
Computer Science Colloquium

Values in the Design of Information Technology

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Olsen 311

Refreshments at 2:30, Talk from 3:00-4:00

Do values have a place in the design of information systems? Are the technologies around us value free, and if not, how do values insert themselves into the design of computer artifacts? If practitioners in computing will have to confront values in the design process, are we educating them to face this challenge? I argue that values are pervasive, unavoidable, and even necessary. Profession organizations and educators have taken steps to recognize this fact, but much more work needs to be done. I'll sketch out some strategies for addressing the challenge posed by the presence of values in technology design, and hope to provoke a fruitful and interesting discussion.

Bio: Sarah Kuhn is an Associate Professor in the Department of Regional Economic and Social Development at UMass Lowell. A social scientist, she holds a Ph.D. in Urban Studies and Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her research and teaching have focused on social implications of information technology, and on the work and education of engineers and computer specialists.

Current projects include a major study of women and men in the software and Internet industry, funded by the National Science Foundation, in collaboration with Paula Rayman. She also teaches 57.211 Sustainable Development, a Social Science elective that also satisfies the CS department's ethics requirement, and is interested in socially sensitive design. Kuhn coordinates the Technology and Human Values minor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.