

Chapter 6

Information and Communication Technoethics

INTRODUCTION

Where is the life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” -Vanderburg, 2005, p. 387.

Vanderburg’s (2005) *Living in the Labyrinth of Technology*, describes the seemingly ambivalent state of life and meaning within a technological society. The ubiquity and invisibility of advancing information and communication technologies (ICT’s) challenges individuals sense of self and society, and their understanding of how meaning is communicated, by whom, for what purpose, and with what outcomes.

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The convergence of information, communication, and technology has become an important concern in academia as is apparent in the intersecting interests of technology studies, information studies, and communication studies in areas related to the role of technology in social interaction, meaning creation, identity formation, culture, and information exchange. This intersection of fields is partly due to the convergence of information and communications with advancing technological innovation. This has given rise to the ever-expanding convergence in academic research within communications and technology studies. This is exemplified through an amassing body of research publications focusing on technology, information, and communication, along with continued growth of technology and communication oriented research activities carried out within professional associations (Society for Social Studies of Science [4S] and the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology [EASST], International Communication Association, Canadian Communication Association).

The study of social and ethical dimensions of information and communication technologies (ICT's) is among the most fruitful areas of interdisciplinary scholarship emerging at the intersection of communication with other fields dealing with technology, society, and human life. This is partly in response to the public demand for academic work that delves into underlying developments, ethical dilemmas, and real-life controversies surrounding the web of new relations created by new communication technologies. This has reinforced knowledge sharing and the cross-fertilization of related fields by encouraging the exchange of ideas and expertise pertaining to the ethical studies of communication and technology. It has also provided new conceptual grounding for previously programs of ethical inquiry pursued within niche areas of technology studies and communication studies (i.e., media ethics, cyber ethics, ethical perspectives in science and technology studies, information ethics). The resulting influence of this interdisciplinary scholarship has helped substantiate communication technoethics as a promising area of interdisciplinary scholarship.

Technoethics in our contemporary knowledge society is marked by powerful information and communication technologies that shape and reshape communication, culture, politics, and the economy. This places Information and Communication Technoethics as a central branch of technoethical inquiry. The discussion that follows deals with the emergence of Information and Communication Technoethics as a branch of Technoethics that focuses on ethical and social aspects of advancing information and communication technologies in all areas of life and society. It begins with a background sketch of Information and Communication Technoethics rooted in technological developments in contemporary society, along with key academic developments within communication studies, technology studies, interdisciplinary studies, and philosophy. Then, it reviews current work on ethical aspects of ICT's

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