



LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO

Center for Ethics Across the University

Lake Shore Campus
6525 North Sheridan Road
Chicago, Illinois 60626
Telephone: (312) 508-8349

July 27, 1994

Mary E. Malliaris
460 Hill Road
Winnetka, IL 60093

Dear Dr. Malliaris:

I am pleased to inform you that the Advisory Committee of the Center for Ethics Across the University has selected you to be one of the Center's Fellows during the Spring semester of 1994-95. If I have not done so by the time you receive this letter, I will be in touch with you shortly by telephone to congratulate you in person and to answer any questions you might have about your appointment. The list of colleagues selected for a Spring 1994-95 Fellowship is as follows: Professors Mary Malliaris (Management Science), Susan Mezey (Political Science), Nicholas Patricca (Theater), and Julie Ward (Philosophy).

You will receive information about the Center Fellows Seminar, which will meet weekly during your tenure as a Fellow, sometime in November. I would be happy to recommend background reading, if that would be useful, or to offer any other help that I can as you prepare for this project. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions as the time for your Fellowship approaches.

Sincerely,

David T. Ozar, Ph.D.
Director

DT0:af

cc: Samuel Ramenofsky, Chairperson
Management Science

Norms in Information Systems

Information Systems is growing as a speciality within business organizations. Many companies now have a CIO (Chief Information Officer) who reports directly to the CEO. The growth of computer usage, the information superhighway and increasing use of linking systems such as Internet and E-mail have made Information Systems specialists within a company a necessity for today's businesses.

Because Information Systems focuses on the use of computers and programs, rather than on company products such as paint, clothing or automobiles, it has developed as a separate entity within a business -- a world within a world. Combined with the view of computer specialists as "nerds", "geeks", and individuals working in isolation with a machine, there has developed a system of rules and values within the Information Systems world which are at variance with the stated rules and values which IS professionals apply to the rest of the world (the users of their systems).

What are the actual norms for those within Information Systems and those outside of Information Systems? What are the basic rights and values of an insider versus an outsider? One norm (stated as a law on software packaging) is: **YOU MAY NOT MODIFY OR ADAPT ANY PART OF THIS SOFTWARE.** This is enforced for purchasers and users of the program. However, an essential skill for an insider is the ability to read someone else's code, take it apart, and modify it as needed. A good programmer is often asked to customize software to meet specific business needs. Outsiders cannot alter code, insiders can.

Hackers, those who practice getting into other's computer files, are often sued and/or jailed. But, within a company, IS people are often expected to have exactly these skills when some user has locked him/herself out of their computer or the computer system is generating

errors which require these "breaking and entering" skills in order to regain access to the system and correct the errors which are occurring. Outsiders cannot hack, insiders can.

The right to privacy is seen as an integral part of the American way of life, but IS professionals are asked to accumulate and "mine" data on individuals as part of a company's marketing strategy. This involves collecting information on every purchase made by a consumer, every phone call made, every product ordered through the mail. Is privacy even a consideration anymore within IS?

Other conflicts occur with copying program disks (No to outsiders, OK for insiders), making stored data available to those who shouldn't see it (No to outsiders, OK for insiders), and releasing a program with known errors or bugs (No to outsiders, OK for insiders). So, the way we seem to train and regulate those persons viewed as "inside" the Information Systems world is in conflict with the rules and regulations Information Systems professionals would like to enforce for those outside of the profession. The standard for conformity within the profession is opposite the standard for outsiders.

This makes it confusing for students who, in introductory classes will be taught the generic outsider rules, but in later classes will observe the insider rules to be those in operation. Isn't it interesting that many of the illegal hackers who we read about in the newspaper are in their late undergraduate - early graduate training, when the confusing shift from what is right for outsiders to what is right for insiders is occurring.

What exactly is the moral framework which is operating inside the profession of Information Systems? What are the norms of practice by which insiders operate? Unstated rules, in direct contradiction to those specified for the public, influence capability and promotion for those within the profession.

I would like to use the Faculty Fellowship for the Study of Ethics to uncover these actual versus stated norms which are in operation for Information Systems insiders.