues of responsibility, regulation, and access are examined. For example, these chapters examine controversies affecting open-source software, medical informatics and genetic research, cyber-conflict, risk assessment, the digital divide, information overload, e-mail spam, online file sharing, plagiarism, censorship and free speech, and so forth. Thus, Handbook readers will gain an understanding of both the general frameworks and specific issues that define the fields of information and computer ethics.

Samenvatting

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