

Jason A. Wood
CSC252
1/17/2001
CSC252 Assignment #1

This is a brief answer to questions posed by Roger Nagel, Ph.D. to my Computers and Society Class. The following are my answers to these questions.

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A) Why I am interested in Computers and Society:

Throughout human history certain revolutions have taken place completely transforming the way many live their daily lives. With each advancement, however, there are those who some way end up disjointed from the rest of humanity and miss the revolution. Computer technologies are quickly shrinking the world we live in, but at the same time expanding the economic barriers for those people who missed the entrance to the information superhighway. In essence what I am getting at is how do all these changes in computer technology effect those who are behind or do not have it all? How does this impact their ability to "learn, shop, eat, vote, receive medical care, spend free time, make war, make friends, make love?"

Other items that interest me are how does technology make its way into these groups of excluded people. Who benefits? Those people or those who sell the technology exploiting them? On a separate topic. I would also like to see discussions of trust and the Internet. How does one go about believing something as a fact when everything from words, photographs, live footage, and documentation can be contained, manipulated, and morphed into anything the media provider wishes?

Although we can now communicate at the speed of light, as you mentioned in class even make *free* phone calls from China to the US, how do we deal with human factors such as irresponsibility, ignorance, and neglect? In other words those who chose not to respond to emails for days, weeks or months.

B) Thoughts on computer ethics:

Ethics is an interesting topic and has many meanings to many people. When I think of ethics, especially my own ethical policies (although still unwritten and sometime changing) it comes down to what I can get away with without breaking my own moral trust, the trust of others, and the law in ways that negatively effect the aforementioned. The important distinction is that my ethics do not mean I do everything right, but I do things in a way that are self-preserving and allow me to live in harmony with myself and others.

This certainly extends to my professional life, which is mostly related to ICT and society. It is what makes the difference between what mp3 I chose to download, what usage agreements to which I comply, and what information I share with whom. In other words ethics play a large role in the choices I make. In a few cases the choices I made might have been ethically correct, while morally wrong, or possibly even in

violation of some law. Probably the greatest challenge that is yet to be solved is how do we (technically minded people, corporations, institutions) share ethical policies among ourselves? How do we enforce them? Are the methods that Microsoft and other large corporations unethical or are they ethical because they are self-preserving and necessary business practices?

C) Topics of interest for class:

I would like to cover the following topics:

- Educational Technology (Computer enhanced education)*
- Industry regulation and the importance of standards based computing/information sharing
- Computers in the workplace, specifically (Groupware) and the problem of participation and training.
- Professional responsibility and code of conduct/ethics
- The *Digital Divide*: is a problem and if so how do we deal with it?*
- The role of the government in regulating...
- Information Jamming: creating fraudulent or pseudo-information
- Computer crime
- Social impacts of ICT (esp. Reliability and reliance)
- Corporate and government ethics (privacy rights, freedom of information access, patents)