



What Ought A Program Committee To Do?

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*“And when the radical priest
Come to get me released
We was all on the cover of Newsweek*

Overview

- Old World: Internet is our sandbox
- New World: Internet is *crucial infrastructure*
- This has many practical implications, which includes questions about the appropriateness of our experiments and measurements

Overview (cont.)

- Issues of appropriateness have started being asked within program committees
 - E.g., when does measurement traffic become an attack? (See [11])
 - E.g., how should public measurement data be treated? (See [3,10,5])
 - E.g., how should our research platforms like PlanetLab be treated? (See [7])
 - E.g., how should users be treated and do we need their consent? (See [12])

Decisions, Decisions

- Job of a PC is to accept or reject papers
- How much should ethical considerations play into that process?

Decisions (cont.)

- Easy approach: just judge the technical contribution
 - aligns well with our expertise
 - community can police itself
 - e.g., [3, 10, 5] trifecta

Decisions (cont.)

- The flip side:
 - PCs are in a unique position to take *concrete* action
 - Doing nothing could spiral into a culture that rewards only the ends without even considering the means
 - Shady experimental techniques might hurt a venue's reputation (or, sponsors)
 - Could be viewed as protecting community resources (e.g., shared facilities and data)

Further Questions

- If a PC does make a judgement that some methodology is inappropriate and rejects a papers, is that it?
- Should there be some further “investigation” or “sanction”?
 - similar to suspected plagiarism ?
 - perhaps databases of previous reviews would be enough?
 - perhaps the next PC will figure things out?

The IRB

- What is the role of the Institutional Review Board?
- seems like a potentially useful avenue for vetting
- If it is OK with an IRB should it be OK for our conferences?
- What about thorny methodologies that do not involve human subjects?



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So ... What Ought A Program Committee To Do?

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Extra Slides

Related Work

- Legal aspects of our work
 - E.g., [9, 13]
- Professional code of conduct
 - E.g., ACM code [6]
 - Can cut both ways
- Compromise of algorithms
 - E.g., [8]
 - We focus on running systems