Society for Philosophy and Technology

SPT Newsletter

Volume 30, Number 1 – Winter 2006

Contents:

Message from the President

Let me begin with expressing my hope that all of you who have attended the Delft SPT meeting have enjoyed your stay at Delft and look back on an intellectually stimulating conference. For the organizing committee, it certainly was, due to the many excellent papers and discussions. It was our pleasure to receive so many old and new friends here at Delft and to exchange views on matters of mutual interest. We are now well under way with the preparation of two major publications as spin off of the conference (a book on design issues and a special issue of our journal Techné on technology and normativity).

In the meantime, the board of the SPT has reached a decision on the venue of the 2007 SPT conference. We received two bids, one from Denton (Texas), and one from Savannah (South Carolina), and the votes turned out to be in favour of the latter. Just before this newsletter was sent out, it was decided that Charleston (South Carolina) would be a better place than Savannah, so let me invite all of you to the
2007 Charleston SPT conference.

More details about the conference will follow in due course. I wish the organizers of the conference much success in their preparations for this conference.

The elections for the new president elect of the SPT and the open place at the executive board are on its way. The nomination committee hopes to organize the elections as soon as possible. Finally, as was proposed at the meeting of the executive board at Delft, John Sullins (john.sullins@sonoma.edu) has been elected in the office of treasurer. So he will act as treasurer and secretary to the society for the coming years. I am grateful to John that he is willing to perform these duties and I appreciate the very pleasant cooperation.

Finally, if there is any news relevant to the members of our society, about conferences, books, publications etc., please don't hesitate to contact Peter-Paul Verbeek who is in charge of the Newsletter of the society.

Peter Kroes

SPT 2007 Conference

The 2007 SPT conference will be held in Charleston, South Carolina on July 8-11, 2007. The theme of the conference will be Globalisation and Technology. Charleston is one of America's oldest and most beautiful port cities with a very lively tourism and nightlife scene. The hotel where the conference will be held is located in the historic district, just a few blocks from the open air market, several museums and the South Carolina Aquarium. Charleston is best known for its role as the birthplace of the U.S. Civil War, but is now one of the key sites in the US for the study of African-American history and culture. Side trips and tours will be arranged to explore this fascinating place during the conference. The conference is being co-hosted by the University of South Carolina and Virginia Tech, and the organizers are Ann Johnson, Davis Baird from the University of South Carolina and Joseph Pitt of Virginia Tech. More details to follow, but reserve the dates now and for more on the city of Charleston, SC see their visitor's website at www.charlestoncvb.com.

News from the APA divisions

Special Session by the SPT at the APA central division meeting, Saturday April 29, Chicago
The philosophy and ethics of socio-technical systems

In the last decades engineers and design methodologists have increasingly come to recognize what philosophers are arguing for some time now, that technology does not merely concern the technical artifacts engineers design and manufacture, but that it affects and shapes social relations as well. Initially, with the advent of ergonomics and the wide dissemination of use of computers, engineers became systematically involved in designing interfaces, pushing their involvement with artifacts one step further to include also the interactions between these artifacts and human agents. Currently, having become aware of the vulnerability of large infrastructural systems for cascading failures and terrorist attacks, engineers are enlarging their professional scope by another step, such that it comes to include the interaction and social organization of human agents that operate artifacts. These amalgams of artifacts, the agents involved and the rules under which they operate are called socio-technical systems, and this special session focuses on the socio-technical turn in engineering.

The session will consist in an introductory part in which authors comment upon the socio-technical turn. This turn seems to complicate philosophical and ethical considerations of engineering and technology: since socio-technical systems are large-scale systems that contain many subsystems, each consisting of heterogeneous elements, epistemic, ontological and ethical considerations linked to the design, implementation, management and use of such systems will become similarly complicated. Yet there may also be advantages, one being that it becomes instantly clear that engineering has social effects and is thus susceptible to ethical considerations. The second part is reserved for general discussion.

Contributions by:
- Noam Cook, San Jose State University
- Peter Kroes, Delft University of Technology
- Heinz C. Luegenbiehl, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
- Kathryn A. Neeley, University of Virginia

Conferences, Workshops, and Lectures

Methodologies for morally evaluating technology development
March 24-25, 2006, Academiegebouw Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Theme of workshop
The field of computer ethics and IT ethics has welcomed different methodologies over the past decennia. We take methodologies to be moral frameworks that aim to structure, conceptualise, and solve ethical issues. In this workshop we will assess a number of moral frameworks which have been proposed in relation to technology development. A prospective perspective on development includes an evaluation of future appliances, uses and impacts. Assessing technology development seems to be complicated by factors of uncertainty and control, because the range of relevant and possible detrimental aspects is not really foreseeable. Moreover, moral pluralism poses further difficulties for

prospective analyses. How do these different frameworks allow for some prospective analysis while taking into account the aforementioned problems? What are their strengths and weaknesses? These questions will be the starting point for a two-day workshop in Utrecht, The Netherlands. This workshop is part of a project by both Tilburg University (Anton Vedder & Anke van Gorp) and Utrecht University (Paul Sollie, Jan Vorstenbosch & Marcus Düwell). The workshop is organized by the Ethics Institute of Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Keynotes
Jim Moor, Dartmouth College, USA
Batya Friedman, University of Washington, USA
Peter-Paul Verbeek, University of Twente, The Netherlands

Participation
If you are interested in attending this workshop or would like to receive more information, contact Paul Sollie, Ethics Institute, Utrecht University, Heidelberglaan 2, 3584 CS Utrecht, The Netherlands, p.sollie@ethics.uu.nl.
More information: http://www.ethicsoftechnology.com

Van Riessen Memorial Lecture by Carl Mitcham

April 21, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands

In memory of professor Hendrik Van Riessen, the Centrum voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte (Center for Reformational Philosophy) organizes the Van Riessen Memorial Lecture. The first Van Riessen Memorial Lecture will be given by Carl Mitcham, a prominent philosopher of technology, author of the influential and widely acclaimed book *Thinking through Technology*. It will take place at the 21th of April at Delft University of Technology.

Carl Mitcham is invited to give this lecture with reason. He can be seen as one of the leading American philosophers of technology of this time. Mitcham has made a great contribution to the philosophy of technology as an author, lecturer, editor, researcher and director of several institutes. His book *Thinking through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy* is known as authoritative in the philosophy of technology and is seen as the most extended and complete overview of the philosophy of technology. Since 1999, Mitcham is professor of Liberal Arts and International Studies at the Colorado School of Mines, Colorado (U.S.A.).

With this lecture, Van Riessen (1911-2000) will be commemorated for the first time, for his role for the philosophy of technology. He was the first affiliate professor of Reformational Philosophy in Delft and is seen as a pioneer in the field of philosophy of technology in the Reformational tradition. His Dutch publications, like *Maatschappij der toekomst* and *Mondigheid en de machten* have reached many people.

The Van Riessen Memorial Lecture is organised by the *Centrum voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte*. This foundation puts effort into the promotion for the position and the strengthening of reformational philosophy, both nationally and internationally.

The Van Riessen Memorial Lecture
21th of April from 15.00 until 17.00
Technische Universiteit Delft, TBM Building, Room A, Jaffalaan 5, Delft, The Netherlands
An introduction will be given by prof.dr.ir. E. Schuurman
Free entrance

ICTTA'06 - 2nd International Conference on Information & Communication Technologies: from Theory to Applications

April 24 - 28, 2006, Omayyad Palace, Damascus, Syria

The *IEEE International Conference on Information & Communication Technologies: from Theory to Applications* - ICTTA'06 - will be held from April 24 - 28, 2006 in Damascus, Syria. Through its technical program, the conference aims to provide an outstanding opportunity for *both academic and industrial communities alike* to address new trends and challenges, emerging technologies and progress in standards on topics relevant to today's fast moving areas of Information and Communication Technologies. ICTTA'06 will offer oral, poster sessions, tutorials and, professional meetings. Submitted papers are expected to cover state-of-the-art technologies, theoretical concepts, standards, products implementation. More information: http://ICTTA.enst-bretagne.fr

Ethical Aspects of Risk

14-16 June 2006, Delft University of Technology

Technology has advanced human well being in a myriad of respects, such as energy, communication and abilities to travel. Still, every technology also has negative side-effects, such as risks from accidents and pollution. A standard way to judge the acceptability of a specific technology is cost-benefit analysis. However, next to the balance between the benefits and risks of a technology the following considerations seem to be important: the distribution of costs and benefits, whether a risk is voluntarily taken, whether there are available alternatives etc. How to judge whether a risk is acceptable is a pressing ethical question that deserves thorough investigation. There is a vast amount of sociological and psychological research on acceptable risks, but surprisingly, there is only very little research from moral philosophy on risks. This conference aims to fill this gap by bringing together moral philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and engineers to reflect on the ethical issues concerning 'acceptable risk'. The following questions will be the focus of the conference:

- What are morally legitimate considerations in judging the acceptability of risks? Is cost-benefit analysis the best way or do we need additional considerations?
- What role should emotions play in judging the acceptability of risks? Are they irrational and distorting or are they a necessary precondition for practically rational judgments?
- What role should the public play in judging the acceptability of risks (e.g. informed consent procedures analogous to medical ethics)?
- Is the precautionary principle a fruitful tool in dealing with risks?

Keynote speakers:
Ruth Chadwick, University of Lancaster
Carl Cranor, University of California Riverside
Douglas MacLean, University of North Carolina
Paul Slovic, Decision Research, Oregon

Organization:
Sabine Roeser and Lotte Asveld (Philosophy Department, Delft University of Technology)
conference management: Henneke Piekhaar

More information: http://www.ethicsrisk.tbm.tudelft.nl

Computing And Philosophy - IV European Meeting
E-CAP 2006@NTNU Norway Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Dragvoll Campus, Trondheim, Norway, June 22-24, 2006

From Thursday 22 to Saturday 24 June 2006 the Fourth International European Conference on COMPUTING AND PHILOSOPHY will be held on the Dragvoll Campus of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway. E-CAP is the European conference on Computing and Philosophy, the European affiliate of the International Association for Computing and Philosophy (IACAP).

program
Continuing the foci of the E-CAP conferences (beginning in Glasgow, 2002), ECAP'06 will deal with all aspects of the computational turn that has emerged over the past several decades, and continues to expand and develop as a result of the multiple interactions between philosophy and computing.

conference Co-Chairs:
Charles Ess (Drury University / NTNU): <cmess@drury.edu>
May Thorseth (NTNU): <may.thorseth@hf.ntnu.no>

keynote speakers:
- Dr. Lucas Introna, Centre for the Study of Technology & Organisation, Lancaster University, UK
- Dr. Raymond Turner, Department of Computer Science, University of Essex, UK
- Dr. Vincent Hendricks, Department of Philosophy and Science Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark

relevant research areas
We invite papers that address all topics related to computing and philosophy, including cross- and interdisciplinary work that explores the computational turn in new ways. Hence, the following is intended to be suggestive, but not exclusive:
- Philosophy of Computer Science
- Ontology (Distributed Processing, Emergent Properties, Formal Ontology, Network Structures, etc)
- Computational Linguistics
- Global Information Infrastructures (technological architectures, web design and accessibility issues, converging information technologies etc)
- Philosophy of Information and Information Technology (Including: Information as structure; Semantic information)
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Problem of Consciousness and Cognition
- Computer-based Learning and Teaching Strategies and Resources & The Impact of Distance Learning on the Teaching of Philosophy and Computing
- IT and Gender Research, Feminist Technoscience Studies
- Information and Computing Ethics
- Biological Information, Artificial Life, Biocomputation
- New Models of Logic Software
- Intersections - e.g., work at the crossroads of logic, epistemology, philosophy of science and ICT/Computing, such as Philosophy of AI
- Ethical and Political Dimensions of ICTs in Globalization

registration
Registration will take place through the conference website. The registration fee includes the conference reception, conference lunches and coffee and tea breaks, and one ticket to the conference banquet. See <www.iacap.org> for further information.

INTERNET CONVERGENCES
Association of Internet Researchers
Brisbane, Australia, 28-30 September 2006
Pre-Conference Workshops: 27 September 2006

The Internet works as an arena of convergence. Physically dispersed and marginalized people (re)find themselves online for the sake of sustaining and extending community. International and interdisciplinary teams now collaborate in new ways. Diverse cultures engage one another via CMC. These technologies relocate and refocus capital, labor and immigration, and they open up new possibilities for political potentially democratizing, forms of discourse. Moreover, these technologies themselves converge in multiple ways, e.g. in Internet-enabled mobile phones, in Internet-based telephony, and in computers themselves as "digital appliances" that conjoin communication and multiple media forms. These technologies also facilitate fragmentations with greater disparities between the information-haves and have-nots, between winners and losers in the shifting labor and capital markets, and between individuals and communities. Additionally these technologies facilitate information filtering that reinforces, rather than dialogically challenges,'narrow and extreme views.

Our conference theme invites papers and presentations based on empirical research, theoretical analysis and everything in between that explore the multiple ways the Internet acts in both converging and fragmenting ways - physical, cultural, technological, political, social - on local, regional, and global scales. Without limiting possible proposals, topics of interest include:
- Theoretical and practical models of the Internet
- Internet convergence, divergence and fragmentation
- Networked flows of information, capital, labor, etc.
- Migrations and diasporas online
- Identity, community and global communication
- Regulation and control (national and global)
- Internet-based development and other economic issues
- Digital art and aesthetics
- Games and gaming on the Internet
- The Net generation
- E-Sectors, e.g. e-health, e-education, e-business

We call for papers, panel proposals, and presentations from any discipline, methodology, and community that address the theme of Internet Convergence. We particularly call for innovative, exciting, and unexpected takes on and interrogations of the conference theme. However, we always welcome submissions on any topics that address social, cultural, political, economic, and/or aesthetic aspects of the Internet and related Internet technologies. We are equally interested in interdisciplinary proposals as well as proposals from within specific disciplines.

submissions
We seek proposals for several different kinds of contributions. We welcome proposals for traditional academic conference papers, but we also encourage proposals for creative or aesthetic presentations that are distinct from a traditional written 'paper'. We welcome proposals for roundtable sessions that will focus on discussion and interaction among conference delegates, and we also welcome organized panel proposals that present a coherent group of papers on a single theme.

This year AoIR will also be using an alternative presentation format in which a dozen or so participants who wish to present a very short overview of their work to stimulate debate will gather together in a plenary session involving short presentations (no more than 5 minutes) and extended discussion. All papers and presentations in this session will be reviewed in the normal manner. Further information will be available via the conference submission website.

Detailed information about submission and review is available at the conference submission website http://conferences.aoir.org. All proposals must be submitted electronically through this site.

graduate students
Graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit proposals. Any student paper is eligible for consideration for the AoIR graduate student award. Students wishing to be a candidate for the Student Award must also send a final paper by 31 July 2006.

pre-conference workshops
Prior to the conference, there will be a limited number of pre-conference workshops which will provide participants with in-depth, hands-on and/or creative opportunities. We invite proposals for these pre-conference workshops. Local presenters are encouraged to propose workshops that will invite visiting researchers into their labs or studios or locales. Proposals should be no more than 1000 words, and should clearly outline the purpose, methodology, structure, costs, equipment and minimal attendance required, as well as explaining its relevance to the conference as a whole. Proposals will be accepted if they demonstrate that the workshop will add significantly to the overall program in terms of thematic depth, hands on experience, or local opportunities for scholarly or artistic connections. These proposals and all inquires regarding pre-conference proposals should be submitted as soon as possible to the Conference Chair and no later than 31 March 2006.

Workshop submission deadline: 31 March 2006
Abstract Deadline: February 21, 2006 (expired!)
Paper Deadline: July 31, 2006

contact information
Program Chair: Dr Fay Sudweeks, Murdoch University, Australia F.Sudweeks at murdoch.edu.au
Conference Chair: Dr Axel Bruns, Queensland University of Technology, Australia a.bruns at qut.edu.au
President of AoIR: Dr Matthew Allen, Curtin University of Technology, Australia m.allen at curtin.edu.au
Association Website: http://www.aoir.org
Conference Website: http://conferences.aoir.org

Recent publications of interest

Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics

Edited by Carl Mitcham

A four-volume "Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics" (ESTE) has recently been published (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005). Edited by Carl Mitcham, it has close to 700 articles by something like 350 contributors from 30+ countries. A significant number of these contributors are SPT members, and ESTE makes a special effort to profile discussions in different countries and cultural traditions, with

articles on Dutch, German, French, Canadian, Chinese, Indian, Ibero-American, African, and other perspectives. If anyone might need more information or would be interested in having their institutions, they should consult the Thomson Gale Macmillan website at http://www.gale.com/servlet/ItemDetailServlet?region=9&imprint=000&titleCode=M339&cf=p&type=4&id=188023 or http://www.gale.com/pdf/facts/EncySciTechEthics.pdf .

Thinking About Technology

Joseph Pitt

For those who are interested, Joseph Pitt's *Thinking About Technology* is now available at the following site gratis: http://www.phil.vt.edu/HTML/people/pittjoseph.htm

Thinking about Android Epistemology

Edited by Kenneth M. Ford, Clark Glymour and Patrick J. Hayes

For millennia, "from Aristotle to almost yesterday," the great problems of philosophy have all been about people: questions of epistemology and philosophy of mind have concerned human capacities and limitations. Still, say the editors of *Thinking about Android Epistemology*, there should be theories about other sorts of minds, other ways that physical systems can be organized to produce knowledge and competence. The emergence of artificial intelligence in mid-twentieth century provided a way to study the powers and limits of systems that learn, to theorize and to make theories sufficiently concrete so that their properties and consequences can be demonstrated. In this updated version of the 1995 MIT Press book Android Epistemology, computer scientists and philosophers--among them Herbert Simon, Daniel Dennett, and Paul Churchland--offer a gentle, unsystematic introduction to alternative systems of cognition. They look at android epistemology from both theoretical and practical points of view, offering not only speculative proposals but applications--ideas for using computational systems to expand human capacities. The accessible and entertaining essays include a comparison of 2001's HAL and today's computers, a conversation among aliens who have a low opinion of human cognition, an argument for the creativity of robots, and a short story illustrating the power of algorithms for learning causal relations.

Contributors: Neil Agnew, Margaret Boden, Paul Churchland, Daniel Dennett, Ken M. Ford, Clark Glymour, Pat Hayes, Henry Kyburg, Doug Lenat, Marvin Minsky, Joseph Nadeau, Anatol Rappoport, Herbert Simon, Lynn Andrea Stein, Susan Sterrett

Kenneth M. Ford is Founder and Director of the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) in Pensacola.
Clark Glymour is Senior Research Scientist at IHMC and Alumni University Professor of Philosophy at Carnegie Mellon University.
Patrick J. Hayes is a Senior Research Scientist at IHMC.

The Nanotechnology-Biology Interface: Exploring Models for Oversight

Center for Science, Technology & Public Policy, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota

The Center for Science, Technology & Public Policy at the Humphrey Institute of the University of Minnesota hosted a workshop on September 15, 2005 to explore and evaluate models for the oversight of nanotechnology, with a focus on nanoparticles that are used in or derived from biological systems. Over 160 people attended the workshop, including individuals from industry, academe, national

organizations, and federal, state and local government. A report summarizing the workshop is now available. It includes a summary of the workshop, as well as conclusions and recommendations about policies for moving forward. The report can be downloaded from http://www.hhh.umn.edu/img/assets/9685/nanotech_jan06.pdf. More information: http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/stpp/nanotechnology.html

Philosophy of Technology Around the World

nanoScience & technology research at the University of South Carolina

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The University of South Carolina has a goal of nurturing a nanoliterate university community which embraces all interested persons, including faculty, students, staff, and neighbors. With the benefit of a pair of grants from the National Science Foundation and help from the University, a research group known as nSTS (nanoScience & Technology Studies) has created a variety of programs and activities to realize that goal: coursework, scholarships, outreach, research, publication, and so on. These programs embrace the natural sciences, engineering, the humanities and the social sciences.

We define *nanoliteracy* as an intellectual culture in which:
[A] people who are interested in nanotechnology are reasonably informed about it (including scientific, humanist and policy features, and the spectrum of views on those topics), and are comfortable discussing it; and,
[B] members of the community are able to pursue their own interests in nanotech by learning more from various sources; and,
[C] members of the community are confident that they can use their knowledge and understandings to participate in shaping nanotechnology policy, even if they do not possess expert scientific credentials; and,
[D] considerations of the public good are integrated into discussions and decisions about technical change, so that the technology is not isolated from society.

If a university community truly possessed such a nanoliteracy, then all could participate constructively in discussions and decisions about nanotechnology policy. Humanists and social scientists, for example, would have realistic expectations of what nanotech will deliver – and what it will not – while scientists and engineers would understand other people's concerns about how nanotech will change our lives.

Background to nSTS at USC

Some USC faculty in the humanities and social sciences were seriously interested in nanotechnology by the time the National Nanotechnology Initiative crystallized in 2000. When the University created its NanoCenter in 2001 with the help of generous funding from the South Carolina State legislature, Davis Baird, Chair of Philosophy, assembled a working group which received: (i) some start-up funding from USC's Office of Research in 2001; (ii) a modest one-year NSF NIRT (Nanoscale Interdisciplinary Research Team) grant for 2002-03; (iii) a much larger four-year grant in 2003; and (iv), in 2005, a five-year grant as a node of the Center for Nanotechnology in Society network.

As the team executed an agenda of conferences, colloquia, publications, courses, and other activities,

three guiding principles dominated. First, our interactions should be interdisciplinary trading zones wherein people from different backgrounds could exchange ideas and generate new ideas. Second, we spoke of the co-evolution of nanotech and society. "Societal implications" of a new technology usually means that the technology arrives, it changes the society, and then we realize after the fact that it has changed our world. But we prefer not to passively accept this sequence. Instead, we need to understand nanotech now, before it causes major disruptions, so that we can advocate the more responsible kinds of changes. This enables us to speak of societal interactions with nanotech, as opposed to societal implications : "interactions" suggests that members of society influence nanotech before technological change is a fait accompli. Finally, we embraced the goal of nanoliteracy, both for our university and for the surrounding community.

The group's work was originally divided into four task areas. Task Area 1, "Ideas of Stability and Control in the Theory and Practice of Nanoscale Research," organized one conference in Columbia, South Carolina, in March 2003, and co-organized a follow-up conference in Darmstadt, Germany in October of that year. It wrapped up most of its work with the publication of Discovering the Nanoscale (IOS Press, 2004). Task Area 2, "Imaging and Imagining the Nanoscale," presented a conference in Columbia in March 2004, and was deeply involved in a follow-up workshop on images of the nanoscale, "Imaging NanoSpace," at the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies [ZiF] at the University of Bielefeld, Germany in May 2005. Much of the work of this task area will be continued and expanded over the next five years with the support of NSF's Center for Nanotechnology in Society network. Task Area 3, "Philosophy and Ethics of Bionanotechnology," organized the third major conference at the University of South Carolina, "Nano Ethics," in March 2005. Task Area 4, "Moving Nanotechnology into the Public Sphere," has begun planning for a congress aimed at producing standards for best practices for interactions of nanotechnologies with society. Finally, the new NSF grant will launch a new Task Area to examine how nanotech is changing scientific and engineering practices.

Courses at USC

The nSTS faculty have institutionalized one course, "Nanotechnology: Promises and Perils," an introduction to social and ethical interactions with nanotech, which uses a framework of philosophies of technology. Several other courses are taught occasionally, including "Enhancing Humans," on the convergence of nanotech, biotech, information technology and cognitive science, and "Nano Philosophy," a graduate seminar. In Spring 2005, a repertoire of five concurrent undergraduate courses, enhanced with talks by visiting plenary speakers, intensified opportunities for students and served as an incubator for developing future courses. The Nano Semester, as we called it, included these offerings: [1] "Nanotechnology: Promises and Perils," as described above; [2] "Arguments in Science and Technology," with special reference to nanotech; [3] "Visual Computing," emphasizing scientific visualization in nanotechnology; [4] "NanoMedicine,"; and [5] "Technological Sight: Seeing Nano through Instrumentation and Philosophy."

The Nano Scholars

Our group values the involvement of undergraduate students, with eight to ten supported by fellowships each year. Faculty mentors supervise their work, which is expected to result in presentations and articles. In 2004-05, three of the Nano Scholars created News From the Bottom, the first scholarly on-line nanotechnology journal written and edited by students. Through the exchange of ideas between students from many universities, our hope is that a student dialogue on nano-related issues can be nurtured and a community of student scholars can coalesce around NFB.

The Nanoculture Colloquia Series

nSTS sponsors a series of talks on societal and ethical issues in nanotech which meet approximately every two weeks during the academic year. Most of the speakers are USC faculty, while additional ones are from other universities, both U.S. and foreign.

During the past two years, topics of NanoCulture colloquia included: a commentary on nanotech from the perspective of environmental philosophy; European perspectives on nanotech; nanotech in science fiction; John von Neumann's influence on Eric Drexler's views; the Drexler-Smalley debate; environmental health and safety of nanotechnology; cultural hermeneutics of nanomedicine; codifying the ethics of nanotechnology; origins of nanotechnology policy; and publics for nanotechnology in Canada and the United States.

The S. C. Citizens' School Of Nanotechnology

Our society's interests in nanotechnology policy would benefit from having an informed public so that nonexperts, when they participate in nanotech policy, can have active, constructive, and confident voices. In Spring 2004, nSTS launched an outreach program, the South Carolina Citizens' School of Nanotechnology, which brings experts and nonexperts together in dialogue on the scientific, social, and humanistic issues in nanotech. The presentations and discussions are supported by background readings which give the participants knowledge and confidence to express their views and interrogate the experts.

The sessions are kept to a small size that permits questions, facilitates discussions, and offers an open environment for comments from the participants. The participants also receive a list of reference sources with websites to assist them in pursuing nanotech topics on their own.

The SCCSN, which has now completed four rounds, is often improved by adopting participants' suggestions, including these: adding more units on societal concerns; adding a lab tour to see the instruments that make nanotech possible, and to observe the imaging of nanoscale materials and surfaces in real time; and including a panel discussion which brought together all of the expert speakers to answer final questions from the participants. We consider each round to be an opportunity for further experimentation and innovation. We expect to offer the SCCSN twice a year for the foreseeable future.

Other outreach activities include speaking to numerous local organizations and venues, including clubs schools. An op-ed piece in the Columbia SC newspaper in Fall 2004 reached more than a hundred thousand readers.

Scholarship

Our group has produced three books, four special issues of journals, more than 50 published journal articles or book chapters, and over 150 presentations at conferences and workshops. Several dozen more articles have been accepted for future publication.

Our leadership in studies of societal interactions with nanotech is reflected in events like the March 2005 History of Nanotechnology conference at the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia PA, where members of USC's nSTS accounted for five of the nineteen presentations, and the May 2005 Imaging NanoSpace conference in Bielefeld, Germany, where our participation was also prominent.

For Further Information

nanoScience and Technology Studies at USC: http://nsts.nano.sc.edu
South Carolina Citizens' School of Nanotechnology: http://nsts.nano.sc.edu/outreach
News from the Bottom: http://schc.sc.edu/nfb

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Evaluating the Cultural Quality of New Media
Towards an Integrated Philosophy of Human-Media Relations

University of Twente, The Netherlands

This fall, a large, international research project in the philosophy of technology will commence at the University of Twente. Director of the project is Philip Brey. The project is titled: "Evaluating the Cultural Quality of New Media: Towards an Integrated Philosophy of Human-Media Relations"

The project is funded by a VICI grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). VICI grants are grants for large, innovative research projects led by outstanding senior researchers. The project will run from August 2006 to July 2011. For the project, four researchers (postdocs and PhD students) will be appointed. This is a preannouncement, awaiting a fuller announcement in the near future. If you know potential candidates for these positions, please contact the director or refer the candidates to him.

Summary of the Project

New media have shaped modern culture, by affecting the way people behave, communicate, learn, and conceive of themselves and their world. The cultural impact of new media has become a major topic of academic study. An increasing number of studies is critical and normative, and assesses the goodness or badness of aspects and implications of new media culture. These implications have also become a hot topic in popular discussions, in which new media like the Internet, video games, and mobile telephones are criticized for their effects on social relations, values, institutions, and everyday life. Unfortunately, existing discussions, including scholarly ones, are often shallow, assigning labels like "good," "bad," "harmful" or "beneficial" with little argument or proof, and appealing to abstract values that are no further explicated or defended. A thorough appraisal of new media culture is made difficult by the uniqueness of many of its implications, and existing normative vocabularies, including those of ethics, political theory, aesthetics and epistemology, seem to fall short.

The foremost aim of this project is to develop a framework for a better normative analysis of new media culture that focuses on its implications for the good life and the good of society. It will use recent work in philosophy and science and technology studies to develop an analytical framework for the investigation of such implications relative to different ideals. Additionally, it will perform analyses of key implications of new media technology for the quality of life and society, and will include projects on the value of digital information, the implications of cyberspace and virtualization, the impact of computer mediation on human practice, and the positions of major political and cultural ideologies regarding the relation between new media, the quality of life and the quality of society.

Subprojects

Project 1: Societal Appraisals of the Cultural Quality of New Media (PhD Project)

Project 2: The Quality of Digital Information (PhD Project)
Project 3: The Quality of Virtual Environments and Tools (Postdoc project, 3 years)
Project 4: The Quality of Computer-Mediated Practices (Postdoc or PhD Project)
Project 5: A Conceptual and Methodological Framework for Quality Analysis of New Media (Philip Brey)

More information: p.a.e.brey [at] utwente.nl

New Center for Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Science

University of Twente, The Netherlands

Last autumn, the Philosophy Department of the University of Twente has established the Center for Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Science (CEPTES). CEPTES has the aim to promote scholarship and research in the philosophy of technology and engineering science, and to encourage scholarly interaction between philosophy, engineering science, and social science. The Center is dedicated to bridging the gap between the humanities and the engineering sciences, and to helping to develop and disseminate a philosophical understanding of technology and engineering science and their impact on society. Furthermore, in March, CEPTES will launch a new internet portal on the philosophy of technology. This new gateway will be available at: www.phil-tech.org. For more information on CEPTES please visit our new website: www.ceptes.nl.

Membership and Dues

SPT Membership

SPT welcomes as members persons from all countries whose professional interests include philosophically significant considerations of technology. Membership is open to those who have an advanced degree (typically but not necessarily in philosophy), to those who are in a technological field, and to students whose work is in keeping with the interests of the Society. Dues are $20US per year, which includes a subscription to the SPT Newsletter (dues for students are $15US, and gratis for people in developing nations).

Ways to pay your dues

Payment of SPT dues is being handled by the Philosophy Documentation Center. Dues can be paid by cheque, money order or credit card (VISA, MASTERCARD, DISCOVER). Payments by any of these methods can be sent to the address below. Credit card payments can also be made by fax or over the phone via the numbers below. (For credit card payments include card number and expiration date).

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