Thomas J. Boucher

Dr. Young Park

CISM 4138 Contemporary Topics in CIS

October 7, 2012

The Importance of Ethics in Information Systems

Ethics is defined as "(1) Moral principles that govern a person's or group's behavior and (2) The moral correctness of specified conduct." I believe that the use of ethics plays a vital role in regards to technology usage. The problem is that technology has also made it easy for a person to get over their head and it would be easy for them to go from just playing around and trying things, to actually committing illegal acts. For instance an Information Technology "IT" student could be practicing something (s)he learned in one of their classes and inadvertently gain access to someone else personal information. Now while the smart thing to do would be just exit out of everything and be done with it we all know that curiosity would get the best of many and they would continue to explore and see just how much information they now had access to. Again this is where ethics would come in to play because whether they are or are not supposed to have access to personal information it is what you do with it once you have it. If the student took that information and used it to let's say steal from somebody than they have acted unethically. At the same time, however, IT professionals have access to a lot of confidential information but just so long as they do not act maliciously with that information than no crime has been committed and ethics have been upheld.

Technology has made life a lot simpler in many aspects but because of this simplification, a lot of personal information is available to those who know where to look. For instance whenever somebody applies for a credit card, opens a bank account, or fills out a job application, they submit valuable personal information. This information could vary anywhere from just their name and address to their social security number

and date of birth and the majority of the time this submission is done via the Internet. With just those four simple pieces of information a person's entire identity could be stolen. Before they know it a person could have multiple credit cards opened in their name, their bank accounts have been depleted, and their credit score destroyed.

Anybody who has taken any of the most basic computer information technology courses has probably already learned the basics and the know how to attempt stealing your personal information. For instance in my class Data Communications and Computer Networks we learned about a program called Wireshark. Wireshark is a free program available to download off the Internet that is an open-source packet analyzer. The intended purpose of this program was meant for network troubleshooting, analysis, software and communications protocol development, and education (Google, 1). These intended purposes make it a very helpful program when used for the right reasons, however many people may choose to use it for other means.

I have personally watched a video tutorial on You Tube (a popular website for the posting of public videos) for Wireshark that walked me through how to use the program to grab packets off the network and then sift through those packets to identify key lines of code that would enable me to obtain the username and password of accounts on unprotected websites. This is useful to people who wish to commit illegal activities. Ethics says that a person's moral principles should govern their behavior but a lot of people choose to ignore these principles in their pursuit of something. Usually this pursuit is money and the ability to make it as fast and easy as possible. The Internet is

an invaluable resource to information and search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo make it even easier to find the information and training that is necessary for somebody to hack into your personal lives. You Tube can be a training source in itself as there are millions of videos uploaded on the site and many of them are meant as a means to teach somebody else how to do something.

After all this talk about how people can steal your information I'm sure you are wondering how to protect yourself and to keep it from happening to you. Well here are a few tips that, however cannot guarantee you will be safeguarded, will reduce your risk of identity theft. First off, do not leave yourself logged into sites or simply close the web browser on public computers. Make sure you completely log off the site and then close the web browser. Do not have the web browser save your username and password as this will make it easy for anyone to get on the computer and look it up in the saved archives. One common mistake is that people will keep external "jumpdrives" that they find lying around in computer labs, on the ground, etc. In many instances these were left intentionally by the owner and although they may appear to be blank or contain the usual information they will also have a hidden file known as a Trojan Horse. This will automatically install itself on any computer that drive is plugged into and will than begin transmitting back to its owner any of the personal information available on the computer.

Another common mistake people make is in regards to password creation. People like to choose something simple and easy to remember. It usually has a

personal significance to them. Things of this nature make it easier for somebody to crack if they know things about you. The best way to protect your password is to make it more complicated by combining upper and lower case letters, numbers, and special characters to equal a minimum of eight characters in length. Try to avoid going to confidential sites such as checking your bank account while you are connected to a public network. The most commonly overlooked prevention technique is to not be logged into a user account on a computer with administrative privileges for everyday use. Instead you should regularly use an account with limited privileges so that if somebody does hack into your computer they are also limited to the amount of information they have access to.

Web sites also assist in the protection of your information if you pay attention and allow them too. Most websites operate on a secure server when dealing with important information such as bank accounts and other personal accounts. You can identify that it is a secure server if you look in the beginning of the address bar. Most websites start with http:// but a secure site will be written as https://. If you do not see that "S" in the address bar than you should not trust that site. My bank also provides a personalized site key and logo that I have chosen so that prior to logging in I can verify they are still what I have chosen and know that nobody has been able to duplicate the site and trick me into giving them my personal information.

Now while technology could be used for many illegal purposes, it is still all the more helpful for their initial intended purposes. My intentions have not been to scare

you away from using technology but more so make you aware of what you can do to protect yourself from any possible identity theft. As long as you being the "user" are careful and follows the tips and suggestions listed above than in many instances you and your personal information will be fine.

Works Cited

Albrechtslun, Anders. "Ethics and Technology Design." *Springer Link*. N.p., n.d. Web.

2 Nov. 2011. <www.springerlink.com/content/4p712u7664t49254/fulltext.pdf>.

Devon, Richard. "SPT v8n1: Towards a Social Ethics of Technology: A Research

Prospect by Richard Devon." *DLA History - About the Scholarly

Communications Project and the Digital Library and Archives, University

Libraries, Virginia Tech*. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 Nov. 2011.

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/SPT/v8n1/devon.html>.

"Google." *Google*. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 Nov. 2011.

<http://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ie=UTF-

8&ion=1&nord=1#hl=en&nord=1&site=webhp&q=wireshark&tbs=dfn:1&tbo=u&s

a=X&ei=eaWyTreGGoi4tgfJ7Ln4Aw&sqi=2&ved=0CCEQkQ4&bav=on.2,or.r_gc

.r_pw.,cf.osb&fp=feeae14602a83ca1&ion=1&biw=1366&bih=643>.

Grunwald, Armin. "Against Over-estimating the Role of Ethics in Technology

Development." *Springer Link*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Nov. 2011.

<www.springerlink.com/content/n1025w0738uu3831/fulltext.pdf>.