

# IT and Ethics: Guidelines for Professionals

Saturday, April 24, 2010

Trenton Computer Festival  
The College of New Jersey  
Ewing, New Jersey

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## The Challenge –

The distinction between legal and ethical is often vague. IT also can enable unethical acts on an unprecedented scale.

## What this session is not:

- legal advice - I am not an attorney
- absolute wisdom
- the final word

## Privacy

- “The right to be left alone”  
- Louis Brandeis
- recommended reading: “The Right to Privacy”  
Alderman and Kennedy (1995)

## Obligations to others

“What you see here, what you hear here,  
when you leave here, let it stay here”  
- Alcoholics Anonymous

- customers
- colleagues
- superiors

## Technology can be very invasive

- Lower Merion School District laptop camera case
- web browsing
- electronic mail
- electronic diaries
- repair technicians
- disposal/destruction

## Ethics – “Just Say No”

- Do not gossip
- Make sure bounds are proper
- Get instructions from superiors **IN WRITING**
- Heed your conscience

## Medical Data

- Patient privacy
- You do not know what is sensitive; even the mere fact of a visit
- aggregation

## Investigations

- germane
- relevant
- character assassination
- cases
  - Consultant on litigation
  - investigation of 3rd party computer
  - information private to consultant unless matches agreed criteria

## Information Gathering

- Transactional data
- Can disclose other information
- Can be misconstrued
- Often less than it seems
  - E-Z Pass
  - Cell phone records
  - bankcard transaction records

## Information explosion is an ethical challenge

- Much privacy was guaranteed by economic infeasibility
- Connectedness removes this impediment
- Social networking enables lightning fast spread
- privacy over time
  - persistence
  - changing circumstances
  - example: campus newspapers & online

## An evolving area –

- Generation Y/Millennials
- long term impact of search engines
- the “infinite memory world”;  
“somewhere out there”;  
there is a copy of something which may  
later become embarrassing

## Conclusions –

- Be careful; the landscape is evolving
- Think long term consequences
- Consequences can be severe

## Questions?

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Session Notes & Materials:

<http://www.rlgsc.com/trentoncomputerfestival/2010/index.html>