

Defined

- ethics (used with a sing. verb): The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy.
- ethics (used with a sing. or pl. verb): The rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession: medical ethics.

American Heritage Dictionary

“An ethical issue is said to arise whenever one party in pursuit of its goals engages in behavior that materially affects the ability of another party to pursue its goals.”

Mason, Mason, and Culnan,
Ethics of Information Management, Sage

Ethical Guidelines

- The ability to cause harmful consequences >> need for ethical behavior.
- Power >> consequences.
- Agency: acting on behalf of others is power.
- Control over scarce resources is power.
- Information is power. Confidentiality, privacy.
- Info and info systems have economic ,social, political effects. Design is political.

Reasons for *formal* ethical codes

- To regulate members- behavior
 - *To inform them of expected behavior*
 - *Reminder that ethical behavior overrides many other considerations*
 - *Reminder of personal responsibility*
- To hold members accountable
 - *Bases for judging in cases of breach*
 - *Help address situations where conflicting views of what is right are possible*
- To present profession to society
 - *State its ethical bases, reassure stakeholders, and give them a basis for evaluating professionals*

ETHICAL BASES

- **I. Teleological: *focus on consequences, ends, goals, purposes of agents- acts. Focus on agents or results.***
 - I.A.. *Agents:*
 - I.A.1. Moral responsibility
 - Key distinctions:
 - » Voluntary vs not
 - » With or w/o full knowledge
 - » Should agent have been fully informed of facts
 - I.A.2. Virtues -- fundamental qualities of agents. “Be honest and trustworthy”
 - I.A.3. Egoism -- acting in self-interest is appropriate and ethical.

I.B. *Results and stakeholders:*

- I.B.1 Consequentialism incl. Utilitarianism: greatest total benefit (costs balance benefits)
- I.B. 2 Justice.
 - *Distributive justice:* similar stakeholders receive similar benefits and burdens; equity
 - *Merit:* receive benefits according to contributions
 - *Socialism:* burdens by ability to bear them, benefits according to needs
 - *Libertarianism:* bear burdens one chooses, benefits from that choice or what others choose to give or do.
 - *Rawlsian fairness:* resolve conflicts by fair method. “Veil of ignorance”; write a social contract as if you didn’t know where you would end up.
 - *Retributive justice* - e.g. punitive damages
 - *Compensatory justice* - e.g. compensatory damages. “Undo or mitigate negative consequences...”

II. Deontological: actions. A Doing right.®

• II.A. Responsibilities, duties

- required actions
- prohibitions
- "Computing prof'ls must attempt to ensure that the products of their efforts will be used in socially responsible ways, will meet social needs, and will avoid harmful effects to health and welfare."

• II.B. Rights, privileges

- "Honor property rights....give proper credit for intellectual property, respect the privacy of others, honor confidentiality."
 - acting within own rights is allowed
 - violating rights of others unethical

ACM CODE OF ETHICS

As an ACM member, I will:

- contribute to society and human well-being,
- avoid harm to others,
- be honest and trustworthy,
- be fair and and take action not to discriminate,
- honor property rights including copyrights and patents,
- give proper credit for intellectual property,
- respect the privacy of others,
- honor confidentiality.

MORE SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As an ACM computing professional I will

- Strive to achieve the highest quality, effectiveness and dignity in both the process and products of professional work.
- Acquire and maintain professional competence.
- Know and respect existing laws pertaining to professional work.
- Accept and provide appropriate professional review.
- Give comprehensive and thorough evaluations of computer systems and their impacts, including analysis of possible risks.

MORE SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES, cont.

- Honor contracts, agreements, and assigned responsibilities.
- Improve public understanding of computing and its consequences.
- Access computing and communication resources only when authorized to do so.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES

As an ACM member and an organizational leader, I will:

- Articulate social responsibilities of members of an organizational unit and encourage full acceptance of those responsibilities.
- Manage personnel and resources to design and build information systems that enhance the quality of working life.
- Acknowledge and support proper and authorized uses of an organization's computing and communication resources.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES, cont.

- Ensure that users and those who will be affected by a system have their needs clearly articulated during the assessment and design of requirements; later the system must be validated to meet requirements.
- Articulate and support policies that protect the dignity of users and others affected by a computing system.
- Create opportunities for members of the organization to learn the principles and limitations of computer systems.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE

As an ACM member I will

- Uphold and promote the principles of this Code.
- Treat violations of this code as inconsistent with membership in the ACM.

ALA Code of Ethics

- We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
- We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
- We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
- We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.

ALA Code of Ethics II

- We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
- We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.

ALA Code of Ethics III

- We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
- We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.