



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7, no. 1

From the Co-Directors:

It is with great pleasure that we are writing to all of you as the new co-executive directors of the International Society for Ethics and Information Technology. Our first order of business is to formally thank the board of directors and Herman Tavani and Rick Spinello for appointing us to this position. We are excited about this opportunity and have wasted no time getting into the thick of things.

If you haven't visited the INSEIT page lately, please take a look when you have a few minutes. We have added some new features—one is a "spotlight" where we will have an interview with individuals who make important contributions to the field. This time we caught up with Deborah Johnson, on the field of computer and information ethics, privacy, mysteries, and more. We also plan to have a section with news briefs and announcements that are relevant to our members. And, the page is now virtually housed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Information Studies' Center for Information Policy Research where Elizabeth is the director. Keith Miller has set up a redirect from the original page or you can go directly to <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SOIS/cipr/inseit.html>.

Please email inseit@sois.uwm.edu with any news, announcements, or suggestions. See the website for submission deadlines. We would also like your feedback on the new newsletter format.

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming CEPE Conference which is in sunny San Diego this summer. Conference details are highlighted on page 2.

It's been said, "Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end." With this in mind, we asked Herman and Rick to take a few minutes to say so long before they go off on their next grand adventure.

Cheers!

Elizabeth & Kat

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Message from the Outgoing INSEIT Co-Directors:

Rick Spinello and Herman Tavani

We congratulate Kat and Elizabeth on their appointments as the new INSEIT co-directors. We are currently working with them in order to ensure a smooth transition. We wish them well, and we have every expectation that they will perform superbly as the new executive co-directors for our association. We believe that they will bring an energy and vitality to INSEIT to move our organization ahead during the next few years. Already, they have proposed some novel initiatives that should help INSEIT to grow and flourish in the near future.

We would also like to thank you – the INSEIT members – for your support during the past five years. It has been a wonderful experience to work with past president Deborah Johnson and current president Jim Moor, since INSEIT's inception in early 2001. We have also enjoyed working with present and past Board members, including Jeroen van den Hoven, Don Gotterbarn, John Weckert, Keith Miller, Fran Grodzinsky, Simon Rogerson, and Philip Brey. We thank all of these individuals for their cooperation and their commitment to INSEIT.

As you know, INSEIT has co-sponsored three CEPE Conferences since its formal inception and has supported Ethicomp conferences by providing discounts for members attending those conferences. It also co-sponsored the Ethics and Technology conference at Boston College in conjunction with CEPE 2003. This year, INSEIT will support the CEPE 2007 Conference, which will be held in July at the University of San Diego (USA). We hope to see you at the conference!

Richard Spinello and Herman Tavani

Conferences:

Seventh International Computer Ethics Conference

July 12-14 2007

University of San Diego, USA: Keynote Speaker: Jim Moor

The 2007 Computer Ethics: Philosophical Enquiry (CEPE) conference is the seventh in a series of international conferences that date back to 1997. The 2007 conference will be held over three days on the University of San Diego campus in beautiful southern California. The theme for the 2007 event is not limited and thus open to all aspects of computer and information technology ethics. Details available: <http://cepe2007.sandiego.edu/detail.asp>

Member Spotlight: Deborah G. Johnson

*Olsson Professor
of Applied Ethics & Department Chair
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How has the field of information and computer ethics changed since you first began in the profession?

I began working in this area in the early 1980s when the field didn't exist. So there are many concrete (and powerful) ways in which the field has changed and become established. For example, several journals are now devoted exclusively to the field, journals that target different audiences. There are several regular conferences (ETHICOMP, CEPE) and many, many other conferences that focus on issues in computer and information ethics on an irregular basis. Indeed, there are now so many conferences in the field that I cannot attend all of them, let alone write papers for each one. The literature in the field has expanded enormously. As with the conferences, I find it difficult to keep up with the literature. Instead of reading everything, on every topic, I find that I have to choose among topics in order to keep up.

The field started out and continues to be richly interdisciplinary. However, when it started out, it was primarily philosophers and computer scientists and now there is much broader participation. New fields have been created – information studies, communications, cognitive science – and so the range of perspectives and disciplines is much broader.

The topics that are addressed in the field have and haven't changed; for example, issues of privacy, responsibility, and property rights continue to be of interest while new issues arise around new technological capabilities, e.g., search engines, data mining, spamming and phishing. In addition to all of the above, there is now a professional organization for the field, INSEIT.

So, given the journals, conferences, and professional organization, I think it is fair to say that there is now an established community of people teaching and doing research on computer and information ethics, as compared to the early 1980s when there was nothing.

Member Spotlight: Deborah G. Johnson

What would you consider to be the most pressing ethical issue in information and computer technologies today?

I've been asked this before and I always find it a tough question. On the one hand, I think privacy is the most compelling and pressing issue because it is so critically important to democratic society and yet is being so drastically undermined by the use of computer and information technology. On the other hand, privacy is not the most intellectually challenging issue. The most intellectually challenging issue has to do with understanding ethics and conceptualizing the connection between ethics and computers or any technology.

Some would say that globalization is the most pressing issue, and I would agree except that I don't see it exclusively as an issue of computer and information ethics. Rather computers and information are a part of the challenges of globalization but globalization is a much broader issue and so the challenge for computer and information ethics has to do with understanding how technology shapes and is shaped by the social and political culture and trends of which it is a part.

What are you currently working on?

I am currently working on about six different projects/papers, though most of them involve trying to integrate what I have learned from reading the literature of science and technology studies with computer ethics. My push here is to draw out the implications of acknowledging that technology is not merely artifacts, that it is sociotechnical systems. I think the connection between ethics and technology will be much clearer and better understood when we think of computer technology as not just hardware and software but a set of social practices in which hardware and software are embedded. I am trying to develop a new paradigm for computer ethics using this concept. I am writing a fourth edition of Computer Ethics with Keith Miller, a computer scientist at University of Illinois. All the scenarios will be updated and many of the chapters reshuffled around this idea of computers as sociotechnical systems.

Member Spotlight: Deborah G. Johnson

Continued...

I'm working on a paper on privacy. I'm working on a paper that continues other work that tries to integrate computer ethics with business ethics. Also, I am working on several papers that continue the theme of arguing against those who argue that computers can be considered moral agents. I believe that artifacts such as computer software and hardware have powerful effects and, obviously, can behave independently in space and time. And, of course, I believe that computer systems should be carefully designed with attention to the values they embody. However, I think the question whether computer systems 'are' or 'ever could be' considered moral agents is misleading and confused. It presumes that there are objective criteria for agency when this seems to be a social matter, that is, we should be asking whether it is a good idea or not to consider computer systems moral agents. Those who argue for moral agency are really arguing that we should consider computer systems moral agents but making it seem that we have to because they meet some objective criteria. I think to consider computer systems moral agents is dangerous because it blinds designers and users to the effects of their actions in designing and deploying computer systems. People design computer systems; people use computer systems and this should always be the starting place for computer ethics.

What are you reading for fun?

I read mysteries for fun and am currently reading the latest P.D. James mystery, *The Lighthouse*. I also read other literature; *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson is, at the moment, sitting on my nightstand. However, films are more my passion, and the latest good movie I've seen is *Tsotsi*, a film that focuses on six days in the life of a young gang leader in Soweto who accidentally kidnaps a baby during a car-jacking and how he takes care of the baby.



From the President: Jim Moor

President's Message

Dear Colleagues:

Thanks to Richard Spinello and Herman Tavani

I congratulate and offer a hearty toast to Richard Spinello and Herman Tavani for their accomplishments as co-directors of INSEIT from 2001-2006. The INSEIT Board appoints a director or co-directors for a period of five years. Richard and Herman have served extremely well as co-directors from the beginning of the organization. Now they have decided to step down as the term of their appointment ends.

INSEIT requires considerable behind the scenes activity in order for the organization to flourish. INSEIT has been sustained by Richard and Herman who continually have put in enormous efforts to get our organization launched and developed. To give a sense of what they have done here is a list of some of the duties and accomplishments of the co-directors:

- Work with the INSEIT Board and INSEIT members to locate sites for CEPE conferences, which are held biannually and which rotate between Europe and the US.
- Oversee INSEIT finances. Coordinate with the PDC (the Philosophy Documentation Center) to collect INSEIT annual dues.
- Edit the quarterly *INSEIT Newsletter*, which includes announcements of conferences and other events.
- Coordinate with the *Journal of Information and Communication in Ethics and Society (ICES)* to provide the names of INSEIT members who are eligible for journal subscription discounts and for free on-line access to the journal.
- Chair INSEIT meetings at CEPE and related conferences. (Co-Directors can also call and chair INSEIT meetings at conferences other than CEPE, such as Ethicomp, CAP, ISTAS, and others where INSEIT members attend or present.)
- Call INSEIT biannual elections (appoint an INSEIT member to form and chair the Elections Committee for a particular INSEIT election).

(continued...)



From the President: Jim Moor

Many of these tasks are very time-consuming. Richard and Herman have set a standard of excellence in doing them. All of us who are members of INSEIT are in their debt. On behalf of everyone I extend a heartfelt thanks to both of them for a job well done!

Welcome to Elizabeth Buchanan and Kat Henderson

The INSEIT Board is pleased to announce the appointments of Elizabeth Buchanan and Kat Henderson as the new co-directors of INSEIT. They are beginning a five year term of appointment from 2007-2011. This Newsletter is their first issue as co-directors.

Elizabeth is currently the Director of the Center for Information Policy Research for the School of Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Kat is an academic librarian at Thunderbird: The Garvin School of International Management in Arizona. Both have an established record of publication on issues in information ethics. Both have demonstrated intellectual acumen and diligence not to mention very high energy. They have a good history of working together elsewhere and have already made some changes in the INSEIT website whose new address is <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SOIS/cipr/inseit.html>

Welcome to Elizabeth and Kat. Having them assume the responsibilities of co-directors is much appreciated.

Best wishes,

Jim Moor

CALL FOR PAPERS:

ICT, TRANSPARENCY AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY:

Social and Ethical Considerations in the Global Economy

November 7-9, 2007, Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Lisbon, Portugal) Details available:

<http://www.cmu.edu/transparency2007>

Membership:

On-Line Payment Now Available

The Philosophy Documentation Center (PDC) website now has the capability for online renewal. Please check it out by going to <http://www.pdcnet.org/member-inseit.html> and click on “current members”. This will take you to a screen where you would enter the renewal order number from the renewal notice sent out recently by PDC. New members can also join INSEIT by using this new and convenient system.

Note that you may also complete and send in the hardcopy document. Please print and complete the following information before sending it to the PDC:

Name:

Mailing Address:

E-Mail:

Membership Options (check one):

Regular Membership in INSEIT, \$60 _____

Student membership, \$25 _____

All payments must be in US funds

Payable by check** or credit card (Visa, MasterCard, and Discover)

Name on credit card:

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Expiration Date:

**Checks should be made payable to the Philosophy Documentation Center

Please return this form with your payment to:

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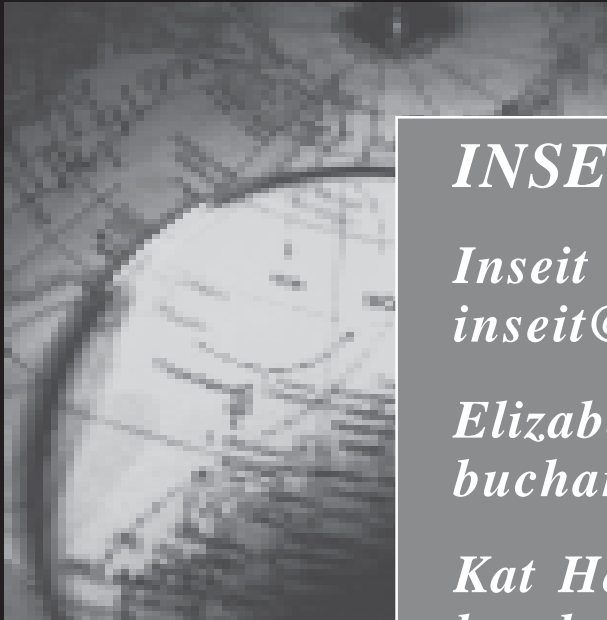
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