Professionalism
in Computing, IT & Communication

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In the news

Cyber resilience

Many businesses at risk from hackers

Strategy Companies need a collaborative approach, say experts.

"The bad guys are very good at sharing their knowledge and methods of attack."
John Vine Hall, IBM

[Hacky Hack Hack](#)

- What is the background to this story?
- What issues does it raise for you?

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

"During 2013, digital surveillance featured more prominently in mainstream news reports in the United States and Britain than at any time since Internet communication was invented."

Chadwick and Collister, *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014), 2420-2441

- Why was this the case – what prompted this level of public interest?

In Australia

- What are the ethical issues raised by this story?

  - What competing considerations arise

  - How would you go about resolving those conflicts

Snowden's view (what ethics are at play here?):
"You can't wait around for someone else to act. I had been looking for leaders, but I realized that leadership is about being the first to act."

Source: Scheuerman, 'Snowden and the Ethics of Whistleblowing' *Boston Review* (May 21, 2014)

What is a profession?

- Historically
  - related to social standing (Royal Academies etc)
  - three classic 'learned' professions (training; apprenticeship): law, medicine & divinity

    "Three graces, all of which combined, support each other" (1853) (Imber, 2008 at 13; Beaton, 2010 at 1)

- Guilds
  - skills of members
  - regulated hours and rates; protected financial interests

- Drivers of modern professionalism
  - Proliferation of specialised knowledge; consumer reliance / risk; social need (Beaton, 2010);
  - Expertise and trust (PSA, 2015); consumer protectionism

Could Watson be a professional?

Source: http://toontown.wikia.com/wiki/Lawbot_Headquarters

Professional standards & regulation

Regulatory Prioritisation Equation
(Sanders 2010)

$$\frac{C + EN + R}{\text{Trust ES}}$$

C = Complexity
EN = Necessity
R = Risk arising from using non-expert
Trust ES = Trust in existing expert sources as a solution

- Self regulation
- Co-regulation
- Statutory regulation

Source: PSA (2015)

Characteristics of a profession

- confers status within society

- has collective influence within society

- learned - requires specialised (admission) and prolonged (continuous) training and education

- high degree of autonomy of practitioners

- organised – has some sort of professional body / association

- self-regulatory

- informed by an ethical code

- collegial

- client-focused

- is orientated towards service rather than profit (non-commercial in purpose)

    Foundation stone: *'… trust is the essence of professionalism and its most necessary component—that around which all the other hallmarks of professionalism revolve …'*
    Beaton, 2010, pp 5 and 15

Modern definition

'A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to **ethical standards** and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing, **special knowledge and skills** in a widely recognised body of learning derived from **research, education and training at a high level**, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the **interest of others**.

It is inherent in the definition of a profession that a code of ethics governs the activities of each profession. Such codes require behaviour and practice beyond the personal moral obligations of an individual. They define and demand high standards of behaviour in respect to the services provided to the public and in dealing with professional colleagues … and are acknowledged and accepted by the community.'

Australian Council of Professions

Applied to IT

"We need an IT profession which:

- Is defined in terms of its ability to play a full part in all stages of IT exploitation
- Is seen as – and sees itself as – an integral part of the business
- Has appropriate non-technical skills, including management, business and leadership skills, as core competences.
- Is about both <u>Information</u> and Technology
- Lays greater emphasis on the accreditation of current capability and competence
- Demands greater personal responsibility on the part of the practitioner
- Is attractive to a wider group of entrants than at present"

Hughes, C, President of British Computer Society (2006)

Professional standards & regulation

'Professional regulation when done properly relies on an understanding between the profession and the wider society that professionals will act in the public interest.' (PSA, 2015)

- Professional standards
  - Competency
    - Admission (qualification standards)
    - Maintenance (continuing professional education / development)
    - Codes of Practice
    - Practice (oversight)
  - Conduct
    - Codes of conduct / ethics (often non-exhaustive)
    - Practice (oversight)
- In Australia:
  - Professional standards legislation
  - Professional Standards Schemes
  - Professional Standards Authority; Professional Standards Councils

Hot off the press!

Australian Computer Society (ACS) Code of Ethics

1. The Primacy of the Public Interest

   You will place the interests of the public above those of personal, business or sectional interests.

2. The Enhancement of Quality of Life

   You will strive to enhance the quality of life of those affected by your work.

3. Honesty

   You will be honest in your representation of skills, knowledge, services and products.

4. Competence

   You will work competently and diligently for your stakeholders.

5. Professional Development

   You will enhance your own professional development, and that of your colleagues and staff.

6. Professionalism

   You will enhance the integrity of the Society and the respect of its members for each other.

Key sources / further reading

- Beaton, G, 'Why Professionalism is Still Relevant' (2010) University of Melbourne, Legal Studies Research Paper No. 445
- Professional Standards Councils, Professional Standards Authority, *21 Years of Regulatory Innovation through Professional Standards* (2015) (ebook)
- Burns, E, 'How does a short history of professions help us think about professionalisation today?' (conference paper; July 2014)
- Professional Standards Board, Australian Computer Society,
  - *ACS Code of Professional Conduct* (2014)
  - *Code of Conduct Case Studies* (2014)
- Professions Australia, *Blueprint for National Registration of the Professions* (2004)
- Hughes, C, 'Professionalism in IT' (conference presentation, 2006)

Thank you