

Web Ethics : an Antidote to Computer Corruption on Campus

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an adaptation of the "Web Ethics" chapter in a new book manuscript entitled: "S.P.I.D.E.R.S. on the Web : Societal Perspectives : Intelligence, Diversity and Ethics with Research Sources". This work speaks directly to the target audience: college or university students.

As any technology, computers are neutral machines that can have both positive and negative effects on society. Both positive and negative effects are determined not only by computer designers, but by computer users. The purpose of this paper is to examine some ethical concerns about computer usage of college and university students. The focus of this paper is one particular use of the computer : The Internet. Issues examined through this Web-ethics filter include :defining concerns, examining policies and suggesting solutions. A self-assessment survey, a list of controversial discussion topics, some relevant web sites and references are also presented.

Inarguably, web sites are links to global resources both human and media-based. In either case, you must realize an important factor about accessing Web sites :

Internet is no nirvana, no Garden of Eden. ... Like all other aspects of life, traffic on the Internet can be mundane, boring, uncivil, offensive, trite, and truly inessential. The Internet, in short, is like life itself, and that means, of course, that the judicious person cannot only avoid its pitfalls, but also benefit greatly by its virtues. (Clark, 1997).

"Pitfalls" and "virtues" are defined within a Western world cultural context : the concept of ethics.

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Defining Ethics

How is "ethics" defined? One universally-accepted definition of "ethics" does not exist. For nearly 2,000 years, debates by philosophers and academicians including Socrates and "his ideas [have] continued to be interpreted in mutually different ways" (Annas, 1999, p. 177); however, it is not the intention of this paper to provide an answer to this debate. Instead, a position will be chosen to provide a basis for discussion. Neither is it the purpose nor the scope of this paper to relate the history or controversies of ethics.

Three basic points should be helpful:

First, human logical thought is reasoning, while human conduct is behavior. Ideally, as you have been advised many times in your life, you should think before you act.

Second, ethics is a broad philosophical concept concerned with logical reasoning composed of ethical principles: "ethical principles are values concerning conduct, especially in relation to other people" (Taylor, 1980, p. 216); ethical principles guide morals, virtues, values and judgments which are concerned with behavior.

Third, most people would probably accept the fact that ethics is a foundation that helps you to rationally decide what "should" and "could" be done in certain situations of conduct, rather than what "must" be done.

The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia provides the following definition:

Ethics in philosophy (is) the study and evaluation of human conduct in the light of moral principles, which may be viewed as the individual's code of conduct or as a body of social obligations and duties. (CD-ROM, 1991).

Who could really question that "ethics" and "morals" are admirable concepts? However, many problems occur in defining and determining the approach to teaching of ethics and morals in higher education.

One problem occurs when deciding which "theory of conscience" or ethics and morals' definition is best. Respected philosophers offer varying, sometimes-conflicting, foundations: divine will, individual experience, the state, religious absolutes, intuition (CD-ROM, 1991).

For this discussion, ethics and morals means "doing good and avoiding evil" as Dr. Lisa H. Newton titles her online manuscript (Newton, 1998, p. 7). But again how are "good" and "evil" defined? These terms are also debatable. For assistance, another researcher, Chris McDonald, a graduate student at British Columbia University in Canada, offers:

Generally, morality is a system of rules that modifies our behaviour in social situations. It's about doing of good instead of harm, and it sets some standard of virtuous conduct ... moral values are shared values. (MacDonald, 19 Oct. 1995, p. 6 & 7).

So, ethics "which deals with right and wrong in the workplace [and the educational setting]-- must be a part of professional education" (Bretcko et al, 1998, p. 5). Morals are shared values, such as honesty, justice, and fairness. You know them all. But should morals or morality be taught-- or at least discussed-- in colleges and university classes? Some educators believe that a discussion of morality is "forbidden territory" (Ibid, p. 5). Their logic is that :

... matters of morality, like other culturally determined questions (such as dress, dietary habits, social rituals and religious beliefs) are rightly inappropriate topics for classroom discussions... [because there is] confusion between ethics and morality (Ibid, p. 5).

This logic leads to another problem : shared values don't always cross cultures. Many anthropologists agree that :

...the diversity of ethical beliefs around the world is significant. In some countries, for example, ethical principles prescribe a strong standard of truth : while in others... it is appropriate to tell others what they wish to hear... [so] definitions of truth vary (Taylor, 1980, p. 217).

Why do ethical beliefs differ? Although you have a set of personal values or your own individual code of ethics, the basis of your beliefs are derived consciously or subconsciously from your cultural values. What are "cultural values"? A team of writers for *Communications Between Cultures* (1998) explain :

Cultural values are derived from the larger philosophical issues that are part of culture's milieu... [and] are transmitted by a variety of course (family, media, school, church, state, and so on)-- [and] guide both perception and communication. That is, our values get translated into action (Samovar et al, p. 60).

What's not ethical to you, may be ethical to someone else from another culture. What you consider dishonesty, may be perfectly acceptable to someone else. To escape this cross-cultural controversy, some advocates suggest that a particular type of ethics be applied : Subjective Realism. Their opponents call this concept of a "superficially popular" definition of ethics and morality. Basically, this term proposes that :

... there is no absolute or unchanging moral principles, but that the rules that govern each situation are to be determined by their relations to something else: the customs or culture of the country, for instance or the desires of the participants [and the]... sole source of knowledge or authority is the perception of the individual (Newton, 1998, p. 8).

In all probability, most Western world colleges and universities will not accept this concept : neither is it being accepted in this text discussion.

Because of the controversies surrounding the definitional issues of ethics and morals, the position of this paper is that you must have a clearly delineated set of shared values

as a college and university student. You need to understand the shared values of your college or your university, especially if you do not permanently live in the Western world or if you are not familiar with your local college or university culture. Definitions of controversial terms within a cultural context is essential. You need to know what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in your higher educational setting.

Defining Web Ethics

How can the specific term "Web Ethics" be defined? In education, Web Ethics pertains to your overall attitude and moral decision-making based on the shared values of the institution in accessing and using Web sites. You have to decide what is right and what is wrong; what is good and what is bad within that social context. Developing a solid base of Web Ethics is not an overnight task; it is an extension of your personal code of ethics that you have been building all of your life.

Consider: What are your attitudes towards cheating, stealing, lying, destroying property? If you have a strong moral sense and realize these activities are wrong, you can transfer this attitude to the use of the Internet and its Web site offerings.

If, however, you have never thought about a personal code of ethics or have a culturally different code of ethics, especially as it pertains to computer access and usage during the Cyber Age, it is the time to develop one. Start today. Right now.

While the Internet with its Web courses and research sources provides more educational flexibility and opportunities, you must provide more academic moral self-discipline and more academic computer-acceptable behavior. Any course work or testing you do online and any research you do on the Internet through Web sites need to follow college rules.

Computer College or University Policy

Do you know that there is a computer policy at your college or university? Do you know what it advises? Do you know where to find it? If not, ask.

The specific computer policy of your college or university is posted in computer labs around campus, distributed through free handbooks and "student planners" or is placed in online library sites. Because the Internet is so popular in computer usage, there are specific guidelines for its use. For example, Raritan Valley Community College provides the following information in their no-cost "Online" Student Plan:

Part of the privilege of an Internet Account includes the agreement to follow RVCC's Internet Code of Conduct. This includes respecting the privacy of other users, respecting legal protection of copyrights, and agreeing not to develop programs or email which harass other users (1998, p. 35).

Following this general statement is a detailed listing of specific warnings about

"respecting" (a moral concept) privacy, copyrights and programs. "Use should be consistent with the ethical standards accepted by the college community" (Ibid, p. 36).

Wedge within an eight-point listing of "unacceptable use" within a 12-point listing of the "Internet Code of Conduct" is the term "academic dishonesty": however, no definition is provided. It is assumed that the concept of academic dishonesty is understood by all students, but is it? Do you really know what it means?

You probably assume-- and correctly so --- that your college or university requires that you to informally or formally "promise" to do your own work online or to not submit prewritten or recycled essays or term papers, then you really must follow the rules. And, at times, some students use the term "must" as an interchangeable synonym for "should" or "could." Incorrect assumption.

But suppose there is no written policy that you are aware of? Even if there is no handbook written policy or publicly posted advisory at the computer center, you must (and not just should) resolve the ethical issue in your own conscience within your higher education setting.

How do you learn to be ethically correct in the educational setting? Years of direct and indirect training in school, at temples, synagogues, churches and mosques, and at home form your personal code of ethics and moral character.

Some researchers believe that you don't really need a separate ethics course to teach you right from wrong in education, but in the new cyberworld of computers and digital information, you might need to be reminded about how the rules apply.

Other researchers believe that there is a rationale why ethics and morals (values) should be taught, but are not included within course curriculum. For example, Brecko et al present the following three reasons :

First, many instructors are reluctant to teach ethics. ... The second reason ... is that they [the instructors] are not familiar with ethical theories and methods of teaching ethics and values. ... Finally, many instructors do not want to clutter up the already crowded ... curriculum ... (1998, p. 5).

How can you learn to be Web-ethical? If you are familiar with the cultural context of your college or university, it is usually a very simple transition: you know the accepted standard ethics in Western world education and have a code of ethics off-the-computer, then follow those rules onth-computer. The Internet and Web technology do not demand new codes of ethics and morals: technology just continues and expands them: however, because the Internet does not include face-to-face human interaction, students sometimes use a "smoke screen attitude" to hide behind. In other words some students rationalize: Nobody's there to expose or embarrass me, so whatever I do is fine.

Have you had an ethics and values course recently, if ever? You probably know

that most instructors don't directly teach ethics. This omission is not an excuse for you to be unethical: ethics should never be overlooked or undervalued in college course work. Without a doubt, ethics should be, and needs to be, an essential element of education, especially as related to technology usage.

In most cases, instructors assume you know the rules and have a code of ethics, and so you must monitor yourself as well as act as a role model for others. Easy to say: but, for a percentage of students, hard to do.

Many Web site questions regarding right versus wrong and good versus bad commonly arise on Cyber Age college and university campuses. For the focus of this paper, you should consider the following query: Should Web sites that tempt plagiarism, like online term paper mills, be permitted? This question will be addressed for you, so that you can make your own decisions.

Let's look at some ethical decision-making within this context. Indisputably, Web sites of treasures vie with web sites of trash. Sorting them out is the challenge (Brock, 1999).

You know there are countless pages of interesting, informative and enriching information on the Internet. Access to worlds of legitimate libraries are just key strokes away. Suppose, though, by mistake or on purpose, you access a Web site that is "socially unacceptable" or "religiously distasteful"? Suppose you use information from a Web site that is "ethically incorrect" or "legally non-compliant"? What will happen? Will a cyber-police officer follow your cyberpath and fine or imprison you for your indiscretions or wrong doings? Probably not.

You-- guided by your conscience -- define and interact with decisions that can be harmful or helpful, good or bad, right or wrong. To better understand your responsibilities in this dilemma, it is important to understand two issues: Web Ethics and Web Intelligence. As you realize, this module discusses Web Ethics which is the "right" and "wrong" ways of using the Internet in education. Another module focuses on Web Intelligence which is the logical and reasonable methods for choosing and using more reliable and reputable Web sites. For more practice in identifying and discussing perplexing unethical scenarios, refer to the Appendix and Case Studies. Research has demonstrated that case studies are a form of "preventative ethics" in which "real cases make the best attention-grabber"(Brody, H. D., Spring 1997, p. 1).

Web Plagiarism

One of the major problems in college and university settings-- off or on the Web-- is plagiarism. You probably agree, especially in this Information Age, that "plagiarism is a difficult concept to define" [Hinchliffe, 1998]. Do you know what plagiarism really is? Is it "academic dishonesty"? Yes. According to the Pace University English Department, plagiarism is defined as:

The use of an outside source in any paper, report or submission for academic credit without the appropriate acknowledgment... It is unethical to present one's own work, the ideas, words or representations of another without the proper indication of the source (Jan. 1998, p. 1).

Whether in the exact wording of the Pace University definition or in other synonyms or phrasing, plagiarism in Western-world colleges and universities is simply : stealing. Besides, copyright and intellectual property rights are laws supporting this cultural value.

Sometimes students make common misinformed mistakes and are innocently unaware that they are plagiarizing. Do you know, for example, that plagiarizing is not only copying entire papers and submitting them as your own original works, but plagiarism is also using original quotations of word series or sentences without correctly and accurately citing your sources? (Hacker, 1999) Or as Fulwiler and Hayakawa claim :

Plagiarism is taking someone else's idea or information and passing it off as your own. ... Most writers simply don't know how to identify borrowed words and ideas correctly. ... In fact, most plagiarism occurs when a writer paraphrases or summarizes a source but stays too close to the wording or sentence structure of the original.(1999 p. 349).

So, how do you avoid on- or off-the-Web plagiarism? Follow four points of advice :

First, learn(or review) acceptable documentation, which is a standardized style for citing the detailed sources that you use in the text and at the conclusion of your paper. One fairly new source is entitled COS, Columbia Online Style, which provides guidelines for correctly citing material accessed from online, or electronic, sources (Barber & Walker, 2000).

Second, learn the difference between "quoting" and "paraphrasing". Quoting or using quotations is the more obvious and the simpler technique to use accurately.

Third, and if you haven't saved all of the details, don't guess and make up dates or book titles. Either return to your hard copy or virtual copy cyber source and find the information, or, if your hunt is unsuccessful, delete this source from your paper.

Four, be certain to read or review all the writer's manual details about integrating direct quotations into your academic paper: however, paraphrasing is the less obvious and the more difficult technique to use accurately. Paraphrasing means using and recognizing a writer's idea, but that idea is expressed in your own words. You must research sources that support your research direction and then then you must synthesize your findings.

Do you use a thesaurus or dictionary to replace synonyms of the writer's exact words while keeping the sentence structure similar? This technique is also plagiarism, even if you cite the source. Too often students who are Limited English Speakers(LES or ESL) don't realize that inserting alternative words is not permitted.

Here is a good explanation again from the English Department at Pace University :

If you leave intact substantial phrases or clauses from your source in the paraphrase without quotation marks, you are plagiarizing even if you provide an accurate reference (English Department, 1998, p. 2).

For some unethical reason or bad habit, Web plagiarism seems to continue, if not, at times, expand this quintessential academic problem. Fueled by the anonymity of Cyber Age Web searches and opportunities, the following attitude is common among a percentage of students who lack a personal code of ethics :

Ah, the Internet. Access to the Web. Access to libraries and book shelves from across the world or across the street coming straight to me. I'll never have to step into a real "live" library again. Even bet: access to a treasury of pre-written papers that I can copy and submit as my own. Access to online college course credits that I can earn from the comforts of my home. Even better : someone else can do the work for me and my professor will never know.

Not so fast. If you're one of these students, and you're not letting your conscience be your guide, and you honestly don't have the time to complete you work, think again: more and more instructors are getting wise to these academic shortcuts.

As a student you know that plagiarizing is a serious accusation. What happens if you get caught plagiarizing? Each higher educational institution has its own policy. Again, at Pace University :

...The current Pace University Undergraduate Catalog (New York Campus) states : "Students who fail to meet the responsibility of academic integrity subject themselves to sanctions... a reduction in grade... failure in the assignment or course... suspension of dismissal from the University" (English Department, Jan. 1998).

Plagiarizing is a very serious offense : don't ruin your college or university career by purposely or mistakenly stealing another writer's work.

But, still plagiarism has always been a plague easily susceptible to college students. Now the Internet makes plagiarism a more challenging problem to instructors and a more tempting alternative to personal research and writing for students. Plagiarism now extends to obtaining and submitting prewritten research and term papers, which you've purchased from a Web site.

Let's say, you are assigned to research and write a term paper, a character analysis essay or a research paper for class. You know that you must not plagiarize nor "recycle" someone's else's paper and claim it as your own work.

"Recycling" a Paper

"Recycling" a paper is a euphemism in this context that means resubmitting another student's or writer's paper and claiming that you are the author. Although both definitions of plagiarism and recycling remain the same with your use of computers

and Web sites, new sources for recycled papers can be found and purchased for a price from web sites on the Internet. These Web sites are commonly called "online term paper mills."

Due to time constraints, deficient study skills, poor deadline planning or a lack of academic integrity, you or a friend might be tempted to use "recycled" papers. It's no surprise to you that for years students have been "recycling" research or essay papers among friends, family members, sorority sisters and fraternity brothers. Metal file cabinets tucked in dorm rooms or boxes stored in student car trunks contained pre-written and pre-graded papers that could be purchased for a fee, retyped with appropriate minor errors and re-submitted to unsuspecting instructors.

As you know, this method still continues today; however, because of the Internet and Web sites, there is an easier-- non-personal-- way to obtain papers without the "middle man". Students can research Web sites and locate these "online term-paper mills". This may not be shocking new information to you.

Online Term Paper Mills

There are probably at least 100 Web sites available for pre-written paper purchase. Papers can be purchased online with charge cards or simply downloaded -- free -- from a another student's personal Web site or e-mail addresses.

One "research site" allows entry, for no charge, to its database of more than 72,000 prewritten essay and research papers. All you must do is to submit one of your essays or research papers. Interestingly, this service called Cheater.com offers the following advice to potential users:

We provide a service for students, like anything else it c an be abused if used improperly. Like any library, we offer lots of infromation which can be used for facts only. Pplagiarism is illegal and Cheater.com does not support it in any way, shape or form (Cheater.com 1997~1999).

What and where are these controversial online term paper mill Web sites? To answer this question, I decided to investigate and search for them (as a student might) on the Internet. I did a one minute search and quickly located two. Both offered a variety of priced products; furthermore, both offered copyright and disclaimer warnings in the student's use of any paper :

All materials are for reference purposes only and not to be misrepresented outside of the limitations of copyright. All products... are intended for RESEARCH and guidance only and are not to be submitted for personal, educational or business credit without proper citation. [This site] and all members of the staff renounce responsibility, liability or knowledge of any wrongdoing or misuse of [site] products or services(Paper Masters, 1998).

What percentage of term paper purchasers read this tiny print at the very end of

the Web site? And, if someone does, do you think he will follow the rules? Would you, if you paid \$300. for a 10-page paper? How would you explain the citation to your instructor? Again, your personal code of ethics should guide you.

First Amendment Rights Defense

Are these online term paper mill Web sites legal? Believe it or not: yes. A recent U.S. court case illustrates an attempt to eliminate "illegal" online term paper mill Web sites on the Internet. Boston University sued several "research assistance" companies -- as online term paper Web sites are formally entitled. Seeking the umbrella of legislation of RICO, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations, claiming "interference with its [Boston University] educational policies and with students' commitment to academic honesty ...", the University tried to seek restitution.

The complaint was dismissed, in part, it seems, because RICO applies to "mob" and criminal conspiracies-- which the term-paper mills companies were not. However, the discussion based on the results of the case indicates that a First Amendment Defense permits term-paper mills on the Internet. The responsibility of the schools to "discipline misuse" of these sites was emphasized(The Washington Post, 1998). Again the responsibility falls on you the student to monitor yourself, even if the instructors don't "catch" you.

College Cheating Research

Why is there a need to emphasize ethics in education? A very recent national "Nightly News" reporter announced the results of a survey by the Center for Academic Integrity on college student dishonesty. Academic cheating among college students is "so sophisticated and widespread" with 84% of students admitting to cheating by copying test answers or assignments.

Technological devices, such as a less than \$1,000 mini-camera can be hidden in a necktie or a scarf to photograph national exam questions and answers. The results can be sold for \$250. to \$9,000. to willing students. In addition, some students reported the use of online Web site term-paper mills as sources for purchased papers submitted to instructors as original work (Brokaw, 1999).

Another study reported that nearly 85% of freshmen entering college use the Internet and Web sites for research or homework [The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1999]. Yes, two separate studies on two separate topics, but what might the results be if these studies were linked? What would a study on cheating on computer usage reveal? What do you think? I wondered myself.

So, I asked 100 of my students to complete surveys called "Cheating at College." Ninety-eight voluntarily and anonymously returned completed forms. Half were students from an inner city university and half from a suburban community college.(I also realized that even though the students could complete the survey in privacy, I

was still the instructor and I assumed that they felt an allegiance to fellow-students' academic integrity decision-making.)

Of the seven closed and open-ended questions, two focused on cheating with the use of computers. Collating the data for these two questions, I discovered the following results :

Question Six: Do college students use computers to cheat?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ I don't know.

Responses :

1. 10% responded : No.
2. 44% responded : I don't know.
3. 46% responded : Yes.

Question Seven : Give an example of college cheating using the computer. Responses:

1. 66% replied : Getting papers off the Net or the Web.
2. 12% replied : Getting test answers off the Net or the Web.
3. 8% replied : Copying someone's Web page rather than creating your own.
4. 8% replied : Using a calculator.
5. 4% replied : Doing "library" research" on the Net or Web.
6. 4% replied : Using a "Cheat Site" to buy or borrow a term paper.
7. 4% replied : Forging documents.
8. 4% replied : Changing grades if can get into (hack) the school.

Results from this survey revealed that almost half of the these respondents knew that students cheat with the use of computers in their college settings. Of the various kinds of computer cheating, the highest use is the Internet Web site access of papers followed by the access of tests.

What do you think? Is there a cyber-amorality among college students or is cheating endemic and acceptable with the computer as an accomplice lending more anonymity and less personal interaction in the situation? Ask yourself : Is it permissible to use Web papers and cheat using computer capabilities? Am I ever tempted?

Does cheating on or off the computer suddenly begin at the college or university level? Of course not. A recent research report showed that cheating has increased to 80% among high ranked students listed in "Who's Who Among American High School Students." Cheating on tests, plagiarizing parts of essays and copying homework were reported occurrences(Kidder, 1998). None were asked about the role computers played in the cheating situations : however, recommendations to minimize cheating are similar to students who cheat on or off the computers.

Although the previous studies were data from American students, academic dishonesty appears in other cultures as well. For example, a recent newspaper article focused on cheating in a European country. One college student admitted openly: "To some degree everyone cheats. Not everyone does the hi-fi stuff" (Hundley, 1998). This cross-cultural focus is certainly a topic for another study and will not be expanded in this paper.

So, how does conscience effect computer decision-making in some college students?

Does cyber-amorality exist on college campuses? Yes, among some students. How can it be combatted? On two battle fronts: Students and Instructors.

Recommendations to Minimize Computer Cheating

What you should do :

- *Know and follow the Internet policies of your college or university.
- *Monitor your personal use.
- *Always use standard required citations.
- *Apply ethics in your computer use decision-making.

What your instructors might do :

- * Limit the number of Internet sources you can use in paper writing, so that you must use the "real" library.
- * Require printouts of all Web site information be submitted with final papers.
- * Use a new service that matches your submitted paper against a database of prewritten paper and reports (Guernsey, 1998).
- * Access a search engine like Hotbot and check for sentence matches to documents in the system.
- * Ask for rough drafts, outlines or notes with final papers.

Yes, computers are catalysts for change. You and your conscience are the catalyst for your own personal code of ethics.

Web Copyright and Intellectual Property Protection

It is common knowledge in the Western world that copyright laws ban the sale, use and distribution of an author's or artist's work without approval or recognition by the user. In the Cyber Age, intellectual property laws are equally important. If you access Web site information -- whether this information is in the form of documents, animation or multimedia clips -- you cannot use this information without citing the reference of the source. In some cases, you might need to contact the author or originator and receive permission(sometimes for a fee) to integrate the work into yours, especially in published format.

How do you know when you might need to contact the originator for written permission or when you might need to pay a fee? You should find this information on the Web site.

In addition during your Web site searches, you might a screen of what looks similar to a page of hieroglyphics. You are probably not reading a site from Egypt, but rather the site is in an encryption format. This garbled, coded text can only be translated with the purchase of a special reader program or for an additional fee. There certainly will be a non-coded explanation of the process for legible access.

How can you respect copyright laws? Easily. Remember that you are stealing if you

copy and distribute text or multimedia without citation or, in some cases, without the required permission. That's the law.

How can anyone ever "catch" you? Again, will the Cyber police track you down? Maybe not. But, here again, you have to apply your personal code of ethics. Ask yourself: Would I want someone to steal what I have spent many hours creating? Probably not. It's not fair.

Whether you agree or disagree, the Web and the Internet are often compared to the democratic society that offers a freedom of choice: the Internet, which provides beneficial educational opportunities for physically-challenged and non-traditional students, also provides less socially acceptable opportunities.

Remember, the Internet is not owned and operated by one person or one group: it is not governmental-controlled by a central agency: however, behind the web sites on the Internet, are individuals, called Web-masters, who design, manage and maintain specific sites whether they be personal or organization-sponsored ones. They should be following their own codes of ethics and following the rules of the Internet.

So, Web Ethics is a personal choice based on a set of shared values. Now you know what's ethical and what's not: what's legal and what's not. The decision to use or misuse the Internet and Web sites is up to you.

Summary

"Ethics" is a controversial term to define. Regardless, ethics can be viewed as "doing good and avoiding evil." As an adult, your attitude about what's right or wrong or good or bad depends on your personal code of ethics. If your college or university doesn't post and your instructors don't warn about plagiarism, or other computer misuse as accessing censored sites, Web-theft and maliciousness (e.g., hacking, phreaking, cracking, pirating and creating computer viruses), you must follow-- or establish-- your own code of ethics.

Research studies were presented that confirm the need for more attention in developing moral attitudes among students. Recommendations are offered to minimize the misuse of computers, especially the Internet and Web site access.

Reflection Check

You have read many facts and opinions in this chapter on the controversies of the Internet, Web sites and ethics.

Circle the rating that best matches your view: 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = neutral, 4 = often, 5 = always.

Do you see a response pattern? What is it?

1. What have you learned about yourself and your attitude towards Web Ethics?
2. Why do you think you found these results? What do you think they mean?

I have a personal code of ethics	1	2	3	4	5
I have a personal computer code of ethics	1	2	3	4	5
I use my code of ethics for the Internet	1	2	3	4	5
A plagiarist should always be dismissed from the college or the university	1	2	3	4	5
Plagiarism is serious stealing	1	2	3	4	5
Online Term Paper Mills should be allowed	1	2	3	4	5

Discussion Topics

1. Were you or a "friend" ever tempted to "break the law" or a social code when you knew probably no one would find out? What happened?
2. Do you have a personal code of ethics? How, when and why did you develop one?
3. Should all Web sites be accessible to everyone? Should there be limits set for some individuals? Why?
4. How should students who disregard school policies be reprimanded, or should the ?
5. How would you encourage fellow students to be ethical in accessing and using Web sites?
6. How would you encourage students to be honest and ethical in accessing and using Web sites?
7. Should instructors be permitted to "check" on the authenticity of your work through search engines and Web sites? Why or why not?
8. Should Web site plagiarism and term-paper mills be discussed in classes? Why?

Relevant Web Sites to Explore

Columbia Online Sources [COS].

<<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos/>>

A fairly new cite that provides a set of flexible guidelines for citing materials found online or electronically.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation [EFF]. <<http://www.eff.org>>

A nonprofit organization citing information on free expression, privacy protection and the right to access public resources and online information; also advocates social responsibility.

Integriguard. <<http://www.integriguard.com>>

A subscription Web site dedicated to searching submitted papers for plagiarism.

NJ WebGuide <<http://njwebguide.com>>

Archived articles on hacking and issues of concern to computer users.

Hotwired <<http://www.hotwired.com>>

Net magazine [also in hard copy]: the first magazine on the Internet: articles on censoring and security concerns.

M. L. A. Handbook <<http://www.mla.org>>

Among many helpful writing suggestions are notes about plagiarism in citing online Web site sources and reference databases.

Paper Masters <<http://www.papermasters.com/paper2.html>>

Paper topics and fees of one online term paper mill Web site services.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. <<http://www.apa.org>>

Plagiarism advice in citing online sources.

Research Integrity.

<<http://pilot.msu.edu/user/gradschl/current/newslett/news.htm>>

Hard copy newsletter from Michigan State University discussing issues of integrity in the college and university settings.

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