Chapter VIII
Responsible Technologies and Literacy:
Ethical and Legal Issues

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a case study of research conducted in the state of Wisconsin, USA, on the awareness of and knowledge surrounding ethical and legal uses of technology by primary teachers, administrators, and technology coordinators. The authors use the term responsible technologies to define the concept of ethical and legal awareness; the chapter reports on the findings from the pre- and post-in-service surveys, and makes recommendations for greater awareness of the ethical and legal implications surrounding technology use in general, and surrounding copyright in particular.

INTRODUCTION: RESPONSIBLE TECHNOLOGIES AS PART OF TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

Preparing future citizens for the responsibilities of full participation in the information society means more than just imparting an understanding of the technical uses of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) that support society. There is a level of literacy that receives less attention than keyboarding, word processing skills, or programming skills. This level of literacy entails an understanding of the *responsible uses of technology* in general and of *computing* in particular. A sense of computing responsibility is a global issue, not relegated to any particular country or area of the world; this responsibility relates to ethical and legal

frameworks and guidelines. But, where do our young citizens learn this responsibility? Moreover, how and what do we teach when we speak of responsible uses of computing?

In the United States in particular, educators, policymakers, industry leaders, and many more people are beginning to ask these very important questions of K-12 education, as this realm of schooling seems to be the most appropriate setting in which to instill legal and ethical understanding of technology use. For instance, Slind-Flor (2000) asks: "Should we be teaching reading, writing, and copyright?" The authors believe the answer to this question is a straightforward yes, and to this end, the responsible technologies (RT) project was funded by the University of Wisconsin System. Responsible technologies, as a concept, is the understanding, knowledge, and uses of technologies in ethical and legal ways. The concept of RT begins with teachers, media specialists, technology coordinators, and school administrators, and is then passed down to their students; a systemic approach is necessary. RT thus becomes a continuum, a process by which all stakeholders in K-12 education embrace the idea of using technology in legal and ethical ways. Therefore, school children and young adults are instilled with a set of skills for present and future technology use—and an attitude of responsibility from which to use those skills as informed citizens in society.

The necessity for the responsible use of ICT is becoming widely recognized, especially as part of the primary and secondary educational experience. Many factors contribute to this growing necessity: the developing case law (e.g., *Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees vs. Substance, Inc*., 354 F. 3d 624 (7th civ. 2003), cert. denied 125 S. ct. 54 (2004)), as well as the increased awareness of copyright issues among educators, in part due to the publicity surrounding P2P (Peer-to-Peer) litigation (*A&M Records, Inc., v. Napster, Inc*., 239F.3d 1004 (9th cir. 2001); *In re Aimster Copyright Litigation*, 334 f 3rd 643 7th (cir. 2003); *Metro-Goldwin Studeios, Inc. v. Grokster, Ltd.,* 125 S. ct. 2764 (2005)). Piracy is, in fact, *growing*, as recent surveys indicate (Business Software Alliance, 2004):

A majority of U.S. children continue to download songs, despite acknowledging they know it is illegal. According to the survey, 88 percent of kids between the ages of 8 and 18 know that most popular music is copyrighted, but 56 percent download music files anyway. Survey participants said they were generally more concerned about downloading viruses in music files than being prosecuted for copyright violations.

Further reasons include the exponential growth in technology use in school settings; a growing mandate from states and departments of public instruction for standards which include a component of legal and ethical competence in technology use, demonstrates that legal and ethical issues are gaining prominence in educational settings but have far to go in making their environments both compliant in terms of the law and committed in terms of ethical uses of technology, combining the legal and ethical issues into a compound concept of responsible technologies.

A number of U.S. states have implemented model academic standards for the use of technology in the classroom that include the introduction of these concepts into the primary and secondary curriculum. In Wisconsin, the locus of the present study, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction issued the Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Information & Technology Literacy (hereafter, WMASITL) (Fortier, Potter, & Grady, 1998). While the majority of the WMASITL concern minimum technological standards and learning