Information Cultures in the Digital Age
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A Festschrift in Honor of Rafael Capurro
Contents

List of Contributors ................................................................. IX

Foreword ................................................................. XVII
  Thomas J. Froehlich

Information Cultures in the Digital Age: A Festschrift in Honor of Rafael Capurro .... 1
  Jared Bielby and Matthew Kelly

I  Culture and Philosophy of Information

Super-Science, Fundamental Dimension, Way of Being: Library and Information
Science in an Age of Messages .................................................. 31
  David Bawden and Lyn Robinson

The “Naturalization” of the Philosophy of Rafael Capurro: Logic, Information
and Ethics ................................................................. 45
  Joseph E. Brenner

Turing’s Cyberworld ................................................................. 65
  Michael Eldred

Hermeneutics and Information Science: The Ongoing Journey From Simple
Objective Interpretation to Understanding Data as a Form of Disclosure ............ 83
  Matthew Kelly

The Epistemological Maturity of Information Science and the Debate
Around Paradigms ................................................................. 111
  Fernanda Ribeiro and Armando Malheiro da Silva

A Methodology for Studying Knowledge Creation in Organizational Settings:
A Phenomenological Viewpoint ............................................ 125
  Anna Suorsa and Maija-Leena Huotari
The Significance of Digital Hermeneutics for the Philosophy of Technology .................. 143
Arun Kumar Tripathi

II Information Ethics

Reconciling Social Responsibility and Neutrality in LIS Professional Ethics: A Virtue Ethics Approach ................................................................. 161
John T. F. Burgess

Information Ethics in the Age of Digital Labour and the Surveillance-Industrial Complex ................................................................. 173
Christian Fuchs

Intercultural Information Ethics: A Pragmatic Consideration ............................. 191
Soraj Hongladarom

Ethics of European Institutions as Normative Foundation of Responsible Research and Innovation in ICT ...................................................... 207
Bernd Carsten Stahl

III From Information to Message

Raphael’s School of Athens From the Perspective of Angeletics .................. 223
John D. Holgate

Understanding the Pulse of Existence: An Examination of Capurro’s Angeletics ...... 247
Fernando Flores Morador

The Demon in the Gap of Language: Capurro, Ethics and Language in Divided Germany ................................................................. 253
Gustavo Silva Saldanha

IV Historic and Semiotic Themes

General Intellect, Communication and Contemporary Media Theory .................. 271
Bernd Frohmann

“Data”: The Data .............................................................................. 287
Jonathan Furner

On the Pre-History of Library Ethics: Documents and Legitimacy .................. 307
Joacim Hansson
Ethico-Philosophical Reflection on Overly Self-Confident or Even Arrogant Humanism Applied to a Possible History-Oriented Rationality of the Library and Librarianship .................................................. 321
Vesa Suominen

V Resisting Informational Hegemony

Culture Clash or Transformation? Some Thoughts Concerning the Onslaught of Market Economy on the Internet and its Retaliation .................................................. 341
Thomas Hausmanninger

Magicians and Guerrillas: Transforming Time and Space .................................. 359
Juliet Lodge and Daniel Nagel

Gramsci, Golem, Google: A Marxist Dialog with Rafael Capurro’s Intercultural Information Ethics .................................................. 373
Marco Schneider

From Culture Industry to Information Society: How Horkheimer and Adorno’s Conception of the Culture Industry Can Help Us Examine Information Overload in the Capitalist Information Society ........................................... 385
Shaked Spier

VI Futures: Information Education

Ethical and Legal Use of Information by University Students: The Core Content of a Training Program .................................................. 399
Juan-Carlos Fernández-Molina and Enrique Muriel-Torrado

Reflections on Rafael Capurro’s Thoughts in Education and Research of Information Science in Brazil .................................................. 413
Lena Vania Pinheiro

Content Selection in Undergraduate LIS Education ........................................ 427
Chaim Zins and Placida L. V. A. C. Santos

The Train Has Left the Station: Chronicles of the African Network for Information Ethics and the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics ........................................... 455
Rachel Fischer, Johannes Britz and Coetzee Bester

Index .................................................. 469
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Foreword

Thomas J. Froehlich

While Rafael Capurro did not invent the phrase “information ethics,” given the prestige, influence, growth and impact that he has created in the field, it could be argued that he is the father of information ethics, if such an appellation were not sexist. Mother-father, even if dialectically conceived, would not fare any better as it is still gender-based and dualistic, a framework with which Rafael Capurro would not find himself comfortable. Perhaps we can call him an angel though it might conflict with any transcultural, intercultural approach that he would espouse, unless it is derivative of his angeletics, his approach to a phenomenology of communication. He is certainly a messenger and the message is information ethics, but he is an evangelist as well. What makes him the angel or, to analogize from another tradition, the archangel of information ethics, is not only his own scholarly, prolific, encompassing and innovative work on information ethics and related subject matters, but his participation in so many local, regional, national and international panels and conferences, his many keynote speeches, his academic appointments, his fellowships and awards, hismultitudinous publications and presentations in several languages, his creation of the International Center for Information Ethics (ICIE, http://icie.zkm.de/) and his commitment and devotion to information ethics. Rafael Capurro’s curriculum vitae is dizzying in its length, breadth and depth: see http://www.capurro.de/. He is an evangelist not only because he spreads the good news (euangelium—as opposed to disangelium, bad news) of information ethics but also that he has inspired and encouraged hundreds of other scholars to contribute to the field, and has provided venues in which they could realize their contributions: by inviting them to participate in conferences (e.g., the South African conference), to contribute papers to the International Center for Information Ethics, especially on theme-based issues of the International Review of Information Ethics (IRIE, http://www.i-r-i-e.net/), etc. While he has advanced substantially in the evolution of his own thought, he has also encouraged the development of thought in the field into international ethical space, by engaging and inspiring others to pursue their own insights and contributions. Many of the contributors to this volume have undoubtedly been the recipient of Prof. Capurro’s graciousness and generosity.

What is remarkable is not only his scholarly record, but his professional and personal engagement with friends, colleagues, collaborators and interlocutors. If there were ever a person on the planet who lives the categorical imperative, “Act so that you treat humanity,
whether in your own person or that of another, always as an end and never merely as a means,” it is Rafael Capurro. But that is too Kantian, Rawlsian, universalistic a description, that does not speak to his personal, hermeneutic engagement. When you meet him in person, one finds that he is affable, warm, amiable, collegial, kind, gentle, charming. He is personally engaged and engaging in so many ways. In person, with a wonderful glint in his eye and in a gesture of an embracing closeness, he hovers with his interlocutor in conversation, as if sharing some intimacies in a thoughtful Platonic dialogue of mutual purpose. It is also reflected in his personalized welcoming email to new members of the ICIE. While authenticity is often an abused and thereby trivialized concept, in a foundational Heideggerian sense, one can truly say that it is characteristic of Rafael Capurro.

It is with enormous pleasure that we offer this Festschrift for Rafael Capurro to celebrate his outstanding contributions to information ethics and related fields and to show our appreciation for his engaged and engaging personhood.