PROMOTING ETHICALITY IN COMPUTING

by

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Abstract

It is important for computing centers' users to practice ethical behavior in their computing activities. Most users act responsibly, but the few who do not have the potential for disrupting all users' work. Computing centers have the difficult role of striking a balance between securing computer systems against unauthorized access and making the systems accessible for legitimate and innovative uses.

This paper describes the process of promoting ethical practices in educational computing. The process begins with recognition of the problem, namely, the lack of awareness of ethical considerations on the part of both users and computing-center staff. The lack of awareness was addressed with the publication of a computing-ethics survey in the computing-center newsletter. The results, also published in the newsletter, revealed that many users were unaware of ethical considerations and that there was a wide divergence of opinion about ethicality in a given situation.

A computing center's responsibilities in promoting ethical behavior include 1) informing users of expected standards of behavior and punitive measures for gross misbehavior, 2) insuring that punitive measures are sufficient and have the support of the institution, and 3) enforcing the standards through prosecution of violators.

This paper describes how these responsibilities were defined in practice, what the expected standards of behavior are, and how users are to be made aware of the standards.

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