

UNESCO Chair in Information and Computer Ethics

UNITWIN UNESCO Chairs Programme: A Vehicle for North-South Cooperation

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Belfast

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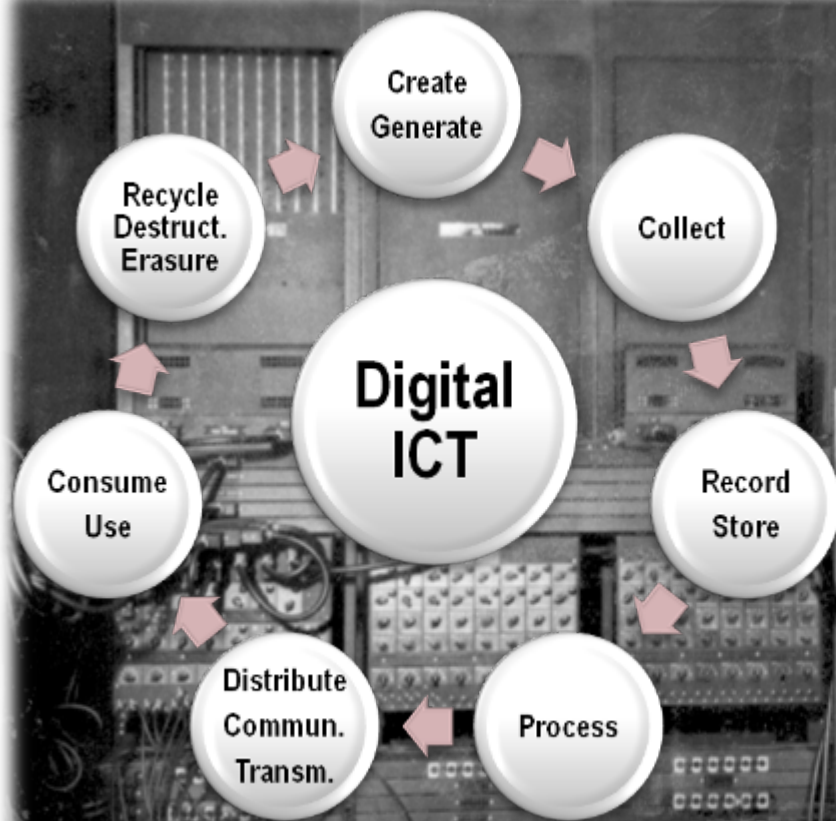
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Gauß-Professur der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen



- 21st Century: the Information Turn
- 21st Century: the Information Age
- The New Ethical Challenges in the Information Age
- Computer and Information Ethics
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21st Century: the Information Turn



Since the fifties:

Computer revolution?

Mobile, Internet (Web 2.0), computers as communication rather than computational devices, distributed interactivity (GPS).

Digital revolution?

Amazon and the book renaissance, more printing.

Information revolution: from things to energy to information.

What matters: changes in the life-cycle of information.

21st Century: the Information Age

Extrovert interpretation: how the world and our interactions with it are changing.

Information society: essential role played by intellectual, intangible assets (knowledge-based economy), information-intensive services (business and property services, finance and insurance comm.), public sectors (especially education, public administration and health care).

Introvert interpretation perhaps the most radical change is in our self-understanding.

The New Ethical Challenges in the Age of Information

Past until 1940s/50s (mainframes):

(speculative issues) Robots and humans (Bentham's Panopticon and Orwell's Big Brother, are not yet digital/computational).

1970s/80s (PCs): PAPA (privacy, accuracy, intellectual property and access), viruses (vandalism).

1990s (Internet): "the triple A" (availability, accessibility and accuracy of information); piracy; digital divide; infoglut; safety, reliability and trustworthiness of information systems; hacking (vandalism); freedom of expression and censorship; pornography, monitoring and surveillance online.

2000 (Infosphere, Web 2.0): security and secrecy; propaganda; identity theft.

Cybernetics: Norbert Wiener in the late 1940s and early 1950s, first to predict and work on such problems.

Computer ethics: coined by Walter Maner in the mid 1970s, to refer to the new field of research about ethical problems “aggravated, transformed or created by computer technology”.

Information ethics: what matters is not the specific technology but the raw material manipulated by it, data/information. Late 1990s the Information Ethics Group in Oxford headed starts working on “information ethics”.

Strategy

To contribute to UNESCO's efforts to meet the ethical challenges raised by the information society.

Purposes

- ▶ “to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation in the field of ICE
- ▶ to facilitate collaboration between high-level, internationally recognized researchers, teachers and institutions.

Objectives

- ▶ “to develop guidelines and protocols for the discussion of ethical problems and the resolution of existing difficulties concerning digital and online information;
- ▶ to be an intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and experience regarding the ethics of ICT, in collaboration with UNESCO’s Ethics Education Programme, Global Ethics Laboratory, and Ethics around the World Programme;
- ▶ to disseminate information to all stakeholders, ethicists, scientists, ICT experts, policy makers, the general public and new generations, about UNESCO’s initiatives concerning the ethical issues related to creative and innovative digital technologies, especially with respect to developing countries.”

Conclusion

Activity

Work towards the elaboration of a new UNESCO Universal Declaration on Infoethics and Human Rights.

Outcome

Shared principles and values leading to the elaboration of a new UNESCO declaration on information and computer ethics identified and integrated at national and international level.

Conditions and a sustainable institutional framework in favour of the elaboration of a new UNESCO Universal Declaration on Infoethics and Human Rights established.

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