Book Review

Social Issues in Computing: Putting Computing In Its Place
Edited by Chuck Huff and Thomas Finholt
McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994

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Social Issues in Computing is a textbook that addresses some of the more salient social and ethical issues of computing that have recently been produced by social scientists. Though it is geared primarily towards undergraduate computer science students, given its timeliness, this reader can be used in the increasing variety of courses--from educational technology and the information sciences to sociology and communication studies--that touch on the social implications of computing.

Huff and Finholt's purpose in compiling the reader is to inform the CS student of the relationship between technological design, the myriad social uses surrounding design practices, and the ethical dimensions that often arise out of this matrix. Their inclusion of readings that demand multi-levels of analysis should help to create more socially literate analyses of technology as well as provide more challenging and critical examinations of technological processes.

Designing computer systems for real people in real organizations is part of their "conviction that ethical concern, social awareness, and quality design are intricately linked to form what we call a design ethic." Authors Huff and Bruce Jawer, in explicating the design ethic, urge students and future computer professionals to become involved in both global and local action. Global action involves participation in organizations such as ACM's SIGCAS, the EFF, CPSR, and IFIP, whereas students can act locally by subscribing to the design ethic itself. To this end the authors advocate the preparation of social impact statements as first elaborated by Ben Shneiderman.

Social Issues in Computing is organized into five broad topic areas: fundamental issues surrounding the social context of computing, the risks of technology, computers and the workplace, human rights, and computers and education. Issues investigated include: repetitive strain injury, safety-critical technologies and errors, computer crime, expert systems, telework, organizational impact of computers, equitable access to computing, computers and disabilities, privacy and surveillance, software ownership and piracy, uses of computer technology for cooperative education, and social isolation associated with computing (including Turkle's study of the hacker).

The readings are previously published articles from *Computers and Society, Communications of the ACM, IEEE Technology and Society Magazine*, and some commissioned pieces. Ron Anderson's paper on the development of the ACM Code of Ethics and Steve Cisler's excellent article on issues involving access to the National Research and Education Network, the successor to the research and education portion of the Internet in the United States, are among those commissioned for the book.

As well, the reader includes reading questions, topics for class discussion and term papers, and practice sections for each chapter so students can gain practical experience with the social and ethical aspects of computing. A concluding essay details the design ethic. A glossary is also included. (Oddly missing, though, is an index).

One of the fears about compiling a volume related to computing is that some of the issues raised might become quickly obsolete; however, the editors have gathered articles that will presumably remain classics in their field. The addition of articles dealing in equitable access to computing, for instance, will, hopefully, inspire further research.

Social Issues in Computing stands as a superb example of a text that should be consulted when SIGCAS' task force investigates and develops curriculum standards for teaching the social impact of computers.