



Jim Moor: Making A Difference 2003

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[Q1]: Looking back, what was it that first sparked your interest in computer/information ethics?

[A]: I came to appreciate the practical impact of computer ethics in the early 70's when I was doing logic programming for student applications. As a programmer I realized that I could "observe" and record what students were doing on the computer (there was only one mainframe computer in a time-sharing mode) without them knowing it. At that time I requested that Dartmouth require a privacy warning so that users would be notified when programs were saving information about their activities. The College complied and this was the beginning of the first detailed code of computer ethics at Dartmouth.

[Q2]: In your opinion, what is/are the most pressing issues in our field today? Why?

[A]: Broadly speaking, matters of privacy and control. These, of course, are perennial issues that always need scrutiny. With the coming of cloud computing, for example, users will have less control over private information and hence over their lives. The state and corporations that control the cloud will have enormous power. We need to find effective means of regulating such power. To put it in stark terms, what could a future Hitler achieve if he controlled the cloud?

[Q3]: Where do you see the field in the future?

[A]: Just to take one aspect of the control issue how will military computers and robots be controlled? Because of the need for quick reactions on the battlefield computers and robots will be doing more and more of the decision-making. We need to continually evaluate the competence of such devices to make these decisions. Once again enormous power is concentrated and the need to be sure the right decisions are made is vital.

[Q4]: What advice or words of encouragement would you give to up and coming scholars?

[A]: The computer revolution is far from over and the field of computer and information ethics is only beginning. This is a growth area with a research and teaching potential of doing tremendous good.

[Q5]: Is there a question I should have asked you but failed to?

[A]: No.

[Q]: What are you reading right now that relates to computer/information ethics?

[A]: I am reading more about transhumanism and future super intelligent machines.

[Q]: What topic are you working on right now?

[A]: Ethics and AI.

[Q]: What is happening now in the world of computer/information ethics that did not see coming when you started researching this topic?

[A]: Many things in computing I didn't see coming. One is that computers could be implanted in us. Computers filled entire rooms when I started programming by punch cards that were processed in batch mode overnight. The possibility that that arrangement could be miniaturized into real time medical devices and implanted inside humans never entered my mind. Today computerized implants are commonplace and will only become more so. I tell students that they were born humans but they will die cyborgs. I believe their lives will be longer and much improved because of it. But I worry that they will eventually become targets of hacking and neural implants may eventually cost them their freedom. This shows that computer ethics is more important than ever.