

Lab Exercise 9 – Computer Ethics: Intellectual Property Rights and Privacy
Computer Science 2334
Due by the end of your assigned lab period (Thursday, November 21, 2013)

Your Name: _____

Group Members: This exercise is to be completed individually.

Objectives:

1. To be able to analyze ethical situations.
2. To be able to make ethical judgments based on intellectual property concepts, the consequences of different approaches to intellectual property, and existing legal instruments that protect intellectual property.
3. To be able to make ethical judgments based on privacy issues, the consequences of different approaches to privacy, and laws regarding privacy.
4. To demonstrate your understanding of intellectual property, privacy, and computer ethics through the analysis of case studies.

Instructions:

Read the case studies included included in this lab exercise. Develop and write a response of a few sentences for each case study that addresses the exercise posed at the end of the case study scenario.

You should consider the principles of a professional organization relevant to CS when answering these questions. As discussed in class, it is your responsibility to locate a code of ethics from a relevant professional organization to use in the completion of this lab.

Use only the space provided for each scenario for your response.

You should spend approximately 15-20 minutes per scenario.

Once you have completed the exercises in this document, you will submit this lab exercise handout for grading.

At the end of lab, the entire class will discuss these scenarios and the various responses developed by the students.

The cases in this lab exercise were dreamed up by Prof. Hougen. Any similarities to any persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental.

Scenario 1. (Hypothetical)

Haley works for Goggles, a major hypothetical search engine and information management corporation and her team from Goggles been contracted to help fix `HealthyCare.gov`, a hypothetical troubled government website intended to work with insurance companies, hospitals and other medical and health -related organizations, and private physicians. `HealthyCare.gov` went live last month and is supposed to be helping individuals find the healthcare they need while minimizing their out-of-pocket costs but, instead, is turning into a giant fiasco. Haley and her team are assigned to help rectify problems the site is experiencing in trying to interface with corporate websites from which it is supposed to draw information and to which it is supposed to provide information.

This morning, when Haley comes in to work, she is greeted by Gregor, who is beaming.

“Why the big smile, Gregor?” she asks.

“I fixed it, boss!” is his reply. “I stayed up all night doing it but `HealthyCare.gov` now talks just fine with Metna. Login, file transfers, searches, health insurance, patient files, everything!”

“Outstanding! How did you do it?”

“Oh, well,” he hesitates, “you don’t want to know.”

“I’m pretty sure I need to know.”

Now Gregor looks sheepish. “I, uh. Look, I admit it. It isn’t the best fix of all time. In fact, it is really only good as a temporary thing, right? But it is working now and people can get things done and we don’t have time for perfection. The benefit of getting people the healthcare they need now is worth cutting some corners for, don’t ya think? Anyway, I do. And it’ll make us look good to get this going quickly. You know, whatever. Anyway, I promise I’ll come back and fix it right later on, once we get everything else patched, at least temporarily. Really, I will.”

“Alright, Gregor, alright. I’ll go with that. Go home and get some sleep and come back tomorrow.”

Exercises.

Find at least *two* distinct ethical principles from a professional code of ethics that are relevant to this scenario. List each principle, **give its source**, and *explain* why you think it is relevant.

For each principle, say whether you think Haley abided by (that is, followed) the principle you listed and *explain* how you came to that conclusion.

Give at least one likely motivation for Haley’s actions and *explain* how you concluded that was a likely motivation.

Give at least one entity (person or group of people) who would be likely to benefit from Haley’s actions and *explain* how you concluded that entity would be likely to benefit.

Give at least one entity (person or group of people) who would be likely to be harmed by Haley’s actions and *explain* how you concluded that entity would be likely to be harmed.

List at least *two* ethical-decision-making problems, each of which is likely to have contributed to at least one of Haley’s decisions and *explain* how you concluded that each was a likely problem.

List *two* ethical-decision-making strategies that Haley could employ to improve his ethical decision making and *explain* how he might employ those strategies in this situation.

Response:

Scenario 2. (Hypothetical)

Reimi is excited about her new job. She worked until just last week for Aiiify, a large and very successful software company, on ASE, the Aiiify Search Engine, which is one of the Internet's most successful search engines. It was four great years – she learned a lot and had a fun time. However, she thinks the businesses model of HowIE.com, her new employer, will make it wildly successful and, since it is a startup and she was able to negotiate an ownership share for herself as part of her hiring package, she is convinced she'll end up much better off financially than if she had stayed with her previous employer.

HowIE.com is a content farm. However, unlike other content farms which pay people small amounts of money to write simple “how to” articles on various topics that are popularly searched (then post those articles alongside targeted ads as a revenue stream), HowIE uses software to generate its “how to” articles. HowIE calls this software “PairOPhrase” and HowIE’s approach is proposed to work as follows:

1. Each night HowIE’s “PairOPhrase Trender” will use search frequency data that are publicly available from Aiiify to determine popular search topics amenable to how-to articles.
2. Once a suitable topic is found, a simple script will use ASE to determine a good existing how-to article on that topic.
3. That article will be imported into HowIE’s “PairOPhraser,” which will paraphrase it.
4. The original article and the “PairOPhrased” article will be run through plagiarism detection software to ensure that the derived article is suitably different from its source article that it will appear that the new article is an independent work.
5. The “PairOPhrased” article is then posted on HowIE.com along with ads for products related to the article’s topic.
6. ???
7. Profit!

Step 6 is where Reimi comes in. It is her job, with her knowledge of ASE’s page ranking algorithm, to ensure that the HowIE article shows up at or near the top of the ASE results when relevant search terms are entered by ASE users.

Exercises.

Find at least *two* distinct ethical principles from a professional code of ethics that are relevant to this scenario. List each principle, **give its source**, and *explain* why you think it is relevant.

For each principle, say whether you think Reimi abided by (that is, followed) the principle you listed and *explain* how you came to that conclusion.

Give at least one likely motivation for Reimi’s actions and *explain* how you concluded that was a likely motivation.

Give at least one entity (person or group of people) who would be likely to benefit from Reimi’s actions and *explain* how you concluded that entity would be likely to benefit.

Give at least one entity (person or group of people) who would be likely to be harmed by Reimi’s actions and *explain* how you concluded that entity would be likely to be harmed.

List at least *two* ethical-decision-making problems, each of which is likely to have contributed to at least one of Reimi’s decisions and *explain* how you concluded that each was a likely problem.

List *two* ethical-decision-making strategies that Reimi could employ to improve her ethical decision making and *explain* how she might employ those strategies in this situation.

Response: