

Lab Exercise #10
Computer Ethics – Intellectual Property Rights and Privacy
Computer Science 2334

Your Name: _____

~~Group Members:~~ This exercise is to be completed individually.

Learning Objectives:

- To be able to analyze ethical situations.
- 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.
- To be able to make ethical judgments based on privacy issues and the consequences of different approaches to privacy.
- To demonstrate your understanding of intellectual property, privacy, and computer ethics through the analysis of several 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)

Annie is very pleased. Her company's deadline for releasing version 1.0 of their new application is tomorrow and Annie has all of her code running perfectly according to every report from the testing group. She can relax and begin thinking about how to implement the functionality that won't be needed until the next release. It isn't the best way to spend her birthday but she knew she'd never get the day off when she found out her birthday was also release day. Her company is simply too small and moves too fast for that.

Then Steve comes in. "I need your help, Annie," he says, "Sonja is out sick today and her graphics aren't done. At least, if they are, they're not in the repository and we haven't been able to get in contact with her to find out where else they might be. We need you to complete them."

"Me? *Me?*" replies Annie, "I'm not a graphic artist! I'm a software engineer."

"C'mon, I've seen the graphics on your personal web pages. You're good. Besides, we need you. No one else is available."

No longer pleased, Annie pulls Sonja's partially completed graphics from the repository along with the specs for what is needed for the project. It doesn't look so bad. She is able to follow the basic style Sonja established for them and complete the few remaining ones by 4:00. She checks each one in to the repository as she completes it and when she checks in the final one she emails Steve, "All done!" Once again she is pleased.

At 4:15, when Annie reads Steve's reply, she is back to being displeased again. "You forgot to check in the splash page," is all it says.

"Splash page? *Splash page?* A splash page is *missing?*" The thoughts run through her head as she checks the specs. Sure enough, a splash page is completely missing. Not even a starting photo to work from. Annie wants to scream and run away. She wants to strangle Sonja. She just wants to be done for the day.

"Fine. We need a splash page, I'll make us a splash page," she thinks to herself and she fires up her web browser, heads over to Google image search, and finds herself a great looking photo to work from. "Perfect," she thinks. "No copyright notice so this puppy is mine!"

Annie saves a copy of the photo and opens it in PhotoShop, grabs an e-copy of the company logo, pastes that on, then adds the project name and "V1.0" in fancy letters across it. A little color tweaking here and there and she calls it good and checks it in to the repository and sends Steve another email.

Looking up, Annie sees it is 5:00 and heads out the door to meet some friends who will toast her birthday. She's not pleased but she is relieved.

Exercises.

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

Say whether you think Annie abided by (that is, followed) the principle you listed and *explain* how you came to that conclusion.

Give one likely motivation for Annie's actions and *explain* how you concluded that was a likely motivation.

List one ethical-decision-making problem that is likely to have contributed to at least one of Annie's decisions and *explain* how you concluded that was a likely problem.

List one ethical-decision-making strategy that Annie could employ to improve his ethical decision making and *explain* how he might employ that strategy in this situation.

Response (Scenario 1):

Scenario 2. (Hypothetical)

Marjorie asks her team members to brainstorm. “We need a new way to target our advertising,” she says. “We’re just not getting the right demographic information to make our sales.”

“We could start a new social networking site,” suggests Herman. “People are always giving away personal info on those sites.”

“Or free email accounts so we could mine email for personal info,” offers Jenny.

Marjorie writes these ideas on the white board. Then there is a long pause. It is a brainstorming session, so no one criticizes the ideas already put forth but everyone knows these ideas are lame – they’ve already been done so how will they attract an audience for their own version of each service? What will set them apart?

Then Jeff speaks up. “Buy out a social network app.”

Another long pause. This time it is confusion.

“I’m not sure what you are suggesting,” Marjorie prompts.

“Well,” continues Jeff, “it doesn’t really matter what the application is – a game, a quiz, whatever. As long as it’s shared among friends on a social networking site and lots of people use it – that is what matters. If people allow the app to access their personal data so that they can play online with friends, then we can add code to it to copy all their personal data to our computers where we can mine it for the demographic info we need for sales. No one will ever even bother to read the terms of service for a simple game or quiz app, particularly for one with a big user base already. They’ll never connect our ads to our app.”

A final pause. This one isn’t long at all.

“Meeting adjourned,” intones Marjorie. “Jeff, run with it!”

Exercises.

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

Say whether you think Marjorie abided by (that is, followed) the principle you listed and *explain* how you came to that conclusion.

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

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

List one ethical-decision-making strategy that Marjorie could employ to improve her ethical decision making and *explain* how she might employ that strategy in this situation.

Response (Scenario 2):